

for the Belleville area Indians. They selected beautiful little Grape Island "on which to collect the Indians in order to bring the adults under religious influences and to instruct the children in the rudiments of an English education, hoping to induce them to abandon their nomadic habits and take to agricultural and mechanical pursuits".¹⁰

The Methodists leased Grape Island and the adjacent Sawguin Island from the Indians for the Indians. Apparently they felt that if the land was held on a long-term basis that they could expect more generous support from benevolent people and groups who would be more ready to give if they knew their help would have lasting value.

G.F. Playter in his book, *History of Methodism in Canada*, has recorded the legal transaction in full. The introductory paragraph and one or two other pertinent parts are worth quoting here.

THIS INDENTURE made at Belleville, in the Midland District, of the Province of Upper Canada, the 16th day of October, in the year of our Lord (1826) between the chiefs, warriors and Indians of the Mississauga tribe, of the one part, -- and John Reynolds, Benjamin Ketcheson, Pannel G. Seldon, James Bickford, and William Ross, all of the town of Belleville...¹¹

In the Indenture, the nomadic life of the Indians is described with its resultant difficulties for education and religion. Because they desire a permanent settlement with church and school and on receipt of five shillings, the Indians agree to lease:

-- all that certain tract of land, situate in the township of Ameliasburgh, in the said district, being composed of a certain island in the Bay of Quinte, near the mouth of Marsh Creek, heretofore generally called and known by the name of Logrim's Island, containing by estimation 50 acres of land... a certain other island within described, and which is commonly called and known by the name of Grape Island, containing about 11 acres.¹²

Included in the agreement was the right of the Indians to live on these islands without paying rent and an interesting conservation regulation that showed much foresight:

... that they themselves shall not, neither shall they suffer or permit any other person or persons to cut down or destroy the

¹⁰ T. Webster, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada*, Hamilton, Canada Christian Advocate, 1870, p199.

¹¹ Playter, *Methodism in Canada*, p292.

¹² Ibid. p293.

trees or underwood of the said island, except so much as may be required to be cleared away for the purposes of cultivating the soil, or which may reasonably be required for building for ourselves, or for fencing our clearings.¹³

On behalf of the Indians, the following signed the agreement: John Sunday, Wm. Beaver, Nelson Snake, John Simpson, Mitchell Snake, Jacob Musquashcum, Joseph Skunk, Paul Yawaseeng, Jacob Nawquashcum, John Salt, Isaac Skunk, Wm. Ross, Potto Skunk, Jacob Sheepegang, and James Snake. The whole was signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of Tobias Bleaker and Peter Jones.



The name Logrim's Island was probably given by an English surveyor. All modern maps label the island Sawguin, suggesting that it quickly reverted to its original Indian name of Sahgeen. It will be noted that a Wm. Ross signed the agreement for the whites and a Wm. Ross for the Indians! Apparently Wm. Ross of Belleville was a man highly respected by the Indians and so one of these was baptized in his name. The agreement also indicates that Peter Jones had visited Belleville for the third time that year.

Although the islands were not leased until October 16, 1826, some of the Mississaugas moved on to Grape Island that fall and spent the winter there in their bark wigwams. The main settlement of the island took place in 1827 however.

1827

The quiet months of winter on the island were spent in hunting and in learning about the new faith. Methodist Episcopal ministers from the area visited them when they could but the main work was left to Indian exhorters such as William Beaver. Scripture passages were taught by rote with the meaning simplified in order to be understood.

In January they all attended a several day meeting in the Belleville Methodist Church where they were given further basic Christian instruction. Before the year was over, Solomon Waldron was appointed as first missionary on Grape Island, and the little flock then had a trained leader to nurture and guide them.

In May, after the quiet of the winter, the island suddenly burst

¹³ Playter, *Methodism in Canada*, p293.