PRIDE AND PAGANISM: THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE ALGONQUINS OF THE OTTAWA VALLEY

The history of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley has been written as an addendum to the histories of other peoples. Our understanding of them is filtered through the prejudices of Catholic priests, and the histories of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) and the Huron (Wendat).[1] Most of their history has been lost, and much of what remains is a collection of caricatures and stereotypes. The misrepresentations began in the 17th century, as French traders and explorers, and Jesuit priests, created an image of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley that has biased our perceptions into the 21st century. Building on their biases, historians in subsequent centuries have echoed these portrayals and added their own.

There is a widespread, indeed unquestioned, belief that the French were allies of the Algonquins, and the English and Dutch were allies of the Iroquois. True in regards to trade and military alliances, it is a highly misleading perception in regard to belief systems. The Jesuits, and French explorers, traders, and administrators influenced by the Jesuits, considered themselves to be in alliance with Algonquin Christians. This was not true of the 'pagans' who held to the old ways, or the 'apostates' who converted and then went back to their traditional beliefs. Only in understanding this distinction is it possible to understand the whirlwind of destruction that struck the Algonquin peoples of the Ottawa Valley in the first half of the 17th century.

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[1] The term 'Huron-Wendat' is also in current usage.

The resistance of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley to Christianity was at the heart of a stereotype that portrayed them as an arrogant and prideful people. Jesuit priests considered the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley to be the haughtiest of all the Indigenous Peoples they worked among, more so than the Iroquois and the Iroquoian-speaking Huron. Of the Algonquin peoples of the Ottawa Valley it was the Kichesipirini, the people of the great river, who were based on what are now Morrison and Allumette Islands, near the present-day city of Pembroke, who stood out. In addition to their resistance to Christianity, the Kichesipirini also earned a reputation for arrogance because they controlled the passage of fur trade canoes coming down the Ottawa River from the west. They were an impediment to the fur traders attempting to expand into the northwest, what the French called 'le pays d'en haut,' and the Jesuits, who wished to convert the much more populace Huron.

We need to take another look at the portrayal of the pride and arrogance of the Kichesipirini in 17th century sources, and the ways in which 20th and 21st century historians have echoed this depiction. This involves closely examining three inter-related themes. The first is the way in which prominent Algonquin leaders have been portrayed, and how these portrayals have come to characterize the Kichesipirini as a people. The second is the way in which this perception of their pride and arrogance is linked to their refusal to convert to Christianity, or to their becoming apostates, returning to their traditional beliefs after converting to Christianity. The third is the way in which the Jesuits rationalized the destruction of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley, which involved a perception of the Iroquois as agents of God humbling the Kichesipirini for their refusal to convert to Christianity.

On top of this 17th century Jesuit prejudice later historians have layered a latter-day justification of the Iroquoian destruction of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley, a rationalization they validate by claiming to be rescuing the Iroquois from their reputation as bloodthirsty savages.

To begin, credit must be given to Alfred G. Bailey, who observes in the late 1930s: "The island Algonkins alone resisted the disintegrating influences of war, disease, drunkenness, and Christianity, fighting the advances of all comers with such success, ephemeral though it was, that they have been branded as treacherous, vindictive, warlike, and unsociable, by the historians of the period."[2] The Kichesipirini were not, in fact, alone in this resistance. At times the Jesuits also condemned the Oueskarini (Ouescharini, Weskarini), who lived on what is now the Québec side of the Ottawa River, along the Petite Nation, Lièvre, and Rouge Rivers, and the Ountchatarounounga (Iroquet, Onontchataronons), who lived on the Ontario side of the Ottawa in what is now the Ottawa –Kingston – Montréal triangle.[3] Bailey is quite right, however, to identify Kichesipirini resistance to Christianity as a source of four hundred years of vilification.

The vilification began in the Récollet lay brother Gabriel Sagard's account of his journey to and from the country of the Huron in 1623-24. Sagard, influenced by Huron attitudes toward the people they called Honqueronons, describes the Kichesipirini as "the most churlish, arrogant, and uncivil" of all the peoples he had

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[2] Alfred G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969, cop. 1937), 43.

[3] The Oueskarini are also known as the Petite Nation.

encountered, a people characterized by "arrogance, vanity, and pride."[4] More than three hundred years later George Hunt takes up Sagard's legacy, describing the Kichesipirini as "powerful and turbulent … the haughtiest, most arrogant, of all the tribes known to the French."[5] Bruce Trigger seemingly accepts at face value Sagard's depiction of them as "arrogant and uncivil."[6] Echoing Hunt's claim that the Huron feared the Kichesipirini, Trigger claims that they "dreaded" their annual encounters with the "continuing high-handed behaviour" of the Kichesipirini.[7] The Huron, it seems, were the victims of the "schemes" of "these formidable people."[8]

So, just how 'formidable' were the Kichesipirini? George Hunt writes: "Feared by many, befriended by none, they were almost constantly in trouble with the French, and were not numerous enough to hold their own when their island was threatened by the muskets of the terrible Iroquois."[9] Somehow, with a pre-contact population perhaps one-tenth that of the Huron, the Kichesipirini were the bane of New France and feared by all other Indigenous Peoples.[10] Yet, at the same time, the

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[4] George M. Wrong, ed., *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 257.

[5] George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960, cop. 1940), 44.

[6] Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987, cop. 1976), 280.

[7] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 341.

[8] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 498, 492.

[9] Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 45.

Kichesipirini were not even numerous enough to defend themselves when attacked by the Iroquois. We also have to question just how fearful the Huron were, given Trigger's claim that in the early 1620s they were merely "annoyed about the ill-treatment that they were receiving from the Kichesipirini."[11]

Historians have failed to place the tolls exacted by the Kichesipirini in cultural context, leading to a stereotyping of the Kichesipirini that has become a truism. We can gain a better understanding by turning to the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune, who observes in his *Relation* of 1637: "These Barbarians have a very remarkable custom. When other nations arrive in their country, they would not dare pass beyond without permission from the Captain of the place; if they did, their canoes would be broken to pieces. This permission to pass on is asked for with presents in hand; if these presents are not accepted by the Chief, not being minded to let them pass, he tells them he has stopped the way, and that they can go no further. At these words they have to turn back, or run the risks of war."[12] The tolls exacted by the Kichesipirini were extensions of a longstanding cultural practice that was engaged in by other Indigenous peoples in eastern Canada, and do not prove that the Kichesipirini were especially haughty and belligerent.[13]

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[10] In 1636 the Jesuit father Paul Le Jeune observes that "the Hurons may be ten against one Islander." Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 9: 275. Hereinafter cited as *JR*.

[11] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 383.

[12] *JR*, 12:189.

The pride for which the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley generally, and the Kichesipirini in particular, are condemned, manifests itself in two main ways. First, it is by far the most prominent character trait of Algonquin leaders, the men the French called captains. Their pride is both personal and, in the case of the Kichesipirini, related to the exacting of tolls on fur brigades passing through the rapids at Morrison Island in the Ottawa River. Second, it manifests itself in the refusal to convert to Christianity, a failure to submit to God that is based in the worst of the seven deadly sins. In the case of the Kichesipirini, this is a blanket condemnation of an entire people that disguises a much more complex and contradictory history.

One of the revealing ways of bringing this complexity into the light is to focus on two of the most influential Algonquin leaders, Tessouat and Oumasasikweie. The Kichesipirini leader Tessouat, who was called Le Borgne by the French because he had only one eye, met Samuel de Champlain at Tadoussac in 1603.[14] He is believed to be the same man Champlain encountered on his visit to Morrison Island in 1613, and possibly the "Le Borgne of the Island" that Gabriel Sagard says was at Trois-Rivières in 1617. Elsie McLeod Jury identifies a second Tessouat, "probably a successor" of the Tessouat that Champlain met in 1613, who died in 1636.[15] A third Tessouat died a Christian in 1654.[16]

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[13] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 214 refers to "a general agreement that one tribe did not have the right to travel, without permission, across the territory of another."

[14] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 231. Other spellings of his name include Tesseouat, Tesswehas, and Tesswehat.

In Kichesipirini society, when a leader died, a ceremony was held to confer his name on a successor. As a result, there is much uncertainty in the historical sources about which Tessouat is being described at any given time. Not surprisingly, in the existing sources the three Tessouats tend to merge into one, with the characteristics and actions of one of them being attributed to all of them, and ultimately being identified with the Kichesipirini as a people. In 1640-41 the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune says that the third Tessouat "strikes only unfairly, and with underhand thrusts."[17] George Hunt refers to the "sagacious and treacherous Tesseouat."[18] Léo-Paul Desrosiers pulls out all the rhetorical stops, calling Tessouat a potentate and a dictator.[19] Difficult to recall by this point that, as Elsie McLeod Jury observes, Samuel de Champlain called the first Tessouat 'the kind old chief,' and describes the second Tessouat as 'a man of intelligence.'

The problems with the stereotyping of Tessouat are compounded by the misidentification of the Algonquin leader Oumasasikweie.[20] Like Tessouat, this was

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[15] Elsie McLeod Jury, "TESSOUAT (d. 1636)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 -, accessed 10 April 2022, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tessouat_1636_1E.html.

[16] Elsie McLeod Jury, "TESSOUAT (d. 1654)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 -, accessed 10 April 2022, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tessouat_1654_1E.html.

[17] *JR*, 20: 291.

[18] Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 44.

[19] Léo-Paul Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie 1534 – 1652* (Québec: Septentrion, 1998, cop. 1947), 95-96.

[20] Oumasasikweie was also known as Oumasikweie, Umasaskiweie, and Oumastikoueiau.

a name that was passed down. The French knew Oumasasikweie as 'la grenouille' (the frog), and he was succeeded by the second Oumasasikweie, who became known to the Jesuits as 'le crapaud' (the toad). The Jesuits expressed little sympathy when the Iroquois killed the 'the frog' in 1635, and 'the toad' contracted a "violent fever," suffered horribly and died in 1647.[21] In fact, they celebrated.

In addition to the vilification of Oumasasikweie we add the widespread belief that, as Bruce Trigger claims, Oumasasikweie was "a Kichesipirini headman."[22] Thomas Grassman, in his entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, also claims that Oumasasikweie was Kichesipirini.[23] The *Jesuit Relations* contain a passage that appears to establish, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Trigger and Grassman are correct. Barthélemy Vimont, in his *Relation* of 1642-43, says that Oumasasikweie calls Tessouat his uncle.[24] Historians have taken this to mean that Oumasasikweie and Tessouat were blood relations, when in reality 'uncle' was a term of respect used to describe all older men in a society. In addition, the Algonquin term the Jesuits translated as 'neveu' (nephew) did not necessarily mean a blood relation either. Algonquin elders referred to all the young men of their society as 'nephews.'[25] This was not just an Algonquin practice, as the Récollet Gabriel Sagard

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[21] *JR*, 31: 265.

[22] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic,* 497.

[23] Thomas Grassman, "OUMASASIKWEIE"," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed 2 April, 2022, http://www. biographi.ca/en/bio/oumasasikweie_1E.html.

[24] *JR*, 24:233.

discovered that, among the Huron, "according to their ages I was thus called uncle or nephew."[26]

At several points in the *Jesuit Relations* we find evidence that Oumasasikweie was not Kichesipirini. To begin, Paul Le Jeune distinguished the Kichesipirini, the people he called Island Savages, from the Algonquins.[27] Le Jeune identifies Oumasasikweie as a Captain of the Algonquins, not of the Kichesipirini.[28] At another point he describes him as being "allied to those islanders," revealing that he was not Kichesipirini himself.[29] Finally, and most definitively, Le Jeune says that the second 'Oumasatikweie' is "of the petite Nation of the Algonquins."[30] Oumasasikweie was Oueskarini, not Kichesipirini.

It is believed that in 1635 the Mohawks killed Oumasasikweie and 22 members of his party who were travelling through their territory. Both Léo-Paul Desrosiers and Bruce Trigger claim that he was on his way to Fort Orange to negotiate with the Dutch, in an effort to divert the Huron fur trade from the French to the Dutch.[31] According to Trigger, Oumasasikweie "had played a leading role in arranging the peace treaty with the Mohawk," and tried to "slip through the Mohawk

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[25] See, for example, *JR*, 25: 259. This is not to deny the possibility that Tessouat ceremonially adopted Oumasasikweie as his 'nephew.'

[26] Wrong, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, 71.

[27] *JR*, 5: 239-41; *JR,* 6: 19.

[28] *JR*, 5: 231.

[29] *JR,* 12: 247.

[30] *JR*, 20: 287.

[31] Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie*, 94; Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 497-98.

country on his way to Fort Orange."[32] The inference is that the Mohawks were justified in killing Oumasasikweie because he was attempting to betray the truce he had negotiated.

One result of this reading of the evidence is the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*'s characterization of Oumasasikweie as a "traitor and intriguer" who "played a discreditable role in the trade rivalries between the Indians of New France and the Mohawks." Author Thomas Grassman suggests this is because he "seems to have been the instigator of the 1634 peace treaty … between the Algonkins, the Montagnais, the Onondagas, and the Mohawks."[33] Grassman's uncertainty may arise from the fact that at one point Bruce Trigger claims that it was Tessouat, not Oumasasikweie, who spearheaded the treaty with the Mohawks in the fall of 1634.[34] Then, not many pages later, he claims that it was Oumasasikweie who spearheaded the treaty.[35] Rémi Savard has a different take, stating that Tessouat was the main architect of the treaty, assisted by "Oumasasikouei," identified as a "capitaine des Kichesipirinis."[36]

Confusion concerning who negotiated the treaty is compounded by doubts about the parties to the truce, indeed whether or not a treaty even existed when

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[32] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 497.

[33] Grassman, "OUMASASIKWEIE.'

[34] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 485-86.

[35] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 497.

[36] Rémi Savard, *L'Algonquin Tessouat et la Fondation de Montréal: Diplomatie Franco-Indienne en Nouvelle-France* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1996), 77.

Oumasasikweie and his party were killed. Bruce Trigger argues that both the Algonquins and the Mohawks were seeking peace in 1634, but does not provide any evidence that this peace was actually agreed upon.[37] Grassman claims that both the Montagnais and the Onondaga were parties to the agreement although, as we shall see, he has mistaken the Oneida for the Onondaga. Léo-Paul Desrosiers describes it as a truce between the Algonquins and the Oneida, then shortly afterwards claims that it probably included the Mohawks as well.[38]

It is possible there was a truce between the Algonquins and the Mohawks, negotiated by Oumasasikweie and/or Tessouat, but there is more substantial evidence of a truce with the Oneida. In late 1634 the Dutch sent three emissaries from Fort Orange to investigate the trading activities of the French and the "French Indians." The three men were Willem Tomassen, Jeronimus de la Croix, and Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, surgeon at Fort Orange, the likely author of the account of their journey. They discover that there are "French savages" living with the Oneida.[39] Writing from an Oneida town on 31 December 1634, the author observes that a chief named Arenias has returned "from the French savages," and that he has gone to them before, which tells us these negotiations have been going on for some time.[40] The next day he comments that Arenias has returned with

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[37] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 465.

[38] Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie*, 88-89.

[39] J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 144.

[40] Jameson, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 149.

"stringed seawan" that the French Indians had given him "as a sign of peace," and that this peace was to last for four years.[41]

We will return to the question of the importance of wampum in these negotiations, but for now the key issue is what the Dutch mean by 'French Indians' and 'French savages.' A year earlier Kiliaen van Rensselaer, founder and director of the Dutch West India Company, and leading founder of New Netherland, wrote a letter that is critical in understanding what happened to Oumasasikweie. In his letter van Rensselaer wonders if the Mohawks, "who will not allow the French savages who now trade on the river of Canada and who live nearer to us than to them [the French] to pass through to come to us, might through persuasion or fear sooner be moved to do so and that from these savages more furs could be obtained than are bartered now in all New Netherland?"[42] A close reading of the syntax of the sentence tells us that 'them' refers to the Mohawks, not to the French, meaning that the 'French savages' who live closer to the Dutch than to the Mohawks are the Montagnais.

Lost in the vilification of the Kichesipirini is Bruce Trigger's point that "the Montagnais, like the Kichesipirini, demanded rights of passage from interior tribes who were passing through their territory to trade with the French."[43] Léo-Paul

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[41] Jameson, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 150.

[42] A.J.F. van Laer, ed., "Memorial presented by Kiliaen van Rensselaer to the Assembly of the Nineteen of the West India Company," 25 November 1633, *van Rensselaer Bowvier Manuscripts* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1908), 248.

[43] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 342.

Desrosiers is mistaken when he claims that the Algonquins dominated the St. Lawrence as well as the Ottawa trade.[44] Montagnais dominance was one of the reasons why the Algonquins preferred to trade at Montréal than at Trois-Rivières, at Trois-Rivières than at Tadoussac.[45] In his November 1633 letter Kiliaen van Rensselaer tells us that it was the Montagnais, not the Algonquins, the Mohawks wanted to keep from trading with the Dutch. According to Paul Le Jeune, Oumasasikweie was living at Québec in this period, and was acting on behalf of the Montagnais, not on behalf of the Kichesipirini. Le Jeune observes that Oumasasikweie understood Montagnais "very well," creating the possibility his role had more to do with a facility for languages than with a propensity for intrigue. [46]

Forgotten in all of the condemnations of the treachery of the Kichesipirini is the fact that they were benefitting most from the tolls at Morrison Island, not in trapping beaver and trading pelts themselves. As Bruce Trigger points out, there were women and children in Algonquin canoes travelling to the St. Lawrence trading centres, but typically not in Huron canoes.[47] Algonquin canoes were also significantly smaller than Huron canoes, and for both reasons carried smaller numbers of pelts. Trading beaver pelts was more important to the Huron and Montagnais than it was to the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. This was especially

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[44] Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie*, 93.

[45] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 343.

[46] *JR*, 5: 181.

[47] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 343.

true of the Kichesipirini, whose efforts focused on exacting tolls on the fur brigades passing through their territory.

It is not possible to disprove the claim that Oumasasikweie was attempting to divert the Huron fur trade from the French to the Dutch, but it is possible to advance an alternative explanation for his death. The key event is described at the end of August by Paul Le Jeune, who observes that the Iroquois have destroyed seven canoes of Oueskarini at Trois-Rivières, meaning the deaths of at least 14 warriors. Le Jeune concludes that the peace is broken, and that the Montagnais will take sides with the Algonquins. Then, in the very next paragraph, Le Jeune comments that Oumasasikweie "acts as a Captain here," meaning Québec.[48] Bruce Trigger is mistaken in claiming that Oumasasikweie was already dead in August 1635.[49] Le Jeune tells us that Oumasasikweie was still alive at the end of August 1635, and he may be the source of Desrosiers' claim that Oumasaskiweie was not killed until the fall or early winter of 1635.[50]

There are several critical issues concerning the killing of the Oueskarini warriors at Trois-Rivières. First, Oumasasikweie was Oueskarini, and had a personal connection with the warriors who died. Second, 'Iroquois' may mean Oneida, not Mohawk.[51] Indeed, the French, Oueskarini and Montagnais may not

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[48] *JR*, 8: 59.

[49] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 498.

[50] Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie*, 94.

have known the identity of the killers and, because of the December 1634 truce, feared it was the Oneida. Oumasasikweie may have been tasked with finding out. Third, there is no good reason to believe that the 22 members of Oumasikweie's party were Kichesipirini. In all probability they were Oueskarini and Montagnais, which is consistent with Le Jeune's observation that the incident at Trois-Rivières would cause the Montagnais to ally with the Algonquins. It is critical to recall at this point that Le Jeune distinguished the Kichesipirini from the other Ottawa Valley Algonquins.

In the existing literature the assumption is that the Mohawks killed the Oueskarini, and Oumasasikweie and his party as well. There is, in fact, no solid evidence for either assumption. Bruce Trigger claims that Oumasasikweie was on his way to Fort Orange to betray the Mohawks, but Trigger's source, Paul Le Jeune, does not say that Oumasasikweie was going to Fort Orange.[52] He may, in fact, have been going to the Oneida. One possibility is that young Oneida warriors, seeking to avoid being exposed for killing the Oueskarini warriors at Trois-Rivières, killed him and his party. A second possibility is that they were killed by the Mohawks, perhaps because they passed through Mohawk territory at some point, or because the Mohawks wanted to create dissension between the Oneida and the Montagnais, and therefore with the French. In any event, we know the Mohawks did not kill

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[51] Consciously or not, historians of New France have repeatedly read Iroquois in the sources and assumed it means Mohawks. As a result, there is a convention in the literature that I call 'the Mohawks did it.' Not always.

[52] *JR*, 9: 95-97.

Oumasaskiweie in order to break the truce because, as Paul Le Jeune observes, the truce was already broken.

In August 1635 Paul Le Jeune believed that it was the Dutch who were attempting to divert Huron trade from the French, not the Kichesipirini.[53] Yet Trigger claims that it was the 'Algonkin,' meaning the Kichesipirini, who "were clearly anxious to eliminate trade between the Huron and the French."[54] This does not make any sense. Trigger points out that the Kichesipirini were collecting "lucrative tolls" on Morrison Island, so why would they want to stop Huron fur brigades from travelling down the Ottawa River to the French settlements?[55] In addition, Trigger himself acknowledges that in 1636 the Kichesipirini did not stop Huron fur brigades travelling down the Ottawa River.

There is one remaining piece of evidence that causes us to doubt the vilification of Oumasasikweie and the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. At the same time as these events were unfolding, the Huron were dealing with a wave of deaths caused by disease, deaths that were linked to Samuel de Champlain, who died in December 1635. Our understanding of what is going on is heightened by knowledge of an event that occurred at Trois-Rivières in September 1637. At that time the Chevalier de L'Isle, representing the governor, met with 150 Hurons, who were counseled not to believe Algonquin rumours that Champlain had wanted to ruin the Huron. The Chevalier de L'Isle summoned the second Oumasasikweie to explain

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[53] *JR*, 8: 61.

[54] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 497.

[55] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 610.

why the Algonquins had "sowed discord."[56] It is at this point that Paul Le Jeune describes Oumasasikweie as "allied to those islanders," meaning that a Oueskarini is being called upon to explain rumours supposedly spread by the Kichesipirini.

Oumasasikweie claimed it was the Hurons, not the Algonquins, who were spreading the rumour. When the Hurons were asked if this was true, "those of one village accused the inhabitants of another of originating these reports, telling them to clear themselves thereof." Rather than denying Oumasasikweie's claim, the Hurons turned on each other. According to Le Jeune, "each denied these calumnies, saying … that the cause of their death was being attributed to certain porcelain collars which the Montagnez had collected in order to invite them to go to war."[57]

Historians of this period have missed the significance of this passage, which entirely changes our perception of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley and their headman Tessouat. In March 1636 Tessouat, interpreter François Marguerie, and three Kichesipirini went to Huronia to enlist the help of the Hurons in a war against the Iroquois to avenge the killing of Oumasasikweie and his party. The 'porcelain collars' being referred to by the Hurons at Trois-Rivières in September 1637 are the 23 collars of wampum Tessouat presented to the Hurons in March 1636. These collars were highly symbolic, representing as they did Oumasasikweie and the 22 members of his party. Even Paul Le Jeune knew that "the Porcelain that takes the place of gold and silver in this Country is all-powerful."[58] If Gilles Harvard is correct

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[56] *JR*, 12: 247.

[57] *JR*, 12: 247.

in arguing that collars of wampum, worn around the neck, were more valuable than strings of wampum worn around the waist, arms, and legs, the importance of this wampum cannot be underestimated.[59]

Jean de Brébeuf mistakenly claims the Kichesipirini collected the collars of wampum.[60] Bruce Trigger does not mention it at all, and Léo-Paul Desrosiers refers to it as "présents."[61] The refusal to accept the collars of wampum was a rebuff of the Montagnais, not of the Kichesipirini. It is true, as Bruce Trigger points out, that the wampum was not offered to the Attignawantan, who comprised half the Huron population, because some time before warriors of the Bear Nation had killed eight Kichesipirini warriors.[62] There is, however, no reason to see Tessouat's refusal to offer the collars of wampum to the Attignawantan as a greater insult than the refusal of the other half of the Huron population to accept it.

While the significance of the refusal of the wampum has been missed, a great deal has been made of Tessouat's boastful, typically Kichesipirini behaviour.[63] Jean de Brébeuf tells us, presumably relating a claim made by the Hurons, Tessouat "boasted that he is master of the French, and that he would lead us back to Kébec and make us all recross the sea." Concerning Tessouat's boasts, Brébeuf

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[58] *JR*, 10: 29.

[59] Gilles Havard, "The Mediating Role of Wampum in French-Native American Diplomacy (17th-18th Centuries)," *Gradhiva*, No. 33 (February 2022), 24.

[60] *JR* 10: 75.

[61] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 498; Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie*, 95.

[62] *JR*, 10: 79.

[63] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 498.

acknowledges "we did not hear them."[64] Tessouat may not even have said the things attributed to him and, even if he did, it is no reason to demonize the Kichesipirini, because the kinds of rhetorical flourishes Tessouat has been condemned for were commonplace in the speeches of the French and other Indigenous leaders as well.

According to Bruce Trigger, by 1636 the "schemes of the Kichesipirini had been decisively crushed and a good working relationship had been restored between the French and the Huron."[65] The evidence, however, tells us that the Montagnais may have been guiltier of scheming than the Kichesipirini. We will never know for certain what happened to Oumasasikweie, but we do know that Paul Le Jeune's reaction to his death tells us everything we need to know about the fate of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. Le Jeune says of Oumasasikweie that "God, who knew the malice of his heart, crushed him." Turning to the Bible, Le Jeune observes: "When Goliath was slain, the army of the Philistines no longer had any strength. The death of these men renders the others more pliable and more disposed to grant us what we desire from them."[66] With interfering leaders like Tessouat and Oumasasiskweie out of the way, the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley were free to be led into the Christian fold.

What the Jesuits desired was the nomadic Algonquins settled down in permanent settlements where they could be brought under the influence of

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[64] *JR*, 10: 77.

[65] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 498.

[66] *JR*, 9: 95-97. This vilification of the Kichesipirini has lived on into our own day, Rémi Savard claiming that Le Jeune's reaction to the death of Oumasasikweie is understandable. Savard, *L'Algonquin Tessouat et la Fondation de Montréal, 79.*

Christianity. The failure of the Jesuits to send a priest or priests to Morrison and Allumette Islands is tied in with their perception of nomadism, practices such as polygamy, and the refusal to convert to Christianity. In his *Relation* of 1638, Paul Le Jeune says that perhaps "we shall send one of our Fathers, this Spring, to the Island, whither it is said the petite nation of the Algonquins has retired."[67] Le Jeune, six years after coming to New France, is thinking about sending a priest to the islands, not to minister to the Kichesipirini, but to minister to the Oueskarini he believes have fled there.

Le Jeune's prejudice has travelled through time to James Pendergast, who disputes Gabriel Sagard's observation that the Kichesipirini were sedentary, claiming that they "were not farmers on a scale matching the Huron."[68] To begin, no - one has ever claimed that any Algonkian-speaking people in New France farmed on the same scale as the Hurons, let alone the Kichesipirini. This matters, because in the *Relation* of 1636, Jean de Brébeuf says of the Kichesipirini that "we told them that one day some of our Fathers might stay in their Country, to instruct them; and that they would have had them before this, had it not been for their wandering life."[69] This is hypocrisy on the part of the Jesuits, because the Cree-speaking Montagnais and Attikamegue, and a number of other Algonkian-speaking peoples, were *less* sedentary than the Kichesipirini.

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[67] *JR*, 14: 225. I have found no evidence that this priest was sent.

[68] James Pendergast, "The Ottawa River Algonquin Bands in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian Context," *Canadian Journal of Archeology*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1999), 77.

[69] *JR*, 10: 79.

It is not well known that Canadian historians have picked up, even if only sub-consciously, the prejudices of the Jesuits, and the histories they have written echo those prejudices. The Jesuits made no secret of the fact they preferred to work among the Cree-speaking peoples, the Montagnais and Attikamegue, who lived north of the St. Lawrence River. In the early 1640s Gabriel Vimont says that the Kichesipirini at Trois-Rivières and Fort Richelieu are "just as proud, and difficult to govern … as those from about Quebec are humble and docile."[70] The Jesuits, who posted fathers at Québec, Montréal, Trois-Rivières, Fort Richelieu, Tadoussac, and elsewhere, did not establish a mission among the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

The false perception of the Kichesipirini as the quintessential nomadic people is coupled with a stereotype of the Kichesipirini as all being resolutely anti-Christian. In his *Relation* of 1642 Barthélemy Vimont, relating the experiences of Father Jean de Quen at Tadoussac, describes a group of Kichesipirini as "very arrogant and consequently very averse to God."[71] For the Jesuits, arrogance was directly tied to opposition to Christianity. In his *Relation* of 1642-43 Vimont writes of the Kichesipirini that "there was nothing but superstitions among them; there was naught but outrages and calumnies against our Christians."[72] By 'our Christians' Vimont means the Cree-speaking Attikamegue and Montagnais, not the Kichesipirini. In comparison to the Kichesipirini, Vimont sees the Attikamegue and Montagnais as "men much more modest, and with better regulated minds, - in a

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[70] *JR*, 24: 191.

[71] *JR*, 22: 231.

[72] *JR*, 24: 209.

word, with souls."[73] We shall see what fate awaits the Kichesipirini who have no souls.

There has been no real understanding of what is happening to the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley in the 1640s. The blanket condemnations of their arrogance, pride, and superstitions disguise a quite different reality; the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley, "as distress overwhelmed the people," were increasingly turning to Christianity.[74] The rift this caused in Algonquin society is evoked in a statement made by a Christian Kichesipirini woman in the early 1640s, when she said of the traditionalists: 'It is pride and women that prevent you from having sense.'[75] For Christian Kichesipirini it was already the case by the early 1640s that holding onto traditional beliefs no longer made any 'sense.' It was pride, and blasphemous cultural practices, most notably polygamy, that stood in the way of 'pagan' Kichesipirini coming to their senses.

While Bruce Trigger has written in great detail about the traditional-Christian division of Huron-Wendat society, little has been said about the same process among the Algonquins. This rending of Algonquin society centred around women and polygamy, because adopting monogamy was crucial to the Jesuit willingness to baptize Algonquin men and consider them Christians. It is difficult to exaggerate the Jesuit antipathy to polygamy and the lengths they were willing to go to put an end to it. In his *Relation* of 1640-41 Jesuit superior Barthélemy Vimont comments: "these

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[73] *JR*, 22: 233.

[74] *JR*, 25: 245.

[75] *JR*, 25: 265.

Savages are closely bound to their relatives; but Jesus Christ came to break this bond."[76]

The Jesuits were most intent on destroying the relationship some men had with more than one wife. In 1642-43 Vimont expressed his antipathy to "the liberty that our Savages have always had, and that they would like to retain, of having as many wives as they please, and of leaving them according to their fancy … of all the Christian laws which we propound to them, there is not one that seems so hard to them as that which forbids polygamy, and does not allow them to break the bonds of lawful marriage."[77] The Jesuit loathing of polygamy was intertwined with their hatred of apostates, Algonquins who converted to Christianity, then returned to the old ways. Of these apostates Vimont writes that it is polygamy "that prevents most of the infidels from accepting the Faith, and has caused some to lose it who had already embraced it."[78]

The impact of this hatred of polygamy and its influence on Algonquin men converting to Christianity, then reverting to their traditional beliefs and practices, dealt a devastating blow to Algonquin society. In the *Relation* of 1643-44 Barthélemy Vimont relates the story of Etienne Pigarouich, a Kichesipirini shaman,

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[76] *JR*, 21: 71. Barthélemy Vimont succeeded Paul Le Jeune as superior of the Canadian mission and prepared the *Relations* from 1642 to 1645.

[77] *JR*, 25: 247.

[78] *JR*, 25: 249.

and François Kokweribagougouch.[79] They are living at St. Joseph (Sillery) near Québec, and leave to go to Trois-Rivières. Vimont says that Pigarouich is going to be with "the Algonquins of the Island, his countrymen, and those of Hiroquet, - who are two Tribes extremely insolent, arrogant, full of superstitions, and very profligate, - he soon allowed himself, with his comrade, to be corrupted by such bad company, so that both abandoned their lawful wives with the practice of the Faith, and took each a concubine."[80] In December 1643, however, Pigarouich repents to Brébeuf and resolves to end his 'debauchery,' meaning that he intends to give up his partner.[81] One of the "principal Christians" at Trois-Rivières is happy that Pigarouich has regained his "sense," which had been taken by the woman.[82] On his way back to Sillery, however, Pigarouich takes back his "concubine."[83]

At Sillery, the French meet Pigarouich, Kokweribagougouch, and the men, women, and children in their party with insults and closed doors. The Ursulines refuse the sick admission to the hospital, and they are forbidden to enter the church.[84] The band is in disbelief when they receive the same treatment from the Indigenous Christians at Sillery. According to Vimont: "No one offered them food;

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[79] It is likely Kokweribagougouch was Kichesipirini as well, but Vimont does not actually say so.

[80] *JR*, 25: 249.

[81] *JR*, 25: 251.

[82] *JR*, 25: 257.

[83] *JR*, 25: 261. It is almost certain that a small minority, if not more, of these people were Christians.

[84] *JR*, 25: 261.

they would not even speak to them, except to reproach them with their wickedness."[85] The traditional Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley were not the only ones guilty of arrogant, high-handed behaviour.

In the fall of 1644 Barthélemy Vimont observes: "The Island Algonquins, and those of the Hiroquet Tribe, after so many years of instruction, are not, it is true, so insolent as they formerly were; but they are not yet so humble as they must be to become worthy of Baptism."[86] At the same time, Vimont comments: "Many savages from the Island, from the Iroquet Tribe, and from other quarters, who had encamped somewhat close to Kebec, went every day to the Chapel of the Ursulines, where Father Dequen dispensed spiritual alms to them."[87] Many Algonquins were in the process of converting to Christianity, but the Jesuits demanded complete submission. The insolence and pride of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley was the insolence and pride of heathens who refused to submit themselves to the will of God, and only complete submission was acceptable to the Jesuits. Anything short of complete submission was revolt against God.

The Jesuits fervently believed that these arrogant, belligerent, and hostile people needed to be humbled, and in the early 1640s the Iroquois emerged as the agents of that humbling. The longstanding perception the Algonquins were allies of the French has hidden from view the actual thinking of the Jesuits, and it has been further hidden by a body of thought that arose in the late 20th century. At that time

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[85] *JR*, 25: 263.

[86] *JR*, 25: 113.

[87] *JR*, 25: 243-245.

the dominant interpretation of Iroquois warfare became the concept of the mourning war, with the most influential iterations of the argument being made by Daniel K. Richter. In a seminal article published in *The William and Mary Quarterly* in 1983, Richter describes the mourning war as a means "of restoring lost population, ensuring social continuity, and dealing with death."[88] According to Richter, capturing enemies and taking them home alive "was preferred to killing them on the spot and taking their scalps."[89]

Richter developed and expanded the argument in his 1992 book *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, in an approach that focuses on the benefits of mourning wars for the Iroquoian peoples. He observes that the Iroquois "believed that the grief inspired by a relative's death could plunge survivors into depths of despair that would rob them of their reason and dispose them to fits of rage harmful to themselves and the community." If the grief "remained unassuaged, women of the mourning household could demand the ultimate socially sanctioned release for their violent impulses: a raid to seek captives who, it was hoped, would ease their pain."[90] Without comment, Richter claims that mourning wars "promoted group cohesion and dramatized Iroquois superiority over their enemies."[91]

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[88] Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1983), 529.

[89] Richter, "War and Culture," 535.

[90] Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 33.

[91] Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 36.

Richter's approach can be traced to observations made by Lewis Henry Morgan in his classic work *League of the Iroquois*, first published in 1851. According to Morgan, it was "the boast of the Iroquois that the great object of their confederacy was peace – to break up the spirit of perpetual warfare, which had wasted the red race from age to age."[92] The confederacy was "a system sufficiently ample to enfold the whole Indian race," and had it not been impeded by the arrival of Europeans, would have "attained a great elevation, and a general supremacy."[93] Richter echoes Morgan, claiming that the Iroquois "envisioned a day of no more wars, with their Great League of Peace extended to all peoples."[94] This rationalization of Iroquois imperialism, combined with the mourning wars argument, serves to disguise the fate of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.[95]

By the 1670s, as Victor Konrad points out, the Anishinaabe – the Ojibwa, Odawa, and Mississauga - were moving from their homelands in the Michilimakinac region into central, southwestern, and southeastern Ontario.[96] At the same time the

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[92] Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (New York: Corinth Books, 1962), 92.

[93] Morgan, *League of the Iroquois*, 93. See also Roger Carpenter, "Making War More Lethal: Iroquois vs. Huron in the Great Lakes Region, 1609 to 1650," *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall 2001), 51.

[94] Richter, "War and Culture," 536.

[95] Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 87-104 recounts the Iroquois dispersion of the Huron, Erie, and Neutral, but has nothing to say about the fate of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

[96] Typically, the Anishinaabe are identified as the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi, the members of the Three Fires Confederacy. It was mainly the Mississauga, however, not the Potawatomi, who moved into and settled in southern and eastern Ontario.

Iroquois were moving north of the Great Lakes, where they clashed with their "Algonquian foes."[97] The Algonquians they clashed with were the Ojibwa, Odawa, and Mississauga, not the Kichesipirini, Oueskarini, and Iroquet. They were no longer able to resist Iroquois incursions. Their decimation allowed the Iroquois to fill "the void" in these areas, as Konrad puts it.[98]

The 'mourning wars' understanding of Iroquois warfare both elucidates and disguises what was happening in the 1640s. Iroquois raiding parties were seeking captives, notably women of childbearing age to marry into the society, have children, and increase the population. Algonquin men were something else entirely. In the *Relation* of 1644-45 Barthélemy Vimont describes the peace negotiations held at Trois-Rivières in September 1645. In attendance were delegates of the Iroquois, Attikamegue, Montagnais, Kichesipirini, Oueskarini, Iroquet, Huron, and possibly others. In his speech, the "chief man" of the Iroquois began by saying "that his country was full of Hurons and of Alguonquin women." Vimont understood his meaning, commenting that the Iroquois "never spared" the lives of Algonquin men.[99] There were no mourning wars for Algonquin men.

In order to understand what happened to the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley we must return to the *Jesuit Relations* and other French sources of the 17th century. Here we find that in early June 1641 some 350 Iroquois, part of a larger contingent

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[97] Richter, "War and Culture," 542.

[98] Victor Konrad, "An Iroquois Frontier: The North Shore of Lake Ontario During the Late Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1981), 142.

[99] *JR*, 27: 287.

of 500 warriors, arrived at Trois-Rivières. With them was the captive François Marguerie, who observed that the Iroquois had acquired guns, and were as skillful in their use as the French.[100] Marguerie states that the Iroquois "had deputed him to speak concerning peace with the French, but not with the Savages, - the Algonquins, and the Montagnais, whom they hate unto death, and whom they wish to exterminate entirely."[101]

At the end of autumn 1641 the Algonquins at Trois-Rivières, fearing the Iroquois, divided into two bands, one going to Saint Joseph, while the other "ascended far into the country of the Algonquins, whither the Hiroquois followed and massacred them." Two Kichesipirini prisoners who escaped say the Iroquois "marched on the ice and snow as far as the Island, where they surprised some cabins of Savages, killed those whom they first met and took away alive as many as they could to their own country, to become the objects of their sport, and food for the flames and for their stomachs."[102]

The Iroquois, having destroyed the settlement on Morrison Island, tracked and pursued the Kichesipirini hunting bands in the forest. According to one of the female captives, as related to Father Buteux, these "poor Algonquins were in their

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[100] *JR*, 21: 37.

[101] *JR*, 21: 37.

[102] *JR*, 22: 249. The fact that the Iroquois found Kichesipirini living on Morrison Island in the winter belies both the Jesuit prejudice about the nomadic Kichesipirini and Bruce Trigger's claim that there was only a summer camp there. Maurice Ratelle takes up Trigger's perspective, claiming that Morrison Island was "a summer meeting-place for the Kichesipirini." Maurice Ratelle, "Location of the Algonquins from 1534 to 1650," in Daniel Clément, ed., *The Algonquins* (Gatineau: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1996), 56.

own country, living in huts in the depths of their great forests, in a place where, in all probability, no Hiroquois had ever been." Having found the Algonquins, they "were at once slaughtered," and the Iroquois "dismembered those whom they had just slaughtered."[103] These accounts are confirmed by two captive Kichesipirini women who stated that "they passed the Winter in suffering and sorrow, as wretched slaves, daily hearing the bluster of those Barbarians against the French and Algonquins, whom they wish to exterminate completely, so they say, knowing that they are supported and armed by the Dutch."[104]

In fact, the killing was not indiscriminate, the Jesuit Barthélemy Vimont noting that the Iroquois "killed only the men and the more aged women, sparing about thirty of the younger ones in order that they might dwell in their country, and marry as if they had been born there."[105] Vimont, like Richter, turns our attention to the way in which captured women of childbearing age benefitted Iroquoian society. Kathryn Magee Labelle turns their argument on its head, writing about the impact of mourning wars on the victims. As Magee Labelle argues, mourning wars could have "devastating effects," the loss of family members and friends sending relatives "into a spiral of depression, unable to cope with the reality."[106] Magee Labelle is writing

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[103] *JR*, 22: 253.

[104] *JR*, 22: 267.

[105] *JR*, 22: 265.

[106] Kathryn Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed: A History of the Seventeenth-Century Wendat People* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 43.

about the Huron-Wendat, and her critical intervention on behalf of the victims of mourning wars needs to be extended to the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

The downplaying of the fate of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous historians, is much in evidence, even as their destruction gathers momentum.[107] In his *Relation* of 1642-43 Barthélemy Vimont writes that the Kichesipirini, "although nearly all ruined and reduced to nothing, have remained in a strange pride, and have hitherto occasioned us great hindrances to the conversion of the other Algonquins, and of the Hurons themselves, who are obliged to pass through their country, in order to come down hither."[108] By the early 1640s the old French-Algonquin alliance that emerged out of Samuel de Champlain's wars against the Iroquois was a dead letter for the traditional Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. The Jesuits believed that the 'pagan' Kichesipirini were the authors of their own misfortune, and were far more concerned about the fate of the Hurons.

Iroquois attacks targeted both the Algonquins and the Hurons, but the Jesuits were most concerned about the fate of the Hurons. In 1644, according to a Huron Christian named Henry Stontrats, ten bands of Iroquois warriors left Iroquoia to raid the French, Algonquins, and Hurons. Five of these bands went to the Ottawa

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[107] No attempt is being made here to disguise the fact that the Algonquins continued to participate in raids on Iroquoia, and to kill, capture, and torture Haudenosaunee. See Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 66-86 for a more Iroquois-centric treatment than I am providing here. My main point stands, however, exemplified in the fact that Hunt's discussion of Iroquois-Algonquin conflict in the 1640s is in a chapter entitled "Iroquois and Hurons."

[108] *JR*, 23: 305.

River, while only one "went in the direction of the Huron country."[109] In spite of the Iroquois focus on the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley, Barthélemy Vimont's account centres around a group of Hurons, who had been receiving Christian instruction at Trois-Rivières over the winter. On 27 April 1644 they left to return to Huronia with Father Bressani, but were captured by a party of thirty Iroquois warriors.[110] Vimont pays far less attention to the fact that a band of 40 Iroquois warriors "marched toward the river des prairies, where they surprised a party of Algonquins, who were all carried off as captives, and most of these were immediately burned at the Iroquois village."[111]

By September 1644 Barthélemy Vimont is reporting a conversation between an Iroquet captain and the governor, in which the Algonquin leader says: 'These few men, whom thou seest around me, are the remnant of one of the most flourishing Tribes that ever dwelt in this country.'[112] By 1643-44 the devastation of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley is impelling the Kichesipirini headman Agwachimagan (the Coal) to observe: 'Some years ago, you saw the Algonquins in such numbers that we were the terror of our enemies. Now we are reduced to nothing; disease has exterminated us; war has decimated us; famine pursues us, wherever we go.'[113]

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[109] *JR,* 26: 35-37.

[110] *JR*, 26: 29-35.

[111] *JR*, 26: 37.

[112] *JR*, 25: 267-69.

Two peace conferences held in July and September 1645 seemingly held out hope for both the traditionalists and the Christians, but these hopes were not to be realized. In January 1646 Jérome Lalement reveals that, in addition to the two public meetings, two private conferences were held in 1645, attended only by the Mohawk leader Kiotsaeton, Governor Montmagny, and the interpreter Guillaume Couture. At the first conference Kiotsaeton asked Montmagny to abandon the Algonquins to the Iroquois. Montmagny was not willing to do this, but at some point Paul Le Jeune and Barthélemy Vimont told Montmagny that "the difficulty might be smoothed over." Their solution emerged at the second conference, when Montmagny said that the Christian Algonquins made peace possible, while the traditionalists were not "united with us like the others."[114] To Montmagny, "us" included the Mohawks and the Christian Algonquins; it was the traditional Algonquins who were being abandoned.

The solution proposed by Vimont and Le Jeune, of course, depended on the ability of the Iroquois to distinguish Christians from traditionalists. George Hunt believes this was impossible, while Bruce Trigger disagrees, claiming that the Iroquois were able to do this.[115] The reality is that, in the heat of battle, when split-second decisions made the difference between life and death, the Iroquois were not stopping to distinguish Christians from traditionalists. On this issue even James

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[113] *JR*, 26: 303.

[114] *JR*, 28: 315.

[115] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 648.

Pendergast disagrees with Trigger, arguing that in agreeing to the treaty "the French virtually abandoned the largely unarmed non-Christian Algonquins."[116]

At first glance Bruce Trigger's claim that after the secret deal was struck "the French had been able to persuade the Mohawk not to wage war against the Algonkin" seems persuasive.[117] In October 1646 Gabriel Lalement states that the Mohawks are hunting freely on Algonquin lands, and the Algonquins have brought Mohawks to all the French settlements. Lalement calls how these long-time enemies are getting along so well "a miracle."[118]

Some miracle. Pursuant to the peace, three or four Mohawks stayed at Trois-Rivières. Gabriel Lalement describes their leaving, accompanied by a Huron by the name of Tandihetsi.[119] On this journey the Mohawks told him "that no peace was desired with the Atichawata, but it was desired with the Hurons and the french; that the french had consented thereto, and that consequently nothing but the opportunity was now awaited for exterminating the Atichawata, and that 300 Annieronons could certainly come by the middle of february for the execution of this plan."[120] A Mohawk who had remained at Trois-Rivières when the others left told

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[116] Pendergast, "The Ottawa River Algonquin Bands in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian Context," 95.

[117] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 649.

[118] *JR*, 28: 279.

[119] *JR*, 28: 147-49. Hunt, in *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 80-81 provides a rationale for Tandihetsi's motives, noting that "he had married an Algonquin woman and had many Algonquin relatives."

Monsieur de la Poterie that the story was true. In response de la Poterie assembled an Algonquin council, and "declared to them the whole matter, to the end that they should look to their affairs. What was surprising therein was that our Fathers sent us no word of all that."[121]

While we cannot be certain of the motives of the Jesuits in not reporting these events, there is the distinct possibility they were trying to convince themselves that the Mohawk commitment to the peace was genuine. If it was not genuine, the French had done their duty, giving guns to the Christians, but not to the traditionalists, so that in an Iroquois raid the Christians had a better chance of survival. In addition, they likely shared Jérome Lalement's belief that "misfortune seems to have opened their minds."[122] For the Jesuits the Iroquois were agents of God, aiding the conversion of the Algonquins to Christianity. Finally, they despised apostates. If the Iroquois killed Algonquins who had converted to Christianity, then gone back to the old ways, they were not about to shed any tears.[123]

The true venality of the Jesuits is revealed in Jérome Lalement's account of October 1646. Lalement records that seven Mohawks, two Hurons, and Guillaume

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[120] *JR*, 28: 149. Atichawata is a Mohawk term for the Algonquins meaning 'tree eaters.' See Marc Côté and Gaétan L. Lessard, *Traces du passé Images du présent: Anthropologie amérindienne du Moyen-nord québécois* (Rouyn-Noranda: Cégep-Editeur, 1993), 111. 'Annieronons' is the term the Jesuits used to name the Mohawks.

[121] *JR,* 28: 149.

[122] *JR*, 27: 39.

[123] In the *Relation* of 1640-41 Le Jeune had called Oumasasikweie 'the toad' and an apostate. According to Le Jeune, "this wicked man has more venom in his heart and in his tongue than that unsightly creature has in its whole body." *JR*, 20: 281.

Couture arrived at Montréal on 22 February 1646. The Mohawks then left to go hunting, and returned in May. Governor Montmagny held a conference on 7 May 1646, at which Tessouat represented the Algonquins. Lalement observes: "this man, utterly distrustful and suspicious, was afraid that the French might make their peace in private, without troubling themselves about the Savages, their allies."[124] This is the same man who, nine months earlier, had revealed the two private conferences between the French and the Mohawks at which the decision to abandon the traditional Algonquins had been made. Tessouat had every right to be suspicious.

Jesuit condemnations of Tessouat, Oumasasikweie, and Kichesipirini behaviour emerged from religious, not ethnic or racial, prejudice. According to the Jesuits, Tessouat had undergone a miraculous transformation when he converted to Christianity. Once baptized, according to Barthélemy Vimont, he acted "with so great prudence that it is not possible to express it."[125] Formerly "the most haughty man in the world," God gave him "the gentleness and the humility of a little child" as soon as he became a Christian.[126] Now, having relapsed and become an apostate, he has reverted to his true nature, that of a stereotypically arrogant, back-stabbing Kichesipirini.

The stage is now set for the culmination of the dispersal of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. On 5 March 1647 the Iroquois captured two Algonquin men and two Algonquin women, who told them where the Algonquin hunting parties were.

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[124] *JR*, 28: 299.

[125] *JR*, 24: 239.

[126] *JR*, 24: 243.

The Iroquois war party split up, some warriors going north of the St. Lawrence, and others south. North of the river they tracked the Algonquins in the snow to their cabins, where they found the women and children. They killed a returning Simon Pieskaret.[127] South of the river they found the band of Jean Tawiskaron. Jean Baptiste Manitounagouch killed an Iroquois warrior before other warriors killed him. In similar manner Bernard Wapmangouch killed an Iroquois warrior, then died at the hands of other warriors.[128]

On the 22 March 1647 came news that 100 Algonquins had been captured by the "treacherous hyroquois."[129] We do not know how many Algonquins were killed in these raids, but it may have been comparable to, or greater than, the number of Algonquins who were captured. Once back in Iroquoia, the women, girls, and "two little boys" were spared, while the youth and men were tortured and killed.[130] Five members of Tawiskaron's band were able to escape to tell the tale.

These events take place in a section of Bruce Trigger's book *The Children of Aataentsic* that he calls "The Huron on the St. Lawrence: 1647-1650." Trigger directs our attention to the St. Lawrence, not to the Ottawa, and to the fate of the Huron, not of the Algonquins. He mentions Simon Pieskaret in passing, but does not tell us his fate. Trigger tells us that in the spring of 1647 many Hurons "were killed

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[127] *JR*, 30: 231-35.

[128] *JR*, 30: 235-37. Bernard Manitounagouch's brother, Pierre Achkameg, was one of the Iroquois warriors. As boys they were captured by the Algonquins, with Bernard remaining with the Algonquins and Pierre being recaptured.

[129] *JR*, 30: 161.

[130] *JR*, 30: 243.

or captured in encounters with the Iroquois," but does not describe what happened to the Algonquins.[131]

Unlike Daniel Richter, James Pendergast provides a detailed account drawn from the *Jesuit Relations* of Iroquois attacks in the 1640s, ending with references to Iroquois raids on the Algonquins and Hurons on the Ottawa River in October 1647. Of note, however, is his omission of the attacks that took place in March 1647. Pendergast also claims that the Ottawa River Algonquin bands "ceased to exist as discrete bands in their traditional Ottawa Valley homelands" as a result of the destruction of the Huron Confederacy in March 1649.[132] In so doing, Pendergast shifts the focus from the Algonquins to the Huron, and mutes the intentionality of direct Iroquois attacks on the Algonquins.

One of the main reasons for the misrepresentation of these events goes back to the peace treaty of 1645 and the agreement to spare the Christian Algonquins. The events of March 1647 rendered meaningless the academic debate concerning the ability of the Iroquois to distinguish the Christians from the traditionalists, because the leading Algonquin victims of the attacks were Christians. The Jesuits, of course, had to find some way to rationalize their betrayal. The solution was as devious as it was ingenious. Jérome Lalement claims that Simon Pieskart, Bernard Wapmangouch, Augustin Tchipakouch, and a man named Kitouchi all knew they were going to die before the massacre happened. To Lalement, the death of these

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[131] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 799.

[132] Pendergast, "The Ottawa River Algonquin Bands in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian Context," 96.

Algonquin Christians was ordained by God, and is an object lesson for the Jesuits in how to die well. Indeed, Lalement says that a priest held conversations with them "upon the means for dying well."[133] The Jesuits want to die the way these Algonquin Christians have died, but they will die working among the Hurons, not among the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

Centuries of indignities heaped upon the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley all emerge out of a false belief that the Algonkian-speaking peoples as a whole were considered allies of the French. As the peace negotiations of 1645 demonstrate, this was true of the Christian Algonquins, but not of the traditionalists. Governor Montmagny's thoughts and actions during these negotiations demonstrate that the French leadership shared the Jesuit antipathy to the traditionalists, and were willing to sacrifice them in order to achieve peace with the Iroquois. Jesuit priests, notably Paul Le Jeune, quite clearly distinguished the Cree-speaking Attikamegue and Montagnais from the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley; they were willing to defend the former, but not the latter. In the end, even the deaths of the Christian Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley were rationalized by the Jesuits and served their purposes.

The vilification of Tessouat and Oumasasikweie, and therefore of the Kichesipirini and the other Ottawa Valley Algonquin peoples, flies in the face of a universally accepted distinction that is made by all Indigenous and non-Indigenous historians. It is now a widespread belief of North American historians that hunter-gatherer societies were non-hierarchical, that the spokespersons the French called

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[133] *JR*, 30: 249.

captains had no power to coerce other society members. To believe that Tessouat and Oumasasikweie had this kind of power is to believe that it was only in the Ottawa Valley, in the entirety of North America, that hunter-gatherer leaders were able to climb to such lofty heights. It is a myth, and it time to put the myth to rest.

It can be difficult to find a reason to believe that what happened to the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley still matters. It still matters because one of the few things we can do for the victims of colonialism is to safeguard those few remaining vestiges of humanity that are left to us, in the process respecting our own humanity. The Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley were who they were, flawed human beings with strengths and weaknesses, but no less human for all that. Hiding, disguising, and explaining away what happened to them, even if done with the best of intentions, diminishes all of us.