“CERTAIN RESERVATIONS SHOULD BE MADE FOR THE WHITE PEOPLE IN OUR COUNTRY”: REEVALUATING MICHIKINIKWA’S PATH FROM WARRIOR TO DIPLOMAT, 1795-1812

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Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: RECONSIDERING MIHCIKINIKWA, THE "AMERICAN CHIEF"

A trip to the rotunda of the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus presents the visitor with a variety of paintings and other symbols, all of which hold particular meanings connected to the formation and growth of the state. Paintings honoring famous individuals and moments in Ohio history adorn the walls of the rotunda, including Oliver Hazard Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie, the Wright brothers, and Thomas Edison. However, the largest painted canvas on display represents an event which predates the state's founding, Howard Chandler Christy's *The Signing* depicts the 1795 signing of the Treaty of Greenville, the peace treaty that ended the Northwest Indian War and opened up large portions of the Ohio Country for "white" settlement. The Ohio-born Christy, perhaps better known for his "Christy Girls" advertising illustrations and his painting *The Signing of the Constitution*, used a neoclassical-inspired motif that belied the painting's mid-twentieth century origins. The painting's symbolism is far from subtle, and the accompanying art guide provided by the statehouse describes the signing as "a key moment in Ohio statehood."[1] On the canvas, the central figure, Miami leader Michikinikwa (Little Turtle), presents a wampum belt to American General Anthony Wayne under the watchful eye of notable United States military figures William Henry Harrison, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark, as well

[1] "Art in the Rotunda of the Ohio Statehouse", pamphlet available on site or via PDF download, www.ohiostatehouse.org

as Native American leaders Buckongelas, Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket), Tarhe (The Crane) and Catahecassa (Black Hoof). The signing takes place under a strategically placed American flag. These men were all present at the actual treaty signing, and yet Christy's scene has been cleverly staged. Due in part to the painting itself, the signing of the treaty has subsequently been incorporated into Ohio's founding myth. This view of history both legitimizes Ohio's founding and simultaneously employs the Ohio Country's original inhabitants as symbolic torch-passers, or wampum and calumet passers in this case. Not surprisingly, the reality of the relationship between Native Americans, United States government agents, and American settlers was far more complex. While the Treaty of Greenville is now viewed as the foundation of Ohio statehood, it was not the end of diplomacy or treaty-making in the Old Northwest. The Native American leaders depicted in Christy's painting and present at the actual signing, along with the respective nations which they represented, did not simply fade into obscurity after the treaty concluded, but continued to play a vital role in the political, social, and economic landscape for decades to come. Perhaps no individual better exemplifies this fact more than the Miami *akima* (chief) central to Christy's canvas—Michikinikwa.

Generations of historians have discussed Michikinikwa's pivotal role in the Northwest Indian War (1785-1795); however, the life of Michikinikwa following the 1795 Treaty of Greenville until his death in 1812 is a seventeen year period that has drawn surprisingly little attention from recent historians.[2] Historians have interpreted

[2] For a more detailed discussion of Michikinikwa's role in the Northwest Indian War see Calvin Young's biography *Little Turtle (Me-she-kin-o-quah) the Great Chief of the Miami Indian Nation,* (Greenvile Ohio, 1917); William H. Guthman's *March to Massacre: A History of the First Seven Years of the United States Army,* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1770); Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and*

Michikinikwa's later years as a period of assimilation, accommodation, and capitulation, often presented in contrast to the armed resistance of Shawnee brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa. Although Michikinikwa himself left no personal account of his life, he appears frequently in the historical record of this period primarily due to his association with son-in-law and ever-present translator William Wells, but also due to the official correspondence and personal recollections of U.S. Indian agent John Johnston and governor of the Indiana Territory William Henry Harrison, as well as other writings like those of the French philosopher and historian comte de Volney. These sources, which detailed his participation in a series of treaties and land sales throughout the early nineteenth century, documented his multiple trips to Philadelphia and Washington, and included statements made personally to Wells, Jefferson, Johnston, Harrison, and comte de Volney, directly contradict the traditional view of Michikinikwa's later life, and instead suggest that the Miami leader was not simply seeking an alliance with American government and its various representatives, but instead was employing a multi-faceted diplomatic strategy with the goal of preserving Native American sovereignty in the face of American settler colonial expansion.

The intellectual inspiration for this argument hinges on Michikinikwa's particularly fascinating 1802 statement to President Jefferson when referring to the Treaty of Greenville: "by the Treaty it was mentioned that certain reservations should be made for

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Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson's edited volume *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814,* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001); and Colin Calloway's *The Victory with No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

the white people in our country."[3] The term "reservations" is synonymous with Native Americans in the context of North American history, so it is surprising to see this term used by Michikinikwa to describe allotments for white settlements. In this specific case, Michikinikwa was referring to the contiguous ceded areas included in the treaty and also the smaller sections of ceded land that included present-day Fort Wayne, Vincennes, and Chicago. In broader context, Michikinikwa's statement is revealing in that it gives us a glimpse into the Miami leader's worldview and separates this view from deterministic avenues of inquiry that skip over crucial diplomatic steps and lose analytical complexity in the process, much like the myth-making of the Treaty of Greenville in relation to the origins of Ohio statehood. Rufus Putnam's 1803 "Map of the State of Ohio" is a thought-provoking visual representation that further illustrates this concept, as Putnam used dark gray boxes around sites at Piqua, Sandusky, Fort Recovery, and Fort Wayne to represent these "reservations for white people." A twenty-first century observer may be accustomed to seeing these types of boxes or circumscribed spaces as representations of modern-day Indian reservations, while in the early nineteenth century this type of cartographical representation denoted areas of the map reserved for white settlement. Seen through this novel analytical lens, terms like "Connecticut Reservation" and "Virginia Reservation" seen on Putnam's map take on new meaning when the perspective is flipped, as these are

[3] John Johnston and Leonard Uzal Hill, *John Johnston and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis: With Recollections of Sixty Years,* (Columbus, Ohio: Stoneman Press, 1957), 15.

not only reservations carved out of the Old Northwest, but are in fact "reservations for white people" on Native American land.[4]

Following Michikinikwa's path from Greenville until his death presents yet another opportunity to flip the traditional perspective of Native American history. While Americans may have been looking westward with ideas of territorial expansion, Native American leaders like Michikinikwa were turning their attention eastward and devising means of containing this expansion while securing their own future on their ancestral lands, all the while attempting to adjust to a rapidly changing economic and political world. A reevaluation of the available sources pertaining to Michikinikwa during the period 1795-1812 reveals that recent historians' depictions of the Miami leader as an accomodationist or American-friendly "chief" are inaccurate. To the contrary, Michikinikwa's activities during this period reveal that he was engaged in a series of strategic diplomatic relations, both through formal participation in the treaty-making process and numerous trips to the American capital, and through more informal relations with private philanthropic missionary organizations like the Quakers, who provided agricultural aid to Native American groups and often lobbied for the abolition of the Indian liquor trade. By revisiting Michikinikwa's statements regarding the Treaty of Greenville and the "reservations for white people," which he believed that treaty established, it is evident that the Miami leader was seeking to use his personal diplomatic influence, as well as the terms of a series of influential treaties (including the Treaty of Greenville), to define, control, and limit white

[4] Rufus Putnam, "Map of the State of Ohio", in *The journal of a tour into the territory northwest of the Alleghany Mountains: made in the spring of the year 1803,* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805), Available online https://www.loc.gov/item/90682167

settlement while simultaneously defining, advocating for, and protecting the sovereignty of his own Miami nation.

Before tracing Michikinikwa's path from warrior to diplomat in the wake of the Treaty of Greenville, it is important to first understand how recent historians have portrayed, or overlooked, this period of his life. Because Native American history during this period remains a relatively small subset of early American history, certain influential texts from the late twentieth century continue to exert great influence on the historiography of Native American participation in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes region and the depiction of Michikinikwa as an accomodationist or American-friendly Native American leader has persisted. Recently, Native American historians have challenged the previous either/or designation that has forced Native American groups to be considered as advocates of either resistance or accommodation, but this new framework, which allows for a greater exploration of Native American agency, has yet to be applied specifically to Michikinikwa or the Miami.

No exploration of the Algonquian-speaking world during this time period would be complete without considering Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. White recognized some of Michikinikwa's complexities, calling him "perhaps the greatest Algonquian war leader," but also referred to him as an "adept politician with the Americans."[5] However, when discussing the Miami leader's role after the Northwest Indian War and the Treaty of Greenville, White pointed out Michikinikwa's failure to maintain influence over his own

[5] White, 495.

people, and his willingness to "accommodate the Americans."[6] White also applies the epithet "American chiefs" to Michikinikwa and others present at Greenville including the Wyandot leader Tarhe and Catahecassa of the Shawnee. While this is not an outright criticism of these men, it is a slight nonetheless, as it suggests that their loyalty to the young American government took precedence over loyalty to their respective nations. Similar phrasing also appeared in the work of R. David Edmunds, who referred to these same Native American leaders repeatedly as "pro-American chiefs" or "American government chiefs."[7]

This type of oversimplified language even briefly appeared in Daniel K. Richter's *Facing East from Indian Country*: *A Native History of Early America*, a work which explicitly attempted to adequately represent the Native American perspective. Richter referred to Michikinikwa as the "accomodationist Miami leader," mentioning him only as an opponent of the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa.[8] Surprisingly, even in the work of historians like Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, whose book placed indigenous actors at the center of the narrative, the view of Michikinikwa during this period remained decidedly negative. Dunbar-Ortiz wrote that "With previous Indigenous resistance movements, such as those led by Little Turtle and Blue Jacket, during peace negotiation in the wake of ruinous US wars of annihilation, leaders of factions had become 'agency chiefs' who agreed to land sales without the consent of those they purported to represent…The emerging younger

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[6] White, 501.

[7] R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet,* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 122 and 153.

[8] Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 231.

generation was contemptuous of such chiefs, whom they perceived as selling out their people."[9]

While there exists clear historiographical precedent for these depictions, the subsequent oversimplified view of Michikinikwa is problematic as it allows little room for Native American agency apart from armed resistance and severely limits Native American opportunities for self-definition. Surely the influential Miami *akima* acted in the best interest of his own nation and did not define his actions or strategies strictly in terms of his relationship to the young government of the United States. Other historians, notably Kathleen DuVal, have questioned the tendency to view Native Americans strictly in terms of their relationship to, or cooperation with, white colonial powers. DuVal wrote "Historians have often divided North American Indians into pro-British, pro-French, and pro-Spanish factions, making the same mistake that European commanders occasionally did…like European groups, Native American groups were primarily pro-themselves."[10] Certainly this was the case with Michikinikwa and the Miami.

While historians like Richter and Dunbar-Ortiz mentioned Michikinikwa only in passing, the Miami *akima* does play a central role in Andrew Cayton's *Frontier Indiana*, and yet, Cayton's chapter focusing on the Miami leader entitled "The World of Little Turtle, 1790-1795" ended abruptly at Greenville, and Cayton chose to portray Michikinikwa's later life in unquestionably negative terms. Some of these criticisms are

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[9] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 85. Notice as well that Dunbar-Ortiz used the anglicized versions "Little Turtle" and "Blue Jacket" and not their Algonquian names "Michikinikwa" and "Weyapiersenwah."

[10] Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 95.

subtle, others are not. For example, Cayton wrote "Little Turtle learned to wear the clothes of the Americans and to adopt some of their manners and customs," as if learning to wear European clothing was an acquired skill that was remarkable.[11] This type of historical condescension may well be unintentional, but Cayton's later appraisal of Michikinikwa is far from ambiguous in its criticism. Referring to the years after Greenville, Cayton wrote that the Miami leader "had moved from hostility to resistance to objection to accommodation with the Americans and their insatiable desire for land. In no way, however, had he improved the situation of the Indians. While he exercised power by virtue of his reputation and his ties with federal agents, he offered little comfort to a people in crisis."[12] This not only seems an overly-harsh value judgement of Michikinikwa's actions and intentions, but also overlooks many crucial events in his life and reduces Native American participation in this era to a choice between accommodation or resistance—a dichotomy which ignores the political, social, and economic realities on the ground.

To be fair to Cayton, his desire to express the tragedy and injustice of later Indian removal policies may have led him to castigate Michikinikwa's supposed complicity in later events, which he would have had no way of foreseeing or perhaps even imagining in the early nineteenth century. Despite any individual historian's view of Michikinikwa, or similar Native American leaders, the term "accomodationist" carries overtly negative

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[11] Andrew L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 166. Cayton's criticism here of Michikinikwa is puzzling, considering that tradition of Native Americans appropriating Europeans goods and clothing for their own cultural purposes was well established by the early 19th century. For more on the history of these practices see Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

[12] Cayton, 204.

connotations in this context. A more carefully considered analysis of Michikinikwa's activities in the final years of his life reveals that any attempt on his part to accommodate American leadership occurred in a diplomatic context and was strategic in nature, not an indicator of allegiance or cultural assimilation. Therefore, the term "accomodationist" is deeply flawed and cannot be applied to Michikinikwa. The aforementioned work of DuVal further questioned the resistance versus accommodation dichotomy in respect to the choices made by Native Americans. Allowing for a greater degree of self-definition, DuVal wrote that "in their negotiations, Indians and Europeans alike sought to control the culture of diplomacy and trade and to define themselves and others in ways that forwarded their own interests."[13] While DuVal focused her study on the Arkansas Valley, her analytical model has the potential for broad applications throughout the Americas. Departing intentionally from the dichotomous approach of previous historians, DuVal stated "in the Arkansas Valley from the sixteenth through the early nineteenth centuries, European colonialism met neither accommodation nor resistance but incorporation."[14]While the same cannot be said for the Ohio Valley or the Great Lakes region during this time period, particularly in terms of resistance (of which there was plenty) it is certainly appropriate to question the uncritical use of the term "accommodation" when referring to the diplomatic strategies employed by Algonquian Native American leaders like Michikinikwa, who undoubtedly adapted and incorporated the European treaty system to his own nation's advantage.

[13] DuVal, 4.

[14] DuVal, 5.

More recently in 2015, preeminent Native American historian Colin Calloway's *The Victory with No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army* painted Michikinikwa in more sympathetic terms, although the Miami leader's life after 1795 is only discussed in the book's epilogue.[15] Calloway briefly mentioned his later trips to Philadelphia and Washington and also included anecdotes from his visit with comte de Volney, but Calloway was more interested in the military legacy of Native Americans and not later diplomatic interactions. Calloway noted the influence of Michikinikwa's son-in-law William Wells, writing that Wells urged his Miami father-in-law to "follow the white-man's path," a choice of phrasing that seems anachronistic and clumsy considering that Wells' own path was full of cultural and racial ambiguity.[16] There is a danger here and a tendency to conflate Michikinikwa's willingness to engage in diplomatic relations and new forms of economic intercourse with a desire for total cultural assimilation. Wells is a fascinating figure in his own right and his story and contribution to our understanding of Michikinikwa is worth briefly sketching out.[17] Because Wells was adopted by the Miami as a youth and fully assimilated into Native American life before entering into the service of the United States government, his loyalty to the Americans was an ever-present question,

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[15] It should be noted here that Michikinikwa's influential role in the Northwest Indian War is unquestioned. However, Calloway qualifies earlier accounts that portrayed Michikinikwa as the chief architect of St. Clair's defeat. Guthman's aforementioned *March to Massacre* and Young's early biography are particularly generous to Michikinikwa, while more recent historians like Calloway now see Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket) as equally responsible for Native American military success.

[16] Colin G. Calloway, *The Victory with No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 159.

[17] For a more detailed account of Wells, see William Heath's biography *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

yet his loyalty to his father-in-law was readily apparent and the two remained inseparable until Michikinikwa's death in 1812.[18] Wells is also crucial from a source perspective as his fluency in multiple Algonquian languages and ability to translate for Michikinikwa allows for the former's accessibility in the historical record.

Calloway's portrayal of the Miami *akima* has remained constant throughout his career, as his latest influential text mentions that Michikinikwa "met [president] Washington and adopted his policies as the best path for his people's future."[19] Calloway furthered linked Michikinikwa to George Washington by noting that "the sword, gun, and medal Washington had given him were interred with him as burial goods."[20] Historian Adam Jortner's recent work, focused on the activities of the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa, echoes the views of Calloway concerning the degree to which Michikinikwa was influenced by his Euroamerican counterparts and demonstrates a similar fascination with the Miami leader's corporeal remains. Jortner wrote that Michikinikwa "adopted Apekonit's (William Wells) enthusiasm for white civilization," once again assuming that individuals like Wells or Washington were crucial to re-shaping Michikinikwa's worldview, apparently transforming him from a formidable enemy to a willing partner.[21]

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[18] Michikinikwa and William Wells both died in the summer of 1812. Michikinikwa died of natural causes at Wells' farm outside Fort Wayne in July, while Wells was killed and beheaded by Potawatomi warriors at the siege of Fort Dearborn in August.

[19] Colin G. Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington, The First President, the First Americans, and the Birth of the Nation,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 382.

[20] Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington,* 461.

[21] Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 89. Here Jortner

Jortner would also invoke the familiar "accommodationist" epithet in regard to Michikinikwa, lyrically describing Fort Wayne as the final resting place of "the longtime accommodationist's bones."[22] While historians like Calloway and Jortner did refer to the post-Greenville career of Michikinikwa, they often used him as an accommodationist or American-friendly stand-in and in doing so gave the venerable Miami *akima* a one dimensional sense of motivation and little agency of his own.

Over the past few years, a handful of historians have begun the process of reevaluating and re-contextualizing Native American participation during this period between the Treaty of Greenville and the end of the War of 1812 with an emphasis on Native American agency apart from armed resistance, a process that influential historian Pekka Hämäläinen has described as the need to "turn the telescope around and create models that allow us to look at Native policies toward colonial powers as more than defensive strategies of resistance and containment."[23] Karim M. Tiro argued that the role of Native American diplomacy leading up to and during the War of 1812 has been ignored by previous historians in favor of "narratives organized around battles."[24] Tiro used the U.S. Indian Agency at Piqua to highlight the activities of Native American groups like the Delaware who remained neutral throughout the war and he argued that increasing

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is using William Wells' Algonquian name "Apekonit," which is typically translated at "carrot," an apparent reference to his red hair.

[22] Jortner, 213.

[23] Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 7.

[24] Karim M. Tiro, "The View from Piqua Agency: The War of 1812, the White River Delawares, and the Origins of IndianRemoval", *Journal of the Early Republic,* (No. 35, Spring 2015), 25.

involvement with the United States government proved to be both an important opportunity to exert Native American autonomy but also eventually led to an increasingly paternalist relationship with Indian agents like John Johnston and the ideological origins of later Indian removal policies grew out of that relationship. Adding to our understanding of the importance of diplomacy, David Andrew Nichols' 2016 book *Engines of Diplomacy: Indian Trading Factories and the Negotiation of American Empire* is, to date, the only comprehensive history of the United States Indian Agency and its network of Indian agencies and agents (also called factories and factors) located throughout the American Southeast, Mississippi Valley, and Great Lakes regions.

While Tiro and Nichols have focused specifically on diplomacy, Lori J. Daggar's work has explored the impact of Quaker agricultural missions in the Ohio Country. Daggar made a compelling argument that instead of debating the relative success or failure of the Quaker "civilizing" process and the rate of Native American assimilation, historians need to consider how specific Native American groups were choosing to participate in this process for the purpose of advancing their own economic or political agendas. In this way, Daggar flipped the traditional perspective and accounted for the annuity system established by the Treaty of Greenville when she wrote "Because the War Department partially funded the civilization project by allocating annuity funds toward agricultural tools and missionary labor, in essence Native nations paid Friends and government officials to clear their fields, build mills, plant corn, fence lands, and build roads that connected their crops with Euroamerican markets."[25] Ultimately, Tiro, Nichols, and Daggar argued for a reappraisal

[25] Lori J. Daggar, "The Mission Complex: Economic Development, "Civilization,' and Empire in the Early Republic" *Journal of the Early Republic,* (No. 36, Fall 2016), 485.

of this crucial period following the Treaty of Greenville by focusing on diplomacy, cultural exchange, and shifting socio-economic realities rather than the more traditional accounts of this period, which emphasized the assimilation/resistance dichotomy as the background for inevitable conflict and eventual Indian removal.

After establishing the relative lack of scholarship on Michikinikwa during the years 1795-1812, pointing out some of the analytical and ideological shortcomings present in the existing scholarship, and connecting to recent texts that reevaluate Native American participation during this time period, it is necessary to move from a deconstructive analysis of Michikinikwa's portrayal to a new constructive analysis of his activities, which allows for alternate explanations of his behavior from varying perspectives. In order to achieve this, it is important to consciously move away from depictions of Michikinikwa that define the Miami leader primarily by his relationship with the United States, and instead analyze how his path from warrior to diplomat specifically impacted the Miami nation. This thesis will reevaluate the available primary sources pertaining to Michikinikwa during the period 1795-1812 and conclude that the Miami *akima* employed a clear, innovative diplomatic strategy. This strategy had the intention of stemming the tide of American settler colonial expansion, while simultaneously legitimizing and defending Miami sovereignty. Michikinikwa's strategy included multiple diplomatic visits to the American capital, an active engagement in the treaty-making process, and a strict policy of neutrality in regard to the growing conflict between Indian resistance movement and the American government during the final years of his life.

This thesis is separated into five chapters. Following this introductory chapter of argument and historiography, Chapter II details Michikinikwa's multiple visits to both

Philadelphia and Washington D. C. during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This chapter documents how the Miami leader argued for the enforcement of the Treaty of Greenville while cultivating personal diplomatic relationships with American presidents, as well as private philanthropic organizations like the Quakers. Chapter III provides an in-depth look at Michikinikwa's role in a series of pivotal early nineteenth-century treaties, including the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1803) and the Treaty of Grouseland (1805). While many historians have viewed these treaties primarily in terms of land cessions in response to American land hunger, Native American leaders like Michikinikwa appropriated these treaties for their own purposes in order to legitimize the sovereignty of their own indigenous nations. Chapter IV analyzes the final years of Michikinikwa's life against the backdrop of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh's Indian resistance movement in the years preceding the War of 1812. Although his influence and health were both in decline during this time period, Michikinikwa's final 1811 speech at Fort Wayne and subsequent letter to William Henry Harrison demonstrated that he remained dedicated to the cause of Miami sovereignty until the very end of his life. The thesis will conclude with a short epilogue, which critically explores how Michikinikwa was incorporated into American memory during the 20th century and how those depictions of the Miami *akima* unfortunately persist to this day.

Michikinikwa was born in 1752 at a Miami village on the Eel River and accordingly spent the majority of his days in the lower Great Lakes region, travelling primarily between the upper Wabash Valley and the principal Miami town of Kekionga (present-day Fort Wayne), which was strategically located at the confluence of the St. Marys, St. Joseph, and Maumee rivers. The Miami had long occupied this key portage point between the Wabash

and Maumee rivers, which provided the access both to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. During his lifetime, Michikinikwa would have been familiar with a geographic landmark and reference point on the Wabash known as the Forks of the Wabash, which is fitting as Michikinikwa himself stood at a metaphorical fork in his own path in 1795. The accomplished Miami war leader could have easily walked away from his leadership role following the conclusion of the Northwest Indian War, and yet he chose to embark on a different path. Just as he chose to defend the Miami nation and its allies from American invasion during the war, he chose to defend the interests of the Miami in a new diplomatic arena. Michikinikwa's new path would be an eventful one, introducing him to a new set of both allies and enemies and would often take him far from his familiar home on the banks of the Wabash.

CHAPTER II

LEAVING THE WABASH: A MIAMI DIPLOMAT AT THE AMERICAN CAPITAL

During the autumn of 1788 tensions were running high in the Old Northwest between a growing confederation of Native American groups and the young American government. Years of boundary disputes and frontier violence had taken their toll, and the situation was rapidly deteriorating into an armed conflict that would come to be known as the Northwest Indian War. Amidst this uncertain backdrop, the Miami, Delaware, and Wyandot nations convened an Indian council on the banks of the Miami river. At this particular council, the Delaware and Wyandot delegations hoped to persuade the Miamies, whose own delegation was led by Michikinikwa, to seek a peaceful resolution to their brewing conflict with the United States. The council's defining moment came when "the Wyandot chiefs particularly presented them [the Miamies] with a large belt of wampum…which was refused."[1] Not easily rebuffed, the Wyandot delegation "then laid it on the shoulders of a principal chief [Michikinikwa]…but without making any answer, he leaned himself and let it fall to the ground."[2] Needless to say, this act of disrespect brought

[1] *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume II: The Territory Northwest of the Ohio River, 1787-1803,* ed. Clarence Edwin Carter, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 362.

[2] *Territorial Papers,* 362. An account of this episode also appears in the papers of Arthur St. Clair, who learned of the events of the council via an Indian messenger who arrived at Ft. Harmar.

the proceedings to a swift and bitter end. Michikinikwa had made his choice, coldly demonstrating that he had no intentions of making peace with the Americans.

At first glance, it may seem difficult to reconcile this more obstinate version of Michikinikwa with the version of the Miami *akima* seen in Christy's famous painting at the Ohio Statehouse. In contrast to Christy's Michikinikwa, who appears graciously presenting a string of wampum to Anthony Wayne, just seven years earlier the Miami leader was letting another string of wampum unceremoniously fall to the dirt. However, in both instances, Michikinikwa was fulfilling his role as Miami leader by practicing a form of diplomacy. While Michikinikwa's early career was defined by his role as a successful war leader, he chose to follow a different path following the Treaty of Greenville and subsequently devoted the remainder of his leadership career almost entirely to the pursuit of peaceful diplomacy. He acted first by pressuring the American government to uphold the terms of the Treaty of Greenville; and then, by frequently arguing for and subsequently negotiating new terms and treaties for his people. These further treaties and negotiations were always entered into with the goal of improving conditions for the Miami, while simultaneously retaining a degree of regional autonomy. Following Greenville, Michikinikwa began to deploy this diplomatic strategy by leaving his home on the banks of the upper Wabash river and travelling east to the American capital.

Before Michikinikwa travelled to the American capital himself, the Miami leader instead sent his son-in-law William Wells to be his representative in Philadelphia. During the late months of 1796, Wells accompanied a small party of Native American leaders, which included Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket), and served in an official capacity as a

translator for the visit, which would turn out to be largely ceremonial.[3] The delegation toured various Philadelphia attractions and eventually was hosted by president Washington, who presented Michikinikwa (via Wells) with "a suit of clothes, a saddle, and a rifle."[4] It is impossible to know for sure Michikinikwa's exact reason for skipping this particular state visit, perhaps he really did wish to avoid sharing the spotlight with his rival Weyapiersenwah, but it is interesting to note that Michikinikwa's own visit to Philadelphia the following year would take on a considerably more ambitious diplomatic agenda.

Michikinikwa would make his own eventful journey to Philadelphia in the winter of 1797-98. His ambitious itinerary included a trip to Peale's museum, as well as visits with prominent individuals like Dr. Benjamin Rush and the Polish hero of the American Revolution Thaddeus Kosciuszko. During his time in the capital, the Miami *akima* also met with Philadelphia's Quakers and even sat for a portrait with world-renowned artist Gilbert Stuart.[5] In addition to these activities, Michikinikwa's trip to Philadelphia also included a number of meetings with the French philosopher and historian Constantin Francois de Chasseboeuf, comte de Volney, who first encountered Michikinikwa and Wells while traveling to Philadelphia himself in 1798 and wrote about their conversations in a book entitled *View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America.* Volney's account of Michikinikwa (who he refers to as Little Tortoise) cannot be accepted

[3] Heath, 237. Heath wrote that Michikinikwa declined to proceed to Philadelphia due to his personal rivalry with Weyapiersenwah and quotes a letter from Anthony Wayne as evidence of this.

[4] Heath, 242. Heath described this visit in detail, which included an eventful trip to Charles Willson Peale's museum at Philosophical hall.

[5] Heath, 245-255.

uncritically, and yet his statements about the Miami leader may well form the basis of many later historian's ideas when considering his life after 1795. Volney writes "After having been a formidable enemy to the United States, the Little Tortoise, convinced that resistance must ultimately prove vain, had the good sense to persuade his tribe to a reasonable capitulation."[6] Volney goes on to recount large portions of his conversations with Wells and Michikinikwa, although the language used is undoubtedly his own. A few of these passages and descriptions have been frequently reproduced and commented on by historians. Recently, Colin Calloway and William Heath have both briefly covered the Volney account and reproduced his observations, including Michikinikwa's attire which Volney described as being "in the American fashion, a blue suit, with pantaloons, and a round hat."[7] Another famous anecdote provided by Volney described the death of Michikinikwa's cow as an example of his precarious position among his own people.

> If [Michikiniwa] delayed returning home, he would lose his credit among his countrymen…When he gets home, he must at once resume the Indian dress and habits, and not speak too favourably of ours, lest he should wound their pride…This man has at home good clothes, tea, and coffee: he has even a cow, and his wife makes butter: yet he is careful not to indulge himself in the use of these, but to reserve them for white strangers. When he first had a cow, she was maliciously killed by night; and he was obliged to pretend ignorance of the person who did it, and a belief of its dying of disease.[8]

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[6] C.F. Volney, *View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America: To Which Are Annexed Some Accounts of Florida, the French Colony on the Scioto, Certain Canadian Colonies, and the Savages or Natives,* (London: Mercier and Company, 1804), 400.

[7] Volney, 405.

[8] Volney, 426

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect here is that Volney assumed Michikinikwa's true wish was to live as an American and that he is forced to keep up appearances as a Miami, when it is far more likely that he was wearing American clothing, using American goods, and entering into discourse with Euro-Americans for a very specific purpose—this is not evidence of assimilation but more likely the strategic use of American goods and services. Gift-giving and the cross-cultural exchange of clothing had a long history among Algonquians and was often a component of diplomatic relations during this time period. Historian Bruce M. White has written that "One special kind of exchange involved clothing," and went on to describe a surviving portrait of the Ojibwe leader Okeemakeequid in which "He is dressed not in Ojibway costume but in the garb of a Dakota warrior obtained during negotiations at the United States-sponsored treaty of 1825 held at Prairie du Chien."[9] Considering this information, it is necessary to recognize that Michikinikwa was operating within a larger Algonquian diplomatic discourse and his actions must be interpreted appropriately with this in mind. It is quite possible that Michikinikwa's clothes, as described by Volney, were the very suit that Washington gifted to Michikinikwa during Wells' visit to Philadelphia in 1796.

Volney's account of Michikinikwa paints the Miami leader as an intriguing yet tragic figure post-Greenville and this view has been picked up on or replicated by later historians. However, this tragic view of Michikinikwa is based off of a particular way of reading his actions and intentions, which may in fact be a misreading. It seems more likely that his trip to Philadelphia was not an attempt to ingratiate himself to the Americans or

[9] Bruce M. White, "'Give Us a Little Milk': The Social and Cultural Significance of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade", in *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2007), 120.

achieve fame but was yet another diplomatic mission in a series of strategic moves by Michikinikwa to secure a degree of Native American autonomy and relevance in a changing world. European observers and their American heirs were often fascinated by the apparent juxtaposition of "savages" walking the streets of early modern cities, but journeys like Michikinikwa's were far from mere spectacle. Historian Alden T. Vaughan addressed this topic in the context of Native American visits to Britain when he wrote "Visiting Americans were major phenomena for more than their wondrous appearance. The painted "savages" en route to Whitehall or St. James' Palace who dazzled London crowds proved powerful negotiators once inside those stately buildings."[10] Although the American capital was considerably less stately in 1798, the same could be said for Michikinikwa. Certainly, a bustling city on the eastern seaboard was a far cry from his home on the upper Wabash, but once the veteran Miami *akima* arrived in Philadelphia, he was able to more than hold his own on the diplomatic stage.

Volney's text is also significantly compromised by its preoccupation with speculative racial theories and questionable perspective on the motivations of Michikinikwa. Volney has been described in colorful terms by subsequent historians as an orientalist and a "French savant and world traveler."[11] The French nobleman's orientalist tendencies were painfully obvious in the following vignette from his writings, in which he attempted to test the hypothesis that Native Americans had migrated to North America

[10] Alden T. Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters: American Indians in Britain, 1500-1776,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xii.

[11] Heath, 248.

from Asia by attempting to determine if Michikinikwa had any geographic familiarity in regard to Asia:

> I laid before [Michikinikwa] a map comprising the eastern part of Asia and the north-west of America. He very readily recognized the lakes of Canada, Michegan, Superiour, the river Ohio, Wabash, Mississippi, &c; the rest he examined with a curiosity, that convinced me it was new to him: but it is the art of a savage, never to display any marks of surprise. When I explained to him the means of communication by Behring's Strait and the Aleutian isles: 'why,' said he, 'should not these Tatars, who resemble us, have come from America? Are there any proofs to the contrary?[12]

Volney's now preposterous notion that Michikinikwa would have had some innate ancestral knowledge of Asia aside, this passage is interesting as it provides yet another example of Michikinikwa's remarkable ability to shift traditional perspectives and play on European expectations in ways that may have been wholly unexpected. It is impossible to fully understand all the dynamics at play during this fascinating meeting between Michikinikwa, Wells, and Volney because, of course, Volney was merely writing down his own perception of the conversations, but it is evident that Michikinikwa was more than willing to challenge European intellectual superiority much in the same way he was willing to challenge the Euro-American military forces earlier in his life—in this way, Michikinikwa never lacked pugnacity.

Also a linguist, comte de Volney ended his volume by producing a "vocabulary of the Miami language," which he compiled with assistance from William Wells. This brief vocabulary provides historians and linguists alike with a snapshot of the Miami language as spoken by Michikinikwa, although earlier in his work Volney only recorded Wells' translations of the words of Michikinikwa. Volney did specifically mention that

[12] Volney, 408.

Michikinikwa used the word "*metoxtheniake"* (meaning "born from the soil") to refer to Native Americans in general terms and Volney's Miami vocabulary included distinctive words that refer to the English, French, and Americans: "*Axalachima,""Mehtikocha," and "Mitchi-Malsa*," respectively. "*Axalachima"* is an Algonquian phonetic translation of "Englishmen," "*Mehtikocha"* designates the French as "ship builders," and *Mitchi-Malsa* is most frequently translated as "long (more accurately "great") knives."[13] Volney also included the more generic term "*Ouabkiloketa,"* referring to Europeans in general as "white-skinned people." Often, translations of Native American speeches use the terms "Red" and "White" to describe Native Americans and their Euro-American counterparts, but it is important to remember that Native Americans fully grasped the intricacies of European ethnicity and nationality and used this knowledge to their advantage in diplomatic relations. Much of this linguistic material has remained virtually unexamined by historians, so there is an opportunity here to gain more insight into the world of Michikinikwa through an analysis of the Miami language.[14] The integration of Native American language into Native American history is still in its infancy, and without a doubt, this is a fertile analytical field that has only begun to be adequately tilled.

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[13] Fittingly, the first President of the "Long Knives", George Washington, gifted Michikinikwa a ceremonial sword following the Treaty of Greenville.

[14] Frustratingly on the topic of language, I have not been able to determine why Michikinikwa is referred to in English as "Little Turtle" considering that the Miami word "*mihsihkinaahkwa"* simply refers to a painted turtle and does not contain the diminutive ending *"oons"* or "*oonsa"* which would be needed to add the meaning of "small" or "little". Some lithographs of the lost Gilbert Stuart painting, as seen in Guthman's *March to Massacre,* contain a small hand-drawing of a turtle in the bottom margin and it is worth exploring the idea that this is linked to his clan designation or *doodem.*

While Michikinikwa's Philadelphia sightseeing excursions, social diversions, and meetings with comte de Volney are remarkable in their own right, it is Michikinikwa's eloquent speech delivered to President Adams on February 7, 1798 that stands out in terms of diplomatic significance. Many of the concerns expressed by the Miami leader in 1798 would be repeated in various forms during the coming decade, and this particular meeting in many ways set the agenda for Michikinikwa's Miami-focused foreign policy during the early years of the nineteenth century.

In early February 1798, President Adams informed General James Wilkinson that "I have received the Miami chief the Little Turtle…He is certainly a remarkable man…we shall endeavor to make him happy here, and contented after his return."[15] Michikinikwa would deliver his aforementioned speech to Adams a few days later on the 7th of February. After exchanging formal pleasantries, Michikinikwa indicated that he wished to alter the terms of the Treaty of Greenville and proposed a land trade with the American government. His plan included swapping "a parcel of the land relinquished to the United States at the Great Miami" for "an equivalent parcel between the Ohio and Mississippi."[16] The Miami *akima* added that the proposed trade would "add greatly to our comfort and may prevent the inconvenience of having the white settlers so near to our principal towns and hunting grounds."[17]

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[15] "From John Adams to James Wilkinson, 4 February 1798," *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-2321.

[16] "Speech of the Little Turtle to the President of the United States John Adams regarding a proposal for exchange of land," February 7, 1798, *Papers of the War Department, 1784-1800,* via http://wardepartmentpapers.org, page 1.

[17] "Little Turtle to John Adams," page 1.

In addition to the proposed land parcel swap, Michikinikwa also requested clarification concerning the boundaries of the land around Fort Vincennes. He also told Adams that "it would be agreeable to the Indians to have a person appointed as agent, who would reside with them and of whom they should approve."[18] Michikinikwa believed this would facilitate smoother relations between Native American nations and the American government, as well as improve the quality of trade goods being delivered to Indian country per the terms of the Treaty of Greenville.

Michikinikwa also seized on the opportunity of his audience with Adams to brief the American president on the deleterious effects of alcohol being felt throughout Indian country. In a particularly compelling moment in his speech, Michikinikwa grimly stated:

> We perceive that the numbers of our people are much diminishing and we consider one of the principal causes to be the quantity of liquor sold to them by traders and others. As far as it is possible to remedy this evil, we entreat it may be done. We find that stills have also been erected within the reservations from whence much of this mischief must issue.[19]We see also that as the settlement increases more of this mischief is to be apprehended. How far it is in your power to check this evil we do not know, but we rely that whatever can be done in this case will not be omitted."[20]

It would seem that Native American leaders like Michikinikwa realized what generations of temperance-minded Americans would come to understand in the subsequent decades: the eradication of alcohol could not be achieved without a form of prohibition on the federal level. Disdain for alcohol and its effects is one commonality between Michikinikwa and his resistance-minded contemporaries Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh, and in fact this

[18] "Little Turtle to John Adams," page 2.

[19] Here Michikinikwa is referring to the "reservations for white people," not Indian reservations, which would come much later.

[20] "Little Turtle to John Adams," page 3.

movement goes back much further in the Ohio Country to the teachings of the mid-eighteenth-century Delaware prophet Neolin and beyond.

Michikinikwa concluded his speech to Adams by requesting a degree of agricultural aid, saying "it will be necessary that we should have ploughs and gears," as well as "a blacksmith to be sent among us," in order to repair any necessary farm implements.[21] Throughout the speeches and translated correspondence of Michikinikwa, the issues of alcohol and agriculture were typically closely linked. This connection gives us precious insight into the Miami *akima'*s internal dialogue and political agenda. While the topics of land cessions and more-precisely-defined treaty boundaries speak to Native American concerns of territoriality, the linkage of alcohol and agricultural development indicates that Michikinikwa was also very much concerned with internal improvement of those strictly defined territories.

President Adams' written response to Michikinikwa's speech was sufficiently cordial. The American president replied that he "has heard with pleasure your speech to him…thanks the great spirit for the opportunity offered him…[and] has seriously deliberated on what you have said to him."[22] Unfortunately for the Miami diplomat, Adams declined to act decisively regarding his requests. Ultimately, Michikinikwa's well-delivered speech brought little change in Indian country. Despite this lack of tangible outcome, the Miami *akima*'s speech to Adams represented a definitive starting point for Miami diplomacy in the post-Greenville Old Northwest. In comparison to later oratory,

[21] "Little Turtle to John Adams," page 4.

[22] "Reply of the President of the United States as issued by the Secretary of War," February 20, 1798, *Papers of the War Department, 1784-1800,* http://wardepartmentpapers.org.

Michikinikwa's 1798 speech to Adams was softly worded and demonstrated that he was still easing into his diplomatic role with a degree of caution. However, while Michikinikwa would continue to address similar themes in the coming years, he would do so in a considerably more forceful and dramatic fashion.

In the years following his meeting with President Adams, Michikinikwa's frustration with the American government's ability to properly enforce the terms of the Treaty of Greenville would only grow. While the Miami leader continued to view the treaty as wholly legitimate, he did not believe that its various articles were being followed or even understood. Luckily, Michikinikwa had the chance to voice these concerns directly to President Jefferson when he visited the new American capital at Washington D.C. in early 1802. During this 1802 meeting he succinctly articulated these concerns over the enforcement of the aforementioned "reservations for the white people in our country" and the issue of Native American territorial integrity in a lengthy speech that was interpreted by William Wells. Michikinikwa told Jefferson, "Father, we think some of the white people are settling over the line and we are fearful some of our young men may interrupt the harmony which prevails between the Red and White people as the white people are considered out of the protection of the United States, when they settle over the line." He went on to blame this occurrence on the fact that parts of the treaty were "not perfectly understood."[23] One way of interpreting this message to Jefferson is that Michikinikwa was genuinely concerned about relations between the United States and the Miami and his statement represents a desire to tread lightly over the issue, but this interpretation seems

[23] Johnston and Hill, 15. This conversation was transcribed and signed by William Wells and the most complete version of the speech is reproduced in this volume—only excerpts appear in the American State Papers.

naïve considering that the Miami leader was perfectly willing to wage war against the United States a decade earlier. A more plausible interpretation of this exchange is that it represents a bit of hard-nosed diplomacy on the part of Michikinikwa, as he is both issuing a veiled threat and demanding that the terms of the treaty be honored. Historians have too often assumed retroactively that Native Americans negotiated the Treaty of Greenville solely from a place of weakness and eventual capitulation, ignoring the fact that leaders like Michikinikwa looked to the treaty to secure and legitimize an important degree of autonomy.

While many accounts of the Treaty of Greenville focus on land cessions, which are no doubt important in retrospect considering that the treaty opened much of modern-day Ohio to white settlement, the treaty is also significant from the Native American perspective for the reason that the terms required the United States to pay annuities and deliver a substantial quantity of trade goods to the various Native American groups whose representatives signed the document.[24] The treaty stated that the United States will "deliver to the said Indian tribes, a quantity of goods, to the value of twenty thousand dollars…and henceforward, every year, forever, the United States will deliver, at some convenient place northward of the river Ohio, like useful goods, suited to the circumstance of the Indians,

[24] For the traditional significance of the Treaty of Greenville, see R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed. *The Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); R. David Edmunds *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1983) and *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984); John P. Bowes *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

of the value of nine thousand five hundred dollars."[25] During his 1802 meeting with President Jefferson, Michikinikwa expressed his frustration with the fact that these goods were frequently arriving in a damaged state and that the promised annuities were not being paid in full, in other words, the United States was failing to uphold the terms of the treaty. The Miami leader informed Jefferson that "when the goods arrive…we are sorry to mention that the goods do not come in good order, that more or less of our annuities have always been unfit for use," and pressed further, saying "of the annuities of five hundred dollars promised to the Eel River Indians, only seventy five dollars worth of brass kettles have been received, and we do not know what has become of the remainder of our annuity. Your children expect that the deficiencies of their annuities will be made up to them."[26] Michikinikwa went on to tell Jefferson that he believed the obvious remedy to this unacceptable situation was to establish a trading house at Fort Wayne so that the annuities could be more easily and properly distributed, when he argued:

> Father, it was mentioned by the executive that a trading house should be established in our country for the benefit of the Red people, we wish it might be established at Fort Wayne…it is a distance from the white settlements, and the farther a trading post is established from the white people the better it will be for both…when your children go to Fort Wayne to receive their annuities they have no house to meet in, the fort from which the goods are distributed is so small, but two or three can enter it at the same time…we wish a house may be built at this place for us to meet and hold our councils in, and receive our annuities from.[27]

Remarkably, and no doubt due to Michikinikwa's diplomacy and influence, the American government ordered a new Indian agency/factory to be built at Fort Wayne later in 1802

[25] *American State Papers,* "Indian Affairs," (Vol. 1, 1789-1814), 563.

[26] Johnston and Hill, 16.

[27] Johnston and Hill, 16-17.

under the direction of none other than Michikinikwa's son-in-law, Indian agent William Wells.[28] Undoubtedly, this development was an unequivocal success for Michikinikwa and the Miami, as the new Indian factory at Fort Wayne both increased Native American proximity to the economic benefits of the government annuities, but also provided a means of observing, limiting, and controlling this particular "reservation for the white people."

Michikinikwa's speech to President Jefferson, as translated and transcribed by William Wells, is a fascinating text that can be read in multiple ways. Each statement begins in a deferential tone, referring to Jefferson as "father", and yet upon closer consideration Michikinikwa's requests and implications are far from conciliatory. For example, after requesting that the rightly-owed annuities be distributed at Fort Wayne, the Miami leader said to Jefferson "Father, we are sorry to trouble you so much; but these things are of consequence to us. We are imposed upon by the British traders, who ask very dear for their goods…We are of the opinion that if a trading house was established in our country this imposition would be remedied."[29] Is Michikinikwa merely discussing economic concerns here or possibly reminding the American president that the threat of British influence, and even British alliance, was ever-present? Whatever his intention, the fact that the government heeded Michikinikwa's request is evidence that this was a successful diplomatic engagement and not an empty gesture of reverence or loyalty. Considering that Michikinikwa was arguing for a fair and equal enforcement of the Treaty of Greenville and attending to the economic interests of his people, it is evident that any

[28] David Andrew Nichols, *Engines of Diplomacy: Indian Trading Factories and the Negotiation of American Empire,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 47.

[29] Johnston and Hill, 16.

degree of accommodation being shown to the Americans was born more out of self-interest than deference or desire for assimilation.

During the 1802 trip to Washington, much like the earlier trip to Philadelphia, Michikinikwa also expressed a desire to acquire farming implements and introduce European agricultural techniques to Native American settlements. And once again, Michikinikwa would tie this request to the unremedied problem of alcohol to make a persuasive case concerning the need for domestic improvement within sovereign Native American nations. On this occasion, the Miami *akima* made an even more emotional plea to Jefferson, in comparison to his words on the subject to Adams in 1798, when he said:

> Father, we wish to reap the advantage of cultivating the earth as you do, and request ploughs and other necessary tools may be put into the hands of the interpreter at Fort Wayne…But father, nothing can be done to advantage unless the Great Council of the sixteen fires now assembled will prohibit any person from selling spiritous liquors among their Red brothers…your children are not wanting in industry, but it is the introduction of this fatal poison that keeps them poor.[30]

In particular, the Miami leader's multiple requests for agricultural aid and instruction have contributed to the view of Michikinikwa as an assimilationist leader, but the realities of this request and subsequent strategy are far more complicated. While agricultural missions (often led by Quakers) sought to "civilize" Native Americans through agriculture, various Native American populations often used these missions for their own purposes and economic benefit while attempting to limit their overall cultural influence.[31]

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[30] Johnston and Hill, 17.

[31] Lori Daggar's recent article "The Mission Complex: Economic Development, 'Civilization,' and Empire in the Early Republic", *Journal of the Early Republic,* (No. 36, Fall 2016) sheds light on this complicated topic.

Michikinikwa would go even further in his pursuit of agricultural aid and prohibition of alcohol, when he later used the connections that he established during his 1798 and 1802 trips to the eastern seaboard to directly request aid from the Quakers of Philadelphia. In an 1803 letter cosigned by the Potawatomi leader Wannangsea (Five Medals), Michikinikwa wrote:

> Brothers, We are sorry to say that the minds of our people are not so much inclined towards the cultivation of the earth as we could wish them…we hope the Great Spirit will permit some of you to come and see us, when you will be able to know whether you can do anything for us or not…we now take you by the hand, and thank you for the articles you were so kind to send us.[32]

Consistent with his approach vis-à-vis presidents Adams and Jefferson, Michikinikwa linked his plea for agricultural aid to the pernicious effects of alcohol in Indian country. Echoing his earlier sentiments from 1798 and 1802, he wrote:

> Brothers, our father, the President of the United States, has prevented our traders from selling liquor to our people…our people appear dissatisfied, because our traders do not, as usual, bring them liquor…our prospects are bad at present, though we hope the Great Spirit will change the minds of our people, and tell them it will be better for them to cultivate the earth than to drink whiskey.[33]

It is interesting to note here that Michikinikwa believed the antidote to the Miami liquor problem was not religious revival but agricultural instruction. In this way, the Quakers were the perfect audience as they emphasized humanitarian aid over proselytization.

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[32] Gerard T. Hopkins, William Love, and Marth E. Tyson, "A Quaker Pilgrimage: Being a Mission to the Indians from the Indian Committee of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting, to Fort Wayne, 1804," *Maryland Historical Magazine, Volume 4,* (Baltimore: The Maryland Historical Society), 2.
[33] *A Quaker Pilgrimage,* 2.

Michikinikwa's 1802 impassioned speech at Washington would be his last dramatic moment at the American capital, but the eloquent Miami *akima* would continue to correspond with presidents Jefferson and Madison throughout the remainder of his life and would periodically reap the rewards of executive favor for both himself and the Miami nation as a whole.[34] So much so, that U.S. Indian agent John Johnston even lamented Michikinikwa's influence in Washington when he wrote, "I shall not suffer him to go to the President, nor the Five Medals (Wannangsea) either. They have been there too often already."[35] Certainly, Michikinikwa's visits to Philadelphia and Washington in the years following the Treaty of Greenville represent a watershed moment in Miami diplomacy, but it must be noted the bulk of the negotiations carried out by Michikinikwa and other Native American leaders occurred in the council houses of the Old Northwest; and as the nineteenth century dawned, the treaty-making process in the trans-Appalachian borderlands would take center stage once again.

[34] Michikinikwa returned to Washington again in 1808 for another meeting with President Jefferson.

[35] "Johnson to Harrison," Fort Wayne, June 24, 1810 in in Logan Esarey, editor, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison: Volume I, 1800-811,* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 432.

CHAPTER III

DEFINING A NATION ON THE WABASH: MICHKINIKWA AND THE PURSUIT OF MIAMI DIPLOMACY, 1802-1805

As the winter of 1797 approached, the French writer, philosopher, orientalist, and intellectual jack-of-all trades Constantin Francois de Chasseboeuf, comte de Volney concluded his nearly three-year tour of the North American interior and returned with haste to the bustling city of Philadelphia. In an unlikely coincidence, Volney would encounter two other individuals in Philadelphia who had recently arrived from points west—the prominent Miami *akima* Michikinikwa and his son-in-law, interpreter, and close confidant William Wells. While Volney viewed this unexpected encounter as a "fortunate opportunity," neither Michikinikwa nor Wells mentioned the encounter in their recorded speeches or writings.[1] Perceptions aside, this meeting would create a significant historical source, as Volney would go on to publish his account of a series of conversations with Michikinikwa and Wells in his 1804 book entitled *View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America.* Volney's choice to portray Michikinikwa as a noble, but tragic, figure looms large in the historiography of the Miami leader's career after his central role

[1] C.F. Volney, *View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America: To Which Are Annexed Some Accounts of Florida, the French Colony on the Scioto, Certain Canadian Colonies, and the Savages or Natives,* (London: C. Mercier & Company, 1804), 401.

at the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.[2] In his account of a series of interviews conducted in January and February of 1798, Volney's penchant for exoticism and fascination with ethnography and race theory was clear. After questioning Michikinikwa about the apparent differences between European and Native American population trends, Volney quoted his response at length: "In such a state of things, it is no wonder the whites have driven us year after year from the borders of the sea to the banks of the Mississippi. They spread like oil upon a blanket; we dissolve like the snow before the vernal sun: if we do not change our course, it is impossible for the red race of men to subsist."[3]

At first glance, Michikinikwa's words appear to fit with the idea that settler colonialism was an inevitable wave, which systematically swept westward through Indian country. This is undoubtedly true in the long-term, but a closer examination of Michikinikwa's choice of imagery reveals a more complicated picture in the specific late eighteenth century context. In this case, focusing in on a particular moment in the process of American settler colonialism pays intellectual dividends, as following this restricted perspective allows for a more detailed analysis of Native American motivation, strategy, and agency. From this *in media res* perspective, Michikinikwa's words read less like a prophecy and more like a dynamic description of a physical and cultural landscape in flux. Returning to Michikinikwa's poetic simile, one can easily imagine initially small drops of

[2] The Treaty of Greenville was signed in August of 1795. The treaty effectively ended the Northwest Indian War and served as the foundation for the treaty system between various Native American nations in the Old Northwest and the American government for decades to come. For the treaty in its entirety, see *American State Papers,* Volume 4, Part Two, (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 562-582.

[3] Volney, 433-434

oil gradually expanding as they work their way through a piece of fabric, creating a blanket or garment that appears spotted and irregular as result. In a similar way, snow does not melt or dissolve in a uniform line from east to west, but instead melting snow creates a patchwork of green and white as it slowly recedes on a warm day in early spring. Considering Michikinikwa's later statement to President Jefferson that "certain reservations should be made for the white people in our country," when referring to the land cessions at the Treaty of Greenville, it is apparent that the Miami *akima* realized the importance of defining and maintaining this ever-changing patchwork of "red" and "white" land.[4]

Undoubtedly, Michikinikwa was concerned about the ongoing status of Native American autonomy considering his warning "if we don't change our course." Too often, historians have viewed this proposed course correction strictly in terms of armed resistance versus accommodation, and this trend seemed to begin with Volney himself. Later historians would reproduce the body of knowledge about Michikinikwa created by Volney, often quoting his account at length and accepting his conclusions at face value as well. Over time, the Miami *akima'*s supposed "capitulation" to the Americans, coupled with his lack of armed resistance post-Greenville, would lead to Michikinikwa being described as "American-friendly." One early twentieth century biographer, Calvin Young, wrote "after the Treaty of Greenville, Little Turtle remained the true and faithful friend of the

[4] John Johnston and Leonard Uzal Hill, *John Johnston and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis: With Recollections of Sixty Years,* (Columbus, Ohio: Stoneman Press, 1957), 15.

Americans and the new government, and was much beloved and respected by those who knew him."[5]

Certainly, Michikinikwa's transformation from Native American mastermind of the Northwest Indian War to willing negotiation partner vis-à-vis the American government was a strategic shift, but was an accomodationist alliance with the Americans the "change of course" that Michikinikwa referred to in his conversation with Volney? When carefully considering Michikinikwa's diplomatic strategies and active engagement in the treaty-making process between the years 1802 and 1805, the answer to this question is an emphatic "no." Following Michikinikwa's pivotal 1802 meeting with President Jefferson in the new capital at Washington D.C., the ambitious Miami leader returned to his home near the banks of the Wabash River and spent the last decade of his life negotiating a series of treaties and attending Indian councils on behalf of the Miami, including the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1803), the pivotal Indian conference at Fort Wayne in the spring of 1805, the Treaty of Grouseland (1805), and he also was at the center of the various controversies surrounding the disputed Treaty of Vincennes (1804).

Despite the aforementioned flurry of diplomatic activity, historians have often overlooked this crucial period or reduced it to a series of one-sided land cessions. Upon re-examination, the fact cannot be overlooked that the early nineteenth century in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley region was a period that saw a significant intensification of negotiation and treaty-making between Native American leaders and United States government officials. This intensification must be seen as a collaborative process, fueled

[5] Calvin M. Young, *Little Turtle (Me-she-kin-o-quah) the Great Chief of the Miami Indian Nation,* (Greenville, Ohio, 1917), 145.

not only by the growing land greed of government officials, land speculators, and territorial governors like William Henry Harrison, but also by the desire of Native American leaders like Michikinikwa (and others) to continue the process, which began at Greenville, of limiting and controlling white settlement in Indian country. Within this intensification of treaty-making, a further shift can be detected. In addition to the attempt to limit, control, and define white settlement, the series of treaties signed during this time period also represented an effort on the part of Native American leaders to define and legitimize the territorial boundaries of their own sovereign nations. This effort represents a discernable change of course in terms of treaty-making strategy and is crucial to understanding the various land transactions during this time period. While Native American leaders sold sizeable tracts of their land to the American government, other strategically located areas of land were strictly defined as belonging to specific Native American nations. For Michikinikwa, the crowning achievement in this regard occurred with the signing of the Treaty of Grouseland (1805), which declared "the Miamies, Eel River, and Weas…as one nation." Furthermore, by the terms of the Treaty of Grouseland, the United States recognized this Native American nation "as joint owners of all the country on the Wabash."[6]

In recent years, a number of historians have focused on the importance of diplomacy when discussing various Native American nations in the context of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One notable example of this trend is Timothy Shannon's *Iroquois Diplomacy and the Early American Frontier.* Actively challenging earlier romanticized portrayals of the Haudenosaunee that overlooked their diplomatic

[6] *American State Papers,* Volume 4, Part Two, (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 697.

acumen, Shannon wrote "the eighteenth-century Iroquois were neither mercenary killing machines nor idealistic forest-dwelling democrats. They were flesh-and-blood participants in a scramble for dominion in North America and diplomacy was their tool of choice."[7] Shannon goes on to describe how Iroquois leaders like Joseph Brant and Cornplanter successfully employed a clear diplomatic strategy vis-à-vis the early American government, which included limited land cessions, protective treaties such as the Treaty of Canandaigua (1794), and multiple diplomatic visits to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. In this way, there are clear parallels during this period between the actions of diplomacy-minded Iroquois leaders and their Algonquian counterparts like Michikinikwa, Buckongelas, and Catahecassa (Black Hoof). Ultimately, Shannon concludes that the work of Iroquois diplomats was crucial to the establishment of "their status as nations within a nation."[8]

While Shannon's work focused on the diplomatic activity of the Iroquois, Richard Grimes' recently-published work on the Western Delaware nation examined the Lenape diaspora in the trans-Appalachian borderlands. Although Grimes acknowledges Delaware participation in the series of multi-sided conflicts that gripped North America during the eighteenth century, he argues that the survival of the Delaware nation was rooted in "social reinvention, political coalescence, and the creation of a new world order in a secured homeland."[9] However, Grimes' study essentially ends with the signing of the Treaty of

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[7] Timothy J. Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier,* (New York: Viking, 2008), 10.

[8] Shannon, 209.

[9] Richard S. Grimes, *The Western Delaware Nation, 1730-1795: Warriors and Diplomats,* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2017), xviii.

Greenville and he views the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a period of Native American decline and wholesale land cessions. Historian Karim Tiro picked up where Grimes left off as his work explored the diplomatic activity of the White River Delawares in present-day Indiana. Tiro's work did not escape the resistance versus accommodation dichotomy so prevalent in the existing historiography, but he did focus his analysis on the importance of the diplomatic accommodation occurring at the United States Indian trading factory at Piqua as opposed to viewing accommodation as a form of cultural capitulation. Tiro wrote of his own work, "a narrative grounded at the Piqua agency takes account of attempts by Native peoples to accommodate the demands of U.S. settlers rather than fight them."[10]

A focus on the impact of Native American diplomacy is important as it allows historians to open up new intellectual avenues of inquiry into the issue of indigenous agency, avenues which are not wholly dependent on the concept of armed resistance to settler colonialism. Historian Andrew Nichols' recent work placed Native Americans at the forefront of the diplomatic process by highlighting the importance of economic diplomacy in early America. When describing how Native Americans engaged with the American system of Indian trading factories (agencies), Nichols wrote "for [Native Americans], the trading houses functioned as political theaters and sources of power and prestige—or, to apply another metaphor, as national banners pinned to the same conceptual

[10] Karim M. Tiro, "The View from Piqua Agency: The War of 1812, the White River Delawares, and the Origins of Indian Removal," *Journal of the Early Republic,* (June 2015), 25.

"map" the Americans used."[11] Nichols' work also flipped the traditional framework of resistance versus accommodation by suggesting that economic diplomacy "necessarily depended on negotiation, on American officials accommodating the needs and expectations of Indian communities. Public trading houses would presumably draw Indian nations into the American economic and political sphere, but at the same time they would pull the US government into Native Americans' interests and conflicts."[12] Historian Jane Merritt also questioned the idea of strict boundary between conflict and diplomacy when she wrote, "The battle for dominance in North America took place as much in treaty conferences as on the field."[13] Keeping this distinction in mind, it is not surprising that Michikinikwa was able to successfully make the transition from warrior to diplomat during the late eighteenth century.

The previously mentioned work of Kathleen DuVal further questioned the resistance versus accommodation dichotomy in respect to the choices made by Native Americans. Allowing for a greater degree of self-definition, DuVal wrote "in their negotiations, Indians and Europeans alike sought to control the culture of diplomacy and trade and to define themselves and others in ways that forwarded their own interests."[14] Considering the importance of diplomacy in regard to Native American autonomy and self-

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[11] David Andrew Nichols, *Engines of Diplomacy: Indian Trading Factories and the Negotiation of American Empire,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 7.

[12] Nichols, 34.

[13] Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 231.

[14] Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 4.

definition, Michikinikwa's active participation in a series of treaties in the early nineteenth century necessitates a detailed exploration of his diplomatic journey.

Despite Michikinikwa's advancing age and series of health problems, which appear to have included severe arthritis, the early nineteenth century was a profoundly busy time for the venerable Miami *akima.*[15] In the early months of 1802, Michikinikwa returned to his home on the banks of the upper Wabash from his meeting with President Jefferson at Washington. During his visit to the American capital the Miami leader expressed a number of pressing concerns to Jefferson, one of which was the unclear status of the Vincennes Tract, a land cession that was formally established at the Treaty of Greenville but only vaguely defined at that treaty in 1795. Secretary of War Henry Dearborn was also very much aware of this problem regarding the Vincennes Tract, and in a January 1802 letter to Indiana Territory governor William Henry Harrison reported: "It appears that the Indians are uneasy & probably will be more so unless some measures are taken for adjusting the differences relative to the boundaries of that tract."[16] In order to address these concerns and others, Harrison convened an Indian council at Vincennes in the late summer of 1802.

Harrison kicked off the 1802 council at Vincennes with a sermonizing speech, which warned the assembled Algonquian leaders about the dangers of alcohol, extolled the virtues of agriculture (holding up the Creeks and Cherokees as exemplary in this regard),

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[15] Volney, 400-401. Volney noted that one of the reasons Michikinikwa was visiting Philadelphia in 1798 was to seek medical treatment for "gout and rheumatism."

[16] Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, January 23, 1802, *Great Lakes and Ohio Valley Ethnohistory Archive (GLOVE),* Glenn A Black Laboratory of Archaeology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

and referred to the Treaty of Greenville as "the great tree of peace."[17] Once the negotiations at the council began, the assembled delegates from the Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Eel River, Kaskaskia, Wea, and Piankeshaw nations "nominated and appointed the Little Turtle, Richarville, To-pinee-bik, and Winemak, or a majority of them, to finally settle and adjust a treaty."[18] The assembled members of the council would go on to agree to new, clarified boundaries for the Vincennes Tract; however, these agreements would not be made official until nearly a year later at the signing of the Treaty of Fort Wayne.

Despite the cordial diplomatic language employed by Native American leaders like Michikinikwa, and Harrison's paternalistic appeals to the "great tree of peace," tensions were running high in the Old Northwest during the spring and summer of 1803. The main source of this tension was the United States government's attempts to acquire additional tracts of land from the Delaware and Piankeshaw in the vicinity of Fort Vincennes. In a letter to Dearborn written in March of 1803, Harrison expressed his displeasure at the fact that Michikinikwa and Wells opposed further land sales in the area. Harrison wrote about the opposition to the acquisitions, "It is equally certain that the disaffected are not as numerous as [Wells] has stated them to be and that those who have expressed discontent have been instigated thereto entirely by the Turtle."[19] Further lamenting Michikinikwa and Wells' influence, Harrison added "I have long known The Turtle has considerable influence over the Five Medals and some others of the Potawatomi chiefs and I believe that

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[17] "Harrison's Address to Indian Council," August 12, 1802, in Logan Esarey, editor, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison: Volume I, 1800-811,* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 52-55.

[18] "Minutes of Indian Conference," September 17, 1802, in Esarey, 56.

[19] Harrison to Secretary of War, March 3, 1803, in Esarey, 76.

Captain Wells and himself control entirely the small band of Eel River Indians."[20] In this particular case, Harrison viewed Michikinikwa's considerable influence as an obstacle, but an 1802 letter to Harrison from Secretary of War Dearborn revealed that the US government was also at times quite happy to benefit from the Miami *akima'*s diplomatic acumen. When attempting to bring the Potawatomi and Kickapoo delegations to the negotiation table at Vincennes in 1802, Dearborn wrote, "there is reason to believe that the Little Turtle will have considerable influence with those Nations."[21] It would appear that for the Americans, Michikinikwa's "considerable influence" could be both a blessing and a curse.

William Henry Harrison's suspicion of Michikinikwa went far beyond his apparent influence with other Native American nations, as he also questioned the Miami leader's degree of personal ambition. Harrison's March 1803 letter to Dearborn contained the following pointed criticism: "The violent opposition which the Turtle has made to the Delaware and Piankeshaw treaties is easily accounted for. Conscious of the superiority of his talents over the rest of his race and colour he sighs for a more conspicuous theatre to display them. Opportunities for exhibiting his eloquence occur too seldom to satisfy his vanity."[22] The acrimony between Michikinikwa and Harrison is not surprising, considering that one man was a tireless advocate for indigenous sovereignty and the other was dedicated to displacing Native Americans from their ancestral lands. A recent biography of Harrison sought to contextualize his destructive policies toward Native Americans by

[20] Harrison to Secretary of War, in Esarey, 76.

[21] Dearborn to Harrison, April 23, 1802, *GLOVE.*

[22] Harrison to Secretary of War, in Esarey, 81.

suggesting that "American politics, Indian policy, and debates about slavery all grew largely from an intense patriotic and anti-British sentiment. Britain's continued close relationship with Indian tribes in the Great Lakes region only exacerbated American's distrust of them."[23] However, Harrison's comments on, and distrust of Michikinikwa suggest a deeper current of racial bias and discrimination. Further damning for Harrison's reputation is the fact that in 1811 he enthusiastically forwarded a reactionary letter to Secretary of War Dearborn from none other than Andrew Jackson, calling Jackson a man "of high character as a soldier and a patriot."[24] In this letter Jackson lamented "the attack of the Indians upon your encampment," and offered to "revenge the blood of our brave heroes , who fell by the deceitful hands of those unrelenting barbarians"—Jackson would go on to add the ominous words "That banditti ought to be swept from the face of the earth."[25]

Despite Harrison's misgivings about providing the eloquent Miami *akima* with any public platform, he would find himself at Fort Wayne in April of 1803 preparing to host Michikinikwa, Richarville, To-pinee-bik, and Winemak for the purposes of signing the Treaty of Fort Wayne, the details of which had been outlined and agreed to in council at Vincennes the previous September.

The garrison orderly book of Fort Wayne revealed the mood at this small military garrison and trading house at the confluence of the St. Marys, St. Joseph, and Maumee rivers on the

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[23] Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007, xviii.

[24] "Harrison to Secretary of War," December 11, 1811, in Esarey, 665.

[25] "Jackson to Harrison," November 28, 1811, in Esarey, 665.

days before Harrison's arrival. On April 22, 1803, the garrison orders read: "As the Governor of the Territory is expected to arrive at this post on the 24th [of this month] the garrison will be exempted from all daily duty tomorrow that they may prepare themselves to parade at a moment warning that day following, neatly dressed in their new clothing and gaithers."[26] Despite the formal mood, which seemingly gripped the fort in late April, the actual Treaty of Fort Wayne was not officially signed until June 7, 1803. As previously mentioned, the treaty represented the official acknowledgement of the agreement reached at Vincennes in September 1802 regarding the clarification of the boundaries of the Vincennes Tract. However, Article 4 of the treaty also ceded to the United States "three tracts of land…on the main road between Vincennes and Kaskaskias, and one other between Vincennes and Clarksville, for the purpose of erecting houses of entertainment for the accommodation of travelers."[27] The Treaty of Fort Wayne (1803) was consistent with the diplomatic strategy deployed by Native American leaders like Michikinikwa at the iconic Treaty of Greenville in that the treaty represented the desire to further define, limit, and thereby control white settlement in Indian country by engaging in formal treaty-making with the United States government. However, there were obvious limits to this containment policy vis-à-vis the seemingly endless tide of white settlement. While the Treaty of Fort Wayne further clarified the boundaries of a number of "reservations for white people," it

[26] Bert Joseph Griswold, ed., *Fort Wayne: Gateway of the West, 1802-1813: Garrison Orderly Books, Indian Agency Account Book,* (Indianapolis: Historical Bureau of the Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1927), 116-117.

[27] *American State Papers,* 688. There is an irony here that in the early nineteenth century, houses of entertainment were being established on "reservations for white people," as this situation would be reversed in the 20th century with the rise of Indian gaming on Native American reservations.

said nothing in regard to the territorial boundaries of any specific Native American nation. Native American leaders were painfully aware of this reality and would seek to rectify the situation via the treaty-making process. The diplomatic stakes in the Old Northwest would be raised considerably the following year with the ratification of the Treaty of Vincennes (1804), which would see the Delaware and Piankeshaw sell additional strategically-located land parcels to the United States, much to the chagrin of the neighboring Native American nations. The resulting controversy is worth exploring in depth, as its analysis reveals important changes in the treaty-making process from the Native American perspective.

Although a significant degree of controversy was swirling around further land cessions in the Old Northwest, delegates from the Delaware and Piankeshaw nations met with William Henry Harrison to sign the documents that would become the Treaty of Vincennes in August of 1804. For the sake of clarity, the Treaty of Vincennes comprises two separate treaties, the first being signed by the Delawares on August 18, and a second treaty signed by representatives of the Piankeshaw nation on August 27. With this controversial treaty, the Piankeshaws ceded "all that tract of country which lies between the Ohio and Wabash rivers, and below Clark's grant and the tract called the Vincennes tract," in exchange for "an additional annuity, of two hundred dollars."[28] The earlier Delaware version of the treaty ceded the same tract of land in exchange for a slightly higher annuity ($300), but the treaty with the Delawares contained an additional article that would prove significant. Article 4 of the treaty read: "the United States will, in future, consider

[28] *American State Papers,* 690. "Clark's grant" refers to "the 150,000 acres across the Ohio River from Louisville which Virginia had reserved for veterans of George Rogers Clark's 1777-1778 expedition when it ceded its claim to the Northwest Territory in 1784." Cayton, 178.

the Delawares as the rightful owners of all the country which is bounded by the White River, on the north, the Ohio on the south."[29] When covering this period of intensified treaty-making in the early nineteenth century, historians have focused their collective attention on the various debates concerning the legitimacy of Native American land sales, but have often neglected to recognize the ways in which these treaties also defined and legitimized Native American territoriality.

Harrison's previously mentioned March 1803 letter to Dearborn referred to Michikinikwa's "violent opposition" to what would become the Vincennes Treaty. Needless to say, the formalization of the Delaware and Piankeshaw land sales created a shockwave of anger and resentment as news of the Treaty of Vincennes travelled up the Wabash. Just a few short months after the treaty-signing, Wells fired off an angry letter, at the request of his father-in-law Michikinikwa, to General James Wilkinson. The letter vividly reflected the Miami opposition to the treaty. Wells wrote "My friend I am sorry to now say that the Indians are astonished to find an agent of the United States purchasing our lands from Indians that has no right to sell them and entirely contrary to the wish of all the Indians in this country."[30] Michikinikwa's view was that although the Delaware and Piankeshaw acted inappropriately in selling title to land they did not rightly possess, Harrison was ultimately to blame for the unfortunate episode, stating "he has made many representations to the president respecting the wish of the Indians—in this country—in

[29] *American State Papers,* 690.

[30] William Wells to Gen. James Wilkinson, Fort Wayne, October 6, 1804, *Great Lakes and Ohio Valley Ethnohistory Archive (GLOVE).*

order to make himself a great man at the expense of the Indians."[31] It would seem that Michikinikwa and Harrison both shared skeptical opinions concerning the ambition of the other. After casting aspersions on the career and character of Harrison, Wells' letter ended on a bellicose note: "I am certain that the Indians would rather wish a war with the United States rather than sell the lands that lay on the Ohio above the Wabash and below the falls…if they had any prospect of being supported by a foreign power."[32] Coming from a Native American leader who was quite proud of his role in orchestrating the Miami war effort during the Northwest Indian War and a one-time-captive who enthusiastically fought against American troops at the Battle of the Wabash in 1791, threats of this kind were not to be taken lightly.[33]

Of course, the "foreign power" mentioned by Michikinikwa and Wells was a not-so-subtle reference to the British, whose motivations and influence in Indian country were never far from the minds of men like Harrison, James Wilkinson, and Henry Dearborn. However, the available sources indicate that there was no legitimate prospect of British military intervention during this time period. In fact, the tension between the United States and the Miami appears to have been somewhat of a missed opportunity for the British. At nearly the same time Wells was sending his letter hinting at British alliance, renowned

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[31] Wells to Wilkinson, October 6, 1804, *GLOVE.*

[32] Wells to Wilkinson, October 6, 1804, *GLOVE.*

[33] Michikinikwa was so adamant that he was responsible for the battle plan when Native American forces routed the American army at the Battle of the Wabash on November 4th, 1791 that he had a falling out with the Shawnee leader Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket) over the issue. See Wayne to McHenry, Detroit, 3 October 1796, in *GLOVE.* For the role of William Wells in the Battle of the Wabash, see Colin G. Calloway, *The Victory With No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 119.

British Indian agent Alexander McKee was admonishing Wells for discouraging alcohol use and warning Algonquians of his motives and influence. McKee reminded Native Americans, "You all well know that [William Wells] is a bad man, you all well know the injuries he done you before you made peace with the long knives."[34] Taking this into consideration it would seem that while Michikinikwa's anger and frustration over the Treaty of Vincennes was legitimate, the threat of warfare may have been merely a bold diplomatic flourish.

As a result of the controversy surrounding the Treaty of Vincennes (1804), tensions between the Miami and the American government would remain high throughout the following year. In an unexpected development, it was the Delaware themselves who would reach out to Michikinikwa and Wells in an attempt to resolve the issue of the disputed land cessions. The leaders of the Delaware nation, including Buckongelas, sent a curious letter to William Wells in March of 1805 indicating that they were sending "our nephew William Patterson" to meet with Wells and discuss the disputed Treaty of Vincennes. The Delaware leaders, who incidentally affixed their names to the said treaty, claimed in regard to "Governor Harrison's purchasing a large tract of land, we know nothing of it, we have not in our power to sell land."[35] When Patterson arrived in Fort Wayne in April to discuss the matter with Wells, he reiterated the previous claims of ignorance regarding the land sales but added a few significant details worth considering. Patterson claimed that the Delaware leaders were eager to sign the treaty because Harrison told them "that he would give them an instrument of writing that would show that the country on White River belonged to the

[34] "McKee to Indians," November 1804, in Esarey, 111-112.

[35] "Delaware Indians to Wells," White River, March 30, 1805, in Esarey, 117-118.

Delawares."[36] He emphatically added, "Friend and Brother! The chiefs of my nation now declare to you from the bottom of their hearts in the presence of God that they never sold Governor Harrison or the United States any land at Vincennes last summer to their knowledge."[37] Going even further, Patterson urged Wells to continue to dispute the land sale at Vincennes and concluded his speech by saying "Friend and Brother! My chiefs wishes you to prevent this land being settled by the white people."[38]

Considering the fact that a number of Delaware leaders, including Buckongelas were present at the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1803), and the earlier Treaty of Greenville (1795), it is difficult to believe that they were wholly unaware of the treaty's true meaning at the time of the signing, especially considering that the terms of the treaty had been debated and agreed upon in the years preceding 1804. However, Patterson's statements concerning Delaware motivation for signing the treaty are believable, as it would have been highly advantageous for this diasporic nation to be in possession of an official document in which the American government recognized their claim to the lands on the White River. Perhaps the most likely (and believable) scenario in this case is that the decision to sell the lands between the Wabash and Ohio rivers to the United States was a calculated risk on the part of the Delawares. A risk that backfired dramatically considering the anger and resentment their decision triggered throughout Indian country.

While the Delawares were attempting to diffuse the tension created by the Treaty of Vincennes by suggesting that the treaty's land cessions were illegitimate, American

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[36] "William Patterson, a Delaware, to Wells," Fort Wayne, April 5, 1805, in Esarey, 122.

[37] "Patterson to Wells," in Esarey, 122.

[38] "Patterson to Wells," in Esarey, 123.

officials were eager to bring the Vincennes controversy to a favorable conclusion by having the Miami recognize the validity of the disputed land transaction. However, despite pressure from President Jefferson to "cause a meeting of the Delaware chiefs, and some of the principal chiefs of the Miames and Pattawatamies," Harrison had little hope that Michikinikwa and Wells would cooperate with this course of action.[39] In an April 1805 letter to Dearborn, Harrison wrote concerning Wells, "I am convinced that this man will not rest until he has persuaded the Indians that their very existence depends upon rescinding the Treaty with the Delawares and Piankeshaws."[40] Despite this prevailing climate of suspicion, Harrison dispatched General John Gibson and Colonel Francis Vigo to convene an Indian council at Fort Wayne in June of 1805 to discuss the signing of a new treaty at Vincennes, which Harrison hoped would take place as soon as possible.

Luckily for the sake of posterity, Gibson and Vigo themselves provided a detailed account of their eventful June trip up the Wabash. While Vigo proceeded directly up the Wabash to Fort Wayne to prepare for the conference, Gibson took a fact-finding detour through the Delaware towns on the White River. On the White River, Gibson discovered that many Delaware leaders continued to oppose the Treaty of Vincennes not because they truly believed that they had been tricked by Harrison and the other American officials, but because they were seemingly embarrassed concerning the disadvantageous financial terms of the treaty. An unspecified group of Delaware notables told Gibson that "they were sorry that their chiefs had behaved so foolishly as to deny the truth and that they were convinced that they had sold the land and were afraid to own it…and they also said that the Little

[39] Secretary of War to Harrison," War Department, May 21, 1805, in Esarey 130.

[40] "Harrison to Secretary of War," Vincennes, 26 April 1805, in Esarey, 125.

Turtle and Wells had said the sum specified in the Treaty was a mere nothing and that they were cheated and imposed upon."[41] Considering the earlier statements made by the Delaware diplomat William Patterson at Fort Wayne, it was apparent that the Delawares were in a precarious situation vis-à-vis both the American government and their Miami neighbors. To make matters worse for the Delaware, Colonel Gibson also reported that their influential leader Buckongelas had recently died, depriving the Delaware nation of an experienced diplomat and treaty negotiator.[42] In the particular context of treaty negotiations in the summer of 1805, the relatively weak position of the Delawares would provide the Miami delegation, led by Michikinikwa, with a unique diplomatic opportunity.

When considering the climate of intrigue and anticipation surrounding the Indian conference at Fort Wayne in June of 1805, the events of the short conference itself may at first glance seem decidedly anticlimactic. Acting under the authority of Harrison, Gibson and Vigo opened the conference by urging the Native American delegates to ignore the "bad stories," and "lying birds flying about" concerning the previous year's land transaction at Vincennes and invited them to visit Harrison at his Grouseland estate as soon as possible to resolve the situation.[43] While the Delaware representative Hockingpomskou was eager to oblige this request, Michikinikwa received Harrison's invitation with a not-so-subtle degree of apathy. The Miami *akima* told Gibson and Vigo, "We can form no

[41] "Gibson and Vigo to Harrison," Vincennes, July 6, 1805, in Esarey, 143. In exchange for the land between the Wabash and Ohio rivers, the Potawatomi received from the United States a 300-dollar annuity for the next ten years. See *American State Papers,* 689.

[42] "Gibson and Vigo to Harrison," in Esarey, 142.

[43] "Indian Council," Fort Wayne, June 21, 1805, in Esarey, 137-138. Here, Vigo and Gibson are employing the terms of Algonquian diplomacy, which often referenced "good talks" and "bad talks." The reference to "lying birds" is simply another term for rumor.

opinion at present on what you have said to us," and that the Miami "wish to consult the Indians in this quarter before we come to a conclusion." [44] In a somewhat curious exchange, Michikinikwa also stated, "You will tell our Father the Governor [Harrison] the weather is now very warm and that we cannot say at what time we can come see him."[45] Although it may have very well been a warm early summer in the Indiana Territory, it is necessary to view Michikinikwa's answer to Harrison in terms of diplomatic gamesmanship and not a literal statement of environmental discomfort. When pressed further by Gibson, Michikinikwa responded more emphatically by saying, "We wish not to be hurried, we think it a matter of importance. We think we have reason to complain and we wish for time to deliberate on the subject."[46]

Certainly, Gibson and Vigo suspected that Michikinikwa was employing stall tactics as part of a hard-nosed diplomatic strategy. These suspicions would be confirmed the following day when a letter from William Wells arrived, addressed to General Gibson. The letter stated that the assembled Miami and Eel River delegations "have no doubt but the governor has sent you and Col. [Francis] Vigo to call them to Vincennes but it appears absolutely necessary to them that you should show them your written instructions from the governor for that purpose."[47] The strategy here may have been twofold. First, if successful, this could have added to the delay while Gibson and Vigo got their paperwork in order.

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[44] "Indian Council," in Esarey, 138.

[45] "Indian Council," in Esarey, 138.

[46] "Indian Council," in Esarey, 139. It should be noted here that the Miami leader Richerville backed Michikinikwa's attempt to stall with the rather vague excuse that "my business calls me in another direction."

[47] "Wells to Gibson," Fort Wayne, June 22 1805, in Esarey, 139-140.

Secondly, a peek at Harrison's orders could have given Michikinikwa and the assembled Algonquian delegates additional insight into the intentions of their primary negotiating partner. Ultimately, Gibson informed Harrison that he declined this request, but was able to report that the Miami leaders intended to depart for Vincennes in twenty five days—not as quickly as Harrison, Vigo, and Gibson had hoped, but this agreement ensured that, despite the contentious proceedings, the conference at Fort Wayne was not a complete breakdown in the treaty-signing process.

In the early weeks of August 1805, some six weeks after the Indian conference at Fort Wayne, leaders from the towns on the upper Wabash, including Michikinikwa, began arriving at Harrison's newly-constructed estate at Vincennes, which Harrison called Grouseland. Reflecting Harrison's often adversarial state of mind, the young territorial governor wrote, "I am now surrounded by the chiefs of the Delaware, Miami and Eel River tribes."[48] However, in the months between the Fort Wayne conference and the event which would come to be known as the Treaty of Grouseland, something unexpected happened. While Harrison himself was aware of Michikinikwa and Wells' "violent opposition" to the earlier Treaty of Vincennes, the Miami *akima* and his son-in-law had adopted a noticeably different opinion and approach by the time of their arrival at Grouseland. Harrison informed Dearborn that "Capt. Wells and the Turtle are both here and I have received from each a positive assurance of a friendly disposition as well towards the government as myself…I am convinced that both [Wells] and the Turtle will exert themselves to bring the present conference to a happy issue."[49] It would be naïve to believe that this reversal of

[48] "Harrison to the Secretary of War," Vincennes, 10th August 1805, in Esarey, 161.

[49] "Harrison to the Secretary of War," in Esarey, 161.

opinion was due to a genuine change of heart on the part of the veteran Miami negotiator Michikinikwa, so what changed in the summer of 1805 to effect this strategic shift?

Undoubtedly, Michikinikwa spent the weeks between the conference at Fort Wayne and the signing of the Treaty of Grouseland in council with his fellow Miami, Eel River, Wea, and Potawatomi leaders throughout the upper Wabash, but unfortunately no account of these meetings exists. In order to analyze why Michikinikwa seemingly reversed course on his opposition to the Delaware land sales at Vincennes, it is necessary to look at the treaty-signing process at Grouseland in depth. After over a week of intensive negotiations, the Treaty of Grouseland was officially signed on August 21, 1805. Harrison originally intended the treaty to confirm the earlier Treaty of Vincennes, but the Treaty of Grouseland ultimately accomplished much more. The Miami, Eel River, and Wea delegation, now a unified front, agreed to accept the earlier Delaware land cessions at Vincennes, but vehemently opposed the Delaware claim to the lands between the White and Ohio rivers. Harrison later reported that "During the whole contest between these tribes, which lasted several days, I observed the most exact neutrality."[50] In the end, the Miami and their allies emerged victorious in this lengthy dispute, as they were able to successfully argue that they had allowed the Delaware to occupy those lands, but that agreement gave the Delaware themselves no title to the land in question, merely the privilege of living on it. In a crushing blow to the Delaware, the Miami, Eel River, and Wea then collectively sold a significant portion of the land between the White and Ohio rivers to the United States for a substantial

[50] "Harrison to Secretary of War," Vincennes, 26th August 1805, in Esarey, 162.

sum.[51] However, increased annuity payments were not the sole motivation for entering into additional land sales with American officials. Harrison's account of the proceedings revealed that the delegates from the upper Wabash argued most vociferously for Article 4 of the treaty, in which the United States agreed to recognize the "Miamies, Eel River, and Weas…as one nation" who were to be considered "joint owners of all the country on the Wabash."[52] Referring specifically to this article, Harrison wrote, "The guarantee of those lands to the three tribes, who call themselves Miamies, could not be avoided, as they insisted upon it with the most persevering obstinacy."[53] With the inclusion of this particular article, it is apparent that Michikinikwa's diplomatic strategy was evolving during this crucial time period. The formidable Miami diplomat had not only learned valuable lessons from previous treaties like Greenville and Fort Wayne but had even found a way to parlay the controversy surrounding the Treaty of Vincennes to his own nation's advantage.

Ultimately, the Miami delegation at Harrison's Vincennes estate were able to effectively out-negotiate the Delaware and sell a portion of the lands on the White River from underneath them for a considerable sum, while successfully lobbying the American government to recognize the Miami claim to the lands on the Wabash. Even in conservative terms this could be seen as a diplomatic masterstroke on the part of Michikinikwa and his fellow negotiators that would benefit the entire Miami nation. However, it must also be

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[51] *American State Papers,* 696. The Miami, Eel River Indians, and Weas all received permanent annuities of 600, 250, and 250 dollars respectively, this in addition to a lump sum of 4,000 dollars. Note that these amounts are significantly greater than what the Delawares negotiated at the Treaty of Vincennes (1804).

[52] *American State Papers,* 697.

[53] "Harrison to the Secretary of War," 26 August 1805, in Esarey, 163.

noted that the Treaty of Grouseland benefitted Michikinikwa on a far more personal level. Harrison concluded his account of the treaty-signing conference by noting, "In pursuance of the President's directions, I have promised the [Little] Turtle fifty dollars per annum, in addition to his pension, and I have also, directed Captain Wells to purchase a negro man for him, in Kentucky."[54] Rather than serving as evidence that Michikinikwa engaged in the treaty-making process solely in pursuit of private gain, the fact that he received added compensation from the treaty served to demonstrate the distinguished Miami *akima'*s central role in the proceedings, and the degree to which his own strategic diplomatic visits to the American capital paid off quite literally in cash and property.

From the American perspective, the meaning of the Treaty of Grouseland was fairly straightforward and pragmatic. The treaty not only settled the controversy surrounding the earlier Treaty of Vincennes, but also transferred a significant tract of land to the United States. Harrison declared, "The tract which has now been ceded contains at least two millions of acres, and embraces some of the finest land in the Western country."[55] However, for the Miami, the true legacy of the Treaty of Grouseland was not defined by the land that was ceded but by the fact that the terms of the treaty defined and legitimized the Miami nation's claim of unity and their territorial sovereignty in regard to the lands on the Wabash. In fact, the treaty itself carried so much ideological weight that during later heated treaty negotiations at Fort Wayne in 1809, a delegate from the Eel River towns

[54] "Harrison to the Secretary of War," 26 August 1805, in Esarey, 164. The specifics of this purchase are unknown, but there is evidence Wells did own slaves at Fort Wayne. The Garrison Orderly Book of Fort Wayne on May 26, 1809 contained the following after orders: "Capt Wells Negrows will be permitted to pass in and out of the Garrison the Same as other inhabitance of the place." In Griswold, 290-291.

[55] "Harrison to the Secretary of War," 26 August 1805, in Esarey, 164.

produced a copy of the Treaty of Grouseland in the presence of Harrison and declared, "Father—Here are your own words in this paper you promised that you would consider the Miamies as the owners of the land on the Wabash why then are you about to purchase it from others?"[56]

Perhaps the most telling statement concerning the Treaty of Grouseland from the Native American perspective came from Michikinikwa himself. During yet another visit to the American capital and meeting with president Jefferson in December of 1808, the Miami *akima* told Jefferson regarding the treaty, "It is now three winters since I informed governor Harrison at Vincennes that all the land on the Wabash and its waters and the lands on our river the Miamie of the Lake belonged to the Miamie, Weas, and Eel River tribes of Indians. Father, since that time your children have been quiet in their minds…and have found themselves much benefitted by it."[57] Considering that Michikinikwa and the Miami delegation argued doggedly for the article of the Treaty of Grouseland that entitled the Miami to lands on the Wabash, it is clear that the land cessions included in the treaty were not an attempt to simply accommodate American land hunger, but rather a calculated concession intended to consolidate and secure their own claim to the land. American government officials like Harrison may have referred to the Treaty of Greenville in grandiose terms as the "great tree of peace" in an effort to assuage the concerns of Algonquians in the Old Northwest, but nations like the Miami were looking to the treaty-

[56] "Journal of the Proceedings at the Indian Treaty at Fort Wayne and Vincennes September 1 to October 27, 1809," in Esarey, 374.

[57] Little to Turtle to Thomas Jefferson, 12 December 1808, *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed April 11, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/99-01-02-9298. "Miamie of the Lake" refers to the present-day Maumee river. In 1808, portions of the Maumee River north of Fort Wayne were still under Miami control.

making process in the early nineteenth century to establish more concrete measures of security. In this case, the Treaty of Grouseland provided just that, and while not as broad in scope as the Treaty of Greenville, it was decidedly more specific and served as an umbrella of security that guaranteed the Miami an important degree of territorial sovereignty.

When writing about the renowned Miami *akima* Michikinikwa, it is impossible to avoid his mythic role at the Treaty of Greenville. In the centuries following the signing of that pivotal treaty in 1795, Michikinikwa has been cast by generations of historians and biographers in the role of worthy adversary who wisely learned to "capitulate" and "accommodate" when confronted with the apparent inevitability of American settler colonialism. Historian Andrew Cayton's late twentieth century view of Michikinikwa departed little from comte de Volney's late eighteenth century impressions of the Miami leader. Cayton wrote, "The great war chief of the Miami may have resigned himself to the inevitability of the Americans, but he obviously had only a glimmering of the kind of changes these new people would bring to the Wabash and the Maumee. His farewell speech described a world in which the United States would simply take the place of Great Britain…But it was not to be."[58] However, Michikinikwa's statements to Volney in 1798 indicated that he did fully grasp the scope of American settler colonial expansion and was envisioning new ways to counteract its tendency toward destructive displacement. Michikinikwa's recognition of the apparent inevitability of American expansion should not be confused as willingness to accommodate or even worse, facilitate, that expansion via disadvantageous or otherwise naïve land sales.

[58] Cayton, *Frontier Indiana,* 166.

While the Treaty of Greenville may have represented the end of Michikinikwa's career as a Miami war leader, his participation in the treaty negotiations was more significant for the fact that it represented the beginning of his career as an influential, talented, and ambitious Miami diplomat. When speaking to the assembled delegates at Greenville on July 21, 1795, Michikinikwa asserted his view of Miami land possession by stating, "I expect that the lands on the Wabash, and in this country, belong to me and my people."[59] A decade later at William Henry Harrison's estate in Vincennes, Michikinikwa was able to negotiate a treaty with the American government that legitimized this territorial claim on paper. Returning again to Michikinikwa's statement to Volney in 1798 that "if we do not change our course, it is impossible for the red race of men to subsist," the Miami leader's acknowledgement that a course correction was necessary cannot be simply reduced to a choice between armed resistance or wholesale accommodation. Following Michikinikwa's diplomatic path during the years 1802-1805, it becomes evident that his "change of course" included an active engagement in the treaty system, not only for the purpose of defining, limiting, and controlling white settlement in Indian country at large, but also for the purpose of defining and legitimizing the territorial boundaries of his own nation. At Greenville, Michikinikwa expressed the idea of a nation on the Wabash—at Grouseland, he defined that nation's territorial boundaries and legitimized its sovereignty.

[59] *American State Papers,* 570.

CHAPTER IV

DARK CLOUDS OVER THE WABASH: MICHIKINIKWA'S FINAL YEARS, 1808-1812

In the spring of 1808, the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa decided to move his growing band of devoted followers from their existing camp at Greenville in western Ohio to the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe rivers—a location near the present-day town of Lafayette, Indiana, which in 1808 was located deep within the Miami nation as defined by the recent Treaty of Grouseland. The news of this move was concerning to a number of Delaware, Potawatomi, and Miami leaders. So much so the nine leaders of these nations, including Michikinikwa, intercepted Tenskwatawa's party on the banks of the Mississinewa river intending "to forbid the prophet from settling on the Wabash—and to point out to him the impropriety of his conduct."[1] Michikinikwa informed Wells that at least a portion of Tenskwatawa's alleged impropriety included his intention to "Draw all those western Indians together and commence war against all those Indians that would not listen to him."[2] The episode represents a fascinating moment as it encapsulated both a physical and ideological confrontation between two of the most prominent Native

[1] "William Wells to the Secretary of War," April 22, 1808, in *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 7, 558.

[2] "Wells to Secretary of War," in *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 7, 558.

American leaders of the era—with a key difference being that while Tenskwatawa's career was in its ascendancy, Michikinikwa's career was nearing its end.

The Indian resistance movement led by Shawnee brothers Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh has been well-covered by generations of historians, including two influential biographies by R. David Edmunds and more recent book by Adam Jortner that focused on the events surrounding the Battle of Tippecanoe.[3] The majority of these accounts write Michikinikwa into the story in the role of accommodationist obstacle to the Shawnee-led pan-Indian movement. Accordingly, Jortner wrote in reference to the Prophet's journey to the Wabash, "Among the first to oppose Tenskwatawa's move were the accommodationist Indians."[4] This interpretation was very much in line with Edmunds' earlier statement that "news of the emigration caused considerable alarm among the government chiefs near Fort Wayne."[5] Using the identifiers "accommodationist" and "government chiefs" suggests the that Michikinikwa and others opposed the Shawnee prophet in order to protect their supposed American alliance, but the differences between leaders like Michikinikwa and the Shawnee brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were far more complex and ideological. From the Miami perspective, Tenskwatawa's intention to establish a pan-Indian settlement on the banks of the Wabash was a direct threat to Miami sovereignty.

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[3] R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership,* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984) and *The Shawnee Prophet,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[4] Jortner, 143.

[5] Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership,* 111.

In addition to concerns over territorial sovereignty, Michikinikwa did not subscribe to Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian theory that all Native American nations had claim to all land in Indian country, as this idea would have completely undone the Miami *akima*'s previous decade of hard-nosed diplomacy and treaty-making. Many historians and educators over the years have romanticized Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh's resistance movement as the last legitimate chance for armed resistance to settler colonialism east of the Mississippi and often excused or otherwise elided the movement's inherent naivete in the process. Keeping this in mind, the confrontation between Michikinikwa and Tenskwatawa was not defined primarily by their relationships to the United States government, but by a fundamental clash between pragmatic and charismatic Native American leadership strategies. During the confrontation on the Mississinewa, Tenskwatawa described his intentions to establish a utopian-like Native American community on the Wabash, in which "a shirt would cost no more than a raccoon skin, and a blanket a deer skin."[6] Considering that Michikinikwa had spent the better part of a decade doggedly negotiating for better terms vis-à-vis the American government and had even established diplomatic relations with groups like the Quakers, he was not amused by the idealistic dreams of the much younger Shawnee holy man. Perhaps this is why Michikinikwa underestimated the appeal of the Shawnee prophet when he told Wells "the prophet has found that all his plans are defeated and has become desperate…no danger is to be apprehended from him at least this season as the Indians are losing confidence in him."[7] Michikinikwa was of course very wrong. As the influence of

[6] *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 7, 558.

[7] "Wells to Secretary of War," *Territorial Papers,* Vol. 7, 559.

Tenskwatawa and his equally charismatic brother Tecumseh would continue to expand, so too would the threat of armed conflict on the Wabash.[8]

Tensions were running high in the lower Great Lakes in 1808, but this tenuous situation would go from bad to worse the following year in the wake of the controversial Treaty of Fort Wayne (1809).[9] The treaty itself was formally signed September 30, 1809; however, the official signing was the culmination of a contentious treaty conference, which lasted the entire month of September.[10] One reason for this contentiousness was, in sharp contrast to the remarkable unity shown at Grouseland in 1805, the assembled Delaware, Potawatomi, Miami, and Eel River delegates did not possess anything close to a unified agenda. While the Delawares and Potawatomi delegation seemed eager to strike a deal with Governor Harrison, the Miami representatives were reluctant to sell more land on the Wabash. Weeks into the negotiations, "The Indians met in council to determine upon the answer to be given to the governor when the Miamies declared their determination not to sell a foot of land."[11] Michikinikwa himself revealed these divisions during the treaty negotiations when he said, " It is true that we the Miamies are not united with the Delawares and Putawatimies in opinion. Father, it appears that the thing is now left with the Miamies, they will withdraw and consult together and after they have made up their minds you shall

[8] The Battle of Tippecanoe would occur three years later in 1811.

[9] For the treaty in its entirety, see *American State Papers*, 761-762.

[10] "Journal of the Proceedings at the Indian Treaty at Fort Wayne and Vincennes September 1 to October 27, 1898," in Esarey, 362-378.

[11] "Journal of the Proceedings at Fort Wayne," in Esarey, 366.

hear our answer."[12] Ultimately, the Miami delegation would decide to sign the treaty, which ceded some 2.9 million acres of land to the United States.[13] However, the Miami delegation only signed the treaty after agreeing to additional compensation, which included "domestic animals to the amount of five hundred dollars, and the like number for the two following years; and an armorer shall be also maintained at Fort Wayne, for the use of the Indians."[14] The treaty also included a stipulation that if the Kickapoos agreed to its terms as well, the Miami would receive an extra two hundred dollar annuity as further compensation. Despite the mounting pressure of America's settler colonial expansion and a chaotic treaty conference, the Miami delegates managed to reach terms that allowed for the sort of internal improvements championed by Michikinikwa.

The proceedings at the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1809) are also significant for the fact that they undoubtedly reflect the diminishing influence of Michikinikwa. His role as speechmaker was noticeably reduced in favor of other Miami leaders like Pacanne, the Owl, and Richerville. As the treaty proceedings concluded, Michikinikwa was dealt a humiliating blow when "a very strong antipathy both to Wells and the Turtle was manifested by all. The Governor had no alternative but to promise immediate satisfaction…and to assure them that he perfectly understood and admitted that the Mississinway chiefs were the real representatives of the Miami nation and that he should always consider them as such."[15] It would seem that Michikinikwa's career as principal

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[12] "Journal of the Proceedings at Fort Wayne," in Esarey, 369.

[13] Owens, 206.

[14] *American State Papers,* 762.

[15] "Journal of the Proceedings at Fort Wayne," in Esarey, 375.

Miami treaty negotiator had come to a sudden end some fourteen years after he took up this position at the Treaty of Greenville.

Casting doubt on the status of Native American leaders and speculating on their degree of influence was not uncommon, so it logically follows that contemporary sources would focus in on Michikinikwa's apparent fall from grace in the wake of the Treaty of Fort Wayne. In the writings of John Johnston, as well as William Henry Harrison and others, there was a preoccupation with Michikinikwa's influence over the Miami people as a whole. At times Americans like Johnston lamented Michikinikwa's influence and ability for intrigue, while at other times doubt was cast upon his leadership and influence. This type of speculation is not unique to Michikinikwa, as similar arguments existed concerning Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa and form an identifiable and possibly self-replicating "weak chief" discourse. Michikinikwa participated whole-heartedly in this discourse himself as seen in his 1808 comments on the waning influence of the Shawnee prophet. However, these statements cannot always be taken at face value by modern scholars because these evaluations apply Euro-American concepts of leadership to Native American frameworks in a way that is unproductive and problematic.

Influential historian Alan Taylor addressed this problem in respect to Iroquoian peoples, noting that Euro-American observers ironically struggled to understand an authority structure based on consensus. Taylor wrote that "a proper chief worked to soothe the discontented, to calm troubles, and to keep the peace by sage advice. Unable to command people, the chief exercised influence through persuasion, which rested upon his

prestige, example, and reason."[16] Applying this logic to Michikinikwa, it becomes difficult to pinpoint exactly where and when he began to lose his persuasiveness, but certainly the Treaty of Fort Wayne is a key window into this process. Perhaps for Michikinikwa, his time had simply come and gone. Predictably, Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh were vehemently opposed to the recent treaty, and a well-known figure like Michikinikwa provided a convenient scapegoat. Edmunds described their reaction thusly, "Outraged by the agreement, both Tecumseh and the Prophet threatened to kill the government chiefs, who they claimed had betrayed their kinsmen."[17] It is easy to understand how these sentiments would have been particularly appealing to a generation of young warriors for whom the Northwest Indian War was but a distant childhood memory or relegated to the realm of campfire tale told by their elders. Either way, the new Indian resistance movement provided an attractive alternative to formal diplomatic relations with the Americans as well as participation in the often arduous and slow treaty-making process.

Interestingly from the American perspective, while U.S. Indian agent John Johnston often portrayed Michikinikwa in a suspicious or otherwise negative light during this period, his recollections of the Miami leader written later in life were far more positive. This is interesting as it demonstrates that Michikinikwa's reputation as an "accomodationist" or "American chief" was developed over time and was not consistently applied to him during his lifetime. In Johnston's later recollection of his long career, he wrote the following concerning Michikinikwa:

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[16] Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution,* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 19.

[17] Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership,* 123.

> I consider him the superior of Tecumtha in all the essential qualities of a great man…Little Turtle, a celebrated Chief of the Miami Tribe…a distinguished orator, Councilor and Warrior, my acquaintance with him was long, intimate, and gratifying…In council with the Commissioners of the United States, he had not an equal among his people. Governor Harrison often admitted his great tact and talent and the trouble which he gave him in the acquisition of the Indian lands.[18]

It certainly appears that Johnston's perception of Michikinikwa had significantly changed over time. Some of this may have to do with the prominence of Tecumseh and the threat that his armed resistance represented to the United States. While it may have been true to Johnston that Michikinikwa seemed more American-friendly in retrospect, the available evidence pertaining to the Miami leader's own life and time period does not reflect Johnston's later interpretation.

Johnston specifically mentioned the "trouble" which Michikinikwa gave William Henry Harrison, and this claim is, in fact, supported by the writings of Harrison himself. A letter from Harrison during this period revealed that the tension between himself and Michikinikwa (not to mention Wells) went back to earlier events at the Treaty of Grouseland. Harrison wrote "In the year 1805…[with] the Little Turtle he [Wells] concluded an intrigue against me which was discovered and exposed by General Dearborn and his dismission would have been the consequence if I had not solicited his pardon."[19] Harrison went on to describe his reasons for continuing to do business with Michikinikwa and Wells, which were not related to his actual faith or trust in their loyalty to the United States but out of fear of their influence and potential as opponents of American policy vis-

[18] Hill and Johnston, 59.

[19] Griswold, 40. This is in reference to Michikinikwa's stall tactics at the Fort Wayne Conference preceding that actual Treaty of Grouseland.

à-vis Native Americans. Referring specifically to the 1809 Fort Wayne Treaty, Harrison commented "I knew that if he [Wells] was not employed both himself and the Turtle would do everything in their power to defeat it. As it was, they both exerted themselves in favour of the treaty, but their subsequent conduct had been so highly improper as to do away with all the favourable impressions which their zeal for the Treaty had created."[20] Needless to say, this was neither a ringing endorsement of Michikinikwa from Harrison nor the description of an "American-friendly chief."

In addition to concerns over the behavior of Michikinikwa and Wells at the 1809 treaty, Harrison also expressed anxiety over Wells' future employment and Michikinikwa's influence. In the aforementioned letter, Harrison wrote "He [Wells] is certainly capable of rendering very important service and if he is not employed and remains where he is every measure of the Government will be opposed and thwarted by himself and the Turtle…they possess such talents for intrigue and are so well acquainted with the Indian character as to be able to do a great deal of mischief."[21] In the letters of Harrison, as well as Johnston, there existed a tendency to portray Wells as the ringleader of the "trouble" and "mischief", but considering the age and experience of Michikinikwa, coupled with the fact that the Miami leader was Wells' father-in-law, it is reasonable to assume that Michikinikwa was the driving force behind much of this resistance to American policy in the Old Northwest.

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[20] Griswold, 41.

[21] Griswold, 41.

Perhaps the problem was not that Wells would be able to stir up more dissent and trouble outside the scope of Indian agency control if he were unemployed, but that he was already employed in a different capacity—by his father-in-law and mentor Michikinikwa. This is yet another shift in analytical perspective, as much of Native American history has been plagued by the tendency to see Native American leaders as "junior partners" to their Euro-American counterparts, but considering the rich history of Algonquian diplomacy and considerable "tact" and "talent" of leaders like Michikinikwa, it is possible that this view of Anglo-Native American relations in the Northwest is seriously flawed and entirely inaccurate.[22] A humorous but insightful anecdote from John Johnston may shed further light on the relationship between Michikinikwa and Wells. In his memoirs, Johnston wrote:

> The Little Turtle used to entertain us with many of his war adventures, and would laugh immoderately at the recital of the following. A white man, a prisoner of many years in the tribe, had often solicited permission to go on a war party to Kentucky, and had been refused…This man, however, had so far acquired the confidence of the Indians, the Turtle at length consented. As was their practice, they had reconnoitered during the day and had fixed on a house…as the object to be attacked…At the appointed time the Indians, with the white man, began to move to the attack…The white man all the time was striving to be foremost…in spite of all their efforts he would keep foremost, and having at length got within running distance of the house, he jumped to his feet…shouting at the top of his voice, "Indians! Indians!" From that day forth this chief would never trust a white man to accompany him again to war.[23]

The fact that this story was no doubt told countless times in the presence of Wells, a white man who was captured in Kentucky as an adolescent and fought alongside Michikinikwa

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[22] There are clearly instances where Native American leaders found powerful patrons. Perhaps the most famous example this was the relationship between Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) and Sir William Johnson, which was covered extensively by Alan Taylor in *The Divided Ground.* However, this model does not fit the relationship between Michikinikwa and Wells for a host of reasons.

[23] Hill and Johnston, 161-162.

at the Battle of the Wabash in 1791, cannot be a coincidence. It is very likely that Michikinikwa's immoderate laughter was due to the fact that this story was a sort of inside joke between Michikinikwa and his son-in-law Wells. This interpretation of Johnston's humorous anecdote further demonstrates that Wells was in a subordinate position to his prominent father-in-law, so much so that he no doubt endured a degree of good-natured ribbing from time to time.

Although Michikinikwa's influence may have been waning in the final years of his life, the aging Miami *akima* would once again find himself front and center on the diplomatic stage, as tensions between the Indian resistance movement of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh and the American government peaked in the latter months of 1811. During an Indian council at Fort Wayne in September 1811, Michikinikwa delivered a series of speeches in which he emphasized his desire for peace with the United States and his opposition to Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, while continually referring back to the terms of the Treaty of Greenville.[24] One excerpt from Michikinikwa's September 1811 speech to Harrison is particularly representative of the Miami leader's personality, diplomatic ability, and political motivations. As translated by Wells, Michikinikwa stated:

> Father, you have asked us whether we are prepared to take part with the Prophet or still hold you fast by the hand. This question causes us to believe that a misunderstanding has taken place between you and some of our people…The transactions which took place between the Indians and white people at Greenville are yet fresh in our minds…Father, you have told us you would draw a line: that

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[24] These speeches were translated and transcribed by William Wells and were later published in the Fort Wayne Manuscript. Historians have debated the authorship of the Fort Wayne Manuscript since its publication, although Wells was always the suspected author. Currently, William Heath, the foremost expert on Wells, believes that Wells is unequivocally the author of the manuscript and has made a convincing argument in his article "Re-evaluating the 'Fort Wayne Manuscript' William Wells and the Manners and Customs of the Miami Nation", *Indiana Magazine of History, (*No. 106, June 2010).

> your children should stand on one side and the Prophet on the other. We, the Miamies, wish to be considered in the same light by you, as we were at the treaty of Greenville, holding fast to that treaty which united us…Father, I must again repeat that you said you should draw a line between your children and the Prophet. We are not pleased at this, because we think you have no reason to doubt our friendship toward you.[25]

When carefully considered with all the other evidence, it is apparent through the language of this speech that Michikinikwa was not pursuing peace from a position of accommodation, subservience or loyalty, but was confidently articulating his view that the Miami were to be considered on equal footing with their American allies and his desire to avoid conflict went hand-in-hand with his desire to maintain Native American autonomy and economic prosperity. In yet another example of Michikinikwa's ability to turn a phrase, he denied Harrison's request for the Miami to "hold [the United States] fast by the hand," and instead stated that the Miami chose to hold fast "to that treaty which united us." When asked by Harrison and the American government to choose a side, Michikinikwa boldly chose his own.

Michikinikwa's final personal contribution to the historical record came in the form of a letter to Harrison dated January 25th, 1812. In that letter, the Miami leader reiterated some of the previous points discussed at Fort Wayne in the fall of 1811, affirmed Miami neutrality in the wake of the Battle of Tippecanoe, which had just occurred in November of 1811, and wished for peace between the "red" and "white" peoples. True to his oratory style, Michikinikwa concluded the letter with a statement that was both ominously

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[25] "The Fort Wayne Manuscript: An Old Writing Lately Found Containing Indian Speeches and a Treatise on the Western Indians", Ed. Hiram W. Beckwith, in *Fergus' Historical Series No. 26-29,* (Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1883), 71-72.

prophetic and undeniably intriguing. As dictated to his ever-present son-in-law Wells, he stated "My friend, the clouds appear to be rising in a different quarter, which threatens to turn our light into darkness. To prevent this, it may require the united effort of us all. We hope that none of us will be found to shrink from the storm that threatens to hurt our nations."[26] Michikinikwa was of course referring to rising tensions that would eventually escalate and become the War of 1812 that following summer, but there is also a larger metaphor to be made here. In many ways, the last 17 years of Michikinikwa's life have been overshadowed historiographically by dark clouds on the horizon that he himself may have anticipated but not live to see overhead. In this case, the dark clouds are the War of 1812, the defeat of Tecumseh's Native American confederacy, and worst of all, the cruelty of Indian removal. Inevitability is a perilous trap than can ensnare even the best historian, but these eventual catastrophes from the Native American perspective cannot be allowed to overshadow the activities of individuals like Michikinikwa who lived through this tumultuous period and attempted to maintain Native American autonomy through a variety of entirely new or reconfigured strategies. Ultimately, these strategies failed; and yet, Michikinikwa's attempts to limit, circumscribe, influence, and control what he saw as "certain reservations for white people" in Indian Country must be evaluated on their own merits. Another easily overlooked aspect of Michikinikwa's final letter is his reference to "our nations." Michikinikwa skillfully negotiated on behalf of his nation, defined that nation through the treaty-making process, and sought to internally improve this Miami "nation on the Wabash" through formal and informal diplomacy, as well as sheer force of character and influence.

[26] "The Fort Wayne Manuscript," 78.

Perhaps, in conclusion, it is fitting to return to the Treaty of Greenville for perspective, as Michikinikwa often did himself. A careful consideration and reevaluation of the evidence presented in the previous chapters reveals that historians should not portray Michikinikwa's final years as a period of accommodation, assimilation, and capitulation, or refer to him simply as an "American chief" or even an "accomodationist Miami leader." Contrary to the imaginary scene constructed and painted by Howard Chandler Christy, as problematic as this may be for modern Ohioans, Michikinikwa was not offering Native American land to the United States in defeat. Rather, he was standing between the Americans and his Native American allies in an attempt to hold his ground, both literally and figuratively. Michikinikwa was a persuasive and precocious Miami *akima* who stood his ground against the United States Army during the Northwest Indian War, stood his ground in the presence of presidents Adams and Jefferson in 1798 and 1802 and demanded that the United States obey the Treaty of Greenville. He demonstrated a willingness to engage in dialogue with European intellectuals and United States Indian agents on equal footing and used his considerable "tact" and "talent" to achieve diplomatic success in his numerous negotiations with William Henry Harrison. These are not the actions of a Native American leader who was demonstrating his loyalty to the United States, but are instead the actions of a Native American leader who was attempting to further the interests of the Miami and their Algonquian allies through a diplomatic strategy that involved direct interaction with the American government, while simultaneously attempting to limit and control white settlement on Native American land. Perhaps more importantly,

Michikinikwa also defined, defended, maintained, and sought to improve his own sovereign indigenous nation against the cataclysmic onslaught of American settler colonialism.

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE: REINTERPETING THE "ACCOMMODATIONIST'S BONES," AMERICAN MEMORY AND THE LITTLE TURTLE

Considering the place of prominence occupied by Michikinikwa at the Ohio Statehouse, the Miami *akima'*s final resting place lies in relative obscurity. Following his death in July of 1812, Michikinikwa was buried on the property of his constant companion William Wells. Wells' property was just north of present-day downtown Fort Wayne, only a few blocks away from the confluence of the St. Marys, St. Joseph, and Maumee rivers. As time passed and the American city of Fort Wayne grew, knowledge of Michikinikwa's burial site was forgotten until 1911 when his remains were accidently unearthed during construction of homes in a neighborhood that would come to be known as Spy Run.[1] Today, motorists travelling to and from Fort Wayne's city center on busy Spy Run Avenue speed by a modest memorial to the Miami leader on Lawton Place, which is marked only by a small, wooden signpost. In 1959, the Fort Wayne Historical Society established the memorial when they converted the plot of land where Michikinikwa's remains were discovered and subsequently reinterred into a public park. A plaque at the site reads:

> Me-she-kin-no-quah. Chief of the Miami Indians. Teacher of his people. Friend of the United States. His endeavors toward peace should serve as an inspiration for future

[1] Young, 169-177.

> generations…This plot of ground, the last resting place of Chief Little Turtle, is dedicated to the children of America.[2]

It would seem that even in death, Michikinikwa cannot escape the flawed "friend of the United States" moniker. More recently, Fort Wayne's Architectural and Community Heritage Program (ARCH) thankfully added a marker at the site, which gives a brief, but fuller, biography of Michikinikwa, even noting his dual roles as a warrior and a diplomat.

Just across the St. Marys river from Spy Run, another more dramatic monument to Michikinikwa towers over a pine grove at Headwaters Park. Sculptor Hector Garcia's larger than life statue was erected in 1976. The statue features Michikinikwa standing defiant, wearing only a breechcloth and his signature bear tooth necklace (as seen in the now lost Gilbert Stuart portrait). Undoubtedly, Garcia's sculpture represents Michikinikwa the fearsome Miami warrior, and yet in 1976 the city of Fort Wayne dedicated the statue "in commemoration of our nation's bicentennial."[3] Much like the memorial at Lawton Place, the memorial makers have linked Michikinikwa to the United States, thus co-opting the Miami leader for their own purposes and incorporating him into a decidedly American memory.

Less than one hundred miles downriver from Fort Wayne, another American monument prominently features Michikinikwa. The Fallen Timbers State Memorial in Maumee, Ohio, which commemorates the American victory over the Western Confederacy of Native American nations at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August of 1794, contains two references to the Miami *akima.* One of the statues three bronze bas reliefs depicts

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[2] *Little Turtle Memorial,* Fort Wayne, Indiana, Lawton Place, 1959.
[3] *Little Turtle,* sculpture by Hector Garcia, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Headwaters Park, 1976.

Michikinikwa at the Treaty of Greenville and indicates that Anthony Wayne's legion "defeated Chief Little Turtle's warriors here at Fallen Timbers August 20, 1794. This victory led to the Treaty of Greenville…which opened up much of the present state of Ohio to white settlers."[4] A second relief depicts defeated Native American warriors fleeing the battle above the inscription "To chief Little Turtle and his brave Indian warriors."[5] On the whole, the monument, erected in 1929, is a testament to American paternalism, imperialism, and triumphalism. To make matters worse, the historical information is inaccurate. Michikinikwa was present at the Battle of Fallen Timbers but had already relinquished his command of the Native American troops—the Native American forces were, in fact, led by Weyapiersenwah, not Michikinikwa.[6] However, Michikinikwa's inclusion on the Fallen Timbers monument demonstrates that he was still in the early twentieth century successfully fulfilling the role of "famous Indian chief" in America's public imagination.

Ultimately, these twentieth century attempts to incorporate Michikinikwa into American memory echo the eighteenth-century observations made by the likes of comte de Volney and repeated so often by generations of historians. Through the centuries, Euro-Americans have transformed Michikinikwa from a "formidable enemy" to a "friend of the United States." This transformation speaks little to the Miami leader's own experience and

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[4] *Fallen Timbers State Memorial*, sculptor Bruce Saville, Maumee, Ohio, 1929.

[5] *Fallen Timbers State Memorial*

[6] For a new, compelling account of the Battle of Fallen Timbers see William Hogeland, *Autumn of the Black Snake: George Washington, Mad Anthony Wayne, and the Invasion that Opened the West,* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2017, 337-351.

conception of his Miami nation and instead reveals more in terms of how Americans have attempted to rationalize the destruction and displacement of settler colonialism. The feared enemy who became a faithful friend is a popular trope that mirrors the more academic tendency to place Native Americans into a strict resistance versus accommodation dichotomy, which strips Native American actors of agency and prevents them from expressing their own self-identity. Considering the career of the Miami *akima* Michikinikwa, it is clear that he defined himself by neither his resistance to the United States nor his later willingness to engage in diplomatic relations with Americans, but by his devotion to the legitimacy, survival, and internal development of a sovereign Miami nation. Seen from this perspective Michikinikwa's path from the Treaty of Greenville until his death becomes a much different story. A powerful story of diplomacy, perseverance, and agency—although, it is also a story contained within a tragedy. Once powerful Native American nations like the Miami would gradually be dispossessed of all their lands in the Great Lakes by the end of the nineteenth century, and the American government would eventually break the containment of Michikinikwa's "reservations for the white people in our country" and establish a vast network of impoverished and marginalized Indian reservations. However, throughout this process of loss and displacement, Native American nations like the Miami would retain their hard-fought sovereignty and perhaps this is Michikinikwa's true legacy. Thinking back to his humble memorial plaque at Lawton Place in Fort Wayne, the true shame is that it is dedicated to the children of America and not to the children of the Miami nation.

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