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‘And whereas it is just and reasonable...’:¹

***The Royal Proclamation
and the Upper Canadian Treaties***

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 that mopped up some of the details left by the British victory in the Seven Years’ War opened a new chapter in treaty-making between Aboriginal peoples and the British Crown. The Proclamation attempted to regulate relations between First Nations and settlers in the northeastern portion of North America, and set out conditions under which Indian lands could legally be acquired. The objective in both instances was to restore peaceful relations between First Nations in the

interior of the continent and Great Britain. Its result, however, was to establish a long-lasting regime for negotiating land concessions that shaped the third phase of treaty-making with consequences still felt in Canada in the twenty-first century. The Royal Proclamation became the single most important document in the history of treaty-making in Canada. And no one was happier with the Proclamation’s clauses dealing with Indians and their lands than Britain’s superintendent of Indians in the Northern Department, Sir William Johnson.

For Johnson the summer of 1764 was an anxious, though hopeful, time, in contrast to the unrelieved stress and trouble of the previous years. Now that the Seven Years’ War was over, he could look forward to getting back to reaping the profits of the Indian trade in the interior region south of the lower Great Lakes, on which he had originally made his fortune. There was more to the summer’s events, however, than the prospects of renewed trade and profit. Sir William was a wealthy landowner and successful trader in the

Mohawk Valley of New York as well as an Indian Affairs official. Since his appointment as superintendent in 1755, he had devoted his many talents to holding the Indians of the northern region, including several of the nations of the Iroquois Confederacy with whom he had close relations, to friendship and support of Britain. Simultaneously, as circumstances permitted, he had attempted to woo the western nations who were the long-standing trading partners and allies of the French and *Canadiens*. As 1764 approached, a major problem he faced was an Indian war of resistance that raged in the interior. In pursuit of good relations with the Indians, Johnson had long advocated centralization of British Indian policy, generous distribution of presents to potential and actual allies, and energetic measures to protect Indian lands from the encroachments of the rapacious agricultural settlement frontier of the Thirteen Colonies. Finally, many of the policies he favoured had been adopted in the autumn of 1763. (See map 3.)

The Royal Proclamation that was issued in London on 7 October 1763 dealt with many aspects of North American colonial policy, though arguably no part of it was more important than its terms concerning First Nations and their lands. The Proclamation made provisions for territories newly acquired by the Peace of Paris, such as the French colony of Canada on the St Lawrence, which Britain renamed Quebec. In addition to establishing boundaries and rules for new territories, however, the Proclamation took several measures to reassure Indians of Britain's good intentions towards them. (These positive steps were given greater urgency – though they were not inspired by² – the widespread Indian war that had broken out in the southern interior, in which a confederacy of Indian groups led by the Shawnee chief Pontiac captured all of Britain's interior posts and killed an estimated 2,000 civilians in reaction to the loss of their ally, France, and insensitive policies by British military administrators.) The 'Indian clauses' of the Proclamation were to have a profound impact on

colonial developments, not least because of their formative influence on treaty-making policy.

Map 3
Boundaries as specified by Royal Proclamation of 1763



Reassuring First Nations about their lands was a key objective of the 'Indian clauses' of the Proclamation. 'And whereas it is just and reasonable and essential to Our Interest and the Security of Our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians, with whom We are connected and who live under Our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to, or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds' were the words with which the Proclamation introduced its final five paragraphs dealing with the Indians and their lands. To reassure First Nations and provide for 'the Security of Our Colonies,' the Proclamation forbade settlement by non-Natives on lands west of the Appalachian divide. This interior region had increasingly been a site of conflict before and during the Seven Years' War, as uneasy First Nations saw restive American settlers and traders begin to operate

in the West. By striking a line along 'the heads or Sources of any of the Rivers which fall into the Atlantick Ocean from the West and North-West' and forbidding settlement inland of this new Proclamation Line, the new British policy sought to reassure interior First Nations that their lands were secure. In addition, access to this region to trade was conditional: a would-be trader had to obtain a licence from the governor of a colony before crossing the Proclamation Line to trade in Indian country. The Hudson's Bay Company territory known as Rupert's Land was explicitly excluded from the Proclamation's provisions.

Britain was aware that there were good reasons why First Nations should be concerned about their lands. The Proclamation noted that 'great Frauds and Abuses have been committed in the purchasing Lands of the Indians, to the great Prejudice of Our Interests, and the great Dissatisfaction of the said Indians,' and it proposed 'to prevent such Irregularities for the future.' The phrase 'great Frauds and Abuses' was an

allusion to a favourite trick of colonial land companies and frontier entrepreneurs who by dubious means obtained a deed from some member or members of an Indian community – perhaps by the use of inducements such as bribery and alcohol – and then claimed the document was sufficient title to the lands. Needless to say, such trickery had caused anger, and sometimes violence, against non-Natives in Indian country. To counter frauds and abuses over Indian territory, the Proclamation laid down rigid requirements governing acquisition of Indian lands. First, 'no private Person' was allowed 'to make any Purchase from the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians, within those Parts of Our Colonies where We have thought proper to allow Settlement.' In the event that a First Nation chose to dispose of some of its lands, they 'shall be purchased only for Us, in Our Name, at some public Meeting or Assembly of the said Indians to be held for that Purpose by the Governor or Commander in Chief of Our Colonies respectively within which they shall lie.'³

Collectively, the 'Indian clauses' of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 were intended to reassure both Britain's Indian allies and the former allies of France who resided in what Europeans now considered British territory that their territorial rights would be respected. At the time this policy initiative – a measure that had been developing for at least a decade – was a pacific gesture aimed at First Nations. Historically it has become even more important as the foundation of Britain's treaty-making policy in Canada. The limitation that only the Crown or its representative could treat with First Nations for land, that negotiations about acquiring Indian lands must take place publicly, and that other members of the First Nation community should be aware of what was being considered would evolve over time into the protocol that was generally followed by the British and later Canadian governments in negotiating with First Nations for land. The Royal Proclamation, as a result, became a vitally important document in the history of treaty-making.

For administrators of Indian policy such as Sir William Johnson, the Royal Proclamation was a godsend. It responded to legitimate grievances among First Nations that had jeopardized relations for many years, and it laid down rules that, if followed consistently, would avoid trouble in future. On a personal level, Johnson acted in concert with the new policy by securing a grant of land from the Mohawk in 1769 to legitimize his occupation of the extensive territory in the Mohawk Valley on which Johnson Hall and his many other buildings stood.⁴ The Indian superintendent realized that the new policy, though promising for the future, did not remove all major irritants. 'This Proclamation,' he wrote, 'does not relieve their present greiviances [sic] which are many, being calculated only to prevent the like hereafter.' Nonetheless, when he used the Proclamation with the Six Nations in a conference during the winter of 1763–4, it was effective in persuading the Iroquois that British intentions towards them were positive. At

that meeting, he argued successfully that the Proclamation demonstrated the king's 'gracious & favorable disposition to do them Justice,' and in future he proposed to 'communicate the same to all the rest of the Indians.'⁵ He saw to it that the Proclamation's terms were made known widely to First Nations, and he began to organize a vast conference with First Nation leaders the next summer at Niagara.⁶ At such a conference, he advised Britain's acting commander-in-chief, General Thomas Gage, 'we should tye them down... according to their own forms of which they take the most notice, for Example by Exchanging a very large belt with some remarkable & intelligible figures thereon.' What he had in mind was 'a Treaty of Offensive & Defensive Alliance' that would, among many things, 'assure them of A Free fair & open Trade, at the principal Posts, & a free intercourse, & passage into our Country, That we will make no Settlements or Encroachments contrary to Treaty, or without their permission.'⁷



3.1 Sir William Johnson, forest diplomat

Johnson carried out his plan at Niagara in the summer of 1764. A vast assemblage of more than 2,000 leaders from twenty-four First Nations scattered across most of eastern North America gathered to treat with the king's Indian superintendent. Several outstanding issues with a number of nations, especially with First Nations who had been close allies of the French, were resolved, and all those represented at the Niagara Conference were admitted to the Covenant Chain of friendship and alliance. At the climax of the conference, Sir William presented the Indians with 'a large Belt with a Figure representing Niagara's large House, and Fort, with two Men holding it fast on each side, and a Road through it.' To 'the Western Nations,' in particular, he said, 'I desire you will take fast Hold of the same, and never let it slip, to which end I desire that after you have shewn this Belt to all Nations you will fix one end of it with the Chipaweighs at St. Mary's [Sault Ste Marie] whilst the other end remains at my House.'⁸

In effect, the British were trying to assume the place of the French in that alliance with western Indian nations. Another interesting example of continuity was the use of wampum. Using these indigenous devices to record the important pact for First Nations was an example of the bicultural practice that by now was common in eighteenth-century treaty-making. The protocols involved were ones of which the Indian superintendent was a master. So far as Johnson was concerned, this agreement concluded at Niagara was intended to be the 'Treaty of Offensive & Defensive Alliance' he hoped would 'tye' First Nations to Britain with bonds of friendship and mutual support.

The Royal Proclamation did not lead to a total abandonment of the practice of concluding treaties of peace and friendship. Indeed, the anxious last months of the Seven Years' War had provided both an opportunity and a need for some of the *domiciliés*, or First Nations in the St Lawrence valley who had been allied with the French, to enter into agreements guaranteeing amicable relations in future. As early as

early autumn, as General James Murray advanced towards Montreal from Quebec, he was approached by a delegation of *domiciliés* Huron seeking peace. The swiftly negotiated agreement that ensued was recorded in a document guaranteeing safe passage that Murray gave to the Huron of Lorette. Not only did this document assure the Huron safe passage through British-controlled territory, it also said that ‘they are received on the same terms with the Canadians, being allowed the free Exercise of their Religion, their Customs and liberty of trading with the English Garrisons.’¹⁰ Here, again, Britain was stepping into the role previously played by the French, continuing respect for indigenous practices and trade ties. Though little remarked at the time, the Murray Treaty flared into prominence and notoriety in 1990. The Supreme Court of Canada in a decision known as *Sioui* upheld the right of the Huron band at Lorette to enter a provincial park and cut saplings for ceremonial use in spite of a provincial legal prohibition on such actions. Arguing that the 1760

document was a treaty protected by the Canadian constitution, the high court held that it superseded provincial law. The ruling was controversial, being scorned particularly by Quebec nationalists. On the other hand, other scholars have argued vigorously that it was a genuine treaty. They point out that the Murray Treaty conformed to a long-standing British policy of concluding peace treaties with First Nations, and it referred explicitly to the Huron as ‘allies’ (*‘sujets et alliés’*), in contrast to references to the *Canadiens* only as subjects (*‘sujets’*). The formulation ‘sujets et alliés,’ they point out, was standard language in other contemporary treaties with First Nations.¹¹

Peace pacts such as the Murray Treaty aside, the protocol for acquiring First Nations land that the Royal Proclamation outlined came at a propitious moment. British authorities in the eastern part of North America would soon find it necessary to make a series of Indian treaties whose purpose was the acquisition of First Nations’ lands. Indeed, Sir William Johnson had found himself initiating such a

process even before the grand gathering at Niagara in July and August 1764. During the early stages of Pontiac's war of resistance, the British had learned painfully how tenuous their communication links to the inflamed interior were. In the summer of 1763, the Seneca had attacked a military expedition bound inland to supply Britain's posts. The loss of goods and more than seventy men a short distance downstream from the falls underlined the critical and vulnerable nature of the vital portage at Niagara. Dealing with the Seneca, especially during Pontiac's War, was ticklish. As 'the keepers of the western door,' the Seneca were forced to try to maintain good relations with the pro-French Indian nations beyond their lands. Taking advantage of the fact that the Seneca were short of food in the spring of 1764, Johnson met them at Niagara and negotiated a treaty that contained many concessions, including their agreement to 'cede to His Maj[es]ty and his successors for ever' a strip of land four miles (approx. 6.4 km) on either side of the Niagara River. The

procedure of negotiating in open council for land followed the letter of the six-month-old Royal Proclamation of 1763; the coercion involved in the process and the punitive nature of the terms did not, however, conform to the spirit of the policy.¹²

The treaty process pioneered at Niagara to obtain Seneca lands for the Crown was merely a preliminary to several phases of territorial treaty-making in what became Upper Canada between the Proclamation and the middle of the nineteenth century. Two forces drove this long process of dispossessing the indigenous occupiers of their lands by treaty: American pressure and immigration to British North America. The American colonists regarded the western lands beyond the Proclamation Line as their undeniable birthright, and they would not be thwarted for long in their desire to move westward in search of lands for agricultural expansion and trade. An augury of the future – Proclamation or not – had come in 1768, when Sir William Johnson persuaded the Indians to accept the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. This

agreement effectively moved the boundary of territory open to settlement further west in New York and Pennsylvania, appeasing somewhat the land hunger of the colonists. For their part, the Six Nations accepted the new line, believing – vainly it proved – that it was permanent.¹³ But the successful revolt of the Thirteen Colonies against British rule in the War of the American Revolution, 1775–83, freed them from the restraint of British policy. In the decade after the Revolution, the United States had to contend with sporadic resistance, often encouraged by the British, from western Indian nations. An American military victory over western Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 effectively put an end to First Nations resistance as well.

Indian nations tried repeatedly to hold their lands – by Pontiac’s War in the 1760s, by allying themselves with the British during the Revolutionary War, and ultimately by siding with the British and Upper Canadians in the War of 1812. In all these cases, they were fighting against the movement of the

agricultural frontier westward. Pontiac’s call to arms in the 1760s had captured the antipathy of the interior Indians to expansive American agriculture: ‘And as for these English, – these dogs dressed in red, – who have come to rob you of your hunting grounds, and drive away the game, – you must lift the hatchet against them. Wipe them from the face of the earth, and thus you will win my favour back again, and once more be happy and prosperous.’¹⁴ Though both sides, American and British, frequently accused the other of ‘using’ Indians in war against each other, the truth of the matter was that First Nations chose the side with which they would fight, or in some cases chose not to fight at all, based on their calculations of what was in their own interest. The tragedy of the situation was that, although most Indians fought against the expansionist Americans on many occasions between 1763 and 1814, they lost every time. The triumph of the westward-moving agrarian frontier displaced First Nations by force south of the lower Great Lakes, and in many cases they sought new homes north of

the Lakes, in territory the British considered theirs, in British North America.

For their own reasons, the British encouraged and sometimes supported the First Nations' resistance in the interior. It suited British interests to retard American expansion, and planners in London even dreamed fondly at times of helping to create an Indian territory south of the lower Great Lakes that would act as a buffer between the United States and British territory to the north. Even following the Battle of Fallen Timbers, Britain quietly encouraged continuing resistance, although now the American victory over the Indians and the negotiation of the Jay Treaty in 1794 that normalized relations between themselves and the Americans required them to be more circumspect in their support of the Indian opponents of the expansionist republic. Great Britain and its Indian Department in North America pursued this slippery policy down to the eve of the War of 1812, quietly encouraging First Nations to resist but not taking overt action that would violate their treaty

with the Americans. Unfortunately for the interior Indians, U.S. power and ambition were simply too great. Repeatedly they had to give ground before the victorious American farmers.

From a British perspective, First Nations refugees moving away from the advancing American farm frontier were merely the first of several groups of migrants who would populate Upper Canada. They, along with later non-Native immigrants from Great Britain, created a dramatic need for access to lands nominally under the control of the Mississauga, an Anicinabe people. Britain was motivated to negotiate territorial treaties, in part, because of the necessity created by the Royal Proclamation of 1763, in part, because of a guilty conscience, and, in part, because it recognized that negotiation was the prudent approach to take in dealing with First Nations north of the lower Great Lakes.

After the American Revolution, the Battle of Fallen Timbers, when British officers shut the gates of Fort Miami in the face of Indian warriors fleeing General

‘Mad Anthony’ Wayne, and the War of 1812, Britain found that the anger of its Indian allies threatened them directly. Following the Treaty of Versailles of 1783, by which Britain blithely surrendered Indian lands to the Americans as part of the peace, they were upbraided by angry Indian leaders. One chief told a British official, ‘They were allies of the King, not subjects; and would not submit to such treatment... If England had done so it was an act of cruelty and injustice and capable only of *Christians*.’¹⁵ After the disgraceful affair at Fort Miami in 1794, Joseph Brant, a major Mohawk leader, bitterly observed ‘this is the second time the poor Indians have been left in the lurch.’¹⁶

By the 1780s, with the horror of Pontiac’s War a fresh memory, Britain knew only too well what angry and disappointed First Nations who were disillusioned with their treatment by Europeans might do. A shamefaced British Indian Department consequently negotiated for new lands on which to settle their angry allies, and turned to the Mississauga

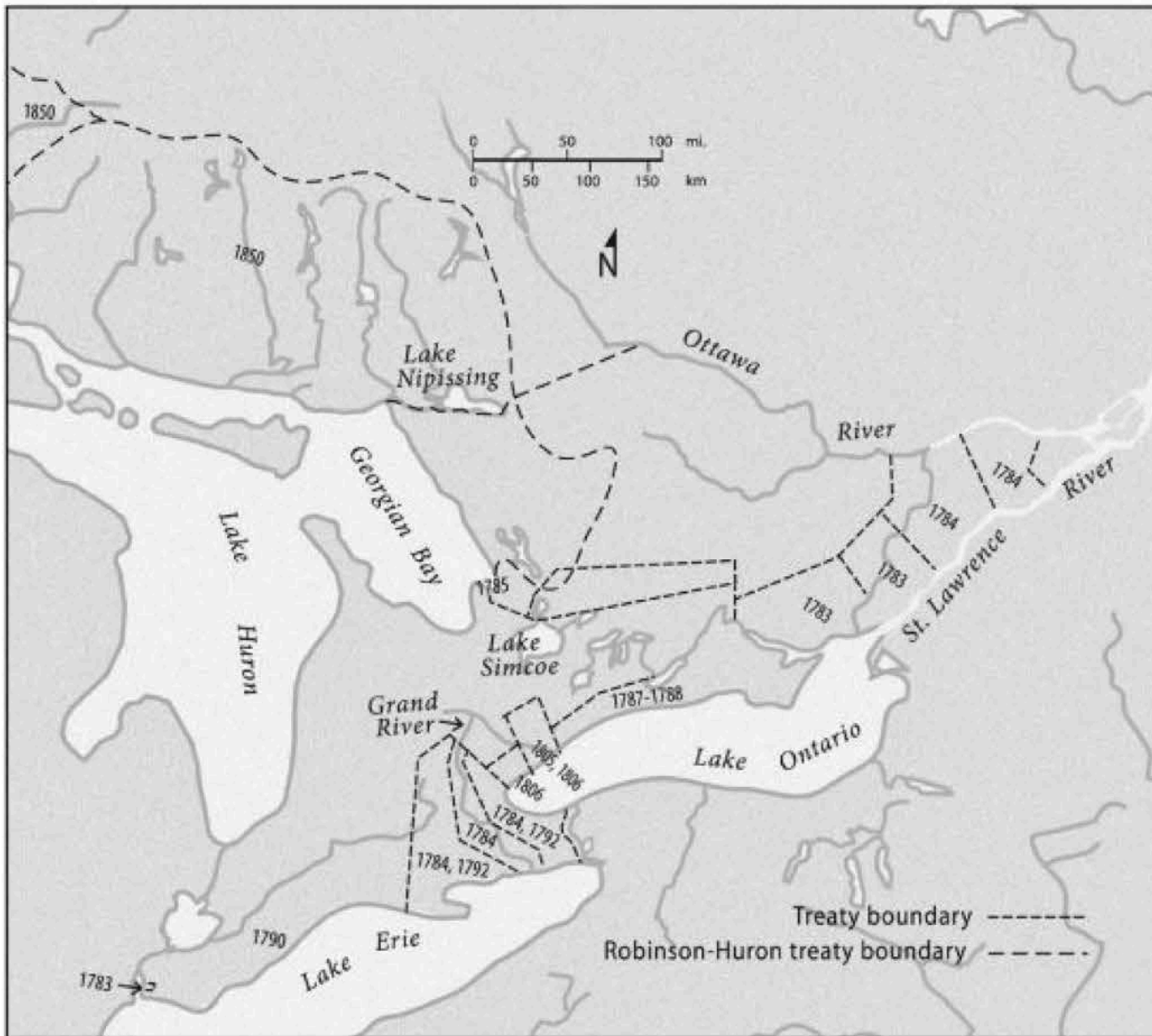
for access to their lands, first in the immediate aftermath of the end of the Revolutionary War. In light of the twenty-first-century argument by Mohawk in Ontario that a clause in the Albany agreement (or Nanfan Treaty) of 1701 gave them a territorial interest north of the lower Great Lakes, one aspect of Mississauga-Crown negotiations in the 1780s and 1790s is striking. If the Albany agreement had protected Iroquois territorial rights north of the lower Lakes, it was to be expected that officials would involve Iroquois leaders in negotiations with the Anicinabe. But Britain never considered involving the Six Nations in these talks. Joseph Brant, it is true, contended that discussions with the Mississauga were unnecessary because the Mohawk were the true owners of the lands on the upper St Lawrence.¹⁷ Neither British officials nor the Mississauga said or did anything that indicated they thought any group but the Anicinabe had a claim to the lands to which Britain hoped to move displaced Loyalists and First Nations allies. On at least one occasion in 1783, ‘three

Onandaga Chiefs lately from Montreal were present [at negotiations between the Mississauga and the Crown] and approved much of what the Missasaugas had done.’¹⁸

In 1783–4, as the Revolutionary War was ending and the flow of Loyalists across the border increasing, Britain initiated a series of territorial treaties north of the lower Great Lakes and St Lawrence River. The prime consideration was obtaining lawful access to lands on which to settle recent allies of the war against the American rebels. The primary zones for expected Loyalist settlement were the regions from the eastern part of Lake Ontario to the Ottawa River, the Niagara Peninsula, and adjacent lands north of the eastern part of Lake Erie. (See map 4.) Of particular concern to British officials such as General Frederick Haldimand was making provision for Iroquois who had fought with them. Initially, it was expected that some of the allied Haudenosaunee would be settled along the St Lawrence across from

established mission sites such as Oswegatchie and Akwesasne. The Indians in the easternmost part of the territory, however, surprised British officials by indicating that they would not object to sharing the district with non-Native comrades. As a result, the most easterly townships of what would become Upper Canada were dominated numerically by non-Natives. Another part of the initial plan had been to settle the Mohawk led by Captain Joseph Brant and Captain John Deserontyon together in a large tract in the Bay of Quinte area on eastern Lake Ontario. However, plans soon changed, with Deserontyon and his followers going to Tyendinaga, near present-day Belleville, and Brant’s community being granted a large concession along the Grand River, which flowed into Lake Erie. Non-Native refugees were settled principally along the St Lawrence at or near sites that developed as Cornwall, Brockville, and Kingston (formerly Cataraqui or Fort Frontenac).

Upper Canadian Treaties to 1812



If the motivation of the United Kingdom in initiating the territorial treaties in 1783–4 is straightforward, the reasons why the Mississauga

acceded to British overtures and entered into a series of treaties are comparatively obscure. No doubt one consideration was that the numbers of proposed settlers did not seem a threat: the future Upper Canada was so huge that the roughly 6,000 incoming Loyalists could easily be accommodated. From the Aboriginal perspective, Loyalist settlers were not menacing in another sense. Those who had opposed the formation of the new American republic would undoubtedly bring their hostility to the victorious Americans with them. If First Nations continued to fear the land hunger and expansionism of the new American republic, augmenting the population in British territory north of the lakes with sturdy pro-British settlers would be attractive. The mostly Onondaga population at Oswegatchie, near present-day Johnstown in eastern Ontario, for example, agreed in 1784 to make “the Front of the Water [the St Lawrence]” available in order to “give lands to the troops.”¹⁹ And the Crown negotiator of an important 1783 agreement along the St Lawrence

River reported that the ‘Missassagues appear much satisfied [sic] with the white people incoming to live among them.’²⁰ Finally, entering into treaty represented a way for the Mississauga to get access to a large amount of British goods.

Whatever the precise motives of the parties to these early territorial treaties, the contents of the agreements were clear and simple. The area covered by the 1783–4 treaties with the Mississauga stretched from the last French seigneurie just west of where the Ottawa River joined the St Lawrence to what is now Prince Edward County, near the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario. Another large block of land included the Niagara Peninsula stretching far to the northwest and on the west to a north-south boundary that met the shore of Lake Erie west of Long Point.

A number of distinctive features characterized these treaties in the future Upper Canada. British negotiators continued the use of Aboriginal protocol that had been such a prominent feature of both commercial agreements and treaties of peace and

friendship earlier. Captain Crawford, for example, reported from the St Lawrence in 1783 that after negotiating with the Mississauga, ‘a large one [wampum belt] was Delivered to the other Chiefs concerned in the Sale, with the usual ceremonys [sic] to be kept in the nation [as] a memorial to their Children that they may know what their Fathers had done at this Time.’²¹ Britain also stepped up the presentation of medals in association with these territorial treaties. Medal-giving, initiated in 1714 following the Treaty of Utrecht, had another period of popularity, as Britain issued medals to chiefs following Pontiac’s War and again to those who had been allied with them after the Revolutionary War. The practice carried over to the territorial treaties that soon followed peace in the 1780s. Medals bearing a likeness of George III were numerous during the period of the early territorial treaties.²²

The early Upper Canadian treaties also had distinctive geographic features. They all fronted on major waterways – the St Lawrence, Lake Ontario,

the Niagara River, or Lake Erie – for the simple reason that rivers and lakes were the highways on which people travelled in these regions. The depth of the treaties back from the water varied considerably. One memorable 1783 agreement, known as the Crawford Purchase, referred to lands ‘extending from the Lake Back as far as a man can Travel in a Day.’²³ (Such a descriptor was not unique: the Indians referred to a 1787 treaty west of the Bay of Quinte area as the ‘Gunshot Treaty’ because it covered land stretching back from Lake Ontario as far as the report of a firearm could be heard on a clear day.)²⁴ Eventually the northern boundary of the Crawford Purchase was struck two or three townships inland.²⁵ Since a township was nine miles (14 km) in length from south to north and there were no roads to speak of in Upper Canada at this time, this represented quite a day’s travel for a person. The 1784 treaty that embraced the Niagara Peninsula and lands north of the eastern part of Lake Erie comprised a vast area of fertile, though largely wooded, lands that amounted

to more than 1,000,000 hectares (2,471,054 acres).

In return for such large areas covered by the Crawford Purchase and the other 1783–4 agreements, the Mississauga received a specified quantity of goods. The chiefs who dealt with Captain Crawford in the Bay of Quinte ‘Demanded ... that all the Familys [sic] Belonging to them shall be clothed and that those that have not Fusees [sic; i.e., firearms] shall Recive [sic] new ones, Some powder and Ball for their winter’s hunting as much coarse Red Cloth as will make about a Dozen Coats and as many Laced[?] hats. This I have promised them...’²⁶ Presumably, the hats and coats were for the leaders of the Indians, such gifts being traditional markers of headship. The 1784 treaty in the Niagara–Lake Erie region cost the British Crown £1,180 in goods. These payments in kind, which were found in all the early Upper Canadian treaties, were one-time concessions only.

Securing the early treaties in 1783–4 facilitated the settlement of non-Native Loyalists and conciliated Native allies at the same time. Loyalist towns were

established at such places as New Johnstown (Cornwall), Brockville, and Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake). The largely Onondaga population of Oswegatchie agreed to the settlement of Loyalist veterans on the waterfront. Equally important, the agreement eased relations with resident First Nations, who might have been expected to be uneasy in the aftermath of American military victory and British diplomatic betrayal. In this respect, the early treaties facilitated good relations between Natives and newcomers in Upper Canada. The treaties also smoothed the way for resettlement of First Nations who had fought with the Crown against the rebellious Americans. Tyendinaga was established near present-day Belleville for Captain John Deserontyon and his followers. In the vast treaty area that included the Niagara Peninsula and territory north of Lake Erie, Governor Haldimand made a grant of lands stretching back ten miles (16 km) on both sides of the Grand River from its source to its outlet on Lake Erie for Captain Joseph Brant

and his approximately 2,000 Six Nations followers. Although both Tyendinaga and Six Nations would be whittled down in area in the early nineteenth century in response to non-Native settlement and desire for reserve lands, these remain important, though shrunken, centres of First Nations presence and influence in Ontario in the twenty-first century.

The 1783–4 flurry of treaty-making by no means concluded the process of obtaining access to First Nations land in the region north of the St Lawrence River and the lower Great Lakes. A number of treaties were made in the 1780s, not all of them following procedures that met the requirements of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. In particular, several of the agreements reached in the 1780s were flawed by the Crown negotiators' failure to document precisely what had been agreed upon.²⁷ In 1785 a John Collins apparently secured a two-mile (3 km) strip along a traditional path from the Narrows of Lake Simcoe (present-day Orillia) to Matchedash Bay near