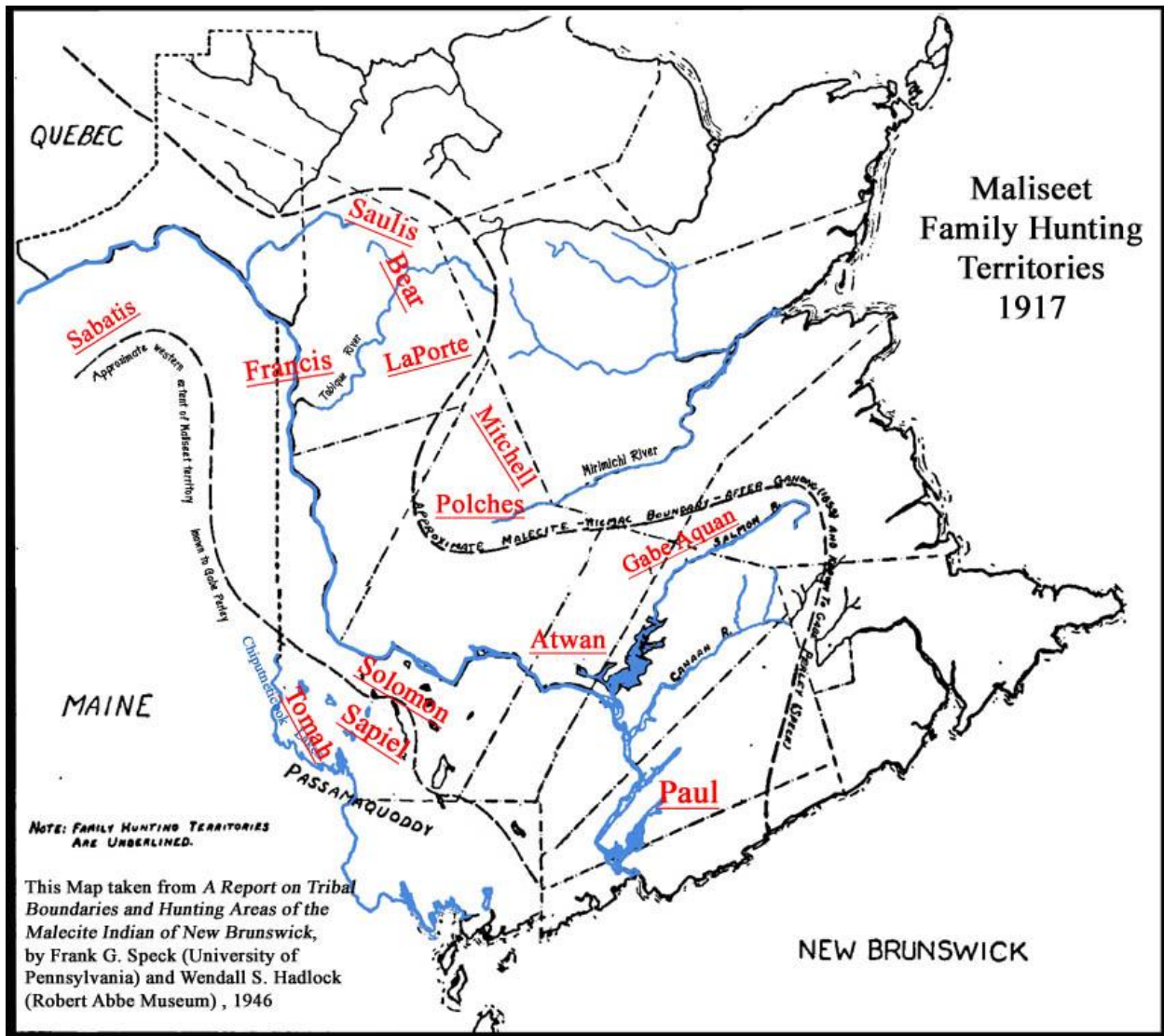


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Assimilation Spawns Disunity --- Disunity Nurtures Assimilation

When Champlain visited Tadoussac in May, 1603 three First Nations had gathered together at St. Matthew's Point near Tadoussac (in present day Quebec), a thousand of them, to celebrate a recent war victory over the Iroquois nation. The celebrations lasted for many days. These three victorious nations were the Etechemins, Algonquins and Montagnais. Most historians contend that the Etechemin nation was the name Champlain called the nation of the Wolastoqiyik whose territory extended from the St. John River watershed all the way to the St. Lawrence River. By uniting with their allied nations the Wolastoqiyik were able to defeat an enemy whose numbers were much greater than their own.

When English captive John Gyles went hunting with the Wolastoqiyik in the late 1600s they took him up the Wolastoq to the Madawaska River and all the way to the Notre Dame Mountains along the St. Lawrence. There was plenty of game in those days and this region was their hunting and fishing grounds. Every year all of the families gathered at one place for the Grand Council meeting, Eqpahak Island above present day Fredericton being one such location. At that time families were assigned different hunting and fishing territories so that one area didn't get overharvested and the game depleted. This is how they survived for thousands of years working together as a united body. As late as the early 20th century some Wolastoqiyik families in New Brunswick and Maine were still hunting in their traditional family territories. The map of family hunting territories reproduced for this article was made from interviews with Gabe Perley and his brother, Gabe Paul, and Newell Paul and Frank Tomer (Tomah) in 1917. The memories of these men go back to before 1870, and some of them were born and reared as children in birchbark wigwams. It was a time when radical changes were taking place in the natural environment, and the economic life of the Wolastoqiyik was transitioning from their traditional ways of hunting and fishing to working for the white settlers as guides or working on farms.

This hunting tradition was first impacted when the Europeans came here and brought guns, powder, lead balls, and also knives, hatchets, axes and traps made from steel and iron. The cultural practices of the Wolastoqiyik and other aboriginal nations were dramatically changed by the adoption of the technologies brought here by the first white settlers. Besides guns and steel traps they were introduced to copper kettles, blankets, sugar, molasses, dried beans and peas, biscuits made from wheat flour, and of course rum, brandy and whiskey. John Gyles wrote in his memoires about Monsieur Sigenioncour (René d'Amours, Sieur de Clingnacourt), the coureur de bois Frenchman who traded at Medoctec with the Maliseets. When they returned from their hunts he would sell them strong liquors and "they would be drunk and fight for several days and nights together, till they had spent most of their skins in wine and brandy." Jesuit missionary Sébastien Rale wrote that an Englishman would give an Indian a bottle of rum, and get from him in return a large tract of land. Father Antoine Simon Maillard wrote that the Indians became dependent on liquors, wine, rum and brandy "of which they obtain supplies by their barter of skins and furs. In short, their hunting procures them all that they want or desire, and their liberty or independence supplies to them the place of those luxuries of life, that are not well to be had without the sacrifice in some sort of it." Their social lives changed too as they were introduced to Roman Catholicism and writing and reading taught by the missionaries. At the conferences accompanying treaties during which the terms and conditions with the white man were negotiated, the Indians most always demanded a priest to continue to live amongst them and minister to their spiritual needs. Another thing they would demand was the establishment of truck houses (trading posts) in their territory to trade beaver, sable and other furs as

well as caribou and moose hides in return for the European goods that made their lives easier. What many of them except the much wiser elders failed to realize was that they were being made dependent on these new tools and other devices which they could not make themselves. Only the white man could provide them and would trade for them.

This transition into the white world was a time of great change and the old men and some older sakomak (chiefs) were very concerned with what was happening among their young men and women. How could they keep their cultural values and oral traditions that defined who they were in pre-contact times if they adopted the white man's ways? They were becoming dependent on the white man and losing the self sufficiency of their traditional culture. In a cunning way, applying the principle of gradualism, this was the beginning of assimilation in which their culture would in time over several generations become but a distant memory.

This worrisome situation created discord among the Wolastoqiyik chiefs as some of them saw a better lifestyle for their people if they befriended the French or English and traded with them for the new technologies and other enticing goods. Others among them were afraid their hunting grounds and forests were in danger of being depleted of the game and material resources needed to maintain their traditional ways.

In 1764 two Maliseet chiefs, Grand Chief Pierre Tomah and Chief Ambroise St. Aubin Bear complained to the authorities in Quebec, that the French Acadians of Kamouraska were trapping beavers in their territory which extended from Grand Falls (in what is now New Brunswick) to Lake Temiscouta in Quebec. The same two chiefs complained again to the Lieut. Governor and Council on July 18, 1768 at Halifax that two Acadian families were hunting on Indian grounds in the Eqpahak area and asked that these families be removed. They also complained that rum was becoming too common among their people and that something should be done to restrict it. At a treaty conference in August 1726 with the "eastern Indians" held at Falmouth in Casco Bay, Maine (at which John Gyles was one of the interpreters) Chief Wenemouett of the Penobscots pleaded with Lt. Governor William Dummer to "give orders that all the Vessels in the Harbour, and Taverns on the Shore, may be restrained from Selling our Young Men any Strong Liquor, which may prevent Mischief."

The white man's culture was beginning to impact their communities in many ways and causing division among the chiefs and captains. At the time of the American Revolution Grand Chief Tomah and Chief St. Aubin Bear were an example of two Wolastoqiyik chiefs who had become rivals creating two factions among the Wolastoqiyik. Chief Tomah saw this war as British fighting British, white fighting white. It was not his people's war. He understood well that whichever side won, they would still be a problem for the St. John River Indians, so in his wisdom he chose to remain uncommitted, neutral, "Half-Boston, Half-English", and would ask both sides in this war

for a priest and provisions. Chief St. Aubin Bear on the other hand kept his dealings primarily with the Americans. It is during this period that in July of 1776 Chief St. Aubin Bear led a delegation of Wolastoqiyik and Mi'kmaq to Watertown, Massachusetts for a week-long conference with the American *Council of the United Colonies*. A total of six villages were represented from the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik communities. Grand Chief Pierre Tomah was not there as he had gone to Quebec. Chief St. Aubin Bear spoke on behalf of the delegates and asked the Americans for a French priest and also that French people on his hunting grounds be removed. He asked for shrouds, blankets, powder, shot, flint, knives, combs, hatchets, small axes, paint, steel traps, and guns. The Americans could not promise a French priest but would "endeavor" to find an English one. They also said they would endeavor to supply the truck house in Machias with the goods the delegates had demanded.

In return the Americans asked the Indians for 600 fighting men who could join the American army against the British. If these two nations could not supply that many warriors, then they should speak to their brothers the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy. Chief St. Aubin Bear said he had sixty warriors in his village of which thirty of them could join the American army. He also promised three Captains. Wolastoqiyik Chief Francis said he could fetch twenty from his village. The Mi'kmaw delegates gave their numbers, and in total the delegates came up with 340 men available and 115 to be provided. They were uncertain how many more they could get from the Passamaquoddies and Penobscots and the other Maliseet and Mi'kmaq villages. At the end of the conference they signed the treaty on July 19th, 1776 under which the Americans promised to supply immediately goods to the truck house at Machias and the Indians agreed to provide up to 600 men for joining the Continental Army. This has been heralded as being the first treaty signed with Indians by the Americans. However, when the delegates brought back copies to the other chiefs at home the chiefs were enraged and refused to accept the treaty. They were afraid that if their men left their villages to go fighting that the British in Nova Scotia would invade their villages. Also, many of their men would be away on the winter hunts at that time.

Col. John Allan of the rebel Americans (formerly a British MLA from Cumberland who renounced his allegiance to the King) met with the Mi'qmaq in Cacagne on September 19, 1776. They were very unhappy about the signing of the treaty at Watertown earlier in July. John Baptist and Matua who had brought the treaty back told their chiefs that they "were imposed on and signed things that were not read to them." The chiefs told Allan they were very angry and uneasy about the actions of John Baptist & Matua. They said, "Because we never authorised those Persons to do such a thing, some of it we cannot perform. Our situation is such that it must be of fatal consequences to our families should it (even if we was willing) be known & these men say they were impos'd on & we are determin'd to return it. We Intend to Carry it to Fort Cumberland or

Halifax, & Shew it & let them know we intend to send it back — for fear they will send their big Vessels in our Rivers & prevent us from fowling & fishing.... we receive our present support from Old England, we want not to molest any but be in Friendship with all." They rejected this treaty and chose to remain neutral. They had Col. Allan prepare a letter from them to George Washington in which they returned the Watertown treaty and gave their reasons for doing so. Here we see the results of a division among the Mi'kmaq.

In June of 1777 American Col. Allan who by then had been appointed Indian Agent for the Continental Congress (on Jan 15th) met with all the Maliseet chiefs and their warriors, 300 of them, at Aukpaque (Eqpahak) village on the St. John River. His mission was to obtain their support for the Americans. The rivalry between Chiefs St. Aubin Bear and Tomah became apparent at this time. Recall that Chief Tomah had not been to Watertown for the signing of the treaty. During the ceremony with the various chiefs and captains, each one who spoke always shook hands with the others after his talk, and Col. Allan's hand was always the first hand to be shaken and then the others. Pierre Tomah made his speech and then shook the other chiefs' hands but Col. Allan's hand he left to the last. When Chief St. Aubin Bear finished his talk he shook Allan's hand first and then the others, but he did not shake the hand of Chief Tomah. The rift between these two chiefs was obvious to Col. Allan as reported in his journal. There became a split among the Maliseets with some joining the Americans and raiding the British, while others who supported Chief Tomah were still trading with the British and providing services to them.

On Sept. 24, 1778 Nova Scotia's superintendent of Indian affairs, Michael Francklin, called the Maliseets and Mi'kmaq to a conference at Menagouèche (present day Saint John). He was pleased to inform them that he had acquired the services of a missionary Joseph-Mathurin Bourg as per his promise to provide them a priest. Maliseet Grand Chief Pierre Tomah, 2nd Chief François Xavier and eight principal Maliseets including Nicholas Akomápis (who had served as a courier for the British) attended the conference along with 12 Mik'maq from Richibucto, Mirimichi, Chignecto and Minas. The Indians took a solemn oath of allegiance to the king and signed a treaty promising to restore to the British settlers arms and other articles stolen or destroyed; that they would bring 200 pounds of beaver pelts or as many moose skins; that they would remain neutral in the war, and to keep the British informed of American activities in the area. They solemnized these promises with a string of wampum. Then they gave to Col. Francklin the presents that George Washington had sent to them and also the treaty they had made with the Massachusetts Government on July 19, 1776. They also signed a letter to Col. Allan forbidding him to interfere with all Indians east of Machias.

Col. Francklin gave them numerous presents which included blankets, hats, ribbons, gold and silver lace, axes, pots, kettles, knives, tobacco, and one large Silver plaited

Cross with the figure of our Saviour on it, and another gold plaited Cross with a figure of our Saviour on it. The following day the Indians went on board a British ship close by where they drank to the King's health. Chief Ambrose St. Aubin Bear was not part of this conference with the British, but remained with the Maliseets at Machias who had been exiled from their river the previous year. Machias was the headquarters of Col. Allan.

Chief Tomah never gave up his negotiations, always looking for a better deal for his people. In May of 1780 he went to Machias and met with Col. Allan. He assured Allan that he had acted out of fear when he met with the British and signed the treaty. He offered to renounce all connections with the British if Allan would fulfill his promise to the Maliseets. When Chief Tomah realized that Allan could not possibly meet his demands, he led the Maliseets from Machias eastward to Passamaquoddy Bay. He told Col. Allan that poverty and desire to have a priest had required them to go meet Col. Francklin in Menagouèche who had supplies for them and a French priest.

Election of chiefs was another area of change with the coming of the white man. In January, 1839 Grand Chief Tomah and Chief Joseph of the "St. Johns Tribe of Indians" and seven councillors by the names of, Sarbattus, Loui, Tormor, Loui, Joseph Bear, Loui Bear, and Alexander sent a petition to the Governor and Council of the State of Maine. This petition described a split in the Penobscot Tribe of Indians at Old Town over the sale of the "upper four Indian townships" that had taken place in 1833. In those times the Chiefs were referred to as Governors, Lieutenant Governors, and Captains in keeping with the white man's form of naming political offices or military ranks. That term is still used by New England Indians. The document revealed that part of the Penobscots tribe was demanding the removal of Governor Attean and Lt. Governor John Neptune for selling their lands in 1833. The St. John's tribe expressed their loyalty to Governor Attean and Lt. Governor Neptune. However, they were not addressing the sale of the lands, but instead the removal of the Chiefs (Governors). They state in the petition that twenty years ago their St. Johns Tribe, the Quoddy Tribe, and the Penobscot Tribe met in council in Old Town and "duly elected John Attean, Governor, and John Neptune, Lieutenant Governor, of said Penobscot Tribe of Indians, both for their natural lives, according to the laws, usages, and customs of all Indians wherever found." They go on to state that those members of the Penobscot tribe who want to remove the two Governors who had been elected were in violation of their traditional laws and customs. They state that electing new governors every so often is a white man's way: "Indian love him Governor when him old - even when him no able to walk any more.....Indian no want to choose him new Governor every time the leaves fall - It makes him trouble - and him loves the old way better. Indian no wants no strange Governor, with new face every year; he wants to know his Governor when he meets him.... When John Attean and John Neptune shall be dead we shall be ready to meet

again and choose a new Governor, and Lieutenant Governor, for the Penobscot Tribe of Indians. We no meet to choose new Governor while the old one is alive." They believed in keeping their traditional way of electing a chief for life. They signed the petition and noted that 252 Indians of the St. Johns Tribe of age 20 and over agreed unanimously with this petition. This event shows that as late as 1839 the Wolastoqiyik still had one Grand Chief representing their entire nation. It is also important to appreciate here the close political ties to their "brothers" the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy nations.

Tappan Adney, in his mission to reconstitute the Wolastoqiyik under one nation and one Grand Chief as they once were, not under separate "Maliseet" bands on reserved lands, so that the old treaties would be considered still valid, was very frustrated with the internal conflict among the present band chiefs at that time. Band chiefs and small reserve lands for the Indians were part of a political structure implemented by the white government to divide and weaken them as a united nation. On March 17, 1948 Adney wrote a letter to Chief Saulis of the Tobique in which he began with, "Do you know one reason why the St. John and other Indians of their family have been able to be pushed around. It is because they won't stand together." He goes on to point to the success of the Iroquois as compared to the Algonquian nation of which the Maliseets are a part of the Algonquian family. He quotes to Chief Saulis a statement from the Handbook of Indians; "The eastern Algonquian tribes probably equalled the Iroquois in bravery, intelligence and physical powers, but lacked their constancy, solidity of character, and capability of organization, and do not appear to have appreciated the power and influence they might have wielded by combination. The alliances between tribes were generally temporary and without real cohesion. There seems, indeed, to have been some element of character which rendered them incapable of combining in large bodies, even against a common enemy." He warns Chief Saulis that there was never a greater need for the Indians in the different reserves like Woodstock and the Tobique to unite than with this issue, and adds, "But will they do it? No! Then let them take what is handed out to them. I say this as a real friend." After his signature he added a postscript: "This should be read to the Indians of every reserve and pounded home as only you know how to do it. Maybe the returned veterans learned something in the army about sticking together."

Presently there is much debate about building a west-east pipeline to come from Alberta and bring oil through Wolastoqiyik land. There is also much debate about fracking Wolastoqiyik land (in Maine and NB) for extracting natural gas. The government of New Brunswick has also committed itself to increasing marketing of all natural resources of Wolastoqiyik land to more global export markets. Supposedly all these things will create thousands of jobs and eliminate New Brunswick's huge debt, and bring affluence to the white man's province that lies within Wolastoqiyik land. Just as it was when the

French and English first came to this continent, Wolastoqiyik land stretches beyond NB into present day Maine and Quebec. Those political boundaries were superimposed over Wolastoqiyik land. To be stewards and protect ALL of this traditional territory requires a very strong united front that crosses over all of the white man's political boundaries.

Rivalry and conflicts continue to exist today and quite often prevent the Wolastoqiyik Nation from acting as a strong united body when dealing with critical issues and fighting for traditional rights. Who speaks for the Wolastoqiyik Nation today and negotiates with the Queen's representatives in Canada and the President's representatives in the United States? Maybe Adney was right that they should consult with the few remaining elder veterans for wise counsel about how to stick together in battle before the veterans are all gone.

..... all my relations, Nugeekadoonkut