

BONITA LAWRENCE

FRACTURED HOMELAND

**FEDERAL RECOGNITION AND
ALGONQUIN IDENTITY IN ONTARIO**

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Preface

Our generation in my family now lives with the repercussions of having been brought up to consider our Native heritage, at very deep levels, to be meaningless. And yet, like a tough weed whose roots are pervasively anchored everywhere in the soil of this land and which therefore *cannot* be uprooted, our Native identity continues to manifest its presence in my family, even after a generation of silencing.

– Bonita Lawrence, *“Real” Indians and Others*

The issue of ambiguity in Native identity has always interested me, primarily because of my own family’s identity struggles. Colonial violence, assimilation pressures, migration, and loss of Indian status have marked my family history and have made recovering a Mi’kmaq identity a difficult process for my generation of my family. Like many urban mixed-bloods, I have struggled to piece together a Native heritage out of family history as my mother’s generation (which has now passed on) remembered it, from fragments gleaned from genealogical research, and from elders’ accounts. And because of the multiple instances of belonging and not-belonging that I experienced in coming to know myself as a Native person, I decided to focus on urban mixed-blood identity for my PhD research.

In the Toronto urban Native community where I lived during the early 1990s, it seemed that internal divisions defined our lives as Native people, whether it was reserve versus urban, dark-skinned versus light-skinned, or

status versus non-status. Of course, these were not neutral binaries. One side of the binary was always “more Indian”; the opposite side was invariably “not Indian enough.” And yet, even as these divisions were part of our daily lived experience, most of the Native people around me were uneasy about discussing them. Perhaps this is not surprising. In a city where over 70 percent of the population consists of recent immigrants, the presence of a hundred thousand Native people barely registers. In this context, to be Native is to be heavily minoritized and to continuously encounter widespread ignorance about our very existence. And indeed, in my research, the family histories of almost every participant bore the marks of a tangible legacy of colonial violence and dispossession. Through this work, I began to understand the powerful role that loss of Indian status had played for many of the people that I interviewed, and that a sense of dispossession and homelessness was a common hallmark of urban non-status Native experience.

In 1999, I left Toronto to take up my first academic position at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. While modifying my dissertation, which was ultimately published as *“Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lawrence 2004), I became aware of a different kind of non-status experience, one that was rural and associated with a land base. As I became friends with Robert Lovelace, then manager of the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre at Queen’s, I met people from his community, Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, and began to understand that for many Algonquin people who lacked Indian status, the land anchored them and provided a sense of identity. Like urban non-status Native people, they bore the scars of a history of colonial violence and often struggled with having lost knowledge of language and culture or with not looking “Indian enough.” There was one huge difference, however: although the Algonquins I met had been profoundly dispossessed when the settler society appropriated their lands, they could by no stretch of the imagination be conceived of as “homeless,” in the manner in which so many non-status urban Native people in Toronto, having lost the ties to their own territories, are homeless.

Gradually, prompted by the friendships that I made among the Algonquins I met in southern Algonquin territory, the idea of conducting research with federally unrecognized Algonquin communities began to grow. In 2003, when I received a tiny grant from Queen’s University to “scope out” the nature of such research, I began to interview the leadership of Ardoch and other communities. When I interviewed elder Harold Perry in a canoe as he paddled around the Mud Lake wild rice beds, which for several generations had been his family’s responsibility to maintain, I began to see that for the most part,

Algonquins were still living in their own territories and that the land was reflected in their family histories. I also learned that because a comprehensive claim was taking place within the region, they were at risk of losing title to the territory that defined them as a people.

Having acquired a large research grant based on the earlier work, I spent the next seven years interviewing Algonquins from all over the territory. They shared their stories about the past, the land claim struggles that were consuming them in the present, and their hopes and fears about the future. I also made friends with a number of Algonquins who were kind enough to help me, not only by interviewing their friends, but by clearing up multiple misconceptions and clarifying complex issues relating to the history of the land claim. In an act of profound faith, they included me in their e-mail networks so that I became privy to the news and ongoing discussions that were raging throughout Algonquin territory, particularly in the interval between 2004 and 2006, after the land claim regime changed.

Over the years, as I worked on this book and was exposed to the terrible divisions that the land claim was generating among so many Algonquins, as well as their efforts to protect the land, I began to understand the price they were paying to maintain their homeland. I offer this book in humble gratitude for the manner in which so many people shared their stories and their wisdom with me. Ultimately, the knowledge I have received is theirs; only the errors are mine.

Wel'aliq! Um sed nogumak!

Acknowledgments

This book would never have existed without the friendship and assistance of Bob Lovelace. Through his willingness to introduce me to the Ardoch community and other Algonquins, and to share his perspectives in lengthy discussions over the years, Bob has been absolutely essential to the success of this project. The chapters relating to Ardoch were written while Bob was in prison for living up to the responsibilities of Algonquin jurisdiction in order to protect the land. As I worked through the newsletters and leaflets that he had written twenty years earlier, the fact of his incarceration gave the process a poignancy and immediacy that I had not expected to experience in writing about communities other than my own. This was amplified by the fact that for a number of years while at Queen's and during the research process, my own spiritual life was maintained through attending sweat lodges conducted by Bob at his property in the Frontenac highlands. Chi Meegwetch, Bob!

Other individuals from Ardoch, such as Paula Sherman and Harold Perry, played an early and formative role in my understanding of the issues, for which I am very grateful. Meegwetch!

As I struggled to understand the history of the Algonquin land claim, as well as the central role that questions of identity have played in its development, Heather Majaury generously gave her time and energy, offering long (and inevitably humorous) commentary and constantly being willing to help me "fill in the blanks," explaining many dynamics that I would not have otherwise understood. Lynn Gehl also played an important role in my writing. In her

tireless research and analysis of the Algonquin land claim, identity, and nationhood, she has constantly challenged Algonquins to rethink, or to think more carefully, about the process in which they are engaging. My own analysis of the land claim and many of the issues faced by contemporary Algonquins therefore owes much to Lynn's work. Finally, my numerous discussions with Bob Majaury enabled me to understand recent developments in Algonquin territory. To all these Algonquins, I offer a heartfelt Chi Meegwetch!

Laura Schwager, a former student of mine from Queen's, was my first research assistant. She provided valuable help during the earliest years of the research when I was struggling, as a new professor, to learn how to run a research project. In later years, her research into her Mohawk family's journey from Akwesasne to off-reserve landlessness intellectually amplified my own work. Niawen!

I also want to thank Brian Murray, who steadfastly typed most of the interviews, despite tremendous difficulties. I want to thank my good friend Jean Murray, who not only typed but carefully coded the work. The countless questions she asked kept me on track throughout the process. Last but not least, I want to thank John Usher, for his work in coding, for his countless efforts to contribute, and for our in-depth arguments about the ethics of the land claim, which, during the early years of the project when I didn't know enough about the issues, kept me honest. Chi Meegwetch!

Introduction

In 1992, land claim negotiations began between the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, the only federally recognized Algonquin reserve in Ontario, the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada. From the moment that negotiations began – and indeed, from the moment that Pikwakanagan launched the petition to initiate the land claim – the existence of large numbers of Algonquins who had never been federally recognized as Indians rose to the forefront.

This book is about federally unrecognized Algonquins in Ontario. It includes the scattering of historic Algonquin communities whose presence was invisible to outsiders, consisting of networks of families who remained relatively cohesive despite losing most of their land base to settlers and not being recognized under the Indian Act. It also encompasses the even larger numbers of non-status Algonquins scattered across Algonquin territory – as well as outside of it – who were organized by representatives from Pikwakanagan into “area committees” for the purpose of the land claim. Through these organizations, many of these individuals are seeking to re-create organic community-based identities as Algonquins.

Indeed, after years of silence about “Indianness,” the land claim has forced many non-status Algonquins to struggle with questions of identity and what constitutes “Algonquinness” and “Indianness.” It has also heightened the divisions created by centuries of colonial incursions into Algonquin territory. And yet this book is not primarily concerned with the land claim, but about

Algonquin identity and nationhood. Because the claim affects each community, it will be taken up, but only where it pertains to the efforts of federally unrecognized Algonquins to be reborn as a people after almost two hundred years of settler engulfment of their homeland, the Ottawa River watershed, and a century of erasure as “Indians.”

Federally unrecognized Algonquins in Ontario have been invisible in public discourse for over a hundred years. Nonetheless, they have persisted in backwoods settlements and small towns throughout the Ottawa River watershed. Most no longer speak Algonquin, many do not look visibly “Indian,” and for many of them, their families have kept silent about their identities for at least a generation, with the result that cultural knowledge is diminished. Unlike non-status Indians in urban settings, however, federally unrecognized Algonquins are anchored by the land in ways that are subtle and yet profound. Connection to the land has enabled some communities to retain aspects of a collective ethos; in other places, the social links that marked Algonquin life have been transformed but not obliterated. For that reason, this book seeks to explore who federally unrecognized Algonquins *are*, in all their diversity, and the differing visions they have of re-creating Algonquin nationhood.

In addressing nationhood, this book does not adopt a post-colonial concern with deconstructing, in an abstract manner, the concept of nationhood. For a people struggling to survive *as* Native people after their collective existence has been continuously under attack for almost three centuries, assertions of nationhood are vital. Indeed, attempting to deconstruct something that is in the process of being reborn is highly inappropriate. And though post-colonial discourse has created a potent body of work addressing nationalism and national identities, as Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) have noted, for the most part this work is premised upon the same principles of Indigenous non-existence on which colonial discourse rests.

For that reason, the only appropriate definition of “nationhood” relevant in this context is formulated by the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of society now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in

accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (Cobo 1987, quoted in Maaka and Fleras 2005, 30-31)

Nevertheless, because Algonquins sought to re-create their nationhood through the comprehensive claims process, which from the start privileged some Algonquins over others and raised basic ideological questions about the nature of Algonquin identity – indeed, about Indianness itself – this book will explore the views of those involved in the process to tease out the contradictions in the diverse perspectives expressed. The aim is to understand the means through which Algonquins have sought to re-create their identities and their nationhood. I will also attempt to articulate the differing experiences of Algonquinness shaped not only by the presence or lack of Indian status, but by varying experiences of settler incursion in eastern Ontario. In a sense, the book seeks to weave together into a coherent web the stories of nationhood that federally unrecognized Algonquins are grappling with, all across the territory.

In rejecting a reliance on post-colonialism, this book adopts Indigenism as its theoretical approach. Ward Churchill (1992, 403-4) describes this perspective, in bold strokes, as taking the rights of Indigenous peoples as the highest priority, drawing upon the knowledge and values of Indigenous communities, and articulating the spirit of resistance that has marked the history of their fight against colonialism.

And yet, Indigenism has many approaches and many ways of understanding the issues we face. Moreover, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes, Indigenous people's experiences of colonization have of necessity been understood through multivariate exposures to the discourses of other colonized and oppressed people around the world. As a result, there is no "purist" lens of resistance that has not been influenced by struggles elsewhere; nevertheless, the perspectives we develop synthesize these outlooks into viewpoints that are of primary relevance to Indigenous people. In an oft-quoted paragraph, Smith (*ibid.*, 38) addresses this reality:

The development of theories by Indigenous scholars which attempt to explain our existence in contemporary society (as opposed to the "traditional" society constructed under modernism) has only just begun. Not all these theories claim to be derived from some "pure" sense of what it means to be Indigenous, nor do they claim to be theories which have been developed in a vacuum separated from any association with civil and human rights movements, other nationalist struggles, or other theoretical approaches. What is claimed, however, is that new ways of theorizing by Indigenous scholars are

grounded in a real sense of, and sensitivity towards, what it means to be an Indigenous person ... Contained within this imperative is a sense of being able to determine priorities, to bring to the centre those issues of our own choosing, and to discuss them amongst ourselves.

Most of my writing might be viewed as the particular strand of Indigenism that addresses the effects of identity legislation and other histories of genocidal pressures on Indigenous people, and the “modern” ways they seek to re-create traditional values. That being said, what I have attempted to develop in this book, above all, is clarity about the colonization processes that Algonquins have experienced and continue to experience in Canada, and how Indigenous people themselves can become implicated in these processes as they search for ways of resisting colonialist assault. Because of this, the diverse paths they have taken toward decolonization are central to this discussion.

Defining “Federal Recognition”

It is important to clarify what is meant by “federal recognition,” particularly in Canada, where this term is rarely used. “Unrecognized” Indigenous people are not perceived as being Indigenous by the nation-state in which they are situated. Bruce Miller (2003) has addressed the fact that Indigenous people exist around the world who, for a wide variety of reasons, are unrecognized by the states who occupy their territories. Although each group faces different circumstances, denial of recognition is almost always part of a colonial process whereby states gain untrammelled access to their land and resources. At other times, states also employ policies of non-recognition in order to reduce the numbers of individuals with claims to the land. The term “federal recognition” has gained the most attention in the United States, where the federal government’s formal acknowledgment of an “Indian tribe” brings a range of rights and possible benefits that greatly increase the abilities of communities to survive as Indians. These benefits may include far higher levels of autonomy from state governments, eligibility for funding, and increased possibilities for generating revenue or acquiring lands. They can also entail the repatriation of sacred artifacts lost to museums, the maintenance of tribal courts, and finally, recognition as “Indian” by other federally recognized tribes.

Because many US Indigenous groups have been recognized by local state governments but not by Washington, or have had their tribal status arbitrarily “terminated,” they can avail themselves of formal mechanisms to *become* federally recognized, provided they can fulfill certain requirements related to

proving tribal histories and lineages. In both the United States and Canada, federal recognition is articulated in legislation and legal decisions defining Native identity. In both countries, recognition is therefore intimately tied to both legal and conceptual notions of “who is an Indian.” However, in Canada, historically, there is only one means of recognition of Indianness – to be registered as a status Indian within the meaning of the Indian Act.¹

In Canada, to be federally unrecognized is both an individual and a collective condition. *Individuals* are “non-status” for a variety of reasons. Either they or their ancestors once held Indian status but lost it due to certain stipulations under the Indian Act, or they never acquired it because their ancestors for various reasons were left off the list of band members developed by Indian agents or were classified as “half-breed” during the treaty process and therefore legally excluded from Indianness. *Groups* usually lack federal recognition because they were left out of treaty negotiations – the band simply was not present and was therefore not included. In areas where no treaties were signed, reserves were sometimes set aside, and some Native people who occupied the land now designated as reserves or who were present when the lists of registered Indians were drawn up by the Indian agent appointed for each reserve became federally recognized. However, those whose lands were too quickly consumed by the juggernaut of colonial settlement were frequently not assigned reserves; from then on, they were no longer recognized as Indians. This is the situation for the majority of Algonquins in Ontario.

In Canada, unlike in the United States, the legacy of British colonialism has meant that though the courts might recognize the limited rights of Indigenous peoples to *use* certain territories, the groups themselves are never perceived as nations (not even as “domestic dependent nations,” which legally defined Native American tribes in the 1830s). In Canada, at best, a group is designated as an Indian band according to the lists drawn up by treaty officials when treaties were signed. These bands are small subsets of pre-existing nations; as a result, instead of acknowledging the existence of fifty-odd Indigenous nations across the land, Canada recognizes over six hundred tiny subgroups of these nations as Indian bands (now designated as “First Nations”). Until 1985, band membership was determined solely by Ottawa, which decided what individuals belonged to what bands. Because Indian status is bestowed only upon those whose ancestors were granted it, Indigenous people who lack Indian status have no formal means through which to attain it (though, until 1985, non-Indian women who married Indian men acquired Indian status). In a rare measure, after the Newfoundland Mi’kmaq were denied recognition when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, they were subsequently brought under

the Indian Act to rectify this omission. However, in most instances, the boundaries of who is legally an Indian in Canada cannot be redrawn once they are established.

Through a land claim, however, a people *can* gain recognition as Indigenous, though this, too, is very rare. For the most part, comprehensive claims are negotiated only with those whom Canada already recognizes as Indian (in some land claim processes, a few claimants are recognized as Metis). For that reason, the Ontario Algonquin land claim, where most of those negotiating have never been recognized as Indian and are seeking formal recognition *through* the claim, is highly anomalous.

In speaking of federally unrecognized Algonquins in Ontario, I am referring first of all to communities – to the networks of families that have persisted in the Ottawa Valley in places such as Ardoch, Baptiste Lake, Mattawa, Sharbot Lake, Whitney, and Allumette Island (whose residents were generally displaced to the town of Pembroke). These communities today are descended from the families who managed to remain within their traditional territories, even as their lands were overrun by settlers. They maintained close ties with each other and, over the years, held on to certain collective practices and values that set them apart from the white settlers around them. In some areas, such as Ardoch, these families were forced to develop modern organizations to represent them, before the land claim even began. Indeed, some of the divisions that currently plague some of the federally unrecognized Algonquin communities originated when the land claim negotiators from Pikwakanagan disregarded the organizations that pre-dated the land claim and instead set up separate area committees in their territories to represent them within the land claim. In other areas, such as Bancroft, the land claim was the vehicle that formally organized existing informal networks of communities.

Although those whose ancestors managed to remain in their traditional territories were able to survive as small, cohesive communities, many other Algonquins survived the onslaught of settlers only through relocation. As families and individuals were scattered across Algonquin territory (including Quebec), they survived as best they could. Sometimes, they left the territory altogether; more commonly, however, they travelled around eking out a marginal survival through seasonal work in resource industries and wherever other work could be found. Their descendants were therefore not affiliated with any Algonquin community until the advent of the land claim, when representatives from Pikwakanagan organized them into area committees. In some instances, these area committees have acted as focal points, gathering large numbers of unaffiliated Algonquins scattered throughout the territory,

becoming “mega-communities” in the process, with little collective focus or cohesion. Finally, the fragmentation produced by the land claim has brought about a seemingly endless proliferation of newer communities splitting off from older ones.

The only organic way to make sense of these multiple experiences is by understanding that, regardless of whether communities are historical remnants of ancient bands or originated as area committees, most federally unrecognized Algonquin communities are still located within the watersheds where historic Algonquin communities were situated. The rivers fed the people and provided transportation, linking each community into the larger confederacy that historically constituted Algonquin nationhood. This book follows this organization, focusing on contemporary communities according to the watersheds in which they are situated. This approach also enables an exploration of the diverse ways in which the communities of each watershed represent differing contemporary manifestations of a broader and more cohesive past.

A final note should be made concerning federal recognition. In order to negotiate a comprehensive claim in a context where the majority of Algonquins are not federally recognized, Canada has been forced to *provisionally* recognize an entity known as the Algonquin Nation Tribal Council, which represents non-status Algonquins, in order to negotiate with them. However, this entity has no formal federal recognition *outside* of this process. For example, if the negotiations were to break down for good, the Algonquin Nation Tribal Council and its constituent communities could not make other claims on Canada or the provinces as federally recognized Algonquins. For non-status Algonquins, then, federal recognition depends on the successful conclusion of the comprehensive claims process.

Structure of the Book

In order to focus on identity, in an organic sense, for federally unrecognized Algonquins, *Fractured Homeland* is organized into parts that correspond to the various Ontario watersheds in which Algonquins live. Part 1, however, is a general overview, exploring the questions of history and identity with which resurgent groups must grapple in their effort to reconstitute themselves as peoples. Chapter 1 engages with the collective history shared by all Algonquins. It sketches the parameters of their historical existence in their entire homeland, when the Kiji Sibi (now known as the Ottawa River) was the centre of their identity, rather than the site of their division into Quebec and Ontario Algonquins; the chapter also discusses how they struggled against encroaching

Europeans. Chapter 2 examines the colonial divisions experienced by Algonquins, including the effects of the partition of their territory into two provinces and their subsequent categorization into status Indians and non-status Algonquins. In the interests of clarity, Chapter 3 focuses on the underlying framework of Canadian constitutional and policy issues that define what Algonquins have at stake in terms of their rights as Indigenous people in negotiating a comprehensive claim with Canada. Concepts of Aboriginal rights and title, the meaning of treaties, and the comprehensive claims process itself are scrutinized here.

Chapter 4 provides both a brief history of the Algonquin land claim, as the means by which Ontario Algonquins have attempted to reclaim their homeland, and an overview of the divisions created in the process. Chapter 5 then takes up questions of identity more broadly, exploring the parameters of resurgence for non-status Algonquins who are struggling to understand themselves as Indian under the extreme pressure of a major land claim despite generations of silence in their families about Indigenous identity.

The next four parts of the book, based primarily on interviews and existing literature, explore contemporary Algonquin communities in four different watersheds in Ontario. Part 2 focuses on the southeastern region of the territory, where three rivers – the Mississippi, the Rideau, and the lower Madawaska – draw together. This area, one of the first to face settler encroachment in the early eighteen hundreds, was also the first site where Ontario Algonquins were promised a land base. Although this land base was not subsequently surveyed and was then overrun by settlers, this region is home to one of the oldest and best-documented of the federally unrecognized communities – Ardoch Algonquin First Nation. As this community has engaged in several efforts to protect the land, its history will be extensively examined, as will that of more recent communities in the watershed, which have formed in reaction to the land claim. Indeed, Part 2 provides a virtual case study on how the land claim has divided the people of this region, with the most complete articulation of how divisions within and between communities have been created and maintained.

Part 3 examines the communities located in the watersheds of the Bonnechere and Petawawa Rivers. This area contains the federally recognized reserve known as Pikwakanagan (initially called Golden Lake) as well as three federally unrecognized communities. Although the unrecognized communities encompass many individuals whose ancestors did not move to Pikwakanagan and who were therefore never granted Indian status, there is also a sizeable number of individuals in these communities whose ancestors were members of

Pikwakanagan and who lost their status primarily because of gender discrimination in the Indian Act.² The tensions between these communities and Pikwakanagan are therefore all the more poignant for these individuals, who feel rejected by their “real” community, Pikwakanagan, simply because, under the complexities of identity legislation in the Indian Act, they cannot regain their Indian status.

Part 4 looks at the last Algonquins to face settler encroachment in the Ottawa Valley, who were granted land in the headlands of their traditional territory, the upper Madawaska River, but were subsequently forced out when a huge provincial park, ironically named Algonquin Park, was created there. The communities they later formed along the Madawaska and York Rivers will be explored here.

Part 5 examines the Algonquins whose families were historically situated along the Ottawa River itself and who today live in small towns on either side of the river. At Mattawa, along the northwestern section of the river (which also encompasses the northern boundary of the land claim), there are two Algonquin communities – one that predates the land claim and one that originated as an area committee. This area is also unique in that it contains a distinct historical Metis community that was central to defining Metis rights under the *Powley* case.³ In a context where Pikwakanagan has frequently dismissed the claims of non-status Algonquins by asserting that they are “really” Metis, the distinctive differences manifested between Metis and Algonquins in this region are important. Near the southeast end of the river, in Ottawa itself, is a small community of Algonquins who have been drawn into Ottawa to work and live. And around Pembroke, near Morrison’s Island, where the ancient Kichesipirini Algonquins were once powerful enough to demand tolls from anybody who wished to travel along the Ottawa River, the descendants of the “people of the island” have re-formed into a community, part of whose homeland now comes under the Province of Quebec but who mostly live in Ontario. Because the Ottawa River forms the provincial boundary between Quebec and Ontario, the communities along it live daily with the fracturing of their homeland into the two provinces, since their membership (and sometimes their territories) spans both sides of the river. They are also aware that the river itself cannot be protected when jurisdictional boundaries place it between current Algonquin land claims in both Ontario and Quebec.

The final chapter of this book focuses broadly on Algonquinness itself and on what can be generalized about Algonquin identity and nationhood. From their initial encounter with Samuel de Champlain in 1603, Algonquins have

experienced over four hundred years of extensive contact, first with missionaries and explorers, then with fur traders, lumbermen, settlers, and miners, and finally with those involved in hydro and nuclear development. In Ontario particularly, they have faced a settler society that developed during the early days of Canada's formation and that has enveloped them almost entirely for nearly two centuries. The truly amazing reality that the research reveals is that despite the changes wrought by settlers, a distinct non-status Algonquin identity remains in Ontario today.

Research and the Literature

This book is the result of seven years of research and seventy-odd interviews conducted with federally unrecognized Algonquins in Ontario. It also includes a handful of interviews with non-status Algonquins living in Quebec. In the interests of hearing divergent perspectives, interviews were also conducted with Algonquins who have status, primarily from Pikwakanagan, but also with individuals originating from Quebec reserves who reside in Ontario.

It is important to address some of the methodological issues that arose during this project. The first problem is the profoundly fragmented nature of the research. Most academics have focused on Quebec Algonquins. Perhaps this is not surprising: as northern land-based people, many of whom have retained their language, Quebec Algonquins are more “interesting” to anthropologists than those in Ontario, most of whom speak only English and are more dependent on a wage economy. However, anthropological interest has generally been quite site-specific, featuring in-depth research with a handful of Quebec communities. There are no comparative studies of Algonquins in different communities, even across Quebec, let alone across the provincial boundary. Furthermore, the sporadic references to urban non-status Algonquins in Quebec within the literature inevitably describe them as “Metis” and portray them as simply being acculturated and therefore “less Algonquin,” rather than suggesting that they might represent a different experience of Algonquinness than their reserve-based status Indian counterparts.

All of the published work on Ontario Algonquins concentrates on Pikwakanagan, as the only federally recognized Algonquin reserve in the province, and has therefore reproduced the colonial categories that render non-status Algonquins invisible. However, recent primary research has provided valuable data addressing the histories of some of the federally unrecognized communities. One example is the eight-volume report on the Golden Lake land claim that was prepared by Joan Holmes and Associates in 1993 for

the Ontario Native Secretariat. Ostensibly about Pikwakanagan, the report includes such wide-ranging research on the entire Algonquin Nation, particularly from government archives, that it has unwittingly provided significant details on the histories of many federally unrecognized communities. *Fractured Homeland* is the first publication to extensively utilize the historical data from this report.

Additional unpublished documents exist for only one federally unrecognized community: a number of graduate dissertations have focused on the histories, identities, and land-based struggles of Ardoch Algonquin First Nation. None of the other federally unrecognized communities have been researched by academics, although the Bonnechere Algonquin Community conducted its own oral history research and produced a slim volume of these histories in the late 1990s. Reports on Algonquin Park archaeological sites were provided to me by members of the Whitney community, and information about the Bancroft community was available online.

Other primary documents were shared by the communities themselves. The website for the Algonquins and Nipissings of Greater Golden Lake routinely posts crucial primary material relating to the land claim, including handbills, reports of public meetings, and newspaper articles, which supplied valuable information. The Sharbot Lake community provided me with a number of newspaper clippings relating to its activities in 2003 (when I interviewed the leader of the community). However, by far the greatest number of primary documents came from the personal files of Harold Perry and Robert Lovelace of Ardoch Algonquin First Nation. By 2004, they had accumulated drawers of file folders containing newsletters, reports of meetings dating back over twenty years, newspaper and magazine clippings on the “rice war” of 1982, transcripts of testimony at trials and hearings in which Ardoch had taken part, and general documents relating to the land claim. These primary sources furnished much of the information about the early years of the claim (prior to 2002) as well as a wealth of material about Ardoch’s history. Ultimately, far more written information was available for Ardoch than for the other federally unrecognized communities. As a result, for most of the other communities, I have had to rely solely on my interviews and a few written sources, with the inevitable consequence that the information is sketchier for these communities.

A second problem was the intensity of the meaning of Indian status for many Algonquins. Most individuals whom I interviewed at Pikwakanagan requested anonymity because they wished to avoid community censure for going “on record” as questioning the meaning of Indian status or expressing

sympathy for the concerns of non-status Algonquins. Pikwakanagan's leader, Kirby Whiteduck, agreed to be interviewed but clearly saw me as potentially biased against Pikwakanagan because of my interest in the federally unrecognized communities; nevertheless, he provided valuable information about Pikwakanagan itself.

I encountered a third difficulty, which proved insurmountable, when I attempted to expand my research into Quebec. Two leaders of Quebec reserves expressed skepticism regarding my work with the Ontario non-status communities; in their view, the only "real" Algonquins in Ontario lived at Pikwakanagan. Ultimately, the two tribal councils in Quebec, each for very different reasons, denied me permission to extend my research into the nine Quebec First Nations that they represented. In any case, given the size of the Algonquin territory there, the language differences, and the number of communities involved, doing an adequate job would have been a daunting task that would have demanded several additional years of research. Nevertheless, the work suffers by its truncation at the Ontario-Quebec border. It is my hope that other Indigenous researchers will focus on the rebuilding of Algonquin nationhood in Quebec and that their work, in conjunction with this book, will provide a much expanded and clearer picture of Algonquin people today and of their beautiful – if fractured – homeland.

Finally, Algonquin resurgence in Ontario, involving a struggle for federal recognition through a land claim, has brought about its own kind of fragmentation. This affected the research in a number of ways. First, the Tri-Council Policy on Research with Aboriginal People required me, as a funded researcher, to obtain the approval of the Aboriginal leadership in each community before I began research within the community.⁴ It also suggests that researchers should, wherever possible, submit their results to the leadership of each community before publishing, to ensure that they have not inadvertently caused problems for the community. However, this policy, developed with federally recognized Aboriginal communities in mind who increasingly have developed straightforward research protocols for researchers to follow, was of little assistance when conducting research with non-status communities involved in a land claim. In many instances, the research involved multiple new communities that were internally fragmented and sometimes in opposition to each other or divided within themselves. Furthermore, in most of the communities that were created for the purpose of the land claim, one individual typically represents several hundred people and sometimes close to a thousand. For many of these communities, multiple dissident voices opposed the policies and practices of their appointed leaders. In such a context, privileging the

perspectives of individual leaders within the communities was not possible; I did interview the leaders first, but there was no question of their providing final permission relating to what I published.

A second land-claim-related problem arose when four community leaders whom I interviewed in 2003 subsequently became Algonquin negotiation representatives (ANRs) when the land claim resumed in 2004. Because all communications relating to the claim must go through the claim's chief negotiator, Bob Potts, ANRs are not permitted to speak with researchers, and researchers therefore cannot quote individual ANRs relating to the land claim. Given that the interviews with these community leaders focused entirely on the land claim, I was therefore unable to include any quotes from these individuals at all, or indeed, to contact them about the research that I had conducted. Although I have paraphrased some aspects of their words and included information that they shared with me, the usual research process of seeking permission from these individuals on behalf of their communities could not be followed in this instance. This stipulation also meant that I could not interview the leaders of two other communities – one in Bancroft and one in Mattawa.⁵ Because of this, my ability to interview members of their communities was compromised. This major gap in the research was mitigated to some extent by individuals residing in Toronto who were knowledgeable members of the two communities in question and who were willing to provide me with information. My writing concerning these communities therefore relies primarily on historical documentation supplemented by a handful of interviews.

As an outsider, I could not have obtained in-depth interviews with many activists, elders, and community people had I not been assisted by two Algonquin individuals – Heather Majaury and Paula LaPierre – who worked on the project as research assistants in 2005. An additional important source of information came from the informal e-mail networks of concerned Algonquins, to which a number of individuals kindly gave me access. Algonquins use these networks to share an extensive array of detailed information – from copies of their correspondence with the chief negotiator Bob Potts and the responses they received, to the latest events in their communities. Some shared how they had broken away from their communities and formed new entities, having the requisite 125 members required to constitute a community under the land claim. Still others circulated documents (including the letters they had received from the leader of their land claim community formally expelling them as dissidents). Others wrote vociferously and tirelessly on the claim process and shared their newspaper and academic articles relating to the subject. For a

specific interval, particularly when the land claim changed from its pre-2004 format to the contemporary framework of negotiations, this e-mail network provided articulate arguments, passionate oratory, and the most up-to-date news about the ever-changing claim developments across the territory. Although a condition of being privy to this information was that I would not replicate it, it contributed valuable background material that is central to this book. These e-mails supplied tangible evidence of how difficult the land claim is for Algonquins and of the resultant divisions in various communities, but it also revealed that though those who negotiated the claim sometimes seemed to speak with a uniform voice, regardless of which community they claimed to represent, the discourse *within* the communities themselves came from intensely local experiences and concerns, varying broadly throughout the region. In this respect, although e-mail consists of text, the immediacy through which it traded news and the vocal and articulate commentary that accompanied it showed that contemporary Algonquins are using e-mail to preserve community life across distances – in essence, to revive and maintain a part of their oral tradition.

The intensifying pressures facing communities due to the land claim affected my research in both subtle and obvious ways. For example, while the project was under way, many community members became increasingly reluctant to talk to outsiders. In 2003, when the land claim was in abeyance, individuals were quite eager to be interviewed; in 2004, they were also eager to be interviewed to discuss the changes in the regime. The willingness of community people to speak with outsiders began to diminish in 2005, as conflicts relating to the land claim intensified. By 2006, most of the people I interviewed were either dissidents seeking alternatives to the direction their community or the land claim was taking or were urban individuals discussing their understandings of their Algonquinness. In 2007 and 2008, only a handful of new individuals consented to be interviewed. In the years after that, most of the research concentrated on updating material via discussions with many people who had been interviewed much earlier. With a handful of new interviews conducted in late 2009, seven years of research were concluded.

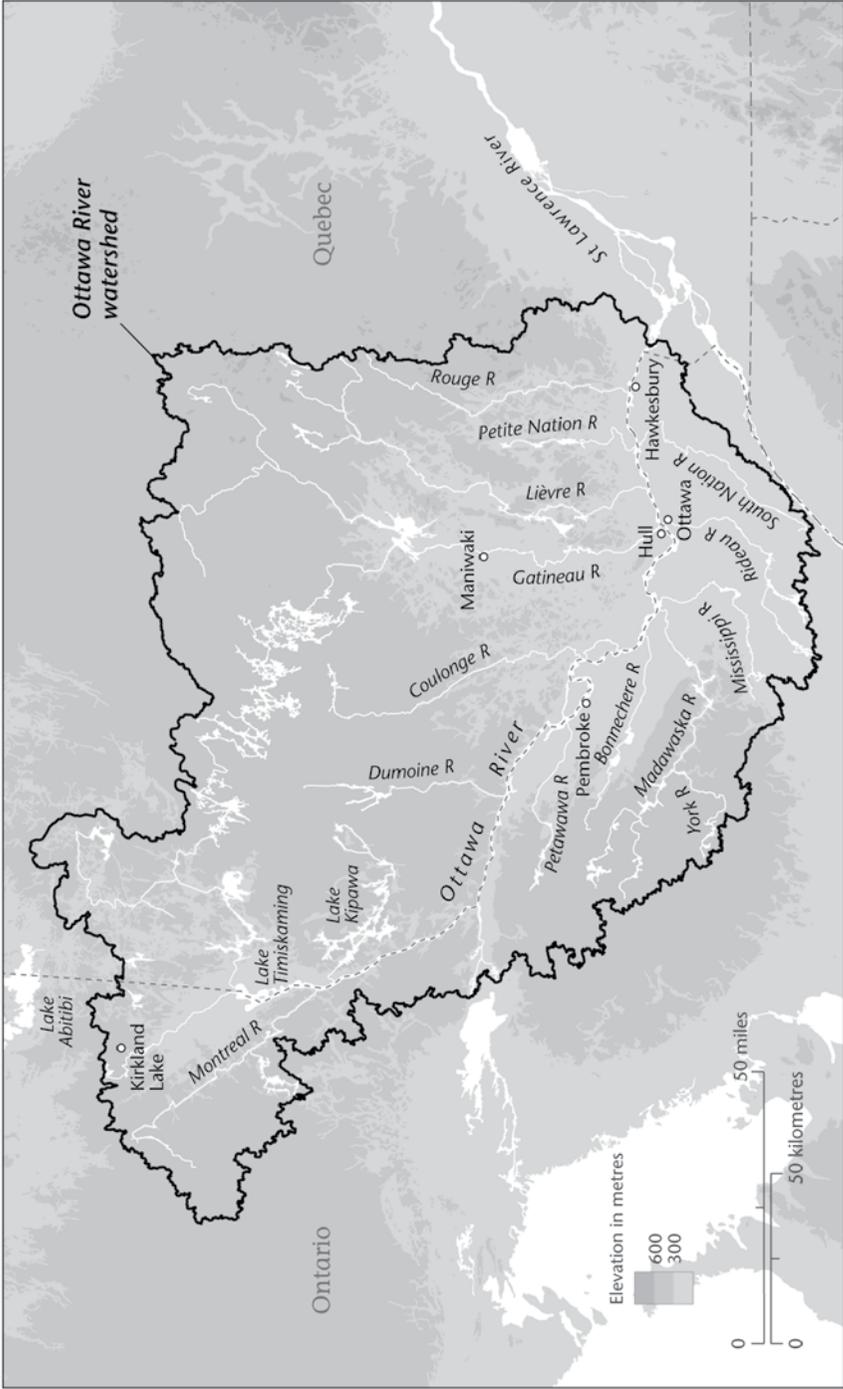
This temporal process has had a regional effect as well. The communities in southeastern and southcentral Ontario, which lie relatively close to urban centres and where a network of individuals referred me to other individuals, were relatively well interviewed. However, this was not the case in other areas, particularly around Algonquin Park, at Mattawa and in Bancroft, where very few people consented to be interviewed, and those who did subsequently changed their mind. As a result, in some locations, only the broadest parameters

of community experience are described in rudimentary ways, whereas in other areas, the nuances and complexities of local community life are more clearly delineated.

Finally, some communities are described in depth over time, due to my ongoing connections with them, whereas others are presented only at the specific moment when a small range of interviews took place. In many respects, then, this book constitutes a series of snapshots of an evolving people at particular phases of their development and cannot claim to be a comprehensive overview, either spatially or temporally. Nevertheless, it does attempt to sketch a range of experiences and contemporary meanings of Algonquinness for those people whose homelands are on the Ontario side of the Kiji Sibi, whose ancestors fought so hard to survive in the face of settler engulfment, and who are currently struggling with a high-stakes process – a comprehensive claim – that will profoundly affect their futures.

PART 1

Algonquin Survival and Resurgence



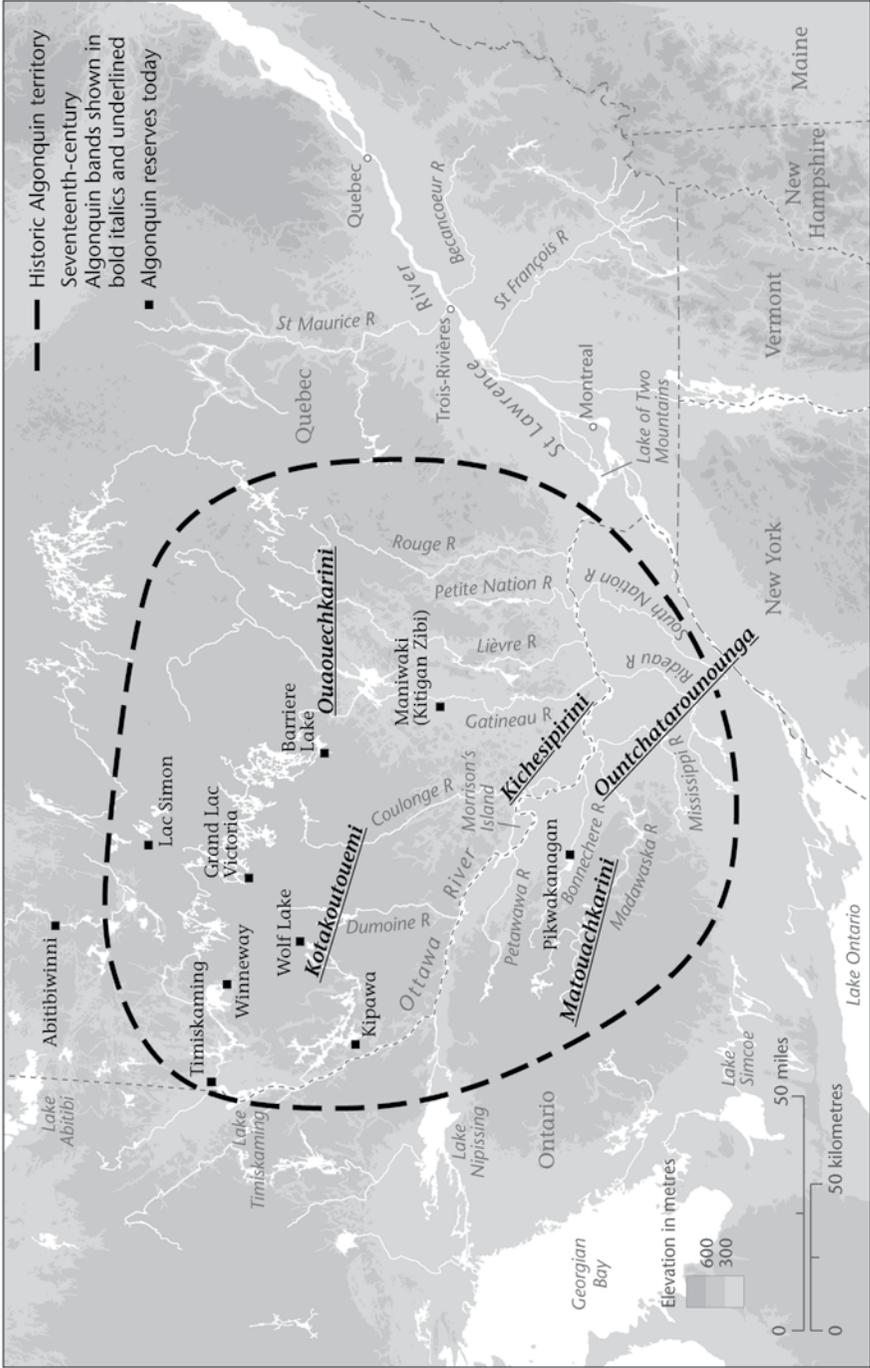
The Ottawa River watershed

1

Diplomacy, Resistance, and Dispossession

The Kiji Sibi, which the French correctly called the Great River of the Algonquins and the English misnamed the Ottawa River, has one of the largest natural watersheds in Eastern Canada, covering approximately 148,000 square kilometres (Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board 1984). The people of the Great River, today named Algonquins,¹ have occupied the watershed since time immemorial.² Although their territories have been extensive, those living in the lower Ottawa River watershed have gradually come to refer to themselves as the Omamiwininiwak, the “downriver” people (Morrison 2005, 26). Their territory, stretching south from Mattawa to Point L’Original near present-day Hawkesbury and encompassing all the lands drained by the Ottawa River and its tributaries, is included in the Ontario land claim. The Algonquins upriver, along the northern tributaries of the Ottawa as well as the upper Ottawa itself, generally refer to themselves as the Anishnabeg, or sometimes the Irini (now Inini).³ For example, the Timiskaming Algonquins call themselves Saugeen Anishnabeg, and the Algonquins of Barriere Lake still call themselves Mitcikinabik Inik, named after the “place of the stone fence or weir,” which the French called Barriere Lake (*ibid.*, 20-21).

Prior to the advent of Europeans, Algonquins controlled the Kiji Sibi, a strategic point on the routes linking the St. Lawrence River to Hudson and Ungava Bays and to the Great Lakes. Thus, they were centrally involved in wide-ranging trade networks that extended from the Gulf of Mexico to Hudson Bay and from the Atlantic coast to the Rockies (Hessel 1993; Côté 1996).⁴ Indeed, we can only conjecture that the language group known as Algonquian



Algonquin territory and reserves

may have been given its name by Europeans precisely because of the key trade role played by Algonquins for thousands of years.

If one looks at the Ottawa River watershed today, often described as part of Canada's "heartland," the Algonquin presence seems to have been entirely erased. Only Mattawa retains its Algonquin name, Matawang, "where the rivers divide" (there, the upper Ottawa River joins the Mattawa River to form the lower Ottawa). Further south, lower Ottawa River names such as Long Sault, La Chaudière, and Calumet and Allumette Islands reflect the long years of French colonization. And yet, as James Morrison (2005) points out, most of these names are actually French translations of Algonquin words. For example, Champlain chose "Sault de la Chaudière" as the name for the rapids near Ottawa because the churning water resembles a boiling kettle. This name is a translation of the Algonquin *asticou*, or *akikok*, which means "boiler."⁵ Similarly, the twenty kilometres of rapids near Lake of Two Mountains, known to the Algonquins as Quenechouan or Kindodjiwan (the long rapids), was renamed Long Sault. The rapids that Algonquins called Opwagani pawatik, or "pipe rapids," because the area yielded a stone suitable for making tobacco pipes, were renamed by Champlain Sault des Calumets, or the Calumet Rapids (*calumet* is the French word for the Algonquin ceremonial pipe). Allumette Island (*allumette* is French for matches) refers to the reeds, used as tapers by the Algonquins, that grow abundantly at the island (Bond 1966, 5). Despite the renaming of the Kiji Sibi landmarks and the imposition of an anglicized or gallicized settler veneer on the watershed, the land remains Algonquin, and an abiding Algonquin presence and sense of place survives that more than four hundred years of colonial incursion has never succeeded in uprooting or destroying.

To address the history of Algonquin relations with Canada is to address the formation of Canada itself, for the Ottawa River became a vitally strategic route between French fur traders on the St. Lawrence River and the Native groups to the north and west of the Ottawa Valley. Subsequently, the river became the boundary line between French and English settlement. In a sense, the Ottawa Valley, with the St. Lawrence, was central to the colonization project of both the French and British regimes.

The French Regime in Algonquin Country

Samuel de Champlain first encountered Algonquins in the Ottawa River watershed in 1603, and his journals document his subsequent visits to their

villages in 1613. His writing reveals that distinct Algonquin groups lived throughout the watershed: these included the Kichesipirini on Morrison's and Allumette Islands near the present-day town of Pembroke; the Ouauouchkarini (or Weskarini), who lived along the Lievre, Petite Nation, and Rouge Rivers; the Kotakoutouemi, who occupied the Coulonge and Dumoine watersheds; the Kinouchepirini, or Quenongebin, whose territory was between the Peta-wawa and Bonnechere Rivers; the Matouachkarini (or Matouweskarini), who occupied the Madawaska River region; and the Ountchatarounounga (or Onontchataronon), who lived along the Mississippi, Rideau, and South Nation Rivers.⁶ The Native people around Lakes Abitibi, Timiskaming, and Nipissing were mentioned as early as 1640 by the *Jesuit Relations* (Joan Holmes and Associates 1993, 2:27) and were subsequently acknowledged as speaking a language in common with other Algonquins (Laflamme 1979, 2). Although Nipissing chiefs represented distinct Nipissing communities during the summer social, spiritual, and political gatherings at Lake of Two Mountains, both the Algonquin and Nipissing Nations were closely linked culturally and politically, so that in later struggles to assert territorial rights over the lower Ottawa River, the term "Algonquin" applied to both Algonquin and Nipissing rights (Sarazin 1989, 171-72).

According to Gilles Havard (2001, 27, 30-31), two Indigenous-European alliance networks developed in seventeenth-century eastern North America, reflecting previous Indigenous alliance patterns. Based in what is now upstate New York, the Iroquois Confederacy allied with the Dutch when they claimed what is now New York City; after the English took over, the confederacy formed an alliance with them through a series of 1677 treaties at Albany known as the Covenant Chain. The French maintained several Algonquian allies, ranging from the Wabanaki Confederacy in the Maritimes, to the Montagnais and Algonquins north of the St. Lawrence, to the Great Lakes nations including the Nipissings, Odawas, Ojibways, Pottawatomis, Miamis, Illinois, Sauks, Foxes, Mascoutens, Kickapoos, and Winnebagos.

Although Indigenous people resorted to warfare when diplomacy failed, most clashes were minor, brief, and strategic; similarly, when vendettas occurred between clans or nations to appease honour, they were small-scale and highly symbolic. The alliances cemented with Europeans, however, transformed this pattern so that warfare became large-scale and deadly, utilizing European weapons and amplified by rivalries between Britain and France. In such a context, the British and the French encouraged or even fomented wars between their respective allies in order to weaken each other's foothold in the territories (since neither could maintain their North American colonies without

Native allies). This tremendous breakdown in diplomacy affected all Indigenous nations, but those of the Iroquois Confederacy, particularly the Mohawks, who occupied the buffer zone between the British and the French, were overwhelmingly embroiled in warfare on a continuous basis. Because of this, they increasingly attacked other nations, primarily to obtain captives to replace individuals lost in warfare with Britain's enemies. Indeed, basing his estimate on numerous accounts, Havard (2001, 49) suggests that by the 1660s, two-thirds of some Iroquois Confederacy nations were composed of captives who had become naturalized members of the confederacy through adoption into the matrilineal clan systems.

For French explorers, missionaries, and fur traders, a central figure – indeed, a central obstacle in accessing Indigenous territories – was Tessouat, the leader of the Kichesipirini Algonquins of Morrison's and Allumette Islands. For twenty years, until his death in 1636, Tessouat and the Kichesipirini confounded the desires of the French to use the Ottawa River to penetrate further north into Huron/Wendat territory and ultimately onward to the Great Lakes in order to establish their own trading forts. For the Algonquins, allowing the French to use their lands as a conduit to other nations represented a violation of their territorial integrity. Because the Kichesipirini held the narrows of the Ottawa at the fortress-like Morrison's Island as well as Allumette Island, Tessouat was able to assert a monopoly on the trade passing through his territory. The Kichesipirini were so important to the French that in 1620 Champlain sent the young Jean Nicollet to live with them and attempted unsuccessfully to persuade Tessouat to support the French.

But Tessouat's focus was broader than simply amplifying Kichesipirini power. Aware that the connections with the French had resulted in the collapse of Indigenous diplomacy and recognizing that conversion to Christianity threatened the ability of Algonquins – and indeed of other Indigenous nations – to resist the French presence, Tessouat strategized to stop the spread of the militaristic Jesuit order north of Algonquin territory by attempting to undermine its conversion efforts among the Huron/Wendat. Master strategists themselves, the Jesuits laboured unsuccessfully to promote Tessouat's acceptance of a French presence in the Algonquin homeland (Jury 2000).

However, the Algonquins could not indefinitely stop the spread of French influence through their territory. Shortly after Tessouat's death, the French, who had ostensibly been allies of the Algonquins against the nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, negotiated a separate peace with the Mohawks at Trois-Rivières (Havard 2001, 54). Through this alliance, the French were able to rely on the Iroquois, traditionally their enemies, to attack the Algonquins, who,

though nominally their allies, had for too long kept the French from expanding up the Ottawa River. The 1647 massacre of the Kichesipirini broke the Algonquin stronghold; the defences of Morrison's Island could no longer impede the French. Nor could the Iroquois attacks be held back; from 1650 until about 1675, due to the intensity of attacks, primarily by the Mohawks, numerous Algonquins were forced to vacate their homelands. Many sought shelter at Trois-Rivières on the St. Maurice River or with the Sulpician mission in Montreal (which was eventually relocated to Oka at Lake of Two Mountains) (Trigger 1994, 794). Others sought the more remote and inaccessible parts of their territory. While the Algonquins were in disarray, the French managed to obtain a toehold in their territory, establishing posts at Lake Timiskaming, Fort Coulonge, and the mouth of the Dumoine River (Joan Holmes and Associates 1993, 2:20). When the Algonquins were able to reoccupy their entire homeland and their populations recovered, they reasserted their control over the Ottawa and its tributaries but could not completely close the river to Europeans. Still, years would pass before Europeans managed to penetrate the many rivers that fed the Ottawa.

One result of the forced migration in the 1650s is that a number of Algonquins remained in permanent alliance with the Montagnais and therefore continued to share the edge of Montagnais territory between the St. Maurice River and the Ottawa River watershed. An 1849 estimate noted that about a thousand Algonquin families (four to five thousand individuals) utilized the tributaries of the St. Maurice as their hunting grounds (*ibid.*, 129-30). Another result is that Algonquin communities as far north as the height of land (the elevation dividing the Arctic watershed from that of the St. Lawrence/Great Lakes) still maintain oral histories of their seventeenth-century encounters with the Iroquois (Emmaline McPherson, Beaverhouse First Nation, author interview, July 2003).

Ultimately, the Iroquois Confederacy and many Algonquian nations, devastated by years of warfare, began pursuing initiatives to overcome the breakdown of Indigenous diplomacy that had developed with the European presence. At the same time, as continuous warfare among Indigenous nations began to interfere with French trading, particularly along the Great Lakes, the French, too, began to explore the possibilities of peace. Havard (2001, 71, 122) suggests, however, that the French sought a peace treaty to pre-empt the possibility that a large-scale Indigenous alliance might develop independently of their influence. The Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 brought together thirteen hundred representatives of forty Indigenous nations. The leader who signed on behalf of the Algonquins, using the Crane symbol, had defeated the

Onondagas in one of the last battles between the Algonquins and the Iroquois before the Great Peace.

Interpreting Algonquin History

One difficulty encountered by contemporary Algonquins in their attempts to re-create their nationhood is the lack of widely available, cohesive knowledge of what *historical* Algonquin nationhood looked like. From the earliest days of European contact, missionaries wrote extensively about the Algonquins; these included Gabriel Sagard, a lay brother in the Recollets, and the Jesuits, who, between 1611 and 1760, travelled throughout Algonquin country in the course of their mission work.⁷ These, as well as fur traders and other visitors, provided descriptions (albeit through Eurocentric eyes) of Algonquins at the time of contact and during the subsequent period in which trade with Europeans, warfare, and disease became regular features of their lives. From these accounts, a number of anthropologists and historians have attempted to theorize the Algonquin past.

Unfortunately for Algonquins, European biases about the “primitive” nature of Algonquian societies permeate the primary documents. In general, Europeans perceived the more sedentary Native groups such as the Iroquoians as more civilized than the Algonquians. The Iroquoians cultivated large fields and had obvious fixed territories and visibly structured forms of governance, whereas most Algonquians, as so-called hunter-gatherer bands, were often depicted as lacking even territorial boundaries and certainly as lacking higher-order governance. Due to these biases, early Europeans failed to realize that the Algonquins had a social order that allowed them to maintain internal relations throughout the Ottawa River watershed; nor did they perceive that the Algonquin Nation had consistent diplomatic goals with nations located outside the watershed. Secondary sources often absorb these assumptions without questioning them. Gordon Day (1979), for example, notes, “It is doubtful that there was ever a politically united Algonquin nation – even in Champlain’s time there were several Algonquin bands, each with its own chief.” Relying on the journals of Champlain, Bruce Trigger (1985, 175-81) assumes that the Algonquin social order had not progressed beyond the band level and depicts Algonquin interactions with the French as those of small groups, each pursuing its own short-sighted economic goals as it competed with other groups for the French trade. By comparison, Trigger portrays the Wendat more sympathetically, presumably because they were Iroquoians who farmed large fields, maintained permanent villages, and had a formal confederacy structure with

a higher-order council of fifty chiefs, and thus their values and way of life resembled those of European nation-states more closely than did those of any of the Algonquian peoples.

Fortunately, recent research by Meyer and Thistle (1995), David Meyer (1985), and Meyer, Gibson, and Russell (2008) conducted with various Algonquian communities in northern Ontario and Manitoba has improved our understanding of how nationhood was historically maintained among many Algonquian peoples. The research demonstrates that, because of their reliance on hunting, governance for many Algonquian peoples was maintained on three distinct levels – family, band, and nation, depending on the time of year. In the winter, extended family groups, consisting of related adults and their kin, retreated to their family hunting territory (and later the traplines) for survival. This extended family group controlled a specific territory; thus, it was bound to observe ecological practices to avoid over-hunting or over-trapping and therefore collapsing the local ecosystem upon which it relied for survival.

In the early spring, the larger band, whose jurisdiction was a specific region in the watershed, generally assembled for the goose hunt and remained together for fishing runs and the plentiful gathering of different foods from early to mid-summer. Often the larger band would also meet in the fall, to engage in wild rice harvesting (where applicable) and to ensure that resources were coordinated and shared among families that were ill or infirm, had lost their hunters, or whose territories had been devastated by fire or flood. In general, relations between families were dealt with at the band level, as were celebrations of the winter's births and mourning the winter's deaths.

Finally, the constituent bands were part of a confederated gathering of bands that formed a nation, which generally met for several weeks or at times even for a couple of months in midsummer to address internal diplomatic relations among the bands as well as external diplomatic relations and treaty making with other nations. These nations were therefore essentially federations of bands, who together controlled a specific region, generally a larger watershed. The larger national gatherings often took place at sacred sites and generally lasted for several weeks. At these gatherings, ceremonies were also conducted to observe sacred events, marriage partners were obtained and marriages effected, and the stories and songs that preserved the collective knowledge base of the nation were sung and performed. Games and feasting occurred at these gatherings, as did hosting other nations for trade and treaty making. As Meyer and Thistle (1995, 406) summarize it, these gatherings enabled nations to maintain complex social, spiritual, political, and economic

functions even though their members were dispersed for much of the year. They were the means by which a sense of community and cultural oneness within the nation were maintained.

This picture of historical Algonquian governance developed by the above writers appears applicable to Algonquins. Like early fur traders, explorers, and missionaries who noted the existence of cohesive bands in each region of the Algonquin homeland, historical sources such as James Morrison (2005) and Meredith Jean Black (1993) have also described how the Algonquin bands who occupied specific territories regularly gathered together in the summer months. This suggests that, due to their reliance on different parts of their territories and various modes of subsistence at differing times of the year, nationhood for Algonquins functioned temporally rather than spatially, along the model of a confederated structure. Territories were held by families and in total by the band, which in turn gathered together at the nation level. Orators spoke at the nation level, and when pressing affairs with other nations arose, gatherings to decide on diplomatic stances could last a very long time. For Algonquins, affiliations at the clan level also bound members of different bands together in ceremonial functions, which allowed more cohesiveness within the larger nation than could always be maintained through semi-annual or annual meetings.

With the European presence and its associated pressures, many of the best Algonquin orators became known more formally as grand chiefs who spoke for the entire nation in international contexts; however, they spoke only after considerable and careful consultation at all levels across the region, depending again on the richness and size of their watersheds.

Meyer and Russell (2004) have rejected the standard anthropological definitions of Algonquians as being “hunter-gatherer bands,” a term that implies a lack of political sophistication. They have categorized collectivities of these “bands” as “nations” despite their small size because they represented distinct sociopolitical units that occupied particular territories and maintained formal diplomatic relations with other nations. Moreover, the historical records clearly labelled these Indigenous peoples as “nations,” reflecting not only how other Native groups perceived them, but how Europeans saw such entities themselves. For example, the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 involved forty nations – France and thirty-nine Indigenous nations that gathered in Montreal to negotiate peace (Havard 2001, 111). Also, at the 1764 Conference of Foreign Nations at Niagara, the British invited the twenty-four Indigenous nations that had sided with them or with the French during the Seven Years’ War to attend (Borrows 1997, 162).

In sociology and political theory, the term “nation” is often restricted to those bodies wielding the powers of states – that is, asserting sovereign authority over specific territories, maintaining a monopoly on the use of coercive force, and imposing order through a formal system of laws (Alfred 1999, 47-49, 57). Indeed, it was precisely the absence of such formal leadership structures and the coercive powers vested in European nation-states that enabled many Europeans to deny that Indigenous people *had* governments (Maaka and Fleras 2005, 191). Despite these Eurocentric understandings of nationhood and despite the fact that traditionally, the Algonquin nations maintained a flexible and minimal form of governance, with leaders who could only persuade rather than coerce, the reality was that the bands scattered across the territory conferred together at the national level to address the concerns of each community. Moreover, most Algonquian nations maintained (and still attempt to maintain) social balance through their cultural practices. Below, Plains Cree Metis writer Wanda McCaslin (2005, 88) addresses the relationship between law, language, and social practices in contemporary Indigenous nations:

Law is embedded in our ways of thinking, living and being. For Indigenous peoples law is far more than rules to be obeyed. Law is found within our language, customs, and practices. It is found within the carefully balanced relations of our clan systems and our extended families. It is also found in ceremonies and rituals. Law is a whole way of life. Through countless means, our traditions teach us how to be respectful of others and mindful of how our actions affect them.

In other words, to exist as Indigenous peoples is to live our law, which holds us in balance. Our communities are a part of the law, and our community members – be they Elders, respected leaders, family, or even our youth – protect law by preserving our cultures’ worldviews and ways. These are not passed on through lectures or written codes. Instead, law is modelled for us daily through our languages, customs, behaviours and relationships. The closer we stay to our traditional ways, the more we internalize our law and its values, so that they exist among us as a natural, everyday expectation of what it means to “be a good relative” – not only with each other but with all beings.

For Indigenous peoples, then, nationhood was (and is) not a matter of size or of maintaining a formal government structure or a coercive state apparatus – it is a matter of the cohesiveness and respectful relations maintained internally through cultural practices and language.

In examining Algonquin contexts, one soon realizes that the bands referred to by Champlain and the Jesuits, including the Ouaouechkarini, the Kichesipirini, the Kotakoutouemi, the Kinouchepirini, the Matouachkarini, and the Ountcharounounga, all of whom occupied the same territories as today's federally unrecognized Algonquins, were part of a larger Algonquin Nation that functioned primarily as a confederacy and gathered during the summer to share the collective business of the nation. These bands also maintained clans that cut across band structures and linked the people of the Ottawa River watershed in complex ways.

A number of sacred sites are known within the Ottawa River watershed – at Rock Lake in Algonquin Park, at Obadjiwan at the narrows of Lake Timiskaming, in the Baptiste Lake region on the York River system, and at Mazinaw Lake (to name only a few). Other gathering places undoubtedly included the spots where the French subsequently established trading posts (or missions) such as at Lake of Two Mountains. However, the sacred sites were probably the most extensively used areas for ceremonial gatherings.

It is essential to theorize about early Algonquin social organization because doing so challenges the historians and anthropologists who have uncritically relied on the primary sources to portray Algonquins as “primitive” bands and who have not perceived that Algonquin social order was complex and organized temporally, according to seasons, rather than spatially. Furthermore, theorizing about early Algonquin social organization provides a means of envisioning ways of re-creating nationhood. From the first, the land claim proceeded as if a singular centralized government would constitute the Algonquin Nation. A more appropriate approach might be to construct the re-created Algonquin Nation along the model of a treaty federation, with communities maintaining a certain degree of autonomy to allow for their distinct circumstances but gathering to sort out commonalities. However, such flexible governance forms would require a retraditionalization of Algonquin society, a possibility that will be explored later in a number of chapters.

Other aspects of historical writing about Algonquins also need revisiting to avoid the automatic adoption of colonialist assumptions. For example, in examining the writings of early missionaries and traders, Algonquin scholars such as Kirby Whiteduck have traced cultural continuities between seventeenth-century Algonquins and those of the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. However, most commentators who interpret the early writings have not questioned common assumptions about the inevitable demise of Native societies in the face of “civilization” and so have tended to emphasize discontinuity and cultural loss for most Native peoples who encountered Europeans

during this period. For federally unrecognized Algonquins in particular, their work enhances present-day colonial divisions rather than deconstructing them.

For instance, both Maurice Ratelle and Peter Hessel, discussing the brief interval during the seventeenth century when Algonquins were forced to vacate much of the Ottawa River watershed, have suggested that Algonquin nationhood was permanently broken at this time and that the nation never effectively reoccupied its homeland afterward. Relying entirely on missionary records, Ratelle (1996) asserts that, when peace was negotiated, warfare and disease had so diminished the Algonquins that they constituted only two small communities, one at Trois-Rivières and one at Lake of Two Mountains, which were subsequently removed to the Timiskaming, Maniwaki, and Golden Lake reserves. For his part, Hessel (1993, 58) sympathetically mourns “the extinction” of the communities along the Bonnechere, Madawaska, Mattawa, Mississippi, Rideau, and other rivers after 1650. The result is that both these historians – and others who make similar claims – replicate colonial divisions by implying that the only Algonquins currently in existence are those whose ancestors moved to today’s reserves after surviving the seventeenth-century Iroquois wars. Such writings expunge federally unrecognized Algonquins from the historical record as effectively as the Department of Indian Affairs purged them from its official files.⁸

To interpret the seventeenth-century European documents as Ratelle and Hessel do depends on contemporary modernist assumptions that connections to place are trivial and truncated, and that the bonds between Algonquins and their family territories were therefore minor and easily relinquished. The reality is that complex technologies of adaptation are required for societies to flourish on the land. While conducting ethnobotanical research during the 1960s among four Algonquin communities in subarctic Quebec, where plant variety is very limited, Meredith Jean Black (1980, 65) learned that even after centuries of forced change under colonialism, the communities still consumed approximately forty local plants on a regular basis and that these plants comprised 98 percent of the vegetable foods they ate as well as 95 percent of their medicines. Robert Lovelace (2008) of Ardoch Algonquin First Nation in southeastern Ontario has noted that, with much greater levels of biodiversity at their disposal, the Algonquins of the southerly Ottawa River regions traditionally used over 240 local plants for food or medicine. The division of the watersheds into family territories was not solely for hunting – each area required local knowledge of the waterways where various types of fish were available and of the woodland sites where ash, birch, and cedar for basketry and canoes could be found and

where sugar maples were plentiful for the sugar camps. It necessitated a careful knowledge not only of the areas where berries and wild roots were abundant, but where medicinal plants flourished and in what seasons. Finally, most families tended wild rice beds, which fed both themselves and the geese and ducks who congregated there and in turn provided another source of food. Clearly, Algonquins not only “occupied” these regions, they modified them according to their needs and were in turn *adapted* to them at every level. No band or family group would give up its territory lightly.

Indeed, historian James Morrison (2005) argues in support of a continuous presence of Algonquins in the watershed but suggests that throughout the eighteenth century, their identity became more complex. Those who gathered annually at Lake of Two Mountains eventually became Christianized and had strong ties to the Sulpician mission there, yet they remained there only during the summer months. Throughout the rest of the year, they joined those who never went to the mission – band members who resisted Christianization and who gathered at sacred sites rather than at the Sulpician mission, spending most of their time within their traditional territories. Morrison (*ibid.*, 29) cites the example of the Wolf Lake First Nation (formerly the Dumoine band), whose membership traces its lineage equally from the non-Christian Anishnabeg on the upper Dumoine and Kipawa Rivers in the eighteenth century and the Otickwagamik (including several prominent chiefs) from the Nipissing village at Lake of Two Mountains.

Meredith Jean Black (1993) also supports this notion of changes to Algonquin identity with the appearance of the mission at Lake of Two Mountains. However, she posits that the Algonquins who spent their summers at the mission developed a sense of pan-Algonquin identity that they carried back to the non-Christian bands in the watersheds where they hunted throughout the year. Black writes that this may have helped to diminish the sense of identity at the band level (and presumably at the clan level) in favour of a more monolithic identity as Algonquins.

For people who rely on the land for their livelihood and have done so for millennia, connections to place are profound. Language, stories, and the sacred – even something as personal as immediate family histories – are tied to specific sites, which for many Algonquins still exist today.⁹ Although the survivors of the seventeenth-century wars and epidemics were not as powerful or as numerous as formerly, and though a Christian influence undoubtedly began to affect their clan structure, they *did* return to the territories that they had traditionally occupied. And in every petition, appeal, and resolution that the Algonquins collectively addressed to the British Crown between 1791 and

1851, they always referred to the entire Ottawa River watershed as being divided into the territories of various families and communities.

By the mid-eighteenth century, as warfare between the British and the French intensified, the Great Peace of Montreal, which had been negotiated in 1701, had disintegrated. However, when the British and their Indian allies attacked the French at Montreal, Sir William Johnson, who became the first superintendent of Indian Affairs, asked the Algonquins to “stand aside.” They did so, thereby establishing firm political relations between themselves and the British at the time of the French defeat (Sarazin 1989, 172).

Attempting to consolidate their hold over the territory that France was vacating, the British issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763. With this declaration, Britain established its claim to territories ranging from Florida and the Caribbean to Acadia and Quebec, and set out large sites of land to be awarded to its officers and troops (from five thousand acres for each officer down to fifty acres for each enlisted man). Although it acknowledged Native peoples’ possession of their territories, it nevertheless claimed them as British but asserted that Britain could acquire them only via purchase or if their owners ceded them. The Royal Proclamation has been alternately viewed as a treaty, as the Crown’s first acknowledgment of Indigenous landholding, and as a unilateral declaration that established the means by which Britain would be able to acquire Indigenous land.

However, regardless of colonial proclamations asserted in Britain, “on the ground” local British and French officials had long been required to observe Native forms of diplomacy, which were often exacting in detail and both costly and time consuming. In particular, the protocols for the use of wampum were very comprehensive. As Havard (2001, 22-23) notes, wampum conveyed voice and word; its purpose was to affirm and validate, in a ritualized way, the messages to be transmitted. No diplomacy could take place without it, and the acceptance or rejection of wampum signified the making or breaking of treaties. At treaty negotiations, orators could not address the group without first presenting strings of wampum. The strings were the simplest of offerings in diplomacy; for significant treaties, woven belts were given, with intricate patterns that symbolized the meaning of the treaty.

In 1763, with peacetime, the first order of business for British officials was to deal with the repercussions of the warfare that had afflicted Indigenous territories for a number of years. In preparation for the Conference of Foreign Nations, held at Niagara in 1764, the Algonquins and Nipissings visited the twenty-four Indigenous nations that had warred with either the British or the French to invite them to this peace conference. They took wampum strings

and a printed copy of the Royal Proclamation with them (Borrows 1997, 162). At the Niagara conference, the question of trade on the Kiji Sibi, the “Great River of the Algonquins” as it was still known, was central, so the Algonquins figured heavily in the negotiations. To affirm their relationships with the Algonquins and other Indigenous nations that had been Britain’s allies or enemies during its wars with France, the British gave three wampum belts to each nation in attendance. The British and Great Lakes Covenant Chain Confederacy Wampum Belt represented the covenant between Britain and the Great Lakes nations (including the Iroquois Confederacy, the Anishinabeg nations, the Wendat Nation, and many others that had been involved in conflicts with European powers). The Twenty-Four Nations Wampum Belt depicted the Anishinabeg nations (including the Algonquin) drawing a British vessel laden with presents across the Atlantic and anchoring it to North America. In accepting the two belts from the British, the Anishinabeg nations bound the British Crown to a promise that these alliances would be life giving and sustaining, not impoverishing (ibid., 163). The Gus Wen Tah, or the Two Row Wampum Belt, had been created for an early-seventeenth-century treaty between the Dutch and the Iroquois Confederacy to represent how the European and Indigenous nations would share the land, with respect and friendship, but with non-interference in each other’s affairs. The Two Row Wampum had subsequently been negotiated with the British when they took over the Dutch territorial possession known as New Amsterdam. In 1764, Sir William Johnson renewed this promise to the Iroquois Confederacy and extended it to the Anishinabeg nations (ibid., 164-65). At Niagara, copies of each belt, woven by Haudenosaunee women, were given to each nation with which the British covenanted.

Below are new editions of the three belts, created by Algonquin scholar Lynn Gehl with guidance from elders. Lynn holds the Two Row Wampum belt in her left hand and points to the British and Great Lakes Covenant Chain Confederacy Wampum Belt. She wears the Twenty-Four Nations Wampum Belt around her neck.

The British Regime and Colonial Incursion

Despite the promises made at the Niagara conference, the disparity between British diplomatic efforts and their trade practices, the expulsion of other European powers from North America, and the press of settlers south of the Great Lakes combined to create a military alliance between a number of Indigenous nations under the Odawa leader Pontiac, who attempted to drive



Lynn Gehl with her Treaty of Niagara bundle, containing the Anishinabe wampum belts that she re-created. Photo by Nikolaus K. Gehl, 2009. © Lynn Gehl

the British out of the Great Lakes region. During the subsequent peace settlements, the Odawas asserted that their territory was part of the Great River of the Algonquins. Although the British knew that the watershed belonged to the Algonquins, when the territory was mapped in 1791, the Kiji Sibi was referred to erroneously as the “Ottawahs River” (Joan Holmes and Associates 1993, 2:33), a usage that persisted, with the result that the river became known as the Ottawa.

This misrecognition of Algonquin territory may have been deliberate, for bypassing those who held title to the land would facilitate the removal of resources from their territory. From 1793 onward, Britain’s economy was largely focused on its twenty-two-year war against France, and the forests of North America supplied large quantities of pine for masts and oak for decking for

British ships. The Ottawa River watershed had the finest white pine forests in North America (Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee 2005b, 89). Squared timber was required in massive amounts. In their haste to secure as much white pine as possible, it is not surprising that the British ignored treaty relations on the Ottawa even while they signed treaties along the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario waterfront areas to provide settlements for United Empire Loyalists.

In 1791, the British drove a territorial marker through the heart of the Algonquin homeland via the Constitutional Act of that year. The act divided Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada, with the Ottawa River as the boundary line. Thereafter, Lower Canada, which lay north of the Ottawa, would be administered separately from Upper Canada, which was situated on the south side of the river. The Algonquins would be listed as “domiciled” at Lake of Two Mountains, which fell within Lower Canada, and their occupancy of the Ottawa River watershed would be ignored. The convenient fact that many Algonquins met annually in Lower Canada rather than Upper Canada also enabled the British to ignore the question of their title in Upper Canada. From 1791 until 1840, during which much of the Ottawa Valley on the Ontario side was surveyed and settled by whites, the Algonquins had no voice in Upper Canada at all (Joan Holmes and Associates 1993, 1:5-6).

From the 1770s until the 1820s, Algonquins struggled to resist British ascendancy in their territories in a variety of ways, involving both claims on friendship and open resistance. For example, after unsuccessfully petitioning the British to stop traders from bringing alcohol into their territories, the Algonquins threatened to close the river to all trade until the rum trade was stopped (*ibid.*, 2:33-34). This strategy proved effective: in 1776, the British passed an ordinance prohibiting the taking of liquor into Indian villages (Sarazin 1989, 173). The Algonquins also sought to bind the British to them in networks of obligation; for that reason, they fought as British allies against the Americans during the American Revolution and in the War of 1812. In 1794, the British did acknowledge that title to the Ottawa River had not been settled. Lord Dorchester met with the Algonquin and Nipissing chiefs that year and promised to rectify the matter, assuring them that the Crown would not take their lands.

During the long interlude in which the fur trade was of prime importance to Europeans, settler incursion had been discouraged in Eastern Canada. However, after the American Revolution, this began to change. In Upper Canada, the fur trade was in decline, and by the end of the eighteenth century, Britain was concentrating on bringing in settlers to establish a beachhead

against potential American invasion. For this reason, the British focused their immediate treaty-making process on the Mississaugas, who occupied the land north of the Great Lakes. And yet, the first Loyalist settlers were granted the most immediately available land, along the boundary between Upper and Lower Canada, which Britain had obtained via the Crawford Purchase of 1783 and the Oswegatchie Purchase of 1784, negotiated with the Mississaugas and the Mohawks, respectively. Both treaties encroached, to the north, on the Ottawa River watershed and Algonquin territory (Joan Holmes and Associates 1993, 2:37).

By 1791, the Algonquin and Nipissing chiefs were complaining about the Iroquois presence on their hunting grounds, which the Oswegatchie Purchase had enabled, and about logging on the Rideau River. In 1798, the chiefs petitioned and met with Sir William Johnson to protest more particularly against the Crawford and Oswegatchie Purchases and the Loyalist settlers who were being brought into the southernmost reaches of Algonquin territory (*ibid.*, 38-42). And yet, even as these petitions addressed what was occurring south of the Ottawa River, the nation continued to face incursions north of the river as well. Thus, the Algonquins were caught in a desperate circumstance whereby two different colonial governments were denuding different parts of their territories of its trees and negotiating land cessions without their consent.¹⁰

By 1829, although some British administrators strongly argued the Algonquin cause, the British authorities had usurped legal jurisdiction over the territory, so that Algonquins who attempted to evict squatters from their land were threatened with legal reprisals (Sarazin 1989, 176). By 1839, Algonquin claims to traditional lands were flatly denied by order of the Executive Council of Upper Canada.¹¹ And in subsequent years, the Ontario government would refer to the Algonquins of Golden Lake as remnants of itinerant bands who had no treaty rights at all.¹²

Between 1791 and 1851, as the white pine forests continued to be depleted for British shipbuilding, at least twenty-eight petitions were directed to successive colonial administrations on both sides of the Ottawa River in a vain effort to force the British to honour the terms of their own Royal Proclamation of 1763.¹³ Most were signed by Algonquin and Nipissing grand chiefs as well as by the various chiefs of specific bands in the territories, a practice that adhered to traditional Algonquin protocol. Leaders must attain consensus from those whom they represent, and families, not the chiefs themselves, hold jurisdiction over specific lands; the leaders speak for them only with their authorization.¹⁴

In the early 1850s, as New England's forests became increasingly exhausted, the timber demands of the American market began to compete with those of Britain. Americans wanted sawn lumber. As a result, the squared timber market along the Ottawa River watershed declined after 1870, to be supplanted by a lucrative sawn lumber trade with the United States (Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee 2005b, 98-100). More than any other development, this spurred the era of railroad building in the Ottawa River watershed, which in turn facilitated the penetration of the Madawaska and Bonnechere River areas for large-scale logging (Kennedy 1970, 171). Once again, respecting the rights of the Algonquins of the Ottawa watershed was simply not expedient for the colonial government.

Possibly because of this, when the Robinson-Huron Treaty was signed in 1850, the government chose simply to incorporate all remaining unsundered territory south of the height of land – including that of the Algonquins – in the treaty (Sarazin 1989, 183). Subsequently, between 1866 and 1878, a number of Chippewa and Mississauga communities in eastern and southern Ontario who had not signed the Robinson-Huron Treaty claimed land in their traditional territories. Only the Mississaugas of Alnwick claimed land within the Ottawa watershed. Indeed, in 1881, the chiefs and counsellors of the Chippewas of Christian Island, Georgina Island, and Rama, and the Mississaugas of Rice Lake, Mud Lake, and Scugog collectively sent a letter to Sir John A. Macdonald specifying that their claim extended *only* to the watershed and therefore not inside Algonquin territory (Joan Holmes and Associates 1993, 2:166-67). Although these communities received some reimbursement from the treaty monies that had been paid to others since 1850, the matter would not be settled until 1923, with the Williams Treaties.¹⁵

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