

North America ...

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North America is one large land mass. Its heights, its lowlands, its long river systems, its sub-tropical to arctic zones supported many centres of activity with large groups of sedentary farmers, hunters, trappers, fishermen, and gatherers. The traders among these people were always active and adapted very quickly to different and newer products that enhanced life in any degree. The one tribal name—Ottawa—derives its meaning from “to buy, to trade.”

At the very beginning of Contact, several catastrophic events broadsided many nations. Though spoken about at Council Fires and numerous events that call for visionary speech, the peoples’ imagination could not grasp what the Cree call the coming of the whiteman as the “ahgeusihin,” the sickness.

The French and British fought one another constantly, thus flexing their military might in all manner of invasions, retreats, ambush. They rolled over onto this continent mashing, breaking and emptying towns, villages of people and causing the nomads to go deep into hidden places.

The focus of this part of the reading is to capture the attitude of first the French regime then the British administration in the colonial period while attached to their Mother countries.

The French were administered by its ruling class who operated very well on trying to get along with peoples that could fry their hearts on Monday and eat it. The Iroquois Confederacy was a thousand years in the making. By the time the first little tub of wooden planks appeared on the Eastern coastline bearing alien numbers of determined settlers, the Council Fires must have quadrupled in numbers. The Keepers of the Eastern Door had to get busy. Other tribal groups were counting on them to cut or at least contain them (the aliens).

When France and England exported their rivalries and wars from Europe to the New World they sought to ally the Indians to their respective causes ... The most powerful of the north-eastern tribes was the Iroquois. Their sphere of influence extended from the Atlantic to the Mississippi and from the St. Lawrence to the Ohio River and beyond.

The Iroquois were not passive observers of these struggles ... not helpless bystanders. They were a formidable nation, armed, and organized. They chose sides ... These shifting Iroquois alliances were not whimsical; at all times they sought to defend their sovereignty and their land.

Fundamentally, the Iroquois understood these quarrels to be about land—their land, their ancient territories—and they were determined to protect what was theirs.

Thomas Berger, *A LONG AND TERRIBLE SHADOW, INDIANS AS ALLIES*: Page 56-57, the Iroquois

It can be said consequently both the French and the English needed allies in their war against each other. Time was on the side of the conquering nation. The costly wars France was engaged in and the overall poverty of the French populations subsequently forced France to relinquish vast tracts of land it had held from 1534 till the Treaty of Utrecht. That treaty did contain special provisions for the five Nations of Indians in that region. In Nova Scotia, from 1713-60, treaties of peace and friendship held.

In 1760 within the Articles of Capitulation of Montreal: the Indian allies of France were to be maintained in the lands they inhabit. On the Indian side this is called maintaining territorial integrity.

Chief Pontiac in 1763 raised several contingents of warriors whose units were usually never more than 300 tightly knit units. In order to amass enough men who could fight, then retire to rest in rotation, Chief Pontiac in the Lake Erie theatre of war, specifically Fort Detroit, sought to wear the British down by taking siege of Detroit. His opponent was Sir Jeffery Amherst. A red coat, this was the commander-in-chief of the British forces of North America.

Amherst had considerable clout. Pontiac was a good orator, a decent attribute to own among Indians. As hostilities mushroomed, it became apparent an important shift had occurred in the mind of Amherst. Indian allies and enemies were one and the same. They were to be subjugated and the French protocol of gift giving and the niceties of gaining entrance into the forts for feasting and pipe-smoking were to be eliminated. In the midst of the change of policy that eliminated the terms of trade so long established as a way of doing business, Amherst even made enemies of the Senecas. The Senecas had brought along the Red Wampam to Detroit to begin the talks for rallying against the English. They were turned down. Amherst heard of the turn of events and very quickly dispatched a large contingent of armed men into that region.

On September 9, 1761 a grand council was called and attended by all the parties involved at Detroit. The English agents thanked everyone for their faithfulness to them. They kept the worst of Amherst's plans of withholding ammunition from the assembly.

In modern parlance it is called the pay-off for being faithful to one side of the other. However, other occurrences started to destabilize other parts of the continent especially among the New England states. At this time, there were 1180 warriors on hand in the Detroit area of conflict. Even so, the Spanish and English conflict came to light as well.

Pontiac knew some important details and some he was absolutely ignorant about. The French and the English had literally buried the hatchet.

The French citizens he could call upon for help, information and safe passage, turned to thoughts of real peace between themselves and the English. In the end, the Treaty of Utrecht held and the Royal Proclamation was hailed in Montreal. Pontiac's war plans were scuttled. No guns, no ammunition and no more refuge among the French on that side of the Frontier which had now moved well into the heartland of the continent.

If one looks sharply at the European sense of Treaty, one side sues for peace. Consequently, that side is the loser and capitulates to terms of surrender. In this case, the French Canadians within the feudal system in place were the serfs and the one ruling class to be saved thus left to interpret the rule of British law were the clergy. Those left behind were allowed to retain their French civil law, maintain their church

laws, buildings and institutions. Everyone else was sent home to France. The majority of French Canadians signed an "x" to legal documents.

An added feature to treaty making was the surrender of land now free to be sold under simple fee. The management of the territory fell to the victor who was free to act in any manner he saw fit.

Under treaty making and rule making, Aboriginal peoples used the living relationship approach. Terms could be negotiated, one of its most interesting ties was the custom of revisiting the Treaty and the calling of witnesses to come forward and to praise or denounce the failing parts of the Treaty. This meant examining the wampums and bringing out the different wampumss such as the war wampums to declare hostilities.

Since the working languages of the day were Indian languages worked through by informants of the languages and speakers who translated everything, this fact remains that European descent peoples choose in the end to come bare-handed for the territory. With lock, stock and barrel and ammunitions on their side, they no longer needed the Indians.

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