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OPINION

TIME TO HONOUR CANADA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

June is National Indigenous History Month.

It's good to see the Independent and Free Press and our local libraries highlighting its importance.

There is a long history of Indigenous interaction and exchange in this area — well before European settlement. In the area of Crawford Lake, there was an Iroquois village dating back to the 15th century.

The land on which we live today is rich in history. There were some efforts by settlers and Indigenous Peoples to trade and form alliances.

The early 1800s however brought pain. The War of

1812 saw many Indigenous people killed, and their ways of life made more vulnerable.

Europeans and American loyalists came to our region looking for land. Disease and economic hardship impacted the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Indigenous Peoples on whose land — in Georgetown and Halton Hills — we live today.

On Oct. 28, 1818, a treaty was signed by representatives of the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Very rich land was exchanged for a very small amount of money, and at a time when the Mississauga people were facing impoverishment and a rapidly declining population.

Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs William Claus described the Mississaugas of the Credit in 1818 as "thin and miserable."

The treaty became known as the Ajetance Treaty, named after Chief Ajetance, himself elderly and desperately looking for ways to help his people.

As we look back at history, may we be reminded of such inequalities and impoverishment.

May we acknowledge our treaty relationship and strengthen our responsibilities to the land, water, resources and learn from and honour the original peoples of the lands where we gather, work, study and play.

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