Dispersed, But Not Destroyed: Leadership, Women, and Power within the Wendat Diaspora, 1600-1701

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2011

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the creation of a Wendat diaspora in the wake of the Iroquois conquest of 1649. Through the prisms of leadership, women, and North American systems of power, it explores moments of resistance pre-dispersal, traces the relocation process, and investigates the calculated re-settlement of Wendat refugees. It includes chapters on seventeenth-century epidemics, ritual practices, warfare, alliance-making and religious conversion. I link research on the seventeenth-century Wendats to the present by incorporating investigations into the perpetuation of the “destruction” myth in modern Canadian, American and Wendat societies, as well as an analysis of the re-instatement of the Wendat Confederacy in 1999. Overall, by going beyond the collapse of the political and geographic configurations of the pre-1649 Wendats and focusing on the persistent use of Wendat identity until the turn of the eighteenth century, I argue that although the Confederacy and Wendat Country may have disintegrated mid-century, the Wendat people, along with their culture, beliefs and diplomatic power remained intact, creating a diasporic polity within the Great Lakes region.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my nephews, Franklyn, Henry, and Gabriel.

For keeping track of what “grade” I’m in.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of several people and institutions. At the Ohio State University, I am sincerely indebted to the guidance and support of my advisor Dr. Margaret Newell, as well as committee members; Dr. Lucy Murphy, Dr. John Brooke and Dr. Alan Gallay. Outside of my home institution, this dissertation was inspired and shaped by the professional knowledge and guidance of Dr. Daniel Richter, Dr. Susan Sleeper-Smith, Dr. Geoffrey Parker, Dr. Roger Carpenter, Dr. Carolyn Podruchny, Dr. Brenda Macdougall, Dr. Nicole St-Onge, and Dr. John Steckley. Special appreciation goes to Dr. Elizabeth Mancke for hours of endless “porch” discussion on alliances and systems of power. In addition, consultations with fellow graduate students often directed my research. Thank you to Thomas Peace, Megan McMullen, Michael Cox, Andrew Sturtevant, Guillaume Teasdale, Robert Englebert, Omeasoo Butt, Kit Bevan, and Triet Nguyen.

Members of the modern Wendat diaspora also gave essential support. I am eternally grateful to archivists Jonathan Lainey at the Library and Archives Canada and Stéphane Picard at the Wendake Archives, with special appreciation and gratitude to my Wendat Aunt, Chief Janith English and my Wendat Uncle, Dr. Georges E. Sioui.

Much of my research would not have been possible without the generous financial grants provided by the following: The Ohio State University, The Lynde and Harry

Finally, I am forever indebted to the years of unwavering support by family and friends. Thank you to Kayla Scott, Lindsay Bolton, Alison Dickey, Jennifer Fair, Sean Magee, Kim Magee, Chris Tait, Dorothy Doyle, Don Doyle, Joyce Magee, Bob Magee, Sylvie Vaillancourt, Julie Lalonde, Rachelle Labelle, and Yvonne Vaillancourt. Of course none of this would have been possible without my parent’s persistent dedication to my work and success—this project is due in large part to them. Last, but not least, I am forever grateful for the encouragement and love, not to mention research and editing, by my husband, Maurice Jr. Labelle. He inspired me to go above and beyond traditional sources and interpretations, pushing me to continue in moments of uncertainty and doubt. I look forward to many more projects (professionally and personally) with him by my side.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: History
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation begins where the Wendat\(^1\) world begins, with the Legend of Sky Woman. In 1912 Catherine Johnson, a descendant of the seventeenth-century Wendat Confederacy, shared her people’s Creation story, which she called "The Young Woman Fallen From Above." According to Johnson, Sky Woman, or Aataentsic, fell from her home in the clouds at a time when the world was a vast ocean inhabited only by sea animals. These animals gathered together in council upon witnessing the falling woman. In order to save her life, they agreed to create a landmass on the back of a giant Turtle. Toad led the initiative by diving to the bottom of the ocean, retrieving mud and placing it on the back of Turtle. By the time Sky Woman reached the water, an earthly continent had formed. Wild geese grabbed hold of Aataentsic’s feet and arms to cushion the fall, guiding her to her new home that we now call North America. Wendats believe themselves to be the descendants of Aataentsic, and they have structured their society in relation to these cosmological origins.\(^2\) In many ways, the Legend of Sky Woman highlights some of the most significant features of early modern Wendat society; it emphasizes the important roles of leaders (Toad), of women (Aataentsic), and communal

\(^1\) The Wendats/Wyandots/Wyandotts are also known as the Huron. The French gave them the name Huron, which is derived from the word “hures,” or “boar.”

systems of power (the council). By the 1600s, these *Children of Aataentsic* formed one of the most important polities in seventeenth-century North America.³

Situated within the territory stretching from Georgian Bay in the north to Lake Simcoe in the east (also known as Wendake), the Wendat Confederacy had flourished for 200 years by the time of European contact. The Confederacy consisted of four or five autonomous nations: the Bear Nation (*Attignawantan*), the Nation of the Rock (*Arendarhonon*), the People of the Cord (*Attigneenongnahac*), the People of the Deer (*Tahontaenrat*) and perhaps a fifth group, the People of the Marsh (*Ataronchronon*).⁴

Every nation included several villages, organized around twelve matrilineal clans—Big Turtle, Little Turtle, Mud Turtle, Wolf, Bear, Beaver, Deer, Porcupine, Striped Turtle, Highland Turtle, Snake and Hawk. While politics remained predominantly a local affair, with decisions reflecting village-level interests, village representatives frequently came together for general meetings of their nation and at least once a year delegates joined to discuss matters concerning the Confederacy at large. Within this multifaceted association each village and nation remained free to create separate agreements in terms of trade, military and diplomatic policies, although they often made collective decisions concerning these aspects as well. At most, the Confederacy consisted of an estimated

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⁴ There is some speculation that this group was an independent unit of the Confederacy or a subsection of the Bear Nation. Trigger, *Children of Aetaentsic*, 30.
30,000 people, occupying roughly twenty to thirty palisaded longhouse villages that changed location about every ten to thirty years.\(^5\)

Wendats shared a common Nadowekian⁶ dialect, matricentric social order and agricultural tradition. Seventeenth-century Nadowek languages included Wendat, Iroquois, Mingo, Cherokee, Eerie, Neutral and Susquehannock. While similar, each differed depending on nation, village or region. Significantly, out of these many dialects, Wendat became the lingua franca throughout the Great Lakes region. Nadoweks also stressed the importance of women’s authority; Wendat society was matrilineal and matriarchal. In addition to structuring clans around the female line, women controlled community fields, activities around the home and domestic life, and clan mothers exercised considerable influence concerning the selection of leaders and their community’s participation in warfare. By the sixth century A.D., most Nadoweks transitioned to maize agriculture, supporting relatively large and sedentary villages. Unlike other Nadowek people, Wendats maintained robust trading networks with non-agricultural partners through the exchange of corn for furs with their more nomadic hunter-gathering Algonquian neighbors. This system extended beyond an economic and subsistence exchange, developing into an official coalition that connected Wendats and Algonquians through marriage, diplomacy and cultural rituals. As a result, Wendats

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⁶ My use of the term “Nadowek” throughout derives from Georges Siou’s presentation “Nadoweks et Algonquiens: La Première Civilisation du Canada” for the Canadian Institute, University of Ottawa (March 10, 2003). Siou argues that “Iroquoian” is a Eurocentric term for the Huron-Wendat, Wyandottes, Eries, Neutrals, Petuns, and Iroquois. He encourages the use of “Nadowek,” which is an Amerindian term used by the Algonquian to describe the same group of Northern “Iroquian” people.
chose to associate themselves more frequently with the ethnically distinct Algonquians, rather than other Nadoeek polities.\footnote{Bruce Trigger has treated all of these aspects thoroughly. For more details on the linguistic, cosmological, cultural, political and economic history of the Wendat Confederacy until 1660, as well as their similarities to other Nadoeek groups see Trigger, \textit{Children of Aetaentsic}.}

The Nadoeek nations comprising the Iroquois Confederacy (Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga) were the long-time rivals of the Wendats. Iroquois territory included most of present-day central and upstate New York, a geographic position that led to frequent encounters with Wendats along the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers. Much like their Wendat foes, each Iroquois nation remained autonomous, while still loyal to their overall alliance. The political structure of the Iroquois Confederacy consisted of a council composed of fifty headmen. The Onondaga enjoyed the most seats in the council with fourteen representatives, while the Cayuga had ten; the Oneida and Mohawk each had nine, and the Seneca retained eight.\footnote{William Fenton, \textit{The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 4-5.} The Iroquois nations frequently campaigned (both independently from each other as well as in unified fronts) against Wendats to avenge blood feuds and because of a desire to repopulate communities by adopting captives. The central location of Wendake in respect to river systems and commercial depots of the northeast, along with the Wendats’ regular trade with Algonquians, further motivated Iroquois aggression. By the seventeenth century, Wendats orchestrated an elaborate geopolitical strategy, making them powerful diplomats, middlemen, and traders, thereby making them the targets of envious Iroquois adversaries.
By 1650, many of the customary features of Wendat society were under attack. Within the span of only a few decades, European encounters set in motion a series of deadly epidemics throughout Wendake. The patriarchal structures of Christianity undermined women’s authority and incessant warfare threatened their ability to maintain trade and an agricultural surplus. Then, in 1649, the Iroquois executed a number of successful raids on Wendat villages. Despite concerted efforts by Wendat warriors, many lost their lives in battle, while others became Iroquois captives destined for torture or forced adoption. Those left behind witnessed the ruin of Wendat homes and fields, as well as widespread expressions of panic and despair. As a result, survivors reconsidered the security of Wendake; after much deliberation, they resolved to evacuate their homeland and recreate their communities in new territories. Wendats packed up their belongings, dismantled their villages and tried to avoid any further Iroquois encounters as they set out to start anew. This Wendat dispersal, according to most accounts, marked the "destruction" of the Confederacy.

Scholars have contributed greatly to our understanding of Wendat society pre-dispersal and the factors leading to the Iroquois conquest. Elizabeth Tooker’s *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians* (1964), for example, delivers a concise report on Wendat lifestyle, culture, political and social structures, foreign relations and material culture.⁹ Although rarely analytical, Tooker’s detailed compilation set the ground work for anthropologist Bruce Trigger’s *Farmers of the North* (1969) and later his seminal

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two-volume history, *The Children of Aataentsic* (1976). Trigger’s books depict a Wendat history centered on the fur trade, though he also touches on Wendat politics, diplomacy and social conditions. His works constitute the most comprehensive studies of Wendat society from the prehistoric period to the dispersal. The historical geographer Conrad Hiedenreich’s *Huronia* (1971) expanded on Trigger’s findings, giving more specific information on Wendat territory, villages, demographics, and subsistence economy.  

In the wake of Tooker, Trigger and Heidenreich, scholars trained in new methodologies and working in response to the rise of social history and cultural studies created Wendat histories that depart from the more general economic and political studies of the past. Sociologist Karen Anderson’s research focuses on Wendat women’s experiences. In *Chain Her By One Foot* (1991), Anderson argues the relationship between Wendats and French missionaries devastated native women, resulting in their loss of social, political and economic power. Focusing on Wendat cosmology, Georges Sioui also finds dramatic changes in response to the crises of the early seventeenth century. Sioui contends that, because of European encounters, Wendats experienced damaging internal power struggles and cultural malaise, as well as disease and warfare. For Sioui, a Huron-Wendet himself, this history is personal, as he delivers a revised

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history of Wendat society from a Wendat perspective. More recently, Roger Carpenter’s *The Renewed, The Destroyed, And The Remade* (2004) contextualizes Wendat policy in terms of Nandouekian cultural traditions, rather than economic aspirations or political power. Through this approach, Carpenter explores how Nandoueks compartmentalized their world-view into three “thought worlds” based on social renewal, destruction, and remaking. Archeologist Gary Warrick’s *A Population History of the Huron-Petun* (2008) is one of the newest contributions to Wendat historical literature. Although covering deceptively similar topics as the works of Trigger and Heidenreich, Warrick’s research delivers new insight into Wendat society by engaging with previously undiscovered materials and evidence. Warrick presents updated calculations concerning population size and the effects of disease on pre-dispersal Wendats. Of particular note is Warrick’s assertion that, contrary to former theories, the adoption of maize agriculture did not result from population pressure, although he does contend that Wendats experienced a population boom in the fourteenth century (reaching approximately 30,000 people) that did not decrease until the introduction of European disease. Most recently, Eric R. Seeman’s *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead* delivers a unique analysis of Native and European encounters through the details of Wendat burial

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rituals, highlighting the collaboration between Wendats and French missionaries based on common notions of spirituality.16

Despite the wide range of approaches, all of these studies share a focus on Wendat society before the mid-seventeenth century, and this temporal framework presents a number of problems. Scholars’ emphasis on this period leads to the overuse of a declension model typically applied to the experiences of Native Americans in the post-contact period. This model tends to portray Aboriginal peoples as passive casualties (in this case the victims of Iroquois aggression and European disease), creating a false notion that the Wendats experienced destruction as a people. With the Iroquois conquest as the climax, Wendat history beyond the dispersal becomes an epilogue perpetuating the belief that whatever happened afterwards is marginal to the overall understanding of the seventeenth-century Wendats, and by extension, other indigenous people who experienced crisis after European contact. The typical Wendat historical narrative is replete with elements comparable to the devastation experienced by many Aboriginal groups during this period, such as the Pequots, Ottawas, Eeries, Neutrals, Potawatomis, and Miamis. The destruction of one of the most powerful confederacies of the seventeenth century has become an emblematic conclusion—or allusion—to the story of first encounters.

Along with their post-dispersal history, the extent to which Wendats exercised agency by developing strategies and coping mechanisms before and after their so-called demise has received little attention. Few detailed stories of Wendat activism appear in

current interpretations, leaving students and the general public with the assumption that Wendats were passive victims. This model distorts the agency and complexity of Wendat peoples by concentrating on factors beyond the control of the Wendat community. In fact, Wendats made repeated, creative attempts to overcome the obstacles of disease and warfare prior to 1649. Similarly, historical portrayals of thousands fleeing haphazardly, rather than the results of calculated planning, obscure the ways in which Wendat people drew upon alliance frameworks and cultural reservoirs in forming their strategies for survival, including the final decisions to evacuate their homeland and rebuild Wendat society.

By refocusing the historical lens, my project foregrounds the dispersal and its aftermath in the hopes of creating a more complex and accurate history of the Wendats and of Indian-European encounters in seventeenth-century North America more broadly. Through this alternative interpretation, Wendat mobilization and innovation become the most dominant themes throughout an era often typified by defeat. Moreover, by going beyond the collapse of the political and geographic configurations of the pre-1649 Confederacy and focusing on the persistence of Wendat identity and power until the turn of the eighteenth century, this study demonstrates that although the customary structures affiliated with Wendat society may have weakened mid-century, the Wendat peoples, along with their culture, beliefs and diplomatic reputation remained intact as they evolved into a diaspora polity within the Great Lakes region.17

17 Elizabeth Mancke examines the existence of indigenous diasporic polities and their unique nature in the early modern Atlantic world in her forthcoming article: “Polity Formation and
In writing this history, I give considerable weight to the personal biographies of individual Wendats as a means to offset the widespread “faceless” history of Native North America. Historian Daniel Richter attributes the lack of research on Native individuals to evidentiary problems, noting “[it] is much easier to reconstruct the abstract forces that constrained the seventeenth-century Native world than it is to recover the personal experiences of the people who struggled to give the world human shape.”18 Like the European imperial sources they draw upon, historians privilege group actions and pan-Indian policies rather than individual agency. By including biographical accounts of Wendat people, this work gives voice to the individuals who shaped this period of Wendat history. The initiatives of particular male and female Wendat leaders allowed them to survive their dispersal; whether relocating to Algonquian territory, sending daughters to convents, or replacing civil headmen with war chiefs, Wendat strategies rested on the ideas and actions of specific people.

My dissertation begins with a prologue that establishes the persistence and pervasiveness of the “destruction” myth. The theme of Wendat destruction pervades not only the established scholarship, but also the wider North American popular culture. Secondary-school curriculum and textbooks, movies, plays and poems, and public history sites such as Sainte-Marie-Among-The Hurons, Crawford Lake Indian Village, and internet websites dedicated to the history of the Wendat all perpetuate the declension narrative. I also explore the persistence of the myth within the modern Wendat nations of

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Quebec, Ontario, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The Prologue both identifies a problem and suggests an alternative way of viewing Wendat history.

In Part One: Resistance, I offer a thematic analysis of disease, diplomacy and warfare before the dispersal, emphasizing the factors that led to the Iroquois conquest. Chapter 1 begins in the 1630s with the introduction of European disease in Wendake, and examines Wendat civil leaders and their policies to address the loss of life and social unrest before the dispersal. The actions of influential Wendat leaders such as Taretande and Aenon, illustrate the diplomatic successes, the political divisions, the failed military strategies, and the secret meetings that reveal Wendat responses to the crises that faced. This chapter also assesses the impact that the deaths of key leaders had on the community during an era of epidemic disease, and explores the ways in which leadership changes affected Wendat decision-making. Ultimately, in contrast to accounts that stress Wendat disorganization and cultural decline, I argue that the 1630s was simultaneously a time of collaboration and renewal.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Feast of Souls ceremony of 1636, when the Wendats sought to include the French in the Confederacy’s most sacred ceremony. By interpreting the Feast as not only a spiritual and social apparatus, but as a vehicle for political initiatives, this chapter builds upon our understanding of Native diplomacy and adds to our sense of what tools Native diplomats had at their disposal, beyond written and oral treaties and gifts. Wendats used the Feast to expand their system of alliances and integrate non-Wendats into their network. The invitations to the French were not just friendly gestures, but official requests for a renewed Wendat-French alliance. In effect,
the Wendats offered the Feast of Souls as a means of transforming the French into
Wendat kinsmen, and thus firm allies. The French rejection of these overtures and of any
kind of official responsibility towards the Wendat in 1636 undermined the Confederacy’s
ability to overcome the pending attacks by the Iroquois in the 1640s.

Chapter 3 explores Nadouek warfare in the 1640s and charts the emergence of
what I term “a culture of war” during the heightened conflict with the Iroquois. The
Wendat military defeat in 1649 did not result from a single decisive attack by the
Iroquois, but rather was the culmination of a decade of battles between the two groups.
Military strategy and leadership changed during this period: most strikingly, war chiefs
replaced the civil headmen who had led the Confederacy in the previous decade. This
shift in political power from the traditional civil leaders to those charged to lead in times
of war explains some of the more frequent violence of the 1640s. Although the Wendats
experienced extreme levels of conflict and captivity, they won notable battles as well, and
the Wendats presented a strong opposition to the Iroquois throughout the period despite
their loss in 1649.

Part Two: Evacuation and Relocation, explores the people, ideas and motivations
behind the community’s decision to evacuate the Wendat homeland in 1649, as well as
the experience of migration itself. Each the five chapters—“Wendat Country,”
“Algonquian Neighbors,” “The West,” “The East,” and “Iroquois Country”—focuses on
a destination the Wendats chose for relocation. The Wendats offer a case study of
circumstances experienced by many Native Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries. In the northeast alone, many other groups joined the Wendats in fleeing
Iroquois violence and European disease.\textsuperscript{19} Yet, the most comprehensive studies of North American Native migration and removal focus on the infamous Trail of Tears and the American Indian Removal Act of 1830. Theda Perdue has written an excellent study on the event, giving voice to the personal dimension of how participants experienced the obstacles faced in starting anew in the western territory.\textsuperscript{20} But, few scholars have explored the Native diasporas of the colonial period, even though tens of thousands of indigenous peoples faced forced and voluntary migrations. The Wendat experience offers a detailed portrait of the strategies, tactics, and cost of removal within a seventeenth-century context.

The initial exodus did not lead to immediate dispersal and division within the Confederacy. Instead, over a year of uncertain settlement, starvation and isolation within Wendake, the Wendats considered various longer-term options. In the end, Wendats directed their own removal; they engaged in a series of Native-orchestrated initiatives, influenced by traditional coalitions and kinship networks, rather than simply reacting to European or even Iroquois decisions and events. Wendats used their unique cultural capital to call French and Algonquian allies to their aid.

Chapter 4 examines the decision to leave Wendat villages, taking refuge in other parts of Wendat Country—most notably the relocation of thousands to \textit{Gahoendoe}. During the interim settlement of this island, many Wendats experienced famine, fear, and death. Out of an estimated 6,000 initial residents, only 1,000 survived. Ultimately, this

\textsuperscript{19} Richard White discusses the refugee population in the upper Great Lakes for instance. See White, \textit{Middle Ground}.

chapter looks at the internal decision-making process that preceded the move to 
*Gahoendoe* in 1649, and the circumstances that pushed Wendats to reconsider their 
choice a year later. Ultimately, the island relocation formed an integral part of a 
calculated plan to overcome the military defeat by the Iroquois and keep a foothold in the 
geopolitical world of the northeast. Indeed, while disease and the Iroquois factored into 
the Wendat resolution to leave their homeland, the food crisis on *Gahoendoe* in 1649- 
1650 was the most important issue shaping the future of the Wendats and their 
subsequent exodus from Wendat Country.

Chapters 5—8 examine the processes and experiences of the Wendat survivors 
who relocated outside traditional Wendat territory. Many Wendats chose to move east 
towards Quebec City, while others faced west traveling towards Lake Michigan and 
settling near Michilimackinac. Still, the majority of Wendat chose to relocate within 
existing Aboriginal societies, ranging from the rival Mohawks and Oneidas to allies such 
as the Petuns and Ojibways. One of the surprising elements of this story is that the 
Wendats consciously decided to become geographically divided as a survival tactic. This 
strategy expanded Wendat geopolitical boundaries; spreading themselves throughout the 
Great Lakes, Wendats re-established their regional position as influential diplomats and 
traders. In contrast to the central and confined parameters of Wendake, the diaspora 
extended Wendat spatial power from Quebec City to Michilimackinac. Despite the 
changed geopolitical realities and Iroquois ascendancy, Wendat acceptance of Christian 
conversion and continued economic activity helped them maintain crucial ties with the
French, which in turn gave the *Children of Aataentsic* leverage with both allies and enemies.

The third and final section of this dissertation, Part Three: Diaspora, outlines the societies that Wendats created in exile by exploring key themes in diasporic Wendat culture. In Chapter 9, “Leadership,” I contend that despite the dispersal, with its various migrations and resettlement strategies, as well as changes in geography, demography and community, the nature of Wendat leadership remained relatively intact. Continuing the emphasis on individual Native stories, this chapter includes biographical sketches of Wendat leaders in the post-dispersal period. Leadership provides a prism for understanding how Wendats maintained their polity, because headmen exercised their duties in relation to their community and formal alliances. The cults of personality that emerged around certain exemplary leaders also offered Wendats a means of maintaining cultural values across generations.

Chapter 10, examines another important leadership class—women. Many accounts insist Wendat women lost political and social status due to the dispersal; although this might be true in the long run, it was not immediate, nor does this teleological argument reflect the numerous ways that women continued to project their influence in the post-dispersal period. Women instigated many relocations and shaped the early stages of diaspora formation. At the same time, the dispersal created unique new opportunities for women to assume leadership roles, to enter trade and to acquire formal education. On the whole, Christianity did not constrain women as in the pre-dispersal period, but provided a vehicle for unity, spirituality and social mobility.
Concluding this section is a chapter on “Power,” in which I analyze the sources and systems of power made available to Wendats after their dispersal. Power can be used as an indication of strength and prosperity as well as a sign of societal struggle and disadvantage. The ways in which people gain, use and lose power often reflects their social, economic and political standing. Wendats drew from a range of sources to survive their plan of resettlement. In turn, these sources translated into multi-dimensional systems of power based on long-standing relationships, while reformulated to meet the needs of the Wendats post-1649. Wendat power did not wane during this period, but grew in terms of regional reputation for economic and diplomatic skill. Chapter 11 also marks the chronological end of my study. In the aftermath of The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701 and the beginning of the eighteenth century most of the Wendats from Michilimackinac migrated to Detroit and began to identify themselves separately from other Wendats by calling themselves the “Wyandot.” This division departs from the seventeenth-century notion of one collective Wendat identity and deserves its own unique study.

My project ends with an epilogue, “Reconnecting the Modern Diaspora, 1999,” centered on a gathering of the modern Wendat diaspora in their ancestral homeland around Georgian Bay in 1999. The meeting signified a renewal of a Wendat Confederacy among contemporary Wendat groups residing in Quebec, Ontario, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Notwithstanding the important and complex history of these separate nations throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, one may argue the persistence of these people, their connection to Wendake, and their ability to identify and unite as “Wendats” all originated during the period immediately after their ancestors’
dispersal in 1649. Within the span of fifty years, generations of Wendats came to understand their place as both individuals living within the physical territory of the French, Iroquois, or Algonquian, while preserving a citizenship to a larger abstract community connected by a common heritage. Modern Wendats, like many other First Nations, exist within a flexible system of citizenry. Based on seventeenth-century notions of alliances, present-day Wendats root the contours of their ethnic identity in relation to their homeland of Wendake; even as most reside outside those geographic boundaries.

While the seventeenth-century Wendats left little in the way of written records, their history is well documented. The bulk of these materials are not the products of Wendats, however, but rather the writings of European missionaries, explorers and settlers of New France. Of course it is not possible to find in these records a completely genuine and faithful recording of indigenous voices from the past because the writer and the context mediated all forms of writing; but it is worthwhile for scholars to develop techniques for sifting them out, even in a heavily mediated form. Finding Native perspectives is essential to understanding the history of North American encounters. Oral traditions and stories passed down through generations of indigenous communities and artifacts made by indigenous people in the past constitute important data, but historians are best served by using as many different types of sources as possible, and documents written by Europeans should not be discounted. Techniques for recovering Wendat perspectives, even in mediated form, include reading widely among European relations and assessing for plausibility, comparing the recordings of a variety of writers to measure
for repeating data, triangulating the data from the recordings with other sources, and reading the relations closely to look for internal clues of contextualization.

The so-called *Jesuit Relations*, which are the main source for this project, consist of small books that reported on the work of Jesuit missionaries from around the world. *Relations* from the mission in New France (in the area that came to be known as Canada), which began to appear annually in 1632 and lasted to 1673, were widely read in France and circulated to other Catholic European countries. Jesuits working in the field sent detailed letters to their superior in Quebec City, who compiled and edited these letters, copying verbatim in some places and paraphrasing in others, and forwarded the compilations to the Jesuit headquarters in Paris, where further editorial changes were made before the Relations were sent to the printers.

The *Relations* are particularly illuminating about indigenous peoples in northeastern North America because, as historian Allan Greer points out, the Jesuits “lived in native villages for years on end, learned the local languages, got to know the people, and took their place on the margins of Amerindian society.”²¹ The Jesuits used their *Relations* as a tool mainly to advertise the successes and hardships of their evangelizing mission to the Order’s superiors and to European Catholic audiences, both clerical and lay, to raise support for their mission. But the *Relations* were more complex than simple propaganda. Because the Society of Jesus believed in a well-rounded education, all Jesuits were trained in observation, recording and writing. Their educational system encouraged scientific inquiry, a high level of communication and a

careful categorization of different types of information. They used their position as evangelists working in the far corners of the known world to engage in a global scale anthropological inquiry, recording information in an encyclopedic, albeit rhetorically formulaic, style. The Jesuits of New France were well equipped to gather a wealth of scientific, linguistic, and cultural data because their efforts to evangelize and civilize required that they thoroughly understand the languages, beliefs, morals and manners of the foreigners they hoped to convert. Their printed reports on North American missions cast the nature of the unconverted Natives as obscured by sin, but not without souls. This led the missionaries to portray indigenous people as recognizable souls that could be saved. At the same time, the Jesuits’ writings revealed an accommodation to local cultures; Jesuits believed they could separate religious belief from the practice of everyday life, and hence graft Catholic principles onto local cultures. Commentary on political and social ordering of the unconverted indigenous culture, an analysis of “pagan” religious beliefs, and then an accounting of their efforts to Christianize the local population constituted a pattern in many of the Jesuits’ relations, which sometimes included portraits of Jesuits engaged in religious and intellectual debates with the indigenous unconverted.

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In this context of global evangelization and gathering knowledge for the humanist cause, the Jesuits’ “relations” can be understood as works that simultaneously provided first-hand reports of specific missionary experiences with indigenous people, observing and recording aspects of diverse indigenous cultures, as well as efforts to convert them to Catholicism, and contributed to a vast project or conversation about exploring the globe and revitalizing the Catholic faith. Because New France was known as a hardship post, and because few explorers had the opportunity to observe and report on the indigenous people who lived there, reports from the Jesuits in New France became important tools for both celebrating the difficult and important work of those spreading the Catholic faith and for providing significant data on a little known corner of the world. The Relations from New France included tales of grueling hardship working in inhospitable lands with grossly ignorant savages, rich ethnographic descriptions of cultures exotically different from life in Europe, and gruesome accounts of missionary suffering, deprivation, and martyrdom. Most combined various elements of exploration narratives and ethnographic descriptions, which were echoed in most colonial literature from North America.  

Inside the general genre of Jesuits’ composition of relations, distinctive variations appeared. Individual missionaries used their Relations as personal and professional diaries, to record their experiences, to observe the strange new world around them, to celebrate and brag about successes and to lament about failures, to convey their disgust at the strange and pagan people to whom they ministered, and to express their wonder and

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appreciation for the sophistication of indigenous material culture, creativity, intellectual abilities, and spiritual fortitude. The *Relations* contained mystical musings, careful ethnographic reporting, therapeutic venting, and problem solving.

Each Jesuit imbued his writings with his own particular style, personality, and obsessions, and these changed over the course of the missionary’s career. For example, Father Paul Le Jeune, superior of the Jesuits of Quebec from 1632 to 1639, and first editor of the *Jesuits Relations* from New France, formed his early relations like a travelogue, describing in great detail the land and life style of the Native populations, although his later relations were almost wholly preoccupied with administrative matters.\(^{26}\) Father Jacques Marquette’s writings on his expedition with Louis Joilliet to discover the Mississippi River in 1673, and Father Charles Albanel’s writings of his journey from the Saint Lawrence valley overland to James Bay in 1672, read like classic exploration narratives and travelogues.\(^{27}\) Famous for his capture, torture and death at the hands of the Iroquois during their 1649 siege on Wendake, Jean de Brébeuf is probably the best known of all the Jesuits who evangelized in New France as one of its martyrs. Brébeuf worked as a missionary in New France for twenty years, fifteen of which he spent ministering to Wendats. He established the first mission in Wendake, and met with failure during most of his time there, although in the last couple of years while Wendake


was under severe attack by the Iroquois, the Jesuits had some success in baptizing a large number of Wendats. Brébeuf became intimately familiar with many Wendat people, before their numbers became ravaged by disease and warfare. A gifted writer, Brébeuf’s relations contain careful, extensive and sensitive depictions of Wendat customs and beliefs. Brébeuf worked hard to master the Wendat language; within the first few years of the mission in Wendake, he compiled a Wendat dictionary and spoke freely among them.  

Until recently, historians seeking to draw from Jesuit sources were relegated to these published Relations. Since 1967, however, Jesuit historian Lucien Campeau gained access to the Jesuit archives in Rome and compiled several volumes of unpublished Jesuit documents. These include letters as well as Relations in their original languages of French, Latin and Italian. Campeau’s work serves as an additional reference, which I used to verify the translations in the more widely used Reuben Thwaites’ edition of the Jesuit Relations.  

The recordings of French colonists are the second most abundant group of documents informing this project. These sources describe the frequent and often intimate relationships forged between Wendats and New France’s civil society, and reveal the sometimes disparate goals of administrators, soldiers and settlers. By 1650, the total

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29 Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1600-1791 (Cleveland: Burrows, 1896-1901) [JR], volume 10: 116-123.  
population of New France totaled an estimated 2,000 people, expanding to 10,000 by the 1680s. French colonists established the capital of New France, Quebec City (1608), as well as additional communities such as Trois Rivière (1634) and Montreal (1642). These sites became not only seventeenth-century hubs for French commerce, culture and colonial political power, but points of interest for Wendats concerned in extending trade and diplomatic initiatives. French citizens interacted with Wendats on a daily basis; lay workers for the missionaries, fur traders, judges, notaries, as well as colonial administrators including governors, intendants and soldiers, became well known figures to the Wendat community. In many cases, French colonists forged intimate ties with Wendats, becoming their husbands, landlords and godparents. Governors, in particular, engaged in face-to-face meetings with Wendat diplomats and traders, forging long lasting and personal relationships with them. The Wendats, as a result, became central subjects in the writings of these colonists. For the most part, correspondences can be found in the letters and reports of the administrators of New France to the Minister of Marine. Other useful documents include published accounts by the first governor of New France, Samuel de Champlain, for instance, as well as the fur trader Pierre Esprit Radisson and the medical doctor François Gendron.

The methodological process for this project included taking the evidence from the Jesuit Relations, as well as those of New France’s secular society and imperial authorities, and weighing them against knowledge accumulated about the Wendats from archeological remains, material culture analyses, and anthropological upstreaming

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(tracing present practices to the past). In brief, these sources became useful by blending analytical approaches to the data, particularly from history, anthropology and archeology, a method often referred to as “ethnohistory.” This methodology takes into consideration the value systems of the primary observers and those they wrote about. Nadouekianist William Fenton suggests that scholars must “learn to evaluate the authenticity of sources, to interpret the document beyond what it says, to assess the personal bias of the observer and to learn something of the writer’s culture and history.” In addition, researchers should try to understand the subjects of their inquiry—in this case, the Wendats. It is simply not enough to understand how and why the Europeans compiled their observations; we need to know what motivated the actions of indigenous people as recorded by European observers. Therefore, during my research, I did not ask whether the exact words and perspectives of indigenous people were faithfully recorded; rather, I looked for the cultural clues transmitted through these transcriptions. Actions and events appear in European written mediums, whether they are the Relations, colonial reports or explorer’s journals, giving brief glimpses of the historic figures and their worldviews that

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shaped the circumstances in which the actions and events occurred. The Jesuits did not create these sources as straightforward, unproblematic recounts of Native experiences, nor did they view them as such, yet they were extremely valuable in revealing some form or shape of tangible Native perspectives. By sifting through non-Native biases, singling out individuals and incorporating comparisons and ethnohistorical analyses, I was able to use the European documents as a medium for the transmission of non-European history.

Several key terms used extensively throughout this study require clarification. Although there is some ambiguity to the meaning of Wendat, as scholars debate whether it translates into "the islanders" or "the people of the peninsula," it was the word used by seventeenth-century Wendats to describe themselves, and therefore I use it to designate the people of the seventeenth-century Wendat Confederacy and their descendants for this project.\textsuperscript{34} The territory occupied by the Wendats before their dispersal was referred to by the Wendats as “Wendake” and is identified as such throughout this study. The popularized term “Huron” has also been used to describe the Wendats and Huronia, their country. Huron is a European-derived label. For this reason, I use Wendat instead of Huron, unless quoted in an original source. In the same vein, I generally use “Nadouekian” in place of the anthropological term “Iroquoian.” For the sake of consistency and clarity, this study employs the term headman in most cases to replace Chief and Captain. Although the primary sources use “Captain” and “Chief” synonymously, recent Nadouekian scholars such as Bruce Trigger, Georges Sioui, and

Daniel Richter argue that headman is a more appropriate and culturally representative term.

Overall, “Dispersed But Not Destroyed” seeks to underscore the agency and active participation of Native Americans in securing their own fate, while encouraging future investigations and questions in regards to the Wendats and their influence on Canadian and American society. It is a revision of our understanding of Native American identity and international relations relative to the collapse of one of the most powerful polities of the seventeenth century Great Lakes region. It is my hope that this research will provide a new paradigm for research into similar situations of political upheaval and the coping mechanisms that emerge in reaction to states of cultural conflict and uncertainty.
PROLOGUE: THE POPULARITY AND PERPETUATION OF THE “DESTRUCTION MYTH” IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Introduction

In his 2007 publication *Words of the Huron*, John Steckley notes the history of the seventeenth-century Wendats is a familiar narrative to many. Through class lessons, public history sites and textbooks, most Canadians have at least some idea of who they were.¹ Indeed, historian Cornelius Jaenen contends that all the histories concerning New France mention the “destruction” of Wendake as a seminal event.² Even Richard White’s influential book *Middle Ground* begins by describing geographic analytical boundaries in relation to “the lands beyond Huronia.”³ White positions the Wendat homeland as a central and symbolic reference to power and geopolitics in the context of seventeenth-century historical frameworks.

For many Canadians, the Wendat legacy remains integral to national and provincial narratives. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Daniel Wilson explained his interest in the Wendats because “… the Hurons [were] the native historical race of Canada, intimately identified with incidents of its early settlement and of friendly

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intercourse with *La Nouvelle France*.“⁴ E.J. Hathaway justified her 1915 publication *Story of the Hurons* by saying the history of the Wendats is the “complete first chapter of the history of Ontario.”⁵ And in 1909 Arthur Jones asserted, “The heroic in our history finds here [Wendake] its home.”⁶ Persisting throughout the twentieth century, government officials of Ontario’s Tourism Ministry in the 1960s justified the establishment of public history sites dedicated to Wendats because Wendake was “Often called the cradle of Ontario’s history.”⁷ According to a 1969 survey, 60% of the people of Toronto (Canada’s largest city and the provincial capital of Ontario) believed learning the history of the Wendats through the creation of public history sites was an “important part of the history of Canada and Ontario and helped make them better Canadians.”⁸

Wendats are important to American identity and history as well. Kansas historian William Conner presented a paper in 1918 describing the critical influence of the Wendat people to Kansas City’s history and important national events, such as the United States’ Civil War. For Conner, the Wyandot of Kansas were of particular importance because of their ancestral links to the Nadouekian people who became “supreme in eastern America” in the seventeenth century.⁹

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⁷ John Sloan (Director of Huronia Historical Parks) to D. Brown (Travel Research Branch of Department of Tourism and Information), December 4, 1968, Archives of Ontario [AO], RG 5-46, box MB139.
⁸ Ontario Department of Travel and Tourism, “Attitude of Metro Toronto to Sainte Marie Among The Hurons,” January 1969, AO, RG 5-46, box MB135.
By describing Wendat history as “Canadian” or “American,” scholars take ownership of a historical period and people. Within this context, the Wendats and their history are no longer autonomous. Instead, they are integrated into these larger non-Native societies, colonizing the Wendat historical narrative to meet the nationalistic demands geared towards identity formation and state security.¹⁰ This tactic also serves to lengthen the early Euro-American national narratives, tucking Wendat history into mainstream accounts of exploration, colonization, and confederation. Yet, Wendat history began long before the establishment of Canada and the United States.

In response to these national narratives, and the proliferation of Wendat history, I came to write my first paper on the seventeenth-century Wendats. Sitting in a high school Canadian history class, I became fascinated by the textbook descriptions of Wendat society. My paper concluded with explicit disappointment that, according to my research, the Wendats were destroyed over 350 years ago. Understandably, I was both shocked and confused a few years later to hear a professor at the University of Ottawa introduce himself as Georges Sioui, a Huron-Wendat from Quebec. Perplexed, I approached Professor Sioui to gain clarification. “How is it possible,” I asked, “that you are a Wendat? Weren’t your people destroyed in the seventeenth century?” Sioui responded, “it is a long story, but I can assure you, I am Huron-Wendat and my people were not destroyed.”

¹⁰ For many scholars, and particularly Native intellectuals, the general writing of Native history by non-Natives is seen as a continuation of the process of colonization, often damaging the veracity of Amerindian cultures and communities. For more on this discussion see Clara Sue Kidwell and Alan R Velie’s chapter “Historical Contact and Conflict,” in Native American Studies (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 41-59. Also useful is Devon Mihesuah, ed., Natives and Academics: Research and Writing about American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).
Since that time I have come to realize the truth behind Sioui’s assertion. Far from being destroyed, there are modern descendants of the former Wendat Confederacy living in Quebec, Ontario, Kansas, and Oklahoma. This prologue is an exploration into the “destruction” myth surrounding the seventeenth-century Wendat. It seeks to understand how this myth was produced, sustained and perpetuated up until the present day. Taking into consideration a wide variety of materials discussing Wendat history produced by academics, educators, government ministries, artists, and the Wendats themselves, I argue that the dominant interpretation consistently alludes to a destruction that has led to the erroneous circulation of a popular mythology with consequences for our understanding of indigenous histories.

**Contact Zones: Academic Scholarship**

The ways in which people engage with Wendat history, and in particular their defeat by the Iroquois in 1649, is varied. These so-called “contact zones,” between researcher and historical narrative, give way to unique experiences and interpretations. For the most part, these materials are produced by non-Wendats for non-Wendats. The most easily accessed and widely distributed materials are in the written form: primary and secondary reports, articles, manuscripts and textbooks. The origins of the “destruction” myth begin with the *Jesuit Relations*. Intimately involved in Wendat affairs

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11 Officially these descendants are members of The Huron-Wendat (Quebec); The Wyandot of Anderdon (Ontario); The Wyandot of Kansas (Kansas); The Wyandotte of Oklahoma (Oklahoma), however, they may live in various additional locations as well.

12 The term “contact zone” is defined by Mary Louise Pratt as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism.” In the context of this chapter, the term describes less conventional encounters, focusing on the interaction between the North American public and Wendat history. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturalisation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.
during the Iroquois attacks of 1648-1649 as well as the years after the dispersal from
Wendake, the Jesuits recorded the Native’s trials and tribulations in the Relations of 1649
and in the subsequent years. Because the Relations are the most easily accessible and
numerous primary source for Wendat history, the way that Jesuits wrote about the so-
called destruction greatly influenced the interpretations of later scholars. Even though the
Jesuits continued to write about Wendats after the 1649 dispersal, they used language
redolent of defeat and loss. The edition that Reuben Thwaites prepared, for instance, is
littered with rhetoric discussing the “destruction of the Hurons.”¹³

Very few publications refer to the Wendats in the years following the end of the
Jesuit reports in 1673. Not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did an
avid interest reemerge. These “early scholars”—anthropologists, ethnographers,
archeologists and historians—extracted details from the Relations and composed them
into scholarly narratives available to the academic community. This sphere of scholarship
includes works by Heratio Hale, Francis Parkman, and Marius Barbeau, as well as lesser
known historians, theologians and geographers.¹⁴ These projects grew out of reports
made for such organizations as the Ontario Historical Society and the Bureau of

¹³ The theme of destruction is used throughout the Relations such as the entry for July 20, 1649
describing the “destruction of the Hurons.” See Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations
and Allied Documents, 1600-1791 [JR] (Cleveland: Burrows, 1896-1901), Volume 34: 57. For
other examples see JR 35: 15, 83, 105, 211.
¹⁴ For representative examples of the “early scholars” see Lewis Cass, Remarks on the policy and
practice of the United States and Great Britain in their treatment of Indians (Boston: F.T. Gray,
1827); Francis Parkman, The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century (Boston, Little,
Brown, and Company, 1867); Hathaway, The Story of The Hurons (1915); Wilson, The Lost
Atlantis (1892); Heratio Hale, “Four Huron wampum Records: A Study of Aboriginal American
History and Mneumonic Symbols” The Journal of Anthropological Institute (February 1897):
254–297; Andrew F. Hunter, Notes of Sites of Huron Villages in the Township of Medonte
(Simcoe County), reprinted from the Ontario Archeological Report for the Report of the Minister
of Education for Ontario (Toronto, 1901); Jones, “Souondake Ehen” or Old Huronia (1908);
Charles Marius Barbeau, Huron and Wyandot Mythology (Ottawa: Department of Mines,
Geology Survey, Memoire 80, 1915); Conner, Kansas City, Kansas (1918).
Archives.\textsuperscript{15} Non-Native men dominated the field and generally the works situated Wendats within the larger context of histories of Native peoples, New France, and colonial North America.

These early scholars took the Jesuit language of destruction literally. Consistently, they recount the events of 1649 with explicit “destruction” rhetoric. Francis Parkman titled his account of the years leading up the dispersal as “The Doomed Nation” and proceeded to discuss how “Fatuity, not cowardice, was the ruin of the Huron nation.”\textsuperscript{16} “All was over with the Hurons,” he continued, “. . . Without a leader, without organization, without a union, crazed with fright and paralyzed with misery, they yielded to their doom without a blow . . . The Hurons, as a nation, ceased to exist.”\textsuperscript{17} Similarly, E. J. Hathaway called the “extermination” of the Wendats “one of the greatest national tragedies in the human race.”\textsuperscript{18} Writing in 1827, Lewis Cass delivered a tragic description of the dispersal as “frightful havoc among the Hurons, and the accounts of their sufferings, given by the old missionaries, who witnessed and shared them, almost task the belief of the reader.”\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Handbook of Indians} (1913) summarized these interpretations by describing the circumstances of 1649 in the following way:

After the destruction of the Huron or Wendat confederation and the more or less thorough dispersal of the several tribes composing it, \textit{the people who, as political units, were originally called Huron and Wendat, ceased to exist}.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} E.J. Hathaway’s work was funded by the Ontario Historical Society and Arthur Jones’ publication by the Bureau of Archives. 
\textsuperscript{16} Parkman, \textit{Jesuits in North America}, 668. The section titled the “The Doomed Nation” begins on page 634. Parkman also includes a section titled “The Ruin of the Hurons,” 664.
\textsuperscript{17} Parkman, \textit{Jesuits in North}, 675.
\textsuperscript{18} E.J. Hathaway, \textit{The Story of The Hurons}, 22.
\textsuperscript{19} Lewis Cass, \textit{Remarks}, 59.
\textsuperscript{20} Emphasis is my own. \textit{Handbook of Indians, tenth report of the Geographic Board of Canada} (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1913), 207.
Later in the twentieth century, a third wave of Wendat scholarship emerged. Although interested in a similar ethnographic focus as their predecessors, this group produced academic books dedicated almost exclusively to Wendat history, rather than to colonial or national narratives. Using the same sources as the early scholars, these “twentieth-century revisionists” situated Wendat history within the first half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, the most prominent scholars of the Wendats, such as Elizabeth Tooker, Bruce Trigger, Conrad Heidenreich, Roger Carpenter, and Gary Warrick, designed projects their around the 1649 benchmark. Despite their tremendous scholarship and contributions to our understanding of Wendake, these ethnohistorians perpetuated the notion of Wendat demise at the hands of the Iroquois. Trigger opened with the remark, “[f]or a brief period in the first half of the seventeenth century the Huron played a key role in the history of eastern North America,” implying that they ceased to play a role after 1649.21 Although they acknowledge the formation of a diaspora Wendat culture, few scholars included accounts of post-1650 history in their studies.22

Overshadowing these same studies are two lines of argument that also distort perceptions of Wendat survival post-1649. Scholars assume both that the Iroquois conquest led to the “Destruction of Huronia” (or the historical territorial boundaries occupied by the Wendats) and that 1649 marks the “End of the Confederacy” (or the

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22 Tooker makes a brief reference to the dispersal and relocation of the Wendats in a footnote, 10-11; Trigger discusses the “early years” after the dispersal in his last chapter of *Children of Aetaentsic*. This spans roughly 46 pages (with maps etc) out of a 913-page book, 789-840.
political alliance between the Wendat nations).\textsuperscript{23} Although in many respects historically accurate, these arguments combine to create a theme of eradication. While acknowledging that Wendats continued to exist and contribute to North American society, the language and frameworks of many of these works distort their academically sound narrative. The word choice of “destruction” and “end” cannot help but describe a situation where the Wendats are portrayed as destroyed. Notwithstanding the importance of these established assertions, they inadvertently suggest that the Wendats as a people disappeared at the same time as they ceased to live in Wendake and identify with the Confederacy.

Textbook depictions of the Wendats are a testament to this intuitive phenomenon, as the language of “destruction” and “end” is often translated into general works on early North American history. Applying this discourse, editors and authors of modern textbooks have taken the analyses of scholars and transposed them into educational frameworks for students. These texts situate the Wendats within the larger stories of Native American, Canadian, and American histories as well as provincial/state and colonials histories.\textsuperscript{24} They are produced for the masses and reach large portions of the population, simplifying the complicated analysis of academics and making the narrative


understandable to the general public. They are also geared towards a pedagogical end, finding ways to explore historical events and people in a meaningful way. In *The History of Canada* (1891) for instance, the Wendat historical narrative concluded:

> As this famine-stricken band occasionally emerged from the gloom of the forest into the clearings where populous villages had been so recently situated, the charred ruins and traces of havoc and slaughter mutely, yet forcibly, *proclaimed the almost general destruction of the Huron race.*

Current history texts continue the tradition. The authors of *The Peoples of Canada* (1992), note “The weakened Hurons were killed, surrendered, or fled . . . . . The next year the missionaries returned to Quebec with a few hundred Hurons – the pathetic remnant of a once-powerful nation.” A similar passage appears in an *Origins* textbook (2000) describing the “fall of Huronia,” where the “Huron dispersal marked the end of Huronia.” Surprisingly, French Canadian historical interpretations do not differ from their English counterparts, unlike most other areas of research. *L’Ontario français historique* (1980) asserts that the Iroquois raids of 1649 resulted in “the dislocation of the Huron Confederacy . . . the end of the Huron nation.” American textbooks are no exception to the trend. Describing the Wendats’ defeat by the Iroquois, the authors of *US: A Narrative History* (2009) assert:

> Reeling from disease and internal division, the Hurons saw their world collapsing. In 1648, well-armed Iroquois warriors destroyed three Huron towns. The Hurons made the wrenching decision to burn their remaining towns and abandon their lands for good. Perhaps 2,000 became Iroquois, either as war captives or humble refugees. Others merged with

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26 Bumsted, *Peoples of Canada*, 75.
neighboring peoples, while thousands more fled and starved or died of exposure in the harsh winter of 1649-1650.29

These textbooks are the basis for classroom lessons and curriculum programs. Public-school curriculums in Canada and the United States provide mandatory units on the subject.30 Moreover, these curriculums are produced by government agencies (the National Endowment for Humanities oversaw the creation of America’s national history standards, while the Ministries of Education regulated the Canadian provincial standards) ensuring the widespread distribution and application of these lessons.

In support of these requirements, other agencies have created teaching aids to help educators come up with activities to convey the material. A current elementary-school lesson entitled “Lesson 5: The Jesuit and The Huron,” provides teachers with the following narrative:

Between 1610 and 1640, disease carried by the Europeans killed close to half of the Huron population. Huron shamans accused the Jesuits of bringing disease and angering the gods with their religious practices. When the weakened villages fell into the hands of the enemy Iroquois, the Jesuits were tortured as was Jean de Brébeuf in 1649. Between 1648 and 1650, the Iroquois nearly decimated the Huron nation.31

29 Davidson, et al, US, 64.
In sum, the consistency of the “destruction” myth, spanning hundreds of years of scholarship, has resulted in a wealth of literature to support such misconceptions. By using terminology, such as “extinct,” “ruined,” and “decimated,” the interpretation is by default one of defeat and destruction. Little attention is given to the resilience of the Wendats or their ability to overcome complete eradication. Moreover, by centering Wendat history on the pre-1649 period, there is little for the general public to draw on in the years following the dispersal.

Contact Zones: Public History Sites

Beyond academic scholarship, there are many alternative mediums for those seeking further information on the Wendats. Interactive public history sites, for instance, continue to reinforce this narrative. According to Laura Peers, “these sites are not simply value-neutral, ‘Objective’, three-dimensional versions of scholarly research or facts” but sites of hegemonic power.32 They tend to uphold Euro-American settler society, marginalizing Native American groups and histories in order to nationalize such histories for the greater nation states. They make particular Native nations into hero/victims, but assume their passing and annihilation. Public sites like the excavated fifteenth-century Wendat village at Crawford Lake Indian Village in southern Ontario enlighten the general public about Wendat modes of life. The Crawford Lake project began in 1971 with an archeological excavation of the area and developed into a tourist and education attraction in the 1980s. It includes three fully constructed long houses, with interior furnishings designed to reflect traditional material culture of the Wendats. Conservation

Halton runs this project. Although relatively small in nature, it serves as a centre for school groups, summer camps, Guide and Scout groups, as well as providing guided tours, and day-long interpretation programs.\textsuperscript{33}

More well known is Sainte Marie-Among-The-Hurons (SMAH), which is the most popular Wendat public history site in North America. Promoted as “the finest of the Province’s heritage projects,” SMAH was established by Ontario’s Department of Tourism as a reconstruction of the old Jesuit mission set-up in Wendake and destroyed as a direct result of the Iroquois wars.\textsuperscript{34} Included in the site are thirty-one reconstructed buildings, such as the chapel, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, as well as a cemetery and a Wendat longhouse. The popularity of the site has grown considerably over the years. In 1968, 134,442 visitors from all six continents ventured to the site. 44,051 of these visitors were French and English students on educational field trips.\textsuperscript{35} In one summer alone, 52,000 people signed the SMAH’s guest book, including students, camps, women’s institute groups, teacher’s conventions, newspaper conventions and religious groups.\textsuperscript{36} In addition to the Department of Tourism, the Huronia Historic Sites and Tourist Association, several local newspapers, radio stations and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation endorsed the establishment of SMAH.\textsuperscript{37} “The role [SMAH played] in

\textsuperscript{33} Ontario Heritage Foundation, Plaque: “Crawford Lake Indian Village Site,” located at Crawford Lake Indian Village, Guelph Line, Campbellville, Ontario, Canada.

\textsuperscript{34} “Speech of the Honourable Fern Guidon, Minister of Tourism and Information – Sainte Marie Among the Hurons – May 15, 1971” Archives of Ontario [AO], RG 5–7, box MB31.

\textsuperscript{35} John Sloan (Director of Huronia Historical Parks) to D. Brown (Travel Research Branch of Department of Tourism and Information), December 4, 1968, AO, RG –5–46, box MB139.


\textsuperscript{37} Jury and Jury, \textit{Sainte-Marie Among The Hurons}, xi-xii.
tourism and travel,” according to the Minister of Tourism in 1971, “[was] a major one, to the Huronia area and to Ontario as a whole.”

Across the border in Michigan, Mackinac State Historic Park, which includes the sites of Colonial Michilimackinac and Fort Mackinac, provides another avenue for the public to engage with Wendat history. Michilimackinac State Park, created in 1909, covers 37 acres with 2,100 feet of Great Lakes Shoreline. Federally recognized as a National Historic Landmark, it was built with the support of the State of Michigan. Although not a central focus of the Park’s interpretive message, the Wendat relocation to the area from 1671-1701 is highlighted through the historical accounts of the “tribal occupation” of the site. Combined, these interactive sites provide venues for non-Wendats to engage with Wendat history. Marketed and popularized by both government agencies and private owners, they reach thousands of people throughout the year, not only from Canada and the United States, but also from around the world. They provide educational programs as well as guided tours, taking the history from the textbook and allowing people to touch, feel and see seventeenth-century Wendat artifacts, houses and villages.

Information plaques are one way that public history sites like Crawford Lake, SMAH, and Michilimackinac Park transmit their message. At SMAH visitors are greeted with the following introduction to the events surrounding the dispersal:

By the winter of 1648-49, Huronia was so ravaged by disease and conflict that the Jesuits abandoned and burned Sainte-Marie and with some

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Wendat followers moved to Christian Island. The following year the Jesuits and Hurons withdrew to Quebec.  

As passive victims, the Wendats display no agency as they “follow” the Jesuits to safety. Moreover, the plaque neglect details concerning the Wendats who moved west or chose to live with the Iroquois. Describing the abandonment of a Jesuit mission on Manitoulin Island in 1650, another plaque, located at the Ontario mission site, explains that this event followed “the defeat and dispersal of the Hurons by the Iroquois.” Similar language appears on a plaque describing the significance of French explorer Samuel Champlain’s contact with the Wendats. According to this plaque, the “expedition increased the hostility of the Five Nations (Iroquois) towards the French and their Indian supporters, which culminated in the defeat and dispersal of the Hurons, 1649-1650.” The narrative at Mackinac State Park, although focused in the post-dispersal period, maintains a similar portrayal. The Wendats, who eventually relocated to Michilimackinac, are depicted as “fleeing the Iroquois,” following the Ottawa, and being “lured” by the French. These interpretations reinforce the popular notion that Wendat history holds little significance after 1649, and that the Wendat were helpless victims after their military defeat by the Iroquois.

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40 Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Plaque: “Sainte-Marie Among The Hurons” located at Highway #12, Township of Tay, Ontario, Canada.  
42 Ontario Archeological and Historic Sites Board, Plaque: “Champlain’s War Party, 1615,” Quinte Street, Trenton, Ontario, Canada.  
Contact Zones: Museums

Museums have long provided an arena for historical inquiry. From large national projects to smaller locally run institutions, the Wendats and their history are incorporated into the meta-narrative of national, as well as indigenous and local histories. On display at the National Museum of The American Indian, a Wendat wampum belt is presented to visitors through a glass box. On the exterior, the caption reads “Culture: Wendat (Huron), Object Name: Wampum Belt, Date Created: 1600-1650.” Although the information is limited, the years 1600-1650 serve to reinforce the 1650 benchmark. Clearly the belt was not constructed over 50 years, but it dates to the pre-dispersal period. The lack of information allows visitors to make their own conclusions, one of which might be that it is a Wendat belt, belonging to a people who ceased to exist after 1650. The Canadian Museum of Civilization provides a less ambiguous message. In a written description of a Jesuit Mortar found at SMAH, the caption reads:

From 1645-1655, the powerful Five Nations Iroquois confederacy waged war that destroyed rival Iroquoian nations. Weakened by disease and torn apart by internal strife, the Huron were defeated in 1648 and 1649.

At the Huronia Museum, located near the SMAH site, the Wendat dispersal is portrayed as not only the end of the Wendat nation, but the beginning of their assimilation into the larger “Canadian” society. Contact with the French is the culprit in this case as “it would ultimately lead to the dispersal of the Huron people between 1647 and 1651, and the creation of new political and social groups that . . . now form a large

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part of Canadian society.”46 Considering Laura Peers’ argument that visitors generally visit public history sites and museums not to learn new information but rather to reinforce preconceived notions of a history, the information provided by these museums seems to bolster the defeatist narrative, as well as the pre-1649 timeline by re-conceptualizing Wendats as “Canadians.”47

**Contact Zones: Popular Culture**

Wendats have inspired North American popular culture as well. The Huron Carol is the oldest and most widely recognized piece of this genre. Written by Father Jean de Brébeuf in 1643, this song was originally entitled “Jesous Ahatonhia” and has been described as Canada’s first Christmas carol. The song was originally written in Wendat and French and was later translated into English by Jesse Middleton in 1926.48

Poets have used Wendat history in order to describe emotional moments of desperation and death. Adam Kidd’s *The Huron Chief* (1830), for instance, was written while he traveled across Canada in a birch-bark canoe and was inspired both by the hospitality of Native people he met along the way and his dislike of their treatment by non-Natives. Before publication, Kidd had requests for over 1500 copies. Proposals were being drawn up for the collection to be translated into Native languages as well.49 Around this same time, Father Garneau, residing in the Wendat village at Quebec, wrote a poem

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49 Adam Kidd, *The Huron Chief, and Other Poems* (Montreal, 1830), xii.
entitled *Le Dernier Huron* (the last Huron).\(^{50}\) It was meant to encapsulate the experiences of the dispersal and conquest by the Iroquois during the mid-seventeenth-century wars. Garneau laments “oh people, you will be no more,” calling warriors to rise to the battle and change the fate of their people.\(^{51}\)

Brian Moore translated the fear and anxiety expressed in Garneau’s poem into a successful novel, *Black Robe: A Novel*.\(^{52}\) Moore’s novel is a mixture of historical fact and artistic license. Published in both French and English and distributed throughout Canada and the United States, Moore describes the intention of his work as an exploration of Wendat and Jesuit belief systems. In short he explains “this novel is an attempt to show that each of these beliefs inspired in the other fear, hostility and despair….\(^{53}\) For Moore, these factors that “[resulted] in the destruction and abandonment of the Jesuit Mission, and the conquest of the Huron people by the Iroquois, their deadly enemy.”\(^{54}\)

Theatrical performances present Wendat history in a similar way. Moore’s book, for instance, became so popular that in 1992 it was released as a feature-length film.\(^{55}\) Although the movie’s rendition of Moore’s classic attracted some criticism for its portrayal of indigenous culture, it received the Genie Award for Best Canadian Film and

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\(^{50}\) F-X Garneau, “Le Dernier Huron,” in *Traverse Les Vents* (1840), Wendake Archives [WA], Collection Français Vincent [CFV], cartable C-J.
\(^{51}\) The English translation is my own. The original poem in its entirety is: “Triomph, destinée! Enfin, ton heure arrive./O peuple, tu ne seras plus./Il n’errera bientôt de toi sue cette rive/Que des manes inconnus/ En vain le soir, du haut de la montagne,/O guerriers, levez-vous; couvrez cette campagne/Ombres des mes aieux!”
\(^{53}\) Moore, *Black Robe*, ix.
\(^{54}\) Moore, *Black Robe*, ix.
\(^{55}\) *Black Robe* (Montreal: Alliance Releasing Corporation, 1992).
positive reviews for its in-depth historical research. The film ends in 1635 during one of the first epidemics in Wendake. Written as a caption within the last scene is the following synopsis: “Fifteen years later, the Hurons, having accepted Christianity, were routed and killed by their enemies, the Iroquois.”

Taking another look at the Jesuits and Wendats, James Nichol produced Sainte-Marie Among The Hurons: A Play. This play was first performed at the London Theatre in London, Ontario in 1974, and subsequently at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in 1977. Main characters include the Jesuit “Blackrobe,” and two Wendats: “Broken Rock,” and “Sleeping Water.” The play included celebrated Canadian actors Colin Fox and Wayne Burnette. It covers the years 1634-1649 and takes place in seventeenth-century Wendake. Sainte-Marie Among The Hurons concludes with a 1649 battle between the Iroquois and the Wendats. The scene closes with the Wendat character Sleeping Water speaking to the audience and summarizing the circumstances in the following way:

The Blackrobes run before the Iroquois. Our Huron villages smolder black and dead. What am I now, left alone? Not Huron, for they don’t exist. Not Christian, for they have fled. The fever has lifted, and like a man who cannot die, captive in my broken land, I breathe, I open my hands and eyes…I live!

Together, these various forms of popular culture present different renditions of the same interpretation. The Wendat ceased to exist after 1649. They were captured, dispersed and defeated, thus, their stories, poems and films end there.

59 Nichol, Sainte Marie Among The Hurons, 79.
Contact Zones: The Internet

Finally, interpretations of Wendat history found on the Internet continue the “destruction” tradition. Although often unreliable, Wikipedia, has become the most popular on-line reference for gaining quick information. It is the second link for a Google search on the Wendat or Huron and explains the dispersal as follows:

The Iroquois attack caused the Huron to enter a state of terror. By May 1st, 1649, the Huron, in their panic, burned 15 of their villages and fled as refugees to surrounding tribes with about 10,000 fleeing to Christian Island. Most who fled to the island starved over the winter as it was a non-productive settlement and could not provide for them. Most who survived were believed to have resorted to cannibalism . . . the surviving Huron relocated near Quebec City and settled at Wendake, Quebec. They absorbed other refugees and became the Huron-Wendat Nation.60

The fear-stricken Wendats react with desperation and social collapse. The post-1649 experience of relocation is brief and simplified. More academically sound websites do not contradict this popular Wikipedia entry. The Ontario Association of Professional Archeologists, for instance, hosts a number of pages that deliver information on the seventeenth-century Wendats. Their “Charity Site” excavation page situates the importance of this archeological project in terms of contextualizing the “demise of the Hurons.”61 This interpretation continues on the Association’s pages on the “Christian Island” excavation. Beginning with the subtitle “The Final Years In Huronia,” the circumstances of the dispersal are explained in the following way:

Realizing the hopelessness of their situation, many of the remaining Hurons abandoned their villages, burned them to the ground so the Iroquois could not use them. This was the beginning of the period of

cultural devastation that has since gone unparalleled in this province…Thus the domination of south central Ontario by the Hurons was over. In a matter if a few years the Huron Nation was completely dissolved.\(^{62}\)

**Contact Zones: Wendat Community Traditions**

Wendat descendents have additional access to their community’s history and oral traditions. Ethnographer Charles Marius Barbeau depicted a dwindling, yet present, tradition of oral history within the modern Wendat diasporic communities at the turn of the twentieth century. He estimated that the Wendat of Oklahoma and Anderdon had a decent amount of story tellers but that in Quebec “hardly any traces of ancient mythology [were] left….”\(^{63}\) Still, people like Anne-Marie Sioui did exist and worked with Barbeau describing Wendat traditions of song, dance, mythology and history, while proving that a collective memory of past events had been passed down through the generations.\(^{64}\)

According to cultural theorist Chris Baker, participants in most diasporas suffer from an anxiety over forgetting the location of origin and the process of dispersal.\(^{65}\) Demonstrating the importance of sharing the past with future generations of Wendats, and the need for modern Wendat communities to remember their ancestors’ experiences of dispersal, the Huron Museum, located on the Wendat reserve in Quebec, printed the following message under the title “Memory” in their main exhibit:

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\(^{63}\) Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, xi, 5.

\(^{64}\) Anne-Marie Sioui, interview by Catherine Gros-Louis Dubé, 1979, WA, Fonds Marguerite Vincent [FMV], cartable G-2-40.

We, the Wendat, keep our history alive in our memory along with the awareness of our roots that are so deeply attached to the land around the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence. In every era, this faithfulness to the memory and traditions of the Ancestors renews our sense of belonging and opens new paths to the future for our people.⁶⁶

Although accounts of the oral traditions may have been limited in 1900, twenty-first-century Wendats have tried to maintain or rediscover their stories for future generations. The Wendats’ ability to gain knowledge about their history is an experience preserved for the most part to the Wendat community. It is not merely out of an interest in the history, as the museum states, but a need to connect with the past and understand their place in the world.

With the exception of Wendat community traditions, most people, whether they are Wendat or not, engage with Wendat history through similar avenues of academic literature, classroom lessons, interactive public history sites, museums, popular culture and the internet. These mediums determine the narrative and perpetuate a widespread and longstanding interest in Wendat history throughout North America. They provide varied “contact zones” between researchers and historians (both professional and hobbyists), as well as historians and histories. Overall, the medium by which Wendat history is transmitted has little consequence in terms of the dominating discourse and themes. Although not always explicitly stating the total demise of the Wendats in 1649, the language and frameworks imply that there is very little relevant to Wendat history after this period. Further, the notion that the Wendats had little choice, and that they were passive victims during this period is also central to the narrative. In the end, they emphasize destruction over the survival of the Wendats.

⁶⁶“Memory,” The Huron Museum, Main Exhibit [visited October 2009].
Wendat Responses

If the general public, like myself, reacts to these historical “contact zones” by creating subconscious conclusions about the destruction and the demise of the Wendats, how have the Wendats themselves reacted to the presentation of the conquest of 1649 and their dispersal? According to scholar John W. Dower, “the manner in which the war is remembered (and forgotten) - derives from the complexity of the interplay between the victors and the vanquished.”67 For the Wendats, the battles of the mid-seventeenth century, as presented by various mediums, permit certain aspects to be highlighted, while obscuring others. The subsequent relationship between the Wendats and New France officials, along with British and later Canadian and American governments has led to dominant non-Wendat representations of these events and a colonization of the Wendat past. One of the reasons behind the overabundance of non-Wendat material is because the Wendats themselves continue their struggle to overcome the sense of loss experienced by their communities during their exile from Wendake. Edward Said notes that “the achievements of an exile are permanently undermined by his or her sense of loss.”68 This sense of loss, although seemingly hundreds of years in the past, still remains within the modern Wendat communities. “At the heart of both defeat and war,” contends historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch, “lies the threat of extinction, a threat that resonates long past the cessation of hostilities.”69 The themes of loss and futility are therefore understandably accepted as legitimate aspects of the dispersal by modern Wendats.

Although the main themes of the narrative may be accepted and even endorsed by Wendats, they overtly reject both the premise of destruction and the non-Wendat misinterpretations of their history. Max ONE-ONTI Gros-Louis, former Grand Chief of the Huron-Wendat nation, has strongly protested the literature written on the Wendats: “There is no shortage of books written about us, written by learned historians (or writers who are recognized as such!). But we reject them because too often they contradict what our ancestors have transmitted to us orally, from generation to generation.”70 For Gros-Louis, the books do not represent a Wendat perspective of the past. Instead they are the educators who “forced us to learn things that I found outrageous, particularly Canadian history, where my ancestors were judged to be cruel, barbaric thieves, crafty hypocrites, liars, lousy, and I don’t know what else.”71 This passage demonstrates vividly his resentment and hostility toward these narratives. Psychologically, the effects of representations of the Wendats to their descendants as marginalized members of the larger North American society led Gros-Louis and others to reject sources derived from outside the community.

Georges Sioui, another member of the Huron-Wendat nation, has expressed similar sentiments. At barely five years of age, Sioui was enrolled in the Lorette Reserve School run by the Sisters of Perpetual Help. Sioui believes that the nun’s duty was to “implant a system of values and morality that would wipe out every shred of respect we might still feel for our ancestors and for the dignity of their way of life.”72 Sioui recounts from memory one nun’s history lessons concerning the circumstances of the 1649 battles

71 Gros-Louis, Gros-Louis, 24-25.
72 Georges Sioui, Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), xvi.
and the capture of Jesuits from the mission of Sainte-Marie: “Your poor ancestors were savages . . . The King took pity on them and sent missionaries to convert them, but your savage ancestors killed the missionaries.” They became our Holy Canadian Martyrs, who died to save the savages.” Upset, Sioui ran home to his parents, who attempted to counteract the “savage” interpretation presented by the nun. Similar to Gros-Louis, Sioui’s response to such a history, whether intended or not, was disillusionment and rejection.

Public history sites can also engender feelings of sadness and resentment for modern Wendats. Although SMAH does not portray Wendats as “savages,” it is nonetheless a place full of conflicting emotion for the descendants of the seventeenth-century Wendats. Many Wendats/Wyandots, according to one interpreter, visit the site on a yearly basis as part of a kind of pilgrimage. In most cases the pilgrims will introduce themselves as Wendat, although “You can often tell they’re Huron before they tell you, they have that look in their eyes,” says an interpreter. The “look” according to Laura Peers, is because “rather like visitors to Holocaust museums who have personal ties to their history being represented, Native visitors have a difficult relationship to some historic sites.” SMAH is a reconstruction of a place that is central to the Wendat destruction myth - the Jesuits tore it down in the wake of the Iroquois attacks and it was from this mission that many Wendats began their relocation out of Wendake.

In the summer of 1999, Chief Janith English, of the Wyandot Nation of Kansas, expressed her emotional experience upon returning to the territory formerly known as

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73 This is not true. The Iroquois captured, tortured, and killed the Jesuit Martyrs.
Wendake for the first time. Through the narratives and histories passed down from
generations of Wendat descendants, English came to understand that “Many years ago
when our people left this beautiful land on the shores of Georgian Bay, our hearts were
heavy, our people were very very sad.”
77 English gained her perspective from texts, classroom lessons, public history sites, museums and community oral histories. Her
feelings are, therefore, the direct results of centuries of rhetoric emphasizing loss and
desolation, rather than survival and strategizing. Thus many Wendats, like Chief English,
have sifted through the biases and retained an understanding of the sad and destructive
aspects of the dispersal.

More recently, there have been a number of attempts by modern Wendats to
revise the history and present it through a Wendat perspective. In respect to academic
works on Wendat history, Georges Sioui’s The Huron-Wendat is an effort to write the
“other” history. This book includes Wendat origins and mythology, demographic history,
with an extensive chapter on Wendat society. Its aim, as Sioui puts it, is to “counteract
this collective conditioning and restore Amerindian dignity and the right to survival . . .
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78 Indeed, this work goes beyond the usual written documents, applying ethnohistorical
approaches and delivering a Wendat perspective on seventeenth-century culture,
diplomacy and politics.79 Notwithstanding the contributions of Sioui’s work, his narrative
retains a pre-1649 framework, silencing once again the post-dispersal period. His third
and final chapter on Wendat society, for instance, concentrates exclusively on the years

77 Roberta Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy, Sense of Belonging,” Toronto Star (August 30, 1999), page 5.
78 Sioui, Huron-Wendat, xx.
79 Sioui defines this last approach as an Amerindian autohistorical approach. For more
information on the subject see his methodological guide: Sioui, For An Amerindian Autohistory
1615-1650. Further, Sioui contends “In 1634 the Jesuits entered the picture. This was the beginning of the end for the Wendats.”80 The use of such language unintentionally asserts that there was an “end” to the Wendats – an argument that clearly Sioui intends to counter.

An elementary-school textbook published by the conseil de la nation huronne-wendat represents another attempt to demonstrate Wendat history from a Wendat perspective.81 This text, entitled Anontaché in the Wendat language meaning “where did it come from?” delivers Wendat history through a conversation between a little girl “Lucie” and her grandfather. Lucie asks questions about Wendat history and her grandfather attempts to answer her. When Lucie asks why the Wendats left Ontario her grandfather replies “because in 1648, the Iroquois attacked and destroyed their village . . . then they took refuge at Sainte-Marie and then Christian Island, where they lived until 1650. Then because of Iroquois attacks and famine they left and went to Quebec.”82 The grandfather then proceeds to list the various locations the Wendats lived in the east before settling at Lorette, Quebec. This account departs from the textbooks discussed by Gros-Louis because it gives power to the storyteller and the Wendats within the narrative of their dispersal. It is a history created by and for the Wendats.

Although government institutions and non-Wendats create most interactive public history sites, Wendats have created a number of sites for the general public. Located within the Huron-Wendat reserve in Quebec, “The Huron Traditional Site,” or “Onhoüa Chetek8e” in Wendat, provides a “journey into the heart of Huron traditions, past and

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80 Sioui, Huron-Wendat, 176.
82 The English translation is my own. Anontaché, 9-11.
present.”83 This site includes guided tours of longhouses and medicine huts, explanations of Wendat cosmology, as well as several artifacts of other North American indigenous groups. This site is privately owned and operated by a member of the Huron-Wendat nation, Mario Gros-Louis. According to Gros-Louis, his original vision and purpose of the site was to share Wendat history with the larger population. In essence “The evolutionary path of the Americas has to a certain extent historically tied our people” says the founder. “While visiting our recreated village and by letting yourselves be carried away by our stories, you will discover the hidden faces of the Huron’s way of life.” Gros-Louis concludes, “We trust your stay amongst us will bring a better understanding of our evolution and culture.”84

In the site’s brochure visitors are told that:

Towards the middle of the 17th century, several thousands of people have succeeded to escape from all those misfortunes that even the courage of our ancestors did not succeed to cast away. For this reason we had to find new lands to escape these plagues. Among the survivors, several were already converted to Christianity, went in the direction of the St. Lawrence River Valley. Only approximately 400 of them arrived in Quebec.85

This brief interpretation, although depicting “misfortunes,” reorients the general discussion with its inclusion of “survivors,” “escape,” and “courage.”

With a similar mandate in mind, The Huron Museum, located in Wendake, Quebec, focuses its history of the dispersal on the tragic collapse of the seventeenth-century Wendat Confederacy and promotes the decolonization of Wendat history in general.86 Under the title “The Fall of The Confederacy,” a caption reads: “Families,

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83 Traditional Huron Site ONHOUA CHETEK8E (Wendake: Huron Village, 2007), 5.
84 Mario Gros-Louis, quoted in: Traditional Huron Site, 5.
85 Traditional Huron Site, 9.
small groups, even entire villages, broke away and scattered the clans and nations to the four winds.” Other captions explaining seventeenth-century artifacts assert, “these objects also tell of deep wounds resulting from a tragic destiny that led to the breakup of the Wendat Confederacy.” Stories of resilience and survival come much later in the exhibit, describing the accomplishments of nineteenth and twentieth-century Wendats.

The modern Wendat nations use the Internet as another means to present their history from their viewpoint. Interestingly, the Huron-Wendats of Quebec do not include any information on the dispersal, choosing to list source references instead. In contrast, the Wendat nations of Anderdon, Oklahoma and Kansas, who are the descendants of those Wendats who settled Michilimackinac, include brief mentions of the dispersal. The Wyandot of Anderdon Nation, for example, includes a chronology of important Wendat events written by Mike Stailey and a brief synopsis of the dispersal between the years 1649-1650. The details are as follows:

1649: War begins between the Mohawk and their allies the Seneca who are of the Iroquois nation against the Wendat. The Mohawk and Seneca have many guns and scatter the Wendat nation. 1650: Part of the Wendat nation seeks refuge with their neighbors the Petun also known as the Tobacco nation by the French. The formation between the Wendat and Petun become the Wyandot.

The Wyandot Nation of Kansas also uses a chronological timeline that incorporates a discussion of the dispersal. The website uses Larry Hanck’s “The Emigrant Tribes: Wyandot, Delaware and Shawnee, a Chronology.” This narrative describes how in 1649 “. . . The Huron Confederacy disintegrates. Some flee to islands in Georgian Bay; others

87 Huron Museum, Main Exhibit [viewed October 1, 2009].
seek refuge with the Ottawa, Petun, Neutrals, Erie or French, while still others become
adopted captives of the Iroquois. Finally, the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma presents
a description of the dispersal as interpreted by Sallie Cotter Andrews and the Wyandotte
Historical Committee. In this case the narrative is:

1648: . . . The Huron nation was scattered. 1649: Huron and Petun are
decisively defeated and flee westward to Mackinac Island. 1650: 300
Huron who had wintered on Christian Island go to Quebec accompanied
by 60 Frenchmen from the abandoned Huron mission.

Combined, these websites give some insight into the events surrounding the dispersal.
The nature of the narrative is factual, although because it is interspersed with the
language of “fleeing,” and “scattering” the story remains one of haphazard decisions and
actions.

Wendat reactions to non-Wendat accounts of their people’s history led to a surge
of histories in various forms from a Wendat perspective. This new body of work aims to
empower the modern Wendat nations who continue to deal with the repercussions of
colonialism and conquest. These histories are not only crucial to the process of
decolonization, but also serve to create new “contact zones” between the general public
and Wendat history. They highlight community insights into Wendat events and people.
In terms of the destruction myth, these discourses infuse personal feelings of loss, despair
and victimization. The themes presented in the mainstream narrative, therefore, persist.
Although it is evident that the Wendats were not destroyed in a literal sense, as their
descendants present these histories, the language of destruction and tragedy hold true and
remain hegemonic. As a result, there remains little room for accounts of decisive strategy

90 Larry Hancks, “The Emigrant Tribes: Wyandot, Delaware and Shawnee, a Chronology,”
and cultural resilience in a narrative emphasizing “breakups,” “collapses” and “the beginning of the end.”

**Conclusion**

Depictions of Wendat destruction, trauma, dislocation and violence are not inaccurate portrayals of the circumstances surrounding their defeat in 1649. The collection of accounts, from seventeenth-century Jesuits to modern Wendats, point not to a critique of historical fact but to a patterned discourse that has inadvertently led to public misconceptions concerning Wendat history. The tendency for the literature, classroom lessons, interactive public history sites, museums, popular culture and websites to employ language that describes “demise” and “decline” insinuates an end for the Wendat people. This unintended conclusion is only bolstered further with the emphasis on the pre-1649 period. Without detailed knowledge of the events taking place during and after the dispersal, the history of the seventeenth-century Wendats is relegated to the first half of the century. With little discussion on the years after 1649, readers, the public, and Wendat descendents are left with illusions of an end to Wendat history, rather than a benchmark. Even with the emergence of Wendat interpretations, information about the fifty years after the dispersal remains relatively absent from the communities’ collective memory. As a result, questions of diaspora process, as well as Wendat identity and agency in the early stages of Wendat removal still persist.

Did the Confederacy truly disintegrate after 1650? How and why did Wendats choose to leave Wendake? How many Wendats survived, and to what extent did they remain “Wendat?” Inquiries of this nature can help us understand exactly how the Wendats overcame the Iroquois conquest, replacing the destruction myth with a more
nuanced and accurate portrayal of Native survival and cultural creativity. The dispersal, therefore, and the subsequent chapters on Wendat mobilization and relocation, represent an opportunity to expand seventeenth-century Wendat history beyond 1649 and the discourse of defeat.
CHAPTER 1
DISEASE AND DIPLOMACY: THE LOSS OF LEADERSHIP AND LIFE IN WENDAKE

Introduction

On the evening of 4 August 1638 the Wendat Confederacy called a general council to order. A number of Jesuit priests attended; the atmosphere was solemn and serious. Father Paul Le Jeune described the council in the following way:

I do not know that I have seen anything more lugubrious than this assembly. In the beginning, they looked at one another like corpses, or rather like men who already feel the terrors of death; they spoke only in sighs, each one understanding the enumeration of the death and sick in his family. All that was only to incite them to vomit more bitterly upon us the venom which they concealed within.¹

This seemingly traditional council symbolized immense social change; the Wendats faced a devastating new reality in the years leading up to their dispersal. Epidemic disease waged crippling attacks not once, but three times during this decade, killing up to sixty percent of the population.² Men were lost; leaders were sick; councils were disillusioned. Thus, the “lugubrious” state of delegates at the August assembly highlighted the experience and destruction of disease across the Wendat Confederacy.

Many scholars have discussed the impact of disease on Native American communities. Demographic depopulation, European conquest, warfare, religious conversion, economy, as well as Amerindian perspectives and reactions to disease have attracted much attention. Studies focused on the Wendat experience generally blame

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disease for the Wendat’s weakness in the face of Iroquoian attacks, a key factor in their “destruction” include similar discussions. Yet although these studies stress the importance of Native American population loss and demographics, there is almost nothing pertaining to the Native American person. Current scholarship focuses on overall reactions, universal perceptions, and general dynamics of disease-ridden societies; the stories of the individuals who lost their lives are overlooked and relegated to a numerical statistic or a faceless account. The personal and historical narratives of Wendat civil headmen who died as a result of the epidemics of the 1630s indicate that Native Americans experienced disease not only as a collective disaster, but as a deeply personal tragedy. Shifting from a general to particular focus reveals the important political and cultural dynamics of a society in crisis. In reaction to disease, Wendat leaders instigated policies to address the precarious cultural disruptions brought on by these circumstances.

In his seminal work The Children of Aataentsic, Bruce Trigger speculates that the Wendats lost experienced headmen throughout the 1630s. It is also likely, according to Trigger, that many of them died before they could transmit any of their knowledge to their heirs. Although convincing, this analysis remains hypothetical, since Trigger has few tangible examples of headmen dying; the specific effects of their deaths on the

5 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 601.
Wendat community are assumed rather than illustrated. The headmen *Taretande* and *Aenon*, both confirm Trigger’s analysis but also helps reveal the complex and intense atmosphere of the 1630s in a concrete way. During this period, the Wendats faced severe demographic and military pressure. They confronted new geopolitical realities in the form of potential French alliance and Iroquois aggression. Christianity offered an attractive new spiritual and political path for some members of the community, but elicited angry rejection from others. All of these factors created conflict within the Confederacy; yet death and disease meant constant turnover in leadership and policy, and often removed individuals best suited to generating consensus. By analyzing Wendat agency, activism, and the loss of headmen during a period of community crisis and survival, this chapter sheds light on political divisions, uncovers failed military strategies, and secluded meetings. Through an examination of these leaders one may come to understand that *sixty percent* mortality is not simply a number, but a symbolic reference to thousands of significant and unique lives whose loss shaped the future of Wendat culture and the Confederacy.

**Wendat Civil Leaders**

Civil headmen conducted the affairs of politics and diplomacy of the seventeenth-century Wendats. Although men traditionally occupied these positions, women controlled the selection of community political leaders. The Wendats were a matricentric society, stressing female authority over kinship, food cultivation and residency patterns, as well as
the selection of male heirs and future headmen. This process usually involved the oldest or most senior woman of a clan nominating a male member of her clan for the position in consultation with other women. After the so-called “clan mother” voiced her selection, the existing headmen approved or rejected the choice. Following the men’s vote, women still exercised their influence over the power of appointed male leaders. Typically the clan or village held a feast in honor of the newly chosen headman, and if at this feast “two women came and [pitched] the tone of the feast, they expected to see only broken heads under the [headman].” In other words, if the women did not accept the new headman, his leadership would be doomed to failure. Women may not have been eligible to hold political office, but they were nonetheless important decision makers throughout the selection process and the subsequent careers of Wendat civil leaders.

Civil headmen directed affairs of state and foreign relations, and also organized feasts, dances, games, and the councils of peace. Their duties included a variety of jobs, except for war councils and campaigns. The headmen were representatives of community villages, clan segments and at times the Confederacy at large. A headman had to prove himself worthy of the position; individuals had to demonstrate intellectual superiority, diplomatic skill, bravery, and they had to enjoy widespread support from their community. Wendat villages often had more than one civil leader, although each

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8 *JR* 17: 161.

headman was no more powerful than the next.\textsuperscript{10} They did not receive presents or gifts for
their appointments, but they did command respect and obedience from their people.
Significantly, while these men held great power, they were not dictators of political
decisions, nor could they act alone. The French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, took
note of the Wendat system of civil leadership and so-called “forest diplomacy,”
observing “the older and leading men assemble in a council, in which they settle upon
and propose all that is necessary for the affairs of the village. This is done by a plurality
of voices . . . They have no particular chiefs with absolute command . . . .”\textsuperscript{11} Civil leaders
had to facilitate productive communication and formidable consensus in order for them to
execute foreign as well as domestic policy.\textsuperscript{12}

These skills, always in demand, become even more critical during times of social
insecurity. A series of epidemics in Wendake throughout the 1630s made the headman’s
role all the more crucial. As Wendats sought solutions to a dwindling population and
unstable political network, the innovative leadership and diplomacy of certain headmen
became critical even as death undercut their initiatives.

The Atmosphere of Disease

Disease was a major concern for Wendats throughout the 1630s. In the autumn of
1633 smallpox made its first decisive attack on the Confederacy, and by 1640 the total

\textsuperscript{10} Samuel de Champlain, \textit{The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, 1604-1618}. J. Franklin Jameson,
\textsuperscript{11} de Champlain, \textit{The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, 1604-1618}, 1: 327.
\textsuperscript{12} William Fenton, “The Iroquois in History,” in \textit{North American Indians in Historical
Perspective} Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie, eds., (New York: Random
House, 1971), 145.
population was reduced to half.\textsuperscript{13} Following the introduction of smallpox in 1633, Wendats experienced a major epidemic in 1634. This epidemic began in the summer and continued to debilitate the population throughout the winter months.\textsuperscript{14} The Jesuits observed it first-hand and made notes on the symptoms of the disease, a “sort of measles and an oppression of the stomach.”\textsuperscript{15} According to Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf, it usually began with a high fever and ended with a bout of diarrhea. This was followed by a rash that looked like “a sort of measles or smallpox, but different from that common in France.”\textsuperscript{16} Some victims also suffered blindness or blurred vision for several days.\textsuperscript{17} This particular epidemic was so severe that communities were unable to harvest food for subsistence during the winter.\textsuperscript{18} The exact number of people affected by this disease is uncertain, but Trigger argues “there can be no doubt that many Huron were stricken by this epidemic.”\textsuperscript{19} Commenting on the loss of Wendat life throughout this period, Brébeuf stated “he personally did not know anyone who had escaped [the epidemic] and that a large number had died.”\textsuperscript{20}

While the epidemic subsided after the winter and during the early months of 1635, Jesuit records indicate that death rates within Wendake remained uncharacteristically high in comparison to previous years.\textsuperscript{21} Another epidemic, more devastating than the last,

\textsuperscript{14} Johnson and Jackson, “Settlement Pattern at the Le Caron Site,” 500.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{JR} 7: 221.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{JR} 8: 89.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{JR} 8: 89.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{JR} 8: 87-89.
\textsuperscript{19} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}. 500.
\textsuperscript{20} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic} 500-501.
attacked Wendat villages in the spring of 1636. It began in May and persisted for the next six months. This time symptoms were much more drawn out than those of 1634, and victims were often bedridden for long periods of time before they began to recover, or pass away, which inhibited other sorts of crucial activities, such as plating corn, gathering food and trade. Death rates were unprecedented. In the span of eight days, the village of Ossossane lost ten individuals. By the end of the epidemic, this same village lost fifty people in total, or twenty percent of the village’s total population. Based on the total deaths from Ossossane, Trigger estimates that roughly five hundred Wendats died during the 1636 epidemic. A third epidemic, which some scholars suggest was scarlet fever, hit the Wendat in the summer of 1637. It lasted well into the fall, as Jesuit accounts depict the disease being the most extreme during mid-November. Missionaries were anxious about the illness, writing continuously of how they were constantly surrounded by the sick and dying during this period.

The personal experiences of those caught in this traumatic event best illustrate the devastation of the epidemics. Father Le Jeune was particularly struck by the loss of an eleven-year-old boy named Arakhie. He felt for the child’s death to such an extent that the priest omitted his account of this subject in his original records, including it only after

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22 Letter from Jean de Brébeuf to T.R.P Mutius Vitelleschi (1636).
23 Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic, 527.
24 JR 13: 213.
26 Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic, 528. To put the numerical loss at Ossossane into context, Warrick estimates that between the years 1634-1637 the Confederacy as a whole experienced 20% depopulation. See Warrick, “A Population History,” 399.
27 Dobyns, Their Numbers Become Thinned, 322.
28 JR 13: 145.
he “was ready to write about it, [feeling] its strong hold upon [his] heart . . . [hardly able to] keep the tears from falling from [his] eyes.”\(^{29}\)

*Arakhie*, which means “closing day,” was a young boy who was like “a little Sun which arose before the eyes.”\(^{30}\) Le Jeune stressed the child’s physical appearance, both taller and stronger than any of the boys his age. He was also intelligent beyond his years, described an equal to the adults of his community.\(^{31}\) Contemporaries characterized *Arakhie* as:

> . . . sedate, grave, obliging and of agreeable conversation. He was polite, and took pride in appearing serious in the midst of the insolence of his companions . . . He was wonderfully docile, and he had a very happy memory . . . \(^{32}\)

Despite his exceptional qualities, *Arakhie* could not escape disease. He was the first to fall ill in his family, followed quickly by his grandmother, mother, and four or five others within his household.\(^ {33}\) Eventually, disease immobilized this boy and his family; they became isolated from their community, fearing that they might spread their illness to others.\(^ {34}\) *Arakhie* lost his will to speak, refusing to maintain a conversation with anyone, transforming from an exuberant and articulate boy into a sorrowful, weak soul.\(^ {35}\) After several weeks of seclusion, *Arakhie’s* family members began to recover; the young boy was not as lucky.\(^ {36}\) Hours before his death, this boy, who was known for stimulating

\(^{29}\) JR 13: 117.

\(^{30}\) JR 13: 117.

\(^{31}\) JR 13: 117.

\(^{32}\) JR 13: 117.

\(^{33}\) JR 13: 121.

\(^{34}\) JR 13: 121.

\(^{35}\) JR 13: 121.

\(^{36}\) JR 13: 123.
conversation and superior intelligence, mumbled his last word: “chieske.”\textsuperscript{37} The translation reads: “What do I know?”\textsuperscript{38}

\textit{Arakhie}’s story is significant for several reasons. First, the sense of loss and sadness felt by those around this young boy demonstrate the severe psychic devastation experienced by those dealing with disease. This kind of despair impaired the ability of the survivors to organize and maintain a functioning society in light of their personal grief. In addition, \textit{Arakhie} was not only loved, but respected by his community. Already at the age of eleven, this young Wendat possessed the qualities associated with the leadership of a talented headman. He is, then, a prime example of a future Wendat leader who never had the chance to reach his potential. Finally, \textit{Arakhie} was not an isolated case. In fact, it was the young men and future leaders, like this boy, who were the most susceptible to disease.\textsuperscript{39} Viral infections, smallpox, measles, mumps and chickenpox occur more frequently among those in the prime of their life (15-30 years of age) because of their more active immune systems.\textsuperscript{40} This demographic included men who were arguably some of the most physically and politically active individuals within their society. Those who died, therefore, did not just include potential leaders, but current leaders as well. Throughout the 1630s, Wendats lost the energy and accumulating wisdom of respected headmen with the onslaught of disease. As headmen died, leadership and policies faltered, disrupting diplomacy as well as domestic politics and the security of the Wendat Confederacy.

\textsuperscript{37} JR 13: 125.
\textsuperscript{38} JR 13: 125.
\textsuperscript{39} Warrick, “A Population History,” 409.
Taretande

The influential headman Taretande serves as a case study demonstrating the
effects of this loss of leadership experienced by the Wendats during the 1630s. Taretande
was a civil headman of the Southern Bear Nation, a Bear Clan member, and belonged to
the village of Ihonatiria. Since the coming of Christian missionaries, but more
specifically the Jesuits, Taretande maintained an anti-European policy of resistance and
rejection. At first, Taretande’s resistance took the form of public mockery. The Jesuits
took up residence in Ihonatiria, often holding religious ceremonies and inviting Wendats
to attend; missionaries enticed the Natives to attend by offering tobacco. Taking
advantage of this situation, Taretande accepted the invitation only to make jokes about
Christian rituals and beliefs. He took tobacco and declared for all those present that this
sacred medicinal plant was the only reason he had come. By chastising the Jesuits in a
public forum, Taretande demonstrated a number of important policies in regards to his
leadership. He was not afraid of the French and was comfortable confronting them
publicly; and he expressed his skepticism about the superiority of the Christian faith and
remained loyal to Wendat Traditional beliefs. Finally, his public displays suggest he
spoke for other members in his society, thus encouraging him to continue this type of
mockery on more than one occasion.

As the epidemics became more severe and the death rates increased, so did
Taretande’s resistance to the Jesuits. In addition to the informal displays of hostility at
Christian ceremonies, the civil leader took action during official councils throughout the

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41 JR 13: 215. The differences between the Northern and Southern Bear seem to be significant
enough to merit making a distinction between the two. For more information on the Northern and
Southern Bear see John Steckley, Words of The Huron (Waterloo: University of Wilfred Laurier

mid 1630s. At a meeting in 4 January 1636, for example, Taretande lashed out at the Jesuits in attendance, throwing burning coals from the council fire at them and making verbal threats. Headmen gathered at this general meeting to discuss the popular belief that the Jesuits were to blame for the diseases inflicting the Confederacy. Taretande went to great lengths in his address to the council to blame the Jesuits for making their communities ill. He held them responsible and concluded his oration by publicly declaring that if anyone in his family should die, he would “split the head” of the first Frenchman he saw.\textsuperscript{43}

After the January council, Taretande made certain to put his words into action by suggesting a policy of eradication. His request gained support from at least six other Bear Nation headmen, resulting in a subsequent meeting between Taretande, his brother Sononkhiaconc and the Jesuit missionaries. This private meeting took place at the Jesuits’ cabin on the evening of 4 January, the same day as the general council. Once again Taretande hounded the Jesuits to admit their guilt in their involvement in the epidemics. He accused them of sorcery, which could be punishable by death. After some deliberation, Taretande confessed the council would not agree unanimously on a death sentence; however, he warned that a number of headmen had resolved to expel the Jesuits from Wendat country, sending them back to Quebec in the spring.\textsuperscript{44} Thus, Taretande made the Jesuits aware that he was not alone, and that he represented a growing faction within the Bear Nation that desired the complete removal of the missionaries from Wendat society. The missionaries in turn acknowledged Taretande as a formidable opponent, passionate in his convictions as well as motivated to implement his policy.

\textsuperscript{44} JR 13: 217.
Taretande’s family supported his position. Jesuit records indicate with extreme annoyance that Sononkhiaconc, Taretande’s younger brother, made fun of the catechisms in the same manner as the headman.\textsuperscript{45} Equally annoying was the refusal by the children in Taretande’s house to listen to the Jesuits’ teachings. On several occasions the Jesuits had visited the home, trying desperately to inflict Christian education on the youth. They met with so much opposition that the Jesuits eventually gave up, and stopped their visits entirely.\textsuperscript{46} Significantly, the most agitation from a single member of Taretande’s family was by his mother, the so-called “renegade Christian.”\textsuperscript{47} This woman had accepted baptism in 1635, making her one of the first converts by the Jesuits. This seems to be a superficial conversion, in that she often abandoned her ties to Christianity, choosing to support Wendat traditional practices when it pleased her.\textsuperscript{48} It is likely she shaped her family’s anti-Jesuit advocacy, given the power of women as Wendat advisors.

The Jesuits’ intense dislike of Taretande and his family and the family’s persistent rejection of the missionaries are further highlighted through their collapse in the wake of disease. Only a few days after Taretande’s private meeting with the Jesuits, three members of his family fell ill, followed by his mother, his brother, and finally the headman himself. The entire household became cut off from society, isolated so that they would not infect others. Quickly the illness took its first victim, a sixteen-year-old sibling of Taretande.\textsuperscript{49} Unfortunately, there was little time to grieve this loss as the family realized that their mother, the “renegade” had also died. Then, like a game of dominos,

\textsuperscript{45} JR 13: 219.
\textsuperscript{46} JR 13: 217.
\textsuperscript{47} The Jesuits do not give her Christian or Wendat name, thus she is always referred to as the “renegade.” JR 13: 219.
\textsuperscript{48} JR 13: 219.
\textsuperscript{49} JR 13: 221.
one after another, brothers and sisters all began to vanish. Left alone, Taretande spent his last hours in meditation, trying to escape the insufferable physical pain that engulfed his body and the sorrow of his many losses. On 12 January 1637, Taretande joined the rest of his family in the Land of the Dead.

Despite their weakened condition and the notion put forth by missionaries that Christian baptism might cure their disease, no one in Taretande’s family converted during their illness. Taretande’s mother, for instance, used the last of her energy to insist that she regretted her earlier baptism and that she did not believe in the Christian faith. The persistence of anti-Jesuit sentiment, led by Taretande and supported by his family, must have made a strong impression on those within the wider community. It was a clear rejection of the Jesuits during a time where not only the fate of the missionaries was uncertain, but the fate of the Wendats as well. Taretande’s skill and determination provided a response and strategy to deal with the turmoil faced by the Wendats. He had persuaded a number of civil headmen to support his endeavors, and had executed his plan by meeting with the Jesuits and communicating the coalition’s desire to have them removed by the following spring. Despite these seemingly successful negotiations, there is no reference to Taretande’s removal policy after his death. In fact, the Jesuits did not leave Wendake the next spring, signaling either a purposeful or unconscious lack of engagement by the surviving Wendat leaders to implement the plan. It would seem that Taretande’s death signified not only the loss of a leader, but his policies as well.

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50 JR 13: 223.
51 JR 12: 223.
52 JR 12: 221.
Aenon

Taretande was not the only headman responding to the intense atmosphere of unrest in the 1630s. Many other leaders took up the call for guidance and strategy. Of particular significance was the influence of another Bear Clan headman from the northern Bear nation, Aenon.\textsuperscript{53} In contrast to Taretande, Aenon spent the 1630s campaigning in support of the Jesuits and the French. This headman was involved in all aspects of Wendat diplomacy, as well as an active participant in the developing fur trade economy.\textsuperscript{54} He had the talent to persuade and the confidence to put his plans into action. In fact, it was the Jesuits’ hope that no other headman could prevail if they were in competition with Aenon.\textsuperscript{55}

Much like his contemporary Taretande, Aenon was prolific. He was a creative individual who influenced all those around him. Most frequently he described his perception of the French and his relationship with them. In a speech made in 1635 to Father Brébeuf, Aenon explained:

The French have always been attached to me, and have loved me; I have always assisted them in every way I could, and they have not found in all this land a better friend than I. This has not been without incurring the envy of others throughout the Country . . . whatever may be said, I shall, all my life, love and serve the French, in every way I can.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} JR 10: 305; Toupin, \textit{Les Écrits de Pierre Potier}, 228.
\textsuperscript{54} JR 10: 309 and JR 8: 139.
\textsuperscript{55} JR 10: 235. In addition to his many public responsibilities, Aenon also faced complex circumstances in his personal life. His son suffered from severe bouts of depression and ultimately committed suicide. According to missionary observers, Aenon’s son could not face his family after losing a game of straws. He had gambled a beaver robe and a collar of four hundred porcelain beads. His fear was so great that he hung himself in a tree. The devastating loss of a child, especially during a time of such critical negotiations, would have most certainly influenced Aenon, yet his son’s death seems to have had little affect on his ability to excel in the public realm. It was at this same time that a Jesuit missionary asserted that Aenon could still prevail over any other headman in the country. See JR 10: 237-239.
\textsuperscript{56} JR 10: 237-239.
It was *Aenon’s* utmost desire that the French and Wendats would maintain an alliance, facilitated through Wendat diplomats and French missionaries. In his view, the nature of this alliance required mutual respect and support. He acknowledged the differences in religion and culture, but asserted that both parties should accept these distinctions and that they should not be stumbling blocks to diplomatic relations.\(^57\) *Aenon* also placed great importance on a military alliance between the French and Wendats. He emphasized the Wendat need for firearms, and, equally, the French need for able-bodied men to protect them.\(^58\) According to the headman, this type of reciprocal exchange would allow for both parties to effectively combat the Iroquois and continue to live in Wendake.\(^59\)

*Aenon* did much more than talk about his aspirations for an alliance. Finding Father Brébeuf alone in his cabin, the headman took the opportunity to have a private conversation with the missionary in 1635. During this meeting, *Aenon* asked Brébeuf what the Wendat could do to get aid from the French.\(^60\) The question had extra urgency as the Wendats were in the midst of dealing with a series of Iroquois attacks, as well as the epidemics. Brébeuf responded only that it was important for the Wendats to pray during these difficult times. *Aenon* appeased the French and agreed to do so.\(^61\)

On 21 July 1635, *Aenon* once again tried to bring the French closer to the Wendats. This time *Aenon* met with several French missionaries at Trois Rivières, and agreed to escort Fathers Chastelain and Garnier into Wendat territory.\(^62\) Initially, the Jesuits’ destination was undecided, but *Aenon* seized this opportunity to make a case for

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\(^57\) *JR* 13: 171-173.  
\(^58\) *JR* 10: 241.  
\(^59\) *JR* 10: 241.  
\(^60\) *JR* 9: 237.  
\(^61\) *JR* 9: 237-239.  
\(^62\) *JR* 9: 247.
his own village and suggested that he would take Father Chastelain to reside with him.\textsuperscript{63} Despite the fact that there were six other Wendat headmen present at this meeting, all expressing a desire to keep the two missionaries together at a village other than that of Aenon, it was Aenon who departed from Trois Rivière with Chastelain in his canoe.\textsuperscript{64} In this case, Aenon’s wish to have Chastelain reside within his village and the successful negotiations of his request demonstrate the leader’s ability to act on his own, while still working towards an overall alliance between the greater Wendat community and the French. By having Chastelain close by and living among his people, Aenon secured a direct connection to the French, his ultimate goal.

Aenon also initiated the idea of a “Centre Lieu.”\textsuperscript{65} This plan involved the amalgamation of five villages into a massive fortified community. The main impetus for the fort was to defend the Wendats against pending Iroquois attacks. For six months Aenon lobbied the French to join the Wendats in this endeavor. He delivered numerous speeches, held meetings and continuously argued the need for full commitment from the French to join the “Centre Lieu.” Aenon persisted and in the spring of 1636, he sent a message to Brébeuf requesting a meeting with the missionary.\textsuperscript{66} Brébeuf agreed and the two met soon after. Brébeuf was so impressed with the headman’s speech that he felt he could not do it justice by writing it down; nonetheless, he recorded the speech because of its importance.\textsuperscript{67} Aenon’s ideas, although perhaps not as graceful in written form,

\textsuperscript{63} JR 9: 247.
\textsuperscript{64} JR 9: 247.
\textsuperscript{65} This proposed strategy was referred to by the Jesuits as a “Centre Lieu”, and roughly translates into “Central Location.”
\textsuperscript{66} JR 10: 235-237.
\textsuperscript{67} JR 10: 237.
demonstrate his role as an effective liaison during the negotiations over this “Centre Lieu:”

Echon.68 I have sent for you to learn your final decision. I would not have given you the trouble to come here, had I not been afraid that I should not find at your house the opportunity of speaking to you. Your Cabin is always full of so many people visiting you, that it is almost impossible to say anything to you in private; and then, now that we are on the point of assembling to deliberate regarding the establishment of a new Village, this interview might have aroused the suspicions of those who wish to keep you.69

Even within this first paragraph (there are eight in total), one can see Aenon deserved his reputation as an effective diplomat. He assessed the situation and took into consideration all factors that might influence the missionary’s decision, and he tried to respond to Brébeuf’s concerns. Aenon understood that to win his case he needed to eliminate outside interference. Furthermore, he was able to balance the urgency of his request and need for a final commitment by the French through an appeal to the missionary’s desire to feel wanted. He knew that by addressing the fact that there were other villages interested in having the French priests live with them, Brébeuf would be pleased and would be more inclined to listen.70 Brébeuf was so delighted that he made a note stating explicitly “we have to praise God, that he gives us the favor to be loved and sought after throughout the Country . . . but, if we have regard to importunities, assuredly [Aenon] will prevail.”71

Because of Aenon’s apparent affection for the French and his role as a leading correspondent between the Wendats and French, he often mediated between those who

68 “Echon” is the Wendat pronunciation of “Jean.” In this case, Aenon is addressing the Jesuit “Jean”/Echon de Brébeuf.
69 JR 10: 239.
70 While Aenon was lobbying for the French to join the “Centre Lieu”, the Wendat villages of Arendoronnon, Attignenonghac, and Ossossane were expressing similar interest in having the French live with them. See JR 10: 235.
71 JR 10: 235.
resisted the Jesuit’s presence and those who supported them. Through speeches made at various times during his leadership, Aenon made significant calls for Wendats to maintain and confirm their alliance with the French. On one occasion, for instance, the men of Aenon’s village called an assembly, inviting both Father Brébeuf and Aenon to attend. They charged Aenon to represent the council at this meeting and apologize for any past messages of animosity, such as Taretande’s threats. In so doing, Aenon asked the French to “think no more of what had passed . . . [and to forget] the evil designs that [the Wendats] had had upon [the Jesuits’] lives.” Brébeuf responded by saying that he forgave them, although he was disappointed in them. Through Aenon, the Wendats were able to make amends with the French, thus sustaining the possibility of an official alliance for the future.

Similarly, Aenon’s diplomacy ameliorated another crisis that transpired when Taretande had threatened to “split the head” of a Frenchman. In response to Taretande’s overt hostility towards the Jesuits, Aenon attempted to smooth over the situation by defending the missionaries and stressing the importance of the French alliance. He informed Taretande that threats towards the Jesuits would only lead to the “destruction and ruin of the country.” Aenon then turned to the Jesuits, adding that “[the missionaries] should have no fear; and that if they were to settle down in his village, [they] should always be very welcome there.” The outcome of this mediation is unclear, but the attempt by Aenon to mend the divisions between the Bear Nation and the French missionaries is obvious. Rather than fighting the arguments put forth by Taretande,

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76 JR 13: 217.
Aenon focused tactfully on the overall future of the community. He attempted to calm the fears of the Jesuits by demonstrating that Taretande and his supporters did not represent all the headmen, offering the welcoming atmosphere of his own village as proof.

Aenon’s role as a mediator took on even greater significance as he saved several missionaries’ lives. Although the public threats towards the missionaries at the 4 January meeting were serious, the extent to which the Natives expected to follow through remained ambiguous. There was, however, at least one occasion when an entire council endorsed a series of threats, and the headmen agreed to kill the Jesuits. Aenon attended this meeting and listened carefully as decisions were passed. After the other men had said their part, Aenon had the last word, and he attacked the council’s decision. According to Father Le Jeune, Aenon continued to reprimand his fellow council members “in such a way that they came and begged the Fathers not to write any of these evil thoughts to [the superiors], lest they should be badly treated in the places where [the] French are.” Aenon’s speech had a significant impact on the council’s decision and the immediate plan to slay the priests was put on hold.

Aenon’s actions throughout the 1630s were persistent, and consistent with his unwavering belief in the utility of a French-Wendet alliance. This policy inspired numerous speeches, military strategies, and diplomatic ventures, all of which were in stark contrast with the equally passionate Taretande. Yet, despite how much these two headmen differed, their lives were cut short in the same way, in the same year. As with Taretande, the dynamics surrounding Aenon’s death are symbolic of his perspectives and policy in life.

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77 JR 12: 89.
78 JR 12: 89.
In early August 1637, *Aenon* made a trip to Trois Rivières to meet with Charles Jacques de Huault de Montmagny, the governor of New France, to discuss the likelihood of confirming an alliance. Upon arrival, *Aenon* was infected with the disease he had evaded for almost a decade. Despite his weakened state, the headman called for interpreters and asked to see the governor. A meeting took place, where *Aenon* presented Montmagny with a present and proceeded to beg the French man to favor the Wendats. He then turned his attention to his Wendat kin and pressed them “not to do any harm to the French in his country.” The poor condition of *Aenon’s* health only worsened, making his call for the governor and his people to unite the final act in his influential life. Understanding that death was near, *Aenon’s* last recorded words were addressed to those that surrounded him. Known as an eloquent speaker and a man who knew how to select his words wisely, his last remarks not only attested to his feelings, but encapsulated his dedication to solidify an alliance once again. His statement was as follows: “Well . . . I have been requested to come to the French, I am here; it is well that, since I must die, I die near them.” His belief in the importance of the French never wavered, even upon death.

On 6 August 1637, *Aenon* was laid to rest; an important leader of the Wendat Confederacy, while also a staunch supporter of the French. Significantly, the headman’s bones were not buried in Wendat country, but alongside the French in their cemetery at Trois Rivières. Considering the Wendat concept that one must live life the same way that

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79 *JR* 12: 89.
80 *JR* 12: 89.
81 *JR* 11: 135.
82 *JR* 12: 199.
souls rest in death, Aenon’s burial symbolized one last symbolic attempt at solidifying a Wendat-French alliance.\footnote{On his deathbed, Aenon asked to be baptized to secure a Christian burial beside the French and other Wendat Christian converts. See \textit{JR} 12: 199.}

Despite Aenon’s hard work and creative diplomacy throughout the 1630s, his vision never became a reality. Just as the anti-French policies of Taretande died with him, Aenon’s ‘Centre Lieu’ was never established and the French alliance remained ambiguous.\footnote{The French refused to support the “Centre Lieu” unless all the inhabitants converted to Christianity. See \textit{JR} 10: 245.} In light of the considerable losses sustained through the deaths of headmen such as Taretande and Aenon in 1637, one may begin to understand the particular ways in which the Wendat Confederacy experienced the epidemics.

**Women and Disease**

Epidemics affected Wendat women in important ways. Remedies for disease were limited and many Wendats, much like Aenon, sought baptism as a solution. But conversion, regardless of individual intentions, constituted a direct attack on Wendat matricentric structures, bringing with it patriarchal regimes and male-dominated social systems.\footnote{Karen Anderson, \textit{Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France} (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).} Many Wendat women outwardly rejected the entire notion of Christian baptism, despite the chance that it might save a life. The Jesuits deemed Arahkie’s mother a “wretch” because of her adamant objection to Christian practices.\footnote{\textit{JR} 13: 123.} On several occasions the missionaries tried to convince this woman to allow her sick son to be baptized, but she unequivocally denied them their request. She maintained that baptism was not the solution to her son’s illness and forced Arahkie’s mouth shut anytime he
began to speak otherwise. She was so strong in her conviction that when the Jesuits persisted to campaign for a Christian conversion she threatened the priests with a burning brand if they did not leave immediately.87

Tareteande’s mother showed similar disdain for Christianity. As noted earlier, she recanted her youthful baptism. In light of her outward support for traditional spiritual practices the Jesuits deemed her a “renegade.” On several occasions she made public displays of her dislike of Christian beliefs. If Jesuits requested that she teach fellow Wendats the missionaries’ lessons, she refused; and when asked to make the sign of the cross she yelled and screamed at the priests for not respecting Wendat traditions.88 Her stance did not diminish when she became sick. Despite numerous visits by the local missionaries during illness, when the priest asked her if she was not in the least bit appreciative of her baptism, she yelled with full force, “No!”89

Much like their limited choice in experienced and trained headmen in a world of disease and mortality, Wendat women had very few options to prevent their loss of power by the 1640s. Either they could openly declare their anti-Christian sentiment and hope that the legacy of a matriarchal heritage would serve to maintain its influence on community members and leaders, or they could convert with the belief that the new religion would bring strength and rejuvenation to a dwindling population and give them a new spiritual role to replace their diminished political influence. The second choice was not to be taken lightly. By the late 1630s and well into the 1640s, any woman choosing to convert was simultaneously taking a gamble on not only her own life, but those of her kin

88 JR 13: 219-221.
89 JR 13: 121.
as well. If her village and/or kinship network was not predominantly Christian, she faced a life of isolation and lack of aid in times of distress.\textsuperscript{90}

The Wendat convert \textit{Anne} is a prime example of the devastating repercussions resulting from a decision to attain baptism. In 1640 \textit{Anne} was seventy years old and a woman of high rank within her community. She had two daughters and a niece, all of whom had been baptized. \textit{Anne} was also baptized during the epidemics. The conversion of \textit{Anne} and other members of her household meant that her entire home, along with all those living in it, faced ostracism by the rest of the villagers who were Traditionalists.\textsuperscript{91} This isolation would have been difficult in its own right; worse, the loss of \textit{Anne}’s daughters and niece due to disease left the household paralyzed. The aged clan mother was left alone to care for three orphaned grandchildren. She was sickly, weak and blind.\textsuperscript{92} In normal circumstances, women from the rest of the village would have come to \textit{Anne}’s aid, but in light of the tensions between Christians and Traditionalists, no one came to help. As a result, \textit{Anne} was unable to collect firewood and her weak eyesight made it nearly impossible to make food or clothing. Her breasts, moreover, lacked the milk necessary to feed the children. Starvation set in and at least two of the three infants did not survive.\textsuperscript{93}

Considering the devastating results of \textit{Anne}’s circumstances, the adamant rejection of the Jesuit faith by \textit{Taretande} and \textit{Arahkie}’s mothers seems all the more understandable. These women (\textit{Anne} included) were faced with insurmountable odds. Death was all around them, and choices needed to be made. Yet all of the options carried

\textsuperscript{90} Anderson, \textit{Chain Her By One Foot}, 201.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{JR} 19: 233-239.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{JR} 19: 235.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{JR} 19: 233-239.
serious risks. French alliance and decline of civil headmen both meant a loss of matricentric political power, while the alternatives of conversion also required departures from customary sources of female power. Options were limited to say the least.

**Conclusion**

The 1630s represented a time of great loss, but they were simultaneously a period of creative strategizing and active diplomacy made all the more urgent because of the many threats to Wendake. The impact of disease on Wendat society directly affected leaders and their policies. Wendat headmen were not merely passive bystanders to disease, but active agents attempting to find solutions in order to save their community. Unwilling to sit back and allow the catastrophe facing them to take hold, headmen resisted the demise of the Confederacy by drawing lines and defining tactics in relation to the epidemics. Solutions were limited, however, and often these tactics became overt campaigns to support or reject the Jesuits and religious conversion.

The victim trope, too often applied in discussions of disease and Native society, distorts the type of decision-making and activism attributed to Taretande and Aenon. Trigger addressed this issue by asserting that the historian’s constant depiction of Amerindians as victims,

[fail] to acknowledge the tenacity with which native peoples, in the face of increasingly unequal odds, continued to defend their lands, customs, and personal dignity . . . This behavior constitutes a record of continuing resourcefulness and adaptability under conditions of stress that had never been paralleled in North America in prehistoric times or at any time in the history of most other peoples.  

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The stories of *Taretande* and *Aenon* are important in their own right; they instill a
certain degree of empathy, difficult to come by if one were to only speak of numbers and
statistics. By infusing a name; a story; and a life to the thousands of people who died
during the 1630s, one is easily struck by the personal loss experienced by the community.

According to Richter, the lack of research on individual loss within Native
societies resounds in the reality that “[it] is much easier to reconstruct the abstract forces
that constrained the seventeenth-century Native world than it is to recover the personal
experiences of the people who struggled to give the world human shape.”95 Yet
*Taretande* and *Aenon* were more than victims; they were active agents who swayed
others and pursued policies to help their people. Their loss, then, had reverberations for
Wendet resistance. Moreover, the Wendats lost not only these proven leaders but also
people like the young *Arahkie*, whose potential we will never know, and the “renegade”
mother who watched helplessly as her children collapsed around her. They serve as
reminders that the numbers representing the extent of loss felt by North America’s Native
population are not just statistics, but human beings. They are the medium by which
individuals living in the present can approach the anxiety, sadness, and despair engulfing
the Wendat Confederacy throughout the 1630. The Wendat indeed experienced a kind of
“destruction” of human capital that severely compromised their ability to resist a changed
world of alliance and Native conflict. But, they still retained a deep cultural reservoir of
tactics and practices from which to draw.

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95 Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America.*
CHAPTER 2
THE FEAST OF SOULS OF 1636: KINSHIP AND RITUAL

Introduction

The atmosphere brought on by disease created an urgent need to address the circumstances at hand. Wendats tried to fix the problems facing the Confederacy in the decades before the dispersal in a variety of ways. Disease and pending Iroquois attacks affected the nature of Wendat strategic resistance during this period, as civil headmen implemented pro- and anti-Jesuit policies and matriarchal structures disintegrated. Despite these new developments, customary traditions remained intact on a number of different levels. Wendat continued to practice feasts, for instance, a feature that remained central to Wendat strategizing during this period.

Writing on the importance of feasts in Wendat society, seventeenth-century Jesuit Jérôme Lallement observed they were “the oil of their ointments . . . the honey of their medicines, the preparations for their hardships, a star for their guidance...the spring of their activities . . . in short, the general instrument or condition without which nothing is done.”\(^1\)

\(^1\) *Feast of Souls* is used throughout this work in reference to the Wendat burial ceremony that has more frequently been described in primary and secondary sources as: *The Feast of the Dead*, or *La Fête des Morts*. In addition, sources also refer to this ceremony in a metaphorical sense. Primary accounts indicate that when speaking about the *Feast of Souls*, the Wendat would refer to it as: “*The Kettle*” in English, or “*La Chaudière*” in French, or “*Yandatsa*” in Wendat. See Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1600-1791*. [JR] (Cleveland: Burrows, 1896-1901), Volume 17: 209. *Feast of Souls* seems the most appropriate term in the sense that the ceremony was focused primarily on the “souls” of the deceased, rather
To be sure, feasts played a pivotal role in all aspects of Wendat affairs. Wendats viewed them as ritualized celebrations set within multifaceted levels of spiritual, cultural, political and economic frameworks. The most significant of the Wendat Confederacy’s feasts was the Feast of Souls.²

The Feast of Souls, in its most basic sense, can be defined as an ossuary burial ritual. It took place every eight to ten years as a result of a village’s decision to move location or in reaction to social insecurities within the region.³ Wendats prepared for the Feast well in advance. To begin, the Master of the Feast, who was usually a leader within the host village, called a meeting of all the headmen of the villages within the Confederacy. This group made plans to hold a Feast of Souls within the next year and sent invitations throughout the Confederacy, as well as to non-Wendat allies (such as the Algonquians). The number of participants for a Feast varied, but could include thousands of people.⁴ When it came time for the ceremony to take place, participants traveling to the host village gathered the bones of those who had died since the last Feast and wrapped them in beaver robes. The women carried these bundles on their backs as they

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² First-hand accounts of the Feast of Souls indicate that this was indeed the most important ceremony amongst the seventeenth-century Wendats. See Samuel de Champlain, The Works of Samuel de Champlain. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1922-36), I: 161-162; Gabriel Sagard, The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), 211-214; JR 10: 281-305.
⁴ JR 10: 279-303.
proceeded in the direction of the Feast, where other invited participants joined them. Upon arrival at the host village, the women cleaned the bones of their deceased relations and wrapped them in fine beaver skins, placing the old robes that had carried the corpses from their temporary resting place to the Feast in the fire. Subsequently, relatives and friends of the deceased distributed wampum beads in honor of the dead, decorated the sacks of bones with necklaces and ornaments, and carried the bundles into the village ceremonially. The packaged bones were then hung at the door of the person charged with providing a feast in honor of that deceased person.\(^5\)

The ossuary pit was quite large, with a depth of about ten feet, leaving enough room to hold all the bones, gifts, articles and robes, as well as the beaver skin and robe lining. High scaffolds surrounded the pit. In some instances, Wendats hung the bags containing the souls along the scaffolding the night before the burial, while other times they carried the sacks to the platform at the time of burial.\(^6\)

The burial itself required that all bones be placed within the ossuary pit at daybreak. There were five or six people in the pit in charge of mixing the bones. Gifts, furniture, ornaments, kettles, corn, as well as other goods were also placed in the pit. Once everything had been deposited, participants placed mats and bark on top of the bones, along with sand, poles and wooden stakes. The rest of the day was taken up by gift giving, songs, and feasts. Combined, these activities marked a symbolic confirmation or renewal of alliances within the Confederacy, as well as with neighboring peoples. Just as the bones were physically united within the same ossuary pit, the living relatives of the


\(^6\) One beaver robe was made with eight to ten beaver skins. See Sagard, *The Long Journey*, 211-212; *JR* 10: 279-303.
deceased were united in a similar synchronic state of kinship. Overall the entire ceremony could last up to ten days.

Modern scholars have affirmed the importance of this ceremony for over a century. Writing in 1899, historian Francis Parkman acknowledged that the Feast of Souls was the “most solemn and important ceremony” of the Confederacy. More recently, Bruce Trigger asserted that “[by] far the most important of all huron ceremonies was the Feast of the Dead.” Wendat Traditionalist and scholar, Georges Sioui, indicates that the Feast “was certainly one of the most remarkable and most pivotal features of the Wendat civilization.” For Sioui, the Feast was central to the stability and security of the Confederacy, as Wendats used it to reinforced traditions and relationships.

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7 According to scholar Lewis Henry Morgan, there are two kinds of kinship classes: the descriptive (or natural) and the classificatory (or artificial). The latter has also been described as “fictive kinship,” or claimed kinship without evidence of biological descent. This type of relationship is often employed in order to encourage social or political interaction, taking place most commonly among Aboriginal societies. In addition, there are special forms of fictitious kinship. In the case of the Wendat Feast of Souls, the use of the ceremony to identify kinship ties between participants defined those relationships as “ritual kinship bonds.” This required that a ritual take place in order for the creation of the kinship to be acknowledged as a formal alliance. The confirmation of such associations was regarded as “relations of peace” that required mutual consensus in etiquette and ritual protocol. In other words, through the Feast of Souls, the Wendat defined their alliances among other confederates and allied tribes by creating fictitious kinship bonds through ritual feasting, gift exchange and the burial of their dead. For more information on the concept of kinship among the Wendat see Thomas R. Trautmann, “Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship,” *Ethnohistory*, vol. 36, 3 (Summer 1989), 314; Bruce G. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1990), 54; James H. Birx, *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (Cansius College: Sage Publications, 2005), 1369; Beverly Ann Smith, *Systems of Subsistence and Networks of Exchange in the Terminal Woodland and Early Historic Period in the Upper Great Lakes*. (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1996), 281-283. For information concerning the importance of kinship to the Wendat Feast of Souls, see de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 162.


12 Personal correspondence between the author and Georges Sioui, October 10, 2006.
With the exception of Erik Seeman’s recent publication *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, literature on the Feast is limited to a small number of common observations within more general works on Wendat religion, economy and trade. In his publication, *The Jesuit Relations*, Allan Greer focuses exclusively on Jesuit priest Father Jean de Brébeuf’s perspective on a Feast of Souls taking place in 1636. In Greer’s opinion, Brébeuf was “impressed” by the ritual, placing value on the ceremony “for [the] lessons it inadvertently provided for Christians.” Further, Greer evaluates Brébeuf’s expectations concerning the Feast and concludes that the Jesuit priest believed that “people who recognized the immortality of the soul in general terms could not fail to eventually see the need for Christian salvation.” Seeman supports Greer’s analysis, as the Jesuits, he argues, viewed the Feast as a window into the Wendat spiritual world. Wendats possessed an understanding of the human soul that could be easily translated into Christian concepts of the afterlife. In his work, *Huron-Wendat: the Heritage of the Circle*, Sioui elaborates on this notion of potential spiritual conversion and argues that Brébeuf saw the ceremony as an illustration of the potential for an “abundant harvest of souls.” Thus, according to these scholars, it was through the Wendat recognition of a soul, as illustrated through their Feast of Souls, that Jesuits assumed they could achieve Wendat conversion to Christianity.

14 Father Brébeuf’s observation of a Feast of Souls taking place in 1636 is the most popular source for information on the Feast. Most scholars either paraphrase his description, or quote his rendition word for word. If there is an analytical component, it usually consists of a few paragraphs. *JR* 10: 281-305.
16 Allan Greer, *Jesuit Relations*, 61.
17 Seeman, *Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead.*
18 Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, 153
Another aspect of the Feast of Souls addressed is the Feast’s important role as a means for economic activity. Trigger highlights, for instance, how the giving of presents at the Feast represented a significant occasion of material exchange for the Wendats because recipients of gifts included friends of the deceased, those who helped to bury the dead, and those who were acting as the hosts for the Feast.\(^{19}\) Still, despite his assertion that “in this manner, a very significant redistribution of property was accomplished,”\(^{20}\) he maintains that economic aspects of the Feast did not define the ceremony.

Consequently, one may ask: what did define the Feast? The overwhelming majority of specialists in the field contend that the most important aspect of the Feast of Souls was its emphasis on alliances. Trigger emphasizes this last aspect by concluding:

> The most important element [of the Feast] remained the great affection that each huron had for the remains of his dead relatives. By joining in a common tribute to the dead, whose memory each family loved and honored, the hurons were exercising a powerful force for promoting goodwill among the disparate segments of each village, each tribe, and the confederacy as a whole.\(^{21}\)

In the same way, Sioui interprets the Feast as a celebration of “the people’s unity and their desire to live in peace and to extend the bonds of symbolic kinship to the greatest possible number.”\(^{22}\) The extent of the unity discussed by Trigger and Sioui is far-reaching. Although located within one host village, the Feast promoted a sense of unanimity that stretched beyond the local community. The function was, as Greer contends, “a ceremony that united (in theory) [all] the huron people.”\(^{23}\) In addition, the inclusion of “other [friendly] tribes” outside the Confederacy has gained significant

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21 Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 90.
attention. The importance of this, Trigger claims, is that only “very close allies appear to have been asked to mingle the bones of their dead with those of the huron.”\(^{24}\) Thus, it would seem that the nature of the Wendat’s most important ceremony originated in a desire to create unity and solidarity among their family, friends and neighbors.

Taking the historiography into consideration, this chapter aims to contribute to our understanding of the Feast of Souls by highlighting the decisive attempt by the Wendats to incorporate the French into their Feast of Souls in 1636. An investigation into this specific Feast serves as an excellent prism to interpret not only the Feast itself but also Wendat society in the years leading up to their dispersal. In other words, it delivers a concrete example of the ways in which the Feast functioned, strengthening the assertions made by Wendat scholars that the Feast was central, if not critical, to Wendat society. Moreover, this chapter expands on existing interpretations by situating the Feast in terms of its diplomatic significance, rather than its religious and economic importance. Ultimately, I argue that through an examination of the rhetoric surrounding the Feast of Souls in 1636 and its manifestation, Wendat invitations to the French demonstrated an official request for a renewed Wendat-French alliance.

**Put the Kettle On**

In 1624, French Recollect brother, Gabriel Sagard, had the opportunity to attend a Feast of Souls as an observer. Sagard took notes on his experience, making particular reference to the “other savage tribes” or Algonquian nations that participated in the Feast in addition to his Wendat hosts.\(^{25}\) Just over ten years later, in 1636, French Jesuit

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\(^{24}\) Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 87.

missionaries attended a Feast of Souls, this time, however, Wendats placed less emphasis on the incorporation of their Algonquian allies, as their major source of discussion concerned the incorporation of French participants. Scholars have explained this discussion as a case of circumstance and dependency. Trigger, for instance, asserts:

The Huron headmen were convinced that these priests had the backing of the French traders and the officials and could only be expelled at the cost of giving up the French alliance. To make things worse, there was no alternative to trading with the French. European goods could no longer be done without and the Iroquois, who were the principal enemies of the Huron, lay between them and the Dutch.26

Yet, it was the French who first approached the Wendats under these circumstances, requesting a reaffirmation of the loosely defined Wendat-French alliance. Throughout the year preceding the Feast of Souls, the French made two decisive gestures toward the Wendats, signaling a French interest in redefining and confirming an official alliance. The first of these gestures came about in a meeting between New France governor Samuel de Champlain and his assistant Théodore Bochart du Plessis, along with several Wendat in 1635. During this meeting, Champlain made explicit inferences concerning the possibility of a French-Wendat alliance. He encouraged the Wendats to adopt the Christian faith, declaring that this was the only means by which a very close alliance with the French could be cemented.27 Champlain concluded that the Wendats agreed to this alliance, the French “would readily come into Huron Country, marry their daughters, teach them different arts and trades, and assist them against their enemies . . . .”28 The Frenchmen then wrote down the details of the meeting in a letter and requested that the letter be taken to the Jesuits so that it might be presented formally at a general council of

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27 JR 10: 27.
28 JR 10: 27.
the Wendat Confederacy.29 The opportunity articulated by Champlain was clear: if the
Wendats converted to Christianity, the French would form an alliance that would foster
kinship ties through marriage, cultural exchanges, economic gain and military strength.
The implications of this meeting suggest that the French had a need to create an alliance
with the Wendats as well.

The French reiterated similar interests in a large council of the Bear Nation later
that same year. Father Brébeuf delivered a lengthy speech about the necessity for the
Wendats to convert to Christianity, emphasizing Champlain’s earlier proposal by
promising that the Jesuits would help the Wendats in whatever way they could to make
this proposal a reality. Brébeuf concluded his speech by presenting the council with a
wampum belt of 1,200 porcelain beads.30 The importance of Brébeuf’s gesture lies in an
understanding of the use of wampum by the seventeenth-century Wendats. During this
period, Wendats used wampum collars or belts to confirm agreements or make treaties
between other Amerindian nations as well as European nations.31 Wendats would have
viewed Brébeuf’s gift of wampum as an attempt by the French to solidify an alliance with
them. Consequently, the Feast of Souls of 1636 served as a Wendat response to the
French and a means to accepted the French proposal.

29 JR 10: 27. The reason behind Champlain’s desire to introduce his offer for an alliance at a later
council is probably due to the fact that the Wendat at this meeting were not leaders within their
communities and had no real authority for making decisions on political diplomacy.
30 JR 10: 29.
31 Georges Sioui, For An Amerindian Autohistory (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press,
1992), 91. For a more in-depth discussion on wampum, see Jonathan C. Lainey, La “Monnaie des
Sauvages: ” Les Colliers de Wampum d’hier à Aujourd’hui (Sillery: Les Éditions du Septentrion,
2004).
“Pressing Invitations”

During the early spring of 1635, leaders of the Bear Nation gathered together to discuss the organization of a Feast of Souls. The council of the Confederacy determined that a Feast would take place the following spring. Throughout the subsequent year, the French received numerous invitations to take part in the Feast of Souls through various levels of participation. These so-called “pressing invitations” represented a shift from the more reticent interaction between Wendats and French from previous years.32 On the whole, Wendats made several attempts to include the French in their Feast of Souls.

From the initial phase of preparation to the final stages of the ceremony, Wendats invited the French to be active participants. In April 1635, Bear Nation “Old Men” and headmen joined together to make plans for the Feast. This council, according to Brébeuf, “was one of the most important that the hurons have.”33 He observed that “they have nothing more sacred . . . it was a Council of peace . . . They call these Councils, Endionraondaone, as if one should say, ‘A Council even and easy, like the level and reaped fields.’”34 The headmen invited the French missionaries to attend this traditional meeting.35 During the council, Wendat leaders encouraged the French to speak, and allowed them to enter fully into discussions on the nature of the ceremonial burial. The Jesuits took the opportunity and expressed their wish to have the Bear Nation accept Christianity, so that future generations would not have their souls sent to Hell, as was the case with those unconverted souls to be buried during the Feast. The Wendat men

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32 JR 10: 289.
33 JR 10: 261.
34 JR 10:261.
35 JR 10: 27.
listened respectfully and, in the end, appeased the Jesuits by agreeing that for the most part they did not wish the experience of Hell on any of their friends or family.\textsuperscript{36}

French participation in the Feast also included a Wendat request to have Frenchmen buried in the ossuary pit. During the winter preceding the Feast, a headman approached Brébeuf on behalf of the Bear Nation to request the missionary’s approval to bury two Frenchmen during the ceremony.\textsuperscript{37} The men in question were Guillaume Chaudron and Étienne Brûlé, who had been killed four years earlier and remained buried within Wendat territory.\textsuperscript{38} The Wendat invitation to mix the bones of the Wendats with the French represented a direct call to unite the two in a ritual kinship bond, similar to the enduring link between the Wendats and the Algonquians. By agreeing to have the bones buried side by side, the French would have engaged fully in the ceremony’s spiritual, cultural and diplomatic function.

The invitations extended to the French reflected official diplomatic gestures by the Wendats. Brébeuf stated explicitly that not only had they received “several pressing invitations” from the Master of the Feast, but also a number of invitations from \textit{Anenkhionicic}, “the chief Captain of the whole Country.”\textsuperscript{39} Apparently, the Jesuits understood that if they did not attend the Feast, the Wendats would perceive the entire ceremony as a failure.\textsuperscript{40} This makes sense considering one of the main purposes of the Feast for that year was to unify the French and the Wendats. If the French did not attend, the alliance could not be confirmed, and the Feast would have had very little significance in terms of redefining a coalition. This also explains the urgency with which Wendats

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{JR} 10: 27.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{JR} 10: 305.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{JR} 10: 305.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{JR} 10: 289, 301-303.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{JR} 10: 289.
sent invitations to the Jesuits. It was crucial that the Jesuits understood the importance of their attendance, as it was equally important for the Wendats to receive confirmation that their attempts to include the French in the Feast were not in vain.

Wendats further demonstrated their desire to create an alliance with the French at an evening council. This council comprised all the leaders of the respective nations involved in the ceremony, including Wendats and allied tribes. During this council the Master of the Feast gave presents to his guests, affirming their friendship, kinship and alliance to each other.\(^41\) Wendats assumed, because of this tradition, that the French would join the other visiting nations and the Wendat headmen at the evening council.\(^42\) The French, however, maintained an ignorance of this formality and did not attend.

The extent to which the Wendats desired the French to be involved in the gift giving council is somewhat ambiguous. Present-day Wendat Traditionalists interpret this event as a strategic and purposeful exclusion of the French.\(^43\) Wendats knew the importance of having the visiting nations believe that the French absence was merely a miscommunication. This perception would have allowed Wendats to suggest that the French might still form an official alliance by participating in the Feast the next day. In reality, however, the Wendats may have already felt a French resistance to such an agreement, as well as their full participation in the ceremony. By misinforming the French about the council, Wendats would have evaded the chance of a public refusal by the French in regards to their participation.

\(^41\) JR 10: 303.
\(^42\) JR 10: 303.
\(^43\) Personal correspondence between the author and Georges Sioui. According to Dr. Sioui, many modern Wendats agree upon this interpretation of the evening council.
Jesuit accounts of the event present a different interpretation. According to Brébeuf, *Anenkhiondic*, one of the most prominent headmen of the Bear Nation, confronted the Jesuits the morning after the council. He explained how the participants in the council proved disappointed over the abstention of the French the night before and how they wished to make amends by giving the French their gift in any case.\(^{44}\) *Anenkhiondic* then presented Brébeuf with a new robe of ten beaver skins. He explained that this represented a reciprocal exchange for the wampum belt given by Brébeuf the year before.\(^{45}\) This account indicates that there had indeed been a miscommunication and the Wendats had truly preferred a French presence at the evening council. If this is true, the inclusion of the French at the night council indicates that Wendats perceived the French to be no different than their Algonquian allies. As a result, French attendance would have been a highly symbolic component of the Feast, as well as a way to confirm their commitment to the Wendat Confederacy. Moreover, *Anenkhiondic*’s insistence on still presenting the gift to the French the next morning exhibits another attempt by the Wendats to incorporate the French into their system of alliances. Despite the discrepancies between the Traditionalist perspective and the written records of Brébeuf, the results remained the same. The French and other nations acknowledged the genuine desire by the Wendats to include the French in the evening council.

In the end, Wendats made numerous to solidify an alliance with the French. Through preparations, councils, burials, symbolic material exchanges and invitations related to the Feast of Souls, the Wendats clearly communicated their intention to create a

\(^{44}\) *JR* 10: 303.

\(^{45}\) *JR* 10: 303.
ritualistic kinship bond with the French that would ultimately lead to a traditional Wendat coalition.

**A Customary Recipe**

Records indicate that two days past the day of Pentecost, on 12 May 1636, the Wendats held a Feast of Souls at the village of *Ossossane*. Thousands of people attended; exchanging gifts, uniting souls and defining kinship ties. The extent to which the French were involved in this ceremony, however, was never fully realized in the context of Wendat aspirations. Essentially, the “Kettle” of 1636 had been prepared by the Wendats, molded by tradition, heated by desperation and stirred with persistence. Yet, in the end, this work became a customary recipe, as attempts by Wendats to integrate the French into their Feast came to little avail. Consequently, the traditional ingredients, or aspects, of the ceremony remained the same as Feasts of Souls performed in the past.

Although the French accepted invitations and attended most of the councils and ceremonies, they outright refused to have Frenchmen reburied in the ossuary pit. Notwithstanding relentless attempts by the Wendats to persuade the missionaries to allow Chaudron and Brûlé to be buried with their dead, Father Brébeuf adamantly rejected the idea. He explained his initial rejection by stating “that could not be, that it was forbidden to [the French]; that, as they had been baptized and were, as we hoped, in heaven, we respected their bones too much to permit them being mingled with the bones of those who had not been baptized; and, besides, that it was not our custom to raise the bodies.”

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47 *JR* 10: 293-311.
48 *JR* 10: 305.
Brébeuf’s later portrayed his understanding of the repercussions of this decision in a personal reflection. He acknowledged the significance of the mingling of the bones and the cultural implications of rejecting such an offer. As a result, he tried to appease the Wendats by suggesting that although he would not allow the French to be buried in the communal pit, he would agree to bury them in a separate grave beside the ossuary pit.49 He justified his proposal in the following manner, “As it is the greatest pledge of friendship and alliance they have in the Country, we were already granting them on this point what they wished, and were making it appear thereby that we desired to love them as our brothers, and to live and die with them.”50 It seems that Brébeuf did understand that a refusal to bury the French was the equivalent of refusing an alliance and kinship bond. Without the actual mixing of the bones within the ossuary pit, however, the burial of the French meant very little in terms of the Wendat concept of alliance formation. This remained in all probability a calculated measure on the part of Brébeuf. It is unlikely that he could commit the French to an official alliance at that time. New France’s colonial policy held Christian conversion of Native peoples as the foremost requirement for alliances, and the Wendats had yet to convert as a whole.

Despite Brébeuf’s attempt to appease the Wendats, several headmen voiced their disappointment in the Jesuit’s decision. They approached the missionary telling him that his actions had not only offended them, but prevented them from “boasting, as they had hoped, to strange Tribes that they were the relations of the French.”51 Furthermore, they believed that other nations “would say that the friendship [between the French and Wendats] was only in appearance, since [the French] had not allowed the bones of

49 JR 10: 305.
50 JR 10: 305.
51 JR 10: 311.
Frenchmen to mingle with theirs.”

Therefore, without the full burial and mixing of bones between the French and Wendats, the invitation for the French to join the burial resulted in no more than empty gestures of friendship on the part of the French as well as a rejection of a profound kinship bond with the Wendats.

Brébeuf also refused to accept the beaver robe offered by Anenkhiondic. He returned the gift immediately, justifying his action in that Anenkhiondic had presented the gift to the French as reciprocation for the wampum belt given to the Wendats the year before. Brébeuf explained that the French had only “made [the wampum] present to lead them to embrace [the French] faith.”

The assertion by Brébeuf that the wampum belt was intended to represent anything but a French desire for religious conversion would have confused the Wendats. The French used wampum in a non-traditional way, allowing for their motives to be lost in translation as Wendats understood the wampum to represent a diplomatic or trade agreement. Moreover, the rejection of the beaver robe further marginalized French participation in the Feast of Souls.

Conclusion

The circumstances surrounding the Feast of Souls in 1636 and its aftermath clarify a number of important aspects of Wendat history pre-dispersal. First, the Feast of 1636 demonstrates that although Natives forged alliances in the seventeenth-century eastern woodlands with verbal contracts and the exchange of wampum, burial ceremonies, such as the Feast of Souls, also served as diplomatic vehicles to create

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52 JR 10: 311.
53 JR 10: 303.
military, political and economic ties. Through this framework, the burial pit was not only a sacred space for spiritual ceremony and a means to display and exchange trade goods, but simultaneously served as a metaphorical and physical diplomatic tool used to create alliances.

Wendat attempts to incorporate the French into their Feast of Souls in 1636 also illustrates the intense atmosphere of the pre-dispersal period. Engulfed in Iroquois attacks and incessant disease, the timing of the Feast remained rooted in a pragmatic effort to stabilize the Confederacy. The Wendats were desperate and searching for a solution to their situation; an alliance with the French seemed like a desirable option. Looking beyond this period to the 1640s, one cannot help but consider the repercussions if the French had agreed to actively commit themselves to the cause of the Wendats. The presence of French military and guns would have certainly evened the odds against the Iroquois. In 1703, the Wendat Chief Michipichy reflected on these circumstances, blaming the Wendat loss in 1649 on the fact that “there were no French among them.”

If the French had agreed to officially take up arms and join the Wendats, the results of the Iroquois-Wendat conflict might have had a very different outcome.

Although this was the first time that the Wendats had officially invited a European nation to join in the Feast (Gabriel Sagard was merely an observer in 1624) their presence did not transgress the tradition of the Feast itself. Rather, invitations to the French stayed consistent with the Feasts’ purpose as a mechanism for defining and

affirming kinship ties and alliances. The tumultuous atmosphere of the pre-dispersal
period forced leaders to pursue creative solutions to address the social and political
uncertainty confronting their community. A Wendat attempt to include the French in their
Feast consequently served as a coping strategy to strengthen the Confederacy. Despite
these diplomatic efforts, however, Wendats failed to meet their goal as the French
formally rejected any kind of official coalition with them in 1636. In essence, the call by
the Wendat to “put the kettle on” was a cultural and temporal indicator of the times, as
well as a foreboding signal of the overwhelming obstacles to follow.
CHAPTER 3
A CULTURE OF WAR: WENDAT WAR CHIEFS AND NADOUEK CONFLICTS BEFORE 1649

Introduction

By the 1640s the socio-political and even physical environment in which the Wendats lived changed forever. Key civil leaders and a substantial portion of the population had died, diplomacy proved difficult; and the French refused to engage in an official alliance. With the loss of so many current and future male leaders, women’s power became uprooted and rearranged, essentially weakening their former influence on Wendat politics. Rather than being able to select the most appropriate candidate, clan mothers made due with the men who had survived the epidemics. The process for selection became superficial, as choices were few to nonexistent.¹

Still, these obstacles served as inspiration for new strategies of resistance. One of the most significant developments of this period was a shift in leadership, as war chiefs began to take on the civil responsibilities of trade, politics and security. A war headman commented on this exact point in a 1638 peace council. He explained the situation in the following way:

My Brothers, you know well that I hardly ever speak except in our war councils, and that I concern myself only with the affairs of arms; but I am obliged to speak here, since all the other Captains are dead. Now before I

follow them to the grave I must free my mind; and perhaps it will be for
the good of the country, which is going to ruin.2

This speech gives some insight into who replaced headmen like Taretande and Aenon.
Although it seems likely both war headmen and civil leaders died throughout the
epidemics, there is evidence to suggest the community’s war leaders took on the roles of
civil headmen. War leaders had less contact with the French during the 1630s and were
therefore less likely than their civil counterparts to contract European diseases. These
men became an alternative option to civil headmen as Clan mothers’ dealt with selecting
leaders from a dwindling male population.

Although both the civil headman and war chief positions involved similar
responsibilities in terms of guiding their respective communities, there were clear
differences between the two. Unlike civil leaders, war chiefs usually attained their
position through demonstrations of bravery and military might. They were responsible for
leading a unique faction of Wendat society—the warriors. Their role was to see that the
community’s men prepared and trained for battle if the need should arise. They did not
have the power to reward or penalize anyone within the community, not even the
warriors.3 Women called upon war leaders of their community to lead and organize war
councils and to deliberate on military campaigns during times of conflict. In brief, these
men held a very specialized role within their society’s ranks of leadership. They did not

2 Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1600-1791 (Cleveland:
3 Pierre de Charlevoix, Journal of a Voyage to North America, March of America Facsimile
Series, no. 36. (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1761), I: 25. In this case, Charlevoix was
commenting on Iroquois traditions of warfare. The Wendats and Iroquois share a similar cultural
heritage (both are Nadoueks or Iroquoian peoples), so it is likely that Charlevoix’s observations
hold true to Wendats as well. Daniel Richter calls this “side-streaming.” See Daniel Richter, The
Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European
Colonization (Williamsburg: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992), 5.
engage in civil affairs, instead conserving their influence for battle strategies and war councils. This all changed in the wake of the epidemics and the failure of the Feast of Souls in 1636. In the summer of 1637, one of the most influential war leaders of the Confederacy engaged in civil diplomacy, signaling a more general shift in roles. *Ondesson* was a prominent member of the village *Angoutenc* and the Hawk Clan. This community was one of the hardest hit by the epidemics, leaving the survivors agitated and in search for answers. The Jesuits visited this village twice during the summer of 1637 and found the majority of the community blamed their desperate situation on the presence of the French in Wendake. In reaction to this hostility, *Ondesson* acted as an emissary of goodwill to the Jesuits.

On 8 July 1637, the war chief personally invited French missionaries to an upcoming civil council. *Ondesson* explained that many, including himself, felt afraid of the Jesuits, and this fear might be dissuaded if the Jesuits clarified their purpose at the council. The Jesuits agreed to *Ondesson’s* request and the two groups agreed to hold a civil council later that week—the war headman’s diplomacy was a success. Similar progress took place at the council itself. After the traditional rituals of speeches, smoking, and introductions, the Jesuits addressed the Wendats, explaining their good intentions

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5 The name *Ondesson* is also written as ‘Ondesonk,’ meaning ‘Hawk’ – suggesting that this leader was of the Hawk Clan. See Steckley, *Words Of The Huron*, 240.

6 *JR* 15: 22.

7 *JR* 15: 23.
towards them. Deliberations by Angoutenc leaders followed; in the end, Wendat
delegates decided to welcome the Jesuits into their community and encouraged future
visits by the French. Although the Jesuits’ record of the council proceedings do not
explicitly mention Ondesson’s participation, was nonetheless critical its success.
Ondesson’s initial diplomatic overtures towards the French made the council happen in
the first place. His appointment as ambassador for the village’s civil matters highlights
the ways in which war leaders became more familiar with civic duties, especially
concerning international relations, and shows how the Wendats managed to use existing
institutions to respond to the twin challenges of epidemics and war.

The Jesuits made specific reference to Wendat war headmen becoming more
involved in French-Wendat affairs in their 1642 report. Specifically, the missionaries
remarked on the increased baptisms of war leaders, linking the “marked degree” of
Wendat Christian converts to the number of Christian war chiefs. Reflecting upon this
apparent shift in conversions, Father Le Jeune noted that during the 1630s “hardly could
one find, hitherto, among our Christians two or three warriors . . . ”; but now “we have
counted in a single band as many as twenty-two Believers, - all men of courage, and
mostly Captains or people of importance.” Of particular interest to the Jesuits were the
leaders Thomas Sondakwa from the Wenro Nation, and Mathurin Astiskwa, and Martin
Tehoachiakwan, both from the Cord Nation. According to the missionaries, it was the
baptisms of “persons of such importance that brought about many others” and Wendat

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8 JR 15: 27.
9 JR 26: 273.
10 JR 25: 27.
11 The Wenro Nation joined the Wendat in 1638. The majority of these refugees went to live with
the Southern Bear Nation. John Steckley, Words Of The Huron, 51.
actions confirmed these notions.\textsuperscript{12} War chief \textit{Martin Tehoachiakwan} expressed a clear desire for his people to follow him in the Christian faith. In a public plea to his community he asserted:

\begin{quote}
the enemies are at our doors . . . I withdraw from misfortune, let who will, follow me; our affairs are in a desperate state . . . I do not fear the Iroquois; I dread the more inhuman cruelties of the devils in hell, in a fire that is never extinguished. I abandon you, without abandoning you, or rather I abandon your follies; I abandon our evil customs; from this moment, I renounce all kinds of sin, and know ye that tomorrow I shall be a Christian.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Although \textit{Tehoachiakwan’s} desire to encourage conversion may well have had a spiritual element, the fact that the French began to give European weapons to converts might also have played a critical role in his new found Christian zeal.\textsuperscript{14} Unlike the Iroquois, the Wendats were not able to acquire guns in significant numbers.\textsuperscript{15} The French, who were the primary European trading partners of the Wendats, refused to trade guns for furs.\textsuperscript{16} This was not always the case in Euro-Amerindian relations, as the Iroquois formed a trading partnership with the Dutch who exchanged guns freely for pelts.\textsuperscript{17} Nonetheless, French missionaries gave guns to actual or potential male converts, thus leaving some room for hope that the French might change their policy and begin to trade weapons.

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\textsuperscript{12} JR 26: 273.
\textsuperscript{13} JR 26: 273.
\textsuperscript{14} Lucien Campeau argues that conversions were the effect of missionary work and a Wendat desire to join the faith, while Bruce Trigger asserts that the reason for conversion was so that Wendat leaders could attain preferential treatment in dealing with French officials and traders. Taking into consideration the rejection of military alliance in 1636 and the need for weapons, conversion by war chiefs was most likely to attain guns. For more on this discussion see: Lucien Campeau, \textit{La mission des Jesuites chez les Hurons, 1634-1650} (Montreal: Editions Bellarmin, 1987); Bruce Trigger, “The French Presence in Huronia,” \textit{Canadian Historical Review} 49 (1968), 134.
\textsuperscript{15} Elizabeth Tooker, \textit{An Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1615-1649} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964), 27.
\textsuperscript{16} JR 24: 271-273.
\textsuperscript{17} Tooker, \textit{An Ethnography}, 27.
\end{flushleft}
Wendats perceived French firearms to be crucial to military and diplomatic success. One headman declared, “On this account the whole Country [Wendake] turns its eyes upon you; we shall esteem ourselves quite beyond fear, if we have you [the French] with us; you have firearms, the mere report of which is capable of inspiring dread in the enemy, and putting him to flight.”  

Father Le Jeune also remarked, “the use of arquebuses, refused to the Infidels by Monsieur the Governor, and granted to the Christian Neophytes, [was] a powerful attractions to win them…” Jesuit Simon Le Moyne confirmed the link between conversion and access to guns when he expressed his frustration in 1639 that the majority of converts were men, with women taking little interest in the process. The need for French military support had not diminished since Aenon’s quest for a Centre Lieu, or the Feast of Souls. Thus, conversion represented an alternative attempt at attaining weapons from the French. War headmen sought to strengthen their connection to the French with an acceptance of the Christian faith.

The participation of former war headmen in civil initiatives and foreign affairs represented an important shift in Wendat diplomacy and leadership. In 1638 a war leader defined his traditional role within the community as restricted to war councils; concerning himself only to the “affairs of arms.” Yet, in the aftermath of the epidemics and the death of many civil headmen, this same war leader regretfully noted that he was now forced to partake in civil matters for which he had little background. The war chief expressed particular concern about his lack of familiarity in international diplomacy, specifically negotiations with the French. In an attempt to explain his situation, as well as

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18 JR 10: 241.
19 JR 25: 27.
20 Father Simon Le Moyne to M. le Curé de St. Martin (his cousin), 25 May 1639, The Newberry Library, Ayer Collection, MS 507.
21 JR 15: 43.
justify his involvement in a civil council, this war headman asserted, “I neither hate nor love the French; I have never had anything to do with them, and we see each other for the first time to-day.”

It seems that the actions of Ondesson, and other Christian war chiefs’ interactions with the French not only broke with common practice, but even transgressed their traditional role, yet the war leaders proceeded with these efforts. As a result, war leaders were not only coming in contact with the French on a more frequent basis, but became key negotiators in terms of Wendat-French relations. With the loss of civil leaders due to the epidemics, the Confederacy was forced to reorganize its polity, creating replacements, new strategies, and forms of leadership.

Although scholars argue over the causes for an increase in warfare in the 1640s, attributing it to the economic aspirations of the Iroquois, and a desire to replenish diminishing populations, the connection between an increase in war headmen in civil matters offers another possible explanation. Less familiar with negotiations of peace, war leaders began to shape Wendat society and policy towards situations that they had more experience in orchestrating. The Confederacy was anxious to respond to their circumstances, yet unlike Taretande and Aenon who sought solutions through diplomacy, and in light of the failed negotiations in 1636, these new leaders resorted to strategies more in line with their role as war headmen. Conflict and warfare became a feasible means for the Confederacy to retaliate against the devastation experienced in the 1630s.

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22 JR 15: 43.

23 George Hunt argues that the Iroquois attacks were out of a desire by the Iroquois for control of the fur trade, see: George T. Hunt, The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study of Intertribal Trade Relations (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940). Daniel Richter stresses replenishing the population; see Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” 528-559.
As a result, Iroquois-Wendat conflicts would overwhelm and dominate the Wendat society for the next ten years.24

Wendats drew on both older traditions and newer innovations in shaping this culture of warfare before dispersal. Much like disease, there were few Wendats who were not directly affected by the wars with the Iroquois. Historians Gilles Havard argues that incessant warfare “was at the heart of Native culture” during this period, while Bruce Trigger calls it a “chronic” aspect shaping the Wendat world.25 According to Georges Sioui, warfare, for the Wendat, was an intrinsic and important part of daily life, regarded as a “normal and inevitable social phenomenon . . .”26 Historians often depict Wendats as weak and passive in their battles with the Iroquois during the 1640s, especially when their defeat in 1649 is framed as the culmination or resolution to these conflicts.27 Despite this interpretation, the Wendats were far from submissive victims succumbing to

Iroquois military might. The defeat of 1649 overshadows Wendat traditions of military success, yet it was the culmination decades of warring, interspersed with intricate customs of captive exchange and decisive Wendat victories.

**Nadouek Warfare**

The Wendats engaged in numerous battles throughout the history of the Confederacy. In most cases these conflicts were with other Nadouek groups. Motives for war were neither religious, nor territorial in Nadouek society.\(^{28}\) The most common reason to go to war was to avenge someone’s death. This particular type of war often began as a blood feud, when one group refused to give appropriate gifts in compensation for killing a member of another group. This denial was understood as an act of aggression and relatives of the deceased felt it necessary to wage war.\(^{29}\) Daniel Richter coined the term “mourning war” to describe Nadouek warfare, as Natives waged war to restore lost population, ensure social continuity, and confront the emotional pain of.\(^{30}\)

Nadouek battles took place between spring and summer, allowing the warriors better coverage behind the fully covered trees.\(^{31}\) These expeditions ranged in length from four to six months.\(^{32}\) They involved surprise attacks and included hundreds to thousands of warriors.\(^{33}\) This type of warfare was so intense among the Nadoueks at times that

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\(^{28}\) Trigger, *Children of Aetaentsic*, 68.  
\(^{29}\) *JR*10: 225; *JR* 17: 11.  
\(^{30}\) Daniel Richter’s article gives an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the mourning war. See Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” 528-559. See also Trigger, *Children of Aetaentsic*, 805-6.  
\(^{32}\) René Cuillerier, “Nation Iroquoise,” Bibliothèque Mazarin, Cote: MS 1964, Fonds General, (c.1700), 7.  
women had to be accompanied by a man when venturing out to the fields to till the soil.\textsuperscript{34} William A. Starna and Ralph Watkins have summarized warfare among Nadoueks as an activity “aimed at subduing an enemy, taking prisoners, and returning them for adoption. The underlying motivations included the acquisition of personal prestige by young warriors, [and] revenge . . . \textsuperscript{35} War offered a means for young Nadouek men to gain status among their people.\textsuperscript{36} They hoped for recognition for personal skill and bravery that could lead to prominent roles within the community. Accordingly, young men were generally supportive of war.\textsuperscript{37}

Wendats identified other Natives as enemies and appropriate rivals if they were affiliated with a foreign tribe that did not have a recognized bond through trade and reciprocity.\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps one of the most enduring conflicts was the traditional and seemingly continuous battle between the Wendats and the Iroquois. In his detailed accounts concerning Nadoueks, Samuel de Champlain described a bloody encounter between the Wendats and one hundred Iroquois. This battle, known as “the Battle of the Richelieu River” took place 19 June 1610. Champlain’s involvement in the affair arose when a Wendat messenger came to ask for the Frenchman’s help; he described the conflict and its aftermath:

Both sides began firing swarms of arrows, one of which pierced my ear and entered my neck . . . The French covered the Indians with musket fire . . . Then, . . . the French stormed the fort, swords in hand, and killed all but fifteen of its occupants. The rest were taken prisoner . . . The only booty found inside the camp were some beaver skin robes and the bloodstained fur clothing worn by the dead. The Indians did not bother to

\textsuperscript{34} Tooker, \textit{An Ethnography}, 31.
\textsuperscript{36} Starna and Watkins, “Northern Iroquoian Slavery,” 68.
\textsuperscript{37} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 69.
\textsuperscript{38} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 68.
plunder the latter and derided the French who did so… The Indians scalped the dead or cut off their heads as trophies, and returned to St. Ignace Island, taking their prisoners with them.\textsuperscript{39}

This example illustrates several key points concerning the nature of Nadouek warfare, including the fact that combatants could number in the hundreds, battles were fought around fortified camps, and the attainment of booty was not an objective of warfare. Once the battle came to a close victors scalped the dead, and in some instances they took live captives back with them.

The production of military equipment and supplies was an important aspect of the preparation process. Arrows were some of the most common weapons produced. By using a sharp knife or sharp-edged stone they would carve a straight and long arrow. Subsequently, the arrow was fledged with eagle feathers. Sharp-pointed stones or bones were then attached to the strongest point of the tip of the arrow using fish-glue.\textsuperscript{40}

Although the arrows had a dual purpose because they were also used for hunting, there were several military implements made specifically for warfare. Gabriel Sagard’s observations of warfare preparation stressed the production of wooden clubs made and used for warfare.\textsuperscript{41} Warriors carried shields that nearly covered the entire body; the shields were decorated with a round piece of bark with the “armorials bearings of [the warrior’s] town or province painted upon it, and fastened to the end of a long stick, like a cavalry pennant.”\textsuperscript{42} An \textit{aquietor} covered the warrior’s arms and legs, serving as

\textsuperscript{39} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 256-258.
\textsuperscript{40} Sagard, \textit{Long Journey}, 98.
\textsuperscript{41} Sagard, \textit{Long Journey}, 98.
\textsuperscript{42} Sagard, \textit{Long Journey}, 154.
protection against the onslaught of arrows. Aquientos, or cuirasses, were made with white rods, all about the same length, sewn together and tightly interlaced with cords.\footnote{Sagard, \textit{Long Journey}, 154.}

Food was an aspect of great importance to a successful campaign. The Wendats expected warriors to perform at great distances from home. If the warriors did not have proper nutrition they could not fight effectively and would be forced to retreat in search of food supplies. Such was a case described by a Wendat when they were at war with the Senecas. The Wendat expedition had to call off their war party and retreat to the nearest village in order to replenish their weak bodies because they had run out of food. The four-day delay cost the Wendats the battle.\footnote{Charles Marius Barbeau, \textit{Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives} (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1960), 294-295.}

The food for Nadouek war parties required careful preparation; bags of cornmeal were scorched and then roasted in ashes. This food supply was easy to transport; it could keep for a very long time and was easy to prepare. When the warriors wanted to eat, all they had to do was soak the cornmeal in water to soften.\footnote{Tooker, \textit{An Ethnography}, 30.}

Nadouek warfare also included a unique pre-battle ritual.\footnote{Due to the fact that there is not yet a specific title assigned to this ritual (primary observers make reference to an “interesting” and “peculiar” Nadouek ritual), it will be referred to as the “Fort Fight” ritual throughout this paper.} Marc Lescarbot described the “Fort Fight” ritual in his observations of the eighteenth-century Nadoueks:

\begin{quote}
They make a fort, within which all the young men of the army place themselves; then the women come to compass them about, and to keep them as it were besieged. Seeing themselves so environed they make sallies, to slip away and deliver themselves out of prison. The women on the watch drive them back, arrest them, do their best to capture them; and if they are taken the women rush on them, beat them, strip them, and from
\end{quote}
such a success draw a favorable presage of the impending war, while if they escape it is an evil sign.  

Reverend P.F.X. de Charlevoix offered a similar description. He summarized this somewhat puzzling episode by stating: “Warriors, before taking the war-path, fought with their wives, and if they got the worst, had no doubt of the success of their expedition; but if, on the contrary, their wives were the weaker, they augured ill.” The pragmatic application of this ritual can be explained by the fact the warriors had to prove themselves strong enough to face adversity and withstand not only physical abuse, but humiliation as well. The *Jesuit Relations* described the lessons learned through this custom and how the Wendats applied them in the context of actual battles. The following is a Jesuit missionary’s account of a battle between the Iroquois and the Wendats:

> About two hundred Iroquois … encountered some advanced-guards of that Huron troop. The latter straightway took flight after some skirmishing, and were eagerly pursued until within sight of our fort – many having been killed while they were in disorder in the midst of snows. But the more courageous of the hurons, having stood firm against those joined combat with them, had some advantage on their side, and constrained the Iroquois … These Iroquois were forced into a palisade, and about thirty of them were taken captives.

The success of the Wendats who stayed and faced the Iroquois and the death of those Wendats who fled demonstrate the importance of standing one’s ground in times of battle. In essence this is what the Fort Fight ritual sought to engender by confirming the strength of the warriors; if they were not strong enough to face their wives and be beaten and humiliated by them, then how could they possibly face their enemies? Therefore,

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49 JR 34: 132-133.
participation in the Fort Fight was ritualized, symbolizing adversity that acted as a means to measure the capability of their warriors before entering battle.

**Women and War**

Despite the usual emphasis on men in discussions of war and battle, women shaped Nadouek warfare in significant ways.\(^50\) Women, generally Clan mothers, initiated the call to war, usually because there had been a death in the family and they desired to be compensated for that death through a mourning war.\(^51\) The woman did this by approaching a leader within the community who she deemed to be influential and requested that he call a war council to try to persuade other members of the village to agree to go to war.\(^52\) The following is a description of how this process took place:

> when, then, this matron judges it time to raise up the tree again, or to lay again on the mat, someone in her family whom death has taken from her, she addresses herself to some one of those who have their **Athonni** [sire] at her home and who she believes is most capable of executing her commission. She speaks to him by wampum belt, explaining her intention of engaging him to form a war party. This is done.\(^53\)

The “matron’s” choice concerning which “sire” would represent her at the council was an important one. This individual brought the clan mother’s desire and justification for war

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\(^{50}\) For more on this topic see Kathryn Magee, “‘they are the life of the nation’: Women and War in Nadouek Society,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2008): 119-138.


\(^{52}\) Marc Lescarbot, *History of Newfrance*, 3: 264.

to the table for discussion. If he was a poor orator, or if he lacked influence and respect within the community, her message might be lost and her call for war refused.\(^{54}\)

Power to confirm or deny participation in warfare constituted one of the most significant contributions by women to Nàdouek military conflict. According to missionary Joseph-François Lafitau, the “the matron, who has the principle authority . . . [she] can force these children to go to war if it seems best to her, or keep them at home if they have undertaken a war displeasing to her.”\(^{55}\) If the war council agreed to go to war but the reasons for battle proved weak, or arguments were not convincing, the women had the power to veto the decisions of male council members.\(^{56}\) Thus, the culture of warfare in Nàdouek societies was one shaped by both men and women. We are inclined to place more emphasis on the men because men received tangible benefits for fighting: personal and political prestige, as well as respect. To an outsider, it would seem likely that men maintained the key roles of influence within warfare because on a superficial level they were the ones that stood to gain or lose the most from successful military campaigns. Since women acquired little in these personal areas of accomplishment, European observers assumed that women did not contribute significantly to the interests and outcomes of warfare because that was the case in their societies.

Another reason why women’s involvement has been eclipsed by male roles in warfare is the lack of a physical presence of women at the war council. According to

\(^{54}\) Lescarbot describes the war council, detailing the chronology of events. This account, although seemingly dominated by the male figures of the council, actually supports the importance of women because it was through the woman’s initial communication with the “sire” that the council was called. The proceedings of the council, according to Lescarbot, were as follows: “on the arrival of the other leaders the [sires] would make long orations to explain the situation and to convince them. At each proposal he asks their consent. At any time the others may also speak and give their opinion.” Lescarbot, History of Newfrance, 3: 264.

\(^{55}\) Lafitau, Customs of American Indians, 99.

\(^{56}\) Beauchamp, “Iroquois Women,” 86.
Sagard, women and young men took no part in the council.\textsuperscript{57} Sagard did not consider the extremely influential presence of women behind the scenes; he might not have understood this aspect of war culture. Women not only participated on a pragmatic and symbolic level by starting the fire that was the heart and centerpiece of the council, but they also demonstrated their significant authority by choosing the headmen who led the council.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore, although women were not physically present during the war councils, their aspirations and political points of view gained expression through their male deputies. The Jesuits acknowledged the extent of female power within Nadouek war councils through an observation of one highly respected Wendat woman. “This woman held a high rank and [was] much respected; . . . the Elders would decide no important affair without [the women’s] advice.”\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, the Jesuits acknowledged, “the women have the chief authority amongst all the nations . . .”\textsuperscript{60}

Nadouek warfare involved a series of perpetual complex rituals. Beginning with the production of equipment, food, and the execution of the Fort Fight, young warriors were prepared to go to battle against the enemy. The call to war was not a simple process, however, and only took place after a multi-layered consultation between war chiefs, clan mothers and the community. This cycle would continue to persist and increase in the years leading up to the dispersal.

\textsuperscript{57} Beauchamp, “Iroquois Women,” 149-150.
\textsuperscript{59} JR 54: 281.
\textsuperscript{60} Beauchamp, “Iroquois Women,” 86.
Captives

The most important aspect of Nadouek warfare was the acquisition of captives. Roger Carpenter contends captive-taking overrode all other objectives in Nadouek warfare. Both Wendats and their enemies placed great emphasis on the conduct and treatment of prisoners of war. Captives usually faced three possible outcomes: death, torture, or adoption into the captor society. Because most wars were waged in the hopes of renewing populations, and replacing a member that had been killed in a previous battle, prisoners were frequently subject to the last of the three options. Much like the decision to go to war, women had the final say in matters concerning the fate of captives, as an arbitrator between life and death. Lafitau asserted that:

The matrons to whom the captives are given are so entirely mistresses of the latter that the wish of the entire village could not save them if the former are desirous of throwing them into the fire nor could they be put to death if these women wish to grant them life.

All scenarios involved highly ritualized events. The adoption process, for instance, featured a series of symbolized public gestures introducing the individual captive to the community. During these initial stages of what Daniel Richter calls the “probation” period, potential adoptees could choose to conform to their captor’s society and assimilate, or resist, risking maltreatment, slavery, or death. On 2 September 1637, a

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63 Lafitau, Customs of American Indians, 154.
64 Richter, Ordeal of the Longhouse, 69.
Wendat contingent defeated an Iroquois war party, bringing back seven captives. The Wendats held a council and decided that the prisoners would be split up among the Wendat nations who had helped in the battle, namely the Cord, the Rock and the Bear. Upon arriving in each respective village another council was taken to decide the fate of the captives. Out of these seven Iroquois, one man, named Joseph by the Jesuits, was deemed fit for adoption by the headman Saouandaouascouay of the Arontaen village. At this time, however, the condition of this Iroquois warrior was questionable. Joseph had one hand that was badly bruised by a stone and one finger that was not entirely cut off but wrenched away; the blow of a hatchet had nearly severed the thumb and forefinger of the other hand, the joints of his arms were badly burned and on one of them had a deep cut. The injuries to his hands grew so severe over the next few days that when they removed the bandaging they were half putrefied, with worms gnawing at his marrow and there was an overwhelming smell of decay. The community made the decision for adoption in the absence of Saouandaouascouay, but was done in consideration of the fact that this Wendat headman had recently lost his nephew to the Iroquois and so Joseph would be the replacement. The parade to Arontaen was elaborate. The captive wore fine beaver robes with strings of porcelain around his neck and the crown of his head. Thirty to forty individuals escorted him, and a large group greeted the party on arrival. Joseph feasted on squash, sagamité (a Wendat delicacy) and fruits. In crossing certain houses he received items in order to make a feast, and another household invited him for a banquet of stewed dog. At the banquet Joseph was approached by a

65 JR 13: 37.
68 JR 13: 43.
headman from the village who remarked “My nephew, thou hast good reason to sing, for no one is doing thee any harm; behold thyself now among thy kindred and friends.” This signaled the amicable nature of the events and the relationship desired by the Wendats with the Iroquois Joseph.

It was on the 4 September that Saouandaouascouay returned from his hunting trip and was finally introduced to his adopted nephew. But he could not hide his dismay at the captive’s condition; fifty years of age and badly injured from his battles. Taking this into consideration, the Wendat headman had to decide whether it was better to honor the adoption or put the ailing Joseph out of misery. He approached Joseph with the following appeal:

My nephew, thou must know that when I first received news that thou wert at my disposal, I was wonderfully pleased, fancying that he whom I lost in war had been, as it were, brought back to life, and was returning to his country. At the same time I resolved to give thee thy life; I was already thinking of preparing thee a place in my cabin, and thought that thou wouldst pass the rest of thy days pleasantly with me. But now that I see thee in this condition, thy fingers gone and thy hands half rotten, I change my mind, and I am sure that thou thyself wouldst now regret to live longer.71

Saouandaouascouay, therefore, had the intention of seeing the adoption through in the customary fashion, but decided to have him killed in light of Joseph’s health. Had this not been the case, Joseph would have become part of Saouandaouascouay’s family and Wendat society—a nephew to Saouandaouascouay living among them. The circumstances of Joseph’s fate reflect the extent to which these adoptions were taken seriously. Enemies became brothers, nephews and sons.

70 JR 13: 41
71 JR 13: 55.
Although adoption was a prevalent cause for warfare, as Carpenter suggests, Trigger asserts that torture and death were far more common events.\textsuperscript{72} Trigger judges these Wendat rituals as a “sadistic game,” revealing a “sinister aspect of the psychological finesse that was a very important part of their culture.”\textsuperscript{73} Daniel Richter believes “the process should be seen less as an exercise in ingenious verities of cruelty than as a ritual humiliation of enemies and controlled release of mourners’ emotions.”\textsuperscript{74} He contends that from the victim’s perspective torture represented three things: a reminder of the captors’ dominance, a test of perseverance, and an altered state of mind (similar to a vision quest) that would lead the captive to a new life.\textsuperscript{75} Therefore, torture was not an arbitrary demonstration of egotistic dominance or display of conquest, rather it was a calculated representations of strict Nadowek cultural codes that were accepted by both the captive and the captors. The case study of Euctace Ahasistari demonstrates these circumstances suggest Richter’s portrait comes closer to the truth for the Wendats.

Perhaps one of the most well known Wendat war chiefs of his time, Ahasistari was an accomplished warrior and leader within his community. Writing on Ahasistari’s military exploits, John Steckley has aptly deemed him “the bravest of the braves,” “a man who excelled and exalted in feats of war . . . .”\textsuperscript{76} In the summer of 1642, Ahasistari led a Wendat expedition, escorting forty Frenchmen from Trois Rivière to Saint Marie.\textsuperscript{77} During this voyage a number of tracks thought to be Iroquois came to the attention of Ahasistari. There was a momentary discussion of whether or not to proceed, but

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Trigger, \textit{Huron}, 48.
\item Trigger, \textit{Huron}, 48.
\item Richter, \textit{Ordeal of the Longhouse}, 70.
\item Richter, \textit{Ordeal of the Longhouse}, 69.
\item JR 31: 21.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
*Ahastari* had the last word exclaiming “it matters not; I noticed by their tracks that they are not in greater number than we; let us advance, and fear nothing.”

This decision had tragic ramifications for the group; a nearly equal force of Iroquois warriors concealed in the bushes attacked the Wendats and took *Ahastari* as a captive, along with roughly twenty-two other prisoners, including Father Isaac Jogues.

Eight days after the initial capture, the ceremonial torment began. First, the captors gave thanks to the Creator for having caused these captives to come to them, this was followed by a salute of arquebus shots into the air in order to symbolize the victory. Then they set-up a stage on a hill, where, armed with sticks and thorns, formed two lines, with hundreds on each side. The captives were forced to run the gauntlet naked and endure each individual slash to the skin. Many did not make the length of the line, collapsing on the ground halfway. Out of the Wendat captives, *Ahastari* received by far the worst of these measures. After the gauntlet, the Iroquois cut off both thumbs from his hands, and thrust through the incisions a pointed stick even to the elbow. This journey was far from over yet. On the tenth day after the capture, the party arrived on land and was made to continue by foot for four days, eating only a few wild fruits along the way.

After arriving at the first Iroquois village, the prisoners were greeted by the community’s youth who had lined up outside the gated entrance. They were armed with

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78 *JR* 31: 21.
79 *JR* 31: 29.
80 The Iroquois termed this as a “welcoming” for the captives. The French translated the Nadouekian term as a “La Saluade.” René Cuillerier, “Nation Iroquoise,” Bibliothèque Mazarin, Cote: MS 1964, Fonds General, (c.1700), 9.
81 *JR* 31: 33.
82 *JR* 31: 35.
83 *JR* 31: 39.
sticks and iron rods. The slower the procession walked, the harder the blows to the captives became.\textsuperscript{84} That night the captives were taken to separate homes where they were tied down and children were encouraged to throw pieces of coal and burning cinders at their stomachs. Following this first day and night, the captives were brought to a scaffold where they endured similar torture for three days.\textsuperscript{85} The process was continued in two additional villages over several subsequent days. The encounters only grew in intensity. By the third village captives had thorns or pointed sticks thrust into their open sores, scratching nailless fingers to the point of renewed bleeding.\textsuperscript{86} At last, \textit{Ahasistari}'s life was brought to an end with a death by fire. As he burned, a missionary recorded his last words. He pleaded with his fellow Wendats that “the thought of his death should never prejudice the peace with the Iroquois.”\textsuperscript{87} Thus, it would seem that \textit{Ahasistari}, despite his horrible experience, respected the ritual as a natural result of warfare. Captive torture was not personal, but rather essential to the larger Nadouek cultural systems.

Not all captive experiences fit the categories of adoption, torture and death. There are cases where captives escaped, either by their own volition or by their captors. In 1647, for instance, the Wendats had captured the prominent Onondaga headman \textit{Annenraes}. After holding several councils to deliberate the fate of prisoners, the Wendats decided to let him return to his country as a kind of peace offering.\textsuperscript{88} The Wendats and Onondagas had been at war during this period and the headmen were hoping to create a truce through this maneuver. Consequently, \textit{Annenraes} was equipped with presents and returned to his country. On his travels, the Onondaga headman encountered 300

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{84}] \textit{JR} 31: 41.
\item [\textsuperscript{85}] \textit{JR} 31: 45.
\item [\textsuperscript{86}] \textit{JR} 31: 49.
\item [\textsuperscript{87}] \textit{JR} 31: 199.
\item [\textsuperscript{88}] \textit{JR} 33: 117.
\end{itemize}

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Onondaga warriors who were on their way to avenge his assumed death. Upon seeing their beloved leader alive, the group decided to retreat and cede for peace instead.\footnote{JR 33: 119.}

Other captives escaped on their own. The fourteen-year-old daughter of the Wendat man \textit{Antoine Otiatonna} was captured by the Iroquois, and while being held over night, heard her captors discussing her potential death. Not wanting to see her end, she gathered her courage and ran from the Iroquois village out into the bush a fair distance away. An Iroquois search party scanned the perimeters for three days and nights, coming very close to the girl on several occasions. In order to not give up her location, the girl remained still, eating and drinking nothing throughout this time.\footnote{JR 33: 95.} Deciding on the third day that she could not remain without food any longer, she took the risk of exposing herself and fled towards the Neutral nation, where she hoped to find sanctuary. The girl walked for three straight days, fording a river and many miles of land. On the third day she encountered a group of Iroquois and Neutrals. The Iroquois recognized her as the escaped captive and threatened to return her, but the Neutrals declared her safe, as she was within their territory.\footnote{JR 33: 97.} Finally, the Iroquois conceded to the Neutrals and allowed the girl to continue to the next Neutral village where she broke her fast and then made the final trip home to Wendake.\footnote{JR 33: 97.}

Captives had to adapt in order to survive. Roger Carpenter calls this attribute a necessary “flexibility” or “duality” for Nadouek captives.\footnote{Carpenter, \textit{Renewed}, 22.} In some cases, captivity provided for means to benefit the Wendats, as escapees could provide valuable
intelligence about the Iroquois war machine, as well as serve as diplomats on the Confederacy’s behalf.

On 14 July 1648, a Wendat named Armand had just escaped from 100 Iroquois who were camped near the French settlement of Trois Rivière. He had come to warn the French that the Iroquois were planning an attack on the settlement in the near future, but that he had tried his best to dissuade them. The Iroquois had made it known that their attack was in response to the Frenchmen’s poor treatment of Iroquois captives. This, Armond had denied; he argued that the French, like the Wendats, treated prisoners very well and in the customary fashion. This seemed to dissuade the Iroquois to some degree, according to Armond, and they agreed to put off the attack for the time being, but only as long as they received notice that the French had kept their brethren alive. In this case, Armond acted as both informant and diplomat. He penetrated the Iroquois inner councils and attained valuable information concerning war strategy, while simultaneously quelling the potential for conflict.

On The Home-front

The affects of the loss of loved ones, whether they were adopted or killed, had serious ramifications for those back home. In the case of Eustace Ahasistari, the results fed into the already changing dynamics of the Confederacy. Ahasistari was a Christian, baptized just before he ventured out on his last expedition in 1642. With the news of his death (many of his comrades out of respect and a desire to see the fallen warrior in the
afterlife) converted to the Christian faith as well. These men defended their decision in relation to a speech delivered by Ahasistari to other Wendat Christians just before he left. The surviving war chiefs used this message as a guide to their actions. Ahasistari said

Let us inform our Relatives who are not of the same Faith as we, even if they may be our fathers and our children, that we do not wish our bones to be mingled together after our death since our Souls will be eternally separated, and our affection will not continue beyond this life.

Ahasistari’s death fed the growing contingent of Wendat chiefs converting to Christianity for guns. In these cases, conversion was used initially out of a respect for Ahasistari but nonetheless fostered closer interaction between war leaders and French missionaries.

On some occasions the loss of a close family member or friend could have devastating effects back home. The news of such a loss could send relatives into a spiral of depression, unable to cope with the reality. Louis Amantacha/de Saint Foy, from the Wendat village of Teanaostaiæ fell captive to the Iroquois and put to death in October 1637. For some time, the family refused to accept that he was gone. In January, one of Amantacha’s uncles received news from a “reliable source” indicating that his nephew was still alive. This only fed Amantacha’s parent’s hopes and they continued the denial for another two months. In March, however, nearly five months after the initial news, Amantacha’s mother declared her son dead. The Jesuits visited the grieving family that same month following the customs of the country by giving 400 porcelain beads and two

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97 JR 26: 273.
99 JR 14: 25.
100 JR 14: 27.
101 JR 14: 27.
small hatchets as condolence gifts.\textsuperscript{102} It was during this visit that the missionaries learned of the depths to which this family had fallen.

With the acceptance of his son’s death, Amantacha’s father, a hardheaded Traditionalist, took his own life, unable to cope with the loss of his son. Apparently, having suffered from severe bouts of depression for many months, the father asked his daughter to gather the root Ondachienroa. This root was known for its medicinal value, although it was also used as a quick poison if prepared properly.\textsuperscript{103} The daughter, believing the root would be used to cure her father’s ailments, went out twice to collect enough root to satisfy her father’s request. After some preparation, Amantacha’s father ate the root, which resulted in a high fever and he died shortly after.\textsuperscript{104}

Repercussions of war and the practice of taking prisoners were not only a personal experience, but one felt by the entire Wendat community. Although warriors and war chiefs were most certainly taken as captives, so too were young girls and old men. The loss of these individuals had major repercussions for Wendat society in terms of Christian conversion and personal stability of the community.

\textbf{Wendat Victories}

Despite, the emphasis on military loss perpetuated with the constant focus on 1649, Wendats represented a strong adversary to the Iroquois. Regardless of their weakened state, Wendats secured numerous victories leading up to 1649. Two cases in particular demonstrate the ferocity and ability of Wendat warriors during the years leading up to the dispersal. In the summer of 1642, Ahatsistari led a successful expedition

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{102} JR 14: 25.
\textsuperscript{103} JR 13: 23.
\textsuperscript{104} JR 13: 27
\end{footnotesize}
against the Iroquois that would contribute to his already prestigious reputation. His party, having perceived a number of Iroquois canoes with much greater numbers than their own, began to panic and petitioned *Ahatstari* to retreat. He refused to give in and pushed his comrades to face their enemy head on. He enticed them saying “No, no, my Comrades. Let us attack them ourselves.”

Taking it upon himself to lead the Wendat contingent, *Ahatstari* was the first to strike at the Iroquois. As the canoes approached, the war chief leapt from the shore into a canoe full of Iroquois warriors. He proceeded to crack the head of the first person he came in contact, then he threw two others overboard before he himself jumped into the water upsetting the entire canoe. He swam with one hand while managing to kill others. The shocked Iroquois retreated. *Ahatstari* and his men pursued them; picking up those who remained in the water and bringing them back as captives and symbols of this extraordinary victory.

Similar circumstances took place in July 1648. An Algonquian scout discovered Iroquois tracks close to a French settlement and sent word of a pending attack. The inhabitants signaled the cannon (which was the usual way of signaling a potential attack). There were five Wendats in close vicinity to the settlement and upon hearing the cannon hurried to see if they could be of assistance. They were confronted by a large Iroquois group of approximately eighty warriors before reaching the French, however, and were forced to begin combat with only two French farmers as allies. The battle ended with an Iroquois retreat.

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105 *JR* 23: 25.
106 *JR* 23: 25.
107 *JR* 23: 27.
108 *JR* 23: 27.
The victories of ’42 and ’48 were not the only military successes for the Wendats during the 1640s, yet they are representative of the ability of Wendat warriors to defend themselves against the Iroquois in a formidable way. These accounts also present instances when the odds were against the Wendats. Outnumbered and caught by surprise, Wendat warriors attained victory despite the fear of defeat. Bravery and skill were most certainly important components to these successes.

**Conclusion**

The 1640s was a decade engulfed in Nadouek warfare, battles and conflicts. The increase in warfare effected not just war leaders and warriors, but the community as a whole. Nadouek war culture began to take precedence as the production of military supplies and the defense of villages became paramount to the security of the Confederacy. Both women and men, old and young, took part in these customary military pursuits; creating arrows and shields, participating in the Fort Fight ritual and respecting the power of female decision-making.

The Nadouek tradition of captive adoption and torture remained intact throughout this period. Adoption replenished Nadouek numbers, diplomatic maneuvers and intelligence exchange. This interchange of people represented community growth and development as citizens were both lost and gained. Through this process kinship networks expanded and cultural customs evolved. Torture and death served as normative component to these events. The system of torture was complex and highly ritualized, rooted in long standing traditions. Despite these outwardly grotesque and brutal physical performances, Nadoueks accepted the beating and mutilation of captives as part of the
warfare experience. Wendats did not take warfare, nor its results, lightly; pain and death served to dissuade future attacks, as well as test the strength and endurance of captives.

A combination of economic aspirations and repopulation strategies motivated these conflicts, while the emergence of Wendat war chiefs in civil affairs also shaped these circumstances. In the end, the Wendats acted as instigators and defenders within these struggles. There is no evidence to suggest that the Iroquois were any more capable militarily than Wendats in the years leading up to their dispersal. But with the close interaction between Wendats and the French by mid-century, Wendat communities weakened with disease and political divisions between pro- and anti- Jesuit factions. Nonetheless, examples of Wendat victories are a testament to the fact that although defeated by the Iroquois, the Wendats represented a potential threat to their Nadoekek enemies and continued to resist Iroquois insurgency at least until 1648.
CHAPTER 4
WENADT COUNTRY: GAHOENDOE ISLAND AND THE COST OF REMAINING CLOSE

Introduction

In the summer of 1648 the Iroquois executed a successful military raid of the northern Wendat village of St Joseph. Over 400 families lived within this settlement and the Iroquois victors took 700 captives.¹ Seven months later, the notable Wendat war chief Estienne Anoatacha from the village of St. Louys expressed a premonition that St. Joseph was only the first of many future Iroquois attacks to come. The chief’s worries became reality on 16 March 1649, when 1,000 Iroquois warriors marched on the village of St. Ignace, resulting in 400 casualties.² In less than twenty-four hours, Anoatacha’s St. Louys also fell, although most of the villagers fled as a result of his earlier premonition.³ Convinced that an inevitable Iroquois victory would bring devastation the remaining Wendats urged Anoatacha to abandon the settlement and the resident Jesuits, who refused to leave. The headman replied in despair, “there is no longer time for them to flee across the snow, Let us die . . . .”⁴ The Iroquois, who proved victorious in a brief amount of time (the battle took place between dawn and 9 am), proceeded to burn the entire village to the ground, killing many Wendats including Anoatacha. Jesuits made a

² JR 34: 125.
³ JR 34: 127.
⁴ JR 34: 125.
record of the events, observing a terrifying scene where “children were broiling beside their mothers; where husbands saw [their wives] roasting near [them].”

After a brief pause, the Iroquois returned to St. Ignace to regroup for an attack on the village of St. Marie the next day. This time, however, over 300 Wendat warriors traveled to St. Marie to help in the defense and managed to repel the Iroquois, who began a long and destructive retreat, taking with them hundreds of Wendat captives and provisions, while burning whatever they could not carry.

Scholars have attributed the Iroquois victories during the spring offensive of 1649 to several factors. The Iroquois’ acquisition of fire arms and the Wendats’ lack of comparable weaponry most certainly played a role. In addition, the timing of the attack on St Ignace (in mid-March) surprised the Wendats, who were used to the conventional Nadouek seasonal warfare taking place in the summer after the fields were planted. The spring attack happened when almost all the winter provisions were used and food resources were at their lowest. This tactic also made escape difficult, as the snow, ice and freezing temperatures restricted movement and the lack of brush made hiding nearly impossible. The number of Iroquois warriors also presented a formidable advantage. Nadouek battles usually included small bands of warriors; the fact that the Iroquois attack comprised over 1,000 able bodied men allowed them to take hold of one village, while sending more men to continue the military campaign on other unsuspecting communities. Finally, the Iroquois strategy of fighting at night violated customary practice of Nadouek

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5 JR 34: 137.
6 Roger Carpenter, The Renewed, The Destroyed, And The Remade: The Three Thought Worlds of the Iroquois and the Huron, 1609-1650 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 126; JR 34: 137. It was also during this conflict that the Iroquois captured, tortured, and put to death Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant.
warfare and caught the village by surprise. These departures from traditional tactics made the attacks all the more devastating for the Wendats.\(^7\)

These decisive Iroquois offensives had both immediate and far-reaching repercussions. In addition, considering the many men, women and children taken as captives, the Wendats lost approximately 630-880 warriors.\(^8\) The loss of so many young men weakened the Wendats’ ability to fend off future invasions, and destabilized the psychological state of victims’ families and loved ones. The destructive nature of the Iroquois retreat further debilitated Wendat survivors; Wendats faced the horrific realization that they would not be able to plant or harvest crops for the coming year. Roger Carpenter speculates that the Iroquois took the Wendats’ remaining provisions for the winter months, as well as corn seeds, so even the untouched fields could not be sown.\(^9\) The Iroquois attacks created a crisis situation for the survivors: if the Wendats remained within the borders of the Wendake mainland, they faced starvation.

Understanding the severity of these circumstances, over 6,000 Wendats convened at the village of St. Marie to evaluate their options.\(^10\) After much deliberating, the majority resolved to move to the Island of Gohoendoe, located roughly three miles from the most northern part of Wendake and the southern tip of Georgian Bay.\(^11\) Gohoendoe became a Wendat refuge for more than a year. This period, deemed by Bruce Trigger as “the hungry winter” (although spanning from spring 1649 to the spring 1650),

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\(^7\) Carpenter, *Renewed*, 126; José Antonio Brandão, *Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy Toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 204.


\(^9\) Carpenter, *Renewed*, 126.

\(^10\) *JR* 34: 199.

\(^11\) The island is called Christian Island today. *Google maps*, [accessed on-line: 10 January 2010].
represented the first major attempt at relocation by the Wendats, yet its importance in the
process of Wendat dispersals has received little attention.\textsuperscript{12} For the most part, historians
treat \textit{Gohoendoe} as a brief stopover in the much longer and geographically distant
Wendat dispersal. It is framed as a complete failure and the impetus for the final
evacuation of the Wendat from their homeland. These quick descriptions fail to explain
the circumstances that led to the Wendat evacuation of \textit{Gohoendoe}.

This chapter explores the decision-making process that preceded the move to
\textit{Gohoendoe} in 1649, and the factors that pushed the Wendats to reconsider their choice a
year later. It considers how the Wendats negotiated their removal, and what aspects
informed their decisions. Wendat “spaces of power” and commercial networks relied
heavily on geographic location, with specific emphasis on waterways. \textit{Gohoendoe}
represented an attempt by the Wendats to maintain their role as diplomats and fur traders
through spatial power.\textsuperscript{13} In this light, the island relocation became an integral part of a
calculated plan to overcome the military defeat by the Iroquois and keep a foothold in the
geopolitical world of the northeast. The failure of this experiment, and the Wendats’ final
resolution to abandon the \textit{Gohoendoe} strategy in 1650, signaled a major turning point in
Wendat survival, but still a calculated one embedded in traditional networks and
identities. While disease and the Iroquois attacks significantly weakened the Wendats,

\textsuperscript{12} Bruce Trigger dedicates a small section to \textit{Gohoendoe} and Roger Carpenter delivers a brief
synopsis of this period. See Bruce Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic: A History of The Huron
People to 1660} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 767-782; Carpenter,
\textit{Renewed}, 127-129.
\textsuperscript{13} “Spaces of power” refers to Elizabeth Mancke’s conception, which she defines “as a system of
social power, whether economic, political, cultural or military, that we can describe functionally
England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons}, Stephen Hornsby and John
G Reid, eds., (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), 32. I have applied the term to
Native networks in the case of the Wendats and their allies.
driving them to leave Wendake, the food crisis on Gohoendoe in 1649-1650 was the most important factor shaping the future of the Wendats and their subsequent exodus from Wendat Country.

The Decision

Wendats reacted to the news of the defeat at St. Ignace and St. Louys with a combination of grief and panic. In the village of Assassin, people heard about the overall Iroquois victory two days after the confrontation at St. Marie. Shocked and frustrated, wives cried out for their husbands and mothers for their sons. According to Father Chaumonot, not a single cabin remained untouched by these events; the wails of mourning family members and friends could be heard throughout the village. Sorrow soon gave way to an overwhelming sense of anxiety about the future. How would they overcome these losses? Would the Iroquois return? How would they defend themselves? For many, these questions pointed to the ultimate demise of the Wendats, and the people expressed this fear both privately and publicly. In Assassin, an older man became so agitated that he began to run from one end of the village to the other yelling that the Iroquois were sure to return and with the loss of so many warriors, the village’s ability to defend itself was hopeless. His disillusionment pushed him to shout, “Run away! Run away! Save us! The enemy has arrived to take us!” In reality, the Iroquois were not attacking the village, but paranoia surely affected many in the already anxious community.

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15 Felix Martin, 94.
16 The translation is my own. The original text is “Fuyons! Fuyons! Sauvons-nous! Voici l’armée ennemie qui vient nous prendre.” Martin, Autobiographie, 94.
Luckily, this type of reaction did not consume the majority, and soon Wendats from all villages began to congregate to address their situation constructively. St. Marie became the nucleus of this activity. Staying in the established villages within Wendake was not an option because of the lack of food supplies and the likelihood that the Iroquois would return. A plan of evacuation and relocation was the next logical solution.

Dividing up into small bands and families seemed a reasonable option strategy that would allow for easier mobility and the potential to evade detection from the Iroquois. 17 Others thought that keeping villages together would create greater security. 18 One group put this plan into action and created a new village, later named St. Charles by the Jesuits. They built cabins and fortified their surroundings. They relied on fishing for subsistence, although they managed to retain a small amount of corn as well. 19 Although some advocated these small-scale relocations throughout the Wendake mainland, others believed the strategy too precarious, since villages such as St. Charles seemed too distant and isolated from the larger Wendat community. 20 Indeed, many of these groups would find themselves exposed to Iroquois attacks and a lack of supplies and provisions. 21 The alternative to remaining on the mainland was to venture across the water to one of the numerous islands located near by. Although some groups decided to move out on their own to various small islands, the majority agreed to remain together and relocate the entire population to one island. 22 At first, the island of Ekaentoton, 23 located within the

17 JR 34: 197, 204.
18 JR 34: 203.
19 JR 35: 173-175.
20 JR 35: 177. The St. Charles villagers struggled with severe bouts of starvation and abandoned their village in less than a year to rejoin the rest of the Wendat.
22 JR 34: 197.
north of Lake Huron approximately 108 nautical miles from St. Marie and already inhabited by Algonquians and a Jesuit mission seemed attractive.\textsuperscript{24} During the deliberations at St. Marie, the Jesuits informed the Wendats that they thought \textit{Ekaentoton} was their best option.\textsuperscript{25} The land was said to be good and the fishing excellent; the island was 1,068 square miles with 108 fresh water lakes.\textsuperscript{26} The presence of other missionaries on the island enticed the Jesuits to support a move there. For the Wendats, however, the question was more complicated than subsistence. Current interpretations point to the long frost season of \textit{Ekaetoton} as the main reason for Wendat reservations towards the location, but Wendats may have also been considering the geopolitical ramifications of such a relocation.\textsuperscript{27} By joining the Algonquians, Wendats would have relinquished their position as middlemen within the French-Wendant-Algonquian fur trade. Traditionally, the Algonquians traded furs to the Wendats in exchange for corn and the Wendats in turn traded the furs to the French for European goods.\textsuperscript{28} If the Wendats relocated to an Algonquian settlement, the French would have no need to go through the Wendats to receive furs, because they would have direct access to the Algonquians.

The Wendats rejected the Jesuit proposal of \textit{Ekaetoton} in 1649 and sought land closer to home. Located approximately twenty-three nautical miles northwest of St.

\textsuperscript{23} Today this island is known as Manitoulin Island.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{JR} 34: 205. According to the Jesuits it is 140 miles (60 leagues) from the mainland.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{JR} 34: 205.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{JR} 34: 203-209; Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 771; Carpenter, \textit{Renewed}, 127.
\textsuperscript{28} Claude-Charles Bacqueville de la Potherie, \textit{Histoire de L’Amerique Septiaenale} (Paris: Chez Brocas, 1753), II: 51; \textit{JR} 21: 239.
Marie, the island of Go ho en doe was one of the largest islands within Wendake. The 13,413 acres of land comprising Go ho en doe could provide ample space for the cultivation of fields and the fishing was known to be plentiful. In addition, there was already a Wendat village on the island, and it was common knowledge that they had already sown their corn for the year. The island’s three-mile distance from the mainland made it a secure location; close enough to access the mainland, but far enough away that any pending attack could be foreseen from the island’s eastern shore (the western shore had no significant land mass in proximity). Its northern location was also an advantage because it was one of the islands furthest from Iroquois Country. While these were important factors, the relationship between the occupied space of Go ho en doe and the resulting maintenance of power within the geopolitical and economic Wendat world must be taken into consideration. Wendake was the heart of commercial activity for the St. Lawrence fur trade and Go ho en doe, was not only within the influence of the Wendat territorial authority, but already an established stopover for the Algonquians and Wendats for the fur trade. Wendats even used it as a meeting ground in the past, a position that would only be augmented further if the Wendat community took the island as their primary place of residence. Despite the frequency of warfare and the latest Iroquois attacks, trade between the Algonquin, Wendat and French continued throughout 1648 and

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29 Google maps and JR 35: 25.
30 William Fenton has calculated that 7,000 acres was needed to sustain a population of 20,000 Nadouek people. Considering that the Wendat population was at most 10,000 people by 1640, the 13,413 acres of Go ho en doe should have been able to support the entire population. Fenton’s analysis is described in Bruce Trigger’s The Huron: Farmers of the North (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 28. The Jesuits record the good fishing attributed to the Island, JR 34: 199.
31 JR 34: 203, 197, 203-205; JR 35: 83.
32 JR 35: 205; Leo Paul Desrosiers, Iroquoisie, I: xxii.
1649, with an accumulation of over 5,000 livres in weight in beaver furs.\textsuperscript{33} Thus, \textit{Gohoendoe} provided a decent subsistence culture and physical defense, as well as a good location to secure Wendat hegemony in the fur trade and their traditional role as middlemen.

The majority of Wendats resolved to move to \textit{Gohoendoe}, having reached consensus within each village.\textsuperscript{34} As a final step in solidifying the pending removal, twelve of the most prominent headmen invited the Jesuits to join them. This request could have been made for several reasons. Although there were already Christian converts within the group, the headmen suggested there would be the potential for future conversions if the Jesuits agreed to move with them. This was most likely done to appease the Jesuits, with the hope that the Wendats would also gain military defense and provisions; the Jesuits had guns, and other goods that Wendats needed.\textsuperscript{35} But because the Wendats fended off the Iroquois at St. Marie, the Jesuits of that mission had maintained decent amounts of livestock and agricultural provisions. In their storage the missionaries had at least ten fowls, two pigs, two bulls, four cows, and a substantial amount of corn (that had been provided by the Wendats in the last harvest).\textsuperscript{36} The prospects of keeping the Jesuits within the Wendat sphere of influence remained crucial to trade networks with the French. By maintaining a close relationship with the Jesuits, the Wendats simultaneously secured future relations with the French.

The official invitation to the Jesuits followed customary Wendat diplomatic protocol. The headmen called a council in which they spoke about the Wendat decision,

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{JR} 34: 59-61.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{JR} 34: 209.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{JR} 34: 209.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{JR} 35: 25.
and the reasons they wished the French to accompany them. They pointed to the weakened state of their people and their inability to properly defend themselves without French help. They urged the missionaries to have compassion on their widows and children. The headmen concluded their three-hour oration with a proposition that many of the Wendats would consider Christian conversion after relocation.  

Subsequently, the headmen presented the Jesuits with ten wampum belts that represented “the voice of the women and children.” The Jesuits resolved to “follow [their] flock, and flee with the fleeing.”

Wendats engaged in calculated planning and strategic decision-making to facilitate their move to Gohoenode. Despite the limited options, Gohoenode represented the best opportunity for survival. Much of the scholarship discussing this point in Wendat history tends to overemphasize the role of the Jesuits in these deliberations. Sainte-Marie-Among-the-Hurons, for instance, presents a sign depicting those who moved to Gohoenode as a group of Jesuits and “some Wendat followers.” Similarly, Mackinac State Park describes the Wendats as being “lured” by the French. In fact, Bruce Trigger asserts that the Wendat looked to the Jesuits for leadership in these matters. The actual circumstances, however, depict a different situation. The move to Gohoenode was clearly a Wendat decision. Jesuits wanted to go to Ekaentoton; an idea rejected by the Wendats.

37 JR 35: 209.
38 JR 35: 209.
39 JR 34: 203; 211.
40 Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, “Sainte-Marie Among The Hurons” located at Highway #12, Township of Tay, Ontario, Canada.
42 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 772.
Further, the Jesuit decision to accompany the Wendats to *Gohoendoe* was made in response to Wendat instigated invitations.

**The Journey**

It took less than two weeks to pack up and strip the village and mission at St. Marie.\(^{43}\) They burnt the village to the ground in less than an hour.\(^{44}\) Similar operations took place in at least fifteen other Wendat villages. These settlements were burned in the hope of preventing the Iroquois from using them for refuge in any future campaigns.\(^{45}\) While most Wendats left near the end of March, several small groups remained on the mainland throughout the summer in the hopes of gathering sufficient provisions for the fall and winter months.\(^{46}\) This strategy was crucial to ensure that upon arrival, the Wendat community would have enough food to last them until spring.

The exact path to *Gohoendoe* is unknown, although the most likely route was by canoe out the Wye marsh adjacent to St. Marie. They could follow the shores of Matchedash Bay, beyond present-day Beausoleil Island and Giant’s Tomb, rounding the northern tip of land that points to the greater Georgian Bay. The journey ordinarily took a day, but was made longer by the large number of people traveling, and hesitancy from fear of Iroquois attacks.\(^{47}\) Some members of the fleet made the mistake of taking refuge

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\(^{43}\) JR 34: 197.
\(^{44}\) JR 35: 83.
\(^{45}\) JR 34: 197.
\(^{46}\) JR 35: 87.
\(^{47}\) The Jesuits who left a few months later took a “few days” to arrive. They traveled by raft and had many able bodied men, JR 35: 83. Professional canoeist Steve Magee contends that on average a skilled canoeist, with good weather, can cover 1 km/15 minutes. The paddle to *Gohoendoe* was approximately 32 km, thus the travel time was at minimum 8 hours. Personal correspondence between the author and Steve Magee [Feb. 15, 2010].
at night for sleep and were attacked by Iroquois war parties that continued to keep watch
on the Wendats from the shore.\textsuperscript{48}

The Jesuits and their European contingent, as well as the remaining Wendats,
followed this first wave of migrants on the evening of 14 June 1649. In addition to
canoes, this group built a raft out of fifty to sixty foot logs. They maintained a strategy of
only paddling at night and thus it took them several days to make it to their final
destination, despite the fact that they had calm winds and no rain.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Population}

Historians have never fully explored the demographic information concerning
those who relocated to \textit{Gohoendoe}. At the time of Bruce Trigger’s publications in the
1970s and 80s, the \textit{Jesuit Relations} provided the most information on population
statistics, and it is Trigger’s assertion that Jesuits’ exaggerated their numbers.\textsuperscript{50} In these
accounts, 300 families occupied the island before June.\textsuperscript{51} Another report indicates over
100 “cabins” by 1650.\textsuperscript{52} If one Wendat family comprised approximately five to eight
people, then at minimum 1,500 people lived on \textit{Gohoendoe} before the major migration in
the spring of 1649.\textsuperscript{53} In addition, one cabin, or longhouse, housed roughly sixty to eighty
people.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, 100 cabins can be translated into a minimum population of 6,000.
Combined these numbers indicate that the entire Wendat population of \textit{Gohoendoe} was
most likely close to 8,000.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{JR} 35: 83.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{JR} 35: 83.
\textsuperscript{50} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 772.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{JR} 35: 87.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{JR} 35: 87.
\textsuperscript{53} For family size see: Trigger, \textit{Huron}, 13.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{JR} 35: 87.
Current archeological data supports these estimates. In the early 1990s, The Northeastern Archeological Association excavated The Charity Site, originally one of the largest Wendat settlements on Gohoendoe in the seventeenth-century.\textsuperscript{55} The data collected at this site, and several others from the surrounding area, revealed over 1,000 people living within one settlement and it confirmed that there was at least one site with over 100 longhouses.\textsuperscript{56} Further evidence of material culture such as 100 decorated pots, 100 ceramic pipe sections, sixty glass beads and a considerable amount of European metal, point to the fact that Wendats had not only settled these locations, but transported their culture and rituals to the island.\textsuperscript{57} Taking these numbers into consideration, as well as the loss of over 700 warriors in the spring campaign against the Iroquois, the Wendat community on Gohoendoe represented at least 86\% of the entire Wendat population!\textsuperscript{58}

This group mirrored the various factions within the Confederacy. Those who removed to Gohoendoe represented all the villages and nations of the Wendats.\textsuperscript{59} Scholars have argued that the majority of those relocating to the island were from Christian villages and nations, but there is little evidence to support this beyond a 1649 letter from Marie de L’incarnation, an Ursuline nun, who believed the entire island was made up of Christians.\textsuperscript{60} Some historians also contend that the majority of those Wendats on Gohoendoe were Christian.\textsuperscript{61} In both cases, the Christian hypothesis is based on

\textsuperscript{55} The Charity Site, \url{http://www.apaontario.ca/r_charity01.html} [accessed on-line: 12 October 2009].
\textsuperscript{56} Charity Site.
\textsuperscript{57} Charity Site.
\textsuperscript{58} Trigger estimates that the population was 10,000 after 1640. Trigger, \textit{Huron}, 13.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{JR} 34: 209.
\textsuperscript{60} Lettre XCI (1649) in \textit{Lettre de la Reverend Mere de L’Incarnation} ed. Abbé Richaudieu, (Paris: Leipzig, Casterman, 1876), I: 389.
\textsuperscript{61} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aetaentsic}, 781.
Jesuits reports of many converts and the baptismal records made by the Jesuits. The use of baptismal records presents two problems. One, Wendats asking for baptism in 1649 suggests that many were not Christian when they first sought to relocate. Similarly, the headman’s oration at St. Marie just before the move implied that many Wendats would consider baptism if the Jesuits moved to Go hoendo e. In addition, the Jesuit practice of baptizing the dying and the Wendat custom of seeking conversion in an attempt to overcome death had not ceased during this period. So, although it is true that 3,000 baptisms were recorded by the Jesuits indicating the number of Christian souls among the Wendats, they do not necessarily point to the number of Christian people.

The loss of so many warriors in the spring of 1649 has led scholars to suggest that the majority of the population was made up of women. The Iroquois wars had taken hundreds of able-bodied men from this community and the Jesuits contend that there were “hundreds and hundreds of widows who had lost entire households.” Although the Jesuits’ constant reference to Wendat “families” when discussing population size seems to complicate the validity of this argument, there is no doubt that hundreds of men were lost in the recent war. If the overall population before 1649 was around 10,000 and 86% moved to Go hoendo e after the dispersal, it is unlikely that the Wendat population was unbalanced as far as gender ratios to such an extreme. This is not to make light of the loss of hundreds, perhaps over a thousand warriors, but in the context of the entire population, it is hard to believe that nearly 90% of the survivors were women. One faction, however, was most certainly comprised of men—the sixty Europeans who came to live among the

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62 There were roughly 3,000 baptisms from 1649-1650 on the island. Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 781.
63 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 772.
64 JR 34: 217.
Gohoendoe Wendats. This group consisted of thirteen Jesuit fathers, including Fathers Chaumonot and Ragueneau, four assistants, twenty-two donnés (a secular employee of the Society of Jesus), eleven domestics, six soldiers and four “boys.”

Settlement

The ways in which Wendats organized their settlement on the Island illustrates a continuation of past practices of agriculture and village composition, while also highlighting innovations for a more secure community. The structuring of this space and thus the physical ordering of the Wendats’ daily lives were direct reflections of underlying cultural principles and belief systems.

They built two large Wendat villages, with several outlying longhouses that were located in more remote areas. The village now called the “Charity Site” was located roughly one mile northwest into the interior on the shore of present-day Douglas Lake. Houses within this community were for the most part customary longhouses, although they were shorter and narrower than those found on the Wendake mainland. They were also built closer together than Wendat settlements of the past. This new structuring had very little to do with any alterations to the population, as archeologists agree that the houses were still able to hold the customary sixty to eighty people. Rather, the new design was most likely an attempt to optimize the amount of space on Gohoendoe. Back on the mainland, villages usually relocated every eight to ten years in order to rotate the

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65 JR 35: 23.
67 JR 35: 87.
68 Charity Site.
soil of their fields. The limited amount of land on an Island would have restricted this strategy and so preserving space was important to ensure the availability of land for the future. The close proximity of the houses to one another may have also been a defensive strategy. Closer, tight-knit villages were easier to defend in the case of an Iroquois attack.

Wendats managed to clear and plant at least one field by June 1649 at the Charity Site.69 Cornfields were an integral part of Wendat subsistence culture and it was paramount that all the villages cultivated the land for food to sustain the isolated island population. Prospects for agriculture were good; William Fenton stipulates that an Iroquoian population of 20,000 people can subsist off of 7,000 acres.70 Taking into consideration the size of Gohoendoe (13,413.1 acres) and the population of the Wendats (8,000), there would have been ample space for cultivation of crops. Gohoendoe, presented additional difficulties as it had dense forest, requiring the trees to be cleared and the ground tilled before any crops could be sown.71 Although this undertaking took priority in terms of community building, only one out of ten families contributed in any significant way.72 Trigger and Carpenter have asserted the preparation of fields was men’s work, connecting the difficulty of the Wendat to engage in this activity with the lack of men within the communities.73 Given the new data on Wendat gender ratios at Gohoendoe, however, the inability of most families to contribute to the fields might have been a result of the many other tasks required by the Wendats during this period. A

69 JR 35: 83.
70 It is not clear what type of soil Fenton is referring to, but one can surmise that his theory is focused on tillable land with agricultural potential. Trigger, Huron, 28.
71 JR 35: 87.
72 JR 35: 87.
73 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 772; Carpenter, Renewed, 128.
combination of building houses, finding food, and protecting the community from potential Iroquois attacks occupied the majority.

The Wendats located their second large settlement, named St. Marie II by the French, a few hundred meters from the southern shore of GoHoendoe, within plain site of mainland Wendake, and close to the Jesuit mission. In addition to at least 100 longhouses built in the same fashion as the Charity Site, this settlement included fortifications. It appears that the Wendat decision to have the Jesuits accompany them paid dividends; under the guidance of several skilled soldiers, the Europeans immediately built two forts, one around the mission and the other circling the Wendat village. This project was made easier with the help of the Wendats, and the realization that the ground naturally provided stone and mortar without any digging. The structure encompassing the mission followed seventeenth-century military guidelines and was approximately 120 feet squared with bastions at each corner. French soldiers were later posted at the bastions for 24-hour protection. This arrangement was completed by the end of the summer.

According to Father Ragueneau, the fortification was an improvement in comparison to the wooden palisade that was constructed at St. Marie I on the mainland. For the most part, the Jesuits felt confident that the stone was impenetrable by the Iroquois. In addition, they hoped the stone walls surrounding the settlements were high

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74 Google maps and JR 35: 25.
75 JR 35: 85.
76 Martin Felix, Plan of the remains of Sainte-Marie II on Christian Island (1855) in Bruce Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 773; JR 35: 85.
77 JR 35: 85.
78 JR 40: 47.
79 JR 35: 27.
enough to repel the enemy and strong enough to withstand a battering-ram. Most Wendats also felt secure on the Island, feeling that the location and buildings allowed for optimal defense against an Iroquois attack from the mainland.

In its longhouses, design and fortifications, the construction of Wendat villages on Gohoendoe reflected both customary practices and alternative innovations. They required a large amount of labor and dedication by every member, each contributing to the building of residences, palisades and fields. The French furthered Wendat aspirations of security by applying their experience with mortar and stone fortifications to these communities. Up until this point, the decision to relocate to Gohoendoe must have seemed a success, providing potential to maintain the Wendat Confederacy and its people, but food shortages soon created a new crisis.

**Food Crisis**

Despite the fact that the Wendats had planted their crops by spring, it became evident after a few months of occupation at Gohoendoe that food was going to be an issue. Some Wendats expressed anxiety over the lack of rain as early as June 1649. Indeed, these worries were well founded, as the droughts of 1649-1650 and the pending crop failure would culminate in a food crisis that proved to be the most disastrous force affecting the future of the Confederacy. The causes of the famine on Gohoendoe have been the subject of some debate by scholars. George Hunt argues the famine was the result of a pre-1649 Wendat focus on trade and a neglect of their fields, obtaining corn

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80 J. R. 35: 27.
81 J. R. 34: 225.
82 J. R. 35: 85.
from other Nadouek societies such as the Neutral and Tionnontate. Trigger discounts this theory and argues that the food crisis was correlated with the depopulation of the Wendats during the Iroquois attacks in 1648-49 and the inability of the survivors to cultivate their fields out of fear of the Iroquois. This, along with the Iroquois destruction of so many Wendat fields and provisions, would have made it difficult for the Wendat to create any kind of substantial surplus to be transported to Gochoendoe. Further, Trigger contends that the immediate crisis occurred because of the small yield of fish on Gochoendoe and the limited amount of food reserves of the Jesuits.

Even though there is little to support Hunt’s assertion, Trigger’s analysis serves to only partially explain the circumstances leading to the famine. A lack of provisions would have created significant problems for an isolated population, and the inability to obtain alternative food supplies, such as fish, would have certainly exacerbated the situation. It is also correct to assume the amount of food in the Jesuits’ storage was lacking. The Jesuits had about 500 bushels of corn and the equivalent in acorns. Trigger combines these amounts, assuming that acorns and corn have equal nutritional value and concludes that this supply would have fed roughly 120 people over the winter.

This analysis presents a number of problems. First, acorns and corn do not have the same nutritional value. While one cup of dried Indian corn represents about 108

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83 George T. Hunt, The Wars of The Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), 94.
84 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 752.
85 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 779.
86 Peak fishing season was in the spring (March-May) although a limited amount of fish could be obtained throughout the year. Conrad Heidenreich, Huronia: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians 1600-1650 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 208-212.
88 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 855, fn 7. This is because ten bushels feed one person and combined the amount of bushels of corn and acorns were 1,200.
calories and provides 78% of the carbohydrates, 12% fats, and 10% proteins of a human’s daily requirements, the same amount of acorns represent 142 calories, 42% of the carbohydrates, 52% fats and 6% proteins. More importantly, the amount of work to attain the nutritional value from these products differed greatly. The Wendat preferred corn because it was easily prepared for consumption. Once dried, it could be ground, boiled or roasted in abundance because the kernels were ready to be eaten. Conversely, acorns were a time consuming product; the edible portion is found within the hard shell of the nut, accessed only by cracking the exterior or boiling the acorn as a whole to break the softer shell. Access to the insides is only half the battle, however, as the bitter tannins within the nut need to be leached in order to make it edible. This process of boiling or soaking could take anywhere from several hours to a number of days, requiring several changes of water. Thus, the reality of the situation was that acorns and corn were not equal in terms of nutritional value or preparation or desirability by the Wendats. Still, Trigger’s emphasis on the lack of Jesuit supplies still holds true. If corn was the most preferred provision, 500 bushels fed fifty people over the winter months – a number that made little to no difference to 8,000 starving Wendats.

These factors could have been overcome if the crops planted in the spring of 1649 had matured. Although the Iroquois may have taken some corn seeds, they obviously did

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not take them all because the Wendats of *Gohoendoe* were able to plant corn that year. In this case, both Hunt and Trigger ignore the effects of a drought that took place during the summer of 1649. Tree-ring data for the entire Mississippi suggests that the mid-seventeenth century was not an era typified by regional droughts, compared to the conditions of the late sixteenth century, or the century-long mega droughts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Nonetheless, Jesuits were seriously concerned about the lack of rain; and it seems likely that a local drought contributed to the Wendat crisis. The Jesuits took note of it and the constant need for rain even before the extent of the drought was fully realized.\(^\text{92}\)

Wendats addressed the crop failure and pending famine in a number of ways. Alternative foods were the first line of defense. Despite their distaste for labor-intensive acorns, these nuts became the number one source of nutrition. Groups were sent out to collect acorns in the late months of summer and autumn to acquire provisions for the winter.\(^\text{93}\) In addition, a bitter root called *otsa* was often collected. Those who did not have the luxury of these items relied on wild garlic that they baked under the ashes or boiled in water.\(^\text{94}\) Other Wendats stripped trees of their bark and boiled it. This created a bitter broth they drank to give their bodies the impression of being full.\(^\text{95}\)

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\(^{92}\) *JR* 35: 85. This was most likely a small-scale decadal drought (usually lasting about 6 years) as opposed to a megadrought that could encompass hundreds of years. For information on the droughts of North America see Stahle, David, Falko K. Fye, Edward R. Cook and R. Daniel Griffin, “Tree-ring reconstructed megadroughts over North America since a.d.1300,” *Climate Change* Vol. 83, No. 1-2, 133-149; Celine Herweijer, and Richard Seager, Edward R. Cook, Julien Emile-Geay, “North American Droughts of the Last Millennium from a Gridded Network of Tree-Ring Data” *Journal of Climate*, Vol. 20, 1353–1376.

\(^{93}\) *JR* 34: 215.

\(^{94}\) *JR* 34: 215.

\(^{95}\) *JR* 35: 175.
Eventually the hunger became a pandemic and famine plagued the entire population. For those who had not or could not obtain other wild foods, bartering for supplies became an alternative. Some sold their material possessions to other Wendats in exchange for meals of acorns or broth. Many of these items were clothing and it was common for desperate Wendats to take the clothes off of deceased bodies and trade them for food. This became such a frequent practice that one dying man pleaded with his companions to “bury me now, at once; for my life is over and thou seest plainly that I am numbered among the dead. Now, what I fear is this, that, if I should die before being buried, other poor people as destitute as I am, may rob me of these rags that cover my nakedness . . .”

Another option was to seek out the reserves of the Jesuits. Although in small amounts, the readily accessible supplies stored at the mission enticed many Wendats to meet the priests and request aid. Not surprisingly, the Jesuits favored Christian converts with rations. To implement distributions in a controlled fashion, the Jesuits introduced a coin that was a small piece of copper stamped with a sign designed for the acquisition of food. They instructed coin holders to line up at mid-day. Jesuit favorites received Indian meal boiled in water, while others could obtain acorns or smoked fish.

As spring drew near, those who survived the winter ventured off the island in search of a wider supply of food, particularly acorns that could be more easily collected on the melting mountain tops of the mainland. They also checked fishing grounds

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96 JR 35: 93.
97 JR 35: 95.
98 JR 35: 99.
99 JR 35: 99.
exposed to the southern sun. These risky endeavors occasionally led to death. In early March 1650 a large group of men, women and children attempted to cross to the mainland for this purpose. They split up into small bands to make an attack from the Iroquois harder. Barely out of the sight of the island, the ice cracked and several drowned. Others remained paralyzed on the surface, unable to move out of a fear of falling through, while equally aware that the amount of noise created by the catastrophe would alert the Iroquois on the mainland. Survivors remained exposed out on the ice overnight, until a Wendat rescue party deemed it safe to make the crossing the next day.

As the famine peaked in the winter of 1649, Wendats were pushed to the brink of survival. People transgressed social norms, implementing survival tactics that would never have been condoned in a healthy Wendat society. Some ate the excrement of animals and humans. They dug up the corpses of animals to eat the boiled fur and bones. This was followed by cannibalism, which for the purposes of physical nourishment, was unacceptable in Wendat society. Yet, brothers ate brothers, mothers their children, and children their parents. The Jesuits observed “everywhere corpses have been dug out of the graves, and, now carried away by hunger, the people have repeatedly offered, as food, those who were lately the dear pledges of love.”

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100 JR 35: 183-185.
101 JR 35: 185.
102 JR 35: 185.
103 JR 35: 21.
104 JR 35: 21. This is different than the spiritual and ritualized eating of human body parts during torture or prisoner ceremonies.
105 JR 35: 21.
106 JR 35: 21.
In the end, the combined effort to attain food through alternative supplies, bartering, Jesuit provisions, escape to the mainland, and cannibalism were not enough to save the majority of the population. Echoing the epidemics of the 1630s, families and loved ones watched each other die with very little opportunity to save them. One young mother, for instance, was found dead, while her two infant children continued to suck at her breasts; shortly after, the children also died. Many parents did not have the strength or resources to help their children, let alone themselves. In another case, a mother visited the Jesuits taking with her four children. Despite the children’s repeated attempts to press their mother for milk, her body could no longer provide nourishment. The mother caressed the weeping children at her feet, one by one until they each died; she did not have the energy to bury her family and left the children in the hands of the Jesuits who promised to take care of the bodies before she herself expired.  

The lack of normal refuse such as animal bones and the minimal remains of corn and acorns in archeological surveys are a testament to the extremely dire situation. Jesuit baptismal records serve as an additional source. Nearly 3,000 baptisms took place between March 1649 and March 1650. This number indicates the number of deaths or at least those expecting to die and who were accepting baptism. This does not count the Traditionalists who were not part of these records, but were nonetheless afflicted by the famine. The Jesuits asserted that “hundreds and hundreds died” on Gohoendoe, the reality was that it was most likely thousands. Bad luck and drought, not poor Wendat

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107 JR 35: 91-93.  
108 Charity Site.  
109 JR 34: 227; 35: 23, 75.  
110 JR 35: 199. Jesuits later equate the number of baptisms (3,000) to the number of deaths.  
111 JR 40: 49.
preparation or decision-making, had undermined the resettlement; regardless of causes, the catastrophe required immediate action.

Exodus

The food crisis pushed Wendats to reconsider their move to Gohoendoe and shaped their entire experience on the island. Instead of a place of refuge, it became a death trap. With the coming of Spring, Iroquois war parties became more active on the mainland, creating increased anxiety within an already weakened population. On 25 March 1650 a group of Wendats were attacked while they attempted to harvest fish from the mainland coast. The Wendats dispersed in all directions, leaving distances of fifteen miles between each group.\(^{112}\) This strategy did not dissuade the Iroquois, however, and the entire company was lost except for one man who managed to escape and return to the island to share the details of the attack.\(^{113}\) In early April two other bands headed by the Wendat leaders Andotitak and Thawenda lost a brief battle that took place about thirty miles in the interior.\(^{114}\) Roughly eight days later the island Wendats received news that two large Iroquois war parties were on their way to Gohoendoe with the intention of attacking the Wendats and destroying their fields.\(^{115}\)

The culmination of the winter famine and the present and pending Iroquois attacks resulted in a quest for new strategies. If the Iroquois were to land on the Island, the surviving Wendats were too weak to orchestrate any kind of formidable opposition. Moreover, the depopulation of the Island community and the weakened state of the

\(^{112}\) JR 35: 187.
\(^{113}\) JR 35: 187.
\(^{114}\) JR 36: 119.
\(^{115}\) JR 35: 191.
remaining Wendats made it difficult to plant the crops needed to survive further occupation of Gochoendoe. These factors persuaded the Wendats to plan an evacuation. In deliberations at a night council headmen discussed the different destinations for relocation.\textsuperscript{116} The majority felt it wise to split up entirely, grouping into small bands and hiding in the forests of Wendake not unfamiliar to the Iroquois. Others suggested that some move south to the Susquahannocks and their allies of New Sweden, or to the west with the Algonquian, while some entertained the thought of meeting with the Iroquois and join them.\textsuperscript{117} Still, some suggested that they might move closer to French settlements for protection.\textsuperscript{118} In the end, the group agreed upon a strategy of calculated dispersal.\textsuperscript{119} The majority of migrants would leave immediately, taking various routes to a number of different locations. A small contingent was left behind, however, that remained to harvest the crops that had already been sown. This group would leave the Island after the harvest.\textsuperscript{120} Women, children and the older individuals who that could not make the journey would remain behind.\textsuperscript{121} Two headmen delivered the news to the Jesuits; they explained their desperate situation in the following way:

My brother . . . thine eyes deceive thee when thou lookest on us: thou believest that thou seest living men, while we are but specters, the souls of the departed. The ground thou treadest on is about to open under us, to swallow us up, together with thyself, that we may be in the place where we ought to be, among the dead.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{116} JR 35: 193.
\textsuperscript{117} JR 35: 193.
\textsuperscript{118} JR 35: 195-197.
\textsuperscript{119} JR 35: 193.
\textsuperscript{120} JR 36: 179.
\textsuperscript{121} JR 36: 186-187.
\textsuperscript{122} JR 35: 191.
Shortly thereafter, the Wendats evacuated *Gohoendoе*; they took nothing but themselves, leaving everything behind. ¹²³

**Estienne Annaotaha and The Last Stand**

The situation was precarious for those Wendats who stayed. Towards the end of autumn the Iroquois set up a fortification on the mainland intending to capture Wendats who strayed from the island. ¹²⁴ After completing the fort, a group of Iroquois ventured to the island and executed what seemed to be an ambush. The Wendats manned the defenses and prepared themselves for a violent conflict when, to their surprise, the approaching enemy sent word that they did not wish to fight but make peace. ¹²⁵ The Iroquois enticed the Wendats with promises of presents attesting to their goodwill. *Estienne Annaotaha, a Wendat with a well-known adventurous reputation, stepped forward to discuss these assertions. The Iroquois brought him to their camp and presented him with gifts. The Wendat replied “It is not to me . . . that these presents should be given,” but to the Wendat headmen and council on *Gohoendoе.⁰⁶ He requested they keep him as a hostage until the return of their emissaries. The Iroquois considered the situation and resolved that it would be *Annoataha* himself who would accompany three ambassadors to the island; a number of Wendats would be kept at the Iroquois camp to ensure the return of their envoys. *Annoataha* called for the people to come together once he returned to *Gohoendoе:*

> My Brothers . . . Heaven is propitious to us to-day, because to day I have found life in death, not only for myself, but for all those who will not

¹²³ *JR 35: 191.*  
¹²⁴ *JR 36: 180.*  
¹²⁵ *JR 36: 181.*  
¹²⁶ *JR 36: 181.*
refuse the happiness that comes to our doors from the side whence we feared our greatest misfortune. The Iroquois have changed countenance, for their hearts have altered; their thoughts are no longer of blood or fires, except to change them into bonfires.127

The Wendats reacted positively to these overtures; headmen expressed their satisfaction and the women gave equal assurances that they believed this was truly a salvation.128 They welcomed the three Iroquois ambassadors into their homes and gave them the best food the famished community could provide.

But, the true circumstances of the situation, much more complicated and potentially disastrous than a customary truce, emerged. As the Iroquois enjoyed their feast, Annoataha took aside the most important Wendat headmen and informed them that he was convinced the Iroquois were laying a trap.129 The headmen organized a secret council to discuss the matter further. They believed Annoataha’s suspicions had merit, considering the most recent attacks and deceptions by the Iroquois over the last year. Consequently, they decided that they would not trust the Iroquois and would implement their own plan of deception. The headmen dispersed throughout the village asking the women to begin pounding corn and collecting provisions in preparation for their move to Iroquois country in three days. The women remained uninformed of the headmen’s suspicions of the Iroquois; he told them only that they should prepare food for the journey to Iroquoia. They accepted the instructions and kept busy with preparations for the next few days, which led the Iroquois to believe in the willingness of the Wendats to join them. On the day of departure, Annoataha approached the large group of Iroquois who had ventured to the island to help in the removal. He invited over thirty of the most

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128 JR 36: 183.
129 JR 36: 183.
prominent war chiefs and young men into the confines of the Wendat village. This was the last act of deception, for as the thirty warriors entered the fort, they fell into a Wendat ambush. Before being put to death, one of the warriors admitted that the Iroquois truce was a lie and that their plan had been to capture and conquer the Wendats. The majority of the Iroquois were killed, while only three escaped.  

Historians have largely overlooked the legacy of this expedition. Denys Delâge, for instance, summarizes the Wendat experience at Go hoendoe and their final evacuation as: “After a terrible famine during the course of the winter, the Iroquois broke through in 1650 and massacred the survivors.” This interpretation replaces the Wendat victory with an Iroquois massacre and implies there were no Wendat survivors. In the end it was a Wendat victory, not an Iroquois one, which shaped the nature of the final evacuation. The results of the victory were two-fold; first, the Iroquois upon hearing of the Wendat victory fled the island and returned to the mainland, abandoning any design for immediate retaliation; and secondly the Wendat became convinced that the Iroquois would return in order to avenge the deaths of their comrades and implement their goal of Wendat eradication. To avoid this fate, the Wendat evacuated Wendake to join their dispersed Wendat kinsmen.

**Conclusion**

The Wendats chose Go hoendoe Island because of its combined opportunities for defense, preservation of trade, as well as its potential for fishing and agriculture. The

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130 JR 36: 183.
geographic location of the island satisfied all of these elements, including their desire to maintain spatial power within their geographic sphere of influence. Iroquois raids, always a threat, largely failed during the year at Gohoendoe. Stonewalls and cement fortifications, as well as French soldiers and firearms, easily protected the compact island villages and their strategic sites. Approaching enemies could be seen long before they landed on Gohoendoe. In regards to trade, there is nothing to suggest that Gohoendoe could not have served its purpose as a meeting ground for exchange between the Algonquians, Wendats, and the French. Before word of the evacuation reached the French settlements east of Wendake, for instance, a fur brigade already departed with Gohoendoe as their final destination for trade. These factors remained fundamental to the Wendat project of resettlement; if it had not been for the drought and subsequent food crisis, the plan might have worked.

The drought of 1649-1650 was the most decisive issue shaping these circumstances. It changed everything. The climatic situation damaged the prospects of any substantial food supply for the Wendat population, and compromised their security. People were weak and dying as the community began to collapse both physically and socially, transgressing cultural norms to the point of cannibalism. The defensive advantages of the island location differentiated the Wendats from other people within the region. Unlike their mainland counterparts, such as the Iroquois and Algonquians, the Wendats were trapped within the confines of the Island’s perimeter. If agriculture was not a feasible option on the mainland, for instance, communities could resort to hunting and gathering, venturing out further and further from their villages in order to meet the needs of their people. This was not an option for the Wendats, and the human population

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133 JR 35: 201-203.
quickly depleted what little game, roots and acorns they might have found on the island itself.

The decision to leave Wendat Country was most certainly made out of desperation and in reaction to a seemingly hopeless situation, but even in the emergency Wendats held councils and considered various strategies of relocation. In the end, the communal resolution to evacuate *Gohoendoe* was a calculated attempt to reorganize the Wendat society for continued collective survival, not inevitable defeat, even if this meant dividing the community. The exodus from Wendake initiated a new phase of Wendat life focused on dispersal and migration. Thus, although the epidemics of the 1630s and Iroquois attacks of the 1640s were crucial in the Wendats’ final decision to leave Wendat Country, it was the food crisis and the often overlooked *Gohoendoe* experience that pushed them “like wolves from the woods” to reshape their community into a diasporic entity, leading to a new reconfiguration of the Wendat world.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ *JR* 35: 189.
CHAPTER 5
ALGONQUIAN NEIGHBORS: PERSISTING NETWORKS OF ALLIANCE AND KINSHIP

Introduction

Making and maintaining alliances remained fundamental to the Wendat dispersal of the seventeenth century, and also to the system of North American networks throughout the century. The Wendat and Iroquois confederacies are some of the most popular examples within Native histories. They began as coalitions, or political leagues in which two or more autonomous nations engaged in a compact or “formal statement of principles to govern separate and collective action,” usually designed for the offense or defense of the contracting members.¹ Confederacies acted under one supreme council that included representatives of the contracting nations who surrendered to the league various powers and rights they previously exercised individually. So-called “looser” alliances also existed between more nomadic groups, such as the Algonquians, or nations seeking temporary truces during times of great distress.²

Investigations into the nature of these alliances have furthered our understanding of how and why they were created, maintained, or destroyed. George Hunt and Daniel Richter have explored the collective economic aspirations of the seventeenth-century

² Hodge, Handbook of American Indians, II: 337-338.
Iroquois Confederacy, for instance.³ Alternatively, Gregory Dowd uses the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century pan-Indian alliances of Pontiac and Tecumseh to demonstrate the importance of spiritual affiliation in this process.⁴ In general, scholars tend to emphasize the commonalities of these coalitions to make sense of the factors that connected them, such as cultural similarities, trade motivations, and Amerindian belief systems. But this has led scholars to question why the Iroquois were at odds with so many of their Nadouek neighbors despite the fact they were so culturally similar.⁵ This line of investigation demonstrates the problem of superimposing European ideas of alliance-making onto North American ones; scholarship tends to ignore the less centralized groups and relationships that nonetheless exercised considerable influence.

Understandably, politics, military defense, ethnicity, trade, and religion fundamentally shaped European political organizations in the seventeenth century, thus making them logical points of reference for historians engaging with European and Euro-American sources.⁶ Scholarship dedicated to understanding alliances that deviate from Euro-centric constructed perceptions of Native American coalitions are sparse.

Traditional studies on the interaction of Atlantic systems of power have restricted our understanding of Native networks because the analytical paradigms employed are European in nature. Native systems looked very different from European ones, as the


⁵ Bruce Trigger argues that the similarities between Nadouek groups should not be overemphasized. Bruce Trigger, Children of Aataentsic: A History of The Huron People to 1660 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 99-100.

contrast between metropoles in Europe and the lack of identifiable centers in North America demonstrates.\(^7\) The prevalence of these seemingly “loose” networks, often functioning outside the realm of a particular Confederation framework, were in reality some of the most prevailing systems of alliances within the North American context.

The Wendat-Algonquian Coalition exemplified this kind of loose, or flexible network. The alliance was over two and a half centuries old at the time of the dispersal, yet its remains overshadowed by accounts that privilege the Wendat and Iroquois Confederacies in terms of seventeenth-century Great Lakes geopolitics. While historians consistently acknowledge the relationship was close and that the Wendat and Algonquian joined together to conduct trade and military campaigns, they differ on the specific details of the alliance and continue to consider it relatively “loose.” Leo-Paul Desrosiers introduces the relationship as a “coalition,” or more precisely “La Coalition Laurentienne,” but we are not given any further insight into the nature of the relationship aside from this label.\(^8\) Bruce Trigger has outlined the dynamics of the alliance by comparing differences in lifestyle, language and cosmology, yet he rejects Desrosiers’ use of any formal label such as “coalition” in that the relationship was too “ambivalent.”\(^9\) Others, such as Denys Delâge have described the Wendat-Algonquian relationship as an unequal partnership, with the Algonquians forced to ally with the Wendats in response to Iroquois attacks.\(^10\) These variations demonstrate the difficulty of deciphering the exact nature of the so-called coalition.

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Wendat descendants offer another perspective; they have preserved a standing knowledge of the Coalition’s importance. The nineteenth-century Wendat Grand Chief from Lorette Michel Sioui described the legacy of the relationship by stating “We, the Hurons of Lorette, have always had great affection for our brothers the Algonquin . . . and we still do.”11 The Chief then presented a wampum belt he said attested to this alliance and continued to explain, “This is the belt that is proof of what I say. We have, or our ancestors for us, fixed this contract with the Algonquians so that we may always be able to hunt together . . .”12 More recently Georges Sioui, also a Wendat from Lorette, attempted to clarify the nature of the alliance for the general public. For Sioui, the historical relationship between these two groups was “symbiotic,” flourishing because of a “sensitive and sympathetic awareness of each party’s situation of the other.”13 He asserts, “These two families, each with essentially distinctive qualities, had a long relationship . . . that was harmonious.”14 Thus, Sioui contrasts Trigger’s emphasis on difference as a deterrent and contends the relationship was in fact rooted in difference, from which each group benefited. Evidence from the Wendat dispersal bears out this interpretation of the Algonquian-Wendat relationship, and offers a new way to Native American alliance-making within the context of North American systems of power. Rather than a marginal “loose” organization of autonomous nations, the Coalition functioned as an established alliance that fundamentally shaped the nature of the Wendat dispersal. It is because of the resilience of the Coalition that Wendats privileged

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12 Sioui, WA, FMV, 8552-03.
14 Sioui, Huron-Wendat, 63.
Algonquian communities for relocation in the early stages of their dispersal, demonstrating an unwavering allegiance well beyond 1650 and into the second half of the seventeenth century.

**The Wendat-Algonquian Coalition, 1300–1650**

The “Algonquians,” consist of the present-day Nipissing, Ottawa, Ojibway and Algonkin nations of the Algonquian linguistic family of peoples. Other nations included in this linguistic group are the Abenaki, Cree, Delaware, Malecite and Micmac, among others. Although these other Algonquian speakers share similar traits with the Nipissing, Ottawa, Ojibway, and Algonkin, they did not consistently engage with the Wendats and it is for that reason, as well as the acknowledgement of present-day ethnic categories, that the “Algonquians” referred to in this chapter only includes those nations who had close and frequent relations with the Wendat—such as the Nipissing, Ottawa, Ojibway and Algonkin.  

The cultural encounter between Wendats and Algonquians began as early as AD. 1000. Around that time Wendats migrated north into present-day Ontario and the Great Lakes region. The foundations for an established relationship between the newly arrived Wendats and their Algonquian neighbors did not fully take shape until the thirteenth century, however, when the Wendats settled permanently within the Georgian Bay area, which was traditional Algonquian territory. At the time of contact with Europeans,

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Algonquians controlled most of the Ottawa Valley, as well as the surrounding area both north and west.\(^{16}\)

Significant differences separated the Algonquians and Wendats. Whereas Wendake included a concentrated number of settled villages with an emphasis on agriculture, Algonquian territory was vast and comprised of smaller spread out villages of 100 to 500 relatively nomadic people who centred their lives around the cyclical movements of wild game rather than the planting of corn.\(^{17}\) Similarly, where Wendats preferred to live in large longhouses to reinforce communal values, the Algonquians constructed smaller wigwams that could house a family or two. Algonquian society was patrilineal, tracing their family lineage through male ancestry, rather than the Wendat custom of matrilineality.\(^{18}\) Language variance was comparable to the contrast between Indo-European languages and the Altaic linguistic group, making the linguistic differences between the Algonquians and Wendats as stark as that between Germans and Turks.\(^{19}\) In regards to religion, the Algonquians produced few Christian converts in comparison to Wendats, as the former preferred to adhere to the uniquely Algonquian notion of the Great Spirit, or “Manitou.”\(^{20}\)

Despite these seemingly diametrically opposed characteristics, the Algonquians and Wendats cultivated a “brotherhood” and Coalition based on a shared partnership between territory, kinsmen, spiritual beliefs, trade, military defence, and diplomacy. The

\(^{16}\) Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, 63.
\(^{19}\) Hesse, *Algonkin Nation*, 39.
coming together of Algonquians and Wendats likely occurred due to their close geographic proximity. Not only did the boundaries of their communities overlap, but in many cases both lived within the villages of the others. It was customary, for instance, that Algonquian groups wintered among the Wendats, establishing their wigwams within the confines of a village’s palisade walls. These wintering groups could average up to seventy people in total. Wendats traveling through Algonquian territory and in need of shelter and food found welcome from Algonquians who provided them with materials to ensure the success of their expeditions. Shared residency offered benefits in the form of security and protection when military attacks by the Iroquois drove both Algonquian and Wendats to seek refuge within the others’ communities.

Interruption further linked these two groups. Although the Wendat custom of matrilocality probably resulted in an overrepresentation of Algonquian men in Wendat villages, the union of men and women and their resulting offspring fostered a system of kinship integral to Native alliances. The incorporation of new members into each respective society was also facilitated by adoption. Jesuit records indicate at least one case where Wendats raised an Algonquian orphan from early childhood.

In view of the extended and sometimes lifelong, shared residence of the Algonquians and Wendats, it is not surprising certain aspects of each community were acculturated by the other. Spiritual charms were one of these elements. The Algonquians had many powerful charms within their belief system. Wendats bought the “onniont,” or

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25 Trigger, Children of Aetaentsic, 173.
26 JR 13: 139.
Serpent Charm, for instance, so they could benefit from its power. This charm, with its
snake like features, was an armoured spirit that roamed the forest and if caught would
render the captor good luck.27 Through Wendat acquisition of the onniount, they
incorporated an Algonquian spiritual practice. Aside from the potential to attain personal
“luck,” Wendat motivations to acquire the charm may have reflected a Wendat belief that
their neighbors to the north possessed “superior powers of achieving harmony with the
spiritual world.”28 According to Georges Sioui, the Algonquians had a closer relationship
with the earth and their traditional way of life. Peoples who had taken to agriculture, such
as the Wendats, effectively distanced themselves from a more spiritually sound way of
interacting with the world. Therefore, the Wendats saw their relationship with the
Algonquians as a way of finding “spiritual regeneration and equilibrium” because the
Algonquians maintained their spiritual connectedness with the animal kingdom.29

Wendats and Algonquians also shared in the same trade network. Pre-dating the
European fur trade, these groups engaged in a reciprocal exchange with one another. This
trade was based on the premise that the agricultural Wendats would provide a surplus of
corn and agriculture produce, and sometimes additional items such as fishing nets and
wampum to their hunting neighbours of the north. This led the Jesuits to qualify
Wendake as the “granary of most of the Algonquians.”30 In return, Algonquians delivered
a surplus of meat, fish and furs, usually through exchange as the Algonquians made their
journey to Wendat Country for their winter sojourn.31 This system of reciprocity was
only strengthened with the introduction of a European market for fur. As a result, the

28 Sioui, Huron-Wendat, 62
29 Sioui, Huron-Wendat, 63.
31 JR 21: 239.
Algonquian and Wendat Coalition entered into an alliance with the French—the Algonquian providing furs and the Wendat securing diplomatic initiatives.\(^{32}\) Joint military expeditions and defence strategies were also part of the Coalition. On numerous occasions, Algonquians and Wendats engaged in military combat with a common enemy.\(^{33}\) Although many assume the Wendats pulled Algonquians into the Iroquois conflict, the Algonquians had a similar, yet autonomous, history of warfare with the Iroquois dating to the sixteenth century.\(^ {34}\)

The Coalition served as a customary vehicle for unified representation in diplomatic endeavours. In most cases, equal numbers of Algonquian and Wendat delegates conducted treaty and council negotiations on behalf of the Coalition. Samuel de Champlain described his meeting with two war chiefs (one from each group) to discuss a truce and future resolutions towards peace.\(^ {35}\) On other occasions, however, one ambassador might represent both groups, suggesting a high degree of unity and shared purpose. At the French village of Trois Rivières, the Algonquian headman Simon Pieskaret represented the entire Coalition in 1647. Under this guise, Pieskaret held responsibility for maintaining peace with the French and punishing any Wendats or Algonquians who tried to deter this goal.\(^ {36}\) The Coalition acted cohesively, in a similar way to the Wendat Confederacy.

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\(^{34}\) Desrosiers argues that it may have been the Algonquian along the St. Lawrence that forced the Iroquois south in the 16th century. Desrosiers, *Iroquois*, 7-8.

\(^{35}\) de Champlain, *The Voyages and Explorations of Samuel de Champlain*, 190.

\(^{36}\) *JR* 31: 287.
The degree to which this close relationship existed culminated in a shared participation in the Feast of Souls ceremony. This ritual offered a familiar stage for cultural exchange and understanding, as well as a forum to renew and solidify the Coalition in a formal setting. Much like their Wendat neighbors, Algonquians approached their interaction with other nations by acknowledging that strangers could either become enemies, or be turned into symbolic kin people.\footnote{Richard White, \textit{The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815} (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 15.} Consequently, just as the Wendats invited the Algonquians to their Feast, the Wendats took part in the Algonquian ceremony.\footnote{Hickerson, “The Feast of the Dead,” 81-107.}

Evidence suggests this ceremony was specific to the Coalition, as it was only the Wendats, and those Algonquian nations who came in close contact with the Wendats, who made it a customary practice.\footnote{Hickerson elaborates that the Fox, Sauk and Potowami, for instance, did not have a Feast of Souls, Hickerson, “The Feast of the Dead,” 87.} Although the customs differed slightly from that of their Wendat neighbors, the Wendats probably communicated the tradition to the Nipissings, who then shared it with other Algonquians in league with the Wendats.\footnote{Hickerson, “The Feast of the Dead,” 81.} In order to demonstrate the profound connection between the two groups, the Algonquians modified their tradition by including a special meal prepared in the Wendats’ honor. This was delivered separately from the other Algonquian nations.\footnote{JR 23: 221.} While it was customary during the Wendat Feast to hold a council that incorporated all the nations (both Wendat and Algonquian), the Algonquians organized two separate assemblies, one for each respective group. At the Wendat council, gifts were delivered to the visiting headmen and
the Algonquian hosts expressed the important role Wendats played within the Coalition and the great respect the Algonquians had for them.\textsuperscript{42}

The Feast of Souls demonstrates the intense unity between these two groups. Further, the Algonquian practice of creating unique and separate positions for the Wendats within their Feast highlights the autonomous character of the nations participating in the ceremony. While they operated as separate and autonomous nations, the Wendats and Algonquians chose to maintain ties to their greater confederations, which in turn dedicated themselves to an even larger coalition between the greater Wendats and Algonquians communities.

**Post-Dispersal Coalition, 1650-1701**

According to anthropologist Harold Hickerson, the Coalition began to disintegrate after 1650 and the dispersal of the Wendat Confederacy. He attributes this to the declining frequency practice of the Feast of Souls throughout the rest of the seventeenth century, although he acknowledges there were at least two different Feasts hosted by the Algonquians in 1660 and 1670 with Wendat guests.\textsuperscript{43} Hickerson also assumes the Coalition intentionally abandoned the ceremonies, when in reality it is unlikely that either group had time to conduct the Feast given the pressures of Iroquois warfare and relocation. Both groups customarily practiced the Feast during times when the community had time to prepare the elaborate elements of the ceremony, which could take over a year, and the Wendat Feast usually coincided with the movement of a village. The dispersal disrupted this pattern as Natives built and abandoned villages in haste during

\textsuperscript{42} JR 23: 221.
\textsuperscript{43} Hickerson, “The Feast of The Dead,” 81, 88.
the first few decades, while they later became permanent, making the practice of
relocation obsolete. The fact that other Coalition customs of joint diplomacy, trade
negotiations and military expeditions continued well beyond 1650 testifies to the
Coalition’s persistence.

In November 1652, for instance, a council was held at Trois Rivières between the
Algonquian-Wendat Coalition, the French and Iroquois. During the proceedings the
Coalition delivered a gift to the Iroquois delegates on behalf of both the Wendats and
Algonquians. A similar council followed in September 1655. Much like in the pre-
dispersal period, the group elected an Algonquian headman to speak on behalf of the
Coalition, while other Wendat and Algonquian leaders attended as witnesses. In this case,
the Algonquian ambassador, Kahoka, expressed the Coalition’s desire for the safe
conduct of the visiting Iroquois and likewise an Iroquois respect for the rules of the host
village. These proceedings illustrate a consistency concerning the Coalition’s
diplomatic function. In essence, they continued to engage in foreign relations as one
cohesive unit. They gave gifts on the Coalition’s behalf and elected representatives to
lead negotiations for the entire group.

Shared trade practices also flourished during this period. A fur brigade, including
four Coalition headmen, conducted trade at Montreal in 1689. At the negotiations, a
Wendat leader presented the French with a wampum belt and explained that it was to
ensure the French give special privileges to the Algonquians, with decent prices on trade
items. This request offered a clear attempt by the Wendats to ensure the prosperity of

44 JR 38: 199.
45 JR 42: 57.
46 de la Potherie, Histoire, II: 91.
47 de la Potherie, Histoire, II: 94-95.
their Algonquian allies. The Wendats used their close and familiar relationship with the French in order to help members of the Coalition gain a similar status with their European trading partners. This would have strengthened the efficiency of the Coalition as a whole.

Trade between Algonquians and Wendats remained consistent with pre-dispersal practices. Although the Algonquian communities became more sedentary and the Wendats incorporated more hunting into their subsistence strategy, the exchange of corn and hides remained an integral to the nature of the relationship. If anything, the Algonquians’ role as providers became more significant during this time as Wendat crops failed and refugees sought to offset the famine with Algonquian game and fish. The legacy of success from the previous reciprocal exchange before the dispersal encouraged the Wendats to depend more on their Algonquian suppliers during their struggle.

Despite the exodus from Wendake and intermittent peace negotiations with the Iroquois, the Coalition maintained its agreement to provide mutual protection and act as a collective military unit. For the most part, the Coalition continued to focus on their joint dislike for the Iroquois. In 1652, Algonquians and Wendats organized and directed an expedition of over 1,000 allies against their common enemy. The main architects of this endeavor were a mix of both groups and included seven principle men: Aennons (Bear nation), Mangouch (Nipissing), Ondaenronk (Bear nation), Eentawai and Totaenchiarak (Rock nation), Teochiawente (Ottawa), and Otontagonen (Ottawa). This group arrived

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49 JR 38: 181. The Algonquian nations appear in the text, but the Wendat nations are more elusive because of the spelling employed by the Jesuits. Therefore, Aennon and Ondaenronk were both names of Bear nation headmen in the 1630s and so these men were probably from the Bear nation. The spelling of the Rock nation description does not match the ethnographic and linguistic information, but its phonetic sound is the closest to the Arendaeronnons (Rock nation).
together at Trois Rivière and informed the French governor of their plan to attack the Iroquois in the autumn; they made a collective invitation for the French to join the Coalition in this campaign.\textsuperscript{50} A similar expedition took place in 1660 that included four Algonquians, sixty Wendats and seventeen Frenchmen. They planned to confront the Iroquois as they returned from a hunting expedition with the hope the enemy would be weakened by their long journey and lack of provisions near the end of their exploits. The ensuing battle took place over two days. Despite a concerted effort, the Coalition and French lost because the Iroquois had prior warning.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the military contract of the Coalition continued to function as it had before. Delegates from various member nations joined together in pursuit of military expeditions, alliances, and defense. They approached outside groups, such as the French, to join in their exploits and expressed their military policies through representatives of the entire Coalition.

In addition to diplomatic, trade and military missions, the observations of contemporaries who engaged with the Coalition in the post-dispersal period point to the persistence of the alliance after 1650. The French certainly saw them as a solid unit. Claude-Charles Bacqueville de la Potherie, an historian living in New France, explained French colonists viewed Algonquians and Wendats as “part of the same body.”\textsuperscript{52} Similarly, in 1676 M. de la Chesnay noted that the Wendat and Algonquian possessed equal amounts of influence throughout the Great Lakes region, with the Coalition

\textsuperscript{50} JR 38: 181.
\textsuperscript{52} de la Potherie, \textit{Histoire}, IV: 237.
representing the majority of the people and territory. Speaking explicitly about the nature of the relationship after a sermon delivered to both groups, Father Louis Hennepin concluded that the Wendats and Algonquians were “in a Confederacy together against the Iroquois their common enemy.” Father Pierre de Charlevoix expressed his lasting impression of the alliance over seventy years after the dispersal. He remarked on the longevity and persistence of the alliance in a letter to his superiors written in 1721. Charlevoix explained that the Algonquians were the “inseparable companions of the Hurons from the time both were driven from their country by the Iroquois.”

The French perceived the Coalition as a legitimate and official alliance. They understood it as a solid partnership where Wendats and Algonquians were in essence one “body.” This perspective shaped the ability of the Coalition to operate in its full capacity. Since the French represented one of its main allies outside the Coalition, it was important that Europeans understood and accepted the Algonquian-Wendat alliance in order for the Coalition to function properly.

Iroquois perceptions of the Coalition depict a similar acknowledgement of the Algonquian and Wendat union. On 19 November 1653, the French governor announced the Mohawks were making preparations to send a wampum belt with the intention of presenting it to the Coalition in the near future. The Mohawk message assured the Coalition that “whatever the Hurons and Algonquins may do, [the Mohawks] shall

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53 Collection de manuscripts contenant letters, memoires, et autres documents historique relatifs a la Nouvelle-France recueillis aux Archives de la province de Quebec ou sopies a l’etanger; mis en ordre et edites sous les auspices de la Legislature de Quebec, avec table, etc. Jean Blanchet (Quebec: s.n., 1884) Collection History of French Canada; CIHM no. 08723, University of Ottawa, 253.
remain at peace with them.”56 This act acknowledged the partnership between the
Algonquians and Wendats and respected the contours of the Coalition including the fact
that all representatives of the alliance had to be present in order for any formal
negotiations to take place. On 3 September 1655, for instance, the Iroquois approached
the Wendat to conduct a formal discussion of peace. This meeting ameliorated an earlier
oversight, when the Iroquois neglected to address both members of the Coalition the year
before when the Iroquois had tried to confirm a treaty with a group of Algonquians at
Trois Rivière. The Iroquois gave the Wendats three wampum belts to entice them to
engage in talks once again and tried to assuage any doubt concerning Algonquian support
of these negotiations by pointing to the fact that the Algonquian ambassador Kahoka had
already agreed to accompany them back to Iroquois country.57 In this case, the Iroquois
had transgressed the policies of the Coalition. Their disregard for the solidarity of the
alliance led to their inability to push forward peace negotiations with both the
Algonquians and Wendats. Thus, they had to accept the dynamics of the Wendat-
Algonquian alliance and shape their own foreign policy so that they met the requirements
of the Coalition.

Despite the relatively firm alliance cultivated within the framework of a multi-
dimensional association, the post-dispersal Coalition was not without its moments of
weakness. Insecurity from both parties could foster conflict with potentially devastating
repercussions. In one instance, the Wendat leader known as Le Baron was accused by
several Algonquian headmen of making secret peace negotiations with the Iroquois and

56 JR 38: 199.
57 JR 42: 57.
agreeing to accompany this traditional enemy on a campaign against the Miamis.\footnote{58}{de la Potherie, \textit{Histoire de L'Amerique septiontrionale}, II: 353.} This meant that \textit{Le Baron} had acted outside the Coalition, disregarding its function as a collective military unit. Diplomacy defused the conflict, however, when \textit{Le Baron} denied the accusations and the Wendats agreed to engage in a subsequent expedition with the Algonquians against the Iroquois to prove their loyalty and dedication to the Coalition.\footnote{59}{de la Potherie, \textit{Histoire de L'Amerique septiontrionale}, II: 354.}

Demonstrations of allegiance were also expressed through penalties for disloyal behavior. During a Coalition military expedition against the Iroquois, one Wendat and one Algonquian scout were sent out to detect the enemy and report back to the main group that was comprised mostly of Algonquians. The Iroquois captured the Wendat scout, who divulged the location of the Coalition’s men. The Iroquois took the information and conducted a successful attack on the scout’s unsuspecting allies.\footnote{60}{\textit{JR} 35: 217-219.} Soon after, the Algonquians approached their Wendat kinsmen and demanded redress for this treachery. The Wendats held a council and decided that the transgression was so severe that the only punishment suitable was death. They sentenced the scout be mounted on a pole and killed by a hatchet: “Thou deservest death, for having betrayed our friends and our allies.” The culprit responded, “it is true . . . kill me.”\footnote{61}{\textit{JR} 35: 219-221.}

**First Wave Migrations, 1650-1651**

Much like the pre-dispersal period, Wendats and Algonquians after 1650 continued to share residency with one another. Relocation strategies stemmed from old customs of sharing space, whether it was an Algonquian band wintering within a Wendat
village, a Wendat war party replenishing their provisions in Algonquian territory or simply the incorporation of a new husband or wife after marriage. This habit fostered shared knowledge about convenient locations for protection in times of insecurity. Although the majority of Wendats moved to Gohoendoe to stay within Wendake’s borders, their historical relationship with the Algonquians persuaded a number of smaller groups to seek out Algonquian communities for shelter and safety in the hopes of evading the Iroquois. The first wave of Wendat migrations from Wendake began haphazardly before 1649, becoming more popular after the food crisis at Gohoendoe, and eventually forming a new dispersal strategy that led Wendats to separate into smaller groups and spread across the Great Lakes as a diasporic community.

As early as 1645 a number of Wendat families chose to relocate to the Algonquian village of Tangouen. The community was located in a fairly remote region, unfamiliar to the Iroquois. These Wendat refugees hoped the village would protect them. The village accepted them without hesitation. In other circumstances both Wendats and Algonquians established new villages that included members of both groups. St. Charles, organized in the wake of the Iroquois attacks in 1649, was one such village. It was located approximately six days journey from Gohoendoe, chosen for its potential for agriculture, fishing and isolated setting. The inhabitants built longhouses, wigwams and fortifications. Eventually the community invited two Jesuit priests to live with them, who spoke Wendat and Algonquian, and they built a Christian chapel out of tree bark. Despite the presence of the missionaries, St. Charles, much like Gohoendoe, included a

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62 JR 30: 47.
63 JR 35: 173.
64 JR 35: 173.
65 JR 35: 173.
mix of Christian converts and Traditionalists. At times this dynamic led to conflicts as some of the most outspoken Traditionalists, who also happened to be the most affluent and influential members of the community, accused the Jesuits of ruining their country. Still, the chapel possessed a following of both Wendats and Algonquians and the conflicts resulting from the Christian/Traditionalist factions seemed to have only translated into confrontations with the priests and not the rest of the village. Overall, the architects built the new village on the basis of the Coalition and a goal to make it a “new country.” Unfortunately, the drought of 1649-1650 also affected the crops at St. Charles and the fishing yielded little. The community resolved to move to Gohoendoè after one winter and join the majority of Wendats in their relocation plan.

Those who congregated on Gohoendoè remained open to an eventual relocation to Algonquian territory. When the Wendat headmen presented their plan to the Jesuits in the spring of 1650, for instance, they expressed the desire of many to go to the Algonquians who would protect them. They explained, “Their charity will alleviate, in part, our miseries; and, at the least, we shall sometimes find there a morsel of bread for our little ones, who, to sustain life, have for so long lived on acorns, and bitter roots. After all, if we must die with them, death there would be to us far easier than in the midst of forests, where no one would assist us to die well . . .” They based their reasoning on past experiences that had included the generosity and charity of the Algonquians to their Wendat kin.

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66 JR 35: 175.
67 JR 35: 173.
68 JR 35: 177.
69 JR 35: 193.
The Algonquian island community of *Ekaetaton* remained another option, despite the initial refusal to move there. The idea resurfaced in the wake of the food crisis and the council negotiations at the final evacuation of *Gohoendoe*. *Ekaetaton*’s distance from Iroquois country offered geographic protection, while its large space and friendly hosts offered familiar settings to rejuvenate the population. At the same time, a number of Jesuits had already relocated to the island in 1648. This would have encouraged both the Christians of *Gohoendoe* in terms of spiritual instruction and Traditionalists in terms of maintaining access to French guns and trade.\(^70\) At least 240 Wendats resolved to relocate to this site.\(^71\) Ojibway oral traditions include an account of the arrival of the Wendats to *Ekaetaton* and Algonquian territory. Reverend T.C. Thomas transcribed the history in 1903:

> Dejected, disheartened, the Hurons presented themselves at the doors of the great council wigwams of the different nations whom they has made enemies by their former depredations; but rather than submit to be led by their own brethren, as a conquered race, throughout their possessions, those who came to the northwest called a council among themselves, in which it was determined upon what should be done. This council, according to tradition, must have been held somewhere on the northern shore of the Lake Huron . . . The Hurons assembled themselves in council, and in the course of their deliberations, they desired several of their chiefs to visit the great Ojibway family . . . It was the policy of the Hurons to present themselves in a pitiable condition before their superiors, the Ojibway family of the great lake, that they might the more easily obtain their favour and sympathy. Tradition informs us that they came and presented themselves before the council door of that nation and begged them to spare their own children’s lives . . . The Ojibways saw them and yielded to pity and compassion. The Hurons were received as friends . . . A situation was assigned them near by, where they and their children could reside and be near the villages of the Ojibways.\(^72\)

\(^70\) *JR* 34: 205.

\(^71\) *JR* 36: 189-91. The calculation is based on six people per canoe and the fact that there were forty canoes that left the Island in 1652.

\(^72\) Charles Marius Barbeau. *Huron and Wyandot Mythology* (Department of Mines, Geology Survey, Memoir 80, Ottawa, 1915), 368-369.
The relocation process in this case followed the customary traditions of cohabitations between Algonquians and Wendats. Just as the Wendat had suspected, they found welcome within the community, not as acculturated citizens, but an autonomous faction with a separate space for residency, while retaining nourishment and protection. This scenario was only temporary, however, as the Wendats on Ekaetaton would relocate further east in 1651.73

As dispersal became the main strategy within this period, and considering the vastnesses of Algonquian territory in the seventeenth century, the Wendats were not relegated to settlements within close proximity to Wendake. For many, the Algonquian communities further east and west provided alternative options.

East of Wendake a growing number of Algonquians had begun to create a semi-permanent community in what the French would later call the town of Sillery. Located 585 miles from Wendake and roughly three miles from Quebec City, this community quickly became a mixed population of Coalition refugees. The Sillery Registry lists numerous Wendat baptisms during the 1640s; these included Wendat Christian names such as: Charles Tgodatsa, Paul Atondo, Jean-Baptiste Okhukandoron, Therese Kinhra, Ignace Saoiaretchi, Pierre Otarenti.74 Totems75 on written contracts with the

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73 JR 36: 189.
74 Léo-Paul Hébert, Le Registre de Sillery (1638-1690) Introduction, Présentation et notes de (Presses de L’Université du Québec, 1994), 38. Charles Tgodatsa was from the Bear village of Ossossane, Paul Atondo, Jean-Baptiste Okhukandoron, were from the Deer village of Scanonaerat, Ignace Saoiaretchi from the southern Bear village of Taenhatentaron, Pierre Otarenti was from the Bear village of Arrente.
75 Because Native Americans were not literate, they used symbols (or totems) to represent themselves on treaty documents and contracts.
French also signal an Algonquian presence at Sillery. After 1649 Wendats seeking protection entered Sillery in even greater numbers; thirty families or roughly 150 people in 1650 alone. Intermarriage was prevalent at Sillery, producing children with ties to both Algonquian and Wendat ancestry.

Much like St. Charles and Ekaetaton, Sillery housed both Christians and Traditionalists. On August 2 1646, the Governor of New France, Charles Huault Montmagny signed over the land around Sillery (which the French considered their own) to the Jesuits to “better convert” the Natives. Later in 1647, the Jesuits received 5,000 livres to aid them. It would seem that the Native inhabitants of Sillery supported this move, as several Algonquian headmen signed the transfer of lands to the Jesuits in 1646. The inclusion of priests in the community and the proximity to the French settlement of Quebec City fostered a close interaction between the Coalition and French settlers, demonstrated through cases where French men and women became the godparents of Native converts. Paul Chomedey and Jeanne Mance from the Quebec quarter of Maisonneneuve, for example, served as the godparents of both Okhukandoron and Atondo. Godparents were not just common French settlers, however. In the case of

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77 Hébert, Le Registre de Sillery, 38.
78 On average, most of these unions seem to have been between Wendat Fathers and Algonquian mothers (80% of children in the registry had Wendat fathers). Hébert, Le Registre de Sillery, 39.
79 Charles Hault Montmagny (2 Aout 1646), WA, FMV.
80 Letter from Du Tillet (July 1650, Paris), “Ratification par le roi de la concession de Sillery, par la compagnie de la nouvelle France, en faveur des sauvages, sous la direction des Peres Jesuits,” WA, Collection Francois Vincent [CFV], Folder 1-b.
81 Charles Hault Montmagny (2 Aout 1646), WA, FMV.
82 Hébert, Le Registre de Sillery, 38.
Tgondatsa, the governor served as his Godfather, as well as the one who gave him his Christian name of Charles.\footnote{Hébert, *Le Registre de Sillery*, 38.}

The Wendat presence within Sillery was substantial, but it served as temporary haven for most. The 150 refugees, for instance, intended to move to a location further east within a year or so. Still, the baptisms of Wendat children in 1659, 1660, 1662 and 1664 demonstrate that some Wendats remained.\footnote{Hébert, *Le Registre de Sillery*, 38.}

Located 250 miles from Wendake and 125 miles from Ekaetaton, the western settlements of Algonquians near present day Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario presented yet another option for the Wendats. This group, whom the French called the “Inhabitants of the Sault,” and the Wendat called the *Pauoitigouieuhak*, numbered roughly 2,000 people in 1641.\footnote{JR 23: 223.} By the time Wendat refugees made their way out to this region, Jesuit priests already had a presence in the area, with a mission established about eighteen days journey from the Algonquians.\footnote{JR 23: 225.} The *Pauoitigouieuhak* and the Wendats were familiar with each other due in large part to the networks provided by the Coalition. The Algonquians of the Sault attended at the Feast of Souls hosted by the Nipissings in 1641, and invited the Jesuits and Wendats to visit them.\footnote{JR 23: 223.} The Jesuits accepted and an expedition left near the end of September 1641, arriving after seventeen days of water travel along Lake Huron.\footnote{JR 23: 223.} This trip allowed the visiting Wendats to no only engage with these Algonquians, but become familiar with the land and route to this area. Discussions concerning Wendat relocation were probably not part of this visit, as it predates the major

\footnote{JR 23: 223.}
insurgents by the Iroquois in the late 1640s, yet it may have served as a point of reference in 1650 when various locations were being discussed. The Pauoitigoueieukeyhak also had a reputation for accommodating refugees, as they had welcomed the Pottawamis before 1640 into their community, providing protection for them against their enemies further west.\textsuperscript{89} Although far away, the familiarity, previous interaction, distance from Iroquois country and reputation of the Sault would have been taken into consideration by those Wendat seeking to relocate. Eventually some Wendats did travel west, residing briefly among the \textit{Pauoitigoueieuhak} before heading south and west within a year’s time.\textsuperscript{90}

**Consequences**

The Algonquians-Wendat Coalition shaped the first wave migration out of Wendake, and the Wendat decision to relocate within Algonquian societies influenced the future of the Coalition and the cultural frameworks of its members for rest of the seventeenth century. Subsistence strategies and settlement patterns changed, although Algonquians continued to return to their fisheries and trading centers, while living in villages during portions of the year, their former small-scale communities began to grow in population. Hickerson argues this swelling of the population was due in part to the fur trade and the desire of more people to seek out trade centers to acquire European goods.\textsuperscript{91} This argument ignores the impact of Wendat refugees, a factor that would have doubled the size of some villages.\textsuperscript{92} A growth in population led to different forms of social interaction, based on more community-level activity. Whereas before, the Algonquians

\textsuperscript{89} JR 23: 223.
\textsuperscript{90} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 789; 823.
\textsuperscript{91} Hickerson, “The Feast of the Dead,” 95.
\textsuperscript{92} Hesse, \textit{The Algonkin Nation}, 2.
usually privileged the needs of small bands and family units, in the post-dispersal period the larger networks of villages, nations and the Coalition’s aspirations took priority. This shift in focus led to an expansion of community-based activity and a larger sphere for decision making.\textsuperscript{93} It reorganized the nature of Algonquian society and may have resulted in an increase in sedentary lifestyle as the century progressed.

The influence of Christianity on Algonquian communities increased with the relocation of Wendats to their territory and the incorporation of Jesuits into these societies. For the Wendats, the prospect of conversion was not new. By including Jesuits in their dispersal and relocation plans (by either taking them with them such as in their journeys out to the Sault, or choosing locations that recently acquired missions such as Ekaetaton and Sillery) they were ensuring the potential for future baptisms. Moreover, their Algonquian neighbors were not as familiar with the Jesuits. Out of the eleven missions established in New France only three were among the Algonquians by 1648.\textsuperscript{94} The new wave of Jesuits taking up residency among the Algonquians after 1650, however, fostered increased interaction with the priests, extending the Jesuit missions among the Algonquians as well.

Individuals such as \textit{Joseph Onahare} came to exist as a result of these circumstances. \textit{Joseph} was an Algonquian, raised within a community without a mission. He relocated to Sillery around 1650 and the Iroquois attacks. There he was introduced to the Christian teachings of the priests, attending their sermons and within a years’ time was baptized. It is uncertain whether he arrived in the settlement alone and had a family elsewhere, or whether he was orphaned like so many children during the epidemics, wars

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{93} Hickerson, “The Feast of the Dead,” 95.
\textsuperscript{94} JR 34: 101.
\end{footnotesize}
and famine. Whatever the case, he did not have immediate family at Sillery. As a result, and on the occasion of his baptism, he was adopted by the Algonquian-Christian Charles Kariskatisitch, who arranged for Joseph to be married to a local Christian native woman.\textsuperscript{95} Joseph was later captured by the Iroquois and sentenced to death. Before his death he delivered a message to his closest friend (who happened to be a Wendat from Sillery and escaped soon after): “If ever, my dear friend, thou returnest to the country of the Algonquians, assure them that the Iroquois, with all their tortures, have not succeed in stifling the prayer on my lips, nor the faith in my heart. Tell them that I died gladly, in the hope of going very soon to Heaven.”\textsuperscript{96} Joseph represented a new generation of Algonquians, who, in the aftermath of the Wendat dispersal and relocations, came in contact with Jesuit missionaries and consequently adopted the Christian faith.

In terms of the Coalition, the dispersal only served to strengthen it. The options made available to Wendats during the early stages of relocation made more numerous through their established alliance with their Algonquian neighbors. This was the result of an official coalition of more than 100 years. It was not “loose” and did not disintegrate in the post-dispersal period. By taking up residency with Algonquian neighbors; the Wendats and Algonquians interacted on a more frequent basis. They shared homes and villages, families and kinship ties that in turn maintained their connection. The Coalition continued to engage in diplomacy and military actions. Further, the acknowledgement of the Coalition by the French and Iroquois demonstrate that the Coalition was seen as a legitimate polity within this period.

\textsuperscript{95} JR 35: 227-229.
\textsuperscript{96} JR 35: 223-225.
Famine and warfare put the Coalition to the test in 1650. At this time more than ever Wendats depended upon the alliance to ensure their survival; the Algonquians were their first option for refuge, rejuvenation and protection. Through this strategy and the Algonquians’ willingness to support the Wendats and preserve the Coalition, Wendats gained security and uphold their autonomy before moving on to future permanent settlements. In addition, Wendats continued to have access to Algonquian furs, while Algonquians created closer connections with the French through Christian missionaries and gained access to firearms because of it. This collective residency resulted in a more thorough merging of territories and people, as the borders between Wendake and Algonquian country became blurred. Nineteenth-century territorial cessions are a testament to the extent of this phenomenon. Provincial government land surveys, dealing with the territory east of Lake Huron within present day Ontario, deemed the area “Ottawa and Huron Territory.” This combination of both Ottawa (Algonquian) and Huron (Wendat) is not only a demonstration of the close relationship between these two groups, but the legacy of the alliance and the movement of Wendat peoples into Algonquian territory during the first wave migration.

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Looking beyond 1650 and the Algonquian enclaves and safe havens near Wendake, Wendats sought refuge further away from their homeland. As Jesuit François Le Mercier explained, the “devastation of the [Wendat] country, having made them apprehensive of a like misfortune, and the fury of the Iroquois having pursued them everywhere, [that] they thought to find security only by retreating to the very ends of the world, so to speak.”¹ Algonquian communities such as Ekaetaton, Sillery and the Sault remained temporary, transitional locations for the dispersed Wendats rather than endpoints of Wendat migrations during the seventeenth century. Much like the first wave, Wendats made subsequent moves in response to the commercial and geopolitical contexts of the region. Within this second wave of migration, a Wendat diaspora truly began to take shape. Groups formerly allied in a settled political and geographic confederacy, in close proximity to one another, relocated to distant outposts hundreds of miles a part. The trajectories of these migrations focused for the most part east and west of Wendake.² Two groups of Wendats set out in 1651; the first headed west towards what was then called

² Some Wendats did move towards other southern Nadouek groups, such as the Petuns (Tionnontate) and Susquahannoks, while others joined the Iroquois (which is the subject of a subsequent chapter). See JR 34: 203.
“the country of the people of the Sea”\textsuperscript{3} and later Michilimackinac, while a second group traveled east along the St. Lawrence to Quebec City.

The establishment of permanent settlements was a long process in both cases, spanning nearly twenty years of intermediate relocations until the 1670s. Ultimately, scholars have conflated both moves with Wendat loss of cultural distinctiveness, arguing in the west, the Wendat adopted an Algonquian lifestyle, while in the east they assimilated to French.\textsuperscript{4} Although in some respects this might hold true, an analysis of community activity, social organization and spiritual affiliation indicates that many Wendat customs endured the relocation process, giving these new communities uniquely Wendat ethnic characters.

This chapter is an investigation into the cultural dynamics of the Western Wendat community at Michilimackinac, offering insight into the extent of assimilation and the persistence of Wendat culture in post-1650 Wendat society. A similar analysis will follow, with Chapter 7 focusing on the Eastern Wendats. The people of the west balanced cultural compromise and maintenance of identity as they endeavored to both transform and maintain Wendat traditions within the community.

**Early Migrations West: The Petun, 1649-1651**

For the most part, the first group of Wendats who moved west included representatives from the Bear, Cord, Rock and Deer nations.\textsuperscript{5} These same members

\textsuperscript{3} JR 42: 221. The region of the “people of the sea” is synonymous with the upper great lakes, Illinois country and the pays d’en haut.


sought refuge in 1649 with a community of Nadoueks called the Petun by the French and 
*Etionmontateronnon*, or “people of the hill,” by the Wendats, who lived in villages 
located approximately thirty-five to forty miles west of Wendake.\(^6\) Both groups were 
ethnically Wendat, speaking the same language and with similar cultural practices; they 
were so similar that linguist John Steckley believes the Petun called themselves 
“Wendats.”\(^7\)

Although the Jesuits established three missions among the Petun in the late 1640s 
(St. Jean, St. Mathieu, St. Mattias), evidence suggests that this community, much like 
their Wendat neighbors, was not entirely Christian. In 1649, after the Wendat relocation 
to the Petun, for instance, a council concluded the French were traitors and caused the 
ruin of all Christian converted nations; eventually these allegations resulted in the murder 
of Jesuit Father Noel Chabanel.\(^8\) The killings highlighted the tensions between Christian 
and Traditionalist factions within this community and more specifically among the 
Wendat refugees, a split that permeated social structures and governance. The anti-Jesuit 
council comprised both Wendats and Petuns, suggesting at least a portion of the Wendat 
refugees were Traditionalists, and Wendats allegedly committed the murder.\(^9\) This type 
of internal conflict did not last long, however; Iroquois attacks became just as prevalent

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\(^6\) *JR* 38: 235: 34: 203-204; Felix Martin, ed. *Autobiographie du pere chaumonot de la Companie 
de Jesus et son Completment pas le Rev. Felix Martin de la meme compagnie* (Paris: Oudin, 
1885), 70.


\(^8\) *JR* 35: 165-167.

\(^9\) *JR* 35: 167.
as those in Wendake and forced the Petun/Wendat community to focus their energy on military defense rather than infighting.

Defense had little impact on the Petun communities, however, and like the villages of the Wendat Confederacy, the Petun were overwhelmed by Iroquois attacks. Initial defeats prompted disbelief and shock; after the conquest of the town of *Ethalita* on December 7, 1649, warriors remained in the village for half a day in silent meditation, cross-legged on the bloodied ground.\(^\text{10}\) By this time, Wendat options were limited. Although some returned with Father Garneau to the complicated despair of *Gahoendoe*, others looked beyond Wendake to the Country of the People of the Sea.

The western Great Lakes represented a unique opportunity for these Wendats. It was predominantly Algonquian territory, thus there was potential to expand the Coalition’s networks and kinship ties. Second, the Sault, as previously mentioned in Chapter 5, had a reputation as a refuge for other nations, exemplified by the movement of many dispersed Native groups to the area during this period.\(^\text{11}\) Wendats also desired to distance themselves from the Iroquois to ensure better protection, and they hoped that French missionaries and supplies might also move west.\(^\text{12}\)

The shared cultural heritage between the Wendat Confederates and the Petuns offered yet another set of incentives. Both groups had prospered in the past by situating themselves within a predominantly Algonquian territory. Some scholars describe the

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\(^\text{10}\) *JR* 35: 109.


\(^\text{12}\) William Allen sees the events stemming from this expedition as the pivotal moment that opened up the west for the French expansion. William Arthur Allen, “Tchibekanakewin: The 1641 Algonquian Feast Of The Dead,” Presented at *Ontario Archaeological Society Symposium Annual Symposium* (Orillia, October, 2003).
Petun and Wendat relocations as mostly a Petun affair. In this interpretation, the Wendats are merely followers due to their smaller numerical status within the group. In fact, it was the Wendats, not the Petuns, who had developed previous relations with the northwest, and who maintained a long history of successful trade negotiations through the Coalition should not be discounted. The Petuns had no such reputation for diplomatic or trade networks, especially in the north, and were not skillful travelers. Although numerically marginal, the Wendats may have influenced the community with their persuasive diplomacy, their established connections to the northwest, and their reputation as skilled canoeists and travelers. Either way, a group of approximately 500 ethnic Wendats, whom the French would later term “The Huron of the Petun Nation,” and for the purposes of this dissertation will be termed “western Wendats,” chose to abandon their villages for good in 1650, stopping briefly at the Sault, before moving on to Michilimackinac.

The Unsettled Period, 1651-1671

From the Sault, as discussed in Chapter 5, Wendats moved south towards Mackinac Island, or Michilimackinac in 1651. This site attracted the Wendat for a number of reasons. The island was about four kilometers in diameter, with stony peaks that could be seen from forty-eight kilometers in the distance, which gave defenders a

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16 Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 821.
18 Michilimackinac is an Ottawa/Algonquian term for “turtle” because the island was said to resemble the shape of a turtle. Virgil J. Vogel, *Indian Names in Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986), 110-11.
chance to see potential attackers at long distance.\textsuperscript{19} The location’s climate was 
exceptional compared to other regions, as a typical winter did not start until January and 
spring arrived in early March, thus allowing for a long growing season.\textsuperscript{20} The soil was 
also very good quality for growing corn.\textsuperscript{21} Wendats, at the time of their relocation, would 
have heard about Michilimackinac’s reputation for excellent fishing potential. Aside from 
the usual fish attained within other regions such as herring, carp, pike, golden fish, 
whitefish and sturgeon, there were three kinds of trout—with one growing well over three 
feet in length. Jesuit records indicate that fish were so abundant that a man could catch up 
to fifty within the span of three hours.\textsuperscript{22} Finally, the geopolitical location of the island 
would have certainly influenced the Wendat decision to relocate there. It was situated in 
the strait connecting Lake Huron to Lake Michigan and contemporaries perceived it as the “key and door” to the lands and people beyond Lake Huron and served as one of the 
main passageways to gain access to the southern nations of the Great Lakes.\textsuperscript{23} This 
spatial position would aid a successful relocation inspired by a need to expand 
commercial and kin networks, while also maintaining a powerful role as fur trade 
mediators and political diplomats.

We know very little about the Wendats’ first few years at Michilimackinac; what 
does seem clear, however, is that despite the apparent distant location, the Iroquois 
followed them and within approximately two years forced the Wendats to change 
location. Their Ottawa (Algonquian) allies accompanied them on this journey to an island

\textsuperscript{19} JR 55: 157.
\textsuperscript{20} JR 55: 173.
\textsuperscript{21} JR 55: 159.
\textsuperscript{22} JR 55: 157-159.
\textsuperscript{23} JR 55: 157.
in Green Bay. 24 By 1653 they had established a camp at the entrance of the bay, but out of a desire for a more secure location they retreated to the Algonquian town of 
_Teaontorai_ in the winter.25 Once again, the Wendat-Algonquian Coalition proved essential as Algonquian towns remained a safe haven for Wendat refugees well beyond the first wave of migration and served as a fundamental strategy for survival. The accompaniment of the Ottawas would have likely given the Western Wendats an extra advantage, as preexisting Algonquian ties may have facilitated the incorporation of the Wendats into _Teaontorai_.

After the winter, Western Wendats and Ottawas continued west to the banks of the Black River, which reminded them of the St. Lawrence. There, the Algonquian speaking Potawatomi welcomed them, allowing the Wendats to reside among their sixty some odd villages. According to the French trader Pierre Esprit Radisson, the region comprised over 1,000 people in 1659.26 The welcoming atmosphere fostered by the Algonquian hosts was in part due to the Wendat-Algonquian kinship network. Radisson confirmed the persistence of the Coalition when he came across the Wendat refugees in his travels, acknowledging that they were one association of both Wendats and Ottawas.27

By 1661, Western Wendats had moved once again, this time to the very end of Lake Superior and the village of _Chaquamegon_ near the new Jesuit mission of St. Esprit. According to Jesuit accounts, the majority of Wendat adults were either already baptized or had received baptism during their stay there. The missionaries asserted that these

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24 _JR_ 56: 115-117.
25 Trigger, _Children of Aataentsic_, 820.
26 _JR_ 45: 235.
conversions occurred because of the Wendats’ exposure to Christianity through the missions in pre-1650 Wendake and their ability to retain their prior knowledge of Jesuit teachings throughout their relocation. Aside from interacting with French missionaries, Wendats cleared and cultivated a number of fields for the purposes of raising Indian corn, which indicates that the Wendats had retained their traditional role as agriculturalists and perhaps suppliers to their Algonquian allies. For the most part the Wendat experience at Chaquamegon remained peaceful—not an easy feat. Only 240 kilometers away were the Sioux, who were comparable to the Iroquois in terms of military might. Heidi Bohaker contends that the ability for Wendats to relocate to this area and maintain friendly relations with its inhabitants and the Sioux depended almost entirely on continued alliance with the Ottawas (Algonquians).

Unfortunately for the Wendats, the peace did not last. Over the course of the winter of 1671 several murders took place involving Wendats, Ottawas, and Sioux. Whatever the motivations behind the murders, the deaths complicated the previously amicable relationship among the different ethnic groups and threatened the security of the Wendat-Ottawa community at Chequamegon. Fearing a retaliatory attack by the Sioux and upon having received word of a peace settlement with the Iroquois, Wendats decided to abandon the shores of Lake Superior in the spring and return to their previous settlement at Michilimackinac where the French had recently established the mission of

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28 JR 56: 117-119.
29 JR 56: 117.
32 JR 55: 171.
St. Ignace.\textsuperscript{33} They spent the winter making preparations and sent an expedition ahead to make sure those living at Michilimackinac.\textsuperscript{34} At the same time, a number of the Ottawas decided to return to \textit{Ekaetaton} on Lake Huron.\textsuperscript{35}

The period of 1651 to 1671 proved significant for the Wendats for a number of reasons. Despite the physical and mental anguish of living in an unsettled and insecure community, the repeated removals provided opportunities for the Western Wendats. The forged intimate relationships with valuable allies through marriages, subsistence interdependency or community projects. It is also likely that the Wendats were one of “various Nations” attending an Algonquian Feast of Souls in 1670, another indication of a persisting adherence to the Coalition.\textsuperscript{36} Access to Algonquian people and fur stocks permitted a continuation of Wendat presence in the fur trade. In the spring of 1655, a Wendat-Ottawa contingent from the Green Bay area arrived in Montreal and Trois Rivière with canoes laden with furs, which they exchanged in the customary fashion for French products.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, commercial endeavors did not cease but in some ways flourished in terms of expanding trade and kin networks among the Algonquian nations of the area.

The route that the Wendats took over these decades also seems calculated. In essence, they traced a perfect geographic circle with strategic periods of settlement among some of the most powerful and numerous nations within the region. The connections fostered along this route, in combination with the circular trail, would have

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{JR} 55: 161.  
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{JR} 55: 161.  
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{JR} 55: 171-173.  
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{JR} 41: 77.
allowed the Wendats to shape the contours of their newly established influence in the area. This would have helped Wendats to connect intimately with the landscape, getting to know the geography of the land on a personal level. Although the Wendat relocation to Michilimackinac was most likely a result of Sioux aggression, it may have always been their intent to return since their initial departure in 1651. Michilimackinac was ideal for many reasons and now that the Wendats had established themselves among the “People of the Sea,” they could conduct themselves as a people of the region.

The Michilimackinac Community: 1671-1701

Parhelion Premonitions

Wendats knew of the advantages of Michilimackinac when they set out to for their return in the spring of 1671. The events of 16 March of that same year served to reinforce this decision: residents witnessed what appeared to be three suns in the sky. They were separated by just over a mile and materialized first in the morning—about an hour after sunrise, and once again in the evening - an hour before sunset. Whereas the real sun was located towards the southwest, the second sun was located in the west and was surrounded by a scarlet band. The third sun was positioned in the southwest, with more of an oval-shaped iris, surrounded by a shimmering gold halo.\(^{38}\) A hazy mist filled the sky, filtering the light projected by the three suns. At one point, a dimmer fourth sun showed itself.\(^{39}\) When the false suns disappeared, they left behind two rainbows stretching across the sky.\(^{40}\) Wendats and Algonquians viewed the Parhelion\(^{41}\) as sky

\[^{38}\textit{JR 55: }173-175.\]
\[^{39}\textit{JR 55: }177.\]
\[^{40}\textit{JR 55: }177.\]
spirits, with the false suns representing the real sun’s wives. In contrast, the French missionaries saw the suns as God’s symbolic reference to the Holy Trinity. Despite these differing views, both Natives and non-Natives acknowledged the suns as an indication of Michilimackinac’s potential.\textsuperscript{42} The Parhelion promised a fruitful future for those living at Michilimackinac, signaling that the Wendats had made the right choice in resettling there. This Parhelion event symbolized the ways in which the shared experiences between Michilimackinac Wendats, Algonquians and French, consistently fostered moments of difference, convergence and persistence based on unique cultural perspectives and traditions. Ultimately, this inspired a community based in cultural compromise, a strategy that allowed the Wendats to create and maintain alliances and traditions.

The Population

By 1671, the Country of the People of the Sea had become a crossroads for dispersed peoples from nations such as the Miamis, Weas, Piankashaws, Kickapoos, Mascoutens. Richard White views the resettlement of these people in terms of “multietnic villages” and “first republics,” where tribal identity remained intact. He contends that the Wendat experience was an exception to this pattern and Wendats settled as a disjointed association of individuals who did not represent any dominant ethnic unity.\textsuperscript{43} The basis of White’s assertion is unclear; it may be rooted in a misunderstanding of the ethnic similarities between the Petun and Wendat confederates, as well as the

\textsuperscript{41} Jesuits describe it as a “Parhelion.” Modern science would call the phenomenon a “sundog” effect. In brief, Perhelion’s are formed by plate crystals high in the cirrus clouds that occur worldwide. In cold climates the plates can also be at ground level as diamond dust. See \textit{JR} 55: 177 and Les Conley, “Atmospheric Optics”, \texttt{www.atropics.ca.uk} [accessed on-line: 1 April 2010].\textsuperscript{42} \textit{JR} 55: 177-179.\textsuperscript{43} White, \textit{Middle Ground}, 188.
developing diasporic nature of contemporary Wendats living in the east at that time. Conversely, an analysis of the population at Michilimackinac reveals a community unified by distinctly Wendat cultural traditions, while simultaneously interacting on an intimate and frequent basis with other groups.

When the Western Wendats left Lake Huron in 1651, they numbered no more than 500. By the early 1670s, and their return to Michilimackinac, Jesuits counted 380 people—with over sixty Ottawas also living there. Less than ten years later the population was estimated to have returned to approximately 500, while the Ottawa numbers had expanded considerably to 1,500.

The gender and age ratios of this Wendat community are hard to decipher. In terms of generational demographics, we know that there were Wendats at Chequamegon who had lived in Wendake pre-1650, which suggests that the western community included at least some Elders. In addition, the records of a winter population census indicate that the community may have consisted of up to 60% women, children and elders. In contrast to the Wendats, the French population was entirely male. Father Jacques Marquette and Piercon headed the mission of St. Ignace, located nearby. Roughly thirty “young” Frenchmen tried to make their way to the area in 1655,

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45 JR 66: 103; Joseph L. Peyser and José António Brandão, Edge of Empire: Documents of Michilimackinac, 1671-1716 (East Lansing: University of Michigan Press, 2008), xxviii, ftnt 30. There is some contention over these numbers; Antoine Laumet dit Lamothe Cadillac, the French commander at Michilimackinac in 1695, reported that there were six or seven thousand Natives within gunshot of the fort. His estimation sounds high, and most scholars believe he was reporting on the entire Native population of the region, not the population at Michilimackinac.
46 JR 66: 105. Given that Wendat men left the village during the hunting season and that the Jesuits recorded that the Wendat population at Michilimackinac dwindled to from 500 to 300 during the hunting season, one can surmise that the population of women, children and elders was 60%.
postponing the trip to the following Spring due to Iroquois raids. The original 
expedition consisted of the Jesuit Fathers Leonard Gareau and Gabriel Dreuilletes, and 
their assistant Louys le Boesme, as well as at least three other “young” men who had 
resolved to carry the faith west. Similar expeditions between 1656 and 1671 added to a 
French population by at least thirty men. In 1683, fifteen more French canoes made 
their way to Michilimackinac and established the military Fort Buade. This increased 
the population to such extremes that by the early 1690s the settlement hosted a population 
of approximately 700 French soldiers and traders. Indeed, the missionaries complained 
incessantly about the influx of French garrisons to the area and their “sinful” influence on 
the Native populations.

By 1700, many of these men had formed close, even intimate ties with the 
Wendats. Intermarriage between Wendats and French soldiers was prevalent. A 1702 
report listed French garrisons and traders who married Wendat women; at least one 
French commander had a Wendat child living within the Michilimackinac village. Although Jesuits decried these relationships as sinful, extramarital affairs, the fact that 
many French men lived in the Wendat women’s longhouse suggests that the Wendats 
viewed them as married couples according to their customs.

Wendat spiritual beliefs at Michilimackinac were as diverse as in the past. Despite 
the influx of the French missionaries to the country and the Wendats’ ten-year sojourn

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48 JR 42: 225.
49 JR 42: 225.
51 La Barre au minister, 4, November, 1684, Archives Nationales [AN], C11A, 6: 134-144v.
52 Peyser and Brandão, Edge of Empire, xxix.
54 JR 65: 237.
55 JR 65: 193. Matrilocal custom requires the husband to go and live with his wife’s family.
near the mission at St. Esprit, the population at Michilimackinac was not entirely Christian. Baptistical records indicate that the population was approximately 30% Christian. A 1676 report, for instance, noted the baptism of forty-five children and forty-seven adults. Considering the total number of Wendats was somewhere between 300 and 500 individuals at this time, this count indicates that at least one-third of the population became Christian. It is likely that this number increased as Wendats and missionaries continued to engage with one another at Michilimackinac. Father Louis Hennepin, for example, alluded to an increase in baptisms, although he simultaneously mourned that many of the Wendat Christians were only superficially Christian, having converted out of curiosity rather than a dedication to the Faith. In sum, there were hundreds of Wendats settled at Michilimackinac. A disproportionate number were women, children and Elders, with many of the women marrying French men who had ventured west for work. In addition, western Wendats were both Traditionalists and Christians, a characteristic consistent with Wendat communities of the past.

The Village

The Wendat village at Michilimackinac initially consisted of several longhouses and a chapel. Within a year’s time, however, the Wendats began building a fort that was meant to enclose the village buildings. They erected an activity area on the far end of the space, and included a number of fields used to grow corn for subsistence and surplus. The Jesuits noted the abundance of the harvest and how the Wendats continued to use

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59 Michigan State University, Anthropology Department “The Marquette Mission” http://anthropology.msu.edu/marquettemission/Photo_Gallery.html [retrieved April 1 2010].
corn as a trade item with the Algonquians to gain other valuable products. The Jesuit mission of St. Ignace connected the Wendat village to a much larger Algonquian community approximately three kilometers away, composed of 1,300 people. Overall, the Wendat village fit customary design in that it included longhouses and fields. The palisade or fort was also typical of a Wendat village; even the inclusion of a chapel was nothing new, as a chapel had been included in the community at St. Esprit, as well as villages in Wendake.

**Cultural Matrix**

The Christian influence on the western Wendat grew stronger during their sojourn within the community at Michilimackinac. Changes and new customs occurred and, as with many cultural encounters, some traditions gave way to the adoption of new practices. The situation at Michilimackinac in the latter half of the seventeenth century presents a case where Native cultural practices did not disappear, nor were they forgotten. Instead, the community engaged in a series of cultural compromises rooted in respect and organized within a flexible framework of integration and accommodation. In this case, Christianity did not necessarily weaken the community, but secured it.

In 1674 Wendat medicine men met with Jesuits and gave their word that they would stop most of their curing practices and give preference to Christian teachings. This was only partially realized in subsequent years, but the promise of the medicine men and their willingness, probably under pressure from other members of the community, is

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60 *JR* 66: 113.
63 *JR* 60: 211.
an early illustration of Wendat appeasement towards French missionary initiatives in the area.

Around the same time as the medicine men’s declaration, a prominent Wendat leader called an assembly with the intention of publicly expressing his views on French religion. This man invited all the local headmen, as well as the Jesuits. As the assembly began, the leader addressed each chief individually by name and then declared that he wished to tell them, and therefore the rest of the community, that he was Christian. He vowed he would not adhere to the power of dreams, nor would he engage in traditional dances that were considered to sexual. Others in his house would follow him.64 His message was passed throughout the village. This pattern of public expressions of loyalty to the French illustrate the changes taking place within the community; although there had been some Christians already within the group, now greater numbers adopted French customs. It is important to note that the leader who had declared himself a Christian did not necessarily reject Wendat traditions. His discussion of Wendat dances depicts compromise; he agreed to discontinue the practice of dances characterized by “lavishness,” while honoring other dances he would continue to take part in.65

This type of cultural brokering fostered the need for new roles within western Wendat society. By 1679, the Jesuits created the position “the Officer of the Faith,” who acted as a liaison between the French and Wendats. This permanent appointment required a variety of responsibilities. Some of the minor tasks included announcing meeting times with the Jesuits, such as Sunday mass and prayer times, by going to each house within the

64 JR 57: 253.
65 JR 57: 253.
village several times a day. The most important task of the Officer was his role as religious leader. After the sermon, the Officer took over and reiterated what the Jesuit had said, elaborating on certain aspects of the sermon in order to clarify subject matter. The Jesuits endowed this person with the authority of a deacon or preacher. The Officer received help from four Wendat “Prayer Officers,” usually two were in charge of organizing prayer meetings, while the other two were charged with leading the prayers and hymns during these meetings. The new religious offices greatly enhanced understanding and communication between the French and Wendats. The Officer of the Faith, in particular, held a powerful role as mediator, translator, and leader within the community. Although, there is no record of what the Officer chose to preach about after the Jesuit’s sermon, the power and influence of that choice would have significantly influenced Wendat perceptions of Christianity as well as their impressions of the French. There is no doubt that word choice, subject matter and interpretation shaped local relationships between these two groups.

In many instances, the Western Wendat Christians embraced Christian teachings by fusing European religious ceremonies with Wendat traditions. Sunday mass was an example of this. In addition to the incorporation of the Officer into the mass, Wendats and Jesuits prayed and sang in the Wendat language. Although the priests made the translations, the Wendat act of singing hymns represented a performative symbolic expression that signified their accommodation and acceptance of this new practice and cosmology. Ceremonial offerings also became fusions of Wendat and Christian practices.

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69 JR 66: 105.
at Michilimackinac. After receiving the blessed bread, Jesuits distributed thirty-three porcelain wampum beads as a symbol of uniting the two cultures in devotion. The beads were placed on each person’s bark plate, and the number of beads depended on the degree of devotion of the individual.\textsuperscript{70} The mixing of Christian ceremony and Wendat diplomacy transformed the Sunday service at Michilimackinac. With Wendat translations and exchanges of wampum, the Christian Wendats and French were communicating within both cultural frameworks.

The Western Wendats celebrated Christmas in a similar sincretic fashion. In preparations for Christmas, Wendat parents sent their children to gather materials to build a small nativity scene. The children gathered grass and wood and soon completed the structure. Subsequently, they confessed, took communion and attended midnight mass.\textsuperscript{71} To conclude these festivities, a few Wendats asked the Jesuits if it would be appropriate to process through the village to view the baby Jesus in the manger of the Wendat-made nativity scene. They explained that through this procession they wished to imitate the “three kings” whom the Jesuits had told them about. The Jesuits agreed. Wendats prepared themselves for the Christmas parade by splitting the village into three groups. Each faction then designated a “king.” The Wendats decorated their “kings” with wampum that was to be used as an offering to Jesus and each “king” wore a traditional Wendat headdress, instead of a European style crown.\textsuperscript{72}

Once the procession concluded, the Wendats hosted a customary Wendat feast and dance in honor of the previous events. The women performed this dance, which was

\textsuperscript{70} JR 66: 107.
\textsuperscript{71} JR 66: 113.
\textsuperscript{72} JR 66: 113-117.
most likely the Wendat welcoming dance.\textsuperscript{73} They arranged themselves into two lines on either side of the longhouse. Each woman took a turn singing and dancing, accompanied by their own personal refrain. In this case, some included refrains that addressed the baby Jesus, others honored his mother Mary or gave thanks to the missionaries for organizing the event.\textsuperscript{74} The Christmas festivities at Michilimackinac demonstrated a coming together of different belief systems. The procession and dance were simultaneously characterized by Euro-Christian customs and Wendat traditions.

Dances in general shifted in practice and meaning during this period. It was common Wendat practice that a number of dances included nudity and certain sexual acts—especially in the case of those performed as curing rituals.\textsuperscript{75} The Jesuits remarked on these types of dances, which they called “the dance of the naked ones,” and which had drawn criticism from the Wendat Christian leader in the early 1670s.\textsuperscript{76} Ultimately, as that leader suggested, Wendats continued to practice their traditional dances with slight modifications at Michilimackinac. The Bear Dance offers an example.

In pre-dispersal times, several members of the community, which included mostly women, young girls, and three or four older women performed this dance. Wendats performed the bear dance, so called because the dancers wore bear skins on their heads, in the hopes of curing women of a disease. The ritual included several rounds of songs and an initial dance performed in the nude. Eventually the sick woman was raised from her

\textsuperscript{73} Elizabeth Tooker explains that the Wendat typically had four reasons to dance: “1) to propitiate the spirits who they thought conferred benefits on them, 2) to welcome someone, 3) to rejoice for some victory, 4) to prevent of cure disease. See Elizabeth Tooker, \textit{An Ethnography of the Huron Indians 1615-1649} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964), 76.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{JR} 66: 121.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{JR} 57: 253; Tooker, \textit{An Ethnography}, 76.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{JR} 17: 81, 193.
resting place and made to dance with the performers.\textsuperscript{77} At Michilimackinac, Wendats performed the dance in a similar manner. In one instance, a sick woman called together twenty women of the village to conduct the dance. The women wore bearskins and wampum around their necks. They proceeded to growl, hide, and act like bears, following the sick woman’s instructions to throw certain items on the fire were in accordance with traditional practice. The sick woman was then made to dance with the performers.\textsuperscript{78}

For all intents and purposes, the nature of the dance remained the same. The songs, dances, regalia, and purpose had survived within the community’s cultural memory. Yet, it purposefully did not include the initial dance that was performed in the nude. This was not an oversight, but the result of an earlier assembly held by the Wendat headmen, who had resolved to forbid the practice of nudity in community dances.\textsuperscript{79} This decision was most certainly a response to Jesuit and Christian-Wendat pressure to engage in more “pious” activities.

Other ways that Wendats incorporated Christian traditions into their customs included an offering to the priests that followed the first harvests of the field. The offerings, which consisted of corn, were placed at the altar and blessed by the Jesuit priest, followed by a brief sermon and a series of prayers where the Wendats gave thanks to God for giving them an abundant harvest.\textsuperscript{80} This was one of the most popular forms of devotion, because Wendats believed that a lack of devotion to the faith could lead to a failed harvest in the years to come. In addition, it motivated Wendat hosts of the traditional Feast of the Squash to take special care to appease both Wendat spirits and the

\textsuperscript{77} Gabriel Sagard witnessed this dance in the 1620s in Wendake. Gabriel Sagard, \textit{The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons} (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), 118.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{JR} 57: 255.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{JR} 57: 257.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{JR} 66: 113.
Christian God. They made the sign of the cross on several occasions throughout the Feast, and especially during the meetings that convened afterward.\textsuperscript{81}

Similar expressions of thanks and devotion were adopted into hunting rituals. It is likely the results of a combination of factors. At first, many Wendats chose to ignore the Jesuits’ incessant teachings that denounced the importance of dreams as guides to successful hunting expeditions. These dreams were used as premonitions and if someone, for instance, dreamt of a bear, the expedition would not kill bears in the hope that it would appease the spirits and would allow for other more profitable kills. According to the Jesuits, after several poor expeditions, a number of Wendats agreed to ignore their dreams and put their faith in their Christian teachings. Subsequent hunting parties were very successful and brought home large numbers of bear, stags, beavers and wildcats. This led many other Wendats to adopt similar practices.\textsuperscript{82} In this case, the Wendat need for wild game drove them to incorporate Christian beliefs into their traditional hunts, while the former importance of dreams was pushed aside.

**Traditionalists And The Cultural Divide**

The examples of Christmas celebrations, feasts, dances, as well as harvest and hunting rituals point to a fusion of Wendat and French values by Wendats. This approach transformed Wendat society and activities, but in most cases, it did not lead to an outright rejection of Wendat traditions in their entirety. Christianity influenced some Western Wendats more than others. Certainly, substantial portions of the population remained unconverted throughout their time at Michilimackinac. Despite the potential for factional

\textsuperscript{81} JR 57: 251.
\textsuperscript{82} JR 57: 259.
conflict, however, it seems that the community continued to engage in joint activities, and that inclusion rather than exclusion was the dominant policy. Both Christians and Traditionalists took part in the Christmas procession, for instance, and Traditionalist women danced and sang at the celebrations that were held in honor of the infant Jesus, although it is unclear whether their refrains addressed the baby Jesus, Mary, and the missionaries in the same way as their Christian counterparts.\(^3\) Moreover, during the Christian season of Lent, both Christians and Traditionalists attended Friday morning meetings led by the Jesuits, where both groups engaged in conversations about spirituality, morality, and their perceptions of the French faith.\(^4\) Non-Christians were also invited to the community’s evening prayer sessions and at times helped in its orchestration.\(^5\)

A Wendat headman gave a public speech at the Feast of Squash that expressed the Traditionalist perspective at Michilimackinac. He called attention to the fact that non-converts respected the Christian faith and its followers. He then made the sign of the cross to publicly honor the Christians in attendance.\(^6\) This display of respect for Christianity indicates underlying tensions within the community. Because past conflicts between Traditionalists and Jesuits as well as Christian Wendats in pre-dispersal Wendake, it was important for Wendat leaders to make clear demonstrations of their amity towards their spiritual counterparts in order to appease any conflict that might arise. There seems to have been little overt opposition to Christianity from Traditionalist Wendats. With the exception of a few rumblings at the Feast of the Squash, when

\(^{3}JR\ 66: 115, 121.\)
\(^{4}JR\ 66: 109.\)
\(^{5}JR\ 66: 107.\)
\(^{6}JR\ 57: 251.\)
participants protested against the headman’s making of the cross, and the infrequent stealing of corn and wampum offerings, overt actions of resistance were minimal.\(^{87}\) The stealing of corn and wampum was most likely out of greed, rather than a Traditionalist protest to Christianity, especially because the culprits did not come forward. Most opposition towards the headman’s symbolic sign of the cross gesture may have actually come from Christians themselves who viewed his act as degrading the purity of the cross. The community dynamic of Michilimackinac contrasted greatly with the days of \textit{Taretande} and \textit{Aenon}. Western Wendat leaders and the general public did not draw lines between community members based on religious affiliation—at least not in the public sense.

\textbf{Foreign Relations and Cultural Connections}

What effect did the acculturation of Christian practices and values have on Western Wendat alliance networks during this period? In regards to the Algonquians, Christianity became an additional means for unification. Often sermons were delivered simultaneously to both Algonquians and Wendats at Michilimackinac.\(^{88}\) More elaborate ceremonies also included both groups, such as the Christmas procession. In fact, the Wendats’ invitation to the Algonquians to their Christmas feast and dance, was one of the first Wendat- Algonquian declarations of their united devotion to Jesus.\(^{89}\)

Christian Wendats frequently visited Algonquian communities to pay respect to that village’s Christians. During these meetings, Wendats visited the Algonquian’s chapel where the entire Wendat procession would salute the baby Jesus. This was followed by

\(^{89}\) JR 66: 119.
chants and prayers delivered in both Algonquian and Wendat. Subsequently, Algonquians provided a feast for the their Wendat visitors and an Algonquian headman would address the group declaring that they were “all united as brothers to obey Jesus, and to entreat the divine Child to preserve their children.”

This type of public fraternity emphasized the unity that still existed between the Wendats and Algonquians, as well as their common desire to have strong relations with the French. It reaffirmed the Coalition as an important aspect of Wendat foreign relations and that the French were still integral allies to the Coalition.

Similar diplomatic gestures took place in response to an Algonquian transgression against the Faith. Apparently, the Algonquians had not paid due respect to a cross that was planted within their community. After hearing about the circumstances, a group of Wendats decided to lead a procession to the Algonquian village so that the Algonquians could make reparations for their actions. The Wendats arrived on a Sunday, carrying small crosses symbolizing respect for the cross. The Algonquians welcomed them and both groups sang hymns in honor of Jesus and the cross. In all likelihood, this meeting was less about transgressions and more about appeasement of the French. It was important that the Algonquians and Wendats demonstrated a consistent policy of respect for French customs, including Christian practices.

As far as French relations were concerned, the incorporation of certain Christian practices into the Wendat community and the full conversion of many Wendats offered clear indications of a Wendat desire to have the French remain close to them. Cultural brokers such as the Officer of the Faith would have facilitated communication between

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90 JR 66: 121.  
91 JR 66: 147.
these groups, while a tactic of respect and cultural flexibility created opportunities for future conversions, which would have enticed the Jesuits to stay. Thus, without fully committing themselves to Christianity, the community at Michilimackinac demonstrated a consistent devotion to the Jesuits and their mission within the area. Also, the lack of opposition made relations between the French and Wendats easier than in times past.

**Leaving “The Country of The People Of the Sea,” 1701**

In 1701 the Western Wendats resolved to move south to Fort Pontchartrain (modern-day Detroit). As Bruce Trigger notes, by this time the western Wendats were role models throughout the region as traders and diplomats.\(^{92}\) In essence, the western Wendat had come full circle by the eighteenth century. In 1650, they had struggled to survive, but after fifty years they had recreated a community analogous with their previous geopolitical role. They situated themselves in a geographic location of central commercial activity, while maintaining their old alliances with the Algonquians and French. They were able to do this through strategic diplomacy and cultural compromise, nullifying conflicts and seeking to expand trade and kinship networks.

The cultural dynamics of the community at Michilimackinac testify to the persistence of Wendat culture. Communal memory of traditions remained intact throughout the long journey west. Knowledge of songs and ceremonial practices such as the Bear Dance traveled with Elders from Wendake. The Wendats continued their traditional role as farmers and traders, a path that sustained rituals such as the Feast of Squash and allowed them to maintain their role as agricultural providers for their Algonquian neighbors. These examples provide evidence that the western Wendats did

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\(^{92}\) Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 824.
not transition into subsistence patterns more in line with their Algonquian kin as some scholars suggest. Rather, they retained their Wendat identity in cultural and political as well as material terms. That said, Algonquians and the Coalition proved integral to the overall success of this relocation. The Ottawas that accompanied the Wendats during the “unsettled years” and who continued to live next to them at Michilimackinac convinced other Algonquians to allow Wendats to stay in the area.

In many respects, it seems that the Parhelion premonition of 1671 was correct: Michilimackinac’s status expanded over the rest of the century and became a major hub for the fur trade, military efforts and politics of the seventeenth century. The establishment of a Wendat village in 1671 meant that the western Wendat were at the heart of this activity. They had spent twenty years creating bonds with the people and land of the region, legitimizing their authority within the area.
CHAPTER 7
THE EAST: NEGOTIATING SPACE AND POWER ALONG THE ST.
LAURENCE

Introduction

Western Wendats created a culture of compromise with their unique situation as refugees among the Algonquian nations in The Country of The People of The Sea. A Wendat desire to maintain a close relationship with the French also fed this strategy. Relocation to the east paralleled the western experience in many respects; it was a long process of twenty years of migration, resettlement, and negotiations. Scholarship that treats these events tends to stress themes of cultural disintegration, assimilation and dependency. Yet, while cultural compromise—a kind of acculturation between Wendat views and host nations— informed the survival strategy for the Western Wendat, settling in the east required cultural conformity. Surrounded by a primarily French population, Wendats who ventured along the St. Lawrence towards Quebec and settled in Lorette enforced strict community guidelines that incorporated a public dedication to Christianity and allegiance to the French. Writing to his superior in 1710, the Jesuit Louis Davaugour

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summarized the unique character of the Eastern Wendat community of Lorette. He argued that:

There are some who think, and therefore write, that the soil of Canada is thoroughly sterile and unfruitful; that the heralds of the Gospel reap therefrom hardly any fruit in return for long and painful labor. This single village of Lorette can teach them otherwise. In fact, I make bold to say that all the other missions of Canada are by no means as fruitful as this one.²

These Wendats were more than just the product of 100 years of determined missionary zeal. Their “fruitfulness” and extraordinarily pious nature resulted from a conscious Wendat survival strategy dating to the 1650 dispersal. Susan Sleeper-Smith has demonstrated how Native people often chose Catholicism as a conduit for achieving power. According to Sleeper-Smith, Christian conversion led to positions of mediation between cultural groups (Native and French), leadership in religious training, as well as the ability to influence commodity production and exchange.³ This strategy was not new, as we have seen with the pre-dispersal conversions of headmen, war chiefs and some female leaders, but became more pronounced during the eastern relocation. Acculturation offered socio-political and economic advantages, and proved essential to creating a successful and amicable relocation among the St. Lawrence French population. Thus, the so-called “Lorettans”⁴ became exceptional Christians, much like Davougour’s

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³ Although Sleeper Smith is speaking most specifically about Native women, this chapter demonstrates that the same argument can be said of Native North Americans in general. Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); also see a shortened version with the same argument: Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade” in *Native Women’s History in Eastern North America before 1900*, Lucy Murphy and Rebecca Kugel, eds., (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 234-255.
⁴ *JR* 66: 159. The Jesuits referred to the eastern Wendat who eventually settled at Lorette as the “Lorettans.”
commentary suggests. They developed a more conservative culture than their western counterparts, one that required major departures from customary behavior mores, and sociability from its members. Some scholars have assumed that the Wendats became “French.” Yet, like the Western Wendats, Lorrettans retained an essential Wendat identity despite their unwavering dedication to the French and Christianity.

**Negotiations: 1650**

Several factors convinced the Wendats to move east to what Father Le Mercier called “the very ends of the world.” The disarray and mortality on Gahoendoe made it an unwelcome stop, and the Wendats viewed relocations to Algonquian villages as a temporary strategy. Removal east seemed attractive for many reasons. First, it was a familiar environment (both in terms of landscape and people). Unlike the western relocation, Eastern Wendats did not have to introduce themselves or prove their usefulness, because their reputation was already well established throughout the region. In addition, a sizeable number of Wendats had moved east to Sillery, Trois Rivières and Montreal, although many considered these locations too dangerous and vulnerable to Iroquois attacks. This shaped a resolution to continue farther east to Quebec City. Wendats believed that this predominantly French settlement would allow them to continue their ties with the French, and offered the possibility of creating a more intimate relationship than before; the Wendats could attain French military protection, as well as

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5 Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 818.
6 *JR* 41: 77.
7 *JR* 35: 209; Jean Blanchet ed. *Collection de manuscript contenant letters, memoires, et autres documents historique realltifs a la Nouvelle-France recueillis aux Archives de la province de Quebec ou copies etrangr; mis en ordre et edits sous auspices de la Legislature de Quebec, avec table etc* (Quebec: s.n, 1884), History of French Canada Collection, University of Ottawa, CIHM no. 08723, 253.
French material goods. Finally, the Wendats perceived Quebec City as the eastern end of the French world during this period. By positioning themselves at this point, the Wendats sketched their geographic and political stakes in North America. They had always had firm trade and diplomatic ties with the northeast. From Michilimackinac to Quebec City, the dispersed Wendats attempted to consolidate their authority from the concentrated center of Wendake to the distant outposts of French, Algonquian and Wendat spheres of influence.

The Wendats held a number of consultations to put this plan into action. First, Wendats deliberated among themselves, and then dispatched a headman to Quebec to propose an official Wendat relocation to the French. Two meetings took place over Easter weekend in 1650; both French civil authorities and missionaries attended, including Fathers Vimont, Bressany, de La Place, and Richer. The colony of New France built its colonial policies on a “unique symbiosis” between the Church and civic administrators, making them “part and parcel” to all negotiations with Native nations, and the Easter discussions were no exception. While the governor general technically controlled Indian affairs, governor Samuel de Champlain had set the stage for a more complex set of relationships in 1632, declaring the French would only trade with Wendats if Jesuits could establish themselves in Wendake. Jesuits later took on full responsibility of Wendat trade from French merchants of the Compagnie des cents Associés (Company of One Hundred Associates). In addition, the Compagnie itself created a policy encouraging Christian conversion. Christian Wendats enjoyed lower prices for

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8 JR 34: 39, 229.
9 Delâge, Bitter Feast, 119, 166.
10 Delâge, Bitter Feast, 118-119.
merchandise than their Traditionalist counterparts; Christians also received guns and could enter French forts.\textsuperscript{12} By 1642, the governor only gave gifts to converted Natives during trade and diplomatic negotiations.\textsuperscript{13} In 1647, the colonial government established a new governing council. It included the governor of New France, the local governor of Montreal, elected representatives \textit{and} the superior of the Jesuits.\textsuperscript{14} Missionaries and administrators, therefore, worked together in most cases to achieve colonial goals. This did not mean that they always saw eye-to-eye, but rather, supported each other to achieve population growth, establish a trade network, and spread Christianity and French culture to Native Americans. Ideally, the latter process of “frenchification,” included the total assimilation of Native people into the French colonial population, leading to full French citizenry.\textsuperscript{15}

In terms of Wendat affairs, governors often used Jesuits as mediators. The Easter meetings were no exception. The church controlled one quarter of the colony’s land holdings. Jesuits received twenty land concessions in New France, ranging from small building plots to large tracts of land outside of towns. Availability of Jesuit land holdings was a key component to the Wendats’ strategic relocations east; equally important was access to missionary funds. The French population at Quebec suffered from the same poor crops because of the drought of 1650-51 and could not support hundreds of Wendat refugees.\textsuperscript{16} Yet, French administrators saw the benefit of keeping their Native allies close

\textsuperscript{12} Delâge, \textit{Bitter Feast}, 167.

\textsuperscript{13} Delâge, \textit{Bitter Feast}, 119.

\textsuperscript{14} Eccles, \textit{France in America}, 52.

\textsuperscript{15} Roger Magnuson \textit{Education in New France} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 60.

\textsuperscript{16} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 801-802.
to help fend off a series of Iroquois attacks throughout 1651-52.\textsuperscript{17} The Jesuits’ private resources offered a solution to this dilemma. Missionaries not only wanted to continue their work with the Wendats at Quebec, endorsing the relocation, but they had the means to do it. After some discussion, the French agreed to welcome the Wendats and allocated 3,000 livres to help in the endeavor.\textsuperscript{18} This negotiation of physical space had broad implications for the future; from the very beginning, relocation eastward depended on the maintenance of friendly relations between Wendats, colonial officials and Jesuit priests.

B ack on Gahoendoe, a council presented the details of the agreement to the community. Several headmen gathered to entice the missionaries to escort a portion of the Wendats to Quebec, and offered concessions concerning the relocation that they hoped would attract greater support. If the French agreed to supply land and provisions for the Wendats, the headmen intimated the Jesuits could garner the conversion of the entire eastern Wendat community. One headman articulated the Wendat perspective in the following way:

Cast thine eyes toward Quebec, and transport thither the remnants of this ruined nation . . . Thou bearest us in thy hands and thy heart . . . If thou listen to our wishes, we will build a Church under shelter of the fort at Kebec. There, our faith will not die out . . . Their charity will alleviate, in part, our miseries; and, at the least, we shall sometimes find there a morsel of bread for our little ones, who, to sustain life, have for so long lived on acorns, and bitter roots.\textsuperscript{19}

According to Wendat tradition, this type of reciprocal relationship typified relocation.

Wendats had incorporated many refugee groups over the years and it was customary to welcome these groups by giving plots of land and provisions to establish themselves as

\textsuperscript{17} Jon Parmenter, \textit{The Edge of the Woods: Iroquia}, 1534-1701 (East Lansing: The Michigan State University Press, 2010), 82.

\textsuperscript{18} The original funds allocated for the Wendat settlement was recorded as 500 \textit{écus}, but Trigger has converted that number to $3000.00. Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 801; \textit{JR} 34: 39.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{JR} 35: 193-195.
part of the larger community. Thus, Wendats expected the French to accommodate their group, while understanding that the situation was orchestrated under the pretext that the eastern Wendats would become Christian.

Wendat emphasis on Christianity may have been the result of previous French demands, by both missionaries and administrators, for Native conversions in relation to relocation. Earlier discussions concerning the settlement of Wendats at Trois Rivières and Montreal would have set the standards for this particular relocation. In 1648, for instance, the Wendats gathered at Trois Rivières to ratify the nature of settlement there. Four main articles of agreement were included in this discussion. First, Wendats agreed to have an individual serve as a representative of the Church, much in the same way as the Officer of the Faith did out West. This person would commit to be the most dedicated Christian and would take it upon himself to indicate to report the names of members of the Wendat community who resisted conversion to the Jesuits. Second, all Wendats who declared themselves Christians were subject to the Laws of Jesus Christ; if they transgressed these laws they would be punished in accordance to Christian rules. They promised to eschew drunkenness; any Wendat was found guilty of this crime would be sent to jail and made to fast on water for several days. Finally, the Trois Rivières council concluded that individuals who openly expressed resistance to Christianity would not receive defense or shelter from the French fort.

Similar negotiations took place at Montreal with the governor. In this case, the headman Achindōanes spoke on behalf of the Wendats and asked the French Onontio.22

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20 JR 35: 209. This was the case with the Wenro refugees for instance in 1630s.
21 JR 35: 237.
22 Onontio was the Wendat name for the governor of New France.
or governor, to “take pity, be their father and protector.” He specifically requested that
the sale of liquor be outlawed to reduce temptation; that the Natives be allowed to seek
employment from the French in the making of canoes, snow shoes or moccasins; that the
French provide provisions when their community was in need (especially during the
hunting season); that more land be provided if the community grew; and that the French
supply a priest. *Achindôanes* concluded that in respect to community justice, the Wendats
desired that if one of their dogs ate one of the Frenchmen’s birds he would be subject to
Wendat laws, not French ones. The governor agreed to the majority of Wendat requests,
although he argued about the acquisition of land and an inability to stop all sales of
liqueur.

The experiences at Trois Rivière and Montreal fit within a tradition of negotiation
between the French and Wendats in cases of relocation; Wendats agreed to endorse
Christianity, while legal authority and rules of law continued to be a point of discussion.
At Trois Rivière, there was a strict code of Christian doctrine, while at Montreal there
may have been instances where Wendat justice trumped French law. In many cases, the
two may have been compatible. Wendat desires to eradicate drunkenness because of its
social toll meshed with Christian notions of piety; similarly, the request for charity in
times of need echoed both Wendat and French customs. Thus, when the *Gahoendoe*
council outlined their desire to relocate among the French, they were most likely aware
that religious conversion would play a key role in the success of this endeavor.

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23 The translation is my own, from “aie en pitie, sois leur pere et leur protecteur.” See “Discourse
des Sauvages Hurons qui demandent des terres aux Seigneurs du Montreal dedans leur ville”
Wendake Archives [WA], Fonds Marguerite Vincent [FMV], Cote: G-1-94.
24 “Discourse des Sauvages Hurons,” WA.
Although the French in Quebec City accepted the terms presented to them by the headman, the missionaries on Gahoendoe were hesitant. A move from Gahoendoe meant a complete abandonment of Wendake, which seemed like admitting failure of the Wendat missions. The Jesuits took to prayer for forty hours and consulted each other on numerous occasions. Finally, Father Rageuneau concluded that “if we [the Jesuits] could conduct them [the Wendats] to the shelter of a French fort at Montreal, three Rivers, or Quebec, it would be, we thought, their only place of refuge; that there, the assistance which we could render them would be more effectual, and their faith would be more assured...”

In other words, the Jesuits accepted relocation as an opportunity to save their mission. The weakened Wendats needed the charity of the St. Lawrence French to survive. By establishing the Wendats in a region surrounded by French Catholics, the Jesuits might convert them more easily. In addition, they endorsed the policy that Christian Wendats would take priority over non-converts and their families would benefit first from French shelters and charity.

The Jesuits agreed to move east, acting as escorts to the Wendats as they ventured towards Quebec.

The context of these discussions contradicts the common notion that the Wendats “followed” the French to Quebec. In reality, the Wendats, not the French, instigated the migration east and set many of the conditions for the relocation. In fact, it was the missionaries, if no one else, who were more hesitant. Gaining French acceptance of the proposal was key, however, and a successful relocation could not have proceeded without the support of the missionaries. Thus, the Wendats engaged in negotiations, similar to previous discussions at Trois Rivières and Montreal, in order to persuade the Jesuits. They

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26 JR 35: 39.
used all their diplomatic skills both to create a consensus in their own communities, and to appeal to the divergent civil and religious communities of New France. A promise of Christian conversion proved essential to this process. Ultimately, by adopting this Christian strategy the Wendats left a considerable amount of power in the hands of the Jesuits. Although the idea of relocation was a Wendat one, the situation permitted the terms of settlement and the future nature of the community to be dictated by the French.

The Journey: 1650-1673

Approximately 300 Wendats moved east in the spring of 1650.\textsuperscript{27} The route was 746 miles and took roughly fifty days.\textsuperscript{28} The difficult journey took an enormous physical and psychological toll. Unlike the migration west, the Eastern Wendat had to cross the homeland of Wendake mainland, where they witnessed the abandoned villages, the decaying corpses of loved ones and the ashes of houses torched in the evacuation process.\textsuperscript{29} Constant fear of Iroquois attacks compounded the horror of the experience. Wendats made note of recent paths created by the enemy and twice they came across abandoned Iroquois forts.\textsuperscript{30} There was no time to bury the bones of the deceased or to stop and lament the loss of a territory.

Fear and paranoia dictated their movements to such an extent that any sign of human activity was assumed to be Iroquoian. Nearing the twenty-fifth day of travel, Eastern Wendat scouts noticed a trail of what they took to be the enemy. They reported their findings to the larger group, who immediately prepared for war. Children and

\textsuperscript{27} JR 35: 215; Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 802.
\textsuperscript{28} JR 35: 199, 209.
\textsuperscript{29} JR 35: 199.
\textsuperscript{30} JR 35: 201.
women hid in the bushes while the men took to arms, retracing their steps towards the attackers. Just as quickly as they drew their weapons, however, they lowered them; to the war party’s relief and surprise, the opposing group was not Iroquois but a group of forty Frenchmen, as well as a few Wendats. Both groups took solace in the close call and used the opportunity to exchange information on Iroquois in the area. As it happened, the group moving west had just survived an Iroquois attack the previous night, in which they lost seven men. The encounter confirmed that their fear was warranted, and forced Eastern Wendats to remain on constant alert for the rest of their journey.

Despite the difficulties of the expedition east, Wendats arrived at Quebec City in the spring of 1650. They were starving and weak, their journey was long and dangerous, but they had finally made it. Ursuline nuns who had established themselves at Quebec in 1639 were some of the first French people to greet the travelers. Writing in August 1650, Marie de l’Incarnation, who supervised the Order, expressed her view that the Wendats were indeed refugees, and promised the Ursulines would try their best to help the Wendats through the initial stages of relocation until they could establish themselves independently from the French. What the Ursuline mother neglected to add was that this charity was exclusionary and only applied to Wendat Christian families. Christians received clothing, food and shelter within the seminary as well as among a number of French residents. The Ursulines’ day-school also welcomed a small number of Wendat girls, where they received formal training in the Wendat language. This strategy,
combined with a lack of supplies within the French community in general, led to at least 200 non-Christian Wendats being without significant aid in the early stages of relocation.\(^{36}\)

Eventually the Jesuits satisfied Wendat requests for settlement, however, and the community established itself on the Île d’Orléans, two miles from the mainland and Quebec City. This took some negotiating on the part of Wendats, Jesuits, and Eléonore de Grandmaison, the French woman who owned the land, which was divided into thirty portions, with the largest tract half an acre.\(^{37}\) The Wendats agreed to an eight-year contract. They arranged to cultivate the land and establish residences separate from Grandmaison, as well as to help her with chores. Accordingly, the French landlady agreed to distribute food in times of need, as well as provide the land for these endeavors. In addition, the French governor agreed to build a fort to protect the Wendats from the Iroquois and the Jesuits agreed to build a mission and chapel.\(^{38}\)

The Wendat tenure on Île d’Orléans proved productive. Trade continued to be profitable during this period; Wendats exchanged beaver robes with the French, trading up to 2,000 skins a year.\(^{39}\) Yet, they continued to struggle with security as the Iroquois harassed them in various ways, alternating between incessant diplomatic meetings and violent attacks. The Iroquois hoped that they might convince the Wendats to abandon Île

\(^{36}\) JR 35: 211.
\(^{37}\) JR 36: 117. The original measurements are given in French arpents, but there is marginal difference (1 arpent = .99 acres).
\(^{38}\) Léonard Garreau to sieur Beauregard, (27 January 1652), Archives nationales Quebec [ANQ], Collection Centre d’archives de Québec [CCAQ], Cote: P1000,S3,D814.
\(^{39}\) Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 804; JR 44: 189.
d’Orléans for Iroquois Country. Eventually the situation became so volatile that it culminated in what Bruce Trigger calls the “rape of the Quebec Huron” in 1656.

Despite all the Wendats’ careful planning, the politics of the region grew increasingly tenuous for them. The French and Iroquois had just made peace and Jesuits established themselves in Iroquois communities. At the same time, several of the Iroquois nations competed to annex the Wendats, who engaged in diplomatic relations with several of them simultaneously in an effort to stave off attacks, not always successfully; in particular, their dealings with the Onondaga incited a bitter reaction from the Mohawks. To make matters worse, the French received word the Mohawks planned to attack the Wendats at Île d’Orléans and decided to remain neutral. The French gave the Mohawks presents in an attempt to discourage the pending attack, but offered no indication that they would provide military support for the Wendats in the event of an assault. Subsequently, the Mohawks landed on Île d’Orléans on the morning of 18 May 1656 and laid siege to the unsuspecting Wendat as they worked their fields. Although some Wendats managed to seek refuge in the Jesuit mission, approximately seventy individuals were killed and a substantial number of taken. The attackers left French residents untouched.

The Mohawk victory engendered important repercussions for the eastern Wendat. It proved that the island was not secure and that the French, despite their continued

40 The details of these negotiations are the basis of the Chapter 8, but for the purposes of this section what is important to know is that the Wendats continued to be the focus of Iroquois assaults.
41 Trigger, Children of Aaaentsic, 806.
42 JR 42: 49.
44 JR 43: 115-119. The fact that Wendats sought refuge in the mission indicates that the governor had not built the fort he had originally promised.

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protestations of friendship, were unable or unwilling to provide military protection for them. This realization led the community to abandon the island and relocate of the Wendats within the fortified walls of Quebec City on 4 June 1656.\textsuperscript{45}

The Wendats at Quebec City established themselves in what the French termed “le Fort Des Sauvages” or the “Native Fort,” located in the center of town.\textsuperscript{46} Governor D’Ailleboust ordered the construction of the fort, perhaps in reaction to the Mohawk assault; he issued a public decree that the French would support any Wendat or Algonquian whom the Iroquois attacked in close proximity to a French settlement.\textsuperscript{47} In addition to the fort, Wendats received forty-four acres of land to cultivate on the south shore of the St. Lawrence.\textsuperscript{48} Although the fort may have provided more protection, it did not safeguard Wendats who ventured beyond it. During the following fourteen years, the Wendats within Quebec City faced continued French-Wendat-Iroquois hostilities, including the famous Battle of Long Sault and the escapades of Adam Dollard des Ormeaux in 1660. The French, Wendats and Algonquians lost this battle, but managed to protect the French settlements in the area.\textsuperscript{49}

In 1667 the French and Iroquois entered into a peace agreement and the following year the Wendats relinquished their Quebec City fort and moved briefly to Beauport,

\textsuperscript{45}This was two years before their tenure of eight years was due to expire, so the reason for the move was most likely due to the Iroquois attacks and lack of security on the Island. \textit{JR} 70: 207.
\textsuperscript{46}“Veritable plan de Quebec comme il est en l’an 1664 et la fortification que l’on y puisse faire.” WA, Fonds Paul Picard [FPP], Cote: P2-S3-D37.
\textsuperscript{47}Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 815; \textit{JR} 44:191-193.
\textsuperscript{48}\textit{JR} 47: 261.
about three miles from the city’s walls. The details of this move are not clear, but possibly resulted from the French-Iroquois peace. If the Iroquois agreed to halt their attacks, the Wendat might have been more confident relocating outside the fort.

The relocation to Beauport only lasted a year; by 1669 the Eastern Wendats had moved again, this time to Notre-Dame-de-Foy. Wendats remained there for four years, enough time to cultivate their fields, build houses and become attached to the land. A Wendat woman’s reluctance to relocate in 1673 indicated the extent of this attachment. She told her friend in confidence about her personal struggle, and the friend reported the conversation to the Jesuits who helped in orchestrating the move. The conversation continued among them as the friend sympathized with the distraught woman, “I see very well that your regret at changing your village comes from the love that you bear to the Fields which you have here, and which you cannot transport so far.” For many Wendats the relocation from Wendake took twenty years. They grew tired and frustrated about their inability to attach themselves to a land and village. It is perhaps for this reason, as well as the productivity of the fields at Notre-Dame-de-Foy, that the Wendats continued to return and cultivate their corn even after their leaving in 1673. The Jesuits associated the move with an increased population and a need for more land as the fields became exhausted. The Wendats continued use of the fields implies that the Jesuits’ explanation of the move may not describe the situation in its entirety.

The relocation of the Wendats to what would become known as “Ancienne Lorette” represents the site that served as the Eastern Wendats’ home for the better part

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50 JR 52: 229.
51 JR 57: 47-49.
52 JR 60: 83.
53 JR 60: 71.
of the remaining century. Many search parties and consultations on the destination took place until finally the group selected a location seven miles from Quebec City. Modern Wendat traditions support this account, as eastern Wendat descendant Mme. Alexandra Martel explained to a reporter in 1965. According to Martel, the main reason behind the selection of Lorette was its location beside the falls of the St. Charles River. The Jesuits highlighted the importance of St. Charles and remarked on how the river was “a brook of excellent water.” The Loretans erected their village in relation to the water on a high tract of land just beyond the brook. It took several months to construct, beginning in December 1673.

During this time a village plan was drawn up. The physical set-up offers perspective into the Wendat diaspora culture the villagers created. At the center stood the chapel, surrounded by twelve to thirteen bark longhouses, each connected by a twenty-foot road that led directly to the church. All of this was set high enough on a tract of land that had a direct view of Quebec City. The church remained central to the Wendat relocation process and settlement strategy. It was literally the force that connected the community through roads, rituals and relationships. Moreover, the view of Quebec City was a constant reminder of the French presence in the area and the Wendat connection to them. The Jesuits described the location as “one of the most pleasing in all this country.” The "Loretans," grew satisfied enough to remain in the vicinity indefinitely.

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54 The eastern Wendats make one more move in 1697 to “Jeune Lorette” that was in very close proximity to Ancienne Lorette. They have remained there ever since. Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 819.
55 JR 60: 69.
57 JR 60: 77.
58 JR 60: 75-81; 58: 147.
59 JR 60: 77.
The two decades of relocation for the Eastern Wendats differed from that of their contemporaries out West in several key respects. Whereas the Western Wendats spent the 1650s and 60s expanding their networks throughout the upper Great Lakes, Eastern Wendats remained confined to restricted spaces allocated by the French. This led to isolationism, as the French began to dictate Wendat interactions with other nations. All the while Iroquois intrusions, both diplomatic overtures and violent assaults, remained a constant concern. Thus, the long journey of relocation to the East resulted in a settled community that survived continued Iroquois attacks and French neglect. The negotiations of spatial occupation created a community dependent on Jesuit support, which in turn required that the Wendats prove themselves worthy Christian allies. Bruce Trigger argues during this period Eastern Wendats “joined the growing ranks of Indians who ceased to be treated with respect by Europeans once they ceased to be an economic asset.”60 As we shall see however, these Wendats retained respect through Christian zeal rather than beaver pelts.

The Loretans, 1673-1697

Population

The Wendat population at Lorette had experienced years of demographic shifts.61 After the settlement on Île Orléans many more Wendats ventured east to join them. In

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60 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 813.
61 To date, there has been very little done on the demographics of the seventeenth-century eastern Wendat. Although Jesuit records are fairly clear that roughly 300 Wendats who first made their way from Wendake, scholars tend to take this at face value or use ambiguous terms such as “group” or “the hurons” with no detail into who these 300 people were, or how the population changed over the years. For examples see Denys Delâge, Bitter Feast, 147; Gilles Havard, The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701, 35. Complicating this narrative even further is Ian Steele’s assertion that there were 600 eastern Wendats and Roger Carpenter’s oversight by not including
1651, forty additional canoes joined the original 300 Wendats who left Wendake. This
group came from Ekaetoton and included roughly 240 people.\textsuperscript{62} During the same year the
Wendats residing at Sillery moved to Quebec in a forced removal dictated by the French
sale of the Jesuit lands at Sillery.\textsuperscript{63} This group numbered close to 120.\textsuperscript{64} It was also in
1651 that the additional group of Wendats who had remained on Gahoendoe to harvest
crops made their way to Quebec.\textsuperscript{65} This number increased again on 26 April 1654 with
the arrival of the Wendats from Trois Rivière.\textsuperscript{66} Thus, by the end of their tenure on Île
Orléans, the Wendat population could have been over 700 people, far in access to
previous estimates; this is corroborated by Father Léonard Garreau’s assertion in 1652
that there were at least 200 Wendat men hunting and 400-600 women in the fields at any
given time.\textsuperscript{67} This exceeds previous estimates of 30 families, or roughly 240
individuals.\textsuperscript{68} These high numbers did not last. Due to Iroquois raids and Wendat
agreements to relocate to Iroquois Country, the population dwindled to approximately
150 members by 1670.\textsuperscript{69} Although the number of Wendats adopted into Iroquoian society

\textsuperscript{62} JR 36: 143, 189. The count of 240 Wendats from Ekaetoton is my estimate based on the
number of canoes in the party; I assume that there were approximately six adults per canoe.

\textsuperscript{63} “Ratification par le roi de la concession de Sillery, par la compagnie de la nouvelle France, en
faveur des sauvages, sous la direction des Peres Jesuits” (July 1651), WA, CFV, Cartable: 1-b;

\textsuperscript{64} In 1650 there were “30 families” waiting at Sillery and Quebec to move to Île Orléans. Leo-
Paul Hébert indicates it was approximately 120 people. See Hébert Le Registre de Sillery (1638-
1690) Introduction, Presentation et notes de Leo-Paul Hebert (Presses de L’Université du
Quebec, 1994), 38.

\textsuperscript{65} JR 36: 179.

\textsuperscript{66} JR 70: 205-207.

\textsuperscript{67} Léonard Garreau to sieur Beauregard, (27 January 1652), ANQ, CCAQ, Cote: P1000, S3,
D814.

\textsuperscript{68} Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 802.

\textsuperscript{69} JR 54: 285.
is unknown, we can calculate the number of dead and captured Wendats roughly. From 1650 to 1656 there were approximately six battles between the eastern Wendats and Iroquois, with the most extreme being the Mohawk attack in 1656. Ninety-three Wendats became captive or “lost;” out of these, seventy-one to eighty-five people were captured in the 1656 battle. Taking into consideration the hundreds of Wendats residing on Île Orléans during that time, and the Jesuits’ account that only seventy people were saved, there must have been hundreds of casualties. Combined with the numbers of Iroquois adoptees, this gives at least a partial explanation to the eventual decline in population and the low number of 150 by 1670.

The ethnic composition of the original Eastern Wendat group included the Bear, Cord and Rock nations. By 1656, however, most of the Bear and Cord had joined the Iroquois. The Loretans primarily consisted of members of the Cord nation who chose to remain in the Quebec region despite Iroquois pressure to leave.

The Cord was not known to be any more inclined towards the French than the other nations, nor did they have a reputation as more Christian. The Jesuits asserted that by the time the Wendats removed to Lorette they were a “church fully formed,” no longer counting “therein the number of the baptized, except by that of the children who come into the world.” Taking this at face value, it seems the Loretans had kept their promise

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70 José António Brandão has done a meticulous job of recording all Iroquois battles from 1603-1701. See: Brandao, Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701 (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), Appendix D.

71 Brandão, Your Fyre Shall Burn No More, Appendix D. In this case “lost” may indicate “runaway.”


73 JR 43: 191. The Deer had already gone to live with the Seneca by this time.

74 JR 43: 191.

75 JR 60: 27.
and were mostly Christians. The Christian character of the Eastern Wendats attracted other Native people to Lorette. Large portions of these visitors were Iroquois and would eventually be incorporated by the Wendats. By 1675, the population of the community rose to roughly 300 individuals, including both “Huron and Iroquois.”\(^76\) In that same year twenty-two Iroquois adults were baptized.\(^77\)

Although La Potherie deemed the indigenous society at Lorette “one of the largest villages in New France,” it was an ethnic minority among the growing French population of the St. Lawrence.\(^78\) By 1660 the French numbered approximately 10,000, making the Loretans roughly 3% of the entire population.\(^79\) This had far reaching implications, not least of which was intermarriage. The Wendats entertained marriages with the French for several reasons. First, marriage represented a symbolic union for the Wendats, one that created customary kinship ties. Christian marriages also signaled a public of Christian piety among the Wendats. Second, European women were still underrepresented among the French: Christian Wendat women provided an alternative for French men. Finally, it was during the 1660s that the French began to enforce a policy of “Frenchification.”\(^80\) Thus, French administrators pressured Wendats to marry the French with the hopes they would assimilate into French society. On 19 August 1667, for instance, Marie Felix Arontio married Frenchman Laurent du Bocq. She received 500 livres from the property of her deceased mother as a dowry.\(^81\) Eight days later, 13-year-old Catherine

\(^76\) JR 60: 27.
\(^77\) JR 60: 27.
\(^78\) Charles-Claude Bacqueville de La Potherie, Documents relating to the early history of Hudson Bay ed. Joseph Burr Tyrrell (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1931), 291.
\(^80\) Minister Colbert a Talon, LAC, C11A 3/fol.11-18; Roger Magnuson, Education in New France Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 60.
\(^81\) JR 47:287.
Annemontak married Jean Durand. Her dowry was 260 livres.\(^\text{82}\) This tradition continued throughout the century. On 8 September, 1698 the notary Guillaume Roger recorded the marriage of the Wendat woman *Elizabeth A. Michel* to Louis Durand, which included a dowry of 500 livres.\(^\text{83}\)

Children resulted from these unions. *Marie Felix* had seven children with du Bocq and *Catherine* had three children with Durand, as well as an additional five children after Durand’s death from her marriage to Jacques Couturier.\(^\text{84}\) It is not clear whether the couples remained in the Wendat village or returned to a French community, though it was Wendat custom to invite the Frenchman into his wife’s family home. The Jesuits also indicate that the population in Lorette continued to grow.\(^\text{85}\) It is likely these mixed families continued to reside in Lorette, creating generations of Loretan children that were biologically both French and Wendat.

**Compliance**

The Eastern Wendat living at Île Orléans, Quebec City, Beauport, Notre-Dame-de-Foy and Lorette needed to make overt gestures to convince the French they would honor their promise of conversion. It was no longer enough to express interest in Catholicism, attend mass and speak about Christianity, because other Native people were doing that by this time. The Wendats needed to be exemplary Christians to stand out. This was not an easy task, as Christian doctrine demanded changes in Wendat cultural traditions. Previous practices of pre-marital sex, nudity, alcohol consumption and

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\(^{82}\) JR 47: 287; 311 ftnt 20.  
\(^{83}\) “Contrat de mariage entre Louis Durand et Elizabeth A. Michel – 1698” WA, DMV, Boîte 8552, Cote E-3-67.  
\(^{84}\) JR 43: 311, ftnt 20.  
\(^{85}\) JR 60: 27.
gambling were forbidden. Nevertheless, the advantages that came with religious conversion, such as French support and Wendat survival, were too important to ignore. It was for this reason that community members imposed strict guidelines on their citizens, with heavy repercussions in the case of disobedience.

Embracing Christianity required major cultural shifts for the Wendats. Extramarital relations and public nudity became virtually non-existent. Christian marriages became the norm, along with a Christian sense of purity, forbidding public kisses and flirting.\textsuperscript{86} This represented a marked departure from earlier Wendat resistance towards Catholic marriage contracts and from habits of sexual liberty that existed in Wendake. Even the missionaries were surprised at the Wendat decision to encourage changes that departed so drastically from previous times.\textsuperscript{87}

Similarly, theft had been a common activity among Wendats before the shift to Christianity.\textsuperscript{88} Jesuits called this an “addiction” in the pre-dispersal period. It is unclear however, the extent to which these activities were seen as “stealing” from the Wendat perspective, since Wendat concepts of personal ownership and property rights differed from the French. Regardless, theft and “borrowing” of property became less frequent after 1650. The Eastern Wendats made a concerted effort to demonstrate their restraint by seeking out the Jesuits if they found any item whose ownership was in question. This could involve things as small as pins and nails found in the street. When found, Wendats brought them to the Jesuits in the hopes that they would restore them to their rightful owners.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{86} JR 57: 67-69.
\textsuperscript{87} JR 57: 69.
\textsuperscript{88} JR 57: 67.
\textsuperscript{89} JR 57: 67.
Alcohol consumption among both French and Native populations had always been a major concern for the Jesuits. Although Wendats and Jesuits repeatedly tried to limit the trade of this commodity, they could not stop it. French traders often tried to entice the Natives by saying, “what crime is there if by the way or when weary from one’s journey, or for the guest’s or friend’s sake, one quaff a cup of wine?” The Loretan Wendats’ reply is indicative of their unwavering perspective on the matter: “It is just as thou sayest, brother,” they would respond, “but we have promised Mary that we would never drink even a single cup.” Wendats placed special emphasis on teaching the immorality of drunkenness and the ways in which it opposed the Christian faith. Together, the missionaries and community pressure succeeded in technically abolishing drunkenness in Eastern Wendat society during this period. Father Davaugour asserted that he saw not a single instance of public drunkenness in his five years at Lorette, a remarkable change from earlier Jesuit observations. A French merchant also remarked on the sobriety of the Wendats. He could not help but “admiring the temperance and constancy of the Lorette Hurons” whom he had encountered on a recent trip, “They never could be induced by us to taste a drop of wine, even to touch it with their lips, being satisfied with bread and a little tobacco . . .”

The Wendat pressured visitors to adhere to the community’s culture of conformity. Large numbers of Iroquois came to the Wendat village for Christian instruction from missionaries and Wendat converts. By 1675, approximately seventeen

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90 JR 57: 157.
91 JR 57: 159.
92 JR 66: 149.
94 JR 57: 159.
percent of the Loretan population was Iroquois.\textsuperscript{95} The Iroquois received rigorous religious training.\textsuperscript{96} At first, newcomers found it very difficult to transcend the tremendous differences between Iroquoia and Christianized Eastern Wendat society. One young Iroquois struggled with how to explain his new life among the Wendats to fellow Iroquois. He believed “the manner in which the hurons lived Was so surprising and so different from that of other savages that he expected that The account he would give of it would be looked upon as a fable.”\textsuperscript{97} Nonetheless, many Iroquois adhered to the transition and became exemplary Christians.\textsuperscript{98}

Wendats enforced these guidelines throughout the community in a number of ways including public humility and reprimands, and burning of houses. In extreme cases, individuals could be subject to a multitude of punishments culminating in permanent exile. The entire community participated in these strict measures. In one case, the community accused a wife and husband of abusing alcohol in the early 1670s. Upon finding them guilty, the couple was exiled from the community and forbidden to return under any circumstances. To prove this point, the villagers burnt the couple’s house so they would have nothing to return to.\textsuperscript{99} Exile was a devastating sentence, as it almost certainly meant death. Without food or shelter and left vulnerable to enemy attacks, those without community had little hope for survival, so fear of punishments pressured Loretans to conform.

\textsuperscript{95} Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 120; JR 60: 29.
\textsuperscript{96} JR 60: 27.
\textsuperscript{97} JR 57: 73.
\textsuperscript{98} JR 60: 29-31. The Jesuits make particular reference to the Iroquois Jacques and Cecile Sogarese, as well as Marie Tsaoueate. The latter becomes so well known for her piety that she is deemed “La Precieuse” or “the precious.”
\textsuperscript{99} JR 57: 55.
Punishment for children differed from their parents, but was nonetheless critical to the success of the Christian strategy. Wendat youth represented the future and their character formation required careful consideration. Wendats always had a special affinity for the younger generations and encouraged them to use their childhood to explore and experiment. The French made particular note of the nature of Wendat children and child-rearing in the pre-dispersal period. Samuel de Champlain, for instance, was struck by the fact that he believed “the children of these nations [were] extremely free.” Recollet brother Gabriel Sagard observed:

they are for the most part very naughty children, paying [parents] little respect, and hardly more obedience; for unhappily in these lands the young have no respect for the old, nor are children obedient to their parents, and moreover there is no punishment for any fault. For this reason everybody lives in complete freedom . . . Bad example, and bad bringing up, without punishment or correction, are the causes of this lack of decency.  

Georges Sioui explains techniques from a Wendat perspective, asserting Wendats perceived children “as developing individuals, [they did] not see or hear themselves being told how to think and behave by people invested with arbitrary powers, or by a system. Instead they simply [had] access to the abundant source of wisdom available to all, which comes from the ancient spirit of the people. Children [could] draw on it when and how they [wished].” This does not necessarily mean there were no limitations on children’s actions; Champlain and Sagard’s observations most likely reflected the contrast between French and Wendat child-rearing practices. Wendats did not traditionally

send their children for formal training, while public humiliation was highly frowned upon and corporal punishment did not exist.\textsuperscript{103}

This altered once the Wendats relocated to Quebec. At Notre-Dame-de-Foy, Wendats observed the French children who attended a school built within the walls of the Wendat village. Here, French children were frequently punished if they did not abide by the rules. Schoolmasters and matrons customarily conducted public displays of reprimand.\textsuperscript{104} Understanding the need for Wendat children to conduct themselves as “good” Christians, Wendats began rounding up all the Wendat children and publicly chastising them for their faults. Parents then took the children to the resident priest to explain once again these faults. After hearing the confessions, the priest would allocate appropriate punishment.\textsuperscript{105} This conduct reshaped the Wendat childhood experience. Thoroughly impressed with the outcome, the Jesuits exulted that “Such exemplary Punishment has made the little savages so well-behaved that one can now do with them whatever he wishes.”\textsuperscript{106} In other words, through European forms of punishment, the Wendats were able to placate the previous “freedom” of their youth and force them to conform to Christian perceptions of appropriate behavior. Eventually they would be seen as surpassing the French in piety. In fact, it was the Jesuits’ opinion that “there [was] much more modesty and decency among The huron youth than among The french.”\textsuperscript{107}

While parents played a major role in implementing punishment for Wendat children, several different people and groups regulated the Wendat community at large in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{103} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 47.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{JR} 57: 61.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{JR} 57: 61. It is unclear what “punishments” the children received, but corporal punishment cannot be ruled out.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{JR} 57: 61.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{JR} 57: 69.
\end{footnotesize}
ways that suggest continuity with traditional cultural forms. Individual leaders, for instance, played a major role as both models and enforcers. In 1668 the Wendat headman Ignace addressed a council in order to express his displeasure with the conduct of his fellow citizens. Ignace found the lack of Wendat religious offerings dissatisfying. It was part of Christian tradition and he was angry the Wendats were not adhering to this mandatory religious act. He asserted, “I am ashamed to see that [the French] make offerings to God, and that we have not yet done anything of the kind. That is why I beg you to consent to imitate the example of the French in future, by making some present to the Church. As for myself, I am going to begin first by making my offering of this Collar . . . .”\textsuperscript{108} In the end, Ignace succeeded as the council resolved that all the young men of the village would make a contribution in their own capacity when they returned from the hunt.\textsuperscript{109}

Elders’ councils also served as a governing body concerning personal conduct and regulations. This body could both punish and forgive transgressors. In the case of drunkenness, citizens could redeem themselves by coming before the Council and proving they had reformed themselves. Again drawing on customary practices, representatives of the defendant offered mandatory gifts to the council, which ranged from three wampum belts to 4,000 porcelain beads.\textsuperscript{110} If the reparations satisfied the council, they extended their forgiveness. A 1672 case indicates that this amalgamation of traditional communal institutions, community oversight, and new Christian mores generated some success stories. The accused Wendat drunkard concluded his remarks to the council, by stating:

\textsuperscript{108} JR 52: 237.
\textsuperscript{109} JR 52. 237.
\textsuperscript{110} JR 57: 55-57.
My uncles, I beg you to believe that I have not been angry that my Cabin was burned, and that afterward I was compelled to live in the midst of the Fields; for I am convinced that I well deserved such a punishment. And if out of consideration for . . . my advocates, you are pleased to grant me mercy, I promise you that I will Never relapse into my past misdeeds. If I do not keep my word, I beg you never have pity on me again.”

According to the Jesuits, he never drank again. Overall, Wendats used French templates to create social order within Lorette, yet incorporated them into their own social structures. The most influential governing body was the entire community. The village itself acted as a conduit for unified peer pressure, ensuring conformity. If a transgression took place, all the Lorettans knew about it. From Elders to children, everyone participated to some extent, which engendered a sense of shared ownership of the new values and behaviors the Wendats had incorporated. Yet even as the Wendats brought this collective pressure and exclusionary policy to bear on individuals who violated a set of rules that had not existed in their community decades earlier, they did so within centuries old frameworks of community governance. The communal pressure on the individual linked the policy on drinking and theft to a customary sense of collective responsibility for the individual; the public had to make amends for the individual. If a person committed an offence against someone else, the entire community was equally held responsible.

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111 JR 57: 57.
112 JR 57: 61.
113 JR 57: 55. The children were encouraged to burn down the cabin of the drunkards, for instance.
114 JR 28: 49; Elizabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians 1615-1649* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 57. Traditionally Wendats who did not comply with the various social expectations were chastised by the entire village and lost respect within the community.
**Continuity**

Despite the rigorous guidelines of Loretan society and their overt need to demonstrate conversion through changes in cultural practices, cultural continuity persisted among the Eastern Wendats. Sincretism between Christian teachings and Wendat traditions, and between French and Wendat social goals allowed for some Wendat customs to remain intact. The most pervasive examples of this were the Wendats’ continued emphasis on charitable donations, shared property and community welfare.

Gift giving formed an integral part of Wendat society before the dispersal, and this practice did not desist with relocation east. Just as the headman *Ignace* stated, offerings became essential elements of Wendat demonstrations of Christian devoutness. The community devoted considerable energy to collecting gifts for the salvation of Wendat relatives caught in purgatory. This became an obsession among the Loretans. Many individuals were known to go without food or clothing in order to accumulate items for this cause.\(^{115}\) In addition, Wendat hunters would trade furs for wampum that was held in reserve by the community for this purpose.\(^{116}\) When the headman *Ignace* died, his wife gave 4,000 wampum beads and a moose skin explaining this was to ensure “at the earliest moment, my husband’s entrance into Paradise.”\(^{117}\) This type of gift giving, although infused with Christian rhetoric, also maintained Wendat traditions of making presents for the deceased to help them on their journey in the afterlife, as was the case with the Feast of Souls.

\(^{115}\) JR 53: 129.
\(^{116}\) JR 53: 129.
\(^{117}\) JR 53: 113.
Loretians embraced charitable donations because they fit Wendat notions of
community welfare and the responsibility of leadership. Similar to rituals of property
distribution in Wendake, the Wendats continued the tradition of shared land and
provisions in the East. *Ignace*, for instance, received a substantial amount of land when
the Wendats left Île Orléans. Instead of keeping it for himself, he distributed it among
community members, with the majority going to widows and poor families.¹¹⁸ Wild game
was distributed in a similar fashion after a hunt, and Wendats shared food freely with one
another.¹¹⁹ If a family was struggling, for instance, a council would direct more stable
members of the community to contribute offerings of sustenance for the family.¹²⁰ This
type of Wendat charity extended to poor French families as well. During a year of
particularly bad harvests, for example, one Wendat woman donated ten bushels of corn
from her personal reserve to help French families.¹²¹

Christian missionaries and teachings supported these activities. Jesuits constantly
praised the charitable nature of the Loretans and asserted the Wendats surpassed the
French in terms of their devotion to such causes. Commenting on the actions of a
particularly charitable Wendat woman, a Jesuit exclaimed “It is a pity that this charitable
soul has not so much wealth as our great Ladies in France. Ah, how many monasteries
and hospitals would she not found! How many thousands of Poor would she not
assist!”¹²² This same Wendat woman later commented on how Christianity influenced her
actions. She asserted her new faith had shown her more fully the benefits of relinquishing
an attachment to the material world. “I no longer envy the rich;” she stated, “I rather feel

¹¹⁸ JR 53: 121.
¹¹⁹ JR 53: 121.
¹²⁰ JR 54: 295.
¹²¹ JR 54: 297.
¹²² JR 57: 49.
compassion for Them, because they place Their affection in things that are of no use to
them after a brief moment of this life.”\textsuperscript{123}

Eastern Wendats also incorporated Wendat traditions into Christian rituals. Although perhaps less obvious than the ways in which the Western Wendat’s mixed Native and Christian customs, the Lorettsans practiced a similar form of cultural matrix. Funerals provide one of the best examples of this phenomenon. After the death of an individual, a headman of the village took charge of letting the rest of the community know. He then made the arrangements for the burial ceremony. Relatives dressed the deceased in his or her finest clothing and covered in a red blanket. Clergy came to view the body and make the appropriate blessings. At the funeral, the headman made a speech and was responsible for distributing three sets of gifts. The first, was a large wampum belt given to the church in order to ensure that prayers be made on the departed person’s behalf. The second included three to four presents that usually consisted of the belongings of the deceased. These were given in thanks to those people in charge of burying the body. Finally, the last set of gifts was given to the closest relatives of the deceased. Following the gift giving ceremony, the group laid the body to rest in a grave lined with layers of bark on all sides. An additional layer of bark was placed over the body before it was covered with earth.\textsuperscript{124} For the most part this ritual satisfied Christian burial requirements, yet also retained aspects of Wendat origin. The role of the headman was similar to the Master of the Feast in the Feast of Souls ceremony, for example, and the distribution of wampum and presents during the funeral was a Wendat innovation. Further, the bark-layered tomb was not a French custom, but a reflection of Wendat

\textsuperscript{123} JR 57: 47.
\textsuperscript{124} JR 60: 37.
burial practices. These remnants of Wendat culture melded with rather than contradicted the Christian nature of a funeral, and were therefore endorsed by both the Loretattans and the Jesuits. Ultimately, it is examples such as this that allowed the Wendats to maintain their traditions, while still adhering to their strict Catholic code of conduct.

The “holy savages” of Jeanne Lorrette, 1697

By the time the Eastern Wendats made their final move to Jeanne Lorette in 1697, their community had been transformed. They were no longer the starving, fearful victims of Iroquois raids, but the prosperous and pious Wendat nation of Lorette. Settled on some of the most fertile soil within the French colonies, Wendats continued to produce crops and cultivate a successful entrepreneurial tradition as canoe, snow shoe and moccasin manufacturers. In fact the Jesuits believed “all the other missions of Canada [were] by no means as fruitful as this one.” This strict policy of Christianization, orchestrated by both the French and Wendats, helped make the community a success. The Loretattans ensured by the end of the seventeenth century the French still saw them as their closest and most loyal Native allies; they retained value in French eyes despite their changing role. This was no small feat as Iroquois and Algonquian communities began to welcome Jesuit missionaries on a more frequent basis, threatening the Wendats’ privileged position. To be sure, the Loretattans’ main advantage in maintaining a preferred status with the French in comparison to other Native nations was their Christian piety. Native conversions, especially among the Iroquois, challenged this position, resulting in a Wendat need to become not only Christian, but the most Christian. The French viewed Christianity in the same light. It was the Jesuits’ opinion that religion was the only tie that

125 JR 66: 147; Trigger, Children of Aataentsi, 818.
126 JR 66: 147-149.
bound the Natives to the French and without it the relationship would not disintegrate, undermining the entire French colonial enterprise. Father Louis Davaugour reiterated these circumstances noting “Once this link is broken…all [would be] over for the colony of the French in Canada.”127 Therefore, both Wendat and French interests the Lorettaans shared an interest in maintaining their Christian practice.

The tactic seems to have worked. Whereas in the west, Wendats became role models in trade, the Eastern Wendats took on the role as spiritual leaders, supported by their Christian reputation. They became the middlemen for frenchification of other Native targets of French policy, including the Iroquois. Their status as “the holy savages” among French and Native countrymen was one of the reasons why the governor solicited Lorettaan warriors to be his personal bodyguards and sentinels when out on military expeditions.128 This honor testified to the prestige of the Lorettaans and became an assumed position by the turn of the century. In one instance, the Eastern Wendats received news the French governor was in the midst of gathering some 2,000 troops to attack the English. The circumstances were cause for alarm because the Lorettaans had not been invited—a transgression in French-Wendat relations. Taking this as a sign of disrespect and perhaps instigated by an additional internal insecurity over their position with the French, a Wendat headman confronted the Jesuits about the matter. Just as he finished his angry speech about this, a messenger arrived with a personal invitation from the governor to join the war party. This appeased the headman and his fellow Lorettaans and restored their faith in their special place among French and Native allies.129

128 JR 66: 163.
Most importantly, exemplary Christian piety played a pivotal role in the Wendat ability to continuously find and negotiate space for relocation in the vicinity of Quebec City. Since their very first settlement on Île Orléans, the Jesuits and their land were the only means by which Wendats were able to organize villages, create a community and establish themselves within the region. It was essential for the missionaries to see the Wendats as a feasible investment for them to continue to support Wendat occupation of the area. This relationship was reciprocal. The Wendats received land and maintained their status as privileged French allies, while the Jesuits used the Lorettnans as a symbol of the success of their missionary work, a testament to the potential for Christian conversion among Native Americans, and as a source of legitimacy for the Jesuit presence in North America. It was due in large part to the proliferation of Jesuit reports on the subject and the widespread reputation of the Eastern Wendats that Father Vallant, the Superior of the Residence of Montreal, praised Father Davaugour for the success of the mission. After affectionately embracing Davaugour, Vallant enthusiastically exclaimed “My Father, congratulate thyself, for thou hast as many saints as thou has Hurons at Lorette.” There is no indication that Vallant visited Lorette himself; thus it was on reputation alone that Davaugour and the Lorettnans received such high praise. In this way, the Lorettnans managed to evade destruction through their dedication to Christianity. By 1701, they were seen as loyal and committed friends to the French, who would protect French interests, and promote French culture for generations to come.

130 JR 66: 163.
CHAPTER 8
IROQUOIS COUNTRY: WENDAT AUTONOMY AT GANDOUGARE,
CAUGHNAWAGA, AND GANOWAROHARE

Introduction

Although relocations to the West and East were orchestrated in conjunction with
allied nations such as the Algonquian and French, many more Wendats either chose or
forced to move into Iroquois Country—at least 2,000 people or 20% of the Wendat
population in 1650. This exceeded the numbers of Wendats at Michilimackinac and
Lorette.¹ In the early stages of the dispersal, most of the Wendats who moved to Iroquois
Country were war captives or single families who decided to cast their lot with the
deny. As the years progressed, however, large-scale relocations of hundreds and even
whole villages took place.

By the mid-1660s the Iroquois occupied a precarious position. The English
conquest of New Netherland threatened their sources of Dutch weaponry; even though
Dutch traders remained in the Hudson River Valley, they no longer enjoyed the regular
supplies that had formerly flowed from New Amsterdam, now New York. This made the
Iroquois more vulnerable to attacks from the Mohicans, New England Algonquians and
the Susquehannocks (who had their own supply of guns). The English colonies
represented a potentially formidable counterforce on the Iroquois’ eastern front. Iroquois
now suffered from the epidemics that had earlier afflicted the Wendats and the Iroquois

¹ José António Brandão, Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy toward New France and
Its Native Allies to 1701 (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 77.
did not command enough manpower to engage in multiple battles at once, as they had
done decades earlier in Wendake. These troubles emboldened the newly energized
French administration, who had undergone their own process of consolidation and
reorganization when New France became a Royal Province in 1663. In 1665 Louis XIV
decided to address the Iroquois problem by sending 1,200 veterans of the continental
wars to “exterminate the Iroquois.”

The adoption of Wendats into Iroquois society helped the Iroquois deal with these
circumstances. The Iroquois viewed Wendat relocations to Iroquois Country as a means
to “requicken” their population and extend the political league to additional people. Although this strategy included the adoption of other indigenous groups, such as the
Algonquians, Wendats represented a unique faction. The Iroquois viewed these Nadoueks
as former kinsmen, or “ancestral people.” Wendat adoption appeared, therefore, as a
reintegration of brothers and sisters into Iroquois communities. This could, in turn, quell
fighting between Wendats and Iroquois and aid in the war effort on the other fronts as
Wendats joined their new Iroquois families in future battles against common enemies.

Despite the existence of a general Iroquois perspective on Wendat adoption, the
“Iroquois” did not operate as a single cohesive unit. Just as the separate Wendat nations

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Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1998), 283-284; Daniel Richter, “Ordeals of the
Longhouse: The Five Nations in Early American History,” in *Beyond The Covenant Chain: The
Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*, Daniel Richter and James
Merrell, eds., (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1987), 21; Levi Anthony,
*Cardinal Richelieu: And the Making of France* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000),
433.

University Press, 2010), 80.


5 Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in
of the pre-dispersal Confederacy acted as independent entities, so the Mohawks, Cayugas, Oneidas, Onondagas and Senecas who constituted the Great League of Peace functioned as autonomous polities. This meant that each nation pursued its own efforts to incorporate Wendats in an occasionally disjointed and even violently competitive fashion. Mohawks urged Wendats to consider their geo-political power as keepers of the eastern door to the Iroquois League’s metaphorical longhouse, while the Onondagas argued that their location at the center of Iroquoia was the more advantageous option. An Onondaga headman underscored the differences between Iroquois nations to the French governor warning, “a careful distinction must be made between nation and nation; that the [Onondagas] were not faithless, like the [Mohawk] Iroquois, -who cherish, deep in their breast, their rancor and bitterness of heart, while their tongues are uttering fair words.’” Although some scholars suggest this disunity resulted in a tenuous alliance, historian Jon Parmenter contends the Confederacy’s flexible factionalism allowed for a cohesiveness between the Iroquois nations, creating room for independent ambitions as well as common goals. This assessment holds true in terms of Wendat relocation negotiations. The Iroquois were united in aspirations to adopt Wendats, yet they acted as separate interest groups in their attempts to acquire them.

Wendats were very aware of the pan-Iroquois desire to incorporate them into their society, and of the other changing geopolitical realities of the region. In 1650, for instance, the Wendats at Gahoendoe were approached by the Iroquois to “take refuge”

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7 *JR* 40:165.
8 Parmenter, *Edge of the Woods*, 84.
and “be but one people.”

Similar invitations to “inhabit but one land” were made in 1653 by the Mohawks, and in 1656 the Oneida declared that the Wendats and Iroquois should be “One cabin and one country.” This type of discourse dominated Iroquois-Wendat diplomacy throughout the 1650s and 60s. The Iroquois consistently asserted they “put a mat in [their] Cabin for [the Wendats];” they emphasized unity and friendly reception in between bouts of violence to convince Wendats to join, rather than fight, the Iroquois. The incessant pressure only ceased when large numbers of the Eastern Wendats agreed to move to Iroquois Country in the middle of the decade.

Scholars speculate that Wendat motivations for relocation to Iroquois Country came from a desire to reconnect with Wendat kin who were already among the Iroquois and a wish to maintain their culture and traditions. The basis for this interpretation is the ethnic similarities between these two groups, in contrast to the Algonquians or French. Similar in lifestyle, cosmology and governance, the adopted Wendats could remain culturally Nadowian to some extent, while experiencing “cultural corrosion” as they assimilated into Iroquois society. Certainly, this was the reality for many Wendats,

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10 *JR* 43: 187.


especially those who relocated in small numbers or were taken captive.\textsuperscript{14} Yet, assimilation was not always the rule, in fact, the experiences of Wendats in the Iroquois villages of \textit{Gandougare}, \textit{Caughnawaga}, and \textit{Ganowarhare} suggest that Wendat strategies among the Iroquois differed very little from those they pursued at Michilimackinac and Lorette. Rather than being absorbed into Iroquois communities, they acculturated, maintaining their autonomy by establishing separate villages, retaining unique leadership roles and adopting Christian rituals to differentiate themselves from their Iroquois hosts. The Iroquois accepted this compromise because they viewed it as a means to appease Wendat requests for autonomy as well as a way to entice Jesuit priests to the community and gain access to French trade networks.\textsuperscript{15} It may have also been a way for the Iroquois to distract the Wendats and French from their Algonquian allies who continued to launch successful raids on Iroquois villages in the 1660s.\textsuperscript{16} Ultimately, though this strategy allowed the Wendats to remain \textit{Wendat} rather than \textit{Iroquois} during the seventeenth century.

\textbf{Iroquois Persuasion}

The Iroquois pursued an aggressive military campaign against the Wendats mid-century. Their ability to conquer village after village and capture thousands of Wendats during this period served a dual purpose of not only dispersing the Wendats, but incorporating them into their polity. This strategy did not desist with the 1649 victories in Wendake. The Iroquois pursued Wendats both east and west. Despite their distance from

\textsuperscript{14} As discussed in Chapter 3, adoption of individual war captives of varying ethnicities by Nadouek captors often resulted in full assimilation into the community. 
\textsuperscript{15} Richter, \textit{Ordeal of the Longhouse}, 108. 
\textsuperscript{16} Fenton, \textit{Great Law}, 283.
the Iroquois homeland, Michilimackinac became another site of bloody conflict with the Iroquois. After only a few years of refuge, the Iroquois attacked Wendats in their settlement on Mackinac Island.\footnote{\textit{JR} 56: 115.} There is very little known about this battle, but considering the timing of the conflict (only a few years after the dispersal from Wendake) the Iroquois likely sought the acquisition of captives and potential adoptees.

A Mohawk attack on the Eastern Wendats at Île Orléans in 1656 was a more overt attempt to force the Wendats to integrate. The Iroquois’ invasion of the island signaled to the Wendats that if they did not choose to go with the Iroquois \textit{voluntarily}, they would be forced \textit{militarily}.\footnote{\textit{JR} 43: 115-119.} The tactic worked; survivors reconsidered their initial refusal to join the Iroquois and subsequent discussions of relocation ensued.

Diplomacy was key to Iroquois persuasion. Although warfare gained compulsory adoptees, preferably, Wendats would join the Iroquois of their own accord. Iroquois diplomats delivered numerous speeches and presented a number of valuable gifts to entice the Wendats. The Mohawks tried to make amends for the actions on Île Orléans, and sent a delegation of thirty Iroquois to Quebec to meet with the Wendats. On this occasion, an Iroquois headman spoke to the Wendats in the following way:

\begin{quote}
My brother, it is to thee that my words are addressed . . . Four years ago, thou didst beg me to take thee by the arm, to raise thee to my country; thou didst sometimes withdraw it when I wished to comply with thy request; that is why I struck thee on the head with my hatchet.\footnote{\textit{JR} 43: 189.}
\end{quote}

The Iroquois justified their attack on the grounds that the Wendats betrayed them by promising to move to Iroquoia four year earlier and then, yet once settled on Île Orléans, had refused to leave. Warfare represented the Iroquois solution to this rift in Wendat-
Iroquois relations. It demonstrated that if the Wendats did not follow through on their promises, the Iroquois had the means to make them do as they wished. Yet this speech also indicates Iroquois’ desires for an amicable resolution seem to have been part of these negotiations. It was not that the Iroquois wanted to fight the Wendats, but rather they were forced to fight because of the Wendats’ own actions. The Iroquois headman continued:

Withdraw it no more; for I tell thee in earnest to get up. It is time for thee to come . . . Fear not; I no longer look upon thee as an enemy, but as my relative; thou shalt be cherished by my country, which shall also be thine . . . \(^{20}\)

The dialogue here was meant to be both convincing and sincere. The headman asked the Wendats to forget past conflicts and see the Iroquois Country as a place of refuge and security. He assured them that the Iroquois would welcome their relocation, and that their people would be treated well. The Oneida made similar speeches that drew upon the common Nadouek cultural heritage between the Wendats and Iroquois. One Oneida ambassador argued:

I take thee by the arm to lead thee away. Thou knowest, thou huron, that formerly we comprised but one Cabin and one country. I know not by what accident we became separated. It is time to unite again . . . I put a mat in my Cabin for thee. I give thee some land for raising Indian corn. I lift thee from the ground. \(^{21}\)

In this case, the Oneida asked the Wendats to remember the compatible Nadouek traditions that might serve as a bond between the two groups. They maintained the Wendats would not only be welcome among the Iroquois, but given land to raise crops. Overall, the Oneida’s reference to “lift thee from the ground” demonstrates their belief

\(^{20}\) JR 43: 189.  
\(^{21}\) JR 42: 253-255.
that this type of agreement was a means to help the Wendats recover from their losses and rejuvenate the population.

Gifts were another traditional tactic the Iroquois used to persuade Wendats to join them. Presents usually consisted of wampum belts and beaver skins and formed a collection of gifts, each with their own symbolic meaning. The Oneida, for instance, delivered a series of seven presents to the Wendats in their 1655 negotiations for removal. The ceremonial presentation struck customary notes of metaphorical rhetoric. To begin, the Iroquois headman invoked the sun “as a faithful witness of the sincerity of his intentions, and as a torch that banished the night and the darkness from his heart, to let in a veritable light upon his words.”

He then gave out his gifts designed to make amends for past acts of aggression against the Wendats and their allies. His explanations were as follows:

The first one was given to wipe away the tears that are commonly shed upon hearing of the brave warriors killed in battle. The second was intended to serve as a pleasant draught to counteract whatever of bitterness might remain in the hearts of the French, because of the death of their people. The third was to furnish a piece of bark, or blanket, to put over the dead, for fear of the sight of them might renew the old-time dissensions. The fourth was to bury the dead and tread down the earth very hard over their graves, in order that nothing might ever issue from their tombs that could sadden their relatives, and arouse any feeling of revenge in their bosoms. The fifth was to serve as a wrapping for packing away the implements of war so securely that they would never be touched again in the future. The sixth, to make clear the river, stained with so much blood. The last, to exhort the Hurons to accept whatever decision Onontio the great Captain of the French, should choose to make concerning peace.

These gifts emphasized the need for Wendats and Iroquois to move beyond their past conflicts and resolve to make peace. For the Iroquois, this meant a relocation of Wendats

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22 JR 40: 165.
23 JR 40: 165-167.
to their country. The last presents’ reference to Onontio, or the governor of New France, also demonstrates the important role the French played in these negotiations. French officials often attended of these councils and took part in rituals, as did Algonquian diplomats. Thus, the Iroquois understood the significance of the relationship between the Wendats and their allies and made sure to include them in their diplomatic discussions.

Kinship played a major role in the ability of Iroquois spokesmen to convince the Wendats to join them. The Wendats’ experience of migration, coupled with the loss of loss of captives among the Iroquois, meant that many families experienced painful separation and loss of powerful kin networks. The Iroquois invitation to settle within Iroquois Country gave Wendats an opportunity to reconnect with kinsmen. Although this topic was never really broached directly by the Iroquois in discussions, it was common knowledge and many Wendats would have added this to their reasons to be persuaded by the Iroquois.24

Wendat Reservations

Despite the skillful diplomacy of Iroquois ambassadors, many Wendats remained skeptical of relocations to Iroquois Country. Several Wendat headmen voiced their opinions on the matter, demonstrating that the Iroquois were still perceived as the enemy and untrustworthy. One Wendat man named Aaoueate encountered an Iroquois war party that gave him news of the peace negotiations between the Wendats and Iroquois at Quebec. Aaoueate felt confused by their overtures and reacted defensively, but the Iroquois who tried to assure him that “Thou art neither a captive nor in danger of death, .

24 JR 40: 55. The Wendats at Gahoendoe stated explicitly that many Wendats thought about joining the Iroquois in the hopes of reconnecting with family.
. . thou art in the midst of thy brothers; . . .”25 The Wendat responded: “You are faithless rogues, . . . your hearts are full of venom, and your minds of knavishness; if you talk of peace, it is only to employ a treachery more baleful both for us and for the French.”26

A Wendat headman at Quebec discussed similar sentiments. He participated in the negotiations and heard the Iroquois’ promises of respect and sincerity, yet he refused to believe them; he perceived the journey to Iroquois Country as a river “bristling with long and great teeth; I would put myself in danger of being bitten, were I to embark at present.”27 Certainly the idea of making a long and isolated journey to join a former enemy would have daunted even the most committed Wendat. Some tried to address this issue by suggesting they travel with a French escort. When the Iroquois resisted this Wendat strategy, the Wendats replied it was not reasonable for them to embark in a war-Canoe (an Iroquois canoe), and that they must wait for a peace-Canoe (canoes escorted by the French). If this was the case, they assured the Iroquois, “From that moment I am at your disposal.”28

The reluctance of Wendats to accept the Iroquois’ invitations arose from personal intuition as well as past incidents that pointed to an Iroquois plot to break their promises of friendship. Wendats recalled, for instance, the death of thirty-four Iroquois on Gahoendoe Island who had tried to fix a similar invitation to Iroquois Country. In the end, the true nature of the Iroquois and their desire to wage war on the Wendats came to light. Given these precedents, many Wendats believed the current negotiations at Quebec seemed like yet another scheme to obtain revenge for the Wendat foiling of the former

25 JR 40: 179.
26 JR 40: 179.
27 JR 43: 193.
28 JR 42: 207.
Iroquois plans to wage war at Gahoendoe.29 Wendats also remembered a potential Mohawk plot to avenge the murder of their headman Torontisati by the Wendats at Trois Rivière two years previous.30

The rivalry between the Onondagas and Mohawks to attain Wendat refugees presented another set of challenges. On the one hand, the Wendats did not want to create any friction between the two Iroquois nations, yet groups lobbied Wendats to join them in their respective villages. By choosing one over the other, the Wendats would create animosity, but if they chose both, they would be forced to split up their community even further. Refusing the offers outright was not an option. According to Wendats, the Iroquois, “their hope, being disappointed, [would] turn to despair, and, seeing themselves both alike deceived, they [would] conspire to effect our ruin.”31 As the Wendats saw it, there was no winning; leaders summarized their situation by stating, “We see plainly… that those two Iroquois nations, in spirit of mutual envy, wish to win us each to its own side. Whatever plan we adopt, we are equally confronted with misfortune.”32

**Wendat Refusals**

These concerns led some Wendats, both individuals and groups, to reject Iroquois overtures. The headman who did not want to get “bitten” by the journey to Iroquois Country refused to join any expedition of that nature, stating if he ever did agree to relocate “it would be for another time.”33 Similarly, the majority of Eastern Wendats, who identified as the People of the Cord, agreed almost uniformly that they would not

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29 *JR* 41: 57.
30 *JR* 41: 57.
31 *JR* 41: 59.
32 *JR* 41: 57.
33 *JR* 43: 193.
leave Quebec and wished to remain close to the French.34 This resolution met with serious consideration and influenced discussion among the rest of the Eastern Wendats. Despite Iroquois initiatives, councils and Wendat pressure, the Cord refused to change their minds. The Wendat leader whom the French called *Le Plat* delivered the resolution publicly. A headman from the Bear nation offered an explanation to the French and Iroquois. According to a leader of the Bear, he considered those who remained at Quebec “better than I am.”35 Putting this into context, it may not have been that the Cord were really seen as “better” than those leaving with the Iroquois, but rather it was important that the French perceive the remaining Wendats as superior, thus ensuring a French desire to have them remain. Put another way, the Cord’s refusal to join the Iroquois became a diplomatic maneuver to gain favor with the French and demonstrate that at least a portion of the Wendats would not abandon the French for the Iroquois.

The Western Wendats also made a collective decision to avoid the Iroquois and their attempts at incorporation. The nature of Iroquois-Wendat relations in the west was based less on skillful diplomacy and more on military might and strategy. Thus, when the Iroquois attacked the Wendats at Michilimackinac in an attempt to try to persuade them to surrender and move east, the Western Wendats responded with a military offensive, as a way of expressing their rejection of Iroquois adoption.36 When the conflict ended, the Western Wendats did not engage in negotiations with their enemies; rather this group decided to move further west, to evade similar incursions from the Iroquois. This successful removal essentially shut the door on further Iroquois campaigns of this nature

34 *JR* 43: 191.
35 *JR* 43: 191.
36 *JR* 56: 115.
in the west, while simultaneously putting more pressure on the Iroquois to conduct successful negotiations in the east.

**Wendat Acceptance**

In the end, however, many Wendats succumbed to Iroquois tactics and agreed to a so-called “voluntary defection” to Iroquois Country. The terms of removal were not merely an Iroquoian construction, however; Wendats made demands that shaped the process and nature of resettlement. Those who chose to live among the Seneca demanded that the Iroquois incorporate large numbers of both the Deer and Rock people in such a fashion that would allow them to live with each other and distinguish themselves from other Iroquois villages. In addition, the Wendats asked the Seneca to agree to wage war on the Mohawks. The Seneca agreed to create a village for the Wendats and discuss the Mohawk attack further. They also offered to send a canoe with Wendat and Seneca representatives to Quebec City to inquire into the extent to which the French might support a military campaign against the Mohawks.

Wendats made similar demands in terms of removal to Onondaga and Mohawk territory. Members of the Bear nation desired to relocate among the Mohawks, while the Rock would join the Onondaga. Wendats asserted these moves were only possible if the French agreed to support it, as well as protect the remaining Wendats in Quebec. The Wendats reiterated that the Jesuits needed to accompany them to Iroquois Country and

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37 Brandão, *Your Fyre*, 327. José Brandão uses this term to describe those Wendats who agreed to live with the Iroquois, as opposed to “involuntary” cases such as Wendat prisoners of war.

38 *JR* 36: 141-143.

39 *JR* 36: 143.

40 *JR* 43: 191.

41 *JR* 43: 193.
install missions among them.\textsuperscript{42} Wendats did not agree to an immediate relocation as the Iroquois requested, but would wait until there were French boats available at Montreal to take them to Iroquois Country. In the words of a Bear nation headman, the Wendats would congregate in Montreal and “as soon as some Canoes belonging to the French who are in [Iroquois] country comes down here, I am at [the Iroquois’] service, and [they] mayst take me wherever thou wilt.”\textsuperscript{43} Finally, the Wendats decided they would send Atsena, a headman of the Bear nation, ahead with a number of Iroquois, as a test to the Iroquois’ extent of friendship. The headman outlined this strategy to the Iroquois, “it is decided; I am at thy service. I cast myself, with my eyes shut, into thy Canoe, without knowing what I am doing . . . I do not wish my cousins of the two other Nations to embark this time with me, in order that they may first see how thou wilt behave toward me.”\textsuperscript{44}

French support was crucial to these negotiations. French authorities viewed hostilities with the Iroquois as the biggest impediment to the success of New France. Jean Talon, the first Intendant of New France, explained peace with the Iroquois was the only way the colony could begin to prosper.\textsuperscript{45} French administrators sanctioned Wendat requests to have Frenchmen and missionaries accompany them to Iroquois Country because of this belief. They agreed to send Jesuits as safeguards or hostages, hoping to dissuade future Iroquois attacks on French settlements.\textsuperscript{46} The Jesuits viewed the initiative as a means to gain access to other Native groups, while governor Pierre Dubois

\textsuperscript{42} JR 43: 189.
\textsuperscript{43} JR 42: 205.
\textsuperscript{44} JR 43: 191.
\textsuperscript{45} Lettre de Talon au minister, October 27, 1667, Archives nationals d’outre-mer [ANOM], C11A 2/fol. 306-320v.
\textsuperscript{46} Parmenter, Edge of the Woods, 95.
Davaugour believed it would appease the Iroquois so they would remain loyal in future wars with the English. Both groups perceived the proposed move as providential. Preparations began once the terms of removal were agreed upon. During the day Wendats and Iroquois arranged their canoes and personal belongings, while at night Wendats hosted farewell feasts that included the French, Iroquois, and Algonquian nations. One of the main purposes of the feasts was to provide a public forum for Wendat farewell speeches – the majority of which were directed at the Iroquois and French. In one case, a headman beseeched the Iroquois to take good care of his close friend Atena. He gave the Iroquois presents in order to ensure that Atena “not fall into the Mud in disembarking.” He continued:

... here is a collar to make the earth firm where he will set foot on it. When he disembarks, do not allow him to sit on the bare ground; here is something wherewith to make a Mat for him on which he may rest. And, that thou mayst not laugh at the women and children when they weep at seeing themselves in a strange country, here is a handkerchief that I give thee to wipe away their tears, and the sweat from their brows.

On another occasion a headman (probably Atena) addressed the Governor and Jesuits who remained at Quebec. He was obviously reluctant to leave, yet his words express a determination to fulfill his end of the Iroquois bargain. “I leave you,” he began,

It is true; but my heart does not leave you. I am going away, it is true; but I leave my cousins, who are better than I am. And, to show you that Québec

47 Allan Greer, Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 98.
48 Parmenter, Edge of the Woods, 154.
49 JR 43: 193.
50 JR 43: 193.
51 JR 43: 195. The Jesuits recorded this speech as given by “The Captain of the Bear Nation.” Because there was no single “captain” of any Wendat nation, it may be surmised that Atena was the captain in question, given that he was highly respected and well known by the Jesuits.
is ever in my country, I leave you the large kettle, which we use in our
greatest rejoicings.\footnote{JR 43: 193.}

This ceremonial kettle was both a material and symbolic gesture of Atsenà’s desire to
maintain relations and a connection to the land and people of Quebec. The kettle
represented the Bear nation, unity, and a desire to return for future feasts between the
French and Wendats. The kettle also served as a material reminder to the French that the
Wendats who relocated to the Iroquois had once lived among them and would continue
their close relationship with them as in times past.

The farewell feasts served as a final Wendat attempts to control the ways in which
the removals continued. They included celebrations, a meeting ground, and a forum for
speeches and appeals. Gifts were exchanged to remind participants, and in particular the
Iroquois and French, of Wendat expectation for the future. The removal was not an
abandonment of the French, nor was it to be an inevitable assimilation into Iroquois
society. Wendats believed this relocation was a geopolitical move that would benefit the
Wendat community as a whole, stopping Iroquois hostilities and appeasing French
desires for peace.

\textbf{Gandougare}

In 1651, approximately 900 to 1,200 Wendats joined the Seneca at their village of
Gandougare.\footnote{Brandão, \textit{Your Fyre}, 78; Trigger, \textit{Children of Aetaentsic}, 826.} As the most populous of the Iroquois nations, the Seneca had led the
decisive attacks of 1649 in Wendake and represented the majority of the warriors during
those battles. It is for this reason that they took charge of the first large-scale adoption of
Wendats.⁵⁴ For the most part, the Wendat refugee population at Gandougare comprised of both the Deer and Rock nation, who came from the villages of *Scanonaerat* and *Cantarea* in Wendake. There were, however, additional Wendats from other villages as well.⁵⁵ By 1672, there were at least 200 families, or 2,000 people living there.⁵⁶ Gandougare was unique in that it was made up of three autonomous enclaves of non-Seneca people, although situated within Seneca territory. Despite their common Nadouek heritage, the towns were divided along ethnic lines. The first town was made up of Onnontiogas, the second of Neutrals, and the third of Wendats.⁵⁷ A French presence was not felt until 1669 when the Jesuits established a permanent mission at Gandougare.⁵⁸ The Wendats at Gandougare were both Christians and Traditionalists. When Father Frémin arrived over ten years after the Wendats initial relocation, he found only forty converted Wendat adults within the village.⁵⁹ Over the summer of 1672, thirty-three children and twelve adults were baptized, thus indicating a large faction of non-Christians within the community, but simultaneously a shift towards conversion after the establishment of the mission.⁶⁰

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⁵⁵ *JR* 54: 83.

⁵⁶ Josê Brandao suggests that the calculation of ten people per family was still valid during this period. Brandão, *Your Fyre*, 78; *JR* 56: 69.

⁵⁷ The Onnontiogas may have been a tribe dwelling on the river called Onnondokouie, which is now known as Gananoque, that flowed into the St. Lawrence fifteen miles northeast of what is now Kingston, Ontario. *JR* 54: 305, ftnt ii.

⁵⁸ *JR* 54: 81.

⁵⁹ *JR* 54: 83.

⁶⁰ *JR* 57: 195.
Wendats and Senecas lived in peace at Gandougare. Wendats lived in “Huron style.” For the most part, scholars argue that the Wendats of Gandougare were able to retain their identity and traditional mode of life for the latter half of the century. This interpretation fails to specify what “traditional” meant at the time of relocation, however; in 1649, Wendats already experienced numerous cultural transformations due to epidemics and warfare. Christianity was changing the social dynamics of Wendake. Scanonaerat and Cantarea were both villages that had missions (St. Michel and St. Jean Baptist). So, the Wendats of Gandougare, although not entirely Christian, had nonetheless been exposed to European and Christian teachings during the pre-dispersal period. An examination of the people and actions of those Wendats living within the Seneca village reveals that the Wendats there functioned as an acculturated people; they maintained Wendat customs, while rivaling the Loretans in terms of Christian conduct and piety.

Although the Gandougare Wendats had a reputation as Traditionalists, they were far from anti-Christian. Notwithstanding their continued practice of Wendat customs and particularly their curing rituals, these Wendats simultaneously created a new identity as Native Christians. This was so widespread that the Senecas and other Native groups in the area referred to them as “The Believers” or “The Faithful.” This reputation created a

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61 JR 41: 243.
62 Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 767.
63 The Gandougare Wendats continued to practice curing rituals after relocation; a custom that the People of the Deer were well known for before the dispersal. JR 58: 229.
64 JR 54: 87.
unique position for the Wendats within Iroquois Country, as the Iroquois, Onontiogas and Neutrals were less familiar with Christianity.65

Considering that the Gandougarians had little contact with Jesuits from the time of their removal to 1669, the preservation of Christian teachings was a significant achievement. It indicates there were Christians who deemed it important to keep the faith throughout this period. They continued to pray among themselves, despite criticism from non-Christians, and discussed the teachings of the missionaries from Wendake without the guidance of a priest.66 One of the community’s oldest Christians proved the extent of his memory and devotion to Christianity by reciting all the prayers by heart for those Wendats who would listen, essentially acting as an interim priest.67 The Jesuits were so impressed with this performance once they arrived they asked him to act as an Officer of the Faith and teach the congregation in the Wendat language at Sunday mass.68

With the establishment of the mission, Gandougarian Wendats re-engaged with the European and Christian world. They embraced the opportunity and welcomed the Jesuits in earnest. This friendly policy became more and more popular as the years progressed. Wendat Elders supported the policy, in stark contrast to the circumstances that had earlier prevailed in Wendake. Father Frémin observed that, “Even the old people, who had despised the light of the Gospel while their country was flourishing, now anxiously sought it, and earnestly asked for Baptism.”69

65 JR 54: 85. The Jesuits recorded that the other two towns at Gandougare were not Christian and had very little knowledge of the Faith.
66 JR 54: 87.
67 JR 56: 67.
68 JR 54: 87.
69 JR 44: 25.
The younger generations looked to for guidance and information concerning Catholicism from their Elders. François Tehoronhiongo was one of these Elders. Tehoronhiongo was originally from Ossossane and received his Christian education from Father Simon Le Moyne. During twenty-seven years at Gandougare he continued his prayers on a daily basis, and also conducted prayer sessions specifically geared towards a request to have the Jesuits come among the Seneca. Tehoronhiongo was especially anxious that he might die without receiving the proper sacraments. When he heard the Jesuits had arrived at Gandougare, he welcomed them saying, “At last God has heard my prayer, hear my Confession.” This man was responsible for the conversion and instruction of his wife and children; he also organized meetings of both Christians and non-Christians to discuss Catholicism. These meetings focused mostly on the New Testament—which he was particularly fond of. Through such respected intermediaries, Wendats continued to engage with Christianity on a frequent basis.

Rather than dividing the society as it had before 1650, Christianity in these new settings fostered a sense of community and culture unique to the Gandougarian Wendats. Tehoronhiongo’s children grew up hearing about the Bible, and they in turn passed on that knowledge to their friends. It was common practice for Wendat Christian youth to encourage their friends to attend sermons and visit the Jesuits. Many children gave in to this peer-pressure, which led to their non-Christian parents attending as well. The result of this tactic was an increase in conversions among the Wendats, including both old and young portions of the population.

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70 JR 57: 193.
71 JR 54: 89.
72 JR 54: 91.
73 JR 54: 89.
74 JR 54: 87.
Certain events also encouraged Wendats to convert. In 1672, for instance, a prominent Christian Elder received notice that his only son had been killed in battle. The Elder was devastated, but kept no secret he found solace in prayer and justified the death as God’s will. Days later, new information came that his son had survived his wounds and was being carried back to the village by his comrades. The entire village went to the Elder’s house to see for themselves. After this incident, many villagers saw the Elder and his family as an example of the power of the Christian faith, as well as models of loyalty and virtue for the community.\textsuperscript{75}

Christianity offered psychic comfort and coping mechanisms for Gandougarian Wendats still traumatized by the events of the previous decades. Many Wendat families had lost loved ones from the wars and famine and many of the deceased were baptized. Prayer brought hope to those who survived in that they might rejoin their family members. This was most certainly the case with \textit{Tehoronhiongo}, as most of his family had died Christians. When he was asked how he was able to deal with these losses he replied:

\begin{quote}
Why should I mourn them? My mother died immediately after Baptism, Almost all my nearest kin expired in the arms of the Fathers who had made them Christians; they are all happy in Paradise, and I hope soon to go and find them.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

His only living child was currently at war, but if the son died, \textit{Tehoronhiongo} would be fine because the priest gave his warrior-son confession before he left.\textsuperscript{77}

The Christian nature of Gandougarians evolved from the informal teachings of Elders to the systematic adoption of Christian customs throughout the village. After the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} JR 56: 69.
\item \textsuperscript{76} JR 54: 91.
\item \textsuperscript{77} JR 54: 93.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
missionaries arrived, Wendats frequently attended mass and requested meetings with the Jesuits. They also adopted Christian marriage customs. This included refraining from pre-marital sex and an aversion to divorce, and guarding young girls more closely, since their Christian virtue became a major priority to ensure successful marriages. This last innovation is more significant in light of the fact that Wendat unions were between two Natives. Unlike Christian marriages in the west and east that involved Wendat women and French men, Natives entered Christian marriages at Gandougare by choice, not out of a need to appease a French spouse.

The community at Gandougare was perceived as just as pious as their Wendat kin on Île Orléans. This was a new development as far as Wendat customs were concerned. The Wendat relocation to Seneca Country predates the Wendat removal east and the policy of Christian conformity at Lorette. Thus, Christianity was a key factor shaping Wendat dispersal strategies from the very beginning, whether west, east, or among the Iroquois. Beginning in Wendake, Wendat Gandougarians retained Christian traditions as well as Wendat ones throughout their relocation. This allowed them to maintain their group identity and differentiate themselves from their Seneca hosts and other Nadouek refugees in the area.

**Caughnawaga**

Because segregated Wendat villages like Gandougare were not typical features among the other Iroquois nations, Christianity continued to play a role in the ability for Wendats to avoid immediate assimilation in more integrated communities. Jesuits

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78 *JR* 54: 87.
79 *JR* 56: 69.
80 *JR* 44: 25.
considered the predominantly Mohawk village of Caughnawaga a place where “the faith was embraced with more constancy, and there Christian courage manifests itself more strikingly, than in any other place.” They viewed it as the “first and Principal mission” among the Mohawks. This reputation arose from the community’s overt support for Christian teachings, a reality shaped by missionaries and a Wendat refugee population.

Caughnawaga, originally called Kentaké, began as a mixed community of Iroquois and French settlers near Montreal. The amicable relations between these groups and its close proximity to Montreal created a strategic center for trade as well as a buffer zone between the French population and Iroquoia. By 1667, the Native population had diversified with only one-third Iroquois, and the remaining two-thirds Wendat and Algonquin refugees. Out of these numbers, about 240 to 320 people were Wendats. In 1673, the Iroquois leader Kryn led approximately 200 Mohawks to the village, which gave the community an overtly Mohawk identity from that point forward. Soon after Kryn’s immigration, Father Jacques Frémin became frustrated with the lack of conversions despite the mingling of Native and non-Native populations and in 1676 he persuaded the Native population to segregate themselves and relocate a few miles west.

Within the Wendat population, there were many who had received baptism before their dispersal and remembered the teachings of Brébeuf and other missionaries who resided in Wendake. This contingent received the first Jesuits at Caughnawaga. The

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81 JR 57: 89.
82 JR 57: 89.
83 JR 51: 189.
84 Brandão, Your Fyre, 78.
85 Greer, Mohawk Saint, 96.
86 Greer, Mohawk Saint, 97; Edward James Devine, Historic Caughnawaga (Montreal: Messenger Press, 1922), 22.
87 JR 51: 193.
missionaries sought out Wendats, requesting an opportunity to meet with them in private and separate from the other villagers. Almost immediately, Wendats congregated in a longhouse and were subjected to a lengthy appeal from the Jesuits to help them spread Christianity to their Mohawk hosts.\textsuperscript{89} It is unclear how the Wendats responded, but if the Christian character of the village that developed in the following years is any indication, it seems the Wendats took up the task.

The conversion process of a twenty-five year old Iroquois woman demonstrates the extent of Wendat influence on the community and their pivotal role as evangelists. During one of the Jesuits visits, this woman asked if she could stay and listen to the teachings normally reserved for the Christian Wendats. The group welcomed her and after subsequent visits she expressed a desire for baptism. The Jesuits, however, planned to travel to another village and left before any such act could be accomplished.\textsuperscript{90} After two weeks past, the woman visited the missionaries at a neighboring village and requested baptism again. The Jesuits remained unconvinced she received all the required teachings, but the woman explained that a Wendat woman had educated her about Christianity. She then recited the prayers and principal rites she had learned.\textsuperscript{91} Still skeptical, the Jesuits returned to Caughnawaga and approached the Wendat community and in particular the woman who had taught the Iroquois. They questioned the ability of the young Iroquois woman and her Christian conduct while the Jesuits had been away. Wendats assured the missionaries that not only had the Iroquois woman practiced her

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{88} JR 51: 193. \\
\textsuperscript{89} JR 51: 193. \\
\textsuperscript{90} JR 51: 193-195. \\
\textsuperscript{91} JR 51: 195.
\end{flushright}
daily prayers both day and night, but had also articulated her devotion to others within the community on a prolific basis. Convinced, the Jesuits baptized the woman.

It is likely that this was not an isolated case, but rather an indication of a patterned process that began in earnest with the establishment of a mission in the area. Much like those at Gandougare, Wendats at Caughnawaga preserved Christianity in the years before the Jesuits arrived. In the end, it seems the strategy proved beneficial because they assumed the role of Christian educators and leaders within the village. Wendats from Lorette heard of their kin’s success and sent a wampum belt acknowledging the importance of the community to the spread of Christianity. Their message encouraged Caughnawagians to continue to embrace Catholicism.

Loretans and Jesuits viewed Caughnawaga as the example of missionary successes in Iroquoia, yet its Christian character was but a means to an end for the Iroquois themselves. The Christian character of the town also assuaged (or at least a counterbalance to) the concerns of French civilians who feared the close settlement of potentially aggressive Native populations. Certainly, the Mohawks and other Natives who came to Caughnawaga did so for complex reasons beyond access to Christian teaching. Missions allowed the Iroquois to gain access to the French and their trade networks. Caughnawaga furthered this strategy because of its proximity to Montreal, acting as a liaison between the French and the English at Albany. Allan Greer views this as a “peaceful response to colonization,” implying friendship, while at the same time staking a

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92 JR 51: 197.
93 JR 51: 197.
94 Devine, Historic Caughnawaga, 42, fn2. The belt is still in the possession of the present-day Kahnawake community.
rival claim to the St. Lawrence trade. Parmenter concurs, stating mission towns, such as Caughnawaga, were about spatial power rather than religious refuge. This gave Caughnawagians a quasi-autonomous status in the colonial balance of power, argues Gerald Alfred, a Mohawk from present-day Kahnawake. According to Alfred, “they were compelled to develop a fiercely independent ideology because of their precarious position on the geographic and cultural margin of both their traditional culture group and Euro-American society.” Despite Caughnawaga’s isolation from their homeland and seemingly autonomous nature, non-mission Iroquois viewed it as integral to the Confederacy. They saw it as a “listening post” for news, goods, and people. As a result, Caughnawaga gained a powerfully unique position among Natives and non-Natives alike. In 1701, for instance, notwithstanding imperial policies that forbade trade between French and English colonies, a secret agreement (The Schuyler-Callieres Agreement) was signed allowing the safe passage of Caughnawagians between New York and Canada.

A key factor to the success of this community was their Christian character. Although rooted in Iroquois desires to expand their geo-political and economic influence, as well as Jesuit hopes for Iroquois conversions, neither of these goals would have been possible without the relocation of Christian Wendats to Caughnawaga.

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95 Greer, Mohawk Saint, 90.
96 Parmenter, Edge of the Woods, 142.
97 Gerald Alfred, Heeding the Voices of our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25, 44.
98 Parmenter, Edge of the Woods, 154; Greer, Mohawk Saint, 99.
99 Alfred, Heeding the Voices, 46.
Ganowarohare

Not all Wendats were incorporated into villages that endorsed Christianity to the extent of Gandougare and Caughnawaga. For many Iroquois, conversion incited cultural corrosion and a European conquest of their lifestyle. Indeed, resistance to baptism had been a consistent strategy for most Iroquois in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{100} Despite these overt rejections of the Christian practices, Christianity continued to play a role in Wendat attempts to preserve their autonomy. The Oneida village of Ganowarhore provides an example. Comprised of both Wendats and Iroquois, villagers at Ganowarhore shared residences and for all intents and purposes acted as one collective community. One of the ways that Ganowarharians became more interrelated was through marriage, resulting in a significant number of children who identified as both Oneida and Wendat.\textsuperscript{101}

Although Jesuits at the mission of St. Francis Xavier had been present since 1667, Wendats and Oneidas hesitated to adopt Christian practices in their entirety. Whereas at Gandougare there were up to forty-five baptisms per month and Christian conduct was coveted, Ganowarhore baptisms averaged fifteen per month and these did not necessarily lead to a pious life.\textsuperscript{102} Father Bruyas complained, for instance, that out of all the adults he baptized not one of them entered into a Christian marriage.\textsuperscript{103} Ganowaroharians also refused to adhere to Christian rules concerning pre-marital sex and divorce. They did not confirm their unions through a Christian ceremony, but continued their Nadouekian

\textsuperscript{100} Réné Cuillerier, “Nation Iroquoise,” Bibliothèque Mazarin (Paris), Cote: MS 1964, Fonds General, (c.1700), 3-4.
\textsuperscript{101} JR 51: 133.
\textsuperscript{102} JR 57: 195; 51: 133. Father Jacques Bruyas recorded sixty baptisms in four months at Ganowarhore.
\textsuperscript{103} JR 51: 133.
customs instead.\textsuperscript{104} Although Bruyas mentioned the existence of polygamy (and his abhorrence for it) it is unlikely this was what he witnessed. Rather, both Wendats and Oneidas came from a Nadouek tradition that encouraged young people to explore various relationships before dedicating themselves to one person. After children were born, however, most parents entered into a monogamous relationship for life.\textsuperscript{105}

Ganowaroharians also struggled with alcoholism within their community. In contrast to the extreme rejection of alcohol consumption at Lorette, these villagers indulged in bouts of drunkenness that resulted in numerous violent acts. To the Jesuits disapproval, their fellow citizens treated neither action as a severe offence.\textsuperscript{106} In some cases conflicts led to murder, which could have led to devastating blood feuds, but these transgressions were eventually forgiven. One Ganowarohariian justified this policy after murdering a fellow neighbor by saying “What wouldst thou have me do? I had no sense, I was Drunk.”\textsuperscript{107}

The Jesuits saw the lack of Christian marriages and frequent intoxication as the foremost impediments to full conversions within the community. Indeed, these factors indicated a resistance to adopting French customs in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Yet, there was a small contingent of Wendats, and perhaps their offspring, who continued to identify as Christians throughout this period. Jesuits made mention of the conversion of Wendat children whose parents had been baptized in pre-dispersal

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{JR} 51: 129.
\textsuperscript{105} Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 49.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{JR} 51: 127.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{JR} 51: 127.
Wendake. In addition, the practice of intermarriage between Wendats and Oneidas may have converted more Ganowaroharians than the records indicate.

It makes sense that Wendats continued to use these conversions as a means to create unique relationships with the French and remind them of their continued loyalty, differentiating themselves from the Iroquois. At the same time, they needed to appease their hosts and did so by maintaining Nadouek traditions of marriage and ignoring Jesuit requests for abstinence and sobriety. This tactic ensured both autonomy and amity at Ganowarhare.

**Foreign Relations**

The Wendat removal to Iroquois Country not only changed Wendat lives, but the politics of the region and in the process Wendats re-cast themselves as middlemen, becoming essential to French-Iroquois relations. As Christians, Wendats fostered close ties with the Jesuits and the French colonial administration. Both Iroquois and missionaries took advantage of this. Before the Wendats moved to Iroquois Country, the French were as unwilling as Wendats to send people to engage with the Iroquois in Iroquoia. Yet, the French needed envoys to the Iroquois for effective diplomacy. Governor Lauzon commented on the irony of the French position in the 1650: “it was necessary to perish in order to not perish; and to expose oneself to dangers of all kinds, in order to avoid all dangers.” This anxiety eased to some extent when Wendats relocated to the Iroquoia. Jesuits found comfort and security among the Wendats, especially in communities disinclined to welcome the French. In one instance a missionary explained

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108 JR 51: 135.
his personal experience as he ventured to Iroquois Country saying, “except for our good Christian Hurons, who were my only refuge, I met with nothing but a cold reception everywhere.” This explains the missionaries’ actions at Caughnawaga, and their immediate need to convene with Wendats when they arrived. Wendats were seen as allies and could help in smoothing out potential conflicts that might arise from the initial presence of French men within these communities.

Wendats also influenced their hosts. Iroquois communities encountered Christian teachings through their Wendat adoptees, which set the stage for further Wendat leadership roles when missions were established later on. Iroquois conversions were thus a result of combined efforts by the Wendats and Jesuits to persuade the Iroquois towards baptism. In essence, the French privileged the Christian Wendats and depended on them to further their initiatives in Iroquois Country.

French favoritism towards the Wendats did not go unnoticed by the Iroquois hosts. This was one of the main reasons the Iroquois began to convert in the first place. In the negotiations for removal the Iroquois presented a wampum belt to the French explaining they wished the Jesuits to join the Wendats in Iroquois Country and “build a new Sainte Marie [mission], like that whose prosperity [they] formerly witnessed in the heart of the Huron country.” Well aware of the advantage the Wendats possessed, their invitation to the Jesuits was a way to even the playing field in terms of French relations. Still, the Wendats’ reputation was not easily usurped. Réné Cuillerier, a French captive among the Iroquois, said “out of all the nations we [the French] have in this country, it is

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{ JR 44: 71.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{ JR 42: 53.}\]
the huron who continue to surpass in spirit.”\textsuperscript{112} At Gandougare, Senecas complained to the Jesuits that they “[preferred] the hurons to Them.”\textsuperscript{113} This led to a persistent campaign on the part of the Seneca to get the Jesuits to write to their superior for additional missionaries, a strategy employed to prove themselves just as devout Christians as the Wendats.\textsuperscript{114}

Wendat relocations brought communication between the French and Iroquois to a new level, and helped foster peace initiatives between both groups. When the Iroquois approached the French in 1653 to discuss a truce, contemporaries viewed the proposal as a Seneca invention. Significantly, this shift in Seneca policy came after the Wendats of Gandougare established themselves among the Seneca for two years.\textsuperscript{115} It is not beyond reason to speculate that the Wendats played a role in this endeavor. As for the French, Seneca demonstrations of amicable Wendat relations would have only strengthened the Seneca appeal to the European allies of the Wendats during this time. Thus, the migration of hundreds of Wendats to Iroquois Country had a fundamental impact on international relations, shaping not only Wendat foreign affairs, but also Iroquois-French interaction.

\textbf{Conclusion}

For many Wendats, removal to Iroquois Country proved daunting. For years Wendats and Iroquois developed a tumultuous and violent relationship with a long history of abuse and mistrust. In the wake of the dispersal and compounded by incessant Iroquois persuasion tactics, Wendat reactions varied. Those in the west avoided

\textsuperscript{112} Cuillerier, “La nation Iroquois,” 10. The translation is my own. The original reads: “De toutes les nations que nous avons en ce pays, il n’y a que le huron qui les surpasse pour l’esprit.”
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{JR} 57: 195.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{JR} 57: 195.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{JR} 40: 165.
invitations by moving out of reach of Iroquois expeditions, while Eastern Wendats faced extreme geopolitical pressure and had little choice but to succumb, at least partially, to Iroquois demands. Still, they managed to shape their relocation in ways that preserved important elements of their culture. Aware of their precarious state, Wendats created a secure and autonomous experience. The French were a major component to this strategy, and so Wendat strategy often involved a shift towards Christian conversion.

The majority of Wendats in Iroquois Country were not necessarily Christian when they arrived, but developed their Christian practices in the aftermath of relocation. Converted Wendats evoked their pre-dispersal knowledge of the Catholic faith on their own initiative, hoping that the French would recognize their devotion and take particular interest in them. Moreover, by adopting a Christian character, either overtly such as at Gandougare and Caughnawaga, or less obviously such as at Ganowarohare, Wendats differentiated themselves as a unique portion of the Iroquois population.

This situation was similar to the experiences at Michilimackinac and Lorette. Wendat communities consistently retained both traditional Wendat customs, while recognizing the advantages of cultural compromise and conformity in terms of Christian conversion and French alliance making. Christianity was a diplomatic power source for these Wendats as well as a coping mechanism to help them overcome the obstacles resulting from their dispersal.

A Wendat Elder explained the nuanced perspective of Christian Wendat survivors. At ninety years old, this eastern leader had significant perspective on the circumstances at hand. He was in his fifties when the epidemics swept through Wendake, perhaps even observing the deaths of Taretande and Aenon. A decade later, he witnessed
to the emergence of war chiefs in civil affairs and an increase in Iroquois attacks. By the
time of the dispersal he was seventy years old and a potential impediment to effective
migrations stretching from Wendake, to Gahoendoe, and beyond Algonquian villages to
the east. Despite these obstacles, he managed to survive and witnessed the complex
negotiations of Wendats to Iroquois Country at Quebec. Certainly there would have been
moments of doubt for him. Yet, upon reflection he viewed the Wendat evacuation from
the homeland as a success. This, in his opinion, was due in large part to his Christian faith
and the Wendats’ continued inclination towards conversion. He saw Jesus as a protector,
who gave strength to all the Wendats, even to those who lived among the former
enemy.\footnote{JR 55: 275.} For this Elder, relocation was essential to the survival of the Wendats.

At an Easter celebration in 1672, convinced of the Wendats’ bright future, he
made a public speech, “Courage, little remnant of the Huron Nation! Your stock is not
yet withered; it will send forth fresh branches; Jesus, risen again, Will make it revive and
bloom anew.”\footnote{JR 55: 275.} He continued:

Yes, Jesus Will restore it and render it more populous than ever, provided
we are always faithful to him and to the blessed Virgin, and are firm in the
resolution that we have adopted never to give any entrance to sin into this
village, - least of all, to impurity and intemperance, the vices that are
likely to destroy the charity and unity existing among us.\footnote{JR 55: 275.}
There was hope for the Wendat people. Despite numerous relocations, the danger of living among an enemy, the chance of assimilation, and the ambiguity of the future, Wendats did not give up as they continued to employ simultaneous strategies of cultural renewal and preservation throughout the post-dispersal period.
CHAPTER 9
LEADERSHIP: COMMUNITY MEMORY AND CULTURAL LEGACY

Introduction

In his 1918 publication *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains*, Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa) declared:

> Every age, every race, has its leaders and heroes. There were over sixty distinct tribes of Indians on this continent, each of which boasted its notable men. The names and deeds of some of these men will live in American history, yet in the true sense they are unknown, because misunderstood.¹

Wendat history in the seventeenth century bears Eastman’s assertion. Individuals such as *Aenon* and *Taretande* and their successors shaped the Wendat world in important ways during this time of social and political uncertainty. Their policies of pro- and anti-Jesuit sentiment rippled throughout the community creating divisions, conflicts, as well as alliances. Their deaths, along with many other civil leaders, created new positions of leadership as war chiefs took on alternative roles in the wake of the epidemics.

The dispersal, with its various migrations and resettlement strategies, re-organized the Wendat world again. Vast changes in geography, demography and community took place; yet, the nature of Wendat leadership remained relatively intact. For the most part, roles and responsibilities remained the same, with some exceptions such as the Officer of the Faith. Leaders were typically men (although women played an important advisory

role) and in the post-dispersal period most headmen became Christian converts.² Despite
the assertion that leaders during this period began to act on their own, irrespective of
community desires, the examples in this chapter demonstrate Wendat leaders relied on
collective decision-making, and continued to be accountable to councils and the Wendat
community at large.³

To speak of specific Wendat leaders in the latter half of the seventeenth century is
to point to only a handful of men. Individual stories are almost as rare as in the pre-
dispersal period, making the few references we do have important pieces in
reconstructing the experiences and events of the dispersal and relocation. An on-line
search for Wendat chiefs in The Canadian Dictionary of Biography database highlights
five names for the period 1650-1701. These include the Eastern headmen Pierre Atirontha,
Etienne Annaotaha and Louis Taondchoren, and the Western headmen Kondiaronk, and
Michipichy.⁴ Gilles Havard’s study on the Great Peace of 1701 gives similar biographical
information on Western Wendats involved in the 1701 treaty negotiations in his

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² This is based on the information given in the sources gathered predominantly by French
Catholic men. There may have been leaders who were Traditionalists, but if there were they do
not surface in the records.
³ Bruce Trigger, Children of Aataentsic: A History of The Huron People to 1660 (Montreal:
http://www.biographi.ca/009004119.01e.php?id_nbr=31&interval=2548&PHPSESSID=el04v0
hrpng0r22211ou0t1fd1; Elsie McLeod Jury, “Etienne Annoataha,” DCB vol. I
http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-
e.php?id_nbr=24&interval=2048&PHPSESSID=el04v0hrpng0r22211ou0t1fd1; Andrés Vachon,
“Louis Taondechoren,” vol. I,
http://www.biographi.ca/009004119.01e.php?id_nbr=279&interval=2048&PHPSESSID=el04v
0hrpng0r22211ou0t1fd1; William Fenton, “Kondioronk,” CDB vol. II,
http://www.biographi.ca/009004119.01e.php?id_nbr=874&interval=2048&PHPSESSID=el04v
0hrpng0r22211ou0t1fd1; Harry Kelsie, “Michipichy,” CDB, vol. III,
http://www.biographi.ca/009004119.01e.php?id_nbr=1532&interval=2048&PHPSESSID=el04
v0hrpng0r22211ou0t1fd1 [accessed on-line: 2 January 2011].
appendix; he mentions Kondiaronk and Michipichy, as well as Le Baron. In-depth biographical depictions remain rare, as most of these individuals are highlighted through abstract glimpses in larger discussions of seventeenth century North American geopolitics. This chapter contributes to the work on Wendat historical biographies in the post-dispersal period by beginning with an overview of both the leaders we know (that are represented in literature) and leaders who have remained hidden in the sources to date. It traces these individuals, as well as other leaders, within the context of their communities and the diaspora. The dispersal did not affect the nature of Wendat leadership and leaders continued to have significant influence on Wendat communities for generations.

Western Leaders

Wendat leaders from Michilimackinac have received the most attention by scholars and in many respects are some of the most well-known Wendats of the seventeenth century. This is due in large part to their high profile visibility during the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. It was these men (all Christian converts) who crafted

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the treaty, leaving notable traces of their actions and personalities in colonial records of the negotiations, totems on the treaty itself and memoirs of those who attended.

*Kondioronk* (Gasper Soiaga, Souoias, Sastaretsi), also called “le Rat” by the French, was born during the initial years of the dispersal in Wendake and was roughly fifty years old at the time of the 1701 treaty negotiations. By 1682, *Kondioronk* acted as a leader for the Western Wendats and gained the title of “Sastaretsi,” a hereditary name associated with prominent leadership. Throughout his life he maintained friendly personal relationships with French leaders such as Governor Louis de Buade de Frontenac and his replacement Jacques-René Brisay de Denonville, meeting with both men on several occasions.7 Contemporaries widely acknowledged his reputation as a stealthy diplomat. Father Charlevoix remarked, “He was naturally eloquent . . . Nobody could ever have more influence than he . . .”8 La Potherie also called attention to *Kondioronk* declaring, “He had the sentiments of a beautiful soul, and was a savage only in name.”9 *Kondioronk*’s initiatives during the late seventeenth century focused on maintaining Wendats’ status as middlemen among the geopolitical domain of the upper great lakes and the St. Lawrence. He expressed constant paranoia over being left out of Iroquois-French peace talks. *Kondioronk* died in the final days of the Peace negotiations

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on 2 August, 1701. It is unclear whether any family members survived him, although he had at least one son who died in 1696.\(^\text{10}\)

The Wendat leader *Le Baron* was a contemporary of *Kondieronk*’s and at times was also called “Sasteretsi.”\(^\text{11}\) Aside from the hereditary name, *Le Baron* and *Kondieronk* shared similar relationships with the French governors and conducted diplomatic campaigns on behalf of the Wendats of Michilimackinac.\(^\text{12}\) *Le Baron* had a reputation as a controversial figure; *Grosse-Tête*, the Algonquin (Ottawa) headman, often questioned this Wendat leader’s integrity. At one meeting, *Grosse-Tête* publicly declared, “*Le Baron* makes things up . . . he is an artificial man who you cannot read his true feelings.”\(^\text{13}\) Several failed initiatives to create a separate alliance with the Iroquois attest to *Le Baron*’s tricky personality. Because of this, the French viewed him as a “dangerous person.”\(^\text{14}\)

*Michipichy*, also called *Quarante Sols* by the French, was a key player within Western Wendat foreign policy in the late seventeenth century.\(^\text{15}\) It is believed he was


\(^\text{11}\) La Potherie calls *Le Baron* “Sastharhesti” but it is unclear whether this was a misunderstanding (Potherie also explains that this is the name used to describe the Wendats of Michilimackinac) or if *Le Baron* also used this name. de la Potherie, *Histoire*, III: 233.

\(^\text{12}\) “Relation par Charles de Monseignat” (November 1690) ANOM, C11A 11/fol.5040; “Relation de ce qui s’est passé de plus remarquable au Canada” (1697) ANOM, C11A 15/fol3-21.

\(^\text{13}\) The translation is my own. de la Potherie, *Histoire*, IV: 24-25.

\(^\text{14}\) de Charlevoix, *Histoire*, II: 156.

\(^\text{15}\) The French fort at St. Joseph River was built in 1691. *Le Baron*, along with a group of Wendats relocated to this area in the 1690s. They were comprised of Western Wendats and *Michipichy* would have spent most of his life among the Wendats of Michilimackinac. Indeed, *Michipichy* told the French that the Wendats of Michilimackinac, and those of St. Joseph were “one body.” de la Potherie, *Histoire* 4: 213. For information on Fort St. Joseph see Joseph L. Peyser and José António Brandão, *Edge of Empire: Documents of Michilimackinac, 1671-1716* (East Lansing: University of Michigan Press, 2008), xxvii.
originally an Iroquois captured by the Wendats and rose to the rank of headman.\textsuperscript{16} This assertion is ambiguous, however, especially in light of his fairly persistent stance that the Iroquois should not be trusted. For this reason he initially warned \textit{Kondioronk} to stop Iroquois peace talks, but in the end he supported the initiative and was one of the signatories in 1701.

This group of charismatic Western Wendats leaders went to great lengths (and distances) to meet the needs of their people. Their policies changed and developed over time. In some instances they concluded agreements in favor of the French, in other times they neglected the French and privileged the Iroquois. It is a misconception that any one of these leaders as consistently pro- or anti- Iroquois or French. Dichotomies such as this distort our understanding of the alliance making process during this period. Although Wendats tended to favor the old coalitions of the Algonquian and French, they were open to talks with any group who might secure and strengthen their position within Great Lakes geopolitics and economic systems. If anything, \textit{Kondioronk, Le Baron} and \textit{Michipichy} were in favor of promoting the best policy for the Wendats and in particular those of the West.

\textbf{Eastern Leaders}

Historians have given less attention to the Eastern Wendat leaders of the post-dispersal period. This obscurity is not due to a lack of information on them, however, as the \textit{Jesuit Relations} are replete with character sketches; more likely, Loretans and their leaders did not take on highly publicized roles at the Great Peace of 1701 and thus have been eclipsed by \textit{Le Baron, Michipichy} and especially \textit{Kondioronk} in the historiography.  

This is not to say that the East lacked in leadership. To be sure, important figures guided the Eastern community through passionate religious conviction and Christian value systems.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Atsena, or Le Plat}, was the leader of the Bear nation who had sacrificed himself to the Iroquois as a test case before other Eastern Wendats moved to Iroquois Country in the mid-1650s.\textsuperscript{18} He was a powerful man within his community, a quality exemplified by his loud and eloquent speeches. He was well liked by his people and upon his departure several other headmen made long address and presents to the Iroquois to demonstrate how much \textit{Atsena} would be missed. Even the Jesuits expressed fondness for \textit{Atsena}; Father Le Moyne made the following farewell address, “My brother, my heart is sad at seeing thee depart… As for thee, take courage; thou shalt see me at every stage of thy journey, in every place where thy cabin will be erected, at every spot where thou wilt disembark.”\textsuperscript{19} Le Moyne is referred to the proliferation of the Catholic faith in Iroquoia and the strength that \textit{Atsena} might draw from it upon his journey there. This is the last time \textit{Atsena} is mentioned in the records, as his fate after his departure remains unknown.

\textit{Ignace Saouenhohi} (Tsaouendhohouii), called \textit{The Vulture} by the Jesuits, was considered to be one of the “foremost [headmen] in the [Wendat] colony,” as well as a

\textsuperscript{17} This section does not include information of the aforementioned eastern leaders \textit{Etienne Annaotaha} and \textit{Louis Taondehoren}. This does not mean that they were not important Wendat headmen, but the information we have on them is relegated almost entirely to their involvement in a military expedition against the Iroquois at Long Sault, giving few details on their influence on the Wendat community at large. For more information on them see: Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., \textit{The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1600-1791} (Cleveland: Burrows 1896-1901) [JR] Volume 19: 148–50; 20: 210–12; 22: 236; 25: 266–68, 276, 300; 28: 134, 148, 150, 196–98; 30: 78, 306; André Vachon, “L’affaire du Long-Sault: valeur de la source huronne,” \textit{RUL}, XVIII (1963–64), 495–515.

\textsuperscript{18} JR 43: 191.

\textsuperscript{19} JR 43: 195.
man of “fine qualities” committed to his people, his faith and the French. He was also
critical to the success of Wendat removal out east. When the Wendats relocated to Île
Orlèans, for instance, Saouenhohi redistributed the land given to him personally by the
local French to all the widows and poor people of the community. Similarly, when he
went hunting he shared hides and meat with Wendats and French, who were
undernourished and struggling. On many occasions Saouenhohi acted as a mediator for
community disputes, a role that he consistently received praise for. Actions such as
these that allowed him to become a Loretan headman, a tenure that he held for three
years. Among his other contributions, he strongly influenced Iroquois conversions; he
made many speeches in councils with the Iroquois, encouraging them to accept
Christianity, and the French credited him with several conversions of Iroquois headmen
who testified that Saouenhohi inspired them. Ignace Saouenhohi died on 21 February
1669, two decades after the initial dispersal from Wendake. His wife and two children—a
twelve-year-old daughter and three year old son, survived him. The funeral took place
in Quebec City at the Bishop’s personal request. The ceremony began with a funeral
procession from Lorette, accompanied by all members of the Wendat community as well
as many French inhabitants. His body was also buried at Quebec.

Wendats considered the war chief Thaovenhosen a “model of Christian integrity.”
In the Jesuits’ eyes “his mind [was] broad and elevated, [conceiving] nothing base,
nothing unworthy of an honest and wise man… To the French as well as to the [Natives],

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21JR 53: 121-123.
22JR 53: 115.
23JR 53: 115.
24JR 53: 103.
25JR 53: 111.
he [was] an incentive to live well and fight well."\textsuperscript{26} One of his most notable achievements was his position as the head of the Loretta bodyguard for the governor. In this role he had many military victories, including several over the English.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, he led an overt campaign against the customary "mourning wars," arguing that the vengeful taking and torture of captives violated Christian principles. In one case, he chastised a council deliberating on the fate of a prisoner. He reminded the councilors, "to remember that they are Christians and citizens of the village of Lorette; that dire cruelty is unbecoming to the Christian name; that this injury cannot be branded upon the reputation of the Loretans without the greatest disgrace."\textsuperscript{28} They acceded to his request. Thus, \textit{Thaovenhosen}, because of his reputation as a successful war chief, paved the way for shifts in Wendat customs, while also saving a life.

Other leaders were able to push similar agendas inspired by the Catholic faith. \textit{Pierre Atiron}ta spent six years as a Wendat headman after his escape from the Iroquois in 1666.\textsuperscript{29} He was a devoted Christian before his capture, but became even more dedicated after his return to the Wendats. As a result he was admitted to the Holy Family,\textsuperscript{30} which gave him a public platform to promote several of his outstanding goals for the community. \textit{Atiron}ta supported peace with the Iroquois (despite his years in captivity) and led community opposition to alcohol consumption and sales. In 1672, \textit{Atiron}ta

\textsuperscript{26} JR 66: 167.
\textsuperscript{27} JR 66: 161-163.
\textsuperscript{28} JR 66: 169.
\textsuperscript{29} JR 57: 37-43.
\textsuperscript{30} The Holy Family was a Jesuit created confraternity that was established in 1653. It was selective in its members, and included both Wendat men and women. See: Nicholas Griffiths and Fernando Cervantes, eds., \textit{Spiritual Encounters: Interactions between Christianity and Native Religion in Colonial America} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 75.
became ill and despite the care of doctors at the French hospital, he died on 16 December.
At least one niece survived him.31

Jacques Onnhataionk made similar headway in terms of anti-alcohol campaigns and Christian conversion. He originally volunteered himself as an aide to Father Le Moyne in Mohawk Country, and with his family (which numbered at least ten) traveled there with the hopes of spreading the Christian faith to the Iroquois. To his dismay, the task was not an easy one and after a brief stay, he returned to Notre-Dame-De-Foy and the Wendats. Upon his return and his re-instatement as headman, Onnhataionk preached daily about the evils of alcohol. In fact, the Jesuits attributed the high level of temperance in Wendat society almost completely to Onnhataionk’s persuasion. A young man who agreed to abjure drinking explained “[w]ould I pay so little heed to the words of my captain, who so often dissuades us from sin, as to allow myself to fall into it in future?”32 Even more significant, the same speech persuaded an entire group of several Wendat hunters to abstain from drink after hearing Onnhataionk’s speech.33 Through these demonstrations of influence in spiritual affairs, Jacques Onnhataionk reclaimed his reputation as an effective leader who achieved his goals and those of his community.

These brief details highlight the achievements of Eastern Wendat leaders. Although they did not participate in the Great Peace of 1701 or gain the fame of their Western Wendat brothers, their influence on the local Eastern Wendat community had significant and long lasting effects. In the end, the widespread use of Christianity by leaders allowed them to foster strength in times of fear and alter old traditions such as the mourning war and new problems such as alcoholism.

31 JR 57: 43-45.
32 JR 57: 67.
33 JR 57: 67.
**Iroquoised**34 Wendats

Not all Wendat leaders lived among the Wendats. In some cases captive Wendats took on leadership positions within Iroquois Country, due in large part to their Wendat identity. The Wendat language was still the primary lingua franca in the post-dispersal period and the Iroquois engaged in numerous diplomatic ventures with the Wendat diaspora and their allies. Having a Wendat spokesperson further increased the Iroquois’ diplomatic effectiveness because Wendat leaders brought other skills, including familiarity with the French and Algonquian people as well as their Wendat kin. Wendats and their allies trusted Iroquoised Wendat leaders more than other Iroquois leaders, and expected them to conduct agreements that would not only appease the Iroquois, but also the favor of their Wendat kin.

Treaty negotiations between the Iroquois and Wendats in 1656 illustrated this type of leadership. The Iroquois presented gifts to the Wendats at the end of deliberations and an Iroquois headman made a final speech. A Wendat, who became a headman in the aftermath of this capture by the Iroquois, delivered a wampum belt. As he approached the Wendats, he explained that the belt was a personal gift from *him* to his Wendat kin. In brief it was a seal of *his* pledge and “to assure them that they were not deceived” by the Iroquois.35 Yet, this “personalized” gift was to some extent a collective present, since his Iroquois community elected him to his position and his role within the negotiations. The individualized presentation can be seen as an Iroquois tactic; it was public, yet intimate at

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34 JR 45: 109. The Jesuits use this term to describe captive Wendats who became incorporated into Iroquois society.
the same time a sidebar exchange where the former Wendat used his identity and kin connections to quell any uncertainty about Iroquois intentions. The Iroquoised Wendat acknowledged this reality in his speech, “My brothers,” he said

I have not changed my soul, despite my change of country; nor has my blood become Iroquois, although I dwell among them. My heart is all Huron, as well as my tongue. I would keep silent, were there any deceit in these negotiations for Peace, thus I am talking to you. The proposal is honest, embrace it without distrust.36

Wendats received the exchange with gratitude, while remaining hesitant, and the negotiations concluded on amicable terms. The extent to which this Iroquoised headman played a role in the success of the meeting is unknown, but one can speculate that his presence, the wampum belt and his speech helped smooth the talks. Moments like this would have served to encourage the Iroquois to continue this strategy. After the dispersal, the Iroquois had hundreds of freshly captured Wendats to use to their diplomatic advantage. Similarly, Wendats used their identity as a means to not only survive in Iroquois Country, but re-establish themselves as influential citizens within their new community.

Martyrs

The status of the Iroquoised headman before he came to live among the Iroquois is unknown. Probably he was not an established leader among the Wendats prior to his capture, because the Iroquois preferred to use the torture and death of captive Wendat leaders as a warning for those who chose to resist their attacks. It may have also been a calculated Iroquois strategy to deprive the dispersed Wendats of leadership during this

36 The translation is my own. Quen, Relation, 23.

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period.\textsuperscript{37} In particular, the Iroquois targeted prominent Christian leaders for harsh treatment, suggesting that all parties realized the link between Christianization and Wendat systems of power in exile.

By the mid-1650s the Iroquois had increased the pressure on Wendats to voluntarily relocate to Iroquois Country. A number of notable Wendat resisters met untimely deaths at the hand of their enemy during this period. In 1656, the Iroquois took eleven Wendats captives. Among them were the Eastern Wendat leaders Jacques Oachonk and Joachim Ondakont, and the captors condemned both to death. Each would serve a distinct symbolic purpose because of his status and reputation among the Wendats.

\textit{Oachonk} was a prominent Christian leader within the community, serving as the Prefect, or key administrator, of the Congregation. His dedication to the faith did not waver upon capture; instead, he consoled other Wendats, encouraging to them to maintain their belief in God no matter how difficult the circumstances seemed. Instead of making the customary war cry song, \textit{Oachonk} chose to sing a Christian prayer during his torture. Repeatedly, he chanted, “Do not pity me, do not consider me unfortunate; I shall be happy in heaven. I fear not fires which my blood can extinguish; I fear the fire of hell which never dies out. This life is nothing to me, which my thoughts carry me to Heaven.”\textsuperscript{38} This song was so loud it was heard for over a mile.\textsuperscript{39} In the end, \textit{Joseph}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] Bruce Trigger argues this last point explicitly. Trigger, \textit{Children of Aataentsic}, 837.
\item[38] \textit{JR} 43: 117.
\item[39] \textit{JR} 43: 117. The Jesuits testified that they could hear his song for over half a league, even though they were not present for the actual event.
\end{footnotes}
*Oachonk* met his death with the simple, yet calculated message “Jesus, have pity on me.”

*Joachim Ondakont* was a different kind of Wendat leader. Notwithstanding *Oachonk’s* influence within the Wendat community, out of the eleven captives taken, *Ondakont* was the most prominent leader among them. He had gained this status through his achievements as a respected war chief. His past incursions with Wendat enemies had won him a widespread reputation as a skilled warrior and brave man. It was for these reasons that he made a fitting companion to *Oachonk* in death; indeed, both were brought to the scaffold at the same time. *Ondakont* was burnt up to the waist, his fingers were cut off and his entire body was covered in blood. Seeing there was no end in sight, his comrades calmed him with a chant inspired by his Christian faith, even though *Ondakont* accepted Christianity only half-heartedly before his capture. We know this, because *Ondakont* evaded his death sentence, breaking free from his bonds while his captors slept. He walked for fifteen days until finding his way back home, where he divulged the details of his fortunate escape.

Information about the loss of men like *Oachonk*, as well as the gruesome details of their torture, filtered back to the Wendat community via escaped comrades such as *Ondakont* or purposefully by Iroquois envoys. This Iroquois “message” conveyed the death of Wendat leaders by the hands of the Iroquois as a demonstration the power and strength of the Iroquois, and it made clear that resisters to Iroquois incorporation policy would be executed. Finally, the message expressed that the Iroquois were not Christians, nor did the majority support conversion. As a result, captive Wendat leaders who promoted Christianity would be particularly vulnerable to future Iroquois assaults.

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^40*JR* 43: 119.
Certainly Iroquois strategy affected both Wendat captives as well as the rest of Wendat society. Now that Wendat leaders, more than any other Wendats, were targets for Iroquois capture, leadership roles carried higher risk than in years past, risks that might have deterred some individuals from taking on the task. Mortality threatened the consistency and effectiveness of Wendat foreign policy. Despite the danger, men like Oachonk and Ondakont continued to lead their people, even if it meant death.

**Accountability**

The exigencies of Wendat circumstances during the dispersal called for proactive and innovative leadership. Wendat leaders still remained accountable to their constituency, whether it was their family, village, nation, the East, West or the diaspora at large. Much like the pre-dispersal period, leaders had to give voice to group initiatives, rather than self-interested ventures. Some served a single Wendat nation with remarkable longevity; Atsena, the leader of the Bear nation, maintained his position during the dispersal, migration east and the early years of settlement at Quebec.\(^{41}\) In other cases, leaders represented different groups at different times. Michipichy was the spokesperson for the Wendats of Michilimackinac in 1689, while Le Baron represented the West in 1695.\(^ {42}\) Yet in 1701 Michipichy spoke almost exclusively for the Wendats of St. Joseph River, Le Baron spoke for those at Michilimackinac and Kondiaronk acted on behalf of all the “allied nations.”\(^ {43}\) Wendats shared clear ideas about the responsibility of the leader to represent the group’s will, and the community punished headmen who transgressed

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\(^ {41}\) *JR* 43: 191.


\(^ {43}\) de la Potherie, *Histoire* 4: 201, 213.
this ideal. *Michipichy* delivered a long oration to this effect when a member of a treaty
council misrepresented the desires of his people.\(^{44}\) The headman’s legitimacy depended
on this link between representatives and nation. Put another way, a Wendat leader’s main
role continued to be to deliver messages on behalf of his constituents, expressive the
desires of the group at large. In the summer of 1682, for instance, Western Wendat
headmen arrived at Montreal to speak to the governor on behalf of the their people. They
had the task of resolving the problem of alcoholism among their youth and sharing the
miserable state of their community because of it.\(^{45}\) Similarly, the death sentence of the
Wendat traitor *Louys* may have been carried out by the Eastern Wendat leader
*Henheonsa*, but the act was done on behalf of the entire community. To this end, while
*Henheonsa* delivered the two hatchet blows to *Louys’* head, another Wendat leader,
*Outarahon*, made a long speech to French witnesses justifying *Henheonsa*’s actions “and
to guarantee that his nation would thoroughly approve all that was done.”\(^{46}\)

Approval also remained an important component to any legitimate leadership.
The escaped captive *Jacques Onnhatetaionk* did not resume his status of headman
automatically with his return from Iroquois Country. Rather, numerous feasts and
ceremonies took place, as well as many campaigns by Wendats asserting their support for
his leadership. In the end, only after a council convened and consented to his
reinstatement could he gain back his “voice.” He gave a wampum belt to signify the
council’s resolution.\(^{47}\) All of these requirements signaled that the traditional custom of

\(^{44}\) de la Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 258.
\(^{45}\) “Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les allies hurons,” (August 1682) ANOM, C11A 6/fol. 5-13v.
\(^{46}\) *JR* 35: 47-49.
\(^{47}\) *JR* 57: 63-65.
community endorsement for leaders persisted almost unchanged in the post-dispersal period; based in collective consent.

Councils remained the central conduit for Wendat decision-making. Leaders both participated in, and were held accountable by, these assemblies. At Michilimackinac, the Wendats held a council to decide whether to accept the Jesuits and support their efforts in conversion. Upon resolving to do so, the council gave the Jesuits a large wampum belt. Subsequently, a single headman rose and delivered a speech explaining the council’s intent. He asserted that, “[the Jesuits] alone should govern their Cabin. As regards [to] those whom [the Jesuits] are not Satisfied, if [the Jesuits] manifest by a single Word that I am not pleased with Them, they at once [will] come of their own accord and bring the inmates of their Cabin to prayer.”48 Although it is unlikely that the council resolved to have the Jesuits “govern” them, it does seem that the council, through this leader’s speech, wished the Jesuits to understand that they had decided to support the Christian missionaries in their endeavors at Michilimackinac.

The fate of prisoners of war also fell under council governance (although women may have initiated the deliberations). In 1688, the Western Wendats captured fourteen Iroquois warriors. As soon as they returned to Michilimackinac they held a council. After some deliberation, the group confirmed that twelve would remain among the Wendats. In addition, one captive would be given the French commander M. Juchereau and the last prisoner would go to the Ottawas.49 Deliberations such as this reflected a persistence of collective decision making when it came to war captives. Adoption and death were fates allocated by consensus because not one individual but the group at large owned them.

48 JR 57: 253.
49 La Baron de La Honton, Nouveaux Voyage de Mr. Le Baron de Lahonton dans l’Amerique Septentrionale (A La Haye: Chez les freres l’Honore, 1704), Letter XIV (May 26 1688), I: 141.
In 1665, twelve Eastern Wendat headmen held a council to discuss their feelings towards the French and the relocation to Quebec. Upon conclusion a representative was sent to explain to the French the council’s sentiments. The long and detailed oration required a highly skilled diplomat to deliver it successfully. The oldest leader of the council was charged with the task. The speech was as follows:

Great Onnontio, thou seest at thy feet the wreck of a great country, and the pitiful remnant of a whole world, that was formerly peopled by countless inhabitants. But now thou art addressed by mere carcasses, only the bones of which have been left by the Iroquois, who have devoured the flesh after boiling it on their scaffolds. There was left in Us nothing but the merest thread of life; and our limbs, most of which have passed through the boiling caldrons of our foes, had no more strength – when, raising our eyes with extreme difficulty, we saw on the river the ships that were bringing thee, and with thee, so many soldiers sent us by thy Onnontio and ours. Thereupon the Sun seemed to shine upon us with brighter beams, and to illuminate our fatherland of old, which had been so many years overcast with clouds and darkness. Then our lakes and rivers appeared calm, and without storms or breakers; and, to tell thee truth, I seemed to hear a voice issuing from my vessel, and saying to us, from as far as we could discern thee: ‘Courage, O desolate people! Thy bones are about to be knit together with muscles and tendons, thy flesh is to be born again, thy strength will be restored to thee, and thou shalt live as thou didst love of old . . . I see thee, O brave Onnontio; I hear thee; I address thee. Be welcome, and receive this little present from the emptiness of our land, as a sign of the joy we feel at thy fortunate coming, and the homage we render to the greatest of all Onnontios on earth, who take pity on our wretchedness and sends thee to deliver us therefrom.’

He concluded the speech by giving a gift of a painted moose-skin to the Governor.

The use of “I” in this oration, was superficial, as the headman was not speaking on his own volition, but for the council and thus the Wendat community that the council represented. Through metaphorlic language and French praise, this leader weaved together a sympathetic story of Wendat dispersal, and their desperate situation, while clearly

50 JR 49: 227-229.
stating the main design of the council, which was for the Wendats to stay near Quebec and the French.

**War/Civil Headmen**

The shift in Wendat leadership in the 1640s, with war chiefs taking on civil responsibilities, complicated the roles of these individuals. The lines dividing these two types of leadership amalgamated in later years, making it more common to have headmen acting in both capacities, rather than one dedicated to war or civil affairs. *Kondioronk*, for instance, clearly acted as a civil leader in his participation in diplomatic ventures, while at the same time he could raise armies and conducting military expeditions. In 1688, for instance, it was *Kondioronk* who led an assault on a group of Iroquois ambassadors and killed one of their main deputies. 51 La Honton corroborates *Kondioronk’s* dual position as he explained that this leader was both “un chef de guerre et du conseil Huron.” 52 *Le Baron* took on similar roles. Father de la Potherie attested that although *Le Baron* was “less about trade and more about politics,” he nonetheless was responsible for rallying “young warriors” on numerous occasions. 53 In some cases, *Le Baron* wore both hats simultaneously. In 1695, for example, he met with the French governor to discuss foreign policy. Talks turned to war, however, and *Le Baron* returned to his community upset because he had “wanted peace, but [the governor] wanted war.” 54

51 “Mémoire de Denonville,” (1688) ANOM, COL C11A 10/fol.100-111; “memoire de l’etat des affaires…” (Nov 6, 1688) LAC, MG1 C11A Correspondence General [CG], R12297-2-8-F; microfilm C-13995, vol 5, 174-196.
54 The translation is my own. “Relation d’évenements survenus en 1694 et 1695,” (1695), ANOM C11A 14/fol. 98v.
Not withstanding examples of dual-role individuals such as Kondioronk and Le Baron, the position of war chief did not totally disappear during the post-dispersal period. At Michilimackinac, La Honton remembered meeting the “war chief Saentsonan” who was on his way to Fort Niagara on a military expedition.\textsuperscript{55} Similarly, the Jesuits introduced Thaovenhosen as a “warrior chief.”\textsuperscript{56} Thus, we have war chiefs throughout the diaspora as Saentsonan was from the West and Thaovenhosen was from the East. Both communities still faced frequent encounters with the Iroquois, so it may have been relevant to maintain the position of war chief in order to offset the responsibilities of the men charged with civil affairs. Whatever the case, it is clear that not all war chiefs took on civil tasks; but, civil leadership often incorporated military leadership in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

**Community Memory and Cultural Legacy**

Although Wendat leaders were still subject to traditional checks and balances of Wendat society—selective leadership positions, appeasing their constituents and respecting the authority of council decision-making—this framework did not restrain headmen from making their own unique mark on their community. Leaders not only played integral roles within their community, but influenced Wendats for generations. These individuals served as points of reference for later Wendats, who kept careful genealogies that preserved hundreds of year of ethnic and cultural heritage. Leaders and the memory of their character and actions are often one of the first distinguishable symbols within a collective community; in the case of people subject to forced migrations, these so-called “Heroes and Chieftains” are even more important in

\textsuperscript{56} JR 66: 165.
maintaining and creating bonds between the migrants. The loss of Wendake and other
material and territorial references for identity meant that Wendats, like other diasporic
peoples, had to draw on less tangible points for cultural continuity.

Names are one way that Wendats maintained a memory of ancestors and in
particular significant leaders of the past. In a 1747 census of what Jesuit Father Pierre
Potier called: “Les 3 Bands hurones avec Leurs anciens at Leurs anciennes,” the names
Aenon and Taretande appeared once again.\(^57\) Like his namesake of the 1630s “Nicolas
Taretande,” also known as “le bedeau” by the French, belonged to the Bear Clan.
Similarly, the name of another eighteenth century Bear Clan member, “Pierre Enons,” is
thought to be a different rendering of Aenon. Both of these individuals had connections to
the Eastern Wendat and Lorette.\(^58\) In the same census, the Western Wendat name held by
Kondioronk (Sastaretsi) reappears in the person of “Mathias Sastaretsi.” It is possible
that Mathias might have actually met or known Kondioronk as a child, as he was
probably around fifty years of age at the time of the census.\(^59\) Mathias was at the end of a
long line of Sastaretsis, a Wendat tradition that may date back to the pre-dispersal period.
Indeed, there is reason to believe that at the same time that Kondioronk held that title, a
Wendat leader at Notre- Dame-de-Foy also was called Sastaretsi.\(^60\) The title does seem
to suggest that it was the name for the “one who leads the clan, the phratry and the
nation.”\(^61\) Baron de La Honton, on his travels among the Wendats in the late seventeenth

\(^{57}\) Robert Toupin, ed., *Les Écrit de Pierre Potier* (Collection Amerique Francaise No. 3, Ottawa,
Les Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1996), 221, 236.
\(^{58}\) John Steckley, “The 1747 Wyandot Elders Council,” forthcoming in *Northeastern
Anthropology*, 14.
\(^{60}\) There is some ambiguity here because the name recorded is “P. Shataresti.” See “La Mosaique
century, questioned his companions about the name and its significance. His Wendat interpreters replied that it was the name of their leader and that it was well over seven or eight hundred years old.  

This type of name recycling was one way to ensure that the memory of past leaders would not be lost. By transposing the name onto living individuals, Wendats retained a tangible reference and reminder of people like Aenon, Taretande and Sastaretsi. Poitier’s 1747 census also reveals the mobility of these names. Unlike material culture or geographic fixtures, names were easily transportable throughout the diaspora. They were not easily lost along the road or left behind, yet in terms of cultural baggage they were heavy. Names designated more than just the people who used to represent them; they functioned as maps to family lineages, and symbols of ethnicity, and also communicated traditional Wendat ideals of bravery, leadership, and behavior to future generations.

Legends of Wendat heroes, both cultural and historical, served a similar purpose. These mythicized figures, based on real people, reflected Wendat customs and embodied the aspirations and ideals of the society. These could be passed down as lengthy story—like legends, or more simplistic wives tales. They often illustrated to the audience not only the heroic actions of an historic leader, but the standards to which Wendats should strive for.

In 1872, ethnographer Heratio Hale visited a Wyandot reservation near Detroit. There he interviewed several community members, including Joseph White. It was

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during these discussions that White told Hale about the “Legend of King Sastaretsi.” He explained that the people’s memory of the migration west towards Michilimackinac was still intact and that they refer to this particular legend for its details. According to White, King Sastaretsi was a great Wendat leader dating to the pre-dispersal period. In the wake of the Iroquois attacks, Sastaretsi agreed to act as a guide for his people in order to take them west. Upon their departure, the King warned his fellow Wendats that “this would not be the end of their wandering.” He kept his word and traveled to the far edges of Lake Huron, where he died. The legend concludes with the Wendats building a statue in Sastaretsi’s honor where he was buried. It was said to point them in the direction of the journey. Within White’s rendition of this legend, we come to understand Sastaretsi’s role within the migration. As a highly revered Wendat leader, he was nominated as one of the guides for people to rely on to lead them out of the disaster zone of Wendake. He was trusted and influential, to such an extent that his memory was encapsulated within both material culture (the statue) and collective memory (the legend).

Other leaders from the dispersal period have been incorporated into the Wendat dialogue in less overt ways. The pious death of Ignace Saouhenhoji entered Loretan folklore as the death of a Wendat saint. Indeed, it was common many years after his passing for Wendats to exclaim, “Oh, may I die like Ignace!” This phrase underscored the influence of Ignace within his community and demonstrates how later generations drew upon his reputation as a model Christian to shape their own actions. Simple phrases like the one referring to Ignace also changed over time. In 1911, Mme. Claire Picard-

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64 Hale, “A Huron Historical Legend,” 479.
66 JR 53:119.
O’Sullivan, a Wendat woman from Lorette, shared her community’s memory of the great war chief of the 1640s Ahatsistari. Her account was recorded as follows:

“.../She/remembered that Ahatsisari was a great Indian warrior whom everybody dreaded. He was called ‘The reaper of scalps.’ Whenever someone, in former days, was found dead and scalpless in the woods, the people would say, ‘Ahatsistari has been here.’”

In this case, “former days” refers to the historic period when Native Americans still employed scalping as part of their military customs. When this tradition ended, there was no place for a phrase such as “Ahatsistari has been here,” yet, Ahatsistari remained in the minds of his Wendat descendants. Mme. Picard-O’Sullivan explained that it became common practice for women at the turn of the twentieth century to scare the children of her village by saying “Look out! Ahatsistari is coming!”

The phrase and context in which Ahatsistari was remembered had changed, but the communal knowledge of his heroic feats and reputation as a notable Wendat leader had not.

Through the continued use of Wendat leaders’ names and the successful retention of Wendat heroes, the post-dispersal Wendat communities were able to reflect upon a common ancestral heritage. This history, with individual leaders as flash points, connected Wendats across time and space. Heroes were stored in the Wendat communal memory, serving as proud reminders of the individuals who gave their people hope, strength and guidance in the past.

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Conclusion

The title “King” Sastaretsi is misleading. Not only was there never a King Sastaretsi, there were never any Wendat kings. Positions of inherited grandeur and power, autocratic rule and notions of nobility were not part of the Wendat world. Kingships required subservience, supreme authority and luxurious prestige. Wendat positions of leadership, in contrast, demanded compromise, consensus, and accountability. There was no single leader in this case, but many respected headmen who were collectively responsible for executing the goals of a variety of factions throughout their constituency.

In the West, the actions of Kondioronk, Michipichy and Le Baron resulted in some of the most important global diplomatic initiatives of the century. In the East, Ignace Saouenhohi, Atena, Pierre Atironx, Jacques Onnhatetiaionk and Thaouenhosen’s local initiatives quelled the abuse of alcohol and furthered Christian conversions. Because of their high profiles and their Christian character, all Wendat leaders risked being the targets of Iroquois torture and Wendat martyrdom. On the other hand, Wendat men in general had the added opportunity to survive among the Iroquois, rising to the ranks of headmen because of their Wendat origins.

Relocation in the aftermath of the dispersal from Wendake had little effect on the nature of Wendat leadership. Leaders functioned as spokesmen for the Wendats, representing different sets of people at different times and places. Councils continued to be the main source of authority within Wendat communities and their support was fundamental in putting forward any policy. Further, the division between war chiefs and civil headmen continued to be ambiguous as individuals such as Kondioronk and Le
Baron acted in both capacities, while Thaouenhosen and Saentsonan maintained a separate and distinct role as “warrior chiefs.” Finally, although Wendats may not have had “kings,” in the words of Charles Eastman, they most certainly had “heroes.” Their contributions were recognized by their contemporaries as well as Wendat descendants centuries after their time. Through their mythacized legacy leaders served as cultural capital inherited by all Wendats. It is difficult to judge the success of these individuals and their policies, yet if the survival of the Wendat people, their culture and collective memory is any indication, these men left their mark.
CHAPTER 10
WOMEN: UNITY, SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Introduction

Leadership took on many different forms within the seventeenth-century Wendat diaspora. While men dominated the public sphere, women led their community in other ways. The experience of dispersal, resettlement, and its connection to dislocation and land became intimately linked to women’s traditional responsibilities within Nadouek society. Women cultivated the land to sustain their families; it was also the landscape in which homes were built, and therefore a space under the authority of mothers, daughters, and wives. This fostered an additional connection between land and people, making removal a uniquely difficult situation for women.¹ In 1817, for instance, in the midst of comparable forced migrations in the United States, Cherokee women gathered together to voice their perspective on dispersals, land and women’s roles. Speaking to the men of their community they began, “Our beloved children and head men of the Cherokee nation we address you warriors in council [. W]e have raised all of you on the land which we now have, which God gave us to inhabit and raise provisions . . . .” A year later, the women reiterated “The land was given to us by the Great Spirit above as our common

right, to raise our children upon, & to make support for rising generations.”2 The Wendats felt and expressed similar sentiments during their removals a century earlier. During the Eastern resettlement, a concerned friend acknowledged the legitimacy of a disheartened woman’s sadness over moving again. In much the same language as the Cherokee women, the Wendat friend observed, “I see very well that your regret at changing village comes from the love that you bear to the Fields which you have here, and which you cannot transport so far.”3 The consistent and persistent notion that Nadouek women held a distinct relationship with the land in contrast to their male counterparts is just one reason the experience and affects of forced removals on women represent a unique avenue of research, consequently gaining considerable attention among scholars. Whether the more familiar Cherokee Removal of the 1830s,4 or the lesser-known Wendat relocations of the 1650s, 60s, and 70s, uprooted Native communities consistently shaped the actions and initiatives of their women and vice-versa. In the case of the Wendat diaspora, scholars generally frame the results as detrimental to the status of women and their overall wellbeing. In particular, Bruce

Trigger argues Wendat women of the East became more dependent on the Jesuits because of the loss of Wendat men during the Iroquois attacks on Île Orléans. Jackie Andres expands on this and contends that no matter what the destination of resettlement, Wendat women lost their pre-dispersal status and influence within their new community. In the East, she argues, Christianity eroded women’s power; in the West, they faced Algonquian patriarchal structures; while in Iroquois Country, a lack of representation in the council meant that the “political power of the transplanted [Wendat] women was eliminated.” These arguments are perhaps extensions of the dominant historical interpretation that Native women lost power due to Christian influences, even with their avid attempts to counteract the work of missionaries.

While Christianization did damage women’s status in the pre-dispersal period, during the seventeenth century Christianity did not constrain Wendat women, but instead provided a vehicle for unity, spirituality, and social mobility. The process of diminishing political and social status among Wendat women did not happen immediately, nor does it reflect the numerous ways women continued to project their influence in the post-dispersal period. Women instigated planning and decision-making in the early stages of diaspora formation, while at the same time the dispersal created unique new opportunities for women. Women’s active participation in resettlement negotiations, continued

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6 Andres argues specifically that women lost political sway among the Iroquois, lost social status out West because of the influence of Algonquian systems of patriarchy and patrilineality, and lost status in the East because of the patriarchal nature of Christianity, Jackie Andre, “Contagious Disease and Huron Women, 1630-1650,” MA Thesis (University of Saskatchewan, 1996), 129, 134, 136.
collective group activity, and their roles as mothers, wives and daughters significantly affected impacted individual women and Wendat society as a whole.

**Relocation Negotiations**

Wendats decided to relocate from Wendake to *Gahoendoe*, Algonquian communities and later to the East and West through a drawn-out process based in consensus and councils. No single person orchestrated these strategies, and although men seem to have dominated the scene, women participated in the process. Many Aboriginal societies perceived a transfer of land as “unethical” without the input of women. After European contact, however, discussions of territory and land distribution rarely incorporated women.\(^8\) This was not the situation for the seventeenth-century Wendat. Although less obvious than the public displays made by men, women remained central to decision-making, and negotiators used them as leverage in persuading the French to accommodate Wendat refugees at *Gahoendoe* as well as in the East.

The decision to allow the Jesuits to move with the Wendats to *Gahoendoe* would not have happened if not for the women. Among the numerous discussions taking place in the immediate aftermath of the attacks in Wendake, Wendat women gathered together to discuss the circumstances and strategize. Although the Jesuits did not record the details of the meeting, the resulting wampum belt made by the women themselves and the message delivered by the headmen at an evening council make it clear that a women’s council took place.\(^9\)

\(^8\) Bales, “Native American Women: Living with Landscape.”

\(^9\) *JR* 34: 209. Although the production of wampum belts was not necessarily a gendered task, there is some evidence to suggest that women may have had a principle role in creating the belts within some Native societies. In this case, however, the Jesuits explicitly stated that these ten belts were made by the women “who made us a present of the little which was left to them in
After three hours of intense speeches by the headmen, one presented the Jesuits with ten large wampum belts representing the voice of the “women and children.” According to the headman, the message represented within these symbolic gifts was to not only take compassion on the widows and their children, but to revive in [the Jesuits] the zeal and the name of the Father Echon (the name which the Hurons have always given to Father Jean de Brébeuf); . . . that [Wendats] hoped that his example would touch [the Jesuits], and that [their] hearts could not refuse to die with them, since they wished to live as Christians.

In other words, it was the women’s desire that the Jesuits support the Wendat decision to move to Gahoendoe, in light of the fact there remained a high number of struggling widows and orphaned children, who, in return for assistance, would accept Christianity and serve as a willing population for future conversions. This last presentation to the council helped convince the Jesuits. According to the missionaries it was, “the disposition of their souls, and the reasons which nature could supply them – [that] conquered us.”

Shortly after, the Jesuits agreed to relocate to Gahoendoe.

The allusion to unique suffering of women as both widows and single mothers resurfaced on a number of occasions within resettlement negotiations. In the case of Gahoendoe, the Jesuits officially agreed to the Wendat requests out of a desire to protect and support the women and children. In the East, the removal to Île Orléans met with

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10 JR 34: 209.
11 JR 34: 209-211.
12 JR 34: 211.
similar notions of sympathy from a woman who could relate to the Wendat women in ways that the Jesuits could not.

Éléonore de Grandmaison was the seigneurasse\textsuperscript{13} of the land on Île Orléans. At the time of Wendat settlement negotiations, the twice-widowed Mme. Grandmaison had just recently married a third time to Gourdeau de Beaulieu. She had five daughters and one son, and was also the first and only white woman living on the island during Wendat relocation.\textsuperscript{14} Grandmaison’s life experience almost certainly affected her decision to rent her land to the Wendat refugees. Throughout the negotiations she expressed pity for the women and children, possibly because she knew what it was like to mourn the loss of a husband while simultaneously trying to raise children.\textsuperscript{15} The fact that the Eastern Wendat consisted mostly of women possibly assuaged the fears Grandmaison and other French civilians, who might have opposed the arrival of a large number of Native men in the area; a group of struggling Wendat women might have seemed less threatening. The bonds between these women, Wendat and French, transcended ethnic boundaries as their gendered experiences as wives and mothers connected them on a different level. Part of the negotiated terms, for instance, included that Wendat women bring food and supplies to Grandmaison on a regular basis. Holding true to the agreement, four to six Wendat

\bibitem{Grandmaison} The Seigneurial system was introduced in New France in 1627. Land was arranged in long strips called seigneuries along the bank of the St. Lawrence River. Although each property was owned by the King, it was maintained by the landlord or seigneur. In this case, the “seigneur” happened to be a woman, hence, “seigneurasse.”


\bibitem{Grandmaison3} “Lettre de père Léonard Garreau adressées au sieur Beauregard,” (27 Janvier, 1652) Quebec National Archives [QNA], fonds cour supérieure, district judicaire de Québec, Greffes d’arpenturs.
women frequently visited Grandmaison throughout their stay on the island, which fostered deeper bonds with the seigneuresse.¹⁶

**Councils**

Collective decision-making and initiatives continued to be a part of Wendat women’s activities in the post-dispersal period. The Women’s Council at Notre-Dame-de-Foy, for instance, petitioned and supported the reinstatement of Jacques *Onnhatetaionk*, the former Iroquois captive, as headman. This required several separate maneuvers. First, the Clan Mothers brought him gifts of Indian corn. The quantity differed greatly; while some delivered chests full of harvested corn, others declared that their entire field was his for the taking.¹⁷ Next, each Clan Mother gave *Onnhatetaionk* a wampum belt, testifying their support for him. The belts were delivered during several feasts held in *Onnhatetaionk*’s honor. All this was done before the former headman was reinstated officially.

*Onnhatetaionk* recognized the influence of these women in his speeches and gifts of gratitude. In addition to hosting a feast and thanking the Jesuits and headmen of the village, *Onnhatetaionk* offered wampum belts to the priests to support Mary and the Catholic church, to governor Frontenac as a request to maintain friendly ties with the French, and most significantly to the Clan Mothers as a promise to meet their request to unite the Wendats and continue to “kindle a Common fire for Them.”¹⁸ Thus, *Onnhatetaionk* acknowledged the power of these women within his society and respected their goals as leaders of the community. It is unlikely that *Onnhatetaionk* could have

¹⁷ *JR 57*: 63.
¹⁸ *JR 57*: 65.
regained his position as headmen without the support of the women, nor could he have maintained his office afterwards if he did not meet their demands for unity.

This traditional group organization and decision-making among women at Notre-Dame-de-Foy served as the basis for similar associations created in the wake of the dispersal. In 1653, the Jesuits created the Catholic confraternity of the Holy Family—the same association the leader Pierre Atironta participated in.\(^{19}\) Although not a gender exclusive society, the Jesuits differentiated the men from the women by speaking specifically of “The Women of the Holy Family.”\(^{20}\) For these Wendat Christian women, the group functioned as a sisterhood and a means for instigating social reform and security. They created projects, for instance, that affected the community directly and expressed their continued responsibility to raise and nurture generations of Wendats. The Women of the Holy Family supported entire Wendat families for months during some of the most difficult times of their relocation and a women’s council determined the manner and extent of support, deciding on a general contribution that the women collected at the end of the council and delivered to the needy family.\(^{21}\) The Women of the Holy Family gave corn to poor French families as well, further cementing ties with the civilian community they lived near.\(^{22}\)

The traditional Women’s Councils and the Women of the Holy Family functioned in similar ways. Although the Holy Family was a Jesuit creation, the Wendats made it their own and used it as a vehicle to better their society. These women made collective

\(^{19}\) Nicholas Griffiths and Fernando Cervantes, eds. *Spiritual Encounters: Interactions between Christianity and Native Religion in Colonial America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 75-76.

\(^{20}\) JR 54: 297.

\(^{21}\) JR 54: 297.

\(^{22}\) JR 54: 297.
decisions to assist weak and poor Wendats in order to strengthen the overall community. Thus, rather than diminishing a woman’s ability to maintain her role as the primary caregiver and social welfare authority, this Christian organization delivered an additional means to organize and execute plans.

**Converts**

Women accepted Christian conversion hesitantly during the initial years of missionary work. In Wendake, Jesuits commented on the over representation of men in the congregation, a circumstance explained partially by the conversion of war chiefs and headmen’s desires to appease the French. 23 Yet, as the years progressed, women became some of the most avid supporters of the Christian faith. The stark contrast from the pre-dispersal to the post-dispersal period did not go unnoticed by the missionaries. One of the clearest demonstrations of this shift was the change in the way women mourned the loss of warriors in battle. Before, it was customary for widows to gather for several days, when they would cried and groaned aloud lamenting their lost loved ones. In 1660, however, when the news of a great defeat reached the Wendat village out East, “prayer took the place of lamentation” and the women gathered in the chapel for consolation from the priests. 24 The congregation at Sillery consisted only of women. 25 Conditions in the west were comparable; the Jesuits mentioned an entire group of women who demanded a simultaneous group conversion after witnessing the Parhelion at Michilimackinac. 26 Western Clan Mothers who could not visit the Jesuits on their own because of their age

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23 Father Simon Le Moyne to M. le Curé de St. Martin (his cousin), “letter,” The Newberry Library, Ayer Collection, MS 507 (May 25 1639).
24 *JR* 44: 61-63.
26 *JR* 55: 179.
asked the missionaries to continue the teachings they learned in Wendake. A blind woman explained this request in that she had not forgotten the teachings of Father Brébeuf, which she witnessed personally, and continued to seek instruction so she might not “die without grace.”

This widespread turn to Christianity arose in part from the desire to seek out coping mechanisms to deal with the hardships they faced from the dispersal. Death was a common phenomenon for most Wendats, but women struggled with the aftermath of losing a husband, brother, father, or son in battle. Women traditionally channeled the mourning obligations of the entire community, and Christianity offered a new way of dealing with these losses. After coming to the realization that her young daughter was about to die, a Wendat mother declared “I used to be inconsolable in the past, when any of my relatives died; but, since I have become [the Holy Virgin’s] daughter, and know that, to please you, one must wish what is God’s will, I am content to see my dear child die.”

Aside from mourning, Wendat Christian mothers and wives found comfort in the idea they could rejoin their children and husbands in Heaven, one of the most important aspects of Catholicism for many Wendat converts. Even during the pre-dispersal period, reports of people traveling to the Wendat Land of the Dead served as a means to persuade Traditionalists to convert. On one occasion, for example, a man returned from the afterlife and told his fellow Wendats, “Rejoice . . . for I have returned from the country of the souls, and I have found none there any longer; they have all gone to Heaven.”

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27 JR 57: 259.
28 JR 41: 155.
29 JR 8: 145-147.
In addition to spiritual succor, the extra material support that Jesuit missionaries provided to converts also appealed to Wendat women. Without husbands and sons, these women lacked the protection customarily provided by Wendat men. They looked to the Jesuits as viable replacements for the father figures missing in their children’s lives. On one occasion a dying father called out to his wife to take pity on his children that would soon be fatherless. The wife, seeking to not only calm her husband, but reassure herself, replied “Do not weep, my dear husband; our children will not remain fatherless after your death. The Fathers who instruct us will be the fathers to them, so long as our children are good Christians; and I will take all possible care to make them become so.”

Conversion of mothers and wives ultimately led to further conversions within the Wendat community. Matriarch’s convinced their husbands and children to follow their lead. The children of Marie Gentéhaon received baptism in light of her Christian faith. Despite being captive in Iroquois Country for twenty years, Gentéhaon passed on her faith to her daughter Françoise Gannendok and Françoise’s husband. Both mother and daughter passed away at the same time and received Christian burials. Often this was the case within families in the post-dispersal period. If the daughter was a Christian, it was likely that her mother was also a convert. This type of familial conversion extended to unborn generations as well. Upon hearing that the Jesuits were coming for a visit, a Wendat woman exclaimed, “our smallest children are so rejoiced that they begin to grow before our eyes; and even those not yet born leap with joy in their mothers’ wombs, and wish to come forth at the earliest moment, to be blessed…” Women, as mothers and

30 JR 52: 247.
31 JR 60: 299.
32 JR 41: 153-159.
33 JR 42:41.
wives, held the power of persuasion. Despite the dispersal, women continued to dominate the household and maintain their influential role as matriarchs within Wendat society. It was not until women began to convert that Christianity became more widespread.

**The Seminary**

Wendat Christian women and girls enjoyed unique educational opportunities available to their male relatives. The Ursuline Seminary at Quebec offered refuge, education, and vocation to women who desired it. In 1639, the widow Madame de la Peltrie sailed from France with three Ursuline nuns to establish the first institution of learning in North America under a royal charter signed by Louis XIII. Mother Marie de L’incarnation, who was a widow herself for ten years before joining the Ursuline order, ran the Seminary. Unlike the Native residential/boarding schools of the nineteenth century, these schools were voluntary in the seventeenth century. Students could come and go as they pleased and parents were allowed to visit.\(^{34}\) Native girls generally bore extra responsibilities in comparison to the French girls, such as working in the kitchen or conducting household tasks.\(^{35}\) The nuns taught primarily in Wendat, but expanded to incorporate the languages of the Algonkian, Innu, and Iroquois.\(^{36}\) Because the Seminary enrolled both Native and French girls, students socialized across ethnic divides on a daily basis.\(^{37}\)

The nuns involved themselves immediately upon the arrival of the Eastern Wendats to Quebec. They tended to the sick and hungry, taking in a number of Christian

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\(^{34}\) *JR* 44: 229-231.

\(^{35}\) *JR* 44: 263.


\(^{37}\) *JR* 44: 229.
families, while the Wendats began to organize their resettlement in the region. In addition, they welcomed a number of young Wendat girls into their classrooms; these girls received lessons on Christianity as well as food and shelter. Marie de L’incarnation made it clear in a letter written in March 1650 that she hoped the Wendats would take advantage of the nuns’ generosity and “that the [Wendats] would establish themselves close to them.” Several months later, she continued to accept Wendats who came to her Seminary because its buildings were strong and secure in comparison to the Wendats’ burnt and half-built houses.

Over and above the security and education presented by the Ursulines’, young girls found opportunities for vocational positions through the Seminary. The daughter of the Christian Wendat woman “Jeanne,” went to live with the nuns for almost two years and received training in the French language. During that time, she excelled in her studies and surpassed many of her French counterparts in terms of her reading and writing skills. Jeanne’s daughter became an interpreter at the affiliated hospital Hôtel Dieu. This young woman’s choice to remain within the domain of the French Ursulines’ was not a rejection of Wendat culture or society, however, as she continued to visit the Wendat community and engaged with Wendats on a frequent basis at the hospital. Rather, Jeanne’s daughter used the opportunities made available to her through the Seminary to

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38 Mère Saint-Thomas, Les Ursulines de Quebec, depuis leur établissement jusqu’a nos jours (Quebec, 1863) University of Ottawa Collection: Women’s History, microfilm CIHM no. 34242, vol 1-4.
39 JR 35: 209-211.
41 Abbé Richaudeau, ed. Lettre de la Réverende Mère Marie de L’Incarnation, 423.
42 JR 44: 229-231.

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maintain her personal well-being (both spiritually and physically) while contributing to her Wendat kin by her vocation as interpreter.

Wendat seminarians could also become nuns themselves.43 Arriving to the Seminary in May 1650, Sister Genevieve Agnes was one of the first Wendats to enter the convent; she was between eight and nine years old at that time. The daughter of one of the most respected Wendat Christian headmen, Genevieve was skillful in languages and mastered French within her first year. She joined the choir and gained a reputation as one of the loveliest voices at the Seminary. Genevieve also worked in the kitchen, a daunting task for any young girl, but the work did not seem to dim her in her devotion to the Seminary. Perhaps one reason for her attachment to the institution was her relationship with her peers. She was notably well liked by the other French students, which after seven years of living among them would have only strengthened her desire to remain within the Convent’s walls.44

Genevieve demonstrated her loyalty to the Seminary in a number of ways. On different occasions, for example, her parents would visit and ask if she would like to rejoin them at the Wendat settlement; they missed her and would do anything to have her live with them again. Notwithstanding this appeal, the young seminarian refused her parents’ requests. In another instance, after being brought before a disciplinary council, Genevieve was asked to choose between leaving the Convent or receiving a physical reprimand. The girl broke into tears as soon as they mentioned leaving and chose the latter option. The nuns decided her commitment to the Order was so profound they could not go through with any form of punishment and let the upset girl return to her

43JR 44: 259.
44JR 44: 261-265.
classmates. Finally, Genevieve demonstrated her personal attachment to the Seminary through her request to join the Ursuline religious order, and in particular to become a Hospital Nun. She received request at the age of fifteen, becoming the first Native sister in New France in 1657. She had little time to enjoy her position, as she died shortly after. Supported and witnessed by her fellow Wendats, Genevieve was buried in her holy garb alongside the other nuns at Quebec.

Several reasons likely lay behind Genevieve’s adamantly attempts to stay within the jurisdiction of the Ursulines. First, at the age of seven, she was impressionable and vulnerable. Having experienced a period of warfare and social crisis, the Seminary would have been the only real home and stable environment for the young Wendat girl. The unfamiliarity of the new Wendat settlement, versus the recognizable perimeters of the Convent served as additional comfort. Beyond sanctuary, the desire to dedicate a lifetime of service to the Christian faith cannot be discounted. After spending her childhood and adolescence in prayer and religious devotion (the basis for which the institution that nursed her to health was founded) Genevieve may have wanted to return the favor. For her, the life of a nun would facilitate an ability to help other people in similar situations.

A contemporary of Genevieve’s expressed similar notions of attachment and sanctuary. At the age of ten, this young girl received a visit from her parents who were making plans to re-establish in Iroquois Country in the wake of a temporary peace. They explained that they felt comfortable with the decision as many of their relatives were already there. They wanted to know if she would consider leaving the Seminary and join her family. The girl’s initial reaction was emotional and confrontational; she asked,

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45 JR 44: 265.
47 JR 44: 275.
“What? Are you not ashamed to wish to leave the country of prayer, and go to a place where you will be in danger of losing the faith?” She reprimanded her parents’ lack of dedication to the Christian faith. In the end, she held fast in her attachment to the Seminary and replied, “Go, if you will, to that wretched country, but I shall not follow you; I will never leave the holy maidens if you forsake me.” Her parents departed shortly after. This decision suggests that Genevieve’s attachment to the Ursulines was not an isolated incident. Some Wendat girls at least, from a very early age, felt a connection to the Seminary, persuading them to remain at the Convent rather than rejoin their families.

The Seminary presented opportunities for non-Seminarists as well. Cecile Arenhatsi, a twenty-three year old Christian widow approached the Ursulines for work. She presented her case to the Mothers, stressing her widowed status, and her need to support her six-year-old daughter Marie. She had heard, while still in Wendake, the Jesuits talk of the “holy virgins,” the Wendat title for the Ursulines, and their generosity. It was this, she contended, that inspired her baptism and devotion to the Christian faith. After the removal to Quebec, she made it a priority to seek out the nuns and see if they could not help her from this desperate state. The Ursulines agreed to engage Arenhatsi as a servant at the Seminary and to enroll Marie at the school.

The Wendat woman’s dedication and gratitude did not end once she gained employment and her daughter was taken care of. Despite a few unforeseen obstacles, including the fact that she rarely got to see her Marie because of her service to the nuns, as well as being the witness and victim of a dangerous fire that burnt down most of the

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48 JR 40: 225.  
49 JR 40: 225.  
50 JR 36: 213.
Sernay, *Arenhatsoi* maintained she made the right choice and continued to respect and admire the Ursulines. As she explained in the aftermath of the fire, “I offered my life to God . . . I thought of him alone . . . and I feared also that my sins had caused the [the fire] to happen to virgins so holy, of whose company I am so unworthy.”

*Arenhatsoi* used her status as a woman and a Christian to gain access to the opportunities presented by the Seminary. This strategy also extended to her daughter Marie, who, depending on her disposition would have the same if not more choices than her mother because of her position as a seminarist.

**Iroquois Captives**

If Wendat women refugees saw Christianity as an additional source of strength and security in the aftermath of the dispersal, Wendat women captives among the Iroquois used it as a necessary means for survival. The obstacles faced by these women were horrific in both the physical and psychological sense. Not only did they have to bear the torments personally, but also had to witness the loss of family members and beloved children. *Gannendio* watched the murder of her children, and afterwards received nine knife-wounds at the command of her adopted family. She survived, despite assaults, and lived through the experience with the pain of not only mending flesh, but the memory of her slain children. *Marthe Aatio* had a similar experience, albeit deadlier. After watching the deaths of both her brother and son, she continued the long journey to Iroquois Country, escorted by her captors. She managed to save the lives of her infant twins. Carrying the babies on her back, she was slower than the rest of the group and after a short while the twins were taken and killed in front of her. Soon her knee became

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52 *JR* 42: 187.
infected and she could only drag herself along the ground. Her captors deemed her too weak and ended her misery with a hatchet to the head.\textsuperscript{53}

In the face of such dire circumstances, Wendat women depended heavily on their Christian teachings to gain comfort and solace. Before \textit{Aatio}’s death, she practiced her faith during her captivity. Every morning and night, as well as before every meal she said a prayer. Although mocked by her captors (and even some Wendats) she made the sign of the cross over her two twin children before breast-feeding.\textsuperscript{54} In response to chastisement, \textit{Aatio} explained, “you think of nothing but the earth, and our thoughts are of Heaven.”\textsuperscript{55} The focus on Heaven certainly made sense because of her circumstances; with her family gone, her only hope was that through death she might rejoin her lost relatives. Indeed, death, for Christian captives, was a better alternative than remaining alive. The Wendat woman \textit{Therese} asked her captors for death in the aftermath of an unofficial confession, pleading that it would do her the greatest service if he ended her life so that she could attain a Christian salvation. Her captor was so impressed by her boldness that he would not let her die.\textsuperscript{56}

Another captive, \textit{Gandigoura}, lived six years among the Iroquois before escaping. She recalled her concerted efforts to be “careful not to forget a thing which she held dearer than life.”\textsuperscript{57} Some escapees attributed their survival entirely to their maintenance of their Catholic devotion. One woman, after escaping the Iroquois and hiding in the woods for six days with her two children, was asked how she managed to overcome the obstacles she faced. “I lived on prayers,” she said, “when I grew weak, I said my Rosary,

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{JR} 42: 187-189.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{JR} 30: 55-57.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{JR} 30: 57.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{JR} 43: 299.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{JR} 42: 189.
and I at once felt my strength return and continued on my way.”\textsuperscript{58} She continued, “At night, I put my children to sleep; and as I could not sleep myself, I passed the nights almost entirely in prayer and in saying my Rosary.”\textsuperscript{59} She concluded, “It is the blessed Virgin alone who has saved my life, and whom I wish to serve with all my heart until my death.”\textsuperscript{60} This belief, whether true or not, succored these women, allowing them to focus on ways to overcome their captivity.

Those who did not escape were no less dedicated to maintaining their Christian identity in both private and public settings. Because of Iroquoian resistance to Christianity, many Wendats felt threatened if they practiced their faith openly. Public chastisement and ridicule also made meetings difficult to conduct. Wendat women addressed this issue by organizing secret gatherings outside of the Iroquois villages, or in Wendat homes. Among the Mohawks, for instance, a number of Wendat Clan Mothers established “flying and hidden Churches.” During these meetings, one woman, usually an Elder of some note, would recite prayers from memory and the audience would repeat them back.\textsuperscript{61} These gatherings unified Wendat Christian women and served as an added source of support—maintenance of an independent Wendat identity—throughout their captivity. This tactic also gave them the ability to retain the Christian teachings of the past and set them apart from the Iroquois women.

Despite Iroquois resistance, some Wendat women even used their Christian knowledge to gain favor with those Iroquois interested in learning more about the Jesuit teachings. The Ursulines publicized the fate of a former Wendat seminarist who was

\textsuperscript{58} JR 43: 253.
\textsuperscript{59} JR 43: 253.
\textsuperscript{60} JR 43: 253.
\textsuperscript{61} JR 49: 107.
captured at the age of fourteen and lived among the Iroquois for ten years. She married an Iroquois and became head of her household. Overtime she persuaded all the members of her family to pray.\textsuperscript{62} Jesuits noticed the public work of women such as this and remarked on the spread of Christianity throughout Iroquois Country: “the Captive women, have kindled this fire which is burning in the hearts of the Iroquois.”\textsuperscript{63} By the mid 1650s, the Jesuits rejoiced that, due to Wendat Christian women, the Iroquois had “heard so much about us, and have been told so often of the great blessings of the Faith, that, in spite of their ignorance of it, it commands their esteem; and they love us in the hope that we will become to them what we have been to the [Wendats].”\textsuperscript{64} The Iroquois perspective demonstrates the success of Wendat women in promoting their Christian strategy. By maintaining their Faith, they stood out among their captors and gained favor with the French. This allowed them to acquire positions of power and persuasion within Iroquois Country.

\textbf{Cecil Gannendaris}

\textit{Cecil Gannendaris} exemplifies many of the themes in this chapter. As an Eastern Wendat woman living in the post-dispersal period, she exercised matriarchal authority over her family, participated in women’s organizations, and acted as a leader on social matters within the community. As a Wendat Christian, she gained additional access to support groups, positioned herself as an expert and enforcer of moral conduct, and received comfort from her belief in a Catholic afterlife.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{62} JR 40: 229. \\
\textsuperscript{63} JR 41: 119. \\
\textsuperscript{64} JR 41: 119. \\
\end{flushleft}
Gannendaris was first and foremost a wife and mother. She married twice to traditionalists who converted to Christianity at their wife’s insistence. The first husband was completely devoted to her, expressing love, affection and respect for the matriarch of his household. His conversion was an easy transition in that he already adhered to many of the teachings. The couple had at least four children before he died of an unknown disease.\textsuperscript{65} Not long afterward, Gannendaris married again to a man who was just as devoted to her. For him, conversion to Christianity was more difficult. Having lived a lifetime under the regulations of traditional Wendat codes of conduct, the strict and different regime of Catholic rules was not easily obeyed. In light of his relationship with Gannendaris and her strong inclination to have him convert, however, he endorsed the Christian teachings and received baptism. His “salvation,” was “particularly dear to her,” as he became “one of the best Christians in the Colony.”\textsuperscript{66}

Gannendaris’ children also became Christians because of their mother. She taught them and convinced them of the benefits of Heaven, Gannendaris employed different forms of corporal punishment, a practice rarely used by Wendats. She justified herself to her children, “Ah, my child, how wouldst thou bear the strange tortures if of the demons, if thou canst not bear so light a punishment? Take good care not to fall again into this fault for which I have just chastised thee, for fear lest thou be condemned to sufferings that never end.”\textsuperscript{67} In other words, Gannendaris reinforced the severity of Hell through physical displays of punishment so that her children understood how baptism would help them avoid these circumstances in the afterlife.

\textsuperscript{65} JR 52: 247.
\textsuperscript{66} JR 52: 251.
\textsuperscript{67} JR 52: 249.
Gannendaris paid particular attention to her two daughters, especially when the girls became deathly ill. Already a devout Christians, according to the Jesuits, their mother went to great lengths to ensure their salvation in case they died. When her twelve-year-old daughter could no longer walk due to a debilitating disease, Gannendaris wrapped the child in a moose skin robe and with the help of another Wendat woman carried her to the Church during Easter to received communion.68 Her other daughter, age seven, was instructed by her mother to continue to say her Rosary throughout an illness that eventually took her life. The child took this to such an extreme that she insisted on adhering to her mother’s instructions even when she had lost the ability to speak.69 Much as she had formed her husbands’, religious training Gannendaris’ shaped her children’s spiritual beliefs.

Gannendaris’s influence did not stop with her family. The Wendat community viewed her as a leader and expert on matters of social welfare and etiquette. Wendats sought advice from her on a regular basis, asking questions that ranged from personal conduct, and morality, to spirituality. As one of the most knowledgeable Clan Mothers, Gannendaris often led women’s meetings. During these assemblies she used her own experiences to entice Wendat women to follow the Christian code of conduct. This did not waiver when she became ill. In fact, Gannendaris took the opportunity to gather a number of Wendat women and continue her teachings. She addressed them:

My Sisters, I was formerly regarded among you as fairly good-looking, and now I am hideous to look at. I used to love cleanliness, and now my body is a mass of corruption. I was not the poorest person in our Village, and today I get no help from my possessions. That is the condition in which you will find yourselves some day. Do many good deeds during

68 JR 52: 249.
69 JR 52: 249.
your lives, for from them only will you receive any consolation in the hour of death."\textsuperscript{70}

As a member of the Women of the Holy Family, she gave similar exhortations and attended meetings focused more specifically on Christian doctrine. For \textit{Gannendaris}, her association with the Holy Family was an extremely important aspect of her life, so much so that she left her most prized wampum belt of 6,000 black beads to the organization in her will.\textsuperscript{71}

\textit{Gannendaris}’ influence went beyond her female kin and the Holy Family. In addition to these groups, she extended her role as a teacher to both the Jesuits and Iroquois visitors. She instructed missionaries in the Wendat language.\textsuperscript{72} She explained Christian teachings to Iroquois pupils over the course of several days. Throughout this time, she made a concerted effort to demonstrate her passion and devotion to the Faith in order to inspire these potential converts.\textsuperscript{73}

Aside from the spiritual benefits and respect she gained from Christian adherence, women found other benefits as well. \textit{Gannendaris} gained access to food and healthcare for not only herself, but her family. When she became ill, the Quebec Bishop sent food to her home in order to help sustain her household. Wendat women and “persons of quality” brought additional provisions to the hospital where she was treated. This support was crucial. Without a mother and wife, \textit{Gannendaris}’ family would have struggled to provide these necessities.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{JR} 52: 253.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{JR} 52: 257.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{JR} 52: 251.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{JR} 52: 251. Her success rate was so high that most assumed she could complete her training by three days, with a student ready for baptism.
During her illness Gannendaris’ drew strength and comfort from her faith in terms of dealing with the prospect of death. Much like many other Wendats, she believed for a long time in Heaven out of a wish to rejoin her loved ones in the afterlife. This belief consoled her through at least three deaths, one of which was her first husband and the others a daughter and son. She only became more steadfast as her illness worsened. When asked if she had any doubt about the afterlife by her second husband she responded, “No, no, I cannot doubt what our Fathers tell us of the good reception given to Christians in Heaven.”74 A few days before her death, she explained how she was woken by a sweet voice calling her name. When questioned by the Jesuits about the experience, she said, “I think it is the voice of my daughter who died last year and who came in this way to call her little brother, some days before he died.”75

*Cecil Gannendaris* died on 6 February 1669. As was customary, a Wendat headman made the announcement, but added that in light of the piety of the deceased all Wendats within five kilometers of Quebec should say their Rosary as a sign of respect. Upon receiving the news, the Quebec Bishop ordered the parish bells to ring and requested that the funeral be held at his Church. Several weeks later Gannendaris’ brother held a feast in her honor and presented a wampum belt to the Elders’ council so that her memory would remain fresh within the community.76

Unlike Wendat leaders such as Kondioronk and Ahatistari, Gannendaris’ legacy was lost within a few generations. She was not the subject of folklore and wives tales, nor was there a statue made in her honor. Yet, during her time, she became one of the most influential members of the Wendat community: a consultant and authority concerning the

74 JR 52: 255.
75 JR 52: 255.
76 JR 52: 257.
Eastern Wendat policy of cultural and Christian conformity; a source of information and inspiration for groups of women and potential converts; and a matriarch to her family’s spiritual salvation.

Conclusion

Wendet women exerted power to meet their own personal goals as well as their inherited responsibility as keepers of their land and people in the post-dispersal period. They instigated and influenced relocation negotiations at Gahoendoe and île Orléans through their continued use of collective decision-making and councils, despite their lack of public attendance at these deliberations. They made their presence felt through wampum belts, headmen’s speeches and the records of Mme. Grandmanson’s sentiments. This kind of collectivity fostered unity among Wendet women, creating bonds essential to promoting their causes and securing their futures outside the borders of Wendake.

For many, spiritual conversion to Christianity acted as an additional safety net after the dispersal. The continued influence of mothers on their children and wives on their husbands expanded this spiritual network throughout the diaspora. Wendets, whether they lived in the East, West or Iroquoia, created a fundamentally Christian identity due to the influence of these women. In the East, women found new opportunities to come together through the Holy Family and the Seminary, while in the West the memory of Brébeuf’s teachings in Wendake strengthened the bonds between the older generations, inspiring them to pass on the knowledge to the younger women. In Iroquois Country, Wendat women united to “kindle the fire” and spread Christianity to Iroquois Traditionalists.
Wendat women’s continued unity and newly inspired spirituality allowed them to create opportunities that did not previously exist. Recall the old woman “Anne,” from Chapter 1; her baptism in the 1630s created a devastating situation in which anti-Christian Wendats ostracized and abandoned her and her orphaned grandchildren. Despite her effort to fulfill this obligation, she was unable to tend to the children’s needs, resulting in their untimely death. This situation stands in stark contrast to that of Cecil Gannendaris in the 1660s. Rather than acting as a means to abandon Gannendaris, her Christian character was the very thing that gave additional support to her family during her illness. Certainly, they received vital supplies and food from within the community, as well as from the Bishop, because of her devotion to the Faith.

Circumstances changed after the dispersal. Christianity was a source of power for Wendats in general, but Wendat women in particular. During this period, social mobility extended far beyond the traditional women’s councils (which still existed) to new roles as teachers, interpreters, Seminarists, Hospital Nuns and Ursuline sisters. This shift allowed for women to maintain and expand their influence throughout the diaspora and the remainder of the seventeenth century.
CHAPTER 11
POWER: SOURCES OF STRENGTH AND SURVIVAL BEYOND THE DISPERSAL

Introduction

At the heart the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. In most cases this is not one migration, but multiple relocations with diverse experiences, people, and landscapes.¹ For the seventeenth-century Wendat diaspora, the journey from Wendake to Michilimackinac and Lorette represented both physical and psychological experiences. Not only did they overcome obstacles of travel, having to clear and plant fields, build long houses and palisades, but they simultaneously reconstructed their society, identity, and economic networks.

A Wendat headman reflected on the dire circumstances of the Wendat situation during the early stages of the dispersal. He introduced his Native delegation to the French governor by saying:

Thou seest at thy feet the wreck of a great country, and the pitiful remnant of a whole world, that was formerly peopled by countless inhabitants. But now thou art addressed by mere carcasses, only the bones of which have been left by the Iroquois . . . and our limbs, most of which have passed through the boiling caldrons of our foes, had no more strength . . .²

Certainly the odds were against them. Weak and “wrecked,” Wendats implemented strategies to overcome these obstacles, but the outcome remained undetermined. By

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1665, the time of this headman’s reflection, he could see beyond the desolation. After fifteen years of journeying, he proclaimed things already looked better. “The Sun,” he asserted, “seemed to shine upon [the Wendats] with brighter beams . . .” This final chapter, examines the details of the Wendat journey from a “pitiful remnant of a whole world” to a people rejuvenated and actively engaged with the new world created in the wake of their dispersal. It does not view the communities of Michilimackinac and Lorette as separate relocation projects. Rather, it connects them to diasporic process through the prism of power.

Power can be used as an indication of strength and prosperity as well as a sign of societal struggle and disadvantage. The ways people gain, use and lose power is often a reflection of their social, economic and political standing. Diaspora communities, for instance, are forced to renegotiate their collective power as a result of their dispersion. Wendats drew from a range of sources to survive their plan of resettlement. In turn, these sources translated into multi-dimensional systems of power based on long standing relationships, reformulated to meet the needs of the Wendats post-1650. The headman was right; the metaphorical “Sun” began to shine on the Wendat diaspora, since power did not wane during the post-dispersal period, but was gained and maintained.

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3 JR 49: 229.
Sources

Wendats actively sought out sources of power after their exodus from Wendake, strengthening their social status and overall chances of survival. Wendats, whether they were headmen, women, Elders, or others, drew upon five main repositories.

Cultural Capital

Previous notions of Wendat culture and heritage shaped the behaviors and beliefs of their post-dispersal community. The Wendats indeed reorganized many customs in response to diaspora conditions, but they maintained specific links to lifeways before their move. Migrants packed these traditions into their cultural reservoir and transmitted them from one generation to another. In the West, The Feast of Squash, Bear Dance and formal Wendat headmen’s regalia demonstrated these traditions; just as in the East the continued practice of gift giving at funerals, communal use of land and food, as well as the skill of canoe, moccasin and snowshoe manufacturing, expressed a similar continuity. Wendats used these displays of cultural capital to remind both themselves and others that their traditions did not remain in Wendake and their customs remained useful and relevant in the post-dispersal period. Wendats continued to influence diplomatic initiatives in part because their language became the lingua franca of regional foreign relations for Natives and Europeans. Commenting on its widespread use by non-Wendat nations in the 1630s and 40s, Pierre Boucher testified that most of the people of the region spoke Wendat, especially the Algonquian, Petun, Neutral and Iroquois. Its

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5 For the continuation of these traditions in the west see JR 57: 251; 66:113-117; 57: 255. For customs in the east see JR 53: 113; 54: 296; 53: 121; 66: 147.
6 Benjamin Sulte, Pierre Boucher et son livre (Ottawa: J. Durie, 1896), 146.
continued use by Algonquian, Iroquois, as well as French ambassadors in the latter half of the seventeenth century, indicates an already established etiquette.

In a 1665 assembly, for instance, including French, Algonquian and Wendat representatives, the Wendats spoke first, “in their own language,” to explain the meaning behind their gifts of wampum and to clarify the discussions of the assembly. This was then translated into French for the governor, as the attending Algonquians would have understood it perfectly. Another example of the prevalence of Wendat language occurred during a peace treaty the following spring. Despite the fact that the meeting was between Wendats, French, and Iroquois, the negotiations were conducted exclusively in the Wendat language. The meeting concluded with a signed treaty outlining the major points of the agreement—and the entire document was Wendat. This custom privileged the Wendats in terms of diplomatic initiatives, especially because “forest diplomacy” emphasized the representative’s ability to eloquently articulate constituents’ desires. The French often felt inadequate because of their failure to master Wendat, let alone the Native rhetorical use of metaphor. The Iroquois were also at a disadvantage, although they were most likely more comfortable than the French. Pragmatic reasons likely dictated the decision to use Wendat for this and other negotiations; not only did all three groups understand Wendat, but it had been a long-standing tradition to conduct diplomacy in that language. Further, the interpreter for this particular proceeding was the French Jesuit Joseph Chaumonnot, a missionary who probably trained in Wendat, rather

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7 JR 49: 227.
8 “Traité fait avec les Iroquois le 22 mai 1666,” (Mai 25, 1666) Archives nationale d’outre mer [ANOM], C11A 2/ fol. 232-233v. The Wendats did not use a written translation of their language, but the Jesuits had created a written dictionary spelling the words phonetically. For more on these dictionaries see: John Steckley, ed., The First French-Huron Dictionary, by Father Jean de Brébeuf and His Jesuit Brethren (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).
9 JR 8: 114-16
than Iroquois. This practice allowed Wendats to influence the region through the appropriation of their language by non-Wendats. It made it a useful tool for diplomacy and set the Wendats apart from other Natives in the region.

Kinship

Kinship connections remained central to Wendat organizational strategy in the post-dispersal period. Their relocations to Algonquian communities and their settlement patterns East and West expanded these networks of relationships. The continued intermarriage of Wendats from the various diasporic communities sustained the Wendat diaspora. In one case, the Wendat Jacques Otratenkoui took advantage of the distances and differences between the Wendat villages, as well as marriage customs, in order to facilitate relocation within the sphere of Wendat society. Otratenkoui first married a Loretta woman from an influential Christian family. He remained with her for some time, but eventually decided that the Christian piety of the East was too much. He packed his belongings, telling his family he wanted to head west to conduct trade. In reality, his journey to Michilimackinac became permanent, resulting in the abandonment of his Loretta wife and his marriage to a Traditionalist. Considering the importance of Christianity at Lorette, his first marriage gave him access to the influence and high profile character of his wife’s family. His second marriage also served as a source of advantage. By marrying a Wendat from the area, he became accepted by her family, and gained security from the community at large as the community adopted him.

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10 This is because the Jesuits started working on an Iroquois dictionary decades after they began to learn the Wendat and Algonquian languages.
11 JR 60: 51-53.
Diasporic Wendats also continued to marry their Algonquian neighbors, with similar effects. It is likely, for instance, that an Eastern Wendat trader named Louis Ouakouts married an Ottawa woman in the 1680s. Although living in the East (it is not clear whether they were Loretians, but they definitely lived between Montreal and Quebec City), this couple maintained contact with their relatives out West. In particular, the wife sent messages and wampum to her Ottawa relatives at Michilimackinac. Kinship connections between the Ottawa wife in the East and the Ottawa community of the West facilitated this type of communication; marriages like this Wendats maintained their close relationship to Coalition members.

Similarly, Wendat marriages to the French expanded access to goods, protection and powerful friends in French civil society. In the pre-dispersal period inter-ethnic relationships rarely existed because it was mostly French missionaries and nuns who were in contact with Wendats, but the influx of French immigrants in the 1660s as well as the relocation of Wendats to the predominantly French settled areas of Michilimackinac and Quebec City in the 1670s changed these dynamics. It was more common for Wendat women, rather than Wendat men, to take French spouses. In the West, French reports frequently observed Wendat women partnering with French soldiers and high-ranking officials. In the East, notarial records list Wendat women who married French

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12 “Testimony of Simone Coté and others on alleged embezzlement at Michilimackinac in the case of Couagne vs. Louis Ouakouts, Marie Félix, et al.” Archives nationales du Quebec a Montreal [ANQM]. Documents judiciaires de la juridictions seigneuriale de Montreal (1651-1695) [DJ], cote TL 2, feuilles detaches, 1681-1692. See also Joseph L. Peysner and José António Brandão, *Edge of Empire: Documents of Michilimackinac, 1671-1716* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2008), 12-17.
13 “Testimony of Simone Coté and others,” ANQM.
15 *JR* 65: 237-239.
habitants, merchants, and traders from Quebec City.\textsuperscript{16} Marriage to these men connected the Wendats to the French by “real” kinship relationships, extending the familial branch to their children. As wives and mothers of French children, Wendat women and their families gained from their personal connections because instead of being the metaphorical “children” of the French “Father,” they literally and biologically became the uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents of French people.

Wendats continued their belief and practice of so-called “fictive” kinship relations as well. Just as Wendats maintained their perception that Algonquians remained part of their “same caban,” or family, Wendat involvement in the Holy Family Society deepened their ties with the French.\textsuperscript{17} Through this organization they became members of a selective Christian network, a spiritual family with God as the “Father” and the French and Wendat members their spiritual kin.\textsuperscript{18} In fact, the Jesuits first contextualized the organization in terms of Wendat kinship practices, explaining that all Wendat Christians should be considered part of the “heavenly family” or “lineage of believers.”\textsuperscript{19} Through this rhetoric, Wendats expanded their membership to a Euro-Christian celestial family.

\textit{Homeland(s)}

Among the many psychological repercussions of forced migrations for refugees, anxiety over forgetting their geographic origins would have been a common, painful

\textsuperscript{16} JR 47: 287.
\textsuperscript{17} Kondioronk states this explicitly. See Claude-Charles Bacqueville de la Potherie, \textit{Histoire de L’Amerique Septienale} (Paris: Chez Brocas, 1753), IV: 23.
\textsuperscript{18} Nicholas Griffiths and Fernando Cervantes, eds., \textit{Spiritual Encounters: Interactions between Christianity and Native Religion in Colonial America} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 75.
phenomenon for most Wendats migrants. Many Natives continued to reference past villages long after the exodus from Wendake. Both Wendats and non-Wendats identified diaspora members by their villages in the homeland of Wendake. Before 1649, their former homeland, and specifically their Wendat town of origin, often identified Iroquois captives. In 1653, a list of captives included the Wendats; Onthaannaooche—from Scanonaerat and Ochehend—from Ationnontetsia. Other examples omitted a Wendat name all together, merely identifying them as “formerly from St. Francis Xavier.”

Wendats created profound connections with their new “homeland” to compensate for Wendake’s loss. According to archeologist Marcy Rockman, it is common for migrants to enlarge their former concept of homeland, by adopting new homelands and incorporating them into their nascent identity. This process “contributes to an expansion of rootedness by allowing people to incorporate a whole new landscape learning experience into the one they already have.”

Wendats from the East and West adopted this strategy whole-heartedly. They shared ancestral links to Wendake, while identifying as Loretans and Wendats from Michilimackinac. Contemporary perspectives identified those from the East as: “hurons de Lorette,” “Sauvage de Lorete,” “gens de Lorette,” “huron Christians de Lorette” and the “Loretans”; and those from the West as: “Hurons de Michilimackinac,” “Huron Village at Michilimackinac,” “Indiens de

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20 This is a common phenomenon with any diaspora. Chris Baker, Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2008).
21 JR 38: 177.
22 JR 38: 189.
24 Zedeno and Stoffle, “Tracking the Role,” 68.
Michilimiackinac.”

Along these same lines, a hand-drawn map of the communities at Michilimiackinac in 1698 clearly differentiates the “Huron Indians” from other groups such as the Illinois and Miamis. Homeland(s) empowered Wendats by giving them a sense of place and permanence. Lorette and Michilimiackinac established communities with identifiable Wendat characteristics, effectively expanding the cultural borders of Wendake into new regions. Far from being the far-flung remnants of a disappearing nation, Wendats from these communities became recognized citizens of that land and location.

Aside from using Lorette and Michilimiackinac as points of reference to their Wendat identity, these homeland(s) also situated Wendats in a privileged geographic location. In the East, Wendats were close to French guns and supplies, Montreal diplomatic meetings, and the St. Lawrence trade routes. In the West, Michilimiackinac developed as a hub for economic activity, French military strategy and Algonquian support. Together, the Lorette-Michilimiackinac corridor extended the sphere of Wendat geopolitical influence in comparison to the more limited borders of Wendake.

Wendakian Identity

Memory of the old landscape of Wendake was accompanied by an equally strong awareness of Wendat identity pre-dispersal. Instead of adopting the character of their Algonquian, French, and Iroquoian hosts and neighbors, Wendats clung to their distinct


26 National Archives (UK), “Map of Louisiana Pass” (1698), MPG1/1221.
ethnic roots as Wendakians. Despite their loss to the Iroquois and their dwindling population, Wendats perceived themselves as the ancestors of a powerful people—a legacy used in the post-dispersal period to assert that their status had not changed since the exodus in 1650. A focus on common ethnic heritage served to bond Wendats across the diaspora, and enabled them to gain favor with future and former allies.

Wendakian connections remained the key to using this strategy effectively. Their long-term engagement with the French privileged them in terms of gaining access to Jesuit guidance, land and protection. When the Western Wendat woman at Michilimackinac requested special meetings with the Jesuits, she gained their attention by explaining that she had been a pupil of Brébeuf’s in Wendake. The woman’s reference to Brébeuf qualified her as a former Wendakian, a people whom the French viewed as having decades of exposure to Christian practices and a particular affinity for it. In reality, the Wendats had been the “first” for most French-Native relations. The French saw them as the first Christians, their first allies, and their first trade partners. Dating back to Samuel de Champlain, the Wendakians set the stage for their diaspora descendants in terms of French relations.

Wendet reputations as diplomats, eloquent orators, and political strategists fortified their Wendakian identity. Commenting on Wendat characteristics, La Potherie

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27 This departs from Bruce Trigger’s assertion that the Wendat past “had no meaning” and Roger Carpenter’s argument that Wendat identity had “no value” after the dispersal. Trigger, *Children of Aataentisic*, 825; Roger Carpenter, *The Renewed, The Destroyed, And The Remade: The Three Thought Worlds of the Iroquois and Huron, 1609-1650* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 134.
28 *JR* 57: 259.
29 *JR* 56: 119.
summarized the Wendats as generally “very politic, treacherous in their movements, and exceedingly proud.”

He continued, “They have more intelligence than the other Indians. They are generous, and show much delicacy in their conversation. They are good speakers, insinuating their manners, and are rarely taken in by anyone whatever.”

La Baron de La Honton made similar observations as he recorded his impressions of them in the 1680s. According to La Honton, the Wendats were “brave, entrepreneurial and spiritual.”

This was in comparison to the Algonquians, whom he deemed “ugly,” and the Iroquois, who he described as “tricky.”

Combined, Wendat self-articulations of Wendakian identity, in conjunction with the acceptance and perpetuation of such an identity by contemporaries like the French, sustained a Wendat identity beyond their dispersal. As a result, members of the Wendat diaspora took advantage of their noted reputations as intelligent, articulate and calculated individuals by merely affiliating themselves with their Wendat heritage.

Christianity

Christianity certainly offered a major source of power for Wendats in the post-dispersal period. Leaders used conversion to gain political and economic privileges with the French, and women leveraged their piety to acquire additional opportunities in comparison to their male counterparts. In Iroquois Country, Christianity helped Wendats sustain their distinct identity, which not only set them apart from their captors but even qualified them for roles as teachers and leaders within their new communities. On the whole, Wendats from across the diaspora embraced baptism as a means to cope with the

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31 de La Potherie, Documents, 291.
32 de La Potherie, Documents, 291.
33 The translation are my own. de La Honton, Nouveaux Voyage, II: 95.
34 The translations are my own. de La Honton, Nouveaux Voyage, II: 95.
obstacles created by their dispersal. It supplied new forms of comfort, cosmology and security during a time of social crisis.

Not all Wendats were convinced conversion was a logical resource for their survival, however. Late into the 1650s, some Wendats still projected resistance, echoing the arguments of Taretande in the 1630s. Individuals continued to “attribute to the Faith all the wars, diseases and calamities of the country.”35 They explained, “their change of Religion [had] caused their change of fortune; and that their Baptism was at once followed by every possible misfortune.”36 Traditionalists not only distrusted Christianity, but the French alliance in general. They often pointed to the Dutch as a potential alternative ally because they did not typically press for conversion and allowed the Iroquois to “live in their own fashion.”37 Notwithstanding the importance of this vocal minority, nor their potential influence on the Wendat communities, the overall character of the Wendat diaspora became increasingly more Christian as the century progressed. This suggests that the Traditionalists became a marginalized faction in the post-dispersal period, as Christians dominated the policies and culture of the majority.

Systems

Scholarly attempts to describe Native North American activity and connectivity have shaped our understanding of the nature of these relationships today. Most often scholars define human interaction in terms of political organization and motivation. Dominating these narratives about the seventeenth-century Native world are what the 

Handbook of North American Indians North of Mexico calls, “confederacies” and “looser

35 JR 43: 291.
36 JR 43: 291.
37 JR 43: 291.
alliances.”38 This paradigm of Native political organization, with confederacies at the forefront, has distorted our view of Native North America in general and Native polities in particular.39 The terminology in many ways reconfigures the character of Native alliance making, giving more weight to centralized sedentary societies and disregarding links that do not fit the typical European notions of alliance. As we have seen, the pre-dispersal Wendats participated in numerous systems, some of which fit the concepts of “confederacy,” while others, such as their relationship with the Algonquians, placed them outside the standard scholarly paradigm. In addition, their attempt to include the French in their Feast of Souls, and the French rejection of that invitation, demonstrates a Wendat attempt to organize European peoples into a fundamentally North American arrangement.

A better way to understand Wendat human actions and connections is “systems of power,” which helps re-conceptualize these Native networks from a Wendat perspective.40 Wendat alliances, both within and outside the Confederacy, functioned as systems of “social power, whether economic, political, cultural or military, that we can describe functionally and spatially.”41 In the aftermath of 1649, Wendats used their repository of various power sources to continue to create and work within a world of

multiple systems of power. Wendat systems were rooted in tradition and persisted despite the dispersal, even as they were transformed by it.

The Coalition

The Coalition broadened its scope in terms of kinship ties, geography and political influence after the dispersal. As a system, it projected its power overtly in diplomatic meetings, trade negotiations and military ventures. Its influence was felt throughout the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway; from Lorette, Sillery, Ekaetoton, Sault Saint Marie, to the “Country of the People of the Sea” and Michilimackinac. This, in turn, enlarged the geographic boundaries of the Wendat world. To a great extent the Coalition influenced the West the most, because Wendats relocated among predominantly Algonquian communities. Wendats worked within this system to achieve settlement strategies in their first wave migrations. They often called upon the Coalition to exert military strength against the Sioux, the Iroquois and the English, and combined to pressure the French into supporting Coalition projects.  

Wendats constructed this system over decades, even centuries, not within a political or military framework, but rather through more traditional Wendat sources of power, with specific emphasis on kinship, homeland(s) and Wendakian identity. Kinship, such as the relationship between the eastern Wendat trader Louis Ouakouts’s wife and her Algonquian kin in the West, fostered a close and intimate relationship between Coalition members. The adoption of a homeland also deepened this association. In the East, Loretta Wendats maintained bonds with Algonquians at Sillery with visits between the two villages, whereas at Michilimackinac the connection became more

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42 “Lettre de Denonville au minister” LAC, R, C-2377; vol. 9, 31-50.
obvious. Located in villages directly beside each other, Wendats and Algonquians shared the experience of relocation as well as space. Wendats relied on new and old Algonquian friends to legitimize the move and entice their new neighbors to allow them to stay. Similarly, Wendats clung to their Wendakian identity, reminding their allies of past Feasts of Souls and their reputations as formidable middlemen, agriculturalists, and diplomats before the dispersal.

A number of scholars question the resilience and stability of this system, especially in the late seventeenth century. They base this assessment almost entirely from the Western Wendat experience and a scandal surrounding Le Baron’s alleged attempt to confirm a secret peace treaty with the Iroquois. The French trader Nicholas Perrot remarked on a similar rumor that included Kondioronk, concluding, “We know very well that the Hurons have always wanted to destroy the nations of the Pays d’en Haut, and that they have never been strongly attached to the French.” In light of the numerous examples of successful Coalition initiatives, Perrot’s assertion has little weight. Kondioronk reiterated this perspective saying, “We have one cabin and one fire, and we should have the same spirit as well . . . .” In reality, it was not until the Wendat removal

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43 This was one of the main topics of discussion at the American Society of Ethnology’s annual conference in Ottawa 2010. Thanks to John Steckley, Thomas Peace, Megan McCullen, and Andrew Sturtevant for fleshing out some of these ideas. In addition see: Harold Hickerson, “The Feast of the Dead among the Seventeenth Century Algonkians of the Upper Great Lakes” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Feb., 1960): 96.


to Detroit at the turn of the eighteenth century that internal conflicts presented themselves on a more frequent basis and the Wendat-Algonquian alliance system began to collapse.\textsuperscript{47}

\textit{The French Connection}

If Western Wendats were more inclined to engage with the Coalition’s system of power, Eastern Wendats participated more fully in a power structure orchestrated around their relationship with the French. Although not nearly as well-defined as the Coalition by 1649, what began as intermittent interaction with French missionaries and trade expeditions to Montreal developed into an intricate web of political, economic, military and social relationships for the rest of the century and the dispersal strengthened it. Jesuit Jean de Lamberville confirmed this development observing that, “these poor people [the Wendats] owe all this great Change in their customs to the loss of Their country and their Transmigration into ours.”\textsuperscript{48} Further he confided, “Formerly I wept at the overthrow and destruction of the hurons by The Iroquois, and now I Praise God for it; for I see clearly that, if the nation had remained flourishing as it was of old, we would not in a hundred years have gained so much ascendancy over Them…”\textsuperscript{49} The destruction of Wendake facilitated the need for Wendats to create more intimate ties with the French.

Wendat relocations and French immigration to North America formed the contours of this system’s geographic boundaries. For the most part, Wendats and French established themselves at the same key geopolitical outposts simultaneously in the seventeenth-century post-dispersal period. With Lorette/Quebec City on the one end, and Michilimackinac on the other, the French-Wendat allegiance intersected and connected

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{JR} 57: 69.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{JR} 57: 69.
people within the same geographic sphere of influence.\(^{50}\) This system benefited both parties. Aside from gaining military allies and trade partners, the French acquired potential Christian converts and access to Algonquian furs. Wendats, on the other hand, profited from, what Ignace Saohenhoi termed, “the power of protection.”\(^{51}\) The kind of “protection” Saohenhoi talked about rested in guns and the growing French population. Frenchmen now outnumbered Wendats; therefore, Wendat migrations to predominantly French settlements increased their odds against enemies such as the Iroquois.

Wendats nurtured their French connections by tapping into cultural capital, kinship ties, Wendakian identity and Christian sources of power. The French had a better grasp of the Wendat language and customs than of other Native groups. This gave the Wendats an advantage during meetings and encouraged the French to “prefer them” above all others.\(^{52}\) Proximity to French settlements and frequent interaction with settlers and soldiers resulted in marriages that made Wendats and French part of the same family. Wendats also recalled their historical relationship with the French dating back to Champlain, illustrating Wendat hospitality and persistent loyalty to the French. Finally, widespread Wendat Christian character provoked the French to continue their affiliation with Wendats with the hopes of achieving their goals of “frenchification” and salvation of North America’s Native people. These sources of power connected the French to the Wendats for decades and created an essential system of social security for both groups after the Wendat dispersal.

\(^{50}\) This tradition continued after 1701, when the Western Wendats moved with the French to Detroit, but dissipated with subsequent Wendat migrations to Ohio, Kansas and Oklahoma.

\(^{51}\) JR 53: 105-107.

\(^{52}\) JR 57: 195.
The Confederacy

There is no doubt that the pre-dispersal system known as the Wendat Confederacy underwent significant change. Yet, it did not disintegrate in its entirety as many suggest. Rather, former confederates transformed the system into a flexible, expanded version of their former political organization, retaining old components as well as creating new ones. In Wendake, the Confederacy fit the familiar framework of a Native political league. It was, more or less, “designed for defense or offense of two or more autonomous nations who engaged in a compact or formal statement of principles to govern separate and collective action.” Typically, it acted under one supreme council that included representatives of the contracting nations who ceded to the league various powers and rights that previously exercised individually. After the dispersal, however, Wendats faced obstacles of distance and disconnectedness. No longer living within close proximity, Lorettaans and Western Wendats reconfigured the Confederacy into what can most appropriately be described as a “diasporic polity.” In brief, the Wendats engaged in a far-flung network of people to whom local authorities granted self-governing privileges. These groups were often associated with trading and financial networks, and many did not have an autonomous territorial base where they were the majority. Moreover, members of diasporic polities were often prohibited from controlling land, in exchange for the right to live and trade among other nations.

53 See references in Prologue for the numerous accounts of the “destruction” of the Confederacy.
55 Mancke, “Polity Formation and Atlantic Political Narratives,” 2.
56 This is the closest description of the Wendat system of power, although Mancke defines diasporic polities as being a union of culturally alien people, which the seventeenth-century Wendats were not. Mancke, “Polity Formation and Atlantic Political Narratives,” 2.
57 Mancke, “Polity Formation and Atlantic Political Narratives,” 3.
Wendats united through their common sources of power. Cultural capital, kinship, homeland(s), as well as their Wendakian identity and Christianity played significant roles in sustaining the former Confederacy as a diasporic polity. Communication was also key in the process. Although Trigger contends that Wendats maintained limited interaction between the East and West, the numerous accounts of Loretans and those from Michilimackinac conversing, trading, marrying and conducting diplomacy together delivers an alternative interpretation. Wendats discussed the possibility of reconnecting the diaspora by having one of the communities join the other. In 1660, the trader Pierre Esprit Radisson met with a number of Eastern Wendats and he asked them if they wanted to join his expedition to the west, “to see their owne nation that fled there.”\(^{58}\) After some consideration, the Wendats declined the offer. In 1669, Western Wendats traveled to Quebec to discuss French military aid against a “powerful enemy.”\(^{59}\) Eastern Wendats, along with the Jesuits, took this opportunity to invite the hundreds of Wendats living out west to relocate permanently to Lorette.\(^{60}\) It seems that Western Wendats did not outwardly reject this offer as the Jesuits believed that at least a portion of the Western Wendats would moved the following spring.\(^{61}\)

Delegations from one corner of the Wendat world to the other persisted into the 1670s. In 1672, Eastern Wendats felt the need to promote a common Christian character when they traveled to Michilimackinac. They declared publicly that all meetings should be conducted with the utmost respect for the Christian faith and that if they became aware


\(^{59}\) Most likely the Sioux.

\(^{60}\) JR 54: 283-285.

\(^{61}\) JR 54: 283.
of any suggestion of offense, Eastern Wendats would leave. There is no indication that the Loretans left or did not participate in the meetings, demonstrating a Western adherence to the East’s requests, as well as a similar acceptance of Christianity at Michilimackinac.

Trade connected the diaspora as well. Marie Felix du Bocq and Louis Ouakouts set out from Lorette in 1682 to Michilimackinac for trade. Among the goods belonging to du Bocq were: 18 combs, 132 “big knives,” a packet of arrow heads, 2 gross of awls, 7 half large muskets, 21 leather knives, 12 strike-a-lights, approximately 10 pounds of lead, 140 musket balls, 7 to 8 pounds of powder, 7 large double mirrors, a “heap” of blue beads as well as black, red and white beads and cosmetic powder. du Bocq also acted as a Jesuit courier, delivering letters from Michilimackinac to the Jesuits at Quebec. These letters most likely contained important up-dates concerning the Jesuit Order, and the Wendats living in close proximity to them. Although motivated by economic pursuits, interactions between Eastern and Western Wendats resulted in exchanges concerning information about each respective community. Marriages continued kinship links throughout the diaspora. The Eastern Wendat Jacques Otratenkoui took the opportunity to take a Western Wendat wife. Through this act, Otratenkoui created familial ties at Michilimackinac, and his daughter consequently possessed ancestral bonds to both her community in the West and her father’s homeland of Lorette.

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62 JR 57: 253.
63 “Statement of trade goods belonging to Marie Felix du Bocq Left with Fathers at Missilimakina 1683,” ANQM, DJ, cote TL2, feuilles détachée.
64 “Testimony of Simone Cote and others on alleged embezzlement at Michilimackinac in the case of Couagne vs. Louis Ouakouts, Marie Félix, et al.” ANQM, DJ, cote TL2.
65 JR 60: 53. Jacques Otratenkoui had at least one daughter with his second wife.
Finally, former confederate members worked within their diasporic polity in order to conduct diplomacy. On many occasions Western and Eastern Wendats initiated policies and agreements autonomous from each other, while there is reason to believe they were represented collectively at the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. Although the Eastern Wendats did not have a headman sign the treaty, historians Gilles Havard and Jonathan Lainey suspect *Kondioronk* represented both the East and West. This theory is supported by the fact that the Lorette Chief Nicholas Vincent possessed a wampum belt in 1825 that he believed to be a gift to an Eastern leader by *Kondioronk* in 1701. This verifies that the Loretans were present at the negotiations, and therefore were likely represented by *Kondioronk*. The joint representation of Wendats in 1701 suggests a continuity of Wendat political traditions post-dispersal. Linked by a common language, families, homelands, heritage and religion, Wendats maintained their status as a political entity by continuing to engage in shared diplomatic ventures. La Potherie observed that by the turn of the eighteenth century, those Wendats living at Lorette and Michilimackinac were from “the same nation.”

**Conclusion**

The hopeful Wendat headman who spoke of “bright beams” at the beginning of this chapter was in many ways correct. His passionate call to his fellow Wendats of, “Courage, O desolate people! Thy bones are about to be knit together with muscles and

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67 de La Potherie, *Documents*, 290.
tendons, thy flesh is to be born again, thy strength will be restored to thee, and thou shalt
live as thou didst live of old.” The headman hoped that dispersed Wendats would regain
their strength and form a legitimate body politic, comparable to the Wendat Confederacy
“of old.” Yet, despite good intentions, his aspirations provoked nostalgia to say the least.
By the 1640s and the conquest, Wendats were not in a formidable state. Weakened by
disease, military attacks and internal divisions between pro- and anti-Jesuit factions, the
Confederacy experienced near-fatal degrees of turmoil and flux. Leaders fell, women
struggled with the patriarchal influence of Christian priests, the French rejected any kind
of formal alliance, and warfare dominated foreign policies. With the dispersal, these
circumstances changed. Rather than returning to a state of social crisis, Wendats pushed
forward and reconfigured their systems of power, overcoming many of their previous
problems.

Wendat people emerged both empowered and disempowered by the dispersal. While some lost their authority, such as Wendat Traditionalists, and leaders became
targets of Iroquois martyrdom, others, such as Christian women, sought out additional
opportunities and Christian headmen maintained their influence as geopolitical leaders
throughout the Great Lakes. Larger systems also shifted direction during this period, but
remained rooted in their pre-dispersal origins. Changes in homelands, culture and politics
resulted in a decline, but not complete destruction of the Confederacy, while the
Coalition and French alliances became more important. Moreover, a study of the
processes of Wendat dispersal and relocation in the seventeenth century demonstrates
that natural factors such as disease, and drought became critical to the success of the
dispersal and the nature of the diaspora. The famine experienced at Gahoendoe and the

68 JR 49: 229.
deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of Wendats forced Confederates to migrate out of Wendake and rely on Algonquian and French alliances for refuge. It was also during this period that large numbers of Wendats settled among the Iroquois, resulting in closer ties with their traditional enemies and enabling a number of peace treaties between the two, including the Great Peace of 1701. In addition, Wendat culture evolved, but remained intact. Taking on both policies of compromise and conformity, Wendats drew from their reputation as Christians to differentiate themselves as a distinct and favored people throughout the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region.
EPILOGUE: RECONNECTING THE MODERN DIASPORA, 1999

On August 10th 1999, the dispersed descendants of the once powerful Wendat Confederacy reunited in a Feast of Souls ceremony.1 Numbering in the hundreds, participants gathered at a sacred ossuary pit located near the old Wendat village of Ossossane, or what is today Midland, Ontario. This was the location of the Feast of Souls of 1636 and the heart of Wendake in the seventeenth century. The reason for this modern gathering was two-fold. It was first and foremost organized to return Wendat bones taken from the pit in the 1940s by archaeologists and placed in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Out of this quest, however, arose an additional goal of reuniting the four modern Wendat Nations, located in Quebec, Ontario, Oklahoma and Kansas, in their homeland.2 Moreover, organizers hoped the gathering would serve as a forum to renew the Wendat Confederacy on twenty-first century terms. Nearly four centuries after their initial dispersal, disparate groups across North America continued to connect and identify as

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1 The descendants of the Wendat confederacy are identified presently within four branches spanning the United States of America and Canada. The Canadian branches are the Huron of Wendake (Quebec) and the Wyandot of Anderdon (Ontario). The U.S.A branches include the Wyandott Nation of Oklahoma and the Wyandot Nation of Kansas. For more information of the Wendat migrations taking place after 1701 see: Larry Hancks,“The Emigrant Tribes: Wyandot, Delaware, and Shawnee, a Chronology (The Wyandot Nation of Kansas: www.wyandot.org, 2007) [accessed on-line: 3 January 2011].
This present-day Wendat diaspora joined together through the same avenues as their seventeenth-century ancestors, drawing upon the power, traditions, and culture of the Confederacy before its dispersal.

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), located in Toronto, Ontario, houses some of the most important exhibits and artifacts in all of Canada. It is not surprising that nearly 500 boxes of Wendat bones, discovered and excavated by archaeologist Kenneth Kid in 1947 and 1948 ended up in the ROM’S collection. For forty years, these souls (as the Wendats call them) were kept in the basement of the anthropology department of the museum, and were never actually put on public display. As a little boy, Michel Gros-Louis, a Wendat from Wendake, Quebec, visited the museum. Through this visit Gros-Louis discovered the location and status of the bones. From that point on, he promised himself he would do whatever he could to return the souls to their proper resting place. He reflected on this goal, “I feel it is my duty to do that out of respect for my ancestors.”

In 1997, Gros-Louis went to the ROM and made a formal request to have the bones returned. The ROM agreed and plans were set in motion.

The reburial required complex preparations. They included the cooperation of Native and non-Native groups, the communication and organization of numbers of volunteers and most importantly the involvement of the Wendat diasporic communities and their leaders. Chief Janith English, of the Wyandot Nation of Kansas, put in many

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3 Despite these group’s varied use of the term “Wendat,” such as: Wyandotte, Wyandot, Wendat-Huron and Huron, they all represent the same identity rooted in their Wendakian heritage.
5 Moran, “Hurons Headed Home.”
6 Moran, “Hurons Headed Home.”
long hours to prepare for the event. Other Wendat leaders (Chief Willie Piccard, Huron-Wendat of Wendake; Chief Leafof Bearskin, Wyandott Nation of Oklahoma; Second Chief Jim Bland, Wyandott Nation of Oklahoma; Spokesperson Steven A. Gronda, Wyandot Nation of Anderdon) asked English to draft the written agreement reinstating the Wendat Confederacy. The task was daunting; nevertheless, she found solace in the work and completed a copy that reached one page in length. It speaks not only of the current bond between Wendat people, but draws upon ancient concepts of leadership and traditions of unity as well. The document concludes, “We vow to attempt to work together in a way that the embers of long ago council fires may be fanned into a flame of kinship, culture and love that will warm countless generations of Wendat people.” The “embers of long ago” that English sought to reignite were the remnants of those seventeenth-century men and women who created and maintained the Wendat identity for future use. In addition to her written work, English created a flag for each of the four Nations. The Chiefs agreed upon a symbol and she spent three months hand-sewing each flag. According to English, the work was worth it because “they were [her] present to the Nation.”

Participants from the Wyandot Nation of Kansas began preparations three weeks prior to the gathering by abstaining from alcohol and drugs. This continued throughout the ceremony and for a subsequent week after. Volunteers began preparations well in

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advance. Despite the importance and relevance of this historic gathering to the broader Canadian society, Heritage Canada and Indian Affairs both denied the Confederacy’s request for financial aid. Consequently, local organizations supported the event, including: The Martyrs Shrine, St-Johns Ambulance organization, Wye Heritage Marina, Friends of Ste-Marie, Ste-Marie Among The Hurons, the Wye Marsh and Wildlife Centre, Camp Simpresca, Girl Guides of Canada, Silver Birch Area, Chappel Farms, A&M Super Store of Barrie, Midland OPP Detachment. Commenting on the specific amount of work and preparation put in by Pierre Lefave, the manager at Sainte-Marie-Among-The-Hurons, Chief English said, “I was astounded to enter each of the buildings. There was a fire blazing in every fireplace and candles on every mantle of that huge complex. No small gesture of welcome.” These intricate details demonstrated the amount of time and energy put in by the volunteers.

Eventually the day came, and despite the inevitable modern-day alterations to this version of the Feast of Souls, the 1999 event maintained its traditional purpose as a means to unite the Confederacy by solidifying friendships, old and new alike. Preliminary events took place the day before the Feast on 28 August and included a canoed entrance of four Wendat Nations’ Chiefs, as well as the signing of an agreement to reinstate the

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12 Moran, “Hurons Headed Home.”
Confederacy. In one fire, each group contributed the ashes of their own nation’s fires, symbolizing the joining together of these dispersed peoples.15

Accompanying the Wendat Chiefs were leaders from local Algonquian and Iroquois Nations.16 In particular, Chief Lorraine McRae of the Chippewas of Mnjikaning at the Rama Reserve stood along the bank of the Wye River to welcome the Wendat Chiefs formally. It was McRae’s people who accepted the stewardship of the fish weir at Atherley Narrows near Orillia, Ontario during the time of the Wendat dispersal. “Our peoples met thousands of years ago” remarked McRae, “and I feel so honoured to be sharing in this homecoming.”17 Observers witnessed the procession with solemn respect. Although only eleven years old, Riel Lamarche, a descendant of the famous Métis leader Louis Riel, understood the circumstances. “They have come home,” he explained to journalist Roberta Avery, who was among a number of different reporters attending the event.18

Aside from non-Wendat participants, approximately 400 Wendats travelled “home” for the ceremony. The 500 boxes of bones were loaded into a cube van and transported from the ROM to the burial site.19 Leaders delivered elaborate speeches before each box was smudged with sweetgrass.20 This was followed by an individual blessing bestowed on the containers by ninety year-old Elder Madelaine Gros-Louis from

16 Moran, “Hurons Headed Home.”
17 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
18 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
19 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
20 Brian Baker, “Ceremony marks return.”
Wendake, Quebec, and the oldest attendee at the ceremony.\textsuperscript{21} The boxes were then carefully passed down one by one through a human chain, and opened to reveal the discoloured fragments of human remains. Small child-size skulls, ribs cages and leg bones were exposed, looking more like bundles of firewood than remnants of human beings. Slowly they made their way towards the eight-foot ossuary pit. At the end of the line was Michel Gros-Louis who lined the pit with over a dozen beaver pelts, as well as other customary burial items such as kettles and pots. Gros-Louis then placed the bones in a circle at the bottom of the pit. He explained the personal satisfaction of the moment in the following way “I feel at peace seeing my ancestors returned to their rightful resting place.”\textsuperscript{22} For Gros-Louis, this was the culmination of ten years of work. It was not only the right thing to do for his people (past and present) but for himself, fulfilling the promise he had made years ago when he first became aware of the bones.

Gros-Louis was not alone in his sentiments. The connection between Wendats and their seventeenth-century ancestors was profound. The Feast of Souls in 1999 became a vehicle for contemporary peoples to meet with their past. Kinship bonds were reaffirmed and new relationships were formed. Jim Bland, Second Chief of Wyandotte of Oklahoma, was overcome by his personal experience. “My ancestors are here. I feel that,” Bland explained. The Feast became a meeting ground that on the one hand delivered a window into the ancient world of Wendake, while on the other hand, inspired a new generation of Wendats. Stephen Gronda, of the Anderdon Wendat, expressed the dual purpose of the event, “[The Wendat] rebirth will come as we return the remains of

\textsuperscript{21} Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
\textsuperscript{22} Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
our ancestors to mother earth.”

Chief English also commented on the unification process by explaining, “I felt like we were suspended in time and place. I feel a oneness with all my brothers and sisters here with me now, and those who went before.”

Beyond a profound connection with ancestors and the revitalisation of the Wendat Confederacy, Wendat organizers attempted to address the pain and dislocation experienced by Wendats because of their dispersal. Although many centuries in the past, the feeling of loss had transferred down for generations. According to Chief English, the emotions and trauma of 1649 persist in the collective memory of the modern Wendat. It is her understanding that “Many years ago when our people left this beautiful land on the shores of Georgian Bay, our hearts were heavy, our people were very, very sad . . .”

Sallie Andrews, a Wyandotte of Oklahoma, sympathized with the pain of her ancient relatives. The event, for Andrews was “an emotional experience of great sadness, it’s more than words can say.”

Despite this sadness, however, a healing process had begun. Chief English saw it as fundamental to creating a strong and vibrant Wendat society.

English shared her beliefs with a reporter during the 1999 events, giving “thanks to the creator that this healing has taken place.” By drawing upon the experience of 1649, Wendats regained a sense of belonging and identity from their ancestors. Reflecting on this notion in connection to the Feast of Souls in 1999, Chief English encouraged people to:

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23 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
24 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
25 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
26 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
27 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
“Remember that the opposite of Love is not hate; it is apathy. Conflict is inevitable when people resolve to reconnect and attempt to define new relationships. For those who love one another, joy is almost inevitably connected with a degree of pain... This was a very powerful event... We all tried the best we could to accomplish the seemingly impossible: to soothe the wounds and welcome each other home after 350 years of separation.”

Central to this healing process was the concept of place and space. Similar to their seventeenth-century kinsmen, the twentieth-century Wendat looked to the old boundaries of Wendake for comfort and belonging. It represented a location to reconnect in a physical, emotional and spiritual way to the people and events of their past.

Consequently, Chief English foresaw that “this place [would] become a place of peace and healing for all who [visit].”

Concepts of homeland and place are frequent points of reference for diasporic people. For the modern Wendat it represents a territory filled with memories of warfare, disease and the conquest of their Confederacy, while at the same time, it symbolized a source of power, as well as a sense of identity and heritage.

The events of 1999 resulted in a number of achievements for the contemporary Wendat community. Since the initial burial, it became tradition to gather at the site every summer, allowing members from each Nation to re-connect on an annual basis.

Moreover, the ROM handed over the responsibilities for the preservation of the burial pit to the Wendake Band Council. Of particular significance is the founding of the “The Agondachia” Association,” which also goes by the name “The Ossossane Foundation” in reference to the location of the burial site. This organization’s main goals are “the

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29 Avery, “Reunion Brings Tears of Joy.”
30 Agondachia is the Wendat word for “The Elders House.”

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survival of the Wendat heritage and the traditional ways of the Wendat people.” The association, therefore, adopted the initial goals of the gathering to promote those objectives for the future.

Popular support for the Feast of Souls in 1999, nearly 400 years after the perceived “destruction” of the Wendat, exposes the reality of the situation. The existence of a Wendat community today is due in large part to the men and women who maintained that identity and culture beyond their physical dispersal in 1649; people like Kondioronk, Pierre Atirona and Cecil Ganaderias. Generations have drawn upon the legacy of the Confederacy, their legends, history, and traditions, to create a new cohort of Wendat leaders and communities. These people may have transformed in the wake of wars, colonialism, and relocation, but at their core they are Wendakian, the descendants of Aenon and Taretande and the results of a cultural persistence rooted in the seventeenth century. Janith English believes in the power of the past and its importance to the modern Wendat confederacy. Her overall perception of the events in 1999 highlight the undeniable conclusion that although the Wendats became were in 1649, but they were not destroyed. Thus, English contends “When I participated in the ceremonies in 1999, I felt as if I had come full circle. The Feast of Souls is the heart of the Spirit of Our Nation. It has assumed a different form; but our Heart never changes.” Much like the Feast of Souls ceremony, therefore, the Wendat of today are not the Wendat of the past, but their hearts have remained the same.

31 The mandate of the Agondachia Association is published on their website at: www.agondachia.com, [accessed on-line: 23 March 2009].
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Audio Visual Recordings

Appendix A: A Brief Chronology of Selected Wendat Events and Migration, 1400-1701

Wendake

c. 1400 - The Bear and Cord Join to Create Wendat Confederacy.
c. 1570 – The People of The Deer Join The Confederacy
1609 – Champlain meets the Wendat in Wendake for the first time
c. 1610 – The People of the Rock Join The Confederacy
1634 – The Jesuits arrive in Wendake, First Epidemic
1636 – The Feast of Souls in Ossossane
1637 – Headmen Tarentande and Aeronon die
1648-1649 – The Wendat are attacked by the Iroquois and their villages are abandon
1649-1651 – The Wendat seek refuge at Gahoendoe Island

Wendat Migration and Settlement In the East

1651 - Ile Orléans
1656 – Quebec City
1657 – Some Wendats decide to join various Iroquois comunities
1660 – Fort des Hurons/Fort St. Louis
1668 – Beuport
1669 – Notre Dame de Foy
1673 – Ancienne Lorette
1697 – Jeune Lorette

Wendat Migration and Settlement in the West
1651 – Mackinac Island
1653 – Green Bay
1659 – Chippewa River
1661 – Chaquamegon (La Pointe du Saint Esprit)
1671 – Michilimakinac (Saint Ignace)
1701 – Fort Detroit
Appendix B: Ottawa Valley and Saguenay Trade, 1600-1620

Figure 1.

Source: Cole Harris ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada: Vol. 1 From the Beginning to 1800*. Geoffrey J. Mathews, Cartographer/ Designer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) 92. This image may be subject to copyright.
Appendix C: Huron Trade and Iroquois Disruptions, 1640-1648

Figure 2.

Source: Cole Harris ed. Historical Atlas of Canada: Vol. 1 From the Beginning to 1800. Geoffrey J. Mathews, Cartographer/ Designer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) 93. This image may be subject to copyright.
Appendix D: The Great Dispersion, 1648-1653

Figure 3.

Source: Cole Harris ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada: Vol. 1 From the Beginning to 1800*. Geoffrey J. Mathews, Cartographer/ Designer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) 93. This image may be subject to copyright.