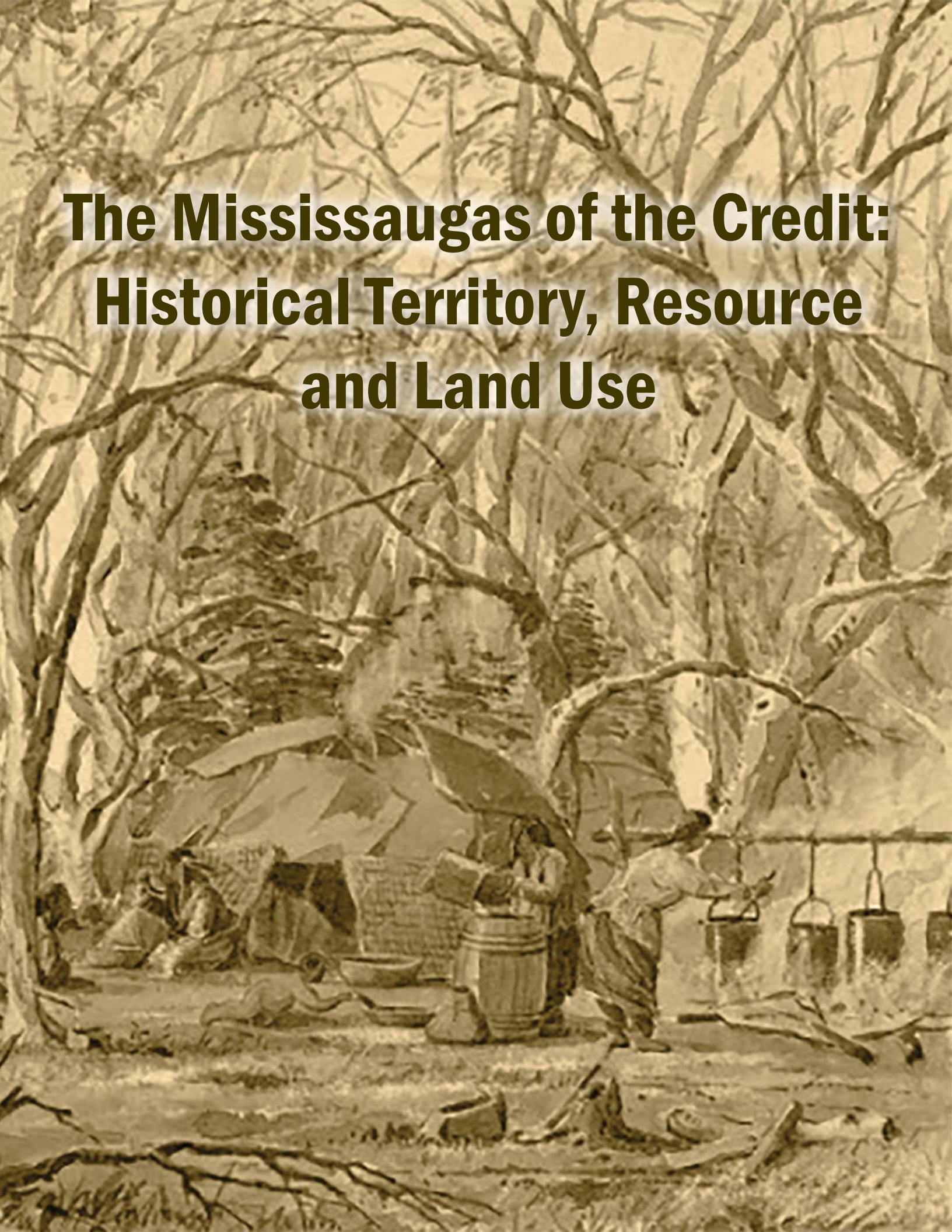


# **The Mississaugas of the Credit: Historical Territory, Resource and Land Use**





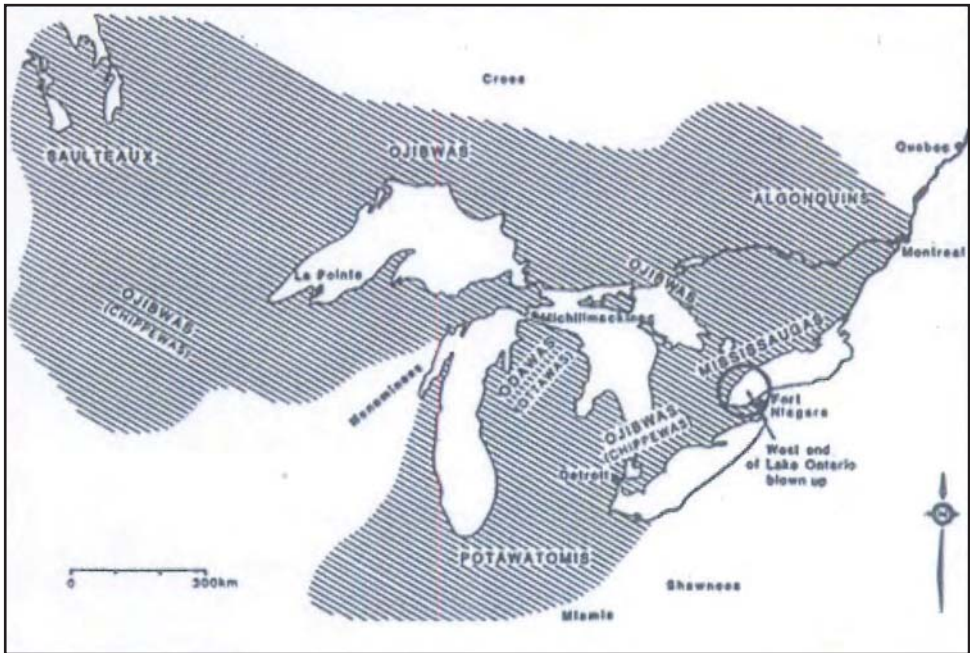
## INTRODUCTION

The intent of this brochure is to outline the general history of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation from the time before contact with Europeans in the early 1600s to the time of settlement in the mid-1800s, onto the present Mississaugas of the New Credit Reserve in southern Ontario. The contents of this brochure provide information on the historical way of life of ancestors of the Mississaugas of the New Credit from the 1600s to the 1800s. The historical account presented in the following pages details the relocation and settlement of ancestors of the Mississaugas of the Credit into southern Ontario, and the nature and extent of use of lands in this time period.



*Gathering Wild Rice by Captain Seth Eastman, the Ojibwa harvested this staple crop in late September. In order to gather wild rice in the fall several people went out by canoe together. The individual in the stern paddled while the others collected it and then beat the kernels free into the bottom of the canoe.*

*Courtesy of Schoolcraft, Indian Tribes of the United States. 3(1853):62*



Map 1  
The lands of the Anishinabeg and related peoples, about 1800



Map 2  
Sacred Feathers's World: Mississauga Place-Names at the Western end of Lake Ontario




## THE MISSISSAUGA NATION IN THE EARLY 1600s

The Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation is part of the Ojibway (Anishinabe) Nation, one of the largest Aboriginal Nations in North America. Before contact with Europeans and until the late 1600s, the Mississaugas occupied a territory situated inland from the north shore of Lake Huron, just to the west of Manitoulin Island and east of Sault Ste. Marie. The first known written record to identify and locate the Mississaugas is a 1640 account of Aboriginal occupants of the Lake Huron by the French Jesuits. In this document, the Mississaugas are identified as the Oumisagai. The name 'Mississauga' has been given three possible meanings. One interpretation suggests the name refers to the Eagle Clan of the Ojibway Nation. A second interpretation suggests the name refers to the mouth of the Mississagi River, which was an important fishing location for the Mississauga people. Still another interpretation posits that "Mississauga" resembles an Ojibway word meaning "people living at the mouths of many rivers."

Like other Anishinabe people living along the north shore of Lake Huron, the Mississaugas followed a way of life that involved mobility and recurring shifts in resource harvesting with the different seasons of the year. In winter months, the Mississaugas were spread out over the Nation territory, living in mobile groups of extended families. Family members cooperated in hunting large and small game animals, and supplemented this main source of food with ice fishing. It was customary for families to establish and move their winter hunting camps within certain ranges.

By early spring families moved to maple sugar grounds. At the end of the maple sugar harvest period, all family groups gathered at spring fisheries. These fishing locations were important social and ceremonial centres. The mouth of the Mississagi River was one of the main fishing centres for the Mississauga people. Up to three villages were established in the area totalling about one thousand persons. At this time of the year, people renewed social relationships after the long winter months, and individuals developed marriage ties. Village populations performed communal religious rites. The summer months were also the time in which the Mississaugas renewed and strengthened social, political and economic relations with other Ojibway and Anishinabe Nations in the Lake Huron region. Mississauga leaders and representatives often travelled to the Sault Ste. Marie area, which was one of the main regional gathering centres for Anishinabe in the Upper Great Lakes.

Between late spring and early fall, people followed a much more sedentary lifestyle relative to winter. The rich fisheries of Lake Huron allowed the Mississaugas to live in semi-permanent villages throughout the summer. The main subsistence activity was fishing sturgeon, trout, and whitefish. However, in addition to fishing, the Mississaugas also practised horticulture to some extent, cultivating corn, squash, and other vegetables in family and village gardens. Summer was also the time in which people collected bark from birch trees used to construct canoes and lodges.



With the approach of fall, the Mississaugas harvested their garden produce and collected a number of wild fruits and vegetable products. A portion of collected fruits and vegetables, in particular corn and blueberries, was set aside and preserved for later consumption in winter. By late fall, village populations began to disperse along the shoreline of Lake Huron, hunting beaver and moose. After a last harvest at fall fishing locations, people broke up into extended family groups and removed to inland hunting ranges in preparation for winter.



*Paul Kane's painting in 1846 of Menominee Indians spearing fish by torch-light on the Fox River in a present day Wisconsin could easily have been painted half a century earlier - about 1800, during the spring or fall salmon runs on the Credit River. The Mississaugas used the same fishing techniques as their fellow Algonquians on the Upper Great Lakes. Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.*



*Paul Kane's painting of an Ojibwa village near Sault Ste. Marie, Upper Canada, in the mid 1840's. It represents very well what Chief Wahbanosay's encampment might have looked like at the head of Lake Ontario during Sacred Feathers's early boyhood. Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.*



## MOVEMENT AND SETTLEMENT INTO SOUTHERN ONTARIO


The arrival of Europeans and the establishment and growth of colonies by the early-mid 1600s brought Aboriginal Nations in eastern North America into increasingly complex political, economic and military alliances with the two main competing European Nations - France and England. Anishinabe Nations in the St. Lawrence and Ottawa River valleys and in the Upper Great Lakes, along with the Wendat (Huron) living in the Penetanguishene peninsula and Lake Simcoe area, allied themselves with French fur traders, missionaries, and the French colonial government. Meanwhile, the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy living south of Lake Ontario, had developed similar alliances with England.

During the first half of the 1600s, Anishinabe and Iroquois had occasionally engaged in military conflicts in attempts to access territories rich in fur bearing animals, and to control important fur trade travel routes. Eventually, these conflicts had grown into full-scale regional warfare. The Iroquois destroyed the Huron villages by 1649-50 and shortly thereafter, the villages of the Neutral and Petun as well, forcing the survivors to flee to distant refuge areas. Southern Ontario became a vast hunting territory for the Five Nations Iroquois, who now threatened more distantly established Anishinabe, including the Ojibway of Lake Huron.

By the 1680s, the Anishinabe of the Upper Great Lakes began to mount an organized counter-offensive against the Iroquois. In the early 1690s, the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomi, politically and militarily allied as the Three Fires Confederacy, initiated a series of offensives that gradually pushed the Iroquois back into their original homeland territory south of Lake Ontario. An oral tradition of these battles was kept by the Mississaugas for over 200 years and validated by modern historians and researchers.

The oral tradition indicates that the Mississaugas played a key role in Anishinabe battles with Iroquois. It also describes how the settlement of Mississaugas into southern Ontario dates from the final removal of the Iroquois from the region. According to Chief Robert Paudash, his account published by the Ontario Historical Society in 1905, the Mississaugas first defeated a party of Mohawks on an island in Georgian Bay named Pequahkoodebaminis (Skull Island). The Mississaugas then travelled along the Severn River to Lake Simcoe where they divided into two groups. The main group continued east to Balsam Lake, and from there down through the Trent waterway to the Bay of Quinté.

A second group of Mississaugas travelled south from Lake Simcoe along the Holland and Humber Rivers. The southern route followed by the Mississaugas, known as the Toronto Carrying Place, was an ancient and well known Aboriginal overland route linking Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. Aboriginal peoples had long used it to avoid the long water passage via Lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron. French explorers learned of its existence from Aboriginal people in the mid-1600s. In the 1700s French traders, followed by Northwest Company traders, used this route as it proved a shorter and more efficient link between Lake Ontario and Lake Huron than any alternatives at the time.

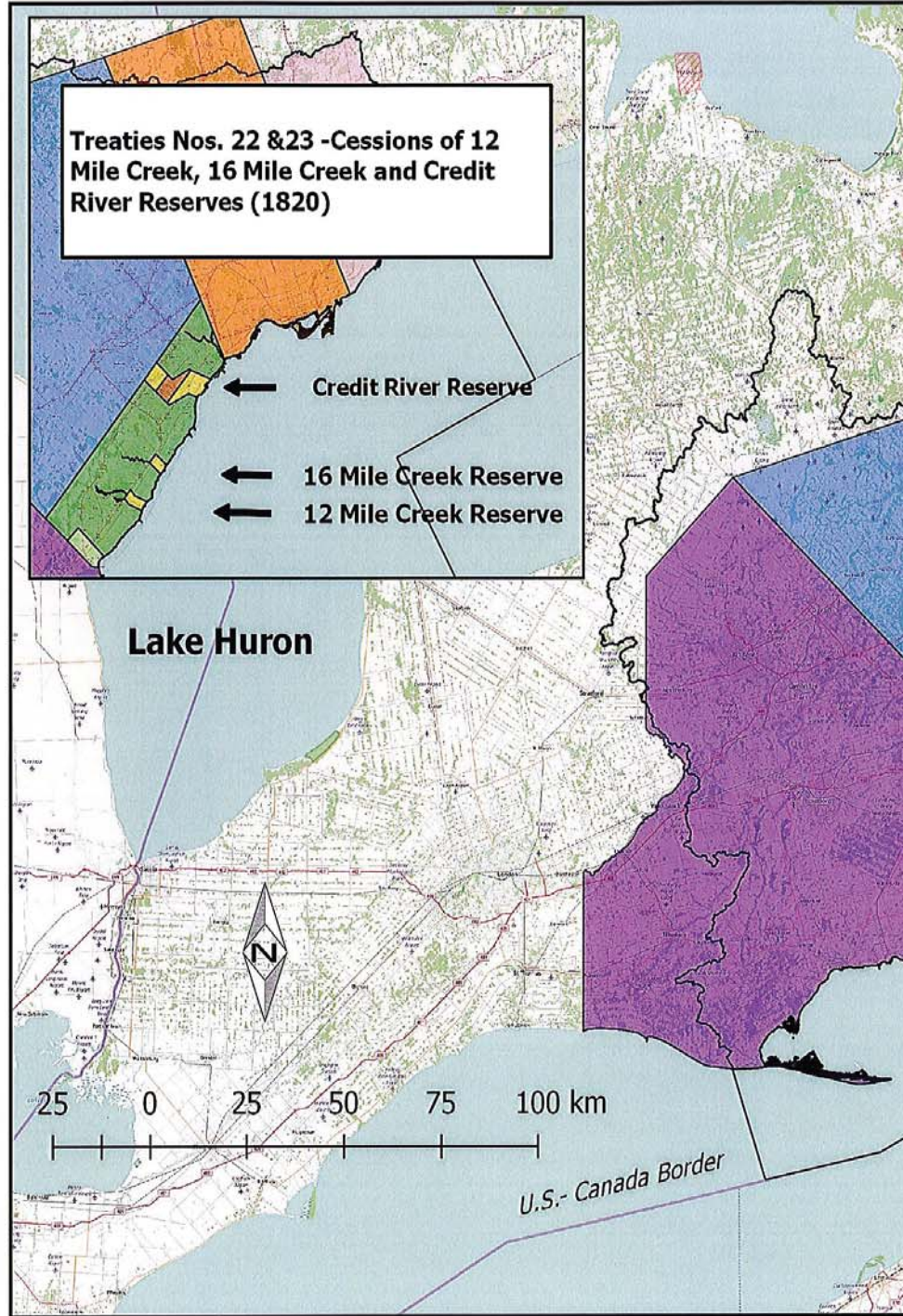




*Depiction of the defeat of the Iroquois. Around 1900 Mesaquab (Jonathon Yorker), an Ojibwa from the Rama Reserve, Lake Simcoe, made this representation of a rock painting that once stood on Quarry Point, Lake Couchiching. As it was "some years since the rock fell into the water," he relied exclusively on his own memory. The design was made for the lid of a birchbark box. The Ontario Provincial Museum's Archaeological Report for 1904 states: "The design is said to represent two Ojibwa warriors after the last great battle fought with the Iroquois, the central figure being a Mohawk, or Canienga. Mesaquab asserts that the Ojibwas, coming from the north, occupied the territory forsaken by their enemies.*

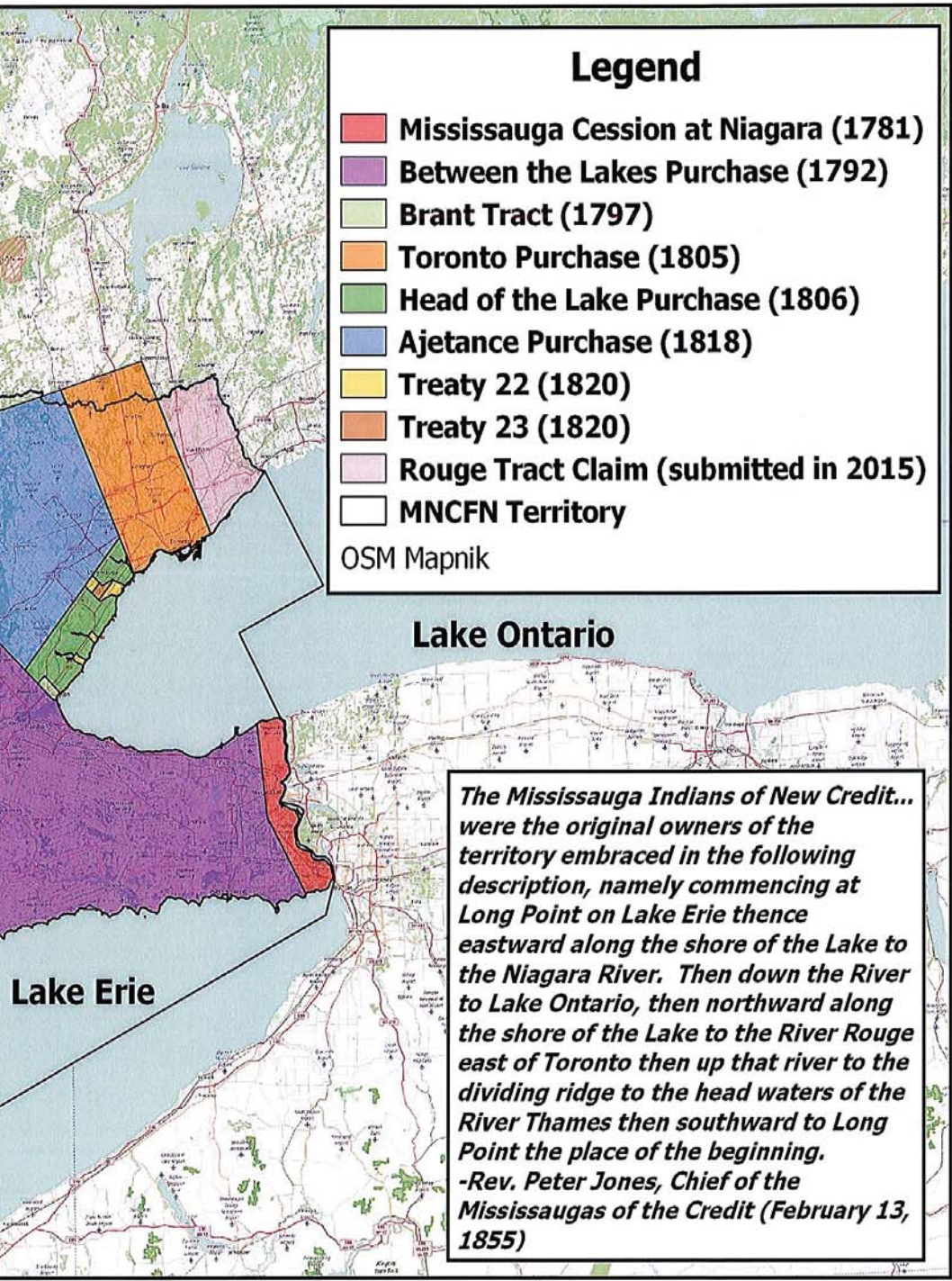
According to Chief Robert Paudash, after the Iroquois retreated to their homeland south of Lake Ontario, the Mississaugas negotiated a peace treaty with the Mohawk Nation. Upon returning from these negotiations, the Mississaugas decided to settle permanently in southern Ontario. Although an exact date cannot be confirmed, historians generally agree that the process of southern Ontario settlement by Mississaugas occurred in about 1695.

One large group established themselves in the of Trent River, along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence up to Brockville. A second group established themselves to the west, in an area between Toronto and Lake Erie. This latter group are the direct ancestors of the present Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.



**Mississaugas of the New Credit and Rouge**





### Legend

- Mississauga Cession at Niagara (1781)
- Between the Lakes Purchase (1792)
- Brant Tract (1797)
- Toronto Purchase (1805)
- Head of the Lake Purchase (1806)
- Ajetance Purchase (1818)
- Treaty 22 (1820)
- Treaty 23 (1820)
- Rouge Tract Claim (submitted in 2015)
- MNCFN Territory

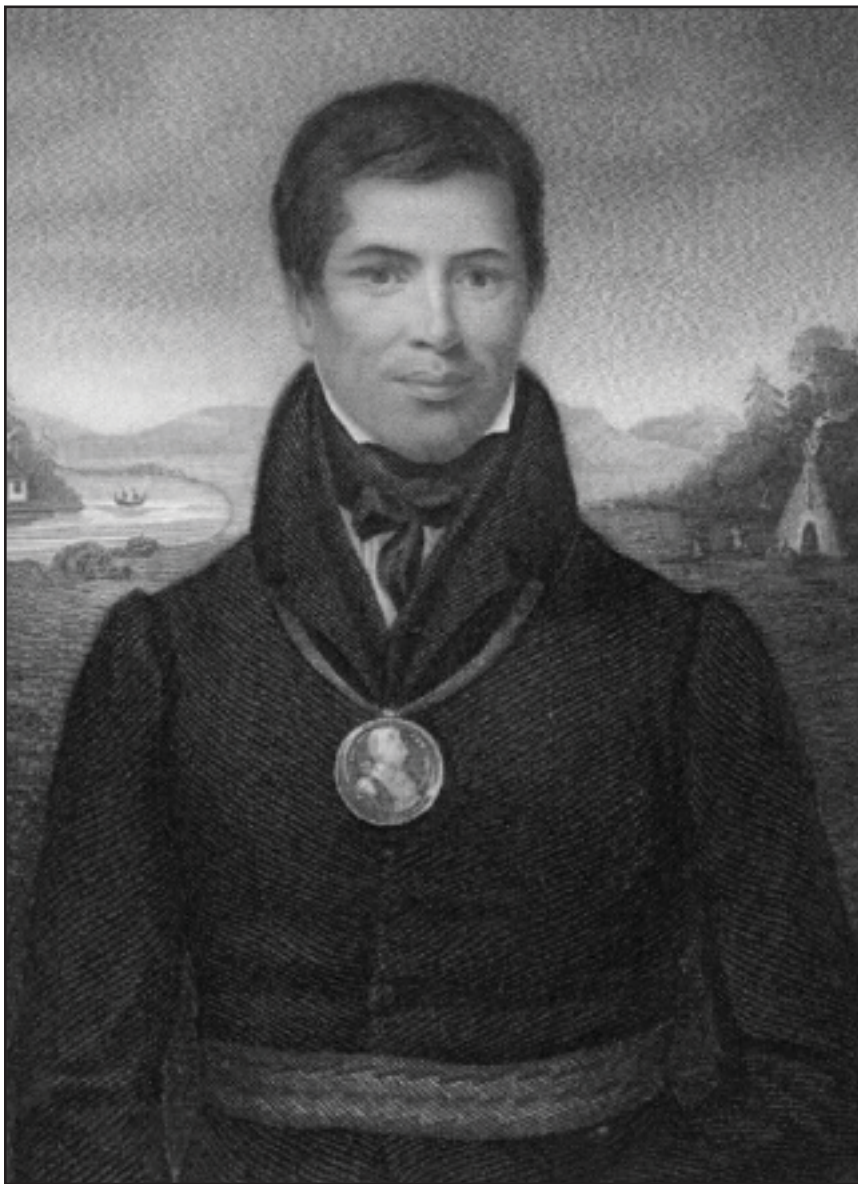
OSM Mapnik

*The Mississauga Indians of New Credit... were the original owners of the territory embraced in the following description, namely commencing at Long Point on Lake Erie thence eastward along the shore of the Lake to the Niagara River. Then down the River to Lake Ontario, then northward along the shore of the Lake to the River Rouge east of Toronto then up that river to the dividing ridge to the head waters of the River Thames then southward to Long Point the place of the beginning.*  
 -Rev. Peter Jones, Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit (February 13, 1855)

**First Nation Land Cessions 1781-1820  
 Tract Claim, 2015**

## THE MISSISSAUGAS OF THE CREDIT: HISTORICAL TERRITORY, RESOURCE AND LAND USE

The Mississaugas who settled in the area between Toronto and Lake Erie occupied and used a large territory in south-western Ontario throughout the 1700s and into the 1800s. In about 1720, French traders established a fur trade post at the western end of Lake Ontario. From this time onwards, the Mississaugas were regularly involved in the regional fur trade. By 1750, another French trade post had been built in the area of present-day Toronto (Fort Rouille). A practice soon developed by which French, and later English fur traders would extend credit to the Mississaugas at a particular river location. As a result, this river became known as the Credit River. By extension, the Mississaugas established in the region became known to Europeans as the Mississaugas of the Credit.




In the 1800s, several detailed and consistent geographic descriptions of what was the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit were outlined in written documents. One such description was provided to the Governor General by Chiefs Joseph Sawyer and John Jones in 1844:

The extent of country owned and possessed by the River Credit Indians from time immemorial, extended as far down as the river Rouge thence up the said river Rouge to its source, thence Westerly along the dividing ridge between Lake Huron and Ontario to the head waters of the Thames thence southerly to Long Point on Lake Erie, thence down Lake Erie, Niagara River, and Lake Ontario to the place of the beginning.

In 1848 the Reverend Peter Jones, whose Mississauga name was Kah-Ke-Wa-Quo-Na-By, provided a similar description of the traditional territory of his people in the *Christian Guardian*.

*Portrait of Kahkewaquonaby, Reverend Peter Jones, Peter Jones Collection, Victoria University Library, Toronto. Matilda Jones, April 1832*



The Reverend Peter Jones was at the time a well-known missionary and advocate not only for his people, the Mississaugas of the Credit, but also for many other Aboriginal Nations and communities in Ontario. By 1855, then as Chief of the New Credit Band, Peter Jones provided a further description of the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit in a statement to the Indian Department. This description is quoted in an insert on the map of Credit Mississauga Territory presented in this brochure.


Upon their arrival in Southern Ontario about 1695, the Mississaugas of the Credit continued to follow a yearly cycle of movement and resource harvesting in their southern Ontario territory. This yearly seasonal cycle was generally comparable to the way of life followed by the Mississaugas on the north shore of Lake Huron.

In winter months, extended family groups were dispersed throughout the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Hunting provided the major means of subsistence in winter. A number of large and small game, birds and fur bearing animals provided important sources of food and pelts for commercial trade. Deer were abundantly available, and bear were also harvested although to a lesser extent. Beaver and muskrats were important fur bearing animals whose pelts were traded in exchange for European goods. However, these fur bearing animals were also harvested for food, and their meat supplemented dietary needs of families.

In spring, families first moved to sugar bushes to tap maple trees. After the maple harvest, families congregated at the Credit River, the site of an important salmon fishery. Furs and pelts were also brought to trade posts at this time. Fishing was supplemented by hunting small game and fowl, principally ducks, geese and partridges.

Summer provided an abundance of resources for subsistence. Women planted corn and other vegetables, tended to crops and collected a variety of wild foods. Berries, mushrooms, roots, and where available, wild rice in the fall, were important wild foods that could be preserved for winter months. Fishing, supplemented by hunting, were the main economic activities engaged in by men throughout summer months. By fall, people often returned to the Credit River for salmon fishing and for obtaining credit (trade goods) from European traders prior to returning to winter hunting grounds.

Toward the end of the 1700s, growing Euro-Canadian settlement in the Lake Ontario region started to interfere with the seasonal movements and resource harvesting activities of the Mississaugas of the Credit. However, the growing villages and towns also provided some opportunities for the Mississaugas of the Credit to supply this population with food and manufactured goods through barter sales. The diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe (wife of the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada) details a number examples of receiving supplies of salmon, pike, geese, ducks and maple sugar from barter sales by Mississaugas of the Credit in the 1790s.





*Indian Sugar Camp, engraving by J.C. McRae of a watercolour by Seth Eastman. The women usually left for the maple sugar groves during the final muskrat hunt in the spring. The Henry Schoolcraft, Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States, 6 vols.*

In 1826, the Mississaugas of the Credit established a mission settlement on the Credit River under the direction of the Reverend Peter Jones. The mission settlement quickly developed as a successful agricultural community. Over the following years, the Credit River settlement gained considerable political importance as a regional centre where a number of Ojibway Grand Councils were held.

However, throughout this time period, the Mississaugas of the Credit continued to travel extensively for hunting and fishing. Many community members had developed close family relationships with Ojibway and other Aboriginal peoples from several First Nation communities in southern Ontario, including Muncey, Owen Sound and the Six Nations Iroquois on the Grand River. As Euro-Canadian settlement intensified along the western end of Lake Ontario, Mississaugas of the Credit travelled further inland and to more remote hunting grounds, for example, in the Muskoka area, to harvest renewable resources.



## THE RELOCATION TO NEW CREDIT


Between the late 1700s and into the 1800s a number of events would have long lasting impacts on the Mississaugas of the Credit and their land base. These events happened within broader social, political and economic changes that included the development of Euro-Canadian settlement in Mississauga territory, colonial government land grants to the Six Nations Iroquois and land purchases from the Mississaugas.

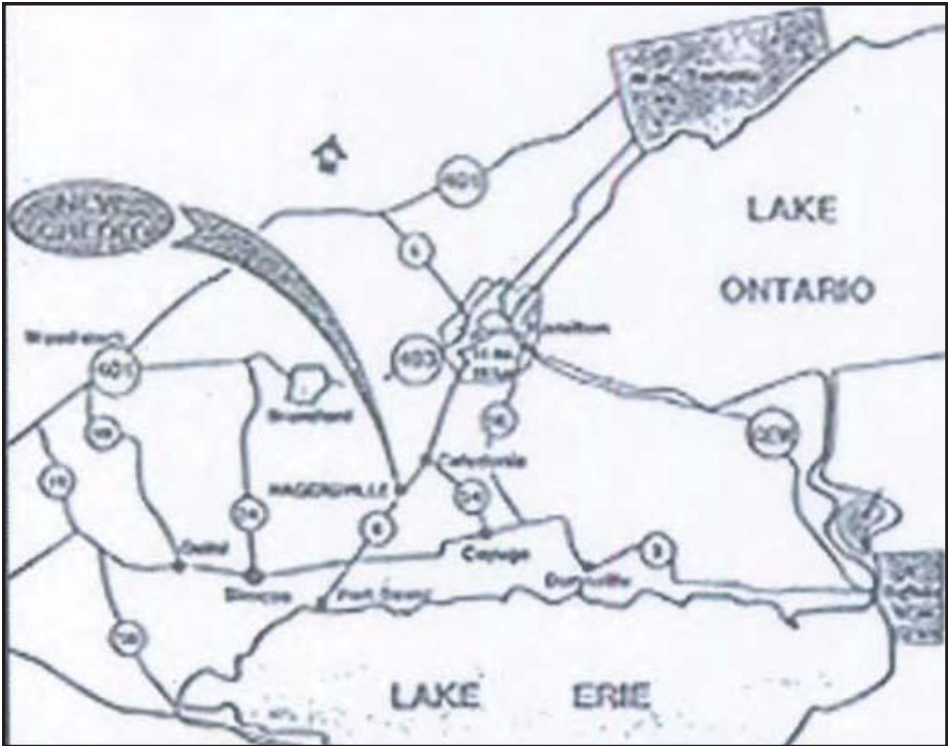
Throughout the 1700s, the Mississaugas and the Iroquois Confederacy (which after the early 1700s included Six Nations) maintained peaceful relations. At the request of the British colonial government in 1784, the Mississaugas agreed to a land grant permitting settlement of the Six Nations along the Grand River.

The land grant to the Six Nations was part of a series of 'land surrenders' (as the British conceived the agreements) involving the Mississaugas first in 1781, and ending in 1820. In this time period, according to the English texts of agreements, the British colonial government 'purchased' all but 200 of approximately 3.9 million acres of the Credit River Mississaugas' territory. The 'Toronto Purchase' of 1787 covered much of what is today central metropolitan Toronto. The 'Gunshot Treaty' of 1788 covered Mississauga lands north of Lake Ontario. Both of these land agreements remain controversial today. The original land purchase documents contained defects by British legal standards at the time. For example, the 1787 Toronto Purchase was renegotiated by the British government in 1805, and the Gunshot Treaty was almost immediately considered invalid by colonial authorities.

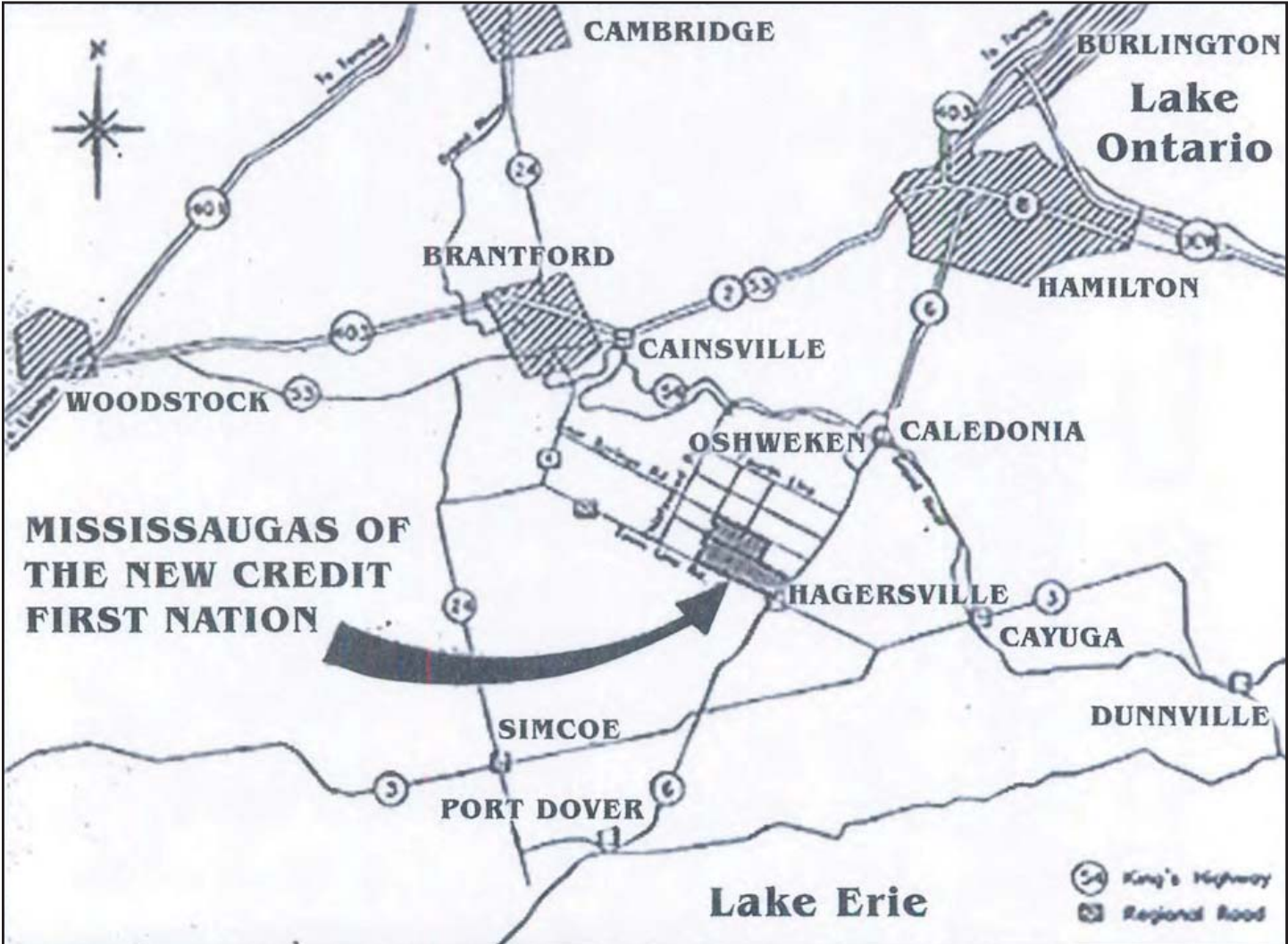
The validity of these early 'land surrenders' by the Mississaugas of the Credit is also questionable on other grounds. The Mississaugas understood these agreements very differently from the colonial government. The British saw land as a commodity and thought they were purchasing land or rights to land once and for all. The Mississaugas conceived of their relationship to the land in spiritual terms. They did not believe that land could be 'sold', or that their rights to use land and access resources for food and living, could be absolutely and permanently signed away. Additionally, the Mississaugas believed their lands were held in common, unlike the settlers who believed in the individual ownership of lands.

After 1800, the growth of Euro-Canadian settlement in the Toronto area put increasing pressure on the ability of the Mississaugas of the Credit to continue to make a living. At first, the Mississaugas of the Credit responded by seeking to protect their ability to make a living on their territory. The Mississaugas petitioned the colonial government to secure for them exclusive rights to key fisheries in 'land surrender' agreements. The text of the 1805 Toronto Purchase defined specific, exclusive rights to fisheries for the Mississaugas in the Twelve Mile Creek, the Sixteen Mile Creek, the Etobicoke River, and the Credit River. In 1829, the Mississaugas of the Credit sought further protection of their fishing rights in a petition to the Upper Canada government to secure their salmon fishery on the Credit River. Later that year, an Act of Parliament was passed confirming exclusive rights of the River Credit Mississaugas to hunt and fish along that river. The Act was confirmed again in 1835.





Yet by the late 1830s the Mississaugas of the Credit realized that their ability to make a living at their settlement on the River Credit was in jeopardy. It was becoming increasingly clear that the community would have to relocate to an area less directly disturbed by Euro-Canadian settlement. After considering several options, in 1847 the Mississaugas accepted an offer from the Six Nations to establish a new settlement on a tract of land situated in the southwest portion of the Six Nations Reserve.



A number of reasons convinced the leaders and people that this tract presented better possibilities for successful relocation relative to other options. The land was within the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, and relatively close to the existing settlement on the River Credit. Also, the land was of superior quality compared to other tracts, and presented greater potential for agricultural development. Finally, over the years, the close ties between the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Six Nations people had resulted in a number of intermarriages. The opportunity to maintain close family ties proved an important attraction.

The relocated community became known as the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. This tract of land was formally confirmed as the Mississaugas of the New Credit Reserve in 1903, which remains to this day.



A special thanks to Praxis Research Associates, 6352 St. Louis Drive, Ottawa, Ontario for researching and writing the MCNFN History.



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