



2016

## A Fire That Could Not Be Extinguished: Sovereignty and Identity in the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 1634-1994

Melisa Cushing-Davis  
*Loyola University Chicago*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss)



Part of the [Indigenous Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cushing-Davis, Melisa, "A Fire That Could Not Be Extinguished: Sovereignty and Identity in the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 1634-1994" (2016). *Dissertations*. 2278.  
[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2278](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2278)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).  
Copyright © 2016 Melisa Cushing-Davis

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A FIRE THAT COULD NOT BE EXTINGUISHED:  
SOVEREIGNTY AND IDENTITY IN THE POKAGON BAND OF  
POTAWATOMI INDIANS, 1634 – 1994

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

JOINT DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN  
AMERICAN HISTORY/PUBLIC HISTORY

BY

MELISA CUSHING DAVIS

CHICAGO, IL

DECEMBER 2016

Copyright by Melisa Cushing Davis, 2016  
All rights reserved.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I've come to believe that writing a dissertation is very similar to climbing a mountain. It takes years of preparation, hard work, and dedication. The writing can feel like a solitary endeavor. However, just as the climber could not achieve the summit without the assistance of a dedicated support team, so too would my efforts have been for naught without the help of so many others. This is my attempt to thank them all.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Loyola University Chicago and the Department of History for accepting me into their Joint Doctoral Program in American History and Public History. The graduate assistantship awarded provided essential financial support. The pedagogical foundation and practical experiences gained were (and are) invaluable. However, it was the opportunity for personal growth and discovery, at a very difficult time in my life, for which I can never fully express my gratitude.

Thank you to all of my committee members. To Dr. John W.W. Mann, it was you who first set me on this path. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, for your support, and for your encouragement throughout both my Master's and Ph.D. programs. To Dr. Timothy Gilfoyle, thank you for your content input and stylistic recommendations. I hope that I have been able to emulate your effortless writing style. And finally, to Dr. Theodore Karamanski: thank you for your help in developing not only the thesis for this work, but in crafting a sometimes very complex story. Your suggestions, insights, sound

advice, direction, and gentle prodding propelled me forward. Progress was sometimes very slow in coming, and for your unending patience, above all else, I thank you.

I must also thank John Low, Assistant Professor at The Ohio State University at Newark and elder of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. As my supervisor at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, John was a mentor and a critical sounding board at the beginning of the dissertation process. By asking the right questions, John set me on the path to discovering my own voice for this project.

So many archivists and research librarians were extremely generous with their time. Their expertise and deep knowledge of their collections guided me to documents absolutely vital to this work. My special thanks to: Mary Francis Ronan at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; the staff at Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library; the staff at the University of Notre Dame Archives; the research librarians at Milwaukee Public Library; Dawn Eurich at Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection; and Sherry Wells, independent researcher and Earl Shaffer, Niles Michigan District Library, who were able to find primary sources where I could not. I am deeply indebted to you all for your assistance.

Special thanks are due to Brenda Bowyer, of WNIT Public Television, who went out of her way to provide copies of documentaries from the 1990s produced by her station. These were essential to understanding the late twentieth-century history of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. Special thanks are also due to Congressman Fred Upton, representative from Michigan's sixth congressional district, who carved time from his busy schedule to be interviewed for this project. I am grateful for your time and your insights.

To my friends, to my brother and sister, my son and daughter-in-law, and my two beautiful grandchildren, Michael and Madison, thank you for your support, and for your understanding during those long periods of silence during which it seemed I had fallen off the planet. And finally, a special thank you to Lisa Theo and Lee Lounsbury, who buoyed me in times of sadness; celebrated every achievement with me; and who believed in me even when I had lost faith in myself. Your unwavering confidence in me, and your love, so generously expressed, sustained me. I love you both dearly.

For my grandchildren, Michael and Madison

Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it.  
The time will pass anyway.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER TWO: IN THE BEGINNING .....	29
Early Potawatomi History .....	30
The Beaver Wars .....	33
Potawatomi and the Middle Ground .....	36
The Potawatomi and the French Alliance .....	43
Intertribal conflict .....	56
Cultural Impact of the Franco/Potawatomi Alliance .....	61
Conclusion .....	
CHAPTER THREE: IN GOD THEY TRUSTED: LEOPOLD POKAGON, CATHOLICISM AND ADAPTIVE RESISTENCE .....	75
Potawatomi Relations with the British .....	79
The Western Confederacy .....	81
Genesis of Removal Policy .....	90
The Potawatomi and the Baptists .....	93
Who Was Leopold Pokagon? .....	98
Emergence of the Pokagon Band .....	106
Renewed Contact with the Roman Catholic Church .....	117
Avoiding Removal .....	131
Conclusion .....	139
CHAPTER FOUR: ACCOMMODATION AND RESISTANCE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY .....	142
Pokagon Land Base Threatened .....	144
Intratribal Factions Emerge .....	151
In Pursuit of Annuities Due, Part 1 .....	161
Changes to Pokagon Tribal Governance .....	165
The Pokagon and Indian Education .....	171
Early Life of Simon Pokagon .....	181
In Pursuit of Annuities Due, Part 2 .....	183
Simon Pokagon, Assimilation, and Acculturation .....	198
Conclusion .....	208



CHAPTER FIVE: A TIME OF DARKNESS .....	211
Simon Pokagon’s Sand Bar Case.....	212
An Indian New Deal .....	218
The Pokagon Press for Inclusion .....	227
The Basis for Administrative Termination .....	238
Opportunities Lost .....	244
Conclusion .....	251
CHAPTER SIX: ALWAYS A PEOPLE .....	255
The Indian Claims Commission.....	256
Creating the Federal Acknowledgment Process .....	260
Reclaiming Tribal Status.....	267
Conclusion .....	295
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION .....	300
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	312
VITA .....	336

## ABSTRACT

American Indian sovereignty and identity, the rights of political and economic self-determination and self-definition, have suffered numerous blows since the time of First Contact. Under the policies of various European nations, and finally the United States, indigenous residents of North America have struggled to maintain political independence, as well as cultural and social integrity, while adapting to changing conditions over which they found themselves, most often, to have little direct control. Such is the history of the Potawatomi people. This dissertation examines the historic responses to these continuing challenges of one band of Potawatomi, the Pokagon of southwestern Michigan. It argues that, far from being vanished generic Indians, the Pokagon Potawatomi have continuously strived to maintain and enhance a cohesive tribal identity. As a case study, the problems faced by the Pokagon, both historical and contemporary, reflect not only upon the Pokagon and their non-native neighbors, but offer insight into common experiences for Native peoples across the country.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

American Indian sovereignty and identity, the rights of self-determination and self-definition, have suffered numerous blows since the time of First Contact. Under the policies of various European nations, and finally, the United States, the indigenous residents of North American have struggled to maintain their political independence, as well as their cultural and social integrity. They have adapted to changing conditions over which they found themselves, very often, to have little direct control. Such is the history of the Potawatomi people. This dissertation examines the historic responses to these continuing challenges of one band of Potawatomi, the Pokagon of southwestern Michigan, providing the opportunity for a detailed case study of these issues. This dissertation argues that, contrary to assertions by many scholars that they are vanished generic Indians who asserted an ethnic identity only when politically convenient, the Pokagon Potawatomi have continuously strived to maintain and enhance a cohesive tribal identity. Unique among the Potawatomi of the Great Lakes region in legally avoiding removal, the Pokagon nevertheless have weathered attacks upon their sovereignty and distinctive identity, as have countless other Indian Nations. The problems facing the Pokagon, both historical and contemporary, reflect not only upon the Pokagon and their non-native neighbors, but offer insight into common experiences for Native peoples across the country.

The challenges faced by the Pokagon began even before they existed as a recognizable band within the Potawatomi Nation, with the seventeenth-century invasion of their ancestral homelands by Iroquoian tribes eager to expand their territory to capitalize on the fur trade. Subsequent experiences within refugee communities in eastern Wisconsin, and contact with the French, further challenged traditional ideas of sovereignty. Yet, I argue, the Potawatomi quickly adapted with new skills and new tools to resist both the French and the Iroquois, eventually allowing them to reestablish their claim to land in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan.

By 1795, the French had abandoned their claim to their North American territories, and the British, who succeeded them, had lost a war of independence waged by their rebellious American colonies. The new United States of America began to exercise its authority in the Old Northwest. The Potawatomi, by virtue of their remote location, long managed to avoid direct intrusion by the Euro-Americans, and continued to practice the skills learned during their long years of displacement. However, following an unsuccessful uprising by the tribes of the Western Confederacy (of which the Potawatomi were active participants), the Potawatomi sued the United States for peace, and were forced to cede a considerable portion of their territory to the United States in the Treaty of Greenville (1795), the first of many treaties that culminated in the removal of the bulk of the tribe with the 1833 Treaty of Chicago.

During these latter treaty negotiations a distinct Pokagon identity emerged with the Catholic Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley. Taking their more common name from leader Leopold Pokagon, the Catholic Potawatomi alone would legally avoid government efforts at removal. Leopold Pokagon's alliance with the Roman Catholic

Church is historical fact. However, his motivations and machinations, I argue, have been misunderstood and misinterpreted. The discussion should not only examine Leopold's religious devotion, or his quest for spiritual power. What remains inadequately explored is how Leopold Pokagon invented a new way of being Indian, a new Pokagon identity, and how that choice shaped the future for his band. Leopold Pokagon's manipulation of the value placed on Christianity by the Americans, his adaptation of what it meant to be Indian, as well as his shrewd choice of Roman Catholicism, allowed his people to successfully negotiate the U.S. policy of land cession treaties and removal. Pokagon's actions not only preserved their right to remain on their ancestral homeland, but also created their distinct identity as the Catholic Potawatomi.

The U.S. federal Indian policies of civilization and assimilation, education, reorganization and acknowledgement, similarly challenged the Pokagon Potawatomi. Each event and circumstance would not only form their identity, but fire their resolve for continued self-determination. This project, however, goes beyond an examination of historical events and actual changes, to consider the erosion or expansion of the Pokagon sovereign condition, delving into how the very idea of what constitutes sovereignty changed over time, and how these meanings have affected community identity. Certainly French, British and United States policies had a significant impact on the changing definition of American Indian sovereignty, but the Pokagon's persistent pattern of cultural unity, preservation of a distinct identity, both within and outside of their community, and the choices they made to protect their sovereign rights are distinctive and worthy of study.

Historically, the Potawatomi were united with the Odawa and Ojibwe in the Council of Three Fires. The Potawatomi were The Keepers of the Fire, responsible for maintaining the sacred council fire: a vehicle for prayer, a way to commune with the Creator, to ask for guidance, blessings and healing. The sacred fire held a central place within the ancient traditions of the People and although at times burning down to faint embers, remains an important source of strength today.

While their definition of sovereignty and self have necessarily changed over time (after all, the Pokagon are no more mired in the past than are any Euro-American group), the Pokagon Potawatomi still identify themselves as the Keepers of the Fire. Having weathered repeated attacks upon their identity, their sovereignty, indeed upon their very existence, the Pokagon have withstood intra-, inter- and extra-tribal challenges, negotiating each with the determination to *remain*. This dissertation then, is the story of how exactly one group of Indian people, although tested, creatively managed to maintain their unique identity and their tribal sovereignty, ensuring that their sacred fire was not extinguished.

The project covers over 350 years of Pokagon history, necessarily focusing on those key experiences that brought change to the community. For while the struggle to maintain that community was, and continues to be, constant, change was driven by discrete events. Such an episodic approach to history is favored by many historians, but can leave readers without an understanding of how these events are connected to a larger historical narrative. The two overarching themes of sovereignty and identity provide a framework for analysis, bringing order to a complicated jumble of events, allowing the

reader to see the long arc of development, the continuity as well as change experienced by the Pokagon.

This exploration of the changing nature of Pokagon sovereignty and identity often counters the conclusions of other scholars. A project with a scope as large as this must necessarily cover a broad range of literature, but speaks most specifically to five bodies of scholarship: 1) American Indian sovereignty; 2) American Indian identity; 3) the general history of the Potawatomi and Pokagon; 4) American Indian spirituality and Catholicism; and finally 5) United States Indian policy.

A historical contextualization of the concept of sovereignty is an integral part of this dissertation. Sovereignty is certainly a Western construct, deriving from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia which granted leaders of proto-nations the right to exercise power within their national borders. The term's first overt application to American Indian tribes was announced in the 1830s with John Marshall's decisions in the Cherokee cases. The concept of tribal sovereignty and the boundaries of the unique relationship between the tribes and the United States government became more fully developed through court decisions over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For their part, American Indians thought more in terms of self-determinism: how they would continue to control their own destiny, politically and economically. The term 'tribal sovereignty' was not significantly incorporated into Native political dialogue until the 1960s. A complex and multi-faceted issue, a basic understanding of sovereignty, both applied and in theory, is essential to fully inform this project.

Literally hundreds of volumes have been written pertaining to American Indian sovereignty. Perhaps the best of these were written by Vine Deloria, Jr. A brilliant

scholar and activist, Deloria was also a lawyer by training, bringing his legal expertise to the topic of American Indians. In *The Nations Within*, Deloria and political scientist Clifford Lytle argue that American Indians are “the only aboriginal peoples still practicing a form of self-government in the midst of a wholly new and modern civilization that has been transported to their lands.”<sup>1</sup> The authors briefly trace the development of theories that were used to justify the taking of Native land, and thus the contours of sovereignty, always from the Indian point of view. In examining Indian perspectives on early treaty-making, for example, they argue that the concerns of Native peoples were not a political assertion of nationhood, but a “concern [for] the preservation of the people.”<sup>2</sup> Deloria and Lytle define what they believe are the principles of ‘peoplehood’ and nationality (clearly distinguishing between nationhood and self-government), and the implications of this differentiation for American Indians, particularly in their dealings with the United States.

Further examining the evolution of Native American political realities, in *American Indians, American Justice*, Deloria and Lytle consider how American Indians “once completely independent of all external influences, have adapted their institutions, customs, and values,” as necessary to survive the changes imposed upon them from the time of First Contact.<sup>3</sup> Neither wholeheartedly adopting Euro-American institutions, nor resisting change absolutely, tribes adjusted cautiously, preserving what was best in their

---

<sup>1</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 2

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), xi.



traditional culture, and adopting only those things that helped them deal with the new realities they faced.

Deloria and Lytle see sovereignty as dynamic and evolutionary, defining the most important characteristics of a sovereign nation as the ability to “determine its own course of action with respect to other nations,” and “regulate [its] own internal functions in the field of domestic relations.”<sup>4</sup> In *Retained by the People: A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights*, John Wunder elaborates on their definition, introducing his theory of “collective entitlements,” or the assertion of rights outside the native legal system, e.g. treaty rights.<sup>5</sup> Covering the period from before the ratification of the Bill of Rights to the late twentieth century, Wunder traces the fluid and controversial application of Native rights within the unique system of diffused sovereignty established under the United States Constitution.<sup>6</sup> Wunder’s periodization, and the challenges faced by Native Americans during each, aid in contextualizing the actions of the Pokagon as they negotiated changing federal Indian policies.

The challenge then is to apply these principles to the specifics of Pokagon history, identifying how they have adhered to, or departed from, each model. In their early interactions with the French, British and Americans, the Potawatomi were treated as a sovereign nation, signing treaties with each of these nations in turn. The analysis

---

<sup>4</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., “Self-Determination and the Concept of Sovereignty,” in *Economic Development in American Indian Reservations*, ed. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Native American Studies, 1979), 22.

<sup>5</sup> John R. Wunder, “*Retained by the People*”: *A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

becomes more complicated when reviewing the actions and objectives of Leopold Pokagon at the Chicago Treaty of 1833. I argue that Leopold acted not only to protect the sovereign rights of his people, but also, like Deloria and Lytle argue, as an exercise in simple preservation – the right to *remain*.

Equally important to this dissertation is an exploration of the development of an American Indian identity. In the twentieth century, Deloria wrote, Indians were “not distinguishable from other Americans except” when donning their regalia to perform ceremonial dances.<sup>7</sup> How, then, do Native Americans differ from non-Natives? Europeans certainly defined the indigenous inhabitants of North America as ‘the other.’ Native peoples, including the Pokagon, reacted to that definition in many ways, including, at times, a rise of a pan-tribal awareness. However, this has seldom superseded a tribal, or band, identity. This is certainly the case for the Pokagon, who established their unique identity in opposition to both tribal and European definitions.

Both Phillip Deloria (son of Vine Deloria, Jr.) and Robert Berkhofer, Jr. have written on non-Native perceptions of Native Americans. In *Playing Indian*, Deloria examines non-Indian’s fascination with Native Americans from the earliest days of the colonies, to the incorporation of ‘Indianness’ into such modern institutions as the Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls.<sup>8</sup> Deloria argues that, seeking to legitimize themselves, white Americans co-opted qualities that they attributed to Native Americans – individualism, freedom, naturalness, liberty – while at the same time loathing those very Indians which

---

<sup>7</sup> Deloria and Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Phillip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

they purported to be emulating. Deloria's *Playing Indian* contextualizes white's imaginings of Indians, even while their distaste for Indians led to policies designed to eliminate Native peoples from most of the continental United States and to assimilate those that were left into U.S. mainstream society.

Berkhofer, too, is interested in the history of white/Indian relations, focusing on the sources and forms of commonly held misconceptions. In *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, he argues that images of the 'good' or 'bad' Indian have changed over time, with substantially different interpretations of identical characteristics dependent more upon changing values within the dominant culture than on any discernable difference in Indian behavior.<sup>9</sup> What is constant, maintains Berkhofer, is a failure to recognize the heterogeneity of Indian groups, in favor of the monolithic Indian. He traces this phenomenon as it affected Spanish, French, British and American Indian policies, noting a cohesive imagery throughout. Berkhofer's analysis, particularly his detail of French interaction with Great Lakes Indians, help to contextualize Pokagon relations with Europeans and Americans alike.

Additionally, to understand American Indian self-perception requires an understanding of the American Indian mind, as differentiated from that of Euro-Americans. In *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*, Donald Fixico juxtaposes the linear thinking of the Western tradition against the circular thought processes of 'the

---

<sup>9</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

American Indian.<sup>10</sup> He argues that unlike the American mainstream, which places the individual at the center of any analysis, Indians value the community, seeking to understand relationships and maintain balance in all things. Such values as seeing relationships, visualizing connections, of patience, silence, and listening, fully inform Native thought processes. Fixico maintains that Western culture emphasizes progress, whereas the Indian thinks in terms of cycles. In his analysis of these differing perspectives, Fixico offers a framework for evaluating the processes influencing Indian actors in their relationships with non-Indians.

While the Pokagon emerged as an identifiable band during the nineteenth century, their early history must be examined as part of the whole of the Potawatomi. Several volumes exist on the history of the Potawatomi generally, focusing on those bands that were removed to Iowa, Kansas and Oklahoma. Fewer texts, however, address the Pokagon specifically. Celia Bain Buechner's, *The Pokagons* and Cornelia Steketee Hulst's *Indian Sketches* both fall victim to the dominant attitudes of the early twentieth century, romanticizing the noble savage and perpetuating the myth of the vanishing Indian.<sup>11</sup> And although written in what might be assumed to be a more enlightened era, Everett Claspy's two volumes on the Potawatomi of the Dowagiac-Sisters Lake area of southwestern Michigan, published in 1966 and 1970 respectively, betray a racist bias that

---

<sup>10</sup> Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Cecila Bain Buechner, *The Pokagons* (Indianapolis: Indiana State Historical Society, 1933); Cornelia Steketee Hulst, *Indian Sketches: Pere Marquette and the Last of the Pottawatomi Chiefs* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912).

still condemned the Pokagon to some imagined primitive condition of the past.<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, all are helpful in explaining the circumstances that form the setting for the actions and reactions of the Pokagon, and their non-Native neighbors, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In looking at the early history of the Potawatomi as a whole, the main topic must be the fur trade because of its considerable impact on the tribe – from the diaspora caused by warfare associated with Iroquoian territorial expansion (itself a product of the fur trade), to the ‘middle ground’ of early interactions with the French and British, and finally to attempts at cultural and political domination by the United States. This dissertation will examine the impact of the fur trade on tribal sovereignty, and how interactions between the Potawatomi, other tribal nations, the French, the British and the Americans either expanded or constrained self-government.

Especially useful in interpreting and refuting the traditional interpretation of the nineteenth-century history of the Pokagon are the works of James Clifton, as well as historians Richard White, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and R. David Edmunds. In *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, Edmunds offers a history of the various bands of Potawatomi, including the Pokagon, from the time of first contact with the French through the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Edmunds work follows the conventional declension model of Indian history, ending with the removal of most bands of the Potawatomi from their traditional Great Lakes homelands.

---

<sup>12</sup> Everett Claspy, *The Potawatomi Indians of Southwestern Michigan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Raun-Brumfield, Inc., 1966); *The Dowagiac-Sister Lake Resort Area and More About Its Potawatomi Indians* (Dowagiac, MI, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978).

Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Regions, 1650-1815* describes the diaspora of many of the Algonquian tribes, including the Potawatomi, confronted by Iroquois expansion motivated by the fur trade.<sup>14</sup> He explores in depth what he terms the refugee villages that formed in what is now the Green Bay, Wisconsin area, and the effects, political, social and cultural, that arose from the close contact of these many different Indian tribes, as well as from their interactions with Europeans. The "refugee" characterization of Richard White has been challenged recently in *An Infinity of Nations*. Michael Witgen makes the case that strong indigenous sovereignty in the Great Lakes region lasted well into the nineteenth century, and that White's thesis is better supported by events in Minnesota than further east in the region, such as in Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio.<sup>15</sup> Michael McDonald in *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2015) also takes issue with the concept of the Great Lakes as a "middle ground" and especially White's characterization of the Anishinaabeg as a "shattered" people in the wake of the Iroquois wars.<sup>16</sup> Finally, in her work, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes*, Susan Sleeper-Smith explores the role of Native women in the Great Lakes fur trade, focusing on the conversion of many to Catholicism, their intermarriage to French traders and the resultant

---

<sup>14</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Michael McDonald, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2015).

Métis (mixed-blood) kinship network that facilitated the integration of French and Native cultures.<sup>17</sup>

In her study of the fur trade, Sleeper-Smith contends that it was the women of the St. Joseph Valley who were responsible for converting the men, such as Leopold Pokagon, to Roman Catholicism. Her contentions regarding the influence of Potawatomi women notwithstanding, it was the men, particularly Pokagon, who wielded Catholicism as a political tool, and as such, Potawatomi spirituality generally, and Pokagon's use of Catholicism as a resistive strategy requires more attention than she has allowed. Additionally, Sleeper-Smith argues that, during the nineteenth century, the Pokagon Band was "hiding in plain view."<sup>18</sup> Certainly as American society became more racialized, "anonymity proved more conducive to survival...than visibility."<sup>19</sup> However, to imply that the Pokagon deliberately concealed themselves, that "hiding" was "a deliberate and conscious decision" ignores the realities imposed upon the Pokagon by their non-Native neighbors.<sup>20</sup> Rather than hiding, I suggest that invisibility was thrust upon the Pokagon by a government and general populace uncomfortable with the very identity the Pokagon staunchly maintained. This forced anonymity took its toll on Pokagon cultural patrimony, which was nearly lost in the twentieth century. However the Pokagon intent was never to *hide*, but simply to *remain* in the face of relentless pressure to be absorbed into the dominant culture.

---

<sup>17</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 116.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Richard White maintains that Potawatomi political expertise was the result of intimate contact with Europeans, painting a picture of consensus among the Potawatomi, and a negotiated “middle ground” between American Indians and the French, British and American colonists of the Great Lakes Region. He argues that that diplomatically negotiated space collapsed with the withdrawal of the British following the War of 1812. In reviewing nearly 400 years of Pokagon history, I contend that White’s middle ground never disappeared. While negotiations were constrained by the shifting balance of power between the Pokagon and the United States, there remained a space for diplomacy, which the Pokagon used to their advantage, although with varying degrees of success.<sup>21</sup>

The foremost authority on the Pokagon is anthropologist James Clifton, whose *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley*, traces the history of this band of Potawatomi from 1500 to the modern age, focusing on their cultural evolution as contact with non-Natives increased.<sup>22</sup> Written specifically to aid the Pokagon’s efforts to achieve federal acknowledgement in the 1980s, Clifton is generally thorough in his recitation of the 'facts' of Pokagon history, demonstrating the continuity in tribal self-government and distinctive identity, but offers little in the way of analysis of those topics. This dissertation takes Clifton’s work as a jumping-off point, but expands

---

<sup>21</sup> Other scholars have demonstrated that the process of accommodation and the search for common meaning which White documented in an earlier period continued into the nineteenth century. See Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Metis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999); Susan Sleeper Smith, *French Men and Indian Women*; Theodore J. Karamanski, *Blackbird's Song: Andrew J. Blackbird and the Odawa People* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012); and Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> James Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).



his simple recounting of events to examine how these have affected the self-definition of the Pokagon.

This study challenges Clifton's assertion that modern Indians have two "fundamental, conflicting...goals: obtaining absolute political autarchy while perpetuating utter fiscal dependence."<sup>23</sup> Rather than vanished generic Indians who asserted an ethnic identity only when politically convenient, I contend that the Pokagon maintained a continual, if evolving, ethnic identity. They undertook political activism not when politically expedient, but when politically necessary to protect their interests and their community. Although this study explores their reactions to specific United States Indian policies, Pokagon self-governance was constant, and aimed not towards "fiscal dependence," but instead towards the goal of economic self-sufficiency.

Religion, specifically Roman Catholicism figures prominently in Pokagon history. In the nineteenth century, Leopold Pokagon rose to prominence within his community as the movement toward establishing the policy of Indian Removal gained momentum within the United States. He has been credited with nearly single-handedly preventing the removal of his band of Potawatomi from their territory in southwestern Michigan by his actions at the negotiations for the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. An addendum to that treaty emerged, specifically exempting certain bands of Potawatomi living in "the Territory of

---

<sup>23</sup> James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 5.

Michigan” from removal to land west of the Mississippi River “on account of their religious creed.”<sup>24</sup>

Clifton’s 1984 treatment of the Pokagon describes in detail Leopold’s participation at the treaty council, as well as in subsequent interactions with the United States, and various religious institutions. He points out that the treaty addendum does not specify to which ‘religious creed’ these bands of Potawatomi adhered. To understand why Pokagon eventually affiliated with the Roman Catholics, rather than the Methodists or Baptists with whom he had also had extended contact, requires further investigation of the nature of Potawatomi spirituality, pre- and post-contact.

Prior to contact with Europeans the indigenous inhabitants of the Great Lakes area held a deeply rooted spirituality that infused all aspects of their existence. The arriving Roman Catholic Jesuits came to realize that American Indians possessed “a complex of...religious elements...firmly embedded in a way of life.”<sup>25</sup> Prayers for successful hunts or harvests, offerings to the spirits of the departed (human or animal), and healing ceremonies were all important elements of Native spirituality, practiced not only to appease the spirits that could bring either power and prosperity or ruin to humans, but to maintain balance within the community and the cosmos.

These spiritual traditions were tapped by Algonquin leaders such as Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, as well as Pontiac and Neolin, and a whole host of other Native

---

<sup>24</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. Treaty with the Chippewa, etc., 1833, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/chi0402.htm> (accessed September 3, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Vecsey, *Paths of Kateri's Kin* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 13.

leaders, whose resistance to European and American incursions inspired a movement described by Gregory Evans Dowd in *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*.<sup>26</sup> Dowd examines the prophet-led religious revivals and rebellions of this period in the Great Lakes region. These messianic movements were born, Dowd maintains, from the rise of an awareness within Native communities of a pan-Indian identity. Indeed, the object lesson of these movements, he contends, was that “all Indians were of a single people...required to perform special duties.”<sup>27</sup> The failure of Indians to fulfill these obligations brought about their loss of power. These movements inspired “a religiously charged struggle for unity.”<sup>28</sup> If, as Dowd theorizes, “Native Americans acted in a world beyond the locality, that they explored ranges of possibilities and traveled widely to do so, and that they taught [and] learned from...each other in the process,” then the actions of Potawatomi leaders a generation later, specifically Leopold Pokagon, must be seen as part of this larger search for meaning.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to their traditional religious beliefs, the Potawatomi were long exposed to the teachings of Christian missionaries, beginning with the French Jesuits in the seventeenth century, and continuing with Protestant missionaries from the Methodist and Baptist denominations. The Pokagon were no exception. George E. “Tink” Tinker roundly condemns church actions in *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of*

---

<sup>26</sup> Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

*Sovereignty*.<sup>30</sup> In his argument for the development of a distinctly American Indian theology, Tinker, an enrolled member of the Osage Nation, begins with the premise that within the Native community, politics and spirituality are “wholly intertwined,” acknowledging the “deep connection between the culture and the religious traditions of Indian peoples,” which has existed for centuries.<sup>31</sup> While his focus is on the contemporary American Indian community, Tinker posits some basic historical ‘tenets:’ that European political domination of American Indians is rooted in canon law and that in pursuit of the goal of ‘civilizing’ the savage Indian, the missionary became “the most efficient means” of “destroying indigenous cultural structures in order to replace them with ...european [sic]...cultural patterns.”<sup>32</sup> The arrival and proselytizing of the missionaries, he contends effectively divided Indian communities politically, a division the proved “genocidal.”<sup>33</sup>

Since religion and culture are never separate in any Indian community, the arrival of the first missionary forced members of the community, for the first time in their lives, to make a choice between full participation in the culture of their community (including religious and ceremonial participation) and participation as an individual in the new religious tradition brought by the colonists.<sup>34</sup>

This irrevocable choice is repeated by Christopher Vecsey in *Paths of Kateri’s Kin*. In a synthesis of many existing secondary sources, Vecsey examines not only the

---

<sup>30</sup> George E. “Tink” Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5,6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

processes by which Jesuit missionaries in the Great Lakes region sought to convert indigenous peoples, but describes the different forms that Catholicism took among the various tribes. He too acknowledges that religion was totally integrated into American Indian lives. The Jesuits, realizing that American Indians possessed “not only religious structures but also a way of life that resisted Catholicism,” indeed tried to drive a wedge into Native communities, separating the converts from the ‘pagans.’<sup>35</sup> To bring ‘salvation’ to the ‘savage’ required nothing less, the priests believed, than a complete disassociation from “their kinsmen and compatriots.”<sup>36</sup>

James Clifton claims that Leopold Pokagon allied himself and his people with the Catholics *because of* Native traditions, rather than in spite of them. He argues that Pokagon was searching for a powerful, protective Manito, to access this spiritual power, as the Potawatomi had done for centuries. While Clifton maintains that his discussion “is not intended to suggest that Leopold Pokagon pursued such relationships in a consciously mercenary fashion,” I suggest that may be exactly what he did.<sup>37</sup> However, there is no need to question the religious devotion of Leopold Pokagon, because there is no reason to believe that a devotion to God, or the Great Spirit, explicitly contradicts the use of religion for political gain. What bears examination is how the traditional Native union of politics and religion shaped the man and his actions.

---

<sup>35</sup> Vecsey, *Paths of Kateri's Kin*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610 – 1791; the Original French, Latin, and Italian Texts, with English Translations and Notes* (Cleveland, OH: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896-1901), 17:129.

<sup>37</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 66.

Finally, Clifton documents the historic role of the Potawatomi as negotiators between the tribes populating the refugee communities of Wisconsin, as well as between the Native community and the arriving Europeans. He also acknowledges that Leopold was “one innovative leader of a hard-pressed band of Potawatomi in a rapidly changing frontier region.”<sup>38</sup> When interpreted in this light, Pokagon’s actions may well be read as another in a series of tactical maneuvers calculated to maintain tribal unity and a modicum of self-determination, perhaps the only tactic available to him when confronted by an opponent as powerful and resourceful as the United States. By re-reading the primary source material, documents produced by missionaries at the Baptist Carey Mission, from the Methodist Indian missions, and from the Archdioceses of Detroit, as well as Leopold Pokagon’s correspondence with influential representatives of these three religious traditions, what emerges is a picture of a politically astute man who used religion as a powerful tool, not only to subvert the objectives of his enemies, but to unite his people, as well. The question is not simply between the search for traditional spiritual power and the abandonment of tradition in favor of assimilation, or even the use of religion as an effective defensive shield, but is much more subtle. Attention must be paid to the *process*, as American Indian leaders such as Leopold Pokagon struggled to find a balance between “accommodation to changing circumstances and protection of...traditions...mak[ing] use of [available] resources,” to preserve their communities.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>39</sup> Edmund Jefferson Danziger, Jr., *Great Lakes Accommodation and Resistance During the Early Reservation Years, 1850-1900* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 221.

More difficult to interpret are the repercussions upon the community of the actions of Leopold Pokagon's son, Simon, who also came to lead the band of Potawatomi bearing his name. Simon Pokagon was a prolific author and well-known, but controversial, personality of the late nineteenth century. While lamenting the treatment of Native Americans at the hands of their 'white brothers' and authoring *The Red Man's Rebuke* of white actions against Indians, he also maintained that Native Americans must give up their traditional cultural practices and adopt the lifeways of the dominant culture in order to survive.<sup>40</sup> Clifton's work on the Pokagon contains an especially brutal condemnation of Simon Pokagon, maintaining that he was banished from the community because of his egocentric actions. In the scant existing literature, Simon Pokagon is characterized as at once thoroughly Westernized, portraying himself as Indian in a manner consistent with non-Native societal expectations for his own personal gain, and as resisting, at both the personal and tribal level, the forces of assimilation. Simon Pokagon thus provides insight into late nineteenth-century policies of assimilation, and one of its primary components, Indian education. Additionally, the story of Simon Pokagon allows an opportunity to examine growing factionalism within the community.<sup>41</sup>

This dissertation also engages an important body of literature on Native American dissent, particularly that of the first generation of those that had been educated in

---

<sup>40</sup> Simon Pokagon, *The Red Man's Rebuke* (Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1893).

<sup>41</sup> Particularly useful for this contextualization are Edmund J. Danziger, Jr., *Great Lakes Indian Accommodation and Resistance during the Early Reservation Years, 1850-1900* (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 2009); Frederick E. Hoxie, *The Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995).

American Indian boarding schools. Two examples are particularly germane to any analysis of Simon Pokagon and his writings: Frederick E. Hoxie's collections of essays, *Talking Back to Civilization: Voices from the Progressive Era*, and David J. Carlson's *Sovereign Selves: American Indian Autobiography and the Law*.<sup>42</sup>

In his work, Carlson addresses the juncture of "legal models of self" and the autobiographies of Native American writers, from the American Revolution to the early twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> Apart from contributions to the methodology of analysis and the generic definition of autobiography, Carlson addresses the issue of authenticity in American Indian autobiographies. While acknowledging the concerns surrounding textual production (often Native American autobiographies have been entirely written by non-Natives or written in a very unequal collaboration), Carlson's primary focus is on the problem of distinguishing the Native voice within these texts.

Carlson examines such extreme views as those which discredit any written texts as an assimilationist departure from an essentially oral tradition, which radically decreases the number of so-called authentic texts available for study. Another equally extreme stance is the uncritical acceptance of Native American autobiographies as "insightful, complete, and varied means of entrance into the private and public worlds of the American Indian."<sup>44</sup> This essentially anthropological approach, however, does not allow for any variation from a preconceived notion of what constitutes a 'real' Indian,

---

<sup>42</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001); David J. Carlson, *Sovereign Selves: American Indian Autobiography and the Law* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Carlson, *Sovereign Selves*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



excluding Native American writers, like William Apess or Charles Eastman (or Simon Pokagon for that matter), whose sense of Indianness is as informed by contact with Euro-American institutions (such as the Christian religion and Euro-American common law), as by oral tradition and tribal memory.<sup>45</sup>

Carlson argues for a more moderate approach, suggested by Robert Allen Warrior in his book *Tribal Secrets*.<sup>46</sup> Carlson's compromise is to look at how Native American autobiographers 'perform' their Indianness within specific contexts. To simply focus on what is authentically Indian precludes any possibility that Indian self-definition can change, fixing Indian identity in the past.<sup>47</sup> In this light, an analysis of Simon Pokagon's writings focusing on both the rhetorical and political strategies available to him, as well as available models of identity within what was still very much a colonial context, sheds light not only on the process of Pokagon self-definition, but also on the cross-cultural contacts under which these works were produced.<sup>48</sup>

In *Talking Back to Civilization*, Hoxie explores the various means by which American Indian writers promoted cultural survival in the early years of the twentieth century. In his introduction to the text, Hoxie argues that this first generation of boarding school-educated Indians, removed from their traditional homelands, were exposed to

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> Carlson, *Sovereign Selves*, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 13.

“new institutions: schools, courts, art museums, publishing houses and newspapers.”<sup>49</sup>

Contact with these institutions inspired Indians to explore new modes of expression, whether that was through social commentary expressed in books and articles, or lawsuits brought to correct treaty violations. Although Simon Pokagon’s *Red Man’s Greeting*, delivered at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, is the first entry in the book, this was written at the end of a long career championing Pokagon band, and American Indian, causes. In many ways Simon Pokagon was a precursor to the authors more typically associated with the Progressive period such as Charles Eastman and Zitkala Sa. The numerous articles he wrote, and his leadership during the Pokagon nineteenth-century Court of Claims suit, demonstrate what Hoxie refers to as “talking back” to the dominant culture, but several decades before most of the authors referenced in the work. Indeed, the Pokagon exemplified what Hoxie calls “a middle position,” extending Richard White’s metaphor from the era of First Contact to include this period where American Indians used their traditional values to resist federal policies, restoring “the confidence of Native people in their cultures without retreating to the past.”<sup>50</sup>

In this context, Simon Pokagon is too easily dismissed within existing scholarship. A complex man, Simon’s actions significantly impacted the future of his band of Potawatomi. By employing a textual analysis of Simon Pokagon’s writings within the context of the norms imposed by a hegemonic society, as well as his actions during the Court of Claims case, I argue that, while a controversial figure (even today),

---

<sup>49</sup> Hoxie, *Talking Back to Civilization*, viii.

<sup>50</sup> Hoxie, *Talking Back to Civilization*, 4.

Simon Pokagon actively manipulated available, if sometimes conflicting, genres and identities to further protect the autonomy of his people. His very public persona within the dominant culture as the “best educated and most distinguished full-blooded Indian...in America” certainly lent credence to the claim that his band was “the farthest advanced in civilization of all their race.”<sup>51</sup> Unlike Clifton, who argues that Simon Pokagon was “ego-centric, autocratic, and self-aggrandizing...a small-time, would-be satrap,” I argue that Simon Pokagon’s actions provided a necessary, if underappreciated, shield behind which his band could continue their pursuit of self-determination.<sup>52</sup> By ‘playing Indian,’ and fulfilling the white man’s expectations of exactly what a ‘civilized’ Indian should be, Simon’s so-called antics provided political and cultural space for a hard-pressed people struggling to maintain their sovereign identity as Indians, no small feat under U.S. policies that continually assaulted such efforts.

In the study of Pokagon persistence in the twentieth century, the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act looms large, but more for what it did not do than for any accomplishment. What is explored in this study is the process and impact of the Pokagon’s exclusion from participating in the legislative programs. Clifton very briefly sketches the Pokagon efforts to obtain acknowledgement and to secure a tribal land base. Their failure to do so, he argues, “came from altered economic...circumstances,”

---

<sup>51</sup> Daniel McDonald, *Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians from Northern Indiana* (Plymouth, IN: D. McDonald & Co., 1899), 7; Frederick Webb Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1928), 372.

<sup>52</sup> James A. Clifton, *Simon Pokagon and the Sand-Bar Case: Michigan Potawatomi Indians Sue for Chicago's Lake Front* (Green Bay, WI: J.A. Clifton, 1984), 2.

resulting from intensification of the Great Depression.<sup>53</sup> While this is certainly true, to a point, a deeper analysis of economic and political realities faced by the Pokagon are a part of this study. Other landless tribes in Michigan received recognition, as did other bands of Potawatomi Indians in the Great Lakes region. Why the Pokagon were denied, and the effects of this Bureau of Indian Affairs decision on the tribe, have yet to be fully explored. This study examines the legislation of identity - how it was taken from, and eventually restored to, the Pokagon Potawatomi, and the effects of federal actions on the community.

In the 1960s a renewed ethnic consciousness and a political renaissance swept Indian country and impacted the actions of the Pokagon people. Leaders of the tribe were actively engaged with the many American Indian organizations that lobbied Congress for legislative reform, and many individual members participated in the acts of political theatre staged by such groups as the American Indian Movement (AIM). Tribal enrollment soared as the attitude changed from one of apathy to one of increasing tribal identification. This growing awareness of an Indian identity, of pride in being Indian, in being Pokagon, impacted tribal as well as individual actions in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Clifton's work on the Catholic Potawatomi is just one manifestation of the renewed political activism of the tribe. Written at the behest of the tribe, Clifton's work was used to demonstrate that the Pokagon qualified for tribal acknowledgement under the guidelines established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1978. Their efforts to navigate

---

<sup>53</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 122.

the complicated process, designed as much to protect the interests of recognized tribes as to facilitate the recognition of new tribes, were ultimately unsuccessful (and would later literally require an act of Congress). However, because Clifton's work ends in 1983, questions surrounding the Pokagon journey through the process, questions concerning the contours of their particular definition of self-determination and economic development are topics that have heretofore not received scholarly treatment.

My analysis offers historical context for Pokagon actions in the late twentieth century, as well as the *motivations* behind those actions, examining the extent to which the prospect of Indian gaming entered into the debate surrounding their petition for federal acknowledgment.<sup>54</sup> Certainly the Pokagon share some similar experiences with other tribes navigating the legislative acknowledgment process, but they experienced a unique set of obstacles to be surmounted. By taking a detailed look at their multi-year struggle to achieve acknowledgement a clear picture emerges of the conflicts faced by the Pokagon reaching beyond self-government, to the necessity of often having to 'play Indian' to a host of audiences to 'prove' their continuing indigenous identity.

The results of this investigation into the social, cultural and political effects of European and United States Indian policies on the Pokagon Potawatomi provides much needed insight into the ways in which one tribe has successfully maintained their community and unique identity, and re-established their sovereignty. The very real problems encountered along the way, issues of relations within the Pokagon community,

---

<sup>54</sup> See especially Mark Edwin Miller, *Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) and Renee Ann Cramer, *Cash, Color, and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal Acknowledgment* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005).

with government entities at the municipal, county, state and federal levels, as well as with members of the local non-Native community are important in establishing the contours of indigenous sovereignty and the identity of the Pokagon Potawatomi. This study provides a much needed reconsideration of Pokagon history, and is a necessary addition to the historiography at the band level for Great Lakes American Indian tribes. Most importantly it conclusively illustrates that through the centuries, as the band sustained attacks upon their culture, their sovereignty and their very identity, they were not assimilated into oblivion. While the council fire the Potawatomi are charged with tending may have burned low within the Pokagon community, it could not be extinguished. Indeed, it burns as brightly today as it ever has.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IN THE BEGINNING

In the summer of 1653, faced with an impending attack by the Five Nation Iroquois on their village at Green Bay, the Algonquian tribes, along with the remains of the Neutral and the Petun, were assembling a force to meet their enemy. This was a battle for survival; the Iroquois had pushed the Algonquian to the eastern boundaries of Sioux territory – there simply could be no further retreat westward.

The allied Algonquian forces, led by Potawatomi warriors accounting for more than forty percent of their total, met the Iroquois at Mechingan, a large, well-fortified village located on the western Lake Michigan shore, north of present-day Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Scouting parties returning with the location of the enemy provided time for the scattered villagers to move into the safety of the fort. Although armed with firearms provided by their English and Dutch allies, the Iroquois were unable to breach the walls of the fort, and were not equipped to sustain a protracted siege, so far from their own homeland and base of supplies. In their retreat, the Iroquois were pursued by the Algonquian; few returned to their New York homes.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this stunning victory, the Iroquois threat was neutralized. The refugee villages of Wisconsin would never again

---

<sup>1</sup> Nicolas Perrot, *Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America*, in Emma Helen Blair (ed.), *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, 2 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911), I:151-57; James A. Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 38-39.

be invaded by Indians from the east.

Potawatomi leadership in this conflict exemplifies the role the tribe took in the new world order wrought by the arrival of Europeans in North American. For while they brought with them conflict as well as disease, the Europeans also brought new opportunities for wealth and power, chiefly from the fur trade. The Potawatomi took full advantage of these opportunities, emerging from their contacts with the French not as a shattered people, but as a proud, independent tribe, with an expanding territorial range. The Potawatomi did not become dependent upon their European ally for protection and sustenance, but rather used the European presence to advance their own ends.

### **Early Potawatomi History**

Only in the early nineteenth century did the Pokagon emerge as an identifiable band within the larger Potawatomi Nation – whose ancestors so successfully led their people to victory in 1653. Prior to this, their history, along with their ideals of identity and sovereignty – political and economic self-determination – were part of this larger group. European accounts of the Potawatomi are rare, thus the use of oral tradition, as well as linguistic and archeological evidence, are essential for establishing the early history of the Potawatomi.

Potawatomi oral tradition describes a prehistoric migration from the shores of a great salt sea.<sup>2</sup> The Potawatomi traveled along with the Ojibwa and Odawa peoples, eventually separating from their kin at the upper end of Lake Huron to establish their own ‘fire,’ or community, in the area along the southeastern shore of Lake Michigan. Ojibwa

---

<sup>2</sup> John Low, “Keepers of the Fire: The Pokagon Potawatomi Nation: Origins” (PowerPoint Presentation, Slides 7-12), accessed June 28, 2016, <http://www.kankakeevalleyhistoricalsociety.org/Kankakee%20River%20History/Books%20and%20papers/Pokagon%20history.pdf>.



tradition places the time of this migration/separation at approximately the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

Linguistic and archeological evidence, however, suggests that this migration and separation may have occurred at a much earlier date. Linguistically, although the Potawatomi language is closely related to Ojibwa, there are certain significant differences which imply that the tribes divided long before they reached the Great Lakes area. Additionally, archeologists maintain that Potawatomi economic and settlement patterns more closely resemble those of the “prairie” cultures than do either the Ojibwa or Odawa. They suggest that the Dumaw Creek culture in west-central Michigan may actually be the proto-historic ancestors of the Potawatomi.<sup>4</sup>

The Dumaw Creek culture flourished along the banks of the Pentwater River around the turn of the seventeenth century, in semi-permanent villages of domed, round shelters – the birch bark covered wigwam that came to be associated with the Potawatomi. Their clothing was made from animal skins, decorated with such items as tubular copper beads and marine shells, obtained through intertribal trade. Practicing a mixed economy based on hunting, gathering, and horticulture, the Dumaw Creek people cultivated corn and squash, with the protein in their diets coming from fish from nearby streams, or elk, deer, beaver and bison from the surrounding countryside. Villages disbanded into smaller groups during the winter, subsisting as best they could on the

---

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, 2d impression. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912), 289-90.

<sup>4</sup> George Irving Quimby, *Indian Culture and European Trade Goods: The Archaeology of the Historic Period in the Western Great Lakes Region* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 22-24.

meager resources the region provided.<sup>5</sup>

However they arrived in the lower peninsula of what is now Michigan, it was this territory which the Potawatomi occupied at the time they were first mentioned by the arriving Europeans. In 1616, Samuel de Champlain, wintering among the Huron Indians along the southern shore of Georgian Bay, recorded information relayed to him by his Huron hosts about a tribe living along the shores of the “Great Fresh Water Sea” to their south and west. Although contact would not be made for another twenty years, Champlain’s account contains the first mention of the Potawatomi in European literature.<sup>6</sup>

These people, whom the Huron called the Asistaguerouons, and who called themselves Neshnabek or the Original People, came to be called the Potawatomi. Inhabiting the lands that lay south of Mackinac, along the eastern shores of Lake Michigan, from what is today the Indiana state line north to Ludington, the heart of their tribal territory was the St. Joseph River Valley. The Potawatomi were technologically well adapted to their habitat, combining innovations from both the northern and central Algonquian groups to exploit their surroundings. Like the Chippewa and Odawa to the north, the Potawatomi were masters of the framed-up birch bark canoe technology which facilitated long distance travel via water. By the early 1600s, (no doubt a legacy from their Dumaw Creek forebears) they had also mastered the art of horticulture, human powered farming, a skill as yet unknown by their northern neighbors. The Potawatomi

---

<sup>5</sup> R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 25.

<sup>6</sup> W.L. Grant, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain: 1604-1618* (New York: Scribners, 1907), 303.

hunted the plentiful game in the region, and harvested fish from the lakes and streams. Their diet was supplemented by gathering seasonal nuts and berries. The Potawatomi were fully adapted to the local habitat, which provided them with a secure livelihood.<sup>7</sup>

Historians assert that, however well adapted to their environment, the Neshnabek/Potawatomi were no match for invading Iroquoian tribes from the east, arguing that the Iroquois, seeking to expand their territory, and their participation in the European fur trade, launched brutal attacks against central and northern Algonquian tribes, driving refugee Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Chippewa, Odawa and Mascouten, as well as the Potawatomi, west in their wake. Their experiences in this war as well as the fur trade significantly affected Potawatomi identity, as well as their political and economic status.

### **The Beaver Wars**

From the time of First Contact, Europeans sought to harvest the natural resources found in the “New World,” for personal gain, and as part of their mercantilist philosophy. In New Spain, conquistadores and the Spanish Empire grew rich from the gold and silver extracted from the earth. In the French and British North American colonies, the most abundant resource in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was fur, considered an expensive status symbol in Europe. Of particular value was the beaver. Long extinct in Europe, beaver pelts were shaved and pressed into a pliable, waterproof felt, used to manufacture highly desirable hats in a seemingly endless variety of stylish shapes and sizes. In short, “the demands of fashion commodified North America’s animal

---

<sup>7</sup> James A. Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984), 1-3.

resources.”<sup>8</sup>

In return for their harvest of pelts, Native Americans received items considered ‘common’ by European standards: metal knives and pots, steel flints for starting fires, woven wool blankets, glass beads for ornamentation, guns, and ammunition. Although trade for alcohol was officially prohibited, it was steadily supplied through the black market, to the detriment of Native peoples. These European trade goods eventually became the catalyst for the reorganization of tribal territories, the development of new alliances, and extended, devastating warfare.<sup>9</sup>

Tensions existed prior to 1634 between the Five Nations Iroquois of New York (the Seneca, Onondaga, Cayuga, Oneida, and Mohawk) and Iroquoian Huron and their Petun allies, who inhabited the Ontario peninsula. The New York Iroquois were allied with the English and the Dutch, while the Huron were allied with the French. The westernmost Iroquoian people, the Neutral, acquired their name because of their ongoing trade relations with both the Five Nations *and* the Huron. However, their neutrality did not extend to the Atsistachronon, the Central Algonquian tribes of Lower Michigan.<sup>10</sup>

Inter-tribal raiding little affected Native populations in the 1630s. However, in the 1640s, assaults by the Neutral against the Algonquian evolved from hit and run raids by small groups of warriors to sustained attacks by larger war parties. By 1641, many tribes in Michigan, including the Potawatomi, began to reestablish themselves along the

---

<sup>8</sup> “Turning Points in History: The French Fur Trade,” Wisconsin Historical Society, [http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-007/?action=more\\_essay](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-007/?action=more_essay) (Accessed June 28, 2011; Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>9</sup> “Turning Points in History”; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 36.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

western shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, in what is now the upper peninsula of the state of Michigan and Northern Wisconsin, especially along the shores of Green Bay: the *pays d'en haut*, the “upper country” surrounding the Great Lakes.<sup>11</sup> In the *Jesuit Relations* of 1642, Father Jerome Lalemant reported on an invitation extended by the Ojibwa to visit them “in their own Country” at Sault St. Marie, and how the priests were eager to do so “especially as we learned that a more remote Nation whom they call Pouteatami [Potawatomi] had abandoned their own Country and taken refuge with the Inhabitants of the Sault [Ojibwa], in order to remove from some other hostile Nation who persecuted them with endless wars.”<sup>12</sup>

At the same time that the Neutral were attacking the Algonquian of Lower Michigan, the Five Nations Iroquois campaign against the Huron and Petun also intensified. Their intentions were nothing less than the elimination of their rivals in the fur trade, and the acquisition and control of Huron and Petun territory. By 1650, the Iroquois had totally destroyed both tribes; survivors were incorporated into the Iroquois or fled west to Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, joining with the Algonquian tribes of the area. In the spring of 1650, the Iroquois turned their fury on the Neutrals and the Erie. As a result of these attacks, the Ontario Peninsula, the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, and a good portion of Indiana and Ohio were depopulated; it would remain Iroquois hunting

---

<sup>11</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x.

<sup>12</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents; Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791; the Original French, Latin, and Italian Texts, with English Translations and Notes*, 73 volumes (Cleveland, Burrows Bros. Co., 1896-1901) 23: 223. (Hereafter cited as *JR*).

territory until the “Grand Settlement” of 1701 established peace.<sup>13</sup>

### **Potawatomi and the Middle Ground**

These so-called Beaver Wars, involving the various Iroquois and Algonquian tribes, as well as their European allies, “divided tribe from tribe and colony from colony” as each attempted to monopolize this lucrative exchange.<sup>14</sup> Certainly the wars contributed to the settlement of the pan-tribal community on the shores of Green Bay described by Perrot, but so too did the ready availability of beaver for the fur trade. The established historiographic interpretation of this era was first argued by Richard White. In his classic study, *The Middle Ground*, White described tribes fleeing the eastern reaches of the *pays d’en haut* before an Iroquois onslaught as “shattered peoples.” In White’s dramatic but highly problematic language, the Great Lakes tribes were refugees from the “Iroquois hammer” which struck “Algonquian glass,” whose only hope to build a new world was “an imported imperial glue” with which to “reconstruct a village world.” There is a danger in speaking in generalities. To say that all Algonquian tribes “shattered” when faced with the Iroquois onslaught is to oversimplify and disregard the specifics of history. The Neutrals and Petuns, the Hurons and the Erie, those tribes who sustained a head-on assault by the Iroquois, lost their headmen, their warriors, and a good percentage of their elders, their women and children. Their societies collapsed and the survivors fled in disarray. Evidence suggests, however, that the Potawatomi, were not one of those

---

<sup>13</sup> Conrad Heidenreich, *Huronian: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 260-76; White, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 85.

shattered tribes.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly in a definitional sense the Potawatomi, along with their Algonquian neighbors, were refugees, “forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.”<sup>16</sup> After having first been mentioned in Champlain’s 1616 memoir as living along the southeastern shore of Lake Michigan, the Potawatomi are next mentioned in the European literature in 1634 when, in the summer of that year, Jean Nicolet was sent into the far western reaches of the Great Lakes to settle a trade dispute. Arriving in the area of Green Bay, Nicolet found a number of tribes, including the Potawatomi.<sup>17</sup>

The Potawatomi were not the only tribe that left Lower Michigan in the wake of first Neutral, and then Iroquois, assaults. In fact, one consequence of the Beaver Wars *was* a massive population dislocation. Tribes that formerly called Michigan their home migrated to the western shore of Lake Michigan, or the southern shore of Lake Superior by one of two routes. Many tribes took a pedestrian route, travelling around the southern tip of Lake Michigan by land. The Potawatomi (and Sauk), skilled in the use of birch-bark canoes, and accustomed to long-distance travel in them, took a northerly route, travelling first to Sault Ste. Marie, a center for the fur trade and the location of a Jesuit

---

<sup>15</sup> White, 1-2. In *The Middle Ground*, White theorizes that all Algonquian peoples of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois succumbed to the violent advance of the Five Nations Iroquois from the East.

<sup>16</sup> *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, revised 10<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1204.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolet himself left no journal of his voyage; the only record of his journey was recorded second hand, by Father Paul Le Jeune, in the *Jesuit Relations* of 1640. *JR* 18:231-33.

mission village, and finally to the Green Bay area.<sup>18</sup>

The territory surrounding Green Bay had long been claimed by the Winnebago, who were unwilling to cede their lands to these incursions by ‘foreigners,’ and repulsed the first attempt by the Potawatomi to settle in the area. However, a series of disasters struck the Winnebago in the 1630s, leaving the tribe reduced to a small fragment of their original number. No longer able to exercise serious power in Wisconsin, the area around Green Bay became open for settlement by other tribes, such as the Potawatomi.<sup>19</sup>

Although removed from their ancestral homeland, the Potawatomi never acted as if they were a broken, shattered people. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that they did not so much flee in a panic-stricken fashion, as did the Huron, as much as remove themselves in an organized, strategic relocation. For the Huron, retreat came in 1649 following a series of coordinated attacks by the Iroquois which killed hundreds. Huron resistance crumbled; abandoning their capital at Ossossane, those that had not been killed or captured fled north and west.

The Potawatomi traditionally increased their territory through division and relocation, whether to resolve a specific conflict within existing settlements, or when their communities reached a size beyond which it became difficult to maintain peaceful relations. When facing the near certain prospect of war with the Iroquois, the Potawatomi chose to move beyond the threat, rather than succumb to it, a strategic decision to avoid

---

<sup>18</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Claude Charles LeRoy, *Bacqueville de la Potherie, History of the Savage Peoples Who Are Allies of New France*, in Emma Helen Blair, *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, 2 vols. (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1911), I:293-301; Louise Phelps Kellogg, *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1925), 88.



conflict and preserve the political structures and cultural integrity of the tribe.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, population numbers from French references suggest that the Potawatomi maintained a strength that simply cannot be ascribed to a “shattered” people. In 1653, faced with the previously described impending attack by the Five Nation Iroquois on their villages at Green Bay, the Potawatomi mustered approximately forty percent of the Algonquian fighting force. The *Jesuit Relations* lists the number of warriors provided by each tribe:<sup>21</sup>

- 400 Ondatonateni (the Huron pronunciation of Potawatomi; 40% of the force)
- 200 Outawak, or cheveux relevez (the Odawa; 20%)
- 100 Awe,atsiwaen´ronnons, and people from the Nation of A´chawi  
(the Winnebago; 10%)
- 200 Enskia,e´ronnons (the Saulteur-Ojibwa; 20%)
- 100 Awechisae´ronnons and Achirwachronnon (the Missisauigi and French River  
Algonquians; 10%)

That the Potawatomi took the lead in successfully blocking the invasion of the Iroquois, providing forty percent of this fighting force, is an important indication of their relative power in the area, as well as their strength in numbers. Their victory, and the number of warriors the tribe provided, also contradicts the perception of the Potawatomi as a “shattered people.” Anthropologists and historians conservatively estimate that for each warrior in the French enumerations, there were an associated five additional persons – children, adolescents, adult women, the disabled, and the elderly.<sup>22</sup> This would denote a total Potawatomi population in the Green Bay area of approximately 2,000 persons. Also of note is the relative *lack* of Winnebago warriors present. In an earlier conflict with the

---

<sup>20</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> *JR* 38:181

<sup>22</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 454, footnote 6.

Sauk, in the 1630s, the Winnebago *lost* 500 fighting men. Even for such a critical battle, and even after a twenty-year period of recovery, they could muster no more than 100 warriors – a reduction in force of *at least* 80%. The *Jesuit Relations* documents the devastation of the Petun and Neutral people, as well. *Nothing in the historical record* – neither in French records nor Algonquian oral tradition – suggests that the Potawatomi experienced such a devastating population loss.<sup>23</sup>

Potawatomi leadership of the allied Algonquian tribes in this battle with the Five Nation Iroquois is also central to refuting the argument that “an imported imperial glue” was necessary to “reconstruct a village world.” The strength of a unitary Potawatomi identity and an equally strong political organization, both developed prior to contact with Europeans, reinforces this argument, as well.

Evidence that the Potawatomi established a unitary tribal identity prior to the arrival of Europeans is demonstrated by the numerous references to the tribe, rather than specific bands, in the French sources. Unlike the Ojibwa or the Odawa, who were identified as separate, smaller, autonomous groups (clans, bands, or villages), the Potawatomi were always identified and called by a single tribal appellation, both by the French and by other tribes of the Great Lakes area, irrespective of clan or village affiliation. Potawatomi migration from Lower Michigan to the Green Bay area of

---

<sup>23</sup> Although the 1666-1668 *Jesuit Relations* records instances of Potawatomi deaths to a “contagious disease that was prevalent” in the Green Bay area, the first documented substantial population loss due to disease within the Potawatomi community occurred in the wake of their territorial expansion and war with the Fox in the 1730s. Increased mobility and contact with other tribes and Europeans increased the spread of epidemic diseases; the Potawatomi, along with the Miami, fell victim to a smallpox epidemic in 1733, in which they “lost many Persons.” Charles de Beauharnois, “Letter to the French Minister, May 1, 1733,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. 17, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/whc/id/12542/show/12155/rec/1>; Also see Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 38-39.

Wisconsin did not alter their identity as a single, unitary, cohesive tribal society. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the assemblage of so many different tribal peoples in such a small area, at the time the French first made lasting contact with the Potawatomi in the Green Bay area, they were acutely aware of their own tribal identity. They had no difficulty contrasting themselves with other societies.<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, prior to their migration, and long before contact with the arriving Europeans, the Potawatomi had developed a stronger and more complex political organization than that characterized by the smaller, more scattered bands of Ojibwa and Odawa to their north. While continuing to reside in small villages (finding it easier to keep peace within these smaller groups), like the Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo they had developed a more unitary tribal identity, recognized by friend and foe alike. Strongly vested in equalitarian values, the Potawatomi had synthesized their small bands into a systematized whole, without a paramount 'chief,' but with a structure that facilitated group decision-making based upon consensus of the whole. Power was widely distributed, within each band and across the tribe in its entirety.<sup>25</sup>

Each village had its recognized leader, or Wkama. These positions, however, were never hereditary and each Wkama knew that acting unilaterally, without consulting the group on important decisions, could result in chastisement or disposition. In addition, each band elected a Kiktowenene, or Speaker, accomplished in the arts of oratory and rhetoric, careful listeners whose job it was to synthesize and verbalize the consensus of

---

<sup>24</sup> For examples of various references to the Potawatomi, see *JR* 18: 231-33; Perrot, I:188; la Potherie, I:291-92.

<sup>25</sup> For an overview of Potawatomi protohistoric societal organization see Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 2-13.

the group in village, as well as tribal, councils. Organizations such as the Midewiwan and Wokitchita acted to integrate the villages into a whole. <sup>26</sup>

Having learned through experience within their own tribal structure, the Potawatomi utilized their skill as careful negotiators to make themselves essential, moderating the disputes that often arose from the close quarters of the refugee camps. In fact, the Potawatomi's role as mediators made them the most influential group at Green Bay.

The old men are prudent, sensible, and deliberate; it is seldom that they undertake any unseasonable enterprise... They have made themselves arbiters for the tribes about the bay, and for all their neighbors; and they strive to preserve for themselves that reputation in every direction. <sup>27</sup>

Thus, far from needing an "imported imperial glue" which Richard White argues was critical to the creation of a "middle ground," the strength of the Potawatomi – in numbers, in their unitary identity, and in their political skills – was the only glue that was necessary to bind together these diverse Indian villages to face a common foe at Mechingan. These strengths, however, were challenged and compromised by the Potawatomi's expanding relationship with the French. For the "imported imperial glue" – however unnecessary for the viability of the Algonquian "village world" – would come to be imposed by the French as they expanded their control of the fur trade in the Great Lakes area.

---

<sup>26</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 5-6. The Wokitchita was an association of warriors, organized at the village level, but coming together at the tribal level in times of war. Similarly, the Midewiwan, or "Grand Medicine Society," was also a pan-tribal organization, responsible for the spiritual, as well as physical, health of the People. Most specifically associated with the Ojibwa, the Midewiwan also served a vital role in other Algonquian societies, notably the Odawa and the Potawatomi.

<sup>27</sup> la Potherie, I:302.

### **The Potawatomi and the French Alliance**

Expanding their sphere of influence across the North American continent eastward to the Mississippi headwaters, the French first encountered the Potawatomi at Green Bay. Migration from their proto-historic estate brought the Potawatomi fully into the realm of the fur trade. Their involvement in that commerce and subsequent involvement with the French affected changes social, economic and political, forever altering traditional cultural patterns.

By 1653, the French fur trade was severely disrupted by Iroquois attacks on trade flotillas from the western Great Lakes. In that year, only two canoes of furs reached Montreal. Ten years prior, more than one hundred canoes successfully made the voyage. This disruption of trade seriously threatened both the economic and political viability of the colony. However, the Algonquian victory at Mechingan, and the resulting tentative peace with the Iroquois, allowed the trade to resume, much to the relief of the French.<sup>28</sup>

In 1654, the western tribes (led principally by the Odawa) took advantage of this respite in hostilities to assert themselves as the principal intermediary in the trade between New France and the interior tribes. Their trading mission to Montreal in that year was a great success; they returned to their villages along the southern shore of Lake Superior with an abundance of European trade goods. On their return, they were also accompanied by two young Frenchmen whom the governor sent to establish relationships with the tribes of the upper lakes region, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law,

---

<sup>28</sup> Kellogg, 103.

Medart Chouart, Sieur de Grosseilliers.<sup>29</sup>

Having traveled to the Odawa village of Chequamegon on Lake Superior and seen firsthand the bounty accumulated by their involvement with the French, the Potawatomi were envious of not only the wealth, but the power and prestige accrued by the Odawa through their domination of the fur trade. As the strongest tribe in the Green Bay area, the Potawatomi were determined to insert themselves into that trade, at the expense of the Odawa. Equally determined to maintain their dominance, the Odawa turned to their allies, the French, seeking military support in their contest with their Potawatomi rivals.

In 1658, Radisson and Grosseilliers accompanied the Odawa to the northern end of Lake Michigan, there to confront the Potawatomi. But the Frenchmen counseled diplomacy, and opened negotiations between the Odawa and their challengers, making it clear to both sides that if peaceful negotiations failed, military action would follow. Recognizing the power of the Odawa/French alliance, the Potawatomi once again chose to avoid conflict. In coming to terms with the Odawa, not only did the Potawatomi avoid the initial prospect of a potentially devastating contest with the powerful French, but they also laid the foundation for a far more lucrative relationship with the French than they originally imagined. They were not yet ready, however, to abandon their desire to monopolize the fur trade with the French.<sup>30</sup>

When the Potawatomi retreated from their Michigan homelands, they settled at a very strategic location. Not only was the area rich in fish and game animals, but unlike

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Esprit Radisson, *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson: Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences Among the North American Indians, From 1652 to 1684*, trans. Gideon D. Scull (New York: P. Smith, 1885), 148-150.

the shores of Lake Superior to the north, the average 150-day growing season in the Green Bay area allowed for the reliable cultivation of corn. Father Claude-Jean Allouez later reported that “Their country is excellently adapted to raising Indian corn, and they have Fields [sic] covered with it, to which they are glad to have recourse, to avoid the famine that is only too common in these regions.”<sup>31</sup> In terms of trade, the Potawatomi had also situated themselves strategically, at the entrance to one of only three water routes from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, through Green Bay to the Fox River, then the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi. An important trading center for indigenous peoples from prehistoric times, the site only gained in importance with the coming of the French and the fur trade. What the Potawatomi could not know at the time of their agreement with the Odawa was that changes in the administrative policy of New France, fueled by political changes in the mother country, would only increase its significance.

Prior to 1660, New France was largely a trading outpost for the French. Little emphasis was placed on colonial development; imperial policy stressed commerce over expansion. However, with the 1661 death of Cardinal Mazarin at the French court, King Louis XIV finally assumed unmitigated control of the French government. Louis quickly began to implement a series of administrative and fiscal reforms, one of which was the appointment of Jean Baptise Colbert as minister of the colonies. Colbert immediately turned his attention to the development of New France, which he persuaded the King to make a royal province in 1663. By 1664, New France was under the direct control of a

---

<sup>31</sup> *JR* 51:26-41

royal governor, Louis de Baude, Comte de Frontenac, as well as an intendant, Jean Talon, a personal representative of the King. Thus began a decade of unparalleled colonial growth.<sup>32</sup>

The population of New France swelled with the arrival of agricultural settlers, as well as thirteen hundred soldiers. In 1689, Frontenac dispatched this regiment into Iroquois country, meeting the mighty Iroquois “hammer” with one of French design. The blows they struck were so severe that in 1694 the Iroquois arrived in Quebec to sue for peace.<sup>33</sup> News of such import traveled quickly in Indian Country; it was word of the Iroquois defeat which that same year brought the Potawatomi to Chequamegon, along the southern shore of Lake Superior.

The Potawatomi journeyed from Green Bay to Chequamegon to meet with Claude Allouez, a Jesuit missionary only recently arrived in the upper lakes. However, their motives were not altogether pure; they still had hopes of becoming the primary middlemen in the fur trade, and news of the Iroquois defeat only fanned the flames of their desire. To that end they invited another Frenchman that they met at Chequamegon to come to their villages in Green Bay – Nicholas Perrot, principle agent for the governor of New France in the Upper Lakes, and soon to become “the most influential of all Frenchmen among the tribes of the Upper Lakes.”<sup>34</sup> By bringing Perrot to their villages, the Potawatomi hoped finally to secure the advantages of the fur trade previously enjoyed

---

<sup>32</sup> Kellogg, 118-123. Louis XIV ascended to the throne of France in 1643, at four years of age. Cardinal Mazarin essentially operated as co-regent, along with the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, until the King came of age. However, Mazarin continued to heavily influence French policy until his death in 1661, long after Louis had reached his majority.

<sup>33</sup> Kellogg, 245-53.

<sup>34</sup> la Potherie, I:308.



by the Odawa.

Securing the position of middlemen in the French fur trade had numerous advantages for the Potawatomi. In addition to the prestige inherent in the political alliance, acting as middlemen brought wealth to the tribe in the form of French trade goods, which the Potawatomi would in turn trade with tribes located further west and south for more furs, as well as items not readily available to them (for example, buffalo meat and hides). By excluding these tribes from direct contact with the French, the Potawatomi sought to secure their own ascendancy over their neighbors. Profit, power, and expansion were the Potawatomi's primary goals in establishing their relationship with the French.

Changes in the focus of French trade greatly aided the Potawatomi in their efforts. The interests of New France shifted from Lake Superior to Lake Michigan at approximately the same time as Perrot's arrival at Chequamegon, based upon directives from the new intendant to penetrate the far interior reaches of the continent, which they would accomplish via the Mississippi River. The French soon discovered that there were only three routes to the Mississippi from the Upper Lakes. In 1668, the Potawatomi already sat astride one of these, the previously described route via the Fox River at the base of Green Bay. Additionally, they sat beside the second route, along the western shore of Lake Michigan to the Chicago River, then the Illinois to the Mississippi. The Potawatomi would eventually claim the entrance to the third route, as well, via the St. Joseph River, but this would not occur until the 1690s, when they reclaimed their

protohistoric estate.<sup>35</sup>

In the meantime, the Potawatomi focused their efforts on controlling trade between the French and the interior tribes of central and southern Wisconsin. The French, however, were no longer inclined to conduct their trade through middlemen. Perrot had just such instructions from the intendant – he was to establish relations directly with the tribes west and south of Lake Michigan, and to encourage them to deal directly with the French traders at Green Bay. Perrot arrived at the Potawatomi villages in Green Bay to find that a large group of Potawatomi had already departed for Montreal with their winter's harvest of furs. In their absence, he began visiting the surrounding tribes, developing his own influence, negotiating inter-tribal disputes and establishing the diplomatic contacts necessary for successful trade. He also began to build his influence among the Potawatomi.<sup>36</sup>

The Potawatomi trading expedition was a great success. They returned to Green Bay flush with trade goods from Montreal. Encouraged by their first direct exchange with the French, the Potawatomi sent messengers to the surrounding tribes - the Miami, Illinois, Fox, Mascouten and Kickapoo - that they were ready to conduct business, and advising them of their ample stock of French goods. The reply brought back by the messengers was not exactly what the Potawatomi had hoped for; in the fall of 1668, these tribes sent envoys, not trading parties, to the Potawatomi. They asked the Potawatomi to visit – but to bring the Frenchmen with them.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Kellogg, 123-25.

<sup>37</sup> la Potherie, I: 322-34

Still hoping to monopolize the fur trade for themselves, the Potawatomi concealed these invitations from Perrot, made the visits themselves, and returned laden with diplomatic gifts. Unfortunately, several members of the surrounding tribes traveled to Green Bay with the Potawatomi. They reproached Perrot and his associates for rejecting their invitation – a serious violation of social protocol by Algonquian standards. As Perrot made plans to visit the surrounding tribes the Potawatomi interfered once again, telling the French that “there were no beavers among those people – who, moreover, were very boorish – and even that they were in great danger of being plundered.”<sup>38</sup> Notwithstanding the Potawatomi warnings, the French went south and received a warm reception from the Miami and Mascouten villages they visited.

Continuing their attempts to sabotage any alliance between these tribes and the French, the Potawatomi sent a “slave” (in all likelihood a war captive that was not adopted into the tribe) to these southern villages, telling them that the French “held them in the utmost contempt, and regarded them as dogs.” The French immediately placed the slave “into a condition where he could say no more outrageous things,” while the Miami observed the entire spectacle “with great tranquility.”<sup>39</sup>

The Potawatomi were outmaneuvered politically by the French. When Perrot reproved them for their behavior, the Potawatomi recognized that in order to stay on friendly terms with the French, they had no choice but to once again strategically retreat, reconsidering their position within the larger fur trade. To preserve their alliance, and as an act of contrition, the Potawatomi sent Perrot “a bag of Indian corn, that he might...eat

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., I:322-23.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., I:333.

and swallow the suspicion that he felt toward them,' and give beaver robes to serve as an "emetic for the ill-will and vengeance which he might retain in his heart."<sup>40</sup> Although ultimately unsuccessful in their bid to dominate the fur trade, the Potawatomi began to pursue a "most favored tribe" alliance with the French, a relationship that brought not only greater wealth to the tribe, but also increased political influence among neighboring tribes and an expanded territory, as well. White's "imported imperial glue," was now being imposed by the French. And while it was no more necessary for simple Potawatomi survival now than it had been in 1653, it had become critical to Potawatomi expansionist goals. The glue may have been of French making, but it could not have held without the Potawatomi's willing acceptance of its application.<sup>41</sup>

If the Potawatomi were unable to accomplish their original objective of creating a trade monopoly in the Green Bay area, neither were they willing to accept a subordinate position to the French, or a position of parity with other neighboring Indian tribes. In the period that followed the incident with the Miami and the French, the Potawatomi began the process of redefining not only the parameters of their relationship with the French, but what their proper position within the fur trade *could* be. As previously discussed, within Potawatomi society decisions of any import were traditionally based upon consensus. Lengthy tribal councils were convened from which emerged a new policy, one of compromise with, but not subservience to, the French. While they might "make great efforts to gain the good opinion of persons [specifically the French] who come among them," the Potawatomi simply thought too highly of themselves to accept French,

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 16.

or anyone else's, rule.<sup>42</sup>

Take, for example, the result of a Potawatomi trade expedition to Montreal in 1669. Arriving with their furs, the Potawatomi found that the French policy of opening the fur trade in the Upper Lakes, along with the Iroquois peace, had greatly depressed the value of their furs. Additionally, the Nipissing, another Algonquian tribe, beat the Potawatomi flotilla to the trade center and “carried away the greater part of the [trade] merchandise.”<sup>43</sup> These unsatisfactory trade exchanges, along with unpleasant encounters with French troops, created resentment among the Potawatomi; however, their discontent was not immediately apparent to the French.

The effects of this episode, however, were soon manifest in Green Bay. Returning to their villages, the Potawatomi were all too eager to direct their annoyance at their treatment in Montreal against the French in their home territory. Arriving at the bay in September 1670, Jesuits Allouez and Dablon found the Potawatomi “highly incensed against the French:”

[T]hey [the Potawatomi] were maltreating the latter [the French] in deed and Word, pillaging and robbing them of their goods...and subjecting them to unbearable insolence and indignity. The cause of the disturbance was this: the natives had received some ill treatment from the French, whom they had this year visited for purposes of trade, and especially from the Soldiers, at whose hands they claimed to have suffered many wrongs and injuries. In order to avenge themselves...they had chosen two-score of their Young men, appointed a Captain over them, and thus formed a Company of Soldiers, for the purpose of treating our Frenchmen who were in those regions in the same way as the Soldiers at our French settlements had treated them.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, despite the military strength of the French, and the clear advantage to a French

---

<sup>42</sup> la Potherie, I:302; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 53.

<sup>43</sup> la Potherie, I:342.

<sup>44</sup> *JR* 55:185-87; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 65.

alliance, the Potawatomi made it known that they would not allow themselves to be so exploited, or mistreated, by the French without consequence.

Neither would the Potawatomi accept a position of equality with neighboring tribes. Throughout the French tenure in North America, the Indian tribes called the French governor in Montreal Onontio and addressed him as “father;” the tribes were therefore Onontio’s sons, and as such, brothers to one another.<sup>45</sup> The Potawatomi, however, maintained that they were the elder sons of Onontio, and thus the elder brothers to the other allied tribes, deserving a degree of “precedence, seniority, and authority,” which the other tribes did not merit.<sup>46</sup> As observed by various Frenchmen, the Potawatomi did indeed hold “so good an opinion of themselves that they regard other nations as inferior to them,” a superiority they worked very hard to maintain.<sup>47</sup>

For example, in 1671, the Potawatomi accompanied Perrot to visit the Miami, whom he intended to invite to a great meeting called by their father, Onontio, at which his captains would make his will known to them. However, the Potawatomi persuaded the Miami chief, Tetinchoua, that the voyage was far too long, and far too perilous, for one of his advancing years. Instead Tetinchoua deputized the Potawatomi to “represent him and his tribesmen at the great meeting,” which offer they graciously accepted,

---

<sup>45</sup> Onontio was the name first given to French governor Charles de Montmagny, whose surname in Latin, *mons magnus* translates to “high mountain.” In the Huron-Wendat language, this translates to *onontio*, or “high and majestic mountain.” The name would be given to all future French governors. The Algonquian tribes referred to themselves as children of Onontio, placing the governor in the role of father. Point-a-Calliere, Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History, [http://greatpeace.pacmuseum.qc.ca/eng/mission\\_pacification-seeking\\_peace/alliances\\_et\\_commerce-alliances\\_and\\_trade/les\\_personnages-key\\_players/qui\\_etait\\_onontio-who\\_was\\_onontio-eng.html](http://greatpeace.pacmuseum.qc.ca/eng/mission_pacification-seeking_peace/alliances_et_commerce-alliances_and_trade/les_personnages-key_players/qui_etait_onontio-who_was_onontio-eng.html) (accessed 31 January 2016)

<sup>46</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 63.

<sup>47</sup> la Potherie, I:302.

signing the ceremonial documents on behalf of their younger brother.<sup>48</sup>

The Potawatomi alliance with the French was formalized at this event. In 1671, the French formally annexed the upper Great Lakes at a grand ceremony at Sault Ste. Marie. Fifteen tribes affixed their totem marks to the official annexation document, including the Potawatomi. For the French, the pomp and ceremony, the speeches and celebration, were a great success, not least because of the piles of rich furs given to them by the Indians. For the Indians present, much had to be taken on good faith, as they had yet seen little in the way of tangible benefit from their association with the French. However, although their relationship was strained at times, and the fluctuating price of furs periodically created tensions that sometimes led the Potawatomi to threaten to ally with the British, the French and Potawatomi alliance ultimately endured all stresses placed upon it, lasting until 1763, when British victory in the Seven Years War ended the French tenure in North America.<sup>49</sup>

Thus firmly allied with the French, and with the Iroquois threat receding, the Potawatomi began expanding territorially, from their refugee villages in the Green Bay area, southward along the coast of Lake Michigan. Population expansion and the depletion of resources in the Green Bay area, both for subsistence and for trade, further encouraged expansion into the surrounding territory. At the time of French annexation of the upper lakes in 1671, Potawatomi villages were still mainly clustered in the area surrounding Green Bay.

---

<sup>48</sup> Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1879; reprint, New York: New American Library, 1963), 41; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 63-4.

<sup>49</sup> Parkman, 41-47; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 46, 73.

While the Potawatomi continued to maintain their villages in Green Bay, by 1688 they had expanded their territory south to the Milwaukee area. In April of that year, Frenchman Henri Joutel described interactions he had with a “tribe called the Poutouatamy” who supplied Joutel and his men with corn. Later that year, the Potawatomi were observed having pushed well south, hunting buffalo and deer along the Illinois River. An indication of the expanse of Potawatomi territory in Wisconsin also emerges from the journal of Jean Francois Buisson de St. Cosme, a French priest who in 1699 traveled south along Lake Michigan’s western shore on his way to the new French territory of Louisiana. Departing from Potawatomi settlements in Green Bay, St. Cosme’s travels first led him to a village of the Potawatomi twenty leagues (about 60 miles) south of Sturgeon Bay, in the area of present-day Sheboygan, at the far southern end of the Door Peninsula. Travelling further south, St. Cosme party reached Milouakik (Milwaukee) where they encountered a large, composite village, inhabited by Mascouten, Fox, and Potawatomi.

Other French records place the Potawatomi back at their historic estate in the St. Joseph River Valley no later than 1694. Antoine la Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac documents a Potawatomi presence of two hundred warriors settled in the area, indicating a total population of as many as twelve hundred Potawatomi again living in southwestern Michigan. While the population in that area was a mix of Miami, Fox, Huron, Mahican, and Wabunaki, the Potawatomi gradually increased their dominance of the area, at the expense of the Miami, their principal competitors.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Vernon Kinietz, *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes, 1615-1760* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1965), 309.



By 1701, the year that peace was finally concluded with the Iroquois, the Potawatomi had also begun to settle in the area of Detroit, where the French had relocated the hub of their fur trade efforts. Over-supply of beaver pelts in France caused a serious depression in prices in the 1690s. This, coupled with Jesuit influence over Louis XIV, had led the King to order the closing of posts and the prohibition of trade in the western Great Lakes. To avoid potentially disastrous consequences for the French-Indian alliance in the region, Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, sieur de Cadillac, proposed a consolidation of all western trading centers into one less expensive, and closer to the economic center at Montreal – Detroit.<sup>51</sup> Cadillac's plan was approved, and in 1701 he completed construction of Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit. With French interest shifting from Wisconsin to Detroit, so too did many of the Algonquian tribes. Encouraged to relocate by Cadillac and his associates, within a few years after the founding of Detroit nearly six thousand Indians had settled in the area surrounding the fort, including a number of Potawatomi.

Thus, by the first decade of the eighteenth century, while still inhabiting the Green Bay area, the Potawatomi also had villages in the St. Joseph River Valley, and near Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee. Their winter hunting grounds stretched even further south, well into Illinois and Indiana.<sup>52</sup> However, their movement into this southern territory was not uncontested. Just as the Winnebago had resisted incursions by refugee

---

<sup>51</sup> Detroit was founded in 1686 when, in an early attempt to curtail British incursions into Lakes Huron and Michigan and the Illinois country, Sieur Duluth was instructed to establish a trading post on the "straights of Lake Erie." Cadillac's plan was to further the development of the post, for his own financial gain. See Pierre Margry, *Decouvertes et Etablissements des Français dans l'Amerique Septentrional*, 2: 186-92. Margry's work is translated on 4 rolls of microfilm at the Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library. Citations in this work refer to the microfilmed translation, by roll and frame number.

<sup>52</sup> Kinietz, 309.

tribal peoples, so too would the Potawatomi meet with resistance from the Fox, Miami and Illinois. Of the three, the Fox were the most threatening to the Potawatomi. For the next thirty-five years, the Potawatomi battled the Fox for control of prime territory in the western Great Lakes. The key to Potawatomi success during this period of turmoil was their strengthening alliance with the French.

### **Intertribal Conflict**

Although the Great Lakes area was relatively secured from Iroquois attacks by the Great Peace of 1701, violence soon erupted in the region once more. Aggression by another tribe, the Fox – “notorious as the most independent and combative of all Central Algonquians” – fueled the fires of war for another thirty-five years. In 1701, settled astride the Fox River, just south of the refugee settlements at Green Bay, the Fox controlled one of the three water routes to the Mississippi River, as well as access to prime hunting grounds in Minnesota and Iowa. Their incessant demands for tribute angered the other tribes in the area, as well as the French. In turn, the Fox were angered by the French, who, in opening trade with the Siouxian people to the west, had provided firearms and ammunition to their mortal enemies. Tensions continued to increase between the Fox and the French-Potawatomi alliance, with scattered raids and skirmishes throughout the decade following the peace ceremony at Montreal, and in 1712 would explode into the First Fox War.<sup>53</sup>

For almost a decade the Fox disrupted French trade in Wisconsin, as they roamed the Wisconsin countryside, confiscating trade goods from French and Potawatomi

---

<sup>53</sup> R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser, *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 3-30.

voyageurs. When French officials refused to intercede, Fox demands for tribute from the Wisconsin traders steadily increased. The war began in 1712 when the Potawatomi learned that the Fox and their allies planned to attack Fort Pontchartrain at Detroit. Alerted to the imminent attack, the fort commander, Charles Regnault, Sieur Dubuisson, dispatched messengers to nearby Potawatomi and Odawa villages, calling for reinforcements and relief. By mid-May, 1712, more than six hundred warriors arrived, laying siege to the Fox camp that lasted nearly a month. Unprepared for an extended siege and running low of water and food, the Fox and Mascouten several times sought to negotiate a truce, but Dubuisson and Mackisabe, the Potawatomi leader of the relief forces, declined all offers of peace. Although in the month long battle, more than one thousand Fox and Mascouten men, women and children were killed, the Fox menace was still not contained.<sup>54</sup>

Alarmed by the remaining threat to his people, Potawatomi headman Mackisabe traveled to Montreal, seeking French support in an extended campaign against their common enemy, to no avail. Bands of Fox warriors continued to attack trade routes, indiscriminately killing French travelers and allied tribesmen alike. Potawatomi settlements in western Michigan were abandoned, as without a strong presence by their French allies, the tribe felt these were most vulnerable to Fox raids.<sup>55</sup>

Also unhappy with the depressed prices of furs and the decline in both the quality and quantity of French trade goods, the Potawatomi traveled to Montreal to express their

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 59-86; la Potherie, I:301-310.

<sup>55</sup> la Potherie, I:343.

concerns to the French governor, Vandreuil. Potawatomi leaders insinuated that they were considering a trade agreement with the British, who had already breached the French monopoly in Detroit through an agreement with the Miami. Vandreuil recognized that, because of their influence among the French allied tribes, the Potawatomi were key to maintaining good relations in the west. Anxious to strengthen his ties with the tribe, Vandreuil assured the Potawatomi that the price of French merchandise would be reduced, and also conceded to their request for additional protection of their territory in the St. Joseph River Valley. Fort St. Joseph was erected in 1718 as a result, enticing many Potawatomi from Detroit and Wisconsin to return to the region.<sup>56</sup>

The Fox continued to create havoc along the south shores of Lake Michigan and in the Illinois River Valley. Conditions reached such a chaotic state that, in 1729, the French were forced, finally, to deal with the Fox menace. The Potawatomi needed little encouragement when finally approached by the French to participate in military action against the Fox. In the climactic battle, between August 17 and September 1, 1730, a combined force of the Potawatomi and their Indian allies attacked the Fox in Illinois. Besieged for over three weeks, the Fox sought escape, but were discovered and nearly exterminated. No more than fifty Fox warriors escaped death. Although the Potawatomi had whole-heartedly participated in this war of extinction, following this massacre their attitude toward the Fox softened. The Potawatomi now convinced the French that the Fox threat had ended, and the Potawatomi brokered the peace between the French and the Fox. And it was the Potawatomi who, throughout this conflict, skillfully used the French alliance to secure their favored position with the French, at once eliminating a threat to

---

<sup>56</sup> "LaSalle on the Illinois Country, 1680," *Illinois Historical Collections* XXIII, 15.

their preferred status and to the reclamation of the western Michigan homeland.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time they were battling the Fox, the Potawatomi were also reestablishing themselves in the St. Joseph River Valley. As late as 1679, La Salle reported that the Miami were the dominant tribe in the region. However, by 1694, Cadillac recorded two hundred Potawatomi warriors living in the area – a total population of as many as twelve hundred people. In 1701, the St. Joseph Potawatomi received their own Jesuit mission, testimony to Potawatomi population growth in the area. By 1707 they had replaced the Miami as the dominant tribe in the region. Even during the height of the Fox threat to their St. Joseph settlements, the Potawatomi continued their expansion, displacing the Miami from their hunting grounds south of the St. Joseph River and Lake Michigan. The Miami were forced to migrate south and east, resettling along the Maumee, Miami and Wabash Rivers.<sup>58</sup>

French support of the Potawatomi caused great resentment among the Miami, who, in 1747, attacked the French Fort Miami, at the confluence of the Maumee and Miami Rivers in northeastern Indiana. In 1748, they built a major town at Pickawillany, further north along the Miami River in northwestern Ohio. The Miami invited the British to set up a trading station at Pickawillany, which invitation they were only too happy to accept. From there, the British penetrated the Wabash River country, and began eyeing Illinois.<sup>59</sup>

The French immediately moved to counter this threat to their economic

---

<sup>57</sup> Kellogg, 257-60; Edmunds 35-38; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 90-91.

<sup>58</sup> Kinietz, 309; JR I: 219-21; *la Potherie*, II: 123-32.

<sup>59</sup> Kellogg, 413-22.

livelihood. The Potawatomi initially refused to participate in French efforts to displace the Miami and British. While remaining steadfast in the allegiance to the French, the Potawatomi had themselves occasionally participated in trade with the British at Pickawillany; they hoped to continue to benefit not only from their favored position with the French, but also to enjoy the lower prices and higher quality of merchandise from the British. However, in 1752, an allied force of Odawa and Potawatomi, led by French officers, attacked the post when most of the Miami warriors were on a hunting expedition, killing most of the remaining warriors, putting an end to the trade at Pickawillany. New France was once again firmly in control of trade in the western country, and despite their initial hesitation, Potawatomi loyalty to the French was confirmed.<sup>60</sup>

Potawatomi fidelity had not gone unnoticed in Montreal. In the 1740s, the French government encouraged them to settle in the Illinois country as a buffer against further British incursions into the region. The Potawatomi, however, had their own expansionist motivations for accepting the French invitation; the lush, fertile prairies had long been an object of Potawatomi desire. Thus supported by the French, in the mid-1740s, the Potawatomi began moving into Illinois in earnest.<sup>61</sup>

Thus either by their own efforts, through support by their French allies, or by capitalizing on the misfortune of other Great Lakes area tribes, by the mid-1750s, the Potawatomi had secured a territory ranging from Green Bay, around the southern end of

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 421-22.

<sup>61</sup> "Revolt in the West Spread," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* XVII (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1906), 479; "Distrust and Dishonesty at Posts," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* XVIII (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1908), 205.

Lake Michigan, to the St. Joseph River Valley and Detroit. Their hunting grounds ranged even further south. Defeat of the Iroquois and the Fox had brought a tenuous peace to the region, bringing with it prosperity to the Potawatomi, but also many unforeseen consequences.

### **Cultural Impact of the Franco/Potawatomi Alliance**

Their close relationship with the French affected many changes within Potawatomi culture – military, political, social, and economic. None of these seriously disrupted Potawatomi traditional cultural patterns during the French period; the Potawatomi maintained their strong tribal identity, while increasing their inter-tribal political power and extending their territory across much of what is now Michigan and Wisconsin, as well as the Illinois River Valley. The continuing need of the French for their military and economic support kept the relationship between the two essentially harmonious. It was, indeed, a successful “middle ground” built upon mutual accommodations and mutual interdependency. However, processes were put in motion that eventually reshaped the various contours of Potawatomi existence at the most basic levels.<sup>62</sup>

The most obvious changes were those to Potawatomi material culture. Their involvement with the French through the fur trade brought access to European trade goods – including metal knives and pots, steel flints for starting fires, woven wool blankets, glass beads for ornamentation, guns, and ammunition. Imagine the convenience wrought by these items so ‘common’ by European standards: metal knives to speed the processing of animals killed in the hunt; steel ax heads facilitating the hewing of trees.

---

<sup>62</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 103-106.

For centuries, Potawatomi women had boiled water by placing red hot rocks taken from the fire pit and placing them into birchbark containers filled with water. The introduction of metal cooking pots eased the labor involved in this most basic of cooking tasks. Their adoption of these technological innovations made the Potawatomi no less “Indian” than they had been prior to the arrival of the French. However, their growing appetite for goods only the Europeans could provide left the Potawatomi with but two choices: continue to develop their relationship with the French, or establish a trading relationship with the British. They could not have both; extensive trade with the British meant rupturing their alliance with the French. The Potawatomi chose to cast their lot with the French who, for reasons of their own, supported the Potawatomi and their Algonquian neighbors against the British-backed Iroquois. Their alliance became one in which, increasingly, the economic and political dimensions were bound tightly together. However, aside from easing the burdens of everyday existence, the French goods had little impact on Potawatomi subsistence patterns during this period. Most Potawatomi continued to plant vast fields of corn, pursue their winter hunts, and follow their traditional seasonal patterns of living.

As long as Potawatomi military support remained essential to the French, as long as at least the possibility of trade with the British existed, and as long as the Potawatomi had easy access to furs through the expansion of their territory (encouraged by their French allies), the fur trade did not negatively impact the Potawatomi economically or politically. Under these conditions, they continued to possess the means to press the French for favorable trading terms and maintain their economic independence.

This close association with the French also drew the Potawatomi into military



action unlike any in which they had participated in the past. In no way was the North American continent a “peaceable kingdom” prior to the arrival of Europeans. Intertribal rivalries always existed; raiding parties regularly invaded the territories of adjacent tribes, sometimes erupting into full-scale war, in which tribes defended their families, villages and hunting territory. With the arrival of Europeans and another of their technological marvels – firearms and ammunition –these rivalries were exacerbated by competition in the fur trade and the conflicts themselves became ever more deadly. No better proof of this exists than the Iroquois ability to decimate many of the tribes of the lower Great Lakes. Supplied with firearms from their Dutch and British allies, the technological superiority of the Iroquois was, at least initially, unconquerable.

The Potawatomi, of course, were no different than their tribal neighbors. Although first choosing to avoid conflict with the Iroquois by migrating to the Upper Lakes, the Potawatomi stood firm in defense of their villages in the Green Bay area, withstanding Iroquois assault, then pursuing their enemy to secure the area from future attack. They confronted the Miami as they expanded their territory to the south and east. And they actively participated in the Fox Wars, not only due to their alliance with the French, but because they wanted Fox lands for themselves.

The French viewed these efforts by the Potawatomi in terms of their support of French hegemony, not only in the western lakes, but also in territory they claimed along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. When their interests were jeopardized, as by threatened Iroquois attacks along the St. Lawrence in the 1680s, or by Fox raids in Wisconsin in the 1710s, the French turned to their allies, the Potawatomi, for support. The Potawatomi willingly participated in these military actions; however, their motivations had changed.

No longer were they simply defending hearth and home or reacting to provocations from other tribes, as had been the case with the Iroquois. Their participation had assumed a more mercenary character. Now Potawatomi warriors joined these campaigns for “personal glory...booty, and pay.”<sup>63</sup> Those warriors heeding French calls for military support served French, as well as Potawatomi, interests, in effect providing auxiliary forces to the French in colonial wars that had little, or no, direct impact on the survival of the tribe, in return for increased wealth, territory and political influence.

The Potawatomi-French alliance also initiated change within traditional Potawatomi political organization. Potawatomi political skills, and their influence among other western tribes, did not go unnoticed by the French. They were described as “intelligent...great talkers...prudent, sensible, and deliberate,” and as having “made themselves arbiters for the tribes about the bay.” As previously discussed, the Potawatomi sought to preserve their influence among the other tribes even within the French alliance, establishing themselves as the “elder brothers” in a family headed by Onontio. However, among these “elder brothers,” some came to have more influence than others. Competition among Potawatomi leaders for status and prestige began to disrupt not only traditional leadership patterns.<sup>64</sup>

As described earlier, leadership authority within traditional Potawatomi society was widely dispersed. Each village had its recognized Wkama, or leader. There was no paramount chief with authority to direct the actions of individual tribal members. Early

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>64</sup> la Potherie, I:302.

French records describe Potawatomi elders as having little influence on young warriors: “their young men had no sense, and would not listen to the elders.”<sup>65</sup> Potawatomi leaders were respected elders who might encourage certain actions, but did not hold the power to command. The French found this lack of central authority mystifying. While they greatly admired the Potawatomi system of governance, in which tribal elders “seldom...[undertook] any unseasonable enterprise,” coming from a hierarchical society where ‘chiefs’ issued orders that were unquestionably followed by subordinates, they were frustrated by the lengthy tribal councils necessary to arrive at a consensus decision.<sup>66</sup>

Duties that had originally fallen to the Potawatomi Wkamek, such as responsibility for diplomatic relations, for managing external affairs with peoples outside their communities and the tribe itself carried over into their alliance with the French.<sup>67</sup> Increasingly, however, the Europeans expected the Wkamek to follow their directives, singling out particular Wkama for favor and prestige in return for support, and rewarding those most cooperative with gifts of material goods and political honors. Few individual Potawatomi names were recorded during the French period; however, two of those that were provide insight into the changing roles of the Wkamek – Onangizes, from the Green Bay area and Ouilamette, at the St. Joseph settlement.

Onangizes is the first Wkama to be mentioned by name in the French documents, greeting La Salle on his 1679 arrival in Green Bay. While there is no evidence suggesting

---

<sup>65</sup> *JR* 55: 189.

<sup>66</sup> la Potherie, I:302.

<sup>67</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 18.

that Onangizes gained his power and influence within his village other than through traditional fashion, La Salle reported that at their first meeting, Onangizes wore a silver medal given to him by Governor Frontenac. This indicated previous contact with the governor in Quebec (likely as part of a trade mission), and was a token not only of Frontenac's expectations that Onangizes would act in support of French interests in the western lakes, but also a visible symbol validating his position of favor with the French. Such a medal certainly increased the respect and prestige Onangizes already enjoyed within his village.<sup>68</sup>

The Wkama Ouilamette, however, was clearly a creation of La Salle. In the spring of 1681, La Salle arrived at the St. Joseph River post. His mission was to secure an Algonquian alliance to block Iroquois incursions into the Illinois country. Many of this force were Eastern Algonquians who were resettling in the area. One of those, Ouilamette, was indeed appointed by La Salle as chief of the Indians in the area. A favorite of La Salle, Ouilamette was not Potawatomi by birth (he was said to be the son of a chief from "near Boston"), but would nonetheless emerge as a Potawatomi leader by 1700, becoming a primary representative of the tribes in the Lake Michigan area in negotiations with the French.<sup>69</sup>

Neither man considered himself to be anything but equal to La Salle or the series of French governors with which they had contact. In fact, with the French dependency upon the Potawatomi for both economic and military support against the Iroquois and the

---

<sup>68</sup> Kellogg, 80-81; Louis Hennepin, "Hennepin's Narrative," Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, I (Springfield: The H.W. Rokker Co., 1903), 53-56.

<sup>69</sup> Margry 1:551-72, 575-85, 629-35.

British, these Potawatomi leaders expected not only that their advice and requests would be received, but that they would be respected. In a 1697 meeting with Governor Frontenac, Onangizes complained to the governor about the chaos in the western lakes caused by disruption of the fur trade. He threatened Frontenac: “If the French leave us, this is the last time we shall come and speak to you.”<sup>70</sup> The French were shocked by Onangizes audacity. The secretary for the proceedings wrote that “His speech was so bold it shut everyone’s lips.”<sup>71</sup> However, no record exists of any French attempt to rebuke the Potawatomi leader. Thus, although Onangizes had visible proof of the esteem in which he was held by the government of New France (in the form of his silver medal), he quite obviously felt no burden of subservience to the ‘chief’ of New France, particularly if the French were not going to uphold their end of the bargain. Onangizes attended the Iroquois peace conference in 1701, acting as Speaker for all the Wisconsin tribes. Despite his best efforts, however, the major center of French power in the upper lakes was shifted from Green Bay to Detroit, leaving Onangizes in charge of what was described as a “sorry village” by 1721.<sup>72</sup>

Ouilamette fared little better in his relationship with the French. Although one of La Salle’s favored ‘chiefs,’ Ouilamette found that there were limits to his powers, as well. Seeking to secure special privileges for his people, Ouilamette offered to send his traders to Fort Pontchartrain at Detroit more frequently if Cadillac (commander of the

---

<sup>70</sup> Margry 2:150-55, 186-92, 306, 395-98.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America*, vol. 2, trans. Louise Phelps Kellogg (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1923), 55.

fort at the time) would but promise to be “generous,” selling French goods at low prices. Although Cadillac advised Ouilamette that he would always be welcome at Detroit, in his reply he showed contempt for the Potawatomi leader: “It was I who made him Chief. If he wished to go elsewhere for his goods, he may do so...it will not disturb my rest.”<sup>73</sup> Ouilamette would also attend the 1701 peace conference, representing the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph area.

Although both men in some ways continued to act in the traditional fashion of the Wkama, promoting the best interests of their own villages, certain key shifts in Potawatomi political organization emerge from an analysis of their actions. That a single Wkama would travel to Montreal to negotiate and make commitments for his village, unqualified by tribal council, as did Onangizes, was a significant change in the traditional decision-making process for the Potawatomi. So too was the idea that one Wkama would represent himself as speaking for all Potawatomi villages of an area (as did Ouilamette), or even all the various tribes of a particular region (as did Onangizes). For the French, this represented a streamlining of command and authority. In the hierarchical system with which they were familiar, it was simply more expedient to have one man speak for all. No longer would French policy be hindered by the diffused power of the tribal council.

Such special recognition, while increasing the wealth and prestige of individual Wkamek, disturbed the fundamental values of Potawatomi life, introducing elements of class into a previously egalitarian society. As clan, band and village interest diverged, the traditional practice of building a durable, shared consensus would not hold. As individual village leaders became more important, acting more independently, band interest became

---

<sup>73</sup> Margry 2: 395-98.

increasingly significant and began to supersede those of a tribal whole. One consequence was added dissent within the tribe, and an increasing tendency towards factionalism, as individual Wkamek sought to secure every advantage for those they represented. While of little consequence in the seventeen and early eighteenth centuries, these changes accelerated in the later eighteenth century, as the Americans exacerbated intratribal dissent, subverting the special interests of one group against another.

Apart from their political and economic relations with the French, the Potawatomi were introduced to Christianity during this period through the ministrations of the Jesuit priest Claude Allouez. This early exposure to Roman Catholicism eventually had far-reaching consequences for one band of Potawatomi. During the French period, however, the Church made little progress in their conversion.

Allouez began his mission to the Indians at Chequamegon on Lake Superior, an area he described as “a fine battle-field for those who intend to enter the lists and fight for Jesus Christ.”<sup>74</sup> In 1665, he established a mission at La Pointe on Madeline Island, where he first encountered the Potawatomi who were visiting from their villages on the Door Peninsula. Allouez describes the Potawatomi as “extremely idolatrous, clinging to their ridiculous legends.”<sup>75</sup> Three years later, the Potawatomi invited Allouez to their villages at Green Bay; this was not, however, because of their desire to receive “instruction, having no disposition for the Faith, but that [he] might curb some young Frenchmen, who...were...maltreating them.”<sup>76</sup> During the 1680s, when the Potawatomi began

---

<sup>74</sup> *JR* 44:251.

<sup>75</sup> *JR* 51:26

<sup>76</sup> *JR* 54:196

returning to their Michigan homelands, Jesuit missionaries expanded as well. In forming the St. Joseph Mission, located near present-day Niles, Michigan, they laid “the foundation for the Christian faith in the region.”<sup>77</sup>

Although scorned by many of the more eastern tribes, those of the west, including the Potawatomi, viewed arriving Jesuits as men of power, telling one Jesuit father that “Thou are one of the chief spirits, since thou usest iron, it is for thee to rule and protect all men. Praised be the Sun, who has instructed thee and sent thee to our country.”<sup>78</sup> The Catholic Fathers, while denying divinity, often used Algonquian premises to advance the cause of Christianity. Whereas the Indians might give thanks to their Manitou, or spirits, for the appearance of game, the Jesuits attributed a successful hunt to the power of Christ, often referring to him in Indian terms as the “Great Manitou.”

This does not mean, however, that the Potawatomi had become firm converts to the Jesuits style of Christianity, nor that they fully appreciated Roman Catholic theology. For the Potawatomi, the Christian God was very often celebrated in the traditional fashion of Wiske – their Great Spirit, greatest of all the manitous. For example, in the *Jesuit Relations* of 1666-1668, Allouez recounts the acts of one particular convert, an old man “about a hundred years old “ whom had recently been brought to Christ. This man was considered “as a sort of divinity,” by the people of his village, “wont to fast twenty days at a time, and had vision of God.” As he was close to death, Allouez advised that he pray frequently to God, to which the old man responded, “Know, my brother... that I am

---

<sup>77</sup> Joseph M. White and John M. D’Arcy, *Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: A History of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend*, Huntington, IN: The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 2007), 3.

<sup>78</sup> *JR* 50:303-05.



continually throwing tobacco into the fire, and saying, “Thou maker of Heaven and Earth, I would honor thee.”<sup>79</sup>

Thus, despite an early and strong Catholic presence in the St. Joseph River Valley, the Potawatomi in particular seemed to reinterpret Christian teachings to fit into their own established ways of dealing with the spirit world. In their cosmology, the Potawatomi believed that it was through the power of Wiske that the people gained protection and power. Each Potawatomi boy, and many girls, participated in a vision quest, a spiritual journey taken at puberty, through which each acquired a guardian spirit, or Manitou. While taking many different identities, the People believed that each was the essence of the Great Spirit. The arriving Europeans, with tools and technology in many ways far superior to that of the People, were perceived as powerful, almost magical creatures.<sup>80</sup> If that power was derived from the spirit they called God or Jesus Christ, it was natural then that the Christian deity was seen as another source from which the people could seek power and protection, another manifestation of the many shapes and forms of Wiske. The resulting syncretism was less a conversion of the Potawatomi to Christianity, and more an incorporation of Christ into the pantheon of Indian Manitous.

While religion was a very personal matter for each individual Potawatomi, it was also very practical. Their faith in any specific religious or magical practices was far from absolute – if a particular spirit power was not serving them well, another might be sought that would. One particular incident, related by Father Louis Andre in the *Jesuit Relations*

---

<sup>79</sup> *JR* 51:26-27

<sup>80</sup> White, 27.

of 1672-73 illustrates this point:

What served greatly to disabuse Them [of their traditional religious practices] was The bear-Hunt that took place while I was in The village. All The Young men were in the Field for ten days: they had dreamed of bears; and, according to Their dreams and Their feasts, The Carnage was to be great. They had even already invited The neighbors to prepare to visit Them and eat bear-meat with them; but not one of them was successful, and not a single bear was killed. They could not attribute this to prayer, because the hunters of Chouskouabika had had a very successful Hunt, and The Chief of that party had given a feast, before their departure, in honor of him who has made all, and of Jesus his son; while they, on the contrary, had invoked only The bear, according to Their custom. I often made use of that unsuccessful Hunt to show Them The folly of their fasting in order to dream of bears. I have conceived a little hope, in this mission, of baptizing some Young men...confident that God will favor The Hunting and The fishing of the Catechumens.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the unsuccessful, and hungry, warriors turned to the Christian God when their traditional spirits had failed them. However much the Jesuits argued to the contrary, “Christian prayer [was] no more effective in soliciting the cooperation of bears than [was] deliberate vision-seeking.”<sup>82</sup> For all their efforts, little evidence suggests that the Jesuits affected lasting change in Potawatomi religious practices. Indeed, a French emissary visiting the St. Joseph area in 1721 remarked that while most of the Potawatomi professed to be Christian, they had “been for a long time without any pastors [and] the missionary who has lately been sent them, will have no small difficulty in bringing them back to the exercise of their religion.”<sup>83</sup> Because so few missionaries existed in a territory so large, most Potawatomi lived their lives without regular contact with Christians, leaving them to create their own syncretic form of Christianity.

In the years to come, the Potawatomi explored many avenues of achieving the

---

<sup>81</sup> JR: 57:297

<sup>82</sup> Charlevoix, 86-87.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

necessary spiritual power to resist Euro-American incursions into their homelands, some of the traditional fashion, others of various versions of the Christian faith. Much later, one band of Potawatomi again turned to the Roman Catholic God for spiritual strength and protection, finding in that God the power which had eluded their bear-hunting ancestors.

### **Conclusion**

The arrival of Europeans on the North American continent brought massive changes in the lives of the indigenous inhabitants, often before they first physically encountered the newcomers. Such was the case for the Potawatomi, who first felt the presence of Europeans through the aggressive territorial expansion of the Iroquois, motivated by their participation in the fur trade. Through their subsequent encounters with the French and their own involvement in the fur trade, the Potawatomi experienced chaotic changes to their environment which could have completely disrupted their society. From their tactical move away from their ancestral homelands, to their ready adoption of European tools, to their political alliance with the French, the Potawatomi found a path through the thicket of challenges brought by the newcomers. Never a shattered people, the Potawatomi strategically avoided the “Iroquois hammer,” and used their strength and leadership skills to eventually repel the Iroquois threat. Eagerly incorporating new European technologies which improved their daily living conditions, they nonetheless preserved their traditional cultural practices, acculturating only so far as *they* wished. By successfully negotiating a favorable alliance with the French and becoming strategically important partners economically and politically, the Potawatomi increased their territorial holdings, their wealth, and their political standing with their

Native neighbors. Successfully maneuvering through a disruptive period which destroyed many tribes, the mid-point of the eighteenth century found the Potawatomi not a shattered, dependent people, but proud, independent, and strong.

CHAPTER THREE  
IN GOD THEY TRUSTED: LEOPOLD POKAGON,  
CATHOLICISM AND ADAPTIVE RESISTENCE

In the spring of 1830, Leopold Pokagon viewed the future with a sense of foreboding, a great fear for the security of his people, and with good cause. The treaty the Potawatomi signed with the United States in 1829 ceded more land to the Americans, even some of those reserved to the Indians by the treaty of 1821. Pokagon had witnessed many such cessions. The Potawatomi had painful experience of treaties that ‘guaranteed’ lands to the Indians, only to have those treaties superseded by others at a later date. Each new treaty continued to reduce Potawatomi lands, leaving them, in 1830, with a small fraction of what they held at the first treaty signing in 1795; now there was talk of yet another cession. Pokagon understood the American hunger for land, and it filled him with dread.

An additional threat to the Potawatomi way of life was the pressure from well-intentioned non-Natives to ‘civilize’ the Indian. The 1821 treaty, among other things, stipulated that the Michigan Potawatomi would receive a teacher for that purpose. Although the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley had requested a Black Robe (a Roman Catholic priest) to fill that position, it was instead awarded to Isaac McCoy, a

Baptist missionary. He established the Carey Mission near Pokagon's village on the St. Joseph River<sup>1</sup>.

Pokagon had initially seemed amenable to McCoy's presence, turning to him on occasion for aid in ridding the surrounding territory of liquor or for assistance in making improvements to his village. But he and the Baptist missionary held very different visions for the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley. McCoy had worked among the Miami Indians for many years before receiving his appointment to the Potawatomi from Michigan territorial governor Lewis Cass. His interactions with the Indians, and his observance of the evils brought about by dealing with unscrupulous non-Natives, left him firmly convinced that the only hope for that "race of men" was a complete separation of the Indian from white society. Only when removed from the temptations of western vice, particularly alcohol, could the Indians continue to be educated in the ways of American society, becoming good Christian, productive citizens of the United States. Continued contact with white society could only result, he believed, in the final extinction of the Indian.<sup>2</sup>

To that end, McCoy worked diligently to advance his plan for Indian "colonization." Although encouraged by the progress he had made through his mission efforts since first relocating to minister to the Potawatomi in 1822, he was "continually

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Treaty with the Ottawa [Odawa], Etc, 1821, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/ott0198.htm> (accessed December 10, 2011); George A. Schultz, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 58.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac McCoy, *A History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes and their Settlement within the Indian Territory, and their Future Prospects* (Washington: Wm. M. Morrison, 1840; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 196-97; 232, 292 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

haunted with the painful reflection that the Indians would soon be driven from this place [Indiana and Michigan Territory] by the ingress of white population.”<sup>3</sup> As early as June 1823, McCoy conceived of the idea of an Indian ‘colony,’ to be located on lands west of the Mississippi River, reflecting that should he and his flock remain in the East, “[i]t will be only to witness the decline and ultimate ruin of the people of our charge, for no band of Indians has ever thriven when crowded by white population.”<sup>4</sup>

Pokagon and his people had no wish to leave their ancestral homeland in Michigan. Firmly established in the St. Joseph River Valley, they had begun to adapt to the changing circumstances wrought by American expansion, requesting, and receiving, ”instruction in agriculture,” and a blacksmith to forge farming utensils.<sup>5</sup> However, with the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1829, the issue of Indian Removal (as the government policy of the early nineteenth century came to be called) heated up, and the relationship between McCoy and Pokagon cooled.

The St. Joseph Potawatomi again requested a Black Robe in 1826, inviting Father Gabriel Richard, vicar-general in Detroit, to their villages. Unfortunately the territory of the archdiocese of Cincinnati (of which Detroit was then a part) was so vast, and the number of priests so small, that he found it impossible to station a priest with the Pokagon. Richard lamented leaving the Pokagon unattended. He understood that Ohio was a much richer territory, capable of providing much more wealth to the archdiocese than “*notre pauvre Michigan* (our poor Michigan). Nevertheless, he urged the Bishop of

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 196-7.

<sup>5</sup> Treaty with the Ottawa, Etc., Article 4.

Cincinnati, Edward Fenwick, not to abandon “the poor Indians who always resist the invitations of protestant [sic] ministers.”<sup>6</sup>

By 1830, no priest had yet been assigned to the St. Joseph Potawatomi. In the traditional fashion, a council was held by village leaders from the area. The decision was made to visit Detroit, to see Fr. Richard in person, and make another, urgent appeal for a Black Robe. Leopold Pokagon was the head of this delegation. The party of five arrived in Detroit on July 1, 1830. On July 2, they met with Richard; Pokagon spoke for them all, begging Richard to permanently assign a priest to minister to his people: “If thou hast no pity on us men, take pity on our poor children, who will live as we have lived, in ignorance and vice.”<sup>7</sup>

Presented with such sincere devotion, Richard pledged that a priest would soon be delivered to the Pokagon. Father Stephen Badin, recently returned to the United States from France, was sent immediately to tend to the Pokagon’s spiritual needs.<sup>8</sup>

Pokagon’s actions, in opposition to both McCoy’s plans and those of the United States government, eventually exempted the Pokagon Potawatomi from the ordeal of removal, buying at least a temporary reprieve from sovereign encroachment by the United States government. His acts were not without consequences, however; in many ways, Leopold Pokagon transformed the Pokagon Potawatomi, adapting many of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Society for the Propagation of the Faith. *Annales de la propagation de la foi*, vol. III (Lyon: M.P. Rusand, 1828), 342-344. (Hereafter *Annales*).

<sup>7</sup> *Annales* vol. IV, 1830, 546-547; translated in Christopher Vecsey, *Paths of Katiri’s Kin* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 243.

<sup>8</sup> *Annales*, vol. IV, 548.



‘civilized’ ways of white society, while at the same time preserving a unique, and still very Indian, identity.

### **Potawatomi Relations with the British**

During the French colonial period in North America, the Potawatomi resettled and expanded their territory from Wisconsin, moving northeastward across the upper peninsula of Michigan, into the south and around the tip of Lake Michigan. Their eastward expansion halted only with their encounter with advancing British-Americans. Subsequent colonial warfare between the British and French in the French and Indian War of 1754 - 1763 ultimately severed their relationship with the French, and severely curtail the Catholic presence in the St. Joseph River Valley. The Potawatomi would cautiously approach the British, and their successors, the Americans.

The Treaty of Paris, signed February 10, 1763, ceded most of France's North American territories to the British, establishing British dominance on the continent, including Indian Country. Agents began meeting with the various tribes as early as 1760, urging them to acknowledge British dominance in the region. The Potawatomi reluctantly agreed to treat with the English as “brothers,” implying and at least symbolically requiring, a position of equality in all dealing with the British government, while reluctantly accepting their claim to sovereignty. However, the Potawatomi remained skeptical and “maintained a more or less hostile distance,” from the British.<sup>9</sup>

British administration of Indian Territory was markedly different than that of the French. The increased settlements of American colonists and failure to grasp social

---

<sup>9</sup> James Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley* (New York: University Press of America, Inc.), 23-24.

intricacies, such as the giving of gifts at treaty negotiations, created tensions which erupted in outright revolt in May 1763 with Pontiac's Rebellion, so called after its Odawa leader and key organizer. A pan-tribal military operation aimed at reasserting tribal sovereignty over the region, the uprising saw some initial success but ended in a stalemate October 31, 1763 at Fort Detroit.

Pontiac's Rebellion had long lasting repercussions for the Potawatomi. Although the political administration of the Great Lakes region by the French ended in February 1763, the French Jesuits were permitted to remain in their mission stations. However, suspicions that the Jesuits had actively encouraged the rebellion led to their expulsion from the territory. The Potawatomi thus lost not only their spiritual advisors, but staunch political allies and advisors, as well. The St. Joseph Potawatomi would not see another "Black Robe" until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Pontiac's Rebellion also prompted key changes in British Indian policy that inspired the revolt. Although continuing to recognize the superior sovereign interests of the Crown, the Royal Proclamation signed October 7, 1763 carefully defined the nature of the relationship between the western Indian tribes and the British government and its citizens. A radical departure from previous Indian policy, for the first time a firm, perpetual, surveyed boundary was declared between English settlements to the East and tribal lands to the West, falling along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. Additional clauses of the imperial proclamation declared that Indians possessed right of occupancy, but could not sell this right to whomsoever they might choose. This right of occupancy

---

<sup>10</sup> Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938), 175

could only be extinguished by actual conquest by the Crown (in cases of future rebellion), or, preferably, by authorized purchase by government agents, a policy which would be continued by the Americans.<sup>11</sup>

Their relationship with the British was but a brief interlude, however, between the French and the next threat they were to face. The Great Lakes area tribes, including the Potawatomi, had successfully defended their sovereignty, forcing the British into a relationship more reminiscent of the Franco-Native alliance based on negotiation and compromise. Such an accommodation, however, would be much more difficult to obtain from the Americans.

### **The Western Confederacy**

After their victory in the war for independence from Great Britain, the Indian policy of the newly independent United States was largely derivative of that employed by the British after winning their war with the French for control of the North American continent. The Americans continued the British doctrine of state control of all Indian land cessions. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 codified this doctrine, legislating the surveyance and division of all lands “in which the Indian titles shall have been extinguished, into counties and townships,” a policy designed to facilitate settlement of the region.<sup>12</sup> The vehicle of transference of Indian lands remained government authorized treaties, with duly noted consideration for these original inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> However, this was

---

<sup>11</sup> The Royal Proclamation – October 7, 1763, Retrieved July 6, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/proc1763.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Northwest Ordinance; July 13, 1787, Section 8, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/18th.htm> (accessed December 10, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Section 2.

predicated on the notion, again borrowed from the colonial powers, that they had *already* acquired sovereignty over all lands in the trans-Appalachian west by right of conquest in their victory over the British; the indigenous inhabitants retained the right of occupancy *only*. The tribes vehemently protested; they had not ceded their lands to the vanquished British, nor had they been conquered themselves. Thus began a contest for sovereignty in the region that would last more than fifty years.

A loose confederacy of a number of the tribes of the Old Northwest, including the Potawatomi, was formed in response to this mutual threat. However, the Western Confederacy (as historians have dubbed it) was troubled from the outset. Geographic location and the varying immediacy of the threat of incursion by American settlers often set the tribes at odds; those tribes in the Ohio Country were most exposed, while the Potawatomi of Michigan remained relatively protected by virtue of their remote location, well-removed from the customary migration route across the Appalachians and down the headwaters of the Ohio River. Even among the Potawatomi, intra-tribal differences plagued the effort to mount a unified resistance, as the interests of the villages near Detroit, in the St. Joseph River Valley, and in Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois varied widely, making consensus often impossible to achieve.<sup>14</sup>

Still politically and economically weak, the United States initially pursued a policy of negotiation, even as Indian raids and scattered skirmishes escalated, disrupting life in frontier settlements in Kentucky and Ohio. Several treaty councils were called, bringing together delegations from various factions of the affiliated tribes. A perceived

---

<sup>14</sup> James Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 141-2; Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 31.

duplicity and failure to negotiate in good faith by the United States strengthened the resolve of the Western Confederacy. As efforts at diplomacy failed, and the Americans tired of the constant raiding, they decided upon a military solution to bring peace to the region in 1790.<sup>15</sup>

Governor of the Northwest Territories, General Arthur St. Clair, planned a military expedition against the Miami and Shawnee in the summer of 1790. Led by General Josiah Harmar, the force numbered 320 regulars and more than 1,000 Kentucky militia when they left Fort Washington, Pennsylvania on September 30, 1790. In an attempt to again split the Confederacy, Harmar sent messengers ahead, assuring the Potawatomi, along with the Odawa and Chippewa, that their villages would not be struck. He hoped this would motivate their warriors to remain in their villages. Instead, the tribes rushed to the aid of their southern neighbors.<sup>16</sup>

In two battles on October 19 and October 21, the Americans clashed with Confederation forces. In the first battle, a scouting party of 180 militia and 30 regulars met a force of 100 Potawatomi and Shawnee warriors. Firing from the cover of heavy underbrush, the Indians held a strategic advantage over the military men, exposed on open terrain. Many of the militia fled; of those regulars and militiamen that remained to fight, only nine survived. In the second battle, a war party of Shawnees, Miamis, Ottawas, and Delawares inflicted similar casualties. American losses in the two battles totaled 183 killed. Having lost more than 25 percent of his regulars, and with the militia

---

<sup>15</sup> R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 116-120.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

unreliable, Harmer was forced to retreat to Fort Washington. The victory over Harmer's troops strengthened the Indian's resolve to continue to fight American encroachment into the Northwest Territories.<sup>17</sup>

Their resolve was tested again in 1791, when Congress appropriated \$300,000 to fund another campaign against the Confederacy. This expedition was headed by General St. Clair himself, and numbered more than 1,400 regulars, militia and volunteers. The troops marched out of Fort Washington on September 17. Hindered by bad weather, the company made slow progress, allowing the Potawatomi and their allies ample time to organize their own force of over 1,000 warriors, including many from the St. Joseph River Valley. In the early morning hours of November 4, the Indians surrounded St. Clair's forces at their camp. In a surprise attack, the Indians, again firing from the cover of dense underbrush, decimated the American forces, killing 647 men and wounding hundreds more. By noon, St. Clair and his followers had retreated, abandoning their wounded comrades and their equipment to the Indians. St. Clair's defeat is still considered the greatest Indian victory over an American military force in United States history.<sup>18</sup>

The Western Confederacy had now twice demonstrated their military superiority over the American Army, uniting to repel a common threat. Although they received scant support in the form of weapons and ammunition from the British in Canada, the

---

<sup>17</sup>Captain Mathew Elliott to Colonel A. McGee, 23 October 1790, *Michigan Historical Collections*, XXIV, 108-109.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-24.

northwest tribes, with the Potawatomi again playing a key role, proved that they were a formidable force.

In the wake of these resounding defeats, in July 1793, the United States again turned to diplomacy. The Shawnee still refused to cede lands in eastern Ohio, with reluctant support from the Potawatomi, Odawa and Chippewa. Equally resolute, the United States would not agree to relinquish lands that were already populated by American settlers. In August the United States once more abandoned their attempts at diplomacy, turning to General Anthony Wayne instead for a military solution to this earliest of “Indian problems.”<sup>19</sup> Wayne had studied well the previous defeats of Generals Joseph Harmar and Arthur St. Clair in their earlier attempts to quash Indian rebellion in the Ohio Country. Receiving word of the diplomatic failure in September 1793, he made the decision to wait until the following summer to launch his campaign against the Confederacy. In the intervening months, he directed construction of two new American forts in the northwestern reach of the Ohio Territory: Fort Greenville and Fort Recovery. These began stockpiling supplies throughout the spring in advance of the planned summer operations.<sup>20</sup>

Aware that the breakdown in negotiations surely meant the outbreak of hostilities, the Confederated tribes made their own plans for the impending battle. While closely monitoring Wayne’s activities, warriors from Michigan and Indiana again began to gather in northern Ohio in May, 1794, including many Potawatomi from the St. Joseph Valley.

---

<sup>19</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 141-143.

<sup>20</sup> Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, 128.

The British continued to imply that they fully supported the Indian alliance, going so far as to construct Fort Miami in northern Ohio. By mid-June, the warriors had grown impatient waiting for Wayne's anticipated advance; more than one thousand strong, the Confederated warriors left their camps to take the battle to Wayne.<sup>21</sup>

The Indians were initially successful in a June 30 attack on Fort Recovery. Surprising an American supply column leaving the fort, they killed fifteen Americans and captured three hundred horses. Emboldened by their success, rather than employing their previously successful ambush tactics using the forest for cover, the Potawatomi, Odawa, and Chippewa stormed the fort. Beaten back, and sustaining heavy losses, the People of the Three Fires accused their allies, the Delaware and Shawnee, of cowardice in their failure to support the attack. While a number of St. Joseph Potawatomi remained, the Odawa, Chippewa and Huron River Potawatomi, nearly one-third of the Native force, withdrew.<sup>22</sup>

When intelligence informed him that the Indian army had been thus weakened, Wayne went on the offensive, advancing with a force of 3,500 men. The Indians gathered their forces at Roche de Bout, near Fort Miami, where they received few reinforcements from the allied tribes. Employing his knowledge of Native customs, Wayne released counter-intelligence to the effect that he planned to attack on August 19; the Indian warriors began their traditional fasting in preparation for battle. That day, they took up defensive positions behind a windfall of fallen timbers. Wayne, however, withheld his

---

<sup>21</sup> Edmunds, 128-133; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 144-147; Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 33-34.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



announced attack. When Wayne failed to appear, nearly five hundred of the thirteen-hundred available warriors left their positions, seeking provisions at nearby Fort Miami. On the night of August 19, many more retired to their camp near the fort, seeking shelter from a summer thunderstorm. On the morning of August 20, fewer than four hundred warriors remained at Fallen Timbers.<sup>23</sup>

The battle itself lasted only two hours, with a minimal number of dead and wounded on each side. However, the consequences for the Indians went far beyond the loss of life. Out-maneuvered and out-flanked by Wayne's forces, the Indians broke ranks and sought shelter at Fort Miami. The British commander, however, refused to help. The Indians, including the St. Joseph Potawatomi, learned the difficult lesson that the British support which they had anticipated would not be forthcoming. Their traditional method of setting one European or American power against another to their own advancement had failed, forever changing the political landscape for the Native inhabitants of the Great Lakes region. Thoroughly demoralized, the Western Confederacy collapsed, with the Potawatomi and other tribes forced to make peace with the United States.<sup>24</sup>

At the treaty negotiations in June 1795, the Potawatomi made the first of many land sessions to the United States. The resulting Treaty of Greenville established a reasonably stable peace in the Northwest, opening up the Ohio Country and the Northwest Territory to settlement by white frontiersmen. In return for ceding most of the Ohio Country, a small portion of what is now Indiana, and ten small tracts of land in the

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

remainder of the Northwest Territory, the United States relinquished its claim, “to all other Indian lands northward of the river Ohio, eastward of the Mississippi, and westward and southward of the Great Lakes and the waters uniting them.”<sup>25</sup>

This ‘gave’ to the Native peoples the bulk of the territory of the Old Northwest: what are now the states of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin. As a condition to the treaty, the western Indians acknowledged that they were “under the protection of the...United States and no other power whatsoever,” forever, presumably, abandoning their loyalties to the British (or the French, for that matter).<sup>26</sup> The treaty reinforced Indian claim to the unceded territory, assuring the participating tribes that they would enjoy the protection of said lands from encroachment by U.S. citizens; however, the treaty also restated in unequivocal terms the United States’ sovereign right as sole legal purchaser of Indian lands:

The Indian tribes who have a right to those lands, are quietly to enjoy them, hunting, planting, and dwelling thereon so long as they please, without any molestation from the United States; but when those tribes, or any of them, shall be disposed to sell their lands, or any part of them, they are to be sold only to the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Nearly one-third of the Indian signatures on the Treaty of Greenville (thirty of the ninety-six signatures) were Potawatomi, testimony to the continued strength of the tribe in the area, as compared to other tribes.<sup>28</sup> And although they had lost this particular battle

---

<sup>25</sup> Although popularly known as the Treaty of Greenville, the document is officially titled *Treaty with the Wyandot, Etc.*, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol2/treaties/wya0039.htm#mn6> (accessed December 10, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

to the United States, far from seeing themselves as conquered people, the Potawatomi, as well as the Ojibwa and Odawa, continued to maintain their equality to the United States as nations. As spokesman for the three tribes, the Ojibwa headman Massas continually referred to the United States *not* as father, but as *elder brother*, indicative of the dutiful respect they had similarly held for the French, but certainly not servility.<sup>29</sup>

The Treaty of Greenville eased fears of violence, and American migration from the east increased dramatically, intensifying pressure on the local tribes to cede more of their lands to the advancing Americans. As the American population expanded, settlements began to press in on tribal territory. These first intruders came across the original Pennsylvania Road, which led settlers into the Ohio County, and thence to Indiana and Illinois. By 1825, however, the building of the Erie Canal provided an alternative, more northerly route for white pioneers, increasing pressure on the Native inhabitants of Michigan. No amount of professed desire to protect the tribes from encroachment by white frontiersmen could quell the rabid territorial hunger from citizens of the United States. The Potawatomi continued to cede land to the United States, signing 38 treaties between 1795 and 1837. By the time of their last treaty, Potawatomi holdings were reduced to a tiny fraction of their traditional homelands. However, this diminishing tribal estate was not enough for the white settlers covetous of Indian lands, or for the growing number of well-intentioned whites who believed that only the complete separation of Native peoples from the adverse influences of white society could ‘save’ the Indian. Coupled with continuing, sometimes violent, resistance from the Native

---

<sup>29</sup> United States, Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, eds., *American State Papers. Class 2, Indian Affairs*. (Washington: Published by Gales and Seaton, 1832), 557.

peoples against white 'invasion,' by the turn of the nineteenth century a new Indian policy began to take shape, that of removal.<sup>30</sup>

### **Genesis of Removal Policy**

First articulated by Thomas Jefferson, Indian removal was conceived as a 'final solution' to the 'Indian problem.' Jefferson recognized that the United States could only provide the land necessary for its growing population by encouraging the Indians to voluntarily relocate west of the Mississippi River, into the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. The policy would be further developed during the James Monroe administration, but was not fully implemented until the presidency of Andrew Jackson, with disastrous consequences for the Potawatomi.

While the United States never doubted that the Indians, both east and west of the Appalachians, would agree to land cessions at approximately the same rate that settlers demanded it, that albeit unrealistic expectation was initially coupled with a sincerely humanitarian desire to 'civilize' the 'Red Man,' thus incorporating him into American society. Jefferson himself acknowledged great respect for Native Americans, initially convinced that "the plan of civilizing the Indians is undoubtedly a great improvement on the ancient and totally ineffectual one of beginning with religious missionaries."<sup>31</sup> In his second inaugural address, Jefferson professed profound admiration for Native peoples,

---

<sup>30</sup> The most notable instances of violent resistance for the Potawatomi occurred during the War of 1812 and Tecumseh's War. Both will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

<sup>31</sup> Bernard Mayo. *Jefferson Himself*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), 227.

whom he found to be “[e]ndowed with the faculties and the rights of men, [and] breathing an ardent love of liberty and independence.”<sup>32</sup>

However, soon after the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, and fully three years prior to his public proclamations of good will, Jefferson, acknowledging the inevitability of U.S. expansion, sent more sinister instructions to Benjamin Henry Harrison, the military governor of the Northwest Territory.

But this letter being unofficial, and private, I may with safety give you a more extensive view of our policy respecting the Indians. To promote [their] disposition to exchange lands which they have to spare and we want for necessaries...we shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands...In this way our settlements will gradually circumscribe and approach the Indians, and they will in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the United States or remove beyond the Mississippi.<sup>33</sup>

Jefferson’s policy was elaborated more fully by succeeding presidents and saw its full articulation under the administration of Andrew Jackson. In his first address to the Union, 1829, Jackson reiterated the government’s ongoing policy of civilization: “It has long been the policy of Government to introduce among [the Indians] the arts of civilization, in the hope of gradually reclaiming them from a wandering life.”<sup>34</sup> However, Jackson saw a contradiction between this goal and government policy in practice, stating that while “professing a desire to civilize and settle them [the United States has] at the

---

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, delivered March 3, 1805, <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres17.html> (accessed December 10, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Jefferson, letter to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803, Indiana Historical Bureau, <http://www.in.gov/history/2573.htm> (accessed June 29, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> President Andrew Jackson First Annual Message, in *Indian Removal: A Norton Casebook*, David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 131.

same time lost no opportunity to purchase their lands and thrust them farther into the wilderness.<sup>35</sup>

Jackson argued that contact with white civilization was inherently unhealthy for Indian civilizations. He further argued that such contact had already resulted in the extinction of some tribes, a fate he foresaw as inevitable. He proposed a solution to the ‘Indian problem,’ echoing the private ruminations of Thomas Jefferson some thirty years prior:

To preserve this much-injured race...I suggest for your consideration the propriety of setting apart an ample district west of the Mississippi...to be guaranteed to the Indian tribes as long as they shall occupy it...This emigration should be voluntary, for it would be as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers...But it seems to me visionary to suppose that in this state of things claims can be allowed on tracts of country on which they have neither dwelt nor made improvements, merely because they have seen them from the mountain or passed them in the chase.<sup>36</sup>

The proposed Indian Removal Act elaborated these basic principles. Tribes would voluntarily agree to removal with terms negotiated by treaty. All costs associated with removal were to be borne by the United States government. The new Indian Territory, to be organized west of the Mississippi, could not be part of any state or territory in line for statehood. Its lands were to be divided into districts for the migrating tribes, so that each might have sovereignty within its own district. The Act provided that “the President solemnly...assure the tribe or nation with which the exchange is made, that the United States will forever secure and guaranty to them, and their heirs or successors, the country

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

so exchanged."<sup>37</sup> Although removal was a controversial and hotly debated issue, Congress passed the legislation into law on May 28, 1830. By the time of his second Annual Message, President Jackson was able to relate that "the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation."<sup>38</sup>

By the end of 1832, Potawatomi tribal lands, although reduced to a fraction of their former size, still included more than five million acres of valuable farmland. Given the growing sentiment among many non-Natives that removal was indeed the only way to 'protect' the Indians and the Americans' lust for land (an ironic combination of greed and good-will), it was only a matter of time before the Removal Policy of Andrew Jackson was applied to the Potawatomi's remaining territory. Missionary efforts were at the fore in instituting this new policy, none more so than the Baptist minister, Isaac McCoy. His involvement with the Potawatomi led many bands to the West; conversely his intimate relationship with the leader of one band ultimately strengthened their resolve to remain on their ancestral homelands, with far-reaching consequences.

### **The Potawatomi and the Baptists**

The Reverend Isaac McCoy knew in his heart that Jackson spoke naught but the truth. Having labored among the Indians of the Old Northwest since his first appointment

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Jackson, Second Annual Message, delivered December 6, 1830 [http://www.civics-online.org/library/formatted/texts/indian\\_removal1.html](http://www.civics-online.org/library/formatted/texts/indian_removal1.html) (accessed December 10, 2011).

in 1817 by the Board of Managers of the Baptist Missionary convention, he had long been a proponent of “colonization” for the Indians.<sup>39</sup>

Although born in western Pennsylvania, McCoy spent his formative years in the frontier wilderness of Kentucky. William McCoy, Isaac’s father, felt the call to preach soon after relocating his family. Thus, young Isaac was raised to appreciate the power of the Holy Spirit to assuage the privations of living on the edges of civilization. Recognizing early in this life “the great want of preaching...obvious among...those [living in the] frontier regions,” McCoy himself was ordained to the ministry at the age of twenty-four. Although his first appointment, in 1809, was among the “destitute white settlers” of Maria Creek Church, near Vincennes, Indiana, his true calling, he believed, was to minister to the Indians. In fact, by 1817, his “anxiety to preach the gospel to the Indians had become great;” he resolved “to employ the remainder of [his] life and labours [sic] in the promotion of their temporal and eternal welfare.”<sup>40</sup>

McCoy’s first mission was among the Miami residing along the Wabash and Maumee rivers in Indiana. There he first recorded in his journal his belief in the need for a civilization program for the Indians. Arriving at Fort Harrison, near Terre Haute, where the Miami had gathered to receive their annuities, McCoy noted that the Indians lacked the ability to compare what *should* have been delivered with what actually *was* delivered, lacking the ability to read or ‘cipher.’ The accuracy of the delivery was entirely

---

<sup>39</sup> McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Schultz, 5; Emory Lyons, *Isaac McCoy: His Plan of and Work for Indian Colonization* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1945), 11; McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 43-44.



dependent upon the honesty of the agents delivering the goods.<sup>41</sup> Securing the permission of both the Miami and their Indian agent, McCoy set about planning for a mission school where Native children would be educated without charge. His plans were realized on January 1, 1819, with the opening of a school on Raccoon Creek, among the Wea Indians (one of six tribes of the Miami Nation) of Indiana. McCoy was forced to close this school after one year, however, in part because of strong opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, a legacy from the French missionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although their influence had waned in the region, McCoy repeatedly encountered resistance from the Catholic Church, and from the Indian tribes who had been among their earliest disciples in the country.<sup>42</sup>

McCoy soon moved his mission to Fort Wayne, Indiana, at the urging of the local Indian agent, as well as a Miami chief.<sup>43</sup> Although at first reluctant to accept their invitation, preferring the Miami village of Massassinawa, McCoy eventually admitted to the utility of the Fort Wayne location, for its central location between several area tribes.<sup>44</sup>

Although gratified to be so openly received at Fort Wayne, McCoy yearned to relocate to the heart of the territory of the Odawa and Potawatomi. To achieve those ends, and to secure additional funding for his mission in Fort Wayne, McCoy journeyed to

---

<sup>41</sup> Isaac McCoy, Journal, May 29, 1818, *Isaac McCoy Papers*, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

<sup>42</sup> Lyons, 15-16.

<sup>43</sup> McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 67-68. McCoy does not name the Miami chief.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

Detroit, where he met with the governor of the Michigan Territory, Lewis Cass. McCoy found Cass to be most kindly disposed to his work, “listen[ing] to the story of our wants with the sympathy that does honour [sic] to humanity.”<sup>45</sup> This proved to be the first of many communications between the two men, establishing what would become a long and fruitful relationship.

Cass offered McCoy “about four hundred and fifty dollars’ [sic] worth of clothing and food,” which was gratefully received. More importantly, Cass provided more in the way of advice, which to McCoy, with his fervent desire to minister to the Potawatomi, seemed little less than divine intervention:

It was at this time [following his meeting with Cass] that I commenced arrangement for obtaining help from Government, which a few years afterwards became the source of the principal part of the support of the mission. A treaty of much importance was to be held at Chicago, which I was invited to attend, with a view of obtaining a more eligible site for our mission than Fort Wayne, and...of procuring treaty stipulations which might be beneficial to the cause of Indian education.<sup>46</sup>

Although mission business kept McCoy from attending the treaty council in Chicago, he sent an associate of the Fort Wayne mission to serve as his representative, making sure that the man “was made acquainted with all our plans and doings in regard to matters among those [the Potawatomi] Indians.”<sup>47</sup> A fortuitous visit from Senator William Trimble of Ohio, himself on his way to Chicago for the treaty council, provided

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 113.

McCoy with another opportunity to provide a statement of his plans and wishes. Trimble left McCoy, promising “his most zealous support at the treaty.”<sup>48</sup>

The 1821 Treaty of Chicago resulted in another massive land cession from the Potawatomi, largely from their holdings in Michigan. From this ceded territory, several small tracts were reserved for the Indians, including a 32,000 acre tract along the St. Joseph River. Most importantly for Isaac McCoy, the treaty provisions included an annual appropriation of \$1,000 (for the term of 15 years) for the Potawatomi, and \$1,500 (for the term of 10 years) for the Odawa, to support both a blacksmith and a teacher to instruct the Indians in the ways of civilization. Each tribe was also to provide, from their lands, one square mile upon which these instructors in the arts of civilization would reside. McCoy was determined to secure those teaching appointments for himself and other Baptists, and the land upon which to build his mission stations. With approval from his superiors, McCoy presented his plan for ‘educating’ the two tribes to Governor Cass; for his part, after receiving “instructions” from the Secretary of War, Cass appointed McCoy as teacher to the Potawatomi, and as superintendant for the efforts among both tribes. Cass emphasized the importance of “Indian improvement,” but gave tacit consent to McCoy’s missionary aspirations among the Indians, acknowledging that “what portion of these instructions shall be moral and religious, must be referred to your own discretion.” He warned McCoy, however that “no other expenditure than your own compensation must be expected from the United States for this object.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Treaty with the Ottawa, Etc., 1821, Article 4; Isaac McCoy to Lewis Cass, 16 July 16 1822, *Isaac McCoy Papers*, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

Duly advised, McCoy nonetheless enthusiastically embraced his mission, now his appointment, to ‘civilize’ the Indians. Named after the great Baptist missionary William Carey, the Carey Mission was soon established at the location chosen by the government, near present day Niles, Michigan. The site was a scant six miles from the village of one rising Potawatomi leader. At the Carey Mission Isaac McCoy first encountered the Potawatomi Wkama Leopold Pokagon.<sup>50</sup>

### **Who Was Leopold Pokagon?**

Leopold Pokagon did not sign the first treaty to cede Potawatomi land to the United States. However, as a young warrior (Pokagon would have been approximately twenty years old at the time of the Battle of Fallen Timbers), he would almost certainly have participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers and his attendance at the Treaty of Greenville, however anonymously, has been ‘confirmed’ by at least one author.<sup>51</sup> While this is almost certainly part of the mythology associated with the man, before the 1833 Treaty of Chicago Pokagon would emerge from the shadows as a powerful leader of his people, a band of Potawatomi that came to bear his name.

With his early life surrounded by legend, Leopold Pokagon is one of the more controversial figures in Native American history, certainly in that of the Potawatomi. Was he the ideal assimilationist painted by Anglo writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? Or, with his political acumen reaped from both Native and Western traditions, did Leopold Pokagon practice adaptive resistance, asserting his influence on a

---

<sup>50</sup> Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 134.

<sup>51</sup> Cornelia Steketee Hulst, *Indian Sketches: Père Marquette and the Last of the Pottawatomie Chiefs* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 54.

system weighted heavily against him, to achieve his desired results? To ignore his acts in lieu of the legend is to lose sight of Pokagon's genuine accomplishments and minimize the role of a man who effectively thwarted the ambitions of the expanding American empire, maintained a level of political self-determinism for the band that bore his name, and shaped the foundations of their modern identity.<sup>52</sup>

Legend holds that Leopold Pokagon, born in 1775 or 1776, was not a Potawatomi by birth, but instead a Chippewa or Odawa-Chippewa, captured in war and presented to the Wkama Topenibe as a slave. Another version has him captured as a boy by Topenibe himself. Presenting a fierce and violent appearance, his captors dubbed him '*poké-igan*' or Pokagon, "the rib," for when captured he is said to have been wearing a human rib in his hair. In the twenty-first century, however, many of his people hold a different interpretation of his name, holding that '*poké-igan*' literally means "something used to shield." Thus, just as the ribs of man shield his heart and lungs, so too did Pokagon shield his people from removal by the United States government.<sup>53</sup> Tribal tradition further recounts how Pokagon was eventually 'tamed' and adopted by Topenibe, quickly rising to high rank among the Potawatomi and eventually becoming one of the great

---

<sup>52</sup> Many of these legendary tales of Leopold Pokagon were promulgated by his youngest son, Simon, whose stated motivations, "I have been taught in the white man's ways and I will use what he has taught me to set my people right," are yet another story in the long history of the Pokagon Potawatomi, to be covered in depth in Chapter Four of this project. (*Chicago Tribune*, February 2, 1897).

<sup>53</sup> John Low, interview by author, November 14, 2011.

Kiktowenenes (Speakers) of his adopted people, indeed assuming the role of Wkama upon Topenibe's death.<sup>54</sup>

Early literature maintains that Pokagon was regarded as courageous and wise, by both Indians and Americans. Isaac McCoy refers to Pokagon as a "Putawatomie [sic] chief of respectability."<sup>55</sup> At the 1795 Greenville Treaty negotiations, it is said that Pokagon advised his people to "be true to their allegiance and rely on peaceful means to right their wrongs."<sup>56</sup> Early twentieth-century accounts of his life elaborate, stating that Pokagon was no supporter of Tecumseh and his brother, The Prophet, who led an unsuccessful pan-tribal resistance effort against the United States which coincided with the War of 1812. Such accounts have Pokagon strongly counseling the Potawatomi to avoid entanglement in the movement, for he foresaw that they "might as well try to stay a cyclone in its course as beat back the on-marching hordes of civilization toward the setting sun."<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, Pokagon, aware of the 1812 planned attack on Fort Dearborn, is said to have again urged restraint and the pursuit of peace.

Unable to restrain all the Potawatomi warriors, Pokagon accompanied them to the fort, where his heroic efforts saved the lives of many that hot August day. "But for the chiefs of the St. Joseph Valley, the family of John Kinzie would not have escaped the

---

<sup>54</sup> Cecilia Bain Buechner, *The Pokagons*, (Indianapolis, IN: The Indiana Historical Society, 1933), 294; Hulst, 54; Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 56; John Low, *Keepers of the Fire: The Pokagon Potawatomi Nation* (PowerPoint Presentation), accessed June 28, 2016, <http://www.kankakeevalleyhistoricalsociety.org/Kankakee%20River%20History/Books%20and%20papers/Pokagon%20history.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 232.

<sup>56</sup> Hulst, 54.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

massacre,” begins one account of the Battle of Fort Dearborn. Simon Pokagon, the youngest son of Leopold, recounted his father’s story from that fateful day:

My father, carried a wounded officer to St. Joseph [most likely Captain Nathan Heald, commander of the fort] and nursed him and cared for him, and then, learning that Indians were coming to take him away, sent him on his journey so that he might escape.<sup>58</sup>

The younger Pokagon went on to tell of the officer’s favorable opinion of his father:

When my father took this officer to his wigwam, and cared for him, the soldier said he had a good heart for all Indians...He said he would try, when he reached a place where men lived who had greater power than he, to secure for my father and his band some lands which my father wished to dwell on.<sup>59</sup> Such fanciful stories must be viewed with suspicion. After all, they were not

published until well after the events occurred and they attribute the avoidance of removal solely to the benevolent opinion of Pokagon by white men, thus removing both agency and the prescience of Pokagon himself. .

Many details of Pokagon’s life cannot be definitively ascertained. The date of Pokagon’s birth, for example, is simply conjecture. If he was born in either 1775 or 1776, he would have been only nineteen or twenty years of age at the time of the Greenville Treaty. While this was the appropriate age for a Potawatomi warrior, and his presence at the treaty session cannot be either definitely confirmed or denied, even if he was present at the negotiations, his young age in a culture that valued the wisdom of its elders would almost certainly have precluded his active involvement in the treaty council. His youthful opinions would have carried little weight. Similarly, there is little contemporary evidence

---

<sup>58</sup> “Fort Dearborn Massacre from an Indian’s Point of View” *Chicago Daily Tribune* , February 2, 1897.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

to indicate Pokagon's involvement in any capacity at Fort Dearborn. Tribal histories acknowledge participation by some Potawatomi from the St. Joseph Valley in the movement inspired by Tecumseh and at Fort Dearborn, however, they do not include the courageous escapades of Leopold Pokagon; these are more likely the creations of a sympathetic white author, the actions of the stereotypical 'Noble Savage.' It is also possible that Pokagon's actions at Fort Dearborn were conflated with those of another legendary Native American, Black Partridge, who was immortalized saving a defenseless white woman from certain death in a bronze statue by Carl Rohl-Smith, which depicts events from the day of the Fort Dearborn attack. The statue was unveiled in 1893 for Chicago Day at the World's Columbian Exposition shortly before his son, Simon's, accounts of his father's involvement were published.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding his personal history, Pokagon may well have been born in an Odawa or Chippewa community, but because of the Iroquois-induced diaspora of the central Algonquian tribes, it was not unusual to find many such individuals living within Potawatomi villages. In fact, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Odawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi were close allies, as illustrated by their mutual participation in the Western Confederacy of the late eighteenth century. Inter-tribal violence was extremely rare. The story of Pokagon's capture and 'civilization,' therefore rings more like a contemporary Horatio Alger story contrived to assuage the values of

---

<sup>60</sup> Low, *Keepers of the Fire*.



Anglo-Americans, suggesting that not only did he have to overcome the disadvantage of low birth, but also to conquer his own savage impulses to become a ‘civilized’ Indian.<sup>61</sup>

While the story of his adoption by Topenibe cannot be ascertained, contemporary ethnohistorians doubt its validity. While a highly respected leader of the Bear Clan, Topenibe was not the high chief of the Potawatomi tribe that the Americans believed him to be, particularly during and after the Treaty of Greenville. While his position with the Bear Clan would have given him ritual prestige, Topenibe’s authority was limited. Although he often spoke as if he were the leader of all the Potawatomi, this again was the result of fractures within traditional Potawatomi leadership structures wrought by external pressures that began with the French, as well as by the expansiveness of Potawatomi territory itself. Potawatomi territorial dispersion often made communication and consensus difficult; this, coupled with the desire of governments from the French through the British and finally the United States to simplify relations with the tribe by dealing with one, all-powerful individual opened a fissure which ambitious Wkama, such as Topenibe, exploited. In later years, as the interests of local groups continued to diverge (including those of Pokagon’s village), and pressure caused by American expansion increased, divisions within the tribe would increase dramatically. The reality of Topenibe’s status, therefore, would not have automatically conferred leadership upon Pokagon at the time of his death.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 57.

<sup>62</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 58; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 172.

Secondly, ethnohistorians argue that Sakekwinik, Pokagon's little used proper name, which means "Man of the River's Mouth," is a name associated with the Kitchigumi or Great Lake clan. The Great Lake totem was the most numerous and thus, most powerful of the clans of the St. Joseph Valley. It would make sense then, that an ambitious young man would affiliate himself with the most powerful social group in the area, which, under Potawatomi tradition, he had a right to do. Indeed, the Potawatomi placed little emphasis on a man's antecedents and none at all on hereditary rights to office. What this suggests is that Pokagon rose to prominence as a young man suggesting wise political choices, and possessing the shrewdness to convince others of the soundness of his judgment. If Pokagon was a member of the Great Lake clan he could not have been the adopted son of Topenibe. Topenibe was of the Bear Clan; any father and son, even an adopted son, would share his father's clan.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore it seems likely that Pokagon was not the favored son of Topenibe, a fact lent credence by an examination of the various treaties signed by the Potawatomi before the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. Between the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and his death in 1826, Topenibe's name appears on seven separate treaties, in all of which critical interests of the St. Joseph Valley Potawatomi were at stake. None of the treaties carry the mark of either Pokagon or Sakekwinik, although according to McCoy, by 1824 he was the leader of his village. This is confirmed by the first official documentary evidence of his leadership, an 1825 census of Potawatomi villages, which lists "Pugagun" (likely a tortured rendition of Pokagon) as leader of one of seven Potawatomi villages along the

---

<sup>63</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 170; 117.

St. Joseph River. The 1821 Treaty of Chicago established five Indian reserves in Michigan, including the Nadowesipe reservation, and consolidated the scattered bands of the Huron, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph Potawatomi within its boundaries, including Pokagon's village. The 1827 Treaty of St. Joseph ceded all of the land of most of the reserves established with the 1821 treaty "to consolidate some of the dispersed bands Potawatamie [sic] Tribe," but increased the area of Nadowesipe to a total of ninety-nine sections, located in northern St. Joseph County, Michigan. Even at such crucial junctures, at negotiations directly affecting the interests of his community at which it might be supposed that Pokagon would assume some measure of leadership, his signature is conspicuously absent.<sup>64</sup>

Although Isaac McCoy provides evidence that Leopold Pokagon assumed leadership of his band of Potawatomi by at least 1824, the first official indication of his authority within the tribe came at the 1828 Treaty of Carey Mission. Pokagon's signature is the third behind Topenibe and Abeenabee. By the time of the 1832 Treaty at Tippecanoe, removal had become a harsh reality for Native peoples living east of the Mississippi River. Confronted with the certainty of further territorial loss through treaty, and the looming threat of removal, the Potawatomi fractured; bickering amongst themselves, the Wkama of the various bands eventually agreed to cede all of their remaining lands south of the Grand River, whether in Michigan or Indiana. Several small tracts of land were reserved for Potawatomi leaders and their villages; of the thirteen such villages created, Leopold Pokagon's was listed first. His mark, second only behind that of

---

<sup>64</sup> Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*; McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 232; Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 59. Clifton places the death of Topenibe in August 1826.

the eldest son of the deceased Topenibe, is indicative of the status Pokagon had finally achieved among his people, as well as his perceived status by the Americans. In fact, the treaty granted Pokagon personally one section of land, by virtue of his status as “second Chief.”<sup>65</sup>

Thus, far from being the presumptive primary chief himself on the elder Topenibe’s death, Pokagon surfaced as a great leader only as the threat of removal loomed. This does not mean that we can discount entirely the contemporary opinions of Americans regarding the St. Joseph Valley Potawatomi and the man that became their most recognized leader, Leopold Pokagon. Pokagon may well have used such legends to his advantage. He was not a passive spectator to unfolding events, rather he used his political, observational and rhetorical skills to actively influence the fate of his people.

### **Emergence of the Pokagon Band**

Tension ran high through Native communities of the Northwest Territory as more Americans pushed into the interior of the country and more states were formed from the lands surrounding the western Great Lakes. When the United States adopted the policy of Indian Removal, pressure increased on the Indians to cede more of their lands to the American government. Such was the case for the Sauk and Fox. Although a few of their leaders had signed an 1804 treaty ceding tribal lands in western Illinois and southern Wisconsin, dissident members refused to leave their ancestral home near Rock Island, Illinois until pushed into Iowa in 1831 by the Illinois state militia. Led by the warrior Black Hawk, the group - 2,000 men, women, and children - returned to Illinois in 1832.

---

<sup>65</sup> Kappler, Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 27, 1832. One section of land was also granted to Pokagon’s wife.

Viewed as a hostile act, Illinois Governor John Reynolds called out the state militia to suppress the 'uprising.' Thus began the Black Hawk War.<sup>66</sup>

Black Hawk's group was often referred to as the British Band because of their support of the British in the War of 1812. In his fight against removal, Black Hawk expected support from his old ally, which never materialized. The Potawatomi were also longstanding allies of the Sauk and Fox, however, the tribe had no desire to become involved in another military action, acutely aware of American military might following the Battle of Fallen Timbers. The Potawatomi also understood that their proximity to white settlements meant that any act of hostility on their part would bring swift retribution from the Americans. Credit is given to Leopold Pokagon by his white neighbors for quelling any rebellion by the Potawatomi in his region. Attending a council held to discuss joining in Black Hawk's rebellion, Pokagon, as the last chief to speak, is said to have "pleaded with such eloquence that he carried his dusky audience with him and the Potawatomi kept away from Black Hawk."<sup>67</sup> While a few individuals joined Black Hawk's group, for the most part the Potawatomi declined his invitation to join his rebellion.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the Potawatomi refusal to participate, an isolated attack in Illinois caused wide spread panic across the region, no doubt exacerbated by the Illinois governor's claim that his state had been "invaded" by "powerful detachments" from several tribes, including the Potawatomi. Michigan mobilized the state militia, as rumors spread that

---

<sup>66</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 232-235; Edmunds, 235-239.

<sup>67</sup> Joshua D. Miller, *South Bend Tribune*, March 6, 1897.

<sup>68</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 232-235; Edmunds, 235-239.

Black Hawk's group was seeking sanctuary with the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph. To the contrary, leaders from Potawatomi villages, particularly those in the Chicago area, enlisted a group of 95 warriors to assist the United States in tracking the rebels to Wisconsin, where, on August 22, 1832, Black Hawk surrendered to a local Indian agent.<sup>69</sup>

With the exception of a few isolated individuals, the Potawatomi remained loyal to the United States during the Black Hawk War. Conscious of American military power, the Potawatomi had no desire to participate in a rebellion they believed had no chance of success. Hoping to gain favor with the U.S. government, Potawatomi warriors accompanied American forces in pursuit of the British Band. An investigation into the uprising found no evidence of Potawatomi collusion, and the tribe was roundly praised for their fidelity. However, Governor Reynolds and other Americans used the Black Hawk War to underscore the need for Indian removal. The Potawatomi found that their loyalty did nothing to stay the flow of white settlers into their territory and increasing government demands for further land cessions.

The 1832 Tippecanoe treaty, approved by Congress in January 1833, secured by law a small land base for the Pokagon Potawatomi. However, a scant three months following the establishment of these reservations, the United States again sought to treat with the Potawatomi, this time to purchase all their remaining lands and to remove them

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.; A. Edwards, White Pigeon, MI to Major General John R. Williams, Niles, MI, 1 June 1832, *Michigan Historical Collections*, XXXI, 402-403.

west of the Mississippi.<sup>70</sup> It is in the context of this struggle to avoid removal that the skills of Leopold Pokagon, schooled in the traditions of his adopted tribe and honed through his own experiences at previous treaty negotiations, came to the fore.

In preparation for the Chicago treaty negotiations Secretary of War, Lewis Cass, issued instructions to the treaty commissioners placing more emphasis on securing the cession of lands in Indiana and Illinois than Michigan, but making it clear that all Potawatomi were to be assembled for the negotiations. Cass was explicit about the necessity of obtaining the consensus of all those affected before removal could begin. Negotiators were also instructed that they might allow some small reserves to remain, but only near Lake Michigan, and only if particular bands insisted upon this provision.<sup>71</sup>

From the beginning of the treaty negotiations, the Potawatomi were sharply divided. Those from southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois, the so-called Prairie Bands, were more focused on long-distance hunting on their prairie homelands and, their resistance to removal was minimal.<sup>72</sup> Far smaller in number, the Woods Band, Potawatomi from northern Indiana and southern Michigan, vehemently opposed any forced migration. Although united in joint council prior to leaving for the negotiations, Pokagon's band separated themselves from the main encampment upon arriving at the

---

<sup>70</sup> Kappler, ed. Treaty with the Potawatomi, 1832. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/pot0283.htm> (accessed December 10, 2011); Clifton, 40.

<sup>71</sup> Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, Letter from Lewis Cass to treaty negotiators Porter, Owen and Weatherford, April 8, 1833, Series M21 Roll 10: 210-12, National Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Clifton, 45.

treaty grounds, going so far as to appoint “a committee to watch and kill upon the spot any Indian who should sign any treaty ceding their reserves.”<sup>73</sup>

Leopold Pokagon emerged as one of the most vocal and eloquent spokesmen for the opposition, clearly articulating the divisions that had arisen between the different bands of Potawatomi, particularly those based upon geographic location. While his was not the only band of Potawatomi opposing removal, the leaders of other Michigan Potawatomi bands who shared his sentiment came to recognize Leopold Pokagon as their nominal leader. “Some of us are called ‘wood Indians’ altho [sic] we are Potawattamies [sic], and others are called ‘Prairie Indians.’ You have, my fathers, asked us to sell our *Land* to our Great father. We do not know *what* land you want” (scare quotation marks and italics original). He also made it clear that while the former might well be amenable to relocation, the latter flatly were not.<sup>74</sup> The American government cared little for the subtle cultural differentiations between the Prairie and Woodland bands of Potawatomi. Indeed, had this been Pokagon’s only argument, no doubt he would have failed in his efforts, and his band, and the other Michigan bands opposing removal, would have been relocated with the remaining Potawatomi. For in addition to drawing this distinction between the differing bands of Potawatomi, Pokagon used a strategy of adaptive resistance to fight removal. By employing techniques similar to those used by his

---

<sup>73</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Affidavit of Lathrop M. Taylor. In *U.S. House of Representatives Miscellaneous Documents*, 1872, No. 137: 13.

<sup>74</sup> Office of Indian Affairs, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Indian Treaties, *Journal of Proceedings*, September 10-October 7, 1833, Series T494, Roll 3: 61-87 (emphasis original); Kappler, *Treaty with the Chippewa, etc.*, 1833. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/treaties/chi0402.htm> (accessed December 10, 2011).



ancestors with the French, Pokagon used the United States' policy of civilization to his full benefit.

At Pokagon's village, and those of the affiliated Wkama, many western-styled agrarian practices were adopted during the 1820s. While significant to its extent and success, this was not a new development among the Michiana Potawatomi. As early as 1801, Potawatomi chief Five Medals proposed turning from traditional subsistence patterns of gathering and hunting to more sedentary agricultural practices. The fur trade, which was so important during the 17th and 18th centuries, was in decline, and increased population pressure from arriving American settlers meant game was becoming ever more scarce. With minimal harvest from their traditional gardens and several years of meager winter hunts, Five Medals believed the only alternative to continued economic decline was a change to the old ways of their forefathers. Although Five Medals was ultimately unsuccessful in turning Potawatomi traditional practices into a hybrid of western-style agriculture, because of his geographic proximity and Potawatomi oral tradition, Pokagon was almost certainly aware of his attempts.<sup>75</sup>

While Pokagon chose this path of adaptive resistance for his own people, at the same time these civilizing Potawatomi were also unwilling to abandon their traditional practices entirely. The Potawatomi developed a syncretized form of classic Jeffersonian yeomanry, moving from subsistence practices toward economic self-sufficiency. The St. Joseph Potawatomi planted two types of corn, what one observer called “Indian corn”

---

<sup>75</sup> For a brief account of Five Medals' efforts to incorporate western agricultural methods into traditional Potawatomi practices, see R. David Edmunds, "Redefining Red Patriotism: Five Medals of the Potawatomis," *Red River Valley Historical Review*, 5, issue 2: 13-24.

and “our [Euro-American] corn.”<sup>76</sup> Women, who in traditional Potawatomi culture were responsible for tending crops, cultivated the former while continuing to care for their gardens. Men cultivated the latter, emulating Western practices as they plowed large fields for their crops, and adopted the latest hybridized seed introduced by federal agents. Although initially resistant to this breach in traditional gender roles, missionary teachers effectively 'shamed' the men into picking up the hoe and using the plow. The Pokagon were eventually persuaded to plant wheat as well as corn. In time, Pokagon harvests rivaled those of their non-Native neighbors.<sup>77</sup>

No longer surviving solely by hunting the local wildlife, they now farmed in the American fashion. Indeed, in Pokagon’s village, one would be as likely to dine on pork or chicken as venison, as likely to ingest beef as bear meat. Western-style frame houses with window glass were as dominant in Pokagon village as the birch bark wigwam. Traditional buckskin clothing had largely been replaced by those in the Euro-American fashion. Pokagon children attended school, learning the language of their non-Native neighbors. Arguments of civilization, however, could not stop Cherokee removal once gold was discovered on their homelands in Georgia. Similarly, Lewis Cass considered the

---

<sup>76</sup> Nellie Armstrong Robertson and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers*, Vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942), 170.

<sup>77</sup> Stephan T. Badin, "Pottowattomie Mission," *The Catholic Telegraph*, 14 July 1832, I, 39, 311; David R. Leeper, ed., *Some Early Local Footprints: The Pokagon Village, The Notre Dame Lakes, Our Savage Predecessors*. (South Bend, Indiana: *South Bend Daily Times*, 1898), 4.

farmland of southwestern Michigan far too valuable to be left to the husbandry of the Indians – any Indians.<sup>78</sup>

Beyond their agricultural adaptations, Leopold Pokagon and his people had another advantage that the Prairie bands of Potawatomi did not: their Catholic heritage, recently revived through his concerted efforts. If it were the cultural difference between the Prairie and Woodland bands of Potawatomi that persuaded Leopold Pokagon to break with the majority of his people, it was the revitalization of this distinct religious tradition, both its spiritual and political implications, which allowed the Pokagon Potawatomi to defy convention and remain in their homeland.

The intense opposition of the Woodland bands voiced by Leopold Pokagon necessitated the creation of two separate treaty documents by the United States. The main treaty was signed September 26, 1833, by the Illinois and Wisconsin bands. However, a supplementary treaty, dealing specifically with the Michigan bands, was signed the following day. Although the supplemental treaty specifically mentions that the “tract of land on the St. Joseph river [sic] opposite the town of Niles...on which the villages of To-pe-ne-bee and Pokagon are situated,” were to be included in the land cession, and that “[a]ll the Indians residing on the said reservations in Michigan shall remove therefrom within three years from this date,” a special addition, in effect an amendment, was added *after* the original supplementary treaty was signed. While not mentioning Pokagon’s people specifically, it states that certain Michigan Potawatomi be allowed to remain in

---

<sup>78</sup> Mark R. Schurr, Terrance J. Martin, and W. Ben Secunda, “How the Pokagon Band Avoided Removal: Archaeological Evidence from the Faunal Assemblage of the Pokagon Village Site (20BE13),” *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, 31 (Spring 2006): 143-164.

the State of Michigan “on account of their religious creed,” although the addendum stipulated that these particular bands would soon be required to "remove to the northern part of the peninsula of Michigan.”<sup>79</sup> Although this modification was not signed by Leopold Pokagon, it was signed by the government negotiators and official representatives of the Michigan Territory, reflecting their approval. The addendum was a part of the treaty package finally ratified by Congress on February 21, 1835, indicating their acceptance, as well. And clearly, the treaty addendum represented the successful realization of Leopold Pokagon’s goals to avoid removing west of the Mississippi. Further analysis reveals just how thoroughly Pokagon understood the stakes at risk, as well as how one politically astute man challenged the United States government – and won.

In times of crisis, generations of Potawatomi had sought power from a close relationship with their guardian Manitou. Leopold Pokagon, while following in this tradition, also recognized the power of the Christian Manitou, Jesus Christ, to potentially conquer the proponents of Indian removal. Although his personal devotion to Christianity appeared genuine, as recorded by the Roman Catholic priests sent to minister to the Potawatomi people, evidence suggests that Leopold Pokagon had not entirely abandoned the traditional spiritual practices of his people. Ultimately, Leopold Pokagon used the American association of the adoption of Christianity with civilization to his benefit, and to that of his people.

---

<sup>79</sup> Kappler, Treaty with the Chippewa, Etc., 1833.

Pokagon's initial flirtation with Christianity was with the Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy at the Carey Mission near South Niles, Michigan. During the 1820s, McCoy and other Baptist missionaries worked closely with the Pokagon, providing technical services in agricultural development and contributing materials and labor for the building of log homes for the band. The Pokagon, while accepting the assistance of McCoy and his associates as part of their adaptive resistance strategy, cautiously maintained their distance in other areas, avoiding mission schools and churches.<sup>80</sup>

If simple spiritual guidance, economic support, and the veneer of civilization were Pokagon's goals, their association with the Baptists might well have been fruitful. Well funded by both the government (with Potawatomi treaty money) and private foundations, the Baptists possessed the resources, and the paternalistic desire, to carefully proctor guardianship of 'their Indians.' Indeed, many of their agricultural adaptations began under the tutelage of McCoy and his assistants. However, the Baptists in general, and McCoy in particular, were strong advocates of the Indian Removal policy. McCoy, in fact, travelled to Washington in 1829 to lobby for the Indian Removal Bill. Contrary to the reality of the progress in 'civilization' being made by the Potawatomi, and other Indian peoples under his charge, McCoy testified that rather they were "perishing." He reiterated his opinion that only complete removal from the vices of the white race would preserve the Indians. If Pokagon and his band were to remain in Michigan, an association with McCoy held little value, and indeed held considerable risk.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> McCoy, *A History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 232, 292; Leopold Pokagon quoted in *Annales*, vol. IV, 546-47.

<sup>81</sup> McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 301-302

The Potawatomi as a whole were remarkably adaptable to the challenges raised by incursions into their territorial homelands – be those by the Iroquois, Europeans or Americans. During the so-called Middle Ground years, beginning in 1650, the Potawatomi used a variety of tactics to challenge or resist threats to their sovereignty – indeed to their very existence. When confronted with the certainty of war with the advancing Iroquois, the Potawatomi chose to relocate to the western shores of Lake Michigan, establishing themselves as the dominant tribe among other “refugee” Indians. Caught between the Iroquois advancing from the East, and the equally threatening Sioux to the west, the Potawatomi chose to fight for their land and their survival. As the Iroquois threat subsided, the Potawatomi consciously developed a political and economic relationship with the French, deftly manipulating the tension between the French and the British to their own strategic advantage.

In the 1830s, Leopold Pokagon no longer enjoyed these options. Militarily, the strength of the Great Lakes tribes was no match for that of the United States, as was proven at the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers and during the War of 1812. If military action was no longer an option, neither was strategic removal westward. This was the United States’ plan for the Indians, a plan in which the St. Joseph River Valley Potawatomi had no desire to participate. Additionally, the Middle Ground years ended in 1832, as the refusal of the British to come to the aid of Black Hawk's British Band demonstrated they would no longer provide military support to their former allies. For more than two hundred years, the Potawatomi had successfully maneuvered between contending empires in the Great Lakes region. With United States supremacy

unquestionably established, there was no longer a rival European sovereign to the Americans to whom the Potawatomi could barter their loyalty.

However, no one informed Leopold Pokagon that the Middle Ground had collapsed. With the choices of flight untenable and fight impossible, Leopold Pokagon determined to utilize the same political tactics that his ancestors had successfully employed with the French. Preserved in Potawatomi oral tradition, the experiences of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the shifting political alliances which often played to the advantage of the Indians, could not be easily forgotten. In his search for an ally to resist removal, Leopold Pokagon relied upon his tribe's memory of the power of the Middle Ground. He could no longer turn to the French (long removed from North America themselves) or the British (who had finally made a lasting peace with their lost American colonies), to counter the strength of the United States. There was, however, one remaining 'foreign' institution powerful enough to challenge the United States: the Roman Catholic Church. Leopold Pokagon approached the Catholic Church in the tradition of the Middle Ground: he sought one powerful institution to counter another. With the Church as his ally, by design or by default, Leopold Pokagon effectively created a new Middle Ground, both religious and political in nature.

### **Renewed Contact with the Roman Catholic Church**

Although a priest had been dispatched to his village from time to time, no Roman Catholic missionary had been permanently placed with the St. Joseph Potawatomi.<sup>82</sup> In

---

<sup>82</sup> Father Frederic Reze was the last of the traveling priests to visit the Pokagon. It was Reze who baptized Leopold Pokagon in 1830, along with twelve of his people. John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529-1854* (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1854), 393.

the wake of the passage of the Indian Removal Act in May 1830, Leopold Pokagon set out on a diplomatic mission of his own, to visit the Catholic authorities in Detroit. His request for a more permanent accommodation was made to Father Gabriel Richard, vicar-general in Detroit for the Bishop of Cincinnati.

French Jesuits missionaries were among the first Europeans encountered by the Potawatomi in 1632. The “black robes” were consistently at the forefront of French penetration into North America. However, the Jesuit Order was suppressed by the government in France, and in 1763 expelled from North America. The victory of the Protestant British over the Catholic French in the Seven Years’ War (1754-1763), resulted in the latter’s expulsion from the continent, sounding a “death-blow to the [Catholic] missions of the West.”<sup>83</sup> America’s victory in their War for Independence from Great Britain (1775-1783), placed the Ohio Territory and the Old Northwest under the domain of the predominantly Protestant Americans. Catholic influence in the region waned; there was no priest west of the Appalachian Mountains for over thirty years.<sup>84</sup>

Following the American Revolution, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States held one diocese, that of Baltimore, the territory of which encompassed the entirety of the United States. As the Catholic Church revived its missionary efforts in the early nineteenth century, among its first priorities were the descendants of French colonists and the Indians of the Northwest Territory. The diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky was one of several founded in 1808 to that end. With a huge territory

---

<sup>83</sup> Shea, 379-380; Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157-158.

<sup>84</sup> Shea, 381-2.



encompassing most of what are today Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan, but with only a small number of priests, pastoral efforts were intermittent, at best. With each decade, the Church expanded its organization, its personnel – and its influence. The Diocese of Cincinnati was founded in 1821. The territory to be covered by the small number of Catholic fathers of the diocese was still considerable, ranging from southern Ohio to the farthest reaches of the Old Northwest. Detroit would not become a diocese in its own right until 1833. However, it was this very scarcity of priests, along with the Church's resolve to rebuild its flock, which aided Leopold Pokagon in his efforts to avoid removal. Too far extended to yet consider expanding their ministry west of the Mississippi with the Indian converts, Pokagon successfully gambled that the Roman Catholic Church would support his desire to remain in Michigan.

Father Gabriel Richard, a member of the Sulpitian order, arrived in Baltimore in 1792, relocating to Detroit in May 1798.<sup>85</sup> Richard traveled extensively, from Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi, to Green Bay; from Michilimakinanck to St. Joseph. He visited the St. Joseph Potawatomi in 1826, and was invited by them to Chicago in 1827, in hopes that he might help them secure a Catholic priest for their villages. Those efforts failed, in large part because of the connections between Isaac McCoy and Lewis Cass, then governor of Michigan Territory and one of several U.S. Indian Commissioners. McCoy

---

<sup>85</sup> *Annales* vol. VI, 144.

may have received the appointment to educate the Potawatomi of northern Indiana and Michigan, but his efforts to convert the St. Joseph Potawatomi were unsuccessful.<sup>86</sup>

Contemporary accounts all attest to the devotion of the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph Valley to the teachings of their original Jesuit fathers, remarking that, while the missions of the French had declined in the wake of eighteenth century French territorial losses, the Indians never abandoned their Catholic faith, indeed continuing many decades later to exhibit a remarkable piety:

The spirit which was frequently exhibited by them, was not that which pines within iron bars and frowns on innocent enjoyment; not the religion which exhausts itself in forms and rubrics, in making professions and counting beads, a religion which showed itself in words rather than in action. But it was a spirit which softened the character and controlled the conduct, circulating through the whole moral system as the blood through the veins of the human body.<sup>87</sup>

This piety finally moved Fr. Richard to revive the ancient mission of the Jesuits at St. Joseph, following a meeting with Leopold Pokagon and five other leaders of the Michiana Potawatomi. Arriving at Detroit July 1, 1830, Pokagon, speaking for the other Wkama in attendance, delivered a passionate appeal to the good Father, to secure the regular services of a priest for his people, and to counter the efforts of Isaac McCoy:

Father, Father, I come to beg you to give us a Black Robe to teach us the word of God. We are ready to give up whiskey and all our barbarous customs. Thou dost not send us a Black Robe, and thou hast often promised us one. What, must we live and die in our ignorance? We are left deaf and blind...although we earnestly desire to be instructed in the faith. Father, draw us from the fire – the fire of the wicked Manitou. An American minister wished to draw us to his religion, but neither I nor any of the village would send our children to his school,

---

<sup>86</sup> *Annales*, vol., III, 342.

<sup>87</sup> James Lanman, *History of Michigan: From Its Earliest Colonization to the Present Time*, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1841), xi.

nor go to his meetings. We have preserved the way of prayer taught our ancestors by the Black Robe who used to be at St. Joseph.<sup>88</sup>

Father Richard, duly moved by Pokagon's emotional plea, promised him that his people had not been forgotten, and that a Black Robe would be sent to them in a matter of a few days. Pressing the issue, Pokagon asked if this Black Robe would indeed remain with his people "*pour toujours*," for always.<sup>89</sup> In fact, Fr. Richard had only intended to send a priest for a few months. However, Pokagon prevailed; Fr. Richard promised not to remove the new priest until another could be found to replace him. Thus, in August, 1830, Father Stephen Badin was dispatched to re-establish the mission at St. Joseph, a post he would hold until 1836.<sup>90</sup>

Father Badin set about his duties immediately, enrolling twenty-four of "*les bons sauvages Poutouatomis*" for instruction and baptism.<sup>91</sup> To the new priest, Leopold Pokagon and his villagers seemed especially devout:

The respectable Chief Pokagon is in charge of my chapel. He summons his band morning and evening for their prayers which they attend with a respect, an attention and a modesty that is hardly found amongst us, if not at the home of the religious and the really pious persons.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> *Annales*, vol. IV, 546-7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>90</sup> Although Father Richard had gone to his heavenly reward several years prior to Father Badin's departure, his successor fulfilled Richard's promise, sending Father Louis DeSeille to continue the mission at St. Joseph. See Shea, 396.

<sup>91</sup> Upon his arrival, Badin found "scarcely twenty" of the Potawatomi had been baptized. By December 1832, 300 more had become members of the Church. By December 1833, over 600 Potawatomi in the Michigan region had become Church members. See Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*, vol. 2 (New York: America Press, 1938), 178.

<sup>92</sup> *Annales.*, vol. VI, 301-302.

The conversion program may have been aided by the fact that many of the practices of a devout Catholic (the fasting, the devotional prayers) were also elements of traditional Potawatomi spirituality. In fact, Badin himself commented on how even the "infidels...fear neither the penance nor the fasting which all impose upon themselves voluntarily...to honor the Master of Life and to invoke quite ordinarily their Manitou."<sup>93</sup> It should be noted that there is no historical reference to the Pokagon overtly abandoning their ancient practices and beliefs. Visiting priests documented that when asking for instruction, three Odawa chiefs of Mackinaw willingly relinquished their medicine bundles, a very precious possession representing their traditional spiritual life. A powerful ritual aid, medicine bundles were thought to possess powers of healing and protection. Abandonment and burning of a medicine bundle was to irrevocably break with the world of the Manitou, indicative of complete abandonment of traditional practices in favor of Christianity. Nowhere in the voluminous records of the early nineteenth-century encounters with the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph, however, do any of the visiting priests record such an occurrence. This might well have been simply an oversight in documenting the conversion of the Potawatomi but for the words of Father Badin, who observed that the same "infidels" who were welcomed at morning and evening prayers continued "to invoke quite ordinarily their Manitou." In fact, Badin

---

<sup>93</sup> *Annales*, vol. IV, 546; vol. VI, 154, 165. Translated in Buechner, *The Pokagons*, 299-304.

documents that many of the Catholic Potawatomi at Pokagon's Village,

[T]ook the bad spirit rather than the good or great spirit, because the latter, they said, certainly would do them no harm, but they fear the others very much and their offering of the sacrifices is to appease them and to turn them away from doing evil.<sup>94</sup>

Badin does not condemn this practice, but simply continued in his letter to describe how *all* the villagers are so inclined to go to confession that, in his absence, they would confess to the female interpreter assigned to the village.<sup>95</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church has used syncretism, the combination of different forms of belief or practice, from its earliest days, as it incorporated elements from pagan cultures to spread the 'true faith.' For example, with the dramatic conversion of the Emperor Constantine and the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the cults of Roman deities were replaced by prayer to the Christian saints. In the Western Hemisphere, many Catholic priests, particularly the Jesuits, worked to minimize any disruption Christianity may have caused. So, just as the Roman Gods became Christian saints, so too did Catholic saints become incorporated into the pantheon of Potawatomi Manitous.

These uniquely Native Catholic practices are not exclusive to the Potawatomi. They can be found in the ancient ceremonial dances which follow the Christmas Morning mass at the San Felipe Pueblo in New Mexico, in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, the Lord of Earthquakes and Lord of Miracles, both found in Peru. All of these

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Theodore J. Karamanski, *Blackbird's Song: Andrew J. Blackbird and the Odawa People* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 52.

examples readily illustrate how elements of traditional practices are incorporated into a Catholicism unique to the indigenous culture in which it is practiced, all of which place a high value on community ritual and worship.

Many of the traditional practices of Catholicism can also be found in Potawatomi spirituality. Potawatomi warriors and young men often fasted in order to prepare for religious ceremonies; Catholics fast to prepare for mass. Tribes regularly greeted the morning sun with devotional prayer; very devout Catholics hold morning prayer, as well. Sage was burned for purification in Potawatomi tradition; in Catholic tradition, incense was burned for the same purpose. This combination of spiritual tropes, the ritual, the ceremony, the fasting, daily prayer, confession and penance, *but* continued sacrifices to appease the “evil Manitous” describes a form of Catholicism uniquely Neshnabé, syncretized by the Catholic Potawatomi during the nearly one hundred years when they were without a ‘black robe’ to guide their prayers. With these marked similarities between traditional Potawatomi spiritual practices and those of the Roman Catholic Church (and the welcoming spirit of Father Badin), conversion would not have been difficult, nor would it apparently have appeared much different in practice from Native spirituality.<sup>96</sup>

Even with a whole-hearted embrace of his new faith, Leopold Pokagon could not have failed to notice the disparity in opinions regarding removal between Isaac McCoy's Baptists and those of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, as did his Odawa brethren to

---

<sup>96</sup> That traditional Potawatomi spiritual practices may have gone underground, but were not eradicated, is also evinced by its re-emergence in the 1960s, when tribal elders taught the long suppressed rituals to a new, “come-back generation.” See Chapter Seven of this volume.

the north, Pokagon "cultivated the relationship with their missionary much as they worked the soil" of their fields, with their labor bearing fruit in the form of a powerful ally against removal.<sup>97</sup>

The first indication that Leopold Pokagon's motives for association with the Roman Catholic Church ran beyond those of simply a spiritual nature is the presence of Fr. Baden at the treaty council held at Tippecanoe, Indiana in October 1832. At that treaty session, three separate land cession documents were signed with various Potawatomi bands, the last of which, signed October 27, 1832, involved the St. Joseph band. Accompanying Pokagon to that council, Baden ably represented the interests of the St. Joseph Potawatomi, presenting them as industrious, sober, and peaceful, in addition to pious. He "declares" that after over two years spent with the Indians, he has "found among them sensibilities and mental capacities often equal to ours [non-Natives]."<sup>98</sup> In part due to Baden's promotion of the St. Joseph band with the U.S. commissioners, a reservation at "Po-ca-gan's village for his band" was secured from the ceded lands.<sup>99</sup> The band was also granted two thousand dollars annually for an indefinite period ("as long as the Congress...may think proper") to educate Indian youth, a provision which the good Father gratefully acknowledged.<sup>100</sup> Baden went further, however, defending the very

---

<sup>97</sup> James M. McClurken, "Ottawa Adaptive Strategies to Indian Removal," *The Michigan Historical Review*, 12 (Spring 1986): 39.

<sup>98</sup> "Father Stephen T. Badin to the U.S. Indian Commissioners, Relates His Labors among the Indians," *The American Catholic Historical Researches*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (July 1911): 197. (Letter originally dated 24 October 1832).

<sup>99</sup> Kappler, Treaty with the Potawatomi, 27 Oct 1832.

<sup>100</sup> "Badin to U.S. Indian Commissioners" (Letter originally dated 29 Oct 1832)

Catholicism adopted by the band, expressing his hopes that “the Catholic clergy [and their flock] so often & [sic] wrongfully designated, [be allowed to] continue to multiply...according to the spirit of the Constitution.”<sup>101</sup>

Leopold Pokagon’s ultimate goal, that of avoiding forced removal west of the Mississippi, appeared to be realized at the treaty session held in Chicago in September 1833, when the resulting land cession and removal treaty was amended, granting permission to “a part of the band residing on the reservations in the Territory of Michigan,” to remain in the state “on account of their religious creed.”<sup>102</sup> This unspecified band was to “remove to the northern part of the peninsula of Michigan,” where several Catholic Odawa reserves were located, within three years (as originally stipulated by the treaty). However, this was at the very least a partial victory for Leopold Pokagon, and was due in part to his association with the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>103</sup>

In appealing to the “black-robos,” and acquiring their patronage, Leopold Pokagon achieved many things. First, by making his plea in person to the Catholic establishment at Detroit, his desire and that of his people to become Christian, and thus ‘civilized,’ was well-documented, due in part to the rigorous, almost obsessive, record keeping by the Catholic missionaries. Having learned well the Potawatomi tradition of rhetoric, there could be little doubt among the good Fathers to Pokagon's sincerity, his appeals for religious instruction so fervently articulated. He thus acquired for himself and his people respected, articulate allies in the form of representatives of the Roman

---

<sup>101</sup> “Badin to U.S. Indian Commissioners” (Letter originally dated 24 Oct 1832)

<sup>102</sup>Kappler, Treaty with the Chippewa, Etc., 1833.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



Catholic Church. Not only could they attest to the Pokagon's conversion and 'civilization,' but because their own relative lack of numbers precluded moving their mission with the Pokagon west of the Mississippi, were inclined to oppose Indian removal themselves. Pokagon's words, coupled with his pious actions, salvaged the fears of both American officials and the non-Native neighbors of the St. Joseph Potawatomi as well.

In fact, unlike tribes such as the Cherokee, who were vigorously pushed out of their territory by local residents and officials, the Pokagon became "much respected by their American neighbors," and found much support from them in their efforts to avoid removal.<sup>104</sup> Having grown up with the Pokagon, Joshua Miller recalled that he "used to play with the little Indian boys," and that the band was composed of "good Indians."<sup>105</sup> Jacob Ritter moved to the area surrounding Pokagon's village in 1830, and found Leopold Pokagon "to be a very good neighbor."<sup>106</sup> An editorial in the *Union City Journal of Commerce* decried efforts to remove the Pokagon as "unjustifiable and unfair." The band is described as being "as peaceable [sic] and good-natured as any class of citizens," living in the area. The Pokagon's conversion to Christianity was certainly a factor in community support, as the editorial pointed out that they were "much more under the influence of civilization and Christianity here than they would be in the far West."<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Letter of Father Badin to Bishop Fenwick, 1832, in *Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: A History of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend*, Joseph M. White and John M. D'Arcy, eds., (Huntington, IN: The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 2007), 17.

<sup>105</sup> Miller, *South Bend Tribune*, March 6, 1897.

<sup>106</sup> Jacob Ritter, *South Bend Tribune*, March 6, 1897.

<sup>107</sup> *Union City Journal of Commerce*, September 19, 1840.

Local support no doubt created a considerable quandary for government representatives. With their leader well respected within the community, how were officials to counter growing public opposition to Pokagon removal? And if the Pokagon would not voluntarily remove from their homelands, how would it be possible to force them away from the tutelage of a religious tradition so deeply embedded in their psyche, while maintaining the government's fictive efforts at civilization? This, then, would explain the treaty amendment, so readily approved by the representatives of the Michigan territory, and, with their endorsement, that of the United States representatives, as well.

Secondly, Pokagon appears to have instinctively recognized a common religion as a powerful tool for unity. For many other Native peoples, Christianity was historically a divisive element. In many Native communities, those that refused to convert were ostracized or banished from their villages. For others, the Christian converts were separated from their 'heathen' relatives into praying towns, as they were among the Iroquois. Some would even argue that Christianity was a genocidal tool of European and American colonialism.<sup>108</sup> Many Native communities, such as the Cherokee, that were readily converting to Protestant denominations discovered that their newfound faith provided no protection against forced removal and the community dissension it engendered. As we have seen, the very inclusivity of Roman Catholicism, at least as practiced by Father Stephen Badin, prevented the ostracization and split of Christian versus non-Christian within the Catholic Potawatomi. Even those who were nominally

---

<sup>108</sup> For such an interpretation of the genocidal effects of Christianity and Christian missionary efforts, see George E. Tinker *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) and *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

Catholic were welcomed at mass, participating in the daily rituals which bound the community together. Not only did Catholicism keep his people from being scattered by the forces of removal, this re-awakened Catholic identity, with its communal practices, pulled the Pokagon closer together as a unit. Each day, as Leopold Pokagon called his people to him for morning and evening prayer, as a leader he reinforced not only his role as Wkama, but the importance of a unified community to their survival. By drawing his people together for daily mass, including, by Badin's testimony, even the infidels, Pokagon reinforced this sense of community, of belonging. Catholicism, as practiced by the St. Joseph Potawatomi, reinforced a distinctive cultural identity, in opposition to the Prairie bands of Potawatomi and other tribes. Again, there is no reason to question Pokagon devotion; however it was the acknowledgment of their devout behavior that was ultimately as important, on a political level, as their actual spiritual conversion.

Additionally, although among the largest of Christian denominations world-wide, in nineteenth-century America Catholics were a minority, and viewed with suspicion. Anti-Catholic sentiment rose in the 1830s, in response to increased Irish immigration. While it would seem antithetical for a group already on the margins of the dominant culture to adopt religious practices so publicly reviled, Pokagon saw advantage in this “double marginalization.” As Indians, the Pokagon were isolated from American society by virtue of their ‘savage’ nature, but were also subject to the whims of the United States government. By aligning with the Roman Catholic Church, the Pokagon gained a potent ally that, unlike many Protestant denominations, opposed their removal. However, rather than bringing them into the mainstream, this alliance pushed them to the margins of society, where they were relatively free to pursue their own interests. By defining

themselves as Catholics, the Pokagon became just Christian enough to satisfy American conceptualizations of civilization and remain in their homeland, without the burden of government oversight into their daily affairs.

Finally, through his alliance with the Catholic Church, Leopold Pokagon established a distinctive identity for his people. As pressure to remove increased, American officials became frustrated with their inability to enforce the policy against the Catholic Potawatomi of Indiana. One agent in particular, Abel C. Pepper, blamed the Catholic Church for the failure, writing to George Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence that the local priests were actively interfering with removal efforts. Pepper accused Louis Deseille, the priest who replaced Fr. Badin with the Pokagon (and who also ministered to the Catholic Potawatomi in Indiana), of agitating the band's opposition to relocation. When he was advised that Deseille was holding meetings among the Indiana Potawatomi, advising them to consolidate into one village, build a church, and reject the government's plans to purchase their lands, Pepper demanded that his assistant be present at all Deseille's future meetings with the Indians, so that he might report back what the good father was preaching. Reminded by Deseille that his concerns were religious, not political, Pepper was shamed into retreat, replying that the United States' government protected all religions, and he had no objections to meetings which were "spiritual" in nature. During this exchange the Michiana Potawatomi (including those at Pokagon's Village) became known as the "Catholic party" to Pepper and other

government officials responsible for Indian removal. They would be known as the Catholic Potawatomi ever after.<sup>109</sup>

### **Avoiding Removal**

Although the Pokagon had adopted several of the principles of ‘civilization’ advanced by American officials - assuming a more sedentary lifestyle, conforming to ‘modern’ agricultural practices, and converting to Christianity – which secured for them government permission to remain in Michigan, the Pokagon were still at the mercy of United States Indian policy. Disputes in Congress over lands assigned to the Potawatomi who had agreed to emigrate west of the Mississippi delayed passage of the 1833 treaty for two years. Once approved, however, the Pokagon found that not only did the United States government fail to allocate funds to underwrite the cost of their removal to northern Michigan (as the Indian Removal Act of 1830 has specifically mandated), they had also not been assigned lands in the northern reaches of the lower peninsula among the Odawa to which to remove. Additionally, not only were the Odawa reluctant to accept their southern neighbors, with the deadline for their removal to northern Michigan rapidly approaching, Leopold Pokagon also learned that Odawa lands to which he and his people were to relocate had also been ceded to the United States.<sup>110</sup> Leopold Pokagon maneuvered around these new obstacles by continuing to use the principles of adaptive resistance, this time in the form of acquiring private property, the ‘holy grail’ of the

---

<sup>109</sup> Benjamin Marie Petit and Irving McKee, *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941), 18-21; *John Tipton Papers*, 246-47, 259-61.

<sup>110</sup> Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes of the American Frontiers* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., Successors to Grigg, Elliot and Co., 1851), 483-484); Kappler, *Treaty with the Ottawa, Etc*, 1836.

American Dream. However, in conforming to the letter of this desired behavior, at the same time Leopold Pokagon was able to preserve the traditional communal nature of Potawatomi life.

In 1836, Leopold Pokagon began buying land in Cass County, Michigan, around Silver Creek, eventually securing fee-simple title to a total of 874 acres. While other members of the community contributed money for the purchases, most of the funding came from the proceeds of the sale of lands deeded to Pokagon and his wife at the 1832 Treaty of Tippecanoe, as well as from \$2,000 in cash he was awarded at the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. Although patented in Leopold Pokagon's name in accordance with American real estate practices, it was to this land that Pokagon, his family, and those Catholic Potawatomi most closely associated with his leadership relocated. Other Catholic Wkama, those closely associated with the leadership of Leopold Pokagon, but maintaining their own village communities, also bought land in southwestern Michigan. Pee-Pee-Yah purchased 160 acres in Van Buren County; To-Posh and Au-Ke-Sta together purchased 40 acres; and Wa-Be-Sah purchased 40 acres. No longer would the Catholic Potawatomi in Michigan be subject to the vagaries of territorial assignment by government agencies; this was definitively Potawatomi land, duly titled, albeit acquired in the traditional American fashion.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 69. The actual acreage purchased by Leopold Pokagon varies by source, however a search of the records in Cass County, Michigan confirms a total of 874.35 acres purchased by Leopold Pokagon from the United States. See Reverend Louis Baroux, *An Early Indian Mission: Correspondence to the Reverend J.J. DeNeve, 1862*, Reverend E.D. Kelly, ed. and trans., Ann Arbor Press, 1913 (Reprinted 1976 by Hardscrabble Press, Berrian Springs, MI), 81; see also Cecilia Bain Buechner, *The Pokagons* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Publications, 1933), 312; see also LH. Glover, *A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1906), 20.

The fate Leopold Pokagon worked so diligently to avoid is heartbreakingly illustrated by what befell the Potawatomi of northern Indiana. Equally willing to participate in government 'civilization' efforts, leaders such as Ashkum, Chechawkose, Shipshewano and, most notably, Menominee, all embraced the strategy of adaptive resistance. Just as Pokagon did in Michigan, the headmen of these Indiana villages hoped to manipulate assimilation policies, turning them into a shield against the looming threat of removal.

Many of the Indiana Potawatomi embraced Christianity. Menominee particularly was reported to be a spiritual leader, having "been called...by the Great Spirit, to preach to the Indians."<sup>112</sup> Menominee led a delegation to visit Baptist missionary, Isaac McCoy, when McCoy was still preaching at Fort Wayne. McCoy spent several days with the party, observing that the group "united in morning and evening worship," as did Pokagon's village.<sup>113</sup> While McCoy visited Menominee's village, the Potawatomi of Indiana also rejected his ministry, turning instead to the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>114</sup>

The Indiana Potawatomi also adopted the same hybrid agricultural practices as those at Pokagon's village. A federal appraisal conducted in 1838 found that the Indiana Potawatomi had nearly 300 acres planted in corn alone. In addition to their farming

---

<sup>112</sup> McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 95.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Baroux, 49; W. Ben Secunda, "To Cede or Seed? Risk and Identity Among the Woodland Potawatomi During the Removal Period," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 31 (Spring 2006): 78.

activities, in 1832 the Indiana Potawatomi also negotiated into the latest land cession treaty a saw mill to be erected on their lands.<sup>115</sup>

The Indiana Potawatomi experienced the same degradation to their land reserves as did the Michigan Potawatomi. In the Treaty of Tippecanoe River, signed October 26, 1832, the headmen of the Indiana Potawatomi agreed to cede most of their remaining land in Indiana, in return for several small reserves, cash payments, and the building of the aforementioned saw mill. Ominously, this treaty also promised to provide "goods, farming utensils, and such other articles as shall be required and necessary," should they "wish to change their residence," a clear reference to removal.<sup>116</sup>

Despite their best efforts, removal was not long in coming. Beginning in 1834, the U.S. government signed a series of removal treaties with the Indiana Potawatomi. One by one, the headmen of the remaining reserves ceded their lands in Indiana to the United States: Mau-ke-kose and Mota in December 1834; Mes-quaw-buck and Wau-ke-wa in March 1836; Aub-ba-naub-ba, O-kah-mause, Nas-waw-kee, and Quash-quaw in April of the same year. The cessions continued throughout 1836, including in August, 1836, the village of Menominee and his allied headmen at the Yellow River reserve, near Plymouth, Indiana.

The Treaty of Yellow River, however, was cloaked in controversy. When informed by local non-Natives that a removal treaty had been signed, the Yellow River band vigorously protested, sending a letter to General John Tipton in which they stated

---

<sup>115</sup> *John Tipton Papers*, 719; Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 26, 1832.

<sup>116</sup> Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 26, 1832.



that they had not been at the treaty session, but working in their fields. As the recognized chief of the Yellow River reserve, Menominee's name was conspicuously absent from the treaty signatures; Pepinawaw, his son Natawka, and Mackatawmoah all maintained that their signatures were forged by Indians from other reservations. When no response to their petition was received from General Tipton, Menominee prepared a second petition, sent to President Martin Van Buren; however the government refused to abrogate the treaty. The Yellow River band received support from the Roman Catholic Church, as well. The St. Joseph River Valley priests denounced the treaty as a fraud. Their resident priest, Benjamin Marie Petit, helped Menominee prepare his petition to President Van Buren. Father Louis Deseille, who was assigned to Pokagon's village, went so far as to threaten to have every Catholic priest removed from the United States if he were not allowed to continue his mission to the Indians, which included periodic visits to the Indiana Potawatomi. Such an action, while unlikely, would have caused a significant commotion among the white residents of the area, many of whom were descendents of the French Catholics who first settled the area.<sup>117</sup>

By the contested treaty, the last date for the Yellow River band to remove was August 5, 1838, two years after the treaty was signed. On August 6, 1838, Colonel Abel C. Pepper, one of several removal treaty negotiators, held a meeting at Menominee's village. Pepper read the treaty to the assembled crowd, which included many white residents of the area, and informed the Indians that their reserved land now belonged to

---

<sup>117</sup> *John Tipton Papers*, 312-13; Petit and McKee, *The Trail of Death*, 41-43; Irving McKee, "The Centennial of 'The Trail of Death,'" *Indiana Magazine of History* 35, no. 1 (March 1939): 35.

the United States government. After Pepper had finished, Menominee made an impassioned appeal to the assembly:

Members of the Council: The President [Van Buren] does not know the truth. He, like me, has been imposed upon. He does not know that you...pretended to get [my consent]. He does not know that I have refused to sell my lands, and still refuse. He would not drive me from my home and the graves of my tribe, and my children, who have gone to the Great Spirit, nor allow you to tell me your braves will take me, tied like a dog, if he knew the truth.<sup>118</sup>

However, that is exactly what happened. The white settlers who wished to occupy Menominee's land appealed to Indiana's governor, David Wallace. Wallace authorized Pepper to recruit one hundred volunteers to forcibly remove the Potawatomi. Under the command of General John Tipton, the militia surprised the Indian village on August 30, 1838, and began their work.<sup>119</sup>

By all accounts, the round-up of the villagers was a brutal affair. The militia are described as vindictive and full of malice, acting in a spirit "more worthy of a tiger than of a human being." "The soldiers ran through the forests with a fury...seizing a great number of prisoners, whom they confined in the church. The soldiers doubly irritated by reason of their escape took revenge on them by maltreatment."<sup>120</sup> Between August 30 and September 3, over 850 Indiana Potawatomi were corralled, their homes destroyed and their crops burned. In total 859 names were recorded on tribal registration rolls. These 859 souls were forced to march west towards an uncertain future in lands reserved for

---

<sup>118</sup> Daniel McDonald, *The Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians from Northern Indiana: Embracing also a Brief Statement of the Indian Policy of the Government, and Other Historical Matter Relating to the Indian Question*, (Plymouth, IN: D. McDonald & Co., 1899), 16-17.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>120</sup> Baroux, 60-61.

them west of the Mississippi. Menominee himself was indeed tied like a dog, marched out of his village at bayonet point; "the old and decrepid [sic], the lame, the halt and the blind, the women and children, were marched off by the soldiers like so many cattle to the slaughter."<sup>121</sup>

On foot, on horseback, and crowded into wagons, the Potawatomi and their military escort left Twin Lakes, Indiana on September 4, 1838. Although initially forbidden to travel with his flock, Fr. Petit was eventually granted permission by his bishop, and caught up with the party at Danville, Illinois, where General Tipton was obliged to stop, as his authority ended at the Indiana state line. Petit's first view of his 'children' describes the conditions they were forced to endure: marching in a line, under the burning noonday sun, surrounded by soldiers hurrying them ever forward. Those who were too weak to walk were crammed into wagons with the baggage, which did little to protect them from the heat, but rather "only deprived them of air, for they were as if buried under this burning canopy - several died thus."<sup>122</sup> In fact, this forced march of approximately 660 miles over 61 days, aptly dubbed the Potawatomi Trail of Death, left over 40 people dead. This was Leopold Pokagon's greatest fear; this was the fate he, too, had worked tirelessly to avoid.

Pokagon's fears were far from groundless. Successful in removing the remaining Potawatomi from Indiana, military forces now turned their sights on the remaining Potawatomi in Michigan, However, the Indiana militia was forced to stop at the Michigan

---

<sup>121</sup> McDonald, 43; Petit, 91-92.

<sup>122</sup> Petit, 98-9.

state line, again because it was beyond their jurisdiction. This bought Leopold Pokagon precious time, which he used to once more turn the tools of civilization to his favor, using the very laws and legal structure of the United States to thwart their removal efforts.

By 1840, the Pokagon still held firm, continuing to improve their settlement at Silver Creek. In February of that year, the Secretary of War, tiring of the long delays in removing the last of the Potawatomi, sent orders to Hugh Brady, Commanding General of the Seventh Military District headquartered in Detroit that all remaining Potawatomi were to be removed from the state – by force if necessary. Upon hearing of these plans, Leopold Pokagon, along with the other Catholic Wkama, set out on another diplomatic mission to Detroit, which would be Pokagon's last. This time his goal was an audience not with the Roman Catholic officials in the city, but with the civilian authority.<sup>123</sup>

Meeting with Epaphroditus Ransom, Associate Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, Pokagon obtained a letter supporting the Catholic Potawatomi claims to remain in Michigan.<sup>124</sup> The note, presented to General Brady when he arrived at Silver Creek in August, 1840, stated that if Pokagon's people were forcibly removed, Ransom would issue a writ of *habeas corpus* freeing them immediately and requiring their return to the state, at government expense. Ransom's considered opinion was that the Pokagon, indeed all the Catholic Potawatomi, had the legal right to remain in Michigan, based on the

---

<sup>123</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 71-3; Secunda, "To Cede or Seed?," 82-3.

<sup>124</sup> Ransom was not Catholic, which might have been perceived at the time as a conflict of interest in the issuance of his opinion. He was, however, notably liberal in his political leanings. Elected as governor of Michigan in 1848, Ransom would serve only one term. Because of his strong anti-slavery leanings, which clashed with the Democratic Party platform, he was not renominated by said party for a second term. See article posted on the Kalamazoo (Michigan) Public Library website at <http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/biographies/epaphroditus-ransom.aspx> (accessed December 15, 2011).

ratified addendum to the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. Brady met personally with Judge Ransom to confirm the matter, following which he informed his superiors in Washington about these recent developments. Government officials declined to pursue the matter further. Thus, shortly before his death in 1841, Leopold Pokagon finally achieved the objective for which he had worked for so long: securing for the Catholic Potawatomi unquestionable recognition of the legitimacy of their residency in Michigan.<sup>125</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Pokagon differed from other central Algonquian tribes in several key ways, most importantly politically and spiritually. From these key differences Leopold Pokagon drew his inspiration and expertise, using adaptive resistance to successfully avoid removal.

Historically the Potawatomi were skilled political negotiators. Their society placed a high value on consensus, and for centuries they acted as mediators between the various other area tribes, and between other tribes and the French, British and Americans. Such a tradition was passed to Leopold Pokagon who, while not the anointed successor to Topenibe, was most certainly schooled in the art of negotiation as part of his experiences in the most influential clan of his tribe. As the threat of dislocation loomed, Pokagon assumed power, filling the vacuum left by the death of Topenibe, not by hereditary right of ascension, but by skills tested in the crucible of removal. By clearly articulating the position of his people in the tradition of the Wkamek and Speakers that had preceded him, in his appeals to the Roman Catholic Church, at the treaty negotiations of 1833, and

---

<sup>125</sup> Brady to COIA, 24 August 1840, in NAM 234, R 361; Clifton, *The Pokagon*, 72; Secunda, "To Cede or Seed?", 84.

later in his appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court, Pokagon successfully resisted American efforts to remove his band of Potawatomi to the west.

Spiritually, the Pokagon differed dramatically from their central Algonquian brethren, many of whom rejected Western religious dogma. Embracing the tenets of Catholicism, after abandonment of the mission of St. Joseph by the French, the Pokagon were left to continue their religious practices without a black robe to guide them. In the ensuing years, it is highly likely that the Roman Catholicism as practiced by the Michigan Potawatomi came to include elements of their Native cosmology. When finally assigned a priest to minister to their needs, the inclusion of both the devout and the heathen served to strengthen, rather than disrupt, the bonds of community. Returning to Catholicism in their time of need, the Pokagon used their alliance with the Church to achieve their own objectives, irrespective of those of the local fathers. By choosing Catholicism over Protestantism, the Pokagon gained both a powerful ally against removal and, because of rising sentiment against Catholics in nineteenth-century America, an additional buffer against United States incursion into their daily lives.

Leopold Pokagon should not be viewed as an early assimilationist, however, entirely abandoning his traditions and Native values for those of the Americans. While he encouraged his people to adopt certain Western practices, Pokagon practiced a strategy of adaptive resistance, employing all the markers of civilization promoted by American officials: conversion to Christianity, adopting a hybrid of Western-styled agriculture, abstinence from alcohol, education of the young and individual property ownership, but with a distinctive Potawatomi perspective.

While redefining Pokagon identity, Leopold Pokagon cleaved to traditional practices where he could, combining elements of Native spirituality into Pokagon Catholicism, blending ancient agricultural forms with their modern alternatives, and finally, using land held individually for tenancy by the entire community. In a period of rapid change, Leopold Pokagon continued to exemplify the traditional Potawatomi values of rhetoric, spiritual strength, and community, the welfare of his people always the foremost motivation for his actions. By using Western values against the Americans, Pokagon was able to preserve both the traditions and the identity of his people in the lands of their ancestors.

CHAPTER FOUR  
ACCOMODATION AND RESISTANCE  
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Simon Pokagon was the special invited guest of Mayor Carter Harrison to the Chicago Day celebration of the World's Columbian Exposition in October, 1893. Pokagon, whose father signed the 1833 treaty that removed Indians from the Chicago area, was scheduled to participate in a re-enactment of the treaty signing and join in the ringing of the Columbian Bell of Liberty in recognition of the sixtieth anniversary of the land cession. Later, in the parade of floats depicting Chicago history, he was the central figure on the float depicting the events of 1812, including the Fort Dearborn Massacre, in which some Potawatomi participated. Addressing the crowd during the festivities, Pokagon delivered a call for forgiveness of past wrongs and an appeal for the future of his race:

I beseech you to lay aside all bitterness of spirit [and] look up and rejoice in thankfulness in the present; for out of the storm cloud of darkness that is around about us we now see helping hands stretched out to aid and strengthen us.... We must give up the pursuits of our fathers; however dear... we must teach our children to give up the bow and arrow [and] take the plow and live as white men do. We must teach loyalty to this nation to our children, and solemnly impress upon them that the war path leads but to the grave.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Triumph of Peace," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 10, 1893.



At the time of his address, however, a very different judgment was circulating among the fairgoers, authored by Pokagon, and printed on spiritually significant birch bark leaves. It was more condemning than conciliatory:

In behalf of my people, the American Indians, I hereby declare to you, the pale faced race that has usurped our lands and homes, that we have no spirit to celebrate with you the great Columbian Fair now being held in this Chicago city, the wonder of the world. No; sooner would we hold high joy-day over the grave of our departed fathers, than to celebrate our own funeral, the discovery of America.<sup>2</sup>

*The Red Man's Rebuke/The Red Man's Greeting*, October 1893

The explanation for this disparity is a subtext of power, agency, and resistance, underlying the celebration of Chicago Day at the World's Columbian Exposition. However, the Chicago Day celebrations are simply a microcosm of events on the larger, national stage. Simon Pokagon's engagement with the non-Native community throughout his life, but specifically at the Exposition in Chicago, illustrates the complexities of defining an Indian identity in an era in which programs of 'civilization' and assimilation reached their zenith, but during which memories of the 'savage' Indian persistently dominated public imagination. For the Pokagon community, as well, issues as diverse as Indian education, land tenure, long-standing claims for treaty annuities, and the relationship between the Catholic Potawatomi and the Roman Catholic Church shaped the contours of sovereignty in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the Pokagon

---

<sup>2</sup> Simon Pokagon, *The Red Man's Rebuke* (Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1893), 1. Author's Note: Although differently titled, *The Red Man's Greeting* and *The Red Man's Rebuke* are identical within the birch bark covers that carry the different title inscriptions. Copies of both volumes can be found in the collection of the Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI. For the sake of clarity, the title *The Red Man's Rebuke* will be used consistently throughout this chapter. Birch bark hold particular significance to the Potawatomi. In their language it is called *wigwes*, and is considered a gift from the Creator.

integrated themselves into the general population, while maintaining distinctive characteristics of their Potawatomi forebears.

### **Pokagon Land Base Threatened**

At the time of Simon's birth, Leopold Pokagon was only beginning his efforts to ensure that his band of Potawatomi were not removed from their ancestral homelands. Although Leopold succeeded, Simon came of age in a turbulent period in Pokagon history, as Leopold's plan to provide a Michigan homeland for his people was very nearly thwarted by the band's association with the Roman Catholic Church. The fallout from this dispute not only affected the Pokagon's relationship with the Church, but had lasting social implications, as well.

As previously discussed, Leopold's was not the only village of Catholic Potawatomi's to be exempted from removal. In addition to Pokagon's Silver Creek homestead in Cass County, in 1840 the Catholic Potawatomi continued to reside at Nadowesipe in St. Joseph County, and had established a community at Paw Paw, in Van Buren County. Pokagon's community was the most populous, the villagers living communally on land that was owned and titled in Leopold Pokagon's name.<sup>3</sup> Now well into his sixties and in failing health, in 1840 Leopold began to deed small parcels of land to members of his community from his holdings.<sup>4</sup> Not only did he recognize that land ownership would be an obstacle to United States efforts to removal, but now understood the implications of having all the village lands titled solely in his name at the time of his

---

<sup>3</sup>Raymond C. Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan, 1843-1904: Including some Ottawa and Chippewa, 1843-1866 and Potawatomi of Indiana 1869 and 1885* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Cass County Register of Deeds.

death. Should he die as sole owner of the Pokagon homestead, it could well endanger the continued presence of his people in Michigan. If titled solely in Leopold's name, all land would pass to his direct heirs, who might not wish to continue with the communal nature of living that Leopold had proscribed. Indeed, to pay property or inheritance taxes, Leopold's heirs might be forced to sell much of the land upon which tribal members were living. With no reserved lands held in trust by the United States, and with no land in northern Michigan to which they could relocate, without individual allotments the Pokagon could well find themselves removed west of the Mississippi River, the addendum to the 1833 removal treaty of Chicago notwithstanding. Even with their adoption of Christianity, Indians existed on the margins of society. Itinerate Indians would soon have found themselves removed, for their own 'safety.'

To prevent this calamity, Leopold Pokagon began to deed tracts of his original 874 acre parcel to heads of households in his community before he died.<sup>5</sup> His efforts to establish a community of small farmsteads owned by individual families (in the traditional Jeffersonian fashion), were quashed, however, by the actions of several priests who sought to obtain title to the Catholic Potawatomi lands.

Not all the Catholic fathers were as opposed to removal as Fathers Gabriel Richard and Stephen Badin, to whom Leopold Pokagon appealed for help in the early 1830s. By 1840, some Catholic priests were actively involved in efforts to remove all Indians from the region. For instance, the Reverend J.C. Francis of Logansport, Indiana, expressed his loyalty to the United States, writing to the Commission of Indian Affairs

---

<sup>5</sup> Cass County Register of Deeds.

that “I have constantly the greatest ambition to be useful to the government.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Father Stanislaus A. Bernier, of South Bend, received payment on several occasions for services actively promoting removal.<sup>7</sup> Bernier often visited Pokagon Village to minister to their spiritual needs, as well. That his efforts conflicted with Pokagon desires to remain in Michigan is obvious. His duplicity in dealing with the Pokagon reached its zenith, however, in the months surrounding Leopold Pokagon’s death.

Leopold Pokagon had long expressed his desire to will to the Church a small parcel of land. Somehow, however, Bernier obtained a deed of sale for two large tracts totaling 674 of the 874 acres registered in Leopold Pokagon’s name. Although the original deed filed by Bernier was dated September 20, 1839, it was not registered at the Cass County Court House until 6:06 AM on August 10, 1840 – nearly eleven months after the alleged ‘sale.’ On January 16, 1841, Bernier transferred the tracts to the Bishop of the Vincennes diocese, Celestine Rene Laurent de la Hailandier. Included in this second ‘deed’ was a clause that guaranteed the “privileges” of use and occupancy to that land to Leopold’s wife, Kitisse, their children, and all of their descendants who were the product of “lawful marriages.” These rights excluded all other members of Leopold’s community, left them effectively homeless, and exposed to the continuing threat of removal.<sup>8</sup>

Events following the registration of the Hailandier deed lend credence to the fraudulent nature of the supposed sale. On April 29, 1841, Leopold Pokagon and his

---

<sup>6</sup> Francis to COIA, 26 February 1840 in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>7</sup> Bernier to COIA, 17 November 1840 and 15 January 1841 in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>8</sup> Cass County Register of Deeds.

family began efforts to reclaim rightful title. There was no little urgency to their efforts – Leopold Pokagon was gravely ill. He died on July 8, 1841. However, aided by local attorneys, his heirs eventually succeeded in recovering legal ownership. In the case of *Kitisse Pokagon, et. al. vs. Bernier and Hailandier* (the Anglicized version of Hailandier) finally heard in April 1848 by the Circuit Court of Cass County, defendants were found guilty of obtaining “said deed... by fraud and undue influence.” The Bernier and Hailandier deed was nullified, with ownership of all 674 acres restored to the family.<sup>9</sup>

Both Bernier and Hailandier sought to consolidate their influence with the Pokagon, establishing their authority not only in their religious lives, but in their temporal lives, as well. By controlling Pokagon lands, Bernier and Hailandier apparently sought to establish the same sort of paternalistic relationship that existed between the Indians and the government of New France during the seventeenth century. Although their actions were deemed fraud by the courts, there is the possibility that the good fathers believed they were actually acting to protect Pokagon’s land from seizure for debts or from theft by unscrupulous land speculators.<sup>10</sup>

This would not have been an unreasonable assumption by the priests. What had begun with land cession treaties with the British in the eighteenth century rapidly escalated following America’s successful War of Independence. Tribes that supported the British were stripped of their lands. A burgeoning American population expanded onto Indian lands, taken either legally, through treaties, by force, or through shady business

---

<sup>9</sup> Cass County Register of Deeds.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that at the time of Leopold Pokagon’s death, no liens existed on any portion of his property, per records held at the Cass County Michigan Register of Deeds.

dealings. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 sounded the death knell for most of the eastern tribes that had not yet lost their lands to the Americans. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Potawatomi of Indiana were forcibly removed from their lands in 1838.<sup>11</sup> By 1840, almost all Native Americans who had lived east of the Mississippi River were removed westward. Those that remained were confined to reservation a fraction of the size of their original territories, on marginal lands, in areas not yet coveted by white settlers. Without a secure land base, the Pokagon Potawatomi would find themselves in a very precarious position.

In fact, the priests attending to the Pokagon's spiritual needs seem to have believed that tribal members were incapable of managing individual land holdings. A German-born missionary, Brother Joseph seemed to have little faith in the Indians to manage their own affairs, stating that they were "like little children when they have money they do...not know what to do with it, and spend it often in useless and criminal manner."<sup>12</sup>

Obviously, such paternalism was not well received by Leopold Pokagon and his tribesmen at the time. In subsequent analyses of the Bernier affair, historians have offered several different perspectives. Everett Claspy and Barbara Hunziker fail to mention the episode at all. Writing in 1933, Cecilia Bain Buechner notes the confusion surrounding the issue of land ownership following the death of Leopold Pokagon, but fails to mention the acts of fraud. She notes only that on his deathbed, Leopold Pokagon gave his people a

---

<sup>11</sup> For a full account of the Potawatomi removal from Indiana, see *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit*, Irving McKee, ed., (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph to Richmond, 8Oct1845; Joseph to Richmond October 3, 1845; both in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

choice of owning their own homesteads, or continuing to live “in the tribal manner.” The tribal members themselves chose not to receive individual allotments, which Buechner attributes as the cause of eventual strife within the community.<sup>13</sup>

However, two local historians, writing in the late nineteenth century, held a more critical perspective of the actions of Bernier and Hailandier. Howard Rogers, in his 1875 *History of Cass County*, accuses Bernier of extorting the fraudulent deed from Leopold Pokagon, when in 1839 he lay gravely ill and in fear of dying. As Rogers relates it, Bernier threatened to withhold the last rites and absolution unless Pokagon signed a deed for 40 acres to the good Father. Only upon his recovery did Leopold discover that the deed was for 674 acres, at which point the lawsuit to recover those lands was initiated. Alfred Matthews, in his 1882 book of nominally the same title, recounts an even more colorful account of the events. While Matthews also relates that Bernier obtained the deed, ostensibly for 40 acres, in 1839 by threatening to withhold absolution to a gravely ill Leopold Pokagon, in his telling, Pokagon does not discover the fraudulent deed prior to his death. Instead, Bernier holds onto the deed, racing to the county seat where the deed was recorded at 6:00AM on the Monday following Leopold death. Only then was it discovered that the deed was for 674 acres, leading to the lawsuit which recovered the land “for the rightful heirs.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Everett Claspy, *The Potawatomi Indians of Southwestern Michigan* (Dowagiac, MI: 1966); Barbara Wood Hunziker, *Sumnerville And Pokagon : A Narrative History of Two Pokagon Township Villages in Cass County, Michigan, from 1825-1976* (Niles, MI: 1977); Cecilia Bain Buechner, *The Pokagons* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society: 1933), 313.

<sup>14</sup> Howard S. Rogers, *History of Cass County, from 1825 to 1875* (Cassopolis, MI: W.H. Mansfield, Vigilant book and job print, 1875), 61; Alfred Matthews, *History of Cass County, Michigan: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882), 51.

Perhaps the most damning assessment of the actions of Bernier and Hailandier comes from twentieth-century historian James Clifton. While not engaging in an argument as to the veracity of the claims of Rogers or Matthews, Clifton condemns the actions of both Bernier and Hailandier as paternalistic, harkening back to “a feudal pattern for housing and managing a dependent population,” thwarting the more progressive, and adaptive, steps taken by Leopold Pokagon. Clearly, Clifton argues, Pokagon believed that his tribesmen would be more secure if each possessed title to their own lands. This security was threatened by the actions of the priests.<sup>15</sup>

Although history has been unkind to Bernier and Hailandier, and their attempts to secure Pokagon lands were rebuffed, no hard evidence proves that they did not, indeed, have the Pokagon’s best interests at heart. However, the consequences of their actions resulted not in a strengthening of the relationship between the Pokagon and the Roman Catholic Church, but rather a fracture in their historic bond. For in the years that followed, although the Church continued their attempts to meddle in Pokagon affairs, the Pokagon themselves began to clearly differentiate between the requirements of the sacred and the secular worlds. Although they continued to turn to the Church to minister to their spiritual needs, they no longer appealed to the Church for help with legal issues. The Pokagon learned from this experience that navigating the complicated waters of the United States legal system demanded the assistance of trained professionals. In the future, the legal advice and assistance the Pokagon would require came from the Michigan legal community.

---

<sup>15</sup> James Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984), 76.



The social implications in the wake of the Bernier affair were equally long-lived, but far more disruptive to the fabric of the Pokagon community. For while the Bernier/Hailandier claim of legal title to the land was resolved, there remained the question of tenancy by other Pokagon community members. In 1848, Leopold Pokagon's heirs declared that the Silver Creek estate was their private property. Further, they intended to sell that property, and anyone who wished to continue living on their farmstead would have to purchase that parcel. This directly countered Leopold's actions before his death (beginning to sell land to other community members), and denied the property rights many within the community believed they justly held as a result of the policies of collective land tenure under his leadership. Disgruntled and disillusioned, many Silver Creek community members began to migrate to other Catholic Potawatomi villages within the region.<sup>16</sup> These population shifts originated with the dispute over issues of land tenure, but were intensified by the leadership void created by the death of Leopold Pokagon, the further machinations by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, and tensions arising from annuities owed the Pokagon by the United States government.

### **Intra-tribal Factions Emerge**

Leadership within Potawatomi communities traditionally fell to experienced men, those who had proved themselves wise and capable. Village leaders were chosen by a consensus of adult males within each community. Leopold Pokagon came to lead his village through this process, as had the leaders of the other Catholic Potawatomi villages in southwestern Michigan. Tribal governance was conducted through a council composed of these village elders. When Leopold Pokagon journeyed to Detroit to seek the

---

<sup>16</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagon*, 83; Annuity rolls contained in Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan*.

assistance of Father Richard, he was not alone, but accompanied by the head-men of the several Catholic Potawatomi communities, most likely Singowa, Leopold Pokagon's Speaker; Pepiya, wkama of the Paw Paw settlement; and Mgwago, leader at the Nadowesipe reserve.<sup>17</sup> The implication is that the decision to appeal to the Roman Catholic Church had been made by consensus; yes, Leopold Pokagon was spokesman for the group, but he was chosen for that position by his peers. At his death, the traditional position of 'primary chief' was left vacant. The turmoil that resulted from choosing a new primary chief had far ranging consequences for the Catholic Potawatomi. The conflict engendered by the selection process was exacerbated by interference from the Church. This, coupled with ineptitude on the part of Leopold Pokagon's eldest son in handling the distribution of annuity payments, further reshaped the population distribution of the Catholic Potawatomi.

The issue of who was to lead the Catholic Potawatomi at Silver Creek was not settled until 1843, two years following Leopold Pokagon's death. At that time another intrusive priest, the Rev. Edward Sorin (the founder of Notre Dame University), simply appointed Leopold's eldest son, Peter, as chief, harkening back to the early days of interactions between tribes and European powers. Although each village continued to be represented by its own headman, representatives of the various European powers, the Americans, and the Church, had long desired one 'chief' through which they could funnel all of their official business, and from which they could receive authorization to proceed with their own priorities. Peter Pokagon's appointment was yet another attempt by the

---

<sup>17</sup> Society for the Propagation of the Faith. *Annales de la propagation de la foi*, vol. IV (Lyon: M.P. Rusand, 1830), 546-547. Note that the *Annales* relate only that Leopold Pokagon was accompanied by a delegation of headmen. No other names are listed.

Catholic fathers ministering to the Pokagon band to return to those days. And although Peter's ascension was favored by the Pokagon family as an obvious legacy of their patriarch, it was opposed by many within the Silver Creek community, and created a great deal of resentment within the other villages. Peter was young and inexperienced. His appointment by Sorin refuted traditional Potawatomi values. The honor should have been bestowed upon a respected elder, who had earned the trust and admiration of the villagers through years of wise counsel to the previous Wkama. Had those traditional practices been followed, it is likely that Singowa, Leopold Pokagon's Speaker, would undoubtedly have become primary chief. The Catholic fathers who served the community soon came to regret their choice, mounting a campaign to discredit Peter Pokagon, and have him removed as leader. In 1845, Brother Joseph wrote to Superintendent of Indian Affairs at Detroit, William Richmond, detailing Peter's bad behavior and ineffectual leadership. Even Sorin himself came to regret his actions. Four years following his decision to simply appoint Peter as "Chief," Sorin wrote to Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Richmond, asking that Pokagon be removed from his leadership role, with Singowa as his suggested replacement.<sup>18</sup> However, neither Brother Joseph nor Sorin were successful in their efforts; Peter Pokagon continued to lead the Silver Creek community until his death in 1855, albeit with a good deal of oversight, and not a little consternation, from the remaining wkamek of his father's time. What the Catholic fathers did accomplish was to further internal strife within the community, leading to

---

<sup>18</sup> The Superintendent of Indian Affairs was the title given to the agent in charge of regional offices often an entire state or territory for the Department of Indian Affairs. This differs from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the title given to the individual who was the head of the entire Department. The titles Superintendent and Indian agent will be used interchangeably in this work.

divisiveness which again manifested itself in a demographic shift, as members of Pokagon's village relocated to other Catholic Potawatomi settlements in the area.<sup>19</sup>

At the time of his 'appointment' Peter Pokagon and the Catholic Potawatomi had not received their government annuities in eight years. Because of the pressing nature of securing land title and Leopold Pokagon's illness, attention had been diverted from collecting these annual distributions. It became the critical priority in the years following Leopold's death.<sup>20</sup>

Collecting annuities due from U.S. government treaty obligations was not solely a Pokagon concern. The history of Federal Indian Policy is littered with such claims. For example, the Brothertown Indians of Wisconsin did not receive compensation for lands taken in an 1824 treaty.<sup>21</sup> The Ojibwa of Lake Superior claimed that the government defaulted on annuities due from an 1854 treaty, as well as underpayment of annuities during the Civil War.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the Stockbridge-Munsee held that the United States

---

<sup>19</sup>Joseph to Richmond, 14 January 1845, 3 October 1845 and 8 October 1845; Sorin to Richmond, 24 January 1847; all in NAM RG75, M574, R80; Clifton, *The Pokagon*, 78; L.H. Glover, *Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1906), 285; Annuity roles in Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan*. Population specifics discussed at the end of this section.

<sup>20</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 78. The annuity payments from the US government provided much needed hard currency to the Catholic Potawatomi. That they had not received those payments for a number of years might well explain the position of Leopold's heirs in regards to the sale of his land. Without those payments, property taxes could not have been paid. If property taxes were unpaid, the land could be seized by the county to satisfy the debt, again placing the Pokagon in a position of having no land base on which to live.

<sup>21</sup> Brad D.E. Jarvis, *The Brothertown Nation of Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 239.

<sup>22</sup> Edmund J. Danziger, Jr., *The Chippewas of Lake Superior* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 230 n19.

had not lived up to its obligations in several treaties.<sup>23</sup> Many of these claims would not be resolved until the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

Efforts by the Catholic Potawatomi to recover their past annuities and secure those for the future began in late 1841, when the village leaders (Peter Pokagon, Pepiya, Singowa, and Wabimanido) made several trips to the Office of Indian Affairs sub-agent at Kalamazoo, T. Edwards. They also made at least one trip to meet with the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Detroit office, Robert Stuart. What followed was a flurry of correspondence between Edwards, Stuart, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., T. Hartley Crawford.

Edwards supported Pokagon claims to back annuities, assuring Stuart that once he knew “the particulars in relation to this matter” that he would be convinced that the Pokagon had been either “neglected or forgotten,” a condition which the Pokagon hoped to remedy. For his part, Stuart was convinced of the legitimacy of the Pokagon claim, and reported favorably to Commissioner Crawford. Stuart noted that the Pokagon were granted permission to remain in Michigan by the Chicago Treaty of 1833, and while they had made good faith efforts to relocate to the northern reaches of the state with the Ottawa (as prescribed by the treaty), those were thwarted by “some evil disposed whites.” They had since purchased lands in southwestern Michigan, and were making progress towards becoming responsible citizens of the State. Stuart concluded that the Pokagon should properly be paid the annuities owed them, citing the pages from the treaty book

---

<sup>23</sup> James Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen : The Political Culture of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, 1815–1972* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 193.

<sup>24</sup> Pokagon efforts to reclaim back annuities will be discussed in depth later in this study.

confirming his analysis.<sup>25</sup> Commissioner Crawford responded favorably to Stuart, approving payment of future annuities to the Michigan Potawatomi.<sup>26</sup> He did not, however, approve the payment of the eight years of back annuities then due, a decision which fueled future Pokagon claims.<sup>27</sup>

The foundation of Crawford's reasoning behind his decision to pay the annuities baffled various House and Senate committees for decades. His analysis would eventually leave the United States Court of Claims, charged with making a final decision regarding Pokagon annuities, completely perplexed. Through a process of torturous logic, Crawford argued that the Michigan Potawatomi were entitled to a pro rate share of a perpetual annuity of \$16,000 from the 1829 Treaty of Prairie du Chein, in addition to their share of the twenty-year annuity of \$2,000 due from the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. Using Stuart's estimate of 250 Potawatomi living in Michigan and entitled to benefits from these treaties, Crawford calculated they were due a total of \$1,587.50 annually.<sup>28</sup>

Be that as it may, the Pokagon had achieved at least a partial victory. Although they did not realize the entire annual sum of \$1,587.50 (after the deduction of a \$200 'tithe' for the priests at Pokagon's village), each head of household received their per

---

<sup>25</sup> Edwards to Stuart, 14 December 1841; Stuart to COIA, 25 March 1843; both in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>26</sup> For a complete list of annual annuity rolls and amount distributed to each qualified head-of-household, see Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan*

<sup>27</sup> COIA to Stuart, 17 May 1843, in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

capita share of the remaining \$1,387.50. The average distribution per family was roughly \$26, paid annually to the Pokagon from 1843 through 1865.<sup>29</sup>

This was an extraordinarily small income, in an era when the annual salary of male bricklayers in New York was about \$780, and that of an Office of Indian Affairs blacksmith was \$300 to \$400. In the 1840s, even a farm laborer in Wisconsin averaged \$197 annually. However, the money received each year was paid in hard currency – gold and silver – not the bank notes in circulation at the time, which were subject to depreciate and were often unreliable. Additionally, this was a dependable source of income for the Pokagon, which allowed them to more easily receive credit from local merchants. These annual payments also represented the successful effort of the Catholic Potawatomi to assert their treaty rights with government officials, and confirmed the continuing guardianship relationship between the United States and the Catholic Potawatomi. Most importantly, the annual distribution of funds brought the Pokagon together, and served to reinforce their identity as a unique band of Potawatomi Indians.<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, the annuity payments also created a great deal of tension within the several Catholic Potawatomi communities, resulting in a flow of complaints regarding inequalities and irregularities in payments. For example, in 1845 Pepiya and Wabimanido sent a complaint to the new Michigan Superintendent of Indian Affairs, William Richmond, regarding the deduction of the ‘tithes’ from their share of the distribution,

---

<sup>29</sup> Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan*.

<sup>30</sup> United States, Estelle M. Stewart, and Jesse Chester Bowen, *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928, Revision of Bulletin No. 499 with Supplement, 1929-1933* (Detroit: Republished by Gale Research Co., 1966), 154, 225; Clifton, *The Pokagon*, 80.

noting that they received “no remuneration, not having any scholars at their school in Pokagon (and for which...said money has been thus taken).”<sup>31</sup>

The deduction of the ‘tithes’ was not the only matter of dispute, however. Peter Pokagon, at the urging of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, was agitating to have the annuity payment made only at Silver Creek and eventually, only to those Catholic Potawatomi actually living in his village. As these payments were made late in the year, many Potawatomi were forced to travel to receive their due, often in cold winter weather. Many were unable, or unwilling, to do so, resulting in a growing number of complaints to Agent Richmond.<sup>32</sup>

Peter Pokagon was encouraged in his actions by Brother Joseph, who fervently believed that the Catholic Potawatomi needed close supervision to avoid squandering their money.<sup>33</sup> Thus the need, in Brother Joseph’s paternalistic opinion, to have all the Catholic Potawatomi congregated at Silver Creek. It would also have a positive effect on their educational needs, as, if they are “all brought together, they “all might enjoy the benefit of instruction.”<sup>34</sup> This was a typical complaint by missionaries working with Native peoples at this time and by the 1850s resulted in treaties consolidating many northern Michigan Indian reservations. However, Brother Joseph seems to have had ambitions beyond simply caring for the fiscal security of his flock. In his October 3, 1845

---

<sup>31</sup> Pepiya et al to Richmond, 25 October 1845. See also JR Baker to Richmond, 27 November 1848; both in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>32</sup> JR Baker to Richmond 27 November 1848 in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph to Richmond, 8 October 1845; Joseph to Richmond 3 October 1845; in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph to Stuart, 14 January 1845; in NAM RG75, M574, R80.



letter to Agent Richmond, Brother Joseph proposed that all Pokagon funds be placed in his hands. His purpose: to purchase “land for them and settle it so that they never could sell it.” Joseph went on to describe four sections of land in the vicinity of Silver Creek, which, while currently “wet,” could in a very few years be drained and turned into good land for cultivation. Joseph described to Richmond how he would “make the Indians work on this land, and pay them for their work.” If his request was not heeded, he warned that the Pokagon could become “but a set of beggars...and of course burdensome to the country.” Brother Joseph, sharing the same paternalistic vision as Fathers Bernier and Hailandier, intended to organize the Catholic Potawatomi very much like the old feudal estates of Europe, not for the welfare of the Roman Catholic Church, or the institution with which he was affiliated in the United States (which he proudly notes has been incorporated as the University of Notre Dame du Lac), but also for the good of the Indians, and of the country, of course.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the aims of Bernier, Hailandier, Joseph, and Sorin may have been, what they succeeded in doing was to exacerbate existing factional divisions within the various Catholic Potawatomi communities. The conflicts surrounding the payment of annuities, the machinations of Peter Pokagon to insure that the payments were made at his village (whomever may have been encouraging him) and Peter Pokagon’s demand that the residents of Silver Creek purchase (or re-purchase) their lands in order to remain in the village finally pushed many of the Catholic Potawatomi beyond their limits of tolerance. The Potawatomi responded in classic fashion: they left the source of conflict to form new communities, or to join other existing communities. Those that abandoned their lands at

---

<sup>35</sup> Joseph to Richmond 3 October 1845; in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

Silver Creek migrated to lands purchased around Nekanekkenbess (Rush Lake), the newest of the Catholic Potawatomi communities. There they lived on small homesteads titled in individual names.<sup>36</sup> The Silver Creek community (the community built upon land originally owned by Leopold Pokagon), was the largest of the three Catholic Potawatomi communities in 1845, with a population of 142.<sup>37</sup> The population at Silver Creek peaked at 187 in 1849, indicating that Peter Pokagon did enjoy some initial success in his efforts to bring all the Potawatomi to his village. However, by 1854, not only had the new community at Rush Lake been settled, but the population of Silver Creek had declined by nearly 60%, to 53 enumerated residents.<sup>38</sup>

The communities north of Silver Creek, Paw Paw, Brush Creek and Rush Lake, were led by Pepiya, Wabimanido and Singowa, respectively. All three leaders were contemporaries of Leopold Pokagon, and were advancing in years. In 1855, Wabimanido died and Pepiya abandoned the area entirely to live on Walpole Island in Canada, leaving Singowa as the recognized leader of these three villages. In fact, with the 1857 annuity roll, the Catholic Potawatomi were no longer enumerated by village but by affiliation: Pokagon Band (those living in or around the Silver Creek community), and the Singowa

---

<sup>36</sup> Baroux, 82.

<sup>37</sup> The three Catholic Potawatomi communities enumerated in the 1845 annuity rolls are Silver Creek (with Peter Pokagon, Leopold's eldest son, listed as 'chief'), Paw Paw (Pepiya as 'chief') and Bush [sic] Creek (Wabimanido as 'chief'). Population at Silver Creek was 142, At Paw Paw, 45 and at Brush Creek, 31. See Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan*.

<sup>38</sup> The four Catholic Potawatomi communities enumerated in the 1854 annuity rolls are Paw Paw (population 50), Brush Creek (population 60), and Silver Creek (population 57). The newest of the Catholic Potawatomi communities, Rush Lake (first enumerated in 1851), had a population of 67.

Band.<sup>39</sup> This practice continued until the 1866 annuity roll, which listed all the Catholic Potawatomi in alphabetical order, regardless of place of residence.

Thus the Catholic Potawatomi had dispersed geographically, establishing themselves in the image of yeoman farmers on small homesteads within their communities. Although the Catholic fathers had wrought havoc within Pokagon political affairs, it was through these missionaries, particularly Brother Joseph, that they learned necessary agricultural skills important to developing their farmsteads. Each family worked on, and profited from, land that they now owned themselves. However, they continued their work in the traditional communal fashion, as well. Three days each week the Potawatomi worked collectively, clearing and planting fields, constructing fences and homes, and tackling other labor intensive tasks. In this way they were able to both overcome a shortage of farm implements, and increase their overall productivity. While Brother Joseph no doubt understood this communal labor as something far more feudal in nature, for the Potawatomi, it was but a modern twist on another of their centuries old traditions.<sup>40</sup>

### **In Pursuit of Annuities Due, Part 1**

Having received only a partial victory in the annuity payments due them, in 1862 the Pokagon renewed their efforts to resolve the matter. In December of that year, the Pokagon were successful in securing a United States House of Representative's directive to the Secretary of the Interior to begin an investigation into the question of the back annuities, a directive which it reissued in 1863. The 1862 report was favorable to the

---

<sup>39</sup> Lantz, *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan*, 21-23.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph to Stuart, 14 January 1845; in NAM RG75, M574, R80; Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 82.

Catholic Potawatomi. However, the 1863 report conditioned payment of the substantial sum it was decided was due the Catholic Potawatomi upon a narrow interpretation of the addendum to the Chicago Treaty of 1833 signed by Leopold Pokagon; it required that in order for the Pokagon to receive any back annuity payment they must relocate, either to Kansas or to northern Michigan, as the 1833 treaty stipulated. This understandably did not sit well with the Pokagon. However, neither did it satisfy the United States Congress, by now fully aware of the reasons why the Pokagon remained in southwestern Michigan, and their substantial progress towards ‘civilization.’<sup>41</sup>

The Pokagon continued their lobbying efforts, sending a delegation headed by Singowa to Washington in 1864, but the results were again mixed. Although the Secretary of the Interior again agreed that back annuities were due the Pokagon, an error in the calculations used to determine the 1843 distribution reduced the amount payable to the Pokagon. Although the original amount calculated by the Secretary was \$192,845.00, after deducting the 1843 overpayment reduced that amount to \$41,695. Additionally, any future sums would need to come from annuity funds belonging to the entire Potawatomi Nation, a finding which met with great resistance from the Potawatomi who had removed to Kansas. Most significantly, an investigation of their claim by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs threatened the Pokagon interest in these shared annuity funds altogether. In their report, the senators confirmed that the Catholic Potawatomi were “members of a tribe with special rights of their own,” but after the removal of most of the Potawatomi to Kansas, the Pokagon had “become...citizens and electors of the State of Michigan,” and

---

<sup>41</sup> HED 19(1862) HR 18 (1863).

thus were disqualified from sharing in any of the benefits granted to those Potawatomi who had removed.<sup>42</sup>

In order to resolve the issue of back annuities, representatives of both the Michigan and Kansas Potawatomi met in Washington during the winter of 1865-1866. Rather than Singowa, who headed many of the lobbying excursions to Washington to this point, the Pokagon chose to send Edward Cowles, a marginal member of the community, whose family was not enumerated on the tribal rolls until 1896. His choice was an ill-advised decision, for he turned out to be a poor advocate for the band. The results were an agreement which favored the Kansas Potawatomi at the expense of those remaining in Michigan.<sup>43</sup>

The settlement that emerged from these negotiations awarded the Pokagon a scant \$39,000, a far cry from the original estimates. Further, the resolution which authorized even this small payment contained a clause which stated that this payment “was in full of all claims in favor of said Michigan Indians, either against the United States or said nation of Indians [the Kansas Potawatomi], past, present or future.” Although the western Potawatomi would continue to receive annuity payments, by the terms of this agreement, no further annuities would be paid to the Michigan Potawatomi.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> SR111 (1865). While the United States Senate may have considered the Pokagon to be citizens of the State of Michigan, there is no indication that this provided them with any more than rudimentary citizens' rights. The Michigan Constitution of 1850 enfranchised only those Indians who are “civilized,” and “not a member of any tribe.” Not until 1909 would “every inhabitant of Indian descent” receive the franchise. Records contained in Matthews *History of Cass County* also provide evidence that the Michigan Potawatomi did not hold any public office in Cass County Michigan during the period in question (1860-1890). According to the Michigan Department of States, voter registration records from this period were destroyed by fire in 1952.

<sup>43</sup> SR 129 (1890); *Congressional Globe*, 26 July 1866, 4190.

<sup>44</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 26 July 1866, 4190.

Most galling for the Michigan Potawatomi was the fact that they were not informed of the content of the settlement until the date of payment. That several members of the Pokagon council were aware of the damaging clause and the reduced payment amount is certain, as a local attorney was hired to work with their congressional representative to have the clause removed from the legislation. However, evidence indicates that the general population of Catholic Potawatomi was not fully informed of the agreement until the day the monies were to be distributed. In order to receive any of the funds due them, tribal members were required to sign away any rights to future annuities. The assembled Catholic Potawatomi voiced their protests, and threatened to refuse the payment.<sup>45</sup>

The Pokagon relented, signed their receipts, and accepted their distribution for two reasons. First, they received assurances from the Michigan Indian Agent Richard M. Smith that their acceptance of the payments would not constrain their further attempts to negotiate payment of past-due and future annuities. However, perhaps the most compelling reason for acceptance was the difficult economic circumstance of the recipients. As historian James Clifton noted, “the sight of so much hard money immediately available to them [undoubtedly] carried its own weight” in their decision. Struggling to maintain and improve their homes and farmsteads, dealing with mortgages and taxes, it would have been nearly impossible to persuade those present to forego immediate payment for promises of a larger, future settlement.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> SR 129 (1890); Testimony of Affiants Nos. 55 and 64 concerning Senate Bill 218, 1874, in RG75, OIA-LR, enclosure 29 in 2706-1883.

<sup>46</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 90.

The Pokagon indeed pursued the matter of the past-due annuities. The internal divisions and community strife caused by meddling by the Roman Catholic Church and poor leadership and bad behavior by Leopold Pokagon's heirs, were forces which could have forever fractured the political unity of the Michigan Potawatomi. Yet the cause of securing the monies due them by the United States government acted to knit the community together in common cause, securing a continued unified tribal identity. The next round of the fight, however, would be fought not by the individual village Wkamek, as in the past, but by a new body charged with tribal governance for the Pokagon – the Business Committee.

### **Changes to Pokagon Tribal Governance**

Many, but not all, of the tribes with their origins east of the Mississippi River modified their political organization in the nineteenth century, to enable them to better manage the rapidly changing socio-political environment of the time. Most famously, the Cherokee Nation replaced their traditional tribal government in 1827 with a tri-partite system modeled on that of the United States. Their Executive Branch was headed by a Principle Chief (as it is today).

Even earlier, the Brothertown Indians, originally from New England, in 1785 modeled the form of their newly organized government after that of a New England proprietary town, with elected officials including a Committee of Trustees to govern the town, a town clerk, and a sheriff. They carried this organization with them when, in the 1830s, they relocated to northern Wisconsin, in what was then the Michigan Territory.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Jarvis, *The Brothertown Nation of Indians*, 116.

Similarly, the Stockbridge-Munsee Constitution of 1857 calls for the election of a Sachem to head the government, and five Counsellors [sic], as well as “a Treasurer, two Peace Makers, two Path Masters and one Sheriff.”<sup>48</sup>

Although political affairs for the western Potawatomi were also controlled by a business committee after 1862, it was dominated by Métis who controlled political and economic affairs for the tribe. The six seats on the committee were occupied by Métis and their American allies, who were accused by historian James Clifton as being “little more than a rubber-stamp group doing the bidding of the [Indian] agent,” with slight concern for the welfare of tribal members.<sup>49</sup>

For the Michigan Potawatomi, the transition from their traditional form of government, headed by village Chiefs and Speakers, to a Business Committee composed by members of the various communities, came in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It was prompted by the need to more effectively deal with the United States government. Tribal members continued to demand that the members of the new Business Committee possess many of the traditional qualities of the Wkamak, such as wisdom, experience and an ability to build consensus. New circumstances required new skills as well, including a full command of both the Potawatomi language and that of the Americans, and, increasingly, an education in the American fashion.

The Business Committee for the Pokagon was created in the years following the second annuity settlement of 1866. As the contemporaries of Leopold Pokagon

---

<sup>48</sup> Stockbridge Munsee Constitution of 1857, from Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen*, 214-15.

<sup>49</sup> James Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 367.



succumbed to old age, a new generation of leaders emerged, less familiar with traditional tribal governance, but still very much dedicated to protecting and preserving the interests of the community. Although historian James Clifton maintains that this new Business Committee was modeled after township governments in Michigan (with which the younger generations were more familiar), this is true only on the surface. Certainly the Business Committee was elected by a General Council, composed of all the adults of the several villages, just as township officials were elected by all franchise holders from throughout the specific jurisdiction. However, unlike in Michigan politics, at the township or even the state level, women were included in the General Council of the Pokagon, not an insignificant difference. By continuing to honor the women of their community, the Pokagon also continued to honor the traditions of their forebears.<sup>50</sup>

The Pokagon Business Committee was also a significantly more complex political structure than that found at the township level, which was typically composed of one Supervisor, a Treasurer and a Clerk. The officials elected by the Pokagon General Council consisted of a Principal Chief, a Chairman of the Business Committee, seven Business Committeemen and a Secretary. This original organizational model remained in use into the twentieth century, with one notable exception.<sup>51</sup>

As initially constituted, the functions and responsibilities of the Principal Chief overlapped significantly with those of the Chairman of the Business Committee often causing conflict between the individuals holding these offices, an issue which was never

---

<sup>50</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 92-94. Minutes from the nineteenth-century Business Committee meetings are not held in an archival facility, but by descendants from committee member at the time. They are thus unavailable.

<sup>51</sup> Matthews, *History of Cass County*, 365; Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 92.

resolved. However, by the twentieth century, the role of chief had fallen out of use, leaving the Catholic Potawatomi's internal community business and interactions with local, state and federal government representatives to be managed solely by their Business Committee. One additional office, that of interpreter, was originally established to translate for the monolingual Potawatomi to the Americans. However, it too fell out of use, as the older generation of native Potawatomi speakers died, replaced by younger generations who were bilingual at best, or monolingual, as were their parents and grandparents. The difference lies, of course, in their primary language. Educated in the western fashion, increasingly young members of the community spoke only English.<sup>52</sup>

This change in political organization was accompanied by a new, corporate identity for the Pokagon, as well. Prior to 1866, the Pokagon were recognized by the United States as part of the "United Bands of Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi." It was under this designation that the Catholic Potawatomi had petitioned to receive their past-due annuities. However, as was discussed previously, one condition of their 1866 annuity settlement was their severance from the interests of that group. To preserve their tribal status, the Pokagon sought and received recognition under their new name, the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana.<sup>53</sup> Although an acknowledgement of the one condition of the 1866 settlement that the Pokagon found most distasteful, it did have several positive consequences. First, it finally incorporated those Catholic Potawatomi who had migrated into St. Joseph County in northern Indiana, who had previously seen

---

<sup>52</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 92-94. Again, because of the unavailability of minutes from the nineteenth century Business Committee meetings, this author must rely upon Clifton's recounting of the activities of the Business Committee.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

little benefit from annuity and other payments received by those living in Michigan. This new name reflected a new effort to include all of the Catholic Potawatomi within the Pokagon body politic, thus reinforcing their community identity in the process. Most importantly, it provided continuing federal recognition of tribal status for the newly incorporated group.

Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Business Committee of the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana served several important functions. Internally, they conducted censuses, attempted to raise funds for the community, and opened bank accounts, all new activities necessitated by changes in the world around them. However, the Business Committee assumed more traditional duties as well, such as ruling on the adoption of new members, organizing communal work parties, and disciplining members for misbehavior.<sup>54</sup> The Business Committee oversaw the final effort by the Catholic Potawatomi to obtain their past due annuities. No longer divided by rival chiefs, the Business Committee represented a coming together of scattered villages, indicative of their desire to continue their communal association. The strength of the community served to protect its members from changing attitudes towards the band from their increasingly numerous non-Native neighbors. Gone were the days of close association between Natives and Frenchmen. As southern Michigan became more heavily populated by settlers unfamiliar with Indians, suspicion and prejudice replaced the close relationships of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. The Pokagon may not have experienced the overt racism expressed in *The Weekly Detroit Free Press*:

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

The Indian population is diminishing at the rate of 5,000 a year. This is too fast for the Eastern humanitarians and too slow for Western common people who have to live near the doomed race.<sup>55</sup>

However, they were surely subject to the benevolent efforts of good Samaritans eager to ‘save’ the Indian:

The peaceful and law-abiding temper of the Indians in Michigan, who are by no means civilized and scarcely Christianized, shows what can be done with them when their tribal relations are knocked to pieces.<sup>56</sup>

The Business Committee served to *integrate* the separate Catholic Potawatomi communities into a tribal whole in the face of those who would *segregate* them from the larger community. This preserved not only community ties, but the tribal cultural patrimony the “Eastern humanitarians” seemed determined to destroy.

By 1866, the Catholic Potawatomi were scattered over a large geographic area in southwestern Michigan and north central Indiana. What could have continued the fracturing of a common group identity begun by the earlier disputes over land tenure and leadership were resolved largely through the conscious decisions of the Business Committee. For example, rather than always convening in the same location, the Committee rotated the site of their meetings (and those of the General Council) among the larger centers of population. Thus through their monthly committee meetings and seasonal meetings with the General Council, it was the Business Committee that preserved not only the political sovereignty and integrity of the Catholic Potawatomi, but their distinctive group identity, as well.

---

<sup>55</sup> *The Weekly Detroit Free Press*, 17 April 1886, 7.

<sup>56</sup> *The Weekly Detroit Free Press*, 23 January 1886, 4. For more information regarding changing white attitudes towards Native Americans, particularly inter-marriage, see David Smits, “‘Squaw Men,’ ‘Half-Breeds,’ and Amalgamators: Late Nineteenth Century Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Indian-White Race-Mixing,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 15:3 (1991), 29-61.

This was no small achievement in an era when U.S. Indian policy was determined to finally solve the “Indian Problem” by ‘civilizing’ the ‘savage’ Indian out of existence. The desired goal, as stated by Captain Richard Pratt, was to “Kill the Indian...and save the man,” thereby turning them into productive members of American society who would fully participate in the nation’s institutions.<sup>57</sup> This, it was theorized, would best be accomplished through education, one of the most important weapons in the government’s assimilation arsenal.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Pokagon and Indian Education**

Efforts to convey the civilizing effects of education to the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley began early in the nineteenth century, as efforts to remove all Indians from east of the Mississippi River gained momentum. Presidents from Washington to John Quincy Adams never doubted that the Indians would agree to land cessions at approximately the same rate that settlers demanded it. At the same time, that unrealistic expectation was coupled with a sincerely humanitarian desire to ‘civilize’ the Red Man, thus incorporating him into American society. President Thomas Jefferson supported “the plan of civilizing the Indians,” which he considered “undoubtedly a great improvement on the ancient and totally ineffectual one of beginning with religious

---

<sup>57</sup> Richard Henry Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,” *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260-271; Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*, Bison Books edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), xvii.

<sup>58</sup> The other important weapon in ‘civilizing’ the Indian was the Dawes Severalty Act, whereby Native American reservations were ‘allotted.’ Tribal members chose, or were assigned, a certain number of acres from their reserved lands (dependent on their status as head of household, etc). ‘Surplus’ lands were then sold to white settlers. The goal was to de-tribalize the Indian by destroying their communal land base. While this had a devastating effect on tribal land holdings across the nation, with no tribal estate to ‘allot,’ the Catholic Potawatomi were excluded from this particular assimilation program.

missionaries.”<sup>59</sup> Some years later, while aggressively pressing his policy of Indian removal, President Andrew Jackson at the same time reiterated the government’s ongoing policy of civilization.<sup>60</sup>

Monetary support for these 'civilization' programs was often written into of the land cession treaties signed by the tribes. For the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley, the first of these provisions came in the 1821 Treaty of Chicago, in which \$1,000 was appropriated for the term of fifteen years, to secure the services of both a teacher and a blacksmith to instruct the Indians in the ways of civilization.<sup>61</sup> The teacher was responsible not only for educating the Indians in reading, writing and basic arithmetic, but also in the tenets of agriculture, as practiced by America’s yeoman farmers. The blacksmith was to aid in that instruction, by producing and maintaining the agricultural instruments necessary for the work.

Initially, the task of educating St. Joseph Potawatomi fell to Isaac McCoy, the Baptist missionary who established the Carey Mission near Leopold Pokagon’s village in 1822. While the Pokagon willingly accepted the physical assistance of McCoy and his associates, particularly that involving land improvement, they cautiously avoided mission schools. An examination of the Carey Mission School student list from 1824 reveals a total of sixty-one students enrolled. The register lists the students by name, and notes their age, their date of enrollment, their tribal affiliation, and their “Degree of [Indian]

---

<sup>59</sup> Bernard Mayo. *Jefferson Himself*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), 227.

<sup>60</sup> President Andrew Jackson First Annual Message, in *Indian Removal: A Norton Casebook*, David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 131.

<sup>61</sup> Treaty with the Ottawa, Etc., 1821, Article 4.

Blood. Seventeen of the students were either Mohegan, Ottawa or Miami, with the remaining forty-four listed as “Pottawatomie” [sic]. An additional nineteen were Metis children, bearing French surnames: Bertrand, Burnett, Wilmett, Beaubien, for example. These children were the product of the French fur trade, the offspring of French men and Indian women. Because of their Roman Catholic heritage, a Catholic school might well have been preferred. However, their desire to see their children educated trumped religious affiliation. And, while McCoy was a proponent of Indian Removal, with their European familial connections, this group would not have had to fear forced removal from their homes. The remaining 25 children are listed as “whole,” or full-blood Indians, a very small number from a community with approximately 250 members.<sup>62</sup>

Under the ministrations of the Roman Catholic Church, however, not only did the Pokagon continue to make progress in their agricultural skills, but they began sending their children to the mission school, as well. Education efforts began under the supervision of Father Stephen Badin while the Pokagon were still living along the St. Joseph River, near the Indiana border. The Catholic Potawatomi continued their instruction in the art of civilization under the tutelage of Brother Joseph after relocating to lands purchase by Leopold Pokagon in Silver Creek Township, near Dowagiac. Although Brother Joseph left the mission in 1845, the school continued to provide

---

<sup>62</sup> 1824 Students at Carey Mission St. Joseph River, Michigan Superintendency, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1851, M234 Roll 419, 1824-1827. <http://mainlymichigan.com/Native%20Americans.1824-Students-at-Carey-Mission-St-Joseph-River.ashx> (accessed March 29, 2016); Matthews, *History of Cass County*, 363.

educational opportunities for Pokagon children for another five years, under the care of the Sisters of Charity.<sup>63</sup>

Leopold Pokagon sent his children, Peter, Francis and Simon, to the Catholic mission school, both at their village near the Indiana border, and at their new village established at Silver Creek.<sup>64</sup> Of his children, Simon became the best known, to contemporary Americans and to history. Simon attended the mission schools, as well as receiving advanced instruction at several institutions not specifically dedicated to the education of Indian youth. Until the late 1850s, the education of Indian children was not yet an integral part of federal Indian policy. There are many possible reasons why Simon received an education beyond that received by even most young white men of the era: his father's high status within the Pokagon band, his Catholic heritage, or his own inherent talents. Whatever the reasons, Simon was only a harbinger of what was to come in Indian education.

Beyond a few letters from Brother Joseph to his superiors in Detroit, very little is recorded specific to the Silver Creek school. However, an examination of the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1843 to 1850 provides a general overview of the curriculum and conditions at Catholic mission schools in Michigan. Each

---

<sup>63</sup> Brother Joseph to Richmond, 8 Oct 1845; in NAM RG75, M574, R80. In his letter, Brother Joseph explains the progress that has been made by the Pokagon in the two years that he has been with them. Thus, the school was begun in 1843. The school is also mentioned in Matthews, *A History of Cass County*, 363. Admission records for both schools could not be located for this project.

<sup>64</sup> Ancestry, Historical Person Search, [http://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/leopold-pokagon\\_23817629](http://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/leopold-pokagon_23817629) (accessed April 14, 2016).



of these years, Bishop Peter LeFevre of Detroit composed his report on the occurrences at the Indian schools in the Catholic missions in the State of Michigan.<sup>65</sup>

All of the Catholic mission schools taught spelling, reading and writing on the most basic level. Additionally, "ciphering" (arithmetic) and geography were taught to those who were "more advanced" than their peers.<sup>66</sup> Indian children were reported to have sufficient "natural capacities enough to learn any science or trade," however, the problem lay in insuring the children attended school on a regular basis.<sup>67</sup> So frequent were their absences that it was difficult for many teacher to know the exact number of students who attended in any given year.

Also included in the annual reports was a letter from the Superintendent for Indian Affairs from each of the agencies (regional offices). In 1843, Acting Superintendent Stuart noted a "great anxiety" among the adult Indians of Michigan to have their children educated in the "arts of civilized life."<sup>68</sup> Stuart observed that there was a growing recognition among the Michigan Indians that "their total extinction [was] inevitable" unless their children learned to "conform their habits" to those of their non-Native neighbors.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> United States, Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*. Available at: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=browse&scope=HISTORY.COMMREP>

<sup>66</sup> LeFevre, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1843*. Available at: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=article&did=History.AnnRep4045.i0004&id=History.AnnRep4045&isize=M> (accessed April 12, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Stuart, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1843*.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Although enrollment continued to steadily increase in the mission schools, both Catholic and Protestant, by the mid-1850s the Department of Indian Affairs was dissatisfied with the state of Indian education. Funding was provided by the United States government, often deducted from payments due the Indians. As such, the government position was that its priorities should take precedence over those of the missions, which strenuously disagreed with that assessment. The disagreement was rooted in the mode of instruction. From the perspective of the Indian Department, education was a tool of assimilation, whose purpose was to civilize and integrate American Indians into the dominant (white) culture. To do so would require nothing short of the destruction of the children's' Native culture, beginning with the abolition of Indian languages. The missionaries believed strongly in the civilizing effects of Christianity and were willing to use materials, such as Bibles and other religious texts translated into Indian dialects, to teach the fundamentals of reading.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, they believed that treaty provisions promised Indian education "in their own language," as stipulated in the 1836 Treaty of Washington between the United States and the Ottawa and Chippewa of Michigan.<sup>71</sup> Ignoring these protests, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs moved to tighten government

---

<sup>70</sup> Examples of Roman Catholic prayer books and hymnals can be found in Loyola University Chicago's Rare Books collection. See Rev'd. Maurice Gailland, S.J., *Potewatemi Nemewinin ipi Nemenigamowinin* (St. Louis: Francis Saler, 1866); see also Rev'd Maurice Gailland, S.J., *Potweatemi Nememiseniukin ipi Nemenigamowinin* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Wewikaneitidjik Benziger, 1868). Numerous other examples are available online.

<sup>71</sup> Kappler

control over mission schools, citing misuse of funds by the missions as his primary concern.<sup>72</sup>

These concerns were also voiced by the Indians themselves, including the Catholic Potawatomi. As early as October 1845, Pepiya, leader of Potawatomi village at Paw Paw, wrote to Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Richmond in Detroit, asking for help in having certain "grievances...addressed."<sup>73</sup> Pepiya's primary complaint lay with the 'tithes' taken from their annuities to support the mission school at Pokagon Village, in Cass County, money which he claimed was rightfully due his community, residing in Van Buren County. Pepiya argued that this money should not be used to support the mission school, as there were no children from his village attending. He went so far as to accuse Peter Pokagon, the son of Leopold, of fraud. Pepiya estimated the amount that was diverted from his village to be between five hundred and six hundred dollars, an enormous amount of money at the time.<sup>74</sup>

The Potawatomi at Paw Paw were not the only tribes to complain. The Ottawa and Chippewa of Northern Michigan filed their own grievance with the Commission of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., charging that funds appropriated for the education of their children was being used for white children, not Indians. Based on these and similar complaints from tribes across the country, as well as their desire for direct control of the daily curriculum being taught to the students, by 1857 all Indian schools were

---

<sup>72</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Interior, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," House Exec. Doc. 1, part 1, vol. 1, 34th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington: Cornelius Wendell, 1856), Serial 840, 353.

<sup>73</sup> Pepiya, et. al., Paw Paw, to Richmond, Detroit, October 25, 1845; in NAM RG75, M574, R80.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

administered by the Indian Department. However, a federally-funded day school was never built for the Catholic Potawatomi since these facilities were never treaty-mandated. After the closing of the mission school, they were left to see to the education of their children at the 'common,' or public, schools of the area, mandated by an 1827 Michigan law. Unfortunately, the Indian children at these local schools were often subjected to taunting and ridicule from their white classmates. Understandably, their motivation to attend under these conditions was muted, even though their parents recognized the value in education.<sup>75</sup>

Attendance at Indian day schools was always considered to be "too irregular" to achieve the desired educational goals. Indian children would not attend when their labors were needed at home, particularly during berry picking and maple sugaring seasons. However, the primary reason day schools were often perceived as "almost an entire failure" is because, at the end of the day the children would always return to their "savage homes."<sup>76</sup> The solution to this problem was the establishment of boarding schools, where Indian children could be removed from the detrimental effects of their home environment. Three such schools were established in Michigan. The Catholic Otchippewa Boarding School and the Harbor Springs Boarding School were both government contract schools, funded by a combination of federal and private funds. The only Indian boarding school owned and operated entirely by the United States government was the

---

<sup>75</sup> Bruce Rubenstein, "To Destroy a Culture: Indian Education in Michigan, 1855-1900," *Michigan History* v 60, no. 2 (Summer 1976), 145, 151; Matthews, *History of Cass County*, 215.

<sup>76</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Interior, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," House Exec. Doc. 1, part 1, vol. 2, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O. 1865), Serial 1248, 636; Rubenstein, 149.

Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, opening on June 30, 1893 in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. The school was in operation until June 6, 1934, with an average enrollment of 300 students per year.<sup>77</sup>

Daily life at Mount Pleasant, like most Indian boarding schools, was extremely regimented. Although it provided rudimentary academic instruction, the majority of the students' day was spent working: at laundry, farm work, and other manual labor. The objective of the government had not changed; the purpose of the Indian boarding schools was to turn Indian children into "red-white men." To further that purpose, Indian children were stripped of their cultural touchstones. Upon arrival, young men were given short haircuts, a humiliating experience for Native boys whose culture associated long hair with masculinity. Any personal items, such as medicine bundles or photographs, were taken from them, never to be returned. Students were taught that their language was "the 'devil's tongue;'" if caught speaking any language other than English, they were severely punished. And although they were to return home during the summer months, children as young as five were routinely denied these visits.<sup>78</sup>

The Catholic Potawatomi, as did all of the Michigan Indians, appreciated the importance of education, viewing it as a tool for their very survival. They recognized that in order to retain their land, they must be able to read: to understand deeds, abstracts, and newspaper notices to ward off any spurious claims to their holdings. To avoid being cheated at local businesses, they must have a grasp of basic arithmetic. For the Catholic

---

<sup>77</sup> Rubenstein, 155; Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, *American Indian Boarding Schools: An Exploration of Global Ethnic and Cultural Cleansing* (Mount Pleasant, MI: Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011), 1.

<sup>78</sup> Rubenstein, 157; Ziibiwing Center, *American Indian Boarding Schools*, 9-11.

Potawatomi, education carried an additional imperative. Still fighting to win a just settlement of their annuity claim with the United States, it was vitally important that future generations learn these basic education skills. Aware of the potential for “cultural destruction,” parents nonetheless sent their children to Mount Pleasant, albeit with a good deal of trepidation. On the Register of Pupils for the Mount Pleasant school are listed some of the most prominent names in Catholic Potawatomi communities: Alexis, Williams, Johnson, Pokagon, and Rapp, among many others. Some of these students entered Mount Pleasant as young as age five (Angeline Pokagon), others enrolled as teenagers (Henry Alexis, age 19). Although never more than a small percentage of the enrolled student body at the school, a significant portion of the children of the Catholic Potawatomi attended boarding schools.<sup>79</sup>

Clearly the Pokagon Potawatomi valued education for their children, believing that whatever the costs, they were necessary to insure the survival of their offspring in the ‘white man’s world.’ Simon Pokagon received an early education at the local mission schools, as did many of his contemporaries. He sent his children to boarding school, as did many of his contemporaries. As one of the new generation of educated Catholic Potawatomi, Simon became a prominent member of his community, yet his relationship with the community became quite strained. The wisdom of his leadership was questioned, particularly during the final annuity battle of the nineteenth century. His very public persona, too, became a source of contention within the band, leading many to question whether he was truly motivated by what was best for the community, or if he had truly

---

<sup>79</sup> Rubenstein, 157; Mount Pleasant Indian School Register of Pupils, 1893-1906, available online at <http://www.mainly michigan.com/nativedata/MtPleasantIndustrial/> (accessed April 11, 2016).

become the white man's Indian. Simon's is an object lesson, not only in the perils of leadership, but in the complexities of defining an Indian identity in an era in which programs of civilization and assimilation reached their zenith, but during which memories of the 'savage' Indian continued to dominate public imagination.

### **Early Life of Simon Pokagon**

The romanticized tale of Simon Pokagon's life is told in his semi-autobiographical tale *The Queen of the Woods*. Originally published shortly after his death in 1899, Simon's work does not detail his early life. However, the Publisher's Notes, written by Charles Engle, provide information about Simon's youth. As related earlier, Simon was born in 1830, while the Catholic Potawatomi were still living in their village on reservation land along the St. Joseph River near the Indiana border. The third son of the tribal patriarch, Leopold Pokagon, Simon of course relocated to Silver Creek with the band in 1837. He was only ten years old when his father died in 1841, and came of age during the turbulent period following his father's death. Although enrolled in the Catholic mission schools, by age fourteen he spoke only his native Potawatomi language. That would change, however, as in 1844 he was sent to the recently founded "Notre Dame school," what is today the University of Notre Dame. After three years there, Simon made his way to Oberlin College in Ohio.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Simon Pokagon, *Queen of the Woods* (Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1899), 5; "Death of Simon Pokagon," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 28, 1899, 5. While Simon Pokagon claimed attendance at Oberlin College and is credited in many accounts as attending Notre Dame University, neither school has record of his attendance. It is more likely that his education began at St. Mary's Academy near Notre Dame (thus the reference to Notre Dame *school*) and continued at the Twinsburg Institute in Ohio. See Lawrence T. Martin, "Simon Pokagon: Charlatan or Authentic Spokesman for the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Anishinaabeg?" in, ed. David H. Pentland *Papers of the 29th Algonquin Conference* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998), 29: 182-91.

After one year at Oberlin, Simon transferred to the Twinsburg Institute, a Christian academy known for its dedication to ameliorating past mistreatment of American Indians. When Simon arrived in 1845, he was one of perhaps a dozen Native students out of a population of approximately three hundred. As was typical for the Institute, as it was known, Simon spent two years at his studies, returning to his home in 1850 at the age of seventeen. While his education may be deemed minimal by today's standards, in later life Simon Pokagon was touted as “the best educated and most distinguished full-blooded Indian...in America.” Simon was not the only accomplished graduate of the Institute, however. His classmate, Andrew Blackbird, would also become a noted leader of the Odawa people in northern Michigan.<sup>81</sup>

Simon Pokagon begins his semi-autobiographical novel with his 1850 return to his mother's home. Simon describes an idyllic life spent in the forest, hunting and fishing. In the first half of the book, he recounts meeting his first wife, Lonidaw, their courtship and happy years spent together. However, the second half of the novel turns dark, as Simon recounts losing their son to alcoholism, their daughter to an alcohol-related accident, and Lonidaw's death from grief at the loss of her two children.

The novel, written at the end of Simon's life, is laden with allegorical imagery and takes certain liberties with the truth, which dramatizes Lonidaw's death. In reality, Lonidaw did die young, on December 1, 1871 at age thirty-five, but not of a broken heart. The four children that she had borne survived her, raised by their father until they were

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.; Theodore Karamanski, *Blackbird's Song: Andrew J. Blackbird and the Odawa People* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 113-119; Frederick Webb Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1928), 372. Pokagon and Blackbird had little opportunity for contact after their years together at Twinsburg. However, as we shall see, their paths would cross again during the annuity suits of the late nineteenth century.



grown. Some speculate that Pokagon did not write the novel himself, but that has been contested by several historians. He did likely receive editorial help from either his son, Charles, or the wife of his publisher, Sarah Engle. While the provenance may be unclear, it in no way detracts from the tragedy and hardship Simon experienced as a young adult.<sup>82</sup>

Simon Pokagon first entered public life in 1864, at the age of 34, when he traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of the delegation which eventually secured the partial payment of annuities in 1866. He was elected Chairman of the Business Committee in 1869. Although in later life his actions were questioned within the community, Simon Pokagon worked diligently, as a member of the Business Committee, to secure for the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana a satisfactory settlement to their still unresolved annuity claims.<sup>83</sup>

### **In Pursuit of Annuities Due, Part 2**

For the newly formed Business Committee, their most immediate concern was an appeal of the disastrous 1866 decision made by the Department of the Interior regarding their annuity claims. Realizing they needed a legal expert to assist with their claim, in 1869 they contracted with William Severance, a junior member of a South Bend law firm. The partners in this firm refused to take the case on a contingency basis, and the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana had no resources with which to pay a retainer, or to

---

<sup>82</sup> Buechner, *The Pokagons*, 318; For commentary on Simon Pokagon's authorship of *Queen of the Woods*, see Bernd C. Peyer, "*The Thinking Indian: Native American Writers, 1850s-1920s*" (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) and John Low, "Chicago's First Urban Indians - the Potawatomi" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Andrew Wiget, *Handbook of Native American Literature* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1996), 277; Low, 72.

even cover expenses. Knowing he would have to cover any costs involved in prosecuting the claim himself, Severance still agreed to represent the band.<sup>84</sup>

As chairman of the Business Committee, Simon Pokagon spearheaded efforts to secure Severance's services. Pokagon also worked diligently to locate members of the band who had moved back into Indiana, welcoming them back into the tribal community. This served to increase membership numbers, giving the Catholic Potawatomi a larger presence, and by implication more validity to their claim to tribal status. While their increased numbers decreased the amount of per capita distribution of any annuities paid, it also contributed to the overall strength of the community. And finally, by welcoming all those with ancestral ties to the Catholic Potawatomi, Pokagon's efforts set a standard and precedent for future tribal citizenship requirements.

However, young Mr. Severance was not a well-connected man politically, and was never able to secure support in Washington to advance their claim. Severance did make incremental progress, delivering materials to Congress which resulted in favorable responses from the House and Senate Committees on Indian Affairs. The Senate Committee went so far as negating the onerous 1866 stipulation ending future annuities, concluding the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana were due substantial additional annuity monies. Unfortunately for both Severance and his client, no payments were immediately forthcoming.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> HMD 5 (1874): 10; W.N. Severance Contracts with Michigan and Indiana Potawatomi, February, 1869, Encl. 18 & 19; Severance to COIA, 29 Nov 1873; Encl. 22; Severance to COIA 22 Jan 1883, Encl. 3; all in 1706-1883, OIA-LR. See also Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 95.

<sup>85</sup> Supplementary Memorial of Certain Indians, HMD 137 (1872); Also see Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 96.

These favorable reports from Congress raised expectations within the Catholic Potawatomi community, and when payments were not realized, the band lost faith in Severance's abilities to carry their claim to fruition. In 1882, Severance was replaced by John Critcher, an attorney who maintained an office in both Chicago and Washington, DC. Critcher contracted with the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana, but unlike Severance, he had his contract approved by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior. This step held significant ramifications for his clients. In order for the contract to be approved, the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana were required to provide evidence that they were organized in "tribal relations." By approving Critcher's contract, the government, through the Office of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior officially acknowledged the tribal status of the band, and confirmed their continuing wardship relationship with the United States.<sup>86</sup>

With the contract approved, Critcher and his Washington associate, Charles Lemaison, immediately began lobbying Congress to secure payment of back annuities. By summer 1882 they had introduced a bill to authorize payment of \$181,051.66 to his clients, which died in committee. They introduced a second bill in 1886, asking for a slightly larger sum (\$186, 740.40). This bill was no more successful than the first, as Congress had begun to balk at the direct payment of Indian claims. In 1887, Congress passed the Tucker Act, considerably restricting the type of claims which could be directly submitted to Congress. Instead, most claims against the government were required to be filed with the Court of Claims. Originally established in 1855, the Court was given

---

<sup>86</sup> Critcher to COIA, 25 April 1881, Encl. 11 in 1706-1883 OIA-LR. See also Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 97.

authority to hear and rule upon claims against the United States founded upon federal statutes. Its jurisdiction was expanded during the Civil War, and again by the Tucker Act. However, because Indian claims were expressly excluded from the purview of the Court by the original organizing legislation, an enabling piece of legislation from Congress was required for an Indian claim to be considered. For the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana, this legislation was enacted March 19, 1890.<sup>87</sup>

The case placed before the Court of Claims was made even more complicated by conflicts between the parties involved: between Severance and Critcher; between Critcher and his clients; within the Catholic Potawatomi community itself; and within the broader Michigan Indian community. The conflict between Severance and Critcher grew out of the former's understandable resentment at being replaced when he believed he was making progress, however slowly. Critcher initially offered to purchase Severance's interest in the case for \$5,000, an enormous sum of money at the time. Severance refused Critcher's offer. But because Critcher had had his contract approved by the Secretary of the Interior, and Severance had not, the issue was quickly dispatched in Critcher's favor.<sup>88</sup>

The disagreement between Critcher and his clients, the Catholic Potawatomi, stemmed from the same issues the latter had had with Severance - lack of performance. Critcher's contract with the band expired in 1887. As both attempts to recover their past

---

<sup>87</sup> HR 1404 (1882); 24 Stat. 505 (1887); 26 Stat. 24 (1890); Gregory C. Sisk, "Yesterday and Today: Of Indians, Breach of Trust, Money, and Sovereign Immunity," *Tulsa Law Review* 39 n. 2 (2003): 313-353.

<sup>88</sup> Severance to COIA, 22 Jan 1883; Critcher to COIA, 24 Nov 1884; both in RG75, M574, R80. See also Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 98. The \$5000.00 offered to Severance in 1882 would be worth \$112,576.27 in 2016 dollars. See Inflation Calculator at [www.in2013dollars.com/1882-dollars-to-2016-dollars](http://www.in2013dollars.com/1882-dollars-to-2016-dollars). Calculations are based upon the Bureau of Labor Statistic's annual Consumer Price Index and a historical study conducted by political science professor Robert Sahr at Oregon State University.

due annuities had failed, the band was reluctant to renew their agreement. The Business Committee went so far as to petition the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for authorization to represent themselves going forward. Their petition was denied by the Commissioner, who understood the complexity of the process in which the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana were about to engage, if they, themselves, did not. With their appeal for self-representation denied, the Potawatomi came to terms with Critcher. In August, 1887, they petitioned the Commissioner and the Secretary of the Interior to renew their contract with Critcher, which was approved January 13, 1888.<sup>89</sup>

The internal conflict within the Catholic Potawatomi community was more complex, and potentially more damaging, as it threatened the unity of the band. It will be discussed later in this chapter. The dispute which would most endanger the annuity payment to the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana, however, would be within the larger Indian community in the State of Michigan. The actions of a rival band of Potawatomi clouded an already complicated case.

Prior to the passage of the enabling legislation in 1890, a conflict emerged between the Catholic Potawatomi of southwestern Michigan and St. Joseph County, Indiana, and a contending group of Potawatomi. As word spread within the broader Indian community in Michigan of the legislative efforts of the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana, other Potawatomi residing in the state sought to attach themselves to their claim. The most organized threat came from the Potawatomi of the Huron. Chiefly residing in Calhoun County, Michigan, this group was composed of the descendants of

---

<sup>89</sup> Pottawatomie [sic] Indians to Sec. Int. and COIA, 25 Aug 1887 in RG75, M574, R80, 184-186; Sec. Int. to COIA, 13 Jan 1888 in S. Hrg. 103-543, 71. The petition from the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana was signed by a total of eighty-nine band members.

the Potawatomi who had at one time resided on the Nottawaseppi reservation. They avoided removal in the 1830s by fleeing to the northern part of the state, or to Canada, taking refuge with the Odawa and Ojibwe (Chippewa) Indians. They later returned to their ancestral homelands, albeit without a reservation.

The memorials submitted to the Forty-Fifth Congress, second session (1878), clearly state that the petition was from "that portion of the Pottawatomie [sic] Nation of Indians which, [by] provisions of the treaty of September 17, 1833 were exempted from removal."<sup>90</sup> As early as 1885, however, the Potawatomi of the Huron had inserted themselves in the claim settlement process, persuading the House to direct the Secretary of the Interior to "ascertain...what, if any, amounts" were due the Catholic Potawatomi, but also explicitly directing the Secretary to, "ascertain whether the bands of Pottawatomies [sic] of Huron located in Calhoun County, Mich. [sic], and not mentioned in said memorial should...be included in any settlement which may be made of the claims set forth in said memorial."<sup>91</sup>

In his response, the Secretary confirmed that the claims set forth in the memorial were well founded, and also related that said claims had been submitted on multiple occasions. He estimated the amount due the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana at \$192,431.14. This was indeed a very favorable report for the Catholic Potawatomi. However, the Secretary continued that he also confirmed that the Potawatomi of the Huron were entitled to be included in any future settlement.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> HR 324 (51-1) 2808, 7.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 5.

Based on the report from the Secretary of the Interior, the bill which would enable the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana to take their case before the Court of Claims originally began as follows: "Providing for the settlement of the claims of the Pottawatomie [sic] Indians of Michigan and Indiana, including the Pottawatomies [sic] of Huron, in Calhoun County, Mich. [sic], as per treaty stipulation existing with said bands."<sup>93</sup> However, in its report, the House recommended a "substitution" in the proposed legislation, stripping the language referencing the Calhoun County Potawatomi. The bill was instead amended to being with a simplified statement: "A bill to ascertain the amount due the Pottawatomie [sic] Indians of Michigan and Indiana."<sup>94</sup> With the exception that "bill" became "act," this was the language contained in the first line of the enabling legislation.<sup>95</sup>

The act was written in two short sections. In Section 1, it authorized the Court of Claims to "take jurisdiction of and try all questions of difference arising out of treaty stipulations...and render judgment" on said claims. It specifically directed the Court to review the claims "de novo," without being "estopped" by the conditions of the 1866 payment which stipulated that the distribution was to be considered payment in full of any and all treaty obligations. Section 1 further stipulated that any appeal of the decision by the Court of Claims would be heard by the Supreme Court. Section 2 of the act stated that in order for the Court of Claims to begin acting, a petition stating the facts of the

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> 26 Stat. 24 (1890)

claim and the amount claimed, must be filed. The petition was required to be verified by "a member of any 'Business Committee' or authorized attorney [for] said Indians."<sup>96</sup>

Pleased with their apparent victory in excluding the Potawatomi of the Huron from the enabling legislation, the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana, through their attorney John Critcher, filed their petition April 14, 1890. It detailed the treaties in question and includes charts to better illustrate the amount and duration of the annuity agreed to in each treaty, as well as the total amount due by treaty and the payments which had been made, to date. In summary, the Catholic Potawatomi claimed a total due from the United States of \$223,035.46.<sup>97</sup>

The Potawatomi of the Huron filed a claim as well, on November 5, 1890, through their attorney John Shipman. Despite the fact that any reference to the Indians of Calhoun County, Michigan, had been stripped from the enabling legislation, Shipman, representing Phineas Pam-To-Pee and 1,971 other Potawatomi residing in Michigan, argued that his clients were also entitled to past due annuities totaling even more than the original plaintiffs. Their argument: because the 1,972 Potawatomi included in this claim had evaded government removal, by flight or by unauthorized return from west of the Mississippi, they were never party to any annuity payments that had been made in past. Shipman also relied on a narrow interpretation of the petition of the original plaintiffs. As it was signed by only 91 of the estimated 291 Catholic Potawatomi (adult men and women), Shipman claimed that his suit also included Potawatomi Indians excluded from

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Petition, 25 Aug 1887, in RG75, M574, R80.



the original claim. The total amount claimed in the Pam-To-Pee petition was \$963,058.50.<sup>98</sup>

Shipman was not the only party to the suit to rely on a narrow interpretation of the scope of the claim. The Catholic Potawatomi immediately protested that the enabling legislation was written to facilitate their claim, owing to the language of the legislation which authorized said claim by a group of Indians known by the title, the Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana. They argued that their band had been legally recognized by this title since 1867, when they had adopted that name for their corporate body. The government did not initially agree. As defendants in the case, they moved on January 8, 1891 to consolidate the cases, lending credence to the rival claim of Shipman/Pam-To-Pee. However, eleven days later, the defendant made a motion to dismiss the second claim, insisting that under the enabling legislation, "but one petition can be filed, and that, when [the original petition was filed], the power and purpose of the statute was exhausted and accomplished."<sup>99</sup>

The dispute was grounded in the broadness of statutory construction within the enabling legislation. While it did specifically grant jurisdiction to the Court of Claims to hear the case brought by the Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana, it further stated that this group made claim against the United States, "in behalf of all the

---

<sup>98</sup> "The Potawatamie Indians v. The United States and Phineas Pam-To-Pee and 1,371 Others v. The Same," in *Cases Decided in the Court of Claims at the Term of 1891-92, with abstracts of decisions of the Supreme Court in appealed cases from October, 1891, to May, 1892*, Charles C. Nott and Archibald Hopkins, reporters (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), 403-421.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 410-11.

Pottawatomie [sic] Indians of said States."<sup>100</sup> It was this language which prompted the Court to deny the motion to dismiss, ruling that "[in] this jurisdiction the substance of proceedings rather than the form is the material consideration."<sup>101</sup> At the Court's insistence, the two petitions were combined into one claim. In their decision, the Court elaborated on its reasoning:

In the special law...the right to sue in some form is given to 'all the [Potawatomi] Indians' of Michigan and Indiana, and the plaintiffs [sic] or petitioners in such a suit are subject only to the qualification or limitation of being Pottawatomie Indians of Michigan and Indiana. The qualification is well defined, and the right extends to all having that qualification. The purpose of the statute is to settle in an authoritative and judicial form all questions of difference arising from the claim of [Potawatomi] Indians of Michigan and Indiana, and any proceeding which accomplishes that purpose, irrespective of technical rules of pleading, is proper and legal under the law.<sup>102</sup>

The body of the ruling addresses not only the amount due the Potawatomi, but overrules government objections to the claim. First, the Court held that the claim resulted from the supplemental article to the treaty of September 27, 1833, and that while unsigned by the commissioners at the treaty council it was, in fact, recognized by Congress and thus a binding obligation. Regarding the treaty stipulation which required removal of the Michigan Potawatomi to the northern part of the state in order to exercise their right to participate in future annuity payments, the Court wrote:

That can not now be considered as an original question. The Government, by its agents, laws, and resolutions of Congress, has treated the removal and continued residence in the northern peninsula of Michigan as immaterial, and it is now too late to attempt to ingraft [removal] upon the right

---

<sup>100</sup> 26 Stat. 24 (1890)

<sup>101</sup> Court of Claims, 1891-92, 411.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

of the Indians [to annuity monies].<sup>103</sup>

Finally, the Court commented on the disparity between the amounts claimed in the two petitions, noting that said difference was based upon the ratio claimed between the Potawatomi residing in Michigan to those who had emigrated west. The Pam-To-Pee suit held that ratio to be "nearly 1,200 to about 4,000," while the Catholic Potawatomi based their ratio on the proportion of the annuities "due at and from" the treaty supplement of 1833, a ratio of "less than 300 to about 4,000."<sup>104</sup> The Court held that because the Indians represented in the Pam-To-Pee petition did not come within the supplemental clause of the 1833 treaty, their number could not be included in the factoring ratio, which was set by the Court at 291 to 2,812.<sup>105</sup> In a complicated accounting of an already complex treaty history, the Court calculated the total amount due the petitioners from both claims at \$104,626.00, leaving the decision on who to include in the distribution of the funds to the Department of the Interior.<sup>106</sup>

The government, satisfied with the decision by the Court of Claims chose not to appeal the ruling. However, both the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana and the Pam-To-Pee group appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, as allowed by the enabling legislation. Critcher, arguing for the Catholic Potawatomi, hoped to enlarge the amount of the settlement. Shipman also hoped to increase the amount of the payment, but also sought to insure, by a court ruling, the participation of the Pam-To-Pee group in any

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 415-16.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 421.

distribution. The appeal was argued before the Court on January 9 and 10, 1893. In its decision, rendered on April 17, 1893, Supreme Court affirmed the decision by the lower court setting the amount of the award at \$104,626.00. Further, it confirmed that the question of who, exactly, was to be included in distribution was one best "dealt with by the authorities of the government when they come to distribute the fund." While unsatisfactory to both parties to the case, there were no further avenues for appeal. And while it was yet to be determined to whom the monies would be paid, Congress acted to appropriate the necessary funds in August, 1894.<sup>107</sup>

The government also moved quickly to determine who would be included in the distribution of the awarded funds. Congress authorized the appointment of an "Indian inspector" to take a census of the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana in March 1895. In June of that year, the Secretary of the Interior issued his instructions for taking the census, directing the 'inspector,' in this case John Cadman, to use the roll from the 1866 annuity payment as his guide to determining who should be included in the new roll. The Secretary specifically instructed that "No additions are to be made to the original [1866] roll other than the descendants of the Indians whose names" were included on that roll.<sup>108</sup>

While Cadman was in the field, John Shipman, attorney for the Pam-To-Pee group, sent a letter of protest to the Secretary of the Interior, complaining that because of the manner in which the census was being taken, many of his clients would be omitted

---

<sup>107</sup> "Phineas Pam-To-Pee v. United States, Pottawatomie Indians of Michigan and Indiana v. United States," in *Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court at October Term, 1892*, J.C. Bancroft Davis, reporter (New York and Albany: Banks & Brothers, Law Publishers, 1893), 691-705; 28 Stats 450 (1894).

<sup>108</sup> Phineas Pam-To-Pee et al v. The United States," in *Cases Decided in the Court of Claims at the Term of 1900-01, with abstracts of decisions of the Supreme Court in appealed cases from October, 1900, to May, 1901*, Charles C. Nott and Archibald Hopkins, reporters (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 436.

from its roll. He specifically objected to the use of the 1866 annuity roll as the basis for the new payment roll, stating that it is "manifestly unjust" that those who were included in the rolls taken in 1843 and 1844 be excluded, citing many reasons why names listed on those rolls might not be included in the 1866 record. However, before new instructions could be sent to Cadman, he submitted his census for review. Based on Shipman's complaint, and many others like it received, the Secretary subsequently appointed another inspector, Marcus Shelby to review Cadman's list, and to further investigate claims made in relation to the 1843 and 1844 rolls. The instructions to Shelby were much more detailed than those given to Cadman: he was to consider descendant of individuals listed on any annuity payment roll between 1843 and 1866, inclusive; substantiated proof of direct decendancy was required for inclusion; and, most importantly, "collateral descendants" were not to be included under any circumstances. If a direct descendant had moved west or north, and were receiving annuities from some other source, they were to be excluded from his enumeration.<sup>109</sup>

The Shelby Roll was submitted March 14, 1896, along with a multi-page cover letter specifically identifying individuals who had applied for inclusion, but who Shelby felt should be excluded, and why. Shelby stated that he rejected the claims of "quite a number" of Potawatomis, "[v]ery nearly all of [which had] allied themselves with other bands and tribes of Indians and participated in annuities...made to said Indians." One of the Indians Shelby mentioned specifically by name is that of Simon Pokagon's former

---

<sup>109</sup> Shipman to Secretary of the Interior, 27 July 1895; Instructions to Agent Shelby, 5 Feb 1896; both in *Court of Claims*, 1900-01, 436-444. It should be noted that in his letter, Shipman refers to the Catholic Potawatomis as "the Pokagons," rather than the title they were then using for themselves, the Potawatomis of Michigan and Indiana.

classmate from Twinsburg Institute, Andrew Blackbird. Of his claim, Shelby noted that Blackbird "believes" his grandmother Seebeequay was listed on the 1844 Catholic Potawatomi annuity roll. Despite the facts that his grandmother had moved to northern Michigan in 1845, that all of her descendants were enrolled with the Ottawa, and that he himself "never lived among the Pottawatomi Indians or knew anything about them," Blackbird felt he was qualified to participate in the distribution based on his Potawatomi ancestry alone.

This was a problem often encountered by Shelby in his investigations. He wrote to the Secretary, "I found it no easy task to show these Indians that the fact of their having Pottawatomie blood did not along entitle them to the participation in the money soon to be distributed."<sup>110</sup> In fairness to the applicants, at the time of the distribution most Indians in Michigan were struggling economically. Even the remote possibility of being included in this settlement would have been motivation enough to try.

In the end, only two additional names were added to the qualified roll by Shelby. The Secretary would add one additional name, bringing the total to 272 names. While the effort invested in preparing these rolls cannot guarantee a complete accounting of the descendants of the Potawatomi allowed to remain in Michigan by the supplement to the treaty of 1833, the Cadman and Shelby rolls would become the foundational documents for establishing citizenship in the band in the late twentieth century.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Court of Claims, 1900-01, 442.

<sup>111</sup> See <http://www.pokagon.com/government/codes-and-ordinances>, Enrollment Code, for a document detailing the current enrollment requirements for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

Distribution was made based on this roll in November and December 1896.<sup>112</sup> However, the amount awarded by the Court of Claims, and affirmed by the Supreme Court, \$104,626.00 had increased. In the six years that passed between the court decisions and final payment, four additional annuity installments were accrued to the Catholic Potawatomi, totaling \$8,325.20. Additionally, the Secretary of the Interior capitalized (or finalized) the perpetual annuities, adding another \$41,626.00 to the settlement. After deducting attorney's fees, the total award to those listed on the Shelby Roll was \$118, 554.52, distributed on a per capita basis.<sup>113</sup>

While the ruling was a victory for the Catholic Potawatomi as it regards payment of annuities, the initial decision by the Court of Claims also confirmed the government position that, while the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana were legally permitted to remain in Michigan, they ceased to be a part of the united nation of Potawatomi which did remove west of the Mississippi. While the portion remaining might have retained a right to share in annuities, "it did not retain any part of the political or corporate power of the tribe, that was undivided and still inherent in the body which emigrated beyond the Mississippi."<sup>114</sup> Although little attention was paid to this language at the time, it would haunt the Catholic Potawatomi in their later relations with the United States.

---

<sup>112</sup> The Pam-To-Pee group would appeal this distribution to the Court of Claims in 1901. The case was dismissed by the Court of Claims. An appeal to the Supreme Court was also dismissed. The Potawatomi of the Huron would eventually receive a cash settlement from the United States through a special act of Congress (33 Stat. 210). This money did not come from the settlement awarded the Catholic Potawatomi.

<sup>113</sup> Court of Claims, 1900-01, 430. Also see Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 107.

<sup>114</sup> Court of Claims 1891-92, 412.

### **Simon Pokagon, Assimilation, and Acculturation**

The conflict within the Catholic Potawatomi community alluded to earlier also grew out of their efforts to recover their past due annuities. Simon Pokagon was the source for much of that conflict. While not affecting the decisions by either the Court of Claims or the Supreme Court, Simon's actions threatened the dollar amount of the per capita distribution, causing considerable consternation among many band members.

As mentioned earlier, the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana could not pay a retainer to their first attorney, William Severance, nor could they even cover his expenses. The reason for this is that the Business Committee, the formal governing body for the band, had no corporate income of their own. As historian James Clifton noted, tribal members "who worked hardest and longest at serving the whole community went unrewarded at least in economic terms." These members had to absorb the expenses for their public business from their personal income, which in some cases could create great hardship.<sup>115</sup> Such was the case for Simon Pokagon. It was the method he used to cover his business and living expenses, coupled with his increasing celebrity, which incurred the ire of many within the community.

Simon Pokagon was elected chairman of the Business Committee shortly after it was formed in 1869. Simon advocated for the committee to hire Severance, and he continued to champion his cause, even as the remaining members of the committee sought out new legal representation. By the time John Critcher was hired to replace Severance in 1881, Simon had also been replaced as chairman of the Business Committee

---

<sup>115</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 93.



by Alexis Chenagar. In fact, this divide among the Catholic Potawatomi mirrored the fissure which resulted from Peter Pokagon's botched handling of Pokagon land following the death of his father, Leopold. Those members who had left the Silver Creek community – moving to Rush Lake, Paw Paw and Brush Creek (near Hartford), supported Chenagar, and opposed the Silver Creek faction, led by Simon Pokagon. The Chenagar faction prevailed, and Critcher was selected to represent the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana.

Many reasons explain why Simon Pokagon fell out of favor within the Catholic Potawatomi community. By 1881, Simon began to gain fame, if not fortune, through speaking engagements to non-Native groups. His public appearances, in which he often appeared in “native” dress (less traditional Potawatomi attire and more an amalgamation of what Simon perceived white audiences saw as “Indian”) stirred resentment, both for his growing notoriety and the growing perception within the community that he was no more than the “white man’s Indian.”<sup>116</sup>

What most irked the community, however, was Simon’s penchant for selling shares in future Potawatomi revenue. In order to finance his continued efforts on behalf of the Catholic Potawatomi, Simon issued receipts to many of his non-Native benefactors for their “donation,” and promise that they would be included in the distribution of future annuities. Additionally, Simon also submitted letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, requesting payment for his services to the committee during the annuity contest. On August 27, 1895, Simon wrote to the Commissioner requesting \$3,000.00 from the

---

<sup>116</sup> Low, 61.

fund, prior to distribution. Additionally, on October 30, 1895, he wrote to attorney Critcher, requesting an additional \$1,000.00. Simon went so far as to form a rump Business Committee, which he had certify that those funds were, in fact, payable to him for his work. Alexis Chenagar quickly put a stop to Simon's end run, sending a resolution signed by members of the legitimate Business Committee to the Commissioner, directing that he "not pay any additional sum of money out of the monies now due" to the tribe, save what he was due "as his legitimate share in the distribution about to be made."

Twentieth-century historians have condemned Simon Pokagon for his actions within the Catholic Potawatomi and the non-Native community alike. James Clifton refers to him as a "small-time, would-be satrap," who "failed in repeated attempts to obtain from his own community the respect... won by [his] father."<sup>117</sup> A local historian, Everett Claspy, quotes Michael Williams, long a leader in the Catholic Potawatomi community who knew Simon as a young man, as believing that "he was overrated."<sup>118</sup> This may be the root of Clifton's disdain for Simon, as he used Williams' personal archives as the source for much of the history he wrote for the Catholic Potawatomi in the twentieth century.<sup>119</sup>

Shortly before his death, Simon Pokagon began a quest which was taken up by his son, Charles (and eventually the Business Committee) after his death. He sought to reclaim for the Potawatomi the land which was created by landfill along the Lake

---

<sup>117</sup> James Clifton, "Simon Pokagon's Sandbar: Potawatomi Claims to Chicago's Lakefront," *Michigan History* vol. 71, no. 5 (September-October 1987): 12-17.

<sup>118</sup> Claspy, 23.

<sup>119</sup> See Low, 7 note 11. Williams, a long-time leader in the community, was an avid record keeper. John Low references his collection, stating that it "filled nearly sixteen file cabinets."

Michigan shoreline, after the Great Fire of 1871. Simon argued that since the land had not existed at the time of the 1833 land cession, it could not have been ceded, and thus remained Potawatomi territory. Simon was condemned for this action, as well, which has been judged as his last ditch effort to win his way back into the good graces of the tribe.<sup>120</sup> However, recent scholarship on what has been dubbed the “Sandbar Case” takes a more sympathetic view, arguing that the Catholic Potawatomi land claim was “an act of resistance to assimilation,” in which the band “asserted a bold claim for their territory.”<sup>121</sup>

While Simon Pokagon was once a pariah within his community, opinions have softened over the years. Where once he was viewed as an “overrated representative of the community,” his picture now hangs in the Tribal Council Chambers for the band.<sup>122</sup> Claspy concluded that Simon’s life “seems to reflect the clash of two civilizations.”<sup>123</sup> This is certainly an astute observation. A further examination of Simon Pokagon’s life reveals much about the power dynamic in the nineteenth-century United States – who held power, and who was beholden to it. Simon’s life is a lens through which to view government efforts to assimilate the Indians – and Indian resistance to those efforts. A review of Simon’s representations of himself to the non-Native community illustrates the difficulties involved in defining an Indian identity in a rapidly changing environment, a problem which was faced, at least to some extent, by all of the Catholic Potawatomi.

---

<sup>120</sup> Clifton, “Simon Pokagon’s Sandbar,” 3.

<sup>121</sup> Low, 156-57.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>123</sup> Claspy, 24.

Simon Pokagon was certainly the best known of the Catholic Potawatomi. The reports of Simon's accomplishments are legion, at least as reported by non-Native authors. So much had been written about him that by 1893 Simon Pokagon, and by association his band of Potawatomi, were viewed by white society as exemplary models of the level of 'civilization' which could be attained by Native Americans. Through the public persona created by Simon, the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana became poster children, if you will, for the success of the assimilationist policies of the United States government in their efforts to eradicate the 'savage' Indian. This notoriety, however, came with a cost.

While not involved in the official activities of opening day at the World's Columbian Exposition, Simon Pokagon was in attendance. He witnessed a mix of memory (which included Native Americans), and modernity (which decidedly excluded the same). Pokagon was frustrated with the dominance of displays of traditional Indian culture, which confined Indians to the past. Having long advocated for the transformative power of education, Pokagon's disappointment at the delay in the opening of a planned model Indian school at the Exposition was genuine. His articulated belief was that "government schools were conceived by the Great Spirit."<sup>124</sup> A product of Euro-American schooling himself (whatever its duration), his children and grandchildren had been enrolled in Indian boarding schools over the previous decades, as well. What Pokagon saw that day did nothing to alleviate his distress. On the Midway Plaisance, the war-whoops and battle-dances of the Sioux and the "rude...dwelling places" of the

---

<sup>124</sup> Simon Pokagon, "An Indian on the Problems of His Race," *The Review of Reviews* 12 (December 1895), 695.

Navajo and Zuni, without the mitigating influence of the Indian school, belied the progress that Native Americans had struggled to achieve.<sup>125</sup> Public perception being easily swayed, Pokagon feared that in the wake of such dramatics, efforts to promote the successes of Indian advancement would fall on deaf ears. This was the frame of mind in which he wrote *The Red Man's Rebuke*; these were the emotions that inspired his fervent condemnation of the Chicago Fair.

At the time, Pokagon's views on education were celebrated within the non-Native population. However, within Native communities – on the reservations and in the homes of Indian families where the harsh realities of government assimilation programs were felt - Simon's message was not necessarily well received. While many Indians agreed with his assessment that only through education would the next generation of Indian children live successfully in the white man's world, many more viewed these schools as re-education camps, stripping Native children as young as five years old of their language, their culture, and their very identity.<sup>126</sup> Within his own community, Simon Pokagon came to be viewed as a pawn of wealthy white Americans.<sup>127</sup> While he was unable to completely reconcile his opinions and actions with those of other tribal members, he nonetheless remained a passionate spokesperson for the preservation of Native cultural practices. And in spite of his perception of the necessity for change, Pokagon also remained a creative advocate for the rights of Indian people.

---

<sup>125</sup> "Indians Will Be Here," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 3, 1891.

<sup>126</sup> Public Broadcasting System, "Friends of the Indian," *New Perspectives on The West*, <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/seven/friendsfindian.htm> (accessed October 29, 2012).

<sup>127</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 97.

As Pokagon saw it, Native American communities had evolved just as had white society. While maintaining their distinctive cultural identities, many indigenous people of American were successfully acculturating themselves to Euro-American agricultural practices, laws, and educational standards. It greatly disturbed Pokagon to see them excluded from the representations of ‘progress,’ or worse, depicted as somehow frozen in time; to see them depicted as anthropological specimens, as somehow less than human.

In *The Red Man’s Rebuke* Pokagon voiced his resistance to the dominance of Western civilization over his Native culture. Understanding the need for education was one thing; wholesale abandonment of the rich cultural patrimony of his people was a decidedly different matter altogether. At the Exposition, and throughout his life, Pokagon attempted to make white Americans better understand his own people, and to appreciate and value in many traditional Indian cultural practices. In his later writings, Simon attempted to reconcile the common Euro-American belief that Native peoples would cease to exist with his fervent hopes for the survival; with his belief that Native practices must be abandoned with his conviction in the value of Native skills. In every case, his writings introduced, or prolonged, public debate on issues central to the future of Native Americans.

In “The Future of the Red Man,” Pokagon offers his dark assessment of the inevitability of Indian “amalgamation with the dominant race.” He reviews interactions between Natives and non-Natives – invaders, conquerors, warriors and priests – a brief history to counter defamatory charges of “Indian treachery and cruelty” which have “always been published to the world by the dominant race.” However, while concluding that, “the blood of our people...will be forever lost in the dominant race,” he insisted that

the dominant race acknowledge the historical exigencies which sometimes forced “vindictive and cruel acts.” “*Cruelty and revenge are the offspring of war, not of race,*” he insists, “and...nature has placed no impassable gulf between [Indians] and civilization,” a conviction he elaborates in two articles written for *The Chautauquan* following his appearance at the World’s Columbian Exposition.<sup>128</sup>

In both articles Pokagon trumpets the value of traditional Potawatomi material culture. “Indian Native Skills” describes not only the artistic talents of Indian women, but the craftsmanship of Indian men, as well. “Our Indian Women,” details the talents and virtues of Native women in contrast to those of their “white sisters.” In each, Pokagon extols the expertise of Native women in crafting utilitarian articles from birch bark, their “fancy work” with porcupine quills, and especially their black ash splint basketry. His motivation is not that of a “boastful heart,” but the realization that “unless the natural ability of my people is recognized by the dominant race they cannot rise to that station for which the God of Nature intends them.” In other words, without recognition of the inherent abilities of the Indians, they could not achieve the ‘civilization’ demanded by that same dominant race.<sup>129</sup>

Some scholars have speculated that Simon’s motivation in writing these articles was the increasing demand by museums and tourists alike for Indian handicrafts, thereby promoting the economic interests (and survival) of the Michigan Potawatomi. However, at least one historian places Simon in the vanguard of the discussion of the “social

---

<sup>128</sup> Simon Pokagon, “The Future of the Red Man,” *Forum* 23 (August 1897), 698-708. Emphasis original.

<sup>129</sup> Simon Pokagon, “Indian Native Skills,” *The Chatauguan* 26 (February 1898), 540-542; Simon Pokagon, “Our Indian Women,” *The Chatauguan* 22 (March 1896), 732-734.

context of contemporary Indian art in America,” with material culture a source of ethnic pride and identity. His writings in the 1890s thus presaged discussions held by the Society of American Indians in the first quarter of the twentieth century, as well as regulations established “to promote the development of Indian arts and crafts” by passage of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act in 1935.<sup>130</sup>

In many of his writings, Pokagon interjects Potawatomi words and phrases into the English text, a technique known as ‘glossing.’ Although not used in *The Red Man’s Rebuke*, glossing is used more frequently in his articles “The Future of the Red Man” and “Indian Superstitions and Legends,” birch bark booklets such as *Algonquin Legends of South Haven* and the *Pottawatamie Book of Genesis*, and in the novel *O-gî-mäw-kwě Mit-i-gwä-kî (Queen of the Woods)* the title itself an example of the technique. In these writings, Pokagon’s deep affection for his cultural heritage is clear; he seeks not only to preserve the oral traditions of the tribe, but the language, as well. By glossing, Pokagon forces his readers to “reconsider stereotypical notions about Indian ‘gibberish,’” and to confront not only the “creative potential” of the Potawatomi language, but its simple beauty as well.<sup>131</sup>

Simon Pokagon found himself in the liminal position of being caught between two worlds, as did many of his Indian contemporaries. Because of his education, and his apparent support of acculturative practices, Pokagon was not fully accepted by his people as Indian; because of his Indian heritage, he often found himself excluded from the very

---

<sup>130</sup> Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 170-171; *Indian Arts and Crafts Act*, Public Law 355, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 49 (1935), 891-893.

<sup>131</sup> Peyer, “*The Thinking Indian*,” 160.



‘civilization’ he seemingly promoted. Perhaps his writings are best regarded as promoting reconciliation between the two races, rather than continued efforts to ‘civilize’ Indians out of existence. *The Red Man’s Rebuke*, the earliest of his published works, was dedicated to the memory of William Penn and others who promoted justice for Native Americans, recognized them as brothers, and defended the race.<sup>132</sup> Written in a spirit of righteous indignation, Pokagon gave voice to the lamentations of his people, a powerful admonition, yet free of vindictiveness.

*The Red Man’s Rebuke* was printed on the bark of the white birch, the tree central to the lives of the Potawatomi. *Wigwes* (birch bark) was a gift to the people from the Creator. It was their writing material in lieu of paper; their hats, caps and dishes were all made from this “manifold bark,” as were their wigwams and canoes, light and fire for their council chambers, even the knots used to seal their marriage vows. Pokagon found great symbolism in using birch bark for *The Red Man’s Rebuke*, because of its centrality to traditional Potawatomi life, and because, “like the red man, the tree [itself] is vanishing from our forests.”<sup>133</sup>

Pokagon’s motivation in writing *The Red Man’s Rebuke* was twofold. Not only did he genuinely resent the exclusion of his people from the opening ceremonies of the Exposition, but he recognized the danger to all Native Americans posed by the prominence of the ethnological exhibits and Indian villages. He knew that public perception was easily swayed, and the romantic image of the ‘savage’ Indian was already well established in the American psyche. Pokagon’s fear was that such displays might

---

<sup>132</sup> Pokagon, *The Red Man’s Rebuke*, 2.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

jeopardize the programs he believed were crucial to the very survival of the Indian, by overshadowing the very real progress Native Americans had made in their lives.

### **Conclusion**

On the morning of Chicago Day, nearly 75,000 people crowded Terminal Plaza on the fairgrounds to participate in the opening chorus, to hear the ringing of the Columbian Bell of Liberty, and to witness the ceremonial reenactment of the 1833 treaty. Mayor Carter Harrison accepted a parchment duplicate of the title deed for more than one million acres from Simon Pokagon, standing in for his father, Leopold, who signed the original treaty. Following the ceremonial presentation, Pokagon addressed the crowd. Published accounts described him as “quiet, dignified and self-possessed,” with a “look of sadness in his face, showing...the weight of years...pressed into a moment of time.”<sup>134</sup>

His words urged both change and conciliation:

What can be done for the best good of...our race? Our children must learn that they owe allegiance to no clan or power on earth except these United States...[they] must be educated and learn the...trades of the white men...[then]they will be able to compete with the dominant race.<sup>135</sup>

However, even as he called for Native Americans to give up many of their traditional ways and adopt those of the “white man,” he continued to support his people’s strategic resistance to the cruelty so often experienced at the hands of that “dominant race,” reminding his audience that: “the red man is your brother, and God is the Father of all.”<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 97; Pokagon, *O-gî-māw-kwě Mit-i-gwä-kî (Queen of the Woods)*, 19.

<sup>135</sup> “Triumph of Peace, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 10, 1893, 9.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

I was pained to learn that some who should have been interested in our people discouraged our coming to the Fair, claiming openly that we are heartless, soulless, and Godless. Now let us all as one pray...that [the Great Spirit] will open the eyes of their understanding and teach them to know that we are human as well as they.<sup>137</sup>

Simon Pokagon's experiences at the World's Columbian Exhibition inspired a late career as an author. Between 1893 and his death in 1899 he wrote nearly one dozen articles for some of the most prestigious magazines of his time, delivered numerous public addresses, and authored his autobiography. Near the end of his life, Pokagon wrote:

I have stood all my life between the white people and my own people. Without gun or bow I have stood between the two contending armies, receiving a thousand wounds from your people and my own. And I have said to my people, when they were bitterly wronged, and felt mortally offended, 'Wait and pray for justice; the warpath will but lead you to the grave.'<sup>138</sup>

The wisdom and quiet dignity of Simon Pokagon at the Columbian Exposition made him seem a consummate example of the 'civilized' Indian. However, Pokagon's was also an object lesson in the possibility of adaptation rather than total assimilation, of cultural persistence rather than extinction. Navigating the perilous road between two cultures, Pokagon's was the voice that announced to the world that his people were not desiccated relics of a distant past, but remained very much in the present. His was a stance of courage and resistance in the face of a dominant culture determined to relegate the Potawatomi of Michigan and Indiana, and Native Americans generally, to the dustbin of history. Never doubting the validity and value of his own uniquely Indian identity,

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Hulst, 82.

until his death Pokagon fought to ensure that all Native peoples would be afforded that same dignity.

Despite their differences, the Catholic Potawatomi continued to exhibit this same courage and resistance into the twentieth century. They too felt the wounds experienced by Simon Pokagon at the hands of the dominant culture, particularly in the first half of the century. However, with the patience counseled by their former leader, the band eventually succeeded in recovering their annuities, reclaiming their sovereignty, and renewing their identity as the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A TIME OF DARKNESS

It was beginning to be difficult to be an Indian. We were not allowed to practice our own religion...we were told not to do it. The language was not spoken since our religion was not practiced. [It] was a time when The People didn't respond. It was a time of darkness.

Rae Daugherty, Elder  
Potawatomi Indian Nation, Inc.  
Quoted in *Always a People*

For the Pokagon Potawatomi, the twentieth century began, if not exactly well, at least hopefully. Having succeeded in securing a portion of the annuities owed them by the United State government, the financial condition of members improved, if marginally. Tribal governance was once again united with the factionalism of the late nineteenth century beginning to dissipate with Simon's death in 1899. The Pokagon looked forward to the new century with a renewed sense of trial unity and purpose. There was reason to hope that the darkest days were behind them, and that conditions, politically and economically, could only improve. What was anticipated to be a time of renewal, however, became instead "a time of darkness."<sup>1</sup>

Hoping to build upon their legal success with their annuity claim, the Pokagon would pursue another claim, this time against the City of Chicago. It was not their success or failure in this legal challenge, however, but a government program designed to

---

<sup>1</sup> Rae Daugherty in *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians*, ed. Rita Kohn and W. Lynwood Montell, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 63-69.

'lift up' the Indian which would inspire much hope within the community, but ultimately leave the band devastated: The Indian Reorganization Act.

### **Simon Pokagon's Sand Bar Case**

Originally championed by Simon Pokagon, what has come to be called the Sand Bar Case was taken up at his death by his son Charles. And although it had once been considered Simon's folly, the case was eventually taken up by the Pokagon Business Committee, as well.

The case hinged on the Pokagon claim that although the Potawatomi had ceded much of the land on which Chicago was built, at the time of the 1833 cession treaty the contested land was underwater lake bed, with the exception of a small island at the mouth of the Chicago River (the sandbar which became the colloquial name for the case). In the intervening years, through dredging and particularly through landfill, an additional 237 acres of land was added to Chicago's lakefront, land which could not have been included in the cession as it did not exist at the time. This land had become some of the most valuable real estate in the City, home to the Magnificent Mile, the Gold Coast, steel mills, railroads, and corporate headquarters.

Historian James Clifton claims that the origins of the land claim date back to the 1850s, when a young Abraham Lincoln briefly "minded the case-file" for the Illinois Central Railroad.<sup>2</sup> Clifton also maintains that John Critcher, the attorney who argued the annuity case for the Catholic Potawatomi, was first tasked with pursuing the land claims

---

<sup>2</sup> James Clifton, "Simon Pokagon's Sandbar: Potawatomi Claims to Chicago's Lakefront," *Michigan History* vol. 71, no. 5 (September-October 1987): 3.

case and only reluctantly redirected his efforts towards recovering the back annuities.<sup>3</sup> However, there is scant evidence to support these assertions.

The land claim first came to public attention in late 1897, when the *New York Times* announced that Simon Pokagon was traveling from Michigan to Chicago seeking legal representation for his claim to 130 acres of prime real estate along the City's Lake Michigan shoreline.<sup>4</sup> Simon had little chance to promote the claim prior to his death in January 1899. However, his son, Charles, immediately stepped in for his father, announcing in April of that same year that he would pursue the case for his father to "get pay for my people for their lost birthright."<sup>5</sup>

Charles had some initial success advancing the claim, persuading Representative Edward Hamilton of Michigan to introduce a bill in Congress which would enable the Pokagon to present their case in the Court of Claims.<sup>6</sup> Arguments in the case were heard before the House Committee on Indian Affairs March 27 through 29, 1900. Appearing for the Pokagon was a Colonel Cook, with Charles Needham representing the State of Illinois. Representatives Mann and Boutell were also present, expressing their concern that the proceedings were intended "to put a cloud upon the title of the property along the lake shore," belonging to their wealthy constituents.<sup>7</sup> The Committee, however, echoing the adverse report on the matter issued by the Secretary of the Interior, issued their own

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>4</sup> "Own 130 Acres in Chicago," *New York Times*, 22 September 1897, 5.

<sup>5</sup> "Pokagon's Will-O'-The Wisp," *The InterOcean*, 2 April 1899, 45.

<sup>6</sup> "To Settle Land Right of Pottawatomies," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 February 1900, 7.

<sup>7</sup> "Indians' Claim to Lake Front," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 March 1900, 9.

report on May 31, 1900, stating their opinion that the Pokagon "had no [legal] interest in the land," effectively ending any chance the Catholic Potawatomi may have had to pursue their case in the Court of Claims.<sup>8</sup>

The Pokagon were not yet willing to abandon their claim. While temporarily stymied in the legal arena, representatives of the band organized a bit of political theater announced in May 1901. On that day, the *Los Angeles Times* reprinted a letter, addressed to the Graham & Morton Line, operators of steamships plying the waters of Lake Michigan:

Please state by return mail your best terms to convey to Chicago aboard one of your steamers, on or about June 1, the Pokagon Pottawatomie band of Northern Indiana and Michigan, one way only, to land them as near mouth of the Chicago River in the city as possible.

There will be about two hundred men and women, about one hundred children under sixteen years of age. There will be not far from forty ponies and about the same number of cats and dogs. There will be ten pet deer and a few other tame animals.<sup>9</sup>

The letter was signed by L. Mero, Secretary to Chief Pokagon.

The story was picked up by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on June 8, 1901, detailing the plans for the "invasion," including the date the tribe would sail from St. Joseph, Michigan: June 22.<sup>10</sup> The invasion was never realized, of course. The publicity was designed solely to keep the land claim in the public eye.

Although James Clifton argues that this "stunt" was orchestrated by Charles Pokagon, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* credits the scheme to "Chief" Isaac Quigno, "the

---

<sup>8</sup> "End of Po-Ka-Gon Claim," *Chicago Daily Tribune* 1 June 1900, 5.

<sup>9</sup> "Pottawatomies to Descent upon the Windy City," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 May 1901, 4.

<sup>10</sup> "Align Tribe for Invasion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 June 1901, 3.



youngest and most daring full-blooded warrior in the tribe."<sup>11</sup> The article lists the names of seven council members, who had "deposed" Charles and his council "because of lukewarmness toward the proposed invasion," indicative of yet another fracture within the Catholic Potawatomi community.<sup>12</sup>

The publicity surrounding the planned invasion, while succeeding in elevating the anxiety of the owners of the lands along the Chicago lakefront did nothing to help the Pokagon cause. In January 1901 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reiterated the government's position that any interest formerly held by the Potawatomi had been ceded to the United States with the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. This included any claim to the lake bed which, based on legal precedent, vested in the sovereign of the territory. The Commissioner elaborated that "as one sovereign withdraws from a territory this title vests in the succeeding sovereign without any special grant."<sup>13</sup> In other words, although the Pottawatomi had not specifically ceded that territory which had only been lake bed in 1833, it is implied by established law that that had been included in the 1833 cession, as well.

This, again, should have been the end of the matter, however, short of a court ruling, the Pokagon were not willing to abandon their claim. Although Simon Pokagon, and later his son Charles, were the public figures most closely associated with the land claim, the Business Committee for the Pokagon community discussed the matter at their regular meetings as early as 1899. And while it is unclear from the *Chicago Daily*

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. The topic of factionalism within the Pokagon community will be covered in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> "Indians Have No Title to Sell," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 January 1902, 9.

*Tribune* article, the new "Chief" mentioned, Isaac Quigno, and the seven new council members, may have been the duly-elected Business Committee for the tribe. While the Committee had periodically discussed the land claim at their meetings, their efforts to recover "their" lands did not begin in earnest until 1914, when the Chicago law firm of Burkhalter & Grossberg agreed to represent the Pokagon Potawatomi, filing suit in federal court on their behalf.<sup>14</sup>

The suit filed for the Pokagon closely resembled the case made before the House Committee on Indians Affairs. Appearing for the plaintiffs, J.G. Grossberg before the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Illinois built a sophisticated argument which belies contemporary notions of Indians as savages. It began with a careful examination of the origins of what was called "Indian Title," the right of indigenous inhabitants to occupy lands until ceded to a Euro-American government. This right to land cession passed from Great Britain to the fledgling United States following the American Revolutionary War. The body of the Pokagon's case, however, was rooted in their interpretation of two key treaties: the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the 1833 Treaty of Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

Grossberg argued that the Treaty of Greenville gave the Indian tribes party to the treaty an absolute title to their lands which were not ceded to the United States as part of the treaty, not merely the "Indian Title" or right to possession:

In consideration of the peace now established and of the cessions  
and relinquishments of lands made in the preceding article by the said

---

<sup>14</sup> John Low, "Chicago's First Urban Indians - the Potawatomi" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2011), 143-44.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 287-296.

tribes of Indians, and to manifest the liberality of the United States, as the great means of rendering this peace strong and perpetual; *the United States relinquish their claims* to all other Indian lands northward of the river Ohio, eastward of the Mississippi, and westward and southward of the Great Lakes and the waters uniting them.<sup>16</sup>

Grossberg acknowledged that the Treaty of Greenville *did* cede to the United States a parcel of land six miles square, at the mouth of the Chicago River. Significantly, the treaty used the then-shoreline of Lake Michigan to establish the cession boundary. None of the lakebed was included in that cession, nor was it included in any subsequent cessions. However, many other cessions in the Northwest Territory did specifically extend cession boundaries into adjacent bodies of water. Because the lakebed was never specifically ceded to the United States, as that lakebed became dry land, for whatever reason, "its ownership stays with the original owner of the submerged land, in this case, the Potawatomi."<sup>17</sup>

While Grossberg made a considered and compelling argument, the Federal District Court was not convinced. They very quickly issued their decision, stating that the Michigan Potawatomi had not demonstrated a case "either under the rules of equity or evidence" which would merit further judicial consideration. The Pokagon appealed the decision, eventually taking their case to the United States Supreme Court. In a terse opinion, published January 8, 1917, the Court affirmed the findings of the lower court, ending the saga of Simon Pokagon's Sandbar. In addition to having their dreams of a

---

<sup>16</sup> Treaty with the Wyandot, etc., August 3, 1795 (7 Stat. 49). Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Low, "Chicago's First Urban Indians," 190-93.

substantial windfall dashed by the Court's decision, the Pokagon were also obligated, by the District Court's decision, to pay the costs of the trial.<sup>18</sup>

As discussed previously, until recently history has roundly condemned the Sandbar Case as pure folly. It has been judged first as an effort by an old man to return to the good graces of his community and later as a foolish attempt by the Business Council blinded by the hope of another large settlement to benefit the community. While the Court's decision did impact the tribe financially (there were expenses to be covered) and had a negative influence on the tribe's morale, it did not decimate the Catholic Potawatomi. The Business Committee continued to meet regularly. Tribal members continued to scratch out what living they could in the region. Their next dealings with the government would have significantly greater, and much more enduring, effect upon the tribe. For the Indian Reorganization Act, which initially inspired hope within the Pokagon community of participating in an Indian New Deal, would ultimately strip them of their tribal status and deny their very identity as Indians.

### **An Indian New Deal**

The Indian Reorganization Act began life as the Wheeler-Howard bill, and was inspired by the vision of John Collier. Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, was an advocate for the preservation of Native American cultures, particularly the principle of community, as he perceived it, within Native societies.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Clifton, "Simon Pokagon's Sandbar Case," 9.

<sup>19</sup> John Collier, *From Every Zenith: A Memoir* (Denver: Sage Books, 1963), 120.

Collier was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1884. While he lost both parents while still in his teens, from both he would profess to have gleaned principles which would guide him throughout his life: from his mother “a passion for the wild [and] wrath at any form of cruelty;” from his father an “identification with public affairs,” which he would much later come to understand as the importance of community.<sup>20</sup>

In 1908 Collier began work in New York City with The People’s Institute, a progressive-era organization dedicated to improving conditions for those marginalized by the socio-economic order of the industrialized world.<sup>21</sup> It was during this period that Collier began to realize the power of community, what he described as “the *gemeinschaft* mode of life...the sufficing brotherhood, within innumerable local communities which are moved by shared purposes,” as the remedy to the woes of modern, industrial life, “the shattering, aggressive drive toward competitive utility.”<sup>22</sup>

Collier could find no solution to the individualistic principles of modernity. Finding little financial and political support for his ideas in New York, Collier left the People’s Institute in 1919; moving to California, he was dissatisfied in his work there as Director of Americanization for the California State Housing and Immigration Commission. Still believing that “the primary social group,” community, “is hardly less essential for the realization of human life than...some essential organic structure,” he was at a loss as to how to affect the necessary changes he believed essential to the salvation of modern man – until his encounter with the Taos Pueblo, Christmas 1920. In his

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 75, 94.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 93.

autobiography, Collier wrote that, through the Taos, he discovered that “deep community yet lived on in the embattled Red Indians,” leading him to vow “with absolute finality...this effort toward community must not fail; there can be no excuse or pardon if it fails.” It was his experiences with the Taos which gave birth to the “central commitment” of his life: the preservation of Indian culture and community.<sup>23</sup>

Following a decade of increasing notoriety as the Executive Secretary of the American Indian Defense Association, during which he also assisted in founding the All Pueblo Council, in 1933 Collier was appointed as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. It was in this capacity that Collier co-authored a bill (along with Assistant Commissioner William Zimmerman as well as Nathan Margold and Felix Cohen, both members of the legal staff of the Department of Interior) which articulated many of the reforms Collier believed necessary to preserve tribal life. Sponsored by Senator Burton K. Wheeler and Representative Edgar Howard, chairmen, respectively of the Senate and House Committees on Indian Affairs, the Wheeler-Howard Act would radically change the relationship between the United States government and the various Indian tribes.<sup>24</sup>

Initially introduced in February 1934, The Wheeler-Howard Act, commonly known as the Indian Reorganization Act, was a forty-eight page document described by one historian as “the most comprehensive and far-reaching legislative vision ever offered to Congress.”<sup>25</sup> Its four titles addressed many of the problems faced by American Indians

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 120, 123.

<sup>24</sup> Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 20.

<sup>25</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., ed., *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), xi.

by amending – or repealing – federal Indian policies which had been designed to “turn American Indians into Indian Americans,” with disastrous consequences detailed in the 1928 report *The Problem of Indian Administration*.<sup>26</sup>

United States Indian policy in the nineteenth century was designed to assimilate American Indians into the larger society. In so doing, the government hoped to remove itself from the ‘Indian business’ through a multi-faceted program of land reform, education and religious conversion, all designed to destroy tribal communities.

Viewed generously, these policies were intended to preserve a ‘race’ that was believed otherwise to be on the verge of extinction. By ‘civilizing’ the Indian, he would be integrated into white society and become another part of the (Euro-) American whole. However, the reality was that, rather than uplifting the standard of living for most Native Americans, living conditions continued to decline dramatically.

The Meriam Report, published in 1928 as *The Problem of Indian Administration*, detailed just how dramatically. Commissioned by Hubert Work, Secretary of the Interior, from the Institute for Government Research (later known as the Brookings Institution), the report was a sharp critique of the current policies of the Indian Service. It suggested the necessity of a complete paradigm shift, in fact concluding that the problem of Indian administration lay not with the Indian, but in the failure of the United States government to address the needs of their Indian charges. Through active enforcement of ill-conceived policies and failure to properly fund the agencies tasked with overseeing Indian affairs,

---

<sup>26</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, foreword to Kenneth R. Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1977), ix.

the Institute concluded, living conditions for an overwhelming majority of Indians were abysmal, whether at home or at the Indian boarding schools of the era.<sup>27</sup>

The report was a comprehensive look at Indian life, addressing such topics as Indian health (“bad” as compared to that of the general population), living conditions (“conducive to the development of the spread of disease”), and diet (bad [and] insufficient in quantity”). The Institute condemned practices at Indian board schools, stating “frankly and unequivocally that the provision for the care of the Indian children in boarding schools are grossly inadequate.”<sup>28</sup> It also gave special attention to the problem of dwindling Indian lands, as well.

*The Problem of Indian Administration* was released while John Collier was still the Executive Secretary of the American Indian Defense Association, where it was favorably received. In fact, Collier saw the report as setting the stage for a radical change in U.S. Indian policy. He aggressively pushed for a full-scale congressional investigation of the administration of Indian affairs, testifying to its urgency before the Senate. While a special sub-committee was appointed in 1928, the radical change Collier envisioned, including serious efforts to stop further losses of Indian land, would not come until 1934 with the Indian Reorganization Act.<sup>29</sup>

As the Executive Secretary of the American Indian Defense Association, Collier could only encourage Congressional action to address conditions faced by Native Americans. With his 1933 appointment as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the

---

<sup>27</sup> Brookings Institution, and Lewis Meriam. *The Problem of Indian Administration*. (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1971).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 4, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Prucha, *The Great Father*, 811-813; Philp, 90-91.



Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, Collier took direct action. Working with his staff and that of the Interior Department's solicitor's office, he crafted legislation designed to restore tribal self-government and communal ownership of land. His hope was that the omnibus bill "would have a massive and dramatic nature, commanding the imagination of Indians and Congressmen alike."<sup>30</sup> The result was the Indian Reorganization Bill, which codified many of the remedial measures first suggested in the Meriam Report

The thirteen sections of Title I, Indian Self-Government, contained detailed provisions for local Indian political organization. The Secretary of the Interior was authorized to issue tribal charters granting powers of government and corporate organization. The charters would define the territorial limits of the community, as well as the powers granted, their qualification and limitations. Title I would have essentially created tribal communities with the powers of municipalities.<sup>31</sup>

Title II, Special Education for Indians, addressed the deficiencies in Indian education described in the Meriam Report. Following the detailed provisions for Indian self-government, those for Indian education were vaguely drawn, extending to the Commission of Indian Affairs the authorization to "make suitable provision" to train Native Americans in the "various services now intrusted [sic]" to the Office of Indian Affairs. It also set out broad curricular guidelines, and authorized funds for Indian educational scholarships.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Collier quoted in Philp, 140.

<sup>31</sup> Deloria, *The Indian Reorganization Act*, 8-13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

Title III, Indian Lands, abolished the policy of allotment, overturning the Dawes Severalty Act. Any lands deemed to be ‘surplus’ under the Dawes Act were to be returned to communal ownership by the tribe within whose reservation boundaries they are located. It also authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire lands “for Indians for whom reservation...land is not now available,” or to acquire land to reverse the checkerboard effects of allotment on reservation land. Title III further authorized the appropriation of two million dollars annually to fund such acquisitions.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Title IV, Court of Indian Affairs, established a federal court outside of the of the existing United States district court system, and in addition to the Court of Claims. It was given original jurisdiction over nearly all cases in which any Indian tribe was party, with few exceptions.<sup>34</sup>

As originally written, the Wheeler-Howard bill met with serious opposition, from members of Congress and from Indian tribal members alike. In both the House and Senate Indian Affairs Committees, members expressed fears that the bill would only serve to further segregate Indians from non-Native society. Representative Theodore Werner of South Dakota stated that the proposed bill would make it “impossible for him [the Indian] to ever become an assimilated part of the citizenship of the country.” Elmer Thomas, Senator from Oklahoma, argued that assimilation had worked in his state, and the Wheeler-Howard bill would reverse the “trend of one-hundred years,” creating an

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 14-17.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 17-19.

“Indian zoo.” Many members objected to the Communist overtones of the collectivization of Indian lands.<sup>35</sup>

Criticism from Indian communities was, perhaps ironically, similar to that from members of Congress, and no less harsh. To allay Indian fears of a bill that Collier believed was essential to their very survival, he called a series of ten Indian congresses across the country. Reception at those meetings was mixed. The Indian perspective was summed up best by Flathead tribal member Joe Buck, who stated that the Indian had learned to be “suspicious, but you can’t blame him.” In the end, however, Collier, or his representatives, were able to sway many of those initially opposed to the bill.<sup>36</sup> Collier did not have such good fortune in Washington, where the bill continued to languish in committee. He called on Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes for support. Ickes in turn spoke with President Roosevelt, who had previously expressed support for the legislation. Only after President Roosevelt endorsed the bill in letters to the chairmen of both the House and Senate Committees on Indian Affairs did action on the bill commence in earnest.<sup>37</sup>

The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) which passed into law June 18, 1934 bore little resemblance to that originally submitted by Collier. Gone were the sections giving

---

<sup>35</sup>Philp, 143-157; Hearings, on H.R. 7902, 73<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., 1934, pp. 33-36, 64; Senate, Hearings, on S. 2755, 73<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., 1934, pp. 97-98, 52, 156, 239.

<sup>36</sup> Deloria, *The Indian Reorganization Act*, 134.

<sup>37</sup> Philp, 158.

Indian communities the power of municipalities and a separate Court of Indian Affairs. What remained, however, was revolutionary in terms of United States Indian policy.<sup>38</sup>

Many benefits accrued by organizing and incorporating under the Indian Reorganization Act. Tribes gained increased powers of self-government, except insofar as those had been extinguished by a Congressional statute or a treaty.<sup>39</sup> The IRA ended the practice of allotment of Indian reservation lands, restored to tribal ownership any remaining ‘surplus’ lands, and extended the trust period for Indian lands indefinitely. It further authorized the Secretary of the Interior to purchase lands for Indians, whether to add to existing reservations or to establish new reservations for landless Indians. It authorized two million dollars each year for this purpose.<sup>40</sup>

In lieu of quasi-municipal political organization, the IRA authorized \$250,000 annually to defray the costs associated with helping Indian tribes organize chartered corporations and adopt “appropriate” constitutions and bylaws. Granted to such chartered corporations was the power to conduct corporate business, employ legal counsel, and negotiate with federal, state and local governments. These chartered Indian corporations were also given access to a ten million dollar revolving fund from which they could borrow to promote economic development of the tribe.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Deloria, *The Indian Reorganization Act*, 20-23.

<sup>39</sup> For example, the Major Crimes Act of 1885 (18 USC 1153) constricted tribal sovereignty by taking the ability to prosecute certain crimes occurring on reservation lands out of the jurisdiction of tribal courts. These included murder, manslaughter, rape, assault with intent to commit murder, arson, burglary, and larceny.

<sup>40</sup> Deloria, *The Indian Reorganization Act*, 20-23

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

By the end of 1953, a total of ninety-six tribal constitutions were approved under the Indian Reorganization Act. An additional twenty constitutions were approved for tribes in Oklahoma and sixty-six in Alaska, under separate enabling legislation apart from the IRA. Of these tribal units organized under the IRA, seventy-three filed for incorporation. The Pokagon were not one of them.

### **The Pokagon Press for Inclusion**

Pokagon efforts to participate in the Indian Reorganization Act began before the Act was even passed. In a letter from tribal member Michael Williams to President Franklin D. Roosevelt dated April 27, 1934, the Pokagon first expressed their desire to be included in the benefits to accrue from the bill when it became law. In a petition signed by twenty prominent tribal members attached with the letter, the Pokagon made their case for inclusion. Citing the Chicago Treaty of September 27, 1833, which allowed their band to remain in Michigan, the petition briefly recounted their history of landlessness from government failure to allot lands, “tribally or severally,” and of annuity payments and “moneys due from treaty pledges” that were “wrongfully shut-off.” The petition further requested that language in the bill be revised to include Indians “of their status,” not just “Indians living under Federal tutelage and control.” This phrase, cited from Section I of the original Collier proposal, but deleted from the final version of the Act, would eventually become the crux of the argument against Pokagon requests to reorganize.<sup>42</sup>

Williams' letter and the accompanying petition was forwarded from the President's office to the Office of Indian Affairs. Commissioner John Collier responded

---

<sup>42</sup> Michael Williams, South Bend, Indiana, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., 26 April 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

almost immediately. Given that the bill was still under review by both the Senate and House Committees on Indian Affairs and was being substantially overhauled, the Commissioner was understandably non-committal. As the final language of the bill had yet to be determined, Collier could not state whether the Pokagon would be able to “share in its benefits.”<sup>43</sup>

In the interim between Williams’ letter and Collier’s response, one of the many conferences held across the country to discuss the Wheeler-Howard Bill directly with Native communities was held in Hayward, Wisconsin. Attending the conference representing the Office of Indian Affairs was Frank Christy, Superintendent of the Mount Pleasant, Michigan Field Office. Writing to Collier following the conference, Christy described concerns among the Indians regarding the words “Indians living under Federal tutelage” which might indeed preclude their benefiting from the provisions of the Act. Especially concerned were the Ottawa (Odawa) and Potawatomi “who have long since severed all connection with the Government.” Christy’s understanding, on which he requested (and received) clarification was that final participation in the benefits of the bill, should it pass into law, was based not only on the qualification of ‘Indian-ness,’ but also on available dollars, or “the amount of appropriations furnished by Congress for amelioration of conditions among Indians.” This information was relayed to both the Odawa at Grand Traverse, and the Potawatomi, with whom Christy had met two weeks prior to his letter to Collier.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, Washington, D.C. to Michael Williams, South Bend, IN, 5 June 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Superintendent Frank Christy, Mt. Pleasant, MI to Commission of Indian Affairs Collier, 28 April 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

What Christy did not mention in his letter was the division within the Pokagon band which he witnessed at his meeting with tribal members. In the months that followed, a series of letters between members of the Pokagon band and Commissioner Collier detailed the factionalism, and hinted at just how heated exchanges between the groups became.

The first indication of factionalism within the Pokagon community appears in a letter from Pete Wesaw to Collier dated May 16, 1934. Wesaw describes three factions, at odds over the Wheeler-Howard Bill and the proper Pokagon response. Additional details are contained in a letter from Wesaw to Collier written three weeks later, June 5, 1934.<sup>45</sup>

Factionalism within the various tribes regarding the pending Wheeler-Howard legislation was not uncommon. Many members supported the bill, believing that its provision would ameliorate many financial woes experienced by the Indians as a result of government policies and worsened by the Great Depression. However, there was a strong current of resistance, as well. Many members expressed their concern that, as one questioner stated at the Hayward Conference, “how do we know that the Government will fulfill its promises? We have been deceived quite a few times!”<sup>46</sup>

Within the Pokagon community, the first, and largest, faction was led by Pete Wesaw. His group, which would eventually number 84 tribal members, supported the band’s participation in any programs resulting from passage of the Wheeler-Howard bill.

---

<sup>45</sup>Pete Wesaw, Dowagiac, MI to John Collier, Washington, D.C., 16 May 1934 and 5 June 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>46</sup>Deloria, *The Indian Reorganization Act*, 377.

The second faction, led by Frank Hamilton, advised his group to ignore Wesaw's group, as he (Hamilton) had been hired by the government "to be representative over these Indians." The third faction was led by Andrew Rapp. Rapp was elected chief of the band in November 1929. While his term expired in 1931, Rapp continued to represent himself as chief. With fifteen members in his group, Rapp not only opposed the Wheeler-Howard bill, but also threatened arrest and prosecution of Wesaw for interfering in tribal business.<sup>47</sup>

Factions within the Pokagon community, and within the larger Potawatomi community, were not uncommon. After all, it was a factional split at the 1833 Treaty of Chicago which first differentiated Leopold Pokagon's Catholic Potawatomi from those he dubbed the "Prairie Indians."<sup>48</sup> Pokagon's adamant refusal to remove from his band's ancestral homelands, breaking with the greater part of the tribe, illustrates the fallacy held by many government officials of tribes as a singular unit, traditionally living in a state of political harmony.<sup>49</sup>

Conflict within Native communities had always existed. However, prior to European colonization and American settlement of large swaths of Indian territory, internal disputes which could not be resolved through discussion were resolved through

---

<sup>47</sup> Pete Wesaw, Dowagiac, MI to John Collier, Washington, D.C., 16 May 1934 and 5 June 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Office of Indian Affairs, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Indian Treaties, Journal of Proceedings, September 10-October 7, 1833, Series T494, Roll 3: 61-87.

<sup>49</sup> Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 45.



the use of "schismatic split."<sup>50</sup> In this scenario, a group who disagreed with a particular tribal policy or decision would simply migrate out of a particular community, forming another village within the tribal estate. This became a less viable alternative in the nineteenth century, as more Indian lands were ceded to the United States.<sup>51</sup>

Factionalism within Native communities first began to be studied by anthropologists and sociologists in the late 1940s.<sup>52</sup> As one of the more significant consequences of the stresses of cross-cultural contact situations, or acculturative situations, scholars have identified many causes for these intra-tribal conflicts.<sup>53</sup> The division between traditionalists and modernists (or assimilationists) is an often-cited cause for tribal factionalism. Other causes include conflict between religious groups (traditionalists vs. Christians or Protestants vs. Catholics); conflicts between competing family groups or clans; or even between those with property and those without.<sup>54</sup>

The factionalism which resulted in Leopold Pokagon's band splitting from the rest of the Potawatomi is difficult to categorize. The split was not likely clan based, as clan affiliation spread across Potawatomi territory, serving to unite far-flung villages into a tribal whole. As such, the Bear Clan, for example, would have had members in both Pokagon's villages and those which migrated westward. While Leopold could be labeled a traditionalist, refusing to accede to the demands of the American government, his

---

<sup>50</sup> James A. Clifton, "Culture Change, Structural Stability and Factionalism in the Prairie Potawatomi Reservation Community," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 6 (Fall 1965): 101-123.

<sup>51</sup> "The Factionalism Stereotype," Indian Country Today Media Network.com. <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2007/01/04/factionalism-stereotype-90188>.

<sup>52</sup> Rebecca Kugel, *To Be the Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998)..

<sup>53</sup> Clifton, "Culture Change," 107.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism*, 39-62.

actions to acculturate to Western agricultural practices, his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and his emphasis on (Catholic) education could see him labeled as an early assimilationist. To Leopold Pokagon, however, the divide seems to have been cultural; between the "Prairie Indians" who might prosper in conditions west of the Mississippi, and his "Woods Indians," who he believed would not.

Factionalism divided the band following Leopold's death, as well. When community members migrated out of the Silver Creek community, rather than make payment to Peter Pokagon, they engaged in the traditional behavior of migration, moving to the already established Catholic Potawatomi villages of Paw Paw and Brush Creek, and establishing a new community at Rush Lake. The later factional divide involving Simon Pokagon and his actions, which centered around similar village divisions (Silver Creek vs. the other communities), was seemingly only resolved at his death.

In the case of the three factions that developed during the Pokagon efforts to participate in the Indian Reorganization Act, it is also difficult to discern their origins. They do not appear to be associated with particular village loyalties. While census records are markedly incomplete, correspondence from the leaders of at least two of the factions confirm they lived in the same town, Dowagiac.<sup>55</sup> Without detailed genealogical charts, familial or clan affiliations cannot be determined. However, correspondence again confirms that members sharing the same surname supported different factions; for

---

<sup>55</sup> For example, correspondence between Pete Wesaw and the Commissioner for Indian Affairs indicates that in 1934 Wesaw resided in the Cass County, Michigan town of Dowagiac. While there are numerous Wesaw's listed in the 1930 and 1940 federal census, there is no record of a Pete Wesaw. after 1920, when he is listed under the record of his father, Charles. At that time the family resided in Silver Creek and Pete was 21 years old. Census records accessed through Ancestry Library, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com) (Accessed April 16, 2016). Note: Ancestry Library is a subscription database.

example, while Andrew Rapp led one faction, George Rapp lent his support to Pete Wesaw's group.

What Pete Wesaw identified as faction number one was led by Andrew Rapp. This fracture may well have been purely political. Rapp was a former chair of the Business Committee, who had recently lost his position in 1931 and who was apparently unwilling to give up his position of authority.<sup>56</sup>

The division between the faction led by Frank Hamilton and the group identified with Pete Wesaw is more mysterious in its origins. Both men were originally from Silver Creek, home of Simon Pokagon. In fact, Frank Hamilton was the grandson of John Winchester, who had been a member of Simon Pokagon's rump Business Committee.<sup>57</sup>

The divide might also have occurred over economics. Frank Hamilton was a mason by trade. In 1930, he was 52 years old and gainfully employed in construction. Two of his children could also be located on the 1930 census. Paul, age 27, was living in South Bend, employed as a metal finisher in the auto industry. Lewis, age 21, was a machine tender in a Kalamazoo paper mill. All of these are skilled trades, which, during the Great Depression, may have made it easier to find employment.<sup>58</sup>

The only census record that could be found for Pete Wesaw was in 1920, when he was living with his father, Charles. At that time, Pete indicates no occupation. His father lists his occupation as a farm laborer. Two of the remaining members of the special sub-committee appointed by the Business Committee to investigate the IRA also made it onto

---

<sup>56</sup> Pete Wesaw, Dowagiac, MI to John Collier, Washington, D.C., 16 May 1934 and 5 June 1934.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> 1930 U.S. Federal Census, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com) (Accessed April 16, 2016).

the federal census. Michael Williams, age 49, worked as a clerk in a clothing store in South Bend, Indiana. Henry Boziell, age 63, listed his occupation as a farm laborer. While both of these men were employed in 1930, as their positions were less skilled, it is likely that their continued employment was more tenuous. The difference in the prospect of continued employment between the Hamilton faction and the Wesaw faction may have contributed to their conflict. With so little evidence to evaluate, it is impossible to say conclusively what led to the divide.<sup>59</sup>

Whatever the origins of the factionalism, in his response, Collier assured Wesaw that his group could not be arrested or punished for expressing interest in the pending legislation, nor could they be prevented from writing to the Commissioner's Office and receiving information in return. However, Collier strongly encouraged the Pokagon to unite in common cause, advising that "dealing with several small groups of fifteen Indians is unsatisfactory and makes the cost of administration exceedingly high," no small admonition given budgetary realities in the midst of the Great Depression.<sup>60</sup> This is also an example of Collier's guiding principle that "unanimity was not imposed but reached only through discussion and acceptance by the entire tribe."<sup>61</sup>

With the June 18, 1934 passage of the Indian Reorganization Act, the Pokagon increased their efforts to be included in the benefits of the Act. On November 17, a committee was appointed from the Wesaw group to press Pokagon claims to be allowed

---

<sup>59</sup> 1920 and 1930 U.S. Federal Census, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com) (Accessed April 16, 2016).

<sup>60</sup> John Collier, Washington, D.C. to Pete Wesaw, Dowagiac, MI, 29 May 1934 and 23 June 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Collier, *From Every Zenith*, 440-41.

to participate in the Indian “New Deal.” Correspondence continued, with a flurry of letters exchanged in the final months of 1934.<sup>62</sup>

On November 24, 1934, letters were sent from committee chairperson Paul Knapp to Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI), Senator Burton Wheeler (D-MT), requesting their help in securing the attention of the Office of Indian Affairs, and to the Secretary of the Interior directly. While the specifics of each letter varied, each carried the same essential message: that the Pokagon Potawatomi were legitimate candidates to participate in the Indian New Deal and wished, without question, to “share in the benefits of the act [sic].”<sup>63</sup> All three letters were forwarded to the Office of Indian Affairs and responded to by Commissioner Collier or Assistant Commissioner, William Zimmerman, Jr.. The response to Wheeler, to Vandenberg and to Knapp was to suggest that the Pokagon send a list of tribal members, their financial status, and their “blood status” (blood quantum), so that the Office of Indian Affairs could make a determination of their eligibility under the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act. In short, the Pokagon needed to prove that they were Indian.<sup>64</sup>

The Pokagon immediately set about providing evidence of their ‘Indian-ness.’ On December 31, 1934, committee member Thomas Winchester forwarded a list of the adult

---

<sup>62</sup> Paul Knapp, Hartford, MI to Arthur Vandenberg, Washington, D.C., 24 November 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives. Note that while the group continued to refer to themselves as the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, they would continue to also refer to themselves as the Potawatomis of Michigan and Indiana.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Knapp, Hartford, MI to Arthur Vandenberg, Washington, D.C.; Knapp to Burton K. Wheeler, Washington, D.C.; Knapp to Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C., all 24 November 1934, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>64</sup> John Collier, Washington, D.C. to Michael Williams, 4 December 1934; William Zimmerman, Jr., Washington, D.C. to Burton K. Wheeler, Washington, D.C., 17 December 1934; Zimmerman to A. H. Vandenberg, Washington, D.C., 17 December 1934; all CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

members of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to Zimmerman, after having the list approved by H.L. Cameron, the Administrator of Cass County, Michigan.

On January 5, 1935, a supporting petition was sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The petition, signed by all five of the committee members, affirmed the following:

1. That the Potawatomis of Michigan and Indiana were “in fact and in all truth Indians.”
2. That they were a band of Potawatomi Indians, numbering “two hundred-fifty to three hundred souls,” all of one-half to full-blooded Indian.
3. That they were descendants of Potawatomis given “the ‘extraordinary’ privilege” of remaining on their ancestral homelands by the Treaty of Chicago, September 27, 1833.
4. That they were assured in that treaty that their tribal rights and dues were guaranteed and that, as a band of Potawatomi Indians, had never abrogated these rights “nor [had they] forgotten the promises made.”

Included in the petition was a scathing rebuke of government efforts to exclude homeless and unemployed Indians, who had been “cast adrift for no reason [other] than that they long ago were stripped landless, cleaned and dispossessed of worthwhile properties,” a reference to the original language of the bill which would have extended its benefits only to “Indians living under Federal tutelage and control.”<sup>65</sup> In response, Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, wrote that the status of the Michigan Indians was under consideration. He explained that Congress had failed to appropriate any of the funds authorized by the Indian Reorganization Act, and thus plans to implement provisions of the act had been “retarded.” Ickes stated that he was forwarding the correspondence to

---

<sup>65</sup> Potawatomis of Michigan and Indiana, South Bend, IN to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., n.d., CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

Commissioner Collier for his consideration “in working out a program for the Michigan Indians.”<sup>66</sup>

Monies to fund many of the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act were appropriated by Congress in May 1935, including \$1 million to purchase additional lands for approved groups. Several tribal bands in northern Michigan were given the opportunity to vote to accept the provisions of the IRA in June. However, although they had enlisted the support of their local government representatives, their U.S. Senator, and the Michigan Indian Affairs Committee of The American Legion, Pokagon efforts were again rebuffed. William Zimmerman confirmed in a letter to Frank Langdon, chairman of the Michigan Indian Affairs Committee, that Section 18 of the Act had been interpreted to mean that the Secretary of the Interior was instructed to call for a referendum vote only on existing Indian reservations. As the Pokagon were not living on reserved lands, they could not be extended the privilege of holding a referendum vote. They were again encouraged to provide a list of members, along with their blood quantum, and assured that “their rights” would be given due attention and such action “as may be practicable” would be extended to include the Pokagon in the benefits of the legislation.<sup>67</sup>

The Pokagon continued to press their case for inclusion throughout the 1930s. However, despite their continued correspondence, their petitions, and their solicitation of support from local and U.S. representatives, their effort eventually failed, as on May 29,

---

<sup>66</sup> Harold Ickes, Washington, D.C. to A.H. Vandenberg, Washington, D.C., 12 January 1935, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>67</sup> John Collier, Washington, D.C., to Pete Wesaw, Dowagiac, MI, 2 May 1935; William Zimmerman, Jr. to Maj. Frank Langdon, Detroit, MI, 26 June 1935; all CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

1940 Commission John Collier issued a decisive memorandum which stated that “There be no further extension of Organization under the Indian Reorganization Act in Lower Michigan.”<sup>68</sup>

### **The Basis for Administrative Termination**

The Pokagon failed in their efforts to reorganization under the Indian Reorganization Act for a number of reasons. First, as discussed previously in this study, although the Pokagon Potawatomi were successful in claiming a portion of the annuities owed them through the Court of Claims, the decision contained language that now would be used against them. In rendering their decision, the Court declared that by remaining in Michigan the Pokagon Band had severed its connection with the United Potawatomi Tribe and had thereby lost its identity with the Tribe. The Court further declared “in ceasing to be a part of the United Nation, it did not retain any part of the political or corporate power of the tribe...still inherent in the body which emigrated beyond the Mississippi pursuant to the terms and requirements” of the Chicago Treaty of 1833. It went on to state that “the portion remaining [in Michigan] may have acquired a right to share in the annuities, but the corporate power of the tribe remained intact and incident to the larger body which emigrated.” In its decision, the Court effectively turned a territorial victory (the right to remain in Michigan) and an economic victory (payment of a portion of back annuities owed) into a political defeat.

Secondly, the Meriam Report, the foundational document for the Indian Reorganization Act, was written to address conditions for tribes with large populations.

---

<sup>68</sup> John Collier, Washington, D.C., to Cavill, et. al., 29 May 1940, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.



Examples to contextualize report findings were cited from tribes of the southwest: Hopi, Zuni, Navajo; from Oklahoma; and from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. The tribes of Michigan were not mentioned by name in the report.

Further, the Wheeler-Howard Bill, passing into law as the Indian Reorganization Act, was John Collier's vision of legislation necessary to ameliorate the problems cited in the Meriam Report. Collier's two primary goals were to preserve and restore Indian lands, and to preserve Native American cultures, his 'principle of community.' His experience with Native communities, and thus, perhaps, his unacknowledged bias, targeted these same large tribal units, with some existing land base, however small or fractured. It was not written specifically to address the needs of a small, landless band, such as the Pokagon. Being perceived as having fully assimilated into white culture, Collier may well have perceived the Pokagon as having lost what he was attempting to preserve.

Additionally, Congress had already been soundly rebuked by the Meriam Report for failing to adequately fund the Office of Indian Affairs, but continued this pattern of neglect by failing to appropriate adequate funding for the initiatives contained within the Indian Reorganization Act. Addressing the Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations on April 4, 1945, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes told the assembled members that for fiscal year ending June 30, 1936, the Interior Department appropriation had been cut from \$3,297,409, of which \$2,997,675, over 90% of the appropriated funds, was taken from the Indian Service. The majority of cuts were from

appropriations authorized by Congress, and allowed by the budget, “for making the Indian Reorganization Act effective.”<sup>69</sup>

Ickes went on to site specifics: Congress had authorized the \$10 million revolving fund for loans to Indians. The budget allowed only \$5 million; the House of Representatives cut that amount to \$2.5 million. Congress authorized \$2 million for land purchases for the Indians. The budget allowed \$1 million; the House cut that amount to \$500,000. Similar cuts were made to the appropriations for other provision of the Act.<sup>70</sup> A shortage of available funding no doubt weighed heavily on Collier, as he sought to achieve the most good with the resources available to implement the provisions of the Act.

Further complicating the issue was the Pokagons’ lack of a tribal land base. The Office of Indian Affairs maintained that the Indians of lower Michigan, including the Pokagon, had not lived on a reservation since their lands were ceded to the United States in 1833, blithely ignoring the fact that the land in the northern part of the lower peninsula reserved for the Pokagon and to which they were to remove was taken by the government before the Pokagon could take possession of the reservation. No matter; as they did not live on a reservation, they could not be considered wards of the federal government. Further supporting his argument, Coordinator M.L. Burns of the Minneapolis Field Office argued that because Indians had been granted citizenship by the State of Michigan

---

<sup>69</sup> Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 74<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 4 April 1935, 1.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

in the 1850 State Constitution, they were wards of the State, which was amply providing for their needs.<sup>71</sup>

Most damning to the Pokagon cause was a report, “A Survey of Indian Groups in the State of Michigan, 1939: The Indians of Lower Michigan,” written by John H. Holst, Supervisor of Indian Schools, at the request of the Office of Indian Affairs. The report looked specifically at the Chippewa (Ojibwa), the Ottawa (Odawa), and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. In his opening paragraphs, Holst summarized his findings, arguing that after the War of 1812, the Great Lakes tribes saw “their tribal organizations [crumble], never to revive again.” Holst made the same tired argument that historians continued to make late into the twentieth century: that the Algonquin tribes had been shattered by the Iroquois hammer against the Siouxian anvil. To deny the persistence of the Great Lakes tribes justified not only the continued denial of rights and benefits, but the taking of, and refusal to return, Indian lands.<sup>72</sup>

Holst relayed that fewer than 500 members remained of a band that once numbered over 3,000. Those remaining members had so effectively assimilated, he maintained, that they are “not distinguishable from their white neighbors,” culturally or economically. Holst contended that the economic status of the Indians of lower Michigan was generally comparable to their non-Native neighbors, as they “adjust[ed] to new occupations and [entered] various fields in competition with other skilled [non-Native] labor.” Culturally, Holst discounted the wearing of regalia at tribal events as “dressing for

---

<sup>71</sup> M.L. Burns, Minneapolis, MN to John Collier, Washington, D.C., 6 April 1936, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Holst, John H., “A Survey of Indian Groups in the State of Michigan, 1939: The Indians of Lower Michigan,” photocopy, p. 1, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

show in supposedly traditional costume.” Native arts, such as black ash basketry, were practiced not to maintain traditional tribal arts, but only “for the benefit of tourists.”<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, Holst confused assimilation with acculturation. In the former, people of a minority culture are fully absorbed into the majority culture. There is a complete loss of the original culture, as the dominant culture comes to be perceived as more valuable. This is not what happened in the Pokagon community. Instead, the Pokagon acculturated with the majority culture. Through this process, some characteristics of the majority are adapted and absorbed into the minority culture, which maintains its viability, as is confirmed by the very activities Holst noted and tried to discount.

Holst’s take on Native governance within the tribes of lower Michigan is that “they recognize no native leadership because they recognize no common interests.” Ignoring documentary evidence that the Pokagon had had a Business Committee in place since the nineteenth century, with an elected leader, or chief, elected to a two-year term, his assessment of Pokagon tribal leaders such as John Williams and Pete Wesaw was that they simply “attempt[ed] to speak” for the band, and that any titles they assumed were “without political significance.”<sup>74</sup>

In concluding his report, Holst argued that the Indians of lower Michigan had “entered into full citizenship” of the State, and “neither need nor ask help...from the Federal Government.” Holst’s conclusion was that “so far as lower Michigan is concerned trust-held land, with its implications of Federal wardship is a menace to Indian

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 4.

welfare and progress,” recommending that “there be no further extension of organization under the Indian Reorganization Act in Michigan.”<sup>75</sup>

There was resistance to Holst’s report from within the Office of Indian Affairs. Peru Farver, Superintendent of the Tomah Indian Agency argued that Holst’s estimation of the economic status of the Michigan Indians was vastly overstated. His experience was that “for the most part [the Indians are] a destitute people.” Farver also pointed out that most Native American groups in the northern peninsula had already been recognized, as had the Chippewa in the lower peninsula. Only the Ottawa and Potawatomi had been denied assistance under the Indian Reorganization Act. While fully agreeing that there should be no further extension of organization under the IRA, Farver argued that “there is a definite need of rehabilitation among some of these groups.” He further suggested this could be accomplished through State and Federal cooperation short of extending the benefits of the Indian Reorganization Act, a proposal also endorsed by Archie Phinney of the Minneapolis Field Office and J.C. Cavill, Superintendent of the Great Lakes Indian Agency.<sup>76</sup>

Ignoring the evidence of Pokagon persistence as a tribal unit, governmentally and culturally, as well as the dire economic conditions stemming from the lack of a tribal land base, Commissioner Collier denied the Pokagon the benefits of participating in the Indian Reorganization Act, basing his decision largely on Holst’s report. In speaking with the Navajo Nation in July 1933, Collier warned that in turning away from their heritage, they

---

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Peru Farver, Tomah, WI to John Collier, Washington, D.C., 1 December 1939; Archie Phinney, A Proposed Role for the Federal Government in the Rehabilitation of the Michigan Indians,” n.d.; J.C. Cavill, Ashland, WI to John Collier, Washington, D.C., 26 October 1939; CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

would throw away that which made them powerful. Ironically, his decision to administratively terminate the tribal status of the Pokagon Potawatomi took away the tools that would have given the band the very power Collier feared the Navajo would lose.

### **Opportunities Lost**

The effects Collier's decision to exclude the Pokagon from participating in the benefits of the Indian Reorganization Act were far-reaching and universally negative. It is perhaps instructive at this point to investigate the political and economic benefits accrued by the four Michigan tribes that were allowed to reorganize: the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Lake Superior Band of Chippewa Indians, the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Hannahville Indian Community, and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

The Saginaw Chippewa are the only one of the four tribes recognized during the IRA era to reside in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Historically occupying the northern reaches of the state, the tribe had been party to numerous treaties with the United States government, from the 1795 Treaty of Greenville to the 1864 Treaty of the Isabella Reservation, which established the Isabella Reservation on which the tribe continues to reside today. Actually established by the 1855 Treaty of Detroit, the borders of the 138,240 acre reservation were modified by the 1864 treaty to prevent incursion by non-Natives and preserve the Saginaw Chippewa land base. Sadly, the measures adopted in

the treaty were ineffective in achieving those goals; the Saginaw Chippewa would lose all but a tiny fraction of that land.<sup>77</sup>

Recognition as a reorganized tribe provided the framework for self-government and political self-determination through an elected tribal council. As recorded in the minutes of that tribal council, the constitution and by-laws of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan were approved by the Secretary of the Interior on May 6, 1937. Between that date and February 19, 1938, the Federal government purchased 410 acres of land for the newly incorporated tribe. From that, landless families were to receive grants of ten acres each, subject to approval by the tribal council. An additional 588 acres was optioned for purchase in 1939.<sup>78</sup> The Saginaw Chippewa were immediately awarded a grant of \$6,000.00 to rehabilitate existing homes for tribal members and to build two new homes. The monies were also to be used to build a tribal community center. An additional \$1,200.00 grant was received to insure cultural preservation, used to renew production of traditional tribal arts and crafts.<sup>79</sup> Funds were also made available from the revolving credit fund to develop tribal and individual businesses, \$6,000.00 and \$7,500.00 respectively, allowing economic self-determinism, as well.<sup>80</sup> Even with these

---

<sup>77</sup> Charlene M. Benz and R. Todd Williamson, *Diba Jimooyung, Telling Our Story: A History of the Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek* (Mt. Pleasant, Michigan: Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, Ziibiwing Cultural Society, 2005), 31-54.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

grants and loans, the tribe struggled economically; they continued to rely heavily on federal loans throughout the twentieth century.<sup>81</sup>

Results from such an infusion of resources compounded over the years. As a federally recognized tribe, the Saginaw Chippewa were eligible for benefits under the numerous programs authorized by Congress to benefit American Indians, such as the Housing Act of 1937; services from the Indian Health Service Division of the Department of Health and Human Services, established in 1956; and benefits under the Indian Education Act of 1972. As of 2015, the Isabella Reservation, home of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, totals 217.67 square miles, or 138,880 acres. Again, while much of that land is owned by non-Natives, having such a large area deemed a reservation gives the tribe broad local governmental power and influence. Tribal businesses have had varied success over the decades; however, as one of the few tribes organized in the lower peninsula of Michigan, the Saginaw Chippewa were uniquely positioned to exploit the Federal government decision legalizing tribal gaming. They opened their first bingo hall in 1980, adding Las Vegas-style card games in 1985. This was two years before the 1987 United States Supreme Court decision legalized Indian gaming, and before the first gaming compacts with the State of Michigan were signed in 1993. The Soaring Eagle Casino now generates an income for the tribe to provide additional housing, health care and educational services to their enrolled members. Because of the casino, the tribe has

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 110.



also become the largest employer in Isabella County, Michigan, by extending employment opportunities to the non-Native community, as well.<sup>82</sup>

The remaining three tribes were all located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The Keweenaw Bay and Bay Mills communities were descendants of the Ojibwa Indians who had historically inhabited the northern Great Lakes region. Both tribes had reservation lands dating from the nineteenth century, although the tribes had lost much of their reservation lands to allotment in the latter quarter of the century.<sup>83</sup> The Hannahville Indian Community, the only Potawatomi community reorganized under the IRA, were descended from those of the tribe who refused to leave Michigan during the removal era. Fleeing from government forces, their ancestors initially took refuge with the Menominee in northern Wisconsin, and the Ojibwa and Odawa in Canada. Some of the people began to migrate back into the region in 1853, eventually settling along the Big Cedar River. Their first parcel of reservation land was purchased by a Methodist missionary, Peter Marksman in 1884, but the tribe was not acknowledged by Congress until 1913, when 3,400 acres was placed into trust for the Hannahville Indians at their current location near Wilson, Michigan.<sup>84</sup> All three tribes had their constitutions approved by the Office of

---

<sup>82</sup>Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, "History of the Tribe," Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, <http://www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing/aboutus/history.htm> (accessed April 29, 2016).

<sup>83</sup> The L'Anse Indian Reservation was created for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community by the Treaty with the Chippewa, 4 October 1842. The reservation for the Bay Mills Indian Community was created by an act of Congress, June 19f 1860.

<sup>84</sup> Hannahville Indian Community, "History," Keepers of the Fire: Hannahville Indian Community, <http://www.hannahville.net/hannahville-history/> (accessed April 29, 2016).

Indian Affairs in 1936; all three would have experienced benefits similar to those of the Saginaw Chippewa.<sup>85</sup>

One additional reason why these four tribes may have been permitted to organize under the IRA is their location. All four of the Michigan IRA tribes lived in the northern part of the state: the Saginaw Chippewa in the far northern reaches of the southern peninsula, and the remaining three tribes in the upper peninsula. This area was, and is, sparsely populated, with minimal industry, based primarily on timber and mining. It is also cut-over land, formerly cool-climate forested area left devoid of its tree by intensive lumbering. While the southern part of Michigan was prime agricultural land, the cut over was not. The effort just to clear the land of tree stumps and rocks required intensive labor and/or massive amount of dynamite. The soil itself was not well suited for planting traditional commercial crops, such as corn or wheat. Certainly these tribes met the IRA requirements of having tribal lands and tribal governments. This additional financial hardship, however, may also have entered into the evaluation of their petitions by the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>86</sup>

Although the Pokagon business committee would persist, as a consequence of having their petition to reorganize under the Wheeler-Howard Act denied, the Pokagon were also denied access to any of the assistance available to the four recognized tribes, either federally purchased land or the grants and loans. Most tribal members continued to subsist on the margins of society economically. The Holst report reveals as much, stating

---

<sup>85</sup> The University of Oklahoma College of Law, "Indian Reorganization Act Era Constitutions and Charters," The University of Oklahoma Law Center, <http://thorpe.ou.edu/IRA.html> (accessed April 1, 2016)

<sup>86</sup> Robert Gough, *Faming the Cutover: A Social History of Northern Wisconsin, 1900-1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

that only three families in the Pokagon group had farms.<sup>87</sup> On average, 52% of the Indian population in the Pokagon service area in Michigan were on state relief rolls, as of 1930.<sup>88</sup> While these numbers would improve as the Great Depression eased, the Pokagon would not achieve the same level of economic independence and self-determination as the Saginaw Chippewa for several decades.<sup>89</sup> Looking back on the period, John Low, Pokagon band member and tribal council member, says:

As an IRA tribe, they [the Federal government] would have provided us with funding, which the Indian Reorganization Act provided for. Low cost loans and other funding. Becoming an IRA government would have confirmed our access to...previous treaties. They owed us health care, they owed us education. And by denying us our continued existence they were absolving themselves of those obligations as well. They knew that we were the poorest of the poor.<sup>90</sup>

Beyond the merely financial, denial of reorganization was a governmental denial of the Pokagon's very identity. The cultural effects of this were devastating. Struggling to make a living in a wage-work economy, many members who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s, the IRA generation, simply lost connection with their tribal traditions. Rae Daugherty, Pokagon Band elder, explains:

---

<sup>87</sup> Holst, John H., "A Survey of Indian Groups in the State of Michigan, 1939: The Indians of Lower Michigan," photocopy, p. 15, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

<sup>88</sup> Paul L. Stanchfield, Lansing, MI to U.S. Office of Indian Affairs, Lansing, MI, 22 April 1935, , CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.. Allegan, Berrien,, Cass and Van Buren counties are considered to be the Pokagon service area in Michigan, which also includes La Porte, St. Joseph, Elkhart, Stake, Marshall and Kosciusko counties in Indiana.

<sup>89</sup> In fact, it would be 1994 before the Pokagon received federal recognition, providing access to land and funding, and restoring to the group the benefits of self-determination, politically and economically.

<sup>90</sup> John Low, Interview for Newberry Library online exhibit, *Indians of the Midwest*, 2009. Retrieved May 13, 2015 from the World Wide Web: <http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/identities/legal-identity/video-transcript-john-low-on-pokagon-potawatomi-federal-recognition/>

At that time it was beginning to be difficult to be an Indian. [It] was a time when The People didn't respond. I think everybody deep down cared, but life was difficult just to have a job, raise your children. Many people went to schools...and they weren't to speak the language. [And] the language was not spoken since our religion was not practiced [either]. It was just kind of erased out.<sup>91</sup>

The language and religion were nearly lost, as was the traditional art of black ash basketry. As the generation which had given birth to the children of the IRA generation died, so too did the many of the traditional skills. Says Philip Alexis, Pokagon Band member and Executive Director of the Confederated Historic Tribes, Inc, "A lot of The People forgot all those things. They forgot how to get black ash trees," and how to make the baskets. It was a not a matter of the previous generation not teaching their children. Alexis recalls a conversation with his father, a member of the IRA generation: "I said, 'Dad, how come you don't know all these things? You know, your mother told you this. She had to, because she told me.' He said, 'Philip, it's very simple. She told me but I didn't listen.'" <sup>92</sup>

Tribal enrollment began to drop as well. Says John Low, "Frankly, when there were no benefits, particularly to being a card-carrying Potawatomi member, people didn't feel that necessity to [join the tribal roll]." He recalls asking his mother why she was not an enrolled member of the tribe, to which she responded, "What's the point?"<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Rae Daugherty in *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians*, ed. Rita Kohn and W. Lynwood Montell, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 63-69.

<sup>92</sup> Philip V. Alexis in *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians*, ed. Rita Kohn and W. Lynwood Montell, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 28-34.

<sup>93</sup> John Low, Newberry Library interviews; John Low, interview by author, 12 May 2009.

## Conclusion

Such an attitude is not unusual in people who have been subjected to what can accurately be called colonial rule for over three centuries. Fortunately for the Pokagon, there remained a core group that continued to resist U.S. government attempts to erase their tribal identity, resisted continued colonialism.

As discussed in the introduction to this work, colonial and postcolonial theories were developed to analyze the social, cultural and economic vestiges of European colonization in Africa and Asia. The markers for colonialism, the means through which colonial rule was established and maintained, include the missionary, the military, the merchant, and the memorialist. It was the expansion of these ideas which led many scholars to explore the applicability of colonial and postcolonial theories to Native American tribal experiences.<sup>94</sup>

The concept of postcolonialism as applied to Africa and Asia differ markedly from its application to indigenous populations, especially those in the United States. There are two problems with the traditional definition of postcolonialism, geography and temporalism. If geography defines a struggle for postcolonial control of territory, or geographic sovereignty, then how to apply this theory to Native peoples, most of whom have been confined to reservations and have virtually no chance to regain absolute control of their territory? Similarly, if temporally postcolonialism is defined as a break from the colonial past and self-rule for a formerly subject people, how to apply the

---

<sup>94</sup> DouDou Diene, "The Notion of Cultural Resistance" (adapted from keynote address at the annual meeting of the American Association of State and Local History, Birmingham, Alabama, 18-21 September 2013), AASLH History News 69, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 11-14.

concept to Native Americans who remain effectively under the control of their “colonial masters.”<sup>95</sup>

The answers lie in broadening the definition of the terms colonialism and postcolonialism. In its classic form, colonialism describes the condition whereby “a small group of colonists occupy land far from the colonial metropolis and remain a minority, exercising control over a large native population,” conditions not applicable to indigenous populations in the United States. This contrasts with internal colonialism, in which “the native population is swamped by a large mass of colonial settlers who, after generations no longer have a [metropolis] to which to return,” or the “settler” colonies (such as Australia, Canada and the United States).<sup>96</sup>

Additionally, regarding temporality, many scholars, including Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Giffiths and Hellen Tiffin, agree that postcolonialism does not simply designate a colonial pastness, an understanding that is “conceptually naïve.”<sup>97</sup> Postcolonialism as applied to Native Americans, they argue, begins at the moment of colonization and continues to the present day. By this definition, both the colonial and postcolonial periods exist simultaneously.<sup>98</sup>

A shift is also required in thinking geographically. If the characteristic feature of colonialism is subjugation, then that of postcolonialism is resistance. If, then, there is no

---

<sup>95</sup> Jyotirmaya Tripathy, “Postcolonialism and the Native American Experience: A Theoretical Perspective,” *Asiatic*, 3, no. 1 (June 2009): 41.

<sup>96</sup> Jace Weaver, “Indigenosness and Indigeneity,” in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2000), 223.

<sup>97</sup> Tripathy, 42.

<sup>98</sup> Weaver, 223.

land to fight for, the struggle becomes one of sovereignty and self-determination, both politically and economically. It includes, as well, a substantial element of cultural recovery.

The Pokagon experienced all four of the markers of colonialism. Their first contact with Europeans was with the French Jesuits in the seventeenth century, and continued with the Baptists, and finally a return to the Jesuits in the nineteenth century. Missionary efforts were centered on destroying traditional Pokagon religious practices in the name of civilization.

The military followed the missionary. Because of conditions specific to European colonization in North America, initial Potawatomi encounters with the military were mostly positive, as they were able to ally with the French against the British. This changed, however, when the British, and finally the Americans, gained superiority in numbers and military control of their territory. The relationship became one of territorial enforcement, as seen in the forced removal of the Indiana Potawatomi, which the Pokagon narrowly avoided.

Seventeenth century encounters with French fur traders began Potawatomi interactions with the merchant, who reshaped their subsistence economy through an increasing dependence on the fur trade and trade items. Dependence on the vagaries of the market economy only increased as first the British, and then the Americans, established economic domination over the tribe.

Finally, the memorialist, who was and is the most dangerous of the four. The memorialist's role was to profoundly reshape memory as well as identity. The memorialist took many forms: the historian (to retell events of the past, rewriting

colonization as civilization); the sociologist and anthropologist (to make clear the primitive nature of Native societies); and the teacher (tasked with the mental transformation of their Native students). For the Pokagon, the memorialist can be seen in the shape of the French explorers who left their accounts of encounters with the Natives to the Jesuit reports to their superiors in France. The memorialist can also be seen in the teachers at Indian boarding schools, who took the indigenous clothing, language and culture away from their young Native charges, "killing the Indian to save the man."

The colonial encounters of the Pokagon Potawatomi with government efforts to erase their territorial holdings, their sovereignty, and their very existence, culminated in the removal of Pokagon tribal identity, articulated by the Court of Claims and implemented by the Office of Indian Affairs under John Collier. Fortunately, Pokagon resistance, begun under French colonization, continued through the treaty era under the leadership of Leopold Pokagon and into the twentieth century by men such as Pete Wesaw and John Williams, would not be deterred; the fire would not be extinguished.

It was a dark time for the Pokagon Potawatomi. But there was a new day on the horizon, and a new generation, a "comeback generation," which would revitalize tribal culture and finally achieve Federal recognition, and with it the political and economic sovereignty the Pokagon had sought for decades.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Tom Topash in *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians*, ed. Rita Kohn and W. Lynwood Montell, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 260.



CHAPTER SIX  
ALWAYS A PEOPLE

After our sovereignty had been denied in the [19]30s, [we] continued to advocate. We just refused to give up, we refused to be assimilated, refused to forget who we were. And so we held onto that, and we continue.

John Low  
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians<sup>1</sup>

Although the Pokagon Potawatomi continued to appeal the 1940 decision by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) denying them permission to reorganize under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), World War II shifted the attention of the country from New Deal programs (such as the IRA) to the programs and sacrifices necessary to defeat Hitler and the Axis powers. Correspondence sent to their field agent and to the BIA office in Washington, D.C. was routinely ignored. The worst possible outcome was realized in January 1941. William Zimmerman, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, writing to Rep. Claire Hoffman (R-MI, 4th District) stated that the Pokagon had "not been recognized as a separate distinct band of Indians for over a century." With the

---

<sup>1</sup> John Low, Interview for Newberry Library online exhibit, *Indians of the Midwest*, 2009. <http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/identities/legal-identity/video-transcript-john-low-on-pokagon-potawatomi-federal-recognition/> (Accessed 13 May 2015).

stroke of a pen, the Pokagon Potawatomi were expressly written out of existence as a tribal entity from the perspective of the federal government.<sup>2</sup>

However much the government wanted to deny their tribal status, the Pokagon continued to exist as a tribe. Their Business Committee continued to meet, as did the general membership of the tribe. After the war ended, the Pokagon renewed their efforts to assert their sovereignty and reclaim their tribal status. Their first victory came in 1978, through the Indian Claims Commission. While this claim was pending, however, the Pokagon mounted a more significant challenge: recognition as a tribal unit through an administrative process detailed by a new department within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Branch of Acknowledgment and Recognition.

### **The Indian Claims Commission**

In 1943, the United States Senate commissioned a survey of conditions on Indian reservations, similar to the Meriam Report of 1926. It concluded that conditions on reservations continued to be extremely poor. As in 1926, the blame was again placed at the feet of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the federal bureaucracy. The government's response to this survey, however, was markedly different than the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The United States was emerging from World War II and making the difficult transition from a war-time to a peace-time economy. In this climate, federal Indian policy shifted once again, this time in a direction decidedly counterproductive to Indians. Rather than create a new set of administrative procedures to which tribes would be required to adhere in order to receive federal benefits, the new policy would terminate

---

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Zimmerman, Jr., Washington, D.C. to Clare E. Hoffman, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., 1 January 1941, CCF General Services, File 9634, RG 75, National Archives.

the wardship relationship between the tribes and the government which was perceived to be perpetuating dependency and poverty. House Concurrent Resolution 108, issued August 1, 1953 announced the official federal policy of termination. Along with Public Law 280, these acts of government would eventually terminate the tribal status of over one hundred tribes, granting them instead all the "rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship."<sup>3</sup>

In itself, this new policy did not apply to the Pokagon, who had seen their tribal status administratively terminated years earlier. What is germane, however, is an accompanying piece of legislation creating the Indian Claims Commission (ICC). Created by the Act of August 13, 1946, the ICC established a tribunal separate from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to hear claims of "any Indian tribe, band, or other identifiable group of American Indians" against the United States.<sup>4</sup> Significantly for the Pokagon, the Act did not require that claimants be federally recognized, nor did it require an enabling act by Congress in order to bring suit.<sup>5</sup> The Act provided broad grounds for claims, including those based on "unconscionable consideration" for ceded tribal lands.<sup>6</sup> Coming as it did soon after the decision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to exclude the Pokagon from the Indian Reorganization Act, this new legislation had the effect of reenergizing

---

<sup>3</sup> Donald L. Fixico, ed., *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 683-685.

<sup>4</sup> 605 Stat. 1060, 25 USC 70a et seq.

<sup>5</sup> The Act did require that the Pokagon prove that they were a legitimate, organized group of Potawatomi. That threshold for proof, however, was significantly lower than that of the Federal Acknowledgment Process.

<sup>6</sup> 605 Stat. 1060, 25 USC 70a et seq.

the tribe's political organization. Soon after hearing of the planned legislation, the band's leaders met to strategize their plan of action.

In late 1946, the Business Committee took the first step in their planned claim: hiring experienced legal counsel. After discussions with one attorney in Oregon, they contracted with an attorney from Cleveland, Ohio, who filed the claim on behalf of the Pokagon, as well as the other Potawatomi bands in Michigan and Wisconsin. After several years, however, the case was turned over to a firm in Washington, DC, which would handle the case through the initial ruling by the ICC and several appeals.<sup>7</sup>

This litigation was enormously complex, and to speak of one 'case' is extremely misleading. In reality, there were a number of distinct cases, or dockets, involved in the suit seeking monetary damages for 'unconscionable consideration' received for cessions of land in Michigan and Ohio in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit. What complicated the cases were the historical entanglements of the tribes involved, including the Potawatomi. As detailed earlier in this work, the Potawatomi had negotiated several land cession treaties with the United States, with the final 1833 Treaty of Chicago breaking the tribe into several constituent bands scattered across Michigan, Wisconsin, Kansas and Oklahoma. Long separated from one another, the bands developed their own special, often competing, interests. Other tribes involved included the Miami, Kickapoo, Ojibwa and Odawa. With each band or tribe represented by different attorneys, their arguments before the ICC came to resemble, as one historian described them, "so many gladiators

---

<sup>7</sup> James Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984), 127.

desperately defending their sponsors," each competing for the same awards, with multiple millions of dollars at stake.<sup>8</sup>

The claim proceeded over multiple decades, but the Potawatomi and their co-litigants finally won a ruling in their favor on May 11, 1978. Wading through mountains of evidence provided by legions of expert witnesses on topics encompassing Colonial History, American History, population numbers, public land policy, soil types, and the competing land valuations provided by plaintiffs and defendant, the Indian Claims Commission ruled that the fair market value of the lands ceded in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit was \$6,400,000, for which the government paid \$57,717.32. The Claims Commission ruled that the amount was "so grossly inadequate as to render the consideration unconscionable," and further ordered that the plaintiffs were entitled to recover from the government a total of \$6,350,616.00, to be divided by the total acreage controlled by each tribe at the time of the treaty (further stipulated in the settlement). The Pokagon portion of the award amounted to almost \$3,800,000.00.<sup>9</sup>

While securing a much needed influx of cash for the band, more importantly the ICC decision further legitimized the Pokagon's tribal status. Energized and empowered

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>9</sup> Hannahville Indian Community et al v. United States, 41 Ind. Cl. Comm. 327 (1978).

by the decision, the Pokagon organized for their penultimate challenge, reclaiming federal recognition as a tribe.<sup>10</sup>

### **Creating the Federal Acknowledgment Process**

"Recognition" is the legal term used to identify those Native American tribes with which the United States government acknowledges a formal government-to-government relationship.<sup>11</sup> Prior to the 1970s, tribal recognition mirrored the ebb and flow of federal Indian policies. Between the founding of the United States in 1776 and 1871, the federal government routinely recognized Indian tribes through the treaty-making process. For the Pokagon, the Chicago treaty of 1833 brought just such government recognition, as Leopold Pokagon differentiated his band of Potawatomi (the Woodland Potawatomi) from those bands living further south and west (the Prairie Potawatomi), culturally, as well as spiritually. These differences resulted not only in Pokagon's band of Michigan Indians establishing their own unique identity within the larger Potawatomi Nation, but also resulted in their being mentioned specifically in an addendum to the Chicago treaty,

---

<sup>10</sup> Although the case was decided in favor of the Pokagon and other plaintiffs in 1978, the tribe would not receive the final financial settlement until 1985. See: Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Act and The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Act: Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 10 February 1994, 37. According to testimony at the Senate hearing, each Pokagon member received two checks, one in 1984 and one in 1985, totaling \$1,900.00. At the time, there "was in the neighborhood of 2,000" tribal members. The total award is thus approximately \$3,800,000.00.

<sup>11</sup> Alva C. Mather, "Old Promises: The Judiciary and the Future of Native American Federal Acknowledgment Litigation," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 151 (2003): 1828; William W. Quinn, Jr., "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes: The Historical Development of a Legal Concept," *The American Journal of Legal History*, 4 (October 1990): 333.

giving the band de jure recognition as a tribal entity, with the sovereign rights imbued by that status.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the early history of the United States, the existence of independent Indian nations within the territorial boundaries of the country, and particularly within those of the states, was an especially contentious issue. In the landmark Cherokee Cases of the 1830s, John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, attempted to codify the relationship between the tribes and the government once and for all. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, Marshall, while acknowledging that a government-to-government relationship existed between the tribes and the United States, doubted whether tribes could rightfully be considered "foreign nations." His definition, that tribes might "more correctly, perhaps, be denominated domestic dependent nations," whose "relationship with the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian," established the parameters of federal responsibility over Indian affairs. While remaining independent from state laws and regulations and retaining the right to govern their internal affairs, American Indian tribes thereafter fell under the absolute power of Congress.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, save Marshall's singular definition of the relationship between the United States and Indian tribes, there is very little else in either the foundational documents of the United States (the Articles of Confederation or the Constitution) or its statutes (for instance the six Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts) which clearly stipulates

---

<sup>12</sup> Mark Edwin Miller, *Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 25-26; See Chapter Three of this dissertation for more information on Leopold Pokagon and the 1833 Treaty of Chicago.

<sup>13</sup> *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, cited in Quinn, "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes, 344; Vine Deloria, Jr., and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 29-30.

how to *define* an Indian tribe. While reserving for itself plenary power in dealing with Indian tribes or nations, Congress maintained that these laws applied simply to "any Indian nation or tribe of Indians," leaving tribal recognition an arbitrary proposition, at best.<sup>14</sup>

With the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934 (IRA), the government, in the form of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), again found itself struggling with the definition of what was a recognized tribe or band, eligible to organize under the IRA. Along with the criteria included within the text of the Act, it was during this period that lawyers for the BIA first articulated a legal principle which continues to affect current acknowledgment policy, stating that tribes had to have an unbroken existence in order to qualify for recognition, and thus be eligible for reorganization. In his landmark *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, Felix Cohen wrote that "it is not enough that [a tribe] existed at some time in [the] remote past...A particular tribe or band may well pass out of existence as such in the course of time."<sup>15</sup> It was this principle which the government used to strip the Pokagon of their tribal status, declaring that, by remaining in Michigan (as stipulated in the Chicago Treaty of 1833), they had separated themselves from the corporate body of the tribe and had "lost [their] identity with the [Potawatomi] tribe."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, 26-27.

<sup>15</sup> Felix Cohen, *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1945), 271.

<sup>16</sup> Zimmerman to Hoffman, 10 January 1941. See Chapter Five of this dissertation for more information on the Pokagon Potawatomi and the Indian Reorganization Act.



The 1950s saw the termination of tribal status become federal Indian policy, with over 100 tribes losing their tribal status. Additionally, over 30,000 American Indians migrated from their reservations to urban areas, in part under the Relocation Act of 1954. Together, the unrecognized, terminated, and relocated created an underclass of Indians, unable to access benefits of federal Indian programs, benefits provided *de rigueur* to reservation Indians. Many of these groups began to band together in pan-Indian organizations, such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).<sup>17</sup>

Organizations such as the NCAI, as well as the Native American Rights Fund, the National Indian Youth Council, and particularly the American Indian Movement fueled a resurgence of Indian cultural identity in the 1960s and an increased activism and mobilization to reclaim federal acknowledgment and the political and economic sovereignty it promised. Federal Indian policy shifted once again, this time back to an acknowledgment of the 'wardship' status of Native peoples, and the government's responsibilities under that relationship first articulated by John Marshall. However, Congress would not move to address the status of unrecognized tribes until the 1970s.

Reclaiming federal acknowledgment as a tribal entity would guarantee access to numerous government programs for housing, health services and education, as well as grants for economic development. Nevertheless, renewing a wardship relationship within a patriarchal federal system to achieve the goals of political sovereignty and economic self-determination seems contradictory on its face. However, federal recognition would reestablish the government-to-government relationship between the United States and the newly acknowledged tribe, a matter of pride for indigenous peoples. Although members

---

<sup>17</sup> Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, 30-31.

of these tribes had always known they were Indians, reaffirmation of that identity at the federal level spoke deeply to Native Americans as a public, as well as legal, acknowledgment of their continued existence, which had been denied them, sometimes for centuries. It was a matter of respect, manifest in official government recognition.

Federal acknowledgment policy grew not only out of the activism of the 1960s, but from the fallout of several lawsuits brought by unrecognized tribes. Without a defined administrative process to achieve recognition through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the courts once again found themselves in the position of making Indian policy in opinions recognizing long-forgotten treaty obligations in issues ranging from fishing rights to land rights.<sup>18</sup> However, despite the many claims decided in favor of an unrecognized tribe, there were many more claims denied by "skeptical white jurists" who, lacking an understanding of Native American history, felt they were dealing with groups "no more entitled to all the benefits the government has given them than the rest of the people."<sup>19</sup> In the 1970s, petitions to the Bureau of Indian Affairs from unrecognized tribes mounted, as federal recognition would certainly bolster their standing in the courts. In 1976, the BIA and Department of the Interior, overwhelmed by these requests, issued a moratorium on any further acknowledgment cases.<sup>20</sup>

During this time, Congress created the American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIPRC), which held hearings of its own to deal with the claims and status of unrecognized tribes. Antagonism towards commission members from unacknowledged

---

<sup>18</sup> Quinn, "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes," 362.

<sup>19</sup> Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-37; Quinn, "Federal Acknowledgment of American Indian Tribes," 363.

tribes from those members belonging to tribes with federal recognition hobbled its effectiveness, but the commission still managed, through its final report issued in 1977 to spur congressional action.<sup>21</sup>

South Dakota Senator James Abourezk sponsored several bills aimed at establishing congressional procedures for recognizing tribes. Under the proposed legislation, an independent Office of Acknowledgment would be established to examine claims from unrecognized groups. Petitioners would need to meet only three of seven criteria. If a group could show that they had once been party to a federal treaty, legislative act or executive order related to them, this would be considered *prima facie* evidence of their tribal status. Significantly, the burden of proof fell to the Office of Acknowledgment to prove they had not continuously existed as a tribe after these acts. However, in the face of strong opposition from the BIA and Interior Department, as well as from reservation Indians, none of the proposed legislation was passed into law.<sup>22</sup>

To prevent any further threat to its hegemony over tribal recognition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs immediately began formulating its own administrative procedure for federal acknowledgment. The new rules were first published in June 1977. The BIA was immediately flooded with objections to the proposed criteria from pan-tribal organizations and scholars alike. Many feared that the initial criteria were too liberal and would award recognition to spurious groups eager to "cash in" on federal benefits. Others feared an erosion of hard-won tribal sovereignty if the public came to view tribal

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

organizations as mere "social clubs," rather than "governments with inherent rights."<sup>23</sup> Some worried that the recognition of a large number of small tribes "would invoke a very serious budgetary impact."<sup>24</sup> Additionally, recognition cuts to the very core of Indian identity; leaders of many federally acknowledged tribes expressed their concerns over the dilution of the cultural significance of Indian status should the bar for recognition be set too low.<sup>25</sup>

In the end, the regulations published on September 5, 1978, and originally promulgated as 25 C.F.R. 54, were considerably less liberal than those originally proposed by Congress. In establishing the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR), the Federal Acknowledgment Process (FAP) required that petitioning tribes meet the following criteria in order to be federally recognized.<sup>26</sup> These were the criteria the Pokagon were bound to meet in order to reclaim their tribal status:

- a) The petitioner has been identified from historical times until the present on a substantially continuous basis as "American Indian," or "aboriginal."
- b) A substantial portion of the petitioning group inhabits a specific area or lives in a community viewed as American Indian and distinct from other populations in the area, and that its members are descendants of an Indian tribe which historically inhabited a specific area.
- c) The petitioner has maintained tribal political influence...over its members as an autonomous entity throughout history until the present.
- d) Petitioner must provide a copy of the group's present governing document.

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>24</sup> Sam Deloria, quoted in Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, 41.

<sup>26</sup> The Branch of Acknowledgment and Research was later renamed the Office of Federal Acknowledgment.

- e) Petitioner must provide a list of all known current members of the group and a copy of each available former list of members.
- f) Membership of the petitioning group [must be] composed principally of persons who are not members of any other North American Indian tribe.
- g) The petitioner is not, nor are its members, the subject of congressional legislation which has expressly terminated or forbidden the Federal relationship.<sup>27</sup>

### **Reclaiming Tribal Status**

Although losing their tribal status when they were denied permission to reorganize under the IRA was a heavy blow, it ultimately did nothing to disband the Pokagon. Unfortunately for the tribe, the climate in Washington, D.C. was such that their periodic correspondence was, for the most part, ignored. World War II was on the horizon in the 1930s, and required the country's full attention in the 1940s. The 1950s saw United States Indian policy embrace legislative termination of many recognized tribes. Thus, according to John Low, formal tribal attorney for the Pokagon, the 1950s was not a time "that was an Indian sovereignty-friendly era."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the Pokagon continued to press their claim to tribal status, in 1952 incorporating as a non-profit institution in the State of Michigan, as the Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana, Inc., to strengthen their position as an organized band. The Pokagon continued to meet regularly, voting on matters of importance to the community.

In 1964, this corporate body neglected to file the necessary annual report and fees with the State of Michigan. As a result, the corporate name became unprotected and was

---

<sup>27</sup> 25 C.F.R. 54 (1978).

<sup>28</sup> John Low, Interview for Newberry Library online exhibit, *Indians of the Midwest*, 2009. Retrieved May 13, 2015 from the World Wide Web: <http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/identities/legal-identity/video-transcript-john-low-on-pokagon-potawatomi-federal-recognition/>.

adopted by a small dissident group within the band. At the time, the Pokagon governing body, the Business Committee, was dominated by men who had long been involved in tribal affairs, many having participated in efforts to organize under the Indian Reorganization Act. Some younger band members, chafing at what they saw as ineffectual leadership in prosecuting the land claim with the Indian Claims Commission, seized the name and appointed themselves as a new governing body. After several disruptive years, however, the general membership would no longer stand for what they saw as the dissident's illegitimate tactics. At a meeting on July 12, 1969, the band overwhelmingly rejected this rump organization. The general membership elected a new Business Committee, to which only one member of the dissident group was elected. While this was a difficult transitional period for the Pokagon, the result was a new, younger, better-educated set of committee members. Reconstituted as the Potawatomi Indian Nation, Inc., this new group set to work on tribal business, including working to secure grants from the State of Michigan to assist with tribal programs addressing pressing needs related to housing, education and health care.<sup>29</sup>

With the creation within the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR), the band began to research the viability of submitting a petition for recognition through the administrative process. Having made the

---

<sup>29</sup> Clifton, *The Pokagons*, 129-130. Although continuing to be known informally as the Pokagon, the band would officially be known as the Potawatomi Indian Nation, Inc. until 1994, when they were awarded federal recognition as the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

decision to pursue acknowledgment through this process, the Pokagon submitted their letter of intent to file the petition to the BAR November 17, 1981.<sup>30</sup>

The federal acknowledgment process is an arduous undertaking, and is often viewed by the petitioning tribe as an adversarial process. The Pokagon disliked the process, which required tribes to prove their existence, something which they found very insulting. Because the Pokagon, as part of the Potawatomi Nation, had been party to eleven treaties from 1795 to 1833, and had continued to be recognized as a tribe through the payment of annuities due, the administrative process seemed to them to be a re-recognition of a relationship which already existed. Daniel Rapp, Chairman of the Potawatomi Indian Nation, Inc. at the time of their petition, was quite candid in an interview with Michiana Public Broadcasting, the Public Broadcasting Service affiliate in South Bend, Indiana. In the program, *To Be Called A Nation*, Rapp said the process "stinks," but "it is there and we're going to use it."<sup>31</sup> Tom Topash, Vice-Chairman at the time of the petition, was somewhat more tactful. "We know we're a community," he stated in the same program, "it is the set of hoops that we must jump through" in order to secure federal recognition.<sup>32</sup>

The research and preparation of the full petition took the tribe an additional seven years. The Pokagon sought help from outside 'experts' to assist with the report, to insure

---

<sup>30</sup> Philip V. Alexis, Dewitt, MI to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, DC, 17 November 1981, Petition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians To the Secretary of the Interior for Acknowledgment of Tribal Status, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Rapp and Tom Topash, quoted in *To Be Called a Nation*, written and produced by Tom Zapiecki, 29 min., Michiana Public Broadcasting Corporation, 1991, digital video disc.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

that there would be no question that they met all of the BAR criteria, that there would be no gaps in their history. During the administrative phase of their quest for federal acknowledgment, the Pokagon hired James A. Clifton, a "widely-respected expert on the Potawatomi Indians."<sup>33</sup> Clifton, an anthropologist at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, had studied the Kansas Potawatomi extensively, and worked with the Pokagon during their Indian Claims Commission suit in the 1960s. He was tasked with writing an ethnohistory of the Pokagon band. His work, published as *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley*, was submitted as part of the petition, intended as 'scientific' proof of the band's continuous existence as a distinct, recognizable unit from historical times to the present, as required by the BAR criteria.

The body of the final petition filed by the Pokagon was a modest fifty-three pages long. However, it was supported by "voluminous appendices," bringing the page count for the entire petition to an astounding several thousand pages.<sup>34</sup> The first three pages of the body includes a cover page, the official "Petition for Federal Acknowledgment of Tribal Status" document, and a "Certification" page, stating that the petition was duly adopted by the tribal council. The remaining fifty-two pages are narrative, containing the Pokagon response to all of the criteria outlined in the previous section. It begins by addressing Section 83.7 (a) of the criteria, defining the Pokagon as the "modern-day

---

<sup>33</sup> Petition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians To the Secretary of the Interior for Acknowledgment of Tribal Status, 4, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

<sup>34</sup> R. Lee Fleming, Director, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, Washington, D.C., to Lisa Cushing-Davis, Pleasant Prairie, WI, 6 November 2015, author's collection. Per Mr. Fleming, the entire petition of the Pokagon filled five archival boxes, or over two linear feet of documentation. Estimating 1,800 pages per linear foot, the total number of pages would be approximately 3,600. Carolina Records Center "How Much Paper Do I Have?" <http://www.carolinadocuments.com/how-much-paper-do-i-have/> (accessed April 5, 2016).



political [successors] to the Indians, who were signatories to the treaty of September 26, 1833," the treaty which specifically allowed the Catholic Potawatomi to remain in Michigan.<sup>35</sup> It goes on to briefly sketch the history of the Potawatomi Nation from the time of first contact through the time of the petition, detail the band's repeated identification by federal authorities (in the form of treaties and annuity receipts), and document their longstanding relationship as an Indian group with the State of Michigan. It continues to cite historical relationships with local units of government, local parishes of the Roman Catholic Church, and local schools. Additionally, it describes identification of the band as an Indian entity by anthropologists, historians, newspapers and books, as well as national Indian organizations and other, recognized tribes. The petition addresses each of the remaining criteria in turn.

The narrative is supported by twenty appendices, referenced in footnotes throughout the document. These range from copies of all treaties to which the Potawatomi generally, and the Pokagon specifically, were party (Appendix I), to annuity records and receipts (Appendix V); from historians accounts of the Pokagon Band (Appendix X) to its corporate bylaws and proposed constitution (Appendix XV and XVIII).<sup>36</sup> Also included were numerous maps (Appendix XIX), as well as the band's current membership roll (Appendix XX).

---

<sup>35</sup> Petition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians To the Secretary of the Interior for Acknowledgment of Tribal Status, 3, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

<sup>36</sup> These include not only the work commissioned by James R. Clifton, but those of Helen Hornbeck Tanner, Cornelia Steketee Hulst, Cecilia Bain Buechner, and Everett Claspy, all of whom are previously referenced in this work.

After a petition was submitted to the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, a team was appointed to evaluate its merit, consisting of an ethnohistorian, an anthropologist, and a genealogist. What should be a straightforward review of the documentation in a timely fashion can in reality take a considerable period of time, depending on the number of petitions that the BAR has under review at the time. After the initial review of the petition, "a limited review conducted over a period of several weeks" a letter of obvious deficiencies is issued.<sup>37</sup> The petitioning group submits additional data, at which time the petition is placed on active consideration and is evaluated in depth by the BAR staff. A proposed finding is then issued, followed by a comment period, to allow any interested parties to remark upon the proposal. At the end of this period, the BAR would issue their final determination. The Department of Interior estimated that this entire process should take a relatively modest two to two and a half years (24 - 30 months). For the Pokagon, the initial review of their petition took just over fifteen months.<sup>38</sup> They received their letter of deficiencies on February 22, 1990.

Despite having tendered a fifty-three page petition supported by thousands of pages of documentary evidence, the BAR found numerous 'deficiencies' in the Pokagon's submittal. Many of these stemmed from its heavy reliance on Clifton's book, which cited

---

<sup>37</sup> Hazel E. Elbert, Deputy to the Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs (Tribal Services), Washington, D.C. to Daniel Rapp, Dowagiac, MI, 22 February 1990, Petition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians To the Secretary of the Interior for Acknowledgment of Tribal Status, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

<sup>38</sup> While the review process should take place at all deliberate speed, some tribes have endured the process for up to nine years. As of 2001, the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research still processed, on average, two petitions per year. The Bureau of Indian Affairs argues that a lack of funding prevents hiring additional personnel to speed the process. As of November 2001, the BAR consisted of eleven staff member. See Jennifer P. Hughes, "Primer on Federal Recognition and Current Issues Affecting the Process," (NCAI Winter Session, February 2001), retrieved January 17, 2016 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.msaj.com/papers/fedrecnov.htm>.

a large number of sources not readily available to BAR staff. Copies of referenced newspaper articles were requested, along with copies of the relevant pages from nine separate archival sources and several books. The BAR also requested transcripts of the oral histories quoted in Clifton's work (or other documentation to substantiate statements made in the petition) and additional minutes from the Pokagon Business Committee.<sup>39</sup>

The Branch of Acknowledgment and Research also had questions regarding Pokagon responses to specific criteria. The BAR staff needed a better description of the social relations and communal activities of the Pokagon, in both their modern and historic community, as well as an estimate of the number of community members who participated in such activities. Not satisfied with the evidence submitted supporting the narrative which stated that the Business Committee had been in continual existence under both the 1952 corporate charter and the 1969 revision to the Articles of Incorporation, BAR staff wanted more information on the rump organization to assist them "in understanding the political process of this particular dispute." BAR staff also requested additional samples of minutes from Business Committee meetings, not to substantiate that the committee met monthly, or that the meetings were open to the general membership, but for further "insight" into the kinds of other internal issues the committee handled between 1899-1950.<sup>40</sup>

In their petition, the Pokagon submitted their corporate bylaws (Appendix XII), as well as their current membership roster (Appendix XX). Additionally, their narrative

---

<sup>39</sup> Elbert to Rapp, 22 February 1990.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

statement clearly defines the membership criteria used to compile the current roster, explaining the genesis of the Cadman Roll of 1895 and the Shelby Roll of 1896, and their significance as foundational membership rolls for the Pokagon. However, BAR staff requested an additional statement describing membership criteria, as well as copies of the enrollment applications for all listed members. Detailed genealogical charts would then be requested by BAR staff from "selected" families.<sup>41</sup>

Much of the new information requested by the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research was not clearly necessary to support the Pokagon petition. However, since the creation of the BAR in 1978 and the time of their filing in 1988, a transition had occurred within the Branch. During its first ten years, the BAR processed eighteen petitions, recognizing seven tribes and declining to acknowledge eleven. Although the numbers might indicate a system slanted towards denial of tribal status, historians generally concur that, at least initially, the BAR made "common-sense judgments," in line with the spirit of the acknowledgment project.<sup>42</sup>

However, the process began to stall in the late 1980's, with only three additional tribes receiving federal recognition between 1988 and 1994. The slowdown can be blamed on a number of factors. Chief among these is the perceived conflict of interest within the Bureau of Indian Affairs as it related to increasing the number of federally recognized tribes, and thus the burden on an already limited budget. Chronic underfunding of the BAR program led to critical staffing issues. While the Branch was

---

<sup>41</sup> Petition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians To the Secretary of the Interior for Acknowledgment of Tribal Status, 49, 51-53, Office of Federal Acknowledgment, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Elbert to Rapp, 22 February 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Miller, *Forgotten Tribes*, 52.

originally intended to operate with four full teams (each with an ethnohistorian, an anthropologist, and a genealogist), it has consistently "hobbled along" with from one to three teams.<sup>43</sup>

Events outside the BAR also contributed to the diminishing pace at which it reviewed petitions. Treaty rights claims over land, fishing and hunting contributed to growing public opposition to the special status, and accruing 'special rights' of Indian tribes. What created the most controversy, however, was Indian gaming. Although it passed through both Houses of Congress with minimal opposition (passed by voice vote in the Senate; yea-nay vote in the House, 323-84), the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 immediately saw wide-spread public hostility, as it was perceived as another undeserved privilege granted to the Indians. Public resistance only grew as the number of petitions to the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research increased dramatically. These controversies led the BAR to increase their scrutiny of acknowledgment cases, requiring rising levels of documentation from petitioning groups. This was the quagmire into which the Pokagon application was introduced.<sup>44</sup>

For the Pokagon, the letter of deficiencies required a decision: should the band respond with the requested information and chose to pursue administrative acknowledgment through the full, active consideration process, or should they proceed with 'Plan B,' the legislative path to achieving federal recognition, which would bypass

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 50-53; Congress, House, Rep. Upton of Michigan speaking for the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6726.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 53; Pub. L. 100-497, 25 U.S.C. 2701 et. seq.

the BAR entirely and petition Congress directly for acknowledgment.<sup>45</sup> While this would require introduction of legislation into both Houses of Congress, and support from their congressmen and senators, the legislative path might ultimately prove to be less burdensome. Faced with an either/or decision, the Pokagon chose both.

The tribe began preparing their response to the BAR, a process that took over a year and a half. Many tribal members were involved in the preparation of the response; with so much documentary evidence required, the project was a massive undertaking for the small tribe. The documentation was received by the BAR on September 18, 1991, and a letter issued on December 4, 1991, acknowledging receipt of their response. The Pokagon were told that their petition would be placed on active consideration on November 18, 1991, and were advised that acknowledgment regulations require that a proposed finding be published within one year of the date the petition reaches active consideration status. In a 1991 interview, Carl Shaw, Director of Public Affairs for the Bureau of Indian Affairs stated that the Pokagon should have a final determination on their petition no later than fall 1992.<sup>46</sup>

During this time, members of the Business Committee also began laying the ground work for the alternate, legislative path to acknowledgment. They first contacted Michigan Indian Legal Services, from whom they received advice and support. In 1991,

---

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Rapp, quoted in *To Be Called A Nation*.

<sup>46</sup> Congress, House, Rep. Upton of Michigan speaking for the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6725; Carl Shaw quoted in *To Be Called A Nation*; The Pokagon Band petition was finally placed on active consideration on January 28, 1994. See: Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Act and The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Act: Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 10 February 1994, 26.

they also traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with their congressional representatives. Members of the delegation which traveled to Washington included Tribal Chairman Daniel Rapp, Vice-Chairman Tom Topash, Tribal Historian Mike Daugherty, Rachel (Rae) Daugherty, Tribal Treasurer, and tribal council member Bob Moody.

The Pokagon delegation first met with Representative Dale Kildee (7th District, MI), who supported the Pokagon in their administrative efforts, but who felt that introducing legislation could work to speed the BAR process. The Pokagon received the same warm welcome from Representatives Tim Roemer (3rd District, IN) and Fred Upton (4th District, MI). Roemer understood that the Pokagon weren't "looking for a handout," but simply for access to the benefits that were due them as a federally recognized tribe, a status he thought they deserved. Upton told the group that should they make the decision to pursue the legislative process he would "be glad to sponsor" the legislation in the House of Representatives.<sup>47</sup>

Opposition to their legislative efforts was anticipated, but the Pokagon had spent decades building support, both within Congress, and within their community in Michigan and Indiana. On July 9, 1992, the Pokagon held a community forum to discuss establishing a substance abuse center for Native Americans in southwest Michigan. In the promotional materials for the forum, the need for such a center was clearly argued. Pokagon efforts to reclaim their tribal status were highlighted, as was the fact that the

---

<sup>47</sup> Kildee, Roemer and Upton were all interviewed for, and their comments appear in *To Be Called a Nation*.

Pokagon could not qualify, at the time, for funding under the programs established for Native American health services.<sup>48</sup>

The Pokagon also created promotional materials in the early 1990s that were distributed throughout their community. One eight-page pamphlet introduced the band to the community, and included a brief summary of their past. It went on to describe current tribal programs and activities, such as their jobs training program and educational programs. It included information on their basketry cooperative, noting that, to the Pokagon, basketry was not simply a craft but "a symbol of...cultural identity." It closed with their argument for federal recognition. "U.S. Recognition," it stated, "does not establish Tribal sovereignty. That exists in the heart and soul of the Pokagon community." However, the pamphlet argued that federal recognition *would* improve the tribe's access to programs and services provided to recognized tribes, which in turn would "strengthen the Tribe's ability to protect, to promote and work on behalf of our values, our tradition and our people." It would "permit [the] Tribe to promote independence through economic development and...re-take charge of our own destiny." Although brief in nature, the pamphlet clearly delineates the contours of sovereignty, economic and political self-determinism, which would be vested in the tribe through federal acknowledgment.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Pamphlet, "Establishing a Substance Abuse Center for Native American Indians in Southwest Michigan," Eastern Mission Group History of Association with Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 64/06 [was 13/09], 1992-1995, Archives of the University of Notre Dame.

<sup>49</sup> Pamphlet, "Potawatomi Indian Nation, Inc." p. 6, Eastern Mission Group History of Association with Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 64/06 [was 13/09], 1992-1995, Archives of the University of Notre Dame.



During this time, Tribal Council members also gave interviews to newspaper and television reporters alike. Each individual stressed the importance of recognition to the economic development of the tribe. Rae Daugherty spoke with the *South Bend Tribune*, saying that "With federal recognition, more funds would be available to have programs to increase education among Native Americans."<sup>50</sup> Tribal Chairman Daniel Rapp told the local PBS affiliate that the object was to be able to "set-up programs or...develop our own businesses and be self-sufficient and independent."<sup>51</sup> Mike Daugherty, Tribal Historian, echoed Rapp's words. "We'd like to acquire land...a land base," to establish businesses. Daugherty stressed that this would not simply benefit the tribe, but would also bring people in from the community. He went on to say that "employment for our people" was a priority for the tribe, as was the means to "provide housing for tribal elders, and to provide an educational for the children."<sup>52</sup>

As a result of their promotional campaign, articles of support began to appear in state and local newspapers, such as the *South Bend Tribune*, the *Herald-Palladium* (St. Joseph/Benton Harbor, MI), and the *Indianapolis Star*. Not surprisingly, given their long history with the Roman Catholic Church, the band received the endorsement of the local parish, as well as the sisters of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ mission group in Donaldson, Indiana, who organized a letter writing campaign to the congressional

---

<sup>50</sup> *South Bend Tribune*, 13 November 1988, B4.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Rapp quoted in *To Be Called a Nation*.

<sup>52</sup> Mike Daugherty quoted in *To Be Called a Nation*.

delegation for the Pokagon.<sup>53</sup> This support translated into the assistance the Pokagon received from Reps. Upton and Roemer, and Senators Levin and Riegle.

Although both congressmen would continue to extol the "justice" inherent in restoring federal recognition to the Pokagon, a status which had been "arbitrarily" taken from them during the IRA era, there may have been deeper, fiscal motivations behind their support. In 1991, when the Pokagon first traveled to Washington, the nation was experiencing its largest recession since 1982.<sup>54</sup> The early 1990s were particularly hard times for Michigan, where the unemployment rate peaked in 1992 at 9.2%, 2.5% above the national average. In the Pokagon service area of southwestern Michigan, St. Joseph, Berrien, and Cass Counties were experiencing below-average income growth, with a long-term forecast for "well-below-average" employment growth.<sup>55</sup> While the unemployment rate in Indiana was only 7%, this was still .3% above the national average. The north central area around South Bend, Indiana, (in the Pokagon service area) continued to feel the full effects of the recession, but with a somewhat more positive outlook.<sup>56</sup> At the time, the Pokagon, incorporated as the non-profit Potawatomi Nation, Inc., were receiving monies from the states for health, education and housing assistance

---

<sup>53</sup> Eastern Mission Group History of Association with Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 64/06 [was 13/09], 1992-1995, Archives of the University of Notre Dame.

<sup>54</sup> The Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, "1990-92 Early 19902 Recession," Slaying the Dragon of Debit: Fiscal Politics & Policy from the 1970s to the Present, <http://vm136.lib.berkeley.edu/BANC/ROHO/projects/debt/1990srecession.html> (accessed April 3, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Public Sector Consultants, "Appendix L: Regional Economies in Michigan," Michigan in Brief <http://www.michiganinbrief.org/edition06/contents.htm> (accessed April 30, 2016).

<sup>56</sup> Indiana Business Research Center, Indiana University School of Business, "The 1991 Midyear Outlook," *Indiana Business Review* 66 (Summer1991), 3.

for tribal members. Should the Pokagon Potawatomi have their tribal status restored, the burden to provide these benefits would shift from the states to the federal government, providing at least some small relief to the states. This fact would surely not have escaped Congressmen Upton and Roemer.

The Pokagon waited patiently for the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research to place their petition on active consideration and to render its decision. When no decision had been reached by the fall of 1992, their patience expired; on October 6, 1992, Rep. Upton and Rep. Roemer introduced H.R. 6205, a bill to restore federal services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians in the House of Representatives, with Upton stating that the "bottom line is the tribe needs to be recognized."<sup>57</sup> The wheels of government turn slowly, however; it would take nearly two additional years, and two Congresses, before the Pokagon would realize their goal.

Reps. Upton and Roemer first introduced a bill to restore federal services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the House of Representatives during the second session of the 102nd Congress, October 6, 1992. As written, the bill would restore Pokagon tribal status, granting them access to federal services generally available to other Indian tribes. It would also define their service area to include most of their ancestral homelands: Allegan, Berrien, Van Buren, and Cass counties in Michigan and La Porte, St. Joseph, Elkhart, Starke, Marshall, and Kosciusko counties in Indiana. Additionally,

---

<sup>57</sup> Rep. Fred Upton quoted in *To Be Called a Nation*.

the bill stipulated that the Bureau of Indian Affairs would acquire a land base for the tribe, to be held in trust by the United States.<sup>58</sup>

The bill was referred to the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs for review the same day that it was introduced. Unfortunately for the Pokagon, time was not on their side, as the 102nd Congress would end January 3, 1993. With the usual recess in December for the holidays, that effectively left a short two month window for the bill to make its way through committee and both house of Congress. Such a rapid review was highly unlikely, and the bill died in committee.<sup>59</sup>

The identical bill was reintroduced in the House of Representatives during the first session of the 103rd Congress on February 4, 1993, again co-sponsored by Reps. Upton and Roemer (H.R. 878). Again, the bill was immediately referred to committee, this time to the House Committee on Natural Resources. From there, it was referred to the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs on March 2, 1993. A hearing for the bill was scheduled to be held on September 17, 1993.<sup>60</sup>

A companion bill was introduced in the Senate on May 28, 1993 (S. 1066), co-sponsored by Senators Donald Riegle (D-MI) and Carl Levin (D-MI). In the Senate, the bill was read twice and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs. A Senate hearing for the bill was scheduled for February 10, 1994.

---

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Congress, House, H.R. 6205, A bill to restore Federal services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1992. Retrieved from the World Wide Web 15 December 2015: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/102nd-congress/house-bill/6205?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22pokagon%22%5D%7D&resultIndex=4>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Congress, House, H.R. 878, A bill to restore Federal services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., 1993. Retrieved from the World Wide Web 15 December 2015: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/878?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22pokagon%22%5D%7D&resultIndex=3>

The text for the House and Senate versions of the bill, as introduced, were identical. Each consisted of 9 Sections. Section 1, Findings, in ten paragraphs provides a brief history of the Pokagon band and justification for the bill: the treaties with the United States to which the Pokagon are political successors, the amendment to the 1833 Treaty of Chicago which allowed the Pokagon to remain in Michigan, their administrative termination in 1939, and their continuous dealings with various branches of government from 1795 to the present.

Section 2, Federal Recognition, in one brief paragraph states what the Pokagon had been working for nearly 60 years to achieve: "Federal recognition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians is hereby affirmed." Sections 3 through 9 detail the services available to the Pokagon as a recognized tribe (including the establishment of a land base, to be held in trust by the United States), their service area, as well as the requirements of acknowledgment (membership, constitution, and governing body). The bill's eight pages would re-establish the government-to-government relationship between the Pokagon and the United States, and restore the tribal sovereignty taken from the Pokagon in 1939. No less important, it would recognize the band's identity as Indians, an affirmation whose significance to individual band members cannot be understated.

However, the bills each still had a long path to follow to passage. The first milestone along that path was the hearing of the House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs for H.R. 878, held September 17, 1993. Although the bill did pass through the subcommittee and was passed for consideration to the full Committee on Natural Resources, it was never considered by the full committee.

Although held on different dates, and with different key players, both the hearing in the House and the hearing of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, held February 10, 1994, fundamentally covered the same ground. Both the House subcommittee and Senate committee held combined hearings on the bill to restore federal services to the Pokagon, as well as to reaffirm and clarify the federal recognition status of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, all three tribes located in Michigan, all three having been denied the opportunity to reorganize in the 1930s under the Indian Reorganization Act.<sup>61</sup> Each hearing saw essentially the same witnesses, the same prepared statements, and the same documentary evidence submitted.<sup>62</sup>

It is significant that both the Pokagon and the Odawa were both pursuing recognition at the same time, through the legislative process. Each of these groups had followed a similar historical journey, with each turning to Roman Catholic missions as a way to manage the nineteenth century assimilation programs of the United States, and to avoid removal. In fact, under the 1833 treaty, the Pokagon were to remove to the Little Traverse Odawa Reservation, as previous discussed. Each of the groups resided in the lower peninsula of Michigan, and had had their tribal status administrative terminated when they were not permitted to reorganize under the Indian Reorganization Act. Yet, each group maintained their tribal identity under challenging conditions. In the midst of an economic recession, it is perhaps not surprising that the Michigan congressional

---

<sup>61</sup> Only those portions of the reports which deal with the Pokagon Band will be discussed in this dissertation.

<sup>62</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Act and The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Act: Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 10 February 1994.

delegation would support their recognition efforts as a way to solve its own 'Indian Problem.'

Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs at the time of the Senate hearing, was not in attendance, his presence being required on the Senate floor for another piece of legislation. However, in a prepared statement included in the report, Inouye expressed the committee's deep concern regarding allegations of "inequitable historical treatment by the Federal Government" as well as "wide fluctuations in Federal Indian policy" as the root cause for the current unacknowledged status of the Michigan Indian tribes in question. He welcomed the testimony from the tribal government representatives, as well as those from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Inouye also expressed his hope that "when the committee takes action...the Bureau of Indian Affairs will put aside any procedural objections and work...to insure the proper exercise of the trust responsibility of the United States," a statement which gave some indication of the mood of the committee and its members.<sup>63</sup> Vice-Chairman of the committee, John McCain (R-AZ), chaired the hearing, and after brief opening remarks in which he expressed frustration with the current acknowledgment processes, he welcomed each of the day's speakers in turn.<sup>64</sup>

Sponsors of S. 1066, as well as H.R. 878, appeared before the committee. Sens. Levin and Riegle spoke in support of the legislation, as did Rep. Upton. Each gave brief oral testimony, with Rep. Upton submitting more extensive written remarks to be included in the record. All three men spoke of the long historical roots of the Pokagon,

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

with both Sen. Levin and Rep. Upton calling for Congress to bestow "recognition justice" which had been too long denied the Pokagon Potawatomi.<sup>65</sup>

The proceedings became somewhat heated during the oral statement of Debra Maddox, Acting Director, Office of Tribal Services for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Maddox testified that the BIA had no objections to the legislation to restore tribal status to the Pokagon. However, she did recommend that the Pokagon complete the administrative process, stating that she believed the review of their petition would be completed by July 1994. Sen. McCain asked how long the Pokagon petition had been under active consideration, that period following preliminary review of the documented petition, which, by statute, is required to be completed within one year after the documented petition is completed to the petitioner's satisfaction. Maddox answered January 28. McCain asked if that was 1993, to which Maddox replied that it was actually January 28, 1994. McCain then asked how long the Pokagon petition had been pending, knowing from the documentation submitted to the Committee that the tribe had received notification from the BAR that active consideration was to have begun November 18, 1991. When Maddox could not immediately answer, McCain chastised her for not having the information readily available. He went on to "assure" Ms. Maddox that the committee prioritized getting "this whole process of Federal recognition into some kind of order."<sup>66</sup>

Following testimony from Ms. Maddox, Senator McCain then recognized the panel representing the Pokagon. Appearing for the tribe before the committee were Tribal Chairman Joseph Winchester, Treasurer Rachel Daugherty, and Tribal Historian Mike

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 21-24; 28-29; 50-60.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 26-27; 30.



Daugherty. Because of time constraints, the panel was given 30 minutes for their oral statements, but Sen. McCain was at pains to assure the panel that the committee was "very well aware" of their testimony from the written statements that were submitted as part of the record. He apologized for having to cut the hearing short, noting that he hoped that did not "offend" anyone.<sup>67</sup> To say that the Pokagon received a cordial welcome before the committee would be to understate their reception.

Each member of the panel gave brief oral statements. Joseph Winchester gave very moving testimony, speaking of the benefits currently denied the Pokagon and the effects on tribal members. He talked of the effects of the lack of health care, because, as an unrecognized tribe, the Pokagon did not qualify for benefits from the Indian Health Service. He spoke about the poor educational opportunities for "the babies," the children of tribal members, because the Pokagon did not qualify for benefits under the Indian Education Act. And he spoke of not being able to provide adequate housing for tribal elders because, again, the Pokagon did not qualify for benefits under the Housing Act of 1937. These were the priorities for the Pokagon according to Winchester. Federal acknowledgment would provide the means to exercise not only political, but economic self-determination, would provide the tribe the means to take care of their members.<sup>68</sup>

Equally moving were the statements from Mike Daugherty, under questioning from Sen. McCain. When asked how the Pokagon people survived in the twentieth century without benefits or services from the federal government, Daugherty described a resourceful people, but a people on the edge of subsistence. Those that were lucky

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 31-32

enough - and educated enough - to find gainful employment worked in construction and in the factories of the area, before those jobs disappeared. Others practiced traditional handicrafts, making black ash baskets, traditional beadwork and appliques, which they sold. Others trapped and sold the fur. They hunted and fished. In short, "if there was anything they could do" to eke out a living, "they did it."<sup>69</sup> Federal recognition would resolve many of these issues, stated Rachel (Rae) Daugherty. The tribe had been self-sufficient when it had a land base. "Today," she said, "we are seeking for the same self-sufficiency."<sup>70</sup>

Prepared statements for the record came from Winchester, Rachel Daugherty, and Mike Daugherty, but also from other individuals and organizations supporting Pokagon tribal restoration, such as James Keedy, representing the Michigan Indian Legal Services, Dr. James McClurken, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Michigan State University, and Philip Alexis, Executive Director of the Confederated Historic Tribes of Michigan. Also included were numerous exhibits documenting the government-to-government relationship that historically existed between the Pokagon Potawatomi and the United States: treaties, Court of Claims documents, Senate and House Reports from the nineteenth century, and the Holst report on *Indian Groups in the State of Michigan* from the 1930s. Even a copy of James Clifton's book, *The Pokagons*, less than favorably received by the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, was included as part of the official Hearing record.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 49-497.

It can be argued that shepherding the recognition bill through both Houses of Congress proved less a convoluted process than navigating a petition through the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research. After the September 17, 1993 hearing, H.R. 878 was considered by the House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs on November 8, 1993, and ordered reported without amendment to the House Natural Resources Committee, where it remained. After its favorable reception by the Committee on Indian Affairs, S. 1066 was ordered to be reported to the Senate, without amendment, by a majority vote of a quorum present on April 13, 1994. Senator Inouye reported to the Senate on May 24, 1994. In the accompanying eleven page report (Senate Report 103-266), the Committee explained the proposed legislation to the larger Senate, including its recommendation that the bill be enacted. The bill was consequently placed on the Senate legislative calendar, awaiting consideration.<sup>72</sup>

When the bill was laid before the Senate, June 10, 1994, Wendell Ford (D-KY), offered, for Sen. Inouye, an amendment to make technical changes to S. 1066, which would clarify language contained in the bill (such as adding "of 1978" to "Indian Child Welfare Act" in Section 8). The amendment was agreed to, and the bill, as amended, passed by voice vote the same day. On June 14, 1994, notice of the Senate action was sent to the House of Representatives, where it was received and considered at 10:31am. Later that same day, the House referred S. 1066 to the Committee on Natural Resources,

---

<sup>72</sup> Congress, Senate, Report 103-266, *Restoring Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., May 23, 1994.

where it was considered on June 29, 1994, and passed by voice vote. On July 25, the Committee report, with dissenting views, was presented to the full House.<sup>73</sup>

As with the Senate report, the House report explained the purpose of the proposed legislation, together with a brief background statement regarding the Pokagon which included a summary of early treaty and post-treaty relationships with the United States, the band's current organization, its culture, and a statement of its continuous existence as a tribe. It also included a statement from the Congressional Budget Committee, which reported that the bill would not result in significant costs. However, although the bill did pass through Committee by a voice vote, indicating overwhelming approval, and the House report includes the Committee recommendation that the bill be enacted by the House, there was also a statement of dissenting views included.<sup>74</sup>

The expected opposition centered not on whether the Pokagon were a tribe, but about the means employed to gain federal recognition. The Pokagon and their allies claimed that they were justified in bypassing the Federal Acknowledge Process because it was cumbersome and ineffective, "a dismal failure."<sup>75</sup> In the dissent, it was pointed out that, having twice been presented with bills to extend federal acknowledgment to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians during the previous two Congresses, the Committee had declined to exercise its authority to do so. The dissenters, who go

---

<sup>73</sup> 103rd Cong. Rec. S6779-6780 (1994); Retrieved from the World Wide Web 15 December 2015: [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).

<sup>74</sup> Congress, House, Report 103-620, *Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., July 25, 1994.

<sup>75</sup> Congress, House, Rep. Upton of Michigan speaking for the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6725

unnamed in the Committee report, argued that the majority offered no compelling reason why they should do so now. Their argument, while against extending *legislative* acknowledgment to the Pokagon, does not preclude their reclaiming tribal acknowledgment through the *administrative* process of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The dissenters reminded the majority of the situation prior to the creation of the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, when recognition could only be secured through an Act of Congress. Prior to 1978, petitions were handled "so badly and so politically" that leaders from both parties, and from Indian Country, demanded a better way - the administrative process. The dissenters urged the committee, and the House, not to return to a time when "emotional arguments [and] influential sponsors...replace merit and fact." However, their arguments did not sway the majority; by voice vote, the bill was approved by the Committee, who recommended its enactment by the House.<sup>76</sup>

The opposition continued when S. 1066 was considered on the floor of the House. On August 1, 1994, House Resolution 502 was introduced from the House Committee on Rules to allow the Speaker to declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole to consider the bill. A parliamentary device, such a declaration essentially turns the whole of the House of Representatives into one large congressional committee. A member is nominated to act as Chairman of the Committee. Normally invoked to give initial consideration to important legislation, it can serve to expedite the consideration process, which is limited to one hour, and debate over amendments occurs under a special

---

<sup>76</sup> Congress, House, Report 103-620, *Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., July 25, 1994, 11.

five-minute rule. Resolution 502 passed the House; it was under these rules that S. 1066 was considered by the House of Representatives on August 3, 1994.<sup>77</sup>

The House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole at 2:16pm. At the same time, the Speaker designated Rep. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) to act as Chairman of the Committee. General debate began at 2:17pm. Thirty minutes each was given to Sen. William Richardson (D-NM) and Sen. Craig Thomas (R-WY) for the opposition. Significantly, both senators represented states with large existing Indian reservations. As discussed earlier, leaders of many federally acknowledged tribes expressed concerns when the Federal Acknowledgment Process was initially being formulated, fearing a very serious budget impact which could mean a significant reduction in funding to programs for those tribes. Both men were apparently representing their Indian constituents, acting to limit the creation of new federal tribes to forestall this possibility. Mr. Richardson gave very brief introductory remarks, and then yielded to Mr. Thomas, who read, verbatim, the text of the dissent from H.R. 103-620. His argument remained that there was an administrative process in place for tribes to pursue acknowledgement, that the claims of bureaucratic ineptness were overstated, and that the solution to the perceived inefficiencies within the Federal Acknowledgment Process (FAP) was to reform the administrative process, not a return to the political process of legislative acknowledgment. To do anything else would be patently unfair to those tribes who, while

---

<sup>77</sup> Congress, House, Resolution 502, *Providing for Consideration of S. 1066, Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., August 3, 1994.

deserving of recognitions, did not have the powerful friends necessary to push a bill through Congress.<sup>78</sup>

Debate continued with Mr. Upton rebutting Mr. Thomas's claims regarding the speed at which the BAR processed petitions, citing the number of petitions processed in the first ten years of the FAP versus the previous six year. He cited tribes who had been waiting over thirteen years for a final determination on their petitions. Mr. Upton also pointed out the fallacy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' estimate of the time and cost involved in preparing a petition, calling the Bureau's estimate of eight months for a petitioner to complete a petition a "ludicrous attempt to avoid the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act."<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Thomas yielded time to Mr. Shays of Connecticut, who finally threw a spotlight on the elephant in the room - Indian gaming. Since its passage in 1988, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act had remained controversial at the federal, state, and particularly local level. Mr. Shay voiced the concerns of many non-Native citizens, faced with the prospect of a casino in their backyard. His argument was that "too many tribal applications around this country," were submitted in "the hope that they [the tribes] can

---

<sup>78</sup> Congress, House, Rep. Thomas of Wyoming speaking against the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6722-24, H6727.

<sup>79</sup> Congress, House, Rep. Upton of Michigan speaking for the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6725

in fact enjoy gambling revenues." He did, however, make a point to exclude the Pokagon from among those seeking recognition only for gaming's sake.<sup>80</sup>

Debate continued for approximately another twenty minutes. The arguments against passage of the bill, Mr. Shay's mention of gaming notwithstanding, were essentially that there was an administrative process in place that, while flawed, should be observed and not circumvented; that although the system was in dire need of repair, the BIA had recently finalized a number of significant new regulations designed to address many of the concerns expressed about the process. It was not the role of Congress to make decisions regarding tribal status; it was the role of Congress to fix the process so that it worked more efficiently. The statistics frequently cited by those supporting the legislative recognition progress, including Mr. Upton, were rebutted by Mr. Thomas, who provided evidence that those statistics were "patently spurious."<sup>81</sup>

Those arguing for passage of the bill contended that the process is badly flawed, that it is unfair and unworkable and unjust. During the final floor debate in the House, Mr. Upton quoted one of the principal authors of the current acknowledgment system:

The vague and subjective nature of the regulations has directly resulted in [the] need for massive amounts of time and money to prepare and evaluate a petition. The current process is impossibly slow. [At its current rate of reviewing petitions] it will take 110 years to complete [those petitions currently pending].<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Congress, House, Rep. Shays of Connecticut speaking against the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6728.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, H6724.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, H6726.



In ending his remarks, Mr. Upton stated that the Pokagon had kept their agreements with the United States, had "kept the faith" for two centuries. He asked that Congress now do the same. He concluded that restoring tribal status to the Pokagon was simply the just and right thing to do.<sup>83</sup>

Because the opposition was so strong, there was no possibility of passage by a voice vote; a roll call vote was required. Representatives cast their votes electronically. Despite the opposition, in the end S. 1066 did pass "by the Yeas and Nays," 248 - 174. The bill was presented to the President on September 14, 1994 and signed into law by President William Jefferson Clinton on Wednesday, September 21, 1994, becoming Public Law No: 103-323: An Act to Restore Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.<sup>84</sup>

### **Conclusion**

For the Pokagon, September 21, 1994 brought jubilation. Clarence White, Keeper of the Drum for the White Thunder Singers remembered his grandfather and other tribal elders going to Washington to argue their case. "They fought the darn thing for so long," he said, "and never really seen [sic] anything become of it."<sup>85</sup> Now, after nearly sixty years, their dreams to reclaim their rightful tribal status were realized. "It was an

---

<sup>83</sup> Congress, House, Rep. Upton of Michigan speaking for the bill Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Committee of the Whole, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 August 1994): H6728.

<sup>84</sup> U.S. Congress, House, S. 1066, A bill to restore Federal services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1994. Retrieved from the World Wide Web 15 December 2015: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1066/all-actions?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22pokagon%22%5D%7D&resultIndex=1>

<sup>85</sup> Clarence White quoted in *To Be Called a Nation*.

occasion of great joy [and] emotion as well," said Tribal Council member Bob Moody.<sup>86</sup> The date was celebrated as Sovereignty Day, a holiday that is celebrated each year by the tribe to this day.

What was overlooked in the arguments over fairness and justice and 'the process,' during the House debate, however, were the concerns voiced by Mr. Shays regarding the spread of Indian gaming across the country. Enacted by Congress on October 17, 1988, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) established the regulatory structure for Indian gaming, particularly casino gaming, in the United States. IGRA grew out of several legal cases in the 1970s and early 1980s, which limited state control over Indian trust lands (confirming the government-to-government relationship between recognized tribes and the United States government), and which ruled that any form of gambling that is legal in any state is also legal on Indian lands in the state - *but without any governmental restrictions*. Congress acted in 1988 to regulate what had become an explosive issue. The resulting legislation was seen as a compromise between state and non-Indian gaming interests to control gaming, and tribal interest (as well as federal interests) to promote economic development on Indian reservations. The "casino compromise," however, was a clear compromise of tribal sovereignty, imposing state regulatory power in civil regulatory laws onto Indian tribal lands which were heretofore exempt from those civil regulations. IGRA mandated that Indian tribes who wished to engage in Class III gaming

---

<sup>86</sup> Tom Yoakum, "Horizons 2015: A thousand years of history," *Leader Publications*, 26 February 2015, Retrieved 22 December 2015 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.leaderpub.com/2015/02/26/horizons-2015-a-thousand-years-of-history/>

(casino gaming) were required to negotiate a compact with the state in which their operation would be located.<sup>87</sup>

In 1981, when the Pokagon filed their letter of intent to petition with the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, gaming in Indian country consisted primarily of high-stakes bingo. Casino gaming would not explode on the scene until after passage of the IGRA in 1988, so would not have figured prominently in any plans the band initially held for economic development. However, gaming was almost certainly a consideration as the Pokagon pursued legislative recognition. By 1988, bingo alone brought in over \$110 million in gross revenue for the small number of tribes operating high stakes games. In the first five years following passage of IGRA, casino revenue would top \$1 billion annually. For a tribe sorely in need of an economic engine, one could hardly blame the Pokagon for entertaining the idea of Indian gaming.<sup>88</sup>

However, throughout their legislative acknowledgment process, from the time they first reached out to their Congressmen in 1991 through passage of the legislation, the Pokagon maintained that their interest lie solely in gaining access to federal benefits and services available only to recognized tribes. While tribal leaders did not specifically say (in any published accounts) that they would definitely not pursue gaming, privately they consistently assured both Reps. Roemer and Upton that they had no interest in gaming.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Steven Andrew Light and Kathryn R. L. Rand, *Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty: The Casino Compromise* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 2-7.

<sup>88</sup> Katherine Spilde and Jonathan B. Taylor, "Economic Evidence on the Effects of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act on Indians and Non-Indians," *UNLV Gaming Research & Review Journal* 17, issue 1 (2013): 17.

<sup>89</sup> *The Indianapolis Star*, 15 November 1994, 21.

Following restoration of their tribal status, with their political and economic sovereignty confirmed, the tribe was faced with the question of how best to bring economic opportunity to their members. John Low, former tribal attorney, says the tribe considered many options, including mining and waste management. Ultimately, none of the alternatives they explored could match the employment opportunities and the potential revenue of Indian gaming. At a meeting held November 12, 1994, the 240 tribal members in attendance voted unanimously to pursue casino gaming.<sup>90</sup>

The economic practicality of casino gaming can be easily understood and the Pokagon claim to be uninterested seems disingenuous in retrospect. This was certainly the attitude of Mr. Roemer and Mr. Upton, who jointly sent a letter to the Pokagon to that effect. Mr. Roemer was particularly incensed by the Pokagon referendum. Having vehemently denied that the Pokagon intended to pursue gaming, he was embarrassed in front of his colleagues; Roemer vowed to work hard to insure the Pokagon did not succeed in their plans. Mr. Upton was dismayed by the Pokagon vote, however issued no such challenge. Rep. Roemer stymied Pokagon attempts to build a casino in Indiana. However, the Pokagon successfully negotiated a gaming compact with the State of Michigan in 1998, and opened their Four Winds Casino in New Buffalo, Michigan on August 2, 2007.<sup>91</sup>

The Pokagon had come full circle in the twentieth century. Having seen their tribal status administratively terminated in 1939, tribal member battled for nearly 60

---

<sup>90</sup> John Low, interview by author, 12 May 2009; *The Indianapolis Star*, 13 November 1994, 20.

<sup>91</sup> *The Indianapolis Star*, 15 November 1994, 21; "Four Winds Casino Resort," *New Buffalo Michigan Travel & Visitors Guide*, Retrieved 21 January 2015 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.newbuffalo.com/casino/>

years to reclaim what was rightfully theirs - a sovereign home for their members. Says Tribal Historian Mike Daugherty, throughout the twentieth century, "the object was to integrate The People into the white society...and it didn't work. And we've learned a whole lot about how to fight." As they approached the new century, the Pokagon faced what could be the ultimate fight - how to exercise the political and economic sovereignty they worked so hard to achieve to the best advantage of their people.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

*Pokegnek pene ga edawat zhode, mine wi gage-edawat zhode.*

The Pokagons have always lived here. And will always live here.<sup>1</sup>

The Pokagon Potawatomi had come, not to the end of their journey, but to a new beginning. The restoration of their tribal status brought with it the political sovereignty inherent in the government-to-government relationship with the United States. Having to prove their identity as Indians was a bitter experience for the band. However, the benefits reaped from their years of struggle have been substantial. These include a cultural renewal, “a huge awakening,” reversing years of loss of their cultural patrimony, as well as the formation of a robust tribal government, dedicated to giving its members a better quality of life, ensuring economic independence, and most importantly, allowing the band to exercise its sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

Preservation of traditional cultural practices were of primary concern to the Pokagon. Of the cultural arts which have been practiced for centuries by the Potawatomi, black ash basketry is one of the most recognizable forms. Long before contact with

---

<sup>1</sup> "People and Places," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website <http://www.pokagon.com/gallery/people-and-places> (accessed April 4, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians*, Rita Kohn, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 33; "Pokagon Band Vision Statement," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government> (accessed April 7, 2016).

Europeans, the Anishinaabe people (the Odawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi) used the abundance of nature to supply their needs for food, and for food storage. Black ash trees supplied the bark for berry baskets, with the interior wood providing the supple splints of wood which are prized for their flexibility and durability. Woven into a variety of shapes and sizes, the baskets served an equally numerous variety of gathering and storage needs.

Black ash basket weaving was one of the traditional practices that went into decline in the 1950s, the “time of darkness” described by Rae Daugherty in the previous chapter.<sup>3</sup> It was the younger generation, the self-described “come-back generation” of Tom Topash, Philip Alexis and others who were instrumental in reviving this practice.<sup>4</sup> Alexis describes learning how to identify and prepare the black ash trees from his grandmother, however most tribal members had lost the skills. In conversation with Julia Wesaw, and other prominent tribal elders, he found that a small group had preserved the skills, but couldn’t find the wood, which Alexis could. He joined with Wesaw and others to form the Potawatomi Basketmakers Exchange in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Today, black ash basketry classes are taught through the tribal Arts Council, preserving the tradition with the younger generation, and sharing their skills with interested non-Native community members, as well.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *Always a People*, 66.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Topash quoted in “Finding our Way Home: The Great Lakes Woodland People,” *The Indiana Historian*, September 2001, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Always a People*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> “Black Ash Basket Co-Op Social,” Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/gallery/black-ash-basket-co-op-social> (accessed April 24, 2016).

The most recent threat to the tribal craft is not in its practice, but to the black ash tree itself. Since 2002, when the emerald ash borer was discovered in southeastern Michigan, the entire species has become endangered. The Pokagon Potawatomi have joined with other Anishinaabe people to preserve the black ash. They have treated over 500 trees, in hopes of preserving the seeds to replant once the ash borer threat has been eliminated.<sup>7</sup> They have also documented the harvesting, preparation, and weaving of the baskets, to insure that should they lose the trees for a generation, the skills will not again be lost.<sup>8</sup>

Language is a key element of any culture. It reflects mindset, way of thinking and values. According to PL 101-477, the Native American Language Act, American Indian languages are an integral part of the cultures and identities of Native peoples, and form the basic medium for the transmission, and thus survival, of not only Native American cultures, but their literatures, histories, religions, and political institutions, as well.<sup>9</sup> Like many tribes, the Pokagon Potawatomi came perilously close to losing their language. Generations of education at Indian boarding schools and public schools, had "erased out" the Native language from the community.<sup>10</sup>

Long before Congress moved to preserve Native languages, Mike Daugherty recognized the threat to the Potawatomi native tongue. He began by teaching a few

---

<sup>7</sup> David Johnson, "Black ash basket tradition carried on at Region of Three Oaks Museum," Harborcountrynews.com (accessed December 1, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Kelly Church, "Sustaining Black Ash Traditions," *First American Art Magazine*, Issue 2, Spring 2014, <http://firstamericanartmagazine.com/black-ash/> (accessed May 5, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> PL 101-477, October 30, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> *Always A People*, 66.



members of the community how to speak the language "properly," in a grammatically correct fashion.<sup>11</sup> Rae Daugherty spoke about Pokagon language restoration efforts at the Senate hearing for their tribal restoration.<sup>12</sup> Today, the tribe has expanded well beyond the individual efforts by members such as the Daughertys. Although as of 2016 only nine Pokagon members speak the Potawatomi language fluently, they are dedicated to extending the language skills of other tribal members. Weekly language classes are offered in Dowagiac, South Bend, and Hartford for elders, adults and children. Monthly language workshops are held at various locations within the Pokagon service area, as well. Pokagon Head Start children now learn basic Potawatomi words as part of their early childhood education. The tribe has published coloring books for use in the program, also available online for parents to use at home.<sup>13</sup>

Another cultural tradition, the Kee-Boon-Mein-Kaa Pow Wow, is held over Labor Day weekend each year. Kee-Boon-Mein-Kaa in Potawatomi means "we quit picking huckleberries." The end of the huckleberry harvest has always been a time for celebration for the Pokagon. Each family within the tribe had their own area for picking, but when the harvest was complete, all of the families came together, sharing food, song, dancing, and prayers. Philip Alexis remembers the gatherings from his childhood, but

---

<sup>11</sup> *Always A People*, 67.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Act and The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Act: Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 10 February 1994, 33.

<sup>13</sup> "Language," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/our-culture/language> (accessed May 15, 2016).

acknowledged that the practiced died out "from maybe the 1950s or late '40s."<sup>14</sup> The practice was renewed in 1985, when the first Kee-Boon-Mein-Kaa Pow Wow was held in South Bend. The gathering is now held on tribal lands in Dowagiac, where in 2015 the Pokagon hosted the thirtieth annual powwow.

Political sovereignty brought with it economic sovereignty, the ability to decide for themselves the best options for economic development on newly-designated tribal lands. While their choice to engage in casino gaming was controversial, the benefits to the tribe - and their non-Native neighbors - cannot be denied.

The infusion of cash brought by the 2009 opening of the Four Winds Casino in New Buffalo, Michigan, as well as the newer locations in Hartford and Dowagiac, have underwritten a host of programs sponsored by the tribe, allowing it to achieve its goals to provide for its members, particularly the children and the elderly. Led by an elected Tribal Council, the tribal government now oversees a host of departments, each tasked with a specific mission within the tribal community. Many of these programs are also at least partially funded through federal programs in which the Pokagon are now eligible to participate. However, gaming revenue has been the key economic resource allowing the tribe to accomplish their goals.

The Department of Language and Culture focuses on language, culture, spirituality, Potawatomi history, and education. In addition to overseeing the language programs previously described, they sponsor twice-monthly drumming workshops, as

---

<sup>14</sup> *Always A People*, 33.

well as monthly cultural workshops where tribal members can "learn about Neshnabe' [Potawatomi] traditions and lifeways."<sup>15</sup>

In line with their mission to better conditions for tribal members, particularly for the children and elders, the Pokagon organized the Departments of Education, Health Services, and Housing and Community Development, which together oversee countless programs dedicated to those most vulnerable members. Education programs are tailored to early childhood, K-12, and higher education students. The "Invest in You" program works to increase regular attendance for high school students, as well as to improve academic performance. The band offers scholarships to meet one hundred percent of the "unmet needs" of college students, including tuition, fees, room and board, books, and even travel costs to and from their chosen institution.<sup>16</sup>

The Pokagon Health Services Clinic opened in 2014. The clinic provides services to tribal members in a wide range of disciplines, including dental, pharmaceutical, medical, and behavioral health. The clinic also includes space for traditional healing, where citizens can come for "healing with...traditional medicines like sage, cedar, and sweet grass."<sup>17</sup>

The mission of the Department of Housing and Community Development is to assist tribal members in acquiring traditional mortgages, to repair or renovate citizen-owned homes, and to move tribal members from rental units into lease-to-own properties

---

<sup>15</sup> "Language and Culture," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government/departments/language-culture> (accessed May 25, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> "Education," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government/departments/education> (accessed May 25, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> "Traditional Healing," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government/departments/health-services/traditional-healing> (accessed May 25, 2016).

managed by the tribe.<sup>18</sup> Numerous programs insure that tribal members have access to safe and affordable housing, providing: down payment and loan acquisition assistance for traditional mortgages; emergency intervention to prevent eviction and homelessness; and rental or lease-to-own units in two tribal-owned villages.<sup>19</sup>

A self-described "milestone in our mission to assist elders, youth, and families with housing," are the Pokegnak Edawat communities in Dowagiac and Hartford.<sup>20</sup> Each village offers duplexes, townhomes, and single family homes to tribal member who meet eligibility requirements. The Dowagiac village, begun in 2004, offers 66 homes: 20 for elders, 14 single family; 16 elders' duplex units; and 16 townhomes.<sup>21</sup> The Hartford village, which broke ground in 2015, currently offers six townhomes and two duplexes. Two additional phases are planned for the Hartford village, further expanding tribal housing resources.<sup>22</sup> These homes are a far cry from the berry shanties and tents some Pokagon members were forced to occupy during the Great Depression.<sup>23</sup>

The economic benefits of the Four Winds casinos extend beyond tribal members, to the State of Michigan, local government, and local businesses, as well. In order to open

---

<sup>18</sup> "Housing Programs," Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government/housing-and-facilities/homeowner-programs> (accessed May 25, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Al Jones, "Work Starts in Hartford on Tribal Village for Pokagon Band of Potawatomi," MLive, [http://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2015/08/works\\_starts\\_in\\_hartford\\_on\\_tt.html](http://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2015/08/works_starts_in_hartford_on_tt.html) (accessed May 15, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> "Pokegnak Edawat," video embedded in Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians website, <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/government/housing-and-facilities/rental-programs> (accessed May 26, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Jones, "Work Starts in Hartford on Tribal Village."

<sup>23</sup> Harold Henderson, "This Land Is Their Land," *The Chicago Reader*, <http://www.chicago-reader.com/chicago/this-land-is-their-land/Content?oid=904102> (accessed March 8, 2012).

each of their three casinos, the Pokagon were required by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 to negotiate a compact with the State of Michigan. In their compact, the Pokagon agreed to make semi-annual payments of eight percent of the net win from electronic gaming to the Michigan Strategic Fund. Since 2008, when the first Four Winds Casino opened in New Buffalo, the Pokagon have paid \$149,134,804.20 to the Michigan Strategic Fund, providing the State with additional resources to "promote economic development and create jobs."<sup>24</sup>

Although no law requires that they do so, the Pokagon also agreed to make semi-annual payments of two percent of the net win from electronic gaming to local government entities in which their casinos are located.<sup>25</sup> These funds are paid to local revenue sharing boards to "cover increased operating costs associated with the operation of" the Pokagon casinos.<sup>26</sup> Between 2008 and 2014 (the last year figures are available), the Pokagon have paid an additional \$45,505,640 to Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> "Payment to Michigan Strategic Fund or Michigan Economic Development Corporation," Michigan Gaming Control Board, March 3, 2016, [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/8\\_percent\\_Payments\\_76616\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/8_percent_Payments_76616_7.pdf) (accessed May 27, 2016); "Michigan Strategic Fund," Michigan Economic Development Corporation, <http://www.michiganbusiness.org/michigan-strategic-fund-msf/#members> (accessed May 27, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> As of 2016, Pokagon casinos are located in New Buffalo (Berrien County), Hartford (Van Buren County), and Dowagiac (Cass County). Negotiation are ongoing for an additional casino in South Bend, Indiana.

<sup>26</sup> "A Compact Between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the State of Michigan Providing for the Conduct of Tribal Class III Gaming by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians," [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/PBPI\\_Compact\\_70602\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/PBPI_Compact_70602_7.pdf) (accessed May 27, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> "Receipts and Distribution of Indian Casino Revenue by Local Revenue Sharing Boards 2014," Michigan Gaming Control Board, September 2015, [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mgcb/Receipts\\_and\\_Distribution\\_of\\_Indian\\_Casino\\_Revenue\\_Report-2014\\_docx\\_502445\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mgcb/Receipts_and_Distribution_of_Indian_Casino_Revenue_Report-2014_docx_502445_7.pdf) (accessed May 27, 2016)

The Pokagon make significant contributions to the local economy beyond those made to state and local government revenue streams. Four Winds Casino New Buffalo created 2,500 new jobs, paying a "living wage, not minimum salary. The day [the casino] opened [it] became the second largest employer in Berrien County...next to Whirlpool.<sup>28</sup> The tribe supports local businesses whenever possible, spending \$74.3 million with 2,202 vendors in Michigan and Indiana in 2014.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the Pokagon Band sponsors the Four Winds Invitational golf tournament for the Ladies Professional Golf Association, which enables donations to Memorial Children's Hospital in South Bend, Indiana and its Ronald McDonald Family Room. Between 2012 and 2015, the tournament generated \$187,000 for those organizations.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the ten percent of electronic gaming revenue given to state and local government, the Pokagon give an additional 2% to The Pokagon Fund. This non-profit organization created in 2000 awards grants that support local governments, non-profits, charities, and other organizations.<sup>31</sup> In 2014 (the last year for which figures are available), the largest single grant was awarded to the River Valley School District, \$1,095,723 to support the district's technology improvement project. In 2014 alone, the Pokagon Fund

---

<sup>28</sup> John Low, Interview for Newberry Library online exhibit, *Indians of the Midwest*, 2009. <http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/indians-the-marketplace/casinos/video-transcript-john-low-casino-part-2/> (accessed August 15, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Al Jones, "Pokagon Band of Potawatomi say it contributed \$88 million extra to the region," MLive, [http://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2015/02/pokagon\\_band\\_of\\_potawatomi\\_say\\_1.html](http://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2015/02/pokagon_band_of_potawatomi_say_1.html) (accessed 5/26/2016).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The Pokagon Fund, <http://www.pokagonfund.org> (accessed May 27, 2015).

awarded \$4,221,414 in grants to deserving organization in Cass, Berrien, and Van Buren counties.<sup>32</sup>

Although gaming continues to be opposed by some local residents on a moral basis, clearly Pokagon gaming has had a positive economic impact on the tribe, as well as on state and local economies. In recent years, however, the Pokagon have begun to diversify their holdings outside of the gaming industry. Chartered in 2007, the tribe's development arm, Mno-Bmadsen, "serves as the engine for the economic development efforts of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi."<sup>33</sup> Today, Mno-Bmadsen is the parent company to five wholly-owned subsidiaries, focused on construction, manufacturing, and architecture and engineering. The company "is the next step in sustaining the tribe through mergers, acquisitions and investments that will allow them to continue to thrive in the centuries to come."<sup>34</sup> Says former Tribal Chairman John Miller, "Gaming is a flash in the pan. Five hundred years from now we will still be a community." Efforts such as those by Mno-Bmadsen will ensure the continued economic viability of that community in the long term.

As did their ancestor, Simon Pokagon, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians have withstood "a thousand wounds" from Natives and non-Natives alike. Pushed from their ancestral homelands to avoid the so-called Iroquois hammer, the Potawatomi met the political and economic challenges posed by the fur trade. Overcoming Native

---

<sup>32</sup> "Building the Future: 2014 Annual Report," The Pokagon Fund, <http://www.pokagonfund.org/ViewDocument.asp?DocumentID=80> (accessed May 27, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> "The good path to good business," Mno-Bmadsen, <http://mno-bmadsen.com/> (accessed May 27, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

adversaries, the Potawatomi built a successful partnership with first the French, only to see those relationships crumble as first the British, and finally the Americans supplanted their European allies.

In the nineteenth century, faced with an ever-expanding American population, the Potawatomi found their power to negotiate drastically curtailed. Even so, Leopold Pokagon used a strategy of adaptive resistance to stymie United States efforts to remove the band from their ancestral homelands. Although his efforts to create a secure land base for his people were unsuccessful, the band that bears his name created a unique identity as the Catholic Potawatomi, an identity which bound them together through over 170 years of trials posed both from internal conflict and United States Indian policy.

The early twentieth-century loss of their tribal status in the eyes of the U.S. brought economic hardship, and continued social and cultural disruption. Deemed ineligible for the very programs designed to benefit American Indians, the Pokagon watched their Native neighbors to the North garner benefits from Congressional acts related to housing, health care, education, and child welfare. During this time, they struggled to survive as dispossessed citizens, finding what work they could in construction, as farm laborers, and in the factories - "when they were running."<sup>35</sup>

What could have finally broken tribal unity, however, became the catalyst for renewed efforts to regain their tribal status. After a decades-long struggle, the Pokagon finally proved to the United States Congress that they were, in fact, Indians, affirmation

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Act and The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Act: Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs*. 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 10 February 1994, 35-36.



of a truth long denied, but never doubted by community members. As Tom Topash, former Tribal Vice-Chairman, said, the Pokagon had known all along that they were a community.<sup>36</sup> The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. The Keepers of the Fire - a fire they would not allow to be extinguished.

---

<sup>36</sup> Tom Topash, quoted in *To Be Called a Nation*, written and produced by Tom Zapiecki, 29 min., Michiana Public Broadcasting Corporation, 1991, digital video disc.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Secondary Sources Books

- Adams, David Wallace. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875 – 1928*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995.
- Archambault, Marie Therese, Mark G. Thiel, and Christopher Vecsey, eds. *The Crossing of Two Roads: Being Catholic and Native in the United States*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Benz, Charlene M., and R. Todd Williamson. *Diba Jimooyung, Telling Our Story: A History of the Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek*. Mt. Pleasant, MI: Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, Ziibiwing Cultural Society, 2005.
- Berkhofer, Robert F. Jr. *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.
- Buechner, Cecila Bain. *The Pokagons*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana State Historical Society, 1933.
- Bunson, Margaret and Stephen Bunson. *Faith in the Wilderness: The Story of the Catholic Indian Missions*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2000.
- Cadwalader, Sandra L. and Vine Deloria, Jr. *The Aggressions of Civilization: Federal Indian Policy Since the 1880s*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1984.
- Calloway, Colin G. *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Carlson, David J. *Sovereign Selves: American Indian Autobiography and the Law*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Claspy, Everett. *The Potawatomi Indians of Southwestern Michigan*. Ann Arbor, MI: Raun-Brumfield, Inc., 1966.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Dowagiac-Sisters Lake Resort Area and More About Its Potawatomi Indians*. Dowagiac, MI: 1970.
- Clifton, James. *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers*. Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *People of the Three Fires: The Ottawa, Potawatomi and Ojibway of Michigan*. Grand Rapids: Michigan Indian Press, Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council: 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Potawatomi*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977.
- Cohen, Felix. *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1945.
- Coleman, Michael C. *American Indian Children at School, 1850 – 1930*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993.
- Collier, John. *From Every Zenith: A Memoir*. Denver: Sage Books, 1963.
- Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. *Anti-Indianism in Modern American: A Voice from Tatekeya's Earth*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Cramer, Renee Ann. *Cash, Color, and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal Acknowledgment*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005.
- Danziger, Edmund Jefferson Jr. *Great Lakes Accommodation and Resistance During the Early Reservation Years, 1850 – 1900*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Chippewas of Lake Superior*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979.
- Deloria, Phillip J. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Deloria, Vine Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle. *American Indians, American Justice*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Deloria, Vine Jr. and David E. Wilkins. *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.
- Deloria, Vine Jr., ed. *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002.
- Deloria, Vine Jr. *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Self-Determination and the Concept of Sovereignty." In *Economic Development in American Indian Reservations*. Albuquerque: Native American Studies, University of New Mexico, 1979.
- Dowd, Gregory Evans. *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Duthu, N. Bruce. *American Indians and the Law*. The Penguin Library of American Indian History. New York: Viking, 2008.
- Edmunds, David R. *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978.
- Edmunds, R. David, and Joseph L. Peyser. *The Fox Wars: the Mesquakie Challenge to New France*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.
- Fixico, Donald L. *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008.

- Foreman, Grant. *The Last Trek of the Indians*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.
- Garraghan, Gilbert J. *The Catholic Church in Chicago*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1921.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*. New York: American Press, 1938.
- Gough, Robert. *Farming the Cutover: A Social History of Northern Wisconsin, 1900-1940*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997.
- Heidenreich, Conrad. *Huronian: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971.
- Heidler, David S., and Jeanne T. Heidler. *Indian Removal: A Norton Casebook*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2007.
- Hodge, Frederick Webb. *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1928.
- Horse Capture, George P., Duane Champagne and Chandler C. Jackson. *American Indian Nations: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.
- Hoxie, Frederick E. *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880 – 1920*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- Hoxie, Frederick E. and Peter C. Mancall. *American Nations: Encounters in Indian Country, 1850 to the Present*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Hulst, Cornelia Steketee. *Indian Sketches: Pere Marquette and the Last of the Pottawatomie Chiefs*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912.
- Hunziker, Barbara Wood. *Sumnerville and Pokagon: A Narrative History of Two Pokagon Township Villages in Cass County, Michigan, from 1825 – 1976*. Niles, MI: Hunziker, 1977.
- Hyde, Anne F. *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012.
- Jarvis, Brad D.E. *The Brothertown Nation of Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010.

- Jennings, Francis. *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984.
- Karamanski, Theodore J. *Blackbird's Song: Andrew J. Blackbird and the Odawa People*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012.
- Kellogg, Louise Phelps. *The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1925.
- Kinietz, Vernon. *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes, 1615-1760*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1965.
- Kugel, Rebecca. *To Be the Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998.
- Lemont, Eric D., ed. *American Indian Constitutional Reform and the Rebuilding of Native Nations*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 2006.
- Light, Steven Andrew and Kathryn R Rand. *Indian Gaming and Tribal Sovereignty: The Casino Compromise*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Indian Gaming Law and Policy*. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2006.
- Lyons, Emory. *Isaac McCoy: His Plan of and Work for Indian Colonization*. Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1945.
- Mann, John W. W. *Sacajawea's People: The Lemhi Shoshones and the Salmon River Country*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.
- Martin, Lawrence T. "Simon Pokagon: Charlatan or Authentic Spokesman for the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Anishinaabeg?" In *Papers of the 29<sup>th</sup> Algonquin Conference*, edited by David H. Pentland. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998.
- Mason, W. Dale. *Indian Gaming: Tribal Sovereignty and American Politics*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000.
- Mayo, Bernard. *Jefferson Himself*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972.
- McDonald, Michael. *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2015.

- McNally, Michael David. *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Miller, Mark Edwin. *Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.
- Oberly, James. *A Nation of Statesmen: The Political Culture of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, 1815-1972*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.
- Parkhill, Thomas C. *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Parkman, Francis. *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1879.
- Peyer, Bernd C. *"The Thinking Indian:" Native American Writers, 1850s-1920s*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.
- Philp, Kenneth R. *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1977.
- Prucha, Francis Paul. *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888 – 1912*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Quimby, George Irving. *Indian Culture and European Trade Goods: The Archaeology of the Historic Period in the Western Great Lakes Region*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- Roleff, Tamara L. *Native American Rights*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1998.
- Rosen, Deborah A. *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty, Race, and Citizenship, 1790 – 1880*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Schultz, George A. *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972.
- Schwarz, Henry, and Sangeeta Ray, eds. *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2000.

- Shea, John Gilmary. *History of the Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529 – 1854*. New York: Excelsior Catholic Publishing House, 1896.
- Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.
- Szasz, Margaret Connell. *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.
- Tanner, Helen Hornbeck, ed. *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987.
- Taylor, Graham. *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.
- Tinker, George E. "Tink." *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- United States, Estelle M. Steward, and Jesse Chester Bowen. *History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928, Revision of Bulletin No. 499 with Supplement, 1929-1933*. 1934. Reprint, Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1966.
- Vanderberg, Bernie E. *A Dowagiac Collection*. Berrien Springs, MI: Hardscrabble Books, 1982.
- Vecsey, Christopher. *Paths of Kateri's Kin*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1993.
- Warrior, Robert. *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- White Joseph M. and John M. D'Arcy. *Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: A History of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend*. Huntington, IN: The Diocese of Forty Wayne-south Bend, 2007.
- White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.



- Widder, Keith R. *Battle for the Soul: Metis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999.
- Wiget, Andrew. *Handbook of Native American Literature*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 1996.
- Wilkins, David E. and K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.
- Wilkins, David E. *American Indian Sovereignty and the U.S. Supreme Court: The Masking of Justice*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997.
- Wilkinson, Charles. *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.
- Williams, Robert A. Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Witgen, Michael. *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.
- Wunder, John R. and Cynthia Willis Esqueda, eds. *Native Americans: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Wunder, John R., ed. *Native American Sovereignty*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.
- Wunder, John R. *"Retained by The People": A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways. *American Indian Boarding Schools: An Exploration of Global Ethnic and Cultural Cleansing*. Mount Pleasant, MI: Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011.

### **Academic Journals**

- Castile, George Pierre. "The Commodification of Indian Identity." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 98, No. 4 (Dec. 1996):743-749.
- Church, Kelly. "Sustaining Black Ash Traditions." *First American Art Magazine*, No. 2 (Spring 2014). Accessed December 1, 2015.  
<http://firstamericanartmagazine.com/black-ash/>.

- Clifton, James. "Chicago, September 14, 1833: the Last Great Indian Treaty in the Old Northwest," *Chicago History*, 9: 86-97.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Culture Change, Structural Stability and Factionalism in the Prairie Potawatomi Reservation Community." *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* Vol. 6 (Fall 1965): 101-123.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Simon Pokagon's Sandbar: Potawatomi Claims to Chicago's Lakefront." *Michigan History*, Vol. 71, No. 5: 12-17.
- Cote, Charlotte. "Historical Foundations of Indian Sovereignty in Canada and the United States: A Brief Overview." *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 31 (Spring/Summer 2001): 15-23.
- Diene, DouDou. "The Notion of Cultural Resistance." *American Association of State and Local History News*, Vol. 69, No. 1: 11-14.
- Dyck, Reginald. "When Love Medicine Is Not Enough: Class Conflict and Work Culture on and off the Reservation." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3:23-43.
- Edmunds, R. David. "Redefining Red Patriotism: Five Medals of the Potawatomis." *Red River Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2: 13-24.
- Fixico, Donald L. "American Indians in Kansas." *Kansas History*, Vol. 26, No. 4: 272-287.
- Garrison, Tim Alan. "The Nadir of Native American Sovereignty." *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 24, No. 2: 265-270.
- Gerwing, Anseim J., O.B. "The Chicago Indian Treaty of 1833." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 57: 117-42
- Goldberg-Ambrose, Carole. "Of Native Americans and Tribal Members: The Impact of Law on Indian Group Life." *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 28, No. 5: 1123-1148.
- Hagan, William T. "Tribalism Rejuvenated: The Native American Since the Era of Termination." *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 1: 5-16.
- Hughes, Jennifer P. "Primer on Federal Recognition and Current Issues Affecting the Process." *National Congress of American Indians Winter Session*, February, 2001. Accessed January 17, 2016. <http://www.msaj.com/papers/fedrecnov.htm>.
- Kelly, Lawrence C. "The Indian Reorganization Act: The Dream and the Reality." *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (August 1975): 291-312.

- Lipsitz, George. "Walleye Warriors and White Identities: Native Americans' Treaty Rights, Composite Identities and Social Movements." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1: 101-122.
- Loew, Patty and Kelly Mella. "Black Ink and the New Red Power: Native American Newspapers and Tribal Sovereignty." *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, Vol. 7, No. 3: 99-142.
- Mather, Alva C. "Old Promises: The Judiciary and the Future of Native American Federal Acknowledgment Litigation." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Vol. 151: 1827-1860.
- McClurken, James M. "Ottawa Adaptive Strategies to Indian Removal." *The Michigan Historical Review*, Vol, 12, Spring 1986: 29-55.
- McKee, Irving. "The Centennial of 'The Trail of Death.'" *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 35, No. 1: 27-41.
- Mezey, Naomi. "The Distribution of Wealth, Sovereignty, and Culture Through Indian Gaming." *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3: 711-737.
- Nagel, Joane. "American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 60, No. 6: 947-965.
- Nichols, Roger L. "Native American Survival in an Integrationist Society." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 1, No. 1: 87-93.
- Quinn, Jr., William W. "Federal Acknowledgement of American Indian Tribes: The Historical Development of a Legal Concept." *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 34, No. 4: 331-364.
- Rubenstein, Bruce. "To Destroy a Culture: Indian Education in Michigan, 1855-1900." *Michigan History*, Vol. 60, No. 2:
- Schurr, Mark R., Terrance J. Martin, and W. Ben Secunda. "How the Pokagon Band Avoided Removal: Archaeological Evidence from the Faunal Assemblage of the Pokagon Village Site (20BE13)." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 31, Spring 2006: 143-164.
- Secunda, W. Ben. "To Cede or Seed? Risk and Identity Among the Woodland Potawatomi During the Removal Period." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 31, Spring 2006: 57-88.

- Sisk, Gregory C. "Yesterday and Today: Of Indians, Breach of Trust, Money, and Sovereign Immunity." *Tulsa Law Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2: 313-353.
- Smits, David. "'Squaw Men,' 'Half-Breeds,' and Amalgamators: Late Nineteenth Century Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Indian-White Race-Mixing." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* Vol. 15, No. 3: 29-61.
- Spilde, Katherine, and Jonathan B. Taylor. "Economic Evidence on the Effects of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act on Indians and Non-Indians." *UNLV Gaming Research & Review Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1: 13-30.
- Steinman, Erich. "American Federalism and Intergovernmental Innovation in State-Tribal Relations." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, Vol. 34, No. 2: 95-114.
- Stevenson, Winona. "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous': A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism." *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1: 33-51.
- Straus, Terry and Debra Valentino. "Retribalization in Urban Indian Communities." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 4: 103-115.
- Trennert, Robert A. Jr., "Selling Indian Education at World's Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904." *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Summer 1987): 203-20.
- Tripathy, Jyotirmaya. "Postcolonialism and the Native American Experience: A Theoretical Perspective." *Asiatic*, Vol. 3, No. 1: 40-53.
- Wetzel, Christopher. "Neshnabemwen Renaissance: Local and National Potawatomi Language Revitalization Efforts." *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 30, Nos. 1 & 2: 61-86.
- Wilson, George W. "Unemployment, Inflation, Interest Rates, and Fiscal and Monetary Policies." in "The 1991 Midyear Outlook." *Indiana Business Review*, Vol. 66, No. 3: 3-4.

### **Dissertations and Theses**

- Clatterbuck, M. "Searching for Souls in a Twice-Foreign Land: An Analysis of Catholic Indian Missions through "The Indian Sentinel" (1902-1962)." Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2008.
- Cole, D. "Indian Questions: Native American Writing in Response to Removal." Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2007.
- Cramer, Renee Ann. "The Politics of Recognition: The Contexts of Federal Acknowledgement Law." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001.

- Gills, B. "The Anishnabeg and the Landscape of Assimilation in Michigan, 1854-1934." Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2008.
- Low, John. "Chicago's First Urban Indians – the Potawatomi." Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2011.
- Myers, Maureen Elizabeth. "The Perceived Economic, Social, and Cultural Impacts of Gaming on a Michigan Indian Tribe." D.P.A. diss., Western Michigan University, 2000.
- Reece, M. "Economic Impacts of Casino Gambling on Rural Michigan Communities." Ph.D. diss., Western Michigan University, 2007.
- Secunda, Ben. "In the Shadow of the Eagle's Wings: The Effects of Removal on the Unremoved Potawatomi." Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame University, 2008
- Sheffield, Carrie Louise. "Decolonizing the American Empire: Native American Literatures of Resistance and Presence." Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 2005.
- Sleeper-Smith, Susan. "Silent Tongues, Black Robes: Potawatomi, Europeans, and Settlers in the Southern Great Lakes, 1640 – 1850." Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1994.
- Stampe, J. "You Will Learn About Our Past: Cultural Representation, Self-Determination, and Problems of Presence." Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2007.
- Stark, H. "Stealing Fire, Scattering Ashes: Anishinaabe Expressions of Sovereignty, Nationhood, and Land Tenure in Treaty Making with the United States and Canada, 1785-1923." Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2008.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. "Writing across the Cultural Divide: Images of Indians in the Lives and Works of Native and European Americans, 1890-1935." Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994.
- Wetzel, C. "One Spirit, One Nation: The Politics of Potawatomi Cultural Revitalization." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007.
- Willig, Timothy David. "Restoring the Thin Red Line: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783-1812." Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2003.

### **Primary Sources**

“An Indian Souvenir.” *Friends’ Intelligencer*, Vol. 50, No. 31 (August 5, 1893), 495.

“Ethnography at the World’s Fair.” *The American Architect and Building News*, Vol. 30 (December 13, 1890): 171.

Badin, Stephen T. “Letter of Father Baden to the Indians on the St. Joseph River, June 9, 1832.” *The American Catholic Historical Researches*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1908):23-24.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Father Stephen T. Badin to the U.S. Indian Commissioners, Relates His Labors among the Indians.” *The American Catholic Historical Researches*, Vol. 7, No. 3. (July 1911): 197-98.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Pottowattomie Mission.” *The Catholic Telegraph*, July 14, 1832.

Baroux, Reverend Louis. *An Early Indian Mission: Correspondence to the Reverend J.J. DeNeve, 1862*. Edited and translated by Reverend E.D. Kelly. 1913. Reprint, Berrian Springs, MI: Hardscrabble Press, 1976.

Beckwith, H.W., ed. *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol I*. Springfield: The H.W. Rokker Co., Printers and Binders, 1903.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The French Foundations, 1680-1693*. Vol XXIII of *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*. Springfield: Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, 1934.

Beeson, L.H. *Fort St. Joseph*. Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections 27: 179-86. (Available online at [http://guides.lib.msu.edu/page.phtml?page\\_id=2173](http://guides.lib.msu.edu/page.phtml?page_id=2173))

Berthrong, Donald J. *An Historical Report on Indian Use and Occupancy of Northern Indiana and Southwestern Michigan*. American Indian Ethnohistory Series. New York: Garland, 1974.

Bishop, Henry. *Settlement of New Buffalo, Berrian County*. Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections 1:125-6 (Available online at [http://guides.lib.msu.edu/page.phtml?page\\_id=2173](http://guides.lib.msu.edu/page.phtml?page_id=2173))

Blume, William W. *Unreported Opinions of the Supreme Court of Michigan*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1945.

Boas, Franz. “Ethnology at the Exposition.” *The Cosmopolitan: a Monthly Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (September 1893): 607-609.

- Brookings Institution, and Lewis Meriam. *The Problem of Indian Administration*. 1928. Reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1971.
- Canby, Noble. "The Great Exposition at Chicago." *The Chautauquan*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (July 1892): 460-468.
- Champion, Ella. *Berrien's Beginnings*. Niles, MI: 1926.
- Charlevoix, Pierre Francois Xavier de. *Journal of a Voyage to North America*. Translated by Louise Phelps Kellogg. Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1923.
- Collier, John. *From Every Zenith: A Memoir*. Denver: Sage Books, 1963.
- Davis, J.C. Bancroft, reporter. *Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court at October Term, 1892*. New York and Albany: Banks & Brothers, Law Publishers, 1893.
- Eastman, Charles Alexander (Ohiyesa). *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, Dover ed. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Indian Boyhood*, Book Jungle ed. Champaign, IL: Book Jungle, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Indian To-day: The Past and Future of the First American*, Dodo Press ed. Gloucester, Gloucestershire, United Kingdom: Dodo Press Publishers, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Soul of the Indian: An Interpretation*, Bison Book ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.
- Flowers, B.O. "An Interesting Representative of a Vanishing Race." *The Arena*, No. LXXX (July 1896): 240-249.
- Gaillard, S.J., Rev'd Maurice. *Potewatemi Nemewinin ipi Nemenigamowinin*. St. Louis: Francis Saler, 1866.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Potweatemi Nememiseniukin ipi Nemenigamowinin*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Wewikaneitidjik Benziger, 1868.
- Glover, L.H. *A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan*. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1906.
- Grant, W.L., ed. *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain: 1604-1618*. New York: Scribners, 1907.
- Jackson, Andrew. "Second Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1830." Library of Congress, Primary Documents in American History. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi->

bin/ampage?collId=llrd&fileName=010/llrd010.db&recNum=438 (accessed June 15, 2016).

Jefferson, Thomas. "Second Inaugural Address, March 3, 1805." <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres17.html> (accessed August 12, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_. "Thomas Jefferson's Letter to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803." Indiana Historical Bureau. <http://www.in.gov/history/2573.htm> (accessed June 28, 2016).

Kelly, Reverend E.D., ed. and trans. *Reverend Louis Barous 1913 correspondence to the Reverend M.J. DeNeve*. Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Press, 1913 (Reprinted 1976 by Hardscrabble Press, Berrian Springs, MI)

Kinzie, Juliette Augusta. *Narrative of the Massacre at Chicago*. Chicago: Ellis & Fergus, 1844. Reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977. (facsimile reproduction; page references are to both the original and reprint editions).

Kohn, Rita. "Finding our Way Home: The Great Lakes Woodland People." *The Indiana Historian*, September, 2001: 4-11.

Kohn, Rita, and W. Lynwood Montell, eds. *Always a People: Oral Histories of Contemporary Woodland Indians*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

La Potherie, Claude Charles LeRoy, Bacqueville de. *History of the Savage Peoples Who are the Allies of New France*. in *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes*, edited by Emma Helen Blair, vol. 1, 172-372; vol. 2, 13-136. Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911.

Lanman, James. *History of Michigan: From Its Earliest Colonization to the Present Time*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1841.

Lantz, Raymond C. *Potawatomi Indians of Michigan, 1843-1904: Including some Ottawa and Chippewa, 1843-1866 and Potawatomi of Indiana 1869 and 1855*. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992.

Leeper, David R. *Some Early Local Footprints: The Pokagon Village, The Notre Dame Lakes, Our Savage Predecessors*. South Bend, Indiana: *South Bend Daily Times*, 1898.

Margry, Pierre. *Decouvertes et Etablissements des Francais dans l'Amerique Septentrional*. Paris: D. Jouaust, 1876-1886.



- Matthews, Alfred. *History of Cass County, Michigan: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882.
- McCoy, Isaac. *A History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes and their Settlement within the Indian Territory, and their Future Prospects*. Washington: Wm. M. Morrison, 1840.
- McDonald, Daniel. *Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians from Northern Indiana; Embracing Also a Brief Statement of the Indian Policy of the Government, and Other Historical Matter Relating to the Indian Question*. Plymouth, Ind: D. McDonald & Co., Printers, 1899.
- Michigan Historical Commission. *Michigan Historical Collections, XXIV*. Lansing: Robert Smith & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1895.
- Michigan Historical Commission. *Michigan Historical Collections, XXXI*. Lansing: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., State Printers, 1902.
- Nott, Charles C. and Archibald Hopkins, reporters. *Cases Decided in the Court of Claims at the Term of 1891-92, with abstracts of decisions of the Supreme Court in appealed cases from October, 1891, to May, 1892*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Cases Decided in the Court of Claims at the Term of 1900-01, with abstracts of decisions of the Supreme Court in appealed cases from October, 1900, to May, 1901*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901.
- Perrot, Nicolas. *Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America*, in *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, vol. 1, edited by Emma Helen Blair, 23-272. Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911.
- Petit, Benjamin Marie, and Irving McKee. *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941.
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, State of Michigan. *A Compact between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the state of Michigan: providing for the conduct of tribal class III gaming by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. Lansing, MI, 1995.
- Pokagon, Simon. "An Indian on the Indian Question." *New York Evangelist*, Vol. 67, No. 33 (August 19, 1897): 10.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "An Indian on the Problems of His Race." Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. Originally published in *The Review of Reviews*, December 1895. Available online at: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=PokIndi.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/par sed&tag=public&part=all>
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Future of the Red Man." *Forum*, August 1897: 698-710.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Future of the Red Man." *Current Literature*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (September 1898):254.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Indian Native Skills." *The Chataugan*, Vol. 26 (February 1898): 540-542.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Massacre of Fort Dearborn at Chicago. Gathered from the Traditions of the Indian Tribes Engaged in the Massacre, and From the Published Accounts." *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 98, No. 586 (March 1899): 649-656.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Our Indian Women." *The Chataugan*, Vol. 22 (March 1896): 732-734.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Red Man's Greeting*. Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1893.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Red Man's Rebuke*. Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1893.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Queen of the Woods*. Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1899.
- Pratt, Richard Henry. "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites." In *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian," 1880-1900*, edited by Francis Paul Prucha. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Radisson, Pierre Esprit. *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson: Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences Among the North American Indians, From 1652 to 1684*. Translated by Gideon D. Scull. New York: P. Smith, 1885.
- Robertson, Nellie Armstrong, and Dorothy Riker, eds. *The John Tipton Papers*, Vol. 2. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942.
- Rogers, Howard S. *History of Cass County, from 1825 to 1875*. Cassopolis, MI: H.W. Mansfield, Vigilant book and job print, 1875.
- Rowland, O.W. *A History of Van Buren County Michigan*. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912.

Schoolcraft, Henry R. *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes of the American Frontiers*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., Successors to Grigg, Elliot and Co., 1851.

Shea, John Gilmary. *History of the Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529-1854*. New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1854.

Smith, Timothy S. *Missionary abominations unmasked, or A view of Carey Mission: containing an unmasking of the missionary abominations practiced among the Indians of the St. Joseph country at the celebrated missionary establishment known as Carey Mission under the superintendence of the Rev. Isaac McCoy*. South Bend, IN: Beacon Office, 1833.

Society for the Propagation of the Faith. *Annales De L'Association De La Propagation De La Foi*. Lyon: Chez M.P. Rusand, 1834.

Thwaites, Reuben Gold, ed. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610 – 1791; the Original French, Latin, and Italian Texts, with English Translations and Notes*. Cleveland, OH: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896-1901.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The French Regime in Wisconsin, 1727-1748*. Vol XVII of *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1906.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The French Regime in Wisconsin, 1743-1766*. Vol XVIII of *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1908.

The University of Oklahoma College of Law. *Indian Reorganization Act Era Constitutions and Charters*. The University of Oklahoma Law Center. <http://thorpe.ou.edu/IRA.html>. (accessed August 12, 2016).

### **Manuscript Collections**

Chicago, Illinois. National Archives and Records Administration-Great Lakes Region. Microfilm Series

Records of the Michigan Superintendency (M1)

Letters of the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800-1899 (M6)

Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent (M21)

Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received (M234)

Office of Indian Affairs, Documents Relating to the Negotiations of Ratified and Unratified Indian Treaties, 1801-1869 (T494)

Office of Indian Affairs, Special Files (M574)

Madison, Wisconsin. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.  
James A. Clifton Papers.

Mount Pleasant, Michigan. Central Michigan University. Clarke Historical Library.  
James A. Clifton Native American Research Collection, 1806-2001.  
James Gibbons, P.J. Ryan and John Joseph Kain Indians of North America  
printed material, 1881-1939.  
Potawatomi Tribe Collection, 1809-1939.  
Simon Pokagon Collection, 1928, 1958.

South Bend, Indiana. University of Notre Dame Archives.  
Stephen T. Badin Papers (CZCF).  
Eastern Mission Group History of Association with Pokagon Band of Potawatomi  
Indians, 1992-1995 (CHJC 64/06).  
Indians of North America Printed Material (PPOT).  
Potawatomi Indians/Pokagon Band Relations with Notre Dame, 1842-1990s  
(PNDP30-Po-2).  
Potawatomi Nation Collection (CZCN).

Topeka, Kansas. Kansas State Historical Society.  
Isaac McCoy Papers.

Washington, D.C. National Archives  
RG 75, CCF General Services, File 9634.

### **Historical Newspapers/Journals**

*Anishinaabe News*  
*The Chicago Reader*  
*Chicago Sunday Times Herald*  
*Chicago Daily Tribune*  
*Decatur (Michigan) Republican*  
*Detroit Free Press*  
*Detroit Michigan Chronicle*  
*Detroit News*  
*Dowagiac (Michigan) Daily News*  
*Grand Rapids (Michigan) Business Journal*  
*Harbor Country News*  
*Holland (Michigan) Sentinel*  
*Indian Country Today*  
*Indian Gaming Magazine*  
*Indianapolis News*  
*Indianapolis Star*  
*The InterOcean*  
*Lansing (Michigan) State Journal*

*Leader Publications*  
*Los Angeles Times*  
*Michigan Magazine*  
*MLive*  
*News From Indian Country*  
*New York Times*  
*Niles (Michigan) Daily Star*  
*Pokegnak Yajdanawa* – “The Pokagons Tell It” – Tribal Newsletter  
*South Bend (Indiana) Tribune*  
*Union City (New Jersey) Journal of Commerce*

### **United States Government Documents**

Avalon Project at Yale Law School. “*The Royal Proclamation, October 7, 1763.*” Lillian Goldman Law Library. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/proc1763.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc1763.asp) (accessed August 12, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_. “Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787.”  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/nworder.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/nworder.asp) (accessed August 12, 2016).

Carter, Clarence E. and J.P. Bloom, eds. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. Vol. 1, General. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1958-1962 .

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. Vol. 2-3, Northwest Territory. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1958-1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. Vol. 7-8, Indiana Territory. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1958-1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. Vol. 10-12, Michigan Territory. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1958-1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. Vol. 16-17, Illinois Territory. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1958-1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. Vol. 27-28, Wisconsin Territory. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1958-1962.

*Hannahville Indian Community et al v. United States*, 41 Ind. Cl. Comm. (1978)

Kappler’s *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. “Treaty with the Ottawa, etc., August 29, 1821.” Oklahoma State University Library. [digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/ott0198.htm](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/ott0198.htm) (accessed August 12, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_. "Treaty with the Wyandot, etc., August 3, 1795." Oklahoma State University Library. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/wya0039.htm> (accessed August 12, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_. "Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 27, 1832." Oklahoma State University Library. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/pot0372.htm> (accessed August 12, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_. "Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 26, 1832." Oklahoma State University Library. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/pot0367.htm> (accessed August 12, 2016).

\_\_\_\_\_. "Treaty with the Chippewa, etc., September 26, 1833." Oklahoma State University Library. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/chi0402.htm> (accessed August 12, 2016).

Michigan. *A Compact Between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the State of Michigan Providing for the Conduct of Tribal Class III Gaming by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. 1998.

Michigan Economic Development Corporation. *Michigan Strategic Fund*. Lansing, MI, 2016.

Michigan Gaming Control Board. *Payment to Michigan Strategic Fund or Michigan Economic Development Corporation*. Detroit, MI, 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Receipts and Distribution of Indian Casino Revenue by Local Revenue Sharing Boards 2014*. Detroit, MI, 2014.

Michigan Votes - Searchable database of **Michigan** Legislature bills and legislator votes. Offers e-mail updates as bills move through the system. [www.michiganvotes.org](http://www.michiganvotes.org)

United States. Office of Indian Affairs. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*. Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1843.

United States. *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Federal Services Restoration (Public Law 103-323)*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1994.

United States, Simon Pokagon, and John Wesley Powell. *Indians Residing in Michigan and Indiana: Accompany H. Res.-, First Session 42d Congress: Supplementary Memorial of Certain Indians*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off, 1872. Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI.

United States, Walter Lowrie, and Matthew St. Clair Clark. *American State Papers*. Class 2, Indian Affairs. Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832.

- U.S. Congress. House. *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*. Exec. Doc. 1, 34th Cong., 1st sess. (1856).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior Transmitting Reports of the amounts due Chippewa, Ottawa, and other Indians now residing in the State of Michigan*. Exec.Doc. 19, 37th Cong., 3rd sess. (1862).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Amounts Due Chippewa and Other Indians*. H. Rept. 18, 37th Cong., 3rd sess. (1863).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Supplementary Memorial of Certain Indians Residing in Michigan and Indiana*. Misc. Doc. 137, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess. (1872).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Supplemental Memorial of Certain Indians Residing in Michigan and Indiana, for relief*. Misc. Doc. 5, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1874).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Pottawatomie Indians*. H. R. No. 1404, 47th Cong., 1st sess. (1882).
- U.S. Congress. Senate. *Report to accompany bill S. 308*. S. Rept. 129, 52st Cong., 1st sess. (1890).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Pottawatomie Indians*. H. R. No. 324, 51st Cong., 1st sess. (1890).
- U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Indian Affairs. *Readjustment of Indian Affairs, Hearings on H.R. 7902*. 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1934).
- U.S. Congress. House. *A bill to restore Federal servicees to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. H.Rept. 6205, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess. (1992).
- U.S. Congress. House. *A bill to restore Federal services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. H.Rept. 878, 103rd Cong., 1st sess. (1993).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. H. Rept. 103-620, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1994).
- U.S. Congress. House. *Providing for Consideration of S. 1066, Restoration of Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. H. Res. 502, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1994).
- U.S. Congress. Senate. *Report to accompany joint resolution H. R. No. 38*. S. Rept. 111, 35th Cong., 2nd sess. (1865).

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Indian Affairs. *Hearings on S. 2755*. 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1934).

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Appropriations. *Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*. 74th Cong., 1st sess. (1935).

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Indian Affairs. *Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Act and The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Act*. S. Hrg. 103-543, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1994).

U.S. Congress. Senate. *Restoring Federal Services to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*. S.Rept. 103-266, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1994).

United States. Department of Interior. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Office of Federal Acknowledgment. *Petition of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to the Secretary of the Interior for Acknowledgment of Tribal Status* (1981).

U.S. *Congressional Globe*

U.S. *Congressional Record*. 1994.

### **Websites**

Hannahville Indian Community. <http://hannahville.net> (accessed August 12, 2016).

Low, John. "Keepers of the Fire: The Pokagon Potawatomi Nation." Ohio State University-Newark, Department of American Indian Studies. [https://americanindianstudies.osu.edu/sites/americanindianstudies.osu.edu/files/Pokagon%20website%202015%20final\\_0.pdf](https://americanindianstudies.osu.edu/sites/americanindianstudies.osu.edu/files/Pokagon%20website%202015%20final_0.pdf) (accessed August 13, 2016).

Mount Pleasant Indian School. "Mount Pleasant Indian School Register of Pupils, 1893-1906." Mainly Michigan. <http://www.mainlyMichigan.com/nativedata/MtPleasantIndustrial/> (accessed August 12, 2016).

Newberry Library. *Indians of the Midwest*. <http://publications.newberry.org/indiansofthemidwest/> (accessed August 12, 2016).

Pointe-a-Calliere, Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History. "Who Was Onontio?" [http://grandepaix.pacmusee.qc.ca/eng/mission\\_pacification-seeking\\_peace/alliances\\_et\\_commerce-alliances\\_and\\_trade/les\\_personnages-key\\_players/qui\\_etait\\_onontio-who\\_was\\_onontio-eng.html](http://grandepaix.pacmusee.qc.ca/eng/mission_pacification-seeking_peace/alliances_et_commerce-alliances_and_trade/les_personnages-key_players/qui_etait_onontio-who_was_onontio-eng.html) (accessed January 31, 2016).



- Pokégnek Bodéwadmik – Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. <http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov/> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- Public Broadcasting System. “Friends of the Indian.” *New Perspectives on The West*. <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/seven/friendsofindian.htm> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- Public Sector Consultants. “Appendix L: Regional Economies in Michigan.” *Michigan in Brief*. <http://www.michiganinbrief.org/edition06/contents.htm> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. <http://www.sagchip.org/> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- University of California, Berkeley, The Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Project. “1990-92, Early 1990s Recession.” *Slaying the Dragon of Debt: Fiscal Politics & Policy from the 1970s to the Present*. <http://vm136.lib.berkeley.edu/BANC/ROHO/projects/debt/1990srecession.html> (accessed August 12, 2016).
- Wisconsin Historical Society. “Turning Points in Wisconsin History.” . <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints> (accessed June 28, 2011).

### ***Video Recordings***

- Zapiecki, Tom. *To Be Called a Nation*. DVD. Produced by Tom Zapiecki. South Bend, IN: Michiana Public Broadcasting Corporation, 1991.

## VITA

Melisa Cushing-Davis was born in Connersville, IN and raised in Indianapolis, IN. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, Cushing-Davis received her BA from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Cum Laude, in 2004. She also received her Master of Arts in History from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 2007.

While working on her doctoral degree from Loyola University Chicago, Cushing-Davis taught courses in the history department as an adjunct instructor, including the first half of the United States history survey. She also worked at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, acting as Interim Executive Director in 2009. She was also active in the community, working as a public historian in a variety of contexts in and around the city of Chicago.