

# Our First Nations Neighbours

According to several accounts, the first European to travel through Rice Lake was Samuel de Champlain about 1615.

## But...

Artifacts from a 1974 archaeological dig on Rice Lake's Sugar Island are on display in the Alderville Community Centre. They point to the existence of **human settlement in this area about 1000-1500 years ago**, or during the Middle Woodland Period.

While all Canadians can join in the celebration of 150 years since four provinces formed the Dominion of Canada, First Nations can look back over a much longer history on these lands. The current residents of Alderville First Nation, on the south shore of Rice Lake, have a rich heritage.

**Wars between the various native tribes** in southern Ontario and the northern American states, **wars between the French and the English**, changing **alliances** between all four, and various **treaties** were the story of the 1600s, 1700s and early 1800s. They all set the stage for the more recent story of our native community.

At the time of the American Revolution (1775) people of the Mississauga nation were living in this area. As settlers continued to pour in from the United States, the Mississauga's traditional semi-nomadic way of life was increasingly under threat. The landscape was changing, and **the Mississauga were gradually pushed from their traditional hunting grounds.**

*"The establishment of farms and additional settlements in the decades to follow disrupted the Mississauga's fishing and hunting... Many Indians were hungry for new religious guidance, since their old religion seemed incapable of protecting them."*

Donald Smith, Sacred Feathers

It was within this context that the Christian Methodist movement in Upper Canada was born.

Methodism had come into Ontario with the loyalist settlers, and was seen by many to be a solution to the native population's problems. In the early 19th century, a number of Mississauga men became missionaries. One was **Peter Jones**. Born at Burlington Heights in 1802, Jones, or Kahkewaquonaby ("**Sacred Feathers**") in Ojibwe, converted to Methodism in 1823 at the height of his peoples' struggles. In 1825, he began work as a Methodist preacher. Between 1825 and 1833 he traveled throughout Ontario, including Northumberland County, and **was the first to create a vocabulary for the Ojibway language.**



*"I cannot suppose for a moment that the Supreme Disposer has decreed that the doom of the red man is to fall and gradually disappear, like the mighty wilderness, before the axe of the European settler" – Peter Jones.*