Abstract
Principal discourses reveal that Euro-Canadian and First Nation claims to territory are a product of differing cultural perceptions of land, territory, and property, as well as a metanarrative of colonial expansion and appropriation of territory. However, current research is demonstrating that the reality was much more complex. In particular, Euro-Canadian contact often precipitated contestation between First Nation interests in areas where none had previously existed. This paper will examine the historical context of the Mississauga-Algonquin conflict of territorial boundaries in the 1783-1923 period. This issue is still central to ongoing land claims in eastern Ontario.

Résumé
Les discours dominants révèlent que les revendications territoriales des Euro-Canadiens et des premières nations sont un produit de perceptions culturelles différentes de la terre, du territoire et de la propriété, de même qu’une méta-narration de l’expansion coloniale et de l’appropriation du territoire. Cependant, des recherches récentes tendent plutôt à démontrer que la réalité est beaucoup plus complexe. En particulier, le contact avec les Euro-Canadiens a souvent précipité l’émergence de contestations entre les intérêts de Premières nations différentes dans des régions où il n’y en avait jamais eu auparavant. Cet article étudierait le contexte historique du conflit sur des limites territoriales qui a opposé les Mississaugas et les Algonquins pendant la période de 1783 à 1923. Cette question continue à se situer au cœur même des revendications territoriales qui ont toujours cours dans l’est de l’Ontario.

Setting the Scene
Euro-Canadian and First Nations’ claims to territory are a product of long-standing differences in their respective perceptions of nature, land and resources that represent different ontologies, cultural constructions and techno-economic systems. Further, these contested claims are usually interpreted in the context of a well-established metanarrative of colonial expansion and appropriation of territory.
However, the reality of land-conflict as it played out on the ground in particular places was much more complex than a simple monolithic explanation of Euro-Canadian and First Nations’ difference. In particular, Euro-Canadian contact often precipitated contestation between First Nations’ interests in areas where none had previously existed. This was certainly the case with the Mississauga-Algonquin conflict over territorial boundaries in the Lake Ontario-Ottawa River watershed region of eastern Ontario. Here, between 1783 and 1923, a formerly extensive territory that had long been viewed as a common resource base with locales of periodic occupancy—often with common campsites that were established points of social congress—became a contested space and a site of conflict. Nevertheless, these contestations have been paper-wars, expressed in the tropes of Euro-Canadian authority, and debated in the administrative spaces of colonial power. Accordingly, the Mississaugas and Algonquins directed their grievances to the Euro-Canadian forums of discussion where they exist as documented confrontations. At the ground-level of lived interactions, however, there is no evidence of personal hostility. Indeed, it would appear that they never communicated with each other directly concerning this issue of contested space or boundaries.

These matters are still central to ongoing First Nations’ land claims in eastern Ontario. How did this come to be?

Dissonant Concepts

European settlement of Canada was intricately connected to the transformation of material and ideological terrains. In particular, formerly unbounded space became limited by boundaries and appropriated as regulated territory. This was facilitated through different social constructions, usufructuary practices and mechanisms of control, all of which were grounded on particular sections of land and located in specific places. The usual assumption is that these different social constructions may be attributed to long-standing cultural—and even racial—categories of difference. Indeed, much has been written about the theological constructions of innocence, savagery and nobility. Whatever the lens, by the eighteenth century, Europe had positioned itself as the arbiter for assigning the relative hierarchy of stages of human development. This taken-for-granted position informed, and functioned, as imaginary geographies of other worlds, and as a template for agendas of power and place.

What is significant, however, is that the eighteenth century Euro-Canadian world was itself undergoing re-conceptualization in the context of the Enlightenment’s transforming forces. The pre-modern world of feudal-communal dependencies was being challenged by the rationalizing concepts of property, profit, management and efficiency. From 1745 to 1845 in Britain, a series of Enclosure Acts attacked the
putative chaos of communal land-use and customary obligations, and reorganized rural society by extending proprietary controls and imposing a geometrical cadastre. More effective state management—some would say a “culture of surveillance”—was facilitated by the introduction of a national census of the population and economy and a coordinated system of national mapping. Finally, increasing attention was directed to the social health of the “body-politic” by an evangelical zeal for converting those on the other side of the “great abyss”—be they Irish, Scottish, Welsh, poor English or exotic heathen—to the improved condition of industry, propriety and morality. These were the dominant values at the time Britain asserted imperial control over North America. The prevailing precepts of effective and rational administration encountered a chaotic wilderness occupied by a people who were noble to some, savage to others, and certainly pagan in the eyes of Western theologies. As summed up by Pratt,

The systematizing of nature represents not only a European discourse about non-European worlds … but an urban discourse about non-urban worlds, and a lettered, bourgeois discourse about non-lettered, peasant worlds … Subsistence societies of any kind appeared backward with respect to surplus-oriented modes, and as in need of “improvement.”

This same impulse prompted the classification and fixing of Native peoples in ethnographic time and geographical space. European conceptualizations of political territory could not accommodate spatial overlap and, eventually, the initial assigned territories became ossified in official maps, Indian Department documents, and treaties and surrenders.

The fundamental problem was that Euro-Canadian society did not comprehend what the meaning of land was to Native groups. Even more profoundly, the Euro-Canadian imagination could not accommodate a different Native ontological engagement with land as “hearth, home, the source and locus of life, and everlastingness of spirit.” For Native peoples, bonding to a particular space was the outcome of social obligations, kinship structures and spiritual constraints that transformed the material world into a moral space. There were no boundaries between the physical and spiritual aspects of Native culture. Territory and the physical environment were encompassed by, and integrated into, the spiritual realm by spatially grounded religious praxis. This gave meaning to their categories of land, residency and resource use. It followed from this that, for Native peoples, land and resources constituted a social relationship, not an individual one, and any “individual’s or a family’s rights to property were defined by the community which recognized those rights.” Moreover, there was a subtle differentiation between the concepts of shared occupancy of territories and joint-use of resources. Whereas use referred to an array of different activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering of medicinal plants and berry picking, occupancy referred to a particular group’s claim to an area because of continuous “habitation, naming, knowledge and control.”

Thus, while the spatial differentiation of the limits of occupancy were likely
to be much more stable over time, the definition of the limits of use revealed temporal and spatial overlap.\textsuperscript{16}

From the Euro-Canadian perspective, however well-entrenched in culture they were, Native customary practices of resource use did not necessarily constitute proof of legal possession and they believed that “Native cultures lacked the rationality to use their lands effectively.”\textsuperscript{17} In particular, effective use of these lands implied Western Euro-Canadian models of agriculture and industry and Native peoples’ retention of wild lands in their savage state would impede civilization, progress and agricultural expansion.\textsuperscript{18} The prevailing official view was that if Natives would cultivate their land it would then be considered their own property, because uncultivated land was like a “wild animal” and could not be protected from intrusion by those who were “hunting” for it in order “to cultivate it.”\textsuperscript{19}

The issue of property was crucial. The Euro-Canadian perception of property and individual ownership underpinned the emerging economic system, the acquisition and control of capital, and a wage economy. It followed, therefore, that “it was difficult for Natives to join in the march of progress because they failed to conform to civilized norms … and they failed to treat land as a source of income.”\textsuperscript{20} The rejection of Native concepts of communal land-use practices and the assertion of Euro-Canadian concepts of ownership enabled the colonial authorities to categorize the land to facilitate colonial territorial expansion. Classified as wild, unproductive and unoccupied, Euro-Canadian concepts of economic praxis and social progress dictated that—in line with the prevailing improvement ethic in Britain—such lands were in need of development by European intervention.

However, if lands were to be improved, they also had to be controlled. The conflicting conceptualizations of property, resources and territory became reified in the very tangible expressions of authority asserted by Euro-Canadian systems of naming, mapping, land recording, taxes, duties and obligations and census. Taken together, such strategies served to other, appropriate and spatialize Native people and their territoriality. On to one imaginative geography was superimposed another, more foreign one, with another vocabulary, different modes of representation and new purposes.\textsuperscript{21} Fauna and flora were assigned the names and categories of Western science and the indigenous peoples were appropriated by the taxonomic power of ethnography. The unknown was explored, surveyed and mapped.\textsuperscript{22} Euro-Canadian appropriation of large extents of territory by treaties was followed by the imposition of an all-encompassing system of districts, counties, townships, concessions and lots that constituted the Procrustean bed upon which the new system of land-control and ownership was developed. Land became reconstituted as parcels of property, fixed spatially on cadastres, legalized in Land Registries, and legitimated by periodic municipal tax-assessments and government censuses.\textsuperscript{23} All of this,
together with the regime of civil and criminal law, served to further alienate and exclude the Native peoples, while also massively altering their long-standing spatial and temporal routines.24

Staking a claim to physical territory—a term as physically evocative as it is theoretically profound—was a concept foreign to Native peoples who, it was claimed, maintained “territorial integrity and access to resources” primarily through “the defence of social boundaries rather than of the territorial perimeter.”25 The principal weapon in this assault on the spatial conceptualization of Native life was the map. It formed the practical template and theoretical underpinning of an array of other mechanisms of control. Maps produced a space governed by “the demands of a field of knowledge,”26 “un espace de projection privilégié pour les désirs, les aspirations, la mémoire culturelle du sujet.”27 By the unstated exercise of cultural elision, the Native peoples were removed from their lived-in places in a rendering of an apparently empty space. Through the “sly rhetoric of simulation,”28 the lines on the map implied control of the ground and the promise of future development and control.

The map focused attention on the matter of boundaries and edges of control: a different ontology of space that transcended the concepts of location and containment. The Euro-Canadian attempts to record boundaries on paper were incomprehensible to Native people.29 This is not to suggest that they did not possess a sophisticated appreciation of space, bio-geographical locations, or their own socially constructed ethno-geographies.30 While not recorded on paper, they were nevertheless crucial in their negotiation of their lived-in worlds. Indeed, “[s]ince the core of the territory, and especially its key resource sites, were the primary concern, boundaries were seldom physically demarcated and were apt to be somewhat permeable, according to social rules.”31 This being said, government officials were well aware that the cartographically established boundaries imposed by them were not well understood by the Natives in their ontology of space and place. As one official noted, “it is unlikely that the Natives of themselves would determine upon a line of latitude, or any imaginary line, as the boundary of their hunting ranges,” arguing further that “the boundaries of the Natives’ territories would be provided by lakes and rivers or heights of land.”32 But these were not perimeters or edges of their “homeland.” Rather, for them, they were integral parts of the total homeland and their mobile ecological existence marked by regularly used campsites, hunting and trapping ranges, and a well-established ecological knowledge. Certainly extensively occupied, and often overlapping with territories used by other Native groups, these peripheries were negotiated according to the mutual recognition of traditional usary rights and were, of necessity, permeable. Their mutability reflected variations in frequency and intensity of use because of shifting demands. Knowledge of their environment, along with systematic use and occupancy of an area, was considered sufficient by them to generate recognition of territorial rights by
outsiders. It was from this perspective that Native peoples negotiated with Euro-Canadians. Perhaps naively, they expected that the cultural, social, and moral obligations and constraints that defined the claims to the cores and edges of their domains would be respected by the colonial authorities and their subjects.

Clearly, government policies were intended to impose order by transforming the wilderness into a place of proprietorial control and productivity, and converting the people to a civilized life. Ironically, the rhetoric of integration and assimilation was accompanied by the actual praxis of spatial and social marginalization motivated by a protocol of moral reform and social control. A cynical interpretation of imperial interests would locate motives of acquisition of territory ahead of the prevailing ideological motive of improvement. No doubt, the two were complementary premises. Certainly, the imperial gaze viewed the wilderness, Native peoples and their established practices of resource use as primitive and irrational. From the earliest instances of contact, this (re)presentation framed Native peoples and their lands in ways that served imperial interests by redefining Native territories and boundaries, and justifying the subsequent appropriation of their land.

The introduction of the concept of private property, the enforcement of bounded spaces and the introduction of land-based systems of social control, governance and surveillance have been the principal mechanisms by which Native peoples have seen the erosion of their autonomy. The central thesis of this paper, however, is that these same processes also destabilized systems of mutual interdependence and understanding regarding resources and territory between Native groups.

The Mississauga-Algonquin Peoples: Contesting a Shared Space

Historically, for the Algonquin and Mississauga peoples, like other Eastern Woodland groups, the “key to survival was access to, and control of, resources, rather than the control of land per se.” While Native groups recognized specific locales at which family units would assemble regularly for the social, religious, economic, and political functions that reinforced their cultural identity, at other times, family groups would disperse throughout the extensive forests to pursue their subsistence activities. Because of low people-to-land ratios, sporadic—albeit regular—resource use and mobility, the Native mode of livelihood challenged the Euro-Canadian concepts of permanent occupancy and fixed residence that underpinned proprietorial claims. They also facilitated Euro-Canadian intrusion into the seemingly unoccupied Native “homelands.”

An Historical Ethnogeography of South-Eastern Ontario

During the late prehistoric period, the region of southern Ontario was largely empty. Endemic warfare led to the region serving as a large buffer
zone between powerful nations—most particularly, the Iroquois Five Nations, the Huron, the Neutral, the Petun, and the Algonquin and the Nipissing. Contact with Europeans and participation in the capitalist-driven fur trade altered Native geopolitics as well as social and cultural structures. Competition for furs and a middle position in the fur trade provided a powerful impetus to control the region. Throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, reciprocal raiding between the Five Nations and the Hurons was interspersed by tenuous peace agreements. The Iroquois engaged in a far-flung offensive against the Hurons, the Petun, the Neutral, and several Algonquian nations and by the early 1650s had displaced them from south-eastern Ontario. Some fled to the west and the region surrounding Lake Nipigon. Others drifted east to what would become Quebec. The consequence was that the Iroquois had gained almost exclusive control of south-eastern Ontario by the middle of the seventeenth century.

Sometime around 1700, the Iroquois were replaced as the primary inhabitants of south-eastern Ontario following a massive Ojibwa offensive, with battles and skirmishes throughout south-eastern Ontario as far north as the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers. Ojibwa oral histories clearly recount how the Mississaugas came to occupy south-eastern Ontario after displacing the Iroquois:

The Mississaugas then returned, and seeing that the land conquered by them from the Mohawks, who had dispossessed the Hurons, was full of game and an excellent hunting-ground, they came down from Lake Huron and settled permanently in the valley of the Otonabee, or Trent, and along the St. Lawrence as far east as Brockville …

By the 1720s, the Mississaugas had become firmly entrenched in the region, with population estimates in 1736 reporting that there were 150 Mississauga warriors between the Bay of Quinte and the head of Lake Ontario. More contemporary estimates propose that there were as many as 2,700 Mississaugas inhabiting the region between Lake Ontario and Lake Huron where they adopted a middle position in the fur trade with the British, French and other Native peoples. The Algonquins had earlier been driven from the region and were concentrated in the area of the Lake of Two Mountains mission in Lower Canada.

During these years, the boundary of the Ottawa River-Lake Ontario watershed became the essential divide between the Mississauga and Algonquin peoples (Figure 1). While a divide and a buffer zone, it increasingly constituted a shared territory and a common resource. For the Algonquins, access to the region was provided by the Ottawa River and its tributaries: Bonnechere, Petawawa, Mattawa, Rideau, Mississippi and Madawaska. The Mississauga of the Gananoque-Kingston-Bay region entered the interior lands via the tributaries to the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario: the Gananoque, Cataraqui, Napanee, Salmon, Moira and Trent.
The height of land between Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River comprised a vast extent of Canadian Shield covered by a mixed coniferous-deciduous ecosystem that supported their nomadic subsistence activities. In particular, the series of lakes at the height of land—the Rideau Lakes—served as a nexus of these waterways where, increasingly in the nineteenth century, some of the Algonquin and Mississaugan peoples gathered in shared or contiguous camps. From there, they made use of the spring runs of maple-sap, the early summer spawning of fish, fall crops of wild rice and game throughout the year. In addition, it was here that they acted out social and political practices by which they negotiated their relationships with each other.45

However, these long-standing practices were challenged by the introduction of Euro-Canadian values into the complex calculus of Native people-land relationships. In a series of somewhat opaque negotiations, the Euro-Canadians negotiated the cession of these Native lands and imposed a foreign system of land tenure, paper-boundaries and administrative praxis (Figure 2). Not only did these negotiations serve to marginalize the Native peoples of the region, they also precipitated a contestation over territory and resources between Native groups where none had existed previously—at least on paper! It is important to emphasize that while there is considerable documentation of Algonquin complaints against the Mississauga, there is no evidence whatsoever of direct negotiations between the peoples themselves. What happened on the ground between the Algonquin and Mississaugas? When they met in their customary gathering places, sat around shared campfires, or intermarried, did they discuss the status of their respective land-claims, petitions and putative grievances that were being
considered and argued in the corridors of colonial power? In all probability, while they were primarily concerned more with such prosaic matters as family, hunting and shared experiences, they were aware that the discourses of territory and boundaries being engaged at a higher domain of policy were increasingly crucial to their own negotiated resource sites and demarcated territories.

New Contacts, New Constructs: The Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Front, 1783-1812

In honouring government’s promise of land and a new home for former American settlers and their Iroquois allies who had been loyal to the British during the American Revolution (1776-1783), the military turned to lands well known to them along the upper St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario front. Designated by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as “Indian Hunting Grounds,” these lands had long been the domain of the Iroquois peoples, but since the early eighteenth century had been occupied by the Mississauga. Accordingly, in 1783, Captain William R. Crawford met with the Mississaugas at Carleton Island and purchased from them “all the lands from Toniatia or Onagara River [Jones Creek, below Brockville] to a river [Trent River] in the Bay of Quinte … including all the Islands, extending

Figure 2. Mississauga Land Cessions: 1783-1923, and Present-Day Algonquin Claim Area

![Map of Mississauga Land Cessions: 1783-1923, and Present-Day Algonquin Claim Area](image_url)
from the lake [Ontario] back as far as a man can travel in a day.”49 It was here, centred on the former French post of Cataraqui—to be renamed, Kingston—that Sir Frederick Haldimand, Governor of the Province of Quebec (1778-1786), intended to locate the loyalist settlers and Mohawk allies.

The 1783 acquisition of lands known as the Crawford Purchase is not accompanied by a documented deed, map or formal treaty. There is only a letter between Captain Crawford and the Indian Agent, John Johnson, and another between Johnson and Governor Haldimand. Indeed, the spatial and territorial tropes that delimited the territory in terms of river boundaries and distances that “a man can travel in a day” were expressions of associations with place very much in harmony with the imagined geographies of the Native peoples. Given the date, they may also reflect an early stage of Euro-Canadian conceptualization of place and territory before the implementation of the full apparatus of colonial control. Certainly, it was ambiguous in terms of both the nature of the concept of ownership, as well as the matter of exclusivity of claims to ownership and initiated a momentum that was to be the source of future dissatisfaction.

What the Mississauga understood the Crawford Purchase to entail refers back to the whole question of Native conceptualizations of nature, land and property. Some would argue that there were profound conceptual misunderstandings over government purchases in Ontario: that Natives probably saw the payment in terms of tribute in order to settle dislocated peoples, a concept that had historical precedent among Great Lakes peoples.50

As for the matter of who were the rightful controllers of the lands, no doubt, government turned to the Mississaugas because they were one of the local Native allies based at Carleton Island, were resident in the vicinity of the proposed new town, Kingston, and claimed the lands fronting onto Lake Ontario as their traditional homelands. Apparently, the negotiating authorities did not investigate the propriety of these claims. Rather, they accepted the assertion of “old Chief Menas”[elsewhere, Mynas], a Mississauga, who had been “useful in facilitating the purchase of the lands from the Mississauga, and had sold his own lands including all the country between the River St. Lawrence and the Grand (Ottawa) River.”51 Few questioned the Mississaugan claim to negotiate the Lake Ontario front as their homeland. But it was their subsequent claim to the shared territories of the watershed divide of Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River as well as to all land south of the Ottawa River that was to prove to be contentious over the ensuing two centuries.

The Rideau Corridor, 1812-1832

In the decades following the War of 1812, attention was directed to settlement of the interior lands to the north of Lake Ontario. There were
several reasons: land was needed to accommodate new settlers; lumbering companies were advancing into the territory along the tributaries of the Ottawa River; and, perhaps most importantly, there was a military imperative to settle and develop a corridor along the line of the Rideau. All of this activity was clearly beyond the limits of the Crawford Purchase—however vague they may have been! And, certainly, there was increasing tangible evidence of new, Euro-Canadian systems of spatial organization. Surveyors’ chain-men were cutting sight-lines through the forest; concessions and lots were being staked-out only to be pulled up by the Mississauga; and in the outskirts of Belleville, new survey-plats were even superimposed over a Mississauga burial place. Everywhere, Native concepts of place and social order were being constrained by geometry and the commodification of land. Confrontations between the Mississauga and government surveyors prompted William Claus, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to instruct the resident Indian Agent, John Ferguson, to investigate the Mississauga claims of intrusion into their lands north of the Crawford Purchase. It was noted that “although they were not certain, they believed they had not sold that part of their hunting grounds.” Further, they claimed that “no other Indians than themselves … have any claim to that area of land” and “that the claims of the Nipissings and Algonquins do not cross the Ottawa River.” On 31 May 1819, Ferguson negotiated a Provisional Agreement with the Mississaugas for a three million acre tract of land along the south shore of the Ottawa River between Pembroke and Ottawa, extending south and west. Because a number of Mississauga chiefs had not been present at the original signing, the agreement was ratified on 28 November 1822. This 1819-1822 negotiation was to be the basis for subsequent disputes between the Mississauga and their Algonquin and Nipissing neighbours.

By this agreement, not only did the Mississauga cede lands in the southern section of the Rideau Corridor, but also throughout the watersheds of the Ottawa valley and, in particular, throughout the tributaries of the Madawaska and Mississippi. Whether or not these lands were part of the Mississauga traditional homeland is not at issue. The point is that the Mississaugas were not the only Native peoples with a long-standing claim to that region. In particular, it had also been the domain and hunting grounds of the Algonquins who had not been party to the Rideau Purchase. Why were they excluded?

Was it because government negotiators were interacting more with the Kingston-centred Mississaugas, many of whom, incidentally, were being converted to Methodism at this time and, therefore, more accessible to government than the Roman Catholic Algonquins? Was it because the Mississaugas were under the control of Upper Canadian authorities while the Algonquins and Nipissings based at Lake of Two Mountains were the charges of Lower Canada? Indeed, it was also claimed that because Captain Charles Anderson, who was not only the “Indian Superintendent of Rice
Lake,” but was also married to a Mississaugan woman, the government would look more favourably upon the Mississauga claim. Whatever the reason, apparently, the government did little to determine Native claims to this vast extent of territory—despite the fact that there was no evidence that the Upper Canada side of the Ottawa River belonged to the Mississaugas and that there was abundant proof that the Algonquins and the Nipissings, “from time immemorial, have considered this part of the country as their exclusive hunting grounds.”57 Accordingly, the Algonquins and Nipissings were not consulted during the Rideau cessions of 1819-22. Not surprisingly, they complained that their lands had been sold clandestinely by the Mississaugas and they continued to press their claims to their traditional homelands.58

Certainly, there is evidence of the reassertion of an Algonquin presence. As mentioned above, the Algonquins and Nipissings were among those groups displaced by the mid-seventeenth century expansion of the Iroquois into southern Ontario. However, it appears that they had begun to re-establish a presence: by the middle of the eighteenth century, they were making winter hunting trips along the Ottawa River; by the 1820s and 1830s, they had taken up permanent residence between the northern limit of European settlement and the Ottawa River. In 1830, such was the growing presence that the Mississaugas of Mud Lake and Rice Lake complained that the Algonquins and Nipissings were destroying their hunting grounds.59 Two years later, colonial officials noted that “the Indians of the Lake of Two Mountains and St. Regis have taken up residence in the Kingston backcountry and are collecting presents intended for the Mississaugas. This is reported as happening last year.”60

What factors prompted the Algonquin to reassert their territorial rights to hunting grounds in south-eastern Ontario? As noted by Major Darling in 1828, one factor appears to have been the considerable pressure on the limited space and resources surrounding the mission at Lake of Two Mountains where they had been congregating during the summer months since at least 1763:

The result of the present state of things is obvious, and such as can scarcely fail in time to be attended with bloodshed and murder; for driven from their own resources, they will naturally trespass on those of other tribes, who are equally jealous of the intrusion of their red brethren as of white men. Complaints on this head are increasing daily, while the threats and admonitions of the officers of this department have been found insufficient to control the unruly spirit of the savage, who, driven by the calls of hunger, and the feelings of nature towards his offspring, will not be scrupulous in invading the rights of his brethren, as a means of alleviating his misery, when he finds the example in the conduct of his white father’s children practiced as he conceives towards himself.61

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that they re-asserted their presence in their former homelands to the north and west, in the Ottawa
River watershed. Moreover, by the 1820s, having claimed and ceded these lands, the Mississaugas were experiencing considerable social and cultural trauma:

In about 1818, there were a great many hundreds of Indians of Kingston, Upper Canada, and at Belleville and Rice Lake. And they were all unhappy drunkards. I was well acquainted with these tribes of Indians. And in 1829 I do not think there were more than half the number; for they were dying very fast every year. Some of them were stabbed, some were shot, some were tomahawked, some were drowned, some were burned, and some were frozen to death. And thus were going to destruction at a great rate.62

Others left the region to join the Methodist sponsored mission at Grape Island, Bay of Quinte.63 Consequently, when Major Darling completed his survey of Native peoples in the Canadas, he could account for only eighty individuals inhabiting the back-country behind Kingston. It would appear that it was at this time, and under these circumstances, that the Algonquins and Nipissings increased their presence in a somewhat depopulated St. Lawrence-Ottawa watershed.

In 1820, Algonquin and Nipissing Chiefs petitioned Sir George Dalhousie, Governor-in-Chief of Canada, requesting that he grant them written titles and patents to the unsold islands in the Ottawa River and other lands to which they were entitled for their hunting. Complaining that their territory was being intruded upon by hunting parties from other Indian groups and by squatters and lumbermen, they were recognizing that they had to have recourse to Euro-Canadian legal practices for protection. Dalhousie’s somewhat unhelpful and undiscriminating response was that he could not

grant a specific tract of the country, however remote, to any particular tribe, or nation of Indians [since] the whole of these widely scattered regions, ought to be open to all those [Algonquins, Nipissings, Iroquois and Hurons] who choose to hunt, in the yet unsettled & uninhabited parts of them.64

In 1824, Sir John Johnson forwarded a similar petition on behalf of the Algonquins and Nipissings to the Military Secretary and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Colonel Darling. This precipitated an investigation and the preparation of a map of the disputed area by Captain J.M. Lamothe of the Indian Department in Montreal. The memorandum accompanying the map is definitive, its assumptions based upon the “right of lengthy occupation” and “confirmation” by Royal Charter:

The Algonquin and Nipissingue Tribes have from time immemorial occupied as hunting grounds the Lands on both sides of the Ottawa and little (Matawa) Rivers … to the height of land dividing the waters of Lake Nipissingue from those of the said little (Matawa); as also the Countries Watered by all the streams falling into the said Ottawa and little (Matawa) Rivers, north and south to their sources. This tract is bounded to the southward by a Ridge
dividing the waters which fall into the lakes and into the St. Lawrence from those falling to the Northward and into the Ottawa River.65

Accepting the basic premise of Lamothe’s map, Johnson warned Darling that as the Algonquin and Nipissings had not received compensation for grants made in their territory, it was a “[b]reach of His Majesty’s Royal Proclamation” and that as

[they] possess no land from which a revenue is derived … and depend upon their hunting for support and of late the Settlement of the Country, and the indiscriminate and injudicious destruction, by the settlers, of the Beaver, and other animals, … is likely soon to deprive them of the means by which they have hitherto supported their families.66

Disputing the claim that these lands were shared by others and warning that he feared “some lives will e’re long be sacrificed,” Johnson went on to comment on emerging Native attitudes to land claims:

the Hunting Grounds of the various tribes of Indians Inhabiting these Provinces were originally defined among themselves, and the boundaries of each Tract Perfectly understood by them; any encroachment by one Tribe upon the lands allotted for the use of another is viewed by them in precisely the same light as is, the Invasion of one Civilized state by another.

Despite the compelling logic of Johnson’s arguments, the Algonquins and Nipissings received no redress. Over the next two decades, they continued to petition, albeit unsuccessfully, a succession of governments for compensation for lost lands and the protection of their remaining lands from encroachment. In 1827, Colonel Darling spoke to the “Grand Council” of Algonquins, Nipissings, Iroquois, and Abenakis and warned them that he could not prevent “White people” from hunting in their hunting grounds and that if they killed any of them they would be tried and punished. He concluded that while he could not grant them lands “to be kept in a wild state as Hunting Grounds,” Governor Dalhousie was ready to grant a small portion of land to those who were prepared to take up agriculture.67

Increasingly, government was reluctant to recognize the particulars of the Algonquin-Nipissing claim because of two somewhat contradictory assumptions: that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 had recognized Native rights, in general, to hunt on ungranted Crown lands; and that the Mississaugas had surrendered the lands claimed by the Algonquins and Nipissings and had been compensated for their rights to them. Indeed, the conclusion reached in 1839 by Justice James Macauley would appear to have finally resolved the issue:

The papers referred to do not enable me to express any opinion upon the merits of this Memorial [an Algonquin claim]. It seems admitted that the Algonquins and Nipissings have a valid claim to the North or Lower Canada side of the Ottawa River, their pretensions to the south side are more doubtful. They contend, not
for the St. Lawrence as a boundary, but a line midway between the two rivers. The Mississaugas it is said, on the other hand, have from the beginning claimed the whole Territory south of the Ottawa and north of the St. Lawrence. The Government of this Province have by treating with this Tribe implicitly recognized their right as occupants, and there is no sufficient evidence to support the counter-claims of the Algonquins. If it exists it must repose in the early history of the Tribes frequenting the great Canadian Rivers.  

Notwithstanding this apparently definitive conclusion, the Algonquins continued to press their case that the Mississaugas had “clandestinely” sold their lands. Indeed, it would appear that the Algonquin-Mississauga land claims were being presented in Euro-Canadian proprietorial tropes. In 1841, at a Council Meeting in Oka, the Algonquins presented the essence of their case to James Hughes, Superintendent of the Indian Department:

The Mississauga never openly came and hunted on our waters nor we on theirs, this was according to an Indian treaty between the chiefs of the Mississaugas and us which the Iroquois Tribe are well acquainted . . . [They asked that] the remuneration annually paid to the Mississauga be from henceforth retained from them and paid to us the Nipissings and Algonquins, the only Tribes entitled to receive the annuity above mentioned.

Despite the judgment by the new Governor-General of British North America, Sir Charles Bagot, that there would be neither compensation nor land, the Algonquins insisted that an inquiry be made into their claim to a portion of the annuities paid to the Mississaugas for the Rideau Purchase in 1819-1822. Eventually, following several more petitions, in 1847, James Hughes presented his opinion to Lord Elgin that “the Mississauga clandestinely took upon themselves to sell this tract of land which they were well aware belonged and formed part of the hunting grounds of the Algonquin and Nipissingue Tribes.” Nevertheless, the Algonquins and Nipissings never received the annuities.

The Bedford Interlude

Ironically, as if to underscore the internal discrepancies within the official documentary voices, one aspect of the lived reality on the ground tells a different story during this period of disputed land claims. The considerable engineering of the Rideau Canal had much altered the hydrography of eastern Ontario by linking the south-west flowing Cataraqui-Gananoque river system with the north-east flowing Rideau river systems to produce a through-route from Bytown [Ottawa] to Kingston. It also created an extended lake-system athwart the watershed that came to be known as the Rideau Lakes in the former shared land-use territories of the Algonquin and Mississauga. Indeed, the Bagot Commission of 1844-45 suggests that not only did they share the region’s resources but that some of them, at least, appear to have shared common camp grounds:
Within a few years past, some stragglers from the Rice Lake tribe [Missisaugas] have settled in the Township of Bedford, about twenty-five miles north of Kingston; and recently they have been joined by a band of eighty-one Indians from Lower Canada, belonging to the post of the Lake of Two Mountains. As the settlement is of recent formation and the claim of these Indians upon the interest of the Department of Upper Canada has only been brought forward last year, they have not been visited by any officer of the Department, and no account can be given of the settlement.71

How did this come to be?

In 1832, some nineteen Mississauga families were granted 2,680 acres close to Wolfe Lake [West Rideau Lake] in Bedford Township.72 Here they stayed until 1833 when they were ordered to move to the newly established reservation at Alderville, near Peterborough. While most complied, many continued to consider the Bedford region as part of their traditional homeland domain.

Nearby, at Bob’s Lake, the Algonquin Chief, Peter Stephens,73 claimed lands for his people, arguing that they had “long been accustomed to spending the [winter] hunting season” there, returning to Lake of Two Mountains for two months in the summer to receive presents and religious instruction.74 In 1842, in response to the Algonquin petition for land, and upon receipt of a census furnished by Peter Stephens that enumerated the Algonquins at Bedford,75 an Order-in-Council awarded a “licence of occupation” to the Stephen’s group, “only during the pleasure of the Crown.”76 Indian Affairs then recommended 2,000 acres of secluded, if poor quality, land be set aside for them, “on the same terms and conditions that the Reservations in other parts of the Province” had been granted.77

Estimated to have some 96 persons in 1844, Peter Stephens group of Algonquins continually petitioned for protection from the intrusion of squatters and lumbermen.78 Their petitions were ignored but they stayed in the area until at least 1863.79 As the frontier of lumbering and pioneer agriculture intruded further into the Ottawa valley, many Algonquin people dispersed further north.

However, these two short-lived experiments—together with evidence of co-residence in camps and intermarriage—suggest that on the ground, at least, the Mississauga and the Algonquins co-existed on the margins of their respective claims. In all probability, they had shared areas of resource use in the past but the shared occupancy of this region and the close proximity of their camps may have been a reflection of the pressure of the times. The encroachment of settlers and lumbermen limited their options: remain in an ever-shrinking territory, relocate to the established reservation at Alnwick (Mississauga) or to reservations established at Golden Lake and in northern Quebec (Algonquin), or move to the north-west of those ceded by the 1819-22 Rideau Treaties.
The Ottawa-Huron Tract

By the 1860s, the Public Lands and Colonization Act (1853) and the Homestead Act (1868) had stimulated Euro-Canadian settlement of the Ottawa-Huron tract.80 Faced with new incursions, in 1869, George Paudash, a Mississauga Indian chief, submitted a petition suggesting that the land lying north of the 45th parallel belonged to the Mississugas and had never been ceded.81 They were claiming this territory on behalf of the Mississugas of Rice, Mud and Scugog Lakes. Paudash was a direct descendent of Charles and T.G. Anderson, both Indian Superintendents, Charles Anderson having married a Mississauga woman from Rice Lake. Accordingly, it has been suggested that not only did the Indian Department favour the Mississauga claim because of this connection but that it might even have assisted Paudash in compiling the claim.82

In any event, in 1870, the matter was brought before the Honourable Joseph Howe, Superintendent General. It was his opinion that the “[t]he Ojibways of the Upper Lakes had evidently no territorial rights extending through from Lake Huron to the Ottawa.”83 The claim was not considered again until 1878 when it was reported that “the Ontario Department of Crown Lands has searched the available documentation and failed to discover the evidence of any treaty showing that any part of the tract of land [claimed by the Mississugas and Chippewas] has been surrendered by the Indians.”84 The Mississauga continued to press their claims, although the conclusions reached by A.E. Irving in 1893 must have displeased them. Essentially, Irving argued that “There is no reason why these Bands [Mississugas and Algonquins] should claim together” and that “the lands in respect of which the Mississugas claim compensation, belonged to other Bands, the Algonquins and Nipissings, and that they [Mississugas] have been compensated.”85 Even more damningly, Irving goes on to assert that “parts of the Lands included in the Surrender of 28th November, 1822, were the Hunting grounds of the Nipissings and Algonquins,” and that “these Chippewas and Mississugas were not aboriginal inhabitants of Upper Canada, they were immigrants, and possessed no rights to land therein.”86 Such was the growing support of the Algonquin position that an Indian Affairs confidential report in 1899 suggested that the department drop the Mississauga claim.87 But in 1909, Samuel Bray, Chief Surveyor of the Department of Indian Affairs, concluded “that the area claimed by the Mississauga had not been claimed by any other group of Indian people,” although he went on to suggest that they “seem to have made very little use of the area claimed.”88

Despite these apparent set-backs, the Ojibwa communities of Christian Island, Georgina Island, Rama, Mud (Curve) Lake, Rice Lake, Alnwick (Alderville) and Scugog continued to argue that they had never ceded their rights to the lands between Lake Ontario and Lake Nipissing.89 Indeed, they sustained a strong presence in the area with people from Rama and Christian Island retaining detailed knowledge of canoe routes to the north.
and those from the Alderville community making references to lakes in the Algonquin Park region. There was also clear evidence of Algonquin and Nipissing having made long-standing use of these lands. Nevertheless, on 31 October 1923, government signed the Williams Treaty with the Chippewa of Christian Island, Georgina Island and Rama, and on 15 November 1923, with the Mississauga of Rice Lake, Mud Lake and Lake Scugog. By this agreement, in return for compensation amounting to $500,000 and $25 per capita, the Mississauga and Chippewa ceded their fishing, hunting and trapping rights to an area of about 17,600 square miles south of Lake Nipissing, west of the Ottawa River, east of Georgian Bay and north of 45 degrees latitude, and to an area of about 2,500 square miles in the Counties of Northumberland, Durham, Ontario and York. They also ceded all rights and privileges to all other lands situate in Ontario, apart from lands set aside as reserves.

While this payment was intended to finally resolve claims of the Ojibwa peoples in this region, yet again, both the federal and Ontario governments had overlooked the claims of the Algonquin peoples of the Ottawa valley. Not surprisingly, the result has been continuing litigation to redress these long-standing claims to a long-standing disputed territory.

**Conclusion: Connections and Disconnections**

Native and colonial societies possessed differing perceptions of the conceptualization of space as a defined territory. Colonial practices of mapping and codifying space resulted in bounded territories with imaginary lines that did not parallel the concepts of boundaries utilized by the indigenous inhabitants. When colonial authorities delimited and categorized indigenous territories as lines on paper, they did not take into account the necessity of permeable boundaries to enable the historically acknowledged freedom of movement of Native groups and the dynamic relationships between peoples and between themselves and the land. As this paper demonstrated, the assertion of colonial control occurred at a time when the Mississaugas and Algonquins were themselves renegotiating territories and boundaries. The thrust of colonial expansion precipitated legalistic contestation between these Native groups and initiated the process of individual claims to territory.

The fact that there continues to be controversy regarding the Mississauga-Algonquin claims to former homeland territories throughout the Ottawa Valley watershed boundaries reflects past governments’ failure to comprehend the grounded ethnographic realities of Native occupation of this region. In the watershed boundary areas, Mississaugas and Algonquins shared lands and campsites and frequently intermarried. As recently as the 1970s, they stood together at the barricades to block the commercial exploitation of their wild rice beds at Mud Lake, Ardoch. It would appear that colonial appropriation of Native lands by such vehicles as the Rideau
Purchase and the Williams Treaty were concerned more with shortsighted legalisms rather than cultural verities. Moreover, there may have been another, purely bureaucratic factor. Rather than a simple metanarrative of contestation between a monolithic Euro-Canadian “government” and the “Native peoples,” there appears to have been a more nuanced intercolonial real-politic. Algonquin claims appear to have been supported by colonial authorities in Lower Canada but resisted by those in Upper Canada. Conversely, Upper Canadian authorities favoured the Mississaugas while attempting to deflect the Algonquins back over the Ottawa River to Lower Canada. Such positions may have been less than objective and more concerned with sidestepping responsibility. The Indian Department was, after all, a very expensive administrative appendage. Whatever the reason, the result has been some two centuries of intransigence, inaction and repetitive litigation. To date, the Algonquin and Mississauga claims to their “Northern hunting grounds” in the watersheds of the tributaries of the Ottawa River are still unresolved.

Notes

1. Huitema is an Independent Researcher, Osborne is in Geography at Queen’s University, and Ripmeester is in Geography at Brock University. They are currently collaborating on an SSHRC funded research project: “Homeland, Third Space, Identity: The Landscapes of the Alderville Mississauga.”


11. Several authors have suggested that the colonial imagination collapsed travel through space and time into a single process. Human difference was explained through recourse to evolutionary process. To travel beyond the bounds of Europe was, therefore, to travel before the time of Europe. See, J. Duncan, “Sites of Representation: Place, Time and the Discourse of the Other,” in J. Duncan and D. Ley (eds.) *place/culture/practice*, New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 39-56; see also A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York: Routledge, 1995; and B. Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Cultures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998.


15. Terry N. Tobias, *Chief Kerry’s Moose, A Guidebook to Land Use and Occupancy Mapping, Research Design, and Data Collection*, Canada: Joint Publication of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and Ecotrust, 2000, p. 3. (Tobias states that these distinctions draw directly from Peter Usher’s work as one of the pioneers of land use and occupancy methodology).


35. For recent formulations of these perspectives, see D. Clayton, “Captain Cook and the Spaces of Contact at ‘Nootka Sound’” in J.S.H. Brown and E. Vibert (eds.) *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996, pp. 95-123; see also R.C. Harris, 1995, *op. cit.*


44. Duchesnay, 1829, cited in G.M. Day and B.G. Trigger, “Algonquin,” in B. Trigger (ed.) *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 15, Northeast, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978, pp. 794-5. The territory north of the St. Lawrence front had been the subject of an alliance between the Abenaki and Algonquin nations in the early 1700s, which recognized the St. Lawrence River as the dividing line, and the land north of the river as Algonquin country. Based on these assumptions, in 1791, the Algonquin nation held a council with


52. Queen’s University Library, Government Documents, Department Lands and Forests, Surveyors’ Letters, Volume 37, p. 93, Samuel Wilmot to Thomas Ridout, 26 August 1818.


54. NAC, RG10, Volume 32:18918-19, letter from Ferguson to Claus, 8 March 1816.


57. A.E. St. Louis, “Memorandum: Ancient Hunting Grounds of the Algonquin and Nipissing Indians: Comprising the Watersheds of the Ottawa and Madawaska Rivers.” Unpublished manuscript. Dominion Archivist, Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Treaties and Historical Research Centre, 1951, p. 15.

58. Much of what follows derives from Hanson, 1986, op. cit.


63. Of course, there were other Ojibwa/Mississauga groups in the Peterborough, Lake Simcoe and Georgina Bay areas. These too were undergoing similar processes, being relocated to such places as Mud Lake, Rice Lake, the Credit, Coldwater and the Narrows. Despite such dislocations, they too retained an interest in, and claim to, lands throughout the Ottawa Huron tract.

64. NAC, RG10, Volume 494, Governor Dalhousie to Colonel Darling, Military Secretary and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, August 1822, pp. 31073-75.

65. NAC, RG10, Volume 494, Captain Lamothe, Indian Department, to Sir John Johnson Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 29 October 1824, pp. 31066-67.


67. NAC, RG10, Volume 20, Colonel Darling to the Grand Council, 5 October 1827, pp. 14240–53.


69. NAC, RG10, Volume 6, Proceedings of Council at Lake of Two Mountains, 4 September 1841, pp. 2915-22.


71. JLAC, 1844-45, Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Indian Affairs to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, Section 2, Part 16. (Hereafter known as “The Bagot Commission.”)

72. NAC, RG10, Volume 48, correspondence between M. Macauley and Col. J. Givens, pp. 54381-55027.

73. Peter Stephens was also known as Piershawanapinessi, Pierchaw-wi-ni-pi-nessi, Peter Shaw-we-ne-pi-nai-see, Peter Shawanipinessi, Pshawainopininisi and Chawaminis. Stephens was also variously spelled as Stevens (M. E. Huitema, op cit. Ftn. 312, p. 117).
74. NAC, RG10, Volume 186, pt. 2, Petition of Peter Shawanipinessi for Licence of Occupation entitled Petition No. 115, 17 July 1842, pp. 108566C-566F.
77. NAC, RG10, Volume 186, Lieutenant Colonel Jarvis (Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs) to Indian Affairs Department, 29 October 1843, pp. 45607-09, also Volume186, pt. 2, pp. 108566.
81. NAC, RG10, Volume 2329, File 67071-1, Wetongwe to William Spragge, (signed by George Paudash) 22 December 1869, unpaginated.
82. A.E. St. Louis, 1951, op. cit., pp. 15, 30.
83. AO, Sir A.E. Irving Papers, MS1780, Folio 1027-1-8, Indian Land Dispute and Compensation Claims, Joseph Howe, Department of Secretary of State, Indian Branch, to Commissioner of Crown Lands, p. 2.
84. NAC, RG10, Volume 2328, File 67071-1, Secretary of the Province of Ontario to Secretary of State (Canada), 17 July 1878, unpaginated.
85. AO, Sir A.E. Irving Papers, MU 1464, Indian Land Dispute and Compensation Claims, Summary of Claim, 9 February 1893, unpaginated.
86. Ibid. Irving claims that this was communicated by Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to Sir John A. McDonald on 2 October 1884, together with an array of supporting documentation.
87. NAC, RG10, Volume 2545, File 111834, Report: J. A. McKenna and R. Rimmer (Law Clerks for the Department of Indian Affairs) 20 March 1899, unpaginated.
88. NAC, RG10, Volume 2329, File 67071-2, Memo: Samuel Bray (Chief Surveyor of the Department of Indian Affairs) to the Deputy Minister, 26 April 1909, unpaginated.
90. L.C. Hanson, op cit. 1986, p. 62.