

KINGSTON

*THE HISTORY OF
KA'TAROH:KWI
AND KINGSTON*



teach

This text is a compilation of written history and oral teachings as collected and shared by Dr. Terri-Lynn Brennan, Onkwehon:we (Mohawk) and British, who currently resides on Kawehnohkwes tsi kawè:note (Wolfe Island) off the coast of Kingston. Dr. Brennan's interpretation does not represent the voice and opinions of all Onkwehon:we and/or Indigenous Peoples of the region as all Indigenous thinkers acquire their knowledge from the voices of their Clan/ Grandparents, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and/or Leaders, and each voice shares stories of their truth.

WELCOME/BOOZHOO/ TEKWANONWERA:TONS TO KINGSTON/KA'TAROH:KWI / KEN'TARÓKWEN/CATARACOUI

Kingston remains on the ancestral homelands of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Tourism Kingston acknowledges the everlasting presence of these Nations and other First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who share this landscape today. We are grateful to reside in and remain visitors to this territory, while acknowledging our responsibility to honour the land, water, and skies with gentle respect and purifying preservation.



The fluidity of space and occupancy of the Kingston region is very complex. Through oral traditions, it is understood that many Indigenous Peoples have persevered across North America for millenia. While archaeologists often exclusively use the location of cultural artefacts to classify the different Nations who roamed this landscape through aesthetic and textural changes in pottery, stone tools, and burial practices, it is my practice to pay attention to all information supplied to tell stories of the past, with a stronger lean toward the words of the Elders. For in the immortal words of Elder Gidigaa Migizi,

“I want to talk a little bit now about Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg history. The ones that think they are smart from the university say that we came to this part of Ontario 9,500 years ago... Archaeologists, the ones that suffer from the disease of archaeology, say they have evidence that paleo-Nishnaabeg hunted caribou around Rice Lake. Our Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg oral traditions tell us that there were caribou here all over the place... [Archaeologists] came up with a site at Burley Falls which they dated as 12,000 years ago. They fight amongst themselves as to whether or not that is true. They argue if they got the date right, if they sent it to the right lab. To me, it doesn't really matter. I'll show you the way I see it.”¹

Indigenous communities forever utilized the local landscape as that undefined by the national, provincial, or regional boundary lines as they exist today. Various Nations walked this land, camped adjacent to the many creeks, hunted in the



regional hardwood forests, and fished along the shorelines. Of the known Nations to have repeatedly visited the area for millennia, the Elders tell us that the ancestors of the modern Huron-Wendat Nation at present-day Wendake, Quebec; the Anishinaabe Nations, Algonquin and Mississauga; and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Nations, Mohawk, Oneida, and Cayuga, all laid claim to Ka'taroh:kwi for many centuries.²

Written text and maps of only the last 500 years, combined with more recent archaeological interpretations suggest that prior to European contact, this region was a hunting and fishing locale bounced between three to five different culturally distinct Indigenous Nations, who all shared a similar language root, identified by the French as the Iroquois language.³ Further literary interpretations also suggest that the Anishinaabek (often called Algonquin in historical literature) language was spoken locally by Indigenous hunters and fishers who walked the region and were amongst the first to establish relations with the French who later built Fort Frontenac.⁴ Indigenous oral histories identify that for centuries the Wendat or 'keepers of the land' (who were called the Huron by early French explorers) shared the full expanse of the St. Lawrence River and both northern and southern Lake Ontario shoreline with their neighbors from the north, the Anishinaabe (Original Peoples) Nations, as well as their neighbours to the south, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (called the Iroquois by early French explorers).⁵

What is agreed upon, is that the ebb and flow of First Nation's occupations across the region have always been hallmarked by the region being bountiful in hunting, fishing, and natural vegetation resources, but also because of its strategic location for monitoring the movement of their neighbours.⁶ With its location at the confluence of three major waterways, the Cataraqui/Rideau River, the St. Lawrence River, and Lake Ontario, marking the region ecologically, Ka'taroh:kwi was the perfect stop over on route to regional Haudenosaunee village sites near what is now Gananoque, Napanee, and the Bay of Quinte, as well as the waterways that led north into the lands of the Anishinaabe.⁷

Crossing into other Indigenous Nation's territories was respected with the same rules that continue today at border crossings: there was a request to enter, identifying the purpose of entering and the length of intention for the visit.⁸ Respectful relationships recognizing the safety of borders in peacetime (and to end wars), were often bonded through the creation of wampum belts. Made from quahog, a round clam shell, the process of making wampum beads is an arduous one, with a series of creating cubes out of flakes from the shell, drilling holes through the centre of the cubes, then shaping and smoothing them into beads to be strung on lengths of thread. The colour of the shell plays a significant role in revealing the information of the wampum, for white wampum signifies peace, while purple relates messages of more serious or political matters.⁹

For the Haudenosaunee, wampum held a sacred use. Bound on strings, wampum beads were used to create intricate patterns on belts, and these belts are used as a guide to narrate Haudenosaunee history, traditions, and laws. Wampum served as a person's credentials or a certificate of authority and are often used for official purposes and religious ceremonies including to commit to peace.¹⁰ A most relevant wampum, especially to this shoreline region between the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee, is the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum Belt, a wampum covenant still adhered to today.

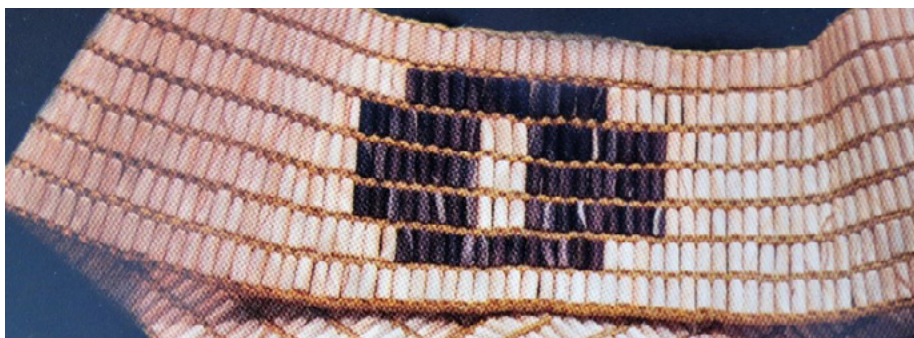


Figure 1: Dish with One Spoon Wampum Covenant Belt¹¹

The significance of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum Belt as shared by Elder Doug Williams, a former Chief of Curve Lake First Nation, and through Knowledge Keeper, Anne Taylor, is explained as this: “[Doug’s] understanding of the Dish With One Spoon is that...it is an agreement to share [Anishinaabe Mississauga] hunting territory with our brothers, the Haudenosaunee, at certain times. The Haudenosaunee are welcome to hunt within our territory during the times when our Nations meet to renew and feed our friendship. This is when hunting is allowed. During other periods, permission would need to be requested and decisions would then be honoured and respected. It is our understanding that this treaty between our Nations is something that must be fed and revisited on a regular basis.”¹²

Wampum treaties such as this were common for centuries between and within Nations to regulate the health and safety of the land, water, and skies: all the resources that humans need to survive. For without us, all that gives us sustenance would thrive. Without all that surrounds us for sustenance, we would see the end of our existence.

Ka'taroh:kwi at contact

Ka'taroh:kwi is not known as a space that held long-term village occupations by any of the regional First Nations. This is most likely due to the lack of fertile soils for growing significant food sources.¹³ This understanding of the landscape can be seen when the first Europeans visited the area in the early to mid-17th century, and learned the name of the region from their Wendat guides to be Ka'taroh:kwi, which translates to mean this is “a place where there is mud or clay” (various spellings of this name, Katarakouy, Cataracoui, or Katarokwi, can be seen across French and British maps up until the present day).¹⁴ Different interpretations exist as to the meaning of mud or clay in this name. The geophysical location where Fort Frontenac is located was a huge swamp and therefore quite muddy, while a reference to clay could also hold more of a metaphorical reference to the location of ancestral roots.¹⁵

As the French, British, Dutch, and Spanish waged wars across the Atlantic, the race to occupy Indigenous lands around the world was becoming vicious. From 1673 to 1763, Ka'tarohkwi and the surrounding area was part of New France and a rudimentary fort and trading post was established on the site of the current Fort Frontenac.¹⁶ The French traded guns for furs from their Wendat and/or Algonquin/Anishinaabe allies, while the neighboring Haudenosaunee Nations observed the transactions with potential concern as to the outcome of the French taking more and more pelts, as well as reaping the landscape with tree extraction for

ship building.¹⁷ Throughout this time, the Haudenosaunee lead skirmishes into Anishinaabe and Wendat territory, with retaliation being offered by the Anishinaabe and Wendat, backed by their French economic partners. Within a short amount of time, many of the Wendat, severely compromised due to new diseases introduced across the landscape by the French, became absorbed into the Haudenosanne and Anishinaabe Nations. Any uncaptured or aligned Wendat Peoples readily fled to two established Wendat villages, one just south of Georgian Bay (St. Marie Amongst the Hurons), and at Wendake, Quebec.¹⁸ The Huron-Wendat Nation at Wendake remains the strongest outpost of Wendat identity and sovereignty to this day. The Wendat around Georgian Bay become assimilated into European cultures or other regional First Nations by the end of the 18th century.¹⁹

As the Wendat Peoples became less distinct across the region, and the incessant push of European Settlers from the south-east forced the Haudenosaunee Nations further into Anishinaabe territory, another Anishinaabe Nation from the north shore of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron arrived on the north shore of Lake Ontario and established several campsites. The Mississaugas are a people of the waters and, it is thought by some, the name "Mississauga" derives from the Anishinabek (Ojibway) word *Minzazaheeg* meaning "people living where there are mouths of many rivers."²⁰ The Mississaugas eventually created a village site in the area of Quinte on Grape Island, an area more commonly occupied by the Haudenosaunee in times before the Europeans. The establishment and growth of the Mississauga from the late 17th century to late 18th century across this area, afforded them a front row seat to watch a European war rage across the Ka'taroh:kwi landscape, which continued to pull the Anisinaabe/Algonquin - Haudenosaunee into the international conflicts of the French and British.²¹

It must be said however, that the French and later the British, not only brought guns and disease to their new allies along the St. Lawrence River and shores of Lake Ontario. They also brought with them brandy alcohol and religion. Religious outlets forced Indigenous converts to stay stationary in and around Fort Frontenac and to take up subsistence farming, while brandy consumption significantly depleted all Indigenous social and governing protocols across and between Nations.²² Soon, without a healthy landscape to farm, unreliability of Indigenous sobriety to trade, and food staples being destroyed or stolen as spoils of war, there was a gradual retreat of French traders and military personnel from the Ka'taroh:kwi region.²³ This left

many local Indigenous communities emaciated due to disease, alcohol addiction, and eventual starvation without the support of priests and the protection of the fort, which they grew reliant on for food and salvation.²⁴ The fort and local landscape eventually passed from French control effectively by British conquest in 1758 to end the Seven Years War, and legally by the Treaty of Paris in 1763.²⁵ It was at this time in 1763, in which King George III of Britain crafts the Royal Proclamation, a treaty of sorts between this monarch and the Indigenous Peoples of the region:

"And whereas it is just and reasonable and essential to our interest and the security of our colonies that the several nations or tribes of Indians with whom we are connected, and who live under our protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the possession of such parts of our dominions and territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their hunting grounds; we do therefore...declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that no governor or commander in chief, in any of our colonies of Quebec, East Florida, or West Florida, do presume, upon any pretense whatever, to grant warrants of survey or pass any patents for lands beyond the bounds of their respective governments....

And whereas great frauds and abuses have been committed in the purchasing lands of the Indians, to the great prejudice of our interests and to the great dissatisfaction of the said Indians; in order, therefore, to prevent such irregularities for the future, and to the end that the Indians may be convinced of our justice and determined resolution to remove all reasonable cause of discontent, we...strictly enjoin and require that no private person do presume to make any purchase from the said Indians of any lands reserved to the said Indians within those parts of our colonies where we have thought proper to allow settlement; but that if at any time any of the said Indians should be inclined to dispose of the said lands, the same shall be purchased only for us, in our name, at some public meeting or assembly of the said Indians, to be held for that purpose by the governor or commander in chief of our colony, respectively, within which they shall lie."

Although the Proclamation presents itself with the King subsuming a patronizing and controlling relationship with the Indigenous Nations of the region, the text that is most referenced and focused on to this day during discussions of treaty rights, is that of the first paragraph of what is shown here; the First Nations continue to remain the stewards, protectors of their/these lands, and will be able to continue with that relationship without any interference from European occupiers and neighbours.



Ka'taroh:kwi post 1763

With the British seizing French colonial occupations around the globe in the late 18th century, British troops and traders to Ka'taroh:kwi encountered many Indigenous communities still rebounding from the diseases and addictions brought to the landscape by the French. Some trading relationships did soon re-emerge, and several Haudenosaunee communities forged alliances with the British. These trading alliances were not just for economic profit but were also to establish military alliances in defense of a growing rebel group to the south who were wanting to break free from British rule. These disgruntled patriots, who also had the support of any remaining French troops still on the continent, eventually announced that they wanted to wage a war in an effort to gain Independence from Britain. Again, Indigenous Nations from across the region were being brought into the European's battles, and between 1775 and 1783 the American Revolutionary War waged across the entire eastern seaboard, expanding inward toward the Great Lakes in the north and following the Ohio River to the south.²⁷ With the Revolution resulting in a Patriot victory, twenty years after the Royal Proclamation, there became an emergent need to create a solid boundary between British North America and what became known as the United States of America.²⁸

Many Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee, as well as surrounding Nations, took up arms to ally themselves in support of whomever they trusted the most, the French, the British, and the American Patriots during the latter half of the 18th century. Alliances were not strictly drawn by cultural/ethnic/community lines. Many different Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee communities posited themselves against their own family and confederacy partners during these wars. In turn many casualties were drawn on all sides. So much so, that the Patriots negotiated the peace in 1783

offering any remaining British settlements in New York and neighboring areas, to move north of the waterways to Upper Canada, without persecution or short-term restriction. This offer was also extended to the First Nations that remained aligned with the British and the King through the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The complexity to negotiate this exodus with both the British and Indigenous Nations retaining some level of pride and possessions intact, required the skills of a veteran in government diplomacy, Indigenous wisdom, and humility. Molly Brant, the stepdaughter of a highly respected Chief, the consort of one of the highest-ranking British leaders in New York, and someone who spoke multiple Indigenous and European languages proved to be the most appropriate individual for this mediation.

Konwatsi'tsiaienni, Mary or Molly Brant was born at Cayahoga, Ohio to Mohawk parents, but raised in Canajoharie, N.Y.²⁹ Along with her very powerful and prestigious younger brother Thayendanega, Joseph Brant, her life was one of distinction, with familial connections to strong leadership across the community, combined with an understanding of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous/European languages and cultural protocols/attributes.³⁰ Molly is said to have been the head of the Six Nations matrons at the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, and as such, a major leader of the alliance with the British Military.³¹ At the conclusion of the war, the regional British troops decided to occupy the landscape surrounding Fort Frontenac and develop it as an agricultural settlement for the thousands of United Empire Loyalists (European and Indigenous Peoples who remained loyal to the King of England) waiting to be assigned lands at Ka'taroh:kwi.³² But this landscape, which was controlled by the Mississauga at the conclusion of the war, wanted compensation if they were to move inland from Gananoque to the Bay of Quinte, in order for the British and Haudenosaunne allies to now settle. Under Molly's negotiating guidance and support, the Crawford Purchase was recorded in October 1783, with the Mississauga relinquishing title to "...all the lands from Toniata or Ongara River [at Gananoque] to a river in the Bay of Quinte within eight leagues of the bottom of the said Bay including all the Islands extending from the lake as far back as a man can travail [sic] in a day...", but the actual extend of the territory remains vague.³³ In return, the Mississauga received gifts, but no guarantee of a perpetual annuity:

"The consideration demanded by the chiefs for the land granted is that all the families belonging to them shall be clothes and that those that have not fusees [massive thread around a spindle] shall receive new ones, some powder, and ball for their winter hunting, as much coarse red cloth as will make about a dozen coats and as many lace hats."³⁴

But the Mississauga did not move to Alderville and Bedford immediately. It was a gradual transition with subsequent land transfers occurring for several years after the Crawford Purchase. They stayed in the Ka'taroh:kwi region and continued to trade food stuffs with the Europeans of the rapidly growing community, now named Kingston, as noted by the Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt in 1790 that, "In the month of September the Indians bring wild rice to Kingston... and yearly four to five hundred pounds of this rice, which several of the inhabitants purchase for their own consumption." Isaac Weld also noted in his writings from 1795 through 1799 that, "... the Mississauguis [sic] keep the inhabitants of Kingston well supplied with fish and game... as well as maple sugar."³⁵ Over time, the Mississaugas were discarded and left to fend for themselves as food supplies ebbed and flowed from both the land and European stores into the early 1800s.

Molly and Joseph Brant however, were awarded significant parcels of land for the allegiance with the British, both strips were located just up the Cataraqui/Rideau River in the location of Rideaucrest Home/Doug Fluher Park toward the The Woolen Mill/Emma Martin Park. Although Joseph continued west across the north shore of Lake Ontario to settle in the area now known as his namesake, Brantford, Molly remained in Kingston until her death in 1796. She remained a devoted Anglican and was the only woman among the fifty-four benefactors who contributed to the building of the first St. George's Church, located on King Street at Johnson Street.³⁶ She was highly regarded and recognized about Ka'taroh'kwi for wearing ancestral traditional clothing made of leather and fur, and continued to meet and host national to international dignitaries as they visited the region.³⁷ Molly Brant is buried in the St. Paul's churchyard on Queen Street.

Indigenous presence and Ka'taroh:kwi today

Although there is little evidence of an Indigenous presence across Ka'taroh:kwi today, there are some points worth noting if you are looking to learn more.

Remnants of Molly Brant

Although Rideaucrest Seniors Residence (175 Rideau St.) currently occupies a stretch of land awarded to Molly Brant in 1783 for her allegiance to the British, you can still take in a plaque at the entrance to the residence offering some more information about Molly, in both English as well as her native Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) language. Another plaque dedicated to her story can be found at St. Paul's Anglican Church (137 Queen St.) in the area of her resting place.



Manidoo Ogitigan

Lake Ontario Park (920 King St. East) is the site of a living public artwork, Manidoo Ogitigan (Spirit Garden) by artist Terence Radford. The garden reflects the journey of the Mississauga Nation and the contemporary cultural identity of Alderville First Nation.

The project's members aimed to acknowledge the Mississauga Ojibway and members of the Anishinaabeg Nation and their long connections to the Kingston region, Bedford Township, Grape Island (Bay of Quinte), and Alnwick (Alderville) at Rice Lake.

Manidoo Ogitigan is intended to function as a symbolic reclamation and physical restoration of the land that explores how the shared experiences of colonization, along with attempts at cultural assimilation, have impacted the living culture of Alderville First Nation.

The artwork presents the history of select wampum belts, the symbolism of the medicine wheel, and a selection of culturally significant food and medicinal plants in a formal layout based on the Alderville Methodist Church. The site includes more than 430 select native plant species, incorporated after consultation with the Alderville Black Oak Savanna, whose mandate is the preservation and restoration of rare grassland habitats.

Manidoo Ogitigan creates an intimate public space for reflection, ceremony, and teaching.

Katarokwi Indigenous Art and Food Market

Every Sunday, summer through early fall, this market runs in in Springer Market Square and features local Indigenous artists, artisans, and musicians. Peruse handcrafted art, jewelry, and clothing for sale. Enjoy freshly made food and take in live music and dancing demonstrations, with different artists featured every week.

Indigenous art and ancestors

The Agnes Etherington Art Centre (36 University Ave.) is home to an extensive Indigenous art collection, comprising significant works in various media by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists as well as international Indigenous artists and communities. Various utilitarian and ceremonial items that were recovered through archaeological means and/or donated from local collectors can also be found in the vaults. The Agnes is closed for renovations until summer 2023.

Ka'tarohkwi Festival of Indigenous Arts

Started in 2019, this annual festival of the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts (390 King St. E) showcases music, film, dance, multimedia, theatre, visual art, and virtual reality stories from the top Indigenous creators across Canada.

Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest (KILN)

In an effort to preserve Indigenous languages local to Ka'taroh:kwi, KILN has been teaching and sharing languages since 2014. Now located at 61 Montreal St., KILN supports language learning, Indigenous cultural revitalization, and community connections.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden

Located in the east end of Kingston on Highway 15, this garden came about as part of Walking the Path of Peace Together, a partnership between the Faith United Church and members of the Kingston Indigenous community. As well as community gardens that feature pollinators, medicine, and food, this project offers a space for ceremonies, gatherings, and cultural and educational programming.

Surrounding communities

To the west of Kingston is Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, located on the shores of the Bay of Quinte. The territory is home to events like the annual Pow Wow and Mohawk Fair, traditionally held in the second week of August.

To the north, the community of Shabot Obaadjiwan - Home First Nation showcases their annual summer weekend of cultural events at the Silver Lake Pow Wow.

To the east of Kingston lies the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne – Proudly Serving All Akwesasronon. A nation that straddles both Canada and the United States, Akwesasne is a thriving community of storytellers, language speakers, and medicinal healers. There is also a Children’s Pow Wow held here early each summer.



Katarokwi Indigenous Art and Food Market





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