Our Long Struggle for Home

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Introduction

Twenty-seven years after Dudley George was killed on the night of September 6, 1995, we – the Nishnaabeg of Aazhoodena – are telling our story of what happened. We are telling it from our own perspective, in our own words, as much as possible. It's not just the story of an over-armed, racist police force opening fire on an unarmed group of Nishnaabeg trying to reclaim our ancestral homeland, one part of which had become the Ipperwash Provincial Park. It is the story of our way of life having been all disrupted when we were forced off the land that had given us life and shared identity for generation after generation – until 1942. Ever since, we have been trying to get back to that life, to our ways of living on that land. We have been trying to reclaim the land to which we and our ancestors belong, trying to renew that connection, that lived relationship, while we can still feel it strongly enough to act on it. To understand this is to understand something of our origin stories, our history and culture, including the culture of treaty making. And to do this is to share our hope that this country can be renewed in a good way, while justice is finally done here at Aazhoodena, the Stoney Point Reserve.

The reserve was created as part of the 1827 Huron Tract Treaty. Under that treaty, at least the "official" written version of it, between 2 and 3 million acres of rich, life-giving land in what became southwestern Ontario were "surrendered" to the Crown by the resident Ojibwe-speaking Nishnaabeg, including our ancestors. One million of those acres were given to the Canada Company to sell to prospective settlers. In addition, four large tracts of land, thousands of acres each

and often on spots considered sacred, were set aside for the exclusive use of the Nishnaabeg for all time.

Together, these four pieces of land represented less than 1 percent of our former territory in this part of the Great Lakes (*Gichi-gaming*) watershed. Still, we were assured that this remaining land would be ours, for all time. One of these reserved areas was near what is now called Sarnia. Another is at Walpole Island on the shores of Lake St. Clair, close to Windsor and Detroit. Two tracts were bordered on one side by a long, curved stretch of fine-sand beach on the shores of Lake Huron north of Sarnia. One of these was called Kettle Point; the other, described as at the mouth of the River aux Sable, was Stoney Point. Our people had been living here for a long time already; we called it Aazhoodena, which means "the town across the way" (from Kettle Point). The Ojibwe word *oodena* means "a village," with "de," our word for heart, in the middle.

In 1942, the federal government invoked the War Measures Act to give itself permission to appropriate – to seize and take over – the entire Stoney Point Reserve. The government turned our land into an army training camp complete with rifle ranges, a grenade range, and another for launching mortar shells. It was understood that at the end of the war the land would be returned, but that didn't happen. Year after year, for decades, our people organized letter writing campaigns, petitions, and demonstrations, trying to get the government to honour its verbal promises, and the treaty as well. Regional and national Indigenous organizations got behind us and lobbied too. There was even a report by a parliamentary committee urging the land's return. But nothing happened. Canada's Department of National Defence (DND) maintained it still needed the land.

In 1993, six of our elders, including some of the last few who were born on Stoney Point, decided they'd had enough. They simply moved back home, and many of us who are their children came with them. Some of us had children of our own by then, and they came too.

At first, we lived in tents and trailers. One family's old hunting-camp tarps sheltered a shared eating area. As winter approached, we built more substantial accommodations, including small additions to some of the camper trailers where we could have a wood stove for heat. We built a council meeting hall. We revived our language and customs such as the sweat lodge and peacekeepers and tried to restore our self-governance traditions. Our actions drew widespread support from non-Indigenous groups and from other reserves, in the United

States and Canada. We hoped this would help advance a return of our land, but nothing happened. The government kept ignoring its promise, ignoring the treaty and the historical obligations associated with it. The army camp (now a cadet training camp) kept going, the barracks full. Cadets kept running around, learning to shoot rifles, grenades.

In 1994, the army shut down the cadet training camp, but not the base. They kept that going, with fewer soldiers around, but still they were there. A year later, on a Saturday afternoon in late July, we moved in on the barracks; that night, the army left the base. A few weeks later, at the end of the Labour Day weekend, some of us went a step further. We took over Ipperwash Provincial Park (by then closed for the season), a piece of the lakeshore that originally had been part of Stoney Point.

Newly elected Ontario premier Mike Harris decided to treat this as a law-and-order issue: these people were illegally trespassing in the park, he said, on land to which the province had legal title. Two days later, on September 6, there was a police boat patrolling offshore in the lake and a surveillance helicopter hovering overhead. Police were everywhere, and there were roadblocks on all the roads around us. In the moonlit darkness of that night, the combined forces of an Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Crowd Management Unit plus a Tactics and Rescue Unit (TRU) – somewhere between thirty and forty officers – in full "hard tac" gear, shields, and visors, the TRU officers with semiautomatic weapons on their shoulders and guns in their holsters, and all with special issue steel batons swinging from their belts, marched down the road. In what happened next, they opened fire. Dudley George, a fun-loving guy, unarmed and dressed in sneakers, jeans, and a T-shirt, was fatally shot.

Dudley George was the only Indigenous person killed by the police in a land claim action (we call it a repossession) in the twentieth century. Stoney Point was the only reserve that has ever been taken over in its entirety and all of its people forced to move somewhere else. These are important things to know and each is a tragedy worth remembering. They are also part of a larger tragedy associated with what to us is a gaping hole in what has officially been called Canadian history. One of the biggest gaps is around treaties. They are the foundation of this country, lying underneath and coming before the 1867 Constitution. Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows calls them foundational constitutional documents.[1]

Most Canadians do not appreciate this,[2] but we do. All of us grew up knowing about the treaties, the two-row wampum belt – all those agreements about sharing the land that was given to us by the Creator, but also about retaining control of certain parts of our territory, our homeland, where we could continue our ways; could continue being Nishnaabeg.

John Borrows describes the treaties as "creating an inter-societal framework in which first laws intermingle with Imperial laws to foster peace and order across communities."[3] There are two important things in what he is saying here. One is that our (First Nations) legal traditions were the first laws of this land and were not extinguished by anything like occupation or conquest. So they retain their legitimacy, as affirmed in the treaties. The other is about the nature of these laws. They are diverse and entwined with the particular history and lived experience of each group.[4] Some are traditional or customary laws handed down from generation to generation through story and ritual and followed every day in our protocols and practices; our customary ways of doing things like hunting and harvesting medicines. Some laws are considered sacred, because they "stem from the Creator, creation stories or revered ancient teachings that have withstood the test of time."[5] Many of the first laws are also natural laws based on close observation of nature. They are laid out in the natural order of things, the mutuality of respect and of different species living together and understanding how the earth maintains functions that benefit all beings.[6] Potawatomi SUNY botany professor Robin Wall Kimmerer celebrates the grace and the beauty of this mutuality in nature's interconnectedness and interdependence: insect to plant, plant to plant and to human beings too – sweetgrass flourishing, for instance, where it is regularly picked and used. As she wrote in *Braiding Sweetgrass,* "My grandmother always said: 'If we use a plant respectfully it will stay with us and flourish ... This place always gives good sweetgrass since we tend to it right.'"[7]

The first treaties for sharing the land with newcomers from Europe go back at least to 1659,[8] and have their roots in diplomatic councils for peace and trade.[9] From long before then, but continuing since, treaties have not been primarily legal contracts. They were more like pledges and covenants, even sacred ones. "Because First Nations followed their own legal traditions in creating treaties," Borrows has written, "their interpretation was that treaties were made with the Creator as well as with the Crown."[10] Treaties created relationships;

ongoing relationships. These relationships were formal and political – setting down principles for "'constituting' their relations."[11] At the same time, treaties were also deeply personal. They were understood as between kin.

They were formally entered into with the exchange of gifts – such as wampum belts in our tradition; medals, clothing, tools, and sometimes liquor on their side. These "sealed a pledge to share space, creating a negotiated relationship as much as an economic transaction."[12] The relationships linked together the people who shared a territory over time. They also bound these people in an ongoing relationship with the land itself. The treaties were about sustaining this shared territory, the habitat, and all its inhabitants together.

The ongoing nature of the treaty relationship meant that the treaty also needed to be renewed on a regular basis, beginning with condolences, restitution, and reparation. These rituals and actions helped to restore balance and peace in the relationship. They set it right again.[13] That is how the treaty was renewed. For us and our way of thinking, this has not changed. The mutual responsibilities are ongoing, generation after generation, and shared by all.[14]

So we want to say miigwech to Heather Menzies, who showed up four years ago saying that the same 1827 treaty that had set aside the Stoney Point Reserve as our exclusive territory had also legitimized her great-great-grandparents being able to settle nearby. In 1832, her father's mother's people, the Crerars, bought land from the Canada Company. Ten years later, James Menzies bought a 100-acre lot from the company too. When Heather showed up, literally at the barbed-wire fencing around the old army camp, she said she had been learning about treaties from our point of view. She understood that they are relationships that must also be renewed, and she wanted to learn more, to learn what her responsibility might be. She said she had come to at least express her condolences.

We invited her in. We got to know her; she got to know us – and our dogs, too. She seemed sincere and compassionate. One or two of us had been hoping that someone with journalistic skills might come along to help us tell our story. We felt we could trust her to play that role. She became our writer assistant.

We drove her around. We gave her things to work with: photos; an old map; a history of our community, Aazhoodena, written by Daniel George's son Graham for the Ipperwash Inquiry into the shooting death of Dudley George. We directed her to the witness transcripts

from the Inquiry: ours and others. She also taped our stories and took lots of notes. After nearly two years of visiting, sometimes for two weeks at a time, she set to work writing a first draft, then sent it to us to review. Draft followed draft with additions and changes according to what we wanted. There is one chapter that we mostly left to her to shape. This is Chapter 8, where she suggested we switch the point of view in the book to the police and government officials making decisions and taking action.

We also want to say miigwech to John Borrows who has honoured our story with his Foreword.

In helping to frame our stories in this book, we are grateful for the work of the many academics whose work we mention, many of them Anishinaabeg. We are also grateful for the work of the Ipperwash Inquiry (2004–07) and for Justice Sidney B. Linden who headed it. In his four-volume report, he created a written record of what happened and made all our witness testimony at the Inquiry publicly available. He also commissioned some important background research, including by Anishinaabe legal historian Darlene Johnston. We draw on it too and are grateful for it. We also pulled in material from our own personal files. Some of these are documents that other family members have written, others were commissioned by the band office. These tend to be photocopies stapled together or assembled into a three-ring binder. They are not officially published books but important sources nonetheless. We also draw on the deep memories each of us has, not only from the events of the 1990s, but from childhood and the stories handed down to us growing up.

Some final words of thanks: first, to Anishinaabe literary agent Stephanie Sinclair, for championing our story and helping us find a publisher; second, to Susan Abramovitch and Laurent Massam, partners with the Toronto office of Gowling WLG (Canada), who negotiated a publishing contract for us, and whose excellent services were donated through Pro Bono Ontario, which we also thank.

Chapter 1 begins with some oral history, drawing on memories and stories to sketch in a sense of how we lived our daily lives at Aazhoodena, the Stoney Point Reserve, before the army took over our homeland. We then step back to offer a brief history of how our people came to be in this place and the origin myths that tell us that we belong here. Then the Europeans started to intrude, drawing more of our people and the animals on which we depended into their fur trade, drawing our forebears further into treaty making as more newcomers

came, wanting land on which to settle. After Confederation, we were drawn more and more tightly under the control of the federal government with its residential schools, its Indian Act, and its local Indian agents.

Chapter 2 continues with more memories; this time, from the day the army came to take our land. They moved some of our houses and destroyed others, as well as our barns, our gardens, and our root houses. They relocated some of us to Kettle Point and left the rest of us scattered wherever.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover the period from 1945 to 1990, providing brief histories of the key families involved, showing the damage that the disruption, the dispossession, and the dislocation inflicted – but also the persistence of our dream of returning home.

Chapter 5 recreates key moments in time from that first May morning in 1993 when a group of Nishnaabe elders, all of them now in the spirit world, brought folding chairs and a picnic lunch onto the army training camp in a first act of returning home. Chapter 6 chronicles more of what we did to restore our traditions and rebuild Aazhoodena, and also our walk to Ottawa, seeking recognition. Chapter 7 describes the takeover of the barracks and evening of September 4, 1995, when a handful of mostly young people extended our land reclamation action to include the Ipperwash Provincial Park once it was officially closed for the season. They put tobacco into the fire they had lit to honour the ancestors buried behind some of the sand dunes, happy that they were finally able to do this.

In Chapter 8, we switch perspectives. We draw on what Justice Sidney B. Linden wrote in his report on the Ipperwash Inquiry, plus witness transcripts, to recreate the two days leading up to Dudley George's death through the words and actions of the OPP and the government officials involved.

Chapter 9 brings the point of view back to us, the Nishnaabeg. We had carried on, unaware of all the government meetings and police planning, but getting more and more nervous at seeing more and more police around. Moment by moment, this chapter recreates the day of September 6, and in the darkness of that night, the firing of the high-powered bullet that killed Dudley George.

Chapter 10 covers the hours and days after the shooting, with all signs suggesting that the tragedy not just of Dudley George's death but all that lies behind his death would continue, the core issue unresolved. Very little has changed.

The penultimate section of the book, the Epilogue, begins with a brief update on what has happened since 1995, plus our vision for the future. It is followed by an Afterword by Heather Menzies where she describes how getting to know us has challenged her to change.

All of us sharing our stories here are related to each other, which is normal since kinship is the heart of Nishnaabeg life. But within this, many of us are descendants of four ancestors: Waapagance, Oshawanoo (Shawnoo), Pewash, and George Manidoka (Mandoka). Waapagance was chief of the Chippewas at Aazhoodena when the colonial authorities were pushing what they called the "Huron Tract" treaty talks in the 1820s; Oshawanoo was a nephew of Tecumseh whose sister, Tecumbeesh, fled north and east with Oshawanoo and another son in the first decade of the 1800s after their Shawnee village was attacked by American forces. Oshawanoo married Mashankegahsenoqua, daughter of Pewash, who was one of the earliest chiefs of the Chippewas of Kettle Point;[15] George Manidoka fled the United States with his wife Shinoot (Charlotte) and their children, along with other Potawatomi to escape "The Trail of Death" after US president Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, forcibly relocating the Potawatomi, the Cherokee, and other nations from territories east of the Mississippi to the west of it.[16] For the Potawatomi Nation, this meant being displaced from Indiana to Kansas. Some of the refugees settled in Aamjiwnaang (Sarnia); some in Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island). Mandoka and his family eventually settled in Aazhoodena.

Janet Cloud, Maynard T. George, Gina Johnson, and Bernard George are descendants of Waapagance. Tom Bressette, Rosalie (Rose) Elijah Manning, and Melva and Hilda George are descendants of the Shawnoo family; though Hilda's father and Melva's grandfather Morris was a grandson of George Mandoka. (When the Mandoka family was baptized in 1860, the authorities dropped the Indigenous name, which signifies a "being with spiritual power," leaving George as the family name.)

One of Mandoka's sons was Tommy, and one of his grandsons was Clifford George. Another of Mandoka's sons was Kamaanii, also known as Albert. Albert George, in turn, had six children, including Robert, whose own children included Reginald, father of Dudley, Pierre, and Cully; Daniel, father of Marcia and Glenn; and Bruce, Bonnie Bressette's father.

Thomas was another of George Mandoka's six sons. One of Thomas' children, Morris, had eight children, including Hilda, who married

Bruce George, and Melva, who married Daniel. Another of Thomas's sons, Milton, had several children and grandchildren, with one of the grandsons being Maynard T. George. (See genealogy chart.)

Finally, a few words about how others have named us, as well as what we choose to call ourselves and how we spell this to convey our own local way of speaking. The word Ojibwe or Ojibway is an anglicized version of a word the Cree used to describe the people living in the Great Lakes territories. Some even say Jibwe. Then there is Chippewas. The British often used that word to describe us, and now it is part of the Kettle and Stony Point's official Indian Act "band" name. In the 1980s, though, a lot of us, the people of the Great Lakes, began returning to the original word we used, which means "good beings" or "human beings."[17] In our language, this word is Nishnaabe. *Nishin* means "good"; *naabe* means "being." The word Nishnaabeg refers to us as a collectivity, a nation, while the language we speak and are trying to restore to living vibrancy is Nishnaabemwin.

We understand that the word "Indigenous" is used now to describe us in general. As much as possible, however, we identify ourselves by using more specific words such as Nishnaabeg or Haudenosaunee. When a more general word is required, we still tend to say "Native" and "non-Native," and so we'll often use that here. As much as possible, we're trying to stay true to how we talk and tell stories.

Throughout the book, we are using the *Eastern Ojibwa-Chippewa-Ottawa Dictionary* as our guide in spelling. It uses phonetic spellings that honour the particular pronunciations we give to different words here. Hence, Nishnaabeg instead of Anishinaabeg, which reflects how the word is spoken elsewhere. However, we will use other spellings, like Anishinaabe, if that is what others use themselves. We want to respect the variation in intonation and dialect from place to place.

We use an *e* in spelling Stoney Point to designate the original reserve but drop the *e* when referring to when they started calling us part of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation.

In writing our story, we refer to our home community as both Stoney Point and Aazhoodena, sometimes interchangeably. Aazhoodenaang refers to us as the people who live here; this explains how we have described ourselves as the collective authors of this book.

We do not pretend to speak for all who call themselves Aazhoodenaang, from Stoney Point. "We" and the idea of this book began among the people who have carried on living on our homeland and others who worked hard to have our land returned and stayed living

nearby, at Kettle Point.[18] From that nucleus we reached out to others, particularly the children and grandchildren of other elders who led the way. In bringing all of these voices and stories together in this book, we are trying to honour the elders' vision. Calling ourselves Aazhoodenang Enjibaajig, which is the name they gave to all the ones trying to reclaim our homeland, is part of that honouring.

CHAPTER ONE

No Word for Surrender

The elders who led the way home in 1993 didn't just know that Stoney Point was home as a historical fact. This knowing was embedded in their muscles and bones from having been born and raised on the reserve, steeped in its daily routines, the seasonal rounds of shared work; a Nishnaabe life and way of life that had evolved here since long, long before the Europeans came.

Clifford George: "We lived mostly off the land ... rabbits, racoons, muskrat, too, and deer. Morels and stuff like that first thing in the spring and then we started having strawberries. They were small but they were wild and they were good. And then raspberries, all the different kinds, and we had thimble berries, and it all grew wild and we used it and it just kept on going. I notice now that they're all dying off because it's not used ...[1]

"We have an idea that the Creator put us there on account of all that we needed was there ... We have a very strong spiritual conviction about all that, that the land was spiritually given to us, many years ago ... That's why we're put on this earth. You are the keepers of the land, the Creator told us ...

"Lena Lunham, she's the one that brought me into this earth – this world. She was a great medical lady. She knew every plant that was in the bush that she walked through ... She knew every plant that was good for us, and also, she was a midwife for just about everybody. She didn't have to be told. She just walked through the bush. So when they saw Lena coming, they said, put the water on because

here comes Lena. She'd be walking across a field, and it was just wonderful to see.

"The whole reserve was very close. Like, if we killed a deer, well, we split it with all the other people."

Lena Lunham was Rose (Rosalie Elijah) Manning's grandmother. Rose was nearly eleven when the army came, and she remembered a lot. "There were all kinds of things in the bush that you could survive on. All kinds of rabbits and small game like squirrels. And of course we had our farm too. We had a few chickens and we had one or two cows.

"I had my best years in Stoney Point. I went to school in Stoney Point. I went to church in Stoney Point. I also seen people that died and were buried there.

"I knew all the people there and I trusted all the people there and they trusted each other. You went to visit somebody, they'd give you a drink of water as soon as you entered their house – no matter what time of day or night. It was a sharing, caring community, but it was a small one."[2]

Others, born later and therefore much younger when they were forced off the land, have scattered memories – including of Laura George, who was a midwife in Stoney Point.

Marcia (George) Simon: "She was telling me how to make a homemade incubator if the baby is born a little early; you had to heat rocks. She was so smart; she knew all those things."

Theresa (George) Gill remembers Laura, her mother, "threshing her beans in a sack," the crackling sound of it as the dried bean shells broke open, the shushing sound of the beans that would become soup rubbing past each other in the bottom of the sack.

A niece, Janice Isaac: "I remember Grandma Laura, 'I'm goin' to the bush for my dyes.'"

Another niece, Bonnie Bressette, remembers her Grandma Flora's root house: "It smelled so good in there, the sage, all the medicines hanging from the rafters, the peaches, the apples ... You could go in there and there's big bins. They were filled with all your food for the winter." It was dug down into the earth about two feet, had logs up the sides and a dirt roof. Two pipes kept the air fresh inside by providing circulation. "Everything you counted on to live was in there" stored in black-ash baskets and bins.

"Your plants, your animals, your medicines, everything here depends on the land.

"To us, land is life. If you didn't have land, you would have no life ... Without land, you don't have no life."

Janet Cloud: "Our mum [Pearl George] told us a lot of stories; her and Grandma and Auntie Liz. They'd get a jar of tea and go back along the inland lakes there and they'd make up their baskets. The men would do the pounding and do the stripping of the [black ash] splits and Mum would make the baskets. And they liked taking their lunch back there. They would take salt-pork sandwiches in fry bread, and they would take little small jars of whatever they canned: peaches or pears or whatever. And their bottles of tea in the sealers. That was their lunch. And they took their time. It was so beautiful back there. They loved it there. They knew who they were. They knew who was true Stoney Point.

"It was a self-sufficient place where she lived. They had a barn. They raised pigs, and they had chickens, and they had geese. They had a little orchard, and they had two spring wells; really crystal clear. Mum said that that water tasted *so* good, and that was destroyed on our property.

"And they had a sawmill; they were the only ones with a sawmill. There was a fire on the reserve back then, and what the men did was they took all the burned timber [from the original log houses] and they sawed it all up and they began to make houses with that timber that they'd been able to salvage."

There were work bees for everything – making maple syrup, ploughing, and planting – and buzz bees too. For cutting up people's firewood, they used a circular saw powered by the power take-off of a tractor. There was no hydro, so most of the power was from horses, and many of us can remember them: workhorses with big hairy feet that people wrapped in old scraps of hide or sacking when they took them out on the ice in the winter. The horses helped with hauling ice in from the lake – and fish too, the nets strung under the ice. They helped drag logs out of the bush and plough everyone's gardens ready for planting in the spring.

The settled, cleared spaces remained small. Most of the reserve was left as it was: traditional hunting and trapping grounds where we also went to pick berries and to forage for walnuts, hickory nuts, butternuts, and for medicines and different things we used for dyes. These hunting and gathering grounds stretched for kilometres through land that had been left wild, its own self-determining place. The trees were a mix of species that had come to grow comfortably together in the long

passing of time: walnuts and chestnuts, maple, black ash and birch, cherry, hazelnut and hickory, and massive oak trees, plus pine trees and sumac on the sandy, dune-hilled land close to the lake.

Kettle Point was valued for its flint deposits, as was Stoney Point. But our reserve was also the only source of ginseng around, and people would come from up and down the coast to get this precious medicine. They beached their canoes on the flank of sandy shore in the lee of the stony point itself, staying to visit with the members of the Midewewin society, medicine men and women. The crescent of sandy beach stretching from Kettle Point to Aazhoodena, with that distinctive stony outcropping at our end of it, was considered sacred by lots of people. It had always been known as neutral ground where people could make peace.

Bonnie: "People came to settle differences, knowing they were safe coming, they were safe leaving. You come in peace, you leave in peace." Bonnie was told this by an old medicine man, Peter O'Cheece, who also said: "Never let [this land] go. It is sacred land."

These are some of the stories handed down, the stories we commit to memory generation after generation.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Through our stories we know that the Nishnaabeg of Stoney Point belong to the Three Fires Confederacy. This alliance dates a long way back; back to the prophecy of the seven fires and the great migration from the east when different tribes or nations,[3] all originating from the eastern part of North America, migrated into the lands of *Gichi-gaming* (the Great Lakes), including what is now southwestern Ontario. They shared a lot of similar Algonkian heritage, and this helped them in coming together as a confederacy. In the story that's told of how this started, three brothers, one from each of the three nations, met and forged the pact, with each responsible for a different fire in the alliance. The oldest brother, a Chippewa or Ojibway, was given responsibility to be Keeper of the Faith. He was to guard the spiritual knowledge of the three nations, recording their history and sacred/moral stories. The middle brother, the Ota'wa or Odawa Nation, was the Keeper of Trade. He was responsible for

the economic well-being of the confederacy and also for preserving the sacred bundles. The youngest brother, the Ishkodawatomi or Potawatomi, was responsible for tending and safekeeping the Sacred Fire.[4]

For hundreds of years and well into the time of the fur trade with Europe, this confederacy controlled the territory around the Great Lakes. Its leaders negotiated relations with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, overseeing trade and maintaining the peace. Over time, the Three Fires Confederacy became the Great Lakes Confederacy, part of the foundation of what is currently known as the Anishinaabek Nation.[5]

The regional peace that these confederacies maintained began to break down when Europeans brought an ever-expanding commercial scale to fur trading across our territories. After a first contact with Samuel de Champlain near Georgian Bay in or around 1615, the Nishnaabeg generally allied themselves with the French, selling to them through our long-time allies, the Wyandot (Hurons), whose territory was concentrated around Georgian Bay. The Haudenosaunee, who were allied with the English, broke up this relationship in the 1690s during the Europeans' struggle for control of the fur trade.[6] There were more and more disruptions as fur sources disappeared because of overhunting. But there was more. Warring between the French and the English continued. And illegal freelance traders used rum as a trading commodity, bringing alcoholism as well as European diseases like smallpox into the area. And then the settlers came.

In 1763, Britain emerged the winner in its war against the French in the Americas, and France gave up its North American territories to Britain. When news of this reached the colonies in the spring of 1763, an Ota'wa chief called Obwandiac (called Pontiac by the English) called together a council of war with a view to pushing out all the Europeans, the English included. At least partly in response to Obwandiac's early successes that year, King George III issued his Royal Proclamation. It was a broad and sweeping promise of peace and ongoing recognition of our rights. First, it recognized our Nations as self-governing allies – although an added phrase "under Our Protection" undercut this with the contradictory idea that

British sovereignty could somehow override this.[7] It also promised to honour Indigenous title to any territory (referred to as "Indian Country" in the proclamation) beyond what had already been surrendered or purchased "by Us," (the Crown).[8]

The following year, the Crown's superintendent of Indian Affairs, William Johnson, set about turning the king's promise into the basis for a treaty. He sent out runners with invitations to a treaty council at Niagara, including to the Nishnaabeg of the Western Confederacy. The council brought together some two thousand chiefs and other representatives of twenty-four nations, not just from around the Great Lakes but from as far away as Hudson Bay and Nova Scotia, many of whom travelled for months to attend.[9] Johnson himself described it as "the most widely representative gathering of American Indians ever assembled."[10] It was hugely significant.

"The Royal Proclamation became a treaty at Niagara because it was presented by the colonists for affirmation, and was accepted by the First Nations."[11]

Lasting from July into August of 1764, the council served, in John Borrows's words, to renew and extend "a nation-to-nation relationship between settler and First Nation peoples."[12] The gathering dealt with many matters, including the exchange of gifts and prisoners, clarifying territory and forming new alliances. It also accomplished what Superintendent Johnson had hoped to achieve. This was a peaceful alliance between Britain and the assembled Indigenous Nations, allaying fears promoted, Johnson knew, by former French fur-trading partners that "[as] soon as we [English] became Masters of this Country, we should immediately treat them with neglect, hem them in with Posts & Forts, encroach upon their Lands & finally destroy them."[13]

Johnson related the promises in the Royal Proclamation to representatives of the nations gathered in the treaty council, "and a promise of peace was given by Aboriginal representatives and a state of mutual non-interference established."[14] Johnson then followed Indigenous protocols in sealing and certifying the agreement that had been reached – by giving tangible marks of it that could be regularly displayed as both proof and reminder of the promises made and the understanding reached.[15] He also followed a long-standing tradition in

our country of offering a number of wampum belts as these tangible markers. These belts, also known as collars,[16] originated with the Haudenosaunee in their first dealings with Europeans, including the British.[17] The Haudenosaunee also used them in their first dealings with the Huron-Wendat,[18] and the Huron-Wendat then used belts in their treating (or treaty making) with us, the Nishnaabeg.

These belts were more than a public sign of a covenanted agreement, however. They were also a record of what was agreed to, with meaning encoded both in the symbols woven into the belts and in the numbers of shell beads in a given row or rows.[19] Successive generations of elders decoded these meanings to retell the story of the treaty's commitments and understandings.

Johnson called one of his belt gifts the "Belt of the Covenant Chain."[20] When the ends of the belt were drawn together to form a collar, the beadwork at each end completed the image of two diamonds side by side.[21] The diamond represents a nation, which is synonymous with a council fire. Having two diamonds together conveys two nations in alliance;[22] here, the British and the Western Confederacy.

The nature of the alliance, continuing its association with the multinational Covenant Chain of Friendship,[23] was depicted in the middle of the belt. There are two stylized humans holding hands, with hearts (each slightly different) worked into the beadwork at the centre of their chests. This was to demonstrate Johnson's claim "that despite the distance between his house (or mat) and the Anishinaabe's, his heart was always close to theirs."[24]

A second wampum belt was the "Twenty-Four Nations Belt." It depicted twenty-four stylized figures linked arm in arm, with the Anishinaabek Nations drawing a British vessel laden with presents from across the Atlantic and anchoring it to North America – a token of the Crown's fiduciary commitment to its treaty partners.

In the stories we grew up hearing, a two-row wampum belt was also presented. Its two rows of purple quahog shells on a bed of white whelk shells depicted a sailing ship and a canoe travelling side by side down the river of life, with the three shells connecting these two lines representing peace, respect,

and friendship. This belt with this image had been used by the Haudenosaunee from their earliest dealings with their British allies to signify and affirm autonomy, with the three connecting shells representing the principles that should guide relations between them. The belt had come to be widely understood as “a diplomatic convention that recognizes interaction and separation of settler and First Nation societies.”[25] Its use at Niagara would be taken to signify that “the principles it represents were renewed in 1764.”

Perhaps to bolster the English record of this understanding, William Johnson wrote to General Thomas Gage that same year, 1764: “You may be assured that none of the Six Nations or Western Indians ever declared themselves *subjects,* or will ever consider themselves in that light ... The very idea of subjection would fill them with horror.”[26]

While the Niagara treaty’s purpose was largely to lay a secure groundwork for ongoing trade, it also dealt with other important matters. One of these was to enshrine the notion of sharing the land, with any surrender of it for settlement to be negotiated by agents of the Crown only. This solved the problem of settlers squatting on our land.

But sharing the land for hunting and trapping and settling on it permanently were very different things, and the difference in meaning went deep. Tecumseh was a visionary leader who recognized this. As the British organized more and more treaty councils about more and more land for settlement, Tecumseh rallied the Anishinaabeg around the idea of creating a sovereign Anishinaabeg state/jurisdiction on land still protected as ours under the Royal Proclamation. He then mobilized a two-thousand–strong Anishinaabe fighting force including Shawnee, Potawatomi, Sauk, Winnebago, and Ota’wa warriors to fight on behalf of the British during the War of 1812.[27] The idea was that, when the British (with the help of the Nishnaabeg) prevailed over the Americans, they would back this plan.

The Anishinaabe fighting presence was seen as decisive in helping to repulse an American invasion.[28] But Tecumseh was killed during that decisive battle, at Moraviantown, and his plan was left unfulfilled.[29]

And the Loyalists and other settlers kept coming, following the “trail of the black walnut” as some of the newcomers put it, understanding the walnut tree to be a sign of good, deep soil for farming.[30] The more they came, the more colonization of our land began to change too, as Tecumseh had foreseen. Canadian historians call it a transition from a staples-extracting colony to a settler colony. The newcomers no longer wanted to just take furs and trees from our territories and go away again, back home to Europe. Now they wanted to stay on our land, settle on it and make it their home too.

Through the 1800s, successive superintendents of Indian Affairs called together more and more treaty councils to secure more and more land for settlement. The largest of these at the time was the Huron Tract Treaty, and it covered a big part of what is now southwestern Ontario, where we lived. Negotiations for this began in 1818.

According to one scholarly account, our people were told that they would be permitted to fish and hunt in their old locations as before.[31] Superintendent of Indian Affairs Thomas McKee told one treaty council meeting with thirteen Ojibway chiefs that the king “wanted this area ‘not for his own use but for the use of his Indian children and you yourselves will be as welcome as any others to come and live therein.’ ... [The Ojibway-Anishinaabe] were not aware that they were surrendering the land for white settlement.”[32] Not then and not now either. Our ancestors agreed to share the land. We do not even have a word for surrender.

The treaty formally decreed that the land at Stoney Point and Kettle Point would remain exclusively ours: “For the exclusive use, benefit and enjoyment of the Nishnaabeg of Kettle Point and Stoney Point.” For us, though, it was our place before the treaty, and that is what was important to us; not the treaty. The treaty was for the settlers, not us really. We just kept the lands that were the most important to us; the rest could be shared.

The original sketch of the land associated with the treaty also indicated that the land to be shared was around 712,000 acres, not the well over 2 million acres the colonial government ended up taking.[33] The larger amount was written down

in the treaty document, along with the word “surrender,” and although most of the chiefs “signed” it (using their clan symbol), most if not all were unable to read the English text where these numbers and the phrase “cede and surrender” were recorded. Still, our understanding, which has been handed down to us from our elders, recorded in their memories, is that this land was to be shared. Like in the two-row wampum belt with those two boats travelling side by side; you got your boat, we got our boat. That is the way it’s meant to be.

Our Nishnaabe forebears carried on with their lives, unaware of how much change had been set in motion. They continued their seasonal movements through their vast territory, “coming together for the spring and fall fisheries, travelling in smaller groups to their more remote hunting grounds for the winter, and moving to the maple sugar camps before congregating again at their fishing sites.”[34] They also always took time to visit their ancestral burial grounds, to feed the spirits. Anishinaabe legal historian Darlene Johnston documented the importance of these visits for the Ipperwash Inquiry:

“For the Anishnaabeg,” she wrote, “the Great Lakes Region is more than geography. It is a spiritual landscape formed by and embedded with the regenerative potential of the First Ones who gave it form and to whom they owe their existence.”[35]

The mark made by our Aazhoodena/Stoney Point Chippewa chief, Waapagance,[36] when signing the draft Huron Tract Treaty is a key to this. He “signed” with a pictograph, a stylized drawing of a caribou. This designated his *dodem,* or “clan totem,” and, through it, the particular place from which his ancestors had emerged and to which, therefore, he and his clan belonged. In the Anishinaabe Creation story, which is a post-flood re-creation story, humans owe their existence to animals.

In her research paper, Darlene Johnston draws on an account of this recorded by Nicholas Perrot, one of the first French officials to overwinter in the area, deferring to this recording of the original story because, as she wrote, “I lack the authority and fluency required to present the oral tradition” herself.[37] In an English translation of Perrot’s version of what he was

told, the story begins after the flood when the land animals are surviving on a great wooden raft. Their leader, the Great Hare, Michabous, knows they need land to survive and that it is still there, buried under all the water. On behalf of all the animals, he asks Beaver to dive down in search of some soil from which they can regenerate land on which to live.[38] When Beaver resurfaces, nearly dead, he has found nothing. Otter tries next, and he too comes back to the surface with nothing. Then the smallest of the animals, the muskrat, dives down into the deep. He is gone for nearly twenty-four hours and when Muskrat resurfaces, he is motionless and belly up, but all four of his paws are clenched. The other animals carefully pull him onto the raft and one by one unclench his paws. In the fourth one they search, they find a single grain of sand. The Great Hare drops this onto the surface of the raft and immediately it begins to increase.

According to the story, he took this and scattered it about, and it kept increasing. Soon it had formed itself into a mountain, and so the Great Hare started to walk around it, creating a path and more land. He sent the Fox out to explore the land, giving him the same power to extend it further. And so the Anishinaabeg world of the Great Lakes came into being – created, Johnston notes, "for mutual sustenance, not personal gain" and through acts of "cooperation and bravery," with the Great Hare's leadership based on "persuasion, not coercion."[39] At its centre, the raft became an island, called Michilimakinac, situated in the present-day strait between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan.

After this landscape was recreated, all the animals, the First Ones, took up residence in whatever part of it best suited their needs. Johnston continues, from Perrot's memoirs:

> When the first ones died, the Great Hare caused the birth of men from their corpses, as also from those of the fishes that were found along the shores of the rivers which he had formed in creating the land. Accordingly, some of the [people] derive their origins from a bear, others from a moose ... You will hear them say that their villages each bear the name of the animal which has given its people their being.[40]

"Totems were the glue that held the Anishnabeg Great Lakes world together,"[41] Johnston has written. They tied particular groups of families together in one place of origin and reminded them to honour it as an enduringly spiritual space. As one result of this, it was important for people to be buried in their particular homeland. "The permanence of the connection between body and soul was grounded in a particular landscape."[42] It was equally important to keep that connection alive by visiting the dead and putting down tobacco, food, and other gifts to honour them.

> In Anishnabeg culture, there is an ongoing relationship between the Dead and the Living; between ancestors and descendants. It is the obligation of the Living to ensure that their relatives are buried in the proper manner and in the proper place and to protect them from disturbance or desecration. Failure to perform this duty harms not only the Dead but also the Living. The dead need to be sheltered and fed, to be visited and feasted. These traditions continue to exhibit powerful continuity.[43]

The Jesuit Chronicles show that some of the first European newcomers understood this, or tried to, it seems. Father Jean de Brébeuf recorded his understanding of what he was told:

> many believe we have two souls ... the one separates itself from the body at death, yet remains in the Cemetery until the feast of the Dead ... The other is, as it were, bound to the body and informs, so to speak, the corpse; it remains in the grave of the dead after the feast and never leaves it ... It shows why they call the bones of the dead *Atisken,* "the souls."[44]

The people many of us are descended from would have kept this up as much as they could, visiting the burial grounds to keep the connection going. But the settlers kept coming. By as early as 1830, their demands for our land and their habit of squatting on it regardless of the rules were threatening that sacred connection. The lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, Sir John Colborne, offered housing and education assistance to those nations who would gather more compactly into villages.

He sent instructions about this to the superintendent of Indian Affairs for the region at the time, George Ironside. He told Ironside to switch the annual treaty gifts from fishing and hunting supplies to gifts of farming equipment instead, to curb "the wandering habits" of the Anishinaabeg. He added: "And he will impress upon them the necessity of the change proposed in their present habits and customs ... and that they ought to lose no time in clearing and cultivating their own lands, and making themselves as independent as the settlers are, who gradually close around them, and will soon occupy their hunting grounds."[45] He hoped that, combined with the building of schools and some houses on reserves, this might happen.

He didn't see that our people, the Nishnaabeg, were continuing to be independent, but in our own way. We adopted things the newcomers brought, but into our way of life. Our forebears started to use European tools in hunting and trapping; they also learned from their earliest relations with the settler-farmers. Those relations were often reciprocal. In fact, the first settlers depended a lot on their Nishnaabe neighbours, not just for guiding, help in hunting and in killing marauding bears, but for day to day survival. Some settler stories make reference to Indian corn as among their first crops. They also learned how to make maple syrup and tan hides, and how to use our herbal medicines.[46] When the Huron Tract Treaty was being negotiated in the 1820s, the Nishnaabeg had requested the services of a blacksmith and someone knowledgeable about raising cows and horses.[47] This tells us that they were starting to acquire horses and cows even then.[48] They were not just hunters and gatherers; they were hunter-gatherers and starting to be farmers too.

The Indian Act

Confederation went ahead with no Nishnaabeg or other Indigenous Nations at the talks to help create and shape it. After Confederation happened, the British government turned over its responsibility for Indigenous affairs in the former British colonies to Canada. The record of what happened next is pretty clear. We Nishnaabeg became "the

Indian problem," the subject of three government commissions.[49] We had no voice, no role in any of these either. In 1876, the Canadian Parliament passed the Indian Act. Among the many ways in which this act tried to take over and control our lives, it imposed a popular-vote form of government on top of and taking precedence over our traditional self-governance, with decisions by consensus and inherited leadership responsibilities. This new government took the form of band councils. Their authority was limited, and voting was restricted to men only. The act redefined us as "wards" of the state, not members of our own clans and nations. And it defined a person as "an individual other than an Indian."[50]

Nothing had changed since the 1857 Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes. This colonial law set out various ways in which Nishnaabeg as individuals could essentially graduate out of their own clans and nations and become "enfranchised" as "civilized" Canadian citizens. Still, doing this was voluntary, and apparently only one person applied.[51] The Indian Act went further. It introduced involuntary enfranchisement for people who got a university education, joined the army, or spent any length of time living off the reserve. The government also set up forced assimilation centres called residential schools for our children,[52] deliberately remote from our reserves to cut them off from home. In 1920, an amendment to the act made residential school attendance compulsory.

This was devastating. Families lost their children as sons and daughters from ages as young as five to at least sixteen were forcibly taken away. Families were allowed visits only by special permission, and the children were only allowed to go home on designated holidays. The children lost everything: not just their parents and extended families, not just the familiar sights, sounds, and smells of home and being on the land of their home reserve, but also their language and the fluent continuity, from one generation to the next, of traditions and life skills – all the teachings and ceremonies, all the practices and protocols that help us sustain our Nishnaabe way of life on the land and the world view guiding it. Instead, the boys learned farm chores, milking up to forty cows morning and night. They were also sent out on road construction and ditch-digging crews. The girls worked in the gardens and kitchen and at the sewing machines, with some of them sent out to the homes of the local well-to-do to sew for them.

Bonnie Bressette's mother, Hilda, was kept back during summer holidays to sew school uniforms for the coming year. Bonnie carries

the memory and the pain of it still. “My mum didn’t have no English language when she went there. She only spoke Nishinaabe language, and they were beaten whenever they spoke the language. One time, she was sewing. They had these big sewing machines, and she was sewing this thick material and the needle went right through her thumb – and she forgot her English and started yelling for help in the language, and the headmistress that was there told her she was not going to help her ’til she spoke in English, and my mum said that was the hardest thing when she was hurting, to remember English to ask for help ...

“The only time I heard my mother speak the language was maybe when she was with some of the [other] people that still had their language. I was fifty years old when she apologized to me for not giving me all the teachings as a Nishnaabe-kwe; an Aboriginal woman.”

Marcia remembers her mother, Melva, crying when she talked about seeing her little brother Calvin being punished for speaking the language. “She remembered them knocking him right onto the floor, right off his chair when he spoke in our language.”

Her father, Daniel, was not sent away to residential school. He attended the elementary school they still had on the reserve. So did Clifford George, though his sisters were taken. Sometimes the children would be kept hidden in the bush when the Indian agent or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) came looking for children in the fall, even though this was against the law. Bruce George was another who escaped residential school this way, attending the one-room school on the reserve. But like many of the boys, he was often needed to go cutting wood in the bush – not just for the family but to sell as firewood off the reserve.

The Indian Act gave the Indian agent more and more power. He had the authority to give or withhold a permit for anyone wanting to sell produce off the reserve. He was allowed to summarily convict people if they did not send their children to residential school, fining them two dollars or sending them to jail for ten days. He had the right to review and approve the agenda for band council meetings. He also attended all the meetings and made sure that no resolution was acted upon until it was approved by Indian Affairs.

Bonnie remembers because her father was active in the community, especially in organizing baseball games, and also served as a band councillor. “You couldn’t do anything without the Indian agent. And if

he didn't like what was going on, he just closed the books and closed the meeting ... When you had to live under Indian Affairs, that's the way life was."

We started losing some of our land too, at first just for road construction, such as replacing what had been a wagon trail through the reserve with what became Highway 21. The government then began treating this as the new border of the reserve. After World War I, there was mounting pressure for us to surrender the beautiful stretch of sandy beach and dunes that ran from Kettle Point to Stoney Point for summer cottages.

From what we know of what happened, a Sarnia land developer approached the Indian agent in 1927 with a view to buying a stretch of this beachfront property closest to Sarnia, in the Kettle Point Reserve. Money was offered to help make this go the way these men wanted – what the developer called signing bonuses and our leaders saw as bribes. The chief at the time, John Milliken, and two others, Sam Bressette and Robert George – grandfather to many involved in the actions in the 1990s – wrote to Indian Affairs when the Indian agent ignored their request to hold a council meeting to discuss the prospective sale. The record does not show whether permission to hold the meeting was ever given. But a vote was held, "bonus" money was paid, and the land surrender went ahead.

Indian Affairs did look into the matter. They decided that the vote had been legitimate and satisfied the requirements of the Indian Act. But the people here never accepted this, and in 1992 the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation took legal action, all the way to the Supreme Court. All the courts decided against the Nishnaabeg. Still, at the 1995 hearing by the Ontario Superior Court, Justice Killeen noted that "There can be little doubt that these cash payments, and the promises which preceded them, have an odour of moral failure about them."[53]

Meanwhile, in 1928, another Sarnia real estate developer (and future mayor of Sarnia) had approached Indian Affairs with a view to buying the beachfront associated with Stoney Point – 377 acres. He got support from the local Indian agent and the local member of Parliament too. The project seemed to move ahead quickly. A majority of the band members (men) voted to support the surrender, accepting the thirty-five dollars an acre the developer was offering the band. (Some historical research done by research consultant Joan Holmes for the Ipperwash Inquiry sheds light on the pressure they might have been under. It explained that bands were often "desperate for capital

for some kind of project ... because, as an Indian Band, they can't borrow money or get money in the way that any other Canadian citizen can."[54])

Less than ten years later, in 1936, these same Sarnia developers sold 109 of the 377 acres to the provincial government – for nearly one hundred dollars an acre – to create a provincial park called Ipperwash. The land included some burial grounds, though the government only officially acknowledged this fact in 1950 when some graves were desecrated by a bulldozer while a reservoir was being excavated in the park. A report on this was filed with the provincial government, and that's all that happened.

One of the names associated with that Stoney Point land turned into the park was Albert George, known to us as Kamaanii. He was the great-grandfather of Dudley George – and others of us too, including Marcia Simon, Glenn George, Bonnie Bressette, and of course, Cully and Pierre, Dudley's sister and brother. We knew that Kamaanii's homestead was there, and he might have been buried there too. Plus, the Kettle and Stony Point band council passed a resolution (on August 12, 1937) asking the provincial government to fence off the burial grounds so they could be protected as sacred ground. The Indian agent approved the resolution and passed it on to his superiors at the Department of Indian Affairs. The secretary of the Indian Affairs Branch duly wrote to the Ontario deputy minister of the Department of Lands and Forests, which was responsible for provincial parks, relaying this request. The deputy minister in turn promised to "do my best to respect the natural wishes of the Indians" and to see what he could do.[55]

Life on the reserve continued, with its seasonal rituals, its familiar routines of fishing and hunting, planting and harvesting, canning fruit and storing vegetables in the root house, plus mending things like fishing nets and making things like baskets, axe handles, and furniture. Each activity produced its familiar sounds, though one persisted from season to season: the steady thonk of an axe-head against a felled log of black ash, sometimes accompanied by someone singing something slow and steady that got everyone pounding to the same rhythm. Thonk, thonk, thonk, up and down the length of the log, loosening the fibres inside, separating the spring wood from the summer wood so the annual growth rings could be peeled off one by one, with each strip then split into thinner and thinner splints.[56] These were then woven into baskets of various sizes and even sunhats for local cottagers.

Marcia Simon and Bonnie Bressette's Grandma Flora used to make and sell these. Nearly a century later, one of Bonnie's granddaughters would use one of these exquisitely crafted hats as the basis of her master's thesis on Indigenous educational policy and leadership. Bonnie had noticed the hat in one of the cottages she used to clean and arranged to acquire it from the person who had purchased it from Flora.

A softer sound but just as prevalent came from the wooden workbenches; the hand-hewn wooden foot pedal clunking down to hold a length of hickory being fashioned into an axe handle or some maple, birch, or cedar being chiselled and planed (using a draw knife) into the leg of a table or chair. From a first recorded sale, presumably to a settler, in 1834, the Nishnaabeg of Stoney Point built up a modest local craft-selling business.

Marcia: "We were really known for our cedar furniture."

Whatever cash needs this and the traplines did not supply our people earned as hired hands working for local farmers, tossing hay onto wagons and into haylofts, stooking grain and gathering up the sheaves for threshing and, by the 1920s and '30s, working in the fields at the new market gardens.

Clifford George was among those who walked four or five kilometres each way to work at the Celery Gardens (we called it "The Bog"), "lifting up the celery ... and an awful lot of onions and stuff like that," for $1.25 a day.

But life was still rooted, deeply, on the reserve. The land sustained us in our daily lives and all this meant to us, and we expected this to continue.

Clifford: "We had everything good here; good relationships, good relationship with the next reserve ... We were very poor, but we managed. We were self-sufficient here, self-supporting completely."

CHAPTER TWO

"The House Was Gone"

In February 1942, the federal government decided to take over our whole reserve and turn it into an army training camp called Camp Ipperwash. They decided to do this to avoid the cost of installing a water pipe from Lake Huron to an existing army base farther inland. They reasoned too that they could take the land because in their eyes it was undeveloped and unproductive. Some of the documentation that came to light during the Ipperwash Inquiry used these words. The Indian agent of the day reported that the site was also ideally suited as a training ground, "with the open lake as a background for rifle ranges." As well, he wrote: "Personally, I think this is a wonderful opportunity to gather a few straggling Indians and locate them permanently with the main body of the band at Kettle Point. It would solve many problems and dispense with a great deal of expense ... such as schools, roads, visitations, etc."

Although four separate reserves were created through the 1827 Huron Tract Treaty, each with its own history and often different traditions and even slight differences in dialect, the colonial authorities decided to treat them all as one "band" for administrative convenience. Walpole Island was the first to be given its own band status, in 1836, followed by the Sarnia reserve in 1919. But instead of giving Kettle Point and Stoney Point each our own band status, too, which would have made sense and been more convenient for us, the government kept us administratively tied together. It was a set-up for trouble, a divide-and-rule kind of trouble, some of us thought. Because

by then the government had imposed its own popular-vote type of self-government on the reserves, which meant a single elected band council for both Kettle Point and Stoney Point. We, those "few straggling Indians" at Stoney Point, were somewhere between eighteen and twenty-two families, although Indian Affairs had it down as fourteen in their records. Either way, there were just over seventy people living in Stoney Point, compared to at least double that number at Kettle Point.

We Stoney Pointers – or, rather, our parents and grandparents – learned of the government's takeover plan through a notice the Indian agent posted outside our church. It was a Methodist church with a Native man preaching inside at the time.

Rose: "I remember everybody thought they were very disrespectful to come in and do this while they were having a service."

Suddenly too there were strangers on our land, going around drilling holes for some reason.

Janet: "I believe it was 1938 that they went on my mother's property. And it was under Chief Frank Bressette at the time. He didn't even ask my grandmother to go, that the ministry wanted to drill on her land. So there was bad feelings there.

"And she did ask them: What are yous doing on my property? He dismissed her! Maybe because she couldn't speak English." She never did find out why they were drilling. None of us did.

Next thing we knew, the Indian agent was following through on instructions to remove any "white" people living at Kettle Point. "White" meant any of the local Nishnaabe-kwe (women) who had brought non-Native men home to marry. When they did this, they lost their official "status" as Indians under the Indian Act. In the eyes of the government, these Nishnaabe-kwe became officially "white."

In March 1942, some of our parents and grandparents sent a letter to the government in Ottawa, reminding them of George III's Royal Proclamation and the Huron Tract Treaty's promise that Stoney Point was reserved for our "exclusive use and enjoyment" for all time. "So please accept this as our final answer of not wishing to sell or leave the Stoney Point Reservation," they wrote. This was followed, on March 25, by a petition from the Kettle Point and Stoney Point War Workers Organization recalling the memory of ancestors who had fought as allies to the British in the War of 1812 under Tecumseh. They also reminded the government that the Nishnaabeg were working and fighting as allies once again – not just in local armament industries but also as enlisted soldiers. Men like Clifford George

were already overseas at the time. "What will our boys think who have signed up for active service ..." they asked, "when they find no home and land to fall back on when they return home after the war?"

On April 1, the Indian agent arranged to hold a surrender vote, with funds specially allocated to bus in people no longer living on the reserve who might bolster the vote for yes. Fifty-nine of the seventy-two eligible voters voted no. No surrender. Two weeks later, the government issued Privy Council Order #2913, authorizing the appropriation of the reserve under the War Measures Act. It also allocated fifty thousand dollars to cover the cost of removing the Indians plus "their buildings, chattels" off the reserve. Most of that money was channelled through the Indian agent, M.W. McCracken, directly to the movers and local building-materials suppliers. In an October 8, 1942, memo to his superiors, McCracken wrote that "In my opinion, this procedure is more desirable than giving thim [*sic*] the money in their own hands which in many cases would be squandered on an old motor car or other similar expenditure."

And then the army came. There were big dump trucks and bulldozers and other equipment. They started clearing our land. They started drilling and digging too, excavating a whole quarry where Rose Elijah (later, Manning)'s family were still living. They crushed up that stone and used it to lay down roads all through our bush. And Ollie Tremain, a local trucker, also came.

Suddenly five-year old Bonnie's home was being lifted into the air and plunked down onto the flat back of his truck. "Why is our house up there?" she asked her father.

"He said we had to move away because there was a war on and that after the war we'd be moving back."

Bonnie has a black-and-white photo of her and her sister, Laura ("Fidgie"), wearing pretty smock-fronted dresses. It was taken that day, possibly by her mother, the dresses a product of their mother's fine sewing.

"Why did we have to get all dressed up for that hurtful day? It wasn't 'til later on, talking with our older women that I could understand: 'You might be doing this to us, but we still have our pride and our dignity.'"

Rose: "Some were moved forcefully. Some were moved while they were at work. They jacked up their house and took it without even their wrapping their dishes up, and they came home with broken dishes on the floor and no handles on their cups. There was a lot of

stories like that. There was one person, she put herself in front of Mr. Tremain's truck because she didn't want to move." Her parents had enough advance warning that they took Rose away that day.

"I woke up in this big swamp with our house just on boulders, and when you tried to go outside, there was nothing but reeds and weeds."

There was no predicting when our homes were going to be moved because Mr. Tremain, who had been given the contract to do the work, apparently took on another job at the same time. He moved our homes when he could fit us into his schedule.

Janet: "Mum and Dad knew they were going to be moved, but they didn't know when. One day after work, Mum came home and found no house. The house was gone. It was devastating for her; they were never given notice.

"Mum and Dad went up to Kettle Point to find their home sitting on four big stones – in a swamp. And all their possessions were in disarray; dishes broken. They were just dishes, but they meant a lot to her. They were probably her grandmother's dishes or her grandpa's. Things that she treasured.

"So Mum had to start all over again, and Dad, to make a home in that area. I don't know how Mum lived through it. She did; they were strong, strong people. I had twin sisters born just after that; they died, and I blame that water ...

"We were all affected. It still does affect us today – that move in 1942."

Like Janet's mum, Pearl George, Bonnie's parents, Bruce and Hilda, had family property in Kettle Point to which they could relocate their Stoney Point home.[1] This was Hilda's family home, Bonnie's Grandma Flora's place. Bonnie remembers her family's little bungalow sitting in an empty field there, grasses and weeds growing all around it higher than Bonnie's waist. It was perched on timber logs and stayed that way until Bonnie's father could get together the money to pour a proper foundation. The Indian agent provided no help.

A couple of months later, Bruce and his good friend Sheldon Cloud went back to Stoney Point thinking there would be food to harvest from their gardens.

"Those guys just stood and stared. They went to the next place and the next. All the gardens were flattened. Everything they counted on, and the army ploughed all them gardens under with some great big machine. Everything they counted on to live. If you didn't have a garden, you couldn't live in the winter."

The family was lucky; they had Grandma Flora's home and her garden to fall back on. The contents of her root house kept them alive that first winter.

Our parents and grandparents from Stoney Point didn't just lose their gardens and fruit trees. Everything – their barns and sheds, root cellars and water wells – was bulldozed and destroyed by the army. Some of us are still wondering where the horses, cows, geese, and other animals went. Rumour had it that the men building the army base simply slaughtered them and used them as food for themselves. There seems to be no record of this on file, no accounting of all the animals. They simply disappeared.

The archives do contain a letter the government received on September 14, 1942, signed by Mrs. Robert George. "You don't know how it feels to be ordered out," she wrote, "losing our beloved ground for a few dollars,[2] and our belongings dumped into a small plot of ground, no land for our children and our children's babies." And cut off from family in the burial grounds too.

Rose: "It's sad to leave your grandfather and sister behind there. And the army promised us that they would look after the graveyard, and they would take good care of it, but they never did. It was shot all to pieces, and there was no regard for the people that was buried there. I guess they just thought, 'Well, they're dead and they don't know anything. They're just Natives.'"

Bonnie: "There was people at Kettle Point too. The Indian agent didn't even ask if they can move somebody's house on there at Kettle Point. They just went and moved it on that land and never even asked that family if they could."

The newcomers were called "refugees" and worse. The children were bullied at school.

Janet: "The Nishnaabeg of Aazhoodena, they were heartbroken and didn't want to live at Kettle Point. Kettle Pointers didn't want Stoney Pointers either. The men from Stoney Point no longer participated in elections because they were not from here. Kettle Point men made all the decisions. This went on for many years."

A 1998 master's thesis cited by one of the researchers for the Ipperwash Inquiry noted:

> The change from forty acre parcels to two acres severely impeded farming efforts, particularly on the swampland on the 14th Concession. Removal onto new land in the midst of the growing season

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