



Before the O'Hara's in Madoc Township

O'Hara family records show considerable interaction and support from local First Nation peoples. This is a synopsis of First Nation peoples activities prior to the arrival of the O'Hara family including the purchase of land from the Mississaugas by the British government and subsequent sale by the crown to settlers like the O'Hara family.

Prior to James O'Hara's arrival and land purchase in Madoc Township in 1823, much of the lands north of Lake Ontario including its tributaries were the traditional territory of the Michi Saagig or Mississaugas. They are Anishnaabeg, meaning "spontaneous man". The Mississaugas occupied these lands from time immemorial. They were hunters, fishers and gatherers of wild edibles, preferring the rivers and forests. They moved with the seasons throughout their territory.

The Mississaugas shared their lands with the Hurons/Wyandot who were more farming inclined and had settled in the fertile Lake Huron area with permanent villages and grew horticultural crops including the Three Sisters crops of corn, beans and squash. In the mid-1600's the Mississaugas temporarily left the Lake Ontario area due to disease and conflict created by the European fur trade.

The Mississauga people had developed trading agreements with the French while the Iroquois/Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy meaning "people of the long house" including the Mohawks traded with the English and the Dutch. The Huron/Wyandot were forced out of their occupation by the Iroquois who were expanding from their traditional territories south of Lake Ontario looking for furs to trade to the Europeans. By 1680 the Mississaugas had returned to their traditional territories at Lake Ontario and the Iroquois were eventually forced back to their ancestral territories in the Mohawk Valley in what is now New York State by the 1740's.

By 1760 the British had control of the French territories.

Mississaugas and their allies including the Ojibwa, Odawa, Pottawatomi and Algonquin fought alongside the British during the many battles of the War of 1812.

The British government signed some 18 treaties with the Mississauga Nation between 1781 and 1923.

One treaty is known as the Rideau Purchase, No. 27 ¼. This treaty containing about 2,748,000 acres including the current Madoc Township was signed on November 28, 1822. Participating members of the Mississauga Nation received “an annuity of two pounds and ten shillings of lawful money of Upper Canada to be paid unto each man, woman and child and to their descendants and posterity forever provided always that the number of persons entitled to receive the same shall in no case exceed two hundred and fifty seven persons, that being the number of persons claiming and inhabiting the said tract at the time of concluding the provisional agreement”. Nineteen chiefs are listed with 12 leaving their mark on the agreement. This is an indication the chiefs were unable to read the document. Considering the insignificant reimbursement for a huge tract of land, the chiefs may have believed they were sharing their land rather than giving up total possession. [The Rideau Purchase can be viewed here.](#)

The Mohawk Presence

The Iroquois/Haudenosaunee had returned to their traditional lands in the Mohawk Valleys by the 1740's. The Iroquois or Haudenosaunee Six Nation Confederacy was made up of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora Nations. They maintained their friendship with the British.

During the American Revolution the Iroquois and the Mohawks in particular supported the British. As a result of the war the Six Nations people lost their traditional lands. To compensate for their losses and in recognition of their military support, the Six Nations were allowed to select unsettled lands in Upper Canada now Ontario. As a result a group of 100-125 Mohawks led by John Deseronto arrived on the shores of the Bay of Quinte in May of 1784. They were welcomed by a group of Mississaugas. The Tyendinaga land was assigned to the Mohawks with the Simcoe Deed in 1793 and included the present Tyendinaga Territory and a large part of the present Tyendinaga Township.

The Mohawks were in the general area when James O'Hara arrived in 1823.