

In Our words – Legislated Land Theft

Bomgiizhik –

So, chief Pontiac was not having the royal proclamation, he was not having the Treaty of Niagara. He felt that it was important to keep indigenous lands away from the British. He felt that they were crooked, and that they were going to try to steal all of the land. And so, it was years after when he actually gave his pipe to Sir William Johnson and said “I’ll fight you no more.” But clearly told him that he knew what he was up to and that he didn’t like it. But that he would honour peace if that is what that was. They actually say that the British themselves hired this other tribe to kill him. And so, they got rid of Pontiac because he was the rebellion, he was the threat. And, God forbid, if he was ever to get a second wind. To think that everybody was conglomerated in this big happy family is not the truth. They were still fighting, there’s actually still battles battles that took place along the north shore after the Treaty of Niagara.

Dave Mowat –

You see this progression of degradation, I guess you would call it, in the relationship. The first survey occurs at Kingston, in 1783: the Gunshot. There was not even any proof that it was executed by the chiefs. So then if you start to look at that partnership, or that relationship from 1764, nothing really happens along the north shore of Lake Ontario until after the revolution. There is really no treaty relationship. It was really just a matter to open up the land to resettle the Loyalists.

Bomgiizhik –

Chief Shingwauk was an Ojibway man who was born South of Lake Superior, and he was raised by his mother. And he quickly became a very spiritual person, and was noted for his strong medicinal abilities, but also his warrior ways. So, they say the Americans started to cross on to the north shore of Lake Huron, and Lake Superior. And, they started to take resources. And of course, we don’t view those things as resources that’s our land. There is a lot of spirit in that. So of course, Shingwauk went to defend their indigenous territories from the Americans. And in July of 1812, Chief Shingwauk took 800 warriors to St. Joseph Island. There was a fort there. He gathered up a handful of British, like not even 50 of them, and zoomed across to Fort Macinac and took over the fort, the American Fort, and actually

this started the war of 1812. The Ojibway people were fighting in the war of 1812 to protect their own autonomy. They weren't fighting to protect the British land, because at that time there simply wasn't any. Those were still indigenous lands. And Chief Shingwauk said we are going to war to protect our independent Ojibway homelands. And so, he gathered warriors from all over the place. Same with Tecumseh, and they fought fighting for their own lands.

Of course, the British fought the French to claim title. While this was going on this new entity called America was formed. And they are trying to define their territory. So of course, the British had to fight them. And once they did, of course, they claimed what we now know as Canada as crown land.

So, during this whole treaty process the populations of indigenous people were very, very low. You had influenza, you had outbreaks of smallpox, and also, they say that half of the population around the Great Lakes were diminished during the war of 1812.

Dave Mowat –

The borderlands are sealed after the war of 1812. That sort of severs the Great Confederacy. You know, our people and the tribes on the other side of the American border. The British realize that their border is vulnerable – the border has been breached four times by the Americans. Chateaugay, Chrysler's Farm, York, and Detroit. And so, the British now need to secure land in from the old treaties. Who ever could build the first mills those guys are the ones that became the real important people in the growing communities. So, then the ecology starts to change. You start to flood the streams and the rivers. And that is going to change the ecology. Colonial drainage laws come down in 1935. So, farmers now have the authority or the ability now to drain the land. There is the union that occurs in 1841, and the province of Canada is created out of that.

Bomgiizhik –

The British had everything mapped out. They had all of the copper, and the nickel, and the white pine. They had all of the gold. All mapped out. And, so once the land was secured as crown land from the Americans and they had eliminated any threat from the Americans. Then they went into full on resource extraction. That was the whole plan from the beginning.

Dave Mowat –

And then the Bagot Commission occurs and that now takes on the "Indian problem." Out of the Bagot Commission comes this idea of the Industrial School. And so, it is the predecessor of the Residential

School. T.G. Anderson the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, he comes to the communities and he says to the people, "we would like the smaller reserve communities to move to those communities, participate in this industrial school." And so, the chiefs agreed that we will provide one quarter of our annuity money to help support the schools. They buy into this scheme because they believe education that will help our people survive. Why did they do that? Because our people are still de-facto self-governing. It is pre-Confederation right, our people control the treaty money, they control their membership, they control their land and resources – what's left of it.