

NEW CREDIT INDIAN RESERVE AND MISSION

The New Credit Reserve near Hagersville, Ontario, was established and occupied in 1847 by the Mississauga Indians of the Credit River settlement near Toronto. The Credit Indian Village had been established in 1825-26 as an agricultural community and Methodist mission. Because of encroaching white settlement and uncertainty of their claim to the land, the Mississauga began in 1840 to consider seriously the relocation of the settlement. The problem was first brought before Council by Chiefs Joseph Sawyer and John Jones on August 6, 1840. Suitable farm land was subsequently sought near the large Indian settlements at the Saugeen River, Muncey Town, and finally near Owen Sound.

In 1846 the Mississauga prepared to transfer to the Owen Sound area, the sole location approved for them by the Indian Department. Anticipating their departure for Owen Sound, the Credit Indians placed their lands "in the hands of the Government to be sold". From reports of advance parties the Mississauga were shocked to learn that the selected tract was poor, infertile, and unsuitable for group settlement. The problem of relocation became critical when, in March 1847, the government nevertheless authorized the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Canada West to begin selling the Credit lands. The immediate need for new land and an uncertain future generated anxiety and fear among the Mississauga. The Reverend Peter Jones (1802-1856), a Mississauga Chief since 1828, Methodist Missionary, and leading native spokesman, summarized additional reasons for leaving the Credit settlement: the scarcity of wood, the need for a larger tract of land, the pressure of white settlement, the temptation of alcoholic drink, and the inconvenience of the village arrangement for farming.

The critical situation of the Mississauga was relieved in April, 1847, when the Six Nations unexpectedly offered assistance in the form of land on their reserve. Conscious of the Mississauga's surrender of extensive lands to them following the Revolutionary War, the Six Nations Council offered the Credit Band "a selection from any portion of their unoccupied land" subject to "the repayment of the money paid to the squatters on their retiring". The Six Nations were further anxious to discourage white squatters from occupying the south-eastern corner of their reserve and encouraged the Mississauga to select their land in that area. They accepted the offer and by mid-April Chief Peter Jones and others had selected a 4800 acre block (lots 1-12, Concession 1-2) in Tuscarora township 'which they desired to settle on, and on which there were no Indian families, and the improvements made by the squatters