"ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE IS HARDLY EVIDENCE OF ABSENCE": SAINT LAWRENCE IROQUOIANS, ALGONKIANS, AND THE POLITICS OF DISAPPEARANCE

One of the great mysteries of Canadian history is what happened to the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians encountered by Jacques Cartier on his three voyages in the 1530s and 1540s. Also known as the Laurentian Iroquois, their main settlements were at Hochelaga on l'Île de Montréal and at Stadacona, now Québec. Those towns, as well as a number of villages along the north and south shores of the Saint Lawrence River, had all disappeared by the time Samuel de Champlain arrived at Tadoussac in 1603. Climate change, disease, and attacks by the Huron-Wendat, the Iroquois, and the Algonkian peoples have all been advanced as causes of their disappearance.

The disappearance of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians has been written about for centuries; who they were, their relationship to the Huron-Wendat and the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee), how they came to inhabit the Saint Lawrence Valley, their encounters with Jacques Cartier, their language and customs being among the topics that have been discussed and debated at great length. The great irony of this vast body of historical writing, in both English and French, is that it has produced few conclusions worthy of being called proof or historical fact. Indeed, it is a body of historical writing rife with speculation, misrepresentation, and outright falsehood.

There is little to be gained by asking the age-old question: what happened to the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians? There is, by way of contrast, much to be learned from a closer examination of the way in which historians, anthropologists, and archeologists have written about the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. The effort to foreground their history has involved downplaying, and at times removing from the

historical record, the Algonkian-speaking peoples who lived in or near the territories controlled by the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. Shifting our attention from the Iroquoians to the Algonkians will not tell us what happened to the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, but it will help explain why bringing the history of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians into the light has cast the Algonkian peoples into the shadows.[1]

The effort to bring the Algonkian-speaking peoples back into focus will proceed by looking at three aspects of the French encounter with the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. First, it will look at the encounter of Jacques Cartier and Indigenous Peoples on the Gaspé Peninsula in 1534, an event that has long been, and continues to be, misrepresented. Second, it will take a closer look at a massacre of Saint Lawrence Iroquoians that took place the year before, in 1533, on an island at the mouth of the Saguenay River. The dominant claim about the perpetrators of the massacre, that it was the Mi'kmaq, must be questioned, and it needs to be linked with the question of the identity of the peoples Cartier met in 1534. Third, it will look at Cartier's encounter with the Hochelagans on l'Île de Montréal, and ask searching questions about the way in which the existing history of the island misrepresents and marginalizes the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

As Jacques Cartier and his crew travelled along the shoreline of the Gaspé Peninsula in the summer of 1534 they met two groups of Indigenous Peoples. We know the second group were from Stadacona, now Québec, men, women, and

[1] The term 'Algonkian' refers to the peoples who spoke an Algonkian language, and includes the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. It also includes the Cree speakers of Québec, and the Anishinaabe peoples of the Great Lakes region, as well as many other peoples who are not dealt with in this paper.

children who had come to fish for mackerel. The identity of the first group has long been contested, and continues to be contested. One body of work claims they were Algonkian-speaking Mi'kmaq, while a second body of work argues they were Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, or more specifically, Stadaconans.

Reaching back at least as far as the beginning of the 20th century, there has been poorly documented speculation that the first people Jacques Cartier encountered were Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. This tendency is strikingly evoked in the work of W.F. Ganong.[2] As an editor of a 1910 publication of the Champlain Society, Ganong observes: "the Indians whom Cartier found in Gaspé are supposed to have been not Micmacs, but Huron- Iroquois."[3] The awkward syntax is revealing, and later in his career Ganong not only questions, but also refutes, this supposition. He observes that on 6 July 1534 Cartier and his men "met a fleet of canoes filled with Indians … now recognizable as Micmac." On 9 July 1534 "they met the same Indians … incidentally recording two of their words which suffice to confirm other evidence that they were Micmacs."[4]

Ganong is referring to the words for hatchet and knife given by the first people to Cartier and his crew. Cartier's account gives their word for knife as

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[2] William Francis Ganong (1864 -1941), born St. John, New Brunswick, Professor of Botany at Smith College, Massachusetts for 36 years, still influential chronicler of the history, cartography, and Indigenous place names of New Brunswick and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, translator and editor of the works of Nicolas Denys and Chrestien le Clercq.

[3] Father Chrestien Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia*, edited by William F. Ganong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1910), 64.

[4] W.F. Ganong, *Crucial Maps in the Early Cartography and Place-Nomenclature of the Atlantic Coast of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the Royal Society of Canada, 1964), 282-83.

"*bacan*."[5] Ramsay Cook notes that Father Pacifique Buisson, a missionary to the Mi'kmaq who published a dictionary of their language, gives 'oagan' as their word for knife. The word for knife now given by the Mi'kmaq is 'wa'quan,' also spelled 'wokun.' This is, the differences notwithstanding, the same word. By way of contrast, Cartier's account gives the Saint Lawrence Iroquoian word for knife as 'aggoheda.'[6] In the 1980s Michel Bideaux agrees with Ganong, stating that it was the Mi'kmaq who occupied "la péninsule de Gaspé," and that Cartier encountered the Stadaconans "après la rencontre des Micmacs."[7]

Tellingly, however, Bideaux's claims are in footnotes of a work few English Canadians will ever read. The works of Ganong and Bideaux are now swamped by a longstanding portrayal of the first people Cartier encountered as Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. In 1899 W.D. Lighthall only mentions Cartier and his crew meeting the second people they encountered, the Stadaconans.[8] In 1955 Bernard Hoffman conflates the two groups encountered by Cartier.[9] In 1966, Bruce Trigger follows Hoffman's example, claiming that Cartier encountered "a party of 300" Saint

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[5] Ramsay Cook, ed., *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2013), 23.

[6] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 92.

[7] Jacques Cartier, *Relations*, Édition critique par Michel Bideaux (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1986), 331n229, 381n372).

[8] W.D. Lighthall, "Hochelagans and Mohawks: A Link in Iroquois History," *From the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Second Series, 1899-1900, Vol. V, Section II (Ottawa, Toronto, London, England: J. Hope & Sons, Copp-Clark Co., Bernard Quaritch, 1899), 201.

[9] Bernard G. Hoffman, "Souriquois, Etchemin, and Kwedech – A Lost Chapter in American Ethnography," *Ethnohistory*, 2, no. 1 (Winter 1955), 77-78.

Lawrence Iroquoians.[10] Trigger, like Hoffman, conflates the two groups, because Cartier's account says there were 300 of the first people he encountered, and 200 Stadaconans.

There is no question the first people Cartier encountered were the Mi'kmaq, as his account states that the Stadaconans "are not at all of the same race or language as the first we met."[11] Bruce Trigger, having gotten it wrong in 1966, gets it right in *The Children of Aataentsic* in 1976, stating that Cartier encountered "two groups of Micmac in some forty to fifty canoes."[12] Even Trigger, however, could not halt the misrepresentation. In 1993 Olive Dickason also conflates the two groups, identifying the first people Cartier encountered with the Stadaconans.[13] In 2016 Michel Plourde adds a Québécois voice to the chorus, echoing Lighthall, Hoffman, the early Trigger, and Dickason by collapsing the two peoples Cartier met into one.[14]

The claim that the first people Cartier met were Stadaconans has led to an assumption that they were fishing in their home territory. The claim is speculative

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[10] Bruce Trigger, "Who Were the 'Laurentian Iroquois?," *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 3, no. 4 (November 1966), 202.

[11] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 24.

[12] Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987, cop. 1976), 177.

[13] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 98.

[14] Michel Plourde, "Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Europeans in the Saint Lawrence Estuary between 1500 and 1650, " in Claude Chapdelaine and Brad Loewen, eds., *Contact in the 16th Century: Networks among Fishers, Foragers and Farmers* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of History and University of Ottawa Press, 2016), 121.

and involves writing the Mi'kmaq out of the historical record. Bernard Hoffman suggests that the Stadaconans were a people "traveling in what they regarded as home territory and that they were not expecting attack."[15] Hoffman believes they are in their home territory because Cartier's account says they are sleeping under their canoes, indicating they are not expecting to be attacked. Hoffman's argument can be turned on its head. If this is an annual trip to their own territory, why not build shelters that can be returned to year after year? The lack of shelters suggests this is Mi'kmaq territory, not the territory of the Stadaconans.

Historians have not considered the possibility that this is Mi'kmaq territory, and the Mi'kmaq have given the Stadaconans permission to fish there. Apart from the seasonal presence of the Stadaconans at this location, there is no reason to believe it is their territory. Bruce Trigger claims that the Mi'kmaq and the Stadaconans "appear to have been fighting for control of the Gaspé Peninsula," but the word 'appear' tells us all we need to know about the solidity of this claim.[16]

The assumption that this was Stadaconan territory is largely based on a problematic reading of one of the most famous moments in Canadian history. Before leaving, Cartier's men plant a cross, seemingly claiming the territory in the name of the King of France. Donnacona, the Stadacona leader, responds with a harangue that is not understood by the French, but has been interpreted as condemning Cartier for his attempt to take possession of Donnacona's territory.

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[15] Hoffman, "Souriquois, Etchemin, and Kwedech – A Lost Chapter in American Ethnography," 77.

[16] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 183.

Never considered is the possibility that Donnacona is condemning Cartier for planting a cross on the territory of his Mi'kmaq hosts.[17]

The question of the identity of the peoples Jacques Cartier encountered in 1534 must be understood in relation to the historiography of a massacre that took place the year before, in 1533. Donnacona tells Cartier in 1535 that two years before 200 men, women, and children were massacred on an island at the mouth of the Saguenay River by a people who came from the south called Toudamans. In 1899 W.D. Lighthall argues that the Toudamans were most likely the Etchemins, better known as the Maliseet, who self-identify as the Wolastoqiyik.[18] In 1911, the Champlain Society's edition of Marc Lescarbot's *The History of New France* claims that the Toudamans were "doubtless the Iroquois."[19] More recently, Brad Loewen disputes both claims, asserting a "Wabanaki Algonquian identity for the Toudaman."[20] Once again, we are faced with a great deal of speculation and little hard evidence.

Bruce Trigger, by far the most influential English Canadian writer on the history of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, has seemingly removed all ambiguity concerning the identity of the perpetrators of the massacre by declaring it was the Mi'kmaq. He links the disappearance of the Stadaconans to the massacre, claiming

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[17] See Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, xxiii–xxvi, for a detailed commentary on the meaning and significance of the planting of the cross.

[18] Lighthall, "Hochelagans and Mohawks," 207.

[19] Marc Lescarbot, *The History of New France*, Vol. II (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1911), 124n2.

[20] Brad Loewen, "Intertwined Enigmas: Basques and Saint Lawrence Iroquoians in the Sixteenth Century," in Chapdelaine and Loewen, *Contact in the 16th Century*, 67.

"the Stadaconan economy was adversely affected … by their expulsion from their fishing grounds along the Gaspé Peninsula by the Micmacs. About 200 Stadaconans were killed by the Micmacs in 1534."[21] In addition to getting the year wrong, Trigger provides no actual evidence that Cartier found the Stadaconans fishing in their own territory, or for the claim the Mi'kmaq expelled them. Indeed, the possibility the Stadaconans were fishing in Mi'kmaq territory is buttressed by Trigger's own argument that the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians and the Algonkians were likely "friendly trading partners."[22]

In an article published in 1966, Bruce Trigger takes historians of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians to task for their biased points of view, portraying himself as the man who will look at the evidence "in an impartial manner."[23] He argues that the 1533 massacre was "facilitated" by Mi'kmaq acquisition of iron weapons, but does not explain why the Stadaconans, if they were really in control of the Saint Lawrence Valley and the Gaspé Peninsula, did not have an equal or greater access to iron weapons than the Mi'kmaq.[24] Even if true, it still does not provide a motive for the attack, something more substantial than an assumption that the Mi'kmaq and the Stadaconans were 'traditional' enemies.

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[21] Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, cop. 1985), 147. Olive Dickason, citing Trigger, also claims the massacre was carried out by the Mi'kmaq. See *Canada's First Nations*, 102.

[22] Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 147.

[23] Trigger, "Who Were the 'Laurentian Iroquois?," 201.

[24] Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 137.

The problem with Bruce Trigger's claim that the Mi'kmaq were responsible for the 1533 massacre goes much beyond a failure of impartiality. Trigger, in fact, goes out of his way to vilify the Mi'kmaq, depicting them as 'cruel,' bad people.[25] By the early 17th century, Trigger claims, the Mi'kmaq were "exploiting the Gaspé Peninsula."[26] There is no reason to believe the Mi'kmaq were more cruel than any other Indigenous People in the Americas of the 16th century, and the claim that they were exploiting their environment is quite frankly astonishing, worthy of being condemned as racist in the academic political culture of the 21st century.

Bruce Trigger goes so far as to imply that the Mi'kmaq were engaged in "genocidal warfare" against a people identified in the Mi'kmaq's own traditions as the Kwedech.[27] The Kwedech, according to Bernard Hoffman, were the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, whose territory extended south to Lake Champlain and included the entire Gaspé Peninsula.[28] The linguistic evidence, however, tells us the Kwedech were not the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. In the Mi'kmaq language there is a word, gwatej, pronounced gwadech. It is the term for Iroquois or Mohawk, so the linguistic evidence suggests it was them, and not the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, who were the Kwedech.

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[25] Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 137-38.

[26] Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 137.

[27] Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 137.

[28] Hoffman, "Souriquois, Etchemin, and Kwedech – A Lost Chapter in American Ethnography," 70.

Historians of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians would have us believe it was the Stadaconans who controlled the Gaspé peninsula, including the territory where Jacques Cartier found them fishing for mackerel. Cartier's account puts the population of Stadacona at 500, meaning that it would have been difficult for them to put 100 warriors in the field. There were other Saint Lawrence Iroquoian villages on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence in the region of Stadacona, but we do not know if the small number of warriors in those villages went to war with the Stadaconans. Even if they did, there is no reason to believe these warriors, combined with the Stadaconan warriors, were in a position to control the St. Lawrence River and Gaspé Peninsula. We are led to believe these warriors were able to defend Stadacona and the smaller villages, control a vast territory south of the Saint Lawrence including the entire Gaspé Peninsula, and wage a protracted war with the Mi'kmaq.

The possibility the Mi'kmaq committed the 1533 massacre cannot be ruled out, but there is a more plausible explanation that takes us back to Marc Lescarbot's claim that it was the Iroquois. Donnacona told Cartier that the Toudamans came from the south, while the Mi'kmaq encountered by Cartier were to the northeast. Donnacona says that the Toudamans "waged war continually against his people," and it was the Iroquois, not the Mi'kmaq, who were in a position to do this.[29] Canoeing with the current down the Richelieu River, then with the current down the Saint Lawrence, Iroquois warriors had no great difficulty in reaching Stadacona. It was more challenging for the Mi'kmaq. If they came by land, they arrived at the

[29] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 67.

south shore of the St. Lawrence without canoes, a serious problem for any claim they were the perpetrators of the 1533 massacre. If they came by canoe on the Saint Lawrence, the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians living on the north shore of the river would have immediately recognized a Mi'kmaq war party, and made every effort to alert the Stadaconans.

Historians have not explained why, if the Stadaconans massacred in 1533 were on their way to attack the Mi'kmaq, they took the time and expended the effort to build the fort that was burned down by their attackers. Even more curious, is the claim that the war party included women and children. As Michel Plourde queries, "would women and children have accompanied a war party?"[30] The fact that the number of Stadaconans massacred – 200 – matches the number of Stadaconans Cartier encountered in the Gaspé in 1534, suggests this was the annual fishing party, not a war party. Two hundred Stadaconans, including women and children, travelling through and/or into Mi'kmaq territory the year after the Mi'kmaq massacred them is strange behaviour indeed.

The disappearance of the Stadaconans is not so difficult to explain if an effort is made to determine the possible control they actually held over the St. Lawrence Valley and the Gaspé Peninsula. The death toll in the 1533 massacre tells us just how vulnerable they were to attack. If Cartier's account is accurate, 40% of the Stadaconan population died in this one attack. There is, therefore, no reason to accept J.R. Miller's claim that the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians "dominated" the Saint

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[30] Plourde, "Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Europeans in the Saint Lawrence Estuary between 1500 and 1650," 121.

Lawrence River.[31] That dominance was constantly being challenged by the Huron-Wendat, the Iroquois, and the Algonkian-speaking peoples who lived to the north, south, and east of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians.

Saint Lawrence Iroquoian dominance of the Saint Lawrence Valley is as much a creation of latter day historians, archeologists, and anthropologists as it is an historical reality. In response to claims that the Gaspé Peninsula was the territory of the Stadaconans, Bernard Hoffman's claim that Saint Lawrence Iroquoians controlled a wide swath of territory south of the Saint Lawrence, including the Gaspé Peninsula, and J.R. Miller's assertion of Saint Lawrence Iroquoian dominance, we can turn to Bruce Trigger. The most influential historian of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, Trigger observes that the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, although they travelled down river to the Gaspé and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, "did not claim this region as their own territory."[32] It was the territory of the Maliseet, the Montagnais, and the Mi'kmaq.

The assertion of Saint Lawrence Iroquoian dominance is of on-going importance, because it directly affects our understanding of what Canada is and who Canadians are. We know Saint Lawrence Iroquoians controlled Stadacona and Hochelaga, but who controlled the areas around these settlements is far from certain – if, indeed, anyone controlled them. Cartier identifies the Stadaconans as Canadians, but does not identify the Hochelagans as Canadians. In spite of this,

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[31] J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, cop. 1989), 30.

[32] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 213.

there has been a pronounced tendency to identify being Canadian with all Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, to the exclusion of the Algonkian Peoples.

We begin with the widespread perception that this country is called Canada because it derives from the Iroquoian word 'kanata.' Most Canadians have been told this in a 1991 Historica Canada Heritage Minute aired by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It depicts Jacques Cartier, accompanied by his men and a priest, encountering an Indigenous leader in 1534. The leader is not identified, but we are to assume it is Donnacona. The priest claims that 'canada' means nation, while one of Cartier's men claims it means village.

To begin, we have already established that the first people Cartier encountered were the Mi'kmaq, not Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. The Heritage Minute does not actually identify the Indigenous People in the video as Iroquoians, but Historica Canada does. What is being depicted is Cartier's encounter with the Stadaconans, not with the Mi'kmaq, the first people he met. The Heritage Minute follows the lead of the historians, and collapses the two encounters into one. Cartier's account does not mention a priest, and in any event, the priest and the member of Cartier's crew depicted in the Heritage Minute would not have known either language.

The Heritage Minute, echoing a number of historical sources, claims that Canada is derived from the Iroquoian word 'kanata,' meaning town or village. As we have already seen, however, Cartier's account says the Stadaconans were sleeping under their canoes. The Indigenous leader cannot have pointed to a town or village while employing the term 'kanata,' because there was no town or village. Given that

Cartier encountered the Mi'kmaq before he encountered the Stadaconans, it is just as likely, if not more likely, that the origin of the word is Algonkian, not Iroquoian. Lost in Historica Canada's seemingly authoritative claim that the word 'Canada' is of Iroquoian derivation is the fact that the Mi'kmaq word for Canada is 'ganata.'

The origin of the word 'canada' has not been determined for all time, nor has the identity of the 16th century peoples who have come to be known as Canadians. It is a complex question that can be approached from a number of directions, but a key starting point is an observation in the account of Jacques Cartier's second voyage, when it says of the people of Hochelaga (Montréal): "they do not move from home and are not nomads like those of Canada and of the Saguenay, notwithstanding that the Canadians and some eight or nine other peoples along this river are subjects of theirs."[33] Just as the term 'Canada' has been associated with the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians encountered in 1534, and not with the Algonkian-speaking Mi'kmaq, Cartier's use of the term 'Canadians' has been associated with the Stadaconans, to the exclusion of the Algonkian peoples.

We will never know the identity of the 'eight or nine other peoples' along the Saint Lawrence, or even what Cartier means by 'peoples.' He is passing by, and has no way of identifying these peoples ethnically or linguistically, so in all probability he simply means the inhabitants of the villages he is seeing. The term 'Canadians' is a description of all peoples living in the region of Stadacona, with no necessary

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[33] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 62-63. Cartier's observation raises a number of intriguing questions that are virtually impossible to answer. If the Hochelagans do not move from home, how can they have placed all the peoples in the entire Saint Lawrence Valley under their control? How, in fact, does Cartier know this?

linguistic or ethnic attribution. In other words, there is no historically valid reason to believe that Cartier thinks that all Canadians are Iroquoian speakers.

At one point Cartier's account refers to "the province of Canada where live several peoples in open villages."[34] The four villages Cartier identifies as being in the vicinity of l'Ile d'Orléans and Stadacona - Ajoaste, Starnatam, Tailla, and Sitadin – we know were Saint Lawrence Iroquoian villages. In the Tadoussac area there is credible archeological evidence of Saint Lawrence Iroquoian sites on l'Île aux Basques and l'Île Verte.[35] Yet, as Michel Plourde points out, the Cree-speaking Montagnais may have "rubbed shoulders with the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians," and they "may have acquired Iroquoian pottery."[36] It is not a certainty that sites where this pottery and other artifacts have been found were Saint Lawrence Iroquoian settlements.

Michel Plourde argues "the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians limited their activities to the coastline, since none of their diagnostic ceramics have yet been found inland."[37] It is entirely possible that Jacques Cartier was seeing the Saint Lawrence Iroquoian face on an Algonkian body. There is no reason to accept

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[34] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 73.

[35] Plourde, "Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Europeans in the Saint Lawrence Estuary between 1500 and 1650," 136.

[36] Plourde, "Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Europeans in the Saint Lawrence Estuary between 1500 and 1650," 141.

[37] Plourde, "Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Europeans in the Saint Lawrence Estuary between 1500 and 1650," 141.

Bernard Hoffman's claim that the Canadian Iroquois are "the Canadian Indians."[38] Hoffman's characterization is now widely accepted, exemplified in Brad Loewen's positing of "the Iroquoian province of Canada."[39]

The people of Achelacy (Portneuf), just upriver from Stadacona, were Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, but there is no valid reason to come to this conclusion about the peoples on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence between Achelacy and Hochelaga. In 1899 W.D. Lighthall points out that Cartier "mentions no village" on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence between Achelacy and Hochelaga.[40] Lighthall, in the late 19th century, sees the territory north of the Saint Lawrence as the hunting territory of Algonkian peoples, while Maurice Ratelle, in the late 20th century, claims it was the hunting territory of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians.[41] It may, in fact, have been a shared territory, but we will never know for certain.[42] What we do know for certain is that Ratelle's claim is part of a century-long tendency to 'Iroquoianize' the 16th century history of the Saint Lawrence Valley that is found in both English and French language sources.

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[38] Bernard G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier: Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America, 1497-1550* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 210.

[39] Loewen, "Intertwined Enigmas," 57.

[40] Lighthall, "Hochelagans and Mohawks," 203.

[41] Maurice Ratelle, "Location of the Algonquins from 1534 to 1650," in Daniel Clément, ed., *The Algonquins* (Gatineau: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1996), 48-49.

[42] The St. Lawrence Iroquoians likely hunted north and east of Montréal Island, but we will never know *how far* north and east.

The hiding of the Algonkian presence at Stadacona is to be found in the work of Bruce Trigger, the most authoritative English Canadian voice on the history of Indigenous People in what became New France. Trigger's understanding of the history of Stadacona reveals the extent to which he was dedicated to making the history of the Saint Lawrence Valley a history of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. Trigger claims that the Récollet lay brother Gabriel Sagard writes about "the remains of an Iroquois fortification" that were still visible at Québec in 1625.[43] In fact, Sagard writes that the Montagnais and Algonquins in the Québec city region "ont autrefois labouré les terres & habité des bourgades comme nos Hurons."[44] This was not, as Trigger claims, an Iroquois fortification, but rather an Algonquin and Montagnais palisade that Sagard says was later fortified by the Iroquois.[45]

Trigger assumes, because these people were farming and lived in a 'bourgade,' a palisaded village, they cannot have been Algonkians. He puts Montagnais in quotation marks, and claims that the peoples Sagard calls Montagnais and Algonquins "could be the St. Lawrence Iroquoians."[46] They could be, but they could also be Algonkians who lived with or alongside the Stadaconans or settled at Stadacona after the dispersal of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. The key point is

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[43] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 223.

[44] Gabriel Sagard Theodat, *Histoire du Canada et Voyages Que Les Frères Mineurs Recollects y ont Faicts pour la Conversion des Infidelles*, Premier Volume (Paris: Librairie Tross, 1866), 271.

[45] Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 272.

[46] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 223.

Trigger *wants* these people to be Saint Lawrence Iroquoians, and is willing to put his own spin on the historical evidence to demonstrate that they were.

Trigger does more than misrepresent what Sagard has said; he also fails to tell his readers the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune corroborates Sagard's claim. Le Jeune describes a visit to the same "bourgade," a village with a palisade around it, near "some arpents of cleared land, where they cultivated Indian corn."[47] Le Jeune calls these people "our Canadians," and says that they "will resume this industry," having been forced into the hunter-gatherer life by Iroquois raids.[48] In the 1630s the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians cannot 'resume this industry,' because they no longer exist.

By the early 17th century "Canadians" is a term the Récollets and Jesuits are using to describe the Algonkian-speaking peoples, not Iroquoian– speaking peoples. Mi'kmaq is "the Canadian language."[49] The Jesuit Pierre Biard, writing about the Mi'kmaq, says "the Canadians are a wandering people."[50] Bernard Hoffman, on the other hand, identifies the Canadians as "the people of Stadacona, Hochelaga, and others."[51] Hoffman is mistaken, because Cartier's account does not identify the Hochelagans as Canadians. The Stadaconans are Canadians who, as Cartier points out, do not live in a palisaded town, and leave in the winter to hunt in the forest.

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[47] 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, 1896-19010), hereinafter cited as *JR*, 8: 27-29.

[48] *JR*, 8: 27-29.

[49] *JR*, 2: 239.

[50] *JR*, 3: 143.

[51] Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier*, 203.

They, unlike the Hochelagans, are a 'wandering people,' and perhaps it is this characteristic, not their language, that makes them Canadians.

Nowhere has the 'Iroquoianization' of the 16th century been more in evidence than in the history of Montréal Island. Once again, Bruce Trigger is involved, but his approach is shared by archeologist James Pendergast, who published a seemingly authoritative article in the *Canadian Journal of Archeology* in 1999, in which he seeks to discredit the claims of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. In this piece Pendergast asserts that the Algonquins "allegedly" lived on Montréal Island, and that their claims "may have been concocted."[52] In the public mind his claim is now orthodoxy, providing the history of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians in sources such as *Wikipedia*.

Pendergast relies heavily on the archeological evidence, which he portrays as the science, and as being more reliable than the writings of the Jesuits and French explorers and traders.[53] His claim is founded on the fact that there is no archeological evidence that Algonquins lived on Montréal Island in the 16th century.[54] Pendergast takes advantage of the fact that Saint Lawrence Iroquoians,

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[52] James F. Pendergast, "The Ottawa River Algonquin Bands in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian Context," *Canadian Journal of Archeology*, 23, no. 1/2 (1999), 78.

[53] Archeological evidence, like the accounts of the Jesuits and French traders and explorers, has its own weaknesses. Claims can only be based on archeological evidence that has been found, not on the evidence that has yet to be found, or will never be found. The interpretation of archeological evidence is not an exact science, because archeologists share with the rest of us a universal human trait, seeing what they want to see.

[54] Pendergast, "The Ottawa River Algonquin Bands in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian Context," 110.

notably the Hochelagans, built palisades around their longhouses, which left behind archeological evidence that does not exist for the camps of hunter-gatherer peoples. This greater body of archeological evidence predisposes archeologists to accent the presence – and disappearance – of more settled agricultural peoples at the expense of hunter-gatherers. Yet, as Neil Oliver insightfully points out, "absence of evidence is hardly evidence of absence."[55]

Bruce Trigger, who worked with James Pendergast and published an article with him in 1972, four years before he published *The Children of Aataentsic*, also has "serious doubts" about Jesuit accounts that he believes do not provide "a reliable basis" for understanding what happened to the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians.[56] Trigger, like Pendergast, is looking for reasons to question the claims of the Algonquins, not making an effort to find the evidence that confirms them. The approach of Pendergast and Trigger is all too often based on speculative claims, and consistently emphasizes the Iroquoian presence in the Ottawa and Saint Lawrence valleys, and downplays the Algonkian presence. We have only to ask ourselves why, as the title of Pendergast's article tells us, do the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley live in a Saint Lawrence Iroquoian context?

For James Pendergast and Bruce Trigger, Montréal Island is a Saint Lawrence Iroquoian context. Challenging their claim requires closer scrutiny of the best - known evidence in the *Jesuit Relations* of the Algonquin presence on Montréal

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[55] Neil Oliver, *A History of Scotland* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010), 12.

[56] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 215.

Island. In Volume 22 of the *Jesuit Relations* there is a chapter entitled "Of the Project of the Gentlemen of Montreal." Although attributed to Jesuit father Barthélemy Vimont, the weight of evidence indicates it was actually written by fellow Jesuit Paul Le Jeune.[57] Le Jeune was in Paris in February 1642 when l'Île de Montréal was dedicated to the Holy Family. Léon Pouliot S.J., who believes Le Jeune wrote the account, says of the establishment of the mission that he "joined in the project enthusiastically … and placed at the service of the cause his vast personal prestige."[58] Le Jeune was in attendance on 15 August 1642 for what the calls "the first Festival of this Holy Isle."[59] The "we" he refers to as going to the top of Mont-Royal includes himself, Vimont, and possibly Father Joseph Poncet, also on l'Île de Montréal.

They go to the top of the mountain with two "chief Savages," who say they belong to the people who used to live there. These leaders are Algonkian speakers, possibly descendants of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians who lived on Montréal Island.[60] They tell Le Jeune and Vimont there were "great numbers of Savages" living in villages in the hills to the east and south of Mont-Royal – that is, along the

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[57] The author refers to Vimont in the third person.

[58] Léon Pouliot, "LE JEUNE, PAUL," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed 15 January 2025, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le_jeune_paul_1E.html.

[59] *JR*, 22: 213.

[60] Ratelle, "Location of the Algonquins from 1534 to 1650," 43.

Lachine Rapids. An "aged man" tells them his grandfather grew corn there, and the Jesuits are also told their ancestors were driven out by the Huron-Wendat.[61]

In a footnote in an article he published in *Ethnohistory* in 1962 Bruce Trigger lends credibility to what he claims is W.D. Lighthall's "assertion that at least some of the Laurentian Iroquois became or were absorbed by 'so-called Algonquins' on the Ottawa River."[62] This is, in fact, not what Lighthall says. His point is that the Algonquins who go to the top of Mont-Royal with Le Jeune and Vimont in August 1642 are not ethnic Algonquins, but descendants of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians who fled Montréal Island. He says the "true Algonquins," not the so-called Algonquins, absorbed them.[63]

The two Algonkian speakers who go the top of Mont-Royal with Le Jeune and Vimont in August 1642 are believed to be descendants of a people the French call the Iroquet, the Huron-Wendat call the Onontchataronons, and who call themselves Ounountchatarounoungak.[64] There is uncertainty as to the home territory of the Ounountchatarounoungak, but it is generally considered to be in what is now the

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[61] *JR*, 22: 215. In 1535 the Hochelagans told Cartier about a people who lived up the Ottawa River that they call 'Agojuda,' the bad people. These people are "armed to the teeth," and their armour is made of "cords and wood, laced and plaited together." The Agojuda, according to the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, "waged war continually." See Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 65. We do not know for certain that the 'Agojuda' were the Huron-Wendat, but we do know that this description of Huron-Wendat armour is consistent with Samuel de Champlain's depiction of their armour.

[62] Bruce G. Trigger, "Trade and Tribal Warfare on the St. Lawrence in the Sixteenth Century," *Ethnohistory*, 9, no. 3 (Summer 1962), 255n32.

[63] Lighthall, "Hochelagans and Mohawks," 209.

[64] Alternative spellings include Ountchatarounounga and Outcharunounga.

Ottawa-Kingston-Montréal triangle. Trigger creates uncertainty concerning their identity in his 1962 article, and again in *The Children of Aataentsic* in 1976 by distinguishing the Onontchataronons from the Algonquins.[65] By questioning the Algonquin identity of these people, Trigger is opening up the minds of his readers to the possibility that they were really Saint Lawrence Iroquoians.

In this same 1962 footnote Trigger adds: "I would interpret the tribe's claim … of having been driven from Montreal Island by the Hurons as a story designed for claiming special privileges from the French and reflecting the tribe's dislike of the Hurons who had broken their control of river traffic."[66] Here we have the source of James Pendergast's claim that the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley were seeking special treatment from the French. In addition, there are two serious problems with Trigger's claim. First, in using the term "tribe" Trigger is conflating the Ounountchatarounoungak and the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians who fled the destruction of Hochelaga; it was the latter who claimed it was the Huron-Wendat who destroyed the town, not the former. The second problem is that it was not the Huron-Wendat who destroyed Algonquin control of the Ottawa River. As Trigger himself points out in *The Children of Aataentsic*, Ottawa Valley Algonquins typically wintered with the Huron-Wendat in Huronia, and relations were generally good between the two peoples. It was the Iroquois, not the Huron-Wendat, who broke Algonquin control of the Ottawa River.

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[65] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 248. Trigger himself is in doubt, because four pages later he classifies the Onontchataronons as Algonkians.

[66] Trigger, "Trade and Tribal Warfare on the St. Lawrence in the Sixteenth Century," 255n32.

There is evidence that it was not just Saint Lawrence Iroquoians fleeing the destruction of Hochelaga who once lived on Montréal Island. In 1637 Paul Le Jeune writes: "I learn that the Savages of the Island in earlier times cleared the land, and had a settlement near this mountain … they abandoned it, as they were too often molested by their enemies. They still call this place 'the Island where there was a village.'"[67] The 'Savages of the Island' were the Kichesipirini, who lived on and in the region of Morrison and Allumette Islands near the present-day city of Pembroke. In September 1640 Le Jeune writes: "if ever the French establish themselves in this place, I hope that the Savages who formerly inhabited this region, and who have gone farther up the river, for fear of their enemies, will return to their old country, where they will find the life of the soul, while seeking only the life of the body."[68] We do not know if Le Jeune means all the Algonquin Peoples of the Ottawa Valley, or just the Kichesipirini, but he is telling us that they are not living where they are by choice, but rather because they have been driven there.

In October 1646 Jesuit father Jérôme Lalement observes that members of all the Algonquin nations have come to Montréal.[69] The Kichesipirini head man Tessouat, Tawichkaron, Captain of the Onontchataronons, and Makatewanakisitch, Captain of the Mataouchkairiniwek, the Algonquin people who live along the Madawaska River, "had resolved to dwell there, to spend the winter there, and there

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[67] *JR*, 12: 133.

[68] *JR*, 18: 245.

[69] *JR*, 29: 145.

to plant Indian corn in the Spring."[70] Tessouat and his followers, fearing the Iroquois, have withdrawn to Trois-Rivières, but the "Onontchataronons, whose ancestors formerly inhabited the Island of Montreal, and who seem to have some desire to recover it as their country, remained firm, and, after their example, the Mataouchkairiniwek."[71] An old man, "aged perhaps 80 years," wants to return to the island, saying: 'My mother told me that while we were young, the Hurons making war on us, drove us from this Island; as for me, I wish to be buried in it, near my ancestors.'[72] In stating that his ancestors were driven off the island by the Huron-Wendat, this old man confirms what Le Jeune and Vimont were told on Mont-Royal in August 1642.

The descendants of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians were seeking to return to their homeland, not special treatment. James Pendergast claims instead: "Faced with destruction by the Iroquois, credibility would not be strained if in 1642, one or another of the Algonquin bands had found it advantageous to claim to have lived on the island earlier in the hope of their obtaining preferential treatment from the French … Apart from seeking preferential consideration, no reason can be suggested why the Algonquins would deem it necessary to negotiate with the French at this particular date to be able to move to Montreal Island."[73] In 1642, by Pendergast's own admission, the Iroquois were already launching the raids that would lead to the

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[70] *JR*, 29: 145-47.

[71] *JR*, 29: 147.

[72] *JR*, 29: 173.

[73] Pendergast, "The Ottawa River Algonquin Bands in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian Context," 78.

decimation and dispersal of the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. Incredibly, his response is to claim that French efforts to keep this from happening means they 'preferred' the Algonquins to the Iroquois. In addition, this was not an Algonquin request that came at 'this particular date,' but rather a longstanding desire to live on Montréal Island that went back at least as far as the generation of their grandparents.

Bruce Trigger and James Pendergast are arguing on the basis of a fundamental misunderstanding of Paul Le Jeune's vision for the Jesuit mission on Montréal Island. It is true that in September 1640 Le Jeune says there are plans to erect a "habitation" on Montréal Island in 1641 for the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.[74] This is not, as Pendergast claims, because the Jesuits prefer the Algonquins to the Iroquois, but because Le Jeune and the other Jesuits have not established a mission in the Ottawa Valley. The Jesuits are especially determined not to work among the Kichesipirini, the people Jesuit father Barthélemy Vimont calls "those wretched upper Algonquins."[75] The Jesuits, who fear and despise the Kichesipirini, will not go to the Kichesipirini; the Kichesipirini have to come to them.

The Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley are not the main concern of the Jesuits. Paul Le Jeune has a grand vision, Indigenous Peoples coming from all four directions, from a vast expanse of North America, to be converted to Christianity. In September 1640 he notes: "if a habitation is erected there, many Savages will come

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[74] *JR*, 18: 245.

[75] *JR*, 24: 209.

to it from different places." Then, revealingly, Le Jeune adds: "If ever we are at peace with the tribes of the South … the settlement which will be found at the River des prairies will give an easy access to all these tribes, which are numerous and sedentary."[76] The Jesuits do not prefer the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley; they prefer agriculturalists, including Iroquoians, they believe will remain at the mission and be more easily converted to Christianity than the 'nomadic' Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley.

The efforts Bruce Trigger has made to turn Montréal Island into a Saint Lawrence Iroquoian context do not end there, and centre on the second journey to Montréal Island Jacques Cartier made in September 1541. In his account, Cartier refers to a town called Tutonaguy, but there is no mention of Hochelaga.[77] Trigger claims that Hochelaga "appears to be the same community that is called Tutonaguy."[78] Once again, the term 'appears' gives us no reason to accept Trigger's claim. To claim that Tutonaguy and Hochelaga are one and the same is to claim that Tutonaguy is on Montréal Island. How does Cartier know this? His account says Tutonaguy is "two leagues distant" from the St. Mary's Rapids, the first Sault of the Lachine Rapids. Cartier's orientation is to the river; he means that his party has already passed Tutonaguy, that it is downriver, within sight of the river.[79] This

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[76] *JR*, 18:245.

[77] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 103.

[78] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 447n14.

[79] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 103.

raises the distinct possibility that Tutonaguy is on the south shore of the river, not on Montréal Island.[80]

In describing Cartier leaving Montréal Island and going back to Achelacy Bruce Trigger writes of his "return from Hochelaga."[81] Cartier did not return from Hochelaga, because he never went to Hochelaga. Trigger is counting on his readers accepting his substitution of speculation for evidence. He also fails to acknowledge a further problem; Cartier did not go to Tutonaguy either.

All the attention paid to Hochelaga has overshadowed the fact historians have paid remarkably little attention to the identity of the peoples Cartier encountered when he leaves his boats and walks a well-beaten path along the Lachine Rapids. He soon encounters "an habitation of people," and at the second Sault "another village or habitation of good people."[82] Cartier turns back at this point, but we can be fairly certain he would have encountered a third people if he had gone on to the Long Sault. When the French get back to their boats they meet a "great store of people to the number of 400 persons or thereabout."[83] Bruce Trigger assumes these people are Hochelagans, but if they were, they would immediately have recognized Cartier. Cartier's account says these people are quite friendly, but there is no indication they know who he is. It is as reasonable to believe these people are not Hochelagans, as it is reasonable to believe they are.

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[80] Perhaps, one day, Tutonaguy will be found.

[81] Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 205.

[82] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 103-04.

[83] Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, 104.

It is, of course, possible all these peoples are Hochelagans and/or other Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. On the other hand, it is possible they are not, because it is possible Hochelaga has already been destroyed, the reason why Cartier does not go there in September 1541. With Hochelaga gone, the 'subject peoples' Cartier mentions in 1535 may be returning, including Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley coming to fish and plant corn. The Kichesipirini, as Samuel de Champlain observed on his journey up the Ottawa River in 1613, were attempting to grow corn in a place less suitable for the purpose than Montréal Island.

W.D. Lighthall observes that originally the Saint Lawrence Valley "seems to have been occupied by Algonquins, as these people surrounded it on all sides."[84] Over the course of the 20th century, and into the 21st century, a large body of historians, influenced by Bruce Trigger and James Pendergast, has worked assiduously to override Lighthall's observation. It is not necessary to go as far as Darlene Johnston does, suggesting the people of Hochelaga were really Algonkian speakers, not Iroquoian speakers.[85] It is, as Johnston argues, necessary to engage in a searching critique of the efforts of Bruce Trigger, James Pendergast, and the writers influenced by them to make the disappearance of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians a special case, and to turn the Algonkian peoples into bit players in a Saint Lawrence Iroquoian drama. Our fascination with the disappearance of the

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[84] Lighthall, "Hochelagans and Mohawks," 205.

[85] Darlene Johnston, "Litigating Identity: The Challenge of Aboriginality" (Toronto: University of Toronto Master of Laws, 2003), 21-30.

Saint Lawrence Iroquoians cannot be allowed to turn the Algonkian peoples of the Ottawa and Saint Lawrence valleys into forgotten peoples of an imagined past.