

# HOW DID THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR IMPACT FIRST NATIONS?

The British had defeated the French. What did that mean for the First Nations who had fought alongside the French and the British to protect their own interests and ensure their survival? The end of the Seven Years' War led to a series of short- and long-term consequences for First Nations in North America after 1763. Consider the viewpoint of Ojibwe Chief Minavavana in **Figure 3.19**. How widespread do you think this viewpoint was among First Nations after the Seven Years' War?

“Englishman! Although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us! We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods and mountains were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance; and we will part with them to none ...

Englishman, our father, the King of France, employed our young men to make war upon your nation. In this warfare many of them have been killed, and it is our custom to retaliate until such time as the spirits of the slain are satisfied.”

— Ojibwe Chief Minavavana

**FIGURE 3.19** Chief Minavavana spoke these words to British fur trader Alexander Henry in 1761. **Analyze:** Why do you think Chief Minavavana uses the word *father* to refer to the King of France?

## BROKEN ALLIANCES

Trade between First Nations and the French came to an end after the war. The British limited First Nations' access to European goods, such as weapons, tools, and clothing. They also stopped paying established prices for First Nations goods.

Governor General Jeffery Amherst, who represented the British monarch, did not see the need to pursue goodwill relationships with First Nations, against the advice of many of his officials. While First Nations viewed gift giving as symbolic of peace and friendship, Amherst felt the practice amounted to bribery.

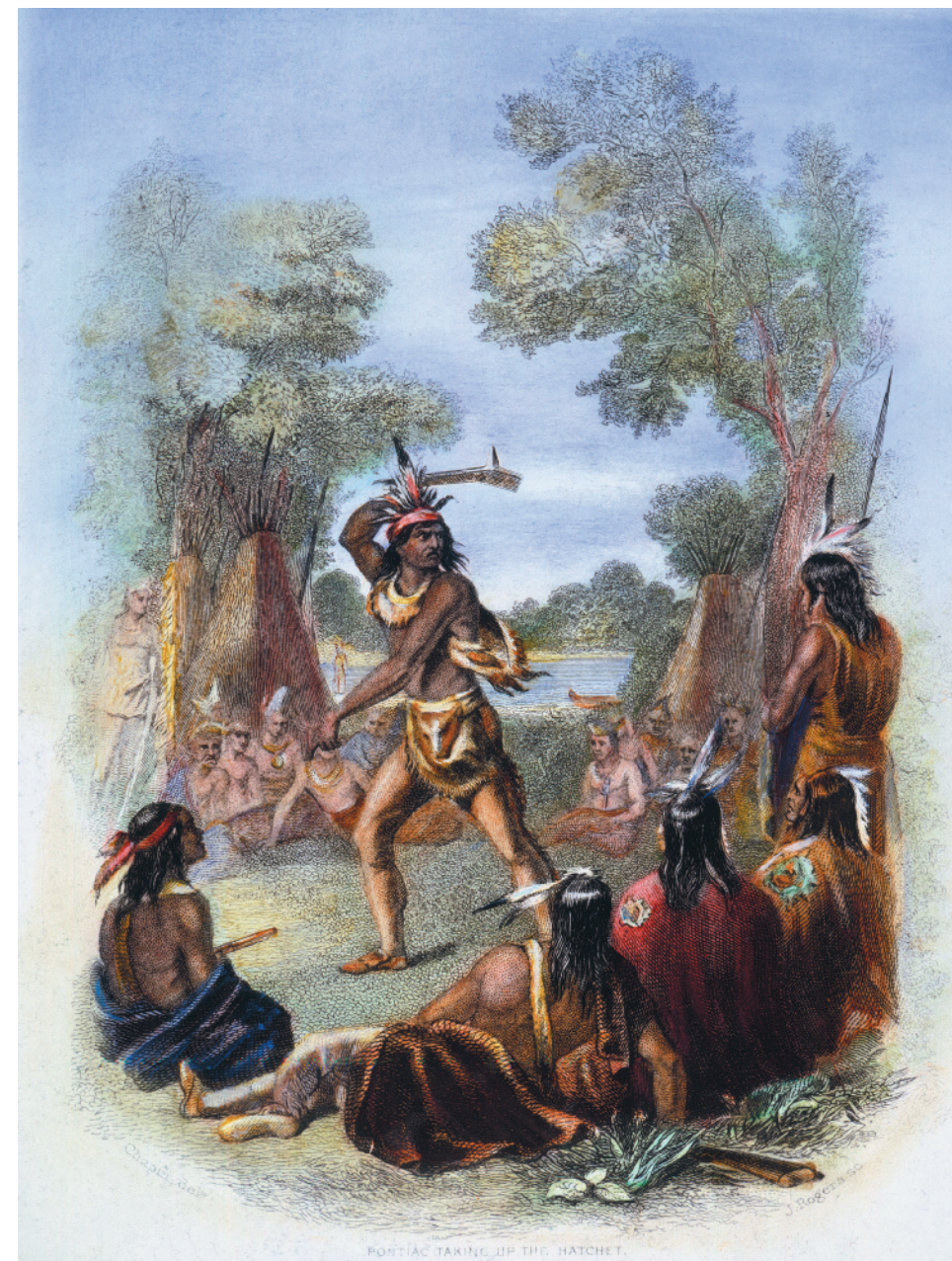
## NEW CONFLICTS

First Nations viewed the movement of more and more British officials, soldiers, and settlers into their territories as a threat to their way of life. Their resistance to any takeover became increasingly problematic for the British. **Figure 3.20** is an excerpt from just one of several letters exchanged between Amherst and his officials in 1763, discussing ways to deal with the resistance.

“You will Do well to try to Inoculate the Indians, by means of Blankets, as well as to Try Every other Method, that can Serve to Extirpate [destroy] this Execrable [very bad] Race. – I should be very glad your Scheme for Hunting them down by Dogs could take Effect; but England is at too great a Distance to think that at present.”

— Governor General Jeffery Amherst

**FIGURE 3.20** Postscript of a letter from Amherst to Colonel Henry Bouquet, July 1763. European blankets given in trade were thought to be one way First Nations caught the deadly smallpox virus. **Analyze:** Do you think Amherst was a good choice for British leadership in North America after the war?



## CHIEF PONTIAC'S REBELLION

After the war, Chief Pontiac led the Odawa Nation. In 1762, a secret council meeting of the Odawa, Ojibwe, Huron (Wyandot), and Potawatomi was held on Chief Pontiac's territory. At this meeting, the nations discussed planning an attack on the British. By 1763, the Senecas had begun sending secret war messages, in the form of wampum war belts, to neighbouring Delaware, Shawnee, and Huron (Wyandot) nations. **Wampum** are beads made of shells, which are used as currency, or money, among some First Nations. Sometimes wampum are beaded together on string to record messages. On May 5, 1763, the Odawa, Potawatomi, and Huron (Wyandot) nations met in council and made a decision to continue to fight against the British. Look at **Figure 3.21**. What do you think Chief Pontiac is telling the others? Read the quote in **Figure 3.22**. What similarities can you identify between Chief Pontiac's speech and Amherst's words in **Figure 3.20**?

**FIGURE 3.21** This colour engraving by an unnamed artist from the 1800s shows Chief Pontiac leading a war council in 1763. **Analyze:** What is Chief Pontiac's body language and what could he be holding in his hand?

**wampum** beads made of shells, used as currency or as a method of recording messages

**FIGURE 3.22** Chief Pontiac issued this call to action (translated into English), May 5, 1763. **Analyze:** What reasons does Chief Pontiac give for rising up against the British?

“It is important for us, my brothers, that we exterminate from our lands this nation which seeks only to destroy us. You see as well as I that we can no longer supply our needs, as we have done, from our brothers, the French. The English sell us goods twice as dear as the French do, and their goods do not last ...

When I go to see the English commander and say to him that some of our comrades are dead, instead of bewailing their death, as our French brothers do, he laughs at me and at you. If I ask anything for our sick, he refuses with the reply that he has no use for us. From all this you can well see that they are seeking our ruin. Therefore, my brothers, we must all swear their destruction and wait no longer.”

— Odawa Chief Pontiac



## ATTACK ON FORT MICHILIMACKINAC

In May and June 1763, the allied First Nations led successful attacks on eight British-held posts around Lake Erie and Lake Huron. These attacks, such as the one on Fort Michilimackinac (on the shores of Lake Michigan), often took the British by surprise. At Fort Michilimackinac, hundreds of Odawa, Ojibwe, and their allied nations gathered outside the fort for a game of *bag'gat'iway* (similar to lacrosse). The British understood the cultural significance of this game to First Nations. The game was often played to resolve conflicts and strengthen alliances. It also helped keep warriors in good physical condition for hunting and fighting. Colonists became used to seeing this ball-and-stick game played over large areas with hundreds of participants.

Figure 3.23 contains a first-person account of the attack on the fort. It was recorded by Alexander Henry, a British fur trader. He explains how the First Nations launched a surprise attack on the British and won. Figure 3.24 shows that a meeting of First Nations took place prior to the attack.

Although Chief Pontiac was successful in convincing many allies to join forces with him, the French refused to join the resistance. They had already suffered many losses to the British and had accepted the terms of surrender. As the violent raids and ambushes went on, many of Chief Pontiac's allies began to abandon him. Chief Pontiac was losing the upper hand. However, the British realized that they must find a way to make peace with the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi (Three Fires Confederacy) to prevent further violence. Jeffery Amherst was sent back to Britain and replaced by James Murray, whom the British thought would work more effectively with First Nations.

“The morning was sultry. A Chipeway came to tell me that his nation was going to play at *bag'gat'iway*, with the Sacs or Saâkies, another Indian nation, for a high wager. He invited me to witness the sport.... I went to the commandant ... representing that the Indians might possibly have some sinister end in view; but, the commandant only smiled at my suspicions ...

I did not go myself to see the match which was now to be played without the fort.... I heard an Indian war-cry, and a noise of general confusion.

Going instantly to my window, I saw a crowd of Indians, within the fort ...

Amid the slaughter which was raging, I observed many of the Canadian inhabitants of the fort, calmly looking on, neither opposing the Indians, nor suffering injury; and, from this circumstance, I conceived a hope of finding security in their houses ...”

— Alexander Henry, British fur trader

**FIGURE 3.23** This excerpt is from Henry's account of the First Nations attack on Fort Michilimackinac in 1763. **Analyze:** How was the game of *bag'gat'iway* an effective cover for the attack?



**FIGURE 3.24** This 2003 painting by Robert Griffing is entitled *The Conspiracy—Fort Michilimackinac*. **Analyze:** What do you think this group is discussing?



**proclamation** an official announcement, statement, or declaration

## CREATION OF A ROYAL PROCLAMATION

The British delivered a Royal Proclamation in 1763, outlining new rules for all the people who were living in North America. This **proclamation**, or official statement, announced that the British were taking over the government of Québec. It also clearly reserved land for First Nations and promised hunting and fishing rights. As you read the excerpts from the document in **Figure 3.25**, consider why the British would think that this document would establish peace with First Nations.

And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to our Interest, and the Security of our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds....

And We do further declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure, for the present as aforesaid, to reserve under our Sovereignty, Protection, and Dominion, for the use of the said Indians, all the Lands and Territories not included within the Limits of Our said Three new Governments, or within the Limits of the Territory granted to the Hudson’s Bay Company, as also all the Lands and Territories lying to the Westward of the Sources of the Rivers which fall into the Sea from the West and North West as aforesaid.

**FIGURE 3.25** This is an image of the Royal Proclamation, 1763. Excerpts from the document are included above. **Analyze:** How might the wording have been different if First Nations had drafted the proclamation?

The Royal Proclamation called for all land deals to be made in public and formalized by a treaty. In the 50 years following the Royal Proclamation, the British government and various First Nations entered into a number of treaties to maintain peace as more and more British settlers moved onto the land. Chief Wabbiocommicot of the Mississauga First Nation had a good relationship with the British, who paid tribute to him with gifts. Chief Wabbiocommicot encouraged other First Nations in the western Great Lakes region to make peace with the British as well.

## TREATY OF NIAGARA

In July 1764, more than 2000 people representing 24 First Nations and members of the British monarchy met to sign the Treaty of Niagara. Under the terms of the Treaty of Niagara, the British promised to keep settlers out of the Ohio Valley. The promises made were symbolized and preserved in the wampum belt shown in **Figure 3.26**. The signing of the Treaty of Niagara became known as The Great Peace of 1764.

## A NEW LEGAL FOUNDATION

The principles of the Royal Proclamation and the agreements woven into the Treaty of Niagara wampum belt are central to negotiations between First Nations and the Government of Canada today. Many consider these artifacts to be among Canada’s first constitutional documents to guarantee Aboriginal rights. Protests like the one shown in **Figure 3.27** were held across Canada starting in November 2012 to remind Canadians of agreements made hundreds of years ago.



**FIGURE 3.26** The 1764 Treaty of Niagara wampum belt preserves Britain’s promise to give annual gifts, in keeping with First Nations tradition, “for as long as the sun shone, and the grass grew, and the British wore red coats.” **Analyze:** How would you interpret the symbols in the belt?

**FIGURE 3.27** On December 19, 2012, protesters in London, Ontario, marched in support of the Canada-wide Idle No More movement. **Analyze:** What is the main message of this photo?

## CHECK-IN

- CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE** Why did the British need to address First Nations issues after winning the Seven Years’ War?
- HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** What is the significance of the 1764 Treaty of Niagara for First Nations? What is its significance for Canada today?
- INTERPRET AND ANALYZE** What was Chief Pontiac’s role in redefining relationships between Europeans and First Nations in North America?