

Hamburg Township Historical Museum

# The Indigenous History of Hamburg Township

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## Contents

Introduction.....	2
A Note on Indigenous History .....	3
First Settlement of the Great Lakes Region.....	5
The Paleo-Indian Period (13,000 BCE to 8000 BCE) .....	5
The Archaic Period (8000 BCE to 1000 BCE) .....	6
The Woodlands Period (1000 BCE – 1650 CE) .....	7
The Post-Contact Period .....	11
The French Era .....	13
The British Era .....	15
The American Revolution .....	16
American Expansionism .....	17
The Treaty Era.....	18
Era of Accommodation and Removal .....	20
The 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> Centuries - Forced Assimilation .....	23
The Modern Era .....	25
Conclusion .....	26
Limitations and Directions for Future Research .....	26
Appendix A – Timeline of Hamburg Township’s Indigenous History .....	28
Appendix B – Glossary.....	30
Appendix C – Native American Trails in Michigan.....	32
Bibliography .....	33

## Introduction

The history of Michigan's Native Americans is nuanced and complex, dating back to the arrival of the first peoples to the region over 12,000 years ago (around the year 10,000 BCE). While it can be difficult to comprehend such a long expanse of time, consider that the ancient Egyptians did not build their first pyramids until 2500 BCE, over seven thousand years after the first Native Americans arrived in the territory that is now Michigan. The world changed quite a lot over the years however, and the Native Americans that the first European explorers met in the early 1600s CE were vastly different from their ancient ancestors. The 'post-contact' period that came after the arrival of Europeans was fraught with drastic changes as native peoples across the continent fought to maintain their cultures and ways of life amid the growing pressure of European and later American colonies. Against this backdrop of colonial expansion, the Anishinabek (the Algonquin word for "original people" or "spontaneous beings") of the Great Lakes region endured through conflict and hardship, adapted to a changing world, and adeptly negotiated their circumstances by playing the rival imperial powers against one another.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, by the mid-1800s most of Michigan's Potawatomi, Ottawa, Ojibway, Miami, Wyandot, Fox, and Sac peoples had either been relocated to reservations west of the Mississippi River, or had fled north into Canada to escape removal. Despite this turmoil, the Great Lakes tribes were never truly broken. Today, roughly 140,000 Michiganders claim some degree of Native American ancestry, with larger related populations of these tribes still living in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Iowa.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, many of these tribes are now recognized by the federal government as autonomous sovereign nations that continue to support tribal members with services and programs such as culture and language revitalization classes. While these ongoing programs can certainly help to heal deep generational traumas, it is worth noting that centuries of cultural destruction and assimilation are not easily undone.

Like much of conflict throughout history, the story of Michigan's indigenous people and their encounters with non-natives was difficult at times, and the part of that history belonging to the land that is now Hamburg Township is no different. That said, it is just as important to discuss the difficult chapters of history as much as the easier ones. The goal of this paper is not to glorify or malign any part of this history, but to present as truly and objectively as possible the facts of history as we know them and then allow readers to draw their own conclusions. Hopefully, this introduction to the Native American history of Hamburg Township will serve as a launching point for future research and exploration into the extensive history and culture of Michigan's indigenous peoples.

Throughout most of the time period discussed, Livingston County was relatively sparsely populated, even by the Native American tribes who occupied the region (primarily the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2016), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Roger L. Rosentreter, *Michigan: A History of Explorers, Entrepreneurs, and Everyday People*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 10.

Potawatomi, in addition to the Ojibway and Wyandot).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it is important to remember that members of these tribes did not reside in permanent homes as people often think of today, but instead migrated seasonally in search of specific resources. The indigenous peoples who lived in this area would not have thought of themselves as being from a particular *place*, but would have instead viewed the area as part of their larger home territory used for hunting, fishing, and farming at different points throughout the year. As such, much of the history described here is a more general narrative of the tribes of Michigan with a particular emphasis on southeast Michigan and the Huron River (the main navigable river running through Hamburg Township). It is written for the lay reader but utilizes footnotes both to cite sources as well as to help readers find additional information on particular topics.

Although history may be difficult to face at certain times, only by confronting its challenging truths can we begin to have an honest conversation about the past and decide what it means for those of us living in the present. We all share in the history of our communities no matter where we are from, and we all live with the legacies of those who came before us. Hopefully, through the scholarship presented here and in the museum exhibit, as well as from your own knowledge and research, we as a community can start the process of coming to terms with our shared past.

### A Note on Indigenous History

You may have heard the saying that “history is written by the victors.” Though an old adage, it is one that rings particularly true in the way that Native American history has traditionally been written. In the case of Michigan’s indigenous history, the victors were American colonists in the early 1800s who were just beginning to settle lands that only decades before had been home to thousands of Native Americans from a variety of different tribes. By the time that the first American settlers set foot in Hamburg Township in 1831 however, the majority of the area’s indigenous inhabitants had already been displaced or relocated. Throughout the 1800s, the U.S. government carried out an aggressive campaign to remove Native Americans from their lands as a means of opening new territory for colonization.

Following in the wake of these removals, settlers in the Michigan Territory were free to write the history of the area as they saw it. Unsurprisingly, the history they wrote cast themselves in a favorable light and drew heavily on the era’s commonly held (but incorrect) notions of race to justify their seizure of land from the Native Americans. According to their version of history, American settlers were an advanced and enlightened people claiming the frontier for civilization. The land’s Native American inhabitants were seen as simple, uncivilized, and an unfortunate obstacle in the way of progress.

While we know today that this version of history is deeply flawed and not based in scientific reality, it was still widely accepted as historical fact by both the early settlers who

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<sup>3</sup> Wilbert Hinsdale, *Distribution of the Aboriginal Population of Michigan*, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1932), 3.

wrote it as well as by subsequent generations of historians. Part of the problem for historians was that most of the primary source evidence (journals, diaries, and other documents authored by people who were living at the time) were all written by Europeans and Americans. Because indigenous Americans traditionally recorded their history through storytelling and oral tradition, there are few primary source documents written by Native Americans from this period. However, when early American historians were first writing, they did not consider Native American oral traditions to be “real” historical evidence (as we do today). Further, racial preconceptions about indigenous peoples meant that few historians felt the need to ask the tribes for their version of events.

Given this bias, historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries continued to view the history of Native Americans not as “real history,” but instead as part of “pre-history.” During this time, Native American artifacts were predominantly displayed in natural history museums alongside the fossilized remains of woolly mammoths and other extinct animals, instead of at cultural history museums alongside European and American artifacts from the same period. Similarly, the voices and perspectives of Native American peoples remained excluded from the writing of their own history well into the mid-1900s.

It was not until the Red Power movement of the 1960s and ‘70s that things began to change. As Native Americans (and other minority groups) fought for their place in American society, they were also fighting for their place in the nation’s history. As historians came to recognize the flaws of the settler-centered narrative of history, they too began advocating for the inclusion of indigenous perspectives, voices, and sources in the writing of Native American history.<sup>4</sup>

Since then, the incorporation of indigenous primary sources and perspectives has become a more mainstream expectation of professional historical research. Nevertheless, this sentiment is still not yet universally accepted. In particular, it has taken time to filter down into other forms of popular media, as well as much of the literature written by this county and township’s historians. The researcher of this paper has thereby made a specific point to include as many indigenous sources as possible, with context given for colonial sources when utilized.

As a final note about terminology, this paper will utilize the name of the band or tribe whenever possible. In particular, the story will focus on the tribes of the Three Fires confederation (the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Ojibway), who are referenced collectively as the Anishinabek people. Otherwise, the terms Native American and indigenous American are used to reference larger or mixed groups of indigenous peoples more generally. The phrase Euro-American is used as well to denote groups of Europeans and/or Americans in a general sense.

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<sup>4</sup> Two books with extensive discussions of this transition in academic scholarship and museum practice are: Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), and Lara Leigh Kelland, *Clio’s Foot Soldiers: Twentieth-Century U.S. Social Movements and Collective Memory*, (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018).

## First Settlement of the Great Lakes Region

There are many creation stories among the Great Lakes Anishinabek peoples. The one described by Ottawa historian Andrew Blackbird states that the world was at first a place of dreams and mist. Home only to an older woman and her daughter, the daughter eventually gave birth to three *manidog* (spirits). Their names were *Nanabojo*, the eldest brother, *Nekajiwegizik*, the middle brother who opened a road for the dead to travel to the spirit world, and *Maskaswabik* the youngest brother who was made of stone. It was believed that *Nanabojo*, who is variously depicted as the hero, villain, trickster, and/or fool in many of these stories, wanted to kill every creature in sight. After killing both of his brothers so that he could wander around the world freely, *Nanabojo* befriended a wolf companion.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, *Nanabojo*'s wolf companion was eventually captured and drowned by angry sea spirits. In revenge, *Nanabojo* killed the god of the deep by shooting him with an arrow. Although *Nanabojo* got his revenge, the water god's sea spirits chased after him with a torrent of water, eventually flooding the Earth. With no land left in the world, *Nanabojo* convinced a muskrat to dive to the seafloor and return with a small handful of dirt, which *Nanabojo* then used to create the land. Afterwards, *Nanabojo* and many other spirits went on to create the *Anishinabek* (the original people) as well as the plants and animals of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Alternatively, archaeologists have developed their own explanations for the origins of the first indigenous Americans. It should be stated however that creation myths and spiritual interpretations form the core of Native American society, beliefs, and values, and should therefore be regarded as equally viable to other modern 'scientific' explanations.<sup>7</sup> The sections that follow utilize terms such as the "Paleo-Indian Period" and "Archaic Period" to describe phases of time; these are western concepts that scientists have applied to indigenous history and are not used by the tribes when describing their own past. But, because archaeologists continue to use these (somewhat problematic) terms to describe the early history of North America's first inhabitants, they are summarized in the following sections below.

### The Paleo-Indian Period (13,000 BCE to 8000 BCE)

According to archaeologists, the first people to arrive in North America likely did so between 13,000 and 15,000 years ago. Scholars have not yet found definitive evidence of precisely when or how this occurred, though there is growing evidence that the first humans arrived here thousands of years *before* the Bering Sea land bridge came into existence. Instead,

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan; A Grammar of their Language and Personal and Family History of the Author*, (Ypsilanti: Ypsilanti Job Printing House, 1887), 75-78. A "representative" version of this creation story is also presented in: Charles E. Cleland, *Rites of Conquest: The History and Culture of Michigan's Native Americans*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992) 3.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan*, 75-78. See also: Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires: The Ottawa, Potawatomi and Ojibway of Michigan*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan Indian Press and Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council, 1986), v.

archaeologists now theorize that the original settlers of North America came from East Asia by boat, island hopping across Alaska and the Aleutian isles in areas where the glaciers had begun to retreat.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest evidence for the presence of humans in the Great Lakes region dates to around 12,000 years ago. During this period, glaciers still covered much of Michigan's lower peninsula. As the ice sheets slowly melted, they left behind a rough landscape of glacial till, moraines, and kettle lakes that eventually grew enough tundra vegetation to host herds of grazing animals. Referred to as the Paleo-Indian Period, relatively little is known about this time other than the fact that the first humans survived in the harsh tundra environment by using long stone spearpoints (Clovis points) to hunt big game such as caribou and mastodon.<sup>9</sup> Clovis points were typically long and fluted (made with the characteristic curve in the base). In 1870, a man named Dexter Knapp reportedly found a collection of these fluted spearpoints on his farm near Buck Lake in Hamburg Township.<sup>10</sup>

### The Archaic Period (8000 BCE to 1000 BCE)

As the climate warmed, the glaciers continued to retreat north of Lake Huron enabling pine forests to dominate the landscape of southern Michigan. This shift marked the beginning of the Archaic Period (8000 BCE to 1000 BCE), which scholars typically further divide into three sub-periods: the early, middle, and late Archaic. During the early to middle Archaic Period, archaeological evidence suggests that the inhabitants of the Great Lakes region faced a rapidly changing environment. Due to a warming climate, shifting vegetation, and intensive hunting, populations of big game animals such as mastodons were already close to extinction.

Requiring a new food source, the peoples of the Archaic Period developed smaller barbed/notched spearpoints that could be used to hunt different types of game. Unlike the larger spearpoints of the earlier Paleo Period, these smaller points could be mounted on throwing spears. Once thrown, the barbed point would then stick in the target, making it an effective tool



Figure 1. Drawing of a Clovis Point from the early occupation of the Great Lakes. Image from: Fitting, Claggett, and Treichler, "Prehistoric Projectile Points of Michigan" *Great Lakes Informant* 2, no 5. 1976.

<sup>8</sup> John Noble Wilford, "New Answers to an Old Question: Who Got Here First?" *New York Times* 9 Nov. 1999, Gale Science In Context. Web. 6 Jan. 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Sheperdigian, "A Fluted Point from Livingston County, Michigan," Personal correspondence, Hamburg Library 2012.0163.

against southern Michigan's populations of deer and elk. In addition, people began making greater use of nuts, seeds, berries, and other gatherable plants.<sup>11</sup>

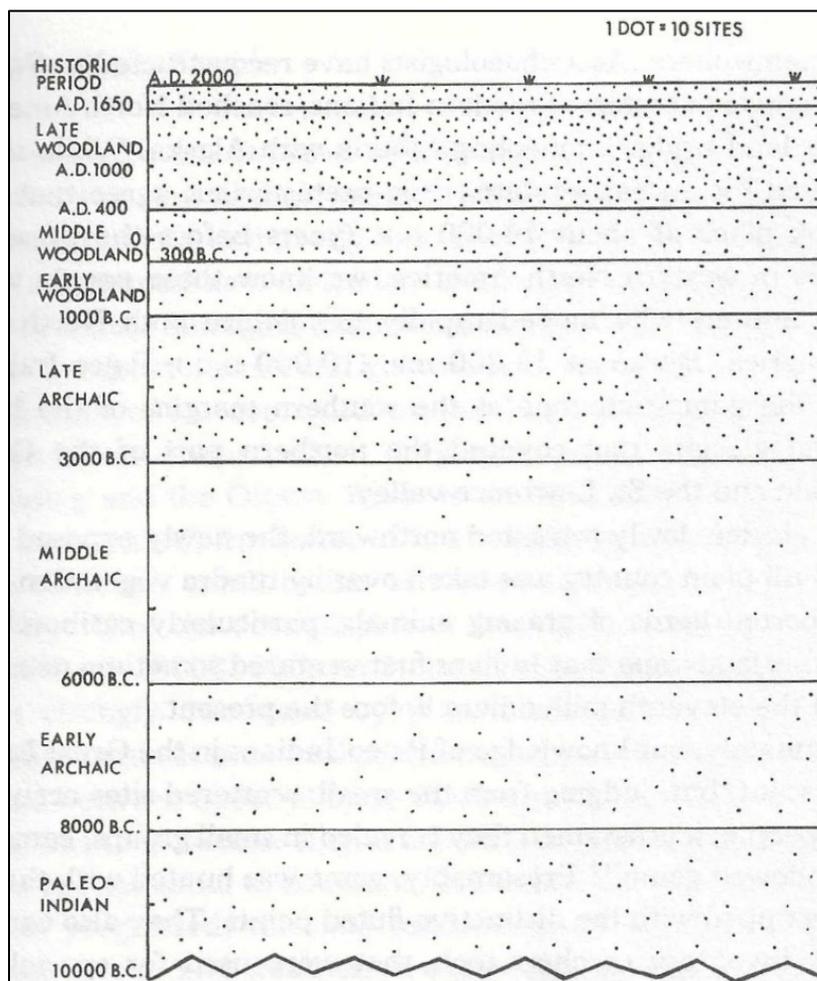


Figure 2. Concentration of known archaeological sites in Michigan by time period, Image from: Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 13.

### The Woodlands Period (1000 BCE – 1650 CE)

Beginning in the Woodlands Period (which lasted from 1000 BCE to the first contact with Europeans in the early 1600s CE), these trends continued to intensify. Woodlands peoples began making fired clay pottery, with each cultural group decorating their pottery in slightly different ways. (These unique styles now allow modern archaeologists to identify the pieces made by each of these cultures). In addition, the development of the bow and arrow around 500 CE made for more efficient hunting.

During the warm period of the middle Archaic, deciduous hardwood forests in turn replaced the coniferous pine forests of the lower peninsula. By around 3000 BCE however, the climate began to cool mildly, leading to the present-day mixed deciduous-coniferous character of Michigan's climate and vegetation. Throughout the middle and late Archaic Periods, technology continued to advance. Innovations in tool making, food processing, and hunting/foraging led to larger villages and more permanent communities. In addition, signs of long-distance trade appear during this era as well, with trade goods from as far away as the Gulf of Mexico arriving at habitation sites in the Great Lakes region.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 15-18. And James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires*, iv.

<sup>12</sup> James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires*, iv.

Trade networks expanded significantly as well, leading to the introduction of cultivatable crops from Mexico. In southern Michigan, people of the Woodlands Period began farming corn, squash, beans, and sunflowers, which in turn led to food surpluses, population growth, and larger villages. In the cooler areas of northern Michigan, hunting and fishing remained the predominant subsistence activities, remaining less reliant on agriculture.

With more time, resources, and labor to dedicate to other activities, the first mound building took place in southern Michigan beginning near the turn of the Common Era (1 CE). Earthen mounds were often constructed as burial chambers for important leaders, as well as for use in other spiritual/religious activities. Made by piling dirt, mounds nevertheless require an enormous amount of labor and social organization to construct. As such, scholars view the practice of mound building as a mark of societies with advanced social structures, leadership, and specialized labor. Archaeologists believe that this period of mound building in the southern Great Lakes was related to increasing cultural contact with the Hopewell people of Ohio and Illinois.<sup>13</sup> Note\* Hopewell is not a tribe of Native Americans, but an artificial ‘cultural group’ named for the family on whose farm the remains of these peoples were first uncovered by archaeologists.

The late Woodlands Period in southern Michigan was characterized by increasing contact with the Mississippian culture to the south. Centered around the massive city of Cahokia in Illinois, the Mississippian culture occupied most of the Mississippi River valley and its tributaries, all the way from the Gulf of Mexico to southern Wisconsin, western Michigan, and Ohio. Throughout the later years of this period, tribal conflict seems to have significantly increased. While the exact nature of the conflict is unclear, the construction of fortifications in southern Michigan around 1300 CE suggests that this was a period of disruption.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, during this period the ancestors of Michigan’s modern Anishinabek tribes arrived in the Great Lakes region. While Anishinabek peoples had been living in the Great Lakes region for thousands of years, according to oral tradition the tribes of the Three Fires confederation (the Ottawa, Ojibway, and Potawatomi - all speakers of Anishinaabemowin – a sub-family of the Algonquin language group) migrated to the Great Lakes from the Atlantic coast near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River in modern day Quebec.

As described in Blackbird’s history: “Very many centuries ago, before the discovery of the American continent by the white people, the traditions of the Ottawas say they lived along the banks of one of the largest tributaries of the St. Lawrence, now known as the Ottawa river.” He believed this migration was “on account of their deadly enemies, the Iroquois of New York.” Over many ages his people continued their westward trek, suffering great hardships and temporarily settling in a number of places along the way. Recorded on a birch bark scroll is a map of this migration recorded by Red Sky, an Ojibway religious leader. In the annotated image attached below, major geographic features and settlement locations are pointed out along the migration route.

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<sup>13</sup> Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 20-21.

<sup>14</sup> Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 26.

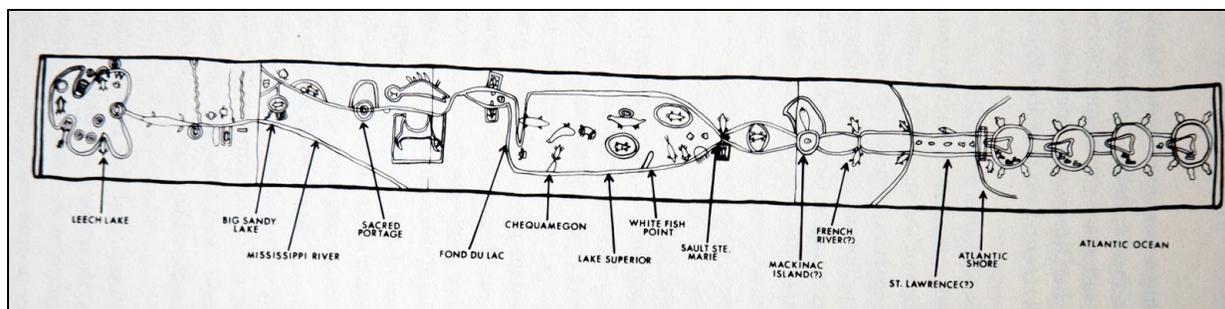


Figure 3 Red Sky's Migration Chart depicting the Anishinabek migration from the Atlantic coast to the Great Lakes. Drawing by B. Nemeth, published in Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 9. Original held in the Glenbow Museum, Calgary.

Archaeological evidence corroborates these traditions, indicating an original departure from the Atlantic coast around the year 900 CE, with the tribes establishing themselves around the Great Lakes over the next several hundred years. According to legend, when the Three Fires tribes arrived at Sault Ste. Marie in modern day Michigan, they split off into different directions. The Potawatomi (who had been the keepers of the Sacred Fire throughout the journey) settled along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. The Odawa (or Ottawa – meaning “trader people” who had been in charge of provisioning supplies) remained along the Straits of Mackinac. The Ojibway (or Chippewa - who were the faith keepers), settled north into Canada and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Both Blackbird's account and archaeological/linguistic evidence suggest that the Potawatomi tribe may have split off from the main group earlier in the journey however.<sup>15</sup>

As they dispersed throughout the Great Lakes, the Three Fires Confederation became a powerful force in the region. Bonded by a shared sense of kinship, the Ottawa, Ojibway, and Potawatomi viewed their alliance in familial terms. The Ojibway (the most populous of the three tribes) held the most prestigious position as the older brother of the alliance, while the Ottawa were seen as the middle brother, and the Potawatomi the youngest brother. Together, the “Three Brothers” or Three Fires formed a loose confederation of largely independent tribes linked together by a shared sense of kinship, language, and spirituality. The confederation did not have a central government, but instead held regular council fires where the leading men of each tribe would gather to discuss important issues and debate possible solutions.<sup>16</sup>

In many ways the Three Fires Confederation reflected the social and political structure within each of the Anishinabek tribes. Instead of leaders who inherited their position, chiefs gained followers by earning respect and promoting their influence through gift-giving and the sharing of resources. No one (including chiefs) had the right to give orders to anyone else, and members of a village were free to come and go as they pleased. In the place of a central authority, Anishinabek society operated according to a shared set of social and spiritual principals. Among these principals was the ethic of sharing what you have with everyone else.

<sup>15</sup> The reason for this early departure is unknown, but may have occurred in southern Michigan, giving the Potawatomi people more time to adapt to the southern horticultural lifestyle of the area. David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomi: Keepers of the Fire*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 3. Also see Clifton, Cornell, and McClurken, *People of the Three Fires*, 76.

<sup>16</sup> Donald Fixico, “The Alliance of the Three Fires in Trade and War, 1630-1812,” *Michigan Historical Review* 20 no. 2 (1994): 4.

“A rich person did not have any more goods than his kinsmen; he simply gave more of what he had.” Particularly in times of hardship, sharing resources among the tribe was necessary for survival. Moreover, everyone in Anishinabek society was born into a clan, which carried with it specific obligations to aid and assist other members of the clan. Because marriage within a clan was forbidden, a married couple always had at least two clans from which they could seek help. Other guiding principles of Anishinabek life include a belief in the interconnectedness of humans with the natural world, a dislike of arguments/violence within the tribe, and a respect for both the rights of the individual as well as the collective good.<sup>17</sup>

Just as intermarriage between clans strengthened the bonds of kinship throughout the tribe, intermarriage between tribes further cemented bonds between the Three Fires. These shared familial ties meant that even as the youngest brother of the Confederation, the Potawatomi stood as equals in their dealings with the Ottawa and Ojibway, and had access to powerful allies that could be called upon in times of need.

These bonds proved to be critical to the success of the Anishinabek people, because as they settled around the Great Lakes they quickly came into conflict with the other tribes who already occupied the region. As Blackbird describes it: “After the Ottawas took complete possession of the Southern peninsula of Michigan, they fought some more tribes of Indians, subdued them, and compelled them to form a confederation with them as their allies.”<sup>18</sup> Notably, Blackbird includes the Mushcodesh (Mascouten), Menominee, Huron, “Odawgawmies” and “Assawgies” on this list of conquered tribes. They would also likely have encountered the Sauk, Fox, Miami, and Kickapoo tribes. Whereas these new alliances were often temporary however, bonds between the Three Fires held firm throughout even the most tumultuous times to come and remain so to this day.

Once the Potawatomi arrived in southern Michigan, they adopted the horticultural lifestyle of their neighbors. During the summer, the Potawatomi would gather in large villages where they grew corn, squash, and beans in garden plots along the riverbanks. At the same time, they used a variety of nets, hooks, harpoons, and weirs to catch fish, while also hunting for deer, elk, bear, bison, and small game. Much of the garden produce as well as the leftover fish and game were dried and stored for the winter months. Summer houses were rectangular in shape with tall arched roofs, made from a framework of “poles covered in elm or cedar bark.”<sup>19</sup> See figure 4 (below) for an image of a typical Potawatomi summer house.

In the winter, the Potawatomi dispersed into smaller villages and hunting camps with their close family and kin. They lived in winter homes constructed as oval-shaped domes, with a central hearth for heat. Food was scarcer during the winter months, so the Potawatomi relied primarily on hunting, as well as the food they had stored earlier in the year. The winter season

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<sup>17</sup> James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan*, 94.

<sup>19</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 16.

was also the major time for gathering around the fire, storytelling, and passing down traditions from generation to generation.<sup>20</sup>

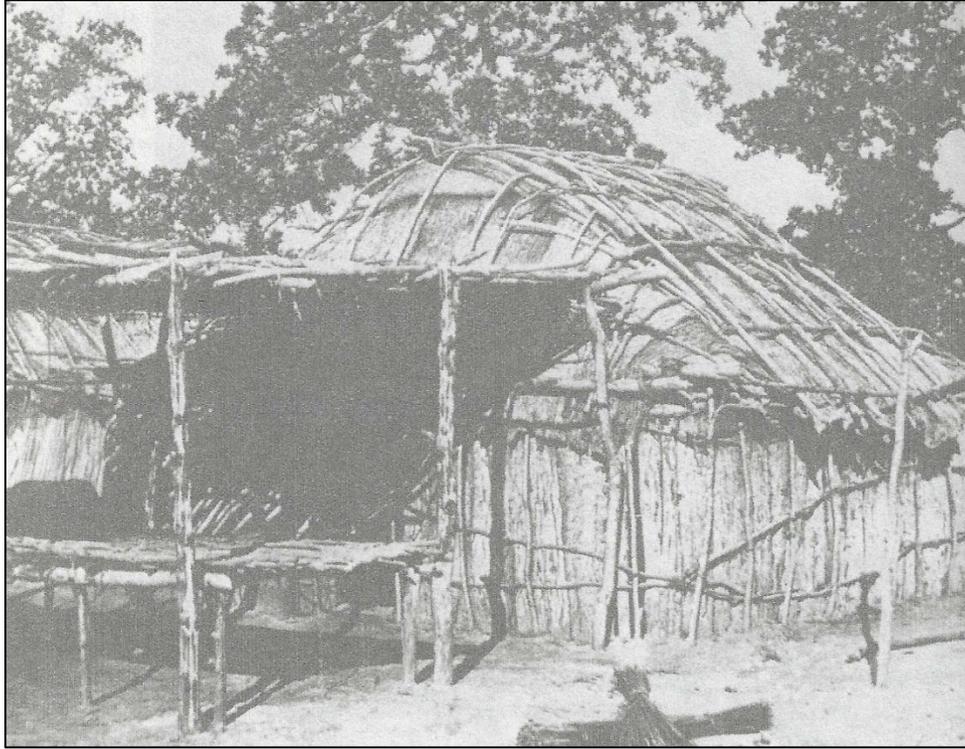


Figure 4. Bark covered Potawatomi summer house. Image from: Edmunds, David R. *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 1978., 60.

## The Post-Contact Period

By the time that Samuel de Champlain (the area's first European explorer) arrived in the Great Lakes in 1615, European influence had already brought major changes to the native peoples of the east. The Senecas (part of the Six Nations Iroquois League), who had long dominated the fur trade on the Atlantic coast had already been purchasing European trade goods and firearms for decades. Outfitted with these new weapons, the Senecas waged a series of wars against neighboring tribes, including those of the Three Fires. Unable to compete against this new technology, by 1650 the Three Fires tribes abandoned most of their lands in Michigan and fled west. Members of the Potawatomi joined together with the other displaced tribes to build a fortified village in Green Bay, Wisconsin. During this same time, the Senecas similarly drove the Huron (eventually called the Wyandot - a tribe of Iroquois-speaking peoples) off their lands in Ontario and into the Detroit area.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 5.

As they established themselves in the western Great Lakes, the Anishinabek tribes fostered relationships with the French and began trading furs with them at the new French outposts in Detroit and Michilimackinac. Now able to acquire trade goods and firearms of their own, the Three Fires confederation prepared to reclaim their lands in Michigan. Further, much like the Anishinabek refugees, the French had little love for the Iroquois. Realizing that the Iroquois raids were impeding profits from the fur trade, the French formed an alliance with the Potawatomi and other Anishinabek tribes to defeat them. Throughout the 1680s and '90s, these allies launched a series of attacks against their eastern foes, ultimately forcing them out of Michigan and back towards their homelands.<sup>22</sup>

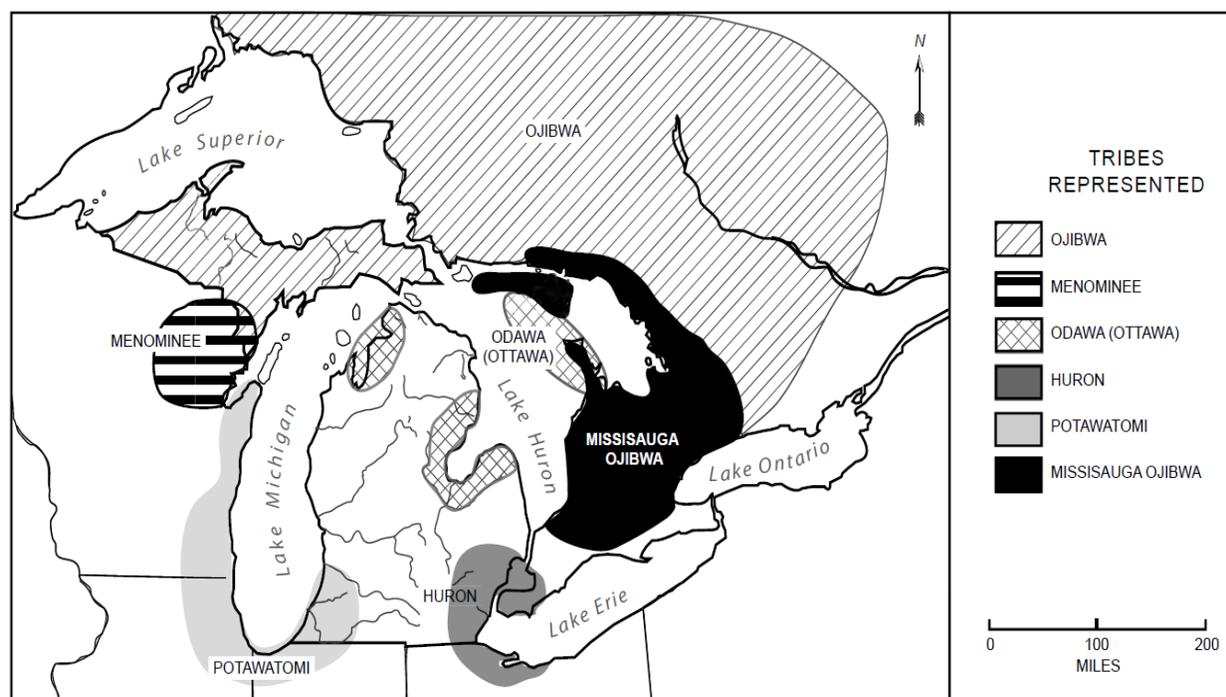


Figure 5. Locations of the Great Lakes tribes, c. 1600. Image from Roger L. Rosentreter, *Michigan: A History of Explorers, Entrepreneurs, and Everyday People*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 3.

With the Iroquois threat diminished, the Anishinabek tribes slowly returned to their former homes in Michigan. Throughout this process, it was the Potawatomi who occupied the southern part of Michigan's lower Peninsula, including the land that is now Livingston County. Until the forced removals of the 1830s, the Potawatomi remained the primary occupants of the Huron River. As shown in Figure 6 (below), the Potawatomi were the only tribe with known villages located along the Huron. However, since this land was located along the border of the Potawatomi and Ojibway territories, there was likely some shared use of it by both tribes. As such, the history of the indigenous peoples of Hamburg Township was determined largely by the interactions of the Potawatomi and Ojibway with other tribes and the encroaching European powers.

<sup>22</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 7.

It is worth mentioning that diverse and multiethnic villages were commonplace throughout this era, particularly in the Detroit area where several tribes moved to live in proximity to the French trading post. Along similar lines, these tribes shared access to the surrounding lands and the resources within them. As a result, many tribes considered themselves to have a legitimate claim to the territory, a fact that the United States was later able to exploit in its purchase of indigenous lands.

## The French Era

The first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (the 1700s) was a time of rising power for the Potawatomi. Now free from Iroquois attack, the Great Lakes fur trade boomed. For their leading role in the military alliance against the intruders, the Potawatomi gained a great deal of influence among the other Great Lakes tribes as well as a highly favorable relationship with the French. French colonial officials showed their appreciation by lavishing gifts upon their Potawatomi allies and inviting members of the tribe to settle in the vicinity of Detroit.

Realizing that indigenous peoples were the key to maintaining their power (and profits) on the frontier, the French colonial government followed traditional Anishinabek gift-giving practices and social customs with their native allies as a means of peacefully maintaining their influence.

Like the French, the British Empire (and their 13 fledgling colonies on the east coast) understood that the support of the Native American peoples would determine control of the Great Lakes region (then referred to as the Old Northwest Territory). Unlike the French however, British colonial officials did not possess the same cultural sensitivity in their dealings with indigenous peoples. Although they could sell trade goods at a lower price than the French, their generally frugal gift-giving cost the British a great deal of good will among the tribes.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout this period, the Great Lakes tribes utilized the sale of furs to purchase a wide array of household goods and trade commodities such as tools, pots, hunting traps, alcohol, firearms, and gunpowder. In the early years of the fur trade these peoples viewed such products as luxuries, but as time went on these products eventually became necessities, leading to a decline in tribal self-sufficiency.<sup>24</sup>

When the French and Indian War (known outside of the U.S. as the Seven Years' War between France and Britain) began in 1754, the Potawatomi honored their alliance with the French and contributed many warriors to serve alongside the French colonial militia. But, in spite of winning several major battles against the British, the French were ultimately defeated. In the subsequent peace treaty, the French (without consulting their Native American allies) gave the British Empire sovereignty over French Canada, the Old Northwest Territory, and all of the indigenous peoples living therein.

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<sup>23</sup> James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires*, 51.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



Naturally, the Potawatomi were shocked at the outcome of the war. They had not only successfully defended their lands against the British but had never been the subjects of France in the first place, which meant that the French had no right to sign away their lands. Regardless, when British troops occupied the city of Detroit in 1760 it was clear that the balance of power in the Great Lakes had shifted.<sup>25</sup>

## The British Era

As the British established themselves as the new major European power in the Great Lakes, the Potawatomi were dangerously low on gunpowder and supplies after years of warfare. Further, with the trading post at Detroit now occupied by the British, the Native American villages in southeastern Michigan were particularly vulnerable to British attack. Fearing retribution for their role in the war, as well as in dire need of supplies, the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Huron of southeastern Michigan made peace with the British. The Potawatomi further west near modern day Grand Rapids and Chicago did not feel as threatened by the British presence however, and resisted attempts at peace-making.<sup>26</sup>

In the early 1760s, British policy towards the Native Americans became even more contentious. British agents were told to stop the practice of gift giving completely, while the sale of gunpowder, ammunition, and alcohol to Native Americans was strictly banned. Angered over these insults as well as the ongoing encroachment of British settlers into their territory, resentment against the British grew. Still, as calls for war spread throughout the Great Lakes tribes, the eastern Potawatomi attempted to maintain the peace by negotiating with British officials in Detroit. Although the negotiations were ultimately unsuccessful, the British continued to underestimate the resentment of the Native Americans, as well as their capacity to organize resistance.

Throughout 1762-63, an Ottawa war chief named Pontiac traveled among the tribes in southeastern Michigan rallying support for a war against the British. Urged on by the teachings of Neolin, a prophet from the Delaware tribe who preached for “Indian self-reliance and a return to the old ways of Anishinabek life,” tensions reached the boiling point.<sup>27</sup> In May of 1763, Pontiac led a group of Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Huron in an attack against Fort Detroit. Though unable to take the fort, the uprising spread quickly throughout the Old Northwest Territory, leading to the capture of several other British forts. Skirmishes between colonial and indigenous troops took place throughout the rest of the year, though without a decisive victor.

In October, peace negotiations resulted in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which marked the Appalachian Mountains as the boundary between colonial and indigenous lands. Everything west of the Appalachians was now considered part of a vast Indian reserve on which all future European settlement was prohibited. After fighting several very expensive wars, the British

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<sup>25</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires*, 93.

government hoped that preventing further westward colonization would minimize future conflict on the frontier.

## The American Revolution

The British may have been correct in thinking that a boundary between colonial and indigenous lands would help to alleviate tension, but they greatly misjudged the impact that it would cause in the 13 colonies. After helping the British win the French and Indian War, American colonists felt that the reward for their service should be the right to settle the recently conquered territories in the Old Northwest. Instead, Britain rewarded the colonists with higher taxes and punished anyone who settled beyond the 1763 boundary line. The colonists interpreted these acts as a major insult and a betrayal of their loyal service to the British Crown. Modern historians now consider this limit on westward expansion to be one of the primary causes of the American Revolution.<sup>28</sup>

As British and American troops were trading the first shots of the Revolutionary War at Lexington and Concord in 1775, British agents in the Great Lakes were rapidly building support among their Native American allies. While many of the tribes were happy to let the British and Americans destroy each other, the people of the Huron River and Detroit area remained closely tied to the British. In addition, since the right to their lands had already been guaranteed by the British, there was a great deal of sympathy for the British cause. Conversely, the Americans (often called the “Long Knives” by the Potawatomi – so named for the large knives that Virginian settlers typically carried) were fighting for the right to settle indigenous lands, a fact that did not earn them the support of many Native Americans.

By this point, the eastern Potawatomi had established several villages along the Huron River, with the largest located near modern day Ann Arbor. In conjunction with their villages near Detroit, they mustered over 100 warriors for service in the war. Joined by the Ottawa and Ojibway, the eastern Potawatomi sent war parties into Ohio and Kentucky to raid the American colonies. Notably, at the Battle of Blue Licks in Kentucky, these warriors joined with a group of British soldiers and decisively defeated a force of colonial militia led by Daniel Boone. These raids continued throughout the remainder of the war, preventing any serious American incursion into Anishinabek territory.<sup>29</sup>

Despite successfully defending their lands, the Anishinabek peoples once again lost in the peace treaty. At the end of the Revolutionary War, Great Britain ceded all of its lands east of the Mississippi River (including Michigan) to the newly independent United States of America. Of course, this included lands that Great Britain had guaranteed to the Native Americans and thus had no sovereignty over, but this fact made little difference to the U.S. With the war over, the west would soon be open for settlement.

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<sup>28</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2016), 51-60.

<sup>29</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 100-102, 114.

## American Expansionism

The years that followed American independence in 1783 marked the beginning of the long decline for Native American lands. In 1785 the U.S. passed an ordinance which claimed the new territories east of the Mississippi River for America but recognized Native American ownership of the land. As part of the ordinance, the U.S. federal government retained the sole authority to purchase these lands by negotiating treaties with the tribal owners. In spite of the ordinance, illegal American “squatters” surged into Ohio and Kentucky believing that these newly ceded territories were rightfully theirs for the taking.<sup>30</sup>

It did not take long for conflict to erupt over these illegal settlements. While several tribes including the Delaware, Wyandot, and Ojibway negotiated the sale of their lands in Ohio, many others including the eastern Potawatomi refused. Forming the “Red Confederacy,” tribes from throughout the Old Northwest Territory united to stand their ground against the Americans. In the early years of the conflict, the Red Confederacy won significant battles against U.S. armies led by Josiah Harmer and Arthur St. Clair, but ultimately faced a decisive defeat against Anthony Wayne at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794.<sup>31</sup>

With the Red Confederacy broken, the Great Lakes tribes met with American negotiators in Greenville, Ohio. Representing the tribesmen of the Huron River was a Potawatomi village chief named Okia (meaning Bay). On March 12, 1795, Okia gave a speech to the gathered crowds of people, directed as much to President George Washington as to the crowds of onlookers. In his speech, Okia called for a lasting peace between their two peoples:

[Speech to the Commander in Chief]

*Thank the Great Spirit for bringing us together this day  
 Weather is fine & clear  
 Come to make peace  
 Happy to see you & our women & children are pleased and happy to know that we have  
 come with a determination to take so strong a hold of peace as never to give way  
 Hearts are all as white [as] this string of wampum  
 Speak in the names of the Ottawas  
 ...Chippewas  
 ...Putawatimes  
 ...Huron Indians  
 Determined to bury the hatchet so deep & so secret that it will never again be found  
 Holding the general treaty  
 Consider a permanent as already made & will go home and spread the joyful tidings  
 Principal Chiefs of that part of the Putawatimi nation living on the River Huron arrived<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Okia, [Speech to the President], Papers of the War Department 1784-1800, Berthrong Collection ARA06. <https://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/item/49531>

Later that year, the Treaty of Greenville was formally signed. In it, the signatory tribes gave up all claim to their lands in southern and central Ohio and sold several smaller tracts of land near Detroit and Chicago. In exchange, the U.S. agreed to provide \$20,000 worth of trade goods, as well as a continuing annuity of trade goods to be paid to the tribes each year, indefinitely. In addition, the government agreed to give up all of its claims to the Michigan Territory (a promise that it broke only a few years later).

## The Treaty Era

The Treaty of Greenville began what is often called the “Treaty Era,” a time when the U.S. government aggressively sought to purchase native lands and clear them for American settlement. At the same time, overhunting and competition with American trappers was causing wild game populations to decline. With this decline, the Great Lakes tribes who relied on these animals for their furs and food began to lose their livelihood. To get by, Native Americans often purchased food and supplies from American traders on credit, leveraged against their future annuity payments. Caught in a deepening cycle of debt, the Great Lakes tribes were forced to rely more and more on land sales and government annuities to survive.

Moreover, political divisions within each tribe meant that some members were more willing to negotiate land sales with the government than others. But, since there was no centralized tribal government, U.S. agents could negotiate with whoever was interested, and then act as though those individuals represented the entirety of a tribe. To incentivize these transactions, government negotiators often gave large personal bribes to village chiefs or other leaders. By taking advantage of these friendly “Annuity Chiefs,” U.S. agents were able to (often illegally) purchase indigenous lands even when such sales went against the wishes of a tribe as a whole.<sup>33</sup>

This is essentially what happened in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit. Two years earlier in 1805, the U.S. Congress officially created the Michigan Territory as a political entity. They recognized however that to achieve statehood, the territory would need to be cleared of its indigenous inhabitants. Michigan’s first territorial governor (and Indian agent) William Hull was authorized to negotiate with the local tribes for the purchase of their lands. By 1807, Hull had found chiefs from villages along the Huron and Raisin rivers who were willing to sell. Nevertheless, plans for the treaty faced significant opposition “by many of the Potawatomis,” particularly those who had met with the Prophet Tecumseh. Much like the Prophet Neolin before him, Tecumseh often preached of the need for native resistance against American expansion and was extremely popular among the younger warriors. Even U.S. Indian agents in the west worried that the land sale would only further inflame tensions among the Anishinabek people, driving them back into the arms of the British.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 178.

<sup>34</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 166.

In spite of these protests, the treaty was signed on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1807. In total, the document granted the U.S. government roughly the southeast third of Michigan's lower peninsula, including the land that is now Hamburg Township. Further, the tribes agreed to "acknowledge themselves to be under the protection of the United States, and no other power, and will prove by their conduct that they are worthy of so great a blessing."<sup>35</sup> In exchange, the U.S. paid the Potawatomi, Ottawa, Ojibway, and Wyandot nations a total of \$10,000 in money and trade goods, as well as an annual annuity of \$2,400 to be paid to the tribes each year in

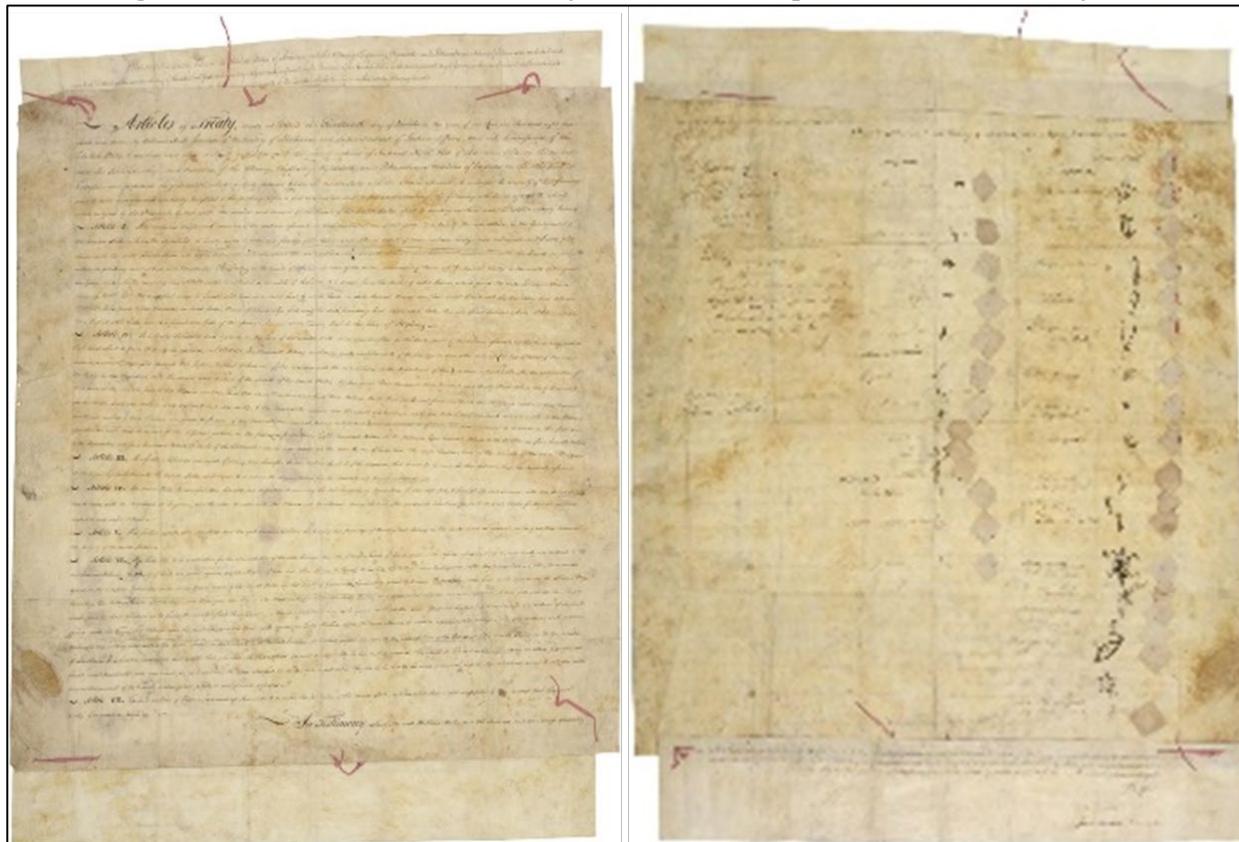


Figure 7. Image of the 1807 Treaty of Detroit. The text of the treaty is on the first page (left) while the signatures of the tribal representatives can be seen on the second page (right). Document scan available from the Library of Congress: <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/2746>

Detroit, indefinitely. The portion of that annuity paid to the Potawatomi of the Huron River and Raisin River was \$400. In addition, the U.S. agreed to pay for two blacksmiths to live with and work for the signatory tribes for a period of 10 years. Finally, the tribes were given a grace period allowing them to continue hunting and fishing on these lands until they were settled by Americans.<sup>36</sup>

William Hull probably did not expect that this grace period would last as long as it did, but the outbreak of war with Britain in 1812 put any plans of settling the Michigan Territory on

<sup>35</sup> "Treaty of Detroit, 1807," Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Accessed 6/18/21 [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native\\_American\\_Material/Treaty\\_Rights/Text\\_of\\_Michigan\\_Related\\_Treaties/Pages/Detroit.-1807.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Rights/Text_of_Michigan_Related_Treaties/Pages/Detroit.-1807.aspx)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

hold. Just as the western Indian agents feared, America's expansionist policies drove many of the Great Lakes tribes to side with Britain. Although a number of pro-American chiefs endeavored to remain at peace (particularly those near the American garrison at Detroit), the influence of the Prophet Tecumseh was powerful, as was the desire to prevent the Americans from taking any more of their ancestral lands. As a result, many young warriors ignored their village chiefs and flocked to Tecumseh's banner.<sup>37</sup>

The war began well for Tecumseh and the British, who were able to trick Hull into surrendering the city of Detroit in August of 1812 (an act for which Hull was later court martialed). But the hope that Tecumseh represented for Native American independence did not last. In October of 1813, the prophet was killed at the Battle of the Thames in Canada. Following his death, the last organized military resistance to American expansion in the Old Northwest Territory crumbled. After the battle, most of Tecumseh's warriors scattered and returned home. Later that month, the Potawatomi, Ottawa, Ojibway, Miami, and Wyandot tribes of southeastern Michigan signed a truce with the United States.

While the eastern Potawatomi honored the peace, the western Potawatomi did not, and continued their support for the British by raiding into Illinois and Wisconsin. While the eastern Potawatomi assured the Americans at Detroit that they had nothing to do with these continued hostilities, the Americans did not distinguish between the two factions. In 1814 General Duncan McArthur raided and burned a number of friendly Potawatomi lodges along the Huron River.<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the war in 1815, chiefs from the Potawatomi, Ottawa, Ojibwa, Wyandot, Shawnee, Miami, Delaware, and Seneca tribes met with U.S. negotiators to sign a formal peace agreement. Although the deal did not substantially change things from the way they were before the war, the tribes were forced to accept all of the land cessation treaties negotiated prior to 1811, including the 1807 treaty of Detroit. With the first major chunk of Michigan land now officially sold, the rest was not far behind.

### Era of Accommodation and Removal

The War of 1812 was the last time that Michigan's Native Americans went to war to defend their territory. With Tecumseh dead and the British defeated, there was no one left to prevent the United States from expelling the remaining indigenous peoples from the Great Lakes. What came afterwards was the Era of Accommodation and Removal.

After the war, the U.S. signed a succession of treaties with Michigan tribes to purchase their remaining lands. The Saginaw Treaty of 1819 ceded a large portion of Michigan's central and eastern Lower Peninsula from the Saginaw Ojibway (Chippewa) tribe. Two years later, the Treaty of Chicago turned over most of the remaining Potawatomi lands in southern Michigan.

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<sup>37</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 181.

<sup>38</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 203. See also Bureau of Indian Affairs records, Michigan Superintendency of Indian Affairs, Letters Received and Sent by the Superintendent, Microfilm M1, Roll 2, 23-24, National Archives.

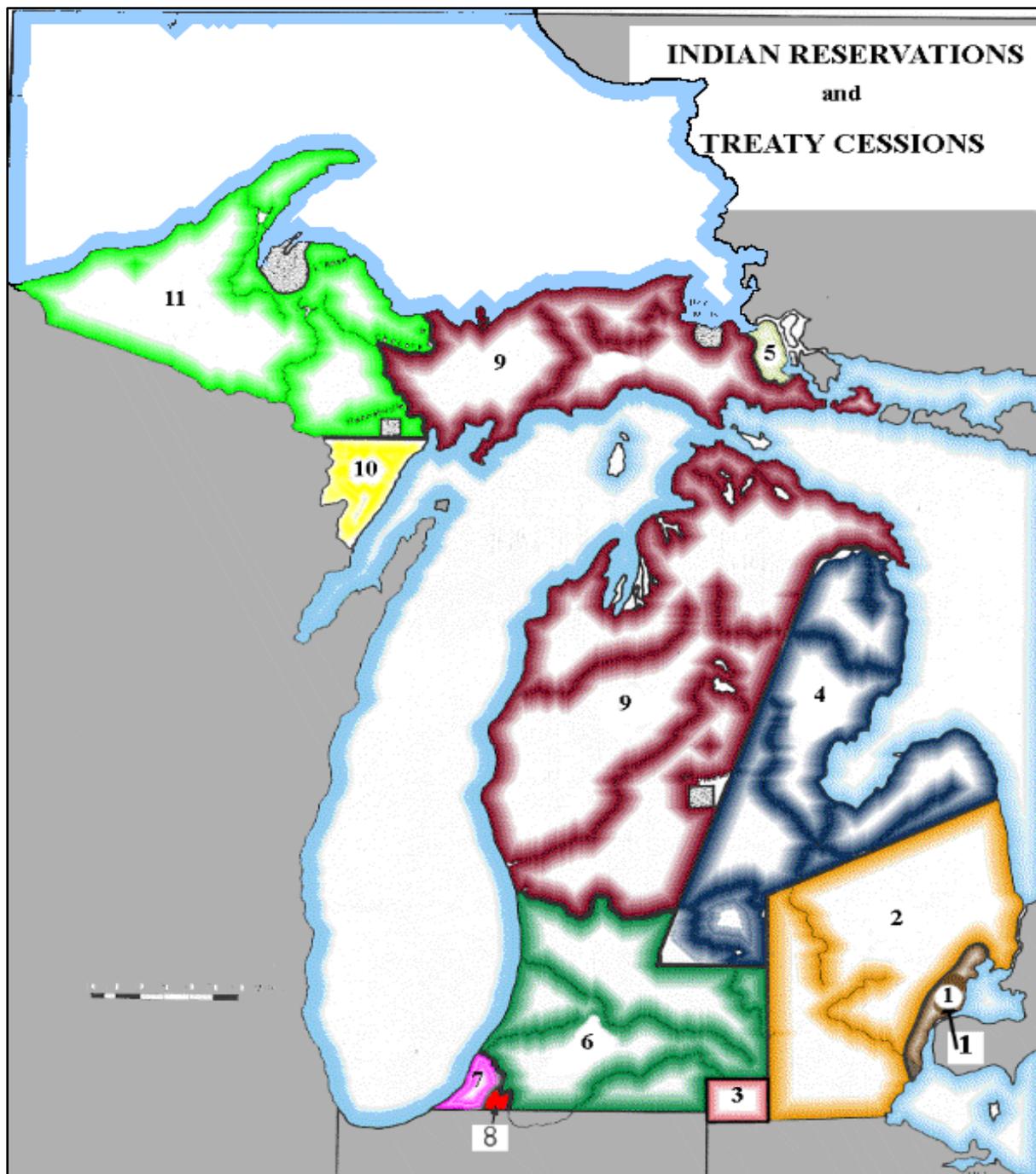


Figure 8. Map of Michigan land treaty cessions. Key: 1). Greenville Treaty, 1795 - 2). Detroit Treaty, 1807; - 3). Foot of the Rapids Treaty, 1817; - 4). Saginaw Treaty, 1819; - 5). Sault St. Marie, 1820; - 6). Chicago Treaty, 1821; - 7). Carey Mission, 1828; - 8). Chicago Treaty, 1833; - 9). Washington Treaty, 1836; - 10). Cedar Point Treaty, 1836; - 11). La Pointe Treaty, 1842. Image from the Clark Historical Library, Central Michigan University: [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native\\_American\\_Material/Treaty\\_Rights/Text\\_of\\_Michigan\\_Related\\_Treaties/Pages/Map-of-Treaty-Cessions.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Rights/Text_of_Michigan_Related_Treaties/Pages/Map-of-Treaty-Cessions.aspx)

In order to facilitate the negotiations, Michigan's new territorial governor Lewis Cass and Indian agent Henry Schoolcraft promised the tribes "enough alcohol to make every man, woman, and child in the nation drunk," a promise that they reportedly did later fulfill.<sup>39</sup>

After 1815, the Huron River Potawatomi began gradually migrating out of the area. Some moved to join their brethren in western Michigan and Illinois, while others crossed into Canada where they were welcomed by the British. "By 1830 most of the Huron Potawatomis had left eastern Michigan, either resettling along the Saint Joseph [River] or moving east into Ontario."<sup>40</sup>

During the 1820s, anti-indigenous sentiment in America continued to rise, making life increasingly difficult for those who chose to remain.<sup>41</sup> In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law, enabling the federal government to remove Native Americans from their lands in the eastern U.S. and relocate them to "uninhabited" areas west of the Mississippi River.<sup>42</sup> During the following decade, President Jackson used The Removal Act to forcibly expel tens of thousands of Native Americans from their lands in southern states, resulting in what is now known as the infamous Trail of Tears.

In Michigan, the removals began as voluntary relocations paid for by the U.S. government and operated by local Indian agents. Using the Americans' desire for removal as leverage, the Potawatomi offered the possibility of moving as long as they could send a team to scout out the territory west of the Mississippi River and select a suitable location for themselves. After being "unimpressed" by their visit to Kansas, the Potawatomi selected the Platte River country in Missouri, as well as Council Bluffs, Iowa, to be their new home. Although a fair number of Michigan Potawatomi accepted the government's offer, it was still a long and difficult journey rife with disease, poor supplies, and criminal mismanagement and embezzlement on the part of the Indian agents. Once the Potawatomi arrived in Missouri, the government broke its promise. Persuaded by pressure from the state of Missouri, the government forcibly removed the Potawatomi from the fertile Platt country and relocated them to Kansas and Iowa.<sup>43</sup>

Angered and dissatisfied by the treatment of their people in the west, the Potawatomi who remained behind became even more determined to avoid removal. Nevertheless, by the end of the decade the removals ceased to be voluntary. In 1840, General Hugh Brady assembled a force of 200 army regulars and 100 Michigan volunteers and began rounding up Native Americans in southern Michigan.<sup>44</sup>

As the first American settlers of Hamburg Township arrived in 1831, it may be that they witnessed Brady's troops scouring the towns and forests for Native Americans. In total, Brady captured 440 Potawatomis. Estimates also suggest that as many as 2000 fled across the Detroit River into Canada, while others escaped to friendly Ottawa territory in upper Michigan. The

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<sup>39</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 221.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 234.

<sup>41</sup> Cleland, *Rites of Conquest*, 202.

<sup>42</sup> The lands west of the Mississippi River were of course already inhabited by the plains tribes, but "uninhabited" by Europeans and Americans.

<sup>43</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 260-72.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 271.

Native Americans captured by Brady's troops were marched to a removal encampment in Marshall, MI, where they awaited deportation to Kansas and Iowa.<sup>45</sup> In a notable exception to these removals, the Pokagon band of Potawatomi on the St. Joseph River in western Michigan avoided relocation by becoming host to a Christian mission, as well as by directly purchasing their land, preventing the government from seizing it.<sup>46</sup>

A resident of Howell, MI, Joseph B. Skilbeck, recalled witnessing a group of several hundred Native Americans being marched under armed guard through the town. According to the story (as relayed by historian Franklin Ellis in 1880), Mr. Skilbeck recalled his "...feelings of indignation at seeing the helpless exiles driven by soldiers, like cattle through the main street of the village, and herded temporarily for rest upon the old public square. But the indignation and sympathy of the white spectators availed nothing, and the unwilling emigrants passed on their weary way to the place of their banishment."<sup>47</sup>

### The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries - Forced Assimilation

In 1842 the remaining native lands in Michigan were signed away in the Treaty of La Pointe. Nevertheless, it was clear by the 1850s that removal policies had failed. Despite the military roundups, many of Michigan's Anishinabek people had managed to evade relocation or had returned home afterwards.

In Hamburg Township and the county as a whole, there are records of several members of the Potawatomi and Saginaw Chippewa tribes who continued to live in the area throughout this period. Unfortunately, most of the information about these individuals was recorded in the recollections of American settlers, transcribed in Franklin Ellis' 1880 "History of Livingston County," which significantly biases this information. With that in mind, Ellis mentions several individuals as follows:

1. A Native American man named "Toag" who Ellis describes as the leader of a small band of Potawatomi who frequented the southwest part of Livingston County. "Mr. Shields speaks of [Toag] as a 'social old fellow, who was on good terms with the settlers, though he would steal their potatoes.'" He mentions as well that Toag and this band eventually moved south into Ohio.
2. In the eastern part of the county "among the lakes of Hartland, lived 'old Shakaw' a Chippewa, who at one time was the leader of a small band. This band was afterwards scattered, and old Shakaw lived alone without a following. Later he moved north to Isabella County, or that vicinity, and died there in recent years."

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 273.

<sup>46</sup> "The Pokagon Band" Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, accessed 6/13/21 [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native\\_American\\_Material/Treaty\\_Rights/Historical\\_Issues/Relocation\\_the\\_Potawatomi\\_Experience/Pages/The-Pokagon-Band.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Rights/Historical_Issues/Relocation_the_Potawatomi_Experience/Pages/The-Pokagon-Band.aspx)

<sup>47</sup> Franklin Ellis, *History of Livingston County, Michigan. With illustrations and biographical sketches of its prominent men and pioneers*, (Everts & Abbott, 1880), 15-16.

3. “On Indian Lake, in Deerfield, lived old Portabeek, a chief or head man of some grade among the Shiawassee. He also had a small following, but, like Shakaw, was afterwards chief of only his own wigwam.”
4. “Another Indian (who is not known to have been a leader, but who was quite well known in Livingston County as a frequent claimant for bounty on wolf-scalps) was Neome, a Chippewa, and perhaps a lineal descendant of the earlier Neome, who was one of the principal chiefs of the Saginawzs.”
5. “It is mentioned by the Hon. Ralph Fowler, that there were three winter camps of Indians in the woods near his house, in Handy [near Fowlerville] in the winter of 1836-37. The occupants of these camps were numerous, and they had about thirty ponies browsing in the woods in their vicinity. The old Chief Okemos, with from fifty to one hundred of his band, was encamped there at the same time, being on his way back from Detroit to his home on the Looking-Glass River, in Ingham County... He was one of the chiefs of the Shiawassee branch of the Saginawe Chippewas, was born about the year 1788, and was consequently some forty-eight or fifty years of age at the time mentioned by Mr. Fowler.” He then goes on to recount the chief’s military exploits in the War of 1812.<sup>48</sup> Beyond the information provided by Ellis, Chief Okemos was a well-known figure in Ingham County, and a link to additional information is provided about him in the footnote below.

Recognizing that relocation had failed, the state of Michigan (and the U.S. government) altered their policy on Native Americans from forced removal to forced assimilation. The latter was an attempt to “civilize” Native Americans by teaching them Christianity as well as training them in the American system of subsistence agriculture. To accomplish this, the state worked with religious missions to create a series of Indian reservations and boarding schools designed to isolate indigenous peoples from the rest of American society, as well as to erase their traditional cultures and replace them with Christian-American values.

This process began in 1848 when Michigan purchased 160 acres of land near modern day Athens, MI, and converted it into a reservation for many of the landless Potawatomi that “continued to roam through southern Michigan.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, in 1855 the state created the Isabella Reservation near Mt. Pleasant, which in 1891 became host to the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School. In addition, the state established a number of other small reservations, as well as two more Indian boarding schools in Baraga and Harbor Springs. Though approved by the government, these boarding schools were operated by religious organizations including the Catholic Church (Baraga and Harbor Springs) and the United Methodist Church (Mt. Pleasant). The Harbor Springs boarding school was the last to close in 1983, and many of the Ottawa people alive today still recall the punishment and abuse that they suffered while attending school there.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Franklin Ellis, *History of Livingston County*, 13-14. While there is relatively little information on the first four people that Ellis discusses, Chief Okemos was a well-known figure in Ingham County, and additional information can be found about him here: <https://project.geo.msu.edu/geogmich/okemosgrave.html>

<sup>49</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomi: Keepers of the Fire*, 275.

<sup>50</sup> Eric Hemenway, “Indian Boarding Schools” Michiganology.org, accessed 6/29/21 <https://michiganology.org/stories/indian-boarding-schools/>

Throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>, Michigan's Anishinabek peoples fought to maintain their traditional language and culture against these forces of assimilation. The endurance of these traditions today is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Anishinabek to overcome these incredible challenges.

## The Modern Era

Today, the modern descendants of Michigan's Anishinabek peoples continue to live and work throughout the state, both on and off their reservations. In 2010, Native Americans represented 0.5% of Livingston County's population, slightly below the state average of 0.7%.<sup>51</sup> There are currently seven bands of Potawatomi in the United States, four of which are in Michigan. These include the Pokagon Band in Dowagiac, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band in Fulton, the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish (Gun Lake) Band in Dorr, and the Hannahville Indian Community in Wilson. The remaining three U.S. bands are located in Wisconsin, Kansas, and Oklahoma, with an additional three bands of Potawatomi in Canada.

While many Michiganders today have heard of tribal casinos, they may not have heard of the cultural revitalization programs that these and other institutions support. These resources help fund tribal museums such as the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways in Mt. Pleasant, which in turn provides Native American archival documents and genealogical resources as well as classes for Anishinabek language revitalization, traditional craft making, and other cultural programs. The museum's main exhibit, *The Diba Jimooyung* (Telling Our Story), teaches the history of the Great Lakes Anishinabek peoples and provides a space to help tribal members heal from past generational trauma.<sup>52</sup> In addition, programs such as tribal Pow Wows (held annually at the Brighton State Recreation Area in Hamburg Township), continue to encourage the expression and restoration of Anishinabek cultural practices. Such cultural programs foster the growth of indigenous tribal identities and contribute to what modern scholars are calling the "Potawatomi national Renaissance."<sup>53</sup>

Although these programs represent significant strides, Michigan's tribal communities continue to struggle today with ongoing issues related to fishing rights in the Great Lakes, treaty rights, state/federal education and tuition waiver programs, and casino gambling laws, to name a few. To read more about these ongoing issues, see the documents provided in the footnote below.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "Livingston County Michigan" Quick Facts, United States Census Bureau, accessed 6/29/21

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/livingstoncountymichigan,MI/RHI325219#qf-headnote-a>

<sup>52</sup> Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 25.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Wetzel, *Gathering the Potawatomi Nation: Revitalization and Identity*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015) 7.

<sup>54</sup> "Native American Treaties: Their Ongoing Importance to Michigan Residents," Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, see: "Contemporary Issues" at the bottom of the page: [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native\\_American\\_Material/Treaty\\_Rights/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Rights/Pages/default.aspx)

## Conclusion

In spite of the many trials faced by Michigan's Native American peoples, their story as a whole is one of perseverance, survival, and overcoming insurmountable odds. Over the course of the thousands of years of history surveyed here, the Great Lakes Anishinabek people have adapted to a great many challenging and difficult conditions but have always utilized their own agency and initiative to make the best of their circumstances and negotiate a better future.

As difficult as it can be to read and discuss such troubling chapters of history, it is important to remember that those of us living today are not defined by the actions of our ancestors. We are, however, the inheritors of their legacies. The first settlers to Hamburg Township may not have taken part in the forced removal of the area's indigenous inhabitants, but they did directly benefit from the actions of other Americans who did. That does not make any of us living today wrong, but it is important to recognize that the Anishinabek peoples of the Huron River did not leave willingly. That fact will forever remain a part of Hamburg Township's history.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This paper was researched and written over the course of six weeks during the summer of 2021, and those time constraints did meaningfully influence the scope of the project in several ways. The first relates to a best practice for museums working on Native American history topics. Ideally, this project would have been deeply collaborative from the very beginning with the Potawatomi and Ojibway tribes (the tribes historically related with this area). While I did reach out to these tribes and received some assistance with the research process, it would have improved this paper to have been able to acquire more direct feedback and provide their voices with a more prominent place in the narrative.

Second, many of the relevant archives required for this research project remained closed or operated only at a limited capacity due to COVID-19. Though a number of these archives' resources were accessible online, there may yet be more evidence out there regarding the Native Americans of this area to explore given more time, funding, and availability.

Finally, while not a limitation *per se*, it is worth noting that the author of this paper is non-native. While I have tried my best to be as objective as possible, my perspective of the world is unavoidably shaped by our own life experiences and inherently different than that of someone with Native American ancestry. Given the long tradition of colonial historians dominating the telling of native history, the potential for bias here is at least worth being aware of.

Note\* During this project, I attempted to use the museum's regular newsletter to crowdsource and map locations throughout the township where artifacts or projectile points had been found by residents. This information would have helped to understand where former habitation sites may have been, but unfortunately, that outreach did not elicit any responses. Future researchers may find this to be a worthwhile avenue to explore. In addition, many of the

named individuals referenced in the Franklin Ellis history may have more information available about them in other archives or repositories.

## Appendix A – Timeline of Hamburg Township’s Indigenous History

- 11,000-13,000+ BCE – the first humans arrive in North America
- 10,000 BCE – Paleo-Indian Period – the first people arrive in the Great Lakes region
- 8000 BCE-1000 BCE – Archaic Period – the climate warms, glaciers retreat, and tundra vegetation slowly gives way to pine forests
- 3000 BCE – Michigan’s climate resembles its modern-day character
- 1000 BCE-1650 CE – Woodlands Period – trade networks expand and agriculture/horticulture begin
- 1 CE – the first mound building takes place in southern Michigan
- 500 CE – the bow and arrow are developed
- 900 CE – Anishinabek people begin their migration from the Atlantic coast to the Great Lakes
- 1300 CE – fortified villages are constructed in southern Michigan, possibly during a period of conflict/disruption
- 1400 CE – Anishinabek people complete their migration and settle throughout the Great Lakes region
- 1615 – the first European explorer reaches the Great Lakes (Samuel de Champlain)
- 1650 – Senecas drive the Three Fires tribes from Michigan using firearms
- 1680-90 – the Three Fires tribes ally with France and drive the Seneca/Iroquois out of Michigan
- Early 1700s – Anishinabek people return to their former homes in Michigan; the fur trade booms
- 1701 – the French trading post at Detroit is founded
- 1754-60 – the Potawatomi side with France during the French and Indian War. France ultimately loses and cedes Anishinabek lands to the British
- 1760 – the British occupy Detroit
- 1762-3 – Ottawa war chief Pontiac incites a brief uprising against the British
- 1763 – Britain enacts the Royal Proclamation of 1763, limiting all colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains
- 1775-83 – during the American Revolution, the Potawatomi side with the British who are ultimately defeated by the U.S. and forced to cede control over all territory west of the Mississippi (including indigenous lands)
- 1785 – a U.S. ordinance claims new territory, but bans settlement in lands still owned by natives. Despite this, settlers illegally surge into this territory
- 1794/5 – The Red Confederacy clashes with the federal government to end its encroachment into indigenous lands, but is defeated
- 1795 – the Treaty of Greenville cedes large portions of native lands in Ohio, as well as smaller parcels near Detroit and Chicago
- Early 1800s – the U.S. begins aggressively negotiating the purchase of more native lands

- 1807 – in the Treaty of Detroit, leaders of multiple tribes cede the southeast 1/3 of Michigan's lower peninsula to the U.S. This action is disavowed by a majority of the Potawatomi
- 1812 – the Prophet Tecumseh and a force of native troops ally themselves with the British against the U.S. in a new conflict, but Tecumseh is killed in Canada in 1813. Afterwards the eastern Potawatomi near Detroit and along the Huron River sign a peace agreement
- 1814 – despite the previous agreement, General Duncan McArthur raids and burns a number of friendly Potawatomi lodges along the Huron
- 1815 – Britain admits defeat in what comes to be known as the War of 1812 and sues for peace. Native allies are forced to accept all treaties signed between 1795 and 1812
- 1815 – the Huron River Potawatomi begin migrating out of southeast Michigan to western Michigan and parts of Canada
- 1819 – in the Saginaw Treaty, tribal leaders cede a large portion of the central and eastern Lower Peninsula
- 1821 – in the Treaty of Chicago, nearly all of the remaining Potawatomi territory in Michigan is turned over to the Americans
- 1820s – anti-indigenous sentiment swells in the U.S.
- 1830 – President Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act into law
- 1830-40 – voluntary removals begin in Michigan; many Potawatomi move to Missouri, but are then forcibly relocated to Kansas and Iowa
- 1840 – General Hugh Brady assembles 300 troops and captures and relocates 440 Potawatomi from southern Michigan; many more escape to Canada and to Ottawa territory in northern Michigan
- 1842 – in the Treaty of La Pointe, the remainder of native lands in Michigan are relinquished to the federal government
- 1848-1855 – Michigan creates several small reservations for the landless natives still living in the state
- 1850-mid-1900s – Forced assimilation policies attempt to Christianize indigenous peoples, teach them agriculture, and erase their traditional language and culture
- 1891 – the first Indian Boarding School in Michigan is established by Congress (Mt Pleasant)
- 1983 – the last Indian Boarding School in Michigan closes (Harbor Springs)

## Appendix B – Glossary

**Anishinabek** – plural of Anishinaabe, meaning “Original People” or “Spontaneous Beings.” It is used synonymously with Anishinaabeg. Generally, Anishinabek refers broadly to Algonquin-speaking tribes, but in this document is used to refer to the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Ojibway.

**Anishinaabemowin** – a sub-family of the Algonquin language group spoken by the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Ojibway peoples; this differentiates these Great Lakes groups from other Algonquin-speaking tribes.

**BCE/CE** – Before the Common Era/the Common Era. Used by contemporary scholars instead of BC/AD.

**Clovis Points** – Long spearpoints with a characteristic flute (interior curve in the base), made by the early inhabitants of the North American continent, c. 10,000 BC.

**Glacial Till/Moraines/Kettle Lakes** – As glaciers move, they scrape the ground and pick up enormous quantities of rock and gravel called *till*. As glaciers melt and retreat, they then leave this glacial till on the ground, often in large winding hills and piles called *moraines*. Similarly, glaciers may leave large chunks of ice buried in the ground, which upon melting leave behind depressions called *kettle lakes*.

**Hopewell** – The Hopewell Exchange Group is an archaeologically-defined group of indigenous people from the middle woodlands period (C. 1-500 CE), who participated in a widespread network of trade and exchange encompassing most of the central and eastern U.S. The Hopewell culture received its name from Mordecai Hopewell, on whose farm the characteristic Hopewell mounds were first studied. As it is only an archaeological interpretation of the past however, it is likely that the people who created these mounds would have identified themselves very differently than the archaeologists who now study them.

**Pre-History/Prehistoric** – Prehistory generally refers to the “time before recorded history.” In the traditional European view, this meant the time before written documents, which led many European historians to consider the natives who inhabited the Americas (who did not have a system of writing) as a pre-historic people. In more modern times, historians recognize that the indigenous method of passing down the history of their people through storytelling and oral tradition is indeed ‘history.’

**Trail of Tears** – The Trail of Tears was part of a broad effort by the federal government to relocate tribes from southern states to areas west of the Mississippi River, but often specifically refers to the forced removal of the Cherokee from their lands in Georgia in 1838. More than 5,000 Cherokee died on the forced march west.

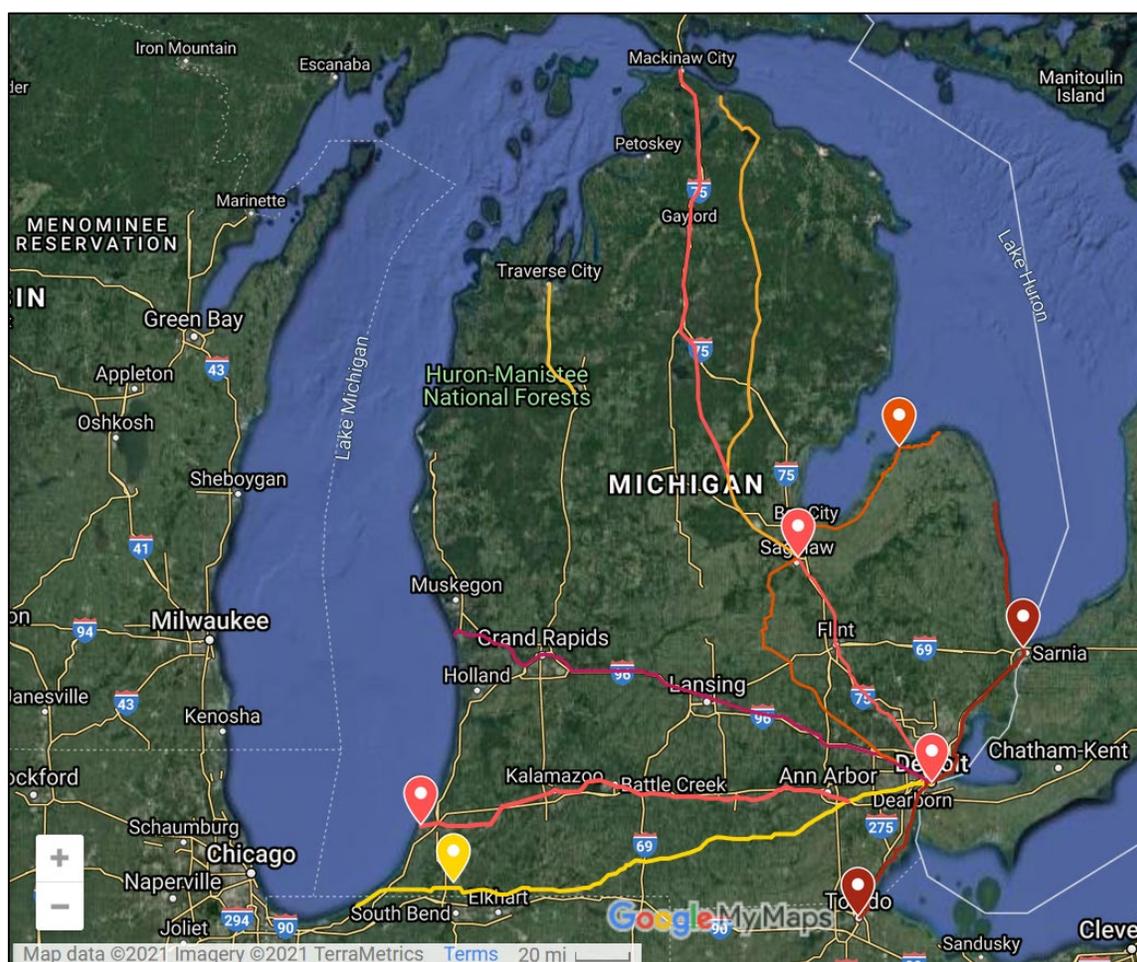
**Treaty** – A treaty is a negotiated diplomatic document between two sovereign nations.

**Weir** – A fishing weir is an aquatic structure made of rocks, branches, or other material designed to funnel fish into a shallow enclosed space where they can then be easily speared or captured.

## Appendix C – Native American Trails in Michigan

There were a number of trails in Michigan utilized by the Great Lakes indigenous peoples, many of which went on to form the foundation of the state's modern road network. The map below displays the major trails running throughout the state. The interactive online map from which this image is drawn is also accessible through the provided link.

The trails closest to Hamburg Township include the Sauk Trail running from Detroit to Chicago (now US-12), the St. Joseph Trail (now I-94) which split off of the Sauk Trail near modern day Ypsilanti, and the Grand River Trail which roughly follows the course of the current Grand River Avenue. In addition to these major trails, a smaller path named the Potawatomi Trail followed the Huron River from its mouth in Lake Erie to Portage Lake. For those traveling by water, Portage Lake also served as the portage between the Huron and Grand Rivers, enabling water travel across the width of the Lower Peninsula.<sup>55</sup>



<sup>55</sup> Map from: "Michigan Indian Trails," Thumbwind.com, accessed 7/8/21. <https://thumbwind.com/american-indian-trails/>. See also: Wilbert Hinsdale, *Archaeological Atlas of Michigan*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931), 4.

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