

Mississaugas addition to reserve request disputed by Six Nations

By Jim Windle

SIX NATIONS—Separating fact from folklore in the relationship between the Six Nations confederacy and the Three Fires Confederacy of the Ojibwa (Mississaugas), Potawatomi and Odawa, has been a bone of contention for many generations in the otherwise peaceful relationship of recent years.

Once again the issue of who was here first, and who helped who, has been brought to the front burner as the Mississaugas of the New Credit have begun a petition to the Canadian government in order to expand their recognized reserve by 42.8 acres, through the Additions to Reserve Policy. If successful the Mississaugas of the New Credit will expand their borders to include land abutting the edge of the Plank Road, also known as Highway #6.

But Six Nations researchers say that the Mississaugas of the New Credit were only granted permission to settle on the five concession blocks that presently comprise the New Credit Reserve. They claim that underlying title to those blocks is still with Six Nations and not the Mississaugas. Plus the land they are looking at is part of the Plank Road land claim.

According to a document distributed January 19th and released by Nationaltalk, Canada has recognized the Mississaugas as the underlying titleholders to most of Southern Ontario.

"The Six Nations Elected Council is prepared to use all legal means available to prevent the Federal Government from declaring the land part of New Credit until express consent of Six Nations is first obtained," says a media release from the SNEC.

The early relationship between the two peoples was hostile and violent. In the 1650's the Haudenosaunee moved north into what is now Southern Ontario, pushing the Mississaugas out during what has become known as the Beaver Wars between 1600 and 1640.

By the 1650's, the

Haudenosaunee had pushed out the Huron Wyandot's, Neutrals and Tobacco Indians and controlled Southern Ontario as their hunting grounds.

In around the 1680's, the defeated Ojibwa, Potawatomi and Odawa formed their own alliance, known as the Three Fires Confederacy and together began pushing the Iroquois back out of the region. By 1700, the Haudenosaunee were considerably weaker and retreated back to their lands south of the Great Lakes.

Some government maps show most of Southern Ontario as being occupied by the Mississaugas between 1700 and 1800, however other contemporary sources show the Haudenosaunee as being the prime occupants of the same territory during the same time.

One very interesting map known as the Mitchell Map of 1755 shows a notation stating that the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) defeated the Mississauga and the region defined by a red outline was "subdued by the Iroquois and now united with them making them the 8th Nation in the league."

Another notation shows the area above Lake Erie states the Hurons were "Conquered and expelled by the Iroquois in 1650 ever since which time they have been in possession of this country."

Disagreements over the different versions of history which would show how the Mississaugas came to be located where they are continued to cause ill feelings between the communities.

In 1903, the Mississaugas of the New Credit negotiated with and paid Six Nations \$10,000 for clear title to the land described as the Mississaugas of the New Credit Reserve.

Going back to 1784, there is a letter in the Canadian Archives, which may indicate that the land "purchased by the British from the Mississaugas to be granted to the Six Nations" may not be as the white man's history now records it.

The letter is dated

May 22nd, 1784 and says, "Meeting held at Niagara with the Mississauga Indians accompanied by the Chiefs and Warriors of the Six Nations, Delaware,

agreement by the Mississaugas to sell such land as belonged to them between the Lakes Ontario, Huron and Erie which they were asked to dispose of saying

'We the Mississaugas are not the owners of all the land lying between the three lakes but we have agreed and are willing to transfer our right of soil

and property to the King, our Father, for the use of his people and our brethren of the Six Nations from the head of the Lake Ontario or the Creek Waghguuta to the River La Trenché then down the River until a South Course will strike the mouth of Catfish Creek on Lake Erie.' With this, Butler declared himself satisfied."

This note seems to indicate that the Mississaugas recognized they did not, or could not, own the land in question but that they would transfer the right to soil and property to the King.

So, the question of who "owned" what, when and how, remains a point of contention even today.



A 1755 Mitchell Map showing the Crown cartographer's understanding of the contemporary jurisdiction of indigenous nations.