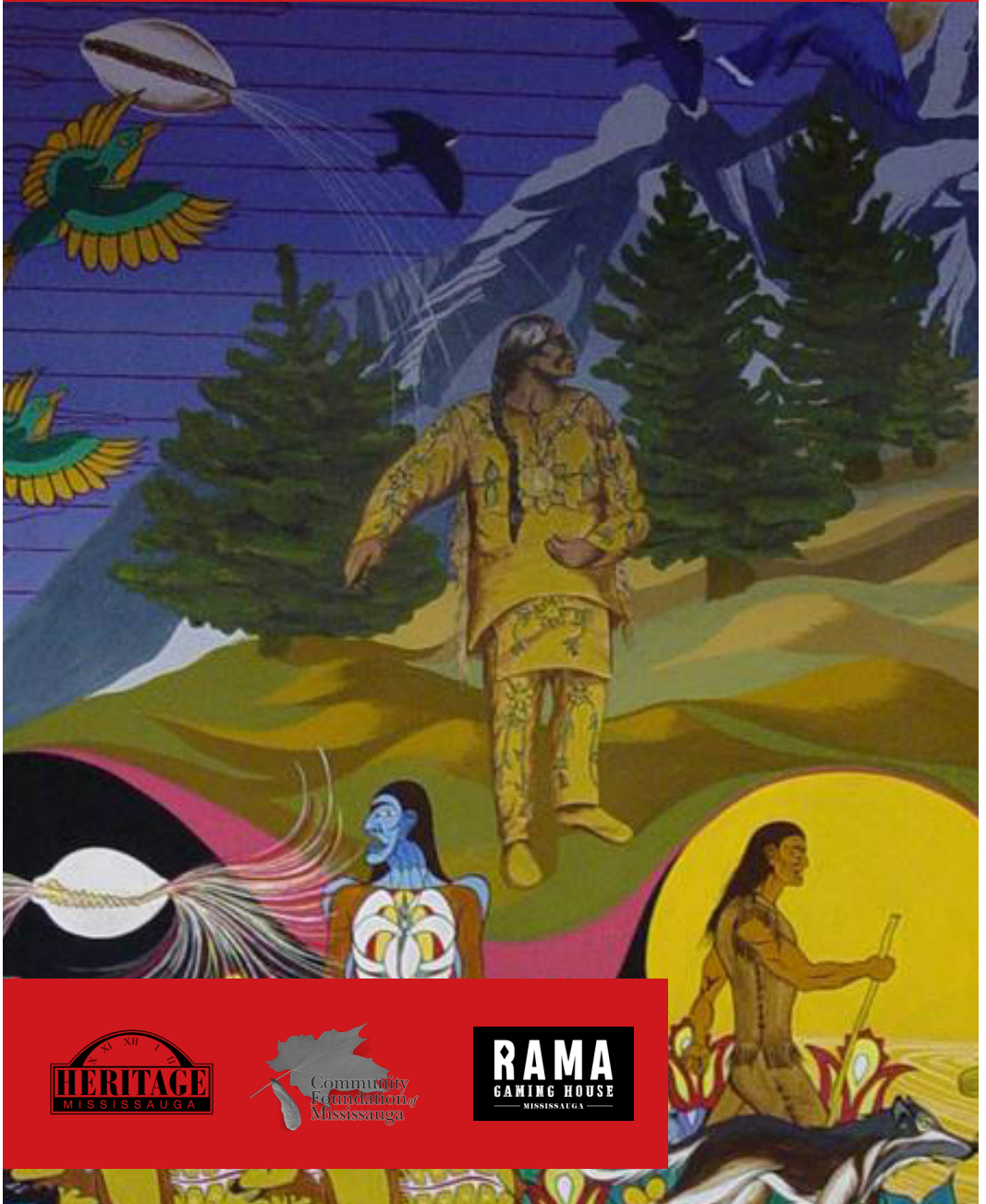


The Mississaugas of the Credit River



Introduction

People have lived along the shores of Lake Ontario, in what is now the City of Mississauga, for over 10,000 years. Although there are scant records of pre-contact aboriginal peoples, archaeology has found evidence of Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Woodland and Iroquoian sites. Between 1650 and 1720 there was a transition between Iroquoian-speaking peoples and the Mississaugas, an Ojibwa tribe, during the Beaver Wars. The Mississaugas established themselves throughout large portions of Southern Ontario, including along the Credit River.

The Mississaugas are part of the Algonkian/Algonquin culture. In 1640 Jesuits first recorded a people they referred to as the Oumisagai (Mississaugas), living near the Mississagi River on the northwestern shore of Lake Huron. By the early 1700s they had migrated to the north and western shores of Lake Ontario. Early French and English traders came to refer to the Native peoples on the North shore of Lake Ontario as Chippewa or Ojibwa, of which the Mississaugas were a part. The Mississaugas referred to themselves as Anishinaabe, meaning “human beings”.



The name “Mississauga” is believed to mean “River of the North of Many Mouths”, although a word in their Native language, “Missisakis”, means “Many River Mouths”. A large portion of the Mississaugas belonged to the Eagle Clan, which was pronounced as “Ma-se-sau-gee”.

History

The Mississaugas lived lightly on the land, leaving little trace of their presence. The Mississaugas lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle, following seasonal patterns of hunting and gathering. By the 1720s they had come to a large river which they called the “Missinihe” (“Trusting Water” – the Credit River), and the Mississaugas followed the course of the river to the shores of Lake Ontario, establishing a permanent presence here. Historically the Mississaugas traditional territory included much of what is today Southwestern Ontario.

In the early 18th Century the Mississaugas traded furs with French traders near the mouths of the Humber, Credit and Niagara rivers.

The Mississaugas traded for everything from buttons, shirts, weapons and ammunition to pots and pans, combs, knives, and tools. After the fall of New France in 1763, the Mississaugas became allied with the English, and fought as allies of the British Crown during the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

European settlement began in this area after 1806, and steadily the Mississaugas’ practice of freely traversing the land became difficult. By the early 1820s just over 200 Mississaugas remained along the western shore of Lake Ontario. To survive, the Mississaugas turned to making baskets, brooms, wooden bowls and tools, and sold them. Influenced by interaction with settlers and Christianity, and led by Chief Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), many desired to adopt new ways and an agrarian, settled way of life.

Front cover: Image from “Our Story Art Mural” (Kiinwi Dabaadjmowin), Lloyd S. King Elementary School, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

Left: Ojibwa gathering wild rice, by Seth Eastman, c1857, Library and Archives Canada

Above: “Trading Post” by C.W. Jeffreys, Library and Archives Canada



Treaties and a Changing Way of Life

By the 1790s the British Crown recognized that the Mississaugas had claim to large swaths of land at the western end of Lake Ontario, which had come to be referred to on early maps as the “Mississauga Tract”. At the end of July of 1805 representatives of the British Crown convened a meeting with the principal chiefs of the Mississauga near the mouth of Credit River.

The Crown was represented by Colonel William Claus, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, with other officials and officers from the 49th Regiment. The Mississaugas were represented by their principal chiefs and a gathering of warriors. The Chiefs of the Mississaugas understood that the Crown wished to purchase land from them, and they were wary of relinquishing too much of their territory.

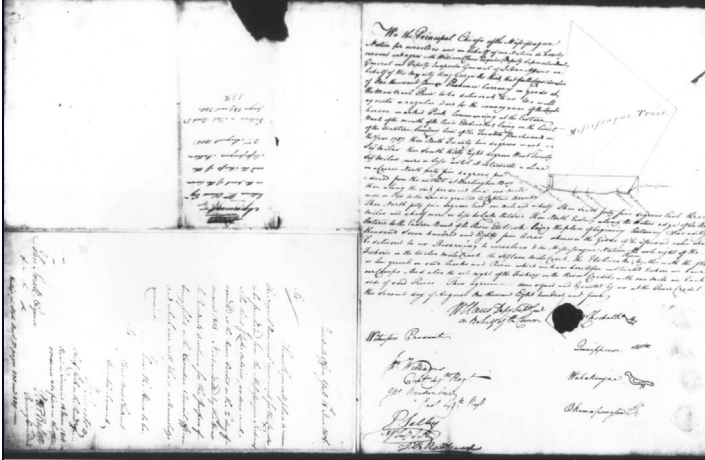
Eventually the Mississaugas ceded to the Crown’s request for territory. The Crown and the Mississaugas signed two treaties during this negotiation. On August 1st, 1805, Treaty 13 was agreed upon, which clarified an earlier treaty from 1787 and involved land east of the Etobicoke Creek. The following day, on August 2nd, 1805, Treaty 13-A was signed. Referred to as the “First Purchase” or the “Mississauga Purchase”, this treaty gave control of 70,784 acres of land to the Crown, involving all lands from the Etobicoke Creek to Burlington Bay to an approximate depth of 6 miles from the shoreline. The southern part of the City of Mississauga, from Lake Ontario to Eglinton Avenue, is located within this area. The Mississauga’s were compensated 1000 pounds of Province currency, given largely in trade goods over several years. The Mississaugas reserved rights to the fishery in the River Credit along with one mile each side of the river. This area became known as the Credit Indian Reserve.

Treaty 13-A was signed by William Claus, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs on behalf of the Crown, together with Mississauga Chiefs Chechalk, Quenippenon, Wabukanyne and Okemapenesse.

Right top: Artist rendition the signing of Treaty 13-A, Heritage Mississauga

Bottom left: Treaty 13-A, Library and Archives Canada

Bottom right: Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), by Matilda Jones, 1832, Victoria University Library



In August of 1818 the Crown and the Mississaugas, signed Treaty 19, which ceded 648,000 acres of land (all lands north of modern Eglinton Avenue). Lastly, in February of 1820 Treaties 22 and 23 were signed and the Crown acquired the reserve lands which had been set aside in 1805. The Credit Indian Reserve lands along the Credit River were retained by The Crown as a Native reserve until March of 1847 when the lands were put up for auction.

The Credit Mission Village



The Credit Mission, also known as the Credit Indian Village, was located on the site of what is now the Mississaugua Golf & Country Club. The Credit Mission was part of the Government's plan to assimilate and settle Native peoples in one area. The Mission was built in 1826 under the direction of Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and Colonel James Givens, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. The village was located on the high grounds overlooking the Credit River, while the valley lands along the river were cultivated for farming. An early description of the village describes "an elevated plateau, cleared of wood, and with three rows of detached cottages, among fields surrounded with rail fences." By 1837 the village grew to include some 52 family dwellings.

Two families lived in each house, separated by an inner wall. Each family had half an acre around their house to garden, and they adopted European furniture, clothing and household materials. In addition to the village site, the Mississaugas also had use of land consisting of one-mile on each side of the Credit River. From this land each family received fifty acres to farm where they raised livestock, grain, hay, potatoes and other root vegetables, and apples. By the late 1830s the Credit River Mississaugas had cultivated nearly 900 acres of the 3,000 acre Credit Indian Reserve.

The Credit Mission thrived for more than a decade. Pressure from surrounding settlement, together with the loss of title to their traditional territory, led the Mississaugas to relocate to the New Credit Reserve in 1847 (near Hagersville, ON). The Credit Mission village itself eventually vanished. The meeting lodge, a barn, and a building that was called the Chief's residence, stood until the 1920s. Since 1906 the property has been home to the Mississaugua Golf and Country Club. Even a portion of Mississauga Road which once ran through the village was realigned, obscuring the original site.

In its brief existence between 1826 and 1847 the Credit Mission Village grew to include a school, a Methodist chapel, a sawmill, and a meeting lodge. Thanks in large part to the leadership efforts of Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquanaby, 1802-1856), his brother John Jones (Tyantenagen, 1798-1847), Chief Joseph Sawyer (Nawahjegezhegwabe, 1786-1863), John Cameron (Wageezhegome/Okemapennesse, 1764-1828), and Methodist minister Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882), the Mississaugas prospered for several years.

In 1834 the Credit Harbour Company was formed, with the Mississaugas owning 2/3rds of the shares of the company whose primary focus was on developing the natural harbour at the mouth of the Credit River for shipping purposes and warehouses. They also owned a schooner, the Credit Chief.

News of the Credit Mission spread. To raise funds and seeking title to the Credit River lands, Peter Jones travelled to Britain, including gaining an audience with Queen Victoria in 1838. In the early 1840s the community had adjusted to the adoption of a new way of life and Christianity, and its population of approximately 250 Mississaugas provided nearly all of their own bread, produce, beef, pork, milk and butter. Traditionally hunters and fishers, in 20 years the Mississaugas had become successful farmers. A few had learned skilled trades, including carpentry and shoemaking.

However, time was against the Mississaugas and their prosperous village. Vast stretches of forest had been harvested, and the salmon run, once abundant and vital, had almost ceased due to the mills that operated along the Credit River. Amidst pressure from encroaching settlers, and denied the security of land tenure at the Credit River, a decision was reached in the winter of 1846 to relocate, and over two hundred Mississaugas moved in early 1847 to 4800 acres of land in Brant County, where they established the New Credit Reserve. Many of their descendants live and thrive at New Credit today.

Left: Sketch of the "Indian Village on the Credit River" by Egerton Ryerson, 1827, Heritage Mississauga

Left: Sketch of the Credit Mission Village by Eliza Field Jones, 1833, Heritage Mississauga

Back cover: Portrait of Chief Joseph Sawyer (Nawahjegezhegwabe), by Reverend James Spencer, 1846, J.Ross Robertson Collection, Toronto Public Library



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