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Ontario Native Canadians and World War One

P.J. Heslin

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ABSTRACT

Ontario Native Canadians and World War One

P.J. Heslin

World War One was a turning point in the history of Native Canadians. The government encouraged participaion in the war, hoping that this would aid in assimilating Natives into the Euro-Canadian culture. Instead, Native resolve against government assimilationist policies was solidified. Although the first pan-Canadian Native alliance was formed after the war, in no sense was there a political policy that all Natives could agree with. Bands argued with each other and political struggles existed within bands.

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Introduction

About 35% of the eligible Native Canadian population served in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces in World War I.[1] The total population of Native Canadians in Canada by the end of the war was 109,294.[2] Ontario contained almost one quarter of the entire Native Canadian population in the same year with 26,411 individuals[3]. The Native Canadian participation in the war was even more impressive when one considers that all who served were volunteers since Native Canadians were exempt from conscription.

Involvement in the war was not limited to military service. Women on reserves formed patriotic leagues that raised money and mailed care packages overseas to Native and non-Native battalions. In addition, bands donated large sums of money to various patriotic funds and leased their farm lands so that Canada could provide badly needed food to the war effort.

A number of Natives were opposed to the war, but most of these were of an older generation who were opposed to government intervention in their affairs and thus vehemently protested conscription. Due to their efforts, Native Canadians were

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1. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs. Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 1919. (Sessional Paper No. 28). p. 13.

2. Ibid. p.7

3. Ibid. p. 7.

eventually exempted from conscription.

The prevailing federal policy regarding Native Canadians prior to and during the war was assimilation. During the war years, the Canadian government passed many acts that were designed to help both the war effort and assimilate Native Canadians: The Greater Production Act, conscription and the Soldier Settlement Act were the main assimilative acts to which Natives were opposed. The government's attempts to assimilate Native Canadians galvanized Native opposition to the government and, for a while, inspired a pan-Canadian Native political organization that was devoted to fighting the government's assimilationist policies.

The scope of this paper only includes Native Canadians from Ontario. There are two reasons for doing so. First, Ontario had the largest percentage of Native enlistment. Also, Ontario contained many different bands that had varying periods of contact with Euro-Canadian culture; some bands, such as those located in Southwestern Ontario, had been in contact with Euro-Canadians for nearly four hundred years. Other bands in northern and northwestern Ontario had only been in sporadic contact with Euro-Canadians for a few decades. Such a spectrum of bands provides for an interesting study and mirrors the situation throughout Canada.

In order to understand the Ontario Native Canadian participation in the Great War, it is necessary to begin with a brief history of their earlier military relations with Euro-Canadian powers. Not only does this provide some explanation as

to why they participated in the war, but outlines the changing relationship between Native Canadians and Euro-Canadians. It was a relationship that had gone from mutual dependence to one where the Euro-Canadian culture eventually dominated the Native Canadian one.

Understanding conditions on Ontario reserves prior to the beginning of the War is an important aspect of this paper. Life on the reserves was formed by both the Euro-Canadian and Native Canadian culture. The Euro-Canadian culture had created the reserve system and had instituted educational and agricultural policies that Native Canadians had to deal with. They reacted to these policies on a local scale. Only after the war did Natives, led by veterans, begin to organize themselves into efficient political groups that looked beyond the reserve.

Chapter 1: Relations Between Native Canadians and Euro-Canadians

On April 10, 1916, the Brantford Expositor ran a story that dealt with the formation of "Brock's Rangers", a battalion made up primarily of Native soldiers. The tone of the article seemed to imply that Native Canadians, in particular the Six Nations, had blindly supported the British Crown in past military endeavours.

> Now Haldimand is one of the Niagara Peninsula group of counties, a peninsula dotted with the battle ground of the War of 1812, a little plot of British ground made famous by Queenston Heights, and Beaver Dam and Chippawa, and Lundy's Lane, and a dozen minor but no less historic fights.
> In nearly all of these the Six Nation Indians of that day did yoeman service for Canada, and at Queenston Heights, where the heroic Brock fell in the hour of victory, their contingent contributed notably to the crushing defeat inflicted on the enemy.[1]

While it is true that the Six Nations did provide British troops with support in that war, by no means was it due to blind allegiance to the Crown. The Expositor article illustrates one of the basic Euro-Canadian misconceptions about Native involvement in European conflicts. In reality, Natives participated in European conflicts to make gains for their own nations. They were not merely pawns in a game of colonial chess. Native-Euro-

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[1]. "Indians Answer Call to Arms." *The Brantford Expositor,* 10 April 1916, p. 14.

Canadian military alliances not only provide insight into the reasons why Native Canadians participated in the Great War, but illustrate the changing relationship between the two cultures that set the stage for their interaction during World War I.

Native-Euro-Canadian military history dates back as far as 1609 when Champlain's arebequs echoed throughout New France in favour of a band of Montagnais.[2] European military aid in the Seventeenth century was linked with commercial venture. Some historians, such as Bruce Trigger and Cornelius Jaenen, view initial contact between Natives and Euro-Canadians as one that was a type of mutually benefitting partnership. From the Euro-Canadians, Natives received material goods and weapons that initially served to enhance their lives. From the Natives, Euro-Canadians learned how to survive in the New World. The French supported bands with personnel or weapons to insure that a supply of furs would continue to their posts.

At the time of initial contact, Natives were relatively unimpressed with Europeans due to the European's inability to survive in their world. "On the whole, though the Indians respected European technology and were prepared to associate themselves with those who produced it, they

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[2]. G.F.G. Stanley, "The Significance of the Six Nation's Participation in the War of 1812." Ontario History. (volume LV #4, 1963): p. 216.

were unimpressed by Europeans."[3]

The relationship changed in the Eighteenth century as competition between European powers increased in the New World. With the growing tensions between European powers, Euro-Canadians turned to Natives for military support which was so vital to their survival. Euro-Canadian settlements were still vulnerable to Native attacks, and no European power could afford to alienate all bands. Another important reason for an alliance was the type of warfare practised in the New World. Owing to the geography of the land, traditional European warfare was impossible. The most effective type of warfare was that practised by the Natives -- what the French called "le petit guerre", or guerilla warfare.

The Six Nations had managed to assert themselves as the most powerful military Native alliance due to the fact that the Six Nations chose to play European powers against each other for their own advantage.

The relationship between Euro-Canadian and Native Canadian powers can best be seen in various Proclamations and treaties between the two powers. When one reads between the lines of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, it is clear that the British not only depended on further Native military support but wanted to safeguard their colonial

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[3]. J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 46.

interests by appeasing Natives:

> 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... are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds, therefore, any lands that had not been ceded to or purchased by Us as aforesaid, are reserved to the said Indians. Furthermore, we do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved, without our especial leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained.[4]

According to J.R. Miller, author of Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada. "These clauses of the Royal Proclamation were intended to avoid conflict between the indigenous population and land-hungry immigrants."[5]

Pontiac's uprising in 1763 and 1764 was proof that Natives were still a military threat to Euro-Canadians. "Before Pontiac and his warriors were cowed by British troops, they had taken several of the western posts and killed over 2000 settlers who menaced their lands."[6] It is

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[4]. The text of the proclamation is reprinted in I.A.L. Getty and A.S. Lussier, eds. As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies. (Vancouver: Nakoda Institute and University of B.C. Press, 1983), pp. 29-37.

[5]. Miller, p. 73.

[6]. Ibid. p. 74.

also an indication that there was no general consensus among the Six Nations regarding Euro-Canadian interests. Bands acted independently because there was no central political organization for the Six Nations. Furthermore, bands allied themselves with competing European or American powers.

During the Americal Revolution, four of the Six Nations Bands supported the British cause. This was due in large part to the efforts of Joseph Brant, his sister Molly and her husband, Sir William Johnson, Britain's superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department. Before pledging support for the British, however, Brant ensured that his people would be compensated for any losses suffered during the war. The British not only agreed to this but, in a rare moment of Native-Euro-Canadian relations, remained true to the promise after the war. "To his credit [Frederick] Haldimand [Governor of Quebec] ratified his predecessor's pledge [of compensation] and agreed that a tract of land on the Bay of Quinte and another area, the length of the Grand River be given to the Indians."[7] The members of the Six Nations came to the old province of Quebec as allies of Britain. They were not a nation that had been conquered, but one that had fought with Britain and were rewarded for their efforts by the

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[7]. G.F.G. Stanley, p. 217.

allocation of lands in what was to become Canada. The perception of themselves as allies and not subjects proved to be a contentious issue when World War I broke out.

When the War of 1812 began, Euro-Canadian forces still were in need of Native military support, in particular the support of the Six Nations now settled in what was known as Upper Canada. True, the fears of the Six Nations regarding the expansionist desires of the Americans coincided with the fears of the British at the time of the war:

> ... Indians such as the Mohawk and others to the south were motivated to support the British and Canadians by a desire to protect their lands. It was still the Americans who were trying to expand their agricultural frontier into what the proclamation had termed Indian 'hunting grounds', and it was still the British who resisted that expansion.[8]

But, the Six Nations had to contend with growing divisions from within. Past European wars fought on North American soil found the constituent tribes of Six Nations fighting against each other. When the War of 1812 broke out, the Nations now living in Canada were hesitant in their support for the British because they did not want to damage relations with Six Nations' members in the United States. Therefore, members of the Six Nations bands on both sides of the border initially supported a stand of neutrality.

This position of neutrality also reflected the political reality of the relationship between the Europeans

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[8]. Miller, pp. 76-77.

and Native Canadians. None of the Six Nations considered themselves subjects of the Crown, and thus did not feel bound to serve the Crown. In a letter to the Lords of Trade dated September 25, 1763, the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson stated:

> The Indians...are no wise inferior to us in sagacity and strategem...I know that many mistakes arise here from erroneous accounts formerly made of Indians; they have been represented as calling themselves subjects, altho, the very word would have startled them, had it been ever pronounced by an Interpreter; they desire to be consdiered as Allies and Friends, and such we may make them at a reasonable expense and thereby occupy our outposts and carry on a Trade in safety....[9]

The belief that the Six Nations were a nation separate from all others is one that is still held to this day. As a Nation unto themselves, the Six Nations have continually and persistently asserted their own sovereignty. This was of particular importance when conscription became an issue during World War I. In fact, Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior in 1909 wrote a letter to the speaker of the Six Nations, Chief Johnston in April of that year addressing this:

> It is the policy of the Canadian Government, as I understand, to recognize its relations with the Six Nations, Indians of the Grand River as being on different footing from those of any of the other Indians of Canada. The Six Nations Indians of the Grand River came to Canada under special treaty as the allies of Great Britain, and the

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[9]. S.J. Bailey, "The Six Nations Confederacy." (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Historical Services. File M 12.) p. 4.

> policy of the Canadian Government is to deal with them having that fact always in view.[10]

Despite the initial position of neutrality in the War of 1812, the Six Nations confederacy did participate. In fact, the Battle of Beaver Dam on June 24, 1813, was won by Iroquois. "Beaver Dam was an Indian victory. It was, indeed, the one substantial Indian battle fought almost entirely by Iroquois Indians during the war."[11]

Why did the Six Nations abandon a policy of neutrality for that of active participation in the War of 1812? According to historian, G.F.G. Stanley, Natives, "saw more adventure in war than in neutrality."[12] J.R. Miller, however, offers a more detailed and realistic reason:

> Once again, the Indians fought not as instruments of European policy but as agents in pursuit of their own interests. The fundamental reason for Indian support of the British cause in the War of 1812 was simply explained: Tecumseh and his followers had not yet given up hope that an Indian state could be created in the Ohio Valley and that the continuous stream of white settlers from across the mountains could be checked.[13]

In other words, they were their own nation fighting for their own purposes.

The end of the War of 1812 marked a new relationship between Natives and Euro-Canadians. After the war, Natives

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10. Ibid. p. 221.

11. Stanley, p. 225.

12. Ibid. p. 221.

13. Miller, p. 86.

were no longer needed as military allies. The Rush-Bagot Convention of 1817 demilitarized the Great Lakes region so that settlement could continue peacefully. Now that Natives were no longer military allies, they became obstacles to settlement. "By 1830, the government of British North America was questioning the value of the Indian for Canada's future. Although it remained a concern for some, invasion from the south by the United States was no longer an immediate and direct threat."[14]

From Military Significance to Paternalism and Assimilation

The governments of British North America were faced with a vacuum in Native Policy, now that Natives were no longer necessary military allies. The formation of a new policy relied on past relations between Native Canadians and Euro-Canadians. Miller states that: "The prominent role of the state and the tradition of cooperative relations between Indians and newcomers explain why the Indians were not subjected to a strategy of extermination when they ceased to be militarily and economically useful in the early nineteenth century."[15] The government ultimately opted for assimilation, through educational, and

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[14]. James S. Frideres, Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1988), p. 21.

[15]. Miller, p. 86.

agricultural policies and programmes.

The change in the relationship between Native bands and Euro-Canadians was illustrated by two developments: the transfer of the Indian Department from military to civilian control in 1830, and treaties made with Ontario bands in mid-century.[16] The nature of the treaties made with Ontario bands throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was characterized by what the Government wanted from the bands. On September 7 and 9 of 1850, the Robinson-Superior and Robinson-Huron treaties were signed between the government of British North America and the Saulteaux Ojibway. The nature of these treaties were worlds apart from the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The Royal Proclamation was formed as a means of stating what belonged to the Natives so that settlers would not infringe on their land. By 1850, however, Euro-Canadians now took what they wanted. The Robinson-Superior and Robinson-Huron treaties were drawn up so that Euro-Canadians could not take the rich minerals that lay in the land given to Natives north of Lakes Superior and Huron to the height of land separating Rupert's Land from Canada.

> In both instances, the potential profits to be gleaned from land that was hitherto regarded as worthless precipitated moves to extinguish the title of the native occupiers. No consideration was given to inviting the Indians to share in the profits. In fact, the treaty terms offered

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[16]. E. Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 2.

> deliberately ensured that they would be excluded.[17]

The assimilative policy found its voice in various acts concerning Native populations. The first and most important was passed in 1850 and entitled "An Act for the protection of the Indians in Upper Canada from imposition and the property occupied or enjoyed by them from trespass and injury." In the same year, a similar act was passed for bands living in Lower Canada. These acts were to be the legislative basis for future negotiations with bands throughout Canada. There were two important aspects of these acts: they defined what an Indian was -- "someone of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular tribe"[18] secondly, they "prohibited the conveyance of Indian lands without crown consent."[19] The government felt this was necessary to protect bands from unscrupulous speculators. What it did do was pave the way for easier federal trespass upon band lands.

Following the model of the Upper and Lower Canadian acts, the "Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes." was passed by the British government in 1857 and concerned all Canadian bands.

> This Act explicitly stated the Government's ideological position on the Indian role in

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17. Ibid. p. 74.

18. Ibid. p. 4.

19. Ibid.

> Canadian society. The Government felt that Indians must be assimilated in order to survive. To this end, the Act provided inducements for Indians to leave tribal societies and become enfranchised, that is, to surrender Indian status.[20]

The culmination came with the Indian Act of 1876 whose goal was to consolidate all existing acts regarding Canadian Natives into a uniform piece of legislation that could apply to all bands across Canada. The heart of the Indian Act aimed at placing Native Canadians in a distinct legal category. "They were regarded as minors -- special wards of the federal government who were deprived of the privileges of full citizenship."[21] Ironically enough, some Native leaders would use this despised Act as grounds for defence when petitioning the Canadian Government against conscription.

To say that Native Canadians did not agree with these acts would be a gross understatement. Proof that they did not want to be enfranchised into Canadian society lies in the fact that between 1857 and 1920 only two hundred and fifty individuals opted for full citizenship and hence the loss of their Indian status by means of enfranchisement.[22]

Conclusion

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[20]. Frideres, p. 67.

[21]. Titley, p. 11.

[22]. Miller, p. 190.

Initially, Europeans viewed Natives as important players in the fur trade and vital military allies in wars against other European powers. This relationship was most clearly exhibited between the Six Nations and Euro-Canadian powers.

The Six Nations played one European power against another, making them the most powerful Native military power in present day Quebec and Ontario. European powers jockeyed for their support in every conflict from the Seven Years War to the War of 1812.

Consensus amongst the Six nations was not always possible. Throughout the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries many rifts developed within the Six Nations which aided the European power ascendency over their society. At no time, though, did the Six Nations consider themselves subjects of the Crown, but as allies of the Crown, and a sovereign Nation unto itself. This was the position that the Six Nations held on to when the Canadian government tried to enforce conscription upon them in 1917.

Chapter 2: Life on the Reserve Prior to the War

Prior to World War I there existed two driving forces on Ontario reserves which helped shape band history. Through various policies, most notably, agricultural, and educational the Canadian government tried to assimilate the bands with the white culture. Although the government did its best to turn Natives into white men in both the pre and postwar years it was not successful. What it did manage to do, however, was create a rift between the young and old generations. The young generation felt alienated from the old ways, yet were not part of the Euro-Canadian world. Native culture also shaped band history by reacting to the pervading invasion of the Euro-Canadian civilization. Where the white presence was strongest, internal band conflicts were more evident. On remote reservations, bands experienced more freedom from government and fewer pressures from the Euro-Canadian culture.

Government Policy Regarding Natives

By the start of World War I, the government's desire to assimilate Canada's native populations into white society was at least fifty years old. This policy was personalized in such characters as Hayter Reed, Clifford Sifton and Frank Pedley.

Duncan Campbell Scott began his career in the

of Indian Affairs under the Sifton administration and thus was strongly influenced by him when he took over the Deputy Superintendent General's title in 1913. Clifford Sifton became Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1896. Although the assimilationist policies that Sifton advocated pre-date him, the focus of this paper necessitates beginning with his administration.

The policy that the Department of Indian Affairs advocated is probably best summarized in Deputy Minister Frank Pedley's words. "The policy of the Department of Indian Affairs, wrote Pedley in 1904, was, "to bring the Indians as near the status of the white man as can be and make them a moral, industrious and self-supporting class.""[1] A method for realizing this policy -- aside from assimilationist educational policies -- was through agricultural policies.

In 1881, non-native purchasers of Native grown grain, root crops or other produce grown on a reserve could be fined or imprisoned, thanks to a new amendment in the Indian Act.[2] This severely limited the market for Native produce if any enterprising Native farmer were to have a

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[1]. Getty and Lussier, p. 128.

[2]. Tim E. Holzkamm and Leo G. Waisberg, "Our Land Here is not as on the Plain: The Development and Decline of Ojibway Agriculture in Northwestern Ontario 1805-1915." (Paper presented at the Meetings of the American Society for Ethnohistory: November 2-5, 1989), p. 33.

market for Native produce if any enterprising Native farmer were to have a surplus. Section 12 of the Indian Act also gave agents, inspectors and commissioners authority, as justices of the peace, to prosecute any Native who disregarded this or any other provision of the Indian Act. The rationale behind this amendment as Indian Agent Ian McColl stated was, "intended for their [Native] benefit, to prevent spendthrifts from disposing of their children's food and starving them." Those who could prove to the Agent that they had surpluses above the needs of their families were given permission to sell their surplus.[3]

In 1889, Hayter Reed became Indian Commissioner for Manitoba and the District of Keewatin. Although his policies were aimed at Bands living on rich agricultural land in the west, his territory also included Natives living in the northwest section of Ontario. His agricultural policy aimed at abolishing tribal or group methods of farming. He forced Native farmers to farm their own plots without the help of other band members, or heavy machinery. His official reason for doing so was the belief that Natives had to graduate through various levels of civilization before they could become civilized.

> Reed drew on aspects of an evolutionary argument to support his peasant farming policy. In the late nineteenth century, those who took an evolutionary view of the North American Indian and other "primitive" people believed that there

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[3]. Ibid. p. 15.

> were immutable laws of social evolution. It was thought that man developed progressively through prescribed stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. These stages could not be skipped, nor could a race or culture be expected to progress at an accelerated rate. The Indians were perceived to be many stages removed from the nineteenth-century civilization, and while they could take the next step forward, they could not miss the steps in between.[4]

There was more to the policy than ideas of Social Darwinism. As more settlers moved westward, complaints increased from white farmers about the unfair competition they found from Native farmers. They believed that government gave the Indians an unfair advantage, allowing them to undersell the white farmer. In 1890, Reed visited Battleford and was assailed by complaints from white farmers.[5] One year later, he released his peasant farming policy. As a result, white farmers began to prosper almost immediately and Native farmers began to suffer. "Qu'Appelle white farmers remember the year 1890 as the turn of the tide; after that all went well. All did not go well for Indian farmers, however."[6]

Both the Natives and the Indian Agents began to complain openly about Reed's peasant farming policy. His strict adherence to it created frustration and devastation

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[4]. Sarah Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow: "Peasant" Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-97." Canadian Historical Review. (volume LXXm 1. 1989), p. 34.

[5]. Ibid. p. 37.

[6]. Ibid. p. 30.

amongst Indian farmers. Even the most prosperous and industrious Native farmers became so infuriated that they abandoned agricultural pursuits. According to historian Sarah Carter:

> These were not lazy Indians. Agent Campbell of the Moose Mountain agency, for example, cited the case of an Indian farmer whom he considered to be the most progressive in the agency. He began to cradle his grain but quit, declaring that he would let his grain stand and never plough another acre. By no means averse to hard work, the man chose to work on the straw pile of a threshing machine, a job not usually considered pleasant.[7]

For the Ojibway Bands located in the Lake of the Woods Agency near the Ontario-Manitoba border, these government agricultural policies were compounded by another federally sponsored programme. In 1887, a dam was built at the outlet of the Lake of the Woods with federal assistance, in order to improve navigation. Hunting, fishing and livestock provided the mainstay of Native diet here but was supplemented by wild rice, corn and potatoes that were grown on garden islands. The raised water level proved disastrous to wild rice and flooded many of the garden islands.

As Native farmers turned away from farming they played into the stereotypical images that many whites and government officials harboured about Natives. The fact that they were leaving their fields when the government had

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[7]. Ibid. p. 43.

Fortunately, Clifford Sifton fired Hayter Reed in 1897 because of the disastrous effects his plan had on Native agriculture. This was one of the few decisions Sifton made that proved advantageous for Natives. It should be noted that part of Sifton's failure to consider the desires of the Natives and his slowness to act had to do with historical tradition and the structure of the bureaucracy. In 1880, the Department of Indian Affairs was separated from the Department of the Interior and became its own entity.[8] Although now a separate Department, Indian Affairs remained under the control of the Minister of the Interior until 1936.[9]

Sifton's policies were guided by a desire to cut costs within the department. As a result, he appointed one Deputy Minister for both the Department of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior; an interesting decision since the interests of Natives were rarely similar to the interests of settlers. He also cut salaries within the Indian Department by an average of twenty five per cent and initially fired twenty nine officials.[10] This forced the resignations of some truly competent Indian Agents and put Natives at a further disadvantage.

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8. Getty and Lussier, p. 121.

9. Ibid. p. 121.

10. Ibid. p. 125.

the resignations of some truly competent Indian Agents and put Natives at a further disadvantage.

Canadian History remembers Sifton as the man responsible for populating western Canada. But he did so at the cost of Native Canadians.

> Clifford Sifton's tenure as superintendent general of Indian Affairs did not occasion dramatic changes in Canadian Indian policy. He had almost no creative new ideas to offer, and most of his policy statements and administrative reforms appear to have been generated substantially within the department. It is arguable that his administrative reforms made the service more efficient, more highly centralized, and that he made a fairly steady effort to minimize the number of incompetent officials. He left his stamp on the department in many of the leading personnel and indeed in the drastic upheaval at all levels of the staff. The changes tended to bring to power men who were if anything less sympathetic to the Indians and to place expenditure under the control of a cost-conscious bureaucracy.[11]

The years from 1906 to 1913 are perhaps the darkest years of the Department of Indian Affairs when it came to Natives. Frank Oliver took over Sifton's position in 1906. His tenure as Superintendent General was one marked by great sympathy for Euro-Canadian settlers in western Canada. By 1911, many government officials and white settlers viewed the reserve system as an anachronism. This was especially true in the west where settlers and railway companies salivated over the valuable land that was set aside for Native Canadians. The official argument against

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[11]. Ibid. pp. 136-137.

themselves. In response to this, Oliver amended the Indian Act with his controversial "Oliver Act":

> In 1911, Oliver successfully introduced two more amendments to the Indian Act which gave the department greater powers to coercion. Section 46 allowed portions of reserves to be taken by municipalities or companies for roads, railways, or similar public purposes without a surrender, but with the consent of the governor-in-council. Section 49a was even more controversial. It permitted the removal of Indians from any reserve next to or partly within a town of eight thousand inhabitants or more if the Exchequer Court of Canada so ruled. This was the notorious "Oliver Act", which alarmed Indian leaders. They correctly perceived it as a major step in the erosion of band control of reserve lands.[12]

With a change of government in 1911 came a change of superintendents general. Robert Rogers was initially given the title but retired due to illness; so the portfolio passed to W.J. Roche in December 1912.[13] One of Roche's first jobs was to investigate the activities of Deputy Superintendent General, Frank Pedley, who was involved in the speculation of Indian lands. In October 1913, Pedley was forced to resign and Duncan Campbell Scott was appointed as the new Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs - a post he would retain until 1932.[14]

Education on Ontario Reserves Prior to the Great War

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[12]. E. Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 21.

[13]. Ibid. p. 22.

[14]. Ibid.

Indian Affairs - a post he would retain until 1932.[14]

Education on Ontario Reserves Prior to the Great War

Many bands initially desired the white man's education. "The motive for participating in the schooling was to acquire the knowledge that they recognized as essential to their continued survival and success at a time when the literate Europeans were becoming dominant."[15] Natives, therefore, did not object to the education offered them but to the policy that lay behind it.

Initially, the church tried to "civilize" Ontario Natives through education and the Bible. This tradition went as far back as the Seventeenth century when the Jesuits tried to educate the Hurons. By the 1840's both the church and state shared this responsibility.

> The effort began with a network of day schools, but shifted in the 1840s to reliance on residential schools. In these new institutions Indian children were insulated from the influences of their own people and subjected to a program designed to lead them to forget who they were and to adopt the ways and values of their teachers. The culmination of this process was expected to be their jettisoning of their Indian legal status in favour of enfranchisement. They would, once they had lost their Indian identity, become citizens, and they would remove both themselves and their land from the Indian

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[14]. Ibid.

[15]. J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1989), p. 103.

world.[16]

With the signing of the British North America Act in 1867, education came under provincial jurisdiction; however, since Natives were wards of the Federal government, it took responsibility for the education of Natives. One of the prime goals of the Federal educational policy towards Natives as it unfolded in the remainder of the nineteenth century was assimilation. The desire for this assimilation would best be expressed in the words and policies of Deputy Superintendent General for Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott: In his department's Annual Report for 1914, he measured the success of Native students against that of whites.

> The buildings erected during the past few years are not excelled in white communities and the character of the work in the class-room has also greatly improved, and it is shown that under favourable conditions the Indian boy or girl can compete with white children. As an illustration, seven pupils of the Mount Elgin industrial school of Muncey tried the entrance examination to the high schools during the past summer, and all were successful, one girl taking first class honours and standing sixth in the county of Middlesex.[17]

Three types of schools existed in Ontario by the year 1914:

> The first was the day school, the oldest and most widespread, but probably least effective, where poorly paid and usually underqualified teachers

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16. Ibid. pp. 112-113.

17. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1914. (Sessional Paper No. 27) p. xxiii.

When the War began, day schools were most prevalent throughout Canada, followed by boarding schools and a handful of industrial schools. Almost all of the schools were supported by the Catholic, the Anglican, the Methodist or the Presbyterian churches.[19]

As Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1936, Duncan Campbell Scott supported the growth of the day school system for a number of reasons. Day schools were the cheapest method of educating Ontario Natives, especially when Church organizations paid for the construction and maintenance of the schools. As well, residential and boarding schools were breeding grounds for epidemics, in particular tuberculosis; and, embarrassingly, they were notorious for mistreatment of Native students.

The result of this educational policy was a young Native generation that fit into neither white society nor life on the reserve. D.C. Scott even admitted that there was a problem with the government's educational program and the pre World War I generation it had created. "The difficulty of assimilating ex-pupils on the reserves is still the essence of the problem."[20]

Ontario Natives could and did protest the government's

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[19]. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1913. (Sessional Paper No. 27) p. xxviii.

[20]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs 1914. p. xxviii.

life on the reserve. D.C. Scott even admitted that there was a problem with the government's educational program and the pre World War I generation it had created. "The difficulty of assimilating ex-pupils on the reserves is still the essence of the problem."[20]

Ontario Natives could and did protest the government's assimilative educational program as early as the mid-nineteenth century. One of the first large scale protests was expressed in 1846 by band leaders from across southwestern and eastern Ontario at a joint government and Native conference held at Orillia. Band leaders objected to the assimilationist educational policy and some refused to send their children to the residential schools at Alderville, Munceytown, and the Six Nations reserve. "As the chiefs at Orillia had tried to make clear, they wanted schooling, not refashioning."[21]

Refusing to send their children to school seemed to be the most popular method that bands used to resist the government.

> The children were even more effective at resisting. They could -- and did -- misbehave, violate rules, refuse to learn, defiantly continue to speak their own languages in spite of official prohibitions, run away, and in the ultimate case, indulge in acts of arson against the property and violence against the staffs of

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[20]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs 1914. p. xxviii.

[21]. Miller, p. 108.

the schools.[22]

In 1914, only sixty one per cent of the enrolled students attended classes regularly.[23] There was no conscious resistance movement amongst the students who did not attend classes, but individuals did refuse to participate in the educational system.

Wage Earning Economies

Natives of Ontario pursued a variety of livelihoods during the war years. According to some Indian Agents, some bands were on the brink of "civilization". This meant that, in the opinion of the Indian Agents, the Native cultures were becoming similar to Euro-Canadian culture. Other bands still followed a traditional hunting and gathering subsistence. Bands coming under the influence of an increasing white presence began to form a rift between the young and the old that was manifested in the use of liquor and a difference in occupational pursuits.

While each band pursued a different livelihood, a general pattern can be traced. Those Native communities that were the furthest from large concentrations of whites in northern Ontario followed more traditional livelihoods. For example, the Ojibbewas Bands located within the

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[22]. Ibid. p. 199.

[23]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1914. p. xxii.

Chapleau Agency on the northern shores of Lake Superior were primarily hunters and fishermen. "While a few buildings existed on their reserves, most lived in tents and teepees and very few spoke English."[24]

Bands located in the Northwestern Ontario Agency supplemented traditional livelihoods with seasonal employment in

> ...construction and resource industries during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They participated in the construction of the CPR through these zones in the early 1880s and the CNR line further north in the first decade of this century. A large number worked in the lumber camps, sawmills, and ancillary construction and maintenance jobs before 1900.[25]

On the other hand, reserves in southern Ontario which were located closer to white populations were primarily engaged in mixed farming. Here, the growing season was longer, the reserves contained more cultivatable land, and there was a market for their goods in the increasingly urbanized white communities. Good examples of bands pursuing farming as their main occupation are the Mississauguas of the Credit located near Hagersville and the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford.[26]

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[24]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1913. p. 1.

[25]. Rolf Knight, Indians at Work. (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978), p. 159.

[26]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1913. p. 21 and p. 31.

in Brantford and other places.[27]

The phenomenon of young men turning their backs on farming as an occupation was not unique to the Six Nations Band. Indian Agent for the Chippewas of Cape Croker, A.J. Duncan, wrote in 1914, "a few of the older Indians are farmers and succeed well enough but the younger element do not care very much for farming, they take more to logging in the winter and work in the mills in the summer."[28]

The younger generation was abandoning farming for a variety of reasons. The first had to do with the fact that encroaching industries offered a steady wage economy for healthy young men. Furthermore, the government was implementing agricultural policies that made farming increasingly difficult for Natives.

This pattern of working for white men was particularly acute in cases where industries were located close to the reserves. The most notable were the Chippewas of Sarnia, the Six Nations reserve at Brantford, and the Chippewas of Rama. In Sarnia, "as a rule the men spend most of their time in the employ of the whites working for the farmers or at the oil refinery, and on the docks and railroads."[29] The Chippewas

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[27]. Knight, p. 153.

[28]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1914. p. 4.

[29]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1913. p. 11.

This pattern of working for white men was particularly acute in cases where industries were located close to the reserves. The most notable were the Chippewas of Sarnia, the Six Nations reserve at Brantford, and the Chippewas of Rama. In Sarnia, "as a rule the men spend most of their time in the employ of the whites working for the farmers or at the oil refinery, and on the docks and railroads."[29] The Chippewas of Rama were primarily employed in the lumber industry. "The Indians of this reserve are expert river-drivers, and whole Indian gangs are hired by lumbermen from this reserve".[30] In addition, "these Indians are expert canoemen and trustworthy guides, and American tourists engage them months ahead for a trip during the summer up north, and pay them very large wages for their services."[31]

Alcohol Use and Health Care in Ontario Reserves

The fact that young Native Canadians were turning their backs on traditional livelihoods is just one example of the rift between the young and the old. A more deadly example of this was the use of alcohol. Most agents that did report an alcohol problem on the reserve noted that it was primarily the young men who were indulging. For

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[29]. Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, 1913. p. 11.

[30]. Ibid. p. 10.

[31]. Ibid.

example, Indian Agent for the Chippewas of Georgina and Snake Island, J.R. Bourchier observed that, "with one exception I do not think any of the older members of the band drink liquor, but the young men do not appear able to withstand the temptation, whenever they get the chance."[32] Frank Pedley also noted the tendency for the young people on the Sarnia Reserve to stay out late and go to town for a good time. "This grows, I think, out of the bad habits of the young men and women, being out at night up town to shows, &c, thus exposing themselves to cold and damp while out, and doubtless conditions are not conducive to health at their homes when they reach them at late hours."[33]

When one reads the reports of the Indian Agents for 1913 and 1914, another important fact of the growing alcohol problem arises. Those bands that were in frequent contact with whites had the biggest problems with alcohol. The Indian Agent for the Chippewas of Sarnia wrote:

> I am sorry to say quite a few Indians on each of the reserves indulge in the use of strong drink, and it is a regrettable fact that too many white men are quite ready to take advantage of their natural appetite for liquor, and for the sake of a few shillings or a share of the liquor secured, join with them in the violation of the law.[34]

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[32]. Ibid. p. 8.

[33]. Ibid. p. 11.

[34]. Ibid. p. 12.

At the turn of the century, the biggest health threat to Natives throughout Canada was tuberculosis. At the end of 1913, all of the Indian Agents in Ontario reported in the Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, that tuberculosis was in check on almost all of the reserves. Despite this, the Annual Report stated that tuberculosis was the number one killer on reserves. Natives located in more remote areas were also susceptible to lethal epidemics of influenza and the measles.

In February, 1904, Dr. P.H. Bryce was appointed medical inspector to the Department of the Interior. Bryce believed that the Indian Department needed a better organized medical service that could control and combat diseases. All of this required money; the accountant for the Department, D.C. Scott, (future Superintendent General for the Department of Indian Affairs), was opposed to Bryce's costly medical suggestions. Bryce made extensive investigations into health conditions on reserves throughout Canada from the years 1904 to 1918. He not only reported his findings to the government, but to the press where he found a sympathetic ear. Thanks to the press coverage, his investigations were given, levels of sanitation and health were improved in reserve schools and homes. In addition, district medical officers were hired to inspect schools and many preventive measures were implemented.

Unfortunately, the expense of these measures did not

correspond with the Department's penny pinching policy. In 1918, Deputy Superintendent General, D.C. Scott, abolished the position of medical inspector as part of his cost cutting policies. In that same year, a Spanish flu epidemic swept through Ontario reserves with devastating consequences.

The government's health care policy was just one example of how out of touch and unsympathetic it was to the plight of Natives. Its plan to assimilate Natives through agricultural policies and amendments to the Indian Act are further examples of this.

Conclusion

The federal government was a major force that shaped band culture. Since 1857, the government pursued a policy of coercive assimilation regarding the Natives in the hope that Natives would eventually assimilate within white society. Some of these policies, such as Hayter Reed's agricultural policy, were extremely harmful to Native Bands. Despite the external influences of the white world and government policies, Ontario natives refused to become white men. The bands, however, could not ignore the white world as it inevitably changed their culture and society.

When World War I started, many Bands in Ontario were on the verge of change. The growth of Canadian industries and urbanization had changed Native livelihoods. More men were seeking a wage earning economy. For some Natives,

that Natives would eventually assimilate within white society. Some of these policies, such as Hayter Reed's agricultural policy, were extremely harmful to Native Bands. Despite the external influences of the white world and government policies, Ontario natives refused to become white men. The bands, however, could not ignore the white world as it inevitably changed their culture and society.

When World War I started, many Bands in Ontario were on the verge of change. The growth of Canadian industries and urbanization had changed Native livelihoods. More and more men were seeking a wage earning economy. For some Natives, wage earning work within the white man's world was a year-round occupation. The Chippewas of Rama, Six Nations at Brantford, and the Chippewas of Sarnia were the most notable examples of Bands coming into more frequent contact with the white world and its influences. Even remote bands in northwestern Ontario were finding seasonal work in lumber camps, the tourist industry and with railway companies.

Perhaps the most important change within bands was the growing rift between the old and the young generation. The young generation was turning its back on occupations such as farming, and began to seek out a living through wage labour in the white man's world. Perhaps for this group of young men, participation in the war was an answer to their problems. In any event, this rift remained between the old

and young generation, and well after the end of World War I.

Chapter 3: Enlistment and Conscription

"Go to hell." was the response of John Cadieux, a treaty Indian from the Port Arthur Agency in western Ontario with regards to conscription.[1] Although between 3,500 and 4,000 Native Canadians enlisted voluntarily in the First World War, there was a large number who objected to conscription. The reasons for doing so were almost as many as the bands that were spread out through Ontario.

Enlistment of Native Canadians was also hampered by racist Euro-Canadian attitudes. Originally, the Department of the Militia was against Native involvement in the War because they viewed it as a "white man's war". "Science and public opinion accepted that certain identifiable groups lacked the valour, discipline, and intelligence to fight a modern war."[2] As the war dragged on, however, the Department flip-flopped on its stance and actively recruited Natives throughout Canada.

Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General for the Department of Indian Affairs, strongly

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[1]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-12, correspondence between John Cadieux, member of the Fort William Band and W.R. Brown, Indian Agent for the Port Arthur Agency, 16 January 1917.

[2]. James W. St. G. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force." Canadian Historical Review. (Volume LXX 1, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 1.

supported Indian involvement in the War. His reasons for doing so provide a mirror to the Euro-Canadian society in which he lived.

Scott was born in Ottawa on 2 August 1862.[3] His father was a Methodist preacher and his mother a first generation Scottish-Canadian. Scott initially wanted to pursue a career in medicine, but limited family funds forced him into a career in the public service. With the help of his father's government connections, Scott began his career in Indian Affairs on 5 January 1890. He started out in the accountant's branch and worked his way up in the Department to become the Deputy Superintendent General. In this latter position, Scott had considerable say in Native policy since the successive Ministers of the Interior regarded the affairs of the Natives of minor importance in comparison with their other duties such as western settlement, administration of Crown Lands and surveying of the vast Canadian frontier.

Scott also received considerable recognition in his time as a poet. E. Brian Titley, author of A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada, believes that his achievements in the arts furthered his civil service career. "It is conceivable that his advancement was aided by the growing

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[3]. E. Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 23.

reputation he was acquiring for himself in the world of literature."[4] Apparently, poetry was where his real passion lay. His friend, E.K. Brown, observed that, "his life was not in his office, where he seldom came early, and never stayed late. After he retired his conversation did not run on the Indian department."[5]

Despite this pre-occupation with his literary career, Scott was not completely negligent towards Native Affairs. Although not entirely in touch with Native concerns, Scott did try to work towards what he considered the best interests of the Natives. This was evident during the 1920's when Scott defended Native hunting rights. Scott did not share the view that was sometimes expressed that Indians should be allowed to endure hardship so that sufficient game would be available for the amusement of white sportsmen. There were several instances during the 1920's when he defended native hunting rights and rejected allegations of irresponsible behaviour on their part.[6] These actions, however, were offset by his strong desire to crush any Native political organizations in the postwar

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4. Ibid. p. 25.

5. E.K. Brown, "Duncan Campbell Scott: A Memoir." in The Poet and the Critic. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), p. 134.

6. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3234, file 600,245, parts 1 and 2, correspondence between Scott and J.B. Harkin, Dominion Parks Branch, January 1921.

era.

Nevertheless, Scott's tenure as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs seems almost benevolent when one considers the actions and thoughts of other Euro-Canadians in the employ of the Department of Indian Affairs. Scott's predecessor, Frank Pedley was forced to resign as Deputy Superintendent General because of his speculation in Indian lands.[7] Pedley's actions were exceptional, but a common view harboured by Euro-Canadians towards Native Canadians was expressed by Thomas Deasy, Indian Agent for the Nipissing Band: "The Indian is not yet in the position to think for himself, on matters of such great moment as the danger to the Empire."[8]

Scott seems to have shared stereotypical images of Natives.

> The Indian nature now [1947] seems like a fire that is waning, that is smouldering and dying away in ashes; then [late 1800's] it was full of force and heat. It was ready to break out at any moment in savage dances; in wild and desperate orgies in which ancient superstitions were involved with European ideas but dimly understood and intensified by cunning imaginations inflamed with rum.[9]

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[7]. Titley, p. 22.

[8]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 2, correspondence from Thomas Deasy, Indian Agent for the Nipissing Band to Scott, 15 June 1917.

[9]. Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties." in The Circle of Affection. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947), p. 110.

Scott honestly believed that Native abandonment of their traditional livelihoods and assimilation into the Euro-Canadian society was the best possible course for Natives. It is easy for the contemporary historian to condemn Scott for his seemingly ignorant views, but Scott was guided by the spirit of the times, believing that what he was doing was in the best interests of Natives. Unfortunately, this was not so since Natives did not want to be assimilated, nor did they voluntarily enfranchise themselves on any grand scale.

When war broke out in 1914, Scott viewed conscription as an ideal method of aiding the assimilation process. In addition, he thought that the War would provide a means of venting the inherently violent nature of Natives. Historian, E. Palmer Patterson II, believed that, "Scott's association of violence with Indians reveals his belief that they represented the irrational brutal element in man. And their behaviour is somehow genetically determined. The pure blooded Indian is a relentless savage."[10]

Scott was not the only Euro-Canadian to harbour stereotypical images of Natives. When World War I began, there were strong racist elements running through Canadian Society.

The experience of "visible" minorities in World

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[10]. E. Palmer Patterson II, "The Poet and the Indian: Indian Themes in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and John Collier." Ontario History. (Volume 59, 1967): pp. 71.

> War I illustrates the nature of Canadian race sentiment early in this century. Most abruptly, it demonstrates that white Canadians participated in the Western ideology of racism. This was true not only in the general sense of accepting white superiority, but in the particular image assigned to certain peoples which labelled them as militarily incompetent.[11]

Initially, the Department of Militia forbade the enlistment of Natives because in its opinion, if Natives were captured by the Germans, "Germans might refuse to extend to them the privileges of civilized warfare."[12]

In the early years of the war, Natives throughout Canada were refused entry into the Expeditionary Forces. "A group of Cape Croker Indians from Ontario applied to four different recruitment centres and were rejected from each one."[13] Tom Longdeer, one of the Chiefs from the Caughnawaga reserve in Quebec, also expressed his concern regarding Euro-Canadian opposition towards Native enlistment.

> In fact, in Lachine and in Montreal, when the recruiting officers are passing in the shops, we have only to say that we are Indians and they leave us alone right away. Lately too an Indian went to the Medical Board to be examined. As soon as it was known that he was an Indian they sent him away saying that he was not liable to be

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[11]. James W. St. G. Walker, p. 25.

[12]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-13, correspondence from Walter Gow, Deputy Minister, Overseas Military Forces of Canada, to Scott, 22 October 1915.

[13]. James W. St. G. Walker, p. 14.

drafted because he is an Indian.[14]

Racism was particularly acute in British Columbia where officers wrote to both the Department of Militia and to Scott stating that they refused to have Indians serving in their battalions.[15]

These Euro-Canadian racist attitudes dictated the Department of Militia's treatment of Native enlistees. "Every province from Ontario west produced proposals [during the summer of 1915] to enlist natives in segregated units where, under careful supervision of white officers, their natural talents as fighters and marksmen could best be utilized."[16] The best example of this was the formulation of the 114th battalion, a primarily Native Canadian battalion. Scott also urged the recruitment of Natives into non-combatant labour and construction units, particularly forestry.

As the war dragged on, the need for soldiers became acute. In the fall of 1915, the Department relaxed its requirements for recruits and began to openly support Native enlistment. This new policy made it possible for any patriotic person or group to raise a battalion. In

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[14]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 1, correspondence from Chief Tom Longdeer of the Caughnawaga Indians to Scott, 5 November 1917.

[15]. James St. G. Walker, p. 14.

[16]. Ibid. p. 6.

light of this, the 114th Battalion was formed in November 1915.[17] Prior to its formation other regiments had already been recruiting Natives in remote areas of Ontario the 157th, 177th, 52nd, 228th, 122nd, 162nd, 119th, 227th and the 94th were the most notable.[18]

The 114th was located in Brantford and drew its recruits from Haldimand County's Euro-Canadian population, the Six Nations reserve, and a number of Iroquois from Caughnawaga and St. Regis. "Some 350 Indians in all joined the battalion."[19] There appear to be two reasons for the formation of the 114th in Brantford and the push for recruitment of Natives there. The first was the historical legacy of the Six Nations' involvement in previous British conflicts as perceived by Euro-Canadians. In a memo to the Department of Militia, Scott revealed another reason for encouraging Native enlistment in this area. Haldimand County contained many German immigrants who were farmers. It was doubtful, therefore, that a battalion who would be fighting against Germans would attract many recruits from

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17. Ibid. p. 8.

18. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 3 February 1916.

19. Fred Gaffen, Forgotten Soldiers. (Penticton: Theytus Books Ltd., 1985), p. 23.

this population.[20]

The first serious attempt to create the 114th occurred in November of 1914 when Lieutenant-Colonel William Hamilton Merritt, a prominent member of the militia, a wealthy mining engineer and an honorary chief of the Six Nations (Ohsweken), cabled 5,000 British pounds to the Private Secretary of the Duke of Connaught in order to equip two Indian companies for active service.[21]

When Merritt died in late 1915, organization of the battalion was passed to Lieutenant-Colonel Baxter who had had companies of Indians in his old regiment, near Brantford for many years.[22] At the same time, the Department of the Militia secured the services of Charles A. Cooke. Cooke was an Iroquois Native who was given the honorary rank of Lieutenant and hired to encourage enlistment of Native bands throughout Ontario. His detailed reports would provide valuable insights as to why each band was opposed to enlistment.

The formation of the 114th created confusion amongst

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[20]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 3 February 1916.

[21]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-13, correspondence from Gordon J. Smith, Indian Agent for Six Nations Reserve at Brantford to Scott, 25 November 1914.

[22]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-13, correspondence from Gordon Smith, Indian Agent at Six Nations reserve at Brantford to Scott, 9 January 1916.

both Natives and the Department of the Militia. Neither group was certain as to whether or not all Natives were to join the 114th, and if Natives already serving elsewhere were to be transferred to it.

> The confusion amongst recruiting officers was shared by the chief of general staff, Willoughby Gwatkin, who confessed that he did not know whether open enlistment was not the rule or whether Indian battalions were to be formed. Meanwhile, the 114th was advertising itself, even in the public press, as the Indian unit, and at least a dozen regiments transferred their Indian recruits to the 114th. In the event, pressure from other battalion commanders convinced divisional headquarters to cease transferring Indians to the 114th, which was therefore unable to fill more than two Indian companies. The result was a concentration of Indians in the 114th, but others were scattered individually throughout the battalions willing to accept them.[23]

Upon arrival in Europe in 1917, the 114th was broken up and placed in existing overseas units where their numbers were needed. Some of the Natives were assigned to combat duties while others were assigned to labour battalions.

There were many reasons why Natives voluntarily enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. James W. St. G. Walker postulates that:

> To some extent this persistence [to enlist] must have been prompted by young men's sense of adventure and patriotism, but they were moved as well by a consciousness that a contribution to the war effort could help to overcome the

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[23]. James W. St. G. Walker, p. 9.

disadvantages faced by their communities.[24]

In his book, Forgotten Soldiers, Fred Gaffen writes:

> For some Indians a motive for enlisting was the opportunity to assert their manhood. It may be of interest to some to note that some ceremonial roles which had previously been restricted to those braves with war experiences in North America were later conferred upon courageous Indian soldiers who fought overseas in either of the World Wars.[25]

While these are all very plausible reasons for enlistment, there were other more immediate and practical reasons for early enlistment. To begin with, Canadians were experiencing the pangs of severe unemployment.[26] This unemployment was particularly acute with bands who had found employment on the construction of the railroad in northwestern Ontario. Participation in the war was made even more financially attractive by a separation allowance. "Early in the war a separation allowance of $20.00 a month was granted to the wives and families of rank and file soldiers. From April 1, 1915, all those who were paying separation allowance were required to assign one-half of their pay to dependents."[27]

What is more interesting than the support that Natives gave towards the war is their opposition. Scott first

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[24]. Ibid. p. 5.

[25]. Gaffen, p. 15.

[26]. James W. St. G. Walker, p. 3.

[27]. Gaffen, pp. 31-32.

noted Native opposition to the war in February, 1916.

> I regret very much to see the attitude of the older Indians; if they are actively engaged in preventing the youths from enlisting, they are really breaking their treaty obligations, as they promised to be loyal citizens and it is anything but loyal to prevent recruiting.[28]

Perhaps the best record of Native opposition to the war can be found in the records of Charles A. Cooke. Cooke was a Native Canadian from the Caughnawaga reserve in Quebec who was hired in February of 1916 to encourage Native enlistment throughout Ontario and Quebec. Cooke was chosen for the job because he was from the Six Nations reserve at Caughnawaga in Quebec and he was fluently bilingual in both Iroquois and English. Apparently, hiring a Native recruiting officer did aid the enlistment cause.

> "...all due no doubt to my [Cooke's] nationality, and connections with the Department, the Indians have been most cordial, and my visits have done much to reconvince the Indians that our Government is willing to recognize its wards by honoring them in having one in its service.[29]

Cooke travelled throughout Ontario and Quebec holding recruitment sessions on or near reserves. He spoke at church gatherings, or at pre-arranged military band recitals. Apparently, these meetings were fairly

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[28]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-13, correspondence to Lt. Col. Glen Campbell, O.C. 107th Overseas Battalion from Scott, 7 February 1916.

[29]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke, recruiting officer to Scott, 25 May 1916.

successful in recruiting Natives. In a letter to Scott, Cooke described one such recruitment session.

> The event [a recruitment session] was made memorable by the khaki boys singing their many jolly choruses of patriotic songs, led by the famous Grand River Indian Brass Band. The different Indian brass bands and orchestras on the reserve have arranged to hold these concerts every Thursday for the soldiers and their friends, needless to state that these gatherings have been responsible for much of the wholesome recruiting that has been made so far.[30]

Cooke was quick to point out, however, that a number of Six Nations' Chiefs were against recruiting.

> I regret to have to note that a great majority of the chiefs on the Six Nations reserve are opposed to enlistment, and needless to say their attitude has given the indifferent some excuse to stay away from the recruiting stations, and has made our work doubly hard. The much boasted loyalty of the nation to the British throne from the stand-point of the chiefs is more of a myth than a fact.[31]

Cooke reported that some of the Chiefs were even pro-German:

> There are only four Chiefs out of seventy who are out openly for enlisting, and they are Chiefs A.G. Smith, J.S. Johnson and J.C. Martin and Joseph Montour. The rest of them are indifferent and some quite hostile, while there are three openly pro-German and have publicly declared themselves as opposed to assisting the Empire; they are Chiefs William Smith, the official Indian Interpreter, a salaried Chief, and

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[30]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 12 February 1916.

[31]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 12 February 1916.

The Chiefs of the Six Nations considered themselves allies of the Crown and not subjects. In light of this, they wanted a formal request from the Crown before they would support the war.

> After the outbreak of the First World War, the Council of the Six Nations at Ohsweken (Brantford) composed of traditional chiefs, did not accept Merritt's offer. Considering themselves a separate national entity, the Council wanted a formal request from the Crown that recognized this status, a request which the Canadian government did not wish to give.[33]

At the time war broke out there existed two movements among the Six Nations. The long house followers adhered to a traditional form of self-government. The chiefs were influential members of this movement and were dedicated to such policies as special status for the Six Nations, and were opposed to enlistment and especially conscription. The other group, known as the Christians wanted an elected council as opposed to an appointed council of chiefs. It drew much of its support from the younger generation and really grew in importance in the postwar years when veterans started to join its ranks and called for change on the reserve.

The only Ontario band that seemed to openly support enlistment in the war, according to Cooke's reports, was the one from Rama reserve. The Council at Rama had a long tradition of co-operating with the government. Furthermore, it was far from the Six Nations' reserves and thus not

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[33]. Gaffen, p. 20.

drew much of its support from the younger generation and really grew in importance in the postwar years when veterans started to join its ranks and called for change on the reserve.

The only Ontario band that seemed to support openly enlistment in the war, according to Cooke's reports, was the one from Rama reserve. The Council at Rama had a long tradition of co-operating with the government. Furthermore, it was far from the Six Nations' reserves and thus not influenced by the strongest anti-enlistment forces in Ontario.[34]

Other bands were opposed to participation in the war, yet each band had its own reasons for this decision. The Natives of Gibson reserve were influenced by the Six Nations at Brantford and decided against it.[35] Parry Island reserve members believed that the government had failed to fulfill previous treaty promises and therefore were against enlistment.[36] Manitowaning Natives were on bad terms with local whites and therefore, resisted

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[34]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 1 April 1916.

[35]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 4 April 1916.

[36]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 4 April 1916.

attempts from local recruiting officers; however, they were more receptive towards Cooke's efforts.[37] Other bands expressed their fear about being immersed into a foreign culture and asked if they could contribute to the war in some other way:

> And we [members of the Mud Lake reserve near Peterboro] are willing as far as possible to do our duty in this great struggle. We would like to bring to your notice the fact that we are Fishermen, and Axemen, and in these crafts we excel; we have had no experience of War, Nor of mixing with foreign Nations and we naturally dread going forth among strange people who do not understand our language, but would prefer if you think it advisable to help our Empire in the way in which we feel we can do so to greater advantage.[38]

Other bands in northwestern Ontario claimed exemption from military service under provisions in their treaty.

As the war pushed on into the Summer of 1917, it became apparent that voluntary recruitment would have to give way to conscription. The conscription issue ushered in one of the most bitter phases of Canadian history. After fierce debate throughout the country, the Military Service Act, providing for compulsory service, became law on August 29, 1917. The French-Canadian opposition to it

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[37]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6765, file 452-7, correspondence from Cpt. Charles A. Cooke to Scott, 1 April 1916.

[38]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 2, correspondence from Chief William Matthews to Scott, January 1918.

is well-known. Native opposition, however, has been virtually ignored.

As conscription was being debated in Parliament during the summer of 1917, Natives throughout Canada petitioned Scott with letters and telegrams expressing their opposition. Bands in northwestern Ontario protested against conscription stating that treaty promises made in Treaty number 3 exempted them from military service. Other bands stated that, since they were wards of the government and not full citizens with the power to vote, it was unconstitutional to force conscription on them. Eric Montizambert, Indian Agent at Manitowaning, wrote to Scott expressing this particular opposition: "The Indians feel, therefore, that unless they have the full privileges which are given to the white man who serves, they cannot justly be conscripted."[39] The Six Nations considered themselves allies and not subjects of the British Crown, therefore they believed conscription of Canadian citizens to be a moot point with them.

Native protest spurred correspondence between Scott and the Department of Justice as to whether or not Natives could be legally conscripted. In one such letter to the Deputy Minister of Justice, E.L. Newcombe, Scott stated: "I

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[39]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 1, correspondence from Eric Montizambert, Indian Agent at Manitowaning to Scott, 12 November 1917.

have discussed the matter fully with the Superintendent General, and it has been decided to say that the policy of the Department is that the Act should apply to Indians. There are no existing treaties which promise immunity from military service."[40]

Such a view clearly exemplifies the Department's ignorance of Native history and treaty history. In fact, Natives who signed Treaty Number 3 in northwestern Ontario were guaranteed exemption from all British wars.

> From the official despatch of the Lieutenant-Governor [A. Morris], dated 14th October 1873, the following is extracted: "They [the Indians] then asked that they should not be sent to war, and I told them the Queen was not in the habit of employing the Indians in Warfare. (Alexander Morris, "The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories", page 50.) This treaty made with Saulteaux tribe of Ojibbeway Indians at the Northwest Angle of the Lake of the Woods.[41]

Initially, the Department of Justice agreed with Scott: "There is no question that the Military Service Act applies to the Indians throughout Canada, whether treaty Indians or not, as they come within the description of

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[40]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 1, correspondence to E.L. Newcombe, Deputy Minister of Justice from Scott, 1 October 1917.

[41]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 1, correspondence from E.L. Newcombe to George B. Nicholson, Member of Parliament for East Algoma, 13 November 1917.

British subjects, resident in Canada."[42]

In order to win support for conscription amongst Natives, Scott convinced Borden to include treaty Indians in the Military Voters Bill of December 1917.

> The bill defined military electors as including all British subjects on active service in the Canadian forces as well as recent immigrants to Canada who were serving in any forces of Britain or her allies. The bill also covered treaty Indians in the forces. These Indians could vote in a polling station closest to the reserve or if this were not feasible, a polling station could be set up on the reserve without their losing treaty status.[43]

The government could not ignore the continued protests of Natives towards conscription. Finally, in January, 1918, the government realized that many Natives were promised exemption from conscription in their treaties and that as wards of the government they should be exempted. Order-in-Council PC 111 exempted all Natives from compulsory military service:

> Whereas petitions and memorials have been received from and on behalf of Indians pointing out that in view of their not having any right to vote, they should, although natural born British subjects not be compelled to perform military service, and that in the negotiations of certain treaties expressions were used indicating that Indians would not be so compelled, an instance of this recently brought forward being the expression of the Lieutenant Governor in negotiating the North West Angle Treaty as it

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[42]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 1, correspondence from E.L. Newcombe to Scott, 26 September 1917.

[43]. Gaffen, p. 31.

appears in the despatch of the 14th of October, 1873, quoted in Morris; Treaties of Canada with Indians, pp. 50 and 69.[44]

Conclusion

Natives scored one of their first major political victories in Canadian history by opposing conscription. Chiefs of various bands continually petitioned the government and voiced their opposition to enlistment and conscription for a number of reasons. Each band, however, worked independently since their reasons for opposing conscription were different. Regardless, their voices were heard and they managed to rescind the Military Service Act.

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[44]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6768, file 452-20, part 2, copy of Order-in-Council PC 111 issued at the Government House at Ottawa, Thursday 17 January 1918.

Chapter 4: Ontario Native Canadian Involvement in World War I

Despite the objections of chiefs throughout Ontario regarding active participation in the war, many Natives did enlist. The actual number of Natives who fought in the war varies between 3,500 and 4,000.[1] An exact number would be difficult to compile since many Natives registered without stating their Native status. Most historians agree that close to 35 per cent of the total Native population throughout Canada enlisted which paralleled that of the Euro-Canadian community. This statistic is particularly impressive when one considers that Natives were exempt from conscription; all who served did so voluntarily.

Of all the provinces, Ontario contributed the greatest number of Natives.[2] One explanation is that Natives living in this province had one of the longest periods of contact with the Euro-Canadian society. Furthermore, the Department of Militia made a greater effort to recruit Natives from Ontario when it hired Charles Cooke to recruit Natives throughout the province.

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1. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1919. (Sessional Paper No. 27) p. 10.

2. Ibid.

Native Participation

Perhaps the most important contribution made by bands, other than personnel, was that of food. This contribution was virtually forced upon them on 16 February 1918 through the Greater Production Act. Although the Act focused on Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta where agricultural land was greatest, the Act affected reserves in Ontario as well. There were basically three components to the Act:

> 1. Encouraging individual Indians to increase their crop production.
> 2. Leasing reserve lands to non-Indian farmers. 16,374 acres were leased for cultivation and 297,024 acres for grazing.
> 3. Establishing and operating "greater production farms" on Indian land. These were unusual experiments in state agricultural entrepreneurship-farms directed by the department's agents using Indian labour. They were set up on Assiniboine, Blackfoot, Blood, Crooked Lakes, and Muscowpetung reserves and occupied a total area of 20,448 acres.[3]

Scott was particularly pleased with this scheme since it would serve a dual purpose of aiding the war effort and civilizing the Indians. It was hoped that the act would prove particularly advantageous to Natives in western Canada where agricultural land was at a premium.

In the eyes of Scott, the Greater Production Farms were a success. "When all factors are considered, the greater production scheme did prove profitable. But most of the profits were generated from the leases of reserve

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[3]. E. Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 40.

lands to neighbouring farmers."[4] The Natives felt otherwise. "The Indians complained about gross mismanagement and about official highhandedness."[5] Almost all of the complaints against the act came from western Native Canadians.

The Greater Production Scheme was being formulated as early as 1915. Scott began the program in Ontario with the purpose of providing food to the war effort and further civilizing the Indians. According to Scott:

> In many localities industries such as lumbering, hunting, and fishing, on which the Indians relied for their livelihood, are no longer active, and they must now look to the soil for their subsistence. The period of transition will necessarily be a long one, but careful supervision and thorough instructions should eventually produce successful farming among the Indians.[6]

Scott hired R.H. Abraham as a field agent to supervise the construction and operation of Native farms in Ontario. Abraham, a graduate from the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph, inspected all the reserves in Ontario that had a reasonable growing season. His plan was to encourage farming in the schools, instructing both teachers and students on proper methods of cultivation, and promoting

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4. Ibid. p. 42.

5. Ibid. p. 41.

6. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1915. (Sessional Paper No. 27) p. xxvii.

the creation of both school gardens and home gardens. He also held agricultural fairs on reserves in order to promote agricultural practices. In the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report for 1915, Scott wrote:

> Mr. Abraham reports favourably on the agricultural work at many of the reserves. The Indians are beginning to realize how valuable an asset they possess in their farm lands, and with capable oversight and guidance, it is hoped that better methods of cultivation will be adopted, and good use made of much of the land which has hitherto remained uncultivated.[7]

The agricultural program in Ontario was a success. In 1915, the year it was started, the amount of land under cultivation on Ontario reserves was 16,180 acres. The total value for this land was $506,648.[8] In 1919, the amount of land under cultivation increased to 21,797 and the value of the land increased to $969,091.[9]

The program was particularly popular in the day schools, where agricultural fairs increased on a yearly basis. The Natives of the Six Nations embraced the program as well.

> A series of meetings on greater production was held on nearly all the reserves in the province. A "Production Club" has been organized on the Six Nations reserve, the function of which is to ascertain the needs of the farmers in the matter

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7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1919. (Sessional Paper No. 27) p. 13.

> of seed and help, the amount of land unplanted and the remaining amount available to plant. The work of this club has been most beneficial in stimulating greater production on the reserve, and the Six Nation Indians have this year [1917] the largest crop on record.[10]

Native women made significant contributions to the war effort through their Patriotic leagues on reserves. "They knitted socks, sweaters, and mufflers, and made bandages, and provided various comforts for the soldiers, and also held garden parties, bazaars, and other social entertainments in order to raise money for patriotic purposes."[11] The largest of these leagues was the Six Nations Patriotic League.

> The sale of basket and beadwork made by the Indian women, this being a native industry among them, was a novel and very successful means of securing funds for war needs. The first society of the above nature to be organized on a reserve was the Six Nations Patriotic League, which was formed in October, 1914, and continued its work with great success until the conclusion of the war.[12]

Natives throughout Canada also donated money from their band funds to the war effort. Of all the provinces, Saskatchewan Bands contributed the most amount by giving

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[10]. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1917. (Sessional Paper No. 27) p. 11.

[11]. Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Canadian Indians and the Great World War." Guarding the Channel Ports. volume III of Canada in the Great World War. (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1923), p. 323.

[12]. Ibid. p. 323-324.

$17,257.00 in total to the war effort.[13] Ontario was second with a total of $10,383.70 going to various war and relief funds.[14]

Native Canadians served in all branches of the Canadian military. The Department of Militia had made a concerted effort to place Natives in forestry and pioneer battalions because it believed Natives were best suited to this type of work. Many, though, saw frontline action in some of the most gruesome battles of the war; some even found themselves in the elite Flying Corps.

Most Natives, especially those from British Columbia were placed into forestry and pioneer battalions in England and France. The forestry battalions performed duties that the name suggests. They cut down trees to provide lumber for the war effort, in particular, ties for railway lines. Pioneer battalions were among the first battalions to arrive on the front line. Their job was to construct trenches and bunkers while under enemy fire.

Natives made a name for themselves in the war by excelling as snipers. "Probably due to their experience as hunters in civilian life, many Indians seemed to take quickly to the use of guns and to excel as snipers."[15]

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[13]. Ibid. p. 322.

[14]. Ibid. p. 319.

[15]. Jack Dempsey, "The Indians and World War One." (File I-123: Department of Indian Affairs Historical

This was no doubt, a fact and not just the army's method of racially stereotyping Native soldiers. After all, many Natives, especially in the remote areas of Ontario, still followed traditional livelihoods. They depended on their rifles for their livelihood and were accustomed to the necessary patience of waiting in extreme temperatures for the arrival of their game. Patience was the most important character trait of a sniper. The war's leading sniper was Corporal Johnny Norwest from Manitoulin Island who was with the 50th Battalion. He was credited with 115 hits and was given a special gun with telescopic sights during the course of the war. The great grandson of Louis Riel was also a sniper and was killed in action.

Captain J.R. Stacey, Lieutenants Moses and Martin were three Native officers from Brantford who originally signed on with the 114th. During the course of the war these men were transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. Captain Stacey had known Billy Bishop before the war and was selected by the flying ace as part of his special "fighting circle". Unfortunately, he was killed in an accident before he could join Bishop's forces. The other two men were killed in action.[16]

Native soldiers had to deal with much more than the

Services, 1989). p. 4.

[16]. D.C. Scott, p. 300.

average Euro-Canadian soldier. Perhaps the most significant obstacle they had to overcome was that of culture shock. Many Native soldiers did not speak English and they found the military discipline difficult to cope with.

> Language was a common problem among native enlistees since many Indians were unfamiliar with English at first and communication was difficult. In addition, they often had little knowledge of the cause and effect or the character of the war. Once in the army it was hard for them to accept military discipline since many had been brought up in a culture that favoured individualism.[17]

Perhaps the best example of this culture shock is the story of Private Semia who came from Osnaburgh in Ontario. His story is told by D.C. Scott in an article entitled "The Canadian Indian and World War One".

> Many of them had their first glimpse of civilization as a result of joining the forces. Among these Indian recruits was one named Semia, a full-blooded Indian from Osnaburg, in the Patricia district. In the summer of 1916 a party of tourists happened to visit Semia's home. through an interpreter the tourists told him about the war and although he was unable to speak a word of English, he decided to journey to Port Arthur for the purpose of enlisting. He joined the 141st Battalion at that place and soon became one of the smartest and best trained soldiers of the regiment. For a time he would not leave the armoury to venture into the streets of the city for fear of being lost, and would only do so in company with another Indian soldier. The city of Port Arthur was a revelation to this son of the forest, who had never before seen electric cars, street lights, automobiles, railways, and steamers. He had never before even been in a village of whites and a canoe was the largest vessel of his acquaintance. Subsequently he

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[17]. Jack Dempsey, p. 4.

> crossed the ocean, had his fourteen days of leave in London, saw seven months of active service in the trenches, participated in the terrible Battle of Passchendaele, and was severely wounded.[18]

Private Semia returned to Osnaburgh after the war and worked on a steamer that was owned and operated by the C.P.R. until his death.

For some Natives, the change from Native lifestyle to that of the army was too much and they deserted. Forty members of the 114th battalion from St. Regis, Caughnawaga and Oka deserted in the winter of 1917. In February of 1917, these deserters were offered special amnesty if they would give themselves up and join the 256th Railway Construction Battalion. Only two of the men, Frank Muscle and Joe Hall surrendered. The other men sought shelter in America where they found jobs in lumber camps in the Adirondacks and in factories in Rome and Utica.[19]

Culture shock was not the only hardship to which Native soldiers had to adjust. Lack of previous contact with white communities made some more susceptible to white men's viruses. Tuberculosis was the major health risk. "Since they did not have any natural immunity to the

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[18]. D.C. Scott, p. 315.

[19]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6767, file 452-16, part 1, correspondence from Charles Cooke to Scott, 10 February 1917 to 28 February 1917.

disease, it killed many who returned home after the war."[20]

Not all of the veterans were able to re-adjust to civilian life. For some who returned, the culture shock and the experience of war left them permanently scarred. Corporal Claude Styres, a Native from the Six Nations Reserve at Brantford, was one such veteran:

> Mrs. Sam Styres is in the office today complaining about the conduct of her son Claude. He is a returned soldier and before going overseas was a good boy industrious and steady but since his return he seems to have lost all sense of right and honour. Mr. Styres is compelled to keep his barn and stables locked up, because the boy has been stealing harness, grain, pork and other things and selling them for almost nothing to anybody who will give him money. He will not work, spends most of the time in bed, and is out wandering around all night. He is of age and his father has ordered him to leave his house, but he has not done so. Arrangements were made sometime ago with the D.S.O.R. for a course of training but when the vacancy occurred he refused to go. His actions are not those of a normal man and the family consider that he should receive some attention from the Military Authorities as his condition is solely due to the war. He has been examined by a medical Board but they pronounced him all right, but stated that at periods he might not be all right. He has also threatened his older brother who is also a returned soldier that he would kill him. An ordinary charge and conviction for theft would not I believe do very much good.[21]

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[20]. Jack Dempsey, p. 4.

[21]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6776, file 452-133, correspondence from George McKay Indian Agent at Six Nations Reserve at Brantford to Scott, 22 June 1921.

One of the most important consequences of the war was the fact that all Natives who fought in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces learned English. Although the degree of literacy varied from soldier to soldier it gave them a common language of communication. Prior to the war, political organization between bands was complicated by the fact that there was no common tongue. This new common language shared by veterans was extremely important after the war when Native leaders were trying to form political alliances with bands throughout Canada.

The war immersed many Natives into the culture of the white man. Officials in the Department of Indian Affairs hoped that this immersion would inspire Natives to assimilate into the Euro-Canadian culture. Instead, it galvanized their sense of identity. Many veterans would join political organizations with the desire to improve the conditions of Native Canadians.

Effects of the War on Ontario Reserves

Although reserves were thousands of miles away from the fighting in Europe, the consequences were felt immediately on reserves. The most notable economic consequence was its effect on the fur trade. In his 1915 Report for the Department of Indian Affairs, D.C. Scott took note of this:

> Heretofore hunting and trapping have always been a most lucrative source of income to the Indians.

> During the past year, however, the price of furs has fallen to a point which is practically without parallel; this has, of course, greatly curtailed the earnings of many of the Indians, especially in the more remote districts where the fur catch is practically the only available means of livelihood.[22]

The fall in the European demand for furs was due to the war. In order to compensate for this, the Department provided aid for those bands most severely affected. In the following year's Report, Scott noted that the fur trade had recovered somewhat.

> I am pleased to report a general improvement in the condition of the Indians as compared with the preceding year. The agricultural Indians shared in the general prosperity, and the hunting Indians received a better price for their furs, the fur trade having recovered from the depression that followed the beginning of the war and the hunt being successful.[23]

The primary industries of Ontario bands were mixed farming, including grain-growing, stock-raising, vegetable gardening and dairying.[24] Since bands were so dependent upon farming, they benefitted from the Greater Production Scheme which was a positive economic consequence of the

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[22]. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1915. (Sessional Paper No. 27.) p. xxviii.

[23]. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1916. (Sessional Paper No. 27.) p. i.

[24]. See Annual Reports for the Department of Indian Affairs for the years 1914 to 1920. Listed by Province or Agency under the sub-heading of Occupations.

War. More remote bands followed traditional livelihoods. In any case, all of these industries were dependent upon the adult male populations of the reserves. The loss of this manpower created many difficulties for bands throughout Ontario.

These difficulties were voiced by Natives on various reserves in the form of letters from parents of soldiers asking for their sons' discharges so that they could help with harvests. Scott looked into these matters personally and received discharges for those who had enlisted underage and were needed to help with harvests.

The war brought Native and Euro-Canadian cultures in closer contact with one another. This contact was experienced on many levels. While still in Canada, Native soldiers were billeted in the homes of Euro-Canadians; Native Canadians fought side by side with other Euro-Canadians. There appears to be no official correspondence that states there was any negative racial repercussions of this contact. None of the Native's letters to family members back home express any sort of racism that they may have experienced while overseas. In fact, Native soldiers seemed to have made a rather favourable impression on Euro-Canadians involved in the war. "Officers gave excellent accounts, especially mentioning their courage, intelligence, efficiency, stamina, and discipline, saying their "daring and intrepidity disallowed the familiar

assertion that the Red Man has deteriorated.""[25]

The war created jobs and a shortage of manpower in the Euro-Canadian labor market. Some of these vacancies were filled by Natives, and created another opportunity for Native and Euro-Canadian culture to meet on the homefront. "Many of the Indians in the settled parts of the province are employed as day labourers in the various local industries, such as munition plants, canning factories, cement works, implement factories, oil refineries, iron works, box factories, brick and tile making, flax pulling, etc."[26]

Sometimes, the contact between Euro-Canadians and Natives meant a clash. The events which occurred at Elk Lake in northern Ontario during the winter of 1917, is a clear example of how some Euro-Canadians still feel about Native Canadians. Early in the war, a recruiting officer moved a party of Natives from James Bay to the town of Elk Lake. The Natives were the wives and children of soldiers who were fighting in the war. The recruiting officer moved these people to Elk Lake, just south of Kirkland Lake near the Quebec-Ontario border, so that he could more easily administer separation allowances and any other financial

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[25]. Jack Dempsey, p. 3.

[26]. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending March 31, 1917. (Sessional Paper No. 27.) p. 24.

matters pertaining to the soldiers' families. The priest in charge of the Diocese which contained Elk Lake noted some of the problems created by this move:

> For this reason a large number of very young married women are brought down from a proper reserve and placed in houses scattered over a mining town. These Indians are of two classes. A better class who mostly speak English and are for the most part clean and moral and a lower class who cannot speak much English and who are very dirty and immoral. The Catechist at Elk Lake finds it impossible to minister to these people properly because of language difficulty and the impossibility of getting the white people and Indians to attend the same church.[27]

The Department of Indian Affairs received other letters from citizens of Elk Lake expressing their concern over the Indian situation there and complaining about the apparently low morality and unsanitary methods of the Indians.

Scott sent E.C. Parker, Inspector of Indian Agencies, to look into the situation. Regarding the Natives, Parker reported:

> I found the majority to be intelligent, quiet and respectable women keeping their houses clean and themselves well dressed. In only one house did I find excessive uncleanliness and in this case there were extenuating circumstances which, in part, accounted for the conditions. In the case referred to, the women had just recently moved into a two roomed shack, previously occupied by a bachelor resident of Elk Lake, who according to reports had not been too careful of sanitary conditions. Three women with their children were occupying it. One was a recent maternity case

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[27]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-13, correspondence from Father Pilner, Priest-in-Charge of the Diocese of Algoma to the Committee on Indian Work in the Diocese of Algoma, 27 September 1917.

> and still unable to work. The day of my visit one of the women was being moved to another house and cleaning operations were under way...Without wishing to appear unkind or unsympathetic I feel that I should also say that I found strong indications that caste and tea table talk were in some measure responsible for the complaints reaching Ottawa...So far as there being a danger of an epidemic of venereal disease from these women, I might say that there is a great deal of it already in the country and any epidemic of this nature must be attributed to other sources than the Indian women.[28]

Parker instructed the Native women on some aspects of hygiene and insured the priest at Elk Lake that the women were not a threat to the morality of the community. After Parker's visit in the winter of 1917, the letters of complaint to the Department became fewer. The letters stopped completely in early 1920 when the men returned from the war and moved their families back to James Bay.

The war created clashes on reserves. Many reserves were split between those who supported the war and those who did not. Those who supported the war were either veterans or had a family member involved in the war. Most of those who did not support the war were older council members who advocated traditional ways. These band members believed the war to be another Euro-Canadian intrusion into Native affairs. The clash between these two Native forces was particularly evident on the Six Nations Reserve at

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[28]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6766, file 452-13, correspondence from E.C. Parker, Inspector of Indian Agencies to Scott, 4 December 1917.

Brantford. It was here that Native enlistment was highest and band council opposition to the war was fiercest. Once the war was over, the differences between these two camps did not cease. In fact, they increased as veterans joined political organizations to promote changes they believed in; changes that the traditional leadership was opposed to.

Conclusion

Native soldiers fought in all branches of the military. Scott no doubt hoped that the contact of the two cultures would speed up the assimilation process. In fact, it did quite the opposite. It seemed to increase the pride that Native Canadians held for their culture and some veterans became committed to improving the situation of Native Canadians. These men formed Native political alliances that were committed to this ideal. Just as the war gave a sense of identity to Euro-Canadians, it did the same for Native Canadians.

Native Canadian participation in the war won the respect of Euro-Canadians. It also instilled Natives who had answered the call to duty with pride. The two cultures, however, were far from an amiable relationship and complete understanding of each other's culture as the Elk Lake incident proved. In the postwar years, a new political leadership began to emerge. It was comprised of young veterans who were both proud of their Native heritage

but clashed with traditional leaders on many issues. These new Native leaders found themselves in conflict not only with the Canadian government but with their own traditional councils.

Chapter 5: The Post War Years

The political organizations created by Native veterans after the war put them in conflict with the government and, as was the case with the Six Nations, created conflict within their own communities.

While Natives were creating these groups, Scott was still hoping his process of assimilation would take hold. The formulation of programs designed to aid enfranchisement not only provided fuel for the new era of Native politicians but attracted band members to their organizations.

Native Canadian Political Organizations

The Grand General Indian Council of Ontario was the only Native political organization in the pre-war years. Created in 1862, its support was drawn from a number of Ojibway tribes of the Great Lakes region. Popular support for this organization began to drop off in pre-war years due to the Council's pro-government tone.

The Grand General Indian Council of Ontario tried to change its attitude after the War.

> The incipient radicalism of the movement became even more evident when Henry Jackson was elected president of the Grand Council in 1918. Thirty-four years old, he was the youngest president in its history. At a special meeting at Parry Sound in May 1919, he asked what had happened to the liberties for which Indians had fought in the recent war. He argued that hunting and fishing

> rights, guaranteed in the treaties, were being trampled on by provincial laws. He attacked the amendment to Section 90 of the Indian Act in 1918 which permitted "unused" Indian lands to be leased without a surrender. And, of course, the Oliver Act received its share of abuse.[1]

For most Natives, however, it was too late. Many started to join new councils that were openly antagonistic towards the government.

Chief Thunderwater's Council of the Tribes was one such group. Thunderwater was an African American posing as a full blooded Native American who managed to gain recognition and support from some Quebec and Ontario bands during and after the war. His organization not only hurt the bands that supported him, but it forced Scott to view other Native leaders with a degree of suspicion.

Thunderwater came from Cleveland, Ohio, to the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford in 1913. He told Native Canadians that the white man had defrauded them and had placed them in a state of demoralization. He believed, however, Natives could improve themselves through suitable leadership and organization. Thunderwater believed he was the most capable man to head a Native organization. All he needed from Native Canadians was a little cash to start his organization.

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[1]. E. Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 94.

Thunderwater obtained most of his support from the Six Nations residing in Ontario and Quebec. Scott was suspicious of Thunderwater's activities from the beginning, but it was not until Thunderwater began to try and undermine the Department's power over Native communities did Scott make any serious move against him.

In April of 1918, Thunderwater, through George MacKay, Member of Parliament from Hagersville, tried to get Bill 30, an "Act to Incorporate a Council for the Indian Tribes of Canada passed."[2] Some of the aims of the Act were to seek "the recovery of their alleged lost privileges and rights rather than to take their places in civilized communities; to conduct their own affairs in their aboriginal way, independent of the Government,"[3] and to recognize Thunderwater as the autocratic leader of this Council. The Bill was defeated, and Scott began his investigation into who Thunderwater was and what he was up to.

Scott discovered that Thunderwater had sexually and physically abused a young Native Canadian that he had adopted from the St. Regis reserve.[4] Scott also discovered

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2. Ibid. p. 99.

3. Ibid. p. 100.

4. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3033, file 235,225, part 1, correspondence from J.A.J. McKenna to Scott, 22 February 1919.

that Thunderwater was really an African American whose real name was Palmer. Palmer's reign of deception ended in 1920 when he was charged with fraud at a fundraiser in Caughnawaga and had to flee to the United States. "According to some estimates, he had collected in the region of $20,000 from his followers in Canada over the years."[5]

Just as Thunderwater's fraudulent operations shut down in Canada, one of the most important Indian political organizations, the League of Indians was being created by F.O. Loft. The League of Indians was the first legitimate Native political organization that tried to incorporate Indians throughout Canada. Although it eventually fell apart when Loft died, it created a future model for Native political organizations.

Loft was born in 1862 on the Six Nations reserve at Brantford and was a member of the Upper Mohawk band. He received a secondary education, went to business college and moved to Toronto where he worked as a clerk at the psychiatric institute. When the war started, Loft was too old to enlist. Moved by patriotism, he lied about his age and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Canadian Forestry Corps. "He spent seven months in France, but he

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[5]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3033, file 235,225, part 1, correspondence from F. Pedley to A. White, 26 June 1920.

was not permitted to engage in combat because of his age."[6] On his return from the war he was close to sixty years old. Instead of planning his retirement, Loft began to create the largest Native political organization that Canada had ever known.

Loft created the League because he believed that the threat of enfranchisement was at its greatest in the postwar years. The Soldier Settlement Act and Bill 14, in particular were measures that Loft felt threatened the foundations of Native culture. The best way to protect Native culture, as Loft perceived it, was through education and collective organization.[7]

Loft's organization came to the immediate attention of the Department of Indian Affairs due to his method of enlisting support. In the winter of 1919, Loft wrote to Indian agents throughout the country asking for names of Natives on various reserves that could read or write English so that he could send them a circular regarding his organization. Initially, the Department had no objection to the formation of this League. Scott's assistant wrote the following letter to the Indian Agent at Sturgeon Falls who wanted directions on how to handle Loft's

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[6]. E. Brian Titley, p. 100

[7]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3211, file 527,787, part 1, article in the Toronto Sunday World, by Mildred Cory, 21 May 1921.

correspondence:

> I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th instant, regarding the communication, which is returned herewith, addressed by F.O. Loft to Chief Alex Paul, as to the formation of a League of Nations.
>
> In reply I beg to say that the Department has no advice to offer in regard to this matter. If the Indians wish to form such a league the Department has no desire to interpass any objections.[8]

Loft started the League of Indians by organizing various bands in Ontario. On December 20, 1919, Loft convened a meeting of Ojibway, Mohawk and Iroquois delegates at Ohsweken reserve in Ontario. The foremost discussion at this meeting was the abolition of the Oliver Act, which had made it possible to sell reserve land without band consent, and remove bands from those lands if necessary.

The second convention included delegates from Manitoba and Saskatchewan and was held near Sault Ste. Marie from September 2 to 4, 1919. After this convention, Loft outlined the aims of the League in a circular that he sent out to bands throughout Canada in November of 1919:

> The first aim of the League then is to claim and protect the rights of all Indians in Canada by legitimate and just means; second, absolute control in retaining possession or disposition of our lands; that all questions and matters relative to individual and national well being of Indians shall rest with the people and their

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[8]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3211, file 527,787, correspondence from J.D. McLean Assistant Deputy Superintendent General to F. Cockburn, Indian Agent at Sturgeon Falls, 20 February 1919.

> dealing with the Government shall be by and through their respective band Councils at all times to be consulted, and their wishes respected in like matters as other constituted bodies conducting public affairs.
>
> The aim also is to demand better educational advantages for our children, also to encourage our people to be farmers, stay on the land and work it, for it is the most independent way of living. We will co-operate with the Government, but we must have its sympathy, encouragement and assistance so to make good. To force or coerce us will do no good; justice and fair dealing is what we ask for. We are men, not imbeciles; from our view and standpoint we must be heard as a nation when we have to speak for ourselves.[9]

On 6 June 1920, Toronto Sunday World featured a major story on Loft and reported that he was "putting up a determined fight against the disintegration of Indian lands under the plea of enfranchisement and soldier settlement"[10] Some of this positive press was due to Loft since he was somewhat charismatic and eloquent. The fact that Loft was also a veteran working to improve the lot of his people appealed to the nationalistic sentiment that Canada's participation in the war had created. The support of the press and Loft's use of the press made him the first Native Canadian leader to use effectively the media.

While the press provided a sympathetic ear for the League of Indians, Scott became more galvanized in his

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[9]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3211, file 527,787, correspondence from Loft to Chief Murray at Caughnawaga Reserve, 26 November 1919.

[10]. Toronto Sunday World. 6 June 1920, p. 15.

opposition towards it. E. Brian Titley, author of A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada, believes that Scott was opposed to the League because, "the success of the League of Indians would weaken, if not destroy, Indian subservience to officialdom."[11] Scott's experience with Thunderwater could have also affected his opinion of Loft's League of Indians.

Scott aimed his criticism of and opposition to the League at Loft. Scott believed that if he could discredit the president, then the League would eventually fold. Shortly after the first convention of the League in Sault Ste. Marie, Scott wrote a letter to the R.C.M.P. requesting that Loft be investigated.

> I would ask that the man signing himself F.O. Loft and living at 75 Madison Ave., Toronto, be investigated, as it would not surprise me that there is a scheme under this other than the advancement of the Indians, either the obtaining of easy money or to make the Indians discontent to such an extent that they might be used to embarrass the Government at a critical time.[12]

Scott's investigation came up empty. All he could come up with was that Loft was exactly whom he claimed to be.

Scott opted for another tact. Since he could not

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[11]. E. Brian Titley, p. 99.

[12]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3211, file 527,787, correspondence from Scott to R.Y. Douglas, Superintendent of "M" Division, 9 December 1919.

discredit Loft, he tried to have him enfranchised. The passage of Bill 14 made this possible. In the fall of 1920, Scott formulated an amendment to the Indian Act that made it possible to enfranchise Native Canadians without their consent. If the Department believed that a Native Canadian was sufficiently educated and capable of providing for himself and his family then the Department could take away his Native Canadian status. Scott believed that Loft easily fit the qualifications for enfranchisement under the guidelines of Bill 14. In the winter of 1921, Scott began the process of Loft's enfranchisement by collecting all available information on Loft. He then submitted Loft's case to the Minister of the Interior, James Lougheed. Scott submitted a personal letter with Loft's file that carried with it a sense of a personal vendetta against Loft:

> The writer of this letter, Mr. F.O. Loft, is an Indian of the Six Nations reserve. He has had some education, has rather an attractive personal appearance, but he is a shallow, talkative individual. He appeared before the Committee of the House of Commons on Bill 14 last Session, and created an unfavourable impression. He is one of the few Indians who are endeavouring to live off their brethren by organizing an Indian society, and collecting fees from them. He is employed by the Ontario Government, and I have proposed to him that he should be enfranchised, which, I think, accounts for this sudden activity on his part. What he ought to get is a good snub. He volunteered for the war and looked very well in a uniform, but he was cunning enough to evade any active service, and I do not think his record in

that regard is a very good one."[13]

There are a number of amusing facts to this letter. The first is Scott's off handed remark about Loft having "some education" when Scott himself had the same level of education as Loft. Furthermore, Loft had created the League of Indians almost two years before the passage of Bill 14. Therefore, his "activity" was far from sudden and certainly not solely aimed at Bill 14. If there was anything "cunning" about Loft's ability to "evade any active service" it was due to the fact that Loft was too old to be considered for active service. In fact, Loft and Scott were the same age and Scott had not volunteered at all.

Scott's attempt to enfranchise Loft failed with the fall of the Meighen administration in 1921. Once the Liberals were in power, they repealed Bill 14 because of its unpopularity with Natives and Loft was saved from enfranchisement. With the failure of Scott's various attempts to discredit and undermine Loft's achievements, it appeared that Loft could not increase the size and strength of the League of Indians. "However, his wife became ill and he took her to live in her home town, Chicago, for a number of years. In his absence the league declined

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[13]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 3211, file 527,787, memorandum from Scott to Hon. Sir James Lougheed, Minister of the Interior, 21 February 1921.

perceptibly. It survived best in the prairie provinces, where a vibrant western branch had been established in 1920."[14]

Loft returned to Canada in the late 1920's and continued his work with the League. He concentrated his efforts in the west where the League was still operational. There the battle centred around provincial gaming laws which restricted traditional hunting and fishing rights. Scott kept his pressure on Loft and the League by ensuring that the R.C.M.P. were present at every meeting that the League held.

In 1931, Loft tried to resurrect the League: however, he found little support on the reserves in Ontario and Quebec. The bands in these provinces had abandoned the league because, without Loft's leadership they found it difficult to work collectively. Furthermore, the Six Nations were trying to deal with their own internal conflict between traditional leaders and young veterans who disagreed with council members.

By this time Loft was close to seventy years old and he no longer had the energy to maintain simultaneously the League and deal with Scott's persistent interference. In July of 1931, Loft failed to appear at a League Convention held at the Saddle Lake reserve in Alberta because of

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[14]. E. Brian Titley, p. 108.

illness. A few years later he passed away.

Although Loft's career ended rather ignominiously, his achievements were landmarks in Native Canadian history. He was the first to establish a working relationship between the press and Native Canadians and he was also the first Native Leader to promote a pan-Canadian Native organization. The League also inspired Native Canadians in the prairie provinces to organize themselves and combat the Government's oppressive measures. Perhaps Loft's achievements are best summarized by Edward Ahenakew, a prominent Native leader from the prairies during the inter-war years:

> As an Indian, I am in sympathy with the idea of the League, not so much for what it is now, as for what it means. At last I see what I have always wanted to see -- the Indians dissatisfied with themselves, hoping to better their condition, dropping that stoic indifference to their fate, showing practical interest in measures to their fate, showing practical interest in measures that affect their progress...For too long, we might have deserved--all of us together--the name Keyam.[15]

The Six Nations' Status Case

One of the reasons that Loft found little support from Ontario and Quebec reserves when he returned in the late 1920's was because the largest and wealthiest Native band

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[15]. John Leonard Taylor, "Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years, 1919-1939." (Ottawa: Published under the authority of the Hon. John C. Munro, P.C., M.P. Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1983. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Historical Services.) p. 185.

in Ontario, the Six Nations, was undergoing political problems of its own. These problems included divisions within the Council of the Six Nations and the attempts of the Six Nations to achieve special status.

The members of the Six Nations were beginning to divide into two political camps. On the one side were the traditionalists or long housers. Members of this group were the older generation and were members of the council. These people were devoted to traditional ways including the hereditary appointment of council members, and were strongly opposed to government intervention into Native affairs on any level. It was this group which led the protest against conscription and voluntary involvement in the war. On the other side were a younger generation of men and women who were known as Christians, Dehorners or loyalists. The exact meaning of the term Dehorners is a mystery since members of the Six Nations will not offer an explanation of the term to this day. Most of this group was comprised of young people who wanted a council that was elected and not appointed.

> In the years immediately preceding the war, operations of the council began to break down under the cross-cutting pressures of the Dehorners on one side, and the conservative Longhouse chiefs on the other. The more immediate factor, however was the loss of the old leadership in council, brought about by the death of such influential chiefs as John A. Gibson in 1912 and Josiah Hill in 1915. For decades these men had been powerful moderating forces in the council, tempering relations and proposing conciliatory measures. As they and other chiefs

> died, they were succeeded by more militant young men of both Longhouse and Christian affiliation who were unwilling to make the compromises their predecessors had made. Confronted with a more assertive and unsettled council, the Indian Department grew increasingly uneasy about the daily management of Six Nations affairs and more determined to contain the restiveness.[16]

The division between traditionalists and the younger generation became aggravated by the war. Angry that the council did not support the war, some of the Six Nations' soldiers serving in France signed a petition asking the government to establish an elected council on their reserve.

1917 Soldiers Petition

France Aug 8 1917

> We the undersigned soldiers in the Canadian expeditionary force, and members of the Six Nations Indians, of the Grand River, regret very much that circumstances have made it so, that we can no longer look on our present council with respect or confidence, and we therefore sign this as an agreement, to do all in our power to rid our nation of the said council, and in its place to establish a government representative of the people, whereby we as Six Nations Indians, in general, may be intelligently represented, and that our public affairs and national spirit may be properly looked after.[17]

Scott was pleased to receive the petition since it was proof that not all members of the Six Nations supported its

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[16]. Sally Weaver, "History of Six Nations." manuscript (Six Nations Cultural Centre: Brantford, 1980.) pp. 94-95.

[17]. Ibid. p. 381.

council's decisions.

When members of the Six Nations returned from the war they formed the Veteran's Association. One of the purposes of this association was to provide support for families of soldiers killed in the war; the Veteran's Association also provided a forum and an organization for those Six Nations members who were opposed to the hereditary council. Veterans and their families were bitter and resentful that the council did not support the war while friends and members of their immediate family were being killed overseas. Subsequently, the term "loyalists" became applied to those who supported the war cause and later to those who advocated an elected council.

It should be reiterated that the council was not opposed to the war. They were opposed to the manner in which they were asked to participate. The council considered the Six Nations an ally of Britain and not a ward of Canada. Therefore, they resented the fact that the Canadian government assumed that the Six Nations should provide support for the war. What the council wanted, was a formal request from the Crown to participate in the war as an ally. This contentious issue gave rise to the Six Nations' status case in the years immediately following the war.

Levi General, or Chief Deskeheh, emerged as the postwar leader of a radical group of Six Nations members

who were devoted to achieving total sovereignty for the Six Nations in Canada. Deskeheh was born on the Six Nations Reserve at Brantford in 1860. During the War, he was one of the long house chiefs opposed to enlistment and conscription.

Early in 1919, Chief Deskeheh formed a status committee to plan the strategy for sovereignty. In conjunction with the formation of this committee, Deskeheh's organization hired A.G. Chisholm and, later, W.D. Lighthall as their legal counsel. Initially, the group did not have much support, but when Bill 14 was passed in 1920 the situation changed. "The compulsory enfranchisement amendment was deeply resented on the Six Nations' reserve and tended to rally support for Deskeheh and his sovereignty campaign."[18] In a pamphlet entitled, "The Redman's Appeal for Justice", Deskeheh outlined his objectives:

> 1. recognition of their right to home rule;
> 2. an accounting by the British and Canadian governments of their trust funds;
> 3. freedom of transit across Canadian territory to and from international waters.[19]

Deskeheh's lawyers, Chisholm and Lighthall, managed to stir up some publicity in the press over their case for

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[18]. Ibid. pp. 427-428.

[19]. Richard Veatch, Canada and the League of Nations. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 93-94.

sovereignty; however there was little public sympathy for the Six Nations' claim to special status.

The publicity did attract Scott's opposition who tried to shut Deskeheh down by refusing to approve payment for the lawyers' bills out of band funds. Chisholm and Lighthall then approached the Department of Justice, and Scott was ordered by the Department to pay the bills out of the band fund. Deskeheh eventually dispensed of Chisholm and Lighthall's services after believing their results to be unsatisfactory. He then hired George T. Decker, an American lawyer, who had been successful in similar Native American cases.[20]

Deskeheh and Decker's case fell on deaf British and Canadian ears because they considered the Six Nations to be wards of the government. The two men believed they would achieve results with the League of Nations. Since the Six Nations were not members of the League of Nations, they had to find a member country to take their case to the League. Initially, the Netherlands decided to take up the case. On August 7, 1923, the Netherlands' minister for foreign affairs, H.A. vanKarnebeek, circulated the Six Nations' petition among the ten members of the League Council. "None of the [council] members requested that it be placed

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[20]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 2287, file 57,169-1A2, correspondence from Scott to J. Harold, 6 May 1921.

on the council agenda for discussion, which brought the matter to a temporary conclusion. It also ended the involvement of the Netherlands."[21]

Deskeheh was undaunted. In March, 1924, he appealed to the delegates of Estonia, Ireland and Panama to take his cause to the League of Nations.

> At this stage, the British government decided to intervene. The Foreign Office informed the offending governments that their efforts to re-open the Iroquois case were resented as "impertinent interference" in the internal affairs of the Empire by "minor powers". This sabre-rattling produced the desired effect, and by May London had been assured that the "minor powers" had abandoned the case.[22]

While Deskeheh and Decker were in Europe attracting media attention for the Six Nations case, Scott did his best to undermine Deskeheh's power back in Canada. Scott and Colonel C.E. Morgan, Indian Superintendent at Brantford, began to work together to depose the hereditary council and thus rid Deskeheh of any legitimacy. Morgan was known personally by many of the Native veterans and initially had their support, but his strong arm tactics eventually alienated him from even this group.

In the fall of 1923, Morgan and Scott had an R.C.M.P. officer stationed at the Brantford reserve. Then on 7 October, 1924, Scott deposed the hereditary council.

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[21]. Veatch, p. 95.

[22]. E. Brian Titley, p. 123.

> On that morning, Col. Morgan arrived at a council meeting accompanied by a number of RCMP. The order-in-council abolishing the ancient system of government of the Iroquois was read, and the chiefs were then expelled unceremoniously from the hall. Details of the election for a new council were also announced.[23]

This action created a solidarity in the Native community. Although many were not in favour of the hereditary system, nearly everybody was opposed to such direct government intervention. The hereditary chiefs called for a boycott of the elections and more than seventy per cent of the population obeyed it.[24]

The Six Nations' status case was dealt a severe blow with Chief Deskeheh's death on 27 June 1925.[25] After his death, John Robert Ockleshaw-Johnson, an English lawyer who claimed to have known Deskeheh picked up the cause. Unfortunately, Ockleshaw-Johnson proved to be nothing but a con man who eventually had to flee to America once being revealed as such by the Department of Indian Affairs. After the Ockleshaw-Johnson fiasco, the Six Nations abandoned their case for special status.

The Soldier Settlement Act

The Soldier Settlement Act was passed in 1917 and was

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[23]. Weaver, p. 472.

[24]. E. Brian Titley, p. 126.

[25]. Ibid. p. 127.

designed to provide veterans with the means to pursue agricultural settlement. "Agricultural settlement was still regarded as a key factor in national growth and one to be encouraged by the government. The Soldier Settlement Act was designed to further this national goal while serving the needs of some of the returning soldiers."[26]

In conjunction with this Act, the Soldier Settlement Board was created. The purpose of the board was to determine who was eligible for assistance and how much would be loaned to the potential settler. Any veteran who had served in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces was eligible for a loan of up to one thousand dollars to acquire dominion lands for the purpose of settlement. In order to acquire the loan, the veteran had to also show the board the necessary means to pay back the loan. The Act also authorized the Minister of the Interior to reserve dominion lands for the use of the Soldier Settlement Board.[27]

Native veterans were not considered eligible for Soldier Settlement loans for almost a full year after the Act was passed. Part of this had to do with the fact that there was some confusion as to who would administer the

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[26]. John Leonard Taylor, p. 27.

[27]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 6770, file 452-22, 8 August 1917 or Order-in-Council 7-8 August 1917.

loans where Natives were concerned - the Department of the Interior or the Department of Indian Affairs? Also, who would provide the necessary security needed for a loan to Natives?

Scott was against dual authority with regards to the Soldier Settlement Act. Therefore, he, and the Soldier Settlement Board agreed that the Department of Indian Affairs would be responsible for the Act where Native veterans were concerned. Scott also wanted all participants to be enfranchised as one of the qualifications for eligibility. Fortunately, Minister of the Interior Meighen forbade this. Scott, however, did acquire considerable powers.

> An amendment to the Indian Act (part 3, sections 196-99), assented to on the same day as the new Soldier Settlement Act (7 July 1919), granted the necessary powers to the deputy superintendent general [Scott]. Not only did he thereby acquire the authority to supervise the loans, but he was also empowered to grant location tickets to common reserve lands without band consent. He could also purchase non-reserve lands.[28]

Prior to the Native question with regards to the Soldier Settlement Act was the problem of acquiring suitable dominion lands for the veterans. The land had to be suitable for agricultural development, and sufficiently close to railways and towns. Many Euro-Canadians immediately pointed to reserve lands. This was especially

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[28]. E. Brian Titley, Op Cit. p. 45.

true in western Canada where Euro-Canadian settlers had been eyeing reserve lands for years. The reserve lands out west were not only suitable for agriculture but were close to towns and railways and almost every Euro-Canadian believed that reserve land was not being fully utilized by Natives.

Initially Native reserves were not considered for disposal: "by the summer of 1919 only 2,000 soldiers had taken up land. There were many reasons for this disappointing result; one of them was, no doubt, the poor quality of the land being made available."[29] As a result, the government turned to Native lands.

> The Soldier Settlement Act of 1919 appeared with the following reference to Indian reserve land:
>
> The Board may acquire from His Majesty by purchase, upon terms not inconsistent with those of the release or surrender, any Indian lands which, under the Indian Act have been validly released or surrendered.
>
> Since the prairie provinces were considered particularly suitable for agricultural settlement, plans were made to acquire even more western reserve land.
>
> With reference to the Indian lands which had not been surrendered it is understood that Mr. W.M. Graham, Commissioner for this Department at Regina, and the Provincial representatives of the Board shall examine such available lands and place a valuation upon them, and that Mr. Graham will then endeavour to secure a surrender from the Indians of the lands to be disposed of to the

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[29]. Ibid. pp. 30-31.

Soldier Settlement Board.[30]

The Native grievances created by these surrenders are still to this day, cause for dispute between Native Canadians and the government.

Initially, Scott intended to settle Native veterans on non-reserve lands. When Graham suggested that they be settled on reserve lands, Scott decided to encourage this.

> By May 1920, 130 loans had been granted, [to Native veterans] for a total expenditure of $192,397. In only half a dozen cases had non-reserve land been purchased. It is interesting that, in spite of the emphasis on western settlement, one-third of the loans made by this time were on the Six Nations Reserve at Brantford, Ontario.[31]

The head of the secretary's branch of the Department of Indian Affairs, J.D. McLean, explained how the loans would be granted to Native veterans.

> I beg to say that it would be a pleasure to extend to an Indian soldier the same benefits as are being extended to other soldiers so far as it can be done in accordance with the conditions of the Soldier Settlement Act and of the Indian Act. If an Indian could comply with the conditions of the Soldier Settlement Act, that is establish his qualification as a settler, able to make a living as a farmer, and give to the Board security of first charge of first mortgage on the land he proposes to farm, the Board would be allowed to advance to him an amount justified by the security which he gives. It is noted that the Indian Department would be prepared to vouch for the qualification of the Indian as being a settler likely to make good and repay the loan. It is noted also that the Indian Department would

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30. Ibid. p. 28.

31. Ibid. p. 30.

> be able to provide land on the different reserves and that the financial assistance would be for the purpose of equipping the Indian with implements, stock, seed, etc.[32]

The hereditary council of the Six Nations protested the Soldier Settlement Act as another example of the government intervening in Native Affairs. Their protests received little popular or press support since the lands were being surrendered to Native veterans.

Conclusion

The war had brought many Native Canadians into immediate contact with Euro-Canadians. For some, it was their first contact. As a result of this contact, Natives began to organize themselves politically in order to protect their culture and improve their situation. Some of these organizations, such as Loft's League of Indians, brought various bands from across Canada together for the first time. The war also created great divisions within Native societies as veterans clashed with traditional leaders as to what was best for their communities.

Although Native grievances are still to be addressed fully by the government, the activities in the postwar years were the first step in this process. They fought enfranchisement and government interference at every turn

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[32]. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10, volume 7484, file 25001, part 1, McLean to Graham, 21 January 1918.

and told the Euro-Canadian culture that they were a distinct society that had no desire to be assimilated.

Conclusion

There is a dominant theme running through Native Canadian/Euro-Canadian relations during the war years: the desire of the Euro-Canadians to assimilate Native Canadians and the latter's opposition to these efforts. Prior to the war, the Department of Indian Affairs became devoted to a policy of assimilating Native Canadians into Euro-Canadian society. They pursued this policy through educational and agricultural policies and proposals. Natives, however, refused to be assimilated and these programs created confusion, poverty and alcoholism on reserves throughout Ontario and the rest of Canada. Natives lacked an efficient system or collective voice to combat these pressures. Furthermore, Euro-Canadian society in general, viewed Native Canadians as lazy and shiftless and incapable of taking advantage of the so-called benefits that were being doled out to them. A good example of this occurred in Native agricultural pursuits. When Natives failed to reap bountiful harvests on their reserves in the pre-war years, Euro-Canadians believed it was because they were lazy. In fact, government laws and programs made Native farming all but impossible.

The war changed all of this, and resulted in some historical firsts for Native Canadians. For example, Native veterans were the first Native Canadians to be able

to vote. The war also created a group of men who had a shared experience as veterans. This, plus a common language of English, made it possible for them to form organizations that could address Native grievances. The most notable of these organizations was Loft's League of Indians. The league was the first legitimate organization that tried to promote pan-Native Canadianism. Although it eventually folded, it provided an important model for other similar broad Native organizations to follow.

Loft was also the first Native leader to use effectively the media. Due to his eloquence and participation in the war, the media sympathized with his efforts and portrayed him in a favourable light. This was an important relationship to be established and used in future Native struggles against the government.

Before the war began, a rift was developing between the old and the young on many reserves throughout Ontario. This was especially true on reserves that were located closer to large Euro-Canadian settlements. The younger generation was turning its back on traditional livelihoods and beginning to work in a wage earning economy. This split became even greater during the war when many of the young men enlisted despite the objections of band leaders and then formed or joined their own native political organizations after the war.

World War I created a new generation of Natives. This

generation had been placed in close proximity with the Euro-Canadian culture; either through participation in the war or through working in Euro-Canadian industries during the war years. It was Scott's hope that this contact would encourage mass enfranchisement. While it did contribute to a clash between the new generation of Natives and their traditional leadership it did not fulfill Scott's plan. Instead, these Natives were proud of their heritage and worked towards a future where their culture could thrive within the surrounding Euro-Canadian world.

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