‘TORONTO HAS NO HISTORY!’
INDIGENEITY, SETTLER COLONIALISM AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IN CANADA’S LARGEST CITY

By

Victoria Jane Freeman

A thesis
submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
University of Toronto

©Copyright by Victoria Jane Freeman
2010
ABSTRACT

‘TORONTO HAS NO HISTORY!’

ABSTRACT

‘TORONTO HAS NO HISTORY!’

INDIGENEITY, SETTLER COLONIALISM AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IN CANADA’S LARGEST CITY

Doctor of Philosophy
2010
Victoria Jane Freeman

Graduate Department of History
University of Toronto

The Indigenous past is largely absent from settler representations of the history of the city of Toronto, Canada. Nineteenth and twentieth century historical chroniclers often downplayed the historic presence of the Mississaugas and their Indigenous predecessors by drawing on doctrines of terra nullius, ignoring the significance of the Toronto Purchase, and changing the city’s foundational story from the establishment of York in 1793 to the incorporation of the City of Toronto in 1834. These chroniclers usually assumed that “real Indians” and urban life were inimical. Often their representations implied that local Indigenous peoples had no significant history and thus the region had little or no history before the arrival of Europeans. Alternatively, narratives of ethical settler indigenization positioned the Indigenous past as the uncivilized starting point in a monological European theory of historical development.
In many civic discourses, the city stood in for the nation as a symbol of its future, and national history stood in for the region’s local history. The national replaced ‘the Indigenous’ in an ideological process that peaked between the 1880s and the 1930s. Concurrently, the loyalist Six Nations were often represented as the only Indigenous people with ties to Torontonians, while the specific historical identity of the Mississaugas was erased. The role of both the government and local settlers in crowding the Mississaugas out of their lands on the Credit River was rationalized as a natural process, while Indigenous land claims, historical interpretations, and mnemonic forms were rarely accorded legitimacy by non-Indigenous city residents.

After World War II, with new influxes of both Indigenous peoples and multicultural immigrants into the city, colonial narratives of Toronto history were increasingly challenged and replaced by multiple stories or narrative fragments. Indigenous residents created their own representations of Toronto as an Indigenous place with an Indigenous history; emphasizing continuous occupation and spiritual connections between place and ancestors. Today, contention among Indigenous groups over the fairness of the Mississauga land claim, epistemic differences between western and Indigenous conceptions of history, and ongoing settler disavowal of the impact of colonialism have precluded any simple or consensual narrative of Toronto’s past.
For Martha
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank first and foremost my supervisor, Cecilia Morgan, who took me on at a difficult moment in my academic career and patiently stood by me through thick and thin, always offering calm, useful, and constructive advice. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Ruth Sandwell and Ted Chamberlin, as well as Allan Greer, Sean Hawkins, Ritu Birla, Eric Jennings, and Sylvia Van Kirk (my original supervisor until her retirement in 2004), for their significant contributions to my intellectual development. I would especially like to thank my interviewees, who entrusted me with their words and experiences and taught me so much.

This dissertation might not have seen the light of day had it not been for the tremendous support and encouragement I received from Simon Ortiz, Lee Maracle, and Lillian McGregor. To them, I owe a special debt of gratitude: they were there for me at crucial moments, believed in me, and taught me so much about Indigenous perspectives and my own connection to them. I also could not have done this without the support of Athina Goldberg or the encouragement and sense of humour of my immediate household: my husband Mark Fawcett, my children Claire and Ariel, and Jacob Currie. My parents, June and George Freeman, my sister Kate, and brother Eric were also there for me in significant ways. My sister Martha died during my first year of PhD studies, and I wish to remember her here.

I want to thank Keren Rice, Jean-Paul Restoule, Donald B. Smith, Monica Bodirsky, Roger Simon, Alison Norman, Jennifer Bonnell, Chris Parsons, Melissa Williams, Rauna Kuokkanen, Eileen Antone, Carolyn King, Jani Lauzon, Julie Nagam, Heather Howard, Coll Thrush, Paige Raibmon, Jarvis Brownlie, Rick Wallace, Jordan Stanger-Ross, Dorothy Christian, Susan Dion, Ron Williamson, Carl Benn, Michel Gros-Louis, Bill Woodworth,
David Redwolf, Sue Hill, Isaac Day, Keith Jamieson, David Sanford, Phil Coté, and Frank Cunningham. I am indebted to Alex McKay and Maya Chacaby for their patience in Anishinaabemowin language instruction and the cultural teachings that go with it. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students in SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) and the Toronto Area Women’s Canadian History Group, and the members of the Toronto Native Community History Project for their interest and encouragement. I also greatly appreciated the assistance of the archivists and librarians of the United Church Archives, Library and Archives Canada, the City of Toronto Archives, the Ontario Archives, the Canadian National Exhibition Archives, the Fischer Rare Book Library and other University of Toronto libraries, and the Woodland Cultural Centre. Special thanks to Caeli Mazara and Jacob Currie for tape transcription, and Caeli again for tremendous assistance with copy editing of the footnotes and bibliography, and formatting of the final manuscript.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the financial assistance I received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, the Centre for Ethics, University of Toronto and the Department of History, University of Toronto, as well as from the funders of the Margaret S. McCullough Scholarship for Canadian Historical Research, the Barbara Frum Memorial Award for Canadian Studies, and the Women’s History Association of Toronto Award.

Lastly, I thank the Mississauga-Anishinaabek who agreed through treaty to share the land I live on. May we all work together to ensure its health and regeneration for all future beings.
Contents

List of Figures ........................................................................................................ iv
Preface ................................................................................................................... ix

1. Introduction: Indigeniety, Settler Colonialism and Historical Memory in Toronto .......... 1

2. The Toronto Purchase ....................................................................................... 38

3. A New People ................................................................................................... 95

4. Commemorations .............................................................................................. 130

5. 1885: Triumphal Narratives and Indigenous Responses ...................................... 176

6. Changing the Subject ....................................................................................... 217

7. Family Ghosts and Hybrid Histories ............................................................... 250

8. The Activism of Indigenous Ancestors ............................................................ 290

Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 320

Postscript ............................................................................................................. 330

Appendix ............................................................................................................... 342

Bibliography ......................................................................................................... 343
List of Figures

Figure 1  Eagle Feather from the Naming Ceremony of Kahkewaquonaby ........... xx
Figure 2  Covenant Chain Wampum Belt ................................................. 53
Figure 3  Twenty-Four Nation Wampum Belt ............................................. 54
Figure 4  Dodem Marks on 1805 Confirmation of the Toronto Purchase ............. 73
Figure 5  1834 Toronto Coat of Arms .......................................................... 84
Figure 6  Toronto Semi-Centennial Celebration Program, 1884 ...................... 138
Figure 7  “The Indian Wigwam” ................................................................. 147
Figure 8  “The Occupation of the British” .................................................... 151
Figure 9  “Little York” ................................................................................ 153
Figure 10 “The Incorporation of Toronto” ..................................................... 153
Figure 11 Cover of Memorial Volume, 1884 Toronto Semi-Centennial ............. 165
Figure 12 New Toronto Coat of Arms ............................................................ 245
Figure 13 Cover of brochure on Toronto Purchase Specific Claim.................... 246
Figure 14 Emory Village Wall Mural ............................................................... 330
Figure 15 Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Edmund Jones) at the Smithsonian .......... 337
Figure 16 A Golden Eagle ............................................................................. 339
To begin a history dissertation by discussing a dream may be highly unorthodox, but in order to convey a sense of the theoretical framework which informs this work, it is the logical place to begin. About twenty years ago, while working to promote the work of Aboriginal writers, I dreamt a huge eagle landed on my left arm, then flew off, leaving behind two feathers which drifted to the ground. In the dream, I picked up a long brown flight feather and a downy white underfeather and resolved to give them to an Aboriginal friend who was going through a hard time.

At the time, I knew no teachings about eagles, feathers, or the significance of dreams; all I knew was that they were part of Native spirituality and culture. I knew little Indigenous history and only a few Indigenous people. What I did know was that in the feminist and literary circles in which I was then active, there was outrage, confusion, and agonized debate over a 1990 op-ed article published in the *Globe and Mail* entitled “Stop Stealing Native Stories,” by Lenore Keeshig Tobias, an Anishinaabe poet and acquaintance of mine who lived in Toronto.¹ So what was I doing having this dream chock full of Native spiritual symbolism? My first reaction was embarrassment, that I had somehow unconsciously appropriated Native culture. But the dream was so powerful that I felt I needed to understand how an Indigenous person would interpret it, so I sought help from the Syilx writer Jeannette Armstrong, who is also a medicine woman and dream interpreter.

Jeannette did not fault me for having that dream. Instead she saw it as a message from the spirit world that I had been given certain gifts that could be helpful. She did not believe that the spirit world spoke only to Indigenous people. She invited me to work with her and several other Indigenous activists to organize a groundbreaking international conference of Indigenous writers, artists, and performers, held at the Museum of Civilization in 1993, the
Year of Indigenous Peoples. The Conference was called Beyond Survival: The Waking Dreamer Ends the Silence.

The eagle dream and its interpretation marked an important moment in my own personal engagement with and participation in contemporary Indigenous epistemes, a journey that has brought me to this dissertation and its exploration of the historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto. Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen, in *Reshaping the Academy, Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*, uses the word *episteme* to indicate “worldview” or “discursive practice”, and adds that the concept “covers aspects of epistemology, philosophy, cosmology, ontology and religion as well as various practices stemming from these, without being limited by them.” Thus I came to my topic because of my involvement with an alternate episteme, a calling from a world the academy generally does not recognize as real or valid but usually only studied as an ethnographic “other.”

An underlying perception common to Indigenous epistemes in many parts of the world today as well as in the past is that “the world’s stability, its social order, is established and maintained mainly through giving gifts and recognizing the gifts of others, including the land...The gift logic ...is grounded in an understanding of the world that is rooted in intricate relationships and responsibilities that extend to everyone and everything.” Reciprocation is not understood as direct one-to-one exchange but more commonly as expressing gratitude, “giving back,” “passing on” or “circulating” what one has been given, as I did in my dream. It plays a key role in interactions between the human and non-human realms, which are not rigidly bounded. Reciprocation with the land and its gifts has been the foundation of Indigenous worldviews, according to Kuokkanen.

This gift logic grounds both contemporary and past Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee understandings of their history, including their interactions with each other
and with English, French and other newcomers to the Great Lakes region; it also underlies their conceptions of the role and purpose of storytelling. It is this gift logic and other contemporary Indigenous theory that I bring to my reading of the changing memory of Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial past.

What do I mean by the word Indigenous? The word is often used to refer to those peoples across the globe who descend from “the original inhabitants of a region prior to the arrival of settlers who have since become the dominant population”; these original peoples maintain cultural differences, distinct from the dominant population, and are usually politically marginalized, poor, and without protection against unwanted “development.” While as a global political and legal identity the word is new, the conception of being indigenous to North America, in distinction to European and other newcomers, is not, and it is in this sense that I use the term in my dissertation. My use of the term does not imply essentialism or cultural or political homogeneity past or present, though most North American peoples who currently define themselves as Indigenous have shared some basic cultural traits, such as the gift logic articulated by Kuokkanen.

While it is now standard ethnohistorical practice to attempt to understand the epistemes of historical Indigenous actors in North America as well as those of the European colonists they encountered, it is only recently that academic historical interpretations based on present-day Indigenous epistemes have been articulated, principally in the works of historical scholars of Indigenous ancestry such as Lisa Brooks, Susan Hill, Jennifer Denetdale, Neal McLeod, and Susan Miller. Contemporary non-Indigenous historians of Indigenous history are also influenced by these epistemes to varying degrees, though it is rarer for this influence to be fully acknowledged or incorporated into their work; nevertheless, there have been some recent attempts to engage with Indigenous worldviews not just at the level of isolated theoretical concepts or “upstreaming” (looking to present-day
epistemes or social practices to illuminate past ones) but also as organizing principles of historical writing. According to many Indigenous scholars, there is still much work to be done for Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous ways of “doing” history to be fully accepted in the academy and for Indigenous knowledge to be treated as other than inferior, deviant, or exotic.

My own engagement with contemporary as well as historic Indigenous epistemes in researching and writing this dissertation reflects an understanding of learning as a dialogic process of participatory reciprocity. It responds to Gayatri Spivak’s call to learn “from,” rather than “about,” the subaltern, and hopefully avoids what Spivak, drawing on Lacan, calls foreclosure, the ways in which “the native informant and her perspective are erased by the production of academic elite knowledge.” Similarly, David Newhouse, Don McCaskill and John Milloy have warned against “Indianism,” which they characterize as attempts to explain Aboriginal peoples that lack the voices of Aboriginal peoples or explanations posited using Aboriginal ideas, the North American version of the “othering” process described by Edward Said, Franz Fanon, and others.

To be a non-Indigenous scholar engaging with Indigenous epistemes is always a perilous endeavor. The risk of trivializing, misunderstanding, misrepresenting, romanticizing, ripping off, or causing other forms of harm or offense is ever present, and yet not to engage seriously and deeply with Indigenous conceptual categories, theoretical constructs, and articulations of experience is, to my mind, the greater offense, because it perpetuates the hegemony of western thinking. While I alone am responsible for the errors in my particular interpretations of Indigenous epistemes in this dissertation, I have sought guidance from Indigenous thinkers and elders all the way through the process of researching and writing, recognizing that this is an area where I will always be the student and never the expert. While I do not claim to fully understand Indigenous experience or worldviews past or
present, and I still receive the many benefits of white privilege, after twenty years of working with Indigenous people I have become culturally hybrid to the extent that I can no longer work solely from a western episteme. I have been told by Indigenous elders that participation in and engagement with Indigenous epistemes is not inappropriate for non-Indigenous people if they recognize their own relation to Indigenous peoples and to colonialism and develop an ongoing and respectful relationship with Indigenous communities – if, in the logic of the gift, the non-Indigenous researcher gives something back. Participation in Indigenous epistemes also responds to Kuokkanen’s call for “multi-epistemic” literacy, which she sees as an essential component for decolonizing academia, as does Spivak in her concept of “transnational literacy.”

Within the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Cree, Syilx, Secwepemc, Inuit, Sto:lo, Pueblo, and other Indigenous epistemes that I have been exposed to, “engagement and participation are more than conditions of being: they are also knowledge” and knowledge is active and alive. While most western philosophy starts from the premise that the mind is distinct from the world, for Anishinaabek,

the mind subsists in the very involvement of the person in the world, caught up in an ongoing set of relationships with components of the lived in environment. And the meanings that are found in the world, instead of being superimposed by the mind, are drawn from the contexts of personal involvement.

In writing about the historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto, then, I recognize that I am participating in that which I describe and I am continually changed in the process. Rather than “critical distance,” I have embraced what Spivak speaks of as “critical intimacy.” Thus, over the course of my research I have become increasingly involved with the Indigenous community of Toronto, from interviews and informal discussions, to working with Indigenous co-creators on a play about the Indigenous past of Toronto, to involvement in the activities of the Toronto Native Community History
Project of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. At the same time, I recognize that
Indigenous knowledge is not based ultimately on an individual’s singular experience but
draws on the collective experience of thousands of years of empirical observation, although
it is also informed by vision and dream, and one’s personal understanding of stories.

Since I was visited by Migisi (the spirit eagle) in my dream, I have been given three
eagle feathers by respected Indigenous elders or teachers. In the North American Indigenous
epistememes with which I am familiar, an eagle feather is alive, a manifestation of spirit
power.15 Traditionally given to warriors to honour their accomplishments, it is now used to
honour those who have worked for the people. However, as much as receiving an eagle
feather is an honour, carrying a feather also entails ongoing responsibility and action, and in
my case reflect my responsibilities to historical truthtelling, to community, and to the land.

Heidigger defined responsibility as a “response to which one commits oneself”; Spivak speaks of “answerability” (drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin) in a conception of
responsibility as not just responding to but answering to someone or something.16 Part of my
responsibility in this dissertation is to address the exclusion and silencing of Indigenous
epistememes in the academy when it comes to history writing, in the context of a consciousness
of and spiritual responsibility to living people, ancestors, and descendants, and to the land.
Indigenous people have told me that, as a descendant of settlers, it is through carrying out
these responsibilities that I find my true place here in North America.

Kuokkanen, following Spivak, argues that responsibility towards the “other” is a
crucial premise of the re-imagined academy and involves the acknowledgement that western
perspectives that do not recognize Indigenous-centred approaches to what constitutes
evidence, knowledge or truth further perpetuate colonialism. She cites a monological
insistence on reason, a hegemonic insistence on Eurocentric concepts, and the
“externalization” of responsibility to community (which she characterizes as a neoliberal
perspective similar to the exclusion of the environment in conventional free market economics) as forces keeping dominant cultural norms in place in academia, along with a gap between theory and practice, whereby Indigenous epistemes are recognized in theory or in the past, but not actively engaged with in the present, except within ghettoized Indigenous studies departments.¹⁷

Spivak and others have spoken of the importance of moving away from the idea of the “field work” of the anthropologist to doing one’s “homework,” articulating one’s own participation in the structures that have fostered various forms of silencing.¹⁸ As Kuokkanen writes:

Sitting down to do homework thus compels us to examine that reality. Who is at home here? Who was here before “my” home? Are there others who are at home here? What and where are our academic homes? What are their historical circumstances, and what is and has been the institution’s role in participating in them? The responsibility of academics cannot be limited to neutral descriptions of who we are … it must also link itself to the concrete, physical locations of our enunciation. Above all the academy must recognize its colonial history and acknowledge that its structures perpetuate the practices and discourses of exclusion and foreclosure… Positions that assume impartiality perpetuate the status quo.¹⁹

Similarly, Mary Louise Pratt asserts that “intellectuals are called upon to define, or redefine, their relation to the structures of knowledge and power that they produce, and that produce them.”²⁰

This idea of “homework” has been my impetus in studying first my own personal family history and its connection to the colonization and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, through my book, Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America, and now the historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto, which is the city where I live and thus my own place-world. I have also recognized that it is necessary to do this “homework” because the University of Toronto, where I have been trained and conducted my research, sits within the very colonial space which is the subject of my research and was in fact a creation of it. As Louis Althusser maintained, the university is one
of the main sites for reproducing hegemony; as an institution, the University of Toronto, like other Canadian universities, is only beginning the self-reflective process that is a necessary aspect of North American decolonization.21

At the same time, I do not claim to be outside the academy or to only value or draw on Indigenous epistemes. I could not undertake this dissertation without the grounding of my own heritage and the education I have received. I value immensely the opportunity I have had to draw on the University of Toronto’s formidable resources, both human and intellectual, and I value the training in historical methods that I have received and the conceptual apparatus – including postcolonial theory -- that the academy has offered me. I have benefited enormously from the critical feedback of my committee members, past and present, and particularly that of my supervisor, Cecilia Morgan. Furthermore, over the last several years, much of my contact with Indigenous people and opportunity to learn from Indigenous teachers and scholars has been through the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives, the Aboriginal Studies Program, and First Nations House at the University of Toronto.

When I first began work on my dissertation I consulted Anishinaabe elder Lillian McGregor, then elder in residence at the University of Toronto’s First Nations House, about the eagle feather that I had been given. She told me very firmly that I should not hide it away, that I should smudge and feast it, and that I should bring it out in ceremony. As she and others have told me, the knowledge that comes through the feather can contribute to pimaatisiiwin,22 living well, the continual regeneration of life, which is the goal of research, including historical research, according to elders and many Indigenous scholars.23 Bringing out the feather has not been easy, however. It is often painful for Indigenous people when non-Indigenous people are given eagle feathers, as it raises fears that their spirituality will once again be disrespected or exploited.24 Until now, I have never brought out or mentioned
my feathers in my own department of history or in relation to my own practice as a historian.25

I have come to recognize, however, that without the active presence in my work of what Indigenous people call the spirit world, something crucial is missing. My connection to Indigenous and especially Anishinaabek epistemes – to the understandings of relational causality, spirit, and the responsibilities these entail -- is one of the organizing principles of this work. The dream and eagle feathers I have received have prepared me to do this research and have brought me Indigenous teachings which form the basis of much of the theory I deploy in this dissertation, though my understanding of these teachings is partial, filtered through a western sensibility. In representing these epistemes, I do not assert that they are “traditional,” or “pure;” rather they reflect the contemporary teachings of Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and other Indigenous people or scholars I have been taught by, and as such constitute an appropriate preparation for thinking about the present multicultural Indigeneity of Toronto and that community’s engagement with local historical memory, which is one aspect of my dissertation research.

In my analysis of the changing historical memory of both settler-immigrant and Aboriginal Torontonians with regard to the Indigenous and colonial past of the city, I therefore consciously employ and draw upon the logics of contemporary Indigenous thought and that of contemporary western scholarship – which are not rigidly bounded, unchanging, internally homogenous, or necessarily opposed or incommensurate entities. These worldviews have influenced each other to varying degrees, are connected to each other through relations of power, and can exist in creative, as well as destructive, tension. Instead of conceiving of them as being in opposition, Kuokkanen argues for the need for a continual process of reciprocation, recognition, and negotiation between them, a process without
closure. This reciprocation, she says, is part of decolonization. Ongoing epistemic engagement leads to conceptual transformation and a sharing of power.

Thus, at various points in the midst of my largely western-based historical analysis, eagle medicine appears and reappears to remind the reader of the reality of alternate epistemes. As the reader shall see, the eagle, eagle feathers, and the spirit world are part of the story of the historical relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Toronto and how that history has been remembered, especially in relation to the people who figure centrally in my research -- the Mississaugas of the Credit River, who were (and still are, in their new location) Eagle people, being predominately of the eagle clan. The appearance and reappearance of eagles and eagle feathers in my dissertation signifies not simply a literary “symbolism” but “medicine” in the Anishinaabek sense, something that can actively work in the mind of the reader or listener to promote positive change. The eagle transforms and persists through various iterations in this colonial story. It reminds the reader of what western historical narratives often leave out: vision, the spirit world, nature, and the relations between human and non-human worlds, including the transformations and communications that are possible between these worlds and that create the web of relationships that link past, present, and future. The eagle in my narrative manifests the relational and metaphorical rather than genealogical model of causality that many Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee people insist upon in preference or in addition to conventional historical explanations that focus on chronological cause and effect.

It is not necessary to “believe” in the spirit world to appreciate its explanatory power in an alternate episteme. Eagle medicine in my dissertation stands in for the larger body of oral tradition and Indigenous knowledge that surrounds and suffuses my topic, and to which I have only limited access. It reminds the reader of the importance of counter-stories as both acts of resistance to colonialism and the resurgence of Indigenous ways of knowing or being.
However, I do not consider my references to the eagle to be “counter” to the historical narrative I am writing in the sense of oppositional; rather, such references act as a cross-story, something that comes from a different direction, moves to a different logic, intersects and interacts with the narrative, disrupting the taken-for-granted hegemony of more conventional history writing. It is also a reminder that history is not just “what happened;” it is always also the story of the historian’s relation to the material, and I use the eagle as a way to make that relationship explicit. I thus begin this dissertation with the story of the eagle and jumping mouse as told to me by Sto:lo writer Lee Maracle.

A mouse had long lived in terror of the eagle, who was always trying to catch and eat him. The eagle could see great distances but not great detail at close range, and that was what had allowed the mouse to survive thus far though the odds were against him. To avoid being eaten, the mouse lived close to or under the ground; he was forced to dig holes and live mostly in tunnels, so that his knowledge of the outer world was greatly limited -- but the close-up world he knew he knew intimately. Still he yearned to see more of the world, and that was why he jumped as high as he could, but he could only get so far off the ground and then always fell back to earth.

One day the mouse was cornered by the eagle. He knew that he was about to die and agreed to sacrifice his life and be eaten if the eagle would only take him high, high up so that he could see the world from that broader perspective before his life ended. The eagle assented to the mouse’s last request. But when the eagle flew up with the mouse in its talons, the mouse was transformed into a second eagle, and became the mate of the first eagle. Their offspring – present day eagles – thus know both eagle and mouse medicine. They can see even small details from a great distance. Although they soar through the air, they still know and are connected to the ground.
Figure 1: Eagle Feather from the Naming Ceremony of Kahkewaquonaby ("Sacred Feathers")


---

1 Lenore Keeshig Tobias, “Stop Stealing Native Stories,” *Globe and Mail*, 26 January 1990, Section A.
3 Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, 7.
4 I use these current ethnonyms to indicate the cultures of the historic peoples who were indigenous to the Great Lakes region, although their identities at the time of contact may have privileged clan over “tribal” or national identifications. See Heidi Bohaker, “Nindoodemag: The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the
Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations of Native Studies at Trent University,” in below” as “trying to learn  outside of the traditional instruments of learning,” without hegemonic assumptions

of salvage, progress or containment. Kuokkanen, terms, listening to and participating with those traditionally “othered” as constructors of meanings of their ow n

progress, detachment, and the mechanistic worldview as ‘real’ and ‘legitimate,’ ” elevating Eurocentric conceptual categories and values above others, particularly those that do not separate spirit and material worlds. Kuokkanen, Reshaping the University, 86. For a critique of the English Canadian historical profession by an Indigenous historian, see Mary Jane Logan McCallum, “Indigenous Labor and Indigenous History,” American Indian Quarterly, 30, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 523-544.

8 According to anthropologist Ronald Niezen, in the Origins of Indigenism, the word as currently used in international circles is a twentieth century coinage, drawing on European conceptions of identity and nationhood. Yet the concept, if not the word itself, has a much longer genealogy in eastern North America, and is not solely European in origin. Indigenous people today often acknowledge George Manuel, a Secwepemc leader and founder of the National Indian Brotherhood (the forerunner of the Assembly of First Nations) and first president of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, as the articulator of the concept of Indigeneity in his description of the situation of colonized peoples within settler nation states as constituting a “Fourth World.” As a category of analysis it was evident in the Report of the British Select Committee on Aborigines in 1837 which discussed the conditions of the Maori, Australian Aborigines, and colonized peoples of South Africa, as well as those of British North America. Looking farther back, a conception of diverse indigenous North Americans nations or peoples uniting against dispossession and colonization and claiming a common identity because of this, while at the same time not erasing their more localized clan or national identities, can be seen in the many eighteenth century attempts by Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee leaders to unite to influence or resist the politics of the imperial powers, and in the more broadly based coalitions of nations marshaled by Pontiac in 1763 and Tecumseh in 1812 to fight colonial domination. Europeans, of course, contributed to the development of this Indigenous identity through their homogenizing classification of all Indigenous peoples of the Americas as “Indian.” In eastern North America, however, contemporary Indigenous identity can also be seen as an outcome of a far older impulse to seek wider coalitions beyond the clan or nation, an impulse dating back to the Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Neutral Confederacies and the Iroquoian Peacemaker’s vision of the white roots of the Great Tree of Peace spreading out to encompass all nations on Turtle Island. Europeans, at times, adapted to and were at least initially included in this conception of alliance in the broad regional treaties agreed to in Montreal in 1701 and Niagara in 1764, although they were also still recognized as newcomers, and hence not indigenous to North America.

7 I use the term Indigenous to refer to the original peoples of North America even in the past, when they themselves did not use that term, as a mark of respect for how many peoples today wish to self-identify and the links they articulate between their past and present as peoples. I also use Aboriginal or First Nations to refer to Indigenous peoples in Canada. In addressing the question of who is indigenous to the more circumscribed Toronto or Great Lakes region, I refer to people by ethnic or clan names that they used themselves (or now use) wherever possible. “Indian,” by contrast, is a colonial term found in historical and legal documents; it remains the descriptor for “colonial subject” under the Indian Act, which unilaterally defines official “Indian” status.


14 Kuokkanen, Reshaping the University, xiv, 149; Spivak, Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 425.

15 See also W.J. McGee, “Ojibwa Feather Symbolism,” American Anthropologist 11, no. 6 (1898), 177-80.

16 Cited in Kuokkanen, Reshaping the University, 114.

17 Ibid., 156, 85, 117-18, 105.

18 See Spivak, The Post-Colonial Critic, 121; Kuokkanen, Reshaping the University, 116-18.

19 Kuokkanen, Reshaping the University, 117-18.

20 Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), xi.

21 Louis Althusser, “On the Reproduction of the Conditions of Production,” Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays (London: NLV, 1971), cited in Kuokkanen, Reshaping the University, 156. For example, in November 2009, a public forum was held at the University of Toronto to discuss History graduate student Monica Dyer’s research exploring the university’s involvement in the residential school system.

22 According to Alex McKay, senior lecturer in the Aboriginal Studies Program at the University of Toronto and my instructor in Anishinaabemowin, pim is what is physical, while aatis is from the noun mitis, or navel, and symbolizes generations. Tis signifies the process of change. Thus life changes constantly and is always ahead of us. Alex McKay, personal communication, January 29, 2008.


24 This is because Indigenous spirituality was suppressed and attacked for so long by the ancestors of these very same people and because, as Stolo writer and traditional teacher Lee Maracle told me, non-Indigenous people who support Indigenous people’s struggles are more quickly honoured with eagle feathers than Indigenous people who have done far more, and that hurts. But she also insisted on the importance of bringing out my feather, painful as that may be to some. Lee Maracle, personal communication, Oct. 15, 2009.

25 Such is the power of the “discipline” that discussion of such influence is usually taboo, and is treated as necessarily extraneous or, worse, as a hindrance to good (often defined as objective) critical scholarship.

26 Lee Maracle, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2009. There are many variants of this story.
Chapter One

Introduction

Settler Colonialism, Indigeneity, and Historical Memory in Toronto

This dissertation explores the relationship and encounter between settler colonialism, the historical experience of the Indigenous people of the Toronto area, and local settler-immigrant and Indigenous historical memory, from the arrival of the British in 1760, through the founding of the town of York in 1793 to the present. The Mississauga-Anishinaabek (henceforth Mississaugas), who lived on the Credit River until 1847, are the primary Indigenous group considered in this study, as they negotiated the Toronto Purchase, lived in closest proximity to the fledgling town of York and the later city of Toronto, and bore the brunt of the colonial encounter in this area. The Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Iroquois) who moved to Upper Canada (the Grand River Territory near Brantford and Tyindenaga Territory near Belleville) in 1784 are a secondary focus because of their interactions with the residents of York/Toronto and the Mississaugas of the Credit and their involvement in local memory practices. A full consideration of the role of the Wendats (Hurons), who were the longest residents in the region but had left the area before the founding of York/Toronto and who have since re-emerged as a stakeholder in discussions of Toronto history and archaeology, is beyond the scope of the present project, although I hope to address their representation in Toronto memory practices, as well as their own representations of their history in the Toronto area, in subsequent research.

This dissertation thus makes a contribution towards the as yet unwritten history of Indigenous peoples in the Toronto region. A full version of this history would include the
many different peoples who have lived in the Toronto area “from time immemorial,” which in western time is at the very least eleven thousand years.

**Settler Colonialism**

Colonialism can be described as a practice of domination of one people over another; it involves the establishing of colonies in one people’s territory by people from another. The word colony comes from the Latin word *colonus*, meaning farmer; thus the word itself signifies colonialism’s central preoccupation with land and the use of land. While various forms of colonialism exist, some of which are primarily focused on resource extraction in the colony for the benefit of the metropole, settler colonialism involves the transfer of large numbers of permanent settlers from the metropole to the colony, where they claim the land and alter the territory’s social structure, government, and economy, while maintaining their political allegiance to their homeland, which claims sovereignty over the new territory.¹ Carole Pateman reminds us of the paradox at the heart of this process: “Colonialism in general subordinates, exploits, kills, rapes, and makes maximum use of the colonized and their resources and lands”; at the same time, in settler colonies, “it aims to create a civil society.”² Settler colonies, by definition, involve the displacement, eradication, or absorption of pre-existing Indigenous populations by the new regime, and many scholars have argued that they are inherently genocidal.³ Imperialism, from the Latin *imperium*, to command, is a related concept that focuses on one nation exercising power over another for its own benefit through various direct or indirect mechanisms of control, though it need not imply the transfer of population; imperialism has also been a process that is critical to understanding Toronto’s history.
A key aspect of settler colonialism is suggested by the word “settler” itself, a term that colonizing populations have typically used to define themselves that effaces and misrepresents their role as invaders. While Indigenous peoples were displaced physically, this displacement has also been cultural and symbolic. As Anna Johnston and Allan Lawson argue, “the occupation of land formerly owned by others always translates into the cultural politics of representation.”

Postcolonial theory offers a crucial set of observations that allow for the critical deconstruction of colonial historical representations. Because settlers are typically seen as second-class “colonials” by citizens of the metropole and generally do not enjoy the full political rights enjoyed in the ‘home’ country, the settler occupies a position midway between the metropole and the colonized Indigene, and is both colonized and colonizing. The settler is thus caught between two First Worlds, two origins of authority and authenticity, that of the metropole and of the Indigenous. To each, the settler is secondary or supplementary, and so the settler acts as a go-between, mediating between the two worlds, seeking authenticity and legitimacy from each. For these reasons, settler subjectivity is often described as “Janus-faced” -- looking in two directions as the settler seeks to construct a new nation.

To focus only on settler representations of Toronto’s history, however, risks perpetuating the effacement of Indigenous epistemes that is such a marked characteristic of settler colonialism, and to assign more power to colonialism than it has often wielded in practice. Indigenous representations have talked back to colonialism since European colonizers arrived in North America and over time have held onto and reclaimed Native space, even as Indigenous representations and identities were also changed through colonialism. In this dissertation I look at the ongoing representation and memory of the
Mississaugas in particular as they “continued to imagine themselves into being even as they grappled with forces that threatened to annihilate them.”

Urban Colonialism

Historian Coll Thrush notes in his groundbreaking study of the Indigenous history of Seattle, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*, that, in published urban histories across North America, “Indians” usually appear only in the first chapter and then “exit stage left after treaty or battle.” Published books on Toronto history largely follow this pattern, with a few interesting and generally recent exceptions. According to Thrush, “Indian” and “urban” have usually been seen as antonyms, at opposite ends of a national past and imagined future. Cities, he says, are seen as the “ultimate avatars of progress,” representing “the pinnacle of technology, commerce, and cultural sophistication;” at the same time cities obliterate the Indigenous landscape of the past, which has certainly been the case in Toronto. Although many Indigenous peoples across the Americas lived in cities before Europeans arrived, connections between urban and Indigenous histories are only beginning to be made.

As Jordan Stanger-Ross, Coll Thrush, Penelope Edmonds, and others have recently documented, urban or municipal colonialism has been a key element of the settler colonial project; indeed, the settler colonial city has often been viewed by colonizers and colonized alike as the “consummation of empire.” Because cities have been hubs of broader networks of power, engines driving regional economies, and places where settler populations and resources were concentrated, cities have been important sites where colonial relations were enacted. They have played a major role in the development and diffusion of national, colonial, and imperial ideas and practices. In fact, as Stanger-Ross and Edmonds have
argued, the social, political, and cultural processes of urban development have themselves constituted a specific modality of colonialism.\textsuperscript{14} Recent studies of colonial processes in Seattle, Edmonton, Victoria, Vancouver, and Melbourne, Australia, have demonstrated that different urban settings produced very different colonial landscapes and spatial politics, which in some instances were distinct from larger regional or national dynamics.\textsuperscript{15} As Edmonds notes, “These varying colonial economic and discursive formations came to frame particular Indigenous subjectivities and their representations.”\textsuperscript{16} All of these colonial processes have been visible in the development of the City of Toronto, where, as Jordan Stanger-Ross has noted of municipal colonialism generally, “[t]he impossible contradiction between urban and Indian was a prolonged political project.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Toronto as a category of analysis}

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is Canada’s most influential urban area, its economic powerhouse, a huge population centre of five million people, and a cultural engine for much of the rest of the country. Historically, it was the capital of Upper Canada from 1796 to 1841 and of Canada West from 1849 to 1851 and from 1855 to 1859. Since 1867 it has been the capital of Canada’s largest and most populous province. The city has played a major role in the development of the country as a whole, both economically and ideologically. It has been the source of much Canadian imperialist rhetoric and practice, as well as the centre of Protestant English-Canadian culture (particularly Orangeism) and the Toryism that for much of Canada’s history has been a significant Canadian cultural paradigm. Toronto and Canada have often had a synecdochal relationship, where Toronto has “stood in” for Canada as a whole -- in the minds of Torontonians at least. And as we shall see
in this study, Ontario and Canadian history have often been conflated and appropriated by Torontonians as their own true history, while their own local history has been effaced.

As a colonial space, the Toronto region has two key aspects. The first is its internal dynamic as a sub-national community that established a new set of social and spatial arrangements over a particular geographic place and historic space, on particular Indigenous lands adjacent to Lake Ontario. Local historical writing and other forms of historical enactment by settlers helped to create the “domestic subject” of empire, in Gayatri Spivak’s words, as well as the colonized subject in the form of displaced local First Nations peoples.

The second aspect of Toronto as a colonial space is its relationship with external polities: with England, its original metropole; with the United States as an ideological colonial other; and with its hinterland of northern and western Ontario and the historic “Northwest,” including the Indigenous peoples of these areas. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Toronto developed from a colonial outpost to a Canadian metropole. As is the case with European metropoles of colonial empires, much of its history actually occurred beyond the city limits; its connection to these other historical processes and events has often gone unrecognized in representations of the city’s past. This is particularly true of its history with Indigenous peoples in the rest of Canada.

Further, as Tony Hall noted in The American Empire and the Fourth World, the processes of globalization that have made Toronto one of the most multicultural cities in the world are related to the forces that led to its establishment as an outpost of British North America in the first place. Toronto’s history thus has local, provincial, Canadian, North American, and international contextual frames, and the effect of larger national, transnational and global processes on both local Toronto history and local historical memory is an important aspect of this study.
It is important to recognize, however, that “Toronto” is a slippery or leaky category, not a discrete or fixed entity. Toronto has continually changed and grown as it absorbed numerous formerly discrete communities and different groups of migrants, as different political jurisdictions and bureaucratic regimes shaped and reshaped its boundaries and identity, which is why frequent reference is made to the Toronto area or region rather than the more narrowly demarcated city proper. Furthermore, Torontonians have acted not just as self-conscious members of a municipal collectivity, but also as members of national and provincial political parties, as participants in broader social movements, and as Canadian citizens. Toronto has thus been a fluid, heterogeneous, and hybrid node of activity always interconnected with, but with changing relations to, local Indigenous peoples, who themselves were not fixed groups living in firmly bounded territories in isolation from each other. Thus one cannot assume a homogeneity of Toronto opinion, interest, or intention now or in the past.

Finally, Toronto is an interesting place to look at historical memory because its colonial and Indigenous past may seem irrelevant to its multicultural, indeed postmodern, present. Given that 50 percent of the population was born outside of Canada, Toronto is a city where family, local, and national histories diverge significantly, complicating how Torontonians relate to a past with which most residents have little genealogical or even cultural connection. Literary critic Germaine Warkentin, in “Mapping Wonderland: The city of Toronto as seen through its writers’ eyes,” comments “For a large part of its history, Toronto has been in a state of near amnesia” and a recent study commissioned by the City of Toronto Heritage Division concludes much the same thing. The city currently defines itself largely in terms of its present ethnic diversity rather than its history, in contrast to some other North American cities of comparable size, such as Boston and Montreal. Toronto is
also anomalous in that there is currently no museum or large-scale institution devoted to the whole span of the city’s history or that situates the history of Toronto in a larger context.  

Today, Toronto’s colonial past and the people affected by it often appear to be completely absent, as if colonialism never happened—or perhaps as if it had been completely accomplished. Yet, as this dissertation will document, colonialism has shaped both the city’s history and public memory of the region’s past.

**Toronto as a “Contact Zone”**

From earliest times, Toronto’s topography has shaped the nature of many of the interactions among the peoples who lived in or traveled through the area, as well as how these interactions would be remembered. A fertile plain along the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario (the “beautiful lake” in several Iroquoian languages) Toronto is situated just east of the western “head of the lake” and directly across the lake from the Niagara river, the passageway to Lake Erie. For Indigenous peoples, the most striking shoreline feature in the area was the peninsula (later island) which provided a sheltered harbour and hospitable stopping place for those travelling by canoe along the hundreds of miles of coastline of the north shore of Lake Ontario. From time immemorial, the huge lake itself has been a vital means of transportation from the St. Lawrence to the interior of the continent and also a natural border separating the territories to the north and south. The Credit, Rouge, Don, and Humber rivers attracted early peoples to the area because of their rich salmon fisheries, and the Rouge and Humber in particular provided important routes inland, as the rivers afforded portage routes to the Holland river and thence to Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay, eliminating hundreds of miles in the journey from Lake Ontario to the upper Great Lakes.
The great plain upon which Toronto was built was covered in thick hardwood forests which were home to plentiful deer and other wild game; the fertile soil would also prove to be eminently suitable for corn agriculture and thus the development of Iroquoian societies. The Niagara Escarpment just to the west of Toronto often served as a natural marker between different Aboriginal polities.26

From early times the Toronto area appears to have been an area where various peoples met, interacted, traded, and cohabited, giving substance to the popular idea that the word Toronto means “meeting place” – an etymology that has been questioned, but is certainly evocative of much of the region’s history.27 The complicated historical relationship between the Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas over the past four hundred years, which alternated between the building and renewal of trading and military alliances on the one hand and competition for control of the north shore of Lake Ontario on the other, exemplifies this dynamic. To them, at least since the seventeenth century, the Toronto area has been a borderland, a sometimes contested and sometimes shared territory of importance because of its salmon fisheries and its strategic access to Georgian Bay. Central to this dance of alliance and mutual suspicion has been the question of how each group viewed and remembered their centuries-old relationship, which included memories of violent warfare with each other but also long periods of trade and peaceful coexistence, and which was also inflected in the seventeenth century in particular by the relationship of each party with the Wendats and the European powers. While colonial documents provide some knowledge of Indigenous interaction, Indigenous oral tradition and wampum are crucial sources in reconstructing these historic relationships.

Richard White’s analysis of the “middle ground,” of intercultural relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth century pays d’en haut may also offer insight into somewhat
analogous intercultural dynamics in the Toronto area, though scholars have warned against overgeneralized or uncritical use of White’s term. As White defined the concept, a middle ground exists where no one group holds political sway, and two or more peoples co-create new or renew cultural forms through their interactions and even through creative miscommunication. Some elements of this process can be seen in the seventeenth and eighteenth century interactions between the Mississaugas and the French on the Humber river and during the short period of English-Mississauga trading relations in the region before the founding of York in 1793 and in the very early years of the settlement.

In the period after the arrival of substantial numbers of United Empire Loyalists in what is now southern Ontario in the wake of the American Revolution, power relations were transformed. The Toronto area can then best be understood as a “contact zone” in the sense that Mary Louise Pratt defined it, a social space where disparate cultures met, where “subjects [were and] are constituted in and by each other” through their “co-presence, interaction, and interlocking understanding and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.” It is the development of historical memory under these conditions of “radically asymmetrical relations of power” that is the focus of this dissertation.

A shared story gives groups “a common experience, creates a group ethos, and weaves a fabric of continuity, holding community together.” Although Indigenous and settler peoples have been in contact in the Toronto area for more than three hundred years, they share very few stories about their history. As Dwayne Trevor Donald comments in “Edmonton Pentimento: Re-Reading History in the Case of the Papaschase Cree,” the tendency to separate the stories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is one symptom of the legacies of colonialism and paternalism, for
Aboriginal and Euro-Canadians are intimately connected through the stories they [could] tell of living together in this place. ...It is in these relationships between people, and in the ways in which the stories people tell reveal these relationships, that a new form of Canadian citizenship [or some other form of equitable, non-colonizing relationship] can be imagined.  

**Writing Toronto Histories**

As Sean Hawkins says in *Writing and Colonialism in Northern Ghana*, “writing made colonialism possible.” Similarly, James Axtell has written, “The conquest of America was in part a victory of paper and print over memory and voice.” On the one hand, as Jacques Le Goff says, echoing Michel Foucault, the document expresses society’s power over memory and over the future; on the other hand, as Indigenous people quickly discovered, it also consolidates the power of the literate over those who are deemed non-literate, and of alpha-numeric writing systems over Indigenous mnemonic forms such as wampum and birch bark scrolls. As we shall see, the writings of settler historians of Toronto invented versions of the Indigenous past that helped to maintain the colonial power structure and turn the Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee into colonial subjects, while using the Wendats as exemplars of extinction.

Throughout the post-contact period, however, there have also been continuing efforts by some Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas to engage with and contest both local and national settler historical discourses, through petitions, speeches, newspapers, Indigenous-authored books, and involvement with local historical societies and commemorative activities. Many of these communicative acts were examples of what Pratt calls auto-ethnographies, texts that involve “partly collaborating with and appropriating the idiom of the conqueror” in an act of “transculturation,” merging these or infiltrating these with Indigenous modes of expression. “Often such texts constitute the group’s point of entry into the metropolitan lettered
Like settler narratives, such auto-ethnographies were also bidirectional or multidirectional; they were addressed to both the settler culture and the small number of literate Indigenous people in Canada, but were read differently by different audiences. Elizabeth Furniss suggests that “We need to also consider factors inhibiting their freedom to choose different ways of speaking about history” and also “examine public silences and their conditions.” (In this regard, it is also important to consider Wendat interventions and silencing with regard to Toronto’s historical narratives.)

**Historical Memory, Origin Stories, Space, and Place**

Historical memory relates to both place and time, but these are configured differently in different cultures. Australian cultural theorist Stephen Muecke suggests that human beings live in a place more than in a time, that places are ontologically singular, and that ritual connects people to place and makes places meaningful. Speaking of Aboriginal Australians, he describes their philosophy as “all about keeping things alive in their place,” a characterization equally appropriate to Anishinaabek epistemes in the Great Lakes region. Historically, oral tradition has provided the instructions for carrying out these responsibilities. Similarly, Vine Deloria Jr. characterized creation stories as more concerned with geography and spatiality, “what happened here,” than with chronological origins and temporality, “what happened then,” and were therefore narrative maps of “an ecosystem present in a definable place.” Anishinaabek stories of the Great Hare/Nanabush and tribal migration and Iroquoian stories of Skywoman and the coming of the Great Law thus conveyed knowledge of how people understood how they came to be in the region, how they were to live on that land, their historic relations with other peoples, and the meaning of hereditary or place names. Both Iroquoian and Algonquian traditions describe the origin of
their people in North America, and while the surviving origin stories do not seem to be focused on features of the local Toronto area specifically, both situate the people in the broader Great Lakes region.  

Origin stories are a form of cultural theory representing a society’s deepest truths and explaining the relation between past, present and future. In the Anishinaabek origin story (actually a recreation story) recorded by late seventeenth century French colonial official Nicolas Perrot, the Earth was flooded and a few surviving land animals floated upon a raft (or climbed a tree in other versions). The Great Hare (Michabous) asked various animals to dive to the bottom to bring up earth, so that he could create enough land to support all the animals. After various animals tried and failed, the Muskrat succeeded in bringing up one grain of sand in its paws, from which Michabous created the island of Michilimackinac. From there the First Animals moved out in various directions, each finding and transforming their own territory. As Perrot recounted:

After the creation of the earth, all the other animals withdrew into the places which each kind found most suitable for obtaining therein their pasture or their prey. When the first ones died, the Great Hare caused the birth of men from their corpses, as also from those of the fishes that were found along the shores of the rivers which he had formed in creating the land. Accordingly, some of the savages derive their origins from a bear, others from a moose, and others similarly from various kinds of animals [including eagles].

Thus, as Anishinaabek historical scholar Darlene Johnston comments,

For the Anishnaabeg, the Great Lakes region is more than geography. It is a spiritual landscape formed by and embedded with the regenerative potential of the First Ones who gave it form. …A member of the Beaver tribe would have ancestors in their patriline, from father, to grandfather, to great-grandfather, going back to the creation of the first Beaver men from the remains of the Great Beaver.

Many landmarks in the Great Lakes region are explained through details in traditional stories, such as the places of burial of these animal progenitors, which were and still are sacred places.
According to Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks, movement was also constitutive of Algonquian place-making, with territory conceived of as lines or pathways of movement more than as discrete areas marked off by rigid political boundaries. In pre-contact times and into the nineteenth century, the Anishinaabek congregated in summer villages, usually at the mouths of rivers, then moved seasonally to fishing and gathering sites in spring and fall, and dispersed into smaller hunting parties of closely related family groups during the winter. Thus the passage of time was connected to a seasonal round of movement over a considerable area.

The role of movement or travel in Anishinaabek conceptions of time and space is also evident in the foundational story of the Great Migration of the Anishinaabek from the east, which relates that many centuries ago the Anishinaabek lived on the shores of the "Great Salt Water" (presumably the Atlantic Ocean), but were instructed by seven prophets to follow a sacred miigis shell toward the west. Their migration apparently took hundreds of years, as they stopped at seven points along the way, mostly in the Great Lakes region, and left some people behind at each stop.

In this world of movement, kinship and custodianship created and maintained the relationship between places; the stability and security created through this network of relationship was represented by the symbol of the common pot, the food which people shared. Patrilineal dodems (clans) were “the glue that held the Anishnaabeg Great Lakes world together” both geographically and spiritually. Indeed, until the nineteenth century, identities were likely most firmly rooted in clan rather than “tribe” or nation. Wherever one travelled from one village to another, one was always welcomed by members of one’s clan; the males of most villages belonged to a single dodem, while they married women of other dodems. Every river had a headman and related male relatives were in charge of that
area.\textsuperscript{51} Because a person had more than one soul, and one of these was inherited from their clan progenitor, each clan member carried the First Animal’s shared soul with them. Thus, all Eagle people carried the First Eagle’s soul.

Anishinaabek burial practices reaffirmed this connection between the First Ones, the animal founders of the clans, and their descendants.\textsuperscript{52} Relatives were to be buried in the proper place, the country of one’s birth, so that the soul left in the bones could be recycled through reincarnation to sustain the nation. As children were understood to be born from ancestor spirits emerging from the bones where an ancestor was buried, and the dead were returned to the ground, where the living had responsibilities for their wellbeing, the land was the enduring location of their spirit.\textsuperscript{53} Because the place endures and is always already there, “place becomes the horizon of temporality against which human finitude finds a rhythm.”\textsuperscript{54} The land itself is mnemonic, a speaking, historical subject: “it has its own set of memories, and when the old people go out on the land it nudges or reminds them, and their memories are rekindled.”\textsuperscript{55}

With this understanding of “life in place,” Anishinaabek time over the last few centuries was not experienced primarily as a linear process opening out into an unknown future (though there are linear Anishinaabek conceptions of time as well, such as the story of the Great Migration with its many stopping places, or the seven historical ages or “fires” in the Seven Fires prophecy), but time was perhaps experienced most profoundly as “intensifying the present moment” through recurrent and concentric “circles of forces and meanings,”\textsuperscript{56} where past, present, and future infused each other in an experience of immanence in place. This is exemplified in the Anishinaabemowin word \textit{pitaapan}, meaning “dawn,” “morning,” or “light comes.” \textit{Pi} is a signifier of future tense, and suggests the future always “coming at you.”\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Pan} is a suffix that signifies past tense, and especially
forefathers or those who are deceased. *Taa* is the present. The individual acts as a fulcrum, holding it all together to create a well-balanced understanding of oneself.\(^{58}\) There is also communication between different times: through the ceremony of *Kohsaapacikan*, the shaking tent, one can talk with the soul or essence of persons who have passed on or gain knowledge of past or future events.\(^{59}\)

Furthermore, because animal and other spirit beings could take human form, history for the Anishinaabek has not been the history of human sociality only, but of transformative relations between all beings. The human world was not the most important world; the manitou world was the real world, and the dream was a person’s most meaningful experience, since it enabled communication with spirit.\(^{60}\) This spiritually infused, transformational, and movement-defined geography was the “place” that the Mississaug-Anishinaabek inhabited when the French traded with them on the north shore of Lake Ontario in the early eighteenth century and when the British arrived in the Toronto area in 1760.\(^{61}\)

In a somewhat similar fashion, historical memory was (and is) inscribed on the Haudenosaunee landscape through the oral traditions concerning Skywoman and the Twins\(^{62}\) (which includes an Earth Diver story with many similarities to that of the Anishinaabek) as well as the coming of the Peacemaker and founding of the Haudenosaunee confederacy.\(^{63}\)

These Indigenous accounts of their genesis and “original instructions” created deep, necessary, and enduring connections between people and land, past and present. As Mohawk scholar Deborah Doxtator noted: “There is little if any physical distance between the two worlds of what is and what was. They are different and distinct, yet rather than being separated by a gulf, they are in essence part of the same incorporated universe.”\(^{64}\)
In the developing city of the newcomers, however, connections between land, place, people, and history would be far more contingent, and often transient. Although a land-based story, the Christian origin story had been adopted from a different culture with a sacred geography in the Middle East. Though Christianity had been somewhat indigenized in Europe through the cults of saints and their relics, when the newcomers arrived in North America, the places of the New World were for them a spiritual and historical terra nullius. Rather than North American land as sacred geography, newcomers to the Toronto area shared a conception of the land as part of a political territory in the form of the colonial possession of a nation-state. In their conception, there was an opposition between the natural and the civil; land was either urban or agricultural and productive, or it was wild, the latter considered therefore unproductive or “waste,” as well as unhistorical. Because North American land was believed to be in a state of nature (“In the beginning, all the world was America” in John Locke’s famous phrase), it was believed to exist in time as the first historical stage of civilization, and like its Indigenous inhabitants, was waiting to be transformed and developed. British occupation of the Toronto area would entail spatial technologies and “rituals of occupation” that would remake the land in Europe’s image and consecrate and later commemorate the Toronto area as a British territory and “Canadian” place.

Tony Swain, speaking of Australian history, posits an opposition of Western Time and Aboriginal Place, and describes the process of Australian colonization as the dislocation of Aboriginal peoples from place and the reorientation of their being in time. While the process in any specific region would be far more complex than this schemata, given multiple orientations to time and place in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, this general movement is observable in the Toronto area. For the Mississaugas, the arrival of the
Europeans would also create new temporalities, a new sense of before and after, either through a nativist periodization of a relatively peaceful and harmonious pre-contact life, followed by a period of rupture, warfare, social disintegration, and self-alienation caused by the European invaders, and a possible return to pre-contact health and prosperity through rejection of the invaders and their cultural influences, or, for those Mississaugas who embraced Christianity, a pagan past of ignorance and sin and a hopeful Christian future of brotherhood and equality with white people and eventual spiritual salvation.

The British officials who claimed political control over the Toronto area in 1760 and who established the town of York (later the city of Toronto) in 1793 had different orientations to place, time and history than either the Mississaugas they encountered when they arrived on the north shore of Lake Ontario or the Haudenosaunee “Red Loyalists” who moved with their assistance to the neighbouring Brantford area in 1784. Although increasingly secularized over the nineteenth century, British society was still profoundly shaped by Christian concepts, values, and metaphors. Thus the biblical story of the creation of the world in seven days by a god named Jehovah; the “fall” of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden; the ten lost tribes of Israel; the victory over the Canaanites for the “promised land;” the life and death of Jesus; and the prophecies of Armageddon, the second coming of Christ, and the end of the world profoundly affected British perceptions of the historic importance of their activities in North America, their perceptions of the peoples they encountered there, and their experience and conceptualization of place. Although Christian Europeans experienced circular time in the annual liturgical round commemorating various events in the life of Christ, and in the seasonal activities of agriculturalists, time was more fundamentally experienced as linear, an irreversible sequence within a teleological frame, in that there was a beginning and end of time, with the
incarnation of Christ as the central point or dividing line in history. Christian ritual was largely commemorative rather than the direct experience of another sacred dimension of time. In its movement from memory to salvation through the achievement of eternal life at the end of the world, Christianity also denied or transcended temporal existence and history.

Furthermore, unlike Indigenous spirituality which was continually adjusted through dream and vision, and Indigenous mnemonic forms such as the metaphors in oral tradition or symbols used in wampums and birch bark scrolls, which required one to think in ways that suggested multiple meanings in parallel, most eighteenth and early nineteenth century Christians considered the Bible to be the fixed and literal word of God, valid for all time.

By the late eighteenth century, in addition to and in tension with the Christian frame for historical thinking, British settlers brought with them a powerful secular concept of history as a narrative of largely secular events, as well as a concept of national histories, while the development of capitalism created a new urban bourgeoisie with a decided orientation to the future rather than the entrenched historical privileges of the nobility. The European Enlightenment thus created a new temporality of European modernity and a scientific rationalism that aimed to put all “primitive” superstition “behind” it in a forward linear movement of progress, with human agency as the driving force. The increasingly rapid pace of technological change and geographic exploration and migration only heightened this orientation to the future. Urban life in particular became increasingly dissociated from the past and focused on the present or future.

As anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose notes, European settlers founded colonial societies on hopes for a better future. “Founded in disjunction (‘new’ worlds), settler cultures posit an endless overcoming in which the present is always about to be superceded.” Change was seen positively as history moving towards a future which would transcend the
past. The latter was not just what has already happened but also what individuals or societies wished to finish, leave behind or forget (a dynamic common to many immigrants), while one’s responsibilities were directed primarily toward the future rather than the present.

National identity could be envisioned as “an imaginary state of future achievement”.\(^77\) In Native societies, by contract, Doxtator noted, “History is an additive process… change…is not replacement, but incorporation and subsuming the structures of the past. Continuity without separating gaps is central to this view of history.”\(^78\)

Over the course of the nineteenth century, western conceptions of history as a formalized practice and organized discipline apart from literature solidified. The discipline developed its own methodology that shaped what historical questions could be asked, what constituted historical evidence, and in what form history should be written. History was increasingly defined as text-based, largely excluding the pasts and memory-practices of Indigenous peoples, who didn’t have their own historians.\(^79\) As Stephen Conn argues in *History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century*, “intellectual encounters with Native Americans made it possible for Euro-Americans to define history apart from myth, history apart from culture, and the realm of history distinct from the realm of the past.”\(^80\)

These developments may be contrasted with anthropologist Keith Basso’s description of indigenous history as he encountered it:

> It is pointedly local and unfailingly episodic. It is also extremely personal, consistently subjective, and therefore highly variable among those who work to produce it. For these and other reasons, it is history without authorities – all narrated place-worlds, provided they seem plausible, are considered equally valid.\(^81\)

The colonial interaction of Indigenous and settler peoples in the Toronto area resulted in contestation between these forms of historical consciousness as well as in new formations
of historical memory. If in Africa, “Europeans invented versions of the African past to suit the needs of colonial rule; at the same time Africans also invented traditions in order to benefit from the colonial order,” one can observe a similar process at work in Toronto.82

My Thesis

It is the thesis of this dissertation that the dispossession and dislocation of the Mississaugas from their place (the Toronto area) from 1787 to 1847, the settler erasure of their specific identity in favour of a generic Indian other, and the reorientation of their being in a monological European theory of historical development, were important elements underpinning Toronto’s self-presentation as the leading city of the developing nation and “peaceable kingdom” of Canada, an ideological process that reached its apogee in the period from the 1880s to the 1930s. As part of this process, settlers, historical writers, and government officials in the Toronto area minimized public awareness of the historic presence of the Mississaugas and other Indigenous predecessors through representations of the city’s past that drew on doctrines of terra nullius or changed the city’s foundational story from the establishment of York in 1793 to the incorporation of the City of Toronto in 1834. Indigenous assertions of alternate historical readings were present during this time period, but were rarely acknowledged or heard by city residents.

Subsequently, and increasingly over the twentieth century, a new process can be discerned: the dissolution of the colonial metanarrative of Toronto history into multiple stories, threads, or fragments (or the complete erasure of the past in a foreshortened present). These multiple stories reflect the co-existence of multiple temporalities and spatialities in a multicultural city of immigrants; they also reflect the challenges posed by the reassertion of Toronto as an Indigenous place with an Indigenous history by an Aboriginal minority.
population that increasingly creates its own historical representations. Contemporary Indigenous historical memory can be understood as a form of “re-memberment”\textsuperscript{83} – a piecing together of what has been rent asunder through various colonial processes, such as dispossession of land and attendance at residential schools.

In the twenty-first century the trajectories of these developments have intersected in complex ways. On the one hand, there is an ongoing historical amnesia on the part of the vast majority of Toronto residents. On the other hand, new historical discourses by some Indigenous and non-Indigenous Torontonians position the historically Indigenous as the glue that at least potentially binds the multicultural city together; in this telling, Toronto’s Indigenous history provides the contextual frame or substrate for Toronto’s current self-creation story, including its heterogeneity. However, the very different interests and perspectives of various groups of settler-immigrants, not to mention Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Mississauga, and other Indigenous residents of the city preclude consensus on a single historical narrative.

**Historiography**

In writing about the historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto, I am not moving into a crowded field of enquiry. Almost no scholarly work has been done on the Indigenous history of Toronto\textsuperscript{84} or on Indigenous history in Canadian urban spaces generally. A detailed history of Indigenous peoples in the Toronto region, including their interactions with settlers, has never been written, though *The Meeting Place*, a book published by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto in 1997\textsuperscript{85} was a groundbreaking beginning. Post 1793 Indigenous history in the Toronto area is very sparsely documented, making it difficult to gauge the extent of Indigenous residency in the city until the twentieth

Scholarly historical writing on the general history of the Toronto region has focused mostly on the post-1793 period, but usually with little or no reference to Indigenous people, although some aspects of Toronto’s contribution to nineteenth century Canadian imperialism are discussed in more general works on Canadian imperialism such as Carl Berger’s *The Sense of Power* and Doug Owram’s *Promise of Eden*.

A few scholars who have focused on the Mississaugas or Anishinaabek of southern Ontario more generally include some Indigenous history of the Toronto area in their work. Donald B. Smith’s groundbreaking 1975 PhD dissertation, “The Mississaugas, Peter Jones and the White Man: the Algonkians’ Adjustment to the Europeans on the North Shore of Lake Ontario to 1860,” his book *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians*, and his articles are essential reading for any student of the Mississaugas of the Credit River. There is also some material about Indigenous peoples in the Toronto area in Peter Schmalz’s *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario*, within the larger context of the history of the Anishinaabek of southern Ontario. In their understandable focus on Indigenous experience, these works do not probe settler attitudes in any depth, especially in relation to Toronto, or focus on questions of historical memory.

There is significant scholarship by Donald Smith, Leo Johnson, Ian Johnson, Robert Surtees, Tony Hall, and Alan Taylor on aspects of the problematic Mississauga land surrenders in the Toronto area, including the complex interactions between the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas, and colonial officials in Toronto in the time period between the Toronto Purchase of 1787 and its confirmation in 1805. However, these works consider these land cessions primarily during the time period in which they were negotiated, and in
terms of their implication for the Mississaugas, not the issue of how these surrenders were remembered by later generations of Torontonians.

Scholarly historical studies of urban Indigenous people and memory in other Canadian or North American cities are also relatively rare though the field is developing rapidly, and as urban Indigenous communities and historians or other academics collaborate on community histories, often involving oral history. Coll Thrush’s groundbreaking *Native Seattle* (2007) is roughly comparable in conception and scope to my own work, as a study of both the Indigenous history of a major city, including the ongoing Indigenous presence in a city where Indigenous peoples had supposedly vanished, and the way that history was recorded and remembered by both Indigenous and settler peoples. Yet Thrush is writing of a western American city, while Toronto is an eastern Canadian city. In Toronto, contact between Indigenous and settler peoples has occurred for a much longer time (since the 1600s as opposed to the mid 1800s), and Toronto settler discourses have had British, Canadian, North American, and often anti-American aspects.

The links between history, historical consciousness, and historical memory, and between historical memory and trauma are broad fields with contributions by scholars studying societies across the globe; in Canada, there is a growing body of work on Canadian and Quebecois historical consciousness by scholars such as Jocelyn Létourneau, Peter Seixas, and the “Canadians and Their Pasts” research project. Works most directly pertinent to this dissertation have focused on memory, representation, and British, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand or American settler colonialism, and on the nature of North American Indigenous historical consciousness, historical memory, Indigenous epistemologies, and Indigenous forms and approaches to historiography. I have also found useful works by non-Indigenous scholars such as Toby Morantz and Keith Thor Carlson,
who have reflected on the tensions encountered between western and Indigenous forms of memory and historical consciousness in their own historical practice.99

The existing historiography of historical memory in Upper Canada/Ontario is somewhat weak in its analysis of colonialism. Norman Knowles’ *Inventing the Loyalists: the Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts*; Beverley Boutilier and Alison Prentice’s *Creating Historical Memory: English Canadian Women and the Work of History*, Gerald Killan’s *Preserving Ontario’s Heritage*; M. Brook Taylor’s *Promoters Patriots and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth Century Canada*, and Carl Berger’s *The Writing of Canadian History* are all valuable works that consider aspects of the creation of English Canadian historical memory in Ontario and Canada,100 especially in relation to England, but these do not examine Indigenous peoples’ historical memory at any length or the interaction of settler and Indigenous discourses, or fully consider the impact of colonialism on settler historical discourses. Elizabeth Furniss’s *The burden of history: colonialism and the frontier myth in a rural Canadian community*, although focused on a community in British Columbia, is a model in this regard. Cecilia Morgan’s articles, “History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920s,” and “History and the Six Nations, 1890s-1960s’: Commemoration and Colonial Knowledge,” and other articles on John Brant-Sero and Ethel Monture have also been very useful in considering the interaction of settler and Indigenous historical discourses in a colonial context.101

More generally, my analytic framework has been profoundly influenced by the cultural and political critique of Indigenous scholars such Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Taiaiake Alfred, Audra Simpson, Vine Deloria Jr., Jeannette Armstrong, Simon J. Ortiz, Marie Battiste, and Sakej Henderson,102 and their remarks on the limitations and colonial grounding of much academic historical writing and research about Indigenous peoples. Their work has
inspired me to make the archival texts of Toronto’s history “participants in Native space” rather than the anchor of a Eurocentric narrative and to consider historical memory beyond the level of text, in oral story, ceremony, cultural practices, and in the body. I have also been inspired by the work of an increasing number of non-Indigenous scholars who creatively and responsibly engage with Indigenous epistemes, and especially by Stephen Muecke and Deborah Bird Rose.

**Methodology**

My methodological approach to the dissertation has been shaped by the academic requirements of the University of Toronto History Department, the university’s developing research ethics regime, and Indigenous knowledge practices, protocols, and approaches to historiography. While the History Department’s expectations are for a written dissertation grounded in an international historiography and based largely on archival evidence (though oral historical approaches are now also accepted and are especially prevalent in immigrant historiography), contemporary Indigenous historical practices often privilege community-based, and indeed community-driven, research drawing primarily on oral tradition, family stories, local knowledge, and prophecy, within a context of an international discussion of Indigenous rights, epistemologies, identity, and governance.

I began by consulting the secondary literature on research ethics and methodologies in relation to Indigenous peoples, and consulted with Indigenous scholars, elders, and community historians, as well as with the members of my committee, (who were non-Aboriginal), in the design of my project. I also attended teachings and ceremonies conducted by traditional teachers and elders and studied Anishinaabemowin. Although I have followed Indigenous protocols wherever possible, this project is not a work of Indigenous-
directed, community-based research, as is currently advocated in many research protocols and by activist scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, partly because I did not have strong enough community connections at the outset and also because of unfamiliarity with such community-based processes in my department. However, my awareness of the Eurocentricity of virtually all written records on the history of Toronto and the perspectives gained from my developing connections to the local Native community solidified my choice to include oral interviews in my research. I also drew on works of cultural anthropology and political and cultural theory to develop an ethnohistorical analysis.

My involvement with the Native community of Toronto in the creation of a work of theatre on Toronto’s Indigenous history and with the Toronto Native Community History Project of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, while only indirectly linked to the production of this dissertation, have been attempts to recirculate the gifts I have been given through this research in culturally appropriate, community-oriented, and Indigenous-directed ways.

Between 2005 and 2009, I conducted 44 interviews to investigate contemporary historical memory of the Indigenous past of Toronto. The interviewees fell into four groups: Indigenous people or people of mixed heritage who currently lived in the city; Indigenous people whose ancestors had lived in the Toronto area in previous historical periods even if the interviewees didn’t themselves, such as people of Mississauga, Wendat, or Seneca heritage; non-Indigenous residents of the city who were primarily descended from the two colonizing nations, Great Britain and France, some of whom had ancestors who had lived in the city; and non-Indigenous residents of Toronto of other ethnicities, many of whom were first or second generation immigrants. This was not a statistically representative sample of the city’s population of 2.5 million people or of its Indigenous community, but the interviews
were nonetheless suggestive of some intriguing aspects of contemporary historical consciousness in relation to Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial history.\textsuperscript{107}

Interviewees were asked about their knowledge of the city’s and region’s history, especially its Indigenous history, and how knowledge or lack of knowledge about their own ancestors and family history affected their relation to the place where they lived, and especially their relation to its history. (Sample interview questions can be found in Appendix A.) Their responses led me to analyse the changing popular historiography of Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial past from the earliest nineteenth century works to the present, as one way of understanding the tropes, ellipses, and absences in my interviewees’ historical representations. These published histories in turn led me back into the archives and also to Indigenous oral traditions to research the history of Indigenous peoples in the region before and after the establishment of York/Toronto and the changing representations of Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial history over time, drawing on colonial records, official correspondence, memoirs, works of art, and newspapers.\textsuperscript{108}

This dissertation focuses on several key moments or periods when certain elements of historical memory crystallized or changed. Chapters Two and Three focus on historical memory in the early period of interaction between settlers and Mississaugas in the Toronto area. Chapter Two discusses the historical memory of the Toronto Purchase, its 1805 “confirmation” and accompanying cession of the Mississauga Tract, and settler representations of the founding and early days of York up to the incorporation of the City of Toronto in 1834. Chapter Three focuses on Mississauga self-representations and historical memory, particularly during the crucial period from 1836 to 1841, and up to their departure from the Toronto area in 1847, as well as mid-century settler representations of Mississauga “vanishing” from the Toronto area.
Chapters Four and Five explore aspects of historical memory during the period of Indigenous “disappearance,” when there was the least contact between settler Torontonians and local Indigenous people. Chapter Four analyzes a key moment in Toronto’s history of civic commemoration: the 1884 Semi-Centennial celebration of the city’s incorporation. Chapter Five considers both settler and Indigenous historical representations in the wake of the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. Chapter Six looks at early twentieth century historical discourses up to the city’s Centennial celebrations in 1934, and then charts the re-affirmation of historical discourses from Indigenous points of view as large numbers of Indigenous people moved into the city after the second world war, which in turn affected settler historical narratives.

Chapters Seven and Eight examine aspects of current historical memory of Toronto’s Indigenous past as revealed primarily through my interviews with Toronto residents. The first chapter focuses on the interviewees’ knowledge and representations of Toronto history and the links between local historical memory and family stories, while the second focuses on a notable aspect of current historical consciousness, the perception of Indigenous ancestral presence in the city. My conclusions are followed by a postscript, appendix, and bibliography.

---

1 For definitions and discussions of these terms see Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, “Settler Colonies,” in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., A Companion to Postcolonial Studies (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 360-76; Annie E. Coombes, Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).


3 For discussions of the genocidal attributes of settler colonialism, see the special issue Genocide? Australian Aboriginal History in International Perspective, Aboriginal History 25, no.1 (2001), Patrick Wolfe, “Land,


5 Ibid.


7 Coll Thrush, Native Seattle: History from the Crossing-Over Place (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2007), 12. The Indigenous past remains disconnected from the history of Toronto in part because of outdated distinctions between the urban history of the city and its non-urban antecedents, or between history and so-called “prehistory,” where the Indigenous past is usually relegated. In fact, the term “prehistory” appears to have been first used in English in 1851 by the University of Toronto’s first professor of history and English, Sir Daniel Wilson, according to Gerald Killan, David Boyle: From Artisan to Archaeologist (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 85. The term was coined before Wilson’s arrival in Toronto. See also Marinell Ash, Thinking with Both Hands: Sir Daniel Wilson in the Old World and the New (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). North American writers immediately latched on to “prehistory” as a “categorical catch-basin into which Indians were put.” Steven Conn, History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 211.

8 An important exception was Frances Sanderson and Heather Howard-Bobiwash, eds., The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life in Toronto (Toronto: Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, 1997). See also Percy Robinson, Toronto During the French Regime, 1615-1793 (henceforth TFR), 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965 [1933]) and, more recently, Frank A. Dieterman, ed. Mississauga: The First 10,000 Years (Toronto: Mississauga Heritage Foundation, 2002).

9 Thrush, Native Seattle, 11. Historic Indigenous urban dwellers included the Incas, Aztecs, Pueblos, Mayas, and Indigenous peoples of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys.


13 See also J.M.S. Careless, Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities and Identities in Canada before 1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 18.


15 See fn 10 above. Edmonds identifies such factors as economic, legal, and demographic disparities created by the fur trade, treaty making, different terms of engagement with colonial labour systems, and variable attitudes to intermarriage, “miscegenation,” and assimilation as factors producing variations in racial and colonial formations in different cities. Edmonds, “From Bedlam to Incorporation,” 69.

16 Ibid.


18 Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 257, attributes the concept to Gayatri Spivak and directs the reader to Spivak’s essay collection In Other Worlds (London: Methuen, 1989).


20 From a small ten-block town site bordered by today’s Front, George, Adelaide and Berkeley Streets in 1793, the city boundaries had expanded to Bathurst Street in the west, Dundas in the north, and Parliament on the east by the time of the city’s incorporation in 1834, with additional areas beyond city control called the ‘liberties,’ reaching Dufferin on the west, Bloor on the north, and, on the east, the Don River south to Queen, and east to Ashbridge’s Bay. The city annexed Yorkville in 1883, Brockton and Riverdale in 1884, and several other villages before the First World War, including Seaton Village in 1887 and North Toronto and Moore Park in 1912. In April 1953 a two-tiered system of government was created; the City of Toronto, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, and York, plus the small urban communities of East York, Forest Hill, Leaside, Long
Branch, Mimico, New Toronto, Swansea, and Weston formed the new Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. In 1966, the province consolidated the 13 municipalities that made up the lower tier in Metro into one City of Toronto and five boroughs (Etobicoke, York, North York, East York, and Scarborough), all of which, except East York, eventually became ‘cities.’ These were amalgamated in 1997 to form a single City of Toronto. See City of Toronto web site, www.toronto.ca.


23 City of Toronto, Culture Division, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department, Humanitas: Feasibility Study for a New Cultural Attraction on Toronto’s Waterfront, September 2004, 18, 27.


26 The escarpment marked the boundary between the Neutrals (Attiwandaronk) and Wendat/Petun, and also between earlier Glen Meyer peoples to the west of the Niagara Escarpment and along the north shore of Lake Erie, and the Pickering peoples east from Burlington along the north shore of Lake Ontario to the Bay of Quinte and eventually northward towards Georgian Bay. Georges E. Sioui, Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle, rev. ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999) 56; J. V. Wright, A History of the Native People of Canada (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1995), 1305.

27 The etymology of the name has long been a matter of dispute. Henry Scadding in Toronto of Old: Collections and Recollections, Illustrative of the Early Settlement and Social Life of the Capital of Ontario (Toronto: Adam, Stevenson & Co. 1873), noted, in his detailed reference to French maps and documents, its migration from Lake Simcoe. In his view, the Huron word Toronto, in the form Toronton, was translated by Gabriel Sagard and Thomas. Heather Howard, following the late Anishinaabe historian Rodney Bobiwash, argues that Indigenous knowledge frameworks of the peoples of this area.” Henry Scadding, Toronto of Old: Collections and Recollections, Illustrative of the Early Settlement and Social Life of the Capital of Ontario (Toronto: Adam, Stevenson & Co. 1873); Heather A. Howard, A. Rodney Bobiwash, “Toronto’s Native History,” First Nations House Magazine 1, no. 1 (2009), 7.


29 For example, in the at times uneasy relations between the Mississaugas and the British on the Humber River in the 1770s, Nanebeaujou, one of the head chiefs of southern Georgian Bay, adopted British alcohol trader Ferral Wade as his son, furthering their ongoing trading relationship through fictive kinship. See Ferral Wade to William Johnson, Sept 22, 1771, William Johnson, The Papers of Sir William Johnson (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1921-1965) vol. 8: 271.
While the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee origin stories are versions of the same basic Iroquoian story, some Haudenosaunee versions detail specific geographic features south of Lake Ontario like Onandaga Lake, while other versions of both the Wendat and Haudenosaunee origin story locate various events as occurring in the St. Lawrence valley. See Georges Sioui, Huron-Wendat.

Nicolas Perrot, Memoire, although written in 1718, was not published in French until 1864 in Paris and in English not until 1911 in E.H. Blair, The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi and the Region of the Great Lakes (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911).

In the strait between Lakes Huron and Michigan.

Perrot, 37.


Ibid.


The Eagle men of the Credit often took Otter wives; “Otter men followed their sisters or daughters and established themselves on nearby Twelve Mile Creek near Burlington.” Heidi Bohaker, “Nindoodemag: Anishinaabe identities in the eastern Great Lakes region, 1600 to 1900,” Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 2006, 217.


Muecke, Ancient & Modern, 16-17.


Muecke, Ancient & Modern, 17.

Note the directional difference from western epistemes, where the individual moves face forward into a future that is always ahead and that can only be seen from behind.

Alex McKay, personal communication, January 29, 2008.

Ibid.

According to Anishinaabe elder Alex McKay, powaamowin or dreaming is the first method for learning, even before a child learns to speak. Dreams are the most significant method to make contact with other than human grandfathers or pawaakak (dream visitors). All beings in the world, including animals, plants, rocks, and spirit-beings, have their own particular knowledge. McKay, personal communication, January 29, 2008. See also Dewdney, Sacred Scrolls, 37.

This is also true of Iroquoian conceptions of past and present. “There is little if any physical distance between the two worlds of what is and what was. They are different and distinct, yet rather than being separated by a gulf, they are in essence part of the same incorporated universe.”
Haudenosaunee versions of the story of Skywoman and the Twins constitute an unbroken oral tradition from pre-contact times. The mother of humankind lived originally in a sky world, but one day fell through a hole in sky. In some versions of the story it is the eagle, the messenger between worlds, who first sees her fall and calls on the water birds to slow her descent and cushion her landing. They lower her onto the back of a great tortoise who swam in the primeval ocean and asked other animals to dive to the bottom of the sea to dredge soil to put on his back to create earth for her to live on. Various animals attempted but drowned or nearly drowned in the attempt, until one succeeds. Skywoman became the mother or maternal grandmother of twin boys who represented the creative and destructive forces necessary for life. In some versions, Sapling creates the eagle, while, in response, Flint creates the bat. See Brian Rice, “The Rotinonshonni: Through the Eyes of Teharonhia: Wako and Sawiskera: A Traditional Iroquoian History for Modern Times,” Ph.D. Thesis. California Institute of Integral Studies, 1999.

Although elements of this story were recorded in nineteenth century works such as David Cusick Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations (Lockport, NY: Turner and McCollum, 1827) and Horatio Hale’s 1883 published version of the Iroquois Book of Rites (Philadelphia: D.G. Brinton, 1883), the full narrative was passed down orally and was only recorded at the turn of the twentieth century. The story is that in a time of terrible warring among themselves, a spiritual messenger came to the Five Nations. In most versions he was born a Huron-Wendat on the north side of Lake Ontario near Belleville and crossed the lake in a white stone canoe to deliver his message of peace to the warring nations. He first persuaded Jikonsasay, a female leader of either the Neutrals or Senecas, to help spread his message, and in gratitude gave women a decisive role in selecting male leaders, and leading clans. He then converted Iawatha/Hiawatha, a Mohawk-Onandaga man renowned for his oratory, who became his disciple. The Kanienkahaka (Mohawks) were the first to embrace his message. Iawatha helped the Peacemaker achieve his vision, divised the first condolence ceremony for healing and was the originator of the use of wampum to record important events in history. When the cannibal Onandaga chief and wizard Tadodaho was finally persuaded to join the Peacemaker, the Peacemaker’s rules of conduct became the Great Law of Peace, which is still the constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy today.


The “faithful” were to demonstrate their faith by remembering Jesus. The exception was in the moment when bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, according to some, though whether or not that was literally true was so contentious it led to violent schism.

A renewed emphasis on enjoying the present (“carpe diem”), in the wake of recurrent plagues, on chronology and the measurement of time with the introduction of mechanical clocks, and on historical writing with the development of the printing press and the spread of literacy, had created major changes in historical consciousness in the period from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. In seventeenth and early eighteenth century Europe, a favourite literary device was the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, where the Ancients were increasingly perceived as ‘outdated’ and the Moderns as progressive. See Le Goff, History and Memory, xxi, 25-27.

The “faithful” were to demonstrate their faith by remembering Jesus. The exception was in the moment when bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, according to some, though whether or not that was literally true was so contentious it led to violent schism.

Le Goff, History and Memory, 12, 14. At the same time, while emigration truncated the personal pasts of Europeans, it also led to a reworking of selected “traditions” as expressions of national essence.

Rose, Wild Country, 5.

Ibid., 15-19.

Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive Perceptions,” 44.

A renewed emphasis on enjoying the present (“carpe diem”), in the wake of recurrent plagues, on chronology and the measurement of time with the introduction of mechanical clocks, and on historical writing with the development of the printing press and the spread of literacy, had created major changes in historical consciousness in the period from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. In seventeenth and early eighteenth century Europe, a favourite literary device was the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, where the Ancients were increasingly perceived as ‘outdated’ and the Moderns as progressive. See Le Goff, History and Memory, xxi, 25-27.

Ibid., 6.


Le Goff, History and Memory, 12, 14. At the same time, while emigration truncated the personal pasts of Europeans, it also led to a reworking of selected “traditions” as expressions of national essence.

Rose, Wild Country, 5.

Ibid., 15-19.


Conn, History’s Shadow, 21.

Conn, History’s Shadow, 6.
81 Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: New Mexico, 1996), 32-33, 47. The question of authority in Indigenous history is a complex one. The birch bark scrolls of the Midewewin and the Mide priests who interpreted them certainly constituted a form of historical authority, as did the word of elders, even if there was also respect for different versions of a tradition, particularly arising from different peoples in different places. Yet Copway noted: “With these traditions there are rules to follow by which to determine whether they are true or false. By these rules I have been governed in my researches. The first is to inquire particularly into the leading points of every tradition narrated. The second is to notice whether the traditions are approved by the oldest chiefs and wise men. Such are most likely to be true, and if places or persons are mentioned, additional clue is given to their origin and proof obtained of their truth or falsity.” George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (Boston: Mussey, 1851), 19. Jones consulted “for several years past...the aged sachems of the Ojibway.” *Life and Journals of Kah-Ke-Wa-Quo-Na-by (Rev. Peter Jones)*, Wesleyan Missionary (Toronto: A. Green, 1983; 1860), 31. Their concern with authenticity and authority may also reflect the influence of western discourses of history on their thinking, however.


83 The term is used in Brooks, *The Common Pot*, xxxiv.


85 Sanderson and Howard-Bobiwash, *The Meeting Place*.

86 There are scholarly studies of a few prominent nineteenth or early twentieth century Indigenous peoples who were Torontonians or had significant interactions with Toronto, such as Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones), John Brant-Sero, Oronhyatekha, Pauline Johnson, Ethel Brant Monture. See Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Keith Jamieson, “Oronhyatekha,” *Rotunda* (Fall 2002), 32-37; Cecilia Morgan, “‘A Wigwam to Westminster’: Performing Mohawk Identity in Imperial Britain, 1890s-1990s,” *Gender & History* 15, no. 2 (August, 2003), 319-41; Cecilia Morgan, “Performing for Imperial Eyes: Bernie Noise and Ethel Brant Monture, Ontario, 1930s-1960s,” in Myra Rutherford and Katie Pickles, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 308; Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).


Historical memory is a term that often suggests what is consciously remembered and represented in discourse or other expressive media either individually or collectively (though there are debates about whether or not memory can be truly collective); it can also suggest the unconscious embodied ways that historical experience, and especially trauma, is remembered in the psyche and body. Historical consciousness has a slightly broader range, for it suggests the dynamic ways that worldviews, including theories of causality, cosmologies, and epistemologies, form frameworks for the analysis or processing of the past experiences and events we usually think of as “history”; however, it is important to note that these frameworks of historical analysis may not be “conscious” at all; in fact, the belief systems that underlie historical interpretation may be completely unarticulated and opaque. See Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, On Collective Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 244; Le Goff, History and Memory, 265; Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” Representations 69 (Winter, 2000), 127-50; Peter Seixas, Theorizing Historical Consciousness (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) and Joselyn Létourneau, A History For the Future: rewriting memory and identity in Quebec (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004).

Although there are also many commonalities in terms of general historical trends in colonial relations between Seattle and Toronto, it is important that the particularities of the historical experience of each be recognized in order to avoid a monolithic approach to urban Indigenous history. Toronto’s Indigenous history is very complex, involving as it does French, English, and American colonizers and Mississauga/Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and other Indigenous peoples. Toronto, unlike Seattle, has played a major, indeed central, role in the development of the discourses and economy of the nation and its imperialism vis-à-vis the Northwest.


Historical memory is a term that often suggests what is consciously remembered and represented in discourse or other expressive media either individually or collectively (though there are debates about whether or not memory can be truly collective); it can also suggest the unconscious embodied ways that historical experience, and especially trauma, is remembered in the psyche and body. Historical consciousness has a slightly broader range, for it suggests the dynamic ways that worldviews, including theories of causality, cosmologies, and epistemologies, form frameworks for the analysis or processing of the past experiences and events we usually think of as “history”; however, it is important to note that these frameworks of historical analysis may not be “conscious” at all; in fact, the belief systems that underlie historical interpretation may be completely unarticulated and opaque. See Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, On Collective Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 244; Le Goff, History and Memory, 265; Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” Representations 69 (Winter, 2000), 127-50, Peter Seixas, Theorizing Historical Consciousness (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) and Joselyn Létourneau, A History For the Future: rewriting memory and identity in Quebec (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004).


101 See Elizabeth Furniss, “Challenging the myth”; and *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier in a Rural Canadian community* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999). For the work of Cecilia Morgan, see “‘A Wigwam to Westminster,’” “Performing for Imperial Eyes,” and “History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (September 2001).


I attended numerous teachings and/or ceremonies at First Nations House, the Native Canadian Centre, Anishinaabe Health, and the Dodem Kanonseh in Toronto and participated in Thunder Mountain spring ceremonies with Anishinaabe elder Isaac Day in 2006. I studied Anishinaabemowin for three and a half years with Alex McKay and Maya Chacaby of University of Toronto.

I interviewed people of a variety of Indigenous ethnicities, including people who identified themselves as of Mississaugua, Anishinaabe, Seneca, Mohawk, Wendat and Erie-Neutral heritage, since these peoples had historic ties to the area, as well as others of Abenaki, Algonquin, Lenne Lenapi, Oneida, Potawatami, Cherokee, Choctaw, and other heritages. Non-Indigenous ethnic heritages included British, French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Zulu, Goan, Trinidadian, Punjabi, Chinese, Russian Jewish, and Israeli. Interviewees used various terms, such as Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, Métis, métis or mixed to identify themselves or they used the name of their specific people, eg. Cree. The interviewees were found by word of mouth and ranged in age from eighteen to almost eighty. I began with some of people I met at a ceremony on one of the Toronto islands (see chapter 8), and also at lectures on Toronto history at the city’s Humanitas festival in 2006; the rest of the interviewees were university students, both graduate and undergraduate, including students I met through the University of Toronto’s First Nations House; friends and relatives of friends; and Indigenous elders, traditional teachers, leaders, professors, and community members. Some interviewees were as random as my garage mechanic. I also interviewed a couple of genealogists and other people who engaged in family history research, as well as a few key people involved in local heritage or archaeology. By and large, however, my interviewees were people without specific historical expertise. Although a number had grown up in circumstances of poverty, most of the people I interviewed had some degree of post-secondary education or were recognized as knowledgeable in the Indigenous community. My reasoning in choosing these people was that if these well-educated people didn’t know the history, it was unlikely that other segments of the population would, especially more recent immigrants. The list of research questions is included in Appendix A.

I analyzed the interviews for common themes and significant differences in interviews by Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents and also by gender. I compared the interviewees’ historical knowledge of the city with previous phases of historical memory to gauge to what extent elements from these previous phases had persisted in the contemporary historical memory of the interviewees.

The archival research was carried out at the City of Toronto Archives, the Toronto Public Library, Archives of Ontario, Library and Archives Canada, the United Church Archives, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto Community History Project archives, and the archives of the Canadian National Exhibition.
Chapter Two

The Toronto Purchase

.....I was going to say that in Canada the land was “surrendered” as it was termed. However the British did pay the Indians for the land. Very little, no doubt, but it was done legally and properly. This was largely different from the United States. In the States they just basically went in and took the land. Maybe stealing is the wrong word but it certainly wasn’t done in the same manner that it was done in Canada. I guess the British did that probably because they were more inherently fair and maybe they were also worried about litigation. But I believe there’s a few slivers of land around that are still in contention to this day. Where that will all go is a matter of conjecture.¹

Pungent smoke rising from an abalone shell and fanned by an eagle feather² marked the beginning of the official celebration of the 175th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Toronto on Friday, March 6, 2009.³ Before a sparse crowd at Nathan Philips Square, Peter Schuler, an elder of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, explained the meaning of the smudging ceremony as a ritual of purification and then offered “a history lesson.” He explained that according to tradition Toronto had been one of the stopping places of his ancestors on the Great Migration of the Anishinaabek from the east coast.⁴ “We stayed quite a while,” he added, but “in 1847 we were removed from this place.” He paused a moment and then continued somewhat bemusedly: “I’m asked to come and celebrate this city but the city itself kind of moved us out.”

This was an assertion of a history that remains unknown to most Torontonians, who in thought and deed generally seem to reflect the attitude that Toronto has little history worth remembering…and certainly very little Indigenous history worth remembering. There is “little widespread awareness of the depth of this pre-contact settlement history, or general knowledge of the societies that inhabited Ontario prior to the onset of Euro-Canadian settlement,” according to a report prepared for the City of Toronto in 2004.⁵ Among the 44 people I interviewed for my dissertation research, for example, most non-Indigenous
interviewees (and even some Indigenous ones) were completely unaware of how the land had changed hands from Indigenous to settler peoples, many had never even considered the question, and many could not name the Indigenous peoples who were involved in the land transaction or who had lived in the region prior to the arrival of Europeans. While some of those listening to Peter Schuler may have been heard that the city had been or was still “Mississauga territory,” thus explaining the presence of members of the First Nation at the opening ceremony, few would have known anything about the peoples who lived in the region prior to the arrival of the Mississaugas, the length of Mississauga residency in the region, or the process of their dispossession. Even fewer Torontonians, other than Indigenous ones, were likely aware of the anticipated awarding of compensation to the Mississaugas of New Credit for their successful land claim.

Perhaps nothing in Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial history is more emblematic of the relation of historical memory to colonialism than Torontonians’ limited memory of the transactions which confined the Mississaugas to ever smaller patches of land until they were finally crowded out of their last remaining 200 acres on the Credit River in 1847, a process that began with the Toronto Purchase of 1787. As a recent video produced by the Mississauga of the New Credit put it, Toronto is a thriving metropolis of “millions of people, most unaware that a controversial land deal signed in 1787 still hangs over the city, controversial because the amount of land taken far exceeds the original amount identified, and in the place of proper signatures there were pieces of paper with chiefs’ totems that had been glued into a blank deed.” In fact, elsewhere, the current chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation has bluntly, if polemically, referred to the Toronto Purchase as a “fraud.”
Questions about the fairness of the treaty are nothing new. The Wendats apparently disputed the right of the Mississaugas to sell the land in the first place, and the Haudenosaunee have long claimed that they have unextinguished rights to the north shore of Lake Ontario. Among the settler population, the original Toronto Purchase was declared invalid one year after York was founded, and the fairness of the 1805 “confirmation” of the treaty was raised in 1806, when Surveyor General Charles Burton Wyatt was dismissed, in part, as John Mills Jackson claimed in 1809, because “he had shewn the Council their erroneous proceedings in a purchase of land from the Messessagua Indians, by necessarily shewing, in his official correspondence with them, how a false map had been procured, and the tribe thereby defrauded of seventeen thousand acres.” The fairness of the treaty was raised again, but dismissed, by antiquarian Henry Scadding in the first historical account of the city, *Toronto of Old*, published in 1873. More recently, the overall process of Mississauga dispossession – and its injustice -- has been documented in considerable detail by academic historians over the past thirty-five years. Yet these aspects of Toronto’s origins are still not part of the official history of the city, as expressed on the city’s web site, or discussed in even the most recent popular histories. Significantly, in earlier nineteenth and twentieth century histories of the city, the Purchase was often not mentioned at all. One can conclude from this silence that much of Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial past, and particularly its legal origin, has clearly not been a *useful* history in the personal, civic, or national narratives of most Toronto residents or the city’s civic leaders. For the Mississaugas of the New Credit, on the other hand, “re-membering” this history has been a crucial element of the reclamation of their history, culture, and economic wellbeing.

The Toronto Purchase is the most significant of a series of conspicuous lapses in contemporary popular Toronto memory of the Indigenous history of the city. Representations
of Toronto’s history have rarely acknowledged that the Purchase itself was not a singular event but a complex, drawn-out, contested, and ethically murky process comprising a series of transactions in 1787 and 1788 initially and then through the next seventeen years, culminating in the joint “confirmation” of the Purchase in 1805 and the British demand for the simultaneous cession of the adjacent Mississauga tract. Nor have they acknowledged that the treaty process was marked by “confusion, inequity, misrepresentation, maladministration, and betrayal,” ¹⁴ or that it was conducted in contravention of clearly established British policy for land cessions that had been set out in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, agreed to by the First Nations at the Council of Niagara the following year, and codified in subsequent regulations issued by Governor Carleton in 1775 and 1786, and Governor Haldimand in 1778.¹⁵ In 2009, the lengthy official history of the city on the City of Toronto web site represented the Toronto Purchase as a singular event, transacted and completed without incident in 1787: “Then, in 1787 the government paid the Mississaugas £1700 in cash and goods to acquire Toronto in order to open the way for Euro-American settlement.”¹⁶

This chapter shall argue that this longstanding settler amnesia about the Toronto Purchase was in part the result of an initial colonial government cover-up of the legal invalidity of the Purchase, which was itself a reflection of an undeclared change from the negotiation of peace and friendship treaties for peaceful coexistence and trade to a land surrender process whose ultimate aim was Indigenous disappearance. It was also a consequence of the fact that settlers arrived several years after the treaty had been negotiated and were not party to the process or the promises made on their behalf. But more fundamentally, the dynamics of settler colonialism favoured the obliteration of memories of Indigenous presence. Today, factors such as competing narratives of local indigeneity and consequently the appropriateness of the Mississaugas as beneficiaries of the land claim, as
well as the city’s desire to present a positive image to investors or tourists work against public discussion of the complexities of the Purchase. Yet, in many respects, the Toronto Purchase was and remains the (absent) “grounding” for all subsequent phases of the city’s historical memory.

To understand the workings of memory in regard to this transfer of land, it is first necessary to explore two key issues: the contentious question of who is indigenous to the region, and the significance of a particular sequence of events -- Pontiac’s War in 1763, the Royal Proclamation of the same year, and the 1764 Treaty of Niagara -- to later Mississauga and settler historical perspectives. A third major event – the American Revolution – was both the immediate context for the Purchase and the catalyst for the narrative construction of a settler self-identity as “better” colonizers than Americans, and this also affected the way the Purchase has been remembered historically.

**Who is Indigenous in the Toronto Region?**

Unbeknownst to most of the non-Native audience, the Mississauga elder’s reference to the oral tradition of the Great Migration of the Anishinaabek at Toronto’s 175th anniversary celebration was an assertion of Mississauga indigeneity in the face of not only their nineteenth century dispossession by non-Indigenous people but also competing claims to local indigeneity by other Aboriginal groups who consider the Mississaugas to be relative latecomers to the area. Indeed, one of the factors working against public memory of the Toronto Purchase is the complexity and political sensitivity of the Indigenous history of the Toronto area before the founding of York, a complexity rarely publicly acknowledged by either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal commentators.
The foundational story of Anishinaabek migration from the east which Schuler referred to has been told in many different versions and is closely associated with the Midewewin, or Grand Medicine Society, a spiritual healing society which has played a central role in structuring, preserving, and passing on Anishinaabek historical memory for generations. The paths of this historic migration of the Anishinaabek were recorded on symbolic maps marked on birchbark scrolls, with pictographs for place-names of the ‘resting places’ along the way. Details of the migration have always varied from one settlement to the next, since each Mide priest represented his own community as the migration’s western terminus. These differing stories have not generally been perceived as contradictory and probably reflect the fact that the Anishinaabek were loosely related groups with different histories until they gathered in the area of Sault Ste. Marie at the end of the 17th century. The oral traditions of the migration do not appear to have originally included the Toronto area specifically, although some traditions identify nearby Montreal, Niagara Falls, and Manitoulin as stops along the way.

The fuller significance of the elder’s reference to people being left behind in the Toronto area was that it cast the historic Mississauga presence in the region in terms of not just historic but sacred time and space, locating Mississaugas in Toronto within sacred narrative and the fulfillment of prophecy.

Present-day Anishinaabek assertions of long residency in the region do not draw only on the identification of Toronto as a stopping place in the Great Migration, however. Archaeology reveals that in the very distant past, and for several thousand years, hunter-gathering peoples who may well have been ancestral to the Anishinaabek lived in the Toronto area. Today, some Anishinaabek speak of genealogical descent from these very
ancient residents, though to date the cultural identity of these peoples and their relationship to current Anishinaabek populations is not conclusively known.

Kahkewaquinaby (Rev. Peter Jones) and Kahgegagahbowh (George Copway), two nineteenth century Mississaugas living on the north shore of Lake Ontario who wrote the first published histories of the Anishinaabek, recorded stories of more recent Mississauga migrations from the west into Upper Canada. In fact, the Mississaugas who were present in the Toronto area when the British arrived (henceforth referred to as the Mississaugas of the Credit River, which was the location of their council fire) appear to have migrated there in the late 1600s from the north shore of Lake Huron near the Mississagi River.

**Iroquoian Historical Memory in the Toronto Region**

While these various strands of Mississauga oral tradition and history form the backbone of their present-day historical consciousness of their presence in the region, Iroquoian peoples also have deep historic ties to the area. From approximately 500 BCE, Iroquoian corn-growers predominated in the Toronto region, though whether through the migration of new cultural groups and the displacement of earlier peoples or through the adaptation of a new technology that came from the south, is currently unknown. Iroquoian origin stories vary considerably in this regard, with some stories attributing an origin in the east near Montreal and other stories describing migrations from the south, perhaps reflecting the diverse origins of different subgroups. What is beyond dispute is that the land encircling Lake Ontario was primarily Iroquoian territory – indeed a homeland – for Iroquoian peoples for at least a thousand years before the arrival of Europeans in the area, while the ancestors of the Anishinaabek generally lived farther north or to the west during this time period. Archaeological evidence reveals the existence of hundreds of Iroquoian villages, burial sites
(ossuaries), and hunting camps along the Toronto region’s river systems; after 1000 CE, these were populated mainly by Wendat (Huron) and Tionontati (Petun), but were often cosmopolitan villages populated by several ethnic groups.  

Over a period of several hundred years until about 1600, the Wendats and Tionontati gradually left the Toronto area, moving their villages north to the Georgian Bay region, perhaps to be closer to Anishinaabek trade routes or farther from Haudeosaunee enemies, though the Toronto region remained Wendat hunting ground until 1649. When the Wendats were defeated and scattered by the Haudenosaunee in 1649-50, the victorious Five Nations systematically attacked the other nations in the region, including the Attiwandaronk (Neutrals) and Tionontati, absorbing large numbers of the Wendats and these other Iroquoian peoples into their own nations. Because today’s Six Nations include the descendants of these peoples, some Haudenosaunee consider the former territories of these nations – including the Toronto region -- as their own by inheritance as well as by conquest.

In the aftermath of their defeat of the Wendats, the Haudenosaunee also attacked various Algonquian groups who were allies and trading partners of the Wendats; these related peoples were known to the French as Mississaugas, Ojibwas, or Ottawas, though they called themselves by their clan names or referred to themselves as Anishinaabek. Peace was not re-established in the region until 1666, when, in the wake of attacks by the French and wars with the Susquehannah and Mohicans, the Haudenosaunee lost many warriors and changed their policy toward the Anishinaabek, who had succeeded the Wendat as the principal traders of the upper Great Lakes region. The Haudenosaunee began to act as middlemen, bringing Anishinaabek furs from the interior, often via the Toronto Carrying Place portage along the Humber River to Albany, where they could fetch higher prices than in Montreal. Thus was formed a mutually beneficial alliance between the Haudenosaunee
and the Anishinaabek, which has persisted, although with a number of interruptions, to this
day. This alliance is a significant feature of the region’s history that is rarely mentioned in
settler histories of the city or region; the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek have almost
always been portrayed either as without relationship to each other or only as traditional
enemies, often in ways that furthered discourses of savagery.

French documents indicate that by the 1660s the Haudenosaunee, and particularly the
Seneca, were using the Toronto area for hunting, fishing and participation in the fur trade.
The mainly Seneca trading villages of Teiaiagon and Ganetsakwyagon appear on French
maps of the Humber and Rouge rivers from the mid 1660s. But the Seneca presence appears
to have been shortlived as the villages were abandoned or destroyed either during or after the
French campaign against the Seneca in 1687.34 By the early eighteenth century, the Seneca
had left the Toronto area and the north shore of Lake Ontario had come under the control of
those Anishinaabek who came to be called Mississaugas. Yet it is largely on the basis of their
relatedness to the Wendats, the period of Haudenosaunee use of the area as hunting territory,
and Seneca occupation of Teiaiagon and Ganatsekwyagon (and disputes about the terms
upon which the Mississaugas subsequently gained control of the area), that some
Haudenosaunee today vociferously contest the identification of the Toronto area as
“Mississauga” territory,35 though other Haudenosaunee accept that designation.36

Mississauga Dominance of the Toronto Area: Conquest or Alliance?

Nineteenth century oral traditions recorded by Anishinaabek writers Kahkewaquonaby,
Kahgegagahbowh, Robert Paudash, and William Warren, among others, described a series of
battles in the last decade of the 1600s which drove the Haudenosaunee out of southern
Ontario and south of Lake Ontario, events for which little written documentation exists.
According to Anishinaabek oral tradition, the Three Fires Confederacy of the Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi was formed at this time to drive out the Haudenosaunee, and came to dominate southern Ontario in the eighteenth century. Kahkewaquonaby related that the final battle took place on the beach at Burlington Bay, where piles of bones were still visible in his day. According to an account recently published by the Mississaugas of the New Credit, there was also a battle at the mouth of the Humber river, though this is the only source I know of for this claim.

Colonial records indicate that on June 30, 1700, envoys from the Five Nations presented certain “Propositions for Ye Commissioners for Trade” at Albany in which they described a call for peace from the Anishinaabek:

We must now give you an account of what the Dowaganhaes [Ottawas] have said at Onondaga. Some of the Dowaganhaes having had a conference with our Indians at their hunting last winter, conclude to desert their habitations and to come and settle upon Ye Lake of Cadarackqu [Ontario],i, near the Sinnekes’ country at a place called Kanatiochtiage [Ganatsekwyagon], and accordingly they are come and settled there and have sent five of their people to Onondaga to treat, being sent from three Nations who are very strong, having sixteen castles.

They say, --

“We have come to acquaint you that we are settled on Ye North side of Cadarachqui Lake near Tchojachiage [Teiaiagon], and desire to be united in Ye Covenant Chain, our hunting places to be one, and to boil in one kettle, eat out of one spoon, and so be one; and because the path to Corlaer’s house may be open and clear, doe give a drest elke skin to cover Ye path to walke upon.”

The Five Nations apparently accepted the Anishinaabek peace proposal. By July 14, 1701 peace was declared: one of the seven nations designated on the elk skin given to the Five Nations was that of the “Assisagh,” or Mississauga. In this way, the Eagle people established themselves at Toronto and became allies of the Five Nations, who were themselves allied with the British through the Covenant Chain, an alliance first established
between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Dutch, which the English inherited and renewed when they took over New York in 1664.\textsuperscript{41}

Two symbols came to represent the agreement between the Anishinaabek (including the Mississaugas) and the Haudenosaunee. The Indigenous metaphor of eating from a bowl with one spoon was generally used to describe agreements concerning shared hunting grounds and is documented throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in treaties between the Haudenosaunee and Algonquians across a vast area around the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence valley.\textsuperscript{42} Similarly, in Iroquoian diplomatic language, the tree of peace (with its eagle on the lookout in the upper branches) was said to have been planted on the north shore of Lake Ontario at the Credit River, and the Mississaugas of the Credit were thus charged with the role of vigilance in maintaining the Anishinaabek-Haudenosaunee alliance.

This account of the Anishinaabek conquest of the north shore of Lake Ontario is now widely accepted among historical scholars and modern Anishinaabek, and has been a feature of more recent settler histories of Toronto\textsuperscript{43}; however it was originally ignored by scholars because it clashed with their preconceptions about the power of the Iroquois.\textsuperscript{44} Today, some contemporary historians of the Haudenosaunee, such as Carl Benn and José António Brandão, and many Haudenosaunee themselves, have suggested that the oral stories have been misinterpreted and actually describe battles with the Wendat or Haudenosaunee in an earlier time period.\textsuperscript{45} According to their interpretations, the Mississaugas came to occupy the north shore of Lake Ontario through a diplomatic agreement rather than conquest, for why, they ask, would victorious Mississaugas sue for peace and seek to join the Covenant Chain of the defeated Haudenosaunee Confederacy? On the other hand, there must have been significant warfare between the two groups for there to have been a need to negotiate a peace
agreement in the first place. Diplomacy apparently resulted in the recognition of Mississauga territorial control of the north shore and an agreement to allow them direct access to the fur traders at Albany, thus cutting out the Five Nations as middlemen. 46 A major reason the Mississaugas sought to join the Covenant Chain alliance between the British and Five Nations, following this line of reasoning, was their wish to gain safe access to the British trade.

Anishinaabek control over the lands north of Lake Ontario was further recognized in the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701, a comprehensive regional agreement binding together the French, the Haudenosaunee, and the Indigenous allies of the French, which was recorded on wampum belts – including one with a shared kettle or bowl -- as well as in European documents. 47 Yet Haudenosaunee perspectives, articulated by the Confederacy and scholars of Iroquoian history such as Brandão and William Starna, maintain that in 1701, while the Haudenosaunee made peace with the Mississaugas, they only agreed to share the territory for hunting as part of their deal with France, while the British agreed to guarantee their continued use of their “Beaver Hunting Grounds” (which included the Toronto area) through the Nanfan Treaty of the same year. 48 In this view, the Haudenosaunee did not give up their territorial rights to the north shore. This issue continues to be hotly debated in some Indigenous circles to this day and was mentioned by some of my interviewees, but has rarely been mentioned in local histories.

By 1720, the Mississaugas had established themselves throughout southern Ontario. 49 After 1700 a number of Mississauga summer villages were established along the western end of Lake Ontario, from the mouth of the Rouge to Niagara, such as those at Auzahzhakewayyogk (Sixteen-mile-Creek), Ashquasink (Twelve-mile-Creek), and the Mahzenahekasepeh or Missinnihe (Credit River), Cobekhenonk (the Humber), Adoopekog
(Etobicoke Creek), and Wonscotonach (Don River). Menecing, the peninsula at Toronto Bay, later Toronto Island, was another place where the Mississauga gathered, apparently for healing ceremonies. The council fire was established at the Credit, and the Eagle clan was given the responsibility of being the first to speak at that council fire. The Mississauga population in the Toronto area was never high, however, probably as a consequence of the devastating epidemics of European diseases that swept through the area following European contact. Their political strength was greater than their numbers implied, for they were allied with a much larger Anishinaabek population that stretched from the Ottawa River to the western plains and constituted the leading power in the upper Great Lakes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

With regards to the subsequent memory of the Toronto Purchase then, it is clear that although the Toronto area was under de facto Mississauga control by 1701, the original Anishinaabek-Haudenosaunee agreement regarding control of the lands in the Toronto area, like the Toronto Purchase that would transfer territorial control from the Mississaugas to the English in turn, would be remembered very differently by the different parties associated with it and has remained contentious. For this reason, the right of the Mississaugas to be sole negotiators of the Toronto Purchase and sole recipients of financial compensation from either the original treaty or the modern land claim, is disputed by some Haudenosaunee.

Just as they had done in New York, the British who claimed political control over the area in 1760 inherited a trading relationship with local Indigenous people that had been established by another colonial power. While the French had traded with the Seneca villages on the Humber and Rouge in the late seventeenth century, they only established trading forts in the area once it was Mississauga territory. They are known to have traded with the Mississaugas near the mouth of the Humber from at least 1715 and built a trading fort there...
in 1720, and again in 1750;\textsuperscript{54} Fort Rouillé was built on the Lake Ontario waterfront (now CNE grounds) in 1751 and was burned to the ground by retreating French soldiers after the fall of Niagara in 1759, near the end of the Seven Years War.\textsuperscript{55} Whether or not the English knew anything of the complexity of pre-contact local history (they apparently did not know, for example, that many of the “Hurons” (Wendats) that the French had encountered near Georgian Bay had previously lived in the Toronto area, a fact established only in the 1880s), they accepted the Mississaugas as the Indigenous people of the area, as the “occupiers”, if not quite the “owners” of the land.

**Historical Memory of the British-Mississauga Alliance**

The Mississaugas’ memory of British promises made to the Anishinaabek at the Council of Niagara in 1764 and the preferential treatment of local Mississauga chief Wabbicommicot at that council underpinned the Mississauga approach to treaty-making twenty years later and formed the basis for Mississauga interpretations of their subsequent history with the British in the Toronto area. Conversely, the disregarding by British officials of the terms of the alliance ratified at the Treaty of Niagara contributed to later settler stereotypes of the Mississaugas as a naive, childlike people who simply gave away their land.

In 1763, a loose coalition of tribes in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley including the Anishinaabek (and some Mississaugas), had captured nine British forts south of the Great Lakes, killing several hundred British soldiers and settlers, and returning most of the Northwest returned to Indigenous control in what is known today as Pontiac’s War. Although many Anishinaabek from other areas joined the resistance, what is generally not remembered when Pontiac’s War is mentioned in Toronto histories is that most of the Mississaugas of the Toronto area did not participate; in fact, Wabbicommicot, head chief of the Toronto area
Mississaugas, played a crucial role in limiting and ending the war. In taking this pacifist stance, Wabbicommicot was exceptional and, although he was generally highly respected, some Anishinaabek considered him a spy, for he warned the British of planned attacks and had personal relationships with Sir William Johnson and Major Henry Gladwin, the commander of Fort Detroit. Because of Wabbicommicot’s status, influence, and friendship with Gladwin, the long siege of this most strategic fort was ended without British capitulation and a peaceful resolution of the conflict was negotiated.

It was in response to Pontiac’s War and the grievances that sparked it, that King George issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which reserved all lands in the Great Lakes region as Indian hunting grounds, off limits to settlers, and established rules for subsequent land surrenders. A foundational yet contradictory document, the Proclamation implied no lands would be taken without Indigenous consent, and described the Indigenous nations as separate “[n]ations or tribes with whom we are connected, and who live under our protection,” yet also claimed British sovereignty over them. Henceforth, Indian lands could only be purchased by the Crown, at a public meeting of the Indians, held for that express purpose by the Governor or Commander in Chief of the colony.

The next year, in July of 1764, Sir William Johnson met with 2000 representatives of 24 nations at Fort Niagara, to negotiate the principles of alliance between the English and the Indigenous nations. More than 1500 of the delegates were Anishinaabek. Mississauga head chief Wabbicommicot of the Toronto area attended as one of 12 Anishinaabek chiefs.

At this gathering a nation-to-nation relationship between settler and First Nation peoples was renewed and extended, and the Covenant Chain of Friendship, a multination alliance in which no member gave up their sovereignty, was affirmed. The Royal Proclamation became a treaty at Niagara because it was presented by the colonialists for affirmation, and was accepted by the First Nations.
The Treaty of Niagara was thus the foundation for all subsequent treaties in Canada, including the Toronto Purchase, as well as for Indigenous-settler relations in Canada generally.

During the Council, Johnson singled out Wabbicommiccot for thanks and gave him a belt of wampum that represented Niagara’s large house and fort, with a road running through it, and two men holding it on each side, symbolizing the renewal of peaceful trade and the end of a half century of war between the Native allies of England and France. Johnson then asked Wabbicommiccot and his people to resettle in the Toronto area and protect it. He gave medals to Wabbicommiccot as well as to his elder brother and brother-in-law, and medals and gorgets to his head warriors. Over the next year, in a remarkable feat of diplomacy, Wabbicommiccot helped to establish peace between Pontiac and the English without requiring Pontiac’s surrender or sparking British retaliation. Wabbicommiccot thus appears to have been instrumental in creating a workable relationship between the British and the Anishinaabek followers of Pontiac.

This incident reveals that, even before the Toronto Purchase, the Mississaugas of the Credit had put their future in the hands of the British, which brought them more into line politically with the Six Nations (other than the Senecas, who had supported Pontiac) than other Anishinaabek. At the Treaty Council at Niagara, the broader Anishinaabek-British alliance which Wabbicommiccot had helped to create was confirmed by two wampum belts.

Figure 2: Covenant Chain Wampum Belt (replica). Used with the permission of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation.
In offering the Anishinaabek the Covenant Chain Belt Johnson promised not to steal their lands:

My children, I clothe your land, you see that Wampum before me, the body of my words, in this spirit of my words shall remain, it shall never be removed, this will be our Mat the eastern Corner of which I myself will occupy, the Indians being my adopted children their life shall never sink in poverty.\(^62\)

Thus, Johnson promised that the settlers would only occupy one small corner of the “mat” [the Great Lakes region], and that the welfare of the Anishinaabek would always be taken care of.

The second belt was the Twenty-Four Nations Belt; it featured 24 human figures, representing the Twenty-Four First Nations at the Council, connecting a British vessel laden with presents on one side to the land of North America on the other.

![Figure 3: Twenty-Four Nation Wampum Belt (replica). Used with the permission of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation.](image)

The belt represented the following promise:

My children, see, this is my Canoe floating on the other side of the Great Waters, it shall never be exhausted but always full of the necessaries of life for you my Children as long as the world shall last.

Should it happen anytime after this that you find the strength of your life reduced, your Indian Tribes must take hold of the Vessel and pull, it shall be all in your power to pull towards you this my Canoe, and where you have brought it over to this Land on which you stand, I will open my hand as it were, and you will find yourselves supplied with plenty.\(^63\)
As Darlene Johnston comments,

In accepting the Twenty-Four Nations belt, the Anishnaabeg bound the British Crown to a perpetual promise that their alliance would be live-giving and sustaining, not impoverishing. These two belts, and the promises embedded in them, form the foundation of the British – Anishnaabeg Treaty Alliance. Subsequent agreements must be read in light of these original promises of protection and sustenance.\textsuperscript{64}

In particular, the apparent Mississauga agreement to give up the lands on the north shore of Lake Ontario for a modest remuneration, which has often been attributed by historians and others primarily to Mississauga naïveté (furthering a discourse of their childlike simplicity), must be seen within the context of these emphatic British promises to provide presents and ensure Mississauga welfare in perpetuity. Given Johnson’s evident appreciation of Wabbicommicot’s role in resolution of the conflict and the Credit Mississaugas’ demonstrated loyalty to the British, even at the risk of alienating their relations, the Mississaugas of the Credit must have considered themselves in an especially secure and esteemed position vis-à-vis the British.

Despite Johnson’s affirmations of Indigenous sovereignty at Niagara, he was unable to change the general British misconception that the Indigenous Nations considered themselves “subjects of the crown” or the blatant British written misrecording of oral agreements, which inserted such language into treaty documents. He wrote privately to Thomas Gage:

You may be assured that none of the Six Nations, Western Indians, etc. ever declared themselves to be Subjects, or will ever consider themselves in that light whilst they have any Men, or an open Country to retire to, the very Idea of Subjection would fill them with horror. \textsuperscript{65}

Yet Johnson was unable to stem this assumption on the part of the British. From at least the 1760s, then, British colonizers and the Mississaugas diverged significantly in their interpretations of their treaty agreements and the legal status of Indigenous peoples.
Mississauga Land Cessions

It is in the light of the Mississauga memory of British promises made at the Treaty of Niagara that the Mississauga cession of the Toronto Purchase and other huge tracts of land to the British in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be understood. The Toronto Purchase is one of five early land transactions of particular importance to the history of the Toronto region: the 1784 Mississauga cession of a huge tract of land in the Niagara Peninsula that was turned over to the Six Nations,66 the 1787 Toronto Purchase and accompanying “Gunshot Treaty” of 1788, the 1805 “confirmation” of the Toronto Purchase, and the 1805 surrender of most of the Mississauga territory between York and Burlington Bay (the “Mississauga Tract”). Small additional surrenders were made in 1818 and 1820. A century later, the 1923 Williams treaty was negotiated with a number of Anishinaabek Nations (but not the Mississaugas of the New Credit) to finally obtain clear title to a large section of eastern Toronto and the north shore of Lake Ontario that had inadvertently remained legally unsurrendered due to problems with the “Gunshot Treaty.”67

The immediate context for the Toronto Purchase was that, with the British loss of territory south of the Great Lakes after the American Revolution, land on the north shore of Lake Ontario had gained a new strategic and military importance and the value of land increased dramatically. The Toronto Carrying Place also assumed a new importance since it provided safe access through British territory to the vast fur-bearing territories of the Northwest.68 The British recognized the north shore of Lake Ontario as a potential site for relocating loyal British subjects – including the Kanienkehaka (Mohawks) and other “Red Loyalists” -- fleeing the new republic. Between 1783 and 1785, 10,000 Loyalists streamed into what would become Upper Canada.
Quickly outnumbered by settlers, some Mississaugas renewed their alliance with the Six Nations in 1784 and ceded a large tract of land along the Grand River about 55 miles (90 km) west of the future site of the town of York for their resettlement. Senior Mississauga chief Pokquan said,

We the Mississagas are not the owners of all the Land laying between the three Lakes, but we have agreed and are willing to transfer our right of Soil & property to the King our Father, for the use of His people, and our Brethren the Six Nations…this tract of Land we imagine will be quite sufficient both for the King’s people, and our brethren the Six Nations, who may wish to settle and hunt thereon…We are Indians, and consider ourselves and the Six Nations to be one and the same people, and agreeable to a former, and mutual agreement, we are bound to help each other.

By 1789, 1200 Haudenosaunee lived at Grand River, 400 of whom were Mohawk (Kanienkahaka); they greatly outnumbered the neighbouring Mississaugas.

After securing land for the Six Nations, the British turned their attention to other parts of the colony, including the strategic north shore of Lake Ontario. In September 1787, Sir John Johnson, in his capacity as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, met with a number of Mississauga bands at the Bay of Quinte to discuss several potential land transactions north of the lake, and the parties apparently came to a preliminary agreement for the purchase of land at Toronto (the Toronto Purchase) as well as land on either side of the Humber River, at Lake Simcoe, and from Toronto to the Bay of Quinte. This was not simply a process involving leaders: 626 Anishinaabek attended the meeting at the Bay of Quinte; a further 391 gathered at Toronto and on the Thames River. The latter two groups were represented at the Quinte council by selected chiefs.

Although the parties came to some provisional agreement over the use of land and gifts were exchanged, in the case of the Toronto Purchase there was considerable subsequent confusion over the nature of the cession, the extent of land surrendered, and whether the presents given were intended and understood as payment for the land in question or were
presents for military allies and trading partners, all leading to dispute over the overall legal validity of the transaction.\textsuperscript{75} The English and Mississaugas had very different understandings of what had transpired at the 1787 meeting and the recording of the agreement was faulty.

When Alexander Aitken arrived at Toronto Bay the next year (in August 1788) to survey the land apparently ceded under the Toronto Purchase, Chief Wabakinine, who had been present at the Bay of Quinte meeting, objected when Aitken attempted to set the eastern boundary of the parcel at the “lower end of the beach which forms the Harbour” [Ashbridges Bay], and insisted that the Mississaugas had not sold land east of the Don River. A few days later Lord Dorchester (accompanied by Sir John Johnson and Colonel Butler, the military commander of Butler’s Rangers) arrived from Niagara with presents that appear to have been intended as payment for the land surrendered (though this is still a matter of dispute).\textsuperscript{76} With the assistance of Nathaniel Lines, who had been the interpreter at the 1787 meeting, Dorchester held discussions with the Mississaugas and eventually secured their agreement to the more eastern boundary point.\textsuperscript{77} A second land cession, the so-called Gunshot Treaty, was also apparently agreed to or confirmed at that time; it ran along the north shore of Lake Ontario from the eastern boundary of the Toronto Purchase to the Bay of Quinte, but again the exact boundaries of the Purchase were not established and it is not clear what, if any, payment was made.\textsuperscript{78} Although agreement on the eastern boundary of the Purchase had been reached, after Dorchester and his party left and Aitken proceeded westward to continue the survey of the Toronto Purchase lands, he was again resisted when he tried to cross the Humber River by Mississaugas who disputed the extent of land sold. Although, with the intervention of Colonel Butler, Aitken was able to proceed to Etobicoke Creek (a contravention of the Royal Proclamation), once Butler left the area Aitken was not able to complete the survey for fear of Mississauga reaction.\textsuperscript{79}
Clearly, there was significant disagreement about what had transpired at the Quinte meeting, and it had not been resolved. Confusion over the boundaries was exacerbated by the fact that there was no clear written record of the agreement of 1787 and later recollections by Johnson, Lines, and another non-Indigenous witness to the treaty offered conflicting accounts of the transaction. In addition, the Mississaugas had apparently understood the agreement in the context of the traditional ethic of ongoing reciprocal gift-giving that they had successfully used in their dealings with traders in the past, and which seemed to have been affirmed through the Treaty of Niagara. In their view, they had agreed to a peace and friendship treaty meant to establish ongoing obligations and the sharing of the land. They apparently thought they would receive increased annual presents of guns, ammunition, shot, cloth and clothing in perpetuity as a form of rent.

For these reasons, the Mississaugas did not insist on a large payment for the land. As Alan Taylor puts it: “Lacking a commercial perspective, the Mississaugas sought a better relationship with the colonizers rather than a better price for their land,” which was the same strategy of engagement with the British that Wabbicommicot had followed earlier. For example, in 1788, several chiefs described their land cession as a gift rather than a sale, with the expectation that the British would be obligated to reciprocate in perpetuity. In their view, by gifting the land to the settlers, they had created a long-term, symbiotic relationship in which they could “farm the farmers, obtaining food in the hungry season as rent for native land.” Because of these miscommunications, the British acquired deeds for thousands of acres of land in the Niagara Peninsula and almost all the land along the shores of Lake Erie, Ontario, and the St. Lawrence through the cessions of 1781, 1782, 1784, 1787, and 1788.

Notably, of the six eighteenth-century treaties purportedly ceding the lands on the north shore of Lake Ontario, only two were recorded in writing and one of these two (the
Toronto Purchase) was only a blank deed which did not describe the boundaries of the cession. None of these treaties followed the established legal process for land surrenders articulated through the Royal Proclamation.\(^{86}\) Yet scholarly opinion is divided on whether these initial treaties were deliberately fraudulent on the part of the British, or the result of sloppy administration, poor translation, or a clash of worldviews. Historian Ian Johnson has argued that both sides negotiated peace and friendship treaties rather than land sales: “In the 1780s, peace and trade, not real estate, were the primary considerations of both the tribes and the Indian Department…Property relations were not a priority of the Indian Department and consequently treaty regulations were not followed.”\(^{87}\)

Regardless of their original intent, immediately after these treaties were negotiated, colonial officials regarded them as outright land sales that extinguished Aboriginal title to the ceded lands. In 1794, a chief of the Thames Valley lamented “that the English were nearly as bad as the Americans in taking away their Lands.”\(^{88}\)

Fundamental to ensuing disputes about these land agreements was a very different relationship to the written and spoken word among the British and Mississaugas. To the latter, the spoken word was the most trustworthy, since it was embodied and was spoken before witnesses, whereas for the English, although verbal promises were made with great solemnity, they were provisional and fundamentally instrumental – to be observed until circumstances changed and compliance was no longer in their interest.\(^{89}\) For example, when Sir John Johnson persuaded the Mississaugas to surrender the vast north shore of Lake Ontario, he assured them that they would be able to hunt and fish at their old locations, their retained lands would be protected from encroachments by settlers, and the English would help those who wanted to learn farming and would provide blacksmiths and doctors.\(^{90}\) The British understood the kind of ongoing relationship the Mississaugas sought, for they
recognized that such verbal promises were necessary to get their agreement and also had long
experience with the Covenant Chain relationship with the Haudenosaunee and the necessity
of its regular “polishing” to maintain the alliance. These oral agreements were not honoured,
however,91 while written title to land acquired from Indians was immediately considered
sacrosanct and permanent. The Mississaugas were unable to check that written deeds
conformed to verbal agreements as none were literate in English before the first quarter of
the nineteenth century.92 British officials likely believed that their promises would soon
become redundant as the Mississaugas died out, a not unreasonable prediction given their
low numbers and the devastation caused by epidemics and alcohol.

South of the border, the British had promised the Native nations of the Ohio valley
alliance, military support, and repatriation of lost territory, in spite of Britain’s signature on
the Treaty of Paris that guaranteed the transfer of western regions to the Americans. As Ian
Johnson remarks, “This deliberate duplicity south of the border raises questions about British
intentions and procedure in their treaty process north of the lakes with the Mississaugas.”93

The British had sought to negotiate such land transactions prior to European
settlement to avoid the chaotic and lawless invasions of Indigenous lands that were common
in the United States; however, exactly because such agreements were made prior to the
arrival of settlers and were negotiated by officials of a distant oligarchic British government,
such diplomacy “did not rest on a bedrock of common life.”94 It is perhaps not surprising that,
subsequently, settlers recognized no relationship of reciprocity with the Mississaugas or
responsibilities towards them. Ultimately it did not matter that the Mississaugas had a
different understanding of the meaning of the treaty, because the British very rapidly
outnumbered their Indigenous neighbours. As early as 1785, white loyalists possibly equaled
the Aboriginal population in the province, even when the Six Nations were included.95
With hindsight, it is evident that the Toronto Purchase created a crucial dividing line in British perceptions of local Indigenous peoples, in that once the Mississaugas agreed to surrender their land, they became people of the past, no longer necessary to a settler present or future, people who most settlers believed would not become part of the modernity of British North America, and who were seen as impediments to the colony’s development.

Subsequent settler histories rarely questioned why the Mississaugas sold so much land so readily and for so little, or they assumed that the Mississaugas did so because they welcomed the British and willingly “gave way” to British cultural and military superiority. They rarely remembered that at the time of the Toronto Purchase, the Mississaugas, although few in number in the Toronto area, were members of “one of the most extensive tribal confederacies ever to exist in the Great Lakes-Ohio Valley region and thus held the military might to influence all activity in northeastern North America.” They were unable to plausibly account for the fact that “the same tribes that grew powerful and influential in the fur trade and drove the [Haudenosaunee] out of Ontario by conquest, willingly gave away their lands, thereby undermining their economy and threatening their culture and their people with extinction, within two generations.”

Large numbers of Mississaugas, by contrast, had been involved in the decision to make the cessions to the British; their leaders had been required to consult and represent the wishes of their communities and the negotiations were witnessed by many band members; the memory would be transmitted to the next generation as long as there was sufficient population and enough social stability to ensure oral transmission…but these conditions were soon disrupted. As many more settlers entered the province after Upper Canada was split off from Lower Canada in 1791, and as settlers’ agricultural and other pursuits began to decimate the forest landscape and pollute the waters essential to the Mississauga economy,
the Mississaugas began to understand that the treaties of the 1780s were not understood by
the British as agreements to share the land. Their economic self-sufficiency increasingly
under threat, they began to protest and some made raids on settler farms.98

In 1793, the newly appointed lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, John Graves
Simcoe, decided to build a naval base at Toronto Bay, since other British settlements were
too close to American territory and there were ongoing tensions with the United States,
especially concerning the unsurrendered western forts. Simcoe hoped to secure the portage
routes at Toronto to keep communication open to the upper Great Lakes if the Americans
threatened the Lake Erie-Detroit River route to the interior.99 He also envisioned a network of
roads for transporting troops and supplies, in the event that the Americans gained control of
Lake Ontario. Thus York was founded in 1793 as a military outpost and distribution centre
for the new settler colony of Upper Canada. It was not originally intended as the capital.

The 1805 “Confirmation” of the Toronto Purchase and the Cession of the Mississauga Tract

Concerns about the validity of settler land tenure soon prompted Simcoe to ask for
confirmation of the Toronto Purchase from Lord Dorchester, Governor General of British
North America. In January 1794, the latter declared the written deed for the Purchase to be
invalid because the document had never been completed:

a Plan…has been found in the Survey’r General’s Office, to which is attached a blank
deed, with the names or devices of three chiefs of the Mississauga Nation, on separate
pieces of paper annexed thereto, and witnessed by Mr. Collins, Mr. Kotte, a Surveyor,
since dead, and Mr. Lines, Indian Interpreter, but not being filled up, is of no validity,
or may be applied to a land they possess; no Fraud has been committed or seems to
have been intended. It was, however an omission which will set aside the whole
transaction, and throw us entirely on the good faith of the Indians for just so much
land as they are willing to allow, and what may be further necessary must be
purchased anew, but it will be best not to press that matter or show any anxiety about it. Thus, a year after York was founded, when only twelve houses had been built, the document that formed the legal basis for the settlement was known to be invalid and the exact limits of the Purchase were unknown. While Simcoe was able to confirm in 1795 that at least the Anishinaabek in the Lake Simcoe area considered that the land on the north shore of Lake Ontario had been ceded, the lack of a valid deed was covered up and nothing was done for ten years about the lack of official documentation.

In the mid 1790s, fears of a widespread Indigenous uprising led to British determination to gain control of the entire north shore of Lake Ontario, and thus to press the Mississaugas for the cession of the remaining lands between Etobicoke Creek and Burlington Bay, which they saw as a threat to their security and an interruption in their communication and jurisdiction. Government correspondence through most of the 1790s reveals that Governor Simcoe and his successors were very concerned that the Mississaugas would turn against the settlers in reaction not only to local problems but to Britain’s handling of the issue of the retained British forts south of the border and British inability or unwillingness to stop American expansionism in the Ohio valley. The strength of the Indigenous military alliance to which the Mississaugas belonged was demonstrated when the Indigenous forces (including Mississaugas) defeated American General Arthur St. Clair in the Ohio Valley in 1791. In September 1794, one year after the founding of York, this confederacy of Indigenous peoples in the Ohio valley (the “Western Indians” or United Indian Nations), was defeated by American General Anthony Wayne at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, while the British soldiers at nearby Fort Miami British refused to come to the aid of their Indigenous allies. Resentment grew against the British for their betrayal, and Simcoe feared
the Mississaugas and their allies would attack settlers in Upper Canada. The inhabitants of York were especially vulnerable, living as they did 150 miles from the nearest British settlement.

Tensions only increased with increased settler disturbance of Mississauga lands, graverobbing, settler overfishing, and the discontinuance of traditional presents under pressure from London to reduce the expenses of the Indian Department, all of which impoverished and demoralized the Mississaugas and contributed to a growing Indigenous historical narrative of “broken promises” and disrespect. The 1796 murder on the York waterfront of head chief Wabakanine, one of the three Mississauga chiefs who had been present at the Toronto Purchase of 1787, brought these tensions to a head. Over the next two years, the Mississaugas considered attacking York and isolated farms in neighbouring townships, and the fear of war led Fort York to be granted official British army post status in 1798. That an uprising did not occur was partly due to the efforts of Joseph Brant, who indicated that the Six Nations were not willing to join the Mississaugas in retaliation. There were also rumours (fanned by Joseph Brant) that French and Spanish agents were stirring up Native peoples in the American Southwest to spread trouble into Upper Canada.

The ongoing destruction of game by settlers rendered the Mississaugas ever more dependent on annual presents. Because they were not farmers but hunter-gatherers, they became completely dependent on government largesse once their economic base was destroyed, which fundamentally altered their relationship with the government. Pressured by the British to give up their last major block of land on the north shore of Lake Ontario and increasingly impoverished, the Mississaugas had few options other than to seek the best price they could get. The subsequent Mississauga attempt to ally with the Six Nations to get a fair
price for the Mississauga Tract has never been part of popular settler memory or Toronto history.

After the murder of Wabakinine, the Mississaugas named Joseph Brant as their spokesman because of his long experience with the British in New York and his success in selling land privately at market prices, far above what the government was offering the Mississaugas. Brant had realized the profits that were being made at the expense of Indigenous people because the crown’s monopoly on land sales through the Proclamation of 1763 ensured it would be surrendered at very low prices and could then be resold at great profit. He attempted to harness the power of the market for Native ends.

Naming Brant “sole guardian of our Nation” with exclusive authority to “transact and negotiate all & every such matters as we may have occasion to do and transact with the white people,” the Mississaugas vowed to “become one people merging with the Mohawks” and some Mississauga warriors even began to shave their heads and dress like the Mohawks. The British reacted with shock when in October 1797, Brant, acting as the Mississaugas’ representative, insisted on at least three shillings, four pence an acre for the Mississauga Tract, which was twelve times more than the government offer of three pence per acre.

That cheap Indian land was essential to the financing of the development of Toronto has also never been part of Toronto’s origin story. With virtually no surplus agricultural production and little trade, and England unwilling to supply funds for public works (unless the cost could be justified by immediate military need), the Upper Canadian economy was incapable of financing the enormous expense of building much-needed canals and roads. The colonies of British North America, like those of the American states, were set up to derive much of their revenue and political stability through surveying Indian lands and selling land titles to speculators it favoured, thus generating revenue and securing the loyalty of powerful
people, who would reap their own profits as they sold the land to settlers. The entire economy of Upper Canada was thus premised on fundamental inequality between its Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants.

The active role that colonial authorities played in disrupting Indigenous resistance to rock-bottom land prices for Toronto land has also not been part of Toronto’s historical memory. Simcoe’s successor, the administrator Peter Russell, warned of Brant’s ambition “to be at the Head of all the Indian Tribes within this Province,” and was instructed by the Duke of Portland to counteract Brant’s influence on the Mississaugas through the appointment of an Indian agent at York:

The primary duty of the new appointee is fomenting the jealousy which subsists between them and the Six Nations, and of preventing, as far as possible, any junction or good understanding taking place between those two tribes. It appears to me that the best and safest line of Policy to be pursued in the Indian Department is to keep the Indians separate and unconnected with one another, as by this means they will be in proportion more dependent on the King’s Government.

Similarly, presents were to be distributed “in such a manner, and with such solemnities, as to produce the most powerful effect on the Indians, and to leave the strongest impressions on their minds, of their dependence on His Majesty’s bounty.” With the use of such tactics and the “interposing of large tracts of settled Country between them,” the Indians would be neutralized “without the possibility of their ever becoming an object of alarm or even inconvenience.” Chief Justice John Elmsley asserted that paying market prices for Mississauga land would actually be harmful to the Mississaugas since it would allow them to maintain “habits of indolence and intemperance rather than working harder and drinking less if forced to survive as labourers…. it certainly cannot be our interest to promote their improvement.”
The Land Board of Upper Canada reported in Oct. 22, 1798 that if Indians were to become aware of true value of land in Upper Canada, the cost of that land to government would rise substantially. Lord Portland instructed Administrator Peter Russell to refuse to purchase any Mississauga land at all and to prevent any private sales, so land would lose value in the eyes of Mississaugas. The hope was that the Mississaugas would eventually be willing to sell at the low price, in order to ensure the continued provision of presents. Portland predicted the Mississaugas would once again become eager to give the land to the government at a token price as a means of retaining government favour.

Meanwhile, in 1797, Peter Russell, lacking records of previous surrenders since Simcoe had taken all his records with him to Britain, had written to the new Governor General in Quebec, Robert Prescott, for copies of various deeds, including the 1787 Toronto Purchase. To his consternation, Prescott replied that he was not sending it because “that transaction is totally invalid, none of the blanks having been filled up.”

Russell replied:

Having laid before His Maj’s Executive Council for this Province the part of your Excy’s letter No. 26 in answer to mine No. 30, with the papers therein enclosed, we were exceedingly alarmed on reading the Paragraph which related to the Purchase made at Toronto in 1787[check], which if more generally known, would probably shake the Tranquillity of many respectable Persons, who have risked nearly their whole Property within its Limits. For should the whole of that Transaction be invalid, as your Excy and Lord Dorchester have judged it to be, the King’s right to any of the Land between the Rivers Etobicoak & Don, may become very doubtful; and our tenure of the intermediate Space (involving a great many cultivated farms, as well as the Seat of Government) might consequently be at the Mercy of the Messisagues, who, if they were apprised of the Circumstance, might be induced to give trouble with a view of making their own advantages from it.

Russell then proposed a devious solution to this problem, whereby a deed for a surrender of new lands adjacent to the Toronto Purchase could be drawn up, and without informing the Mississaugas, a recapitulation of the British understanding of the 1787
transaction could be incorporated into the new deed that would be signed by the
Mississaugas, thus taking advantage of their illiteracy. Prescott rejected Russell’s plan “on
account of its tendency to mislead the Indians, [which] would be productive of the most
dangerous consequences to the King’s Interest, as soon as they should discover, that they had
not been openly dealt with.”

Among the Anishinaabek, meanwhile, there was already a generational divide in the
way the Toronto Purchase was remembered. When Anishinaabek leaders from Lakes Simcoe
and Huron visited York in 1798, Chief Yellowhead, speaking through an interpreter,
apparently confirmed that lands south of Lake Simcoe, including the Toronto Carrying Place,
had been sold in accordance with the government’s understanding:

If you white people forget your transactions with us, we do not. The Lands you have
just now shew to us belongs to you; We have nothing to do with it; We have sold it to
our Great Father the King, as was well paid for it. Therefore make your mind at easy.
There may be some of our young people who do not think so; They may tell your
people that the Land is ours, but you must not open your ears to them, but take them
by the arm and put them out of your houses.

Yellowhead may not have been the appropriate chief to confirm the Toronto
Purchase, however, and Ian Johnson has suggested that he was actually referring to other
lands outside of the Toronto Purchase; in any event, the government’s subsequent actions
suggest a definite lack of transparency. When Chief Wabanip and the Mississaugas of the
Credit arrived unexpectedly at York just before the meeting with Yellowknife and other Lake
Huron and Simcoe chiefs, Indian agent James Givens ordered them to leave York
immediately, in order to keep them separate from their northern relatives. When the
Mississaugas protested, Givens announced, without authority, that henceforth no Indians
were to come to York or attempt to see the Lieutenant-Governor unless previously invited.
When both the Six Nations and the Mississaugas angrily rejected this denial of their rights,
Russell became extremely worried and ordered both houses of the Legislature to pass legislation to ensure that the militia was fully prepared and ready for the first hint of rebellion. Meanwhile, Russell ordered the building of a blockhouse, and military settlements were begun along the routes that Aboriginal people might use if attacking York.  

Fear of a Six Nations and Mississauga alliance with the Western Indians was thus a key element in Indigenous-settler relations in the Toronto area during the formative years of York. When the British finally surrendered the disputed forts on American soil after the signing of Jay’s Treaty, and the British received reliable reports that the French and Spanish agents had been unsuccessful in stirring up the Western Indians against the British and that these peoples wanted to remain peaceful, “all pretence of a policy of benevolence and reconciliation towards the Six Nations and the Mississaugas could be abandoned.” Without the threat of Native uprisings, Brant’s influence with the British deteriorated. The government refused to recognize him as the agent of the Mississaugas. Meanwhile, he was also being criticized by his own people at Grand River for selling vast amounts of Haudenosaunee land. Increasingly isolated, he withdrew from active politics, and the alliance between the Six Nations and the Mississaugas broke down.

In the late 1790s, Peter Hunter, the new Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, revived the government’s plan to purchase the Mississauga Tract. In 1805, the authorities decided the conditions were finally conducive to success. By then the Mississaugas’ assertion of independence and equality had collapsed and they had sunk to the state of dependence envisaged earlier by Portland and Russell. William Claus, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, met with the Mississaugas at the Credit River on July 31, 1805 to conclude the deal. The surveyor, William Chewitt, was directed by Claus to prepare two plans, each
showing different western boundaries for the Toronto Purchase, the first according to “the
Survey made by Mr. Jones,” (likely to Etobicoke Creek, as the boundary was drawn by
Alexander Aitken in 1788), and the second according to “that which you were pleased to say
the Indians conceived to be the true Boundary,”132 likely the Humber, as originally asserted
by the Mississaugas in 1788. At the council, William Claus, now Deputy Superintendent
General of Indian Affairs, began by telling the Mississaugas that the exact limits of the 1787
purchase had not been adequately defined and requested that Mississauga chief Quenepenon
(Golden Eagle)133 confirm the terms of the “Toronto Purchase” as agreed upon in 1788.

But as Leo Johnson points out, the minutes of the meeting make it clear that the death
of all the old chiefs had placed the Credit band in a very awkward position, because the oral
memory of the Purchase had been largely forgotten. Their old people had told them that the
western boundary of the Purchase followed the Etobicoke Creek for three miles, then ran
straight inland, but they didn’t know how far.

Chief Quenepenon stated:

All the Chiefs who sold the Land you speak of are dead and gone. I now speak for all
the Chiefs of the Mississaugues; We cannot absolutely tell what our old people did
before us, except by what we see on the plan now produced & what we remember
ourselves and have been told.134

Thus, when the Mississaugas were only shown one of the two plans, the one that indicated a
larger surrender, they accepted it.135

Claus then presented the Mississaugas with a demand that they surrender all their
lands between York and Burlington, and indicated that he expected an immediate answer.

Quinepenon was extremely reluctant to comply:

I speak for all the Chiefs & they wish to be under your protection as formerly. But it
is hard for us to give away more Land: The Young Men and Women have found fault
with so much having been sold before: it is true we are poor, & the Women say we
will be worse, if we part with any more land.136
Furthermore, the reality of the land surrenders had proven to be very different from what the Mississaugas had been led to believe, because settlers did not honour treaty promises:

The inhabitants drive us away instead of helping us, and we want to know why we are served in that manner – Colonel Butler told us the Farmers would help us, but instead of doing so when we camp on the shore, they drive us off & shoot our Dogs & never give us any assistance as was promised to our old Chiefs….The Farmers call us Dogs & threaten to shoot us in the same manner when we go on their Land.137

According to Leo Johnson, the fear of losing their presents was constantly in their minds during these discussions. Reluctantly, they complied with the government’s wishes, asking to reserve only a mile-square tract at the mouths of the Twelve Mile (Bronte) Creek, Sixteen Mile (Oakville) Creek, and the Credit, and no longer even proposing a price. Quinepenon’s words express their subjection: “Father. This is what we will do & we ask no price, but leave it to the generosity of our Father.”138 They also asked for protection against the racism of white settlers:

We now rely on you Father to protect us when we want to encamp along the Lake and not suffer us to be driven off as we now are on the Lands we formerly sold our Father, alth’ we were promised to camp & fish where we pleased: we also reserve all our fisheries both here [c] at the Sixteen & Twelve Mile Creeks together with our huts & Cornfields & the flats or bottoms along these creeks.139

But even this request was refused, since the government did not want to leave the creeks and harbours in Mississauga hands, though they were allowed to retain the right to the fisheries at the mouths of these rivers. The next day, the Mississaugas capitulated, asking only they be allowed to keep a small tract of land at the mouth of the Credit.140

Because of the duplicity with the two plans, the formal deed of surrender for the reconfirmed Toronto Purchase conveyed considerably more land than the ten miles square
cession that Sir John Johnson, chief negotiator of the Toronto Purchase, recalled the Mississaugas had agreed to in 1787. It also included the Toronto Islands, which the Mississaugas of the New Credit land claim says was explicitly excluded from the original Purchase. The ten shillings they were paid was a purely nominal fee; it did not begin to compensate them for the extra land included in the “confirmed” treaty (Figure 4).  

Figure 4: Dodem Marks on 1805 Confirmation of the Toronto Purchase.
From the map between 1:58 and 59 in Canada, Indian Treaties and Surrenders: From 1680-1960: 2 vols (Ottawa: Brown Chamberlain, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1891).

The accompanying surrender of the Mississauga Tract, from Etobicoke Creek to Burlington, was for 80,000 acres (32,389 hectares), for which the government decided to pay the Mississaugas one thousand pounds provincial currency at the Montreal price—approximately three pence per acre (7.41 pence per hectare). According to Leo Johnson, “Considering that wild land at this period was selling for approximately one hundred pounds for a two-hundred-acre lot, the price received by the Mississaugas represented about 2.5 per cent of its actual market value.”

At about 1 pence per acre, it was also a third less than the British had offered in the 1790s. This was so obviously unjust that even William Claus,
who had been the government’s negotiator for the treaty, protested. In a letter to Alexander Grant, the administrator of Upper Canada, he called for reconsideration. When he received no response, Claus wrote him again:

I beg to bring to your honours mind the pitiful situation of those poor people, the Messessagues, and hope that you will, sir, so far consider them, as to recommend a further sum than that stipulated in the Provisional Agreement.141

This plea had no result.

The following year, Quinepenon protested to the government that a settler was building a weir to catch salmon on their way upstream to spawn and “our Waters on this River are so filthy & disturbed by washing with Sope & other dirt that the fish refuse coming into the River as usual for which our families are in great distress for want of food.”145

As both Brant and the Mississauga chiefs had foreseen, the loss of land, the destruction of their fisheries, and overhunting by whites soon destroyed the hunting and gathering economy of the Mississaugas on the Credit. Mississauga morale and social life collapsed as well. Significantly, they also lost much of their relation to their own past as embodied in the land and in their daily practices, since the land had lost its power to provide sustenance, health, identity, and happiness and thus the link between past, present, and future. The Mississaugas’ world became unrecognizable, their historic presence negated and erased through the settlers’ transformations of the landscape. Increasingly, they were made to feel unwelcome, as if they were outsiders. Estranged from their land, they also became strangers to themselves, as the episteme upon which their life was built was threatened with destruction.

The Toronto Purchase and its 1805 confirmation bookend a significant transitional moment in the history of the Toronto area and of the Mississaugas. The two agreements mark the arrival in the Toronto area not just of Europeans but of their words. This moment saw the
passage from largely oral to written agreements, and the change from a relationship and diplomacy conducted according to traditional Indigenous protocols to the imposition of British rule. It marked the moment when gifts and presents changed their traditional meanings. It revealed the failure of British officials, let alone settlers, to recognize and honour their treaty relationship with the Mississaugas. One can see that although the British followed Indigenous diplomatic protocols and showed “respect” to the Mississaugas to gain agreement to the sharing of land, they had no interest in an ongoing bicultural reality. Once it was able to swamp the region with settlers, the British government was able to dictate the form and nature of the relationship between the two peoples. Further, by refusing the Six Nations and Mississaugas the right to sell their land at market value, they ensured the exclusion of both the Mississaugas and the Mohawks from the developing capitalist economy of the colony, confirming their own conception of Indigenous peoples as people of the past.

Later Euro-Canadian historiography would all refer back to this critical period of Toronto’s history, if not to the land agreements themselves. The early days of Toronto would become iconic, though what would be remembered by the settlers and their descendants would prove to be altogether different.

**Settler Stories**

From the moment of their arrival at Toronto Bay, York’s settlers began creating stories, images, and symbols of the town’s origins and development and their rightful possession of the land – in effect, they told their own creation story that, like all creation stories, expressed or explained the social order. Simcoe’s surveyor Joseph Bouchette, wrote a romantic description of his first view of Toronto Bay on May 4, 1793 that would become the
foundational text for the *terra nullius* interpretation of Toronto’s history and a classic passage in histories of the city, suggesting as it did a pristine landscape, an untouched Eden:

I distinctly recollect the untamed aspect which the country exhibited, when first I entered the beautiful basin, which thus became the scene of my early hydrographical operations. Dense and trackless forests lined the margin of the lake, and reflected their inverted images in its glassy surface. The wandering savage had constructed his ephemeral habitation beneath their luxuriant foliage-- the group then consisting of two families of Mississagas,-- and the bay and neighbouring marshes were the hitherto uninvaded haunts of immense coveys of wild fowl. Indeed, they were so abundant as in some measure to annoy us during the night.  

Thus, from the beginning, the area was described as empty, or almost empty, of inhabitants, the Mississaugas represented as “visitors” passing through the area from elsewhere, almost as ephemeral as their wigwams, in contrast to the expanding physical presence of the settlement of York. Later writers liked the image of the populous modern city arising from a single wigwam: Edward Allen Talbot, in his *Five Years’ Residence in the Canadas* (1824) would write, for example, “In the year 1793 there was only one wigwam on the site of this town.” In this “narrative of succession,” the Indian wigwam was a rhetorical devise to emphasize the city’s progress, yet it also legitimized the settler takeover of the land from “primitive” inhabitants who had never developed its potential.

In fact, the area and the natives were not nearly as pristine as they appeared in Bouchette’s narrative. As we’ve seen, the French had been trading with the Mississaugas near the mouth of the Humber from at least 1715 and at times the trade at Fort Toronto had been so brisk and lucrative that it threatened the trade at Niagara. While most published histories of the Toronto region refer to the French “fur” trade, this was actually a somewhat misleading designation, for the main focus of the Toronto trade had been liquor. Even after Fort Toronto was burned to the ground by retreating French soldiers in 1759, the Mississaugas in the Toronto region had interacted regularly with both French and British
fur/alcohol traders throughout the 1760s and 1770s. In 1770, for example, Ferrall Wade and Peter Keiuser (partners with, and outfitted, by none other than Sir William Johnson) arrived with trade goods consisting ‘almost entirely of rum.’ Although the Mississaugas had first demanded that alcohol be sold by the French as a condition of trade, by the late 1700s Chief Wabicommiccot and other Mississaugas recognized alcohol’s terrible toll, but were unable to stop it. British officials reported that a group of Mississaugas came to Niagara “naked and destitute of Everything, having Sold their Skins at Toronto for Rum,” that “the traders of Toronto debauch all the Indians from those quarters by selling them rum,” that the Mississaugas “loose more of their young men by Rum than they used to do by war.” While most later histories of Toronto would refer nostalgically to the “fur” trade of the French period on the Humber, they almost uniformly ignored the sorry details of the alcohol trade in the Toronto region; ironically, the city would later be known for its strict temperance and would be nicknamed “Toronto the Good.”

The British immediately began to transform the mental and physical landscape of the area. Governor Simcoe, who is said to have considered the Aboriginal name of Toronto “outlandish,” immediately changed the name of the new settlement to York, to commemorate the Duke of York’s recent victory in a battle in Flanders. Thus, in an act of “imperial fashioning,” the Indigenous place was reinscribed with a European name that symbolically incorporated it into European colonial geography and history. York was subdivided into a grid of lots and the streets were given names commemorating the British homeland, particularly names of the English royal family, familiar English places such as Scarborough, and other notable people or events from English history. Simcoe’s renaming of Toronto was not popular with either settlers or visitors to the fledgling town, however.
Joseph Brant sarcastically observed: “Gen. S. has done a great deal for this province, he has changed the name of every place in it.”

The descriptions of John Graves Simcoe’s wife Elizabeth and others of his entourage, recording numerous initially friendly encounters with Mississauga and Haudenosaunee visitors to York, their warm welcome by the lieutenant-governor and his family, and the friendly exchange of gifts, would become important sources for later settler discourses of the “benevolent conquest” of local Indigenous peoples, but other discourses popularized by early York settlers and visitors viewed the local Mississaugas with suspicion and disdain, and their comments were also repeated by later writers. British traveler Isaac Weld commented:

They are of a much darker complexion than any other Indians I ever met with; some of them being nearly as black as negroes. They are extremely dirty and slovenly in their appearance, and the women are still more so than the men; such indeed is the odour exhaled in a warm day from the rancid grease and fish oil with which the latter daub their hair necks, and faces profusely that it is offensive in the highest degree to approach within some yards of them.”

La Rochefoucault, who visited Upper Canada in 1795, remarked that ‘the colonists, by their mean and barbarous policy, teach the Indians to despise them.”

Historian Allan Taylor attributes this negative attitude to the “Iroquois prism” through which the British viewed all other Indigenous peoples. Given their large and concentrated numbers, their agricultural lifestyle, their long history and recent role as strong allies of the British, and their value as the first line of defense against Americans crossing the border at Niagara, the Haudenosaunee, and especially Joseph Brant, assumed great prominence in the eyes of British officials at York and a sometimes contentious leadership role among First Nations in their dealings with the British. The British consistently favoured the Mohawks and tended to regard the Mississaugas as especially “lazy, dirty, ignorant, drunken, and savage.” They considered the Mississaugas to be at a lower rung of cultural
development because they were not sedentary farmers like the Mohawks, and because, as
people living and hunting in forests, they rubbed themselves with fish oil as a protection
against mosquitoes. As more settlers arrived, the Mississaugas were increasingly treated as
beggars, driven away, and blamed for the loss of any domestic animals, while settler hunting
and fishing diminished Mississauga food stocks.¹⁶⁴

A further reason for the Mohawks’ pre-eminence was the legacy of the relationship
between the Mohawks and Sir William Johnson, and particularly between Molly Brant and
Johnson, and Molly’s brother, Joseph Brant.¹⁶⁵ Even after William Johnson’s death, the
relationship between his family and the Mohawks set the tone of the Indian Department into
the 1800s.¹⁶⁶ In the Toronto area this Mohawk influence was strengthened through Joseph
Brant’s association with fur trader and interpreter Jean-Baptiste Rousseau dit Saint-Jean,
whose father had been the first trader to be licensed to trade on the Humber. In 1787, Jean-
Baptiste married Margaret Clyne, a white woman whose family had been killed in the
revolution, and who had been the ward or adopted daughter of Joseph Brant. Rousseau and
his wife took up permanent residence on the Humber in 1792, and have been remembered as
the first European settlers in the Toronto region.¹⁶⁷

Elizabeth Simcoe expressed the common negative attitudes to the Mississaugas but
made a distinction between “Back” and “Lake” Indians. Those who lived well to the north of
York in the vicinity of Lake Simcoe and were relatively unaffected by British settlement she
described as “extremely handsome with a superior air.” She conceived of them in historical
terms, as being of another age, akin to the great pagans of the classical world¹⁶⁸; this analogy
also suggested that they were doomed to die out, as had the great classical civilizations. The
Mississauga who frequented York and Kingston, on the other hand, were “unwarlike, idle,
drunken and dirty,”¹⁶⁹ the product of cultural contamination.¹⁷⁰
Some stories of early encounter passed down through settler families recorded instances where the behaviour of the Mississaugas overturned the assumptions of local settlers, such as that passed down through the Cummer family of Willowdale:

One day Elizabeth, busy with her household chores, was startled by an Indian peering through the door, his eye on a shiny kitchen-knife lying on the table. Being afraid and most anxious for him to leave, she quickly gave him the knife. Later, he returned bringing her a cradle he had made for her baby John. It was an Indian custom to return gift for gift.  

In such stories, the friendliness and apparent acquiescence of Mississaugas to the settler presence was the narrative passed down to subsequent generations. Similarly, a gravestone in an old graveyard in Scarborough recorded another such encounter from the 1790s:

In memory of Mary Thomson, the Mother of Scarboro, who died the 8th November, 1847. Aged 80 years. Here her remains repose side by side with those of her husband DAVID THOMSON, Whose gravestone tells the Land of their Nativity and when they settled in Scarboro, which was then a Wilderness. On the opposite bank of the passing Rivulet, a little above this Burial-ground, they built their lonely cottage, and there they contended successfully against the hardships of a forest life; and there she passed the first seven months after their settlement without seeing a woman and the first was an INDIAN. As her husband, she lived and died respected, leaving behind her 100 descendants.

A volume published in 1896 further elaborated on Mary Thomson’s story, as remembered by her descendants:

During the first seven months, Mrs. (Mary) Thompson had not seen another woman, until one day an Indian woman came into the cottage. Her face was strange, the language spoken unintelligible, but Mrs. Thompson welcomed her gladly. Albeit of an alien race and colour, they were women, and they understood one another by the freemasonry of sympathy divinely implanted in the breast of women.

In this instance, the settler woman welcomed the Aboriginal woman into her “home” in an act of domestic virtue, while the Aboriginal woman was not named and was “alien” although she was indigenous to the place. Mary Thompson was commemorated as the archetypal pioneer woman, almost biblical in her begetting; in the eyes of later Torontonians, her struggle and sacrifice contributed to the founding of the nation. The Indigenous woman’s
descendants were unknown and possibly non-existent, a vanishing race visible only at the/moment of contact. In the late nineteenth century remembering of this encounter, the two
women met and “understood” each other in a tacit sisterhood that all women were purported
to share, the female version of the longstanding settler trope of Indigenous people welcoming
settlers that appears in so many forms across North America.

Although the Mississaugas of the Credit had a brief moment of glory when they were
the sole defenders of York against the initial landing by the Americans in 1813, their
contribution to the city’s defense was soon forgotten or minimized. After the end of the war,
when they were no longer needed as military allies, they were increasingly seen merely as
impediments to the colony’s development.  

Mississauga Traumatic Memory

In 1820, an unidentified southern Mississauga chief articulated a common Indigenous
discourse of Native generosity and settler betrayal:

You came as wind blown across the great Lake. The wind wafted you to our shores.
We received you – we planted you – we nursed you. We protected you till you
became a mighty tree that spread thro[ugh] our Hunting Land. With its branches you
now lash us.  

With their traditional economy destroyed, their land largely lost, and their population
decimated by war and disease over several generations, the Mississaugas became severely
traumatized. With confidence in their traditional ways already shaken because of these
multiple catastrophes, an incident involving Mississauga chief Quenepenon (Golden Eagle)
during the War of 1812 marked the abject failure of traditional spirit power to protect them.
Quenepenon, as may be recalled from the previous chapter, had signed the 1805
Confirmation of the Toronto Purchase and Cession of the Mississauga Tract and was chief at
Bronte Creek just west of the Credit. Quenepenon had a powerful name, for the golden eagle, a bird of the prairies, was the war eagle, the largest predator bird of North America and an exceptional hunter; its feathers were especially prized for use in ceremony. When Quenepenon had a vision that he could not be killed by any weapon, he gathered his followers together to bear witness to his spiritual power, instructing a man to shoot him as he held only a tin kettle in front of his face to catch the bullet. When the man complied, Quenepenon was killed instantly. As Donald Smith has remarked, “That one bullet did more than kill a respected leader; it shook the faith of many Mississaugas in their traditional way of life.” ¹⁷⁶

In the wake of these multiple losses, the survivors “were psychologically traumatized and …seem to have lost confidence in themselves as a people.”¹⁷⁷ Many lost faith in their own history and traditions, and saw no possible future. Both settlers and the Mississaugas themselves believed that the Mississaugas would soon die out. This period of extreme trauma and hopelessness would become internalized and passed on to future generations in the form of intergenerational trauma, a deep and unacknowledged or unresolved grief, felt both individually and within their society as a whole, since the entire community was traumatized.¹⁷⁸ Such historical memory was carried in the body and passed on over generations, often wordlessly.

In the fall of 1818, Indian agent William Claus met the band at the Credit River, where he found them “thin and miserable,” their land “lying dead.” He told them the king would buy their land in return for “Goods yearly to cover” their “Women and Children” in addition to the regular annual presents. For an annual distribution of goods, Ajetance, who had been made chief in 1810, agreed to this further surrender but asked that the band be allowed to retain three small reserves at the mouths of three local rivers, as “it is but small
and we will not have it long; it is all we have to live upon.”  

In another surrender in 1820, William Claus, now deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, arranged for the Mississaugas to sell the latter two reserves and their land at the mouth of the Credit, retaining only 200 acres farther up the Credit River, at the site of what is now the Mississauga Golf Course, promising that the proceeds would be used to educate their children, instruct the Mississaugas in Christianity, and build them a village on the remaining two hundred acres. However, the Mississaugas, because they were still not able to read the text of the surrender, had a totally different idea of what they had agreed to. In 1829, Nawahjegezhewabe (Joseph Sawyer) and Tyenteneged (John Jones) related what they had understood Claus to say:

The white people are getting thick around you and we are afraid they, or the Yankees will cheat you out of your land, you had better put it into the hands of your very great Father the king to keep for you till you want to settle, and he will appropriate it for your good and he will take good care of it, and will take you under his wing, and keep you under his arm, & give you schools, and build houses for you when you want to settle.  

Thus the Mississaugas thought the Crown would protect their land, for the Mississaugas wanted to “keep it for our children forever.” Meanwhile, an Order-in-Council accepted the surrendered land at Twelve Mile Creek “in trust to the Hon Mssrs Smith and Robinson,” the latter probably John Beverley Robinson, the newly appointed Attorney-General of the colony, in a direct contravention of the Royal Proclamation.  

**York Becomes Toronto**

The year 1834 marked the appearance of a new version of the Toronto creation story, or rather a recreation story, as the town of York was legally incorporated as the City of Toronto in recognition of its increased population and commercial development. The
incorporation took place on March 6, 1834 and as a mark of this transformation, Lieutenant Governor Sir John Colborne restored the city’s Iroquoian name. Declaring the name “Toronto” “part of the country and important in history since 1686” [when it was first mentioned in French records in a directive to build a fort], he thus included French history as part of the history of Toronto, but not necessarily Indigenous history. The incorporation thus was accompanied by an assertion of the city as a uniquely North American place and of the “indigeneity” of its settler population, which had of course been appropriated from the Indigenous peoples the city had displaced.

This settler indigeneity was also suggested by the iconography of the city’s new coat of arms. From 1834 and for more than a century – until 1998 – an “Indian” warrior appeared on the Toronto coat of arms, along with the imperial figure of Britannia. (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: 1834 Toronto Coat of Arms](image)

Used with the Permission of Ulli S. Watkiss, City of Toronto City Clerk.

The coat of arms exemplified a long-established North American practice of appropriating Indigenous imagery and constructing images of Indigenous/non-Indigenous friendship and cooperation to solidify the identity of settlers and legitimize the settler’s place in the new land – a practice going back to the image of the Indian saying “Come over and
help us” on the seal of the 1629 Massachusetts Bay Colony. Yet the fact that the warrior was inappropriately depicted for more than one hundred years in a Plains eagle feather war bonnet suggests the largely mythic role of the Indian. It reflected the nineteenth century belief that Plains Indians were the “real” and archetypal Indians.\textsuperscript{185} In fact, the image of the warrior was most likely intended allegorically, as a figure representing the New World, distinguished by its Indigenous aspect from its partner, Britain. In this reading, the coat of arms represented Toronto as a partnership between or joint creation of colony and empire. According to art historian Stephanie Pratt, such allegorical representations were common in early nineteenth century British art.\textsuperscript{186}

Yet, whether or not it was originally intended as such, the “Indian” on the Toronto coat of arms would later be identified as a Mississauga warrior, and thus the coat of arms could also be read as signifying an agreement between the Mississaugas and the British in the founding of the city. An early trope of multiculturalism,\textsuperscript{187} the imagery thus also suggested that an equal and amicable partnership between Britain and Indigenous peoples had provided the historic foundation for the city, belying the actual power imbalance in the treaty negotiations and all the subsequent actions that led to the dispossession and near demise of the Mississaugas.

\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{Notes}
\begin{thebibliography}{9}
  \bibitem{1} Donald Jones, Interview with Author, Feb. 6, 2006.
  \bibitem{2} The eagle feather helps to transmit the prayers to the spirit world, as the eagle is the messenger between these worlds.
  \bibitem{3} Before the incorporation of the City of Toronto in 1834, the chief structure of local government was the district, administered by government-appointed magistrates or justices, while towns elected only minor officials. The town of York was part of the Home District (originally Nassau District from 1788 to 1792). After 1834, the Home District included the area covered by Toronto and the counties of York, Peel, and Ontario. See
\end{thebibliography}


5 Archaeological Services, Inc., et al, *A Master Plan of Archaeological Resources for the City of Toronto: Interim Report*, submitted to Heritage Preservation Services, Culture Division, City of Toronto, August 2004, 12. This assessment is born out in the interviews with Toronto residents that I have conducted for my research on historical memory in Toronto.

6 Of the non-Indigenous interviewees, twelve did not know there was a treaty; the six who did know all had a background in history or heritage related fields. Five did not address the question. Twelve (including the six working in heritage fields) identified or guessed that the Mississaugas were the signatory to the treaty when asked. Fourteen non-Indigenous interviewees could name at least one Indigenous group who had lived in the area prior to the arrival of Europeans, but few knew more than one.

Three people of Indigenous or mixed heritage (all from non-local First Nations) were not able to name the Mississaugas as the Indigenous party involved in the Toronto Purchase, while fourteen Indigenous people positively identified them; four did not address the question. Four interviewees of Indigenous or mixed heritage could not name any of the peoples who lived in the region prior to the arrival of the British.


8 Bryan Laforme, in public remarks at Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, July 28, 2009.


12 See previous chapter, fn 90.

13 See www.toronto.ca. It’s possible that the city was advised not to include discussion of the treaty’s problematic nature for legal reasons while the land claim was in process.


15 Ibid.

16 www.toronto.ca

17 The earliest written version was recorded by captive John Tanner prior to 1800; other versions were published in the nineteenth century by Anishinaabe author William Warren (18xx) and Walter J. Hoffman (1891). See Vennum, “Ojibwa Origin-Migration Songs,” 753.

18 No one knows how old the Midewewin is as an institution (its antiquity has been a matter of scholarly debate), but there is no doubt that it draws on ancient Anishinaabek worldviews. For hundreds of years (at the very least), a Mide priest known as a kanawecikewinini (lit. “preserve-man”) has been given the responsibility of acting as tribal historian and songs incorporated into Mide ceremonies have preserved some of the most ancient idioms of Anishinaabemowin, the language of the Anishinaabek. Vennum, “Migration Songs,” 753; Dewdney, *Sacred Scrolls*, 67. While the full origin-migration story is told over a week’s time, some themes are included in prayers said at every Mide ceremony and discussed or enacted in teachings and rituals. Portions of the origin story are also symbolically reenacted in initiation rituals, where the historical journey from east to west is paralleled in the new member’s “path of life”, from the sweatlodge east of the medicine lodge, through the initiation in the lodge, to the western door, from which the initiate exits. William Warren, “History of the Ojibway Nation,” *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* 5 (1885), 77-81. Vennum, “Migration Songs,” 753-754; Dewdney, *Sacred Scrolls*.

19 Kahgegagahbowh (George Copway), a nineteenth-century Mississauga Christian from the north shore of Lake Ontario, wrote that near Lake Superior there were three depositories of “records written on slate rock, copper, lead, and on the bark of birch trees…. These records are made on one side of bark and board plates, and are examined once in fifteen years, at which time the decaying ones are replaced by new plates…Ten of the wisest and most venerable of the Nation dwell near these, and are appointed guardians over them.” George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (Boston: Mussey, 1851), 128-30.

Population History may also have lived in or near these cosmopolitan Iroquoian villages, as some are known to have done with the trading relationships with Algonquian-speakers who were ancestral to the Anishinaabek; some Algonquians Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), whose homeland was south of Lake Ontario. These Iroquoian-speakers also had

University of British Columbia Press, 1999)


Selwyn Dewdney noted that the oldest migration charts known to outsiders show nothing east or west of Lake Superior, Dewdney, Sacred Scrolls, 75; and, although Ojibwa tradition claims an earlier and more easterly origin than the sojourn of the ancestral Anishinaabek at Bowetung, or Sault Ste. Marie, the latter is the first clear geographical location described in surviving lore, while earlier locations are more legendary, such as “big earth” created by the Great Spirit after the flood, and “rock island,” according to Dewdney, Sacred Scrolls, 58, and Vennum, “Migration Songs,” 764 -7. Benton-Benai depicted the migration as following the south shore of Lake Ontario on a map in The Mishomis Book. The first suggestion in print (that I am aware of) of the Toronto islands as a stopping place in the Great Migration was made by Rodney Bobiwash in 1997 in The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life in Toronto, (Toronto: Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, 1997), 8.

For example, in the Middle Woodland the local subsistence hunter-gatherer economy was very similar to that of the Nippissings and Ottawas of the period after contact, with a diet of fish, deer, nuts, mussels, waterfowl, and, in some areas, wild rice. Again, some spring-summer gathering sites were occupied for centuries. Warrick, A Population History of the Huron-Petun, A.D. 500-1650, Studies in North American Indian History, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 323.

Kahgegagahbowh (George Copway) wrote: “All appear to adopt the belief that most of the Indians came from the west. The present Ojibways, or those now called Messamgans, settled in Canada West after the years 1634 and ’35. They came over from St. Marie’s River to Lake Huron.” Copway, Traditional History, 29.

Donald B. Smith, "Who are the Mississaugas?" Ontario History 67 (1975), 216.


See discussion by Sioui, Heritage, 11-16.

These included Attiwandonak (Neutrals) whose homeland was to the west of the Niagara escarpment and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), whose homeland was south of Lake Ontario. These Iroquoian-speakers also had trading relationships with Algonquian-speakers who were ancestral to the Anishinaabek; some Algonquians may also have lived in or near these cosmopolitan Iroquoian villages, as some are known to have done with the Wendat closer to Georgian Bay in the seventeenth century. For the region’s cultural diversity, see Wright, History, 1394; Sioui, Heritage, 83; Warrick, Population History, 362; Ronald F. Williamson, ed., Toronto: An Illustrated History of its First 12,000 Years (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2008), 50; Williamson, interview with author, July 19, 2006.


Whose homeland was south of Lake Ontario.

Interview with David Redwolf, March 19, 2006, re Wendat heritage. Susan Hill said that the Confederacy had favoured the Grand River territory over that at Tyidenenga in 1784 because previous intermarriage between the Neutrals of that area and the Haudenosaunee meant that many people at Six Nations who knew their lineage were descended from Neutrals who had lived “for a couple of thousand years at least” on the Grand River. Susan Hill, Guest Lecture, University of Toronto, Jan 17, 2006.; Lisa Brooks notes that the Grand River territory was within the old Attiwandaronk (Neutral) territory of Jigonsaseh, who helped the Peacemaker and joined the Confederacy. Brooks, The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 121.


Smith, “Who are the Mississaugas?” 213-14.

After devastating Seneca villages and crops to the east along the north shore and then heading south of the lake to the Seneca homeland, Denonville’s army returned via the north shore of Lake Ontario. Denonville recorded in his journal that he spent one night at the Humber River, left at noon the next day, and then reached Ganatsekwyagon. Edmund O’Callaghan, ed. Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 14 vols. (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1856-1887) (henceforth NYCD) 9: 368, 369. He makes no mention of the inhabitants of either village; it is not known if the villages were still inhabited or indeed were still standing, if the villages had been abandoned, or if he destroyed them, a matter of contention in historical memory today.

Although the Three Fires came to dominate southern Ontario in the eighteenth century, the relation of the Mississaugas who moved into the Toronto region to this confederacy is unclear, though at the very least they were allies, if not full members. Johnson, “Early Mississauga Treaty Process,” 31.


Propositions made by ye Sachims o the Five Nations to ye Commissioners for the managing of Indian Affairs in Albany, June 30, 1700,” *NYCD* 4: 693-5.


This relationship was commemorated in the seventeenth century Two-Row Wampum or Gus-Wen-Tah. Because Iroquoia occupied the most strategic position in North America between New York and New France, and also fronted Lake Ontario and thus controlled access to the Great Lakes, the British had cultivated their alliance with the Five Nations since the British had taken New York from the Dutch in 1664.


Schmalz, *Ojibwa*, 26-33. Peter Jones recorded oral history of the defeat of the Iroquois and also describes the proceedings of a council in 1840 renewing the peace and friendship treaty between the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee, Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians: With Especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1861), 114-122.


Smith, “Who are the Mississauga?” 217, 222.


By 1736 a French census counted approximately 150 warriors at Matchedash Bay and along the entire north shore of Lake Ontario (reflecting a total population in these areas of between 1000 to 1500 people), and the Anishinaabek were spread over a thousand miles of territory from the St. Lawrence River to the Lake of the Woods “Enumeration of the Indian Tribes, 1736,” *NYCD* 9: 1054, 1056-8.


Robinson, *TFR*, 100.

Ibid., 139.

Schmalz, *Ojibwa*, 72, 84.

On July 19, 1787 the Governor General, Lord Dorchester (Sir Guy Carleton) wrote to John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General: “It being thought expedient to join the settlements of the Loyalists near to Niagara, to those west of Cataracqui [Kingston], Sir John Johnson has been directed to take such steps with the Indians concerned, as may be necessary to establish a free and amicable right for Government to the interjacent lands not yet purchased on the north of Lake Ontario, for that purpose; as well to such parts of the country as may be necessary on both sides of the proposed communication from Toronto to Lake Huron.” Lord Dorchester, “Connecting People to Place,” 15.

For further information on Wabbicommicot and his relation with the British, see Chapter 6 of Heidi Bohaker, “Nindoodemag.”


On Oct. 19, Johnson wrote that he had recently given goods valued at £2000 to approximately 1,000 Mississaugas received £1,180 in trade goods, including guns, ammunition, and clothing. Robert J. Surtees, “Land Cessions, 1793-1830,” Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations, Rogers, Edward S. and Donald B. Smith, eds. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 102.


Benjamin Frobisher of the newly founded Northwest Company applied for land along the portage route from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay in 1784. In a competing proposal, French Royalist Philippe-Francois de Rastel, Chevalier de Rocheblave, applied in 1785 for 1000 acres from the mouth of Humber and a monopoly on moving freight to Lake Simcoe. While neither of these were approved by British authorities, they appear to have been the impetus for the Toronto Purchase. See Percy J. Robinson, “The Chevalier De Rocheblave and the Toronto Purchase,” Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada 31, (3rd series, 1937): sec. 2, 138-146.

Some Anishinaabek living near the Thames River later protested that the Toronto area Mississaugas had sold land that was not their territory. Schmalz, Ojibwa, 108.

Pokquan, speech, May 22, 1784, in Charles M. Johnston, ed., The Valley of the Six Nations: a collection of documents on the Indian lands of the Grand River (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1964) 47. The first sentence of this speech is used by some Haudenosaunee today to argue that the Mississaugas themselves recognized that they were not the true owners of the land of southern Ontario, and therefore argue that they were not in a position to sell that land to the British. Hill, Guest Lecture, January 17, 2007. See “‘Toronto’ is on Haudenosaunee Territory,” fn 27 above. However, Johnson argues that Pokquan was likely referring to the fact that their relatives, whom Johnson refers to as Chippewas, also held some of the territory, “Early Mississauga Treaty Process,” 157.


On July 19, 1787 the Governor General, Lord Dorchester (Sir Guy Carleton) wrote to John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General: “It being thought expedient to join the settlements of the Loyalists near to Niagara, to those west of Cataracqui [Kingston], Sir John Johnson has been directed to take such steps with the Indians concerned, as may be necessary to establish a free and amicable right for Government to the interjacent lands not yet purchased on the north of Lake Ontario, for that purpose; as well to such parts of the country as may be necessary on both sides of the proposed communication from Toronto to Lake Huron.” Lord Dorchester, Captain General and Governor in Chief, to John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General, July 19, 1787, Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, Third Report, 1905, 379.

LAC, DIAND fonds, vol. 15, p. 197, “Return of Mississauga Nation of Indians assembled at the Head of Bay of Quinte the 23rd September 1787...together with those of the same Nation collected at Toronto...” See also Robert J. Surtees, “Treaty Research Report.”

According to the records of the Indian Department, a “Distribution of Arms, Ammunition, & Tobacco made by Sir John...to the Missesagey Indians assembled at the Head of the Bay de Quinte the 23rd September, 1787, refers to a “formal cession of lands on north side of Lake Ontario,” and says goods were distributed not only to those Mississaugas at the meeting but also to those members of the “same Nation” gathered at Toronto and River Le Trench [Thames], consisting of 1,017 persons. LAC, DIAND fonds, vol. 10029, “Distribution List,” n.d. On Oct. 19, Johnson wrote that he had recently given goods valued at £2000 to approximately 1,000 members of the Mississauga Nation “for their readiness in giving their Country to the Loyalists,” LAC, MG19,
Claus Papers, vol. 4, reel C-1478, Sir John Johnson, Superintendent, Department of Indian Affairs, Quebec, to Daniel Claus, Dept of Indian Affairs, October 19, 1787. Yet British records indicate the presents had been intended not as a payment for land but as a reward for their loyalty to Britain and “services during the late American War.” Public Record Office, London, Treasury Papers, bundle 647, “Return of Merchandise intended as a present for the Missisagis Indians as a reward for their fidelity to His Majesty’s Government and Services during the late American War, May 17, 1787.” See Surtees, “Treaty Research Report,” 5.

Cf, the interpretations offered by Henry Scadding, Percy Robinson, Robert Surtees, Ian Johnson, Leo Johnson, and Donald Smith.


78 Aitken reported that he gave up the survey after Wabakinine “cautioned me against crossing it [the Etobicoke creek, as he was “left without anyone to settle any disputes that might arise between me and the Indians.” Aitkin to Collins, Sept 15, 1788.


80 The Mississaugas had entered into social and political relationships with the traders, calling them “Great Men,” and making formal speeches to them using strings of wampum. Nanebeaujou, one of the head chiefs of southern Georgian Bay, came to trade on the Humber in 1771 and adopted British trader Ferral Wade as his son, furthering their ongoing trading relationship through fictive kinship. From Wade’s account of this event, it is evident that the English traders were still very much operating in an Indigenous world. See Ferral Wade to William Johnson, Sept 22, 1771, The Papers of Sir William Johnson 8: 271.


82 For example, in a previous land cession in 1785, when discussing the price, “the Chiefs observed [that] they were poor and Naked, they wanted Cloathing and left it to their Good Father to be a judge of the Quantity.” John Collins, memorandum, Aug 9 1785, quoted in Taylor, Divided Ground, 130. At first, the Mississaugas thought the British had entered into the reciprocal relationship they sought, as they distributed more lavish presents and offered ceremonial respect, but in fact the British did so to obtain further large quantities of land at very low prices.

83 Taylor, Divided Ground, 131. One wonders how honest or idealistic Johnson was in making such promises, given his certain knowledge of the previous history of settler disregard for such agreements south of the border.

84 Schmalz, Ojibwa, 125.


87 Ibid., 184-185.


90 Ibid., 13.

91 In March 1790, John Butler, chief Indian agent at Niagara, wrote Sir John Johnson that “the Mississaugas complain at being disappointed in their payment for the lands they sold Government when His Lordship (Lord Dorchester) and you passed Toronto (in 1788).” Robinson, “The Chevalier de Rocheblave,” 141. William Chewett, Dept. Surveyor General, reported in March 1794 that while surveying Yonge St between York and Lake Simcoe some Mississaugas had asked Wapinose, Chewett’s Mississauga guide, the business of the survey party. When Wapinose replied that it was to open a road to increase trade, they said they had never heard of
any sale of those lands and sharply criticized Wapinose for helping the surveyors. Wapinose acknowledged that there was no treaty, but insisted that the survey did not take land from them, and mollified them with wampum. A few days later, William Bond reported that three Indians had robbed the man he had hired to improve his land in the disputed area, and because of this Bond intended to tell his associates in England not to come to Upper Canada. William Chewett to E.B. Littlehales, Aug. 31, 1794, Simcoe Correspondence 3: 24.


100 Cruikshank, ed. Simcoe Correspondence. Dorchester to Simcoe, January 27, 1794, 11: 138.

101 Schmalz, Ojibwa, 104.

102 This problem was so serious that the colonial authorities issued a 1796 “Proclamation to Protect Fishing Rights and the Burying Grounds of the Mississaugas,” Upper Canada Gazette, 30 December 1797.

103 Schmalz, Ojibwa, 110.

104 Johnson, “Mississauga -- Lake Ontario Land Surrender,” 236; Samuel Smith to Peter Russell, Sept. 11, 1796 and Russell to Simcoe, 24 Nov 1796, Edith Firth, The Town of York, 1793-1815: A Collection of Documents of Early Toronto. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), 36-37. However, as the British continued to give presents to American Natives who visited Amherstburg, the Toronto Mississaugas and their relatives at Lake Simcoe concluded that they were being neglected because the British considered them “weak.” At a council held at York on Nov 25, 1796, two chiefs from Lake Simcoe complained they had been “thrown away” by the government. Speech from Indian Chiefs of Lake Simcoe, Nov. 25, 1796, in The Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell: With Allied Documents Relating to His Administration of the Government of Upper Canada during the Official Term of Lieut.-Governor J.G. Simcoe while on Leave of Absence (henceforth Russell Correspondence) (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1932), 1: 98.

105 He was killed in a fight with a soldier who had attempted to prostitute his sister. Russell Correspondence 1: 49-50. See also Smith, “Dispossession,” 76-78, and Smith, Sacred Feathers, 27-29. It was the second murder by a British soldier of an important Mississauga chief in four years. In the case of both murders, neither soldier was convicted of any crime, though historians disagree about the reasons for this. Darlene Johnson suggests that in the case of Wabakinine, this was because the Mississaugas would not consent to an autopsy, as this was considered an offense to the dead. Darlene Johnston, “Respecting and Protecting the Sacred,” Report Prepared for the Ipperwash Commission, 2004, 20. Wabakinine’s wife, a sister of another powerful chief, Wabanip, died several weeks later, apparently of injuries sustained at the time. Schmalz, Ojibwa, 109-111; Johnson, “Mississauga-Lake Ontario,” 235; Taylor, Divided Ground, 342.; Brendan O’Brien, Speedy Justice: The Tragic Last Voyage of His Majesty’s Vessel Speedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 45-53.


107 Schmalz, Ojibwa, 109-110. But concerns about the vulnerability of York led to the decision by the government to grant land fifteen miles north of York to Count de Puisaye, a royalist French military officer, and 41 followers to protect York from attack. Taylor, Divided Ground, 346.

108 “Whereas other Indians (the agriculturally based Six Nations, in particular) continued to insist that the receipt of presents was a “right” earned by past services and mutual respect, the Mississaugas were soon placed in the position of annually having to “prove” that they deserved them.” Johnson, “Mississauga -- Lake Ontario Land Surrender,” 247.

109 Taylor, Divided Ground, 342-3.


111 Taylor, Divided Ground, 9.


113 Portland to Russell, marked “Secret and Confidential,” Sept. 11, 1797, Russell Correspondence, 1: 277-78; Taylor, Divided Ground, 343.

114 Duke of Portland to Peter Russell, Nov 4, 1797, in Russell Correspondence, 1: 277-78; Johnson, “Mississauga -- Lake Ontario Land Surrender,” 238.


116 *In order therefore to exercise that foresight which our Indian neighbours are but beginning to learn, and in which it certainly cannot be our interest to promote their improvement, we submit to your Honor’s consideration the propriety of suspending the promulgation of the plan which has been laid down for us until[sic] we can make a purchase sufficiently large to secure to us the means of extending the population and encreasing [sic] the strength of the Province, so far as to enable us before our stock is exhausted to dictate instead of soliciting the terms on which future acquisitions are to be made – For we are satisfied that the purchase of 50 or even 100 Townships, if made now, will cost us less than the purchase of ten after the


118 Peter Russell, Administrator, Upper Canada, to Robert Prescott, Governor in Chief, Quebec, September 21, 1797, in E.A. Cruikshank, ed., Russell Correspondence, 1: 284-5.


120 Peter Russell to Robert Prescott, January 21, 1798, in Russell Correspondence 2: 68-69.

121 Robert Prescott to Peter Russell, April 9, 1798, in Russell Correspondence 2: 137-38.

122 “Yellow Head’s Answer to the President’s Request, 22 May 1798,” Russell Correspondence 2: 161.


125 “Journals and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Province of Upper Canada, 1798,” speech by Peter Russell, July 5, 1798, in Russell Correspondence 2: 205.

126 The Queen’s Rangers were given land in Etobicoke so that they would be readily available to provide security. Johnson, “Mississauga -- Lake Ontario Land Surrender,” 243. Peter Russell suggested that weapons be given to experienced military men among de Puisaye’s followers to form a local defence force and buffer against any possible Indian threats from north.


128 He was accused of illegal use of attorney trust in 1797, having sold three-fifths of their territory, mostly to Americans, at enormous personal profit. The new Lieutenant- Governor, Peter Hunter, deliberately neutralized him by refusing to meet with him, invalidated his land sales, and forced him to approach the government through his enemy, William Claus, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Taylor, Divided Ground, 349-51, 358-359.

129 Meanwhile, the 1802 vision of Handsome Lake led to a new nativist spiritual and cultural movement among many Haudenosaunee, a revival of traditionalism and move away from the more integrationist politics of Joseph Brant.

130 The impetus was the ongoing concerns regarding the validity of the Toronto Purchase of 1787 and the need to define the eastern boundary of the new tract that the government wanted to buy. Robert Surtees, “Land Cessions, 1793 -1830,” 29, fn 94.


133 Quinepenon was the brother of Oskiqua, the Otter wife of Wabakinine. He was headman of Twelve Mile Creek. Bohaker, “Nindoodemag,” 217.

134 LAC, DIAND fonds, Vol 1, reel C-10996, “Proceedings of a Meeting with the Mississaugas at the River Credit 31st July 1805.”


136 LAC, DIAND fonds, Indian Affairs, Red Series, Lieutenant Governor’s Correspondence, vol.1: 294-96, Minutes of a meeting with the Mississaugas, Aug 1, 1805.


139 Ibid.

140 Indian Treaties and Surrenders (Ottawa, Queen’s Printer, 1891), Treaty no. 13, 1: 34-35.

141 ICC, “Mississauga Purchase Claim. It was on the basis of this discrepancy that the Mississauga land claim is based, and has been accepted. See also Mississaugas of the New Credit, “Toronto Purchase Specific Claim,” 9-10.

142 Johnson, “Mississauga -- Lake Ontario Land Surrender,” 249.

143 Taylor, Divided Ground, 350.

144 LAC, DIAND fonds, Indian Affairs, Red Series, Lieutenant Governor’s Correspondence, vol 1:310, William Claus to Alexander Grant, October 28, 1805.

145 LAC, DIAND fonds, Upper Canada Civil Control, Indian Affairs 1: 451, Quinepenon, speech, Sept. 6, 1806; also Russell Correspondence 1: 41; Donald B Smith, “Kineubenae,” DCB, 5: 466-7.
region. himself at the mouth of Humber; his son was remembered as the first permanent European resident of the

Furs were exchanged mainly for rum, brandy, and wine, along with guns, gun powder, shot and balls. Robinson, TFR, 94, 118, 120.

Trade had resumed in 1762, with the arrival of Jacques Baby, (son of Jacques Duperon Baby, of the Detroit mixed-race Baby family) and others (Baby’s son James would later established his estate at Baby Point, on the former site of Teiaiagon). In 1770, Jean-Bonaventure Rousseau, a Frenchman from Montreal, established himself at the mouth of Humber; his son was remembered as the first permanent European resident of the region. Robinson, TFR, 146; Schmalz, Ojibwa, 89.

“They assured him [Sieur de Ramezay] that Onontio was always their Father and that they would rather trade with the French than the English if the price of the goods were closer, and if they could get eau-de-vie, which they said they would not do without; and that if they could not get it at Fort Frontenac, where they could go in four or five days, they would go to Orange for it though it would be 70 leagues by land.” Letter from de Ramezay and Bégon to the Minister, Nov 7 1715, quoted in Robinson, TFR, 69-70.

Wabiconmicot had illegal traders brought to Niagara to be arrested, and had pleaded with the British that no further trade be allowed at Toronto, but was unable to stop the alcohol trade and eventually succumbed to it himself. Schmalz, Ojibwa, 96.

The Papers of Sir William Johnson 3: 754, 943.

Major Henry Basset to General Frederick Haldimand, 29 April 1773, quoted in Schmalz, Ojibwa, 95.


As brother to Molly and a former protégé of Johnson, Brant had a cachet both with Native people and the British. The latter were fascinated by his hybridity and “half-European manners,” though they were also wary of his ambition and didn’t fully trust him. The talents, charisma, and influence of both Brants were widely recognized and the British considered it smart policy to maintain a good relationship with them.

William Johnson’s son John was named “Superintendent General of the Six Nations Indians and others of the Province of Quebec” (which then included Ontario) in 1782, and John Johnson’s brothers-in-law Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson (who married daughters of Sir William) were also Indian Department officials. Daniel Claus’s son William continued the tradition of Johnson family dominance of Indian Affairs in Canada as deputy superintendent general of the Six Nations Indians in 1796 and deputy superintendent general of the Indian Department in 1800.

Kathleen Macfarlane Lizzlies, The Valley of the Humber, 1615-1913 (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1913). One of the Rousseau children was named Joseph Brant. See also “Jean-Baptiste Rousseau,” DCB, 5: 723-5.

After another sketching session with an Indigenous visitor, Simcoe wrote: “I sketched a Conneaghna Indian today whose figure was quite antique. I have often observed (but never had more reason to do so than today) that when Indians speak their art & action is more like the Greek and Roman orators than of Modern Nations. They have a great deal of impressive action & look like figures painted by the Old Masters.” Entry for 6 January 1794, Elizabeth Simcoe, The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe, wife of the first lieutenant-governor of the province of Upper Canada, 1792-6, with notes and biography by J. Ross Robertson (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1911), 212. As Eric Miller notes, Simcoe was referring to Renaissance concepts of Greco-Roman attitude “as though
the Greeks and Romans were the honourable Aboriginals of Europe.” Eric Miller, “Elizabeth Simcoe and the Fate of the Picturesque,” in Conny Steenman-Marcusse, ed., _The Rhetoric of Canadian Writing_ (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 101.

169 Entry for July 3, 1792, Simcoe, _Diary_, 115.

170 Some of the Mississaugas who lived near York were indeed living in degraded circumstances: for example, at the turn of eighteenth century, Nawahjegezhewabe (Joseph Sawyer) was sold by his father for a bottle of liquor, a story he later recounted to white audiences when he became a Christian. Schmalz, _Ojibwa_, 134.


172 ibid., 33-34.

173 The period after the War of 1812 was a very traumatic time in the Mississaugas’ history. Settler pressure on their remaining lands only grew worse. Sawdust on water from sawmills and floating oak staves were named the chief causes of the disappearance of the fish on the Humber and other rivers. In 1836, 185 people from the Home District signed a petition stating that the salmon fishery of the province was in danger of annihilation. Lizars, _Valley_, 118. As their traditional livelihood was destroyed, some Mississaugas eked out a living by selling baskets, maple sugar, handicrafts, and some fish to settlers, while others were reduced to begging. There was widespread hunger and while settlers felt free to supplement their diet by hunting and fishing, the Mississaugas were threatened when they trespassed on farm lands looking for food. Schmalz, _Ojibwa_, 151.


178 Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski, _Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing_ (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004), 2.


180 LAC, DIAND fonds, vol. 5: 46, Joseph Sawyer, John Jones to Sir John Colborne, River Credit, 3 April 1829.

181 ibid.


183 As Upper Canada became an increasingly prosperous agricultural colony with English laws and institutions, the population of York and the surrounding townships boomed. In 1815, York had had only 300 buildings and a population of 2,500; by 1834, this had risen to 9,256. D.C. Masters, _The Rise of Toronto_, 1850-1890 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), 8,11. In Upper Canada generally, from 1815 to 1824, the non-Aboriginal population doubled from 75,000 to 150,000, and would increase to almost half a million by 1840. Indeed, by the third decade of the nineteenth century, the Mississaugas were outnumbered by more than one hundred to one by the white settlers in the colony and were increasingly ignored in the York/Toronto area.

184 Lizars, _Valley_, 100.

185 Significantly, there was more than one version of the image, and some were more accurate representations: on an 1841 official letter announcing the birth of one of Queen Victoria’s children, the warrior was represented with a scalplock or three feather headdress, a fringed skirt, with one arm on a long bow with arrows in a quiver behind his back, holding what appears to be a pipe or pipe tomahawk, and carrying a scalping knife in his belt at his waist. See City of Toronto Archives, Information File: Toronto (Former City) Symbols, typescript, n.d., “Brief History of the City of Toronto Coat of Arms.”


Chapter Three

Countering Narratives of Extinction and Extinguishment

“...it was their intention to renew treaties of peace and friendship with all the Indian tribes in the dominions of her Majesty the Queen, that the interests of all the Indians were one; that they had always supported the British Government, as they were strongly attached to it, and if even that attachment should be lessened, it would not be their fault, but the fault of the government, in not keeping faith with the Indians; that all the Indian tribes ought to unite in obtaining titles to their lands, as all Indians stood in the same situation with regard to their lands: that the government and the white people were taking away their lands by fair promise…”

These words were spoken by Mohawk Chief John Smoke Johnson at a council held at the Credit Mission on the Credit River in January of 1840, when two hundred Anishinaabek chiefs and warriors met with fifteen Haudenosaunee chiefs to renew the treaty between their peoples for the fifth time. This mobilization of Indigenous historical memory was political: the Anishinaabek, and particularly the Mississaugas of the Credit, hoped to rebuild their alliance with the Six Nations so that their combined population of 10,000 people would make it harder for the government of Upper Canada to ignore or remove them from their territories, as was happening in the United States. At this council, they spoke of a government that had forgotten or ignored its promises, while the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek had remained loyal to the Crown, in accordance with their historic Covenant Chain relationship.

The treaty council was one of several attempts in the late 1820s to the 1840s by the Mississaugas of the Credit to mobilize Indigenous historical memory against settler narratives that positioned them as ahistorical, denied them title to their lands on the Credit, and asserted the inevitability of their extinction. These Mississauga interventions will be explored in this chapter.

This strategic deployment of Mississauga historical memory took two main forms: public performance and written text. The performative strategy was most closely aligned to oral tradition and historic forms of diplomacy, and was deployed in inter-Indigenous contexts.
such as the 1840 treaty renewal council as well as in commemorative ceremonies, such as the 1841 restoration of the Brock monument. With the development of Mississauga literacy through Methodist schools, written texts -- first petitions and later longer narrative autoethnographies – began to articulate a written history of the Mississaugas as a people, and as an “Ojibway Nation.” These texts collaborated with and appropriated British idioms of historical development and nationhood for Indigenous ends: they articulated Mississauga perspectives on their history and experience under colonialism for non-Indigenous readers both in the colony and British metropole and also provided a historical record for their own people under rapidly changing circumstances. They interacted in complex ways with settler discourses on Indigenous peoples and their historical development.

The 1840 council at the Credit was a response to the dramatic events of the previous four years, which had begun with the appointment of Sir Francis Bond Head as lieutenant governor of Upper Canada in 1836. Bond Head had forcefully advocated the removal of all Indigenous peoples in the colony from their traditional territories and their relocation on isolated Manitoulin Island. In the settler struggle over responsible government that soon embroiled Bond Head, the Tory Family Compact, moderate reformers, and the radical opposition under William Lyon Mackenzie, Bond Head tried to use Anishinaabek lands to fight the Reform party, engineering a number of forced surrenders and opening up Anishinaabek lands for settlement. The Mississaugas of the Credit, though few in number, were at the centre of resistance to this policy.

Today the story of the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada, which Bond Head largely precipitated, is one of the few events that the interviewees for my dissertation research could remember about the history of Toronto, while almost none knew the concurrent story of the regeneration of the Mississaugas of the Credit as Methodist Christians, their tenacious but
ultimately futile struggle to hold on to their remaining lands on the Credit, and their final exile from the Toronto area.\textsuperscript{2} At the heart of this struggle was a contest of nineteenth century historical discourses regarding Indigenous people in Upper Canada that was itself a subset of a much broader European discussion about the historical development and place of colonized peoples across the globe. The Mississaugas of the Credit were not merely subjects of consideration in this debate; their leader Kahkewaquinaby (Sacred Feathers) and several other prominent Mississaugas were active participants, with Kahkewaquinaby the chief promulgator of a new discourse of Mississauga history that helped to ensure their survival as a people under very hostile conditions.

Kahkewaquinaby (also known as Peter Jones) was the bicultural son of Welsh surveyor Augustus Jones (who had been one of the first surveyors of the Toronto area) and Tuhbenahneequay, the daughter of Wahbanosay, the eagle ogimaa of Burlington Bay and one of the chiefs who had signed the 1805 confirmation of the Toronto Purchase.\textsuperscript{3} Raised for the first eleven years by his mother, Kahkewaquinaby had been given an important name:

When I was young a grand feast was made for the purpose of giving me an Indian name, and of dedicating me to the guardian care of some particular god, according to the Indian fashion. I was then named Kahkewaquinaby, which literally means “sacred waving feathers,” and refers to feathers plucked from the eagle, the sacred bird. By this name I was dedicated to the thunder god; the eagle being considered by the Indians the representative of the god of thunder. At this feast I was presented with a war club and a bunch of eagle’s feathers, which I was to keep as a memorial of my dedication, the club denoting the power, and the feathers the flight of the god of thunder. . .My grand-father Chief Wahbanosay, officiated at the feast, and gave me my name, which belongs to the Eagle Totem, clan or tribe, it being that to which my mother belonged.\textsuperscript{4}

Subsequently, at about the age of nine, he was adopted by Ajutance or Captain Jim, ogimaa of the Eagle people on the Credit. Ajutance had lost a son bearing the same name of Kahkewaquinaby; perhaps Jones was adopted to assure his clan membership and potential
leadership role since it was inherited through the male line. However, Ajutance’s participation in a “drunken frolic” at the mouth of the Credit in winter resulted in Kahkewaquonaby being crippled for several months as a result of severe exposure, an experience that contributed to both his lifelong poor health and his determination to fight alcoholism among his people. Raised among the Mississaugas until 14, then educated in his father’s culture, Kahkewaquonaby and his sister were converted to Methodism in 1823. Within an astonishingly short time, he had converted most of the Mississaugas of the Credit and other bands who lived along the north shore of Lake Ontario.

For a time, many Mississaugas embraced Methodism in a revolutionary social experiment to reconstruct their devastated societies. Through radical personal transformation and social restructuring, they found healing, hope, and a new resolve to survive the cumulative effects of colonialism over the previous decades. Connection to the Christian God in the fervent prayer meetings of the Methodists enabled them to experientially renew their personal relationship with the spirit world. They also found political allies in the Methodists, who were strongly associated with the humanitarian movement then gaining strength in England and the United States. Humanitarians in Britain would become increasingly active in agitating against slavery and in calling for the protection of Indigenous peoples from the worst effects of colonialism, including their exploitation by alcohol traders.

Central to humanitarian discourses was a belief that history and culture, not genetics, could account for the disparities between nations: the “children of the forest” who were members of the “primitive” and “savage” societies at the bottom of the supposed hierarchy of nations could be civilized through the efforts of the British at the top. Education, sobriety, conversion to Christianity, and the adoption of agriculture and private property were seen as the key ingredients in a universal civilizing process. As Lord Glenelg later told Peter Jones,
“our forefathers the ancient Britons were once as barbarous as the North American Indians are; and as Christianity has made the nation what it is, surely it will do the same for the Indian tribes.” Thus, among other things, Methodism and humanitarianism offered the Mississaugas a new way to view their own history, while at the same time it allowed Euro-Canadians to see the missionary brand of colonialism as a gift. Through Methodist Christianity, the Mississaugas of the Credit Mission would reinvent themselves and offer a new Mississauga re-creation story to the world.

As a historical discourse, Anishinaabe Methodism also drew on the long tradition of other revitalization movements that had reinvigorated Indigenous societies through a reawakened spirituality, such as those of Neolin and Tenskwatawa, brother of Tecumseh. It echoed them in its call for a ban on alcohol and return to sobriety. It validated Mississauga historical experience by acknowledging the many wrongs done to the Mississaugas by whites, particularly whisky sellers, whereas most settlers simply regarded Indigenous people as degenerates or savages fully responsible for their own misery. Methodism also appeared to offer Mississauga converts a route to social equality, as it stressed personal reformation of both Indigenous and white sinners and required temperance of both. Yet in other respects Anishinaabe Methodism demanded a sharp break with the Mississauga past and a rejection of many social and cultural traditions, especially spiritual beliefs. Thus it both acknowledged some aspects of the historical experience of the Mississaugas and denied the validity of their historical culture at the same time. As Rev. G. Osborne would write in the introduction to Kahkewaquonaby’s *History of the Ojebway Indians*:

He, who in his infancy had been dedicated by his pagan mother to the eagle, -- i.e. the thunder god, -- now dedicated himself, unreservedly, to the living and true God...He, who on the day of his heathen baptism was presented with a war-club and a bunch of eagle feathers, as the insignia of his future office as an Indian chief and warrior, on the day of his spiritual baptism took unto himself the whole armour of God,
determined to fight the good fight of faith, and to win the crown of life, which fadeth not away.\textsuperscript{8}

In 1824, Kahkewaquonaby had founded a Methodist school at Six Nations (where he had close family and friends) which had attracted many Mississaugas from the Credit.\textsuperscript{9} In 1826 the whole band of 200 Mississaugas had moved back to the Credit River to live in a new model village established for them by the government from the band’s annuity funds, in fulfillment of a treaty promise from several years earlier. Through Kahkewaquonaby, British officials hoped to civilize the Mississaugas and eliminate the expenses of the Indian Department as the Mississaugas became self-sufficient farmers.

By 1827, word began to spread of an astonishing change among the Credit band; visitors described the substantial and comfortably furnished log homes they lived in. The Mississaugas had given up drinking and incidents of violence had dropped precipitously; they had begun to clear land for farming and send their children to school. They took on Christian names. Stories of their remarkable conversion and transformation into model Christian farmers circulated among Toronto Methodists through the \textit{Christian Guardian} and other Methodist papers and throughout North America. In 1828, the first formal inquiry into Indian conditions in Upper Canada noted the transformation of the Credit River Mississaugas and recommended a general policy of assimilation, whereby Indians would be similarly established in fixed locations, educated, converted to Christianity, and transformed into farmers, thus becoming ideal British colonial subjects.\textsuperscript{10} This policy was supported by Lieutenant-Governor John Colborne in 1830, as an alternative to US-style removals.\textsuperscript{11} Through Kahkewaquonaby and other Credit River converts, including David Sawyer and Maungwudaus (George Henry), as well as Mississaugas from other bands who were converted by Kahkewaquonaby, Methodist influence spread to Anishinaabek across Upper
Canada and ongoing relationships developed between some Torontonians, particularly Methodists such as the Ryersons, and the Mississaugas at the Credit Mission. In the 1830s and early 1840s the story of the Mississaugas’ conversion and civilization was emblematic of hopeful narratives of cultural evolution, a story told by Mississaugas, Methodists, and humanitarians alike that resonated in Indigenous communities, British North America, and even Britain.

The advent of literacy among the Mississaugas and the biculturalism of a few individuals like Kahkewaquonaby enabled them to enter a new period of advocacy for their historical rights beginning in the late 1820s. Because of the pivotal role they could play as intermediaries in dealings with white society, Methodist leaders were soon named chiefs or assumed leadership roles in many communities. Kahkewaquonaby was named a chief of the Credit band in 1828; his uncle Nawahjekezhewabe (Joseph Sawyer), whom Kahkewaquonaby had converted, was elected head chief after the death of James Ajetance in 1829. Together they sent many petitions to the lieutenant-governor and legislators at York concerning the need for protection of their fishing rights and a firm title to their land at the Credit. In these petitions can be found public articulation of their view of the history of local Indigenous-settler interaction, though undoubtedly tailored for political purposes. An 1829 petition to Sir John Colborne, for example, reminded Colborne that the Mississaugas had received the first Europeans as friends and gave them land to live on:

Father,

Your children who now petition you are a remnant of the great nations who owned and inhabited the country in which you now live and make laws; the ground on which you and your children stand covers the bones of our fathers for many generations…But the white man made us sick and drunken, and as they increased we grew less and less, till we are now very small. We sold a great deal of land to our great father, the King, for very little, and we became poorer and poorer. We reserved all the hunting and fishing ground, but the white men soon grew so many that they took all; when all the rest was gone, we kept the (Auzahzahkewayyogk) Sixteen-mile-
Creek, (Asquasingk) Twelve-mile-Creek, and the (Mahzenahekasepeh) River Credit. The two first are gone from us, but we are wishing to keep the Credit. We reserved one mile on each side of the Credit, where we now live. About four years ago, the Great Spirit sent to us good men with the Great Word, the Gospel of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and we became a new people; we have thrown away our sins; we live in houses in a Village where we worship the Great Spirit, and learn his word and keep his Sabbaths; our children and young men learn to read, and many of our people from a distance have joined us. We now want the fish in our River, that we may keep our children at home to go to School, and not to go many miles back to hunt for provisions. We also catch Salmon, and sell them very cheap to industrious white men, who bring us flour, and other provisions, and cattle; and they say it is much better than to fish themselves. But now, Father, we will tell you how wicked white men have used us—These are almost all lazy drunken white men, who will not work. They come in the Fall and Spring, and encamp for many weeks close by our Village— they burn and destroy our fences and boards in the night—they watch the Salmon, and take them as fast as they can be come up—they swear and get drunk, and give a very bad example to our young people, and try to persuade them to be wicked like themselves, and particularly on the Sabbath—their wicked ways give us much trouble, and make our hearts sorry. Others go to the mouth of the River and catch all the salmon—they put the offals of Salmon in the mouths of the River in the Lake; and often in the dark they set gillnets in the River, and stop all the fish. by these means we are much injured, and our children are deprived of bread.

Now, Father, once all the fish in those Rivers and those Lakes, all the deer in these woods, were ours; but your red Children only ask you to cause laws to be made to keep these bad men away from our fishery at the River Credit, from Mr. Racey’s line to the mouth of the River, and along the Lake shore one mile on each side of the River, as far as our Land extends—and to punish those who attempt to fish here. We will not fish on Saturday night, Sunday night, and Sunday, but will let the fish pass up to our white brothers up the River.

And we, your children, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Given that mission-oriented Christians and some humanitarian government officials were the only allies the Mississaugas had against land-hungry settlers, such discourses of improvement were necessary to counter the argument that Indigenous peoples were uncivilizable savages, unable to change or integrate with whites and therefore doomed to extinction.

Discounting such Mississauga narratives of civilization, in 1836 Sir Francis Bond Head articulated the belief that Indigenous peoples were essentially ahistoric; they could not be civilized into Christian farmers and were therefore doomed to extinction.
between the healthy lives of those who lived near Georgian Bay to the degradation and early
death of those living near the white settlements such as York further south, Bond Head
advanced a plan to relocate all Indigenous people in the colony to Manitoulin Island, where
they could hunt and live in their traditional ways during their final days. Historian Ted
Binnema suggests that Head ignored the considerable evidence of the successful
“civilization” of the Credit River and other bands because the civilizing policy offended his
romantic sensibilities; he preferred to preserve the noble savage “like a museum specimen,
for his own aesthetic enjoyment” until they succumbed to extinction. Bond Head exalted the
Indian as a simple “natural man,” unalienated from nature and morally superior to civilized
Europeans, whose increasingly industrial civilization he viewed as corrupt and artificial. This
was a view of radical alterity that many settlers shared. Anna Jameson, who spent a year in
Toronto in 1835, similarly believed that Indigenous peoples could not join an urban
modernity:

[They] do strike me as an untamable race,’ “[T]here is a bar to the civilization of the
Indians, and the increase or even preservation of their numbers, which no power can
overleap…I can no more conceive a city filled with industrious Mohawks and
Chippewas, than I can imagine a flock of panthers browsing in a penfold.”

Initially a number of Aboriginal people, including Kahkewaquonaby and others at the
Credit Mission, who were increasingly affected by the presence of settlers and squatters
crowding them on all sides of their 200 acres, had supported the idea of removal to a more
northerly Indian territory where they would be segregated from whites for their own
protection and given the freedom to govern themselves, a new incarnation of the old dream
of a protected homeland that had been articulated in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, that had
galvanized Indian allies during the American Revolution and after it in the Ohio Valley, and
that Tecumseh had fought and died for in the War of 1812. However, when Bond Head
offered them the rocky land of Manitoulin Island, not the fertile Saugeen Tract, and engineered the fraudulent surrender of the Saugeen by pressuring a few individuals of the Saugeen band to sign the treaty\textsuperscript{19}, the Mississaugas and other Anishinaabek were outraged.

While Head advanced his program of removal, the British Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Peoples was preparing a massive report, published in 1837, which articulated a very different discourse with regard to the history of colonization. The Committee was extremely critical of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada (and in other British colonies) and accused British settlers of treating Indigenous peoples immorally and of contributing to their moral degradation and physical destruction by oppressing them through land theft, murder, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and the deliberate introduction of guns and alcohol.\textsuperscript{20}

The injuries we have inflicted, the oppression we have exercised, the cruelties we have committed, the vices we have fostered, the desolation and utter ruin we have caused, stand in strange and melancholy contrast with the enlarged and generous exertions we have made for the advancement of civil freedom, for the moral and intellectual improvement of mankind, and for the furtherance of the sacred truth, which alone can permanently elevate and civilize mankind. … Through successive generations the work of spoliation and death has been carried on, until to the colonial possessions of the most religious nation in the world the emphatic language of Scripture may with truth be applied – they are “the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty.”\textsuperscript{21}

These discourses were infused with evangelical Christian ideas about sin, repentance, and redemption and the idea that collectivities such as nations, could be punished directly by God or given a higher divine purpose. Given that Indigenous peoples had been and were continuing to be destroyed in large numbers across the British empire, the authors of the Report argued that the only way for the British to atone and prevent further deaths was to protect, Christianize, and civilize Indigenous people. Within settler society, missionaries
were seen as the only true friends of Indigenous people who could help prevent their corruption by drunken traders and evil settlers.\textsuperscript{22}

As historian Elizabeth Elbourne notes, the Report assumed that by publicizing the historic wrongs of colonialism and the plight of Aboriginal peoples around the world, the virtuous British public would rebel against such atrocities, as it had in the case of the horrors of the slave trade. While British humanitarians and Methodists in Toronto and elsewhere did rally to the cause, and the British Aborigines Protection Society was founded that same year (1837), making “the Canadian Indians…the Society’s first special care,”\textsuperscript{23} the Report was opposed or ignored by most settlers in Upper Canada.\textsuperscript{24}

It was in this context that in 1837 the Mississaugas of the Credit had sent Kahkewaquonaby to London to meet with Lord Glenelg and deliver a petition directly to the Queen, asking for a title deed for their land on the Credit.

We are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the soil, who formerly possessed this, their native country, in peace and harmony long before the French, the ancient enemies of your people, came over the great waters and settled upon our territories. ..Our people have begun to improve their farms; they wish to sell the produce at market and buy goods from the white people, but they are afraid to clear much ground, because they are told by evil-minded persons that their farms can be taken away from them at any time. …We know that our people in times past have sold lands to our late father the king, but we never sold our lands at the Credit.\textsuperscript{25}

The Mississaugas thus advanced the historic claim of indigeneity, as “original inhabitants” who preceded all others. They contended that they had lived peacefully, not as savages, before the French arrived. They located themselves within a discourse of modernization and civilization, describing themselves as farmers who wanted to contribute to the market, but who lacked the security of title that other citizens of the colony enjoyed. They did not contest their previous land surrenders, but argued that because they had not
surrendered their lands at the Credit, they still owned them, thus calling for the recognition of Aboriginal title.

Kahkewaquonaby finally met with Lord Glenelg in March 1838, the same month Bond Head left Toronto after resigning his post in the wake of the rebellion; the Mississauga envoy then succeeded in taking his land petition directly to Queen Victoria in September, 1838. To his great joy, Victoria approved Glenelg’s recommendation to grant title deeds and it appeared that the Mississauga protests had been successful. But this victory was illusory. Glenelg resigned in February 1839, and the Mississaugas lost their most important ally. The new Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, George Arthur, simply ignored the question of title deeds and no one from the Colonial Office insisted that he issue them. Kahkewaquonaby continued to press for the deed, meeting Charles Poulett Thomson, the new Governor-General of British North America, in 1839 but nothing came of this meeting. It was in the wake of this silence that in 1840 the Mississaugas once again turned to alliance with the Six Nations in the hope of gaining greater political leverage.

The process for creating Indigenous unity through treaties was an ancient one: both groups had a long history of diplomatic councils, both among themselves through their confederacies -- the Great League of Peace and Power of the Haudenosaunee, and the Three Fires Confederacy of the Ojibwa, Odawa and Potawatomi – and with each other. Such councils were important moments of reconnection to the Indigenous past on Indigenous terms. The past in the form of the words and promises of their ancestors was relived and indeed requickened through the repetition of the ritual of treaty renewal, fusing past, present, and future through ceremony and embodying them in wampum. The condolence ceremonies which began such councils both acknowledged the losses each group had suffered and washed away the tears of the past. Mass attendance was essential, so that there were many
witnesses who could help remember commitments; by reiterating key memories and core principles, these councils educated the younger generation, made the nation visible to itself, and reproduced culture.\textsuperscript{29}

In 1840, there was some notable changes from traditional protocol: the minutes record that Chief Joseph Sawyer of the Credit (Nawahjegezhewabe), was named “president” of the 1840 council, “as we were emulating the good ways of the white people” \textsuperscript{30} and Rev. Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), was named “secretary” of the council and prepared the written minutes. These would later be reproduced in his book, \textit{History of the Ojebway Indians}, published posthumously in 1861. The council thus involved a reworking and supplementation of previous mnemonic traditions for new purposes and in new contexts. At the same time, the new reality of colonial power was inescapable: Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Samuel Peters Jarvis attended the council and was consulted on various matters, such as whether or not the government considered the Indians to be subjects or allies of the Crown.

On the first day of the 1840 council, Onandaga chief Skanawiti (John Buck), the keeper of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy’s wampums and hence its historian, exhibited and explained the wampum belts which commemorated the treaty and its previous renewals. With regard to the Haudenosaunee-Anishinaabek alliance, there were four belts or strings of wampum, which were explained in turn. The first commemorated the first treaty between the Confederacy and the Anishinaabek which had been concluded at the eastern end of Lake Ontario around 1700. It contained a symbol of a dish or bowl and, according to Skanawiti, it signified that the Anishinaabek and Six Nations were to eat from the same dish, that is to share their hunting grounds and have all their game in common. The second wampum came from Buffalo, where the original treaty had subsequently been renewed. The third came from
the great council of 1793 at the Maumee River in the Ohio country, at which Captain Brant had been present and an Indigenous confederacy had been created. The fourth and last wampum had been given by the Ojibwas and Ottawas to the Six Nations, in confirmation of the treaties of their fathers, at a meeting that had taken place at Wellington Square (the home of Joseph Brant and then his son John Brant) in Burlington about 25 years previously, ie circa 1815.31

The next day Chief William Yellowhead, a grand chief of the Mississaugas from Mjkaning (the Narrows at Lake Simcoe) and the son of the previous Yellowhead, exhibited a historic wampum belt given to the Anishinaabek by the Six Nations. The Haudenosaunee Chief Johnson then explained the six emblems on this belt, which signified the details of the treaty, including one that specifically referred to the role of the Mississaugas of the Credit River in maintaining vigilance over the alliance between the Anishinaabek and the Haudenosaunee:

Fifthly, the eagle perched on a tall pine tree at the Credit denotes watching, and swiftness in conveying messages. The eagle was to watch all the council fires between the Six Nations and the Ojebways; and being far-sighted, he might, in the event of anything happening, communicate the tidings to the distant tribes.32

Kahkewaquinaby concluded his account of the council by stating that

Yellowhead presented the Six Nations with two strings of white wampum, as a memorial or pledge of this council, and of what had been transacted between the two parties. The chiefs of the Six Nations then returned the wampum belt to Yellowhead, and so parted, shaking each other by the arm; which method was adopted by our forefathers when the treaty of friendship was first formed. Thus ended the renewal of the treaty, with which all present were much pleased.33

Historian Donald B. Smith, reading between the lines of Kahkewaquinaby’s account and that in the colonial records, offers a different interpretation of the outcome of this council. According to Smith, what was not mentioned in the account by Kahkewaquinaby was that in the second day of the council, hopes for further collaboration on title deeds
collapsed as a dispute arose over the meaning of the bowl with one spoon in the first wampum belt. Skanawiti had interpreted it as representing that “the Ojebways and the Six Nations were all to eat out of one dish – that is to have all the game in common,” whereas Yellowhead disagreed with this interpretation and produced the belt given to the Anishinaabek as a refutation.

According to Yellowhead, this Belt was given by the Nahdooways [Five Nations] to the Ojibways many years previously, “about the time the French first came to this country.” In his view, the dish placed at the Credit meant “that the right of hunting on the north side of the Lake was secured to the Ojebways and that the Six Nations were not to hunt here only when they come to smoke the pipe of peace with their Ojebway brethren.” In other words, the Anishinaabek asserted their control over the north shore of Lake Ontario and its resources, including those of the Toronto region. From this episode it is clear that interpretations of wampum symbolism were sometimes contentious, and that the issue of rights to the land and hunting on the north shore of Lake Ontario evident in the conflicting treaties of 1701 had never been fully resolved. According to Smith, the disagreement was such that the Six Nations left the council early, and no active alliance was formed to fight for title deeds. The failure to unite meant that Indigenous strength was greatly lessened among the 450,000 settlers in the colony. Over the next decade the Mississaugas of the Credit would repeatedly describe a vast area of southern Ontario as their “traditional territory” which they had held since “time immemorial.”

The council minutes also noted the absence of some Anishinaabek: “The council disapproved of the conduct of Kandoching and his people, in not attending this assembly after having been notified, and also of their saying that they supposed they were sent in order to be talked to about the worthless Christianity.” Thus the discourses advanced by
Kahkewaquonaby and other literate, Christian Mississaugas – the only ones readily accessible to Toronto residents in the 1830s and 1840s and to historians today -- represented a politically dominant but not unanimous perspective. Even among the Mississaugas on the Credit there were traditionalists, moderates, and reformers. While the latter group, led by Kahkewaquonaby, tried to eradicate many of the surviving Indian beliefs and practices, not all Toronto-area Mississaugas chose to join the Credit Mission and not all those who moved to the new village converted to Christianity, though most of those who did not want to become Christian eventually went elsewhere. A small non-Christian group allied themselves with Bluejay, a former convert who rejected Kahkewaquonaby and the Methodists and began living on the Humber, “the wicked Indians at the Humber,” as Kahkewaquonaby referred to them. In the area east of the city, in present day Scarborough, later town chroniclers noted that a Mississauga camp, with bark lodges for 40 people, had existed on lot 29, concession 3 up until at least 1835 and was “perhaps the last of its kind in these parts,” though it’s not clear if these people were also originally from the Credit River or more closely associated with the Mississaugas in the Peterborough area. Additionally, increasing interdenominational rivalry had led to much disillusionment among the Mississaugas: by 1840, one third of the Credit adults had left the Methodist Church. Despite these serious fractures, the various factions shared a desire to retain their historic identity and separate social organization as Mississaugas.

By the 1840 council, however, recognizing that they were running out of options, the Credit Mississaugas discussed with Jarvis the possibility that they would have to move from their land. For the next six years, the Mississaugas of the Credit agonized over the decision of whether or not to move from the Credit, while they continued to use all available avenues to obtain secure title.
One such avenue was historical commemoration. For example, in 1841, the Mississaugas of the Credit joined other Anishinaabek and the Six Nations to present donations of money to Indian Department officials for the rebuilding of the Brock Monument at Queenston Heights:

Some of our people fought and bled by the side of that brave chief [Brock]…. We shall ever remember the debt of gratitude we and our children owe to that great chieftain…. We are happy and contented to live under the protection of such a wise, good, and powerful Government, and we hope nothing shall ever separate us from the protecting hand of our Great Mother the Queen.46

In this manner the Mississaugas reminded the settlers of their loyalty, sacrifice, and historical contributions to the colony, and, by inference, of the colony’s obligations towards them.

It was shortly after the failure of the 1840 council to make any progress on the land question that Kahkewaquonaby apparently began to write The History of the Ojebway Indians, though it would not be published until 1861, five years after his death. It was not the first book to be published by an Indigenous author from Canada; this honour had gone to Kahgegagahbow, the Rice Lake Mississauga Methodist known as George Copway. The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation appeared in 1850, and was the first published history of the Anishinaabek.47 Jones’s book was the second, although Jones had actually written most of his book in the 1840s, but had never completed it, most likely because of his deep discouragement over the refusal of the government to grant the Mississaugas formal title to their lands, which the book addressed at some length. After Kahkewaquonaby’s work, there would be a dearth of books by Indigenous authors published in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century, and although some
continued to be published in the US, the interest in Indigenous writers evident before 1850 waned.48

While there were significant differences between the two – Kahgegagahbow critiqued European social institutions and compared them unfavourably to those of the Anishinaabek, while Kahkewaquonaby was generally more disparaging of traditional Anishinaabe culture -- both published works reflected Indigenous perspectives on this history, both from traditional and Christianized points of view, and often an amalgam of both.49 They also signalled a new conception of the Ojibwe “nation,” which was a different category of belonging than either the clan identities that had linked Anishinaabemowin-speaking peoples of different regions in the past or the confederacies that had been invoked at various times to fight enemies.50

The mid-nineteenth century turn to racialized thinking, in which supposedly scientific racial theories were advanced to establish the superiority of the white race in a racial hierarchy of cultures, undoubtedly spurred both Kahgegagahbow and Kahkewaquonaby to write their histories,51 but at the same time it imposed severe discursive restraints on their narratives:

In this context, it was practically impossible to argue in favour of difference and equality, since colonial discourses so vehemently linked difference (from British norms) to assertions of inferiority and, importantly, of unfitness for self-government…. A discourse of Aboriginal redeemability through Christianity and “civilization” allowed these spokespersons to find an audience and a voice.52

In The History of the Ojebway Indians, Kahkewaquonaby addressed the discourse of the doomed savage head on:

I cannot suppose for a moment that the Supreme Disposer has decreed that the doom of the red man is to fall and gradually disappear, like the mighty wilderness, before the axe of the European settler. Some persons may affect to ascribe this waste of life to a divine decree, in order to screen themselves from the terrible responsibility which rests upon their own souls.53
Furthermore, Kahkewaquonaby argued, their destroyers, “coming from a land of light and knowledge, are without excuse.” In his view, the rapid decrease in the Indigenous population was due to the devastation caused by alcohol. Kahkewaquonaby clearly named the violence, dispossession, and social problems caused by colonization and denounced the actions of unscrupulous white traders and settlers: “Oh, what an awful account at the day of judgment must the unprincipled white man give, who has been an agent of Satan in the extermination of the original proprietors of the American soil!” He contrasted the current state of Aboriginal life with that before contact, quoting an elder who told him:

My son, before the white man landed on our shores the red men of the forest were numerous, powerful, wise and happy. In those days nothing but the weight of many winters bore them down to the grave…. These were happy days of sunshine and calm to our forefathers….

Yet Kahkewaquonaby was somewhat mistrustful of such assertions of a former Golden Age, for while, “it must be acknowledged that they were much better off in their comparatively happy state, when they could feast unmolested on the abundance which nature had provided for them,” this was a “pagan, imaginary bliss, mixed up with everything abominable and cruel.” Yet the arrival of white men led to new cruelties:

Our fathers held out to them the hand of friendship. The strangers then asked for a small piece of land on which they might pitch their tents: the request was cheerfully granted. By and by they begged for more, and more was given them. In this way they had continued to ask, or have obtained by force or fraud, the fairest portions of our territory.

At the same time Kahkewaquonaby ensured that his largely white audience understood that he was “civilized,” and displayed his literary erudition as a sign of his education and civilization. For example, in describing the relation of the Mississaugas to their environment before contact, Kahkewaquonaby quoted English poet William Cowper: “I am monarch of all I survey, My right there is none to dispute; From the centre all round to
the sea, I am lord of the fowl and the brute.” This was a European and Christian view of human superiority and lordship over nature quite alien to traditional Anishinaabek views which saw other animals as relations with whom one had to live in harmony in a spirit-infused universe, though it might have appealed to his intended readers.

Similarly, in describing contact and its effects, Kahkewaquonaby sometimes employed the florid language reminiscent of nostalgic settler laments for the vanishing Indians, although from him it was likely intended as witness and reproach:

After the arrival of the big canoe with white wings, carrying strange men white as snow and wise as gods, the red men gradually were pressed back; disease and the musket mowed them down, and fire-water came to gnaw their vitals and spread contentions, disease and death. Where are the aborigines who thronged the shores of the lakes and rivers on which the white man has now reared his dwelling and amassed his wealth? What doleful tale do these bleaching bones tell which the husbandman has ploughed?

This western influence is also notable in his attitude to oral tradition, which in some instances was related as folklore, as when he reported that a tribe of “fairies” (more likely maymaygwayshiwuk — “hidden or covered beings”) was said to have formerly resided on the east bank of the River Credit. He recounted how some tribes believed Nanahbozhoo (Nanabush) made the world and the Indians, and related the earthdiver recreation story of the world after the flood:

[T]he reader will observe many resemblances in this tradition of Nanahbozhoo to that beautiful account of Noah’s flood handed down to us in sacred history, which leads me to conclude it is a corruption of the same...As the Indians had no means of preserving records, the true history of any event would in the course of time would be lost, and I have noticed that even this tradition is related quite differently by various tribes of Indians, either by adding to or omitting some parts of the story. From all that can be gathered from the wise old Sachems and their traditions on the subject, it appears that their notions as to their origin are little better than a mass of confusion. Many of their traditions are founded on dreams, which will account for the numerous absurd stories current amongst them.
In positioning Biblical history as true “sacred history” over the “mass of confusion” relayed through oral tradition, and in discounting dream knowledge altogether, Kahkewaquonaby disavowed important elements of traditional Mississauga epistemology and historical consciousness. He also apparently discounted traditional mnemonic aids such as birch bark scrolls as a reliable archive.

At the same time, while he believed oral tradition could not be taken literally or believed uncritically, he did concede that oral tradition could offer clues about ancient history. For example, he endorsed the theory that Indigenous people originated in Asia, noting that almost all tribes placed their forefathers in the west and believed that souls returned to the west. He also drew on oral tradition for his account of more recent history of the Mississauga defeat of the Nahdooways (Haudenosaunee) by conquest, “the greatest and most bloody war” the Mississaugas had ever waged.

After this the Nahdooways, acknowledging they were conquered, freely gave up their country; at the same time entering into a treaty of friendship with the Ojebways, both agreeing ever after to call each other “Brother;” which treaty is still observed between the two nations.

He also reminded his readers of the history of treaties with Europeans, beginning with the French:

This treaty bound their hands together by a steel chain. But when the English conquered the French in Canada, they broke this steel chain, and entered into a treaty of friendship with the Ojebways, stating to them that the chain which had bound their hands with the French was one that would soon rust and break, and was of little value; but the chain that they (the British) would use should never rust nor break, and would be of great value. This would be a silver chain, and this chain has kept their hands bound together to this day.

According to Kahkewaquonaby, the old chiefs often referred to these treaties in their councils and the Ojibways had never broken them. Because of the treaties, he argued, the Mississaugas were allies, not subjects (which Jarvis had asserted at the 1840 council).
though their relationship changed when they were outnumbered by British immigrants.

“From that time the Colonial Government assumed a parental authority over them, treating them in every respect as children,” though they were better treated by the British than the Americans.

It was kind in the Government to act as guardians of the poor defenceless Indians, and to protect them from the frauds of unprincipled white men; but at the same time, I think that some acts of the Colonial Government cannot be considered as doing full justice to the natives. I now refer to the manner in which some of the Tribes have been compelled to surrender their territories. Indians at the present time enjoy no political rights or advantages. They cannot vote at elections for members of Parliament, nor sit as jurors, however qualified they may be, simply because they have no title-deeds for their lands.68

According to Kahkewaquonaby, the lack of title to their lands acted as a deterrent to their advancement in civilization. This was particularly unfair as the Anishinaabek and other tribes had greatly assisted the British in 1812:

It is generally believed, that had it not been for their efficient and timely aid, Canada would have been wrested from the crown of Great Britain. It is also well known that during the late rebellion in Canada, the Indians were not slow in assisting to suppress the insurrection. In these wars many of our fathers fell and mingled their blood with the brave sons of Britain, whose bones now lie side by side.” 69

In his evocation of the sacrifices of ancestors and the mingling of settler and Mississauga bones, Kahkewaquonaby drew not only on western traditions of heroic sacrifice in war, but on Anishinaabek traditions of the Feast of the Dead, in which the bones of ancestors from different families and communities were mingled to build relationships of reciprocity in the present.70

*The History of the Ojebway Indians* also reprinted many of the petitions that the Credit Mississaugas had sent to London or Toronto to retain their land, an indication of Kahkewaquonaby’s desire to educate the broader Canadian public. By the time *The History*
of the Ojebway Indians was finally published, however, the removal of the Mississaugas from their land on the Credit was a fait accompli.

Gradually, the Credit Mississaugas ran out of options, particularly as they got nowhere with Superintendent Jarvis, who was fired in 1845, after a lengthy investigation. The 1844 report of the Bagot Commission, which had been set up to investigate the Indian Department and Anishinaabek complaints about their treaties, concluded that the government had failed to protect Indians from the massive alienation of their lands, but argued that

It has been alleged that these agreements were unjust, as disposing the natives of their ancient territories, and extortionate, as rendering a very inadequate compensation for the lands surrendered….If, however, the Government had not made arrangements for the voluntary surrender of the lands, the white settlers would have gradually taken possession of them without offering any compensation whatever… The Government, therefore, adopted the most humane and the most just course.71

As Ian Johnson notes, this rationale was “ludicrous,” as immigration had been very low until the government itself offered inducements to settlers to come to Canada; it was also disingenuous, as it did not acknowledge that the government relied on the resale of Indigenous lands to finance colonial development and even Indian “presents”.72 Yet the Mississaugas were increasingly ignored because the humanitarian agenda lost ground worldwide and the Aborigines protection movement rapidly declined. The late eighteenth century view that the hierarchy of human societies rested on cultural, rather than racial, differences was increasingly challenged by a belief in permanent racial differences that essentially placed Indigenous peoples outside of time.73 Polygenists such as the American J.C. Nott, argued in 1843 that the different races were in fact different species with different biological origins, a view shared by many Mississaugas, though for different reasons.74

In the Toronto area, the balance of power that had existed before the 1837 rebellion between Tories and Reformers was destroyed when the rebellion’s failure led to the
decimation of the local Reform party, with the result that the city became known for its Toryism and famous for temperance, sabbatarianism, and a “fervent advocacy of Empire and particularly of monarchy, an equally fervent dislike of Americans and the Church of Rome, a belief in the maintenance of propertied classes and of the political and economic status quo.” The Toronto Methodist allies of the Mississaugas were severely weakened; Methodism largely lost its radical edge or was associated with a “backwoods …frontier element” outside of the city.\(^7^5\)

As it finally became clear that the government would never award them secure title to their land on the Credit River, Chief Joseph Sawyer and his council faced the inevitable. In 1844, the Mississaugas on the Credit made the decision to relocate, but after several attempts, they were unable to find a suitable site for relocation.\(^7^6\) Because they had already arranged for their lands on the Credit to be held in trust by the colonial government, they could not stay at the Credit, although they did not have a location to move to.\(^7^7\) Finally, in 1847, the Six Nations Confederacy, remembering the generosity of the Mississaugas in 1784 in providing sanctuary for the Six Nations fleeing the American Revolution, decided to send a delegation inviting the Credit River Mississaugas to relocate to the Six Nations lands in Tuscarora Township. The Confederacy offered them, as a gift, 4,800 acres in the southeast corner of their territory (though the exact nature of the offer and of the rights transferred would later become a matter of controversy). The Mississaugas therefore abandoned their lands on the Credit River to live on territory they had earlier relinquished to the British for use by the Six Nations refugees from south of the border. They called their new territory “New Credit.” (They would finally be paid compensation for their lands on the Credit after a successful land claim in the late twentieth century.)
The departure of the Mississaugas from the Credit Mission apparently caused some comment among their Methodist supporters, for a front page article on “The Removal of the River Credit Indians” appeared in the January 12, 1848 edition of the Christian Guardian, written by Kahkewaunobay. In it, he reassured his readers: “The excellent Missionaries and School-teachers who have laboured at the Credit will rejoice to know that their work of faith and labour of love has not been in vain.” Kahkewaunobay recounted the history of the Mississaugas, from the time when their territory stretched from “Long Point on Lake Erie to the River Rouge” and inland to the headwaters of the Thames, Grand, Credit, Humber, and Rouge. He then described the history of conversions, “beginning chiefly with my own relatives,” the move to the Credit in 1826, the building of houses from the funds of the tribe and their alacrity in building their own chapel, followed by the diffusion of Indian Methodism through twenty-four Native teachers, missionaries, and interpreters to other areas.

Putting the best face on their decision to leave the Credit, Kahkewaunobay wrote:

It may appear strange to some that this prosperous settlement should be abandoned, but when the reasons are listed I think it will appear that the Indians were actuated by the right motives. 1st. The scarcity of wood for fires and fencing. 2nd. Wishing to get on a better and larger tract of land. 3rd. The settlement being surrounded by white villages, the temptations to the young people to drink the fire water was very great. 4th. For many reasons they wished to live near some other large Tribe of Indians. 5th. They found it inconvenient to live in a village with their farms at a distance, and they thought if they moved at all it would be better to go to another location.

Alluding to the band’s unsuccessful efforts to relocate to either Munceytown or Orillia, he described their desperation when their lands at the Credit “were now in the hands of the Government to be sold for our benefit, yet “the spring was advancing when preparations ought to have been made for planting, and we knew not whither to head our steps, or find a resting place.” At this point, the Mississaugas went to their chapel to pray and “it is a remarkable fact, that about this time the Chiefs of the Six Nations, on the Grand River, were
holding a Council, who having heard of our situation took our case into consideration and unanimously agreed to offer us a portion of their tract; this was done without our knowledge or solicitation.” Because the Mississaugas had previously offered them refuge after the Revolutionary War, “it gave [the Six Nations] great pleasure to return us a similar kindness by giving us back a small portion from the large reserve they had received. Another reason was, that ever since they came to this country, they had lived in friendship with us.”

Thus Kahkewaquonaby began to articulate a new historical discourse among the Mississaugas that was a more elaborate version of their previous re-creation story. A story of sin and redemption, it continued to offer hope, instil pride and self-respect, and demonstrate the validity of Christianity. In this discourse Kahkewaquonaby characterized the Mississaugas of earlier times as pagan sinners who had been reborn as a Christian people. They had then gone through a period of unsettlement and endured many trials, ending up homeless like the Jews wandering in the wilderness. In spite of their hardships, they had maintained their faith in God. Finally, God had answered their prayers and given them a new home at New Credit. At least publicly, Kahkewaquonaby expressed no bitterness concerning the treatment of the Mississaugas, for God’s plan superceded human failings and betrayals.

This story was new, in that it employed the framework of Christian narratives. However, it was also an old story, in that it reinforced the traditional Indigenous ethic of reciprocity and the value of Indigenous alliances. In the end it was other Indigenous people who had helped the Mississaugas in their hour of need, and the Six Nations had done so because of previous Mississauga generosity.

At the same time, Kahkewaquonaby also continued to articulate a discourse of the Mississaugas’ increasing civilization. When they moved, he proudly reported, many households had had to make two treks to move all their household goods and cattle. They had
owned two thirds of the stock in the Credit Harbour Company, which, when sold, they
applied in part towards building a fine schooner, called the Credit Chief. They also owned a
sawmill and warehouse. He stressed not their failure to hold their land, or their victimization,
but their success.

Nevertheless, even though the band members who made the move considered it for
the best, Kahkewaquonaby acknowledged that they left with mingled feelings.

Not a family but left behind them the sacred dust of some loved relative, for the grave
yard is rich with the dead, and never till the morning of the resurrection will it be
known how many, who were strangers to fame and fortune here, will then arise from
their lowly beds to receive crowns of glory and palms of victory…Many would also
cast a farewell look of thankful adoration towards the sacred house of prayer where
first they heard the name of Jesus or felt the power of a Saviour’s love, where they
have so often sang His praises with joyful hearts, and joined their white friends in
celebrating the emblems of His dying love…At the last Quarterly meeting many of
our white friends expressed their sorrow that that would be the last time they would
have the pleasure of meeting their Indian brothers and sisters on such an occasion,
after having enjoyed so many happy meetings with them.80

The move of the Mississaugas to New Credit went largely unnoticed in other Toronto
newspapers, but marked a growing trend of ethnic separation across Upper Canada, where
more isolated reserves were the only locales where Indigenous peoples could continue to
maintain cohesive communities.81 The neighbourliness of early York had become a thing of
the past, and would largely fade from memory.

In his article in the Christian Guardian, Kahkewaquonaby concluded his account of
the Mississaugas’ departure from the Credit with a vision that transcended the geographic
and cultural separation that now was a reality for the Mississaugas and their Methodist
supporters. The Mississaugas, Kahkewaquonaby said, would be reunited with those they had
left behind – both their ancestors and their white friends and allies, “when our wanderings
here are ended, may we all meet in our Father’s house above to part no more!”82
Thus the Christianized Mississaugas, now exiled from “place” -- their lands and the bones of several generations of ancestors on the Credit -- sought solace in a new vision of time -- a Christian heaven in an unearthy future beyond earthly time, and in a new vision of partnership between whites and Aboriginal peoples. Yet the move to New Credit would also result in further rupture in their own historical memory of themselves as a people.

Meanwhile, in Toronto, it was widely believed by mid-century that the Mississaugas had disappeared from the region and could only be remembered, not encountered -- though in fact they were often simply forgotten. In 1855 Johann Georg Kohl, a German visitor to Toronto, perfectly expressed the popular trope of the vanishing Indian, noting that Native people

were numerous when the English founded here the town of York, and there are still people in Toronto who remember the fleets of bark canoes and little skiffs, in which the Indians used to bring fish and other things to sell to the inhabitants – mostly encamping on that long sandy peninsula [now the Toronto islands]…But the Indians have now vanished like the morning mist, and nothing remains to recall even their memory, but the well sounding name they invented for this locality – the sonorous Toronto.\textsuperscript{83}

This was the trope, but not the reality. As we have seen, the Mississaugas had not simply “faded away” through some natural process; they had been gradually treated as persona non grata in the city and had been pushed off their land on the Credit River.

Local painter Paul Kane reinforced the view of the disappearance of Indigenous people from the city. Kane wrote in his autobiography, \textit{The Wanderings of an Artist}, published in Toronto in 1859, that the subject of the North American Indian

was one in which I felt a deep interest in my boyhood. I had been accustomed to see hundreds of Indians about my native village, then Little York, muddy and dirty, just struggling into existence, now the City of Toronto, bursting forth in all its energy and commercial strength. But the face of the red man is now no longer seen. All traces of his footsteps are fast being obliterated from his once favourite haunts, and those who would see the aborigines of the country in their original state, or seek to study their native manners and customs, must travel far through the pathless forest to find them.
To me the wild woods were not altogether unknown, and the Indians but recalled old friends with whom I had associated in my childhood.\textsuperscript{84}

Indigenous people were thus associated with York’s muddy, dirty beginnings, its infancy, and not the more mature, modern city; the obliteration of signs of Indigenous occupancy was itself a sign of modernity and progress.

Kane also exhibited paintings of “real” Indians in Toronto: his first Toronto exhibition took place in 1848 at Toronto City Hall, one month after his return from the west, and he also exhibited work at Toronto’s Provincial Exhibition in 1852, reinforcing the nineteenth century fascination with Indians as exotic spectacle, the dominance of Plains or western Indian imagery as iconic for all Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the dichotomy between authentic indigeneity and Toronto.\textsuperscript{85} Kane did paint a portrait of Kahkewaquonaby’s half-brother, Maungwudaus (George Henry), wearing a Plains-style eagle-feather headdress.

Just as the Mississaugas had reimagined themselves as a new people, by the early 1800s, the settlers of British North America were doing the same. In 1855, Brockville resident John Mercier McMullen published the first reputable study of Canadian history in English. The 1850s marked the beginning of a growing national historical consciousness in Canada generally,\textsuperscript{86} as the development of responsible government, sweeping social and economic changes accompanying capitalist expansion and industrialization, the rapid expansion of transportation networks with the advent of railways, and the proposed union of various colonies created an increasing sense of the immense future potential of British North America as the unified nation of Canada. Toronto as the capital of Canada West and then, after Confederation, of Ontario, the most populous province, would come to epitomize this transformation; the city itself was becoming a symbol of the new nation’s progress, particularly for English Canadians.
McMullen asserted in *The History of Canada from its Discovery to the Present Time* that pre-Columbian America was a blank awaiting the impact of “civilized humanity.” “If this ‘poor and thinly scattered community of improvident savages’ had been succeeded by “an orderly, industrious, and enterprising people” whose genius and resources embodied “all the germs of a mighty nation,” McMullen thought there could be “little room for regret” that the possession of the country had been “transferred to the Anglo-Saxon race, and that the rule of the fierce Indian” had forever passed away.\(^87\) McMullen traced what soon became the orthodox narrative of Canadian history, from New France to the Loyalists and the founding of Upper Canada, through material progress and improvement, the rise of British institutions, the Family Compact, and then concluding with colonial self-government. The founding of York and development of Toronto was an important part of that story, though McMullen got many of the details wrong: in his version, the old French fort was called Toronto after the Italian Tarento [supposedly an Italian engineer according to another account by Bonnycastle], where the inmates of a solitary wigwam, represented the Huron [should be Mississauga] nation, on this their ancient hunting ground….From a locality, where fifty years ago the beaver gamboled in solitary streams, rarely visited by human footsteps, and where fever and ague reigned supreme, has risen one of the most beautiful cities of the American continent.\(^88\)

Thus, by mid-century, the Indigenous peoples who had lived in the Toronto area were increasingly viewed by settlers as only the prologue to the linear, progressivist historical trajectory of the nation.\(^89\)

The residents of Toronto may have believed that the local Mississaugas had vanished, but in fact, they had not completely disappeared. According to a history published by the Native Canadian Centre in 1997, there is “some evidence that many Native families remained in the area,” and that small Native communities continued to exist in the northern part of the Greater Toronto area.\(^90\) On the other side of Toronto, in what was then the separate town of
Scarborough, although no “Indians” were reported in the 1851 census or any other until 1921, a Mississauga family camped in the Rouge River valley and made and sold woven baskets as late as 1915, and there were other known encampments in Scarborough in the mid nineteenth century. Through their tenacious, if marginal, presence, these and other Mississaugas physically resisted the settler trope of the vanishing Indian that was the underpinning of mid-nineteenth century narratives of the nation.

1 John Smoke Johnson, quoted in Jones, History of the Ojebway Indians: With Especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity (London: A.W. Bennett, 1861), 120.
2 Five non-Indigenous interviewees mentioned the 1837 rebellion as an event of Toronto history. Indigenous interviewees were more likely to mention the War of 1812. Only four Indigenous interviewees, all of Mississauga/Anishinaabek descent, and one non-Indigenous ally who had worked on an Indigenous heritage project discussed the post-1787 history of the Mississaugas on the Credit, although my impression is that a few other Indigenous interviewees may have been aware of it.
4 Peter Jones, Life and Journals of Kah-Ke-Wa-Quo-Na-by (Rev. Peter Jones), Wesleyan Missionary (Toronto: A. Green, 1860), 2.
5 Donald B. Smith’s excellent biography of Kahkewaquonaby, Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), vividly describes this process. Jones and other Mississaugas were able to bridge the gap between Anishinaabe and Christian spiritualities by emphasizing their similarities; in their fundamentals of reverence and obedience to a creator and living in harmony with others, the two religions were “essentially” the same, they argued. Smith, Sacred Feathers, 53.
7 Lord Glenelg, quoted in Smith, Sacred Feathers, 166.
8 Jones, Journals, 12-13.
9 Smith, Sacred Feathers, 63.
10 The report was by Major General H.C. Darling, military secretary to the colonial Governor General and Superintendent of Indian Affairs.
11 The success of the Credit River band’s “civilization” may have helped to dissuade others from advocating removal. In 1830, Sir George Murray, Colonial Secretary transferred jurisdiction over Indian Affairs from military to civilian authorities, and also advocated civilization. See Ian Johnson, “The early Mississauga treaty process, 1781-1819, in historical perspective,” Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1987, 389.
12 Peter Jones, for example, stayed for seven weeks at home of former Credit Mission missionary Egerton Ryerson in 1856 when undergoing medical treatment in Toronto. Jones, History, 15.
13 Schmalz, The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 156.


A somewhat similar idea would also be advanced by George Copway (Kahgegagahbowh) another Mississauga from Credit, who in the 1850s advocated the creation of an Indian Territory to the northeast of the Missouri River in the US, though Copway envisioned the territory being administered by a white governor and educated Indians. “Kahgegagabowh,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB)*, 9: 419-21.

He did this by saying that whites would take the land anyway without any compensation whatsoever. James Evans, St. Clair, 24 March 1838, *Christian Guardian*, April 1838.

See Elizabeth Elbourne, “The Sin of the Settler.”

The report also argued for metropolitan oversight for the management of Aboriginal affairs, because of the inevitable conflict of interest among colonial legislators between the duty of protection and that of responding to the desires of their electors. Elbourne, “The Sin of the Settler,” para. 4, 15, 24, 26.

Quoted in Binnema and Hutchings, “The Emigrant,” 130.

Their foundational narratives emphasized the virtue of the founders of colonial society, the lack of virtue in uncivilized Indigenous societies, the morally superior use the British made of Indigenous land and the superior virtue of settlers because of their higher level of civilization. Furthermore, the report’s emphasis on individual settler virtue and vice enabled the Colonial Office to largely downplay the issue of the morality of land sales. Elbourne, “Sin of the Settler,” para. 18, 19, 22, 24, 66-68.

Copy of a Petition to the Queen, from the Credit Indians, Praying to Have Their Lands Secured to Them, 4th October, 1837, in Jones, *History*, 265-267.

Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 166.

Ibid., 175.


“...If any party wished to meet in council to discuss this agreement, they were to send word to the Eagle at the Credit, who would carry news” to the Caribou nindoodemag at Mjikaning, who were the keepers of the fire and kept the wampum belt recording the treaty. The Eagle was thus second to the Caribou in council, and was an aid to the Caribou. Bohaker, “Nindoodemag,” 83-84.


Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 176.


Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 177.

A Mississaugas of the New Credit brochure comments: “Over time, the Mississaugas of the Credit came to view the territory they occupied and used in southern Ontario as their traditional territory.” In 1844, for example, Chiefs Joseph Sawyer and John Jones wrote to the Governor General: “The extent of the country owned and possessed by the River Credit Indians from time immemorial, extended as far down as the river Rouge thence up the said river Rouge to its source, thence Westerly along the dividing ridge between Lake Huron and Ontario to the headwaters of the Thames thence southerly to Long Point on Lake Erie, thence down
Lake Erie, Niagara River, and Lake Ontario to the place of beginning.” Similarly, Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones) described the Mississaugas as the “original owners” of a similar area in a statement to the Indian Department in 1855. Quoted in Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, “The History of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation,” [brochure], n.d.
39 Jones, History, 117.
40 Smith, Sacred Feathers, 158.
41 Ibid., 158; Peter Jones to Eliza Jones, Credit, 23 Sept 1837, Letter Book, Peter Jones Collection, Victoria University Library; Jones, Journals, entry for 24 July 1832, 352.
44 They still signed their petitions with the images of their dodem or clan, even if the reformers no longer believed they were descended from the First Animals. Bohaker, “Nindoodemag,” 98. Their language was also an important tie to the past; as Kahgegagahbow (George Copway) would later comment: “our language perpetuates our own ideas of civilization, as well as the old usages in our nation.” Copway, The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation (Boston: Mussey, 1851), 260; Smith, Sacred Feathers, 158-9.
45 “Having considered the future welfare of our children, and anticipating the time when your red children will be so crowded by your white children, as to be compelled to leave their present settlement and see a home elsewhere: we therefore humbly pray that our beloved great Mother the Queen may be graciously pleased to rescue a sufficient tract of land in the vicinity of the Sangeeny [Saugeen] River, as the future home of all your red children.” Jones, History, 127-8.
49 As Peter MacLeod notes, “Given that it would have been impossible for an unacculturated Amerindian to write a book in English and find a publisher, it is not surprising that these writers were not conventional Anishinabe.”…Yet if not typical Anishinabe, these authors were representative of those individuals who were able to function in both white and Amerindian society, and could attempt to bridge the gap between two very different cultures. MacLeod, “Anishinabeg Point of View: the History of the Great Lakes Region to 1800 in Nineteenth-Century Mississauga, Odawa and Ojibwa Historiography,” Canadian Historical Review 73, no. 2 (1992): 198.
51 Arthur de Gobineau’s influential Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines published in France in the 1850s, and the Englishman Robert Knox’s The Races of Men (1859) outlined a racial hierarchy of societies, with Africans and Aboriginal Australians at the bottom, the missing link between apes and humans, while the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Maori were somewhat more highly regarded.
53 Jones, History, 29.
54 He related the story of his own mother being accosted by whisky traders when returning from Toronto by canoe, in the company of other Native women. Yet his story asserted native agency and superior morality, for when overtaken by a boat of white men who pulled out a bottle of whisky and insistently urged them to drink, his mother had accepted the bottle, then poured it out on the opposite side of the canoe, returning the empty bottle. Jones, History, 174.
128

56 Ibid., 26-27.
57 Ibid. 27.
58 Ibid., 25.
59 Ibid., 103.
60 Ibid., 159.
61 Ibid., 35.
62 Ibid., 36.
63 Ibid., 37. He also discussed the theory that Indigenous peoples were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel, acknowledging that certain customs and sacrifices resembled those of the Jews, but in his view there were also many differences, which led him to reject that theory and believe instead that Indians were the descendants of Asiatic Tartars “as there appears to me a more striking similarity in their features, customs and manners, between them and my countrymen than any other nation.”
64 According to Jones, the term Nahdoway applied to the Six Nations as well as the Hurons and Wyandots, though he appeared to be describing a war with the former. MacLeod notes that while both Copway and Jones focused on Anishinabek military history, they largely focused on victories over traditional enemies and omitted reference to Mississauga involvement in the intercolonial wars or the previous trading/military alliance between the Wendats and the Anishinaabek. “[M]uch, but not all of the Anishinaabeg oral tradition is devoted to explaining to future generations how their nation came to possess the territory that it occupied prior the beginnings of Euramerican settlement.” MacLeod, “Anishinabeg Point of View,” Ibid., 200-202, 205.
65 Ibid., 32
66 Ibid., 129, 216.
67 Superintendent General Colonel Samuel Jarvis attended the 1840 council and was asked to clarify two historical issues: “to enquire of the Colonial Government in what relation they stand to the British Government – whether as subjects or allies” (Colonel Jarvis intimated that the Anishinaabek were considered subjects), and if the white people had the right to prevent the Indians from hunting on their wild lands, as they had been repeatedly ordered away from woods, and even had their venison confiscated. Jones, *History*, 116.
68 Ibid., 217.
69 Ibid., 209.
71 Quoted in Johnson, “Early Mississauga Treaty Process,” 397-398. For the full report of the Bagot Commission, see Commission of the Canadian Assembly to Investigate Indian Affairs, 1844-1845, *Journal of the Legislative Assembly*, 1842-1845, Appendix EEE.
74 The views of the Mississauga elders mentioned by Kahkewaquonaby echoed the separate creation story of Tenskwatwa, yet also bore some similarities to the then current theories of the polygenists. According to Jones, a major obstacle to Christian conversion was an unwillingness to believe all humans came from one pair as in the Bible, but now “a host of living witnesses among our own people have risen up, declaring that “God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth.” While he argued for descent from Adam and Even, he and many other Indigenous peoples were also increasingly influenced by racial theories in their belief in African inferiority. Jones considered Africans inferior to the “other races of the human family” and expressed great aversion to intermarriage with them. Jones, *History*, 31-32.
75 Toronto Toryism was not confined to the Conservative party; according to historian Donald Masters, it originated from the fact that Toronto had been settled by men of official position, most of them directly from Britain or United Empire Loyalists. A second Tory group consisted of the nouveau riche business class, such as the Worts and Gooderham families. See Armstrong introduction to Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), vi; Masters, *Rise of Toronto*, 1850-1890 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), 20-21, 27. Charles Dickens, not an especially neutral observer, would later write of his 1842 visit to the city that “the wild and rabid Toryism of Toronto was appalling.” Quoted in Ibid., 20.
76 Initially, they had hoped to relocate to the fertile Saugeen territory, which was touted as a potential homeland for all the Indigenous people in the province, but the land was not returned to the Anishinaabek, even though Jarvis had arranged for a fraudulent surrender. Jones and his party advocated moving to the Munceytown area and purchased good farm land near London, but this decision was not unanimous, and although the band as a
whole approved the decision to relocate, the Herkimer party, which consisted of 12 out of the 50 families on the Credit, refused to go. Samuel Jarvis favored the Herkimer faction, tried to discredit Kahkewaquonaby, and refused to sanction the move. The Munceytown plan was therefore abandoned. They were then strongly encouraged to relocate to the Bruce peninsula, where they were promised secure title deeds, and so the band placed their Credit lands in trust to the colonial government, in anticipation of such a move. After an exploratory visit, however, members of the band reported that the land on the peninsula was unsuitable for agriculture and the decision to move was reversed. As their lands on the Credit had already been surveyed in anticipation of its sale to settlers, the Mississaugas were unable to remain there. See Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 163-212.

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
82 Jones, “Removal,” 01.
84 Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America: From Canada to Vancouver’s Island and Oregon through the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Territory and Back again* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), lxii.
85 Earlier paintings of Toronto had depicted Indigenous people as bystanders on the margins or passive witnesses to the advance of civilization as the townscape materialized in front of them. They were also part of the scenery, signifiers that the landscape in question was North American, not British. See, for example, Elizabeth Frances Hale’s *Plan of York the Capital of Upper Canada on the Bay of Toronto in Lake Ontario, 1804*, where they appear to look wonderingly at the houses materializing on the shoreline. In Stretton’s *York Garrison, 1804*, they continue their traditional activities of canoeing and spearfishing on the margins of the painting but the water is full of other boaters and the land in the painting has been entirely taken over by European settlement. In James Gray’s *York from Gibraltar Point, 1828*, a solitary Native couple quietly cook over a campfire in the foregrounded natural environment of the island while all around them the hustle of the harbour and city are evident; one can almost hear the joyful sounds of “progress.” These representations told a visual story of indigenous people as outsiders to the historical development of the city, people located in the past or soon to be past, represented in the very act of fading away. In all three, the date in the title signals the sense of historical significance, the capturing of the city at a certain moment in what is understood to be its historical unfolding.
87 John Mercier McMullen, *The History of Canada: from its first discovery to the present time* (Brockville, ON: McMullen, 1868), xiv.
90 Sanderson and Bobiwash, *The Meeting Place*, 20. At Lambton Mills on the Humber, for example, Kathleen Lizards recorded that Mississaugas would shoot the dam on their way down to spear salmon at the mouth of river and held “numerous” picnic parties in the nearby swamps. For many years in the 19th century, she recalled, baskets were sold in Lambton made from reeds gathered along the lower Humber. “Credit Indians came constantly, entered where they chose and took what they chose, and peaceably departed. They had the right to enter any swamp, and not longer than eighteen years ago [i.e. in 1893] a large party of them exercised it.” Lizards, *The Valley of the Humber, 1615-1913* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1913), 112.
91 Barbara Myrvold, Curtis Fahey and Scarborough Public Library Board, *The People of Scarborough: A History* (Scarborough, ON: City of Scarborough Public Library Board, 1997), 73-74.
Chapter Four

Commemorations

According to Penelope Edmonds, “the nineteenth-century city marked an unprecedented urban space in the New World, signifying a key moment in both Empire and modernity.”¹ In the case of Toronto, one of those key moments, at least discursively, was the 1884 celebration of the Semi-Centennial of the 1834 incorporation of the city. For most of a week, Toronto’s history and its relation to British colonialism and imperialism was openly celebrated and linked to the centenary of the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists, which was honoured at the same time.²

As Alan Gordon comments in Making Public Pasts: the Contested Terrain of Montreal’s Public Memories, 1891-1930, public memory is fundamentally “a discourse about power” which serves to “legitimize states, ideologies, or political factions by offering imagined communities a sense of shared posterity and common descent.”³ Commemoration constructs a narrative about the past in support of both the present and its power relationships and a desired future; it also often features in its story about one group, a story about another group, thus differentiating self and other.⁴ H. V. Nelles has described such commemorations as “politics by other means,” turning “social structure into performance art.”⁵ This chapter explores two somewhat divergent approaches to the performance of “politics by other means” at Toronto’s Semi-Centennial celebrations: one approach was the explicit and complete erasure of the Indigenous past of Toronto and the celebration of its British-Canadian and imperial future, while the other offered a vision of an idealized past in which Indigenous peoples and newcomers to the Toronto area coexisted harmoniously, thus supporting the idealization of Canada as a peaceable kingdom.⁶ While both approaches to Indigenous pasts were common in settler colonial discourses across the new dominion and indeed North America, at the 1884 Semi-Centennial, these discourses now also served
specifically urban ends, promoting an image of the city’s modernity and progress to tourists and investors, supporting the assertion of Toronto as the leader – economically, culturally, and ideologically – in the future development of Canada, and reinforcing the Toronto elite’s attempts to colonize the West. The Semi-Centennial popularized and perhaps also crystallized certain ways of talking about Toronto’s history that would remain hegemonic in Toronto popular histories and civic commemorations until the late twentieth century.

The Semi-Centennial celebrations occurred within a context of the growing recognition of the need for a shared identity to hold the developing nation of Canada together. Stories of heroes and founding moments were needed to create national identity, since origins were widely believed to establish the character of a people and to largely determine the course of a nation’s development. At the same time, the rapid pace of change in late nineteenth century Canada created certain anxieties: citizens looked to a nostalgic past for guidance and inspiration, permanence and continuity in the face of sometimes bewildering social transformations. Both of these needs were addressed through the Semi-Centennial events.

These dynamics were by no means exclusive to Toronto. The celebrations of great persons and events in the past, the establishment of historical and patriotic associations, and the creation of public commemorative monuments and museums were an international phenomenon during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and served civic, nationalist, and imperialist projects. In Toronto, and Canada generally, such activities were initiated in part as a somewhat anxious imitation of and reaction to developments in the United States. As a new country, Canadians felt the need for a national past to rival that of the Americans, who had successfully created a unifying nationalist form of American historical writing which exalted the colonial and revolutionary “founding fathers” and
valorized the republican form of government as an improvement on British traditions. Canadians needed a history that would counteract this political message and unify Canadians in resisting American continentalism.\textsuperscript{10}

According to Norman Knowles, following Benedict Anderson, “the creation of community requires a particular view of the past to be selected to represent the nation,” beginning with “a founding moment of great significance from which a straightforward history of progress can be dated.”\textsuperscript{11} In English Canada, that founding moment was the arrival of the Loyalists as refugees from the American Revolution as the founders of “British” Upper Canada, a distinct British American society built on loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice and industry. Since Toronto’s founding was intimately tied up with the attempt to make Upper Canada a safe haven for the Loyalists (although Loyalists did not make up the majority of its early population), this version of Canadian history was very useful to Torontonians. By constructing Canadian identity as pre-eminently British (and Protestant), the Loyalist story gave Torontonians an edge in their political rivalry with Montreal and French, Catholic Quebec, both in terms of their relative power in Ottawa and in terms of their expansion into the western territories.\textsuperscript{12} Thus there was a certain synergy in the celebration of the anniversaries of Toronto’s incorporation and the arrival of the Loyalists in the same week.\textsuperscript{13}

Cities, no less than nations, articulate founding moments in their efforts to define themselves. The vision of the past articulated through Toronto’s Semi-Centennial commemoration was guided by the needs of the present, and as Harold Berubé’s contrast of the commemorative practices of Montreal and Toronto illustrates, each city turned to the “first moments” that best articulated current sensibilities and aspirations.\textsuperscript{14} What is interesting about Toronto’s history of civic commemoration is that the 1884 celebrations honoured two founding moments – the founding of the town of York in 1793, which was presented as part
of the Loyalist story and had been the founding moment in previous histories of the city, and
the incorporation of the City of Toronto in 1834, which has been the event celebrated in
virtually all subsequent civic commemorations. A shift in the “founding moment” from 1793
to 1834 thus appears to have occurred at the 1884 Semi-Centennial, which was the first major
commemorative event in the city’s history. Henceforth, civic leaders would chose to
commemorate the achievement of Toronto’s status as the first incorporated city in British
North America (outside of Quebec) as its most significant anniversary and so emphasized its
entry into modernity. This shift had consequences for the historical memory of the city’s
Indigenous past.

As noted in chapter 3, the 1834 incorporation had been accompanied by the
reinstatement of the Indigenous name “Toronto” over Lieutenant-Governor John Graves
Simcoe’s 1793 imposition of “York.” Thus the incorporation also marked the assertion of the
city as a uniquely North American place and the “indigeneity” of its settler population. In
1884, the theme of settler indigeneity was an important, if more subtle, theme; in later
commemorations of the anniversary of incorporation, it would simply be assumed and
Toronto’s actual history with Indigenous people would largely disappear from view.

In 1884, Toronto was the capital of the province of Ontario and a rapidly
industrializing lake port and railway hub, a regional centre on its way to becoming a national
metropolis, as the Canadian Pacific railway lines linking it to the west would be completed
the following year. In 1882, its population had been 86,000 but was rapidly increasing with
the annexation of its first suburbs. Ethnically and culturally homogenous, more than 93 per
cent of the population was of British heritage and a majority were Canadian-born, according
to the 1881 census. The city boasted impressive commercial and public buildings as well as
imposing churches. The rival department stores of Robert Simpson and Timothy Eaton at Yonge and Queen Streets exemplified the city’s modern, commercial, and capitalist spirit.  

Toronto’s week-long Semi-Centennial commemoration was organized by the Citizens’ Semi-Centennial Celebration Committee, headed by former mayor William B McMurrich (who as mayor had first initiated the planning process in 1882), and including current mayor Arthur Boswell. The 298 positions on the executive committee and eleven sub-committees were filled by leading citizens – mainly professional men, merchants, and manufacturers -- as well as municipal and provincial politicians. Thus the biases and values expressed through the Semi-Centennial were overwhelmingly those of the white, male, upper middle-class elite of the city. The old elite families – those who had been considered among the founders of the city – were poorly represented on these committees, a sign of changing times.  

The aim of the Semi-Centennial was to celebrate the material and social progress of Toronto and project an inviting image of prosperity and social harmony that would further encourage tourism and investment, hopefully outdoing similar celebrations in rival cities such as Buffalo. A host of entertainments were planned, ranging from fireworks to parades to sports events. While ceremonies were held on March 6, 1884, the actual anniversary of the incorporation, most activities were scheduled for six days at the end of June and beginning of July – a better time for tourists and public participation in outdoor activities. 

The first day of the summer festivities, Monday, June 30, was named “Municipal and Historical Day” and began with a rousing parade down Yonge Street and along downtown city streets, chiefly Queen St, to the Exhibition Grounds. Large crowds lined the route: as one commentator noted, “it seemed the entire population of the province had made it a special point to be present.”
Thousands of heads protruded from every window and leaned from every balcony. Thousands of hands waved in the air, and as the more striking features of the parade passed up the densely crowded streets, the thunder of the applause was deafening.25

The procession began with a marching band and then the Mayor, the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, the Mayor of Philadelphia, and the president of University College of the University of Toronto rolled into view in the lead carriage, followed by other civic officials in carriages, and then the city’s firefighters. After them came the members of the Semi-Centennial Committee, and then more than a 100 members of the York Pioneers, the city’s main heritage organization. The Pioneers, many of them elderly and “perhaps the most sombre part of the procession” were especially honoured with a long roll of applause.26 After the Pioneers came a series of twelve historical tableaux, which were erected on wagons drawn by horses; according to the Daily Mail these provided an “illustration of events which should be familiar to every inhabitant of Toronto.”27 The parade culminated at the Exhibition Grounds, where the guests of honour spoke to the theme of the day.

The comments of the “Orator of the Day” at the culmination of the parade are particularly salient to a discussion of historical memory in Toronto. The speaker, Daniel Wilson, the first professor of History and English literature at the University of Toronto, and later Sir Daniel Wilson, had been expected to relate “a retrospective history of the city.”28 Instead, he told the crowd that they inhabited a city with “scarcely a past either for pride or for shame”:

that they had no record they need look back upon as even the greatest and noblest of the nations of the past had; no such record as even noble England had to look upon; of times of persecution, of civil war, and tyranny and despotism; that they had nothing practically to repent of; that they had great white sheets spread before them upon which they had to write the record of their city and young Dominion….29

Indeed, the professor urged the assembled to look to the future, rather than the past, for the unfolding of the history of the city. “It remained for the young men of today to fill up
the great white pages before them,” he advised, foreseeing a future that might rival “the glorious histories of Thebes, with its ancient foundation 1,000 years before the Christian era; Jerusalem, with its great temple; and above all, that wonderful centre of modern civilization, London.” If this was rather standard Eurocentric fare at the time, it was delivered to the crowd by a figure of some authority. At the time of his comments to the crowd at Toronto’s Exhibition Grounds, he was a noted scholar and president of the University of Toronto’s main teaching college, University College.

In Wilson’s view, while it was perhaps to be lamented that Toronto’s history was too short and uneventful to be heroic and therefore worthy of great pride, what was more important was that it had created no victims. Toronto’s history -- and by extension Canada’s -- was virtuous, as were the municipal and national subjects this history had created, an analysis which denied and ignored both the colonial relations that underpinned the Canadian state and the effects of colonialism on the Indigenous peoples of the area. To Wilson, the United Empire Loyalists epitomized Canada’s and Toronto’s moral virtue and in his speech he honoured their achievements at some length.

Like many late-nineteenth-century Torontonians, Daniel Wilson believed that Toronto, as the capital of the most populous and important province, as well as the self-appointed custodian of all things British (and Protestant), had a leading role to play in Canada’s unfolding destiny, especially in the west. In Wilson’s speech, the pasts and futures of Toronto and Canada were elided; in fact, either one could stand in for the other. Indeed, writers or commentators on Toronto history, Canadian history, and the need for Canadian control of the Northwest and its Indigenous peoples were often one and the same.

Although he was a world renowned scholar, Wilson’s historical expertise was more apparent than real; history was never his main interest and modern history less so; he did
not have a university degree himself and in any event history as an academic discipline was then in its infancy. Yet in dismissing the previous history of the land upon which the city was founded and Toronto’s history of relationship with Indigenous peoples, Wilson spoke with the authority of the university behind him. His words undoubtedly influenced many, reflecting and supporting the view that Toronto’s past – and particularly its Indigenous past -- was of no consequence to the modern city. Like public memory in many other instances, his discourse treated those excluded from power as unhistorical. (In Canada, those considered history-less have variously included women and French Canadians as well as Indigenous peoples). Wilson’s Semi-Centennial speech thus gave official sanction to the ongoing erasure of the history of the Indigenous presence in Toronto and the colonial processes which had dispossessed them. As we have seen in previous chapters, the treatment of the Mississaugas in the Toronto area was hardly the blameless history that Wilson claimed as Toronto’s and Canada’s heritage. Furthermore, his depiction of Toronto’s clean slate accorded with accounts that stressed Indigenous vanishing as a natural and inevitable phenomenon.

By 1884, Indigenous people who lived or worked in the city were either invisible or too “civilized” to still be considered Indians, whereas “authentic” Indigenous people came to be seen by non-Indigenous Toronto residents as exotic Others outside of the modernity and the historical trajectory of Toronto. “Real” Indians were increasingly conceived of as living in the north and west, where Toronto residents could plan and support missions for their conversion to Christianity and civilization, Toronto artists could paint them, Toronto’s men of letters could study them anthropologically, and Toronto’s businessmen, political leaders, and imperialists could call for the annexation of their land.
Wilson’s dismissal of Toronto’s history stood in contrast to the works of William Caniff and Henry Scadding, who were also significant participants in the week’s celebrations as well as the authors of the two popular historical works that had recorded the history of local European settlement, and to the images on the cover of the Semi-Centennial Program (Figure 6).  

![Figure 6: Toronto Semi-Centennial Celebration Program, 1884](image)

Used with Permission. City of Toronto Archives, Series 1099, Item 578, ID 0001

Canniff, author of *The Settlement of Upper Canada* (1869) and the city’s chief medical officer, was the main organizer of the fourth day of the Semi-Centennial, which was devoted to the commemoration of the centennial of the Loyalist migration to Upper Canada.

A proud descendant of United Empire Loyalists, virulently anti-American and pro-British, Canniff’s perspectives and prejudices formed the basis for many of the common
tropes of Toronto historiography, such as the selflessness and virtue of the Loyalists, the courage and hardiness of pioneers, the nobility of Joseph Brant, and the brave militia saving Canada in the War of 1812. Given that Upper Canada was only sixty-four years old when Canniff’s work was published, a large section of the book was devoted to narratives of the societies that were its antecedents: New France before the British Conquest, and American history leading up to Revolution. This, not Indigenous history, was the true pre-history of Upper Canada. Canniff’s was a history of European peoples, not of place, partly because, as Canniff wrote, although “it is true the native Indian, who once proudly ruled the vast extent of the new world, has a history yet undeveloped, an impenetrable cloud obscures the facts appertaining to his advent upon this continent” and there was an “absence of any data upon which to base statements relating to the aborigines.” Yet his historical narrative clearly included Indigenous actors, especially the Six Nations, whom he viewed in a far more positive light than many of his contemporaries. Unlike many other historical writers (especially Americans) who emphasized a discourse of pan-Indian, and particularly Iroquois, savagery, Canniff characterized the Americans as the true savages in North America who had wronged and slandered the Six Nations and particularly Joseph Brant. Canniff articulated the contrast between the Iroquois, and particularly the Mohawks, and other Indigenous people, including the Mississaugas, which would persist in Toronto historiography: “the Iroquois were not only brave as warriors, but they had attained to a much higher position in the scale of being than other tribes inhabiting America. They were not ignorant of agriculture, nor indifferent to the blessings derived therefrom.” The Mississaugas, while not as advanced in civilization as the Haudenosaunee, were also noteworthy because of their conversion to Christianity. The peacefulness of Native people in Canada was in Canniff’s view a reflection
of the benevolence of the British government, while their degradation arose from unscrupulous traders.

It would naturally be expected that one of the first dangers in entering a wilderness, would be from the Indians, whose territory was being occupied… The considerate and just policy pursued by the British government, left the Indians no cause of complaint, and they did not at any time assume an hostile attitude toward the infant colony. But that curse of the human race, -- baneful curse to the Indians, alcohol, came with the white man; and, too often, the unscrupulous trader, and merchant would, not only sell the fire water to them, but rely upon its intoxicating qualities, to consummate more excellent bargains for furs. The evil thus inflicted upon the Indian, returned in some cases, upon innocent pioneers.44

*The Settlement of Upper Canada* was published in 1869, the year that the Red River Resistance broke out in the Northwest. This event galvanized many Torontonians, who felt that the Northwest was essential to the future development of Canada generally and the economic development of Toronto specifically; Toronto’s Queen’s Own Rifles and the Ontario Rifles had joined the Wolseley Expedition sent to suppress the resistance. Canniff had become an active member of Canada First, a largely Toronto-based nationalist movement that sought to strengthen confidence in “the new nationality”45 and annex the Northwest; he had also advocated western colonization in his book.

Antiquarian Henry Scadding was one of the founders and in 1884 the president of the local heritage organization known as the York Pioneers, whom he led in the June 30th parade. Scadding had deep ties to the early founders of the city. His father had come to Upper Canada with Simcoe, and Scadding had been the first student of Upper Canada College, where he was a protégé of John Strachan. He later attended Cambridge University in England through the generosity of Elizabeth Simcoe. After completing a doctorate in divinity at Oxford, he returned to Toronto in 1837. Like Canniff, Scadding was also deeply interested in Canadian history: he was a founding member of the Canadian Institute in 1849, its president from 1870 to 1876, and the editor of the *Canadian Journal* from 1869 to 1886. He was also
one of the compilers of *Toronto, Past and Present*, the Semi-Centennial commemorative volume.

Shortly after Wilson’s speech, Scadding was awarded a medal honouring his historical labours in documenting the city’s past. In 1869, Scadding had published a series of articles on the history of Toronto in the *Canadian Journal*. These were published in book form in 1873 as *Toronto of Old: collections and recollections illustrative of the early settlement and social life of the capital of Ontario*, which marked the beginning of a historiographic tradition specifically focused on Toronto. His aim was to commemorate the city’s first European inhabitants and their built environment:

..it is a duty which we owe to our forefathers to take what note we can of the labours of their hands; to forbid, so far as we may, the utter oblivion of their early efforts and deeds and sayings, the outcome of their ideas, of their humours and anxieties; to forbid even, so far as we may, the utter oblivion of the form and fashion of their persons….In a few years all the original edifices of York, the infant Toronto…will, of necessity, have vanished.46

Thus the first pioneers now faced the same fate as the Indians had before them – their history being lost to “oblivion,” all traces of their presence “vanished.”

Although Scadding drew on many written records, his work also drew on his own recollections and the oral history of other early residents. Like other town histories of the period, *Toronto of Old* was concerned with members of the ruling and professional classes, prosperous shopkeepers, and tradesmen and presented a somewhat idealized view of the city; in Scadding’s work, “[e]arly Toronto is depicted without want, disease, squalor, or crime.”47

Like Canniff, Scadding venerated all things British; he was an “ardent imperialist but not a dogmatist… ready to back the advance of Canada within the framework of empire,” and with a strong faith in progress.48
Toronto of Old’s almost 600 pages were spatially rather than chronologically organized. The narrative was organized by street, offering a walking tour of the history of the city; each street, each building, had a history, rather than the people or city as an abstraction. This was an intentional recreation of a kind of historical consciousness experienced in the homeland,

generating for Toronto, for many of its streets and byways…a certain modicum of that charm which, springing from association and popular legend, so delightfully invests, to the prepared and sensitive mind, every square rood of the old lands beyond the sea.”

Scadding also discussed several major themes which would become common tropes of Toronto’s history with respect to Indigenous people. In Toronto of Old, Scadding had outlined the history of the French fur trade and the establishment of French trading posts on the Humber River and Lake Ontario shoreline, documenting the migration on French maps of the name “Toronto” from what is now known as Lake Simcoe to the Toronto area. His detailed account of Simcoe’s founding of York included Joseph Bouchette’s description of the bay and its surroundings in 1793, which had implied that the Mississaugas were purely nomadic, (when in fact they generally returned to the same hunting and gathering areas in a seasonal round) and that their ownership of the land was therefore purely nominal, a view that Scadding reinforced. Yet Scadding also discussed the ancient Indigenous portage route along the Humber River to Lake Simcoe as a significant local feature, instantly belying the region’s supposed tracklessness. He noted that the Toronto area had been “one of the quarters frequented by the [Mississauga] tribe,” but that their numbers had been “incredibly few,” as a consequence of European epidemic diseases and the effects of the introduction of alcohol.

Although Scadding’s overwhelming interest was in the colonial history of the town, Scadding documented some aspects of Indigenous life in the town of York and early
Toronto, generally citing his sources. He described positive contacts between Indigenous people and early residents or visitors to the city as well as the contributions of Indigenous warriors to the War of 1812. He appears to have been the first historian of Toronto to discuss the Toronto Purchase and to explain its peculiarity, nothing that while for other Mississaugas surrenders, “the values received for the tracts surrendered as thus duly enumerated may, by possibility, have been reasonable,” Indian Department records for the Toronto Purchase of 1805 reported a rather surprising price of “Two dollars for the site of Toronto and its suburbs, with an area extending eastward to Scarboro’ heights,” though his explanation, as outlined in Chapter One, was that the deed of August 1, 1805, was simply confirmatory (and hence unproblematic), and the sum named as the consideration was merely nominal.

Given the visibility and influence of Scadding and Canniff both in Toronto historiography and at the Semi-Centennial celebrations, Wilson’s apparent dismissal of Toronto’s history in his speech at the Exhibition Grounds was clearly not based on a lack of historical knowledge but on his particular conception of what constituted “history.”

In his own landmark work of anthropology, *Prehistoric Man: Researches into the Origin of Civilization in the Old and the New World*, published in 1862 (three years after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*), Wilson had explicitly linked his view of the history of Toronto and of North American Indigenous peoples to larger debates about the origin and antiquity of humankind, the nature of civilizational development, and the biological and cultural similarities or differences between the so-called “races.” He drew on archaeological evidence on two continents and his encounters with Indigenous people on his vacations to argue that the Indians of North America were at the same stage of cultural development as the prehistoric peoples of Europe, the “long obliterated past of Britain’s and Europe’s infancy… here reproduced in living reality;” thus contemporary
Indigenous peoples of the region surrounding Toronto were actually artifacts of the past. To his credit, he also remarked upon the very different consciousness of the Indigenous people he had encountered, who did not see Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural differences as marking different historical stages of evolution: “The Indian does not even believe in the superiority of the white man. The difference between them is only such as he discerns between the social, constructive beaver, and the solitary, cunning fox. The Great Spirit implanted in each his peculiar faculties; why should the one covet the nature of the other?”

This refusal to acknowledge their place on the evolutionary ladder or to understand their difference in historical terms was, in Wilson’s view, an immense obstacle to the civilization of Indigenous peoples, “one of the great elements of the unhopeful Indian future.”

Wilson had argued that Europeans were therefore bringing not just civilization but history itself to the New World. History, in this sense, was both a written narrative rather than oral tradition and also a history of large organized states along the European model. “And so,” he wrote, “the wanderer goes forth to help to sow in other soils what makes historic lands.”

In Wilson’s view, the capital of Upper Canada was “unstoried,” its precursor “but a group of Mississaga wigwams in the tangled pine forest.” An old resident of the city had described early Toronto to him as “a few log-huts in the clearing, and a small Indian village of birch-bark wigwams, near the Don, with a mere trail through the woods to the old French fort, on the line where now upwards of two miles of costly stores, hotels, and public buildings mark the principal street of the busy city.” In contrast, the historical consciousness of the Englishman or European was nurtured “amid the inspirations of a landscape vital with the memories of his country’s history, or haunted with the poetry of its legends and songs,” with a “thousandfold associations and inherited ideas.” That the pre-urban past of the
Toronto region might be richly storied by Indigenous people was outside the bounds of Wilson’s conception of history.

Instead, he remarked on “the strange sense of freedom that stirs in the blood in the New World’s clearings, where there is nothing to efface, to undo, to desecrate.” Toronto and its hinterland was “a nearly unvarying expanse, a blank: with its Indian traditions effaced; its colonial traditions uncreated…. Its history is not only all to write, it is all to act.”

He noted the characteristic orientation of Toronto’s citizens to the future rather than the past. “All is rife with progress. “Onward!” is the cry; a distant and boundless future is the goal. The new past is despised; the old past is altogether unheeded; and for antiquity there is neither reverence nor faith.” In Toronto, one could witness the “seeds of future empires taking root on its virgin soil.”

Although he offered this same discourse at the Semi-Centennial, by 1884 Wilson was well aware that the forests were not as history-less as they appeared. With intensifying agricultural settlement in Canada West after 1850 and the building of railways over lands previously untouched by settlers, many ancient Wendat and Petun ossuaries and village sites were being uncovered in the Toronto region. (The Wendat and Petun had departed the area by 1600, well before the Mississaugas arrived c.1700.) In fact, Wilson had become one of the city’s foremost collector of antiquities, along with David Boyle, a bookseller who eventually became the first provincial archeologist and curator of the Provincial Museum. When workers uncovered what is now known as the Markham Ossuary adjacent to Woodbine Avenue in 1881, for example, Daniel Wilson collected fifteen skulls from that ossuary and transferred them to the University of Toronto. While archaeological exploration in the first half of the century had originally been driven by the desire to prove the legitimacy of the Bible as a historical source, for Wilson and Boyle it reflected a new “object-based
epistemology,” that led to the questioning of biblical origin accounts and chronologies and a conviction that archaeology revealed a permanent and objective record of Native history.69

In 1884, then, Daniel Wilson was clearly aware of the deep pre-urban Indigenous history of the Toronto area, yet his message was that the only Toronto history that mattered or that could truly be considered “history” began with the Loyalists and British settlement, since the Indigenous past of the area was “prehistory” – a temporal category that separated the pasts of literate peoples from all others.70 In fact, Wilson appears to have been the first to use the term “prehistory” in English (in 1851).

If Wilson’s Semi-Centennial speech dismissed Toronto’s history, the historical tableaux of the parade brought Toronto’s creation story, as previously related in the works of Scadding and Canniff, to vivid life. The tableaux represented Toronto’s “frontier” history through a series of what Elizabeth Furniss has called “epitomizing events.” In her analysis of settler memory, Furniss notes that these function as “convenient, easily condensed symbols that represent (just as they draw attention away from) more complex historical processes.” This form of historical consciousness articulates a “diverse, yet interrelated set of values, beliefs, attitudes, identities, and understandings about society, history and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations” that powerfully shapes perceptions and representations of the past and present.71

The effect of the tableaux was described in the Globe:

One is unconsciously taken back to the unhewn forests, and brought forward, step by step, through the gradual processes of our ever-growing civilization until we behold Toronto, the Queen City of a great Province, the centre of a thriving, populous agricultural district, a growing, stirring, unresting metropolis, the proud possessor of colleges of national repute, indomitable commercial pluck and enterprise, and vast material wealth.72
The order of the tableaux was most interesting, for the historical procession did not begin with the presence of Indigenous peoples on the site of Toronto as the first of twelve tableaux, as was originally intended by the Tableaux Committee, but rather with two tableaux enacted by the York Pioneers who immediately preceded them; these represented “Clearing the Land,” and “Augustus Jones’ First Surveying Party.” These tableaux referred to the arrival of the Loyalists in 1784 in what would become Upper Canada (then the western portion of the colony of Quebec) and to the British survey of the entire north shore of Lake Ontario, which occurred in 1791. Thus, in watching the parade tableaux in the new sequence, spectators saw the origins of the city identified with the previous history of a particular group of people from elsewhere – the United Empire Loyalists – rather than with the ongoing history of the place.

Figure 7: “The Indian Wigwam,” from 1884 Semi-Centennial Tableaux Souvenir Booklet Used with Permission. City of Toronto Archives, Series 1099, Item 575, ID 0004
Significantly, no connection was made between Augustus Jones and his Indigenous wives or his famous half-Mississauga son, Kahkewaquonaby, who had fought so hard to retain Mississauga lands in the area.

Only after these two tableaux had passed did the “The Indian Wigwam” (Figure 7) -- the originally intended first tableau -- come into view, featuring a group of “Indians” in war paint and feathers, thus adding colour, excitement, and exoticism to the proceedings. The point of the tableau was explained in *Toronto Past and Present*: “in 1793 [the year that York was founded] the wigwam of the aboriginal was the only human habitation to occupy the site on which Toronto now stands.”

The car on which the tableau is erected is about 25 feet by 9 feet; the rear portion is occupied by a wigwam made of canvas, but painted to represent hides and bark. In front of this tent is a bank sloping down to a piece of water, which the spectator is requested to imagine the Don. On the bank is a canoe containing a fierce-looking red man in battle array, standing erect in the centre, and a meek-looking squaw sitting in the prow. A third Indian is engaged in shoving the canoe off. A squaw with her papoose, and an aged Indian smoking his pipe somewhat disconsolately, stand in the background, and with a dog squatting on his haunches, make up the scene.

*The News* described the scene this way:

Then came the Indian Wigwam of 1796[sic], with its birchbark canoe in front and the sward around covered in evergreen. Before the tent in full war paint were a detachment of Six Nations Indians in all the glory of war paint and feathers. They were armed with all the primitive weapons of their nation, the rude clubs, knives, bows and arrows of their tribe. Their appearance was striking and picturesque.

That the Mississaugas were depicted by “Six Nations Indians” was a clear indication of just how fictive these “Indians” were; in fact, they were only referred to generically as Indians and never specifically identified as Mississaugas. It is likely that they were enacted by Tyendinaga Mohawks from the Bay of Quinte, who were not at all related to the Algonquian-speaking Mississaugas who were resident in the Toronto area when the British founded York in 1793. Nowhere in the program for the Semi-Centennial or in news reports
was there any mention of actual Mississaugas attending the Semi-Centennial; presumably they would have been identified if they had participated. In fact, the only Indigenous people mentioned in newspaper reports of the celebrations were “Six Nations Indians from Tyendinaga” including several chiefs, who were present during the week’s festivities to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the Loyalists.

Mississaugas could conceivably have been included in the category of “Six Nations Indians,” since after 1849 they lived as the “Mississaugas of the New Credit” on a corner of the Grand River territory (what is now known as the Six Nations territory), though they still remained politically distinct. However, there is no mention of anyone from Grand River in any of the accounts of the Toronto celebrations, while they were prominent at the Loyalist celebrations at Niagara on August 14 of the same year. Chief C. M. H. Johnson of the Six Nations at Grand River had initially accepted an invitation to participate in the Toronto event, and had promised to bring twenty chiefs and warriors with him, including his ninety-two-year-old father, John Smoke Johnson. However, when Chief Johnson died, Toronto arbitrarily changed the date of the event, and Niagara held a rival celebration. The Mohawks appear to have decided not to participate in the Toronto festivities. The Six Nations had also begun as early as February 1884 to plan their own Loyalist celebration at Grand River for the following October.

If the Mississaugas were indeed represented by “Six Nations Indians from Tyendinaga” in the Semi-Centennial parade, it would not be the only instance of one Native group representing another in settler historical re-enactments. At the Quebec tercentenary celebrations in 1908, more than 200 Indigenous people from all over the Great Lakes region would be paid to take part in the massive recreations of the founding of Quebec, wearing Plains Indian costumes created by the organizers. The Indigenous actors of Buffalo Bill
Cody’s Wild West Show, who hailed from many different nations, would re-enact battles from the Northwest Rebellion when they arrived in Toronto in 1885.\textsuperscript{85}

The Toronto Semi-Centennial Committee’s notions of authenticity similarly required only that the Mississaugas be played by “real” Indians, whatever their tribal affiliation, rather than white actors. As a report of the Tableaux Committee published in \textit{The Globe} on May 19 promised: “There will be no deception in the Indians; they will be veritable red men from crown to heel, and will be borrowed from Brantford or elsewhere for the occasion.”\textsuperscript{86} The homogenizing colonial category of the “Indian” thus erased tribal distinctions, as well as the history by which tribal or clan identities were constituted; for Toronto residents, war paint and feathers denoted authenticity or at least verisimilitude. Even had they been present, it is highly unlikely that the Mississaugas would have had any control over their own representation, as it was the Semi-Centennial Committee that decided on the content of the tableaux.\textsuperscript{87}

At the 1884 celebrations there did not seem to be the same concerns about representation as had been expressed during the Royal Tour of 1860, when the Toronto-based Methodist newspaper, the \textit{Christian Guardian}, had chastised the Indian Department for staging ‘savagery’ in the form of war dances and other spectacles that they charged gave a distorted picture of the progress that missionaries and others had made in transforming Indigenous cultures.\textsuperscript{88} Since, at the Semi-Centennial, organizers were depicting a historic (and presumably “vanished”) Native population rather than one in the present, paint and feathers were called for. Spectators could experience the thrill of witnessing “untamed forest dwellers and peoples on the verge of extinction” and could “satisfy their curiosity about humanity in its wild state,” secure at the same time in the knowledge of their own civilization.\textsuperscript{89}
Wherever they came from, the “Six Nations Indians” representing the Mississaugas did not just appear in one tableau. After “The Indian Wigwam,” was “The Occupation of the British (Figure 10),” which could be read as a strikingly self-congratulatory vision of British interactions with the Mississaugas:

On the summit, was seated in a Roman chair, a fair lady, who assumed the role of Britannia, and who leaning upon her shield surveyed with satisfaction the scene beneath. Her outstretched hand was pressed by the lips of an Indian maiden, who is supposed to be in this way evidencing her gratitude and appreciation of the beneficent rule that is about to be inaugurated.90

This and other tableaux drew on the well known iconography of Britannia, a symbol of the British nation and of British imperial ideals, derived from a female figure of Roman times and conflated with the English queens, especially Elizabeth I and, by 1884, Victoria.91 As such she also represented the legality of the settler presence and, as a mythological rather than a mere human figure, the sacredness of the British imperial project.

Figure 8: “The Occupation of the British,” 1884 Semi-Centennial Tableaux Souvenir Booklet
Used with permission. City of Toronto Archives, Series 1099, Item 575, ID 0002
She was well known to city residents through her appearance on the city’s coat of arms and in the imagery used during the Royal Visit of 1860, when, for example, J. Seel’s Oyster Depot had commissioned a large transparency “representing Britannia holding out the olive branch to an Indian.” According to historian Ian Radforth, the latter image could be read both as signifying good relations between Indigenous peoples and the Crown, as compared to the wars of the United States, or good relations between Canada and Britain.

The parade tableau of the Indian maiden kissing Britannia’s hand, like the Toronto coat of arms, constructed an image of Indigenous/non-Indigenous friendship and cooperation to solidify the identity of settlers and legitimize the settlers’ place in North America. In the tableau, however, the power imbalance between the two figures was more marked than in many such depictions. The young Native maiden expressed her deference and subservience to the more mature and powerful Britannia, the epitome of British stability and law, before a phalanx of soldiers; elsewhere in the tableau, two Native children played about a cannon, adorning it with flowers. The image thus represented both the military might of Britain and the fact that it was not needed. The tableau indicated the peaceful extension of British rule of law over Indigenous territories and Indigenous socio-political systems, a “conquest through benevolence” that allowed citizens of Toronto to feel exalted as law-abiding white subjects, while masking the racism, and indeed the violence, of their paternalism. (The imagery might also be read as foreshadowing the growing militarism of late nineteenth century British imperialism.) In other tableaux, amicable co-existence was suggested by Indians welcoming Governor Simcoe’s arrival in Toronto Bay, or by Indians and York pioneers being positioned on either side of a mound of evergreen and flowers with Britannia at the top holding an infant representing York (Figure 11).
Figure 9: “Little York,” 1884 Semi-Centennial Tableaux Souvenir Booklet
Used with permission. City of Toronto Archives, Series 1099, Item 575, ID 0003.

Figure 10: “Incorporation of Toronto,” 1884 Semi-Centennial Tableaux Souvenir Booklet
Used with permission. City of Toronto Archives, Series 1099, Item 575, ID 0001.
According to the memorial volume, the next tableau, “The Incorporation of Toronto (Figure 12),” was a very pretty tableau, and one that would be readily understood, with the inscription beneath “Britannia,” with an Indian seated beside [and the City coat of arms between them]. At her feet sat a girl, wearing a crown upon her head, and representing Toronto. Before her stood an official, with cocked hat and sword, in the act of handing her the document which proclaimed the incorporation of the city.  

As discussed in chapter three, the iconography of the city’s coat of arms, which featured an “Indian” warrior on the left side of the shield and Britannia on the right, could be read in various ways. On one level, the warrior could be seen as commemorating the Mississauga presence on the land and perhaps the single moment of pre-urban Indigenous history that might have been significant to settlers – the moment in 1787 when the Mississauga chiefs purportedly signed the Toronto Purchase. However, it is not known if city residents originally considered the warrior to be a Mississauga specifically. Certainly in 1884, given the other parade tableaux and the narrative of settlement that they depicted, that identification could easily be made. The warrior could also be read as representing the past, and Britannia the future, with a suggestion of an amicable transfer of resources -- a beaver and agricultural produce -- depicted on the shield between them. Thus the theme of partnership, understood both allegorically as between Britain and Canada and historically as between York’s pioneers and the Mississaugas, was strongly conveyed.

What is most striking about these tableaux is that, taken together, they suggested a history of far more substantial Indigenous presence than a single wigwam. Equally striking is the fact that the numerous fictive Indians in the tableaux were depicted as uniformly welcoming British rule and the founding of the city, an attitude which the “Six Nations Indians,” as Loyalists and long-time allies of the British could perhaps more convincingly portray than the now displaced Mississaugas. In representing British colonialism as a “gift”
to Indigenous people which they gratefully accepted and to which they dedicated themselves in return, the gift logic of Indigenous societies was referenced but altered to British advantage.

Such imagery of peaceful Indigenous-settler relations also contributed to a local version of Canada’s self-identification as a more peaceful nation and of Canadians as “better” colonizers than Americans. While it was certainly true that early relations between settlers and Indigenous people in the Toronto area had rarely been overtly violent, especially compared to the frequent warfare in the United States in the same period, the parade tableaux entirely ignored the role of local settlers in the dispossession of the Mississaugas, the unpunished killings of Mississaugas by settlers, or the early settlers’ fear of Mississauga attack; this darker history was denied by the uniformly happy relations depicted in the tableaux.

It was notable that the Toronto Purchase was not alluded to in the parade tableaux, except perhaps very indirectly through the coat of arms; instead, the 1834 Act of Incorporation was represented as the city’s foundational legal document. Similarly, in most nineteenth century historiography of Toronto, the Toronto Purchase would be characterized more as a beneficent formality than a legal necessity, and was often not mentioned at all. The underlying attitude seems to have been that “while an Indian might be of the land, he/she was not worthy of it, and had no legitimate, or respectable claim to it,” and that the British, by virtue of their evident cultural and moral superiority, deserved to be its rightful owners.

There may have been additional reasons that the importance of the Toronto Purchase was downplayed, as Daniel Wilson, in his 1873 review of Scadding’s *Toronto of Old*, had noted that
[t]he land was in occupation by a wandering tribe of Mississagas. What negotiations were made by the first Governor for permission to effect a settlement, and lay the foundations of a city, do not appear; but a report of the Indian Department, dated August 1st, 1805, bears the curious record of the “Toronto Purchase,” comprising 250,880 acres, including the site of the city, and stretching eastward to the Scarborough Heights: for all which its Mississaga lords received and accepted the sum of ten shillings.\textsuperscript{199}

That Wilson had highlighted this meagre payment in his review of \textit{Toronto of Old}, indicates his awareness of the Toronto Purchase and the issue of its legitimacy and fairness, which he did not mention in his Semi-Centennial speech. It is interesting that in his review he did not offer Scadding’s explanation of this paltry amount – that “‘divers good and valuable considerations,’ not specified, were received by the Mississaugas in 1787” and that the payment at the 1805 “confirmation” was only nominal as a result\textsuperscript{100} -- though perhaps Wilson’s aim as a reviewer had been to make readers curious enough to buy Scadding’s book. Nevertheless, it is clear that as organizers of the 1884 celebrations, both Scadding and Wilson and presumably others were aware of the Toronto Purchase. Perhaps it was not represented in the parade tableaux because its problematic nature could have been controversial— or because representing a treaty relationship with Indigenous peoples raised questions of equality between two sovereign peoples, whereas the Indian Act of 1876 had declared Indigenous peoples inferior “wards” of the crown.\textsuperscript{101}

The “Incorporation of Toronto” was the last tableau of the day to depict Indigenous people. In the narrative of the parade, as in the earlier recollections of Toronto residents like Paul Kane, the Mississaugas were part of York’s history, but not Toronto’s, part of the story of Toronto’s childhood or adolescence, but not its maturity. They ended when the incorporated city began. They were constitutive of the initial event that had made Toronto what it was, but had been left behind in the forward march of progress. While the deed
acquired from the Mississaugas was irrelevant to its present or future, the 1834 Act of Incorporation had become the deed to Toronto’s modernity.

The Mississaugas’ settler counterparts, the pioneers, on the other hand, were valorized in the tableaux and in the parade generally as representatives of the best values of the past, which were now understood to be under threat by the less positive aspects of modernity. “The Early Settlers,” for example, had featured men splitting logs, and women spinning, “their privation being but lightly touched, whilst their loyalty, courage, cheerfulness, and industry were all made apparent.”

Subsequent tableaux -- “Toronto, the Centre of Agriculture,” “Toronto, an Educational Centre”, “Toronto, the Queen City” -- celebrated the mature city’s accomplishments and modernity. Finally, “Toronto Welcomes All” offered a representation of inclusivity that included everyone but First Nations, prefiguring the city’s later discourse of multiculturalism:

The title explained the idea set forth, which was that, irrespective of nationality, creed, or colour, Toronto welcomed all who came to add to its stores of wealth, or industry, or intelligence. A lady sat on a canopy supported by four painted poles and surmounted by a beaver. Around her stood an array of immigrants of every colour, creed, and clime. Here was Wah Hoo, a Chinaman, who intended to establish a laundry in the city; here a negro, who meant to become a “tonsorial artist”; here an Englishman who was going to try farming; and here were Irish, and Germans, and Scandinavians, and Icelanders, and Russians, and Italians, and many others, all seeking opportunities to make a successful start to a fresh life in the New World.

Thus, the narrative arc of the parade tableaux was that unnamed Native people of the Toronto area, recognizing the superiority of British culture, had voluntarily made way for a virtuous and lawful British society, which in turn offered unprejudiced opportunity to multicultural immigrants. If Daniel Wilson’s claim that Toronto had a negligible history can be read as a denial of the significance of the Indigenous past of the land upon which
York/Toronto was founded, the parade tableaux can be seen as another form of disavowal: a representation of history as Torontonians wished it might have been.

In parsing public silences and their conditions as well as public discourse (as Furniss has suggested), one can see that in both cases, the relations of power limit the possibilities of speech. Thus the voicelessness and lack of recognition of the Mississaugas at the Semi-Centennial celebrations may be contrasted with the discursive space given the “Six Nations Indians” during the same week of festivities. On July 3, the descendants of the United Empire Loyalists from all over the province were invited to gather at the Horticultural Gardens on July 3rd for a day of activities exclusively for them. William Canniff gave the opening address. The cancellation of another speaker led to the substitution of Chief Samson Green of the Bay of Quinte (Tyindenaga) Mohawks, who was introduced as “a descendant of the great Thyendenagya (Joseph Brant), the friend of Britain in the great revolutionary war.” Green was a “progressive” and a known quantity, as he had spoken at the previous Loyalist celebration at Adolphustown on June 17, was acting president of the Grand General Indian Council of Ontario, and was chief of the first elected band council in Canada.

That a Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) was invited to speak at such a gathering indicates that the Six Nations were still acknowledged and remembered in 1884 as Britain’s loyal allies and commanded a certain degree of respect that the Mississaugas – who had initially been French allies and who had not participated to any great extent in the Revolutionary War – never received. (The Mohawks had also worked very hard so that Canadians and state would not forget their contribution.) Indeed, one notable element of William Canniff’s historical interpretation in The Settlement of Upper Canada had been his portrayal of the Six Nations as exceptional Indians and red Loyalists. Canniff clearly admired the Haudenosaunee, first of all, because they adhered to democratic principles in their
confederacy, and secondly, because, in his view, the Six Nations were the original North American imperialists, their vast “empire” of subordinated nations a pagan analogue to the rapidly expanding British Empire. Also, because they were settled horticulturalists, they more closely conformed to European definitions of civilization than did the Mississaugas, who had been hunter-gatherers.

According to the *Globe* report the next day,

Chief Green, a young man, appeared in a handsome native dress, gorgeous in beadwork, and with headdress of eagle plumes. He spoke in English with great fluency and with only the slightest possible trace of foreign accent. He addressed the audience briefly upon the deeds and prowess of his ancestors and the sacrifices made by them in order to remain the allies and friends of England.

Green, like his ancestor Joseph Brant before him, was perceived by Torontonians to be a hybrid figure who could move between Indigenous and settler cultures with ease, though the issue of his authenticity was raised by one journalist who commented that the “eagle” feathers in his headdress came, in fact, from a turkey. Yet Green clearly and proudly defined himself as a Mohawk, and not a generic Indian.

Green expressed his great pleasure at being able to join with other descendants of Loyalists in celebrating the deeds of their forefathers. He told the audience that,

> [t]he traditions of his tribe handed down from Joseph Brant said that the English people were kind to the Indians, and he found them so (Loud applause.) Always the English had treated his people well since the earliest days. The Mohawks settling on the Bay of Quinte had been true to their country and true to their church, the Church of England.

Thus the sole Indigenous speaker during the week’s official events reinforced Wilson’s message of blameless history by insisting that the British had behaved virtuously in their treatment of Indigenous peoples, further effacing their history with the Mississaugas.
Chief Green’s speech also reflected the degree to which Kanienkehaka self-representations of the time could incorporate discourses of progress, civilization, and loyalty to Britain, while also advancing an alternative interpretation of their history as Loyalists and their political status within Canada that implicitly challenged settler histories.\textsuperscript{111} While Chief Green commented “that of late years his people have made much progress in civilization and Christianity,” with two churches and four good schools at Tyendinaga, and two “white lady teachers,” he also clearly articulated the understanding that they were a nation with their own history. He took the opportunity to educate the public about this history by recounting the story of the Peacemaker and the founding of the Confederacy:

One day a very wise head among the Mohawks suggested a scheme for the consolidation of certain tribes for mutual protection – a scheme which was adopted, and led to the organization of the Six Nations Indians, whom he now represented. In the course of time England and his nation made a treaty, which the tribes have since loyally observed.\textsuperscript{112}

The Kanienkehaka were thus allies, not subjects of the Crown. They were the equals of other Loyalists and had acted in partnership with them, and thus should be accorded full political rights rather than the wardship that they were reduced to under the Indian Act. As Norman Knowles comments, Chief Green and other Mohawk leaders who spoke at the various Loyalist celebrations that year “appropriated the language of Loyalism to advance their own political agenda.”\textsuperscript{113} Yet Chief Green was restrained in his comments to his white Toronto audience, as were the Indigenous speakers at the settler-organized events at Adolphustown and Niagara; at their own subsequent celebrations at Tyendinaga and Grand River, Haudenosaunee speakers would speak far more critically of the government’s failure to uphold Indigenous rights.\textsuperscript{114}

No Mississauga leader was given the same prominence in the week’s events or had an opportunity to express potentially dissident Mississauga views of the history of Toronto or
Upper Canada, though Dr. Peter Edmund Jones, the very accomplished son of the missionary Peter Jones and heir to the name Kahkewaquonaby (Sacred Feathers), was chief of the New Credit band in 1884. Ironically, this Kahkewaquonaby was also an advocate of civilization, enfranchisement, and elected councils, and had attended the University of Toronto medical school, so the non-participation of this “progressive” Mississauga from the Semi-Centennial festivities is even more striking.\[^{115}\]

It was certainly not the case that the Mississaugas had “faded away” at New Credit, nor were they politically inactive. During the Prince’s tour in 1860, the Duke of Newcastle had received a petition from the Mississaugas of the New Credit that that their former “Council Grounds,” on the site of what is now the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health on Queen Street in Toronto still belonged to them. \[^{116}\] Clearly, the Mississaugas, though departed from the Credit River, still remembered their history in Toronto and felt they had historic claims there.

In 1875, this Kakhewaquonaby had also participated in an extraordinary exchange of letters in the pages of one of Toronto’s leading papers, the *Daily Mail*.\[^{117}\] In response to letters that had demeaned Indigenous people in general and the Mississaugas in particular, he had provided statistics proving that the Mississaugas of the New Credit were highly “civilized” and technologically advanced.

I will commence by stating that there is not in Canada a tribe of Indians more clean, industrious, and sharp in business than are my people. Although a band of only a little over two hundred souls we have two schools in active operation, taught by well-educated members of the tribe. …My small reservation can boast of thirty-one sewing machines, and eleven organs and pianos, which in comfortable houses are handled with dexterity by the women, while the buzz of nineteen reapers and mowers is heard in the fields cutting down the golden grain, and in the evening the young men make the reservation ring again with the sweet music of a splendid brass band.\[^{118}\]
Finally, only two years before the Semi-Centennial, the Grand General Indian Council of Ontario had been held at New Credit and attended by 109 delegates from 21 Native communities in the Great Lakes region. At that event, over 3000 people, including a large contingent of white participants, had attended the grand opening of the New Credit Council house, and were feted with a rich dinner, speeches by Six Nations and Anishnaabek chiefs, music by reserve brass bands, and a war dance. Given Chief Kahkewaquonaby’s insistence on the Mississaugas’ modernity, he might have refused a request for the Mississaugas to represent themselves in a state of “savagery” in the Torontonians’ historical tableaux; it’s equally possible, however, that, because the presence of “modern” Mississaugas would disrupt the narrative of “Indians” vanishing from Toronto, he was never even asked. It can only be hoped that further research will clarify the issue of the Mississaugas’ apparent non-participation in the Semi-Centennial.

One element of the celebrations offered a potentially complicating symbol of the obscured history of Indigenous/British interactions in the region and suggested a transfer of Indigeneity from Natives to whites. A lacrosse game offered the only image of contestation between the settlers and Indigenous peoples during the entire week of celebrations; it was also perhaps the clearest acknowledgement of a historic Aboriginal contribution to Canadian culture. Again, it was Iroquoians who took part, though this time from the largely Mohawk settlement of Kahnawake (Caughnawaga), near Montreal. The official Semi-Centennial program described the contest this way:

Lovers of Canada’s National Game will have an opportunity of seeing a warm struggle between the whites and the aborigines, when the Torontos cross sticks with the Royal Team of Caughnawaga Indians, at the Rosedale Grounds. The Indians are those who played before royalty last summer. An exciting context may be looked for.
That lacrosse was now described as Canada’s national game was an overt appropriation of the Native ritual of “baggataway.”¹²¹ The first recorded game between white and Indigenous men had taken place in Montreal in 1844, and the Montreal Lacrosse Club had been formed in 1856.¹²² During the Royal tour of 1860, the Methodists had denounced the Indian Department for organizing the spectacle of Indigenous people playing such “savage games” instead of arranging for the Prince to hear Christian Indians sing hymns. They argued that Indian grievances in their petitions to the Duke of Newcastle had not been addressed because the now civilized Indians had been paraded around as savages.¹²³ But in 1884, these concerns appear to have disappeared. A white Montreal dentist, George Beers, had “civilized” and standardized the game in 1867, and it had become popular across the country. “Long, long after the romantic “sons of the forest” have passed away,” Beers wrote in *Lacrosse: the National Game of Canada*, published in 1869, “long, long after their sun sinks in the west to rise no more, Lacrosse will remind the pale-faces of Canada of the noble Indians that once ruled over this continent.” The “rationalized” version of the game became a signifier of post-Confederation Canadian identity, with the motto of the newly founded National Lacrosse Association “Our country – our game.” ¹²⁴ In this context, Torontonians could cheer on their city’s team to victory against the Indians and appropriate their indigeneity at the same time – though, in this instance, the Indians won the day.

The lacrosse game also sparked the following editorial comment in the *Toronto Evening Telegram* on July 5:

About the only Indians to be seen hereabouts now are the few who come to play lacrosse with their white opponents. Yet it is not so long ago that the whole country was inhabited by Indians. Where Toronto now stands was a forest with Indian wigwams scattered along the lake shore. The Indians have made way for a superior race. The burden of maintaining those of the race who still survive is annually growing heavier. Year by year they depend more largely on the government for assistance. As long as they were left to themselves they hunted and fished and were
self-supporting, but the government has taken such good care of them that they have grown intolerably lazy, and have no disposition whatever to go to work. It costs Canada considerably over a million dollars per year to maintain her Indians, and when blankets and food are not forthcoming, they know that by kicking up a row they can soon secure them. The race has sadly degenerated. It has acquired the vices of the white man without acquiring his virtues. How to make the red man self-supporting is the problem.\textsuperscript{125}

In this discourse, the role of settlers and the government in impoverishing the Mississaugas, reducing their agency, and rendering them dependent so that they would sell their remaining lands was completely invisible and was replaced by the notion that the government ruined Indigenous peoples simply by being too generous to them. This discourse also ignored the fact that the Indian Affairs Department had recently reported that the Indians of Ontario were largely self-supporting.\textsuperscript{126}

The blending of Loyalist veneration, Toronto history, and imperialist sentiment so evident in the Semi-Centennial week’s events was also expressed in \textit{Toronto: Past and Present}, the memorial volume published under the auspices of the Semi-Centennial Committee and compiled by Henry Scadding and John Charles Dent.\textsuperscript{127}

The cover of the memorial volume featured an unusual variation of the Toronto coat of arms (See figure 11), with the addition of a unicorn behind the “Indian” figure and a lion behind Britannia, representing the British coat of arms (though the animals are usually reversed) and emphasizing the imperial theme. Equally significant, the “Indian” was no longer the half-naked warrior depicted in the 1834 coat of arms in Plains eagle feather war bonnet, but a fully clothed chief dressed in a nineteenth century chief’s coat, with a blanket worn on the left shoulder, a chief’s medal (suggesting loyalty to the Crown), tight leggings, mocassins and a tunic.
On his head he wore a very different style of eagle feather headdress, reminiscent not of a Plains war bonnet but of the feathers worn by the subject in Cornelius Krieghoff’s painting of a *Huron-Wendat Hunter Calling a Moose* (c. 1868), or Edward Chatfield’s 1825 portrait of Wendat Chief Nicholas Vincent Tsawanhonhi.  

It’s possible that the image on the cover of the memorial volume was a composite from such portraits of chiefs from the eastern woodlands in an attempt to make his dress more appropriate to the region or perhaps more modern (which would have emphasized the theme of ongoing partnership). Ironically, his living counterparts in the Great Lakes region, contending with Euro-Canadian perceptions,
now often wore variations of Plains headdresses to signify their authenticity and authority as chiefs.

While recapitulating much of *Toronto of Old*, the memorial volume offered this retrospective:

A few years since we rightly regarded the founding of New Westminster, in British Columbia, as an event of great interest, indicating, as it conspicuously did, an important advance of English civilization into regions of the earth hitherto wholly undeveloped and savage. [He then mentions the founding of Winnipeg]… An incident of a parallel character to the origination of these places was the founding of York, Upper Canada, in 1794. It was, at the time, the establishment of an entirely new centre of influence and power in the domain of savagery.¹²⁹

This discourse suggested that the pre-urban past of Toronto was not history because it was not civilized; it was instead only the timeless moment of savagery. Despite the “Indian” on the cover, there was therefore no mention of the Toronto Purchase anywhere in *Toronto: Past and Present*, an indication of how unimportant the legal transfer of land was to the city’s identity.

However, in representations of the Indigenous past in the Semi-Centennial celebrations, “savagery” had been portrayed as rather toothless, as civilization’s childhood, rather than as an uncontrollable or biological propensity to irrational violence. In fact, the Indigenous people represented in the celebration – even the fierce-looking warriors – were uniformly peaceful, and more childlike, exotic, quaint, or titillating than dangerous. This reflected the relative security that settlers felt in 1884, with Indigenous people no longer a potential military threat as they had been during the early days of York and no longer a visible presence in the city.¹³⁰

Over the course of the six days of the Semi-Centennial celebration of 1884, Toronto citizens had seen representations of contestation between Native and white (if only on the lacrosse field), of the Mississaugas’ previous presence on the land and supposed voluntary
bequeathing of their land to Britannia in recognition of the superiority of British civilization. They had also been reminded of the loyalty and exceptionality of the Six Nations. Various and somewhat contradictory discourses of local Indigenous and colonial history had been articulated, yet underlying virtually all these representations was a common belief in the peaceful and rightful subordination of Indigenous peoples, the superiority of British culture, and the ultimate triumph of Toronto’s role in extending British and English-Canadian hegemony over other Indigenous peoples and lands. In most representations, the assumption was that progress in Canadian history had started with the Conquest of New France, and that the British Constitution and racial character were responsible for Canada’s economic growth and liberty.131

Although there had been some contestation about whether the Loyalists should be celebrated as an elite group or simply as pioneers, and whether the celebration should be used to advance the political cause of imperial unity,132 the organizers of the Semi-Centennial and Loyalist celebrations shared an idealized version of the past, in which the Loyalists were the “makers, founders, and defenders of Canada” who upheld the solidarity of the British race and empire.133 For this reason, Britannia, rather than Simcoe—the actual “founder” of Toronto—was the main character and heroic figure of the parade tableaux that represented Toronto’s foundational narrative. However, as Knowles points out, this idealized image of the Loyalists had originally emerged during debates over government land and immigration policy.134 It was land that had attracted many Loyalists to Upper Canada in the first place and that initially set the Loyalists and their children apart as a distinct group, since they received more land than other settlers.135 Tellingly, in former Upper Canada generally, and Toronto specifically, the suffering and dispossession of the Loyalists was highlighted in historical discourses just as the dispossession and losses of local (and western) Indigenous peoples
were obscured; in fact, the one masked and symbolically took the place of the other. More poignantly, in the historical representations at the Toronto Semi-Centennial, it was the Red Loyalists, and particularly the Mohawks or Kanienkehaka, who symbolically took the place of the displaced Mississaugas, though this was a representation that originated with the settlers. How the tableaux Indians understood “playing Indian” is unknown, though they clearly had their own reasons for agreeing to this role.\textsuperscript{136}

Sunera Thobani, in \textit{Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada}, describes “exaltation” as a technique of power that creates “socially organized and politically identifiable subject positions prescribed by, and within, the field of power” in a process complementary to the disciplinary technologies of prisons, schools and other institutions examined by Michel Foucault. In this technique, the subject experiences the embodiment of particular qualities said to constitute national [and in this case also municipal] identities; the exaltation of the subject ennobles the subject’s humanity and sanctions the elevations of its rights over the rights of those deemed Other.

In Canadian historiography, exaltation conceals the colonial violence that marks the origin of the national subject, even as it mythologizes and pays obeisance to its national essence…Inhabiting exalted national subject positions crystallizes this subject’s sense of self and of its belonging in the social world.. Exaltation …organizes a modality for the subject’s bonding with the state and nation.\textsuperscript{137}

This process of exaltation and embodiment was certainly at work in the case of the parade tableaux and other events at the Toronto Semi-Centennial celebrations, while the Mississaugas were literally disembodied and impersonated, their name “disappeared.” Yet, although the Semi-Centennial offered a vision of the past to frame and ground present identities and power relations,\textsuperscript{138} this was not a one-way or uncomplicated process of Semi-Centennial organizers moulding the minds of Torontonians. For as Gordon notes, “memory does not construct nationalism and nationalism does not invent memories; they develop
together in an entwined and symbiotic relationship.” Pride in nation and “race” had to exist already in the minds of the audience attending the Semi-Centennial for the pageant before them to have any symbolic or emotive power.

Furthermore, although the United Empire Loyalists received special acknowledgment of their high standing by being allotted a day to mark an anniversary of their own, their program may have been the least successful of the entire week and apparently elicited little response from the population at large. One editor considered that “[i]t was probably a mistake” to devote a day to “the comparatively unexciting celebration of the virtues” of this select group and another writer complained of the excesses of Loyalist hagiography that year. It is possible that the elitism and traditional values of the Loyalist Day organizers had already reached their zenith and were becoming outdated in 1884. Perhaps they didn’t resonate as well as did discourses of progress with residents of the rapidly growing industrial city. But as Loyalist discourses lost their purchase, so too did discourses of historic Indigenous-settler partnership, which the Red Loyalists had epitomized. Similarly, as the focus for historical commemoration shifted from the founding of the city in 1793, to its incorporation in 1834, the city’s history with the Mississaugas became even more obscured.

1 Penelope Edmonds, “From Bedlam to Incorporation: Whiteness and the racialisation of colonial urban space in Victoria, British Columbia and Melbourne, Victoria, 1840s – 1880s,” in Exploring the British World: Identity, Cultural Production, Institutions (Melbourne: RMI, 2004), 67.
Toronto, see Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).


8 Ibid., 8.

9 Ibid., 7.


12 Ibid., 11.

13 In fact, other municipalities resented Toronto’s role as host of Loyalist celebrations, arguing that other cities such as Niagara or Adolphustown were more appropriate venues, and decided to organize their own events. See Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, 79-81.

14 Thus, in 1943, Montreal celebrated its founding in 1642 rather than its incorporation in 1833, as part of a reappropriation of urban space by its Franco-Catholic community, and thus emphasized the founders’ heroism, missionary mystique, and divine intervention. The city’s 1833 incorporation didn’t serve the interests of the organizers, especially because the incorporation was revoked in 1836 in the wake of political troubles. Toronto, on the other hand, was able to get more political mileage out of its incorporation than its 1793 founding. See Harold Bérubé, “Commémorer la ville: une analyse comparative des célébrations du centenaire de Toronto et du tricentenaire de Montréal,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 57, no. 2 (2003): 217-18.

15 Ibid., 218.


17 There were also about 2000 Germans, 1,200 French, 124 Jews, 103 Italians, and smaller numbers of people of other origins; Indigenous peoples were not listed as a distinct category. Protestants (mainly Church of England, Methodists, and Presbyterians) outnumbered Catholics by about three to one, and the Orange order was a significant force in the city. Canada, Census of Canada, 1881-2 Vol.1 (Ottawa 1882), 276-7.


19 Council authorized McMurrich to establish a committee of interested citizens and supported the event through a $10,000 contribution, despite the economic downturn that year. As Goheen notes, City Council records indicate little involvement in the actual organizing, although ten councilors were designated as responsible for city matters relating to the Semi-Centennial. City of Toronto Archives, Minutes and Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto, 1884, January 21, Item 52; April 15, Item 105. Goheen, “The assertion of middle-class claims,” 77.

20 These included an Executive Committee of twelve members, a Tableaux Committee of 24 members, and a Memorial Volume Committee of 16 members. Scadding and Dent, eds., *Toronto, Past and Present, Historical and Descriptive: A Memorial Volume for the Semi-Centennial of 1884* (henceforth *TPP*) (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, 1884), 132, 303-307; Goheen, “The assertion of middle-class claims,” 78.

21 Goheen, “The assertion of middle-class claims,” 79.

22 Ibid.

23 The parade moved down Yonge to Queen, along Queen to Jarvis, south on Jarvis to King, west to Simcoe St., north on Simcoe to Queen, west on Queen to Strachan, and then south to Exhibition Park. Scadding and Dent, *TPP*, 313.

24 “Jubilee: Opening of Toronto’s Great Holiday,” *The News*, July 1, 1884, 1. Many had come from out of town via railroad or lake steamer.


26 “The Queen City (cont.),” *Daily Mail*, July 1, 1884, 2; “Toronto’s Jubilee,” *Globe*, Tuesday July 1, 1884, 3.

27 “The Queen City (cont.).”

28 Scadding and Dent, *TPP*, 315.
"The Queen City (cont.)."

Scadding and Dent, *TPP*, 315.

31 In the *Globe* newspaper report the next day he was identified as president of the entire university, a post to which he would be officially appointed a few years later.


33 See Daniel Wilson, “Toronto of Old,” *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 4, no. 2 (August 1873): 96. See also F.H. Armstrong’s introduction to the abridged edition of *Toronto of Old*: “Since the town, and later the city, was the centre of activities for Upper Canada, the leading figures of both capital and province tended to be the same.” Henry Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, ed. and abr. Frederick Henry Armstrong, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn, 1987), xvii.

34 Careless commented that his knowledge was said to encompass “ancient rocks to Henry VIII,” Careless, “First Hurrah,” 149.


37 Indigenous Torontonians during this time period were largely western educated Christians from influential Mohawk families at Six Nations or other “civilized Indians,” particularly Anishinaabe missionaries, who visited Toronto to meet with members of missionary societies. People of mixed ancestry, some from Red River, also lived in the city, but hardening racial attitudes made it increasingly difficult for those who did not look white. See Sylvia Van Kirk, “‘What if Mama is an Indian?’: The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family,” in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, 207–217 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985). Less prominent individuals likely came to the city seeking education or to work as servants or labourers; others sold crafts or produce at St. Lawrence Market or the Industrial Exhibition. A few came to the city as performers of traditional songs and dances. Maungwudaus, half brother of the Mississauga missionary Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones), performed at St. Lawrence Hall in 1851. Mr. Ma-zaw-keyaw-se-gay and Mr. and Mrs. Mah-koonce (the “grand-daughter of the famous, brave and warlike, yet generous and hospitable Captain Brant”) performed at the same venue in 1856. Increasingly, however, Indigenous performers came from further afield, such as Kawshawgance and his troupe who illustrated “the manners and customs of the Rocky Mountain Indians,” in 1856. Edwin Clarence Guillet, *Toronto from Trading Post to Great City* (Toronto: Ontario Publishing, 1934), 409, 411.


39 For example, George Brown and George Taylor Denison III. Land had become scarce in Upper Canada/Canada West by the 1850s; potential settlers and Toronto’s rapidly expanding business class needed a new hinterland to exploit.

40 Canniff, Scadding, and Wilson were all members of the committee organizing the Loyalist commemoration on the fourth day. For the members of the committee, see *The Centennial of the Settlement of Upper Canada by the United Empire Loyalists, 1784-1884* (Toronto: Rose Publishing, 1885), 50.


42 Ibid., 2-3.

43 Ibid., 84.

44 Ibid., 217.


48 Frederick Armstrong, in the introduction to his 1987 edition of *Toronto of Old*, xxvii.

49 As was the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of County of York* (Toronto: Miles & Co., 1878), which featured an historical introduction by William Canniff.

50 Scadding, *Toronto of Old* (1873), vii.

51 Ibid., 3.
“From time to time, previous and subsequent to 1813, and for pecuniary considerations of various amounts they surrendered to the local Government their nominal right over the regions which they still occupied in a scattered way.” Scadding, *Toronto of Old* (1873), 369.

He noted Native women at the fish market in Bartlett’s sketches in *Canadian Scenery*; the Mississaugas’ use of the peninsula as a sort of spa, and the medical ministrations of Dr. Lee to sick Aboriginal women. Scadding, *Toronto of Old* (1873), 32, 83, 7.

In fact, Wilson had reviewed Scadding’s *Toronto of Old* in the *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 4, no. 2 (August, 1873): 90.

Daniel Wilson, *Prehistoric Man: Researches into the Origin of Civilisation in the Old and the New World* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1862). Subsequent revised editions were published in 1865 and 1876.

Wilson described North America as a historical and cultural laboratory. While Britain had become great through a slow process of “collision with races only a little in advance of herself, in the natural transition through all the stages from infancy to vigorous manhood,” in North America the “free savage” in a state of nature was “brought into contact with some of the highest phases of European civilization while the inheritor of that same civilization, divested of its inevitable control, has been left amid the widening inheritance of his new clearings to develop whatever tendencies lay dormant in the artificial European man.” Thus, in an apparently natural historical process, “the American red-man is displaced by the American white-man,” the “free product of the great past and the great present.” Furthermore, this experiment included Africans as well, “to try whether the African is more enduring than the American even on his own soil,” and offered the opportunity to study “amalgamation and hybridity,” and the “development and perpetuity of varieties of a dominant, a savage, and a servile race.” Although Wilson employed racial categories in his analysis, he did not conceive of them as biologically fixed or as arising from separate acts of creation as did polygenists such as Josiah Nott, but rather as the result of divergent historical development. He also rejected Darwin’s theory of the origin of the species through evolution from apes, instead asserting the biological unity of the human race as “descendants of one primal pair.” Ibid., 4, 16, 13; Bruce Trigger, “Prehistoric Man and Daniel Wilson’s Later Canadian Ethnology,” *Thinking with Both Hands: Sir Daniel Wilson in the Old World and the New*, Marinell Ash et. al., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 87, 92.

Wilson, *Prehistoric Man*, xiii.

One such find was reported in “‘The Red Man’: Evidence of His One Time Residency North of Toronto Unearthed,” *Globe*, May 24, 1881.


“Semi-Centennial Tableaux: The Queen City presented in a variety of aspects,” *Globe*, Monday May 19, 1884, 5. Newspapers varied in their reporting of the sequence, some calling the York Pioneers’ tableaux the first in the sequence, and others not mentioning these but beginning with the first of the twelve commissioned ones.


Tyendinaga Mohawks acted the part of the Mississaugas at the instigation of William Canniff, the chief Indians present, descendants of those who accompanied the Loyalists to Canada in 1784. It is possible that the organizer of the day of Loyalist celebrations, who had close ties to the Bay of Quinte area.


There is no mention of Mississaugas, Credit Indians, Ojibways, Chippewas or any similar name.

“Toronto’s Jubilee: United Empire Loyalists celebrate,” *News*, July 4, 1884, 3. “There were quite a number of Indians present, descendants of those who accompanied the Loyalists to Canada in 1784.” It is possible that the Tyendinaga Mohawks acted the part of the Mississaugas at the instigation of William Canniff, the chief organizer of the day of Loyalist celebrations, who had close ties to the Bay of Quinte area.

The Six Nations had offered them refuge in 1847, in recognition of the fact that the Mississaugas had agreed to a surrender of land in 1784 for the benefit of Six Nations refugees from the American Revolution. The Mississaugas subsequently purchased the land for the New Credit reserve. However, relations between the Six Nations and the Anishinaabek nations were somewhat strained in 1884 following a political crisis among members of the Grand General Council of the Indians of Ontario. See Norman D. Shields, “Anishinabek Political Alliance in the Post-Confederation Period: The Grand General Indian Council of Ontario, 1870-1936,” M.A. Thesis, Queens University, 2001, 70.

See City of Toronto Archives, fond 2, series 1241, file 10, City of Toronto Semi-Centennial Scrapbook 1883–1884, 35, 36, 49, 51, 53. The 1885 annual report of the Department of Indian Affairs mentioned that the Six Nations had been invited to participate in the Niagara celebration and made no mention of the Mississaugas in this regard, though their population was enumerated separately from the Haudenosaunee elsewhere in the report. The report was reprinted in Peter Edmund Jones’s newspaper, the *Indian*, 31 March 1886. Although Jones did not mention Mississauga participation in the Toronto Semi-Centennial, he did reprint articles on Toronto and on historical place names written by Henry Scadding, David Boyle, Arthur Harvey, and others, and also reported a meeting as well as articles by several other Toronto authors.


Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 18, 174, 81. Native people, including Huron-Wendats from Lorette, Anishinaabek from Sault Ste Marie, Mohawks (Kanienkahaka), Onandagas, and others were the only paid actors in the Quebec pageant. According to Nelles, they largely followed the script given them, dressing and acting according to dominant cultural perceptions of Indianness.


“Semi-Centennial Tableaux.”


Scadding and Dent. *TPP*, 310. On another part of the same float, the victorious Major Rogers received the sword of the “vanquished” French general.


Quoted in Radforth, *Royal Spectacle*, 210-211.

This could also be read as Canada’s deference to Britain or the British Empire.


Cecilia Morgan, personal communication, June 2, 2010.

Scadding and Dent, *TPP*, 311.

As discussed in chapter two, what they were actually signing is unclear, as the only record of the agreement was a “a blank deed, with the names or devices of three chiefs of the Mississauga Nation, on separate pieces of paper annexed thereto…” E.A. Cruikshank, ed., *Simcoe Correspondence* 11, no. 138, Dorchester to Simcoe, January 27, 1794.


Wilson, “Toronto of Old,” 90.


Similarly, the parade organizers did not represent other historic interactions between the British and local Mississaugas from the city’s pre-urban past in which the Mississaugas might have been seen as valuable or
powerful allies rather than subjects, such as the significant role that local Chief Wabbicommiccot played in containing and finally ending Pontiac’s War in 1763-4.

102 Ibid., 311. Apparently women in Upper Canada did not actually spin, according to Cecilia Morgan.
103 Scadding, TPP, 312.
105 Tyendinaga had elected its first band councilors in 1870 according to the online version of the exhibition, “Mohawk Ideals, Victorian Values: Oronhyatekha, M.D,” (held at the Woodland Cultural Centre and Royal Ontario Museum in 2001-2002). http://woodland-centre.library.cornell.edu/synoptic.html.
106 “The league binding them together was rather of a democratic nature…They were always deliberate in their councils, considerate in their decisions, never infringing upon the rights of a minority, and dignified in their utterances. They were noted, not only as warriors, but as well for their agriculture, their laws, and their oratorical ability….They were for hundreds of years the terror of the various Indian tribes peopling North America, and most of the time could, at will, roam the wide expanse between the Hudson Bay and the Carolinas. Other tribes, too weak to oppose them, were from time to time completely exterminated.” Canniff, Settlement of Upper Canada, 72.
107 Canniff had written that they showed no “turbulent spirit, none of those wild attributes natural to the wild-woods Indian, toward their white neighbors,” and were sober, farmer-like Christians. Their “elevated” nature was at least in part because of their mixed heritage: “Of the six hundred Indians now living upon the Reserve, there is only one with pure Indian blood. … The circumstances of the Indians during the revolutionary war, and subsequently in settling in Canada, led to frequent unions between the white men of different nationalities and the Indian women. Therefore, at the present day there remains but little more than a trace of the primal Indian who lorded it, a hundred years ago, over no inconsiderable portion of the North American Continent.” Canniff, Settlement, 84-85. Such a positive assessment of intermarriage and “miscegenation” contrasted with the many depictions of treacherous, dangerous, and uncivilized “half-breeds” that would circulate at roughly the same time in relation to the Métis of the Northwest who had joined with Riel in the Red River Resistance of 1869-70.
108 “Toronto’s Jubilee: The United Empire Loyalists Celebrate.”
109 City of Toronto Archives, City of Toronto Semi-Centennial Scrapbook, Fond 2, Series 1241, Box 148487, folio 5: 77 (unidentified newspaper clipping from 1884).
110 “He exhibited a silver communion service presented to the Mohawks on their conversion from Paganism by Queen Anne.” “The Jubilee: The United Empire Loyalists Celebrate.”
111 Knowles, Inventing the Loyalists, 88.
112 “The Queen City (cont.).” It was also true that the Tyendinega Mohawks were more Christianized than those at Grand River, which Green acknowledged in his speech at Adolphustown, recorded in The Centennial of the Settlement of Upper Canada, 39.
113 The non-Indigenous organizers were not willing to endorse this agenda, since to them Indigenous peoples should demonstrate their loyalty by assimilating with Anglo-Canadian society. Knowles, Inventing the Loyalists, 86.
114 Brantford Expositor, 25 October, 1884.
115 In fact, while there was considerable opposition at the Grand Council, and notably the Six Nations, to the Indian Advancement Act of 1884, which provided for annual elections of municipal-style government, the Mississaugas of New Credit were the only band in Ontario to adopt the Act in the nineteenth century. Dr. Jones considered it to be a “batch of privileges” for which he was “very thankful.” See Shields, “Anishinabek Political Alliance,” 77.
116 “A lot of three acres in the vicinity of Toronto City near or where the Provincial Lunatic Asylum now stands, this was a Reserve for camping and council purposes.” Colonial Office Records, Memorial from the Mississauga Indians of New Credit to the Duke of Newcastle (C.O. 42, Vol 624, Sept. 17, 1860): 458.
118 P. E. Jones, “Red Man v. White Man.”
120 Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin Room, Toronto’s Semi-Centennial Programme 1884, “1884 - Centennial Celebrations” file.


“Saturday, July 4, 1884,” *Toronto Evening Telegram*, July 5, 1884, 1.


Dent was a freelance writer of popular history, formerly editor of the reform newspaper, the *Weekly Globe*, author of the four-volume *Canadian Portrait Gallery*(1881), and *The last forty years: Canada since the union of 1841*, which soon became the standard English account of that period. “John Charles Dent,” *DCB*, 11: 246-9.

My thanks to Cory Wilmott, an anthropologist at Southern Illinois University and expert on Indigenous attire, for her analysis of this image on the cover of the Memorial Volume and her reference to these other images. Cory Wilmott, personal communication, Feb. 22, 2010.

Scadding and Dent, *TPP*, 17.

Similarly, Edmonds recounts that after Indigenous peoples were excluded from Melbourne, they became objects of curiosity and were put on display at the Melbourne Zoological Gardens as part of Australian Centennial Exhibition of 1888. Edmonds, “From Bedlam to Incorporation,” 61.

See Berger, *The Sense of Power*.


The organizers’ discourses were not monolithic, however; there had been disagreement about whether the Loyalists should be celebrated as an elite group or simply as pioneers, and whether the celebration should be used to advance the political cause of imperial unity. Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, 123–80.

Ibid. 11.

Ibid., 20–21.

There is no record of the Native actors receiving payment for their appearance in the tableaux. See also Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) for a discussion of forms of colonial mimicry involving Indigenous people in the United States.


Ibid., 165.

Ibid.

Quoted in Goheen, “The assertion of middle-class claims,” 79.

“Let us give the U.E. Loyalists the glory they so unquestionably merit, and refuse to daub their honoured sepulchers with the whitewash of indiscriminate flattery.” Charles Pelham Mulvany, *Toronto, Past and Present: A Handbook of the City* (Toronto: W.E. Caiger, 1884), 5.
Settler representations of both local and western Indigenous peoples would change dramatically a year later, when thousands of Torontonians gathered to send off their men to fight the Métis in the Northwest Resistance of 1885. Indeed, even in the midst of the week of Semi-Centennial celebrations, a small notice in the Daily Mail had reported ominously that Louis Riel had re-entered Canada after his exile in the United States and was holding a meeting with the Métis, “purpose unknown.” The outbreak of hostilities was a transformative moment in Canadian history, where the white settler nation found itself under attack, shattering the myth of “conquest through benevolence” that had been the underlying assumption in the self-congratulatory portrayals of history at the Toronto Semi-Centennial the year before. Like the Red River Resistance in 1869, it galvanized many Torontonians who felt that the Northwest was essential to the future development of Canada generally and the economic development of Toronto specifically, and who cheered the local troops as they headed west.

The events in Saskatchewan would have a profound effect on local historical discourses, but responses varied. Once hostilities broke out, some Torontonians would employ harsh discourses of Indian savagery, often drawing on earlier French depictions of Iroquois torture. The insurrection increased support for the settler idea of race as an inherent, biological difference; it led to an increasing emphasis on racial homogeneity and the definition of the national essence in terms of a whiteness restricted to northern Europeans more than a single culture. As Stephen Cohn comments, in History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century, “as race emerged as the
“scientific” category into which Native Americans were put, they could be more easily removed from the category of nation.”

The years 1884 and 1885 saw a flurry of publishing on Toronto history by influential Toronto authors, and it was these same authors who largely shaped residents’ perceptions of Indigenous peoples elsewhere as well, especially in relation to events in the Northwest. Some of these employed a discourse of difference between Indigenous peoples of the west, who were seen as savage and uncivilized, and the Indigenous peoples of Ontario, who were considered to be higher up in the civilizational hierarchy and could perhaps be entrusted with the vote (as Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had proposed), though some writers considered all Indigenous peoples irredeemably savage.

At the same time, the far-reaching consequences for Indigenous peoples of the 1885 Northwest rebellion and its suppression, and the need to respond to renewed discourses of savagery on the one hand and potential voting rights on the other, led to a remarkable Indigenous response in the form of The Indian newspaper, published by the second Kahkewaquinaby (Sacred Feathers), the Mississauga doctor Peter Edmund Jones, who was the son of Rev. Peter Jones. This very ambitious national newspaper made visible a very particular Indigenous perspective and discourse to at least an elite few in the city of Toronto and was a multi-faceted response to the racism of writers such as John Charles Mulvany.

Mulvany had moved to Toronto in 1878 from eastern Ontario and had written for many Toronto newspapers and periodicals, especially Rose-Belford’s Canadian Monthly and National Review. In 1883 he had co-authored The History of the County of Brant, Ontario, which had included a history of the Six Nations and a biography of Joseph Brant (though these sections were probably not written by him) and in 1884 had published a Semi-
Centennial publication also titled *Toronto, Past and Present* (1884), which, although it made very little mention of Indigenous people in Toronto, or of the Toronto Purchase, featured a drawing of an Indian “wild man” in the illuminated letter T at the beginning of his first chapter on the “The Toronto of the Past.” In that volume Mulvany expressed his discomfort with the excessive mythologizing of the Loyalists that year, but that did not mean he avoided all mythologizing of the city’s founding moments. Characterizing the period of General Simcoe’s government (1792-1796) as the golden age of English-speaking Canada (since there was no Family Compact, state church, or party politics), he idealized Simcoe as a heroic “soldier-governor,” the father of Upper Canada and founder of Toronto.⁴

In subsequent publications, Indigenous peoples commanded more of his attention, and what distinguished his work from that of others was the virulence of his discourse of savagery. In his *The History of the North-west Rebellion of 1885*, most of a chapter was devoted to Toronto’s involvement in the suppression of Riel’s insurrection and its wholehearted support of the “saviours of the land.”⁵ Victory in “savage” warfare against Indian and “half-breed” foes was the new narrative that displaced the Semi-Centennial’s narrative of peaceful and benevolent conquest of uncivilized, yet friendly, Indians.

Mulvany’s poem “Our Boys in the North-West Away,” which was published in the *Globe* on May 24, 1885, expressed a popular racism:

They did not fear that dark ravine  
Where Half-breed hell-hounds yelped unseen,  
With might predestined to prevail  
Trod down the gusts of leaden hail,  
Victorious in the fight are they,  
Our boys in the North-West away.

They could not fail, they knew not fear  
When Otter led the charging cheer.  
They charged the open, they laid low  
With Gatling fire the Red-skin foe,
They felt the rapture of the fray,
Our boys in the North-West away.  

Mulvany’s racism was further evident in his “A Brief History of Canada and the Canadian People” which formed the first part of *The History of Toronto and the County of York* (pages 1-209), the first comprehensive history of the region. This volume was also edited by Henry Scadding and John Charles Dent, and published in 1885. Mulvany’s account set the history of the city and surrounding townships in the broader context of Canadian history, from Cartier, Champlain, and New France to the struggle for responsible government. In Mulvany’s text, Native people were mentioned only in the first few pages, where they were characterized as ignorant, superstitious, savage, and violent. He noted for example that “of all savage races, these alone practiced the cruel and disgusting custom of scalping … [including] Pontiac, Tecumseh and Captain Brant,” while the pioneers and British were noble and courageous.

The three Indigenous groups of the region were stereotypically differentiated. Mulvany characterized the Hurons (Wendats) as good but pathetic and doomed; their huge bone pits were the scene of the “loathsome Feast of the Dead,” and their “interminable speechification” was “characteristic of these grown-up children.” Of their religion, Mulvany wrote: “Animism is the superstition of children when they beat the ground against which they have fallen and hurt themselves.”

The religious chivalry of the French Jesuit missionaries converted, and might have civilized, the Hurons. But the torch and tomahawk of Iroquois warfare exterminated the race as utterly as the Canaanites were destroyed from the face of earth by the pious zeal of the children of Israel. Nothing remains of them but the name given to the lake by which they dwelt.
Thus Mulvany characterized the Haudenosaunee victory over the Wendat as total genocide, completely disregarding the large numbers of Wendats who were adopted into Haudenosaunee society, and unaware of their survival in Quebec and elsewhere.

Mulvany also continued the usual contrast between the Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous peoples; the former’s society was a “nearer approach to civilization: they were “the Romans of the Western World,” while the Mississaugas and other Algonquians were barely above animals:

Like the other inferior races of man, they have no annals, no record of their own past; but the record of race, stamped on skin and skeleton, would seem to indicate an Asiatic origin…. But when, in the sixteenth century of Christian civilization, French and English maritime enterprise, born of the new birth of classical literature, discovered or re-discovered this country, the Indian race in Canada had not advanced beyond the civilization of the Stone Age. They were in some respects behind, they were in no respect in advance of, the human wild beast who was the contemporary of the mammoth and the cave-bear. …their dress was that of the earlier savages described in the legends of Hebrew and other primitive races, paint and the skins of wild beasts….They had lived for unknown centuries with no home but the forest, which they shared with the wolf, the bear, and the lynx. In architecture they were inferior to the brute instinct which had shaped the lake cities of the beaver, the cave-shaped nests of the mole, the wax hexagon of the bee.

The Indians of Canada represent its pre-historic age. It is impossible to estimate the date of their sparse and nomadic occupation of a country that, now civilized into farms, towns and cities, supports an increasing population which to their feeble and shifting number is as a thousand to one. No doubt these inferior races fulfilled a useful purpose. They were of some service to the first white immigrants into Canada….But they surpassed all other savage races known to history in cruelty, treachery, and revenge; …[and] most likely will become extinct.

Indigenous contributions to world civilization were almost negligible and they would be deservedly forgotten. Their only contribution, the canoe, was fragile and unsafe:

…it will in all probability pass away with the decaying race to whom it belongs, and who appear doomed to fade in obedience to that inexorable law of the non-survival of the unfit, leaving as their memorial only the strange music of their names for the rivers, lakes, and hills of a country which has become the Dominion of a higher race.
In contrast to the earlier discourse of Canniff, which had portrayed the region’s Indigenous people as equal morally and intellectually to white people, Mulvany’s Indigenous people were “savages who hated civilized man.” Speaking of the arrival of the Loyalists, Mulvany wrote:

The country west of Montreal was then an unknown wilderness of swamp and forest, the haunt of wild beasts and reptiles, the hunting ground of savages whose hatred of civilized man made its exploration perilous.  

In his history, there was no mention of treaties with such people or land surrenders like the Toronto Purchase; Mulvany’s social Darwinist assumption appears to have been that given the hierarchy of races and “non-survival of the unfittest,” they were not necessary. Indeed, in Mulvany’s description of the ceremonial naming of York, the Mississaugas encamped on the peninsula were mere “hangers-on” who were already overstaying their welcome:

While the military pageant, and the salute from garrison and harbour, which must have scared the wild fowl from the bay and dumfounded the Mississaga hangers-on in the camp, the rough, unhewn site of the future capital rose to the dignity of a town, while the old oaks by the marge of the lake bowed their heads in recognition of the honour.

Other sections of *The History of Toronto and County of York*, written by other authors, presented different images of the Indigenous past of the region, such as the lengthy discussion of archaeological sites in Scarborough, most likely written by David Boyle:

About half a mile from Eglinton, to the south-west, the remains of an Indian village were discovered about twelve or fifteen years ago. The character of the relics unearthed, which were of the usual kind found about the sites of aboriginal settlements in this neighbourhood, indicated that it had been a populous village, and that it must have been a place of habitation for a long period.

Similarly, “traces of the large aboriginal population which occupied the western portion of this township [Scarborough] but disappeared before the advent of the white settlers, are frequently discovered.” The author located their principal settlement at the mouth of the
Rouge, “where the site of what was once a considerable Indian village was indicated by the remains of the logs which formed a wooden palisade surrounding their habitations.” (This was likely at Bead Hill, believed to be the site of the seventeenth century Seneca village of Ganetsekwyagon.) The influence of archaeological investigations on conceptions of local history was evident:

Here have been discovered from time to time a variety of Indian relics, which, in the opinion of scientists, show a continuous residence on the spot for at least a century. Some have all the characteristics of the stone age, and mixed with the rude weapons and implements of “native industry” are those of copper and iron, and also glass beads, which were probably obtained by intercourse with the early French voyageurs and traders.

Discussing further village and burial sites in the Claremont and Pickering area as “relics of a vanished race” the author concluded: “These ancient settlements were connected with the one in Scarborough, and all are believed to have belonged to the once powerful Huron nation.”

Indeed, significant new historical interpretations were now suggested by the study of local artifacts. In the 1880s, archaeologist Andrew F. Hunter, for example, catalogued village and ossuary sites in Simcoe, York and Ontario counties, counting 33 village sites in York and 5 ossuaries. By tracing French relics at Huron-Wendat sites, he was able to date many of them, and as a result was the first to suggest the Huron-Wendat arrived in Simcoe County from the south, including the Toronto area.

These investigators and collectors were most interested in the origins and migrations of Iroquoians. The “prehistory” of the Algonquian peoples from whom the Mississaugas were descended was largely neglected, partly because their physical remains were less frequently encountered in the immediate area and as a semi-nomadic people they left fewer physical traces. Furthermore, as previously discussed, they were considered an inferior, less
“advanced” people, less interesting than the Six Nations with whom the United Empire Loyalists, and British generally, shared an affective bond.

In 1885 Boyle, Daniel Wilson, and other collectors called on the government of Oliver Mowat to establish a provincially funded museum in Toronto “for the preservation of Indian relics and Canadian antiquities.” This proposal was supported by both the Globe and the Mail, the Mail editorializing: “We are so desperately bent upon the affairs of the present that we have no time to devote to the numberless monuments bequeathed to us by the people who preceded us on this continent.”17 In such discourses, settler Canadians were portrayed as inheritors rather than appropriators or conquerors of Indian land, or desecrators of Indian graves. Canadians were duty-bound to become custodians of the Indigenous historical legacy, since actual Native people had either vanished, were considered to be unrelated to the makers of the artifacts, or were considered too backward, poor, or uneducated to protect such material remains or interpret them correctly.18

Graeme Mercer Adam

Another influential Toronto writer whose work similarly spanned Toronto history, Canadian history, and Indigenous peoples of the west was Graeme Mercer Adam, a publisher, editor and author, “probably the most influential literary figure of the immediate post-Confederation period writing in English in Canada.”19 Adam’s contribution to the History of Toronto and the County of York focused on the history of the city of Toronto itself. It contained almost no mention of Indigenous people, save for the two Mississauga families in Bouchette’s original description, and the warriors in the battle of York: “The casualties also included a number of Indians, who had been of much service, under Major Givins, when the enemy were in the act of landing.”20 But that same year he also wrote The Canadian
Northwest: its History and its Troubles, “from the early days of the fur-trade to the era of the railway and the settler” with a narrative of three insurrections and a title page bearing the banner “From Savagery to Civilization.” One chapter discussed the “Indian Tribes of the Older Provinces and the Northwest,” and opened with the statement: “Savagery, it has been said, is civilisation’s childhood.” Yet much of the chapter discussed the white man’s duty to address “the Indian Question,” because

it is a question entirely of the white man’s making. We came to the Indian, not the Indian to us. We were the aggressors. We invaded his territory…With one hand we held before him the Cross; with the other we cut him down with the sword…In the face of our relations with him, it ill becomes our humanity to say, that “the only good Indian is a dead one!”

Adam argued that the Europeans had greatly exacerbated tribal wars: “What for instance, gave increased violence to Iroquois enmity to the Hurons, but the intermeddling, in 1615, of Champlain and his French following?” He detailed a long list of white atrocities on Indigenous peoples -- “In all the range and license of human passion, history has no greater atrocities to chronicle” -- and characterized Indian attacks on whites as retaliation or goaded by other European powers in intercolonial warfare. “Lay at our own doors responsibility for inciting the Indians to acts of savagery.” While acknowledging that the poetic Indian, the Indian of Cooper and Longfellow, was an idealistic fiction, he strongly criticized the characterizations of writers like Mulvany, arguing that “we are not called upon to paint him in the pigments of the pit, or to endow him with the attributes of fiends.” Rather, he agreed with George Catlin that they were “a people who are dying of broken hearts.” In Adam’s view, the differing portrayals of Indians had more to do with the bearing and disposition of the observer than with the inherent characteristics of the subjects. Adam’s more sympathetic perspective echoed that of earlier Methodists and humanitarians and also Canniff’s in its acknowledgement that Indigenous people had been wronged, but it was also a reaction to the
extreme racism expressed by contemporary writers such as Mulvany in the context of the Northwest Rebellion. But Adam’s sympathy only extended so far. The Canadian Northwest concluded with a poem by poet and journalist Agnes Wetherald\textsuperscript{23} that reverted to the discourse of savagery Adam had criticized elsewhere in the book, an indication of the tensions and competing discourses in settler ideologies.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1887, Adam was co-author, with Wetherald, of An Algonquin Maiden: A Romance of the Early History of Upper Canada,\textsuperscript{25} a cautionary tale of the perils, indeed impossibility, of intermarriage and the necessary extinction of Indigenous people. That it is clearly a story from a Torontonian’s perspective is evident from the fact that many of the Euro-Canadian characters bear the last names of Toronto’s most established families. The novel sets up an opposition between the city and the wilderness to the north where Torontonians were then beginning to engage in wilderness tourism.\textsuperscript{26} The maiden in question is Wanda, “a veritable child of Nature, untamed, untamable, not only in her habits and surroundings, her modes of life and thought, but in her very nature, in every fibre of her being, every emotion of her mind.”\textsuperscript{27} The beautiful and passionate daughter of a deceased Huron mother and foster daughter of a “very grave, very dignified, very far from being immaculately clean” Algonquin chief who is “the last of his race,” she lives a life of primitive innocence, freedom, isolation, and “barbaric splendour,” in the forests of Muskoka, north of Toronto. Edward Macleod, an earnest young cadet, encounters her on a vacation from the city and is smitten with passion for her. He desires to share the “simple joys of a free and careless savage life” and rejects his former love interest, the civilized Helene de Berczy, “the flower of an old and complex civilization,” who, like all white women, appears to be a strange, unnatural, and wan creature compared to Wanda, especially in the context of the untamed new land.
When Wanda falls in love with Edward, he feels obliged to offer marriage, but he soon realizes his mistake when she shames him with childish behaviour and inattention to appropriate dress and irritates him with her unconsciousness. Eventually he realizes she is like a “course weed” and will never be civilized. Luckily for him, although he cannot honourably desert her, Wanda meets her “adamantic, inexorable fate,” drowning herself after saving Edward’s life, when she realizes he will never love her, singing her Indian death song as she sinks below the water. Edward is then free to marry Helene De Berczy in a symbolic union of French and English that prospers once the Native has been excluded and has died off. According to Terry Goldie, this was a common fate for Indigenous women in settler fiction.

Significantly, both Wanda and her father express supposedly “Indian” perspectives on the history of contact with Europeans, including their belief in the racial superiority of Indians and the harmful results of white contact: “the white race was like a poison vine, killing all it touched. The Hurons had become infected with it, becoming mere tillers of the soil”; to the Algonquin chief, civilization made men stupid. He considers white people “a strange, servile race” who look upon the forest as their enemy. They are not fit associates for Wanda; they “mourn bitterly for their dead because they feel how great is the distance between them and the land of spirits.” Yet Wanda is haunted by the stories of the bloody extermination of her mother’s people by the Iroquois, “the story of that dark time, far back in the annals of Canada…when “the poetry of Indian life among the peaceful shades of this virgin wilderness was turned into a tale too ghastly for the human imagination, too terrible for human endurance,” the Iroquois unleashing “a red tide of blood.”

These same discourses of Iroquois savagery and an apparently virgin but actually blood-soaked land appear in another commemorative volume of Toronto’s history published
by Adam to celebrate the 1891 centenary of the establishment of Upper Canada in 1791 and the founding of the capital in 1793. *Toronto, Old and New* was edited by Adam and featured an introduction by Henry Scadding. In describing the earlier French period, the Toronto Passage is described as being the bloody warpath of the Iroquois in their wars against the French and Hurons in Huronia:

New York was then the lair of the Iroquois, while Canada, in the main was the hunting ground of the Algonquins and Hurons…. On the errands of hell, season after season, came bands of the Five Nation Indians, and in their path through the forest marked “the pass by Toronto” with the scorchings of Iroquois hate.\(^\text{31}\)

It seems but a baleful dream to stand to-day by the mouth of the Humber, now almost a suburb of the great city and reflect that by so placid a waterway the Spirit of Evil then sent its emissaries to work such havoc. It is nearly two hundred and fifty years since these tragic days in the history of Canada, but how few are there of Toronto’s holiday crowds on the Humber who think to what scenes the present safe and pleasant waters, which connect Lake Ontario with Lakes Simcoe and Huron, then led. …\(^\text{32}\)

If, for Kohl and Mulvany, all that remained of Indigenous presence on the land was the “strange music” of Indigenous place names, here Adam more fully articulated a trope that what appeared to be untouched “virgin” forest was invisibly but indelibly marked or haunted by a history of bloody violence, unbeknownst to modern-day Torontonians. In this sense, the land was not simply a terra nullius, an empty land, that needed to be productively used to be owned, but a formerly savage land ruled by satanic forces. Savagery permeated and haunted the forest, the “wilderness” antithesis to the city.\(^\text{33}\)

Implicit in this trope was the sense that only cutting down the forest would dispel the evil miasma that haunted the land. The ecological transformation of the land from forest to farm and city was thus also a moral redemption.

There is one other sense in which *Toronto, Old and New* addressed the issue of the “virgin” forest. In returning to Bouchette’s first description of Toronto bay, the author emphasized the solitude and silence of the “virgin site of Toronto”:
When civilization first seriously invaded the sanctuaries of Nature in the region of what is now the fair City of Toronto, the startled onlookers were a flock of wild fowl and a couple of families of the Children of the Wood. At the time we speak of, in the beautiful basin of Toronto Harbour, if we except the noiseless movements during the hours of day of one or two Mississaga Indians, solitude reigned supreme. …..34

The site of Toronto was a silent, empty stage, and thus the perfect setting for Europeans to become actors and set real history in motion. The Mississaugas were “one or two” stealthy interlopers, mere shadows silently flitting through the forest, too immaterial to lay a claim to territory.

Wild West Shows – Playing Themselves

The year 1885 also marked the first appearance of a new kind of performance in Toronto: Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show, which arrived with an entourage of 150 “cowboys, Mexicans and Indians,” including Sitting Bull, Annie Oakley, sharpshooters, and the “largest herd of buffalo ever exhibited.” “The Greatest Novelty of the Century” pulled into town in eighteen train cars; a vast crowd lined the streets to watch the long procession to Woodbine Park. There the sold-out audience watched trick shooting, horse racing, bronco riding, buffalo hunting, Indian dancing, and set battles between the cowboys and Sitting Bull’s Indians, including re-enactments of Custer’s Last Stand at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876.35

A big draw of the show was its supposed “realism.” Arriving in Toronto in the summer of 1885, when the Northwest Rebellion was barely over and Riel still alive, the show promoted itself as offering “an Exact Exhibition of Western Border Life” with recreations of “battles similar to Fish Creek, Cut Knife and Batoche.”36 It seemed to reflect history in the making. Certainly, the Globe’s reporters considered the shows lifelike, commenting favourably on a “wonderfully like-like representation of an Indian attack on a settler’s cabin,
and a brilliant rescue effected by Buffalo Bill and his cowboys.” “No description can convey an adequate idea of the striking realism of this show as a picture of Western frontier life…There is no paste-board, no tinsel, no gaslights, no shifting of scenes, nothing to mar the realism of the scenes enacted.”

As “the most popular purveyor of the Indian image before the advent of the Hollywood movie,” the popularity of the shows further inscribed Plains Indians as the type for of all Indians in the popular imagination of Torontonians and perpetuated the erasure or effacement of knowledge of local Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee peoples, who did not conform to that image. These highly visible performers from elsewhere reinforced the notion that Indigenous people were exotic Others alien to the modernity of Toronto.

Indigenous people themselves apparently viewed the shows with ambivalence, for despite the stereotypes and overall message of the triumph of civilization, more acculturated individuals of Pauline Johnson’s generation believed that the shows “gave them their first glimpse of the redman in his pre-contact state;” they were inspired by his “fierce independence.”

**The Indian, 1885-1886**

In the context of heightened debate about the supposed savagery of Indigenous peoples, Kahkewaquonaby (Sacred Feathers/Peter Edmund Jones), the son of the missionary Peter Jones and now the chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, undertook a groundbreaking and ambitious project: the editing and publishing of a fortnightly national newspaper called *The Indian*. “A paper devoted to the Aborigines of North America and especially to the Indians of Canada,” it was the first newspaper published by an Indigenous person in Canada, and sought to educate and empower Indigenous people and to alter the discourses about them. Kahkewaquonaby, a supporter of John A. Macdonald’s Conservatives, also clearly
had political aims. The paper supported both the federal Indian Advancement Act and the Dominion Franchise Bill. The former conferred certain privileges on the more “advanced” bands of Ontario and Quebec, in order to “train” them for the exercise of some features of municipal self-government, while the latter extended the federal franchise to Indian males who met the minimum property qualifications required of any British subject, whether or not they held these lands in severalty.  

*The Indian*’s first issue appeared on Dec. 30 1885, and was distributed to reserves across Canada. 45 *The Indian* had strong connections with Toronto from the start; it attracted Toronto advertisers, featured contributions by a number of well known Toronto authors, and discussed some aspects of Toronto’s history. It also immediately gained the attention of Toronto newspapers, especially the *Globe* and the *Mail*. Published from December 1885 to December 1886, *The Indian* provides a fascinating snapshot of one prominent Mississauga’s perspective on many of the historical discourses about Indigenous people then circulating.

Kahkewaquonaby, like his father, believed that Indigenous people should adopt Christianity and become educated and civilized, and his paper aimed to support that end: “by advice and suggestions, to elevate them step by step to the same position in the social, agricultural, and commercial world, which is now enjoyed by their white brethren.” But equally important was the opportunity to give Indigenous people across the country a voice in their own affairs, to report on conditions from their own perspectives, in their locales, to acknowledge and reflect on their history, to analyse Canadian laws that affected Indians, report on Indian councils, and provide news on markets that affected them, such as those for fish and furs.

That history would be an important theme in *The Indian* was suggested by the classical epigram by Ossian on the masthead:
Where are our Chiefs of old? Where our Heroes of mighty name?
The fields of their battles are silent – scarce their mossy tombs remain!46

For Aboriginal readers, who would likely not know the source of the poetry, the epigram spoke for itself of the need to know and speak out about their own history and culture, and conveyed the sense of a past that could or should be considered heroic, though it also conveyed a sense of loss through the obliteration of memory. For educated non-Aboriginal readers, the inclusion of the epigram additionally proved Kahkewaquonaby’s erudition and thus his considerable credentials as a civilized Indian, and signaled that the newspaper would be of a high literary quality. At the same time it also created a link between Indigenous and settler cultures by reminding those of British heritage that they too had an ancient oral tradition that was a treasured part of their heritage.

The lead editorial of the first issue also made a historical claim, opening with three lines from Sir Walter Scott’s well known poem, “My Native Land”:

Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said
This is my own, my native land!47

Again the words did double duty, signaling both a patriotic sentiment that both Indigenous and Euro-Canadian readers could share and a specific claim by Native peoples to the land because of their indigeneity, a claim that settlers could not make and that leaders like Kahkewaquonaby wanted Euro-Canadians to recognize.

Yet, in the twenty-three issues of the paper, Kahkewaquonaby never specifically referred to the Toronto Purchase or its aftermath for the Mississaugas. In only one instance, was the issue of the Mississauga struggle to retain their lands obliquely referred to. In the very first issue, he featured an article on the St. Catherine’s Milling case, a landmark case in Aboriginal jurisprudence then underway in which the province of Ontario successfully
argued against the concept of Aboriginal title and asserted provincial jurisdiction over lands ceded to the government by treaty. The province argued that pre-contact Aboriginal peoples had been primitive and nomadic, and hence were incapable of owning property, as they had no laws or binding rules of conduct. “Nothing is more clear,” Ontario’s lawyers had argued, “than that they have no government and no organization, and can not be regarded as a nation capable of holding lands.” To his reporting of the arguments for and against Aboriginal title in this case, Kahkewaquinony added his own addendum, quoting an extract of an English paper of 1836, which referred (without mentioning his name or other specifics) to the outcome of his own father’s visit to England to petition the Queen for secure title deeds at the Credit. He commented: “[I]t would appear… that the matter in point was discussed at that early date, and the discussion arrived ‘is of incalculable advantage to the Indians.’” The reprinted text included the following passage:

[A] dispatch has been addressed by Lord Glenelg to the present excellent Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, on the subject of Indian Title Deeds, which will secure to the evangelized Indian and their posterity, the possession in perpetuity of the lands on which they are located, and which they have to some extent improved and cultivated.

Thus, for Kahkewaquinony, the issue of title to land raised by his father was still very much alive, even if the energy of the Mississaugas was now focused on rebuilding their community at their new home at New Credit. Although he did not discuss the Mississaugas’ dispossession further, many of the articles would attest to the long history of Indigenous occupation of the land.

His conviction of the importance of historical understanding of both Indigenous traditions and the process of colonization underlay much of his selection of the content of the paper.
Indian history, and more especially that of the various bands of Canada, will have its place and our attention. The editor possesses one of the largest private Indian libraries in Canada, containing nearly all the principal works on Indian history, and he expects to be ably assisted by noted writers upon this subject.

Kahkewaquinaby published biographical sketches of leading Indigenous figures such as Joseph Brant, his own father (Peter Jones or Kahkewaquinaby), Shawundais (John Sunday), Chief George H. M. Johnson, and Cherokee philologist Sequoyah, the latter two sketches written by noted scholar Horatio Hale. He also received (or was at least promised) contributions from a number of leading historians and archaeologists, most of them based in Toronto, including Daniel Wilson; Henry Scadding; Arthur Harvey; archaeologist and collector J. Hirschfelder; James Bain, City Librarian; and G.B. Boyle.

Archaeology was represented in nearly every issue and the establishment of a provincial archaeological museum was one of the goals supported by the newspaper from the outset. Kahkewaquinaby published a report of the February 1886 deputation made by Daniel Wilson and David Boyle to Oliver Mowat, Attorney-General of Ontario, calling for the establishment of such a museum, in which they argued that the government should also record the sites of Indian villages, battlefield, and burial mounds, and control the exploration of such sites to prevent their desecration, graverobbing, and the illegal selling of relics to collectors in the United States.

Kahkewaquinaby also published two articles with more direct connections to the history of Toronto. The first, “The Use to Make of Early Recollections” was a report by Henry Scadding on the visit of the Pioneers Association of Toronto to Guelph; a second article described a gathering of the York Pioneers at the Exhibition Grounds, and reprinted the address by Scadding, which discussed the historic past of Fort Toronto.
There was also an appeal to Indigenous people to contribute to historical discourses by acting as informants for white scholars; Arthur Harvey wrote the following appeal for help:

“Wanted: The Indians’ Account of Themselves from 1650 to 1700.”

_The Indian_ thus expressed a particular perspective on Indigenous history, a perspective that tried to marry Indigenous and European viewpoints and forms of knowledge. It drew on the best available scholarly knowledge concerning the past of Indigenous peoples and the Toronto area. By publishing or reprinting it in a newspaper for Indigenous peoples, Kahkewaquonaby was clearly asserting that Indigenous people had a long history, that there was shared history in the Toronto area, and that knowing this history was important and useful for Indigenous peoples, as a source of both identity and rights. Yet at the same time, because virtually all of the articles were written by white “experts” and reflected Euro-Canadian and Christian forms of knowledge about this past, alternative Indigenous perspectives and forms of knowledge were largely effaced. Kahkewaquonaby also reprinted settler literature on historical themes that, on the one hand, showed readers that the Indigenous past and its heroes were worthy of literary treatment, and yet, on the other hand, reinforced stereotypes of the vanishing Indian and noble savage, such as a serialized version of James Fenimore Cooper’s _Last of the Mohicans_ and an excerpt of Charles Mair’s _Tecumseh_. These and many passages from other articles by non-Indigenous authors reinforced some prevailing stereotypes while debunking others. Kahkewaquonaby’s newspaper was thus a fascinating amalgam of discourses for various audiences, reflecting his own complex subject position and understandable ambivalence toward both Euro-Canadian and Mississauga cultures.

Kahkewaquonaby’s view of the history of colonization was certainly more benign than that of many other Indigenous peoples, and would not have been endorsed by
traditionalists at Six Nations, for example. While acknowledging that “the Indians are not now the dominant power in the country,” his view of that history was that “by treaty and by cession they have surrendered rights, that civilization might be advanced and their condition improved.” While granting that the Whites had brought intemperance and immorality to Indigenous societies as well as the Christian religion, agriculture and industry, Kahkewaquonaby was clearly aiming to diffuse the animosity caused by the Northwest Rebellion, articulating an idealistic agenda of reconciliation between Indigenous and settler peoples that transcended their historical relationship:

Happily the Indians of Canada, with devotion to their own interest, and with a commendable submission to prevailing circumstances, met those who are now their fellow-countrymen, and have arrived at such a mutual and satisfactory understanding as to their relations to each other, that the Indians can now fairly say to their former antagonists, “Peace be with you, Good will to all men.” The animosity between us is now spent, and Indian and white go hand in hand, each aiding the other in the development of the country’s resources to the mutual advancement of each, and, in the grand endeavour to attain the chief end of man, “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

In an article explaining the benefits of the Dominion Franchise Act, the claim was made that the confederacy of the Five Nations supplied the model for the constitution of the United States. Civilization, it seems, went in both directions.

Thus the red man furnished, so to speak, the raw material of the form of government which now prevails over the greater part of the North American continent. The white brother brought to the common fund his European civilization the heritage of twenty centuries of jurisprudence. Now, in Canada, the joint heritors unite for the first time on terms of perfect equality to administer the affairs of the most perfect outcome of the confederate idea.

This vision was bold and forward-looking, but The Indian ceased publication after 23 issues. Perhaps one of the reasons for its demise was its failure to attract Indigenous contributors or a sufficient Indigenous readership. Kahkewaquonaby had tried to solicit
contributions from educated Indians, but, except for brief notices of news from various reserves (which may in fact have been sent in by missionaries or Indian agents), there appear to have been few contributions by other Indigenous writers. (Oronhyatekha, for example, was conspicuously absent.) Although Kahkewaquonaby apparently had the support of the majority of his own band, since he served as their chief from 1874-1877 and from 1880-1886, “a cultural gulf” of education and privilege separated him from most Indigenous people, including other Mississaugas; for example, his cousin George Henry had attempted to oust him from his post as official doctor for the band. Some Indigenous people were clearly wary of him and judged him as too white, both because he was only one quarter Indian (and had married an English-born wife), and because of his strong support for voting and elected band councils. His political positions reflected one aspect of “progressive” Mississaugas attitudes to history that sharply differentiated them from Haudenosaunee positions, or that of most other Anishinaabek. Yet they demonstrated a historical continuity between the pro-British stances of Wabbicommiccot and his own father.

A further reason for the paper’s failure may have been the determined campaign by the Toronto newspaper the Globe to discredit its editor. While The Indian received positive reviews from a number of settler newspapers in Canada and the US, including Toronto’s Daily Mail, which enthused that “The Indian promises to be an exceedingly interesting paper,” the Globe immediately went on the attack, linking the paper to the Conservative party and suggesting that it was merely a vehicle to attract Indian votes to that party.

Kahkewaquonaby was indeed a strong supporter of the Conservative party and had written John A. Macdonald to thank him personally for extending the franchise to Indian men and recognizing them as “persons.” Kahkewaquonaby was then targeted by the Globe and other Liberals as the “Dominion Government Franchise Agent Among the Indians,” and it
was asserted that the payment of a claim to his band by the government in 1884 had been
made to influence their votes anticipating the Franchise Bill, though there is no evidence
that this was actually the case. Another *Globe* headline maliciously accused
Kakhewaquinaby of advocating the removal of the Six Nations to the Northwest. These
allegations were picked up by the *Brantford Expositor*, in which “A Native Grit” charged
that the denial of this charge by the editor of *The Indian* was a lie, while the Toronto papers,
“the *Courier* and *Telegram* with equal force contended Kahkewaquinaby’s “denial is
sufficient and entitled to belief.” Certainly the accusation was intended to harm his
reputation among the Six Nations, the most powerful and influential Indigenous peoples in
Canada, an attempt reminiscent of earlier colonial strategies to break up the Mississauga-
Haudenosaunee alliance of the 1790s.

*The Indian* was by any standard a remarkable achievement. The fact that
Kakhewaquinaby was able to draw on the likes of Henry Scadding, Daniel Wilson, David
Boyle and other leading Toronto intellectuals in 1886 suggests that he may well have known
them in 1884 or met them through the Semi-Centennial celebrations. While the Semi-
Centennial parade tableaux had perpetuated a notion of Mississauga “fading away,” *The
Indian* would record another development that would eventually challenge the discourse of
the vanishing Indian. The annual Report on Indian Affairs for 1885, which *The Indian*
reprinted, reported that the population of 226 Mississaugas and 3216 members of the Six
Nations was now increasing: they were no longer “dying out.”

**Historical Discourses of Indigenous Torontonians**

While Kakhewaquinaby’s newspaper had engaged with the historical discourses
advanced by Torontonians from a distance, a small number of educated Haudenosaunee who
lived in or visited Toronto in the last decades of the nineteenth century also contributed to local historical consciousness, although they did not focus on the history of Toronto specifically. The members of this small Indigenous elite, who were perceived as having successfully made the transition to “civilization” as exceptional individuals of an otherwise dying race, and who were also members of the self-styled “progressive” faction favouring elected government at Six Nations over traditional modes of governance, knew and interacted with influential non-Indigenous Torontonians, such as Daniel Wilson and David Boyle, often as cultural mediators. For example, John Brant-Sero gave a talk on the Six Nations at the 1889 Toronto meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and also acted as a translator for Boyle in his visits to Six Nations. Allan Wawanosh Johnson, brother of E. Pauline Johnson, became vice president of the United Empire Loyalist Association and lived in Toronto later in life.

Of those Indigenous residents who successfully navigated Victorian Toronto society, Oronhytekha had the highest public profile. In his 26 years as CEO of the International Order of Foresters, which provided insurance to working men, he expanded the IOF base throughout Europe, Australia, and the U.S. became one of North America’s best-known advocates of fraternalism, built the impressive 11-storey Temple Building, then the tallest building in the Empire (at Bay and Richmond streets), and in 1901, was photographed welcoming the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall to the city. Maintaining his Mohawk name throughout his life, he wrote two articles on the Mohawk language, and was “an ardent defender of his native heritage.” Oronhyatekha contributed to local historical discourses as a collector, putting his collection of artifacts on display at the IOF headquarters in Toronto in 1904. Donated in 1911, four years after Oronhyatekha’s death, this collection was one of the founding collections of the Royal Ontario Museum. It included “some of the most significant
pieces of 19th century Great Lakes First Nations material in the ROM’s collections" and recorded the historical relationship of alliance between the British Crown and the First Nations in the Great Lake region. The collection has been interpreted by Haudenosaunee curator Keith Jamieson as Oronhyatekha’s assertion and documentation of Indigenous sovereignty, which has long been an important part of Iroquoian historical consciousness.66

Another Mohawk who played a significant role in articulating Indigenous historical consciousness to Torontonians was E. Pauline Johnson, the poet and performer, who was also from the same group of “progressive” Mohawk families. On January 16, 1892 Johnson participated in an “Evening with Canadian Authors” at the lecture hall of the Art School Gallery on King Street West, which was attended by many of Toronto’s and Canada’s intellectual elite, including Duncan Campbell Scott, William Wilfred Campbell, Agnew Maule Machar, William Lighthall, George Ross (Ontario minister of Education) and the author Graeme Mercer Adam. She recited “A Cry from an Indian Wife,” concerning the Northwest Rebellion:67

They but forget we Indians owned the land
From ocean unto ocean; that they stand
Upon a soil that centuries agone
Was our sole kingdom and our right alone
They never think how they would feel today,
If some great nation came from far away,
Wresting their country from their hapless braves
Giving what they gave us – but war and graves….68

Go forth, nor bend to greed of white men’s hands,
By right, by birth we Indians own these lands,
Though starved, crushed, plundered, lies our nation low…
Perhaps the white man’s God has willed it so.69

A review in the Globe two days later enthused: “It was like the voice of the nations that once possessed this country, who have wasted away before our civilization, speaking through this cultured, gifted, soft-faced descendant.”70
Johnson herself considered it her ambition to “upset the Indian Extermination and Non-education Theory, in fact to stand by my blood and my race.”

Although Johnson’s audible and sometimes political Indigenous voice was a novelty in Toronto, the effect of her critique of white society and her Mohawk perspective on history was blunted because of the power of the stereotypes through which her audiences viewed her, and which she also played up. There was still very little room in the public sphere of Toronto for Indigenous voices, particularly political ones that articulated Indigenous perspectives on the history they shared with settlers.

**Mobilizing Discourses of Heritage**

In the last decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth, Torontonians participated in heritage activities as never before; in fact, by the 1890s, the commemoration of Toronto and Ontario histories were recognized as worthy endeavours by various levels of government. In 1886 Henry Scadding had founded the Pioneer Association of Toronto, which became the Pioneer and Historical Association of Ontario. In 1892 the Association sponsored centennial celebrations for the founding of the province and the appointment of Simcoe as Lieutenant-Governor. Renamed the Ontario Historical Society in 1898, it defined its objective as the “nurturing of patriotic memories, sentiments and attitudes by educating Ontarians about the events and meaning of the British-Canadian heritage.” In 1899, the OHS held a mammoth exhibition, the “Great Canadian Historical Exhibition,” at Victoria College in Toronto. The history of the city and province continued to be intertwined in the discourses of these heritage organizations, which focused on the Loyalists, the Simcoes as founders of both Toronto and head of the new British administration of Upper
Canada, and the war of 1812, though they also celebrated connections to the founding families of the city.\textsuperscript{76}

A new development in some of these heritage activities was greater collaboration between non-Indigenous Toronto scholars or antiquarians, such as David Boyle and Daniel Wilson and Indigenous people, principally from Six Nations. Although Indigenous people were generally “informants” rather than equal partners in archaeological fieldwork, the recording of oral tradition, and ethnographical or genealogical studies, these collaborations did result in the publication of somewhat more reliable and less negative information about local Indigenous cultures.

The Six Nations also attempted to use heritage work to advance their own political and social concerns. They gained special status as an affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society in 1897\textsuperscript{77} and argued that because of their exceptional level of civilization and their historic role as joint founders of the province, the Haudenosaunee deserved political privileges (e.g. the franchise) not appropriate to other, and especially western, Indians. Although welcomed into the OHS, Haudenosaunee efforts to enlist OHS support for their demand for legal equality were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{78}

Nevertheless, this increased contact with the Haudenosaunee influenced some settler historical interpretations of Toronto area history. For example, David Boyle’s contact with Six Nations was evident in his book, \textit{The Township of Scarboro} (1896), which was produced to commemorate the centennial of what was then a separate community. Boyle was the first author to acknowledge the complexity of the region’s Indigenous history, which came partly through his knowledge of local archaeology: “The Rouge yields many evidences that its banks were, of old time, frequented by the red man, Algonkin, as well as Huron and Iroquois.”\textsuperscript{79} While Boyle included much more information on the Mississaugas than previous
local histories, he was also the first author to highlight the fact that the Mississaugas were themselves newcomers to the area, likely also the result of his exposure to Haudenosaunee perspectives:

Our governmental transactions with the aborigines have always been characterized by fairness, if not generosity, but it is doubtful whether those who procured cessions and surrenders from the Mississaugas (by which name our Ojibwas were known) would have treated them so liberally had it been apparent that these Indians themselves were, comparatively, newcomers, whose occupancy did not extend further back than from fifty to one hundred years.\(^8\)

He also appears to have been the first to publicly call attention to the fact that there was no known treaty document for the Scarborough area:

Scarboro does not appear in any of the cessions made by the Indians. What is called the Toronto Purchase made in 1787 did not extend eastward as far as the town line between York and Scarboro townships. …Correspondence with Dr. Douglas Brymner, the accomplished Dominion Archivist, and Mr. Duncan C. Scott, Secretary of Indian Affairs, has elicited that neither in the Archives nor in the Indian Department is this territory mentioned. Dr. Brymner, after making a thorough search without being able to meet with anything bearing on this point, referred the writer to Mr. Scott, who replied to the effect that this matter had frequently been under the consideration of the Indian Dept. and that while there is what may be called a tradition in the office confirming the belief that a cession had been made, there are no documents so testifying.

It is probably that some verbal or otherwise informal transfer of this, and a wide strip extending eastward along Ontario and the St. Lawrence, was ceded to the British by the Iroquois, who claimed it as a hunting ground even after the Treaty of Paris in 1763.\(^8\)

This is a very interesting statement, for in admitting that there was no known document confirming a cession, Boyle was forced to rely on Haudenosaunee claims to the territory and their entrusting of the land to the British (presumably in the Nanfan Treaty of 1701, though Boyle does not refer to it specifically) to reassure his readers of the legitimacy of settler title to the land. In spite of Boyle’s discovery, the issue of the lack of a formal cession for the Toronto lands east of the Scarborough bluffs would not be addressed – despite
continual development of the lands in question – until a government inquiry into the matter in 1916, and the signing of a new treaty, the 1923 Williams Treaty, seven years later.

**Wilderness Nostalgia**

Another factor that led to the development of alternative historical narratives among the settler population was the very ubiquity and success of “progress” itself. Beginning in the late 1890s, growing awareness of the social problems associated with urbanization and industrialization led to a reappraisal and romanticization of pre-contact Indigenous life. Inspired by works such as Henry David Thoreau’s search for simplicity and solitude in Walden, Torontonians began to turn nostalgically back towards nature and also to ideas of the nobility of traditional Indigenous peoples, a “race” of people they had supposedly already superceded. Wilderness camping and cottaging in Muskoka, recreational hunting as “man’s natural sport,” summer camps with Indian names, and new youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Woodcraft Indians, which emphasized Indian natural lore and traditional crafts and skills, became fashionable; all involved “playing Indian” to some degree. As Philip Deloria put it, “The appeal of looking at ‘real Indians’ gave way to the romance of feeling, temporarily, like an ‘Indian’ oneself.” Ernest Thompson Seton, the foremost proponent of this turn to nature and Indianness, had lived in Toronto as a boy from 1870 to 1879 and in 1903 published *Two Little Savages*, which recorded his youthful adventures playing Indian in Toronto's ravines. His book accorded with new theories of child development that suggested that childhood involved a recapitulation of human evolution, and that children had to go through a phase of being “savages.” According to Deloria, such modern/antimodern journeys advocated by camping, nature study, and Indian play
enthusiasts were typical of the kind of tension between the primitive and contemporary that became a defining characteristic of modernity.\(^8^5\)

This tension was also evident in other spheres. Social Gospellers called for a rejection of the competitive values of urban industrial life and a return to the cooperative “Golden Age” of pioneer and Indian communities.\(^8^6\) Local historians had a role to play in this return to a more cooperative society: “The county historian can do more than any other force to bridge the gulf of inequality that lies between the communal system of the Indian and the early settlers and a great co-operative social system that is to come.”\(^8^7\)

The revaluing of nature, local history, and Indigeneity by Toronto residents created new historical narratives of the city, such as\textit{The Valley of the Humber} (1913), by Kathleen Macfarlane Lizards, which also appears to be the first volume of Toronto history written by a woman. Lizards gave far less emphasis to the heroism of the United Empire Loyalists or Simcoe, but focused instead on the physical river and valley itself, and then the Indigenous and French history that made it a human place, before turning to the history of British settlement. Remarkably, she expressly critiqued previous historical writing (referring especially to a passage in \textit{The History of Toronto and County of York}) that erased Indigenous history both before and after contact:

A foolish statement in a modern gazetteer is to the effect that as so little of the history of this country is known, and as that little is so slightly authenticated, all that is essential for us in these days to know on the subject is that no portion of the country was the fixed abode of any civilized human being until about the middle of the eighteenth century, and, that the Indians have left very little perceptible traces behind them.\(^8^8\)

\textit{The Valley of the Humber} discredited this notion by discussing Indigenous history both before and after the arrival of the British.
Wildly romantic and dramatic, Lizars’ book offered Torontonians two new heroes related to the Indigenous past: Etienne Brulé and Rev. Peter Jones (Kakhewaqaonaby). Most of the first chapter was devoted to Brulé, “the first civilized man to gaze out upon that broad expanse of waters,” thus pushing back Toronto’s “founding moment” to 1615. According to Lizars, the date of the discovery of the Humber as a pathway to the Great Lake is “worthy of finding a place in the list of great events of its time.” But the point that Lizars returned to over and over was that Brulé was indigenized, a white Indian at home in the bush. He had spent his early years among the “Good Iroquois” [i.e. Hurons, as opposed to the “savage” Five Nations]; he was “an adept in learning the savage life,” “a half-naturalized Indian with, possibly, some of his tribe’s power of flowery speech and imagery.” In Lizars’ book, Brulé was the indigenized founder of Toronto, the figure who connected the modern city to its French and Native roots and brought Indigenous and European cultures together.

Lizars also documented the continued presence of Indigenous people in the area after the establishment of York. The Valley of the Humber, like The Township of Scarboro, gave far more attention to the Mississaugas, the “good Indians,” as she called them, than had previous Toronto histories. “From Yonge Street for miles westward they were known as the Credit Indians, irrespective of the boundaries of their temporary grounds.” Lizars discussed the Toronto Purchase of 1787 and its confirmation in 1805 and also repeated the stories of Mississauga involvement in the Battle of York in the War of 1812. She was also the first historian of Toronto to give significant attention to Rev. Peter Jones (Kakhewaqaonaby), the conversion of the Mississaugas of the Credit to Methodism, and their struggle to retain their lands on the Credit, quoting from the writings of Kakhewaqaonaby and from Mississauga petitions to give a Native perspective on the arrival of Europeans. Interestingly, while most subsequent popular histories would take up Lizars’ characterization of Etienne Brulé as the
heroic “discoverer” of Toronto, they did not follow her example in incorporating the history of the Mississaugas of the Credit into Toronto history or in depicting Kahkewaquonaby as an equally memorable and heroic figure.

While the social problems caused by rapid industrialization had instigated an idealized return to nature, a revaluing of the noble savage, and a diminished faith in narratives of progress among settlers, returning Indigenous veterans of the First World War brought changed perspectives back to Indigenous communities, including Six Nations and the Anishinaabek communities closest to Toronto. Native soldiers had seen both the best and the worst of the Old World, which gave them new perspectives on the history of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada. Fred Loft (Onondeyoh), a Mohawk war veteran and Torontonian (he worked as an accountant at the Provincial Lunatic Asylum on Queen Street for forty years), had an audience with King George V while overseas to discuss the serious problems facing First Nations people in Canada. In 1919, he founded a new national pan-Indian organization, the League of Indians, to press for Indigenous rights. Then, in 1923, Cayuga leader Deskaheh (Levi General) appealed to the League of Nations in Geneva to recognize Haudenosaunee sovereignty. His speech, “The Red Man’s Appeal for Justice,” reminded European colonizers in North America of their obligations under the Two Row Wampum. Both Fred Loft’s and Deskaheh’s actions reflected a sharp critique of dominant historical discourses; in the latter case, this case was supported by Indigenous mnemonic forms. The Indian Department under Duncan Campbell Scott immediately began efforts to suppress the League’s challenges to settler dominance by trying to involuntarily enfranchise Loft (thus stripping him of his Indian status), and suppress Indigenous historical discourses that supported Indigenous sovereignty and legal rights, particularly land rights. For example, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confiscated important historical documents and
wampums when it dissolved the traditional government of the Six Nations in 1924, and in 1926 the Dominion government enacted legislation making it illegal for First Nations to raise money or pay lawyers to pursue land claims. 97 Meanwhile, other legislation compelled First Nations parents to send their children to residential schools that stripped them of their language and culture, and hence much of their history.

Some non-Indigenous Torontonians also raised questions of historic injustice and the rights of Indigenous people, echoing some of the discourses of the nineteenth century Aborigines Protection Society. In 1914, Rev. Dr. Lewis Norman Tucker, first general secretary of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, gave an address at a luncheon in Toronto on the “The Protection of Native Races.” He suggested that the newly formed (and apparently short-lived) Canadian Association of Friends of Native Races (which appears to have been a Toronto-based organization) support the BC-based Friends of the Indians of British Columbia started by Arthur O’Meara 98 and protest the British Columbia government’s denial of the existence of “Indian title” and refusal to negotiate treaties. Such settler support for Indigenous struggles was rare, however. The imperialist-Loyalist interpretation of Toronto history that had reached its apogee in 1884 and assertions of Indian savagery that had gained new strength in 1885 remained dominant settler narratives into the 1930s and beyond, as did their underlying assumptions of British cultural and white racial superiority.

Jesse Middleton’s three-volume The Municipality of Toronto, published in 1923, for example, reiterated many of the tropes and stereotypes developed by previous chroniclers of Toronto history, such as those of the empty wilderness, pioneer grit, and Iroquois savagery. Middleton lingered over the gruesome details of the torture and martyrdom of French priests Gabriel Lallement and Jean Brebuef by “an army of red demons straight from the Pit.” 99 The
Mississaugas and other Aboriginal people disappeared from Middleton’s history of Toronto once the British arrived, except for a single mention of the 1799 threat of attack by the “western Indians.”

By 1933, however, the growing professionalization of the academic discipline of history was beginning to change historical discourses about Toronto’s Indigenous past. The 1933 publication of Toronto During the French Regime, 1615-1793 by Percy Robinson, M.A. marked the first major scholarly (rather than antiquarian) work on Toronto. It consciously built on the pioneering work of Scadding, noting that “only a few documents were at that time accessible.” Drawing on the newly available correspondence of John Graves Simcoe,100 the Jesuit Relations, the journals of early explorers, manuscript materials in various archives, notarial deeds, early maps, and reports of archaeological fieldwork, Robinson was able to write the first “continuous history of the locality from 1615 to 1793.”101 He reproduced the historical cartography of the Toronto region, painstakingly reconstructed the probable path of the Toronto Carrying Place portage route, identified the site of the Seneca village of Teiaiagon and discussed its archaeological heritage, and provided a detailed account of the establishment of the various French forts, including new evidence that a French fort had first been erected on the Humber in 1720, twenty years earlier than previously believed. He documented the involvement of the local Mississaugas in the intercolonial wars between New France and New England and Wabbicommicot’s role in ending Pontiac’s War.

Robinson also included the recently rediscovered account by Surveyor Alexander Aitkin of the first survey of the Toronto Purchase in 1788, which related Aitken’s disputes with the Mississaugas over its boundaries, and thus brought the question of the Purchase’s fairness out into the open. He continued to research and publish articles on the subject, which
historian Leo Johnson would later characterize as “sweeping conclusions concerning the validity of the ‘Toronto Purchase’ arrived at on very thin evidence.”

Robinson included this material in second edition of *Toronto During the French Regime* in 1965.

Surprisingly few of Robinson’s many contributions to the field of Toronto’s Indigenous history were incorporated into the centennial celebration of the incorporation of the city in 1934, (which was also the 150th anniversary of the Loyalists’ arrival in Canada, and the 400th anniversary of the explorations of Jacques Cartier). If anything, the Mississaugas were even more invisible than in 1884. Two descendants of John Graves Simcoe came from England to attend the ceremonies, as did two descendants of the French governor under whose order Fort Rouillé was erected; they represented the founders of city, and, by extension, the French and English as the founders of Canada. No Aboriginal descendant or contribution to the founding of the city was similarly recognized although “Indians” were present for the opening of the restored Fort York.

A special centennial edition of the *Globe* did not even mention the Mississaugas in its feature article on Toronto’s history, nor was there any mention of the Toronto Purchase. The founding of the city was associated only with the Loyalists. Similarly in the newspaper’s discussion of the War of 1812, “so stalwartly fought by British soldiers and colonists,” there was no mention of Aboriginal participation, even in the defense of York. At the Centennial Parade, Toronto’s story was retold in floats through seven ages – which began with the French occupation of the area and focused on French involvement in the fur trade rather than Indigenous occupation of the land. The parade also included the Empire divisions of the different countries in the British Empire. Here Aboriginal people were represented in the Canadian contingent, which included twenty-five “Indians from Six Nations in full regalia representing the first inhabitants of Canada,” as well as twenty-five French-Canadians, and
one hundred English-speaking Canadians. However, these did not appear to have been associated in any way with the history of Toronto. The City’s commemorative Centennial booklet did make brief mention of the city’s Indigenous past: “time and the effort of man have combined to build up such a splendid modern City upon the site of an Indian meeting place.” Meanwhile, Jesse Edgar Middleton, the author of *The Municipality of Toronto*, also produced *Toronto’s 100 Years*, a commemorative volume published by the Centennial Committee, which told the story of the city from its incorporation in 1834. It included almost no history before this date and made no mention of the Toronto Purchase, saying of the region’s pre-urban past only:

> Upper Canada, a land of almost unbroken forest, had been separated from Quebec and constituted as a Province in 1791.…A sandy peninsula gave shelter for shipping, the Humber for many years had been on the trade route to the Upper Lakes, and the land in and about the region was fertile… More than forty years before this the French had established a fortified trading post at Toronto to intercept the Indians from the Upper Lakes country on their way to the English fort of Oswego.105

This was the only mention of Native people, who were not identified by nation.

The Toronto public was somewhat better served by Edwin C. Guillet’s, *Toronto: From Trading Post to Great City*, also published in 1934,106 which drew on Robinson’s research and gave more attention to Toronto’s Indigenous past, mentioning the Humber portage route, Brulé, the fur trade, the traditional Mississauga meeting place on Toronto Island, Teiaiagon, the furtrader Rousseau, and the story of the scalp taken to Washington by the invading Americans. He also made explicit mention of the Toronto Purchase of 1787, its insufficiency, and its “confirmation” in 1805, though this was represented as unproblematic.

If the 1934 Centennial celebrations marked perhaps the lowest point in the public recognition of the Indigenous past of Toronto and particularly of the Mississaugas, the 1920s and 1930s also saw the beginning of a new demographic trend. The city was repopulated
with Aboriginal people as a steady trickle of Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee came to Toronto in search of economic and educational opportunities not available on reserves or because they felt alienated from or unwelcome in their reserve communities after their experiences at residential school or in the armed forces.\(^\text{107}\) For the first few decades, they were relatively few: only 2-300 Aboriginal people are thought to have been living in the city in 1950.\(^\text{108}\)

This period marks the beginning of a fuller historical memory of Indigenous people in the city: from the 1930s onward, Indigenous memories and perspectives on Indigenous life in the city are recoverable, often in the voice of the participants themselves or their descendants:

1) When [my grandmother] returned back to the reserve [after ten years at residential school], she was only there two years and didn’t really feel connection there. When she was 18, she went to Toronto. She lived her life here.\(^\text{109}\)

2) And when [my great-grandfather] was enfranchised, he left [Six Nations] and went to Rexdale and stayed there...

**Victoria:** Why was he enfranchised?

He went to school. He got too smart, and they pretty much said you can’t be an Indian anymore cuz you’re too smart. My great-grandmother married him, and she became enfranchised but she didn’t get the vote, which they still called enfranchised, whatever...\(^\text{110}\)

Although Indigenous migrants were assumed to be assimilating into mainstream culture, in fact, the city offered opportunities for cultural and political freedom not available on reserves and its anonymity allowed certain traditional practices as well as principles and values to persist.\(^\text{111}\) Gradually, as numbers increased, the community became aware of itself and a social network developed; the North American Indian Club was formed in 1950.\(^\text{112}\) Perhaps because Toronto’s Indigenous community was always multicultural, there was never a geographically localized community, in contrast to some other cities, such as Winnipeg; instead, community was largely formed through Native organizations.
Like the muskrat in the Anishinaabek Earthdiver recreation story, these first migrants began to painstakingly recreate an Aboriginal place in the city in spite of the flood of white settlement which had transformed their land beyond recognition.

1 Charles Pelham Mulvany, et al., *History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario: Containing a History of the City of Toronto and the County of York, with the Townships, Towns, Villages, Churches, Schools, General and Local Statistics, Biographical Sketches, etc., etc.* (henceforth *HTCY*), vol. 1 (Toronto: C.B. Robinson, 1885), 1.


5 Charles Pelham Mulvany, *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885: Comprising a Full and Impartial Account of the Origin and Progress of the War, of the various Engagements with the Indians and Half-Breeds, of the Heroic Deeds Performed by Officers and Men, and of Touching Scenes in the Field, the Camp, and the Cabin: Including a History of the Indian Tribes of North-Western Canada, their Numbers, Modes of Living, Habits, Customs, Religious Rites, and Ceremonies, with Thrilling Narratives of Captures, Imprisonment, Massacres, and Hair Breadth Escapes of White Settlers etc.* (Toronto: A. H. Hovey, 1885).


7 Mulvany, et al., *HTCY* 1: 5.

8 Ibid., 1: 4.

9 Ibid., 1: 2-3.

10 Ibid., 1: 1-2.

11 Ibid., 1: 6.

12 Ibid., 1: 112.

13 Ibid., 1: 207.

14 Ibid., 1: 85.

15 Ibid., 2: 107.


17 *Toronto Daily Mail*, Sept. 21, 1885.

18 For a discussion of similar discourses in the US, see Conn, *History’s Shadow*.


22 Ibid., 154, 155.

23 Wetherald (1857-1940) wrote numerous articles for the *Globe* under the pen name Bel Thistlewaite, and was made Women’s Editor. She later published six volumes of poetry.
The poem lauded the “conquering heroes” who faced a “treacherous, scarcely human” enemy, versed in 
“animal cunning”:

Swift in their veins runs the hot, vindictive blood of their fathers;
Deep in their hearts lies a hatred, strong and cruel as death.
The heart of our country is beating against the knife of the savage;
But the knife has dropped to the ground, the heart is conqueror still.


Adam and Wetherald, Algonquin Maiden, 64.


Adam and Wetherald, Algonquin Maiden, 50-1.

G. Mercer Adam and Henry Scadding, Toronto, Old and New: A Memorial Volume, Historical, Descriptive and Pictorial, Designed to Mark the Hundredth Anniversary of the Passing of the Constitutional Act of 1791, which Set Apart the Province of Upper Canada and Gave Birth to York (Now Toronto): To which is Added a Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Professions, and of the Growth and Development of the City's Industries and Commerce, with some Sketches of the Men Who have made Or are Making the Provincial Capital (Toronto: The Mail Printing Co., 1891), 6, 5.

Ibid., 6.

See Jasen, Wild Things, 82-83 on the meaning of forests to settlers.

Adam and Scadding, Toronto, Old and New, 9.


“Buffalo Bill.”

Ibid.


Over the next decade, imitators such as Captain Harry Horne’s Historical Wild West show and Pawnee Bill’s Entirely New Great Wild West Show would also come to town, establishing themselves as highlights at the Industrial Exhibition in 1890 and 1892, complete with the requisite stage coach attacks, recreations of famous battles with Indians, a herd of buffalo, and an “Indian village.” Canadian National Exhibition Archives, Programme, Toronto Industrial Fair, 1890, 1892.

See Francis, Imaginary Indian, 87-96.


For an analysis of the historical significance of The Indian and nineteenth century Native media production in Ontario, see Kathleen Buddle, “Shooting the Messenger: Historical Impediments to the Mediation of Modern Aboriginality in Ontario,” Canadian Journal of Native Studies 22, no. 1 (2002): 97-121. George Copway was the first Native person from Canada to produce a weekly newspaper – Copway’s American Indian, but it was published in New York after he had been expelled from the Methodist Church. See Penny Petrone, Native Literature in Canada: from oral tradition to the present (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 45.

The Indian Advancement Act of 1884 followed upon the 1880 revisions to the Indian Act, which had created a new Department of Indian Affairs, and empowered the superintendent general to impose the elective system of band government if he considered a band ready for it. These initiatives were a direct attack on the historic cultures of the First Nations and marked a new phase of federal attempts at aggressive civilization and assimilation: “The elected band council was regarded as the means to destroy the last vestige of the old tribal system, the traditional political system.” John L. Tobias, “ Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline of Canada’s Indian Policy,” As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies, ed. Ian A. L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 45-6. The Indian Advancement Act was strongly opposed by most First Nations, including Six Nations, because while it increased the powers of local band governments over public health, policing and taxation, it also made the
Indian Agent chairman of the band council with broad powers to direct its functioning. See Malcolm Montgomery, "The Six Nations Indians and the Macdonald Franchise," *Ontario History*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (March 1965). What is interesting in terms of Toronto history is that New Credit was the only band in Ontario to support the Indian Advancement Act. In fact, in 1882, even before promulgation of the Act, the Mississaugas of New Credit had adopted their own system of municipal-style regulations. See Shields, “Anishinabek Political Alliance in the Post-Confederation Period: The Grand General Indian Council of Ontario, 1870-1936,” M.A. Thesis, Queens University, 2001, 77; Montgomery, “The Six Nations Indians.” The extension of the federal franchise to Native men was intended to be a further enticement to Indians east of Lake Superior to ask for elected band councils, but the Franchise Bill was introduced into Parliament four days before the Northwest Resistance broke out. Thus the discourses of Indian and Métis savagery that became prominent in Toronto and elsewhere in Canada throughout 1885 were also in reaction to and in competition with other discourses of civilization, equal rights, and the capability of Indians to vote in federal elections, which were advanced by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald (who was also Superintendent General of Indian Affairs), among others: “…they have their own assessment and their own system of taxation in their own bridges and roads, they build their own school houses; they carry on the whole system in their own way, but it is in the Indian way, and it is an efficient way. They carry out all the obligations of civilized men…in every respect they have a right to be considered as equal with the whites.” Quoted in Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times,* 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 289. Sir John A. Macdonald had originally planned to extend the federal vote to all Indian men, whether enfranchised or not, but faced with vociferous opposition in the House of Commons, Macdonald compromised so that Indians in areas recently involved in the Northwest Rebellion were denied the vote.

Kahkewaquonaby appealed to educated Indians to be contributors and subscribers: “we trust every family which contains a reading member will take this paper.” *The Indian*, December 30, 1885, 5.

Ossian was the narrator, and supposed author, of a cycle of poems which the eighteenth century Scottish poet James Macpherson said he had translated from Scots Gaelic oral traditions and manuscripts. Macpherson published *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland* in 1761 and also claimed to have found an epic about the hero Fingal, written by Ossian. He published translations of it in *The Works of Ossian* (1765). The poems achieved international renown and were considered the Celtic equivalent of classical literature, though there were later many questions about their authenticity. See Fiona J. Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James MacPherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), 192.

Quoted in *The Indian* 1, no. 1, December 30, 1885, 1.

*Reports of the Supreme Court of Canada*, vol. 13, 596.

*The Indian* 1, no. 1, December 30, 1885, 8.

Amateur archaeologist Hirshfelder’s extension collection of about 2300 archaeological specimens was donated to the Geological Survey of Canada in 1884, and is now held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. He published and lectured on Ontario archaeology in the 1880s and also called for a national archaeological museum. http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/tresors/ethno/etb0360e.shtml

*The Indian* 1, no. 23, Dec. 22, 1886, 1.

*The Indian* 1, no. 1, Dec. 30, 1885, 1.

*The Indian* 1, no. 1, Dec. 30, 1885, 6.


Jones was also the Indian agent for New Credit from 1887 to 1896.

“A few months will probably determine whether it is to be run in the interests of the aborigines or in the interests of Toryism. And it might be observed that ‘Old Tomorrow’ [John A. MacDonald] now has as many organs as the country can afford to support.” *Globe*, quoted in *The Indian* 1, no. 2, Feb. 3, 1886, 9.

Writing as secretary of the Grand General Council, and the newly elected vice president, he declared that “the time has come when we should insist upon a representation or voice in the House of Commons, the step most likely to elevate the aborigines to a position more approaching the level of the whites.” The letter is reprinted in Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1885: 2371.

A letter to the editor of the *Globe*, purportedly from an unidentified “Indian Chief” from Tuscarora, went further, charging

“First. – ‘That the Indians down here do not take much stock in the little doctor’s paper, or in his person.’

Second. – ‘That the sum of $2,000 was paid to this Mr. Jones by the Dominion Government out of the Indian funds, for the express political purpose of establishing the INDIAN newspaper.’”


“Great Scheme’ Again,” *Indian* 1, no. 12, June 23, 1886, 38.
Entering the University of Toronto in 1864, he completed his studies at the Toronto School of Medicine in 1867, and joined the 2nd Battalion of the Queen’s Own Rifles, serving briefly against the Fenians. He then left the city and in 1872, became Chairman of the Grand Indian Council (later Grand General Council), an association of bands in Ontario and Quebec. He returned to Toronto in 1888 as head of the International Order of Foresters, a fraternal society that expanded across North America and offered mutual support and low-cost insurance to working people (and which made a special dispensation to allow Oronhyatekha to be a member, since the constitution explicitly barred non-whites). The rule restricting membership to “white males” was overridden by special dispensation. He died in March 1907, a few days after meeting President Theodore Roosevelt during a trip to the United States; 10,000 people paid their respects when his body lay “in state” at Toronto’s Massey Hall.

“Of another race, without the advantages of birth or fortune, he has pushed his way by dint of merit and ability to the front,” wrote Toronto journalist G. Mercer Adam, in Prominent Men of Canada (Toronto: Canadian Biographical Publishing, 1892), 46.


Senior Curator Trudy Nicks, quoted in a Royal Ontario Museum press release, January 14, 2002. While the collection contained objects collected from his travels around the world, the Indigenous artifacts in his collection included objects belonging to Joseph Brant, Tecumseh, Shingwauk, and many other celebrated First Nations leaders, such as wampum belts, Native jewellery, headdresses, pipes, implements, and weapons.


Gray, Flint & Feather, 139-40.

Ibid., 143.

Ibid., 144.

Ibid., 146.

Ibid., 147.

The fashionable Toronto artist, J.W. L. Forster, who offered to paint her portrait, enthused about “her full possession of the valkyrie-like wild passion of the traditional Red Indian.” Ibid., 230-232. Johnson participated in and played up this discourse of exoticism, wearing a Huron scalp that had belonged to her grandfather. Ibid., 158.


Ibid., 39.

Ibid., 50.

For the Loyalists, who played a role similar to old-stock families (eg. Mayflower descendants) in New England, heritage activities were an attempt to recover social prestige and compensate for the loss of social and political power to the nouveau-riche through claims of greater patriotism. Yet the actual membership of the York Pioneers consisted mainly of those of “log cabin” birth, not wealthy or prestigious old stock Upper Canada families. As prosperous businessmen, professional people, political and social leaders joined the ranks, the York Pioneers and similar organizations became clubs for the social and intellectual elite. Ibid., 29-34.

Killan, Preserving, 42-44; Ontario Historical Society Report (1911), 44-7. The Six Nations subsequently let their formal affiliation lapse, though some individuals remained active in the more local Brant Historical Society, and a few individuals continued to be involved with OHS; Cecilia Morgan, “History and the Six Nation, 1890s-1960s: Commemoration and Colonial Knowledge,” Paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Conference, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, May, 2007, 1-38.

Ibid., Preserving, 44.

Ibid., 23.

Ibid., 28.

See Deloria’s Playing Indian (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) for an exploration of the performativity of Indianness.

Quoted in Jasen, Wild Things, 32.
That he was also a member of the United Empire Loyalist Association, suggests that the historical discourses of Loyalism continued to provide an important way for Haudenosaunee to bridge the social gap between Indigenous and settler societies. His speeches to the Association were published as: “Captain Joseph Brant, - Thayendanega (head chief and warrior of the Six Nations),” United Empire Loyalists’ Assoc. of Canada, Annual Transactions., 1904 to 1913 (Brampton, ON: 1914), 57-61; and “Iroquoian loyalists,” Annual Transactions, 1914 to 1916 (Toronto, 1917), 68-79. Loft published several articles in Toronto publications, including “The future of the Indian,” Globe, 8 Feb. 1908: 8; “The Indian and education,” Saturday Night 12, 19 June and 3, 17 July 1909; and “Indian reminiscences of 1812,” Saturday Night, 11 Sept. 1909. See also Peter Kulchyski, “‘A considerable unrest’: F. O. Loft and the League of Indians,” Native Studies Review 4 (1988): 95-117.


See Dickason, Canada’s First Nations, 328, and Brian E. Titley, A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986).


Published by the Champlain Society, beginning in 1923. New archival sources of Toronto history would continue to be published, especially by the Champlain Society, such as the correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell, which was published from 1932 to 1936.

Percy Robinson, Toronto During the French Régime: A history of the Toronto Region from Brulé to Simcoe, 1615-1793 (TFR) (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), xii.


The Star reported that “[a]s the troops disbanded after the fort was opened by Lord Bessborough, one of the Indians added a rather incongruous note by forgetting the part he was playing long enough to mount a bicycle and ride off to his wigwam – or his hotel.” Toronto Star, May 25, 1935, 25.


Mike White, Interview with author, October 12, 2006.

Linda Schafer, Interview with author, January 26, 2006.

Howard, “Dreamcatchers,” 214.

Ibid., 149-50.
Chapter Six

The Return of Golden Eagle

Over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century, conventional settler narratives of Toronto history would begin to share discursive space with other less triumphalist settler narratives and would be strongly contested by Indigenous peoples in the post World War II era of Third World independence movements, civil rights, and Red Power. After 1950, the arrival of large numbers of Aboriginal peoples in Toronto challenged but did not eradicate the colonial dichotomy between Indian and urban, which reappeared in tensions between on-reserve and urban Indigenous people and in debates within both the Native and mainstream communities of Toronto about Indigenous authenticity. Nevertheless, with increasing opportunities for Indigenous people to document and articulate their own history for their own purposes, Indigenous Torontonians were sometimes able to change the subject – from the Indian problem to the white problem, from being the subject of other peoples’ research to challenging the assumptions of non-Native scholars or popular writers. They affirmed their own perspectives, asserting the validity and, indeed, the primacy of Indigenous subjectivity in interpreting their own history and traditions.¹

The arrival of large numbers of Indigenous peoples in the city initially led to the development of new colonial narratives of Indigenous urbanization, however. As the Indigenous populations of Toronto became more visible, new non-Indigenous discourses originating in the United States but adopted by Canadian and Ontario government officials dealing with the urban Indigenous population described the “failure” of Indigenous people to adapt to city life. This failure was attributed to a fundamental incompatibility between Indigenous culture and modernity (often described as a “simple” vs. a “complex” society) rather than racism or systemic factors. Successful adaptation was considered to be complete
assimilation. According to this view, urban life was modern and dynamic whereas life on the reserve was stagnant and backward; at the same time urban Indigenous people were seen as inauthentic because “authentic” Indigenous culture was equated with the natural, mystical, and non-civilized world.  

Journalist and poet Katherine Hale’s *Toronto: Romance of a Great City*, published in 1956, reinforced many of these Indian/urban dichotomies, as well as the older views of Toronto history and the familiar stereotypes of Indian savagery. Once again Toronto’s history began with a romanticized Brulé: “This was always a predestined spot – a most advantageous situation, as Brulé thought, bursting out of the woods to mark the place on a map; as Simcoe reaffirmed and acted on almost two centuries later.” Describing Riverside Drive as an Indian trail upon which the Indians had “silently” travelled, she characterized it as

a trail of the Indians, a trade route, a path of life and of sudden death, of the march of prisoners and of traders towards the Iroquois village of Teiaiagon and its drunken revels, or to the Mississauga village whose people later welcomed the governing French, said good-bye to them, and sold their land to the British… Silence reigned over the Humber valley for years after Brule’s brief appearance. It continued to sleep on in the heart of the unknown land, unconscious of the upheavals of a changing world that was soon to awaken it.  

In Hale’s narrative, the savage Iroquois had previously destroyed the first “embryo city” of Ste Marie among the Hurons, but this was eventually replaced by the great city of Toronto. In describing the two Seneca villages of Teiaiagon and Ganetsekwyagon, the Indigenous precursors of the city, it is the European visitors who give them any historical legitimacy: “And then the door of the Carrying-Place opens at last and two figures appear against the shadowy background…Robert de La Salle, and Hennepin.” But La Salle was “too busy” to describe Teiaiagon:
and it probably made no more impression upon him than did its nearest neighbour on the Rouge, or any other smoky, palisaded habitation of Indian life which he knew, with its fighting braves, its longhouse, its huts, wild children and dogs; the ancient filth of crowded alley-ways and fat squaws lounging in the sun.\(^6\)

Thus the filthy Indigenous villages were contrasted with the cleanliness and modernity of Toronto urban life. These previous settlements were now a wonderful treasure trove for adventurous diggers:

for many years antiquarians have been interested in this area where all kinds of relics have been found. Hundreds of Indian graves have been opened and are still encountered when excavations are made. Tomahows were found on the crest of the hill overlooking the Humber which flows down from Lambton Mills, …The whole region is full of early history…\(^7\)

Yet what was perhaps most startling was her analysis of the Toronto Purchase:

One of the most important dates in the history of this city is that of Sept 23 in the year 1787 when a meeting took place at the Carrying-Place on the Bay of Quinte and three chiefs from the Mississauga tribe met Deputy Surveyor-General Collins from Quebec …and as children obedient to a liege lord, expressed their willingness to agree to his wishes. The exact limits of the property transferred at that moment were not defined, but the price paid for an area which covers nearly one third of the county of York was 1,700 pounds in cash and goods; though authorities aren’t sure how much the Indians actually got in cash!…Yet this strange acquiescence, the unquestioned changing and turning over of the land, seems more dramatic and moving than the building or the burning of forts, or even the struggle for their maintenance. For it has to do with the fading out of ancient powers and dangers, often sinister and terrible, that were one with the spirit and nature of the early country itself – its hidden paths, its sudden and barbaric violence and the sharp beauty of its wild free life. More symbolic than the column of smoke rising from the last French stronghold was this forfeit of birthright by members of a race that was doomed to gradual disappearance through the forces that were from that moment beginning to work on the gradual reversal of nature, the building up a great artificial city for Canadians of the future.”\(^8\)

Thus, in Hale’s view, the Mississaugas, conscious of their doom as an inferior people, knowingly and willingly relinquished the land to the superior people who would create a great city for the new people of the future.

Although attitudes such as Hale’s were still prevalent in Toronto, the late nineteen fifties also saw some stirrings of change. Globally, there was increased consideration of
human rights with the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 by the newly formed United Nations and the beginnings of decolonization movements in such places as India and Africa. The pseudo-scientific racial theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were discredited by social scientists. As well, new technologies such as radio and television facilitated communication across the globe and especially among oppressed peoples who were thus able to strengthen their solidarity with each other. In Canada, the ban on the potlatch and sundance was lifted in the 1951 revisions to the Indian Act and John Diefenbaker passed the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960.

Yet Britannia was still firmly in place when the City of Toronto decided in 1958 that it needed to update its coat of arms. City officials did so because they wanted to standardize the image and formally register the coat of arms with the British office of heraldry. While both Britannia and the Mississauga warrior retained their iconic positions on the coat of arms, it was finally recognized that the Mississauga warrior had been depicted for more than a hundred years in attire inappropriate for someone from the Great Lakes. A new version was finally approved in 1962; the Plains headdress disappeared and the warrior was given “garments characteristic of the costume of the Indians who formerly inhabited this section of Canada.” The nineteenth century chief’s jacket and medals that had clothed the more “modern” Indian on the cover of the 1884 memorial volume also disappeared: the Indian on the new coat of arms was clearly a vanished Indian of the past, wearing a breechcloth and little else, aside from a single eagle feather in his hair.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this push for greater authenticity on the part of the city was that by the early 1960s, Aboriginal migration to the city had become a mass phenomenon, and Native people in Toronto had begun to organize to improve urban living conditions and to change policies affecting them. One of the new initiatives of the Indian
Club was to establish a community centre. The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, the first Native organization in Toronto, was officially incorporated in 1962. Among those in attendance at the 1962 opening of the Centre was Lieutenant Governor J. Keiller MacKay and Toronto Mayor Nathan Phillips. This high-level attention marked a significant change in the mainstream’s attitude to the city’s Indigenous population and was the result of a strategic collaboration between some members of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Centre and wealthy white women, especially members of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, who helped to secure the funding for the Centre’s establishment. This alliance strongly contributed to the shaping of early discourses of Indigeneity at the Centre.

Ironically, the IODE had been founded in 1900 with the mission of encouraging imperialism, but in the 1960s, as third world countries began to decolonize and achieve independence, this was clearly an outdated objective. As Howard documents, its members, like many other upper class white women with a sense of “noblesse-oblige,” began to focus on issues of Canadian national identity and citizenship, including the integration of immigrants into Canadian society and the situation of Native people, as part of a larger project of nation-building. They and the Indigenous women they supported promoted the idea that a sense of pride in Indigenous heritage contributed to Canadian citizenship; for Indigenous women, this pride also affirmed citizenship in their own First Nations. Thus the Centre promoted cultural distinctiveness but emphasized that this was not incompatible with an ability to integrate successfully into the mainstream of Canadian urban life.

“A largely Anishinaabe-centric multiculturalism” or pan-Indianism was the norm at the centre and provided the most visible manifestations of “Native culture,” “tradition,” and “community” in Toronto. According to sociologist Joanne Nagel, pan-Indianism was mainly an urban phenomenon, where there was no single dominant tribal culture and where
populations of tribally diverse native people interacted, intermarried, shared traditions, and created new institutions and practices. Yet, because of this multiculturalism, and also because of the cultural losses that had been suffered by many Indigenous migrants to the city, the “Native culture” that the Centre promoted and sought to preserve was largely abstract, most visible in performance and display for outside audiences, such as the NCCT float in 1963-66 Grey Cup parades. Pan-Indianism was often evident in crafts or regalia, as once can see from a newspaper photograph of Governor General Roland Michener picking up a young boy in a Lakota headdress and buckskin outfit at the opening of the Centre’s second location in 1966 – an ironic echo of the Mississauga warrior’s Plains headdress in the city’s coat of arms. At the Centre, there were numerous disputes about what constituted “authentic” culture or tradition.

Torontoitians were soon exposed to another important initiative that attempted to change dominant Canadian discourses about Indigenous people and their history. The Canadian Indian Hall of Fame was conceived of by a group of Indigenous people and the Indian Eskimo Association and was housed in the Better Living Building at the 1965 Canadian National Exhibition and for a few years thereafter. The CNE Annual Report of 1965 reported that

The Canadian Indian was honoured this year with a particularly pleasing exhibit featuring ten portraits of outstanding Canadian Indians painted by Irma Coucill. This highly popular exhibit also featured Indian craftsmen showing how they carve and mould their handicrafts. The Canadian Indian Hall of Fame will be long remembered by those who saw it.

In subsequent years, a committee of Aboriginal people from across Canada decided each year who should be added to the portrait gallery. Those honoured included not only notable historic figures from the past such as Poundmaker, Joseph Brant, Tecumseh, Louis Riel,
Crowfoot, Peguis, E. Pauline Johnson, and Big Bear, but also notable Aboriginal people who had lived in Toronto.21

One of the interviewees for my research, Anne Solomon, recalled her participation as one of the young attendants at the Indian Hall of Fame (her father, Art Solomon, had been one of the chief organizers). She recalled:

After my year of repeating grade eight was finished my father brought me to Toronto to work at the Indian Hall of Fame. This exhibit was the first time in Canadian history that there had ever been an exhibit that spoke to the reality of the Original People and of the sacred bundles that had been taken away by Indian agents and other government people from around the period when our sacred ceremonies were banned through the Potlatch Laws of 1885, I think. My father actually succeeded in…in getting artifacts, what the museum calls artifacts, out of the ROM [Royal Ontario Museum] and…having those sacred items (or bundles as we call them) on exhibit for everyone to see. I worked at the Indian Hall of Fame for two summers in grade eight and then after my first year in boarding school. Both times the experiences had a tremendous effect on me. I went from this year of silence in boarding school to travelling with my Dad down to Toronto and then over to Six Nations, and down to Toronto. We traveled to a couple of other places to learn from the people who were called “crafters” and medicine people. I learned the stories of the things he was getting out of the museum from the people or families they were taken away from.22

In this quote, the sense of empowerment is palpable. Instead of failing in the white school system, Anne, through her father, began the process of recontextualizing Indigenous sacred bundles from museums with Indigenous peoples’ stories, thus creating an Indigenous frame of reference for historical and cultural knowledge.

Another major development in Indigenous self-representations was the establishment of Native Studies programs at universities and other institutions, beginning with the Indian-Eskimo program at Trent University in Peterborough in 1969 and the subsequent establishment there of the first department of Native Studies in North America in 1972. In Toronto, Wilf Pelletier (who had long been involved in the Indian-Eskimo Association) established the Institute for Indian Studies (ISS) at Rochdale College (a “free” college of the time) in 1967, along with Anglican priest Ian MacKenzie and Cherokee anthropologist and
ecumenical activist Bob Thomas.\textsuperscript{23} ISS was intended as “an educational-residential centre which provides an opportunity for Indian people to study and teach their own languages, histories, and cultures in their own way.”\textsuperscript{24} Similarly Duke Redbird, an activist associated with the Canadian Indian Youth Workshop, founded the Thunderbird Club (a social club and coffeehouse) and stressed the need for self-determination in cultural development and Native control over Native education. By the early 1970s, then, the historical discourses of and about Toronto Native people had begun to change significantly. The Indian-Eskimo Association was an active ally in this process and later became the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples.

These changes would also be reflected in the mainstream historiography of Toronto. Bruce West’s \textit{Toronto}, published in 1967,\textsuperscript{25} offered an astonishing revisionism and new ironic tone:

> It might have been gratifying to be able to record here that the first white explorer to set eyes upon the site of the metropolis that would someday be renowned as Toronto the Good and the City of Churches was a God-fearing man of stainless character and exceedingly high principles…. But the discovery of that part of Canada which was to become Toronto was not alas, surrounded by any of these noble and romantic circumstances. From its very beginnings until the present, as we shall see, Toronto had to grow into one of the most exciting cities of the continent while living down various rather embarrassing circumstances concerning its birth and rise to great stature.\textsuperscript{26}

In particular, the city had to live down the antiheroic Etienne Brulé:

> said to have been a rough and vulgar adventurer with little or no morals who finally committed the crowning sin of his iniquitous life by turning traitor against his own countrymen and guiding an English expedition up the St. Lawrence in 1610 during an attack upon Quebec.

Yet, West noted, Brulé was one of the New World’s greatest explorers, but because he had little education, “took no notes, drew no maps, lived and looked like an Indian, was addicted to women, and spent the rest of his life living with Hurons,” his great achievements were
ignored. West quoted Father Du Creux: “Long a transgressor of the laws of God and man, he spent the rest of his life in vile intemperance, such as no Christian should exhibit among the heathen.” West described “the once dashing and daring explorer who, after being turned away by his own people following his betrayal of Quebec, lived a drunken life among the Indians who finally turned upon him, beat him to death and ate him.”

In his second chapter, which focused on Teiaiagon, West presented a view of French involvement there that was completely antithetical to the “civilizing” discourse so common in other histories, quoting the following passage by Sulpician missionary François Vachon de Belmont about “one of the first groups of white visitors:”

The Carnival of the year 1967-- six traders from Katarak8y named Duplessis, Ptolémée, Dautru, Lamouche, Colin and Cascaret made the whole village of Taheyagon drunk, all the inhabitants were dead drunk for three days; the old men, the women and the children got drunk; after which the six traders engaged in the debauch which the savages called Gan8ary, running about naked with a keg of brandy under the arm.”

Similarly, in describing Fort Rouillé, West outlined the role of alcohol in the fort’s history. West was also sceptical of claims by previous authors that the object found in the Parliamentary chamber by the invading Americans was not a scalp.

Reflecting the sensibilities of a new generation, West deflated the sentimentality evident in so much previous local history:

Little remains now to remind us of it except a plaque on a stone pillar in the Grounds of the CNE marking the site of Fort Rouillé. Perhaps a footsore visitor to the “Ex” occasionally rests against one of the cannon at the base of the monument to eat a hot dog or drink his pop, without even bothering to read the inscription.

West discussed the Toronto Purchase in more detail than had most other popular writers in the past, detailing the presents delivered to them on August 1, 1788, such as 24 brass kettles,…200 lbs Tobacco, 47 Carrots…10 dozen Looking Glasses…1 “Hogshead containing 18 pieces Gartering…24 Laced Hats…2,000 Gun Flints…1 Bale flowered Flannel…and 96
Gallons of Rum” equivalent to about 1700 pounds, for roughly 500 square miles, which he characterized as “quite a bargain in the light of later events.” “It was not until 1805, however, that the final details of the deal with the Indians were worked out during a third meeting between them and government officials at the mouth of the Credit River.”

West and G.P. de T. Glazebrook’s, *The Story of Toronto* (1971) were able to draw upon the recently published second edition of *Toronto During the French Regime*, which contained a new and lengthy discussion of the 1787 Toronto Purchase in its appendix. From this point on, it became more common for Toronto history books to at least mention the Toronto Purchase, eg. Lucy Booth Martyn’s *The Face of Early Toronto* (1982) and J. Clarence Duff’s *Toronto: Then & Now* (1984). Through the publication in the 1960s of Edith Firth’s two-volume collection of documents, *The Town of York (1793 to 1834)* by the Champlain Society, writers of Toronto history also had greatly increased access to primary source documents.

**Red Power**

Indigenous critiques of the dominant paradigm for Toronto’s self-perceptions had always existed, but finally became at least dimly audible to non-Indigenous Torontonians in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island off the coast of California by the “Indians of All Tribes” transfixed Indigenous peoples across the Americas, in a North America also challenged by the New Left, feminism, the Black Panthers, and the civil rights movement. In Canada, Indigenous people vehemently rejected the proposals of the federal government’s 1969 White Paper, which sought to terminate Indian status. Their reaction to this attempt at full assimilation galvanized Aboriginal people across Canada, and resulted in strong attacks on the status quo by writers such as Harold Cardinal in *The Unjust
Society (1969)\textsuperscript{36}, which became a Canadian bestseller, and Howard Adams in *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (1975).\textsuperscript{37} Indigenous people in Canada were also inspired by the activism of the radical American Indian Movement, which soon moved into Canada. Indigenous residents of Toronto participated in a number of protests in the 1970s, such as one outside Queen’s Park, in November 1974,\textsuperscript{38} though the community was generally less radical than those in Western cities like Winnipeg or Vancouver. A number of local people participated in the Caravan to Ottawa, an event documented by one of the participants, Cree Torontonian Vern Harper, in *Following the Red Path: the Native People’s Caravan, 1974*.\textsuperscript{39}

As Nagel comments:

> Red Power redefined and revitalized Indianness. The movement created both unity and tensions within and among Indian communities and multiplied the voices articulating diverse Indian realities.\textsuperscript{40}

These diverse realities included the distinctive experiences and perspectives of what Indigenous scholar and activist Vine Deloria called “ethnic Indians” as contrasted with “tribal Indians” who lived on reservations. It was ethnic Indians in cities who were at forefront of 1970s Indigenous activism.\textsuperscript{41}

As Howard notes, this shift to a revitalized Indianness radically changed local discourses: while the Native leadership in Toronto in the 1960s had stressed Native people becoming fully productive Canadian citizens, now the distinctive value of Native identity and culture was emphasized.\textsuperscript{42} Although traditional drumming and singing was no longer practiced in much of southern Ontario, it was now revived at the Native Canadian Centre.\textsuperscript{43} Native people and their issues became more visible through the new centre, an increasing number of offshoot organizations, the *Toronto Native Times* monthly newspaper,\textsuperscript{44} and a volunteer speaker’s bureau. As Howard notes, the totem pole erected in front of the new
Native Canadian Centre on Spadina in the 1980s was a fitting image of both the hybridity and traditionalism of the urban Native population: “authentically” carved by a Haida artist, the totems represented were those of local Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee clans.⁴⁵

Associated with this shift was a revisionist history. As an article in the *Toronto Star* reported in 1977: “In classes on ancestral customs they learn not only the chants and drum rhythms, but a sense of pride in the achievements of their forefathers.”⁴⁶ Indigenous people in Toronto, like others across the continent, began to redevelop their own forms of historical discourse, including the use of personal testimony in oral histories, the integration of oral tradition into written narratives, and the proliferation of a new historical genre of expression - the land claim. Historical discourses were also embedded in the rhetoric of political protest, which spoke of historic injustice and sometimes romanticized the pre-contact past. As Howard notes, a developing Native middle class increasingly controlled ideological constructions of Indigenous identity and culture in the city, both for members of the community, and to outsiders.⁴⁷

The increased visibility and activism of Toronto’s Indigenous population also coincided with a growing tolerance of ethnic diversity in the city, since massive post-war immigration had transformed Toronto into a multicultural city. Native people participated in the city’s new multicultural festival, the Metro International Caravan, although there was little settler understanding of how Indigenous peoples differed from immigrants. Meanwhile, the city of Mississauga began to acknowledge its special connection to the history of the Mississaugas: the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native People worked with the Mississauga Multicultural Committee to organize its first successful powwow in 1975.⁴⁸
Toronto Native Times

A local Indigenous newspaper, the *Toronto Native Times* (TNT), was published monthly out of the Canadian Indian Centre/Native Canadian Centre from April 1969 to 1981. It not only provided a voice for urban Indigenous people, but also reported growing challenges to the conventional western discourses of the Native past, including academic ones. For example, in November 1974, a *TNT* article entitled “Indian Historian urges respect for Past, Present, and Future of Iroquois Culture” reported that two young “Indian Historians” had been invited to present a paper on problems in methodology and records regarding Iroquois prehistory and history at a symposium in Toronto on ‘Ontario Iroquois Prehistory’ sponsored by the Ontario Archaeological Society. “Donald Grinde Jr., Professor at Buffalo University and a member of the American Indian Historical Society, said that he, Richard Hill and others are involved in attempting to correct misconceptions, misinformation and misinterpretation of Indian culture and history.” The newspaper printed his speech, in which he raised the issue of archaeological disturbance of grave sites:

> The Creator provided a lasting home for the dead and the birthplace of future generations in the earth. Violation of the sacred burial grounds by any scholar denies the rights of the dead, the present generation, and future Iroquois people. The earth suffers from the wounds of archaeological rape and theft. Can a discipline ignore the values and traditions of the people it studies?  

Grimes also quoted the statement of the “Indians of All Tribes” who had occupied the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles:

> We are not dead. We are a people with a rich and beautiful heritage that keeps our spirit alive in spite of all measures used against us which can only be viewed as a conspiracy to exterminate us. We want the symbolic return of sacred objects which are a part of our present religion, not just our past.

Grimes concluded by speaking specifically about stolen wampum belts, including wampums seized by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Six Nations in 1924 and held by the Royal
Ontario Museum in Toronto. “Belts are a living, viable medium of communication…a symbol and document of Iroquois sovereignty.”

While these and other articles dealt with general aspects of the Native past, no articles focused specifically on Toronto’s Indigenous history. The closest was an article in June 1972 entitled “Whiteman’s Graveyards May Hold Clue to His Unusual Behaviour!” in which the authors suggested that Native people could dig up skeletons at Mount Pleasant Cemetery:

in the name of science we could dig up some of the skeletons there, in order to get some kind of clue as to why white people today insists on digging up our sacred grounds. Perhaps by measuring sizes of skulls or certain abnormalities in bone structure along with peculiar burial customs, we could discover why their descendants today behave in the strange way they do.51

The article was illustrated with a drawing of a stereotypical Indian canoeing in the bay in front of the cityscape, with ghostly images of ancestors emerging in the sky from polluted smoke, while a second image showed a white woman looking and smiling and pointing at rows and rows of skulls on a shelves (reminiscent of a nineteenth century photograph of a room full of ancient Indigenous crania at the Provincial Museum), with the caption “It’s an old European custom.”52

Toronto Native Times also took issue with some of the reactionary discourses of mainstream society that attacked the Red Power Movement’s reassertion of pride in Indigenous history and traditions. It reprinted an article from the Toronto Star by Dennis Braithwaite entitled “Canada’s Indians can’t live in the past” with the caption “Can You Believe It Folks?” Braithwaite was reacting to news of a man who died in Chilliwack, B.C., as a result of his participation in a tribal initiation dance:

However proud they may be of their past, the Indians can’t go on living in that past. I know that our brand of civilization is an inexact concept, a mixed blessing and in some rarefied liberal circles today, a pejorative term, but it is the road that all the world has embarked upon and there is no turning back for anyone. Tribal dances, longhouses, hunting rights – these are as irrelevant for the Indians as forts, mounted
soldiers and glass beads for white Canadians…. A return to the chimerical past of the unadorned, uncorrupted Indian, the noblest savage of them all, can never be anything but a pipe dream. An Indian is, or should be – must be – a Canadian like any other.55

The new strength and diversity of Indigenous expression and its contestation of by then conventional settler historical discourses regarding Toronto and Canada was also accompanied by a seismic shift in government policy. In the period following the rejection of the White Paper, the Canadian government found itself in an unprecedented situation when, in the Calder decision of 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Aboriginal title – the legal title to the unceded lands of Indigenous people based on their historic occupancy of those lands -- existed in Canadian law. It responded by establishing the Office of Native Land Claims the following year, and a new era of Indigenous historical research to advance land claims was inaugurated. This process was applicable to the lands of the Credit Mission (now the Mississauga Golf Course), which had never been legally surrendered. Because this office only dealt with unceded land, however, a Special Claims process was added in 1991 to deal with issues pertaining to lands covered by treaties, which included the Toronto Purchase.54

In 1982, Indigenous heritage acquired further significance in the eyes of Canadians when the Constitution was repatriated. Section 35(1) of the new Constitution read: “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.” This simple statement marked a huge turnaround from the White Paper of only thirteen years previously and set the stage for a new valuation of the Indigenous past as a source of rights and heritage, and as an indelible part of the fabric of Canada. Section 35(1) was the final rebuttal to the myth of the Vanishing Indian.
Toronto Sesquicentennial

Despite these developments on the federal scene and the Toronto Native community’s increased presence and activity, Indigenous people did not play a large part when the City of Toronto celebrated its sesquicentennial or 150th anniversary in 1984. While at the New Years’ Eve Gala event that kicked off the year of celebrations partygoers were encouraged to dress in period costumes that reflected 1834, 1884, 1934 and 2034, the emphasis of the sesquicentennial organizers was on the city’s multicultural present rather than its Indigenous past. While each month had a theme, August’s telling twin themes of history and senior citizens garnered little press. Although the Canadian Mint issued a Toronto Sesqui-centennial silver dollar that featured a voyageur canoeing past the modern City of Toronto skyline, including the CN Tower, and an excavation was conducted at Fort Rouillé, Indigenous history did not have a prominent place in the celebrations.

The Toronto Star’s published a special section for the event titled “Sesqui: The Official Guide to Toronto’s 150th Birthday,” that included a “Toronto Timepiece” marking, among other events, Brule’s presumed visit in 1615, the 1749 construction of Fort Rouillé “on the site of a trading post called Toronto by Mississauga Indians,” and the 1787 Toronto Purchase (“Three Mississauga chiefs sell one third of York County to Crown for 1,700 pounds in cash and goods,”) but this was the extent of attention given to the city’s Indigenous past.55

An article on July 21 by Donald Jones, the Toronto Star’s historical columnist, did give a very long view of Toronto history. “Toronto: From Glaciers to lakeside triumphs,” described the Star’s sesquicentennial gift to the city of the Martin Goodman trail along the historic waterfront, and included mentions of Taiaiagon and the fact that Indigenous people had used the Toronto Carrying Place for thousands of years before Europeans discovered it.
Yet in his enumerations of significant moments in Toronto history, Jones did not include the Toronto Purchase. This was pointed out in a subsequent letter to the editor by R. Rogers of Guelph, who also commented that “this year, Toronto has cause to celebrate two important events, Toronto’s 196th birthday and the 150th anniversary of being incorporated as a city.”

His was the first public comment by a non-Indigenous Torontonian that I’ve encountered that called attention to the truncation of the city’s historical memory caused by the civic tradition of celebrating Toronto’s anniversaries of its incorporation in 1834 as its major historical commemoration. (Most cities date anniversaries from initial European settlement, such as Quebec in 1608 or Montreal in 1642.)

The city commissioned *Forging a Consensus*, a collection of scholarly historical essays on Toronto, edited by Victor L. Russell and published for the Toronto Sesquicentennial Board by University of Toronto Press in 1984. The editor asserted that “The decision to publish a volume of scholarly essays on the history of Toronto is evidence of a growing sophistication in the corporation’s approach to its past …not a work of expansive civic pride, like those of 1884 and 1934, but a judicious evaluation of Toronto’s past,” which it described as “the gradual synthesis, in a British community on North American soil, of a civic culture that was not British, yet was distinctly un-American…a civic culture based on stability and consensus, unique in North America, for being ‘the city that works.’” However, the history discussed in *Forging a Consensus* began only in 1834; there was no mention of Native people in the index, and although it included an article on the Semi-Centennial celebrations of 1884 by J.M.S. Careless, there was no mention of the Native presence in the parade tableaux or of Chief Green’s speech. Thus the Indigenous history of Toronto was again marginalized.
While historians of Toronto remained unengaged with the Indigenous past of the city and surrounding area, Indigenous challenges to conventional western historical thinking in the post-war era influenced new generations of non-Indigenous scholars who studied the Mississauga or Anishinaabek past. Donald B. Smith’s groundbreaking 1975 dissertation on “The Mississaugas, Peter Jones and the White Man: The Algonkians’ Adjustment to the Europeans on the North Shore of Lake Ontario to 1860” as well as his 1981 article, “The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians: a Missing Chapter in the Early History of Upper Canada,” profoundly influenced academic historical interpretations of the history of the Mississaugas. This work as well as later contributions by Peter Schmalz, Leo Johnson, and Ian Johnson, led to a re-evaluation of the 1787 and 1805 land surrenders and the process of Mississauga dispossession. Although this new scholarship did greatly influence the Mississaugas of the New Credit (much of it was used to support their land claims), by and large, this new academic scholarship did not result in a radically different Toronto creation story among the general public.

**Reclaiming History and Heritage**

If non-Indigenous Torontonians were celebrating their history in 1984, Indigenous people in Canada were struggling with their heritage in a completely different way by the next year, after passage of Bill C-31, federal legislation that reinstated various degrees of Indian status to Native women and their children who had lost their Indian status through marriage to non-Indians. The fact that individual First Nations were unable to meet the huge demand of reinstated women and their families for housing on reserves or for subsidized education and that children of reinstated women received status but not band membership,
sparked new tensions between reserve and off-reserve people and huge debates in the Native community in Toronto over who was traditional, authentic, truly Indigenous, or assimilated.

As Howard commented,

Native cultural identity is also a form of capital in the negotiations to secure financial and political support from non-Native sources to grow and maintain the Native community. This creates a politically charged space of complex competing discourses that reify, reinvent, and adapt concepts of Native “traditions” in the urban context. Urban Native people confront and often resist the ways in which their identity is relegated to a homogenized, romanticized, and static past by non-Natives. Yet “the past” is precisely the cultural capital drawn upon to build community for current and future generations.  

In 1988 the Native Canadian Centre was mandated to incorporate traditional and cultural practices into all programming at the Centre. In the late 1980s the Centre began to offer an annual Traditional Awareness Gathering featuring traditional teachings by elders. Also, beginning in 1983, the Native community of Toronto hosted the annual Canadian Aboriginal Festival or Skydome (now Rogers Centre) powwow, a non-traditional powwow “completely designed to market and showcase Native culture,”  

Another aspect of the authenticity debate was focused on questions of cultural appropriation. When Toronto Anishinaabe poet Lenore Keeshig-Tobias wrote an op-ed piece in the *Globe and Mail* in 1990 entitled, “Stop Stealing Native Stories,” the whole issue of representation, appropriation, and Indigenous voice became an issue of widespread public debate. Such interventions moved from debates about the appropriation of voice in fictional work to questions about who could write Indigenous history, and the relative value of emic and etic perspectives, a debate which is still ongoing.
Age of Apology

In the 1990s, a series of standoffs, including the Oka crisis in 1990, and the 1996 killing of unarmed Dudley George by provincial police at Ipperwash Provincial Park put native rights high on the national and provincial agenda and ushered in a new era of non-Indigenous self-examination, a renewed rhetoric of historic wrongs, and a willingness by some non-Indigenous people to assume responsibility in the interests of building a past that all parties could share. This shift was part of the larger shift in global morality identified by Elazar Barkan as a new era of apologies and witness, which bore some similarities to the humanitarian discourses of the early nineteenth century. In this climate “two subjective [and historical] identities developed: victim and perpetrator, linked in a discourse of restitution.”

Within a global context of increased discussion of human rights and decolonization, non-Indigenous Torontonians became somewhat more willing to consider Indigenous political and historical perspectives and there was also growing recognition of the need for the Toronto Aboriginal community to tell its own story. In 1995, Anishinaabe cultural activist Rodney Bobiwash established the Native Canadian Centre Community History Project, modeled on a similar project in Oakland, California. The project began to collect oral histories of the city’s Indigenous residents and preserve documents and memorabilia in its own archive, documenting both historical injustices and cultural renaissance, combining scholarly and community-based knowledge, and legitimizing “non-reserve based Native peoples’ claims to Aboriginal rights and sovereignty.”

The vision of the Project was:

To hold faith with our ancestors; To speak our memory. To preserve and promote the history of Aboriginal people in the Toronto area from time immemorial to the present, and for the future. To teach and share in the spirit of friendship, and with the goal of eliminating racism and prejudice.
The project offered a ten-session community history seminar, which culminated in the Great Indian Bus Tour of Toronto, a five-hour tour of the city from a Native perspective. Bobiwash explained the purpose of the bus tour:

When we do the Great Indian Bus Tour, we essentially want people getting off the bus at the end of the day with a different set of eyes. … If we can get people to govern their relationships with that different set of eyeballs, then we’ve really come to some useful purpose in history…Most cities in North America, of course, are built on Native land. Most don’t acknowledge that. Most have very little knowledge, of the presence of Native people, either historic or contemporary, within the urban-scape…

There’s a medicine that grows on the sidewalk called plantain. It grows anywhere – in dusty lots, the cracks of sidewalks – and if you pick it up and clean it and put it on a wound, it will take infection out and promote healing. In a lot of ways, the plantain is very similar to the history of Indian people in the city. They may be obscure and they may be sort of growing between the cracks in the sidewalk, but when they’re brought back to who they are, then there’s an immense amount of power, and there’s an immense amount of healing.

Publishing Toronto’s Indigenous History: The Meeting Place

For its 35th anniversary in 1997, the Native Canadian Centre published The Meeting Place, a groundbreaking account of Indigenous life in Toronto produced by the Native community itself and integrating scholarly research, oral tradition, and oral histories of individual community members, with the aim of demonstrating “the resourcefulness and true spirit of the Anishnawbe people” and the vibrancy and resilience of the community. Beginning with an account of the geology, flora, and fauna of the region, the book demonstrated the continuity of Aboriginal life in the Toronto area over more than 10,000 years, with an emphasis on the Anishinaabek. “The history of the Toronto area is one in which the Mississaugas and other Native people were integrally involved,” wrote Rodney Bobiwash in the opening essay, citing archaeology, oral testimony and place names as evidence of “[t]heir full knowledge and use of the area” and its rich resources prior to the arrival of Europeans. The book was the first to document the presence of Aboriginal people
in the city after its founding and also to record the twentieth century history of the Aboriginal community and the development of its organizations.

In characterizing the pre-contact past, Bobiwash used the “meeting place” as his central image: “the Great Lakes area, particularly around Toronto, was a place not dissimilar to the Mediterranean in the Old World in that many cultures and peoples met for the purposes of trade and commerce, dating back thousands of years prior to European contact.” Reflecting an Anishinaabek perspective, Bobiwash explicitly located Toronto within Anishinaabek oral tradition, asserting that “there is no doubt that Toronto Islands were a stopping place along the migration route and later the Mississaugas would reclaim this land as a territory of their own;” thus rejecting the portrayal of the Mississaugas as newcomers to the region and asserting, not just an Indigenous, but an Anishinaabek continuity on the land. This appears to be the first time the connection between Toronto and the oral tradition of the migration was made in print.

The historical narrative of *The Meeting Place* was one of Indigenous self-respect, emphasizing the agency and essential dignity of Indigenous peoples of the past, the sophistication of their cultures, and the validity and persistence of their values and moral principles. As such, it was clearly intended as a corrective to the racist and colonialist narratives so prevalent in previous writing about the region’s Indigenous past. The introduction spoke of the unselfish way that Aboriginal people have shared their knowledge of the land and treated newcomers to their territories…. Initially Anishnawbe were perhaps the innocent, unsuspecting hosts to those who would try and change their lives….everyone was afforded the opportunity to live in harmony with their Native hosts.

Much has been written about the early settlers and what they bought to this land, and little attention is paid to the fact that the early Aboriginal people here had already settled and “tamed” the great land. …Anishnawbe people were critical to the well-being of these new settlers. They taught them how to live off the land. The
Anishnawbe were quick to share their knowledge of hunting, fishing, and agriculture... The Anishinawbe were the benefactors of these weary, unprepared colonists.⁷⁴

Bobiwash cited both their extensive trade networks and diplomacy as evidence of Indigenous sophistication, and emphasized that Indigenous peoples set the tone of diplomacy with the newcomers, devising the Two Row Wampum and Covenant Chain to define the relationship between themselves and the settlers. “What is important to remember is that Native people formed strategic alliances with both Europeans and other First Nations for their own purposes and with their own agendas.”⁷⁵

Bobiwash’s narrative also differed in its refocusing of the narrative away from the favourite tropes of non-Indigenous historical writers, such as the violence of the Haudenosaunee attacks on the Wendat. Instead, Bobiwash attributed much of the Wendat population decline to disease and demoralization, and used neutral language to describe the Five Nations’ wars on their neighbours: “From 1650-1710 Iroquois people had displaced other Iroquoian Huron, Petun and Neutral peoples from most of southern Ontario and the area had become a large hunting territory under the tenuous control of the Iroquois.” Similarly, Bobiwash did not dwell on the details of Anishinaabek oral traditions that celebrated their victory in battle over the Iroquois to gain control of southern Ontario, though he clearly favoured the Anishinaabek version of that history: “Around the year 1700, the Mississaugas had expelled the last of the Iroquois from the Toronto area.”⁷⁶ Such tact and reticence suggest a desire to avoid sensationalism and the exacerbation of existing divisions within the multicultural Indigenous community of Toronto, as his aim was clearly to create an empowering history that would help Indigenous people in Toronto to gain strength, self-confidence, and cohesiveness.
Similarly, in his discussion of the Credit Mission, Bobiwash refocused attention away from the conventional narrative of Methodist Christianity transforming the community to emphasize the success of the Anishinaabek transition to agriculture at such settlements as well as settler attempts to limit Native participation in the economic social and political life of the colony. The Gradual Civilization Act, in Bobiwash’s interpretation, was “really designed to limit Native participation in the rich markets of York, to restrict hunting and gathering activities which supplemented farming activity, and to assimilate the Native population.” He noted that it was immediately rejected by the Grand Councils of the Ojibwe, restoring the history of ongoing Indigenous resistance that rarely made it into settler histories. Similarly, he referred to the many protests over illegal sales of Aboriginal lands, corruption in the Indian Department, and the illegal alienation of lands such as former Council grounds on Queen St.77

In creating an empowering history, however, Bobiwash also downplayed the complexity of the Indigenous political landscape of the past. For example, when speaking of Pontiac’s War, he clearly sided with Pontiac politically in his resistance to British colonialism and did not mention local head chief Wabbicommicot’s role in preventing Detroit’s capture and thus the success of the Indigenous uprising. He also did not mention -- and perhaps was not aware -- that most Mississaugas in the Toronto area did not support Pontiac.78

In discussing Anishinaabek interactions with the French and English, and emphasizing the independent status of Indigenous peoples and their nation to nation relationship with the Europeans in treaties, Bobiwash restored awareness of their agency and avoided portraying Indigenous peoples as mere victims of the colonizers. Thus he wrote: “The Mississaugas remained in control of their lands and dictated the terms of incursion into
their lands.” This was surely an overstatement of their power in the Toronto area in the 1780s and 1790s, given their very low numbers and the loss of a competing colonial power to play off against the English -- though clearly the British could not simply dictate to the Mississaugas either. However, Bobiwash tempered this statement of Anishinabek power with his references to settler competition over fishing, looting of burial grounds, and pollution of the local rivers. He also clearly described the shift in power relations over the course of the nineteenth century:

The nineteenth century was, however, a great century of change …pressures of settlement, disease, competition for game, warfare, and a concerted campaign by colonial governments to destroy the traditional political alliances of Aboriginal nations resulted in their marginalization in their own lands. This led to the movement of the Mississaugas in the 1850s [sic] to the New Credit Reserve in its present day location near Hagersville.79

Bobiwash’s discussion of the Toronto Purchase was problematic for a different reason. He apparently confused the Toronto Purchase and the Gunshot Treaty, declaring that it was the former that was addressed in the Williams Treaty, rather than the latter. While he mentioned the 1805 surrender of the Mississauga tract, he did not discuss the reconfirmation of Toronto Purchase at that time, or the land claim of the Mississaugas. (Although the Indian Claims Commission had ruled in favour of conducting an inquiry into the Toronto Purchase claim in 1994, the five First Nations initially involved had decided not to proceed, and the matter was not taken up again until 1998.)80

Bobiwash’s overall analysis was insightful and influential, even revolutionary, and it certainly changed the course of Toronto history writing. For example, in writing about the original coat of arms, he wrote:

that the person portrayed is obviously in Plains and not Mississauga dress, speaks clearly to the steady alienation of truth in the pursuit of a mythical history in which Aboriginal people, like the beaver adorning the top of the shield, were part and parcel of a subdued land and very much relegated to the past.81
Bobiwash’s essay, and The Meeting Place as a whole, was also revolutionary in countering
the stereotype of the vanishing Indian in Toronto. Referring to the departure of the
Mississaugas to New Credit, Bobiwash commented:

This did not mean that Native people either literally or figuratively disappeared from
the landscape. They continued to press for redress of the injustices committed against
them throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Native people
continued to live in the Toronto area both as individuals and communities.82

One result of these new discourses about Toronto’s Indigenous history was a
reaffirmation of Indigenous connection to the land itself. Heather Howard, the non-
Aboriginal wife of Bobiwash, herself one of the founders of the Community History Project
and co-editor of The Meeting Place, concluded her 2004 anthropological study of the
development of the post-war Native community in Toronto with this observation:

I have found that Native people in Toronto have actively formed a discourse around
this city as a Native territory. The pre-contact history and sacred nature of the area,
particularly in Anishnaabe lore, is a significant part of contemporary discourse in the
Toronto Native community…. As I have heard Elder Lillian McGregor remark on
many occasions, “the sidewalks are cement, but that cement is made of the earth and
water.” The city is reducible to its basic elements, and that connection between
Aboriginal people, also referred to as land-based peoples … and the land, is not
broken.”83

Remembering, Forgetting, and the Mississaugas of New Credit

While members of the Native community in Toronto were beginning to document
their history in the city over the final decades of the twentieth century, Mississaugas of the
New Credit began to grapple with their loss of considerable historical and cultural
knowledge. The Christianization of most of the band in the 1820s and 1830s had resulted in
the wholesale jettisoning of many cultural practices, and the 1847 move away from their
territory on the Credit had further fragmented the community, with some families dispersing
to other First Nations. At New Credit, the Mississaugas found their history subsumed by that of the far more numerous Six Nations. Former Chief Carolyn King recalled that children did not learn their own history even at their local reserve school:

You know what they taught in our school? Six Nations history. And when our kids went to the Six Nations school...for [grades] seven and eight and they had to write about local community history, when they say “who’s the chief of your community?” they would have to say the Six Nations chief because our chief was wrong. That’s how narrow it was and how oppressing.84

The loss of identity was such that King recalled being challenged by members of New Credit for referring to the people as Mississaugas rather than Chippewas.

And I said, “You don’t know your history! You’ve got to know your history. You’ve always been Mississaugas, and there’s books and there’s papers and everything’s about here, here’s why we are.” And I said, “I think we need to figure out who we are before we can even fight and... you know, stand up at the table. Because if you don’t know your history, you can’t defend yourself.” So that became a driving force. And I remember reading a book, a women’s anthology book of native women, and the headline was, like the subtilte inside, was “if you don’t know your own history, someone will come along and change it for you.” And I would tell them that all the time. We’ve got to get our own history written down. And so we started.85

A consultation process among the New Credit people identified the recovery of community history as essential to the renewal and strengthening of the community. The filing and resolution of a land claim in 1997 for the abandoned 200 acres on the Credit River was also catalytic in reconnecting the Mississaugas of New Credit to their previous history in the Toronto area. In researching the experiences of their ancestors in their previous land claims, band members were strengthened in their resolve when the government offered compensation for a mere 30 acres.

I said, “That is horrendous! Now I can understand what happened to our ancestors, when they got pushed in the corner, and said ‘it’s this way or not. Take what you get. Take it or leave it.’”...I said “I can understand now what happened to our ancestors because we’re in the same boat.” I said “but here we are today, we’re supposed to be able to read and write and understand those papers. It’s not like before.” I said “we’re the smart people here. We’re considered the smart people, we can’t accept
that. A hundred years from now when they look at this and say ‘how could they be so stupid as to give that up, to accept that kind of parameters?’” I said “I cannot be part of this. [If] you’re going to accept it, you write me out, and I’m not going to vote for it, eh.” So he went back to the table and said “no, we have to negotiate on all of it. We’re not backing out.” So it stopped the process or whatever. So we negotiated on 200 acres, for all of it, as opposed to some of it.\textsuperscript{86}

Meanwhile, in 1986 the Mississauga Tribal Claims Council filed a land claim based on the faulty process of the Toronto Purchase of 1787 and the inadequate compensation offered in the treaty process of 1805. This claim was originally rejected, but an independent inquiry requested by the Mississaugas of the New Credit led to a review of the claim and the federal government’s acceptance of the claim for negotiation in 2002. In May 2010, the First Nation accepted the government’s $145 million offer to settle the claim.\textsuperscript{87} A third and outstanding claim is for the Toronto Islands, which the First Nation says it never relinquished.\textsuperscript{88}

\textbf{The New Toronto Coat of Arms}

It was perhaps only an interesting coincidence that the same year that the Native Canadian Centre published \textit{The Meeting Place}, making the history of Native people in the Toronto area visible for the first time, the City of Toronto’s iconic depiction of its historic relationship with the Mississaugas was on its way out. When the boroughs of Mississauga, Scarborough, Etobicoke, East York, York, and the old City of Toronto were amalgamated in 1997-98 to form the new City of Toronto, an entirely new coat of arms was created for the “megacity” which dispensed with the fictive Mississauga warrior altogether, thus eliminating the delicate question of his representation in an era of heightened political sensitivities (Figure 12). Glorious Britannia also finally made her exit. Instead, three animals took centre stage: a beaver, a bear, and a golden eagle, the latter chosen as “a symbol of our native background…known for its strength, bravery and power”\textsuperscript{89}
The eagle was originally supposed to be a bald eagle, the symbol of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, but because it had become so closely associated with the iconography of the United States, a golden eagle was substituted. The specific historical role of the Mississaugas was thus made less visible. On the other hand, the lack of specificity could also be seen as an attempt to be more inclusive of other Indigenous peoples who have lived in the Toronto area at various times as well as the multiculturalism of the current Native community. Ironically the golden eagle is not considered indigenous to the Toronto area (its habitat is considerably to the north or west), and bald eagles have largely “vanished” from the area. They last nested on the north shore of Lake Ontario in the 1950s, their reproduction imperiled by widespread use of pesticides, though their numbers in southern Ontario are slowly increasing.  

While it was unlikely to have been the intention of the designer of the new coat of arms, the image of the golden eagle is also a reminder of Kinepenon (Golden Eagle), the Mississauga chief who was deceived about the boundaries of the Toronto Purchase in 1805, who reluctantly agreed to the surrender of the Mississauga tract despite the protests of the women, and whose death in 1814 shattered the Mississaugas’ faith in traditional beliefs and
practices, particularly the efficacy of dreams and spirit power. To the observant Anishinaabe, the appearance of the golden eagle on the coat of arms can thus be seen as a sign of the return to the city of Indigenous worldviews, including versions of the spiritual practices that were abandoned when Kinepenon died. It also marks the resurgence of Mississauga perspectives on their history in the Toronto area, for with the recent settlement of the Mississauga land claim, which addresses some of the wrong done to Kinepenon and his people, Mississauga history has come full circle.

In a similar vein, when the Mississaugas of the New Credit published a glossy information brochure to educate the public about their land claim to the city, the cover featured a striking image: a bald eagle in the foreground flying across the water of the city’s harbour, reclaiming the skyscrapers and CN Tower of the modern city (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Cover of brochure on Toronto Purchase Specific Claim, printed by the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.
This was first evident at the groundbreaking Toronto-Yale Conference on the North American Indian Today, held at the University of Toronto in 1939, just as the Second World War broke out. The twelve Indigenous delegates, who came from across North America and included Edith Brant Monture and Norman Lickers of Six Nations, presented their own manifesto at the end of the conference calling for their own conference free of “political, anthropological, missionary, administrative, or other domination,” and offered to help find solutions “to the white man’s dilemma in a social and economic order that has….clearly gone on the rocks.” See Appendix A, “Resolutions Adopted by the Indian Members of the Toronto Conference,” in C.T. Loram and R.F. McIlwraith, eds, The North American Indian Today (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1943).


Katherine Hale, Toronto; Romance of a Great City, (Toronto: Cassell, 1956), 262.

Hale, Toronto, 2, 9-10.


Katherine Hale, Toronto; Romance of a Great City, (Toronto: Cassell, 1956), 262.

Hale, Toronto, 2, 9-10.


Katherine Hale, Toronto; Romance of a Great City, (Toronto: Cassell, 1956), 262.
27 Ibid., 2-3.
29 Ibid., 10.
30 Ibid., 89.
31 Ibid., 18.
32 Ibid., 20-21.
38 Howard, “Dreamcatchers,” 129.
44 One of the founders of the *Toronto Native Times* was Jeanette Corbiere-Lavell, a youth counselor at the Centre in 1960s, whose later protest at her removal from the band list in Wikwemikong in 1970 for marrying a non-Native man led to changes in the Indian Act and Bill C-31 to reinstate such women.
46 Quoted in Ibid.
48 Ibid., 127.
49 *Toronto Native Times* (*TNT*), Nov 1974, 10, 12.
50 Ibid.
51 *TNT*, June 29, 1972, 2.
52 *TNT*, June 29, 1972, 2.
53 Ibid., 5.
58 Russell, *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto* (Toronto: Published for the Toronto Sesquicentennial Board by University of Toronto Press, 1984), 4, 5.
60 Howard, “Dreamcatchers,” 68.
61 Ibid., 189.
62 Ibid., “Dreamcatchers,” 201-204.
63 It moved to Hamilton in 2009 because the organizers felt that they were not adequately promoted or supported by the City of Toronto. Graham Rockingham, “Steelestown woos aboriginal festival from Toronto: Organizers say they didn’t get enough respect,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 8, 2009.
64 Such debates were very much in evidence at some of the sessions of the annual conferences of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association and Canadian Historical Association in 2009.
65 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which was established in 1990 and reported in 1996, epitomized this changing environment as well as the increasing determination of Indigenous peoples in Canada to tell their own history in their own way. Central to this move was the realization on all sides of the importance of hearing Aboriginal perspectives firsthand, unmediated by non-Native editors or historians; the Commission
thus amassed thousands of hours of first-person testimony on a variety of topics, most notably the experience
and legacies of residential schools. See Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Report of the Royal

66 Gillian Whitlock, “Active Remembrance: Testimony, Memoir and the Work of Reconciliation,” Rethinking
Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa,
Studies in Imperialism, Ed. Annie E. Coombes, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) 35; see also
Eleazar Barkan, The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices (New York: Norton,
2000).

68 Howard, “Dreamcatchers,” 227. History Project Advisory board members were historians Sylvia Van Kirk,
Donald Smith, Olive Dickason and David McNab, Ibid., 237.
69 Quoted in Howard, “Dreamcatchers,” 240.
71 Rodney Bobiwash, “The History of Native People in the Toronto Area: An Overview,” The Meeting Place,
72 Ibid., 7.
73 Ibid. 8.
74 Sanderson and Bobiwash, “Introducing the ‘Meeting Place’” The Meeting Place, 2.
76 Ibid., 14.
77 Ibid., 18.
78 Ibid., 14.
79 Ibid., 22.
80 See the report of the ICC, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation Inquiry: Toronto Purchase Claim,
June 2003, 1-4, for an account of the history of the claim.
81 Bobiwash, “History of Native People,” 18.
82 Ibid., 22.
84 Carolyn King, Interview with Author, July 30, 2006.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Bryan Laforme, Interview with Author, November 14, 2007. See also ICC, “Toronto Purchase Claim,” and
Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Toronto Purchase Specific Claim: Arriving at an Agreement,
Hagersville, ON: Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, n.d.
88 Ibid.
89 http://www.toronto.ca/protocol/coatofarms.htm
90 Environment Canada, Great Lakes Fact Sheet: Bald Eagle Populations in the Great Lakes Region
http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/factsheets/fs_bald-eagle-e.html. Bald eagle numbers are improving in southern
Ontario and bald eagles are regularly seen by birders recording seasonal migration at High Park. On Jan. 22,
2010, M. Hundertmark reported to an on-line bald eagle viewing site: “I was walking my dog along Lake
Ontario in Mississauga, Ont. and saw a bald eagle flying about thirty feet over my head carrying a big sucker or
catfish in it’s [sic] talons. It was very exciting! It was flying east toward the nearby Rattray Marsh. I have no
idea whether it has a nest or is a welcome visitor for the winter. The weather is extremely mild this year. I am
absolutely hooked as an eagle watcher. Hoping this is a positive sign to our improving environmental health and
Chapter Seven

Family Ghosts and Hybrid Histories

I turn now to the legacy of Toronto’s Indigenous past in the present, as represented through my research interviews conducted between 2005 and 2009 with Toronto residents of Indigenous, non-Indigenous and mixed heritage, and with others who did not live in the Toronto area themselves but whose ancestors did.¹ This chapter will look at what my interviewees knew of Toronto’s Indigenous and colonial history and the myriad ways they located themselves within it or related to it, if they did, and how their own family histories influenced their perspectives on this history.

Significantly, stories of Toronto pioneer interactions with Indigenous people were not among the stories told by the 23 men and 21 women I interviewed about their own family history and their knowledge of the history of Toronto.² For Toronto is now one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with over 150 languages spoken and 50 percent of the city’s population born outside of Canada.³ The city now exemplifies what Marshall Berman has described as “that immense demographic upheaval, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfways across the world into new lives,⁴ that is a fundamental characteristic of (post)modernity. The city’s colonial and Indigenous pasts appear to be almost completely forgotten in the future-oriented modern city, in much the same way that the pre-contact Indigenous past had no place in the consciousness of most early settlers, for whom the immediate world began anew. Although there are descendants of Toronto’s first settler families living in the city, their presence and stories are almost as invisible as those of the descendants of the Indigenous peoples who lived in the area prior to the founding of the city. Stories of contact between the two groups are rarer still.
Indigenous people constitute a tiny minority, numbering somewhere between the 26,575 counted by Statistics Canada in 2006 and the estimate of 60,000 used by some Native academics and social service agencies, in a general population of almost 2.5 million in the city and approximately 5 million in the greater metropolitan area. Similarly, while Anishinaabek, Haudensaunee and Crees from Ontario predominate among the city’s Native residents, Indigenous people have migrated to Toronto from all over North America. Indeed it is this exceedingly diverse, multicultural dimension of the Toronto Native community that distinguishes it from other large Canadian urban Native communities such as those of Winnipeg or Vancouver.

Few of the Indigenous or non-Indigenous people I interviewed could relate a coherent narrative of Toronto’s history, colonial, Indigenous or otherwise; their impressions of the region’s history usually consisted of a few temporally ungrounded, decontextualized phrases, recurring concepts/myths/tropes, such as “always a meeting place,” “lost rivers,” “unjust family compact,” “land was bought” and “nobody was here,” that emerged as discursive fragments rather than as any kind of systematic knowledge or chronology. Many did not know the names of any of the Aboriginal peoples who had been here, and only a few were aware of their presence in the Toronto area after the land was acquired by the Crown.

By the time my family arrived in 1807 or 1819, what natives were here were gone, or mostly gone.

Basically I don’t think there were any… well there may be one or two Mississaugas still left around that area. At the time I think a lot of them were at the Credit River or living on the Burlington Peninsula. I don’t know how many would have been left in Toronto at that time. I don’t think many.
More Aboriginal people I interviewed had some idea of the pre-contact history, at least in a general sense, but most from First Nations not indigenous to the region did not know the specific history of the region, including which groups were here before the Europeans:

**Interviewee:** I know very, very little at all. I mean I’d be hard-pressed....people often come up and ask me – they think I should know because I’m Aboriginal, but I don’t. Sometimes it bothers me that people expect that I should know this.

**Victoria:** …because you’re not from here…

**Interviewee:** Well no, this isn’t my land anymore than it’s their land. So I don’t know. I think it’s the Mississaugas but I …only just learned that I think. There’s lots of controversy around whose land it is and different people claim it. [laughs] … Yeah, but can you really be surprised? It’s been a long time. It’s been a lot of years. I mean the traces are so faint in many ways and so many of the Aboriginal people that live in this city are recent comers to this urban landscape that it’s actually not that surprising that we don’t know. There’s such a difference between… the history of colonization is such that if your traditional territory was on the eastern seaboard or around the Great Lakes then you lost your land a lot longer ago then people say on the West Coast.\(^{11}\)

Nevertheless, some Indigenous people who were not from this area and did not know the history still felt viscerally connected to the past of the place through their Indigeneity:

**Victoria:** Are you aware of the people who lived here before the Mississaugas?

**Interviewee:** No, I’m not aware of that. But obviously there had to be…this was Aboriginal territory. Our footprints are all over this land and whether we are Mohawk or Algonquin or Mi’kmaq or Blood, this was our land.\(^ {12}\)

Few interviewees remembered any of the Indigenous or local history they were taught in school (what there was of it), and most of what they were taught was national rather than local history\(^ {13}\):

You know, [I learned] very little about where I was. Markham, Toronto, Ontario, almost zero. About Canada, you got your stock: Louis Riel, your Plains of Abraham, your trappers working their way through the north…\(^ {14}\)

One thing I did sort of realize as an adult was that the Aboriginal presence was really absent from the Toronto school system, a landscape, from my consciousness,… we grew up in very multicultural communities but Aboriginal people were not one of the groups I think that were really visible.\(^ {15}\)
Well, my [university] students oftentimes don’t think about [Indigenous history in Toronto] until they do that project. They think that there’s nothing Indigenous here.\textsuperscript{16}

The only thing I was told was there’s a very small church at the end of our street that’s a United church, Zion Wexford United Church. It was very tiny and was started, I believe, by Scottish settlers in 1830. So I was pretty much raised being told Elizabeth and James Tingle had owned the entire area and we were on their farm and it didn’t go back farther than that. My understanding was there was nobody here.\textsuperscript{17}

The older generation of Mississaugas of the New Credit also didn’t learn anything about their Toronto area history at school, even though they went to a reserve school-- but at Six Nations:

In the school it was Canadian history. It was about the history about...you know the thing is that...in school they never told you about the reserves and all that kind of stuff. You got that from your family...from my...my dad was...maybe because he became politically driven to get on the [band] list and stuff like that, and...whatever reason I liked that talk, and so I used to talk with him as a young person about those things.\textsuperscript{18}

While few interviewees of any heritage knew much local Toronto history, they often engaged with other forms of history: history related to their countries of origin or particular First Nation, disconnected fragments of the conventional narrative of Canadian history, the oppression and dispossession of Indigenous peoples nationally or globally, and the history of other countries that was enjoyed either for its relation to world events or precisely because it was distant, exotic and a good story. Some people had no apparent knowledge of or interest in any kind of chronological historical narrative at all, though they may have related to the past through imaginative identification in historical fiction, through a spiritual experience of ancestors or spirits, or through the re-enactment of family or ethnic traditions.\textsuperscript{19}

It was generally true that more of my interviewees knew at least some of their family history than the history of the place where they lived, i.e. Toronto. This is consistent with
Canadian, American, and Australian studies which have highlighted the primacy of family to contemporary historical consciousness. Most of the interviewees had someone in their extended family who researched family history; this correlates with the fact that ancestor research is one of the fastest growing activities among Canadians – and North Americans as a whole – including Indigenous people.

Family history was what most connected my interviewees to place, what gave them a sense of “belonging” or “right to be” in a specific place – a contentious issue for settlers particularly-- even if it was not where they currently lived. Some had visited places overseas where their ancestors had lived, which gave them more of a sense of their roots and heritage, such as the daughter of Portuguese immigrants.

I think my overall sense of place is Canada but I have to say it is a really cool feeling when I go back and I feel connected to my ancestors through place, through being in that landscape, and I don’t feel that here in Canada. I feel it there in Portugal.

Another woman spoke of her sense that she had a feeling of belonging or a right to be in Nova Scotia, where she had been born and where her ancestors had lived for several generations, although she herself had lived all her life in Toronto. She said: “I’d always would have liked to have Toronto ancestors I think. I kind of wish I did. Or Ontario pioneers. I’d love to have some Ontario pioneer ancestors, and I don’t.”

Yet Toronto history connected with family history in surprising ways. For example, in describing Toronto’s early history, or when questioned about the impact of colonialism on Toronto’s history, a number of interviewees mentioned Toronto’s “unjust Family Compact,” which, in their understanding, was an early clique of privileged and related members of the ruling class, and which they sometimes wrongly associated with the Toronto Purchase. Associated with this trope was the sense of Toronto’s “official” history as the history of an
elite group -- particularly a white, male, Protestant elite -- that most interviewees did not feel connected to – even if they were white, male, and Protestant.\(^\text{25}\)

Some non-Indigenous interviewees, as well as most Indigenous ones, stated that they were not interested in that “elitist” history, but focused rather on alternative histories, to which they, their families, and in some cases their ancestors belonged and with which they identified. One second generation immigrant, for example, was very interested in the history of the Jewish community in Toronto. She felt it was her own history, and in which she included her own family history, whereas the more official history of the city was not her history and did not interest her at all.\(^\text{26}\) Similarly a second-generation immigrant from Portugal said:

Well, growing up in an immigrant community, I don’t think there is a big emphasis on knowing Toronto’s history. I think partly because it was so Anglo-Saxon, so Protestant and it was really not a lot of connection for immigrant kids. The history I find most fascinating about Toronto is, like, the kind of neighbourhood I grew up in, that local neighbourhood history.\(^\text{27}\)

The same interviewee commented that many immigrants felt that Toronto (and Canada) had no history to speak of, compared to the civilizations of Europe or Asia:

….that’s something you hear in immigrant communities all the time – not just that Canada has no history, Canada’s boring, like the history of Portugal is way more exciting than anything you can get in Canada, according to these people…. Because when I’m in a European city, in Lisbon or whatever, you see the centuries old buildings, you feel the history around you. It’s a visible reminder all the time. You just don’t get that in Toronto.\(^\text{28}\)

By and large, non-Indigenous interviewees were most interested in their family’s private histories in Toronto rather than in larger public narratives. They had not read or been taught the history of the city, but often related to it through oral stories conveyed by parents and grandparents who had lived here.

I think my dad talked a lot about his life in Toronto. Growing up as a boy they lived on a street in Toronto. When they were here two summers ago we went back up there
and drove by and went to the Mount Pleasant cemetery and found like Edwin Smith’s grave, so there’s a lot of what Toronto was like, how it was very very British, and the Eatons ran everything, you know, how people pulled together towards the war, the air raid sirens, being a boy, being strapped at school -- a lot of stories like these.  

Some related to the city’s history through family history research about more distant Toronto ancestors, if they had them. One non-Indigenous interviewee spoke of the sense of rootedness and history he feels in Toronto when he walks by the site of an ancestor’s house:

So I walk by that every day on the way to the streetcar and I think, “Huh, my great great-great-grandfather used to work there…It gives me a deep root to the place.”

Sometimes descendants were aware of an ancestor’s involvement in larger political events in the city, such as the 1837 rebellion. One interviewee said: “I like to tell the story that we never actually did anything, [but] we were there. My family was at some of these events and saw this history taking place.” This genealogically inspired interest in Toronto history often focused only on the period in which the ancestor was present.

Some people who identified as non-Indigenous learned some Indigenous history because of ancestral intermarriage in their families. One interviewee, for example, was a descendant of the brother of eighteenth century Toronto surveyor Augustus Jones. This person became interested in Kahkewaquonaby and the history of the Mississaugas because Peter Jones was a son of Augustus by a Mississauga wife.

In general, non-Aboriginal interviewees who had a more detailed knowledge of Toronto’s Indigenous history often had a profession that required them to know it, such as professional genealogists, historians, or people working in the field of Toronto or Indigenous heritage. Such researchers tended to know the history of Toronto through a detailed knowledge of archival materials, maps, dates, buildings, and public figures.
Most non-Indigenous interviewees had virtually no knowledge of the Toronto region’s history before 1793 or of its Indigenous history afterwards. Even a Canadian History Ph.D. student who had lived all her life in Toronto and had an interest in Aboriginal people did not know which Indigenous nations had lived here, an indication of the general lack of awareness of this history. However, some non-Indigenous people became allies and friends of Indigenous people and learned Toronto’s Indigenous history orally from that connection or from historical research that supported alliance work:

I would have to say friends. Just simply sitting in discussions. It wasn’t that I went to it from a perspective of reading…I’ve done a lot of traveling, canoeing up and down the Credit River, and with one friend who is First Nations, “now that was a hunting site, that was a fishing site, we know this from my grandfather” and talked about this is where they used to come and those are now in the process of …again going back and land claims and claims of these kinds of things that’s part of the greater discussion. There was a major migration on the Credit River, all sorts of different routes… salmon fishing.

Then I came to Canada and actually it was after I broke up with my ex-wife that I started to sort of… I needed to focus on something which I was not sure what, to sort of give me some strength to live. It was sort of a funny period to me. Suddenly…I don’t know. Oh, it was a customer actually. He’s Native…. We started to have small conversations. I got really interested and I did some more research, I bought books, pictures, museums. I’ve been in a few Native sites of history. I’ve been in… I’m not sure now but Acton Mills. It was east of Mississauga. I’ve been in a few of them, the longhouses.

Not surprisingly, almost all Indigenous participants had an awareness of the deeper time depth of Aboriginal history in the region and the more recent history of the community in the city, and some Indigenous interviewees had quite detailed knowledge. Within the Native community, there has clearly been more discussion of the region’s deep past and the significance of its history within Indigenous frameworks:

There are things we talk about in our community, like the Mississauga land claim and the Toronto Islands being ceremonial grounds. And then, the environmental people talk about the streams that are still running under peoples houses; it gives me the
sense that this city is this giant thing that’s been plunked down on top of what’s really here. Sometimes I envision the land as it should be, with forest and streams running down from the high ground into the harbour, being able to walk up to any stream and drink clean water from it. Toronto is a spiritual place, a meeting place, but now on a much larger level. Toronto has its own magic that makes this the biggest meeting ground in the world, with the most diverse cultural groups in any city anywhere – that’s kind of cool. When I think about the more recent history of Toronto, I think in terms of the growth and development of Native organizations in this town. Or I think about Toronto as a place that welcomes people from Native communities all over the place, or Toronto as the safe place for gay Native people to come to. I think about my clan, the Wolf Clan, which adopts people, and I think that maybe Toronto is a giant Wolf Clan that adopts people. And of course it’s my birthplace too.  

You can still find deer in the city, that you can find all manner of interest…..coyotes… this is a place where the land is under siege but it is not surrendered. And there are still Native people all over. I mean Spadina, Spadina Street was an old traveling route for Native people. There’s no mystery that a lot of the Native service agencies are on Spadina. That street itself is built on traveling routes that were very important to Native people. 

Another Indigenous interviewee distinguished between distant and more recent ancestral connections to places in the city:

I almost feel like I have no connection to the people who lived here. The area I’m in – you know Rosedale, the ravine? -- I know for a fact that way before, I’m almost certain someone lived there, probably where I’m sitting. Like someone that I knew, like an ancestor, really really far back, could’ve been hanging out there in the exact same spot, killing deer and whatever, but really that’s so long ago. The distinct connection that I have is where my family came from, like my great grandfather is the center of my history and he’s wasn’t here. I have a stronger connection to Rexdale [where her grandfather moved from Six Nations] than here. 

Since most Indigenous interviewees were first or second generation residents of the city, they related primarily to the history of the city’s twentieth century Indigenous community and to the history of their own Indigenous nation even if that was located elsewhere. Their relations to the city’s history could be complex, however: for example, Shandra felt connected to the history of Toronto as her birthplace. Her birth parents, an Anishinaabe father and white mother, met and fell in love during the height of the countercultural scene on Yorkville Avenue. Shandra described herself as a “sixties love
child,” who was placed for adoption and raised in a white family in Southwestern Ontario. She rediscovered her Anishinaabe heritage as an adult and searched for her birth father, only to find that he had died six months before she arrived in Toronto. A homeless Ojibway man left to ‘sleep it off,’ he had died without medical treatment in a Toronto hospital hallway. She reconnected with her family and her reserve in Northwestern Ontario. Now living in Toronto, her history is entwined with Native people in the city and on her reserve, and her connection with the city’s Native community has been central to her own personal journey of identity formation.  

The stories of other Indigenous interviewees clearly reflected the colonial forces that removed them from families and traditional territories and led to their urbanization:

When I was growing up… [my mother] didn’t have status because her father lost status for him and his family when he joined the army. Mama would have lost her status had she had it when she married Dad [a white man] but she had already lost it.

One of the things that bothered me the most when we did work on homelessness was we interviewed a lot of young people, and they were youth on the streets, and invariably many of them…had been adopted out [as] part of the baby scoop. And they had been adopted out, some overseas, and some of them in the United States…[They] would come back to Canada, [and] when they got older; they’d end up in Toronto and come to us at the [Native Canadian] Centre to search for their identity. …That whole generation was showing up on our doorstep.

In two cases, Indigenous interviewees’ stories recorded the efforts of their ancestors to blend into white Toronto in a time of extremely racist attitudes:

My grandmother was working here at the International Club since she was young. She passed away in 1973 and she had been here since she was 18…There was no Native centre, per se, but there was still Native people, just it was kept quiet. They would say they were Spanish or whatever.
There’s no way they would pass for white. They tried really hard. My family’s very Catholic. They kind of delved into that whole very Catholic thing. My Grampy, he couldn’t go to school, because in Rexdale, they wouldn’t take him because he was obviously an Indian. He looked incredibly like it so they wouldn’t take him into the public school there, because he wasn’t a regular student. He was considered by the school board to be a crown ward or something. But because he wasn’t a crown ward, because his parents weren’t crown wards anymore, then he couldn’t go to the public school, so he didn’t learn how to read until he was like 46.\textsuperscript{45}

Indigenous interviewees whose more distant ancestors had lived in the Toronto region had generally only learned this later in life – it had not been part of their family or community’s oral history. For example, two New Credit Mississaugas interviewees had learned as children of the move from Toronto but heard little or no history from before that time. Most of their history in the Toronto area was recovered in the last thirty years from non-Aboriginal sources, such as research by academic historian Donald B. Smith. Because most of their oral tradition was lost when they became Christianized and relocated, they have turned to other related Anishinaabe groups to recover forms of traditional knowledge such as dances, songs, origin stories, and ceremonies.\textsuperscript{46}

**Interviewee:** We knew that in 1845, we left our traditional grounds in the City of Mississauga and moved where we are today, just south of Brantford. We knew that there was some of our ancestors…my great-great-grandfather John LaForme was one of the first people to set foot on the New Credit. We knew that we had gotten the land from the Six Nations because we had given them land, so they in turn helped us out. That was pretty much all we knew about our history, because it was never taught in school. …

**Victoria:** Okay. So when you were growing up, did you have stories about ancestors, at all, that you heard?

**Interviewee:** We did…but it was mainly about the ironworkers and how they would catch rivets and throw rivets and those kinds of things. Nothing, again, going back to the culture and traditions, no….when we grew up, we were feeling the impacts of the residential school. So it was difficult for us to really practice our traditions and our culture. We had snippets of it through my grandmother and my grandfather, languages and things like that, but we weren’t avid practicers of our culture. …..

**Victoria:** So did you grow up learning any Ojibwe?

**Interviewee:** Just a little bit. Like I say, it was really hard for us. The Indian Agent of the day made sure those kinds of things weren’t allowed in our territory and if they
were, you had to be very secretive about it. A lot of our members didn’t want to take that chance, so they were very reluctant to get involved in it.\textsuperscript{47}

This cultural loss and its effect on identity has meant that community members have reassessed their historical ties with Christianity, with some members condemning the actions of Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones) in converting the community, and others stressing that his actions have to be seen in historical context:

\textbf{Interviewee:} Christianity was a big thing and going back through our history, Peter Jones had a big influence on Christianity for my people. Whether that’s good or bad, you can look at it either way, and I choose to look at it in a way that, because of Peter Jones, it allowed us to survive. Now whether we agree with the methods under which he undertook that challenge…. Nonetheless, if it hadn’t been for him, we wouldn’t be here.

\textbf{Victoria:} It certainly seems like he exerted leadership.

\textbf{Interviewee:} Yeah. You know, for many years, and he’s the one who got us into agriculture. He’s the one who got us into businesses and rather than living in wigwams, we were living in houses that were built with money that we earned. As a result of that…because at one point, we were down to only a couple hundred of us, and again, he was instrumental in turning that around and allowing us to be here today.\textsuperscript{48}

Similarly, a Seneca man only learned of the Seneca past in Toronto through archaeology:

So I’m sitting there talking to him and he says “you know our relatives”—because he was a Seneca chief—“our relatives just found another site in Toronto. Six foot six,” he said, “some of those bones, some of those skeletons were.” He says to me “we were big people. I don’t know what happened because we’re a lot shorter today.”\textsuperscript{49}

While family history was the most frequent form of historical knowledge or historical interest I encountered among my interviewees, often only the stories or ethnic heritage of certain family lines were passed on, remembered, or used as identity resources, while others had been lost or suppressed or ignored for a variety of reasons, and this also affected how they related to the region’s Indigenous history. A number of these identifications, particularly in the case of Indigenous heritage, reflected colonial processes, but my interviewees’ recognition of these processes also led to the deconstruction of colonial identities and new
identifications. For example, the grandmother of an interviewee was half Irish and half Oneida:

My grandmother’s mother, no, my grandmother’s father is Irish from potato famine Irish and generations upon generations have been here, and he married an Iroquoian woman obviously and so my grandmother’s actually [only] half Irish, but you should hear the woman talk. It’s like she just got off the boat. It’s like “back in the old days in Ireland” and I’m like “You’ve never been there, woman!”… She had this great Iroquoian history behind her and she just focused on this Irish thing. It’s like she couldn’t see and she was almost ashamed. So I’ve totally broken myself off from that Irish heritage, because she focused too much on that.

The same woman noted that while she came to identify as Oneida from listening to her great-grandmother, her sister didn’t listen to this elder and so is Euro-Canadian in identity, with Euro-Canadian notions of womanhood.

Indigenous identifications could sometimes be very strategic. For example, when I first interviewed one interviewee in 2005, he emphasized his Seneca and Wendat roots, claiming Wendat rights to land in the Toronto area on that basis (and protesting the Mississauga land claim); he was very involved in issues of protection and control over Wendat archaeological sites as a Wendat descendant. In his eyes, this ancestry gave him a right to be consulted in archaeological decisions. However, when I spoke to him again in 2008, he was now drawing on a different lineage in his family history to identify himself as “Erie-Neutral,” and petitioning the city concerning older mounds in the city that he identified as dating back to the mound-builders, whom he identified with the Erie-Neutrals or their ancestors. He sought jurisdiction and protection of these sites, in spite of the fact that their authenticity was challenged by the city’s leading archaeologist.

With most interviewees of Indigenous ancestry, knowledge of certain lines of the family had been cut off because of colonial attitudes or colonial legislation, such as the Indian Act, which forced people to leave reserves and hence their families. For example, one
interviewee of Six Nations/Mississauga heritage noted that a white ancestor who had married into her family had been disowned by her birth family:

So over on the MacDonald side we must have a whole other family line…that we don’t know about.54

On the other hand, one non-Indigenous interviewee recounted how in her family there was a family tradition of an “Indian princess” in the lineage.

Now as a child I thought it was wonderful, and that was really played up by my dad actually who is not related in any way: “You know, you’ve got Irish Druid roots and you’re this Celt and you’re part Indian princess!” (laughs) Oh my god! For a little girl it’s pretty cool, but it really works towards essentialization. When I figured all this out it was like “Ahhh! I wonder who she really was?”55

The trope of the Indian princess ancestor is a well known one that Vine Deloria commented on in *Custer Died For Your Sins*, in which he remarked that often white people claim kinship with some distant Indian grandmother as a way of resolving the illegitimacy of their status as settler-colonizers.56 Yet here the interviewee was conscious of that strategy, which was no longer available to her, though the family story remained. It had become a marker of colonial loss, the “othering” that effaced all knowledge of who her ancestor really was, a process she also recognized as a factor in her lack of knowledge about the Indigenous history of Toronto.57 Significantly, among non-Indigenous interviewees, almost the only form of interaction with Indigenous peoples remembered in their family stories was ancestral intermarriage.

**Choosing Silence**

Many Indigenous interviewees were denied knowledge of their own histories and connections to places because knowledge keepers in their families often made the decision not to tell certain stories, and that erasure of memory and story was sometimes also the result
of colonial oppression. This was particularly serious for families estranged from their communities, where a child’s only source of Indigenous cultural and historical knowledge came through immediate family members.

I didn’t really learn anything until I was like in my thirties because my mom wouldn’t tell us stories. I think she wanted to protect us. But even though Mom didn’t tell us the stories in words, we lived it in our day to day life.”

The same interviewee recounted how her mother shielded her from her family’s experience of racial hatred:

So they were walking home on the side of the road at two o’clock in the morning after the bars closed and some punk white kids came by and ran over them. And that’s a part of the story that you know… how does my mother tell her kids these stories? I mean in some ways we are denied so much of our history because so much of it is so damn painful.

This interviewee and others spoke of the absence of family stories and subsequent loss of cultural knowledge over generations. Among a significant minority, little or no oral history or culture was passed on out of shame or fear of reprisal. One interviewee did not learn about his cultural heritage because his father was working in a bar and would be fired if it became known that he was Native. Another interviewee described his grandmother’s silence as a result of residential school and fact that her brother was beaten to death there:

So a lot of her not talking about this stuff is to do with the fact it’s really painful, or it was really painful for her. She went in speaking Ojibwa and came out completely…like, just blocked a lot of it, right. That’s why we didn’t talk about it a lot. …It was very much something that was removed from her, and as a result, she removed herself from that history. She enfranchised.

Sometimes all that was remembered was the loss or absence of knowledge:

Mom says she remembers her dad drumming and she remembers him singing songs while he drummed, but he never taught her the songs. He never taught, as far as she knows, he never taught her older brothers the songs. Her two older brothers went to residential school but there was a school on the reserve by the time mom went to school so she never had to go to residential school. But she never got to learn her language and she never got to learn any of the…she never had access to any traditional knowledge.
My grandmother told me that all of our sacred knowledge, all of our traditions, was hidden. And she said when...there was a time when it was dangerous to practice this. It was when she was bringing the thing off the tree [a fungus used as a form of smudge]. There was a time when we were not allowed this, she said. All of that is written and it’s hidden away and sometime when it’s...it will be known when it’s safe to bring it out.65

Some oral tradition was passed down, in spite of the difficulties however:

When I was a kid I learned all the stories of Sky Woman, and all the traditional lore. And then when I was older, I got that story. I obviously knew the story of the Great Peace, because my great-grandmother told us...[Fighting with] Brant, that’s kind of like the pinnacle of our family’s history. That’s like the shattering point, the one moment that changes everything. Other than that...I think that’s about all I got...66

Some families were consciously using family history research to reconnect historically dispersed members of the same Indigenous family, which contributed to the gathering of historical knowledge of former Indigenous communities.67 For example, the Tobico family that dispersed upon the abandonment of the former Mississauga community on the Credit River now holds annual reunions:

We have a family picnic with Tobicos which is part of my line and the traditional line here that goes right back. We have our family picnic right out here, the first weekend in July and we’re trying to do our family tree of the people on the Tobico side. And we’re the only family here that does that, that comes here and has a family picnic, a history family picnic....Because there’s Tobicos in Curve Lake, there’s Tobicos in Moose Deer Point, Tobicos in Sault Ste. Marie, there’s Saults in Sault Ste. Marie, there’s Kings in every community. Kettle Point has got cousins of the New Credit people. So they’re all over the place, just fragmented off. One of the things that happened when they moved here, they followed Peter Jones, right, and Peter Jones was the minister. He was the Eagle Clan. So most of the people that followed him were the Eagle Clan and they were converted. He was taking them down this road, eh, and the other people thought he was taking them too far. So they chose not to be part of that, chose to do something else, took their group and went to live someplace else, so went to various other parts when they separated out. So we have relations all over.68
For the Mississaugas of the New Credit, the loss of cultural knowledge has been acute, and is a direct result of both their history of displacement and dispersal from the Toronto area and their conversion and “civilization”:

I always say there’s an identity issue here, and that they came...they’re small, they got displaced from their lands, came to live here, and were treated almost like refugees. And...just always like fighting for their identity and their existence. And then it’s...like they’re so mixed...there’s mixed blood, it’s mixed with the others off reserve, mixed with Six Nations...other nations...it’s like who are you, and what are you, and that’s one of things I found.... But really they’ve got a great history, you know, just a wonderful history...rich and … directly linked to this land.69

Not surprisingly, the Indigenous history of Toronto mattered far more – emotionally, spiritually, culturally and materially – to the Indigenous people I interviewed than it did to interviewees with no Indigenous heritage. Whether or not they knew specific dates and events, in their own lives, Indigenous interviewees had lived the consequences of that history or a similar history, with its impact on their lands, cultural knowledge and practices, languages, family and community connections, and spirituality. As a consequence, they made stronger use of history as an identity resource than did the non-Indigenous participants – again not surprisingly, since the very concept of indigeneity is based on a consciousness of colonial history.70

In fact, almost all interviewees of all heritages situated Toronto’s Indigenous past within a discourse of indigenism that linked local histories to a general story of colonial loss, sometimes to the point where they felt they had no need to know the local specifics. However, they also frequently attributed the invisibility of Toronto’s Indigenous history to a colonial silence about Indigenous dispossession.

Before the foundation of Toronto I don’t know the history as well. I know it better in other parts of the country, which is interesting. It feels like, come to think of it, it feels like where I live, that history has been omitted and I don’t know about it and I wonder if I don’t know about it for a reason. Like why don’t I know about it? Who
was here first? What their traditions were, what their views, what their attitudes were, and why don’t I know that?71

I have more of a sense of what’s happening elsewhere in Ontario but not in the Toronto area…there were people here when they got here and discovered it, so to speak, so that’s a really interesting piece there that…it’s a gap. I have no sense of Aboriginal peoples in the Toronto or York area…nothing. But yet it’s a huge historical piece. I mean you’ve got the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada, you’ve got all these amazing things that happened and a lot of stuff about immigrant history here, right, but nothing Aboriginal.72

I think part of it comes down to whose history is taught, right. And the colonized and the people who’ve been defeated, right, or so-called defeated, their histories are not important. Only the people who’ve…you know who’ve come to colonize...so they basically have created a history.73

Others attributed the lack of visibility of Indigenous history to a lack of caring on the part of non-Indigenous Toronto residents, either because they did not value Indigenous people as much as non-Indigenous people, were only interested in material wealth, or were focused on the future, rather than the past. Some saw this future orientation and an emphasis on the practicalities of making a living as impeding knowledge not just of the Indigenous past but of the history of Toronto generally.

Nobody cares about…as long as you’re out of sight, you’re out of mind. The only thing they see is the stereotype that’s been painted on TV, or you might see the derelicts on the street. That’s the image they have. That’s the image they see all First Nations people as. It’s unfortunate.74

They’re more concerned about the money and buying a new house and having a beautiful swimming pool, or this Mercedes or that than caring about the natives. Sorry to tell you this, but there’s nothing we can do. No one’s going to be open-minded to that. It’s just sad. People don’t care. It’s all about money. …They will never be able to speak out. I don’t think society is going to let them talk too much. They won’t be heard. They won’t be listened to.75

I don’t think many people are aware of the Native history and if you want to talk to people about how – all my friends moved to the suburbs by the way – but how they’re building the suburbs and actually destroying all these archaeological sites and
builders aren’t going through the formal processes of getting the land checked for archaeological artifacts….people are just like, “What?” It just never would cross their minds, right, that Native groups would have lived in this area and that there would be stuff in the ground to preserve. I didn’t grow up with that kind of sense of Toronto history, definitely. I don’t think it’s common.  

It’s a place that people have chosen to live because it’s a good place to earn a living and so it reflects that…. it’s a very sort of functional straightforward city and that people are attracted here because… they want to look forward and they want to make money and they want to get their family moving forward. And the spirit of it does reflect that. And they go somewhere else when they want to slow down and look at the other details of life and so maybe it sort of becomes the pattern because it has that reputation, so it attracts people who, whatever their stage in their life, that’s going to be their focus. 

The latter interviewee also attributed the general lack of interest in history to Toronto’s chronic sense of inferiority relative to other major cities, itself a colonial legacy.

Toronto is always trying to aspire to be this world-class city but it doesn’t think its own story is important enough to tell. I don’t know but I get that over and over and over and over again.  

Very few interviewees knew how the land was acquired from Indigenous people or were aware of the Toronto Purchase, and even fewer knew that it had a problematic history, though a number of interviewees simply assumed the worst because of the general history of Indigenous/settler relations and broken treaties.

**Victoria:** So did you have any idea of how the land changed hands?
**Interviewee:** In terms of from aboriginal to colonial? It was taken.
**Victoria:** Did you know that?
**Interviewee:** Yes, yes.
**Victoria:** How did you know that?
**Interviewee:** I don’t know.
**Victoria:** You felt it?
**Interviewee:** Could be instinctive. Could be just the way it always works. Colonialism is the opposite of sustainability. A colonist takes and gives nothing and makes sure that whoever is there can have nothing.
Victoria: Do you know anything about how the land here was acquired for European settlers?

Interviewee: The only story I know about that is Manhattan Island was sold for, I don’t know…24 strings of necklaces or something. That’s the only story I know.\textsuperscript{80}

Interviewee: I’m sure it was…obviously it was appropriated [laughs uncomfortably] most likely under force. Other than…I mean I don’t know how exactly it became an urban core. I guess it had something to do with a military settlement. Like they’ve got Fort York, but then again Kingston is based on that as well but it is by far not as urbanized as this city is. So it probably has something to do with, like, financial centres as well. But other than…deep rooted in the history, far, far back, I don’t know how this land was acquired.

Victoria: I guess what I’m saying is, was it conquest or was it treaty or what was it?

Interviewee: Oh, wasn’t it a mix of both? I mean a lot of the treaties weren’t honoured anyway so that would suggest it’s a takeover anyway.\textsuperscript{81}

One interviewee suggested that the treaty was probably fair because it was negotiated by the British, who, in his view, valued law and order, in contrast to the American seizure of land by force.

Certainly, very few non-Indigenous people had any family stories of ancestral interaction with Indigenous people in Toronto or elsewhere.\textsuperscript{82} In some cases, it was the absence of story that haunted them. Without specific knowledge, it was the general story of Indigenous oppression that influenced how some interviewees, particularly those of Anglo-Celtic heritage, felt about their own pioneer ancestors. For example, a non-Aboriginal woman, whose ancestors had been Ontario pioneers said:

And then again when I began to really understand the relationship between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada, it was a source of shame that I don’t have connections, real connections to that or understanding of that, although I have to say... and then understanding that we became these landowners on the backs of all that too, and the complexities of that is certainly not clearcut, ...there’s a story in here about trying to get to Bradshaw from the farm through the bush and everything and it’s quite remarkable how they managed to eke out a living in this area of the world in the middle of the cold with nothing there and so I’m very proud of that. There’s this toughness, this idea that oh you’re tough because you come from these people who broke the land and I like that, but at whose expense? So every feeling that becomes a source of pride for you is mitigated by this other ….the settler colonizing aspect is
troubling to me…. you can feel good about a lot of things but you can’t feel great about anything. It’s like “Great, we come from pioneers – oh darn!”

This ambivalence about pioneer ancestors and settlers, while by no means ubiquitous, marks a change from common late nineteenth century discourses like the story of Mary Thomson, the Mother of Scarboro, and reflects the increased Canadian and international discussion of historical injustices, collective guilt or responsibility, apologies and restitution since 1945. While there are undoubtedly still romanticizing tendencies in genealogical circles today, increased public awareness of Canada’s history with First Nations people and questions about present responsibility for past actions, including the actions of ancestors, affected the way some non-Indigenous interviewees related to local Indigenous history.

A few of the non-Indigenous interviewees stated that they had never been interested in Toronto’s history because they didn’t feel rooted here. They either saw themselves as cosmopolitan citizens of the world or as people who really belonged somewhere else, either because of family connection or simple preference for a different culture or locale. Eight interviewees did not have a strong sense of “home” or connection to place or felt suspended between Toronto and an overseas homeland, while a number of people had moved repeatedly within Canada.

Sometimes associated with the “placelessness” felt by some non-Indigenous interviewees was a discomfort or ambivalence about their own ancestors and their relation to the history of dispossession and colonization of Indigenous people. This ambivalence affected both their right to be here, in Canada, on land they considered taken from Indigenous people, and their desire to know the local history of where they lived.

I’m a very strange case because I’m only here against my will. I would rather be somewhere else. Like I sort of have an attachment, but I don’t. I’ve always wanted to be somewhere else…. so I don’t really have a huge attachment to a lot of places….
I think Toronto for a long time really felt like home to me, but then when I came back from Asia I had less of a sense of that than before.\textsuperscript{85}

I grew up in Toronto. I was born in Toronto, and I keep wanting to get out of it. Like what am I doing in this city? I had my astrological charts done, and it shows there is not one line that goes through Toronto! So apparently that indicates there is no energy connection to this place. The astrologer says “Even though you were born, when you look where the planets were at the time you were born, this is not where you are to be. And one of the very strong lines goes through England. I feel that I’m to go back there to reclaim my ancestry, my English ancestry. … Also I feel strong connections to the native culture, and aboriginal healers and aboriginal healing and that’s it. As far as the settlers who’ve come here, I just don’t feel consciously connected to them. And yet every time I come back to Toronto, I see our multiculturalism, and all our multicultural events and music. It leads me to think, “Well, this is here and it’s not as greatly integrated in a lot of other places I’ve travelled to.” So I begin to have a much greater appreciation for Toronto. But when it comes to being really connected to what happened a long time ago, it’s not part of something that draws me. And I just think my soul was really somewhere else. And I had a palm reading once one time when I came back from one of my journeys and I said to her, “Show me what’s going on here, because I just can’t seem to find my home.” And she says “I can see it right there. You’re a universal citizen. The world is your home, so that’s what you’re drawn to, it’s the whole world.” And so I feel I’m much more living on the cosmic level than on an individual level. So I think that’s why I don’t think about Toronto in connection to its history.\textsuperscript{86}

Most non-Indigenous participants felt that local Indigenous history should be known, even if they didn’t know it themselves, because “if you don’t know your history you’re doomed to repeat it.” However, there was also a sense that knowing that history was rather like taking unpleasant medicine, good for you in a constitutional sense but not very pleasant going down, not a source of pride or enjoyment. An 18-year-old non-Aboriginal interviewee said that it was difficult to connect to the past positively, that he had “a negative view” of his history which made him not want to visit Great Britain, where his ancestors were from. Instead he would rather go to other places with different histories that he could learn from.

\textbf{Victoria:} So when you say your view of that history is negative, why is that, what do you mean?
\textbf{Interviewee:} I look at it, what my ancestors have done, and I know, it’s not a guilt thing anymore but it’s more like a responsibility, an issue of responsibility that I still
see it as…. I mean I know that I have this Eurocentric history and I know it’s based in colonialism and I know it’s based in violence, overt and covert, and I realized this day it’s continuing in different forms. And it’s not that I have remorse for that but again it’s like I feel I need to take responsibility for it instead of allowing it to continue. And I don’t know if I look at being a part of Western civilization so to speak as participating in that but it’s more that I’d rather disengage from it for awhile and learn something else and I think that would allow me to reconsider my negative view of it as well, considering I do have a lot of exposure.87

This sense that some settler-descended interviewees had of being ‘displaced” persons themselves and perhaps of bearing a burden of racial guilt has also been described by Australian scholar Peter Reid in Belonging: Australians, Place, and Aboriginal Ownership. He described the ambivalence of a politically self-conscious settler subjectivity: “I belong but I do not belong. I seek a solemn union with my country and my land but not through aboriginality; I understand our history but it brings me no relief.” Reid suggested this ambivalence was largely limited to university-educated, urban, middle class individuals of Anglo-Celtic heritage;88 how widespread such ambivalence is in twenty-first century multicultural Toronto is matter for further research.

Certainly, among Torontonians of mixed Indigenous/non-Indigenous heritage, historical consciousness can be very complex. One such interviewee commented on the “unsettlement of settlers,” and felt that the Indigenous side of her family, because of its historical connection to the land, was more “real” than the settler side:

Canadians don’t have a sense of [being] settled; they don’t feel like they’re here. If you feel like you’re somewhere you can point somewhere, like I can point to the Six Nations and be like that’s where my family came from, at least on the real side of it. The realness, that’s what I know. I’m more connected to that if I can point to that and say that’s where my family’s from.89

Interviewees who were first or second generation immigrants also sometimes related to Toronto’s history with Indigenous people through their own family history. This was particularly the case when they had experienced colonialism elsewhere, such as an
interviewee of Trinidadian and Punjabi heritage whose family experience of indentured labour and diaspora caused him both to identify with the colonial experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada and also to feel ambivalent about his presence as a settler on Native land. He spoke of

the perspective that you have as...a politicized person with a kind of double consciousness both as a person whose people have been colonized and continue to be, and then also as a settler on this land, and how you kind of negotiate that in your own head.\textsuperscript{90}

One interviewee of Israeli Jewish heritage saw striking parallels between the occupation of Palestine and the situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada:

I went over to Israel and Palestine three years ago and I spend about a month on the West Bank and I lived in refugee camps and stuff like that, and I got to see a firsthand account. I immediately connected it with the history of what happened here: the whole residential schools, the whole ghettoization-reserve thing. I mean, the refugee camp and the reserve thing, there’s so many...and it’s not even...it’s just people’s narratives. You hear people talk. I talked to so many Palestinians and their stories sounded identical to the stories that happened here. Identical, in terms of feeling the despair and feeling like they’re under the thumb, always, and they either have to conform, being homogenous and assimilate, or basically struggle.\textsuperscript{91}

Two Portuguese interviewees, one whose father had fought in Angola, the second who had lived the early part of his life in Mozambique, were aware of parallels between the Portuguese in Africa and settlers in Canada, though they drew different conclusions:

My parents haven’t really discussed it but I think they would have carried this notion of benevolent colonialism with them which is what they think about their own...[about] Portugal’s colonizing experience, and would see Native peoples as needing help, as needing that civilization,...yeah, I think they would fall within that.\textsuperscript{92}

Everyone else was talking about Portugal in Africa, what the Portuguese was doing to the black people, but they end up doing even worse here to the Natives.\textsuperscript{93}

A black South African immigrant who had lived under apartheid and now felt unsure about her right to be on Native land in Canada didn’t bother reading histories of Toronto because she didn’t trust histories written by colonizers:
I have to also say this…that I have very little faith in what I read when it comes to history, so I tend not to read history, because…especially because of these issues we’re discussing, who’s writing the history and what are they going to say about it. And I know there aren’t that many Aboriginal people who are going to write the history that predates the arrival of Europeans…. I just have a mistrust, and maybe it’s unhealthy, but I have a mistrust…of…the writings that would speak of historical events here, because the issues are not settled to begin with…the issues between the two nations are so up in the air that whoever writes it almost definitely will have an agenda…a self-serving agenda, and so I…I’m kind of lethargic about reading history of that kind, you know what I mean?\textsuperscript{94}

In a similar vein, the Chief of the Mississaugas of New Credit commented that in fact recent immigrants understood the experience of Indigenous colonization far better than most Torontonians of settler heritage:

I don’t think they [Torontonians] know the history well enough to understand what it means to have an original territory, because you have to remember that Toronto is a melting pot of all different kinds of cultures. You know the ones that support us the most are the freshly-arrived Europeans or immigrants that come in from other countries, because they know what it’s like to be oppressed…They come up to you and say, “We support you. We’ve been there. We know what it’s like.”….You take people from other countries, third world countries and countries that have been oppressed and human rights issues are nonexistent, they come here and they’ll walk hand-in-hand with you, because they can identify.\textsuperscript{95}

On the other hand, an Aboriginal professor spoke of the reluctance to learn the history that she encountered among some recent newcomers.

In my teaching sometimes I have recent newcomers to the land...and sometimes the newcomers want to absolve themselves from any kind of responsibility for knowing this history and for being implicated in the history. And yet they are! They came to this land and this land is made available because the Indigenous people were dispossessed from their land. The wealth the Canada has to offer new immigrants was accomplished on the backs of Aboriginal people, in terms of what we gave up –what we gave up, right, as if we had any choice in the matter!\textsuperscript{96}

And others saw the city’s diversity as impeding knowledge of the Native past.\textsuperscript{97}

But because this is so…every world is getting like that, so mixed up, different cultures are there mixing and mixing. It’s going to be even harder and harder for people to listen to their story. You come here, you can…you come to this country, you might want to know about the Aboriginal people, but you have so many other people in here: the Chinese, the Portuguese, the Jamaicans, the Indians. You might get interested in so many other cultures, so it’s getting harder and harder for people to
care about the natives....The fact that it’s so multicultural, it’s going to make people forget about the natives, the roots of this land.98

Responsibility to the Past

While most interviewees thought that local Indigenous history should be taught or learned, a few interviewees did not agree. One interviewee was very ambivalent about the Indigenous history of Toronto being taught at school, as she worried that this would create a competitive culture of grievance among various ethnic groups in the city:

Victoria: Do you think you should have been taught that, or not, or does it matter?  
Interviewee: I don’t know…there’s so many different people in Toronto. I know the Japanese now are claiming reparations for…you know the problems out west and…and I’m just not sure about the number of Aboriginals involved and the number of Japanese involved and the number of…I mean now we’re…the Moslems are having real problems with racism or whatever you want to call it, and…I’m…I’m just not sure…where you draw the line.99

Another interviewee had no interest in learning history at all:

You know, I feel like for me, no. Because I feel in my perspective everything happens in this moment. And yes I can spend a lot of time and energy trying to know some of the history. But all of what’s happened in the past is right here. Anyway the experience of what we’re having now is related to what happened in the past, and all of history is in this moment.100

Among some Indigenous interviewees, there was also a reaction to the previous generation’s preoccupation with the past. One young Indigenous interviewee told me that many Indigenous young people were tired of the older generation’s focus on historical grievances and loss:

I think my generation is kind of like the clean slate of things, even though obviously there are still a lot of problems. We’re not the generation to look back -- we’re the generation to look forward. We are like, okay, this sucks, but everything that I do is a lot more focused on making it better than saying hey, you pretty much fucked us over, now pay up, whereas a lot of the older people I’ve met have a lot of anger and hatred about languages and about artifacts and land and it’s like, what does it matter to my generation? That means nothing. Like the artifacts are gone. Well, make more. You know, they were used in traditional ceremonies… make another one. What does
it matter that it’s not old, because it shouldn’t matter to us at all. We should be able to go on…. I realize that all these people my grandfather’s age are going on about this, and that’s the residential school age. They obviously did have something taken from them, but it’s nothing to do with artifacts or language. It has everything to do with pride and dignity, and they want that back. Obviously they do want the language back and the artifacts. But underneath all that is the pride. And that’s definitely what my ancestors lost. But my generation has it. 101

The same interviewee disputed the need for everyone to know Toronto’s history:

You need to know where you came from and if you’re not from here, what does it matter if you know about Toronto or if you know about Canada even, if your family is from England? Learn about England if you feel centered there.

Two Indigenous interviewees who had lost connection to a traditional homeland or First Nation community, also expressed a sense of “placelessness.”

I would say that I’m not connected to a place, a physical place so much as I’m connected to… I think I’m more connected to a sense of place. I mean I imagine the land and the life and so it’s more of an imagined place and the practices that occurred in that place. …. There’s a sense of connection to place but more associated with practice, practice that I don’t even know but I just imagine. 102

Yet in spite of this placelessness, this interviewee still felt it was important to know local Indigenous and colonial history:

Well, I think the value of the local story is again the connection. It’s the connection to, it’s the part of understanding myself in a relationship with the land that I live on and the people who lived on this land and all of the long history of this land. And who were and who are the Indigenous people of this land and how did it come to be that I could make my home here and who am I in relationship to on the basis of living on this land. So I think there is an importance of the local story. There is a responsibility and a connection to the local, but there’s also, I think, I understand, a sense of connection, of placing the local in the context of the broader story, because it’s all a part of this land that we live on and this social, political, historical community in which we live, nation in which we live. Toronto is a part of Canada. People come to Canada. People recognize themselves as Canadians. So the local is important but it’s also important in terms of being a part of a bigger set of relationships.

Similarly, a non-Indigenous interviewee expressed his sense of the importance of knowing the history of where he lived:
I have to know where I am. What is this place? What is my connection? I don’t believe that you can just be in a place and not be engaged with it. You have to be connected to it. I don’t believe in separation. You can’t separate yourself from the energy of a place, whether you try to or don’t try to. I feel like I might as well know what this place is all about, because then I could then know how I’m going to be in relation to it and then I can make decisions in that and be aware of my influence in it. I believe as we’re in a place, we’re engaging with that narrative. This is not a dead history that is old and 1532. It’s now. I really believe that. Like you said, these memories were born out of memories, so they get carried over. We’re playing out the old stories. I think that, for example, in Israel-Palestine, people are playing out…it’s not even their story. It’s nothing to do with them. They’re re-enacting a story that’s just been given to them. They don’t understand why they hate or why they’re scared. They somehow know that that’s what they should be doing. I feel the same way here. Who am I in the story?103

Stories, Diversity, and Pimaatisiiwin

The interviews I conducted with Torontonians of Indigenous, non-Indigenous and mixed heritage, while not a representative sample of Torontonians and thus not constituting a statistically significant survey, still provide an interesting counterpart to the findings of the Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen study of historical consciousness in the U.S and other national studies. One significant finding of that study was that different ethnic groups related very differently to the past. (The study included special samples of Mexican-American, African-American and Oglala Sioux respondents.) In particular, there were differences in the way that white and Oglala Sioux respondents connected the past of their family to the past of their racial or ethnic group. When most white Americans talked about “we” or “our” they referred only to their own family, whereas Sioux talked “our history,” “our heritage”, “our culture” “our tribe,” “our language,” “our traditions” -- all phrases rarely heard in interviews with white Americans. For the Oglala Sioux, their strong sense of group identity and relatedness both “drew upon and reinforced a distinctive sense of the past, with a shared set of historical references to particular events, places and people that they repeated invoked and used”; they also described a specifically Indian chronology. The Sioux thus constructed
collective narratives about the past and used those narratives to understand their lives in the present, while this tendency was much less evident among most white Americans. The Sioux more often constructed a progressive narrative than white Americans did, though this was not the usual American story of national progress.\textsuperscript{106}

These differences were also broadly evident among my interviewees of Indigenous and non-Indigenous background, although first and second generation immigrants had a stronger sense of belonging to a specific group than the Americans of the study. Also, because the interviewees of Indigenous heritage (like Indigenous people in the city generally) were a far more heterogenous and displaced group than the Oglala Sioux respondents in the US survey, their “usable past” was not as cohesive or unified, except perhaps with respect to the general North American or Canadian metanarrative of Indigenous loss and oppression. Indeed, their narratives of Toronto’s local Indigenous past sometimes fractured along ethnic or other lines. The different perspectives and sometimes clashing interpretations of some individuals of Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississauga/Anishinaabe background, particularly among individuals with political agendas, worked against the construction of a single narrative of the “Indigenous” history of Toronto.

If non-Indigenous attitudes to this past were largely characterized by ignorance, indifference, or guilt, some Indigenous interviewees expressed perspectives that were highly contentious, vitriolic, “interested,” and intolerant of other Indigenous perspectives.\textsuperscript{107} Though perhaps representing minority opinions within the Toronto Native community, these interpretations were sometimes perceived by other Indigenous interviewees as dangerous to the health of the Native community as a whole because they promoted divisiveness. Indeed some Indigenous historical interpretations were perceived as being as injurious to community relations as those promulgated by non-Indigenous “colonialist” historians.
In some instances, these interpretations were divisive because they perpetuated ethnic stereotypes: Mohawks were characterized as aggressive, the “stars”; the Wendats as Christian sell-outs; the Mississaugas as interlopers. But a more serious topic of disagreement concerned the validity of the Mississauga land claim, with six Indigenous interviewees questioning Mississauga claims that Toronto is their traditional territory and five advancing Wendat or Haudenosaunee counterclaims.

**Interviewee [Cherokee]:** What I find interesting is that there are a lot of assertions of Mississauga claims to this place, but they were not the first Native people here. They came in after the Hurons, they came in after the Neutrals, after the Tobacco people, Victoria: And the Senecas.

**Interviewee:** And the Senecas. So that’s very interesting. We talk about the history as though that started with the Mississaugas, but it did not, although this is within the Mississauga land claim. I think we also have to acknowledge these other folks who were displaced as a result of a lot of different things….

**Interviewee [Seneca/Wendat]:** So…this whole area traditionally is Erie/Neutral and Wendat. You could take it back further: it’s Erie/Neutral and Wendat; it’s not Mississauga…. Even though they try to claim that it is, it’s not traditional Mississauga territory….They moved in from up north near the Mississagi River, that’s their traditional land up there, this is not their traditional territory…. It’s not right. It’s not their traditional territory, and how can they lay claim to that area when that area was filled with longhouse villages before they even got there. And our ancestors are buried there. And they’re trying to lay claim to our ancestral burying places. That’s what burns me.

A former chief of the Mississaugas of New Credit had a very different perspective, emphasizing both that Mississaugas were the ones in the region when the British wanted to enter into treaty and that the arrival of the colonizers and their money profoundly changed Indigenous attitudes to land:

**Interviewee:** Yeah, the Senecas tried to settle in Toronto, too. I think for a 50-year period or something they tried to settle. And they’re laying claim, right. Well, “you weren’t here long enough,” right? [Laughter] Go home.

**Victoria:** Sorry, they’re laying claim, did you say?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, but you just came in, tried to build a house, and then you left, right, type of thing. So what’s the claim?
Victoria: So does that impinge on your claim, or do they have a separate claim that they’re making?

Interviewee: I’d think it would be a separate thing. It’s a tough one. It’s how you sort out all this stuff. Because every one of these in here, because there’s the Tobaccos, the Petuns, the Neutrals, they’re all here, right. Here’s what the Iroquois claim is: that this was all their land. Their creator allowed them to go through all of these lands. …It is true, the Ojibwas are northern groups, okay, northern and all in here. So there’s no claim. This is Iroquois, right and they’re up into here, too.

Victoria: Yeah, the St. Lawrence.

Interviewee: They roamed and ate here. But everybody roamed and ate, and as people of the land…this is my interpretation about economic stimulus that changed us, that everybody’s entitled to live, and you could move across all these boundaries and not be owners of the land. Everyone’s entitled to fishing, hunting and gathering, so all can survive, right. They know that they’re different people, and they’ve got different cultures and traditions, but no one’s going to stop you from eating and finding something for your people to live. And then this thing happened.

Victoria: Yeah. The big thing [colonization].

Interviewee: The big thing happened and then we became like this. We’ve become “this is mine, and as a matter of fact, I want yours. Take you out.” You know, another little group over here, take you out, because I want all of this now, to be mine in order to get, for these people. So then they became aggressors…. And who’s got the strongest position is New Credit. Their aboriginal title, basically. We were the ones who were here when the…at the…maybe Johnny-come-latelys because we were here, pushed them [the Haudenosaunee] across the border, we were holding this land by conquest. It doesn’t get any stronger in the world, and they made the deal with the Mississaugas to let these people come over here, and that’s pretty strong, but you’ll never hear that story.

Two other historical issues that were extremely contentious among interviewees was whether or not the Haudenosaunee committed genocide in their 1649-50 dispersal of the Wendat by the Haudenosaunee or whether or not the Mississaugas “conquered” the Haudenosaunee or acquired rights to the Toronto area by treaty or invitation:

Interviewee: There’s this attitude I guess towards Wendat or Huron people…by a lot of our people at Six Nations, that…we’ve [the Wendats] been annihilated, or…we have been totally wiped out. That we have been adopted as a whole nation and we’re no longer…so there’s this attitude that we no longer exist. That…um…we were brought in through the Cayuga nation and therefore we’re now Cayuga, we’re not Wendat anymore. We don’t exist. So there’s that attitude there and that’s kind of the attitude that I grew up with. You know being Seneca, you know that…and even until four years ago I had that attitude, until I…um…met some of the Wendats who are still alive, and learned that, that hey…that some of the stuff that has been taught is wrong. Um…that no, we did not annihilate all of them, and that we did not annihilate them at all, and learned exactly what happened to the Huron or Wendat people…. It
wasn’t that we went out there and ransacked their villages and forced them to come and live with us. These are people that wanted to come and live with us.

**Victoria:** So are you saying there was no fighting between them?

**Interviewee:** I’m not saying that there was none whatsoever….What I’m saying is that from what I’ve been told was that the scale that we were led to believe that there was…wasn’t. …Of course there were a few family feuds that happened. And this was basically because the Jesuits came and started to turn people against each other…started to Christianize some of the Wendat people and turn them against their own people… And then started these stories about how the Iroquois were doing this and doing that and doing this and they weren’t doing that. And therefore that was lies spread among the Huron people and caused them to feel like not so safe or good with the rest of the Five Nations because of the lies of the French…. And the people that say these other things are people who are basically stating what the white historians have been shoving down our throats all these years… And trying to spread animosity between us.111

They [Mohawks] have a natural personality, that’s what I say. The personality is that they’re aggressive. They’re strong leaders and they’re good at it and they’re the stars and they just want it more. And what I see is that this side, this group of people, took up like the white people and became aggressors and take like the British. And look what the British did around the world. And they took up their cause and they still claim to be the friends of the British. And the British, look at their history. They have a terrible history…. See, they were here, everybody was here and they have the soup bowl [reference to the bowl with one spoon], the bread box, which are more community agreements to live together and survive. The word is “we are all in here to survive.” And then they became warring nations…They [the Haudenosaunee] were being aggressive and they [the Mississaugas] pushed them back.112

**Interviewee [Mohawk]:** “It’s thought that our nation was at the heart of the violence. Four hundred years ago my ancestors were responsible for their genocide.”113

The last interviewee spoke of conducting ceremonies at Wendat archaeological sites, where he asked for forgiveness for his ancestors.

Given the historic divide and conquer strategy of British officials in Toronto, and the current need for strength in numbers to advance any Indigenous issues in the city, it is difficult for Indigenous people to discuss or address such differences openly. Thus in the interest of community harmony, some aspects of the history of the Toronto region are avoided or are glossed over. This is not necessarily because people wish simply to deny
history. Many Indigenous people believe that knowledge should serve the community rather than exist in its own right, as in the western academic tradition. Since it should advance *pimatisiiwin*, living in a healthy way, knowledge that causes division should not be pursued.\(^{114}\)

Historically, in the oral tradition there was great tolerance for multiple versions of stories, as there was also much sharing of territory, yet this tolerance has been greatly strained by the awarding of land claims to some groups over others. This is one of the downsides of Canadian colonial treaties: they were made with certain groups and others were excluded from the process. Now money is attached to certain historical interpretations and competitiveness over land and financial compensation has led to historical interpretations that characterize other groups as motivated only by selfish motives such as greed or lust for power.

No. As a matter of fact they [Mississaugas] were a part of the confederacy for about thirty or forty years….And then they broke away. They broke away just before the Toronto Purchase, so that way they could….they could be awarded all this money from…what wasn’t really that much.\(^{115}\)

Other interviewees recognized that money had distorted traditional attitudes to land among all parties, as well as local stories about the past:

But in the Beaver Wars, or fur trading war, the Mississaugas…or the Ojibwas and the Iroquois fought for land, because if they had the more furbearing lands, they could trade more. So I say that we were never land owners. We were of the mindset that we were people of the land and not over the land and the fur trade, and I call it an “external economic stimulus,” came in and changed us from our concept of land ownership, and it made us owners of land like we never were before, and has never changed us. Forever changed us. And I think what I see…cheap gas, cheap cigarettes and casinos is the next thing that’s changing us. I don’t know from what, but it’s not looking good. It’s an external economic stimulus that’s changing us, and I think the fur trade did the same thing.\(^{116}\)
As Sean Hawkins has commented in *Writing and Colonialism in Northern Ghana*, colonialism is a distinct type of historical experience.\(^{117}\) The injustices committed against the Mississaugas, Haudenosaunee, and Wendats as part of colonialism now make up part of their identity; these injustices are now woven into their own account of who they are as distinct peoples, unite (and sometimes divide) them as Indigenous peoples, and shape their historical interpretations of subsequent experience. One can also see this intertwining of history and identity in the historical development of the concept of Indigeneity itself, a concept evident today in the calls for unity among the Indigenous peoples of many disparate heritages in the multicultural Indigenous community of Toronto.

**Common Ground**

I have spoken mainly of the differences in historical consciousness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous interviewees, and even among Indigenous interviewees, but there were also some recurring tropes that all groups shared. Of these the strongest was the sense that Toronto had always been a confluence and meeting place,\(^ {118}\) which was often associated with the widely publicized but possible mistranslation of the city’s name, that sonorous word ‘Toronto’ that Kohl spoke of as the only surviving remnant of the city’s past.\(^ {119}\)

Toronto was the meeting place, or the name of Toronto supposedly means the meeting place in some language.\(^ {120}\)

Well just that this has been a gathering grounds from way, way back. That this was a place that was a place of interaction for Native peoples long before it was for Europeans and that that history of interaction and negotiation and relationship carries through today.\(^ {121}\)
This version of the meaning of the name provides a historical and indeed Indigenous basis for the city’s current cosmopolitan self-image as a multicultural community embracing immigrants from all over the world. It is associated with the historical portage route to Lake Simcoe known as the Toronto Carrying Place and with the peaceful intercultural commerce and contact that it facilitated.

[The Seneca, Erie/Neutral and Wendat] were like sisters. They were always neighbours. They always lived next to each other. And in many cases we lived in the same villages with each other, even here. And this is what they’ve been finding in the Toronto area is a lot of the villages there were shared village sites. They were not just one nation living there….

Both people that are of Iroquoian descent and Algonquian lived in the same villages…so we shared…we shared territory, we shared villages…we lived together in harmony with each other and then there was a period of time that came when we became more agricultural. And the ones that…wanted to continue to hunt, fish, and whatnot packed and went further.

2) Victoria: Okay. What about…in terms of Toronto’s history…do you think people who live in the Aboriginal community today connect with the much earlier history [eg. Wendat, Seneca, Credit Mission]….?
Interviewee: Not enough…There is some connection to it, and people …take some pride in it, but it’s not really a strong enough connection. That’s what I’m saying: you have to exercise those connections and we’re pushing for that…You have to be very careful in how you do it, because the fear is we were all fighting for these lands against each other…and they start thinking about the old days. But what I’m saying is let’s just work together and bring [out] that feeling of a united community that accommodates all the nations. And then you can call it home. Hopefully that’ll start developing so that people will get that sense of history. They tie their history too much to their own nation…They’ve got to look at it from a broader perspective. Toronto’s broken it down now; at least now the Métis and the status communities are working together. But we’ve got to break those barriers down between the different nations….. I really think Toronto could be the home that accommodates so many nations, not only Aboriginal nations, but the whole world. I mean, we’re reflective of that….Toronto has to understand, that’s where it starts, and we’re actually welcoming them in our home. We’re prepared to share that. And have a common understanding….
Arising in part from uncertain translation as well as historical experience, this concept of Toronto as a common ground or meeting place also shares some features with Richard White’s middle ground of intercultural contact and invention.

1 My research on Toronto family memories is based on published family histories or reminiscences as well as on 44 interviews I conducted between 2005 and 2009 with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who were residents of Toronto or whose ancestors had lived in the region. Of the 21 women I interviewed, 12 identified as non-Aboriginal and 9 as of Aboriginal or mixed heritage, while for men, 11 identified as non-Aboriginal and 12 as of Aboriginal or mixed heritage. The interviewees fell into four groups: Aboriginal people or people of mixed heritage who currently lived in the city; Aboriginal people whose ancestors had lived in the Toronto area in previous historical periods even if the interviewees didn’t themselves; non-Aboriginal residents of the city who were primarily descended from the two colonizing nations, Great Britain and France, some of whom had ancestors who had lived in the city; and non-Aboriginal residents of Toronto of other ethnicities, many of whom were first or second generation immigrants.


2 Of the five stories told by non-Indigenous interviewees about their ancestors’ interactions with Indigenous people, only one referred to the Toronto area.


5 Statistics Canada 2006; Bonita Lawrence, “Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), xv. The huge discrepancy exists because many Aboriginal people refuse to participate in the Canadian census, because not all Aboriginal people are willing to identify themselves as such even if they do participate, and also many Aboriginal people in the city are highly mobile; they may not be full-time residents or may live in the city only for a short time and then move elsewhere.

Howard, “Dreamcatchers,” 204. For a recent public opinion survey on the values, experiences, identities and aspirations of urban Aboriginal peoples, as well as Non-Aboriginal attitudes to urban Aboriginal peoples, see Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report, April 2010.

See also footnote 6, p.38. Twelve of the thirteen Indigenous people who responded were aware of or assumed Indigenous presence in the Toronto region after 1787, whereas only five non-Indigenous interviewees (mostly those with history-related professional backgrounds) knew of post-1787 Indigenous presence.

John McCord, Interview with Author, February 8, 2006.

Donald Jones, Interview with Author, February 6, 2006.

Ellen Wise, Interview with Author, February 26, 2006.

Helen Thundercloud, Interview with Author, February 4, 2006.

Fourteen interviewees remembered learning something about Indigenous people in elementary or secondary school, but most remembered learning only about Louis Riel and/or the fur trade or commented that what they learned was biased or lies.

Dave Rosato, Interview with Author, July 12, 2006.

Maria Oliviera, Interview with Author, February 21, 2006.


Carolyn King, Interview with Author, July 30, 2006.

One interviewee did not trust any history because it was written by colonizers; nine expressed only mild interest in history, while virtually all of the interviewees expressed interest in family history.

See for example, Conrad, Létourneau, and Northrup, “Canadians and Their Pasts,” 15-34 for the preliminary findings of the Canadians and Their Pasts research project, and the project’s web site at http://www.canadiansandtheirpasts.ca/index.html; Rosenzweig and Thelen, The Presence of the Past; and Australian Cultural History 23 (2003), a special issue devoted to survey findings in Australia.

Thirty of the interviewees were themselves knowledgeable about their genealogy, or had someone else in the family who was knowledgeable, while only four said they did not have familial access to this information. Ten did not respond to this question.

For example, 21,000 people registered to study for the Certificate in Genealogical Studies at the University of Toronto between 1999 and 2005 “Online1861 U.K. census opens door to past,” Toronto Star, Monday, March 14, 2005, E1.

Maria Oliviera, Feb.21, 2006.


Eleven non-Indigenous interviewees out of twenty-three commented that Toronto’s official history was that of an elite group; all but two of these were of ethnic heritages other than British, and seven were first or second generation immigrants. While only three Indigenous interviewees commented directly on the elite nature of this history, the general thrust of comments by most Indigenous interviewees suggested that this criticism of Toronto history was simply assumed.


Maria Oliviera, Feb. 21, 2006.

Ibid.

Susan McDonald, Interview with Author, Feb. 2, 2006.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ancestral intermarriage (farther back than grandparents) was reported by four non-Indigenous interviewees, while almost all of the interviewees of Indigenous heritage reported intermarriage involving either distant or recent ancestors.

Four non-Indigenous interviewees could be characterized as “allies” of Indigenous people, working in solidarity with them in various capacities; all four had access to some degree of orally-transmitted Indigenous knowledge.


Roberto Ferreira, Interview with Author, Aug. 26, 2006.

Shandra Spears Bombay, Interview with Author, January 14, 2006.

Of the twenty-three interviewees of Indigenous or mixed heritage, only one came from a family who had lived in the city for three generations; the rest of the thirteen who currently lived in the city were the first or second generation to arrive. The remainder had more distant Wendat, Seneca, or Mississauga ancestors who had lived in the area, or were first generation migrants who had lived in the city for a lengthy period of time but had since left the city.

Shandra Spears Bombay, January 14, 2006

Victoria: So it’s interesting that in a way you don’t really connect to the French Canadian history even though it’s a very long history on this continent.

Ellen: It is a very long history on this continent but I really don’t know those people. I don’t know who they are. Except for the little name on the map and the kind of odd sense of I don’t know…oh, they have the same name as me. But I don’t know who they are. So I have a hard time being responsible to them. The Irish I’m responsible to; the Aboriginal ancestors I’m responsible to. It’s like I know more stories about the Irish. I can tell you more stories about my dad’s family than I can tell you about my mom’s family but I feel…is a different kind of lived experience even though mom didn’t tell us the stories in words: we lived it in our day-to-day life. So that’s a different kind of connection but a connection all the same, a very powerful connection all the same.


Another interviewee who identified as non-Indigenous but whose family was involved in the fur trade many generations ago, recounted how her grandmother had left a written genealogy for her father in an envelope to be opened after her death. It contained a long list of male ancestors but not the names of their wives, because, as this interviewee later found out through her own genealogical research, they were Aboriginal. Her family had suppressed its Native heritage and there were no family stories passed on from the side of the family that had Native background.

Janice Nickerson, Interview with author, February 14, 2006.

If all these stories reflect the construction of colonial identities, stories of the loss of Indian status epitomize the relation of identity to colonial practices. In Canada, under gendered colonial citizenship legislation that was on the books until 1985, an Aboriginal woman who married a white man was deprived of Indian status, as were her children. The absurdity of these colonial categories was apparent in many family stories told by my interviewees.

Fourteen of twenty-one Indigenous or mixed interviewees described this withholding of information, while seven did not respond to the question.

As one interviewee said: “Certain things my parents didn’t talk about; they just did it.” David Redwolf, Mar. 19, 2006. Another recounted: “My grandfather was also very ashamed to have anything to do with it, so he didn’t talk about it very much.” Linda Schafer, Jan. 26, 2006.
Twelve Indigenous interviewees mentioned using family history research to reconnect family members. Nine did not address the question.

Other than stories of intermarriage, the only other pioneer interaction mentioned was a story of a female ancestor shut outside a fort during a Native attack in Nova Scotia, Iris Kiefer, Interview with Author, February 9, 2006.

Four of eleven non-Indigenous interviewees with significant British heritage expressed ambivalence about their pioneer ancestors.

Five interviewees expressed concern that with Toronto’s ethnic diversity, Indigenous peoples tended to be seen as merely another ethnic group, if at all.

Four individuals in particular expressed highly partisan and/or vitriolic opinions about other First Nations groups.
The characterization of Toronto as a meeting place was made by at least sixteen interviewees, almost half of the sample. Many people knew that the name Toronto was an Indigenous word, but had no idea of what language it might be. The most common translation of the word that I encountered in the interviews was that it meant “meeting place” or “gathering place,” the translation suggested in the The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life I Toronto, published by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, and earlier advanced by Henry Scadding in 1873. John Steckley, a linguist of the Huron language, has proposed “sticks in the water” or “fish wier” as more accurate translations, while other versions I encountered were “Delondo” a Mohawk word for a log, or fallen white pine, and “Taranto,” which one interviewee believed was a Seneca word for meeting place. Early French maps show the word Toronto or Taranto attached to Lake Simcoe, not the current Toronto area. See also Alan Rayburn, “The Real Story of How Toronto Got Its Name,” Canadian Geographic, 114:5 (Sept-Oct. 1994), 68-9. See also John Steckley, A Huron-English/English-Huron dictionary (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).
Chapter Eight

Indigenous Hauntings in Settler Colonial Spaces: The Activism of Indigenous Ancestors

At a multifaith event in the fall of 2005, a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists reclaimed one of the Toronto Islands as “Spirit Island,” reconsecrating and reactivating the land as a sacred site for healing ceremonies and teachings by elders. During that ceremony, Angaangaq Lyberth, an Indigenous elder from Greenland, sang a healing song passed down from his grandmother’s grandmother. He sang it for the sculptor who hoped to create a healing garden for children on the site, which he envisioned as a medicine wheel of sculptures by Indigenous artists. The sculptor spoke of being raised white and only later in life realizing that his family’s multigenerational history of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse were the result of the catastrophic impact of the Trail of Tears on the Cherokee/Choctaw lineage running through his grandmother. That was a history and geography far removed from Toronto – and the medicine wheel also came from elsewhere\(^1\) -- yet he and others present seemed to draw strength from connecting their own particular histories and concerns with the Mississaugas’ historic use of that land for healing and to their assertion that the Toronto Islands remained unceded territory.\(^2\) In many of the speeches and prayers that day, there was a palpable sense of return.

A white pine was planted, both recalling and making manifest the Great Tree of Peace planted long ago by the Iroquoian prophet, the Peacemaker, who brought peace to the Haudenosaunee, one of the largest groups of Aboriginal people now living in the city, and whose own people, the Huron-Wendat, resided in the Toronto area long before Europeans occupied the territory. Also present was an Anglo-Canadian woman who practiced a form of ancestral healing and understood herself as a shaman; her healing practice drew on New Age conceptions of Indigenous spiritual traditions, although she was not strongly connected to
Indigenous people herself. Later, an Anglo-Canadian man arrived who proudly traced his lineage back to the brother of Augustus Jones, eighteenth century surveyor of the fledgling settlement of York that later became the city of Toronto. He was the father of Kahkewaquonaby (Rev. Peter Jones), perhaps the most famous and influential Mississauga of his time. This descendant brought with him the physical manifestations of his connection to Kahkewaquonaby: an old photograph of the missionary and a mid-nineteenth century Christian hymn book he had translated into Ojibway, which were examined reverently by the group. Some Anishinaabek who worked in the healing professions were also present, people related by ethnicity to the Mississaugas who had lived in the area until 1847.

All of these people believed in one way or another in the potency of ancestors as forces or influences from the past on present-day Toronto. Whether their progenitors were buried in the vicinity or in unknown graves thousands of miles away, their ancestry or the ancestry of others mattered. They wanted to forge new connections to the Indigenous history of the place, and in some sense to reactivate, or even reanimate, the site as Indigenous space. The Spirit Island ceremony exemplified the diverse ways that various indigeneities, histories, and other cultural influences mix, meld and mutate in this twenty-first century global city.

On another day in Toronto in 2005, on the Great Indian Bus Tour of the city sponsored by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, a tour guide presented an alternative history of the city. She challenged the tour participants to imaginatively “strip back the layers of concrete” to learn the true history of what had happened to the Indigenous peoples of the area, a history which she spoke of as being hidden and suppressed. Referring to the Bering Strait theory as “voodoo science,” she spoke of the widespread Indigenous conviction that Native American life originated in North America, that Indigenous people had always been here. She described how, in the ancient Anishinaabek migration story, the ancestors followed
the megis shell from the east coast of North America to Madeleine Island, Wisconsin. Some Anishinaabek had been left at different points along the way, she said, including on the peninsula that later became the Toronto Islands. Her point, reinforced by her references to the hundreds of Indigenous archaeological sites along the shores of the region’s rivers, was that Indigenous peoples had always been present in the city and its environs and were still there. In her view, they included the Anishinaabek, whom academic historians generally describe as moving into the area only after about 1700CE. In spite of the layers of concrete and eighteenth century land cessions, the footprints of the ancestors were everywhere, a spiritual presence that proved both Indigenous continuity and persistence and demonstrated true ownership of the land.

At one point, the bus tour participants disembarked at an unusual grassy mound that looked like a good tobogganing hill in a Scarborough suburban neighborhood, the top of which was marked with a cairn and plaque describing the mound as the site of a Huron-Wendat ossuary dating from more than 500 years ago. There the remains of 475 Iroquoian people were buried communally, in a ritual manner consistent with the Wendat Feast of Souls now known largely through a description by Jean Brebeuf in the Jesuit Relations of 1636. The modern visitors, who were mainly but not exclusively of Aboriginal heritage, offered sacred Indian tobacco and prayed for the spirits of the ancestors, who were referred to as such regardless of the particular tribal ancestry of the tour participants. The tour guide remarked that in the past the site had not been properly cared for. As a result, houses in the area had often been put up for sale because they were haunted. Since then, she said, the non-Aboriginal neighbours have learned to watch over Tabor Hill, protect its sanctity, and even honour the ancestors’ spirits with tobacco.
These two anecdotes are suggestive of an emerging pattern of historical memory practice in present-day Toronto, in which the Indigenous past of the Toronto area is being reinscribed on the modern city through the medium of Indigenous ancestral spiritual presence. In both examples the Aboriginal past and the Aboriginal sacred were one and the same, still existing at very specific sites, but also experienced as everywhere in the city in a largely invisible but unbounded way. In my research on the historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto, I have encountered many contemporary narratives of Indigenous ancestral spiritual presence in Toronto, a city where Indigenous people are a tiny minority, where there is no Indigenous reserved land, and where detailed knowledge of the city’s history, Indigenous or otherwise, is rare. In my interviews with current residents of the city, or those whose ancestors lived there, many of the Indigenous interviewees spoke of ancestors, ghosts, spirits, the energy of sacred sites, and other forms of haunting or spiritual presence from the past actively and invisibly at work in the present-day city, often for Indigenous ends, always producing Indigenous difference. As Emilie Cameron writes, “ghostliness is a politicized state of being.”

For a non-Indigenous Toronto citizen such as myself, such stories relating the historic Indigenous and especially the historic Indigenous sacred to familiar Toronto places had a curious effect. They rendered my hometown unfamiliar and strange—“unheimlich,” to use the terminology of Sigmund Freud—leaving me as a settler with a curious double vision where I was both in place and out of place, living in “a present constituted by the non-linear enfolding of multiple, conflicting pasts.” This was an interesting turnaround, since being both in place and out of place is an everyday experience for most Indigenous people in Toronto, who live in a land which is and is no longer their own land, where they are often haunted by the past and particularly the suffering of their ancestors. Such moments are
examples of what Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, also following Freud, describe as manifestations of the Indigenous “uncanny”. In a settler colonial context, this experience of unsettlement is a potentially decolonizing force, where “what is “ours” as settlers is also recognized as potentially, or even always already “theirs.” For me, this unsettlement occurs even though my own ancestors first arrived in Toronto, then the town of York, in the 1830s, and three of my four grandparents were born in the city.

As a historian, I have been curious about the relationship of discourses of Indigenous ancestral spiritual presence to questions of historical memory and historical consciousness and how and why they have become a mode of empowerment for Indigenous people in the city. In the interviews I conducted as part of my dissertation research, some Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of Toronto described instances of Indigenous haunting in the city, either in the sense of disaffected spirits returning or sometimes in the more metaphoric sense of a returning or haunting memory or image, or a slight trace or vestige of something lost. Indigenous and non-Indigenous uses of such stories differed. For many of the non-Indigenous people I interviewed, stories of haunting expressed what was once and was no longer, hence a kind of absence, whereas for Indigenous interviewees and some of their allies, ghost and spirit stories articulated what had been and was still present, if invisible, in the city and what could become more visibly manifest in the future.

Haunting as Indigenous absence has an old pedigree in the settler trope of the “vanishing Indian.” Recall, for example, Johann Georg Kohl’s 1855 comments that Native people were numerous when the English founded here the town of York, and there are still people in Toronto who remember the fleets of bark canoes and little skiffs, in which the Indians used to bring fish and other things to sell to the inhabitants – mostly encamping on that long sandy peninsula [now the Toronto islands]…But the Indians have now vanished like the morning mist, and nothing remains to recall even their
memory, but the well sounding name they invented for this locality – the sonorous Toronto.\textsuperscript{13}

Kohl’s nostalgic description itself reenacts that ghostly vanishing, with only the word Toronto lingering as a haunting vestige of that history. Indeed, from Kohl’s time to the present, Toronto’s name has been one of the few remaining links with its Indigenous past.\textsuperscript{14}

While virtually all my non-Indigenous interviewees were aware that the city had an Indigenous name, and some were aware of at least one possible meaning, that Indigenous name was alive in a completely different way for some Indigenous interviewees. As one person explained, the word ‘Toronto’ carries spirit energy from the past into the present because the language itself is alive. Created by the ancestors, it continues to do their spiritual work.\textsuperscript{15} Such ancestral energy asserted both the Indigenous past and current Indigenous presence into the consciousness of the city through its very name. It always accompanied current Indigenous residents so they would never be alone, so they would never be only in a settler colonial place. Such perceptions are illustrative of the way some of the people I interviewed spoke of the activism of their ancestors; either in spirit or by example the ancestors invisibly helped their descendants in their personal lives and also influenced the development of the city. Such activity by the ancestors inspired activism in their descendants in turn, strengthening their commitment to Indigeneity\textsuperscript{16} in their own lives and to the passing on of Indigenous culture to future generations of descendants.

In some interviews, particularly with non-Indigenous Torontonians, Indigeneity itself was often experienced as a kind of ghostly absence in the modern multicultural city,\textsuperscript{17} somewhat akin to the city’s “lost rivers.”\textsuperscript{18} To many of the non-Indigenous people I interviewed, and some Indigenous ones, Toronto appeared to be a place where Indigenous historical presence and especially the Indigenous sacred, appeared to be wholly absent, or
destroyed by modernity, something which had been “lost”, and which existed only as a residue if it existed at all.¹⁹

In any event, and contrary to Kohl’s narrative, the Mississaugas did not “vanish” from the growing city like mist in some inevitable natural process. The story of the dispossession of the Mississaugas is one that perhaps should haunt Torontonians, but which they and their popular historians still rarely seem to know or tell.²⁰ Yet following their departure, Indigenous people did indeed become invisible to Torontonians except for a few acculturated individuals or as exotic visitors.

If those mostly unknown and invisible Indigenous individuals living in the city between 1850 and 1950 seem a bit ghostly to us now, there is also a sense in which Indigenous peoples now living in the city, though very much alive and thriving, can also be said to haunt it. Just as peoples formerly colonized by the British and French have flocked to the European metropoles of their former colonizers, so Toronto’s current Indigenous inhabitants, the vast majority of whom arrived after the second world war, are part of a postcolonial phenomenon arising from a history of oppression and dispossession in which Toronto businesses, government, churches, and residents played an active if rarely acknowledged role.²¹ These Indigenous residents can also be haunted by each other. One interviewee spoke of being “spooked” when she encountered a previously unknown relative on a streetcar in Toronto:

I know people there [at Six Nations], but I can only basically guess that they’re family [because her grandfather was disenfranchised and forced to leave the territory]. I can’t trace it back because obviously I don’t know enough. …there was one man I met on the streetcar one day …last year. I met him on the streetcar coming home from one of these classes. When I was looking at him, it was like oh my god, he looks just like my grandfather, and I’m staring at him, and the man’s like, “Are you okay?” and I’m like “You look like my Grampy!” and I was kind of getting all shaky, because he exactly looked like him. Anyway his last name was MacDonald. His grandmother was Mary Hill or something so it turns out, if we actually go back
that far, he is actually my great uncle or cousin or something. Anyway, we’re related. It’s weird that I met him on the streetcar. It was so insane how much he looked like my Grampy. I’m staring at him, and it’s like exactly the same eyes, the whole nine yards.\textsuperscript{22}

As we have seen, the current Indigenous population of Toronto, like much of the non-Indigenous population, is multicultural, cosmopolitan and diasporic. In fact, some interviewees expressed a Native version of “placelessness,” where their sense of home was a more generalized or idealized Indigenous space or even an idealized Indigenous past, rather than a specific reserve or territory.\textsuperscript{23} For at least eight Indigenous interviewees, contemporary Toronto was that idealized space where divisive or painful histories could be superceded and a pan-Indigenous urban territory or meeting place could be created or realized. Discourses of Indigenous spiritual presence thus occur in a context of Indigenous dispossession and alternative place-making.

Furthermore, as we have seen, questions of who is indigenous to Toronto are complex. To understand the relationship between the current Aboriginal population and narratives of Indigenous spiritual presence or haunting in the modern city, one must understand that even whose ancestors’ bones are buried in the earth and whose ancestors’ spirits haunt the land is contested. Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabek peoples have all lived in the Toronto area at various times, but creation and migration stories in oral tradition, archaeological evidence, archival evidence, and linguistic analysis do not cohere to provide easy answers accepted by all concerning the question of their origins, movements, or the length of their residency.\textsuperscript{24}

As Gelder and Jacobs argue in \textit{Uncanny Australia}, Indigenous cultures are adaptable and mobile: one is never just dispossessed, nor can dispossession be completely equated with disempowerment. Rather, they argue, to be out of place provides new ways of being in place.
In fact, “new forms of authority may come into being through the very structures of dispossession.” In Toronto, ghosts, ancestors, and historical discourses of spirit and sacredness are integral to these new forms. As in Gelder and Jacobs’ Australia, the Indigenous sacred becomes more than a relic of the past; it becomes a new form of authority, facilitating a return of Indigeneity, in the context of dispossession.

Today, with more Native people arriving in the city every day, Toronto’s “Indians” are no longer vanishing. Rather, their past has disappeared – often both their familial past and the Indigenous past of Toronto. Not just “lost,” these are pasts from which Indigenous peoples have been actively dispossessed, both in terms of who controls the actual physical remains and artifacts from that history and who controls the content and form of historical narratives about this past. It is in this context that Indigenous discourses about haunting and ancestral spiritual presence are especially salient, a context in which, among other things, they do symbolic and ideological “work” in the political struggle to reclaim the city’s Indigenous past on Indigenous terms and to reclaim the city as Indigenous territory.

Many of the stories I heard of Indigenous spiritual presence in the Toronto area related to archaeological sites where Indigenous people had lived, were buried, or had used the land in the past. Indigenous haunting, which above all is the ephemeral presence of beings from the past, occurs in Toronto in a context where local Indigenous peoples have little or no access to the material remains left by their ancestors. Although roughly 135 Indigenous archaeological sites are known to exist in the city of Toronto, and more than 185 in the GTA, many of these known sites are poorly documented and are under threat. Many more are likely to be discovered with ongoing suburban expansion over relatively undisturbed farmlands. Several of the Indigenous people I interviewed were actively involved in political struggles to protect these sites, which were seen above all as sacred
sites, more than as repositories of evidence for the reconstruction of Indigenous histories. In fact, Indigenous bones were markers for important connections to land, cultural traditions, and ultimately sovereignty.

Interviewees told me that “bones come up for a reason.” The uncovering of human and other remains in the GTA, such as the accidental uncovering of ancient bones during road widening on Teston Road in Vaughan (just north of Toronto) in August 2005, was interpreted by some as a direct communication from the ancestors and a form of strategic action and solidarity with Indigenous peoples in the present. The ancestors’ reappearance obstructed wanton and environmentally harmful “development,” asserted Indigenous presence, reclaimed the land, and called for respect, return and recognition. Certainly their manifestation directly engaged the settler colonial state in a complex chain of interactions, claims, and counterclaims that cut to the core of settler colonial and postcolonial dynamics between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in the GTA.

As we’ve seen, settler disturbance of Indigenous burial sites is a problem with a long history in the Toronto area, going back to the 1790s. Until very recently, even where archaeologists have made connections between ancient bones and contemporary Indigenous peoples, they have often still sanctioned a double standard in the treatment of human remains where accidentally uncovered Euro-Canadian remains were immediately reburied but Indigenous ones were retained for scientific study without the consent of descendant groups. This deferential treatment was justified on the grounds that scientific knowledge about “Indians” was essential for the public good.

Cultural differences with respect to death and ancestors have been and continue to be an important aspect of local conflicts over ancestral remains. Anishinaabek historical scholar Darlene Johnston, an expert witness on Anishinaabek history for the Ipperwash Inquiry into
the death of Dudley George (who died protecting an Indigenous burial site), noted that both
Iroquoian and Anishinaabek spiritual beliefs documented since the seventeenth century and
still powerful today accord at least two souls to the dead. One of these souls remains with the
bones perpetually unless reborn in a child while another leaves the body after death but
remains close by until properly honoured through ceremony and feast, after which it travels
to the Village of Souls.\textsuperscript{30} Thus, for many local Indigenous people today, and perhaps even
increasingly as cultural traditions are revived, remains of the dead are believed to retain a
spiritual essence which requires ongoing respect. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the
living to care for the dead through visiting, feasting and prayer; failure to perform these
duties harms not only the dead but also the living. If human remains or spiritual objects such
as grave goods are handled inappropriately, bad things may happen to the people and
communities involved. Historically, the loss of ancestral lands was especially traumatic
because it also entailed separation from the graves of ancestors and the inability to carry out
these essential spiritual and familial duties.

In the \textit{Jesuit Relation} of 1639, Father Paul LeJeune recorded that the Montagnais,
another Algonkian-speaking people with similar cultural traits to the Anishinaabek, referred
to the soul remaining with the bones as “the soul of their Nation,” a concept that Johnston
reported was still resonant among Anishinaabek today.\textsuperscript{31} This conception of death and the
ongoing spirit nature of ancestors gives modern local Indigenous peoples who are
traditionalists or even unconscious inheritors of these cultural understandings a very different
orientation to their past and its relation to the present than that of mainstream Euro-Canadian
culture. First Nations archaeologist Eldon Yellowhorn speaks of “the perception of the past
as a spirit nation” which brings “the mythic era into the daily lives of aboriginal people”\textsuperscript{32}
(though Yellowhorn describes this as a pre-modern belief system to be superceded, a position
with which many of the people I interviewed would disagree). In an Anishinaabek context, Johnston explained, “The remains of the First Animals contained a powerful spiritual essence that gave birth to the First Humans. Human remains return to the earth with their spiritual essence intact, continuing the spiritual cycle of birth and rebirth.” Indigenous bones, Indigenous ghosts and ancestral spirits, then, signify much more than individual ancestors; they embody the continuity of the people.

Yet the question remains, which people? If “bones come up for a reason,” surely the most striking result of such ancestor activism in the Toronto area has been the resurgence of a Huron-Wendat presence in Toronto. Until recently, Toronto archaeologists and administrators, like the general public, assumed that for all practical purposes the Wendat were an extinct people, whose wishes no longer needed to be taken into account. But in 1997 Wendat scholar and activist Michel Gros-Louis of Wendake, Quebec, convinced the Royal Ontario Museum to repatriate Wendat bones excavated in the 1930s from the 1636 Feast of Souls at Ossassané (near Midland, Ontario). The scattered descendants of the Huron-Wendats in Quebec, Michigan, Oklahoma and elsewhere gathered at Ossassané for the first time since their dispersal in 1649. There they ceremonially reburied their ancestors’ remains at the site of the original ossuary as part of the first Wendat Feast of Souls held in more than 350 years. Many of the Wendats who attended the ceremony experienced an intense spiritual reconnection with their ancestors, their Ontario homeland, and their living relations. As a result, the Wendat have become an increasingly vocal political force for heritage preservation in southern Ontario, including the Toronto area. For them, the repatriation of the ancestors activated the descendants. Consequently, there has been a shift in local historical consciousness and a much greater awareness of the depth of the Indigenous past in the region, which is not only Mississauga territory.
In her comments to the Ipperwash inquiry, Johnston articulated an important distinction between the two souls of Indigenous ancestors: “the fear of the disembodied soul vs. tenderness toward the soul that remains with the body.” Commentators such as Paul LeJeune in the seventeenth century and Kahkewaqonaby (Sacred Feathers) in the nineteenth, commented on the fear of the living toward souls which have left the body to travel with dead relatives and the efforts of the living to get ghosts to leave. These beliefs, mixed with elements from European traditions, underlay my interviewees’ representations of ghosts as unhappy spirit beings from the past who remain in the human world to remind the living of what was unfinished or lost, or who are unable to move on to the spirit world. They were unsettled, not properly put to rest or acquitted with appropriate respect, often because of colonialism. Such ghosts haunted both people and places, making places unliveable or uncomfortable, and were dangerous to people in the present. For example, haunting was cited as the reason for a cave-in during the demolition of the Uptown Theatre on Yonge Street that caused a death of an innocent bystander in 2003; according to two interviewees, the theatre was disrespectfully built over an ancient Indigenous burial ground. In the late 1970s, a school building erected in 1888 in the oldest area of Toronto, not far from where the Don River used to empty into a swamp at the waterfront and near an Indigenous burial ground, was said to by haunted by the ghost of a young Mississauga woman who had been raped by a British soldier and then died, perhaps as a suicide; a Native ceremony was held to help the ghost leave the building.

Such hauntings do not necessarily consist of visual apparitions of dead people, though a couple of interviewees showed me photographs of what they perceived to be Indigenous spirits hovering over historic Toronto lands such as village sites and one non-Indigenous teacher at the aforementioned school related his experience of seeing an apparition. Some
interviewees spoke instead of experiencing historical trauma, especially of one’s own ancestors or of Indigenous ancestors generally, either as a haunting energy in the Toronto environment or as physical or emotional pain in the body or psyche, where one was literally possessed by the pain of previous generations. A man of Seneca heritage told me that he knew his own ancestor had been murdered by the French at Teiaiagon, the 17th century Seneca village on the Humber River in western Toronto, because of the terrible pain in his shoulder that suddenly assailed him one day while walking along the Humber riverbank not far from the village site. He spoke of sensing the souls of the dead who he said still haunted the area because so many had been killed in an attack by the French in 1687 that they had not been properly feasted.

The connections between historical trauma and ancestors were also highlighted in a remarkable series of commentaries by Mohawk traditionalist and city resident William Woodworth on four lectures on the Indigenous history of the Toronto area given by the City of Toronto’s then chief curator Carl Benn, an historian of Iroquois history as well as of the city’s Fort York. These lectures, held in May and June 2006, were part of the Humanitas Festival, an attempt by the City of Toronto to kickstart its initiative to create a new civic institution that would “tell Toronto’s stories” to the world. Benn had suggested in his scholarly account that the Seneca villages on the Humber and Rouge rivers may have already been abandoned by the time French governor Denonville sailed past Toronto returning to New France in 1687 after ransacking Seneca villages south of Lake Ontario. Denonville did not mention them in his journal, but boasted of attacking other Seneca villages. Contesting Benn’s remarks, Woodworth said there was an oral tradition that Teiaiagon had been destroyed by fire, the people massacred by the French, and the whole area around Toronto deforested. Woodworth spoke further of how he had formerly hated being in Toronto
because of the “dark energy” he felt in the city, which he described as a deep sense of abandonment, because the souls of the dead had not been properly addressed and cared for. “I used to hate it here; it hurt me [because] of the history…I feel genocide in Toronto.” He spoke of Baby Point (the site of Teiaiagon) as a sacred place, sanctified by the horror of what happened there, and the English houses built over the site as the epitome of colonization.42

Such emotional, bodily or “energetic” haunting can be interpreted in various ways. Regardless of one’s beliefs regarding the existence of ancestral souls, ghosts, spiritual energy, or blood memory, at the very least one can consider such experiences a form of “postmemory.” Marianne Hirsch defines this as the memory of later generations not directly involved in the original traumatic event, whose own lives are “dominated by narratives that preceded their birth,” by “events that can be neither [fully] understood nor recreated.”43 Indigenous healers often describe the same phenomena as intergenerational trauma.

According to Indigenous psychologists, intergenerational trauma is itself a form of memory, truer than anything written in the history books about Indigenous experience. Such trauma can often be passed on wordlessly, as in the familial dysfunction caused by the experience of the Trail of Tears mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. According to Native American psychologists Duran and Duran, many Indigenous people are possessed or haunted by the past.44 Traumatic memory, characterized by flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety attacks, occurs when the past is uncontrollably relived, when the distance between past and present collapses.45 In the case of Indigenous people, there is not one trauma but many over a long time period, and not just their own personal experience, but that of their ancestors over generations. A common feature of such traumas is that those who survive feel they must not betray those who were overwhelmed by the trauma, such as ancestors; reliving the past becomes a necessary commemoration, though it may also be retraumatizing.46
According to Dominick LaCapra, healing of traumatic memory begins when the past becomes accessible to recall in memory and language, which provides some conscious control, distance, and perspective. Those who are haunted thus begin working through the trauma, laying ghosts to rest. But as Duran and Duran emphasize, there are very culturally specific ways to propitiate such ghosts. Indigenous forms of expression are critical to such healing. On the other hand, imposed historical narratives by outsiders can be experienced as retraumatizing.

While the painful experience of ancestors affected many Indigenous interviewees directly, their connection to their ancestors was by no means only negative. The distinction articulated by Johnston in responses to the two souls of the Indigenous dead was echoed in the difference in how peoples spoke of Indigenous ghosts haunting the city on the one hand and the beneficial spiritual presence of Indigenous ancestors in their own lives on the other. Nineteen of the Indigenous people I interviewed recounted positive experiences of the spiritual presence of their ancestors, who admonished them, guided them, inspired them, or helped them to heal. While some of the non-Indigenous Torontonians I interviewed were also very interested in their ancestors and imagined them vividly, and a few sensed them as spiritual presences even if they had lived on other continents, almost all my Aboriginal interviewees felt deeply connected to history through their ancestors. As one audience member at the Humanitas talks put it, “[Woodworth] is not a historian but he feels very personally connected to the history in a way that I don’t think generally people in the Western tradition feel… I don’t feel it and I don’t think [Benn] feels that connection… I don’t feel that connection with my European ancestors of 400 years ago.”

But for many of the Indigenous people I interviewed, their ancestors were, in some sense, still alive. Although they had “passed on,” they continued to work for present and
future generations in another medium, from another level of reality, and to be aware of how their descendants treated them in turn. The relationship between ancestors and descendants could best be described as based on reciprocity, that most fundamental of Indigenous values, and one that promotes strength and continuance. Reciprocity and relationship with ancestors helped Indigenous interviewees find the persistence necessary to endure in a context of colonialism, despite the legacy of cultural genocide.

Thirteen of the Indigenous interviewees expressed their awareness of the presence of their ancestors in their lives as a sense of doubleness in which past and present coexisted; thus, their sense of the present included a sense of repetition and return. For example, some interviewees identified with their ancestors when colonial patterns were repeated, as Carolyn King did when she took part in Mississaugan land claims negotiations. Others connected with the spirits of ancestors through treaties, ceremonies, and traditional practices because of their consciousness that these were how the ancestors had provided for future generations. One interviewee expressed a sense of becoming one with the ancestors, a communion of spirit. He described a complex interweaving of tradition and personal life. “My personal life is a lot more than a personal life. It is actually a repetition of ancestral ways and I’m carrying it. These aren’t my decisions, it’s just my nature and I’m actually streaming it.” Whether or not Indigenous historical consciousness was primarily cyclical in the past --a matter of considerable debate among historians of Indigenous history -- paradigms of historical return or historical cycles were articulated by many of my interviewees. They were not only as a sign of Indigenous difference; they also offered hope for an end to colonialism and a return of Indigenous sovereignty.

In contrast to most of the non-Indigenous people I interviewed, Indigenous interviewees felt a deep sense of responsibility towards their ancestors, to protect their
physical remains, to survive as a people, and to teach future generations their history and the cultural practices they created (though some members of immigrant groups also felt a very strong commitment to preserve language, culture, and the continuous identity of the ethnic group). As Woodworth commented during the Humanitas lectures, this sense of duty is highlighted by the fact that local indigenous cultures exist only here, and are localized, particular and unique. Indigenous North Americans, he said, are the only ones who have not crossed the oceans and gone to live elsewhere; they may have been displaced through forced removal and other effects of colonialism, but they have not disappeared. Many Indigenous interviewees insisted on a strong sense of Indigenous continuity in Toronto: it was “a place infused by our energy”, “very much alive and very much imbued with the spirit of its history,” “covered with the footprints of ancestors.”

Yet there was considerable variety in the extent to which Indigenous interviewees experienced the spiritual energy of ancestors in Toronto.

**Interviewee:** I feel mostly connected to the land where I was born, where my grandmother was born, where I guess our ancestors are buried [Algonquin territory in Quebec]. But there are sacred places in Canada... You stand there and you...you’re amazed because you said, “OK, something happened here, is happening here,” and you realize that it’s a sacred place. Whatever happened there, it’s a place where there are the spirits of...where our people are still there and they hold you when you walk by or when you walk through. Try to remember those places so that you can go back there when you need to feel be connected to our ancestors. Those are the places where our ancestors live.

**Victoria:** Have you ever experienced that anywhere in Toronto?

**Interviewee:** No, but I keep looking. I mean there’s lots of concrete here. You know you really have to be on the land. If there were not so much concrete. I’m sure this is a sacred place, you know.

**Victoria:** Why do you say that?

**Interviewee:** Why do I keep coming back here? [laughs]

While unfeasted or ill-treated spirits may make places uninhabitable, ancestors make a place sacred. A form of the past experienced in the present by many of the Indigenous people I interviewed was the accumulated energy or spirit of places in Toronto, such as the
site of Teiaiagon or Spirit Island. They perceived this energy as coming from the traces of all the beings that had inhabited that place before, the events that had occurred there, the emotions and words expressed, prayers said, offerings left, the bones and remains of the dead in the earth, the blood spilt or tears cried. The feeling and energy of places in Toronto reflected the treatment of the land itself, whether it had been treated with respect in the past, was appropriately honoured and nourished through ceremony and thus was a healthy place, or whether it had become a place of desecration and pain. The spiritual energy of a place also reflected the influence of other than human spirit beings on that place. Some of the Indigenous people I spoke to conceived of invisible lines of power that linked places to other places in a web or grid of spirit energy. To them, Toronto was a place linked to others in a vast web of spirit. It was the role of human beings to try to maintain this web by ensuring balance, the good energy of a place, which would then actively influence what transpired there. It was this energy – an energy that contained within it all the historical experience of the place -- that the people attending the Spirit Island ceremony sought to connect to.

With similar understandings, Woodworth spoke to the Humanitas Festival audience about his vision to create a new sacred site for condolence ceremonies on the Toronto waterfront to bring arriving immigrants to the city into spiritual relationship with the Indigenous ancestors of the land. He called on the Indigenous peoples of the area to resume their ancient hosting duties and to adopt newcomers into their clans. In a brochure for his Beacon to the Ancestors Foundation, he wrote that through seventeen specific ceremonies over a twelve month period Toronto would be “reinvigorated and recontextualized in the spirit of the Ancestors,” with “reconciliation and healing between peoples, with the ancestors, and with the created world itself.”
In his historical understanding, the city’s famous CN Tower was the modern realization of the Great Tree of Peace, envisioned thousands of years ago in the prophecy of the Peacemaker:

The Hotinonshon:ni prophecy of gathering the peoples from the four directions under the Great White Pine Tree of Peace is now coming to fruition. In a place still named in the language of the Ancestors, peoples from virtually every part of the world find refuge in Toron:to. The original Hotinonhson:ni teachings instruct us to share with all peoples who visit our lands. In an understanding held in the Two Row Wampum, our many Ancestors agreed to share this place in our separate yet collateral streams. The time has come to recover and refresh these old responsibilities in this special place which is nurturing a powerful form of global community.  

Woodworth’s interpretations of history and the Peacemaker’s prophesies may be idiosyncratic, and are grounded in Haudenosaunee understandings that may not be as resonant to Anishinaabek. However, his general orientation to the past is broadly discernible among the many Indigenous people I’ve talked to in my dissertation research and in numerous other circumstances. In interpreting the past and present through Indigenous prophecy, Woodworth was not alone in seeing the words of the ancestors become manifest. Others I spoke to viewed Toronto history through the interpretative framework of the Seven Fires prophecy of the Anishinaabek. Prophecy is an orientation to the past that deeply affects many Indigenous people’s interactions with the western discipline of history and their understanding of their history and present life in the city of Toronto.

Indigenous assertions about the spiritual presence and activities of ancestors in Toronto are, among other things, claims to the validity of Indigenous knowledge practices and point to the fundamental question of authority in the construction of historical narratives. People of Indigenous heritage who I interviewed for my research were far more likely to give primacy to oral tradition, literally the words of the ancestors, which they sought from elders and trusted over professional historians’ information and interpretations or the documentary
records produced by colonizers. For example, while historians’ narratives have often focused on conflict between Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Anishinaabek peoples, Indigenous interviewees stressed that archivally documented historical conflicts represent a short period of post-contact turmoil, whereas oral tradition speaks of long periods of regional interaction and mainly peaceful co-existence.

As noted earlier, some Indigenous interviewees spoke of knowing aspects of Toronto history through feeling and intuition, and through direct, often bodily experience rather than through intellectual knowledge of official historical narratives focused on events and chronologies (although many people I interviewed were also well versed in the latter.) Some spoke of encountering ancestral spirit through direct communication in vision or dream. Even when the past was narrated in stories in the oral tradition, the story itself, even apart from its content, was experienced as carrying spiritual life energy from the past, medicine from the ancestors that would help to sustain the spirit of the people. In such instances the past was experienced as a presence as much as, perhaps even more than, as historical narrative, and as continuity as much as a sequence of discrete events.

This analysis of the changing historical memory of the Indigenous and colonial past of Toronto has also brought to the fore questions of epistemology and episteme. Historians trained in the western academic discipline of history have generally privileged textual records over oral traditions (though historians of Indigenous history are increasingly grappling with the latter); secular accounts over those which draw on other-than-human spiritual forces; material or oral evidence over intuitive or revealed knowledge; and critical distance over emotional connection and identification, all of which are elements of the historical consciousness and worldview of many contemporary Indigenous peoples (and also of many non-Indigenous people as well, especially those who are religious). But from Indigenous
perspectives, the distanced, “neutral” tone of academic historical narratives can be equally problematic. Woodworth spoke of how horrifying it was to hear his ancestors’ painful experience “objectified” by an academic historian. He spoke of how Native people were inside the history and the feeling of the history -- they did not just think about this history in their heads but experienced it bodily, even in their DNA that their ancestors had passed on to them – a view shared by a number of interviewees. For them, the more “objective” accounts of history were empty, because they did not address the way they were haunted by the historical experience passed on to them or the spiritual connection they felt with their ancestors. In these instances the experience of family history moves beyond the limits of representation within the discursive formation we usually refer to as history and becomes a vehicle for what is inexpressible in these more positivist forms. Stephen Turner asserts: “History in the modern era has for Europeans taken the form of an idea (capitalized as History): an object of cognition, and the basis of a discipline of knowledge, rather than an affective or experiential reality.” In his view, “for the settler the Western notion of history is perhaps the deepest form of forgetting, a self-constructing form of repression.”

In the Humanitas lectures, Woodworth spoke of the fact that much Indigenous knowledge was not shared with outsiders, that many stories were only told among Native people, and were not shared. They were “protected by the ancestral energy -- they’re not in history.” Mohawk historical scholar Susan Hill (among many others) has also spoken of the spiritual repercussions that come from disrespectful relations to sacred knowledge. Thus Indigenous knowledge can be for others a kind of absence, something concealed from the gaze of the “marauding” and secular non-Indigenous world.

Because of this secrecy, claims about Toronto’s history based on Indigenous knowledge may sometimes be associated by others with the possibility of deception. As
Gelder and Jacobs point out, the suspicion or fear that some Indigenous people are “inventing” history for their own purposes relates specifically and especially to Indigenous claims made about historical events or historical places based on non-rational, spiritual or sacred knowledge, including communication with ancestors, which are essentially unverifiable through western historical practices. But rather than focusing solely on the issue of verification in the western sense, it is perhaps more useful for historians to recognize that the Indigenous sacred, and in this case, the historical Indigenous sacred, represents those aspects of Indigenous cultures that current western historical practices cannot adequately describe or explain. Perhaps, as Gelder and Jacob suggest, this is a case of Lyotard’s differand: “a case of conflict that cannot be resolved equitably for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments, where one side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy,” a condition of incommensurability. Canadian historian Toby Morantz suggested a similar incommensurability in her consideration of the blending of oral history with western approaches to the history of the Swampy Cree. Other Canadian historians of Indigenous history, such as Keith Thor Carlson, have considered similar questions. Among Indigenous scholars, there is also critical discussion about the nature and role of various forms of Indigenous knowledge in the construction of historical narratives.

In addition to problems of verification, Indigenous knowledge claims about ancestral spiritual presence in Toronto may also cause anxiety because of their inherent unboundedness; from a non-Indigenous perspective, such knowledge is unpredictable and beyond colonial control. It thus at least potentially institutes new forms of authority and power for Indigenous people. Perhaps for these reasons – as well as increased Indigenous confidence and the need to speak publicly of the sacred when it is increasingly under threat - - Gelder and Jacobs noted an “amplification of the sacred” in Australia, such as the assertion
that more and more previously unknown sites are sacred. This phenomenon is also observable in Toronto. For example, one Indigenous activist in Toronto has claimed a large mound on the flood plain of the Humber river near the site of Teiaigon is an ancient “thunderbird” mound, knowledge of which he discovered not only through investigating the shape of the mound and other physical characteristics but also through visionary contact with an ancient leader buried there. The activist posted signs on the mound identifying it as an Indigenous sacred site and warning others to stay away, creating a new geography of Indigenous significance in the city.

Yet the marshalling of discourses of Indigenous ghosts and ancestors can also prove uncontrollable to Indigenous residents. Unlike the situation in a reserve community where the community is bounded and is itself the ultimate verifier of Indigenous knowledge and check on spurious claims, in the freefloating more open-ended Indigenous communities of the city, where new people are constantly arriving and others leaving, individuals who do not have strong connections with Indigenous communities or a solid grounding in Indigenous culture can attach themselves to the Indigenous sacred. They can make claims regarding their knowledge of an unverifiable oral tradition through unknown Indigenous ancestors, and attract a following, especially of less culturally knowledgeable Indigenous or non-Indigenous city dwellers. Such people may have little or no support from knowledgeable elders in the city’s Indigenous community or from leaders at Wendake, New Credit, and Six Nations, or only cautious tolerance when the result is good (such as the preservation of archaeological sites), even if the means are questionable. In Toronto this phenomenon is remarked on by various Indigenous and non-Indigenous commentators, and their most damning criticisms of such people are not only that they may use questionable historical evidence or speak for communities they do not actually represent, but that they do not have the ancestry they claim,
that the Indigenous ancestors and cultural heritage they claim to be guiding their actions are
bogus, thus reproducing the problematic of authenticity. This was the single most common
criticism I heard of activists involved in Indigenous heritage preservation in the city, and one
that various activists made about each other in disputes over heritage, identity, and cultural
knowledge that are themselves the legacy of colonialism.

For many Indigenous people in the city of Toronto, as elsewhere in the world,
Indigeneity is of necessity both heritage and project. Ancestral spirit energy was perceived
by many of my interviewees as actively re-asserting Indigenous historical and spiritual
presence both on the landscape and dreamscape of the city, acting simultaneously on multiple
levels of reality, only some of them visible in everyday life. Ancestral spirits assured and
represented Indigenous continuity and remade the city as Indigenous sacred space, creating
or recreating geographies of meaning and spirit. On the one hand these could be used to
assert difference, including the validity of a particular kind of knowledge. On the other hand,
they could unsettle non-Indigenous residents in a way that promoted greater recognition of
Indigenous historical presence and opened up the possibility of healing and reconciliation
between Indigenous and settler-immigrant peoples. Thus ancestors were not perceived as
dead relics of a pre-modern past but as active and dialogic, influencing modernity in Toronto,
though Toronto’s modernity also reshaped the narratives of ancestors in turn, since it
reformulated the context in which they were active.

Essences of blood and spirit were still active, according to many Indigenous
interviewees, especially in the form of blood-memory. They reminded the Indigenous
resident who has forgotten on a conscious level what his or her body/mind still knows, the
connections to ancestors and to land, to responsibilities given by the Creator. Such spirits
were perceived as acting on Indigenous descendants and settler-immigrants alike to instill
respect for this history and to realize an Indigenous and indigenizing destiny, perhaps even bringing the ancestors of all city residents into relationship and community, as the Wendat Feast of Souls did so long ago in its mixing of bones.

Because narratives of Indigenous ancestors and ghosts in Toronto represent many things that western historical practices cannot or do not describe or account for in relation to the region’s Indigenous past, these spirit beings can be understood ultimately as expressing one form of modern Indigenous historical consciousness in the city.

2 See Toronto Purchase Specific Claim: Arriving at an Agreement (Hagersville, ON: Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, n.d.)
3 This descendant’s line was through a different wife of Augustus Jones; not the mother of Kahkewaquonaby.
6 Alanis King, tour guide, Great Indian Bus Tour, October 29, 2005.
11 At least seven of the twenty-one Indigenous interviewees and six of the twenty-three non-Indigenous interviewees described some form of Indigenous ancestral spiritual presence in Toronto.
12 Settler hauntologies have a long genealogy and political significance in Canada and have been examined by Cameron in “Indigenous spectrality” and in many of the essays of the University of Toronto Quarterly 75, no. 2 (Spring 2006), a special issue with the theme of haunting in Canadian cultural production. See especially D.M.R. Bentley’s “Shadows in the Soul: Racial Haunting in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott,” and Warren Carriou’s “Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal ‘Ghosts’ and the Spectres of Settlement.” Cameron argues that settler representations of Indigenous ghosts haunting the Canadian state reinscribe colonial relations by “relegating Aboriginality to the immaterial and spectral past” and “writing out” the bodies and voices of living, politically active Indigenous peoples. Settler hauntologies perform a guilty white liberal “dancing around a wound,” rather than active engagement in political change in the present. Cameron, “Indigenous Spectrality,” 384, 388, 389. Carriou distinguishes between the very different deployment of ghosts and spectral/spiritual presence in


14 Similarly, Duncan Campbell Scott wrote a poem called “Indian Place Names” (1905) that laments the vanishing Indian: “But all the land is murmurous with the call/ Of their wild names that haunt the lovely glens/ Where lonely water falls, or where the street/ Sounds all day with the tramp of myriad feet.” D.C. Scott, New World Lyrics and Ballads (Toronto: Morang & Co, 1905). As Cameron notes, the “spectral native” was a common trope among the Confederation poets. Cameron, “Indigenous spectrality,” 385.

15 William Woodworth, Interview with Author, July 19, 2006. This comment reflects the general conception of language in the Indigenous oral tradition: “Native people view words as living, breathing, dynamic beings….Uttered sound vibrations possess physical and spiritual energies that find their expression in the voices and visions of all sentient beings…Words carry one’s physical totality or state of being and become part of one’s being….To Native people, then, words affirm existence.” Lois J. Einhorn, The Native American Oral Tradition: Voices of the Spirit and Soul (Wesport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 3.

16 Indigeneity has a number of definitions. It does not refer only to being in a given territory first. Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz, speaks of Indigeneity as “Indigenous land, culture and community that is a way of life for Indigenous American people because of the connection or bond that is primarily articulated as a sharing of responsibilities or sacred trust (spiritual law or principles) between Indigenous human culture and the land that is native and aboriginal to them.” Personal communication, Nov. 27, 2007. Seminole historian Susan Miller defines “indigenousness” as a pattern of characteristics shared by polities that are not organized as nation-states but conceive of their peoples as communities within a living and sacred cosmos. Susan A. Miller, “Native America Writes Back: The Origin of the Indigenous Paradigm in Historiography,” Wacaso Sa Review, 23, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 9-28. Jeffrey Sissons defines indigenous cultures as those “that have been transformed through the struggles of colonized peoples to resist and redirect projects of settler nationhood.” Jeffrey Sissons, First Peoples: Indigenous Cultures and their Futures (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 15.


18 These rivers were buried underground by the beginning of the twentieth century and combined with sewers. Five interviewees (from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritages) mentioned the lost rivers in their interviews.

19 Gelder and Jacobs describe a similar phenomenon in Uncanny Australia, 1. Fifteen of the non-Indigenous interviewees expressed some sense of absence when commenting upon the Indigenous history of Toronto.


21 As the developing metropolitan centre dominated its southern Ontario hinterlands economically and politically, Torontonians were at the forefront of calls for the annexation of northern Ontario and the Red River Colony, both of which had significant Aboriginal populations. See Tony Hall, “Native Limited Identities and Newcomer Metropolitanism in Upper Canada, 1814 - 1867,” Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless, eds. David Keane and Colin Read (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 148-73. Toronto political commentators called for harsh treatment of the leaders of Métis resistance movements in the west in 1869-70 and 1885. Also, 600 of the 1200 men in General Middleton’s expeditionary force sent to quell the 1885 resistance came from Toronto, and Toronto churches and their national offices (also located in Toronto) played a large part in supporting Indian residential schools in the west.

22 Linda Schafer, Interview with Author, January 6, 2006. Colonial interactions can also make Indigenous people feel invisible, a common experience aptly described in a report by the Lytton and Mount Currie Indian Bands in British Columbia: “As we live through our daily lives as Indians, eventually we become accustomed to the fact that non-native people can see right through us. We mean simply that the majority of the non-natives view us as invisible peoples, who really should not exist outside museums.” Quoted in Cameron, “Indigenous spectralities,” 389.

23 Edith Wise, Interview with Author, February 26, 2006; Roger Obansawin, Interview with Author, March 13, 2006.

24 David Redwolf, Interview with Author, March 19, 2006, spoke of at least 2000 people at Six Nations as having Wendat ancestry, but I have no confirmation of this figure.

25 Gelder and Jacobs, Uncanny Australia, 43, 51.

26 Ibid., 46.
Preserving historic sites has not been a priority in Toronto and many important Aboriginal sites have been destroyed according to Archaeological Services, *Interim Report*, submitted to Heritage Preservation Services, Culture Division, City of Toronto, August 2004, 28.

Seven Indigenous interviewees, five of Iroquoian ancestry, had been involved with local archaeological issues in some way; most local archaeological sites are Iroquoian.

Such interpretations were articulated most forcefully by Woodworth, Redwolf, Sandford, White, Gros-Louis, Solomon, and Bazile.


Yellowhorn, “Internalist Archaeology,” 207.


Ibid. This was confirmed by two Wendat interviewees.

This shift is noticeable not only in terms of archaeological consultation, but also in ceremonial acknowledgements to the Indigenous peoples of the area at the beginning of some public meetings.


Alanis King, Great Indian Bus Tour, October 29, 2005. Henry Scadding referred to a Native warrior killed during the siege of Toronto in 1813 as being buried at Sandhill, an ancient burial ground believed to have been located just west of Yonge and south of Bloor. Henry Scadding, *Toronto of Old* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987), 399.

Rob Rennick, Interview with Author, June 2, 2008. Ceremonies were held to induce the ghost to leave the building through the combined efforts of a Native elder and a Wiccan spiritual practitioner.


LaCapra, *Writing Trauma*, 70, 89.

Ibid., 22. “One’s bond with the dead, especially with dead intimates, may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound.”

La Capra’s notion of “working through” trauma crucially involves distinguishing past and present, self and other. This paradigm may be problematic for Indigenous peoples and others whose worldviews involve less rigid distinctions between such categories.

I also interviewed two non-Aboriginal spiritual healers (one of them a New Age healer, the other a traditional South African sangoma) who also said they had frequent contact with ancestor spirits, but they did not know any Toronto history and did not have relationships with Indigenous people or Indigenous spirits here. Sibongile Nene, Interview with Author, May 22, 2006, and Marlayna Lynne Marks, Interview with Author, January 6, 2006.

Margo Dunn, Interview with Author, July 5, 2006. This point is arguable, as ancestral grievances have fanned ethnic hatred in various countries, including the former Yugoslavia, for example, but it may be generally true of non-Indigenous Torontonians.
318

53 Paradigms of restoration or return were articulated by twelve of the Indigenous interviewees and were likely operative with several of the other Indigenous interviewees as well.
54 That deep sense of connection and responsibility to answers was described by
55 William Woodworth, July 19, 2006; David Redwolf, March 19, 2006; David Grey Eagle Sanford, Interview with Author, March 5, 2006. I am also indebted to Jon Johnson, whose unpublished dissertation chapter on the Great Indian Bus Tour offered by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto emphasizes the importance of this sense of continuity of Indigenous presence in the city as expressed in that guided tour.
56 Helen Thundercloud, Interview with Author, February 4, 2006.
57 Sixteen of twenty-one interviewees with Indigenous ancestry reported sensing the energy of a place; twelve of twenty-three non-Indigenous interviewees also reported this, though the idea of conscious participation in or responsibility to alter or maintain the energy of a place seemed to be more developed with the Indigenous interviewees.
60 “Knowledge is gathered through the body, mind and heart in altered states of being, in songs and dance, in meditation and reflection, and in dreams and visions.” Gregory Cajete, “Philosophy of Native Science,” American Indian Thought, ed. Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 52. Eight Indigenous interviewees felt that one could know history intuitively, none overtly disagreed, while thirteen made no comment. Seven non-Indigenous interviewees felt that one could know history intuitively, while five disagreed, and twelve made no comment. Twelve Indigenous interviewees spoke of dreams as sources of knowledge, none overtly disagreed, while nine did not comment. This contrasts with four non-Indigenous interviewees who mentioned dreams as a source of knowledge, while six reported that for them, dreams were not a source of knowledge, and thirteen did not address this question. Finally, fifteen Indigenous interviewees believed in or had experienced some sort of ancestral memory, usually conceived as being in the body, blood, or DNA, while one did not have that experience, and nine did not address the question. By contrast, eight non-Indigenous interviewees believed in some sort of ancestral memory, while six did not, and nine did not comment. From the lack of negative responses among Indigenous interviewees, it would appear that the paradigm of ancestral memory was much more accepted among the Indigenous Torontonians I interviewed.
61 David Redwolf, Mar. 19, 2006; David Sanford, Mar. 5, 2006; Bill Woodworth, Jul. 19, 2006, Daniel Justice, Interview with Author, February 23, 2006; Helen Thundercloud, Feb. 4, 2006. This intuitive sensing was most pronounced in people working on the preservation of local Indigenous archaeological sites. A few non-Aboriginal people also said they sensed energy or spirit but generally not in relation to Toronto’s Indigenous history, though a couple of allies of Native people did. Mark Walmer, Interview with Author, January 31, 2006 and Anna Petrov, Interview with Author, January 25, 2006.
62 For example, Ortiz writes: “Story, whether in oral or written form, substantiates life, continues it, and creates it.” Ortiz, “Indian Literature,” 258.
66 Gelder and Jacobs, Uncanny Australia, 106-7.
67 Ibid., 26.
68 Ibid., 17.

For example, Yellowhorn, who has called for a rational, secular practice of “internalist” archaeology informed by Indigenous oral traditions, speaks of the need for Indigenous peoples to recognize that “a secular antiquity exists that is independent of the sacred versions related in traditional narratives.” He decries “the tendency to revere a putative aboriginal utopia,” and to uncritically accept largely invented traditions, such as the medicine wheel. Yellowhorn, “Internalist Archaeology,” 194; 199-200. Susan Miller, on the other hand, insists on the sacred as an integral part of Indigenous historiography. “The key distinguishing assumption of the Indigenous paradigm is that the cosmos is a living being and that the cosmos and all its parts have consciousness. Spirits recognized in Indigenous worldviews are real and powerful within the material world.” See Miller, “Native America Writes Back.”10.


Ibid., 26.

Gelder and Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia*, 118. Redwolf, March 19, 2006. The site was also registered with the Ontario Ministry of Culture; Ontario Ministry of Culture Archaeological Site Record, Borden Number Aj Gu 44, Nov. 4, 2003. Similarly, protesters led by David Grey Eagle Sanford set up camp on “sacred land” to push the city to save an old bridge over the Rouge River, “Natives aim to save bridge,” *Toronto Star*, Oct. 14, 2007, A3. He was quoted as saying “My ancestors are buried all through here. It is sacred land to me.”

David Redwolf, Mar. 19, 2006; David Grey Eagle Sanford, Mar. 5, 2006; Bill Woodworth, Jul. 19, 2006; Ron Williamson, May 18, 2006; Anna Petrov, Jan. 25, 2006; Susan Hill, personal communication with author, July 24, 2007.


Gelder and Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia*, 22.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion

From the work of Henry Scadding to Katherine Hale to the City of Toronto web site, the typical Toronto historical narrative has been “a narrative of ethical indigenization in which the “settler” assumed the place of the disappearing indigene without the need for violence (or, of course, the designation of ‘invader.’)”¹ The Mississaugas “made way” for the pioneers and Loyalists; in the 1884 parade tableaux, their willingness to share the land was portrayed as their rightful submission to and voluntary recognition of British superiority and as evidence of their childlike simplicity, rather than an expression and affirmation of a social ethic of reciprocity, or an attempt to incorporate the newcomers into an ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship. Similarly, in later tellings, the Toronto Purchase was represented as a simple one-time land sale, a business transaction which did not require remembrance, renewal, or gratitude. Torontonians have never acknowledged themselves as treaty people, with treaty obligations. Rather, in settler histories, a few vestigial Mississaugas marked the starting point for the trajectory of Toronto’s rapid progress; the seemingly untouched and uninhabited land at Toronto Bay called out to be filled by settlers, farms, industry, and, ultimately, the city.

Further, in settler histories of Toronto, there was a series of symbolic displacements. The city stood in for the nation as a symbol of its future, and national history stood in for the region’s local history; “the national is what replaces ‘the Indigenous.’”² As Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson have written: “The settler seeks to establish a nation, and therefore needs to become native and to write the epic of the nation’s origin. The ‘Origin’ is that which has no antecedent, so the presence of the Ab-origines is an impediment.”³ Most nineteenth and twentieth century chroniclers of Toronto history thus asserted or implied that local
Indigenous peoples – especially the Mississaugas -- had no history, and by extension the Toronto region had little or no history before 1793. At the same time, the city played a mediating role in these settler figurations of nation and ethnic group, providing a *locality* for their relationship.

What was most consistent in the discourses of settler-immigrant Torontonians about local Indigenous peoples through to the early twentieth century was their characterization of Haudenosaunee exceptionalism. For them, the Six Nations were both the most savage and bloodthirsty Native peoples before contact and the most civilized after. Loyalty to England had civilized and redeemed them as much as Christianity, it seemed. The Six Nations became not only the most civilized and exemplary Indians in the eyes of Torontonians; they became the *only* local Indigenous people. If Toronto stood in for Canada, the Six Nations came to stand in for all Indigenous peoples, and especially the Mississaugas, with whom Torontonians (and Upper Canada settlers in general) had entered into a treaty relationship with regard to the land.⁴

The Mississaugas, by contrast, were not just displaced, but were *disappeared* both materially and in an act of imaginative genocide, their name largely forgotten, their existence unacknowledged, their role in the history of the area subsumed in later commemorations by generic “Indians” who looked either Mohawk or Plains Cree, their voices of protest or historic claims ignored. The role of both the settler government and local settlers in crowding the Mississaugas out of their lands on the Credit River was either ignored or rationalized as a natural process. Similarly, the Wendats, who were the earliest and longest residents in the region, figured only as a contrast to the Haudenosaunee, which highlighted the latter’s pre-contact and pre-Christian savagery. The Wendats were portrayed as “good, but doomed”
Indians who existed only in the past and exemplified the fate awaiting other Indigenous peoples, including the Mississaugas.

Why were the Six Nations remembered and the Mississaugas ignored for so much of Toronto’s history? It was not only because the residents of the city lived on land which had been controlled by the Mississaugas, and which thus required a Mississauga exit. Collective memory depends critically on a shared sense of community. Both Indigenous groups had formed affective bonds with some elements of Toronto’s population: the Six Nations with the Loyalists and their descendants, the Mississauga converts on the Credit with Toronto Methodists. The latter had considerably more information about the Mississaugas than other Torontonians through their direct contacts with Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones) and the Credit band and through their newspaper, *The Christian Guardian*, which regularly reported on developments at the Credit Mission, the Methodist and humanitarian campaign against Sir Francis Bond Head’s removal policies, and the work of the British-based Aborigines Protection Society. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, the Loyalist group gained hegemony in Toronto, while the ties between the Methodists and Mississaugas were greatly weakened by the bitter infighting among Methodist factions in the 1830s and 1840s. After the move to New Credit in 1847, many Mississaugas converted to other Christian faiths, further diminishing their bonds with Toronto Methodists, who were the only Torontonians who might have insisted on a more robust remembrance of the Mississauga presence in or near the city and of the wrongs perpetrated against them. Toronto Methodists, for their part, became less radical and more mainstream in the latter half of the century.

Interest in the Mississaugas also diminished because of a general turning away from humanitarianism in the mid nineteenth century and an increasing emphasis on pseudo-
scientific doctrines of racial hierarchies and social Darwinism, which naturalized and rationalized their disappearance. Similarly, accusations of defrauding of the Mississaugas in the 1805 “confirmation” of the Toronto Purchase were raised in 1806 and 1809 by political radicals, but these individuals were soon marginalized by the far more powerful forces of the Upper Canadian oligarchy.

By contrast, the Haudenosaunee who, like other Loyalists, entered Upper Canada as landless refugees did not in any way threaten or complicate Torontonians’ sense of the legitimacy of their city or their colony’s ownership of the land. Rather, their historic relationship offered an image of Indigenous/non-Indigenous partnership based primarily on military alliance and loyalty to the British crown both in the American Revolution and War of 1812 (while the memory of the Mississaugas’ participation in the War of 1812 was largely forgotten). Thus the historical memory of relationship with the Haudenosaunee was useful to Torontonians who constructed a nationalism based on Loyalism or anti-Americanism in a way that memory of the Mississaugas was not. Furthermore, later generations at Six Nations were able to use popular filio-pietist, racial, and Loyalist discourses to keep alive the memory of their history as independent and sovereign allies of the British and argue for special status that would largely exempt them from the colonial category of Indian as ward of the state. Though they were not successful in their campaign for legal equality, they retained a measure of recognition and respect from Torontonians as long as imperial and Loyalist sympathies were strong.

Although the historic Joseph Brant had challenged the colony’s right to regulate Haudenosaunee land sales, supported Mississauga efforts to gain a fairer price for their land, and at various times used the threat of war to political advantage, an idealized (and dead) Joseph Brant soon became an icon of Loyalism, “Indian” civilization, and nostalgia for the
early days of Upper Canada and York. Brant became the city’s favourite Indian, a figure settlers idealized and celebrated, even as they forgot their efforts to discredit and disempower him. For an Indigenous person to claim a genealogical connection to Joseph Brant was to make an unassailable claim to authenticity, and to be ennobled by a reflected greatness. This is still largely true today, although many Haudenosaunee have an entirely different assessment of Brant’s character and legacy.7

Ultimately, however, as Sean Hawkins writes of the LoDagaa of Africa, the combination of colonial power and writing created among settler Torontonians an “ontological and epistemological arrogance,” because “what [Indigenous peoples] knew was not enshrined in writing.”8 In the Toronto area, Indigenous people’s knowledge from and about their past was invisible to the settlers, and was not found in settler historical accounts. As Hawkins notes, the colonizers were determined to make “the world on paper” the source of all power, but their success was only partial; as my interviews documented, Indigenous people often responded by coming to trust only their own oral sources, or, more recently, their own written histories. In fact, there are still tensions between oral and written forms of talking about the Indigenous past of Toronto.

For the Mississaugas of the New Credit, as well as Indigenous Torontonians of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, maintaining, reforging, or re-imagining one’s connection to family, ancestral land, and cultural heritage in the face of massive change, dislocation, and cultural destruction has been an act of resistance, essential for personal and cultural survival. From early Mississauga petitions to contemporary Indigenous-authored historical narratives of the Toronto Native community, Indigenous people have often drawn on what Chadwick Allen has called “the blood/land/memory complex,” three interrelated foundational tropes that “counter, and, potentially, subvert dominant settler discourses,”9 yet
also invoke problematic issues of authenticity and inheritance, competing claims to land, and “racial” memory. The deployment of the blood/land/memory discourse highlights the “underlying disparities that still exist between indigenous and invading people’s conceptions of history, as well as the underlying unequal power relations that determine whose version of history and whose methods of historiography are considered “legitimate” and “authentic” in various popular, academic, and legal contexts.”

As Allen notes, the discourse of treaties stands out as distinguishing feature of the historical discursive relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler-immigrants. “Because it operates within a paradigm of nation to nation status, the discourse of treaties…provides one of few interpretative frames within which contemporary indigenous minority activists and writers can stage formal dialogue with dominant settler interests on (potentially) equitable terms.” Although the British almost immediately considered treaties as not binding on the nation, treaties have been “a widely recognized symbol and set of widely recognized statements through which they [Indigenous peoples] can not only express anger over past and present acts of colonial violence but, at the same time, continue to imagine the possibility of future peace.” As Allen notes, the discourse of treaties calls for the re-recognition, rather than the deconstruction, of the authority of particular colonial discourses, but for Native ends.

If, in previous discourses, settlers were good and “savages” were bad, twentieth century challenges to the previous metanarrative of Toronto history sometimes resulted in a simple inversion of these positive and negative roles. Such inversions were apparent in a number of my interviews with both Indigenous and settler residents of Toronto. Yet Toronto history has rarely been a simple colonized/colonizer binary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, but has always been triangulated by third parties. For much of the early
colonial period, York’s history was shaped in part by complex interactions between the Mississaugas, the Six Nations, and European settlers and officials, or between Indigenous peoples, the British, and either the French or Americans. Now, drawing upon Vine Deloria’s distinction between ethnic Indigenous peoples in cities and tribal peoples on reservations, Sissons theorizes postcolonial formations as a complex negotiation between the ethnically Indigenous, the tribally Indigenous, and the non-Indigenous, where each binary relationship is disrupted by a third voice.\textsuperscript{15} New discourses that draw on conceptions of Indigeneity inevitably reflect a tension between all three, such as Bonita Lawrence’s 2004 study of urban Aboriginal people in Toronto, \textit{Real Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood}.

Similarly, the binary of modernity and the traditional so often expressed in settler histories of Toronto – and in more complex form in nineteenth century Indigenous authoethnographies – is superseded in new Indigenous historical discourses that articulate a particular Indigenous modernity characterized by the affirmation and conscious re-appropriation of tradition. Today, what has long been represented as “past” has become visibly and unmistakably present, as Toronto’s Indigenous artists, filmmakers, playwrights, and cultural activists increasingly incorporate elements of the city’s Indigenous history into their work. The 2009 film \textit{Tkaronto}, by Métis director Sean Belcourt, about Indigenous life in the city, used the Mohawk version of the city’s name as its title and included historical information about the name and the city on its web site.\textsuperscript{16} In the 2010 play \textit{What We Forgot Here}, migrants to the city were forced to pass through security and fly on Indigenous “Eagle Airways” to truly arrive. These projects all assert that, as Chief Laforme said during a July 2009 talk at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto: “We’re not just a footnote in history; we are history.”\textsuperscript{17} These new discourses, while barely registering in the consciousness of the
larger public of the city, have gained increasing ground in Toronto activist circles and at City Hall. They have resulted in discussions between the City’s Heritage department, the long exiled Mississaugas of the New Credit, and Mohawk architect William Woodworth about a proposed new ceremonial “sacred space” on the city’s historic waterfront, not far from the first European settlement of York, the traditional Indigenous healing grounds of the Toronto islands, and historic Indigenous encampments on the Don River. As Sissons comments:

While the symbols and practices that constitute the outward expressions of indigenous culture often have ancient precedents, their meanings are always contemporary and changing. The meanings attributed by indigenous peoples to their art and material culture... may not always be those of their ancestors but they remain distinctively theirs, and, as such, they are often radically different from the meanings attributed by national museums. A similar change overtakes local customs and knowledge recorded in publications by outsiders and indigenous scholars of an earlier period; when re-appropriated these indigenous possessions become charged with renewed significance within alternative cultural frames.

Such post-colonial formations complicate settler notions of authenticity, which posit that “if there are no “real” Indians left, there are no “real” Indian land claims.”

According to many Indigenous scholars, the recovery (and reworking) of traditional knowledge is deeply entwined with the process of decolonization. Part of the context for Indigenous histories of Toronto therefore is that there is a relationship between Indigenous sovereignty, however one defines that, and the practice of history, “an emerging concept of sovereignty that has as much to do with the reclaiming and retelling of various histories – of peoples, cultures, and institutions – as it does with control over territories and resources.”

Sissons describes Indigenous cultures as cultures “that have been transformed through the struggles of colonized peoples to resist and redirect projects of settler nationhood.” Indigenous historical storytelling is clearly an important element of this redirection.

Yet with Indigenous stories as well as non-Indigenous ones, different emphases and omissions create usable pasts. In recent representations of the history of the Mississaugas of
the New Credit First Nation, for example, certain aspects of the central role of
Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones) in the history of the First Nation are downplayed,
particularly his role in converting the band to Christianity, instigating the abandonment of
many cultural practices, exporting Mississauga Methodism to Indigenous peoples in the west,
and playing a major role in the early development of the residential school system in Upper
Canada, instead his role in petitioning for land and fishing rights or arranging the move to
New Credit is emphasized and the contributions of other Mississauga leaders like Joseph
Sawyer and John Jones are given more prominence. Similarly, when the Mississauga-
produced film *A Sacred Trust* (2008) discusses the fur trade on the Credit river, it is the
virtue of the Mississaugas in always repaying their debts and thus being known as “Indians
of good credit” that is emphasized, while the role of alcohol in the fur trade period of
Mississauga history is not mentioned. The Mississaugas’ 1829 success in having exclusive
fishing privileges at the mouths of local rivers recognized in colonial legislation is also
highlighted; their inability to secure title deeds to their lands on the Credit is not even
mentioned. Clearly, success stories and stories of resistance are useful in instilling pride and
respect for the Mississauga people as active shapers of their past, while stories of defeat,
oppression, or more complex relations to colonialism may elicit a range of negative reactions
in both Mississaugas and non-Indigenous peoples and so are not seen as helpful to current
members of the First Nation. In the case of the historical legacy of Peter Jones, many
members of the Mississaugas of the New Credit are clearly ambivalent about his role and
potentially divided in their assessments of his legacy, so some aspects of his contributions to
Mississauga history may be downplayed to avoid controversy and division within the New
Credit community itself.
As Hawkins and many other scholars have noted, cultures are not objective entities, but ever-changing historical processes. “Their constituent elements are not coherent or cohesive, only a diverse array of shifting “symbols and meanings.””\(^\text{24}\) In a similar vein, Raymond Williams spoke of the retention of selective traditions characterized by the “way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded…[and]some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture [which can also be the dominant Indigenous culture of a community]”\(^\text{25}\)

Karen Cerulo has also analyzed the cultural processes involved in symbolic change, arguing that symbolic change often arises through the superimposition of variant memories rather than straight displacement so that several exist contemporaneously. Thus various symbolizations of Toronto history from different time periods co-exist in the city today. Charles Mulvany’s vitriolic anti-Indian racism and his language of deserved extinction remains only a mouse click away for anyone who googles the “history of Toronto” on the Internet. A recent wall mural on the corner of Finch and Weston Road commissioned by the Emery Village Business Improvement Association (Figure 18) depicts an “Indian” in a Plains headdress as a very prominent feature in its representation of local history.\(^\text{26}\)
Another mural project in Islington has not yet depicted a single Indigenous person in the thirteen completed murals depicting aspects of Islington’s past, even though this area lies between the Humber River and Etobicoke Creek, and so has a long and rich Indigenous past.

According to Cerulo, “charged symbolic associations fail when they are blocked or suspended,” when old symbols are too fixed for referents that have changed, or when old symbols become irrelevant. Dynamic symbols that are abstract and multivalent, like that of the nation [or that of the longhouse or eagle] can more readily persist, she says, and can promote solidarity without actual consensus. Older images may persist because of the “endurance of the social relations they symbolize,” even through periods of large scale change. In analysing American settler imagery, Lynn Spillman notes that the emphasis on the founding events of 1776 persisted as central features of American collective memory in both 1876 and 1976. According to Spillman, the 1776 founding moment remained compelling because it offered multivalent symbols that could appeal both to mainstream cultural producers and their critics, bridging the gap between them. By contrast, in Australia, the emphasis on the founding moment of British invasion and settlement, which had been very important in settler historical consciousness in 1888, had by 1988 largely
disappeared in constructions of Australian history. It did not have a similar resonance and was, in fact, an embarrassment to many.

Such symbolic changes are also evident in the settler-immigrant depictions of Toronto history. One can see from the changing Toronto coat of arms that the Mississauga warrior and Britannia eventually became redundant to the city’s self-definition as a multicultural modern city. The commemorative shift from a focus on Toronto’s founding in 1793 to the identification of the 1834 incorporation of city as the key founding event, with the incorporation charter, not the Toronto Purchase, as the symbolic founding document of the city, is equally significant. In continuing to focus on the incorporation as the city’s main anniversary, the city bypasses awkward questions about the town’s colonial genesis, a history that could prove divisive or embarrassing in a multicultural city that prides itself on peaceful relations between various ethnic groups and celebrates its diversity.

As this dissertation documents, Torontonians cannot assume that they share a common idea of the purpose and nature of the city’s “history,” nor can Torontonians assume that conventional western approaches to the past should take precedence in public tellings of the history of the city. As local historian Peter Naameh noted in an African context: “the question of reaching objective certainty about what happened in the very distant past may be quite secondary in Dagara historical consciousness, to how knowledge about the past helps to iron out present difficulties and ensure peace in the society.” Thus there are ethical and political as well as methodological conundrums for the city in any effort to present a single “official” and consensual public past, especially if the city wishes to contribute to decolonization. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples may have different needs in relation to this history, and thus find different aspects usable.
Furthermore, Indigenous knowledge of the past, like Indigenous knowledge generally, is not just a stock of information: it is also a process of “coming to know,” and this is where it differs most profoundly from the conventions of western history-writing. As Susan Miller has written, “Indigenous knowledge comes from a higher power, is revealed and contextualized through relationships, and emanates from spiritual forces that lie outside human agency to generate social change.” This concept of knowledge also entails a different concept of mind. David Newhouse refers to a good mind as a balance between the thinking and feeling parts of the mind, Donald Fixico to “seeing” and “listening” with the unconscious mind, Gregory Cajete to the emphasis on the metaphoric over the rational mind in Indigenous cultures, while western and particularly academic historical epistemologies generally disregard everything but the rational. Yet Indigenous knowledge practices are not monolithic, and not all Indigenous people are committed to them.

Western history is based on assumptions about how the social and natural worlds are constituted which may not be shared by Indigenous peoples, including the belief that another society can be known and represented as a series of facts. Hawkins writes: “Just as writing conditions our understanding of reality, so too does it distort the academic understanding of the past, because we are ‘unwittingly burdened’ as [Isabel] Hofmeyr reminds us, by a ‘highly institutionalized, text-bound, linear and chronological understanding of history.’" As memory scholar Roger Simon has commented, “the truth of trauma and victimization is lost in dead historical facts. The lived experience of being othered and objectified is lost to history and regained only through the testimony of witness.”

At the 2009 celebrations marking the 175th anniversary of Toronto’s incorporation, the representations of the region’s Indigenous past had apparently once again undergone a
sea change. The Mississaugas of New Credit opened and closed the event and were given the opportunity to speak, if only briefly, and to conduct a traditional spiritual ceremony, while the people of the Six Nations were not much in evidence. An Indigenous poet, albeit from Vancouver, read a poem about the Indigenous history of Toronto. Nobody was called a savage. Several of the books for sale at the City Hall library during the anniversary’s literary readings recognized the time depth of human presence in the region, as did the historical account posted on the City of Toronto website, which documented thousands of years of Indigenous history, if only up to the founding of the city.\textsuperscript{38} The event as a whole celebrated the city’s diversity.

And yet the question remains: how should this history be remembered? \textit{Toronto: A Short Illustrated History of Its First 12,000 Years} was initiated by the City of Toronto through Heritage Toronto and published for the 2009 anniversary celebrations; among its most salient features is its incorporation of a much longer time frame to discuss Toronto history, and the serious attention it gives to the Indigenous archaeological past of the city. Yet it has only this to say of the Toronto Purchase and subsequent negotiations: “…the Crown purchased Toronto from the Mississaugas on September 23, 1787, for £1,700 in cash and goods. (The boundaries however, were not understood clearly, and a subsequent treaty in 1805 clarified the details of the purchase.)”\textsuperscript{39} There is no mention of the Mississauga land claim. Clearly Torontonians have yet to imagine or think through the full implications of the Toronto Purchase, both in terms of their own history and of who they are as people living on lands acquired through this agreement.

\textit{Toronto: A Short Illustrated History} raises another issue related to historical memory of the Indigenous past of Toronto, in its inclusion of the Indigenous archaeological past of the region as Toronto’s history. To do so without also acknowledging settler Torontonians’
complex historic relationship with Indigenous peoples, including the wrongs and harms perpetrated against them, risks being an appropriation similar to that of the archaeologists of the late nineteenth century. The latter considered the artifacts and bones of the Indigenous archaeological past as a legacy “bequeathed” by vanished Indians to Toronto scholars for their own use and ignored the relationship of the Indigenous past and its very human remains to living Indigenous people. Another appropriation occurs when the Mississaugas of the New Credit are referred to as “Toronto’s Original Land-Owners,” since this ignores the previous millennium when the area was an Iroquoian (especially Wendat and Petun) homeland.

As this dissertation has documented, historical memory in Toronto is always interested, fluctuating, contested, and precarious. Today, Toronto is once again a city of newcomers, where half of its current residents were born outside of Canada. For many Torontonians, the story of the place begins with their arrival, as it did for those immigrants who first established York and then Toronto. The nature of the historical inheritance of city residents, particularly in relation to the land, its Indigenous past, and Indigenous peoples, remains conflicted, complicated, and contested. Toronto’s Indigenous past is still only superficially acknowledged in most quarters and remains largely unknown.

On May 29, 2010, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation voted overwhelmingly to accept Ottawa’s offer of $145 million in past-due payments for the true value of the 250,850 acres of land legally ceded to the settler government through the confirmation of the Toronto Purchase in 1805. On Tuesday, June 8, the band council met with Toronto’s City Council as one government to another “to restore a relationship between the original inhabitants of Toronto and…what the First Nation would call the settler government. To build bridges and establish lines of communication and to basically honour the fact than an ancient wrong has been set right and that they can move forward.” At the
ceremony, Chief Bryan Laforme emphasized that the agreement did not change the Toronto City Council’s duty to consult with the First Nation about changes to the land.

The resolution of the land claim and the attempt to right a historic wrong was a significant moment in the city’s history, but it generated surprisingly little publicity. It was not front page news in the city’s papers and received scanty coverage in the broadcast media. Perhaps this reflects the fact that the settlement arose from a legal process initiated by the Mississaugas that resulted in negotiations with the federal government, with only minimal involvement from the city. While the current municipal government has acknowledged the treaty relationship with the Mississaugas of the New Credit, civic elections in November 2010 may elect a mayor who is far less disposed to do so. How the settlement of the land claim will affect the historical consciousness of the general population of Toronto or of its multicultural Indigenous residents remains to be seen.
Postscript

The observant reader has noted the appearance and reappearance of eagles and eagle feathers at various points throughout this dissertation, from the opening account of my dream, to the migrations and experiences of the Eagle people who came to the Toronto area, through the 1805 “confirmation” of the Toronto Purchase and cession of the Mississauga Tract reluctantly agreed to by Chief Kinepenon (Golden Eagle), whose failure of spirit power before the white man’s bullet resulted in a loss of faith for many Mississaugas. The eagle persisted in the feathers and name given to Kahkewaquonaby (Sacred Feathers) who, although he became a Christian, retained his name and wore a coat embroidered with eagles in his meeting with Queen Victoria. He passed on this name and the eagle coat and at least one eagle feather from his naming ceremony to his son, Peter Edmund Jones. This second Kahkewaquonaby, although a “progressive” who considered British culture superior in many respects to his own Anishinaabe heritage, nevertheless proudly signed this name, meaning “Sacred Feathers,” in letters to the editor of Toronto newspapers and in his own newspaper, the Indian, even though his identity as an Indian was often challenged because of his mixed ancestry. He was photographed wearing the coat in 1898 at the Smithsonian Institution, when, through his donation, it became a historical artefact in a western museum. (Figure 15). The sketch of his father’s eagle feather reproduced in the preface of this dissertation was published in an article on Anishinaabe feather symbolism in 1898 (figure 1).

Meanwhile, in the city of Toronto, eagle feathers marked the Indian on the Toronto coat of arms, first in a Plains headdress, and in later iterations as a sign of local authenticity. As markers of savagery and paganism, eagle feathers were necessary accoutrements of the tableaux Indians at the Semi-Centennial. Responding to these settler codes, even local Native
people wore Plains feather headdresses as a sign of authentic Indianness into the late twentieth century.

The disappearance of bald eagles from the Toronto region marked not only the region’s ecological stress and the settlers’ environmental transformations, but also the nadir of settler awareness of Indigenous people in the city and their contributions to the region’s history. The warrior’s replacement with a golden eagle on the newly amalgamated city’s coat of arms was a sign of contested meanings and symbolic change. Today the bald eagle has reappeared on the crest and the flag of the Mississaugas of the New Credit and the eagle staff flag of the Anishinabek Nation; it may eventually nest again on the shores of Lake Ontario.

The eagle medicine I spoke of in the introduction moves beyond the pages of this dissertation. Recently, at a meeting of the Toronto Native Community History Project, artist
Phil Coté, a descendant of Tecumseh, related the story of the eagle standing up for the people when they were threatened with destruction.

A long time ago, as people began to populate the land and form different groups, some began to fight wars and turned away from their original instructions or twisted the medicine they had been given. The Creator asked, “How did this happen?” and resolved to cleanse the land by sending a destroyer [likely a thunderbird] who would cause a great change in the weather, such as a flood or fire. The eagle heard this and, knowing that there were still good people, asked himself why they should die. He knew he had to say something. He flew high up in the air and called out, and then flew higher in the air and called out again. He then flew as high as he could and called out as loud as he could and finally the destroyer being heard him and asked, “Why are you here?” The eagle said that he had heard about the great change that was to come because of the behaviour of the humans and he asked why all should suffer for the behaviour of a few. He offered to fly over the land every day to forestall the destruction that would cleanse the earth. He vowed to find at least one family following their original instructions. The offer was accepted. In this way the eagle stood up for the people when they couldn’t stand up for themselves.42

Coté also spoke of even the smallest feathers “lifting the spirits” of those who found and displayed them.

While researching and writing this thesis, I began to work with Indigenous theatre artists in a parallel process of creating a play to bring together and transmit various streams of knowledge about the Indigenous history of Toronto in a way more consistent with Indigenous knowledge practices, since oral tradition is performative. One person who joined the creative team was an Anishinaabe graduate student in archaeology. His family had been in the city a long time, he was a speaker of Anishinaabenomin, and, as an oskaabewis (a helper and apprentice of medicine people in ceremonies), he carried considerable cultural and spiritual knowledge. During the first ceremony he conducted for members of the play’s creative team, he spontaneously told a story about a powerful dream he had had many years ago, which had guided his commitment to learning the medicines and spiritual practices of his people, to carrying the traditions forward, and to working for the continuance and
flourishing of the Anishinaabek. In his dream, an eagle had landed on his left arm and then flown away, leaving behind gifts of eagle medicine, though these were different gifts than the ones that had been left for me. Neither of us had known of the other’s dream, and yet Migisi had appeared to each of us and brought us together to think about Toronto’s history.

All my relations. Ikonikanaa.

Figure 16: A golden eagle. Photograph by Dave Bonta.
Although the Toronto Purchase was an agreement between the Mississaugas and the colonial government, rather than with settlers per se, they were the treaty’s beneficiaries and were also included in the oral promises that settlers would help the Mississaugas to become farmers and respect their hunting and fishing rights on ceded territory. It is unclear how these settler treaty responsibilities should be carried out in the present, though the principle of reinterpreting treaty promises in the light of modern circumstances has been affirmed in Supreme Court decisions. Many Haudenosaunee would say, however, that the British were also in a treaty relationship with the Six Nations for the same land through the Nanfan Treaty.


7 See, for example, Doug George-Kanentiio, Iroquois Culture and Commentary (Santa Fe, N.M: Clear Light Publishers, 2000) 146-147.


10 Ibid., 16.
11 Ibid., 17.

12 Ibid., 18-19.
13 Ibid., 19.

15 Ibid., 155, 159.

16 See www.tkaronto.net.
17 Bryan Laforme, public talk, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, July 28, 2009.

18 Bryan Laforme, speaking at Robert Houle presentation to New Credit Council, September 21, 2010.

19 Sisson, First Peoples, 13.


22 Sissons, First Peoples, 15.

23 According to J.R. Miller, Kahkewaquonaby had concluded by the 1830s that residential schooling was essential for the improvement of the Anishinaabek and he undertook ambitious speaking tours in Great Britain in the 1830s and 1840s to raise money to establish a residential school at Alderville. In 1835, noting the inadequacy of the day schools at Methodist missions, he advocated that “all the children be placed entirely under the charge and management of the teachers & missionaries, so that their parents shall have no control over them.” United Church Archives, Peter Jones Collection, box 1, file 3, “Memorandum – thoughts on Indian Schools” (1835). However, he anticipated that the schools would be run by educated Christian Native people like himself and would produce bicultural individuals who could advocate for Indigenous rights in the English legal system. J. R. Miller, Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 80.

24 Hawkins, Writing and Colonialism, 21-22.

26 My thanks to Edith George for drawing this mural to my attention. It is located at the southwest corner of Finch Ave. West and Weston Road.

28 Barry Schwartz, quoted in Spillman, 166.


See Judith Binney, “Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts: Two Forms of Telling History,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 21, no. 1 (1987): 16-28. According to Binney, Maori oral histories and Pakeha written texts are passed on in different ways and have different purposes. Maori history is conveyed through narrative, song, and proverb to listeners, and is concerned with family and genealogy, establishing meanings for events and validating family claims to power and knowledge. Pakeha history is a political narrative conveyed in writing to readers and its purpose is “to erase other interpretations.” See also Julie Cruikshank, “Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing some Issues,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 75, no. 3 (1994): 410.


A spring 2009 Heritage Lecture Series at the Tollkeeper’s Cottage Museum at Bathurst and Davenport was billed as “The Mississaugas of the New Credit (Toronto’s Original Landowners).”


Phil Coté, personal communication. He repeated this story for me on June 13, 2010.
APPENDIX: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions are sample questions only. Interviews will not be tightly structured but will follow the interests and concerns of the interviewee as well as the interviewer. I will ask you if I may record the interview on cassette. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview, let me know. If there is a question you don’t feel comfortable answering, that’s fine.

1. What kind of history did you learn as a child? National? Local? Other? Where did you learn it?
2. Have you researched or were you told the history of your family? If so, at what point in your life? How far back can you trace your family history? To where? In what places has your family lived?
3. How do you define your family in terms of family history? How related do you have to be to be part of this history?
4. If you are non-Aboriginal, are there ways in which your history connects with the history of Aboriginal people? If you are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, does your own family history research reveal any dynamics of Aboriginal/settler interaction either in Toronto or elsewhere?
5. What do you know or what is your impression of the history of Toronto? What do you know or what is your impression of the history of Aboriginal people in this region? What is your sense of Toronto’s role in the non-Aboriginal settlement of other parts of Ontario or Canada? Where did you learn these things – or if you didn’t, do you feel they are important to know? Why or why not?
6. Did you learn stories from your family connecting you or your family to the land of this region? Please tell those stories. How did your family acquire or lose their land?
7. What do family history stories mean to you and how are they used within your family? Does family history tell you anything that other forms of history do not? What can and cannot be said in family history stories? Who can tell these stories?
8. In what ways is your family history tied to the history of larger groups of people? Clan? First Nation? Ethnic group? Canada?
9. How did it affect you to learn about previously unknown ancestors and/or family history? Did it change how you relate to the past? How does knowing your family history affect your sense of identity? If you are of mixed heritage, how do you relate to the history of the various branches of your family?
10. Does your family or community collectively honour or recognize ancestors in any way? Do you feel any sense of duty or responsibility towards your ancestors or your family past? If yes, what is the nature of that responsibility? If no, why not?
11. To what extent is family history passed on from one generation to the next? Are there ways that history is passed on through the body? Is there such a thing as blood memory? Have you ever experienced the living presence of your ancestors in your life?
12. Do you feel that historically your family has been involved in or affected by colonialism? If so, in what way? Does this create any ethical obligations in the present?
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Newspapers


Hammond, M. O. “Toronto’s Seven Ages: Sketching the story of the Centennial City From days of French occupation as trading post – succeeding era of rising ambition to days of metropolitan air.” Globe and Mail. May 24, 1934, 17.

The Indian from December 1885 to December 1886.


———. “Toronto: Scenes at the celebration of the Queen’s birthday.” Canadian Illustrated News. June 16, 1877.


———. “Semi-Centennial tableaux: The Queen Cityu presented under a variety of aspects.” *Globe*. May 19, 1884, 5.


———. “The Queen City (cont.).” *Daily Mail*. July 1, 1884, 2.

———. “Toronto’s Jubilee: The first day an unqualified success.” *Globe*. July 1, 1884, 3

———. *Toronto Daily Mail*. July 1, 1884, 2.


———. *Toronto Evening Telegram*. July 5, 1884, 5.

———. “Saturday, July 4, 1884.” *Toronto Evening Telegram*. July 5, 1884, 1.


———. *Globe*. August 22, 1885.

———. *Globe*. August 24, 1885.


———. “Regret Port Credit Indian landmarks not preserved.” *Toronto Daily Star*. May 14, 1930.


——. *Toronto Evening Telegram*. August 27, 1938.


*Toronto Native Times* February 1971 to October 1975.

**Archival Sources**

**Canadian National Exhibition Archives (CNEA)**

Poster for Indian Hall of Fame, n.d.
*Programme*, Toronto Industrial Fair, 1890.
*Programme*, Toronto Industrial Fair, 1892.

**City of Toronto Archives (CTA)**

Alexandra Studio fonds 1257, Alexandra Studio commissioned photographs, series 1057, item 4869, “Native Indian Group.”
City of Toronto, Information Files
Coat of Arms
Centennial
Seals
Semi-Centennial
Sesqui-Centennial
City of Toronto Pamphlets and Ephemera, fonds 2, series 1099, items 575, 576, 577, 578.

Toronto City Clerk Subject Files, Board for the Control for Consideration by the Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto, report 30, “Redesigned Coat of Arms of the City of Toronto,” November 6, 1961.

**Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa**

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds, formerly Record Group 10
Vol. 1, reel C-10996, “Proceedings of a Meeting with the Mississaugas at the River Credit 31st July 1805.”
Vol. 5: 46, April 3, 1829, Joseph Sawyer, John Jones to Sir John Colborne, River Credit.
Vol. 663, 716 Indian Councils 1819, 1826-40
Vol. 790, Claus Papers.
Vol. 1733, 1734 Minutes of Indian Councils, New Credit, 1883-1910
Vol. 2238 New Credit Agency Correspondence, 1883.
Red Series, Lieutenant Governor’s Correspondence, vol. 1.
Upper Canada Civil Control, Indian Affairs,, vol. 1: 451, September 6, 1806, speech, Quinepenon.

Manuscript Division 19, vol. 4, reel C-1478.


Toronto Native Community History Project Archives (TNCHP)

Toronto Native Times

Toronto Reference Library Archives (TRL)

Report of the Subcommittees of Semi-Centennial Committee
Baldwin Room, Broadside
Samuel Peters Jarvis Indian Papers, Vol. B56, B57, B58, B59, B60
Theatre Collection, Canadian playbills

United Church Archives/Victoria University Archives (UCA), Toronto

Peter Jones Collection
Anecdote Book
Letter Book

Interviews (some names are pseudonyms)

Marlayna Lynne Marks, Jan 6, 2006.
Iris Kiefer, Feb. 9, 2006.
Helen Thundercloud, Feb. 4, 2006.
Don Jones, Feb. 6, 2006.
Maria Oliviera, Feb. 21, 2006.
David GreyEagle Sanford, March 5, 2006.
Chris Ramsaroop, April 26, 2006.
Margo Dunn, July 5, 2006.
Bob Simmons, July 11, 2006.
Dave Rosato, July 12, 2006.
Carolyn King, July 30, 2006.
Roberto Ferreira, August 20, 2006.
Anne Solomon, August 24, 2006.
Michael White, October 12, 2006.
Dan Smoke, September 13, 2006.
Marie Bazile, April 22, 2007.
Rob Rennick, June 2, 2008.
John Fuller, April 23, 2009.

Printed Primary Sources


Adam, G. Mercer and Henry Scadding. *Toronto, Old and New: A Memorial Volume, Historical, Descriptive and Pictorial, Designed to Mark the Hundredth Anniversary of the Passing of the Constitutional Act of 1791, which Set Apart the Province of Upper Canada and Gave Birth to York (Now Toronto): To which is Added a Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Professions, and of the Growth and Development of the City's Industries and Commerce, with some Sketches of the Men Who have made Or are Making the Provincial Capital.* Toronto: The Mail Printing Company, 1891.


Bouchette, Joseph. *The British Dominions in the North America; Or, a Topographical and Statistical Description of the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia the Islands of Newfoundland, Prince Edward, and Cape Breton, Including Considerations on Land-Granting and Emigration; to which are Annexed, Statistical Tables and Tables of Distances, etc.* London: Longman, 1832.


———. *The Indian Act*, 1876.

———. *Indian Advancement Act*, 1884.


Cusick, David. *Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations, comprising first: a tale of the foundation of the Great Island (now North America), the two infants born and the creation of the universe. Second: A real account of the early settlers of North America and their dissentions. Third: Origin of the kingdom of the five nations, which was called a longhouse: the wars, fierce animals, etc*. Lockport, NY: Turner and McCollum, 1848.


Gibson, Marian M. In the Footsteps of the Mississaugas. Mississauga: Mississauga Heritage Foundation, 2006


Great Britain, Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, and Aborigines Protection Society. Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlement). London: William Ball, Aldine Chambers, Paternoster Row, and Hatchard & Son, 1837.


Howison, John. *Sketches of Upper Canada, domestic, local and characteristic: To which are added, practical details for the information of emigrants of every class; and some recollections of the United States of America*. Edinburgh Oliver & Boyd, 1825.


Independent Order of Foresters, Oronhyatekha Historical Rooms and Library, Barlow Cumberland, and Oronhyatekha Historical Collection. *Catalogue and Notes of the Oronhyatekha Historical Collection, Prepared by F. Barlow Cumberland*. Toronto: Supreme Court, Independent Order of Foresters, 1904.


*Toronto’s 100 Years*. Toronto: Centennial Committee, 1934.


———. *Toronto Purchase Specific Claim: Arriving at an Agreement*. Hagersville, ON: Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, n.d.

Mississauga: Recreation and Parks Department. *Mississauga’s Heritage: the formative years, 1798-1879*. City of Mississauga Recreation and Parks Dept., 1983


Mulvany, Charles Pelham. *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885: Comprising a Full and Impartial Account of the Origin and Progress of the War, of the various Engagements with the Indians and Half-Breeds, of the Heroic Deeds Performed by Officers and Men, and of Touching Scenes in the Field, the Camp, and the Cabin: Including a History of the Indian Tribes of North-Western Canada, their Numbers, Modes of Living, Habits, Customs, Religious Rites, and Ceremonies, with Thrilling Narratives of Captures, Imprisonment, Massacres, and Hair Breadth Escapes of White Settlers etc*. Toronto: A. H. Hovey, 1885.

Mulvany, Charles Pelham, G. Mercer Adam, and Christopher Blackett Robinson. *History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario: Containing a History of the City of Toronto and the County of York, with the Townships, Towns, Villages, Churches, Schools, General and Local Statistics, Biographical Sketches, etc., etc.* Toronto: C.B. Robinson, 1885.


Russell, Victor L. Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto. Toronto: Published for the Toronto Sesquicentennial Board by University of Toronto Press, 1984


Slight, Benjamin. *Indian Researches; or, facts concerning the North American Indians; including notices of their present state of improvement, in their social, civil, and religious condition; with hints for their future advancement*. Montreal: J. E. L. Miller, 1844.


**Theses and Dissertations**


Secondary Sources


Dewdney, Selwyn H. *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway*. Toronto: Published for the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, by University of Toronto Press, 1975.


Firth, Edith G. and The City of Toronto. *Toronto in Art: 150 Years through Artists’ Eyes*. Markham, ON: Fitzhhenry & Whiteside in co-operation with The City of Toronto, 1983.


McCallum, Mary Jane Logan. “Indigenous Labor and Indigenous History.” *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 523-44.


Morgan, Cecilia. “History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920s.” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (September 2001): 491-528.


Nagler, Mark. *Indians in the city; a study of the urbanization of Indians in Toronto.* Ottawa: Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, St. Paul’s University, 1970.


———. “Whose Indian History?” *William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (April 1993): 379-93.


“Now We Talk, You Listen: Indian Delegates at a conference in 1939 joined to speak for themselves.” *Rotunda* 23, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 48-52.


