

Treaty Primer #1: Whose land are we on?

Since time immemorial the Indigenous history of this region has been cosmopolitan in nature – Nations with diverse populations and complex institutions have existed, and many continue to exist, on this land.

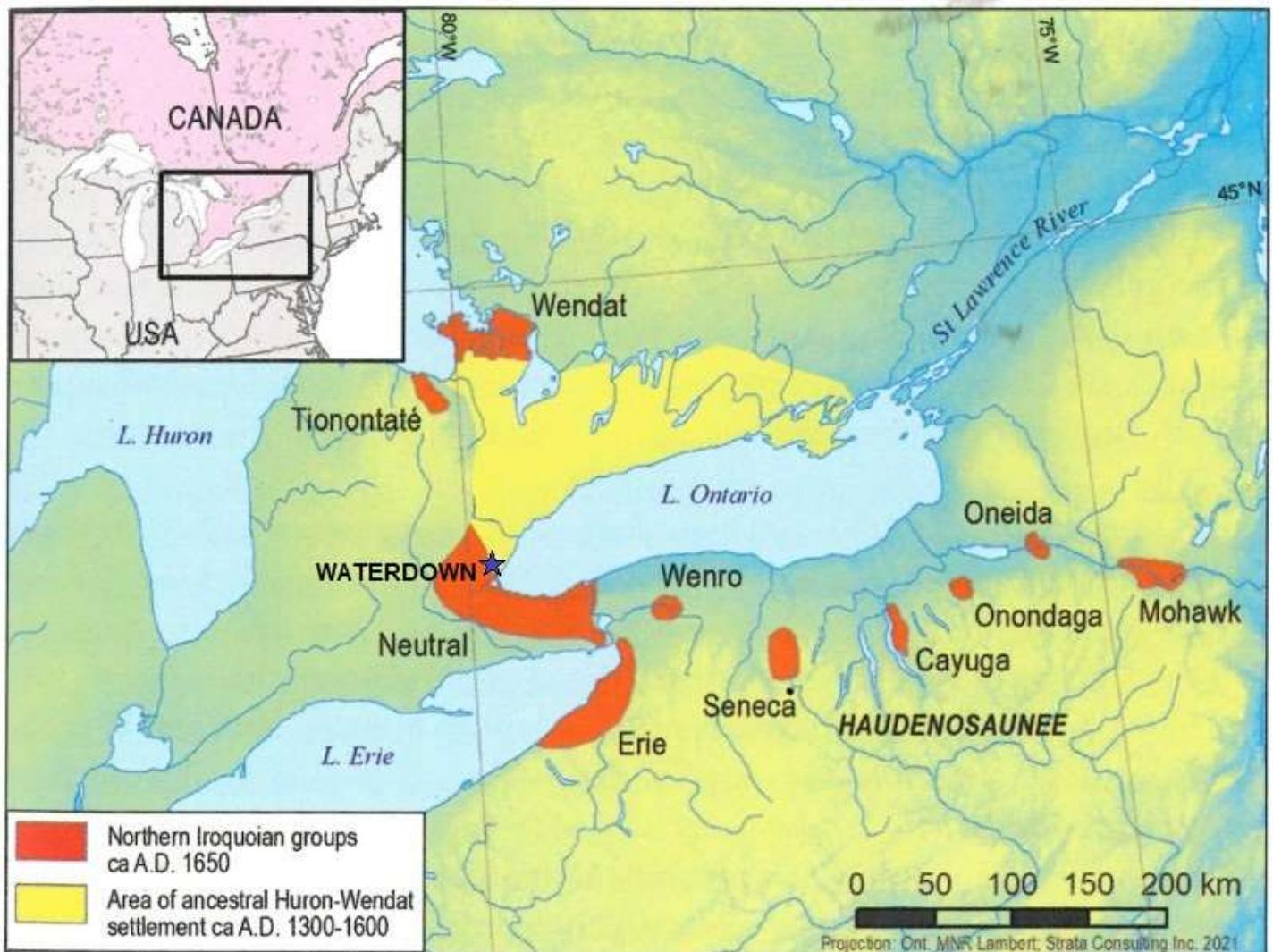


Figure 1.5. Map showing the locations of the Haudenosaunee and Ontario Iroquoian nations at the time of contact, as well as the ancestral territory of the Wendat.

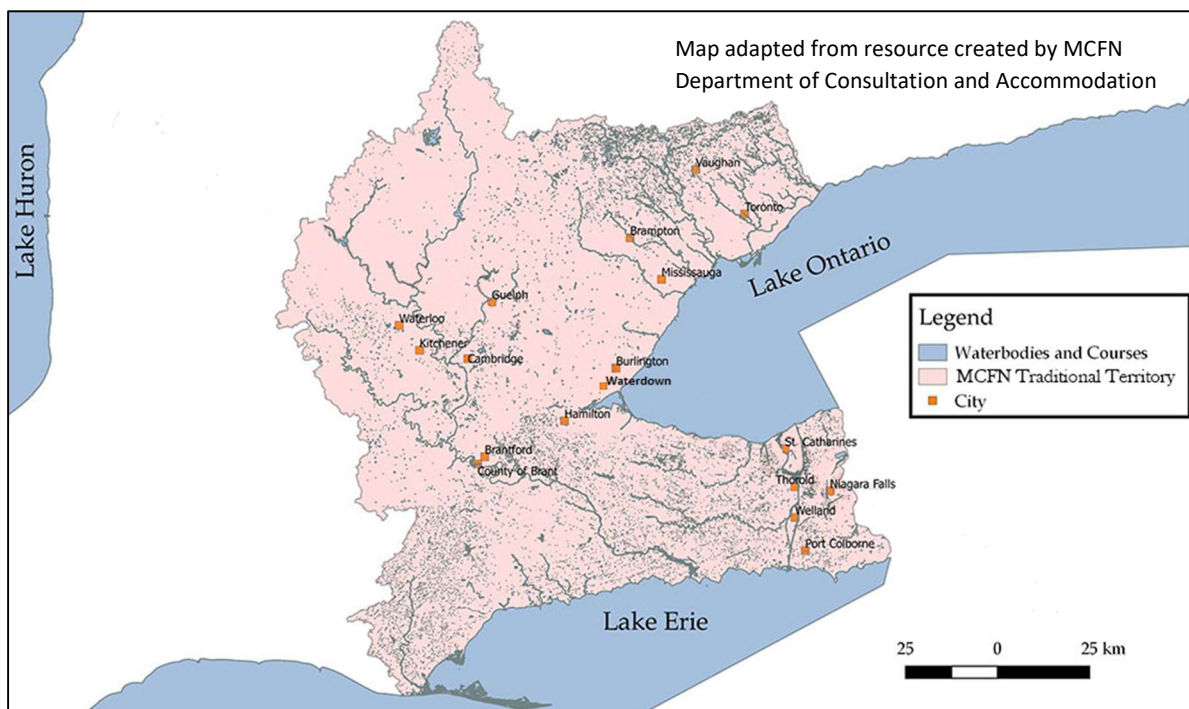
Source: Map by Ron Williamson.

**Iroquoian refers to a language family group. Iroquoian groups spoke different dialects within a common language structure.*

- Following the *Beaver Wars* and the establishment of the **Dish With One Spoon** protocols, the Mississauga Nation came into this land.
- Since the 17th century, the Indigenous nations in this territory have observed the **Dish With One Spoon** which governs their relationships with each other and the land.

Dr. Alan Corbiere provides a lesson about the *Beaver Wars* here: <https://youtu.be/iU42AAqpgzI>

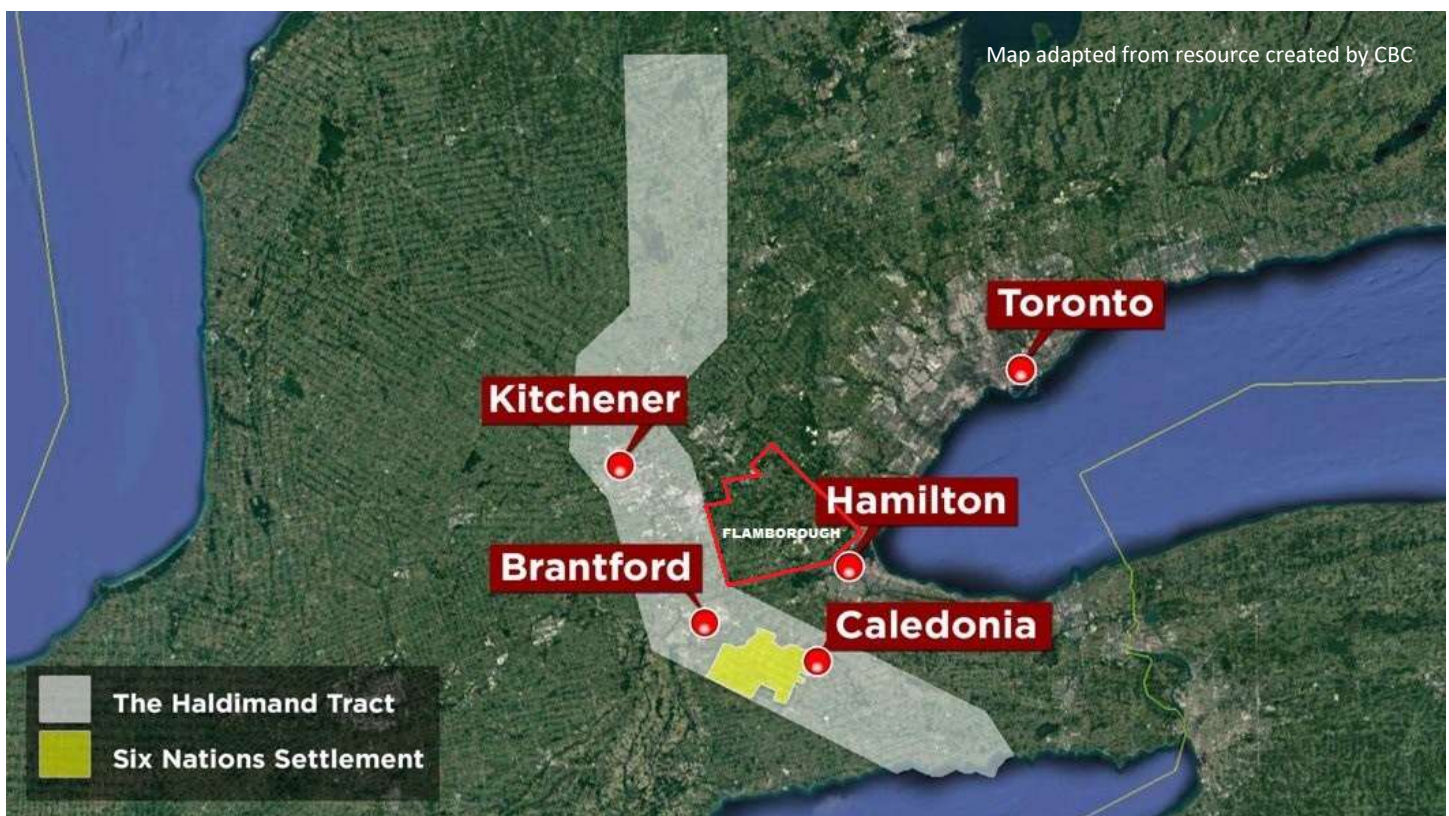
Mississaugas of the Credit: Waterdown is located within the Treaty Territory of the [Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation](#), an Ojibwe/Anishinaabe Nation. Taking up the **Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship** in 1764 (see Treaty Week Primer #2), it was this Nation that the Crown concluded the highly problematic *Treaty*² No.3 (1792) which Europeans saw as allowing for unrestricted settlement of the region. Currently, the Mississaugas of the Credit Nation are based in a reserve outside of Hagersville and are governed by an elected Giima and Council.



² Treaty No.3 (1792) violates the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship. It is often held up as an example of land theft.

- **The Haudenosaunee Confederacy** (a.k.a. The Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy³) have used this territory for millennia - there were Seneca (one of the nations within the Confederacy) communities in Flamborough until the 17th century. While their homeland is located along the southern shores of Lake Ontario, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy interacted with the various nations in this territory, as well as exercised their own hunting rights.

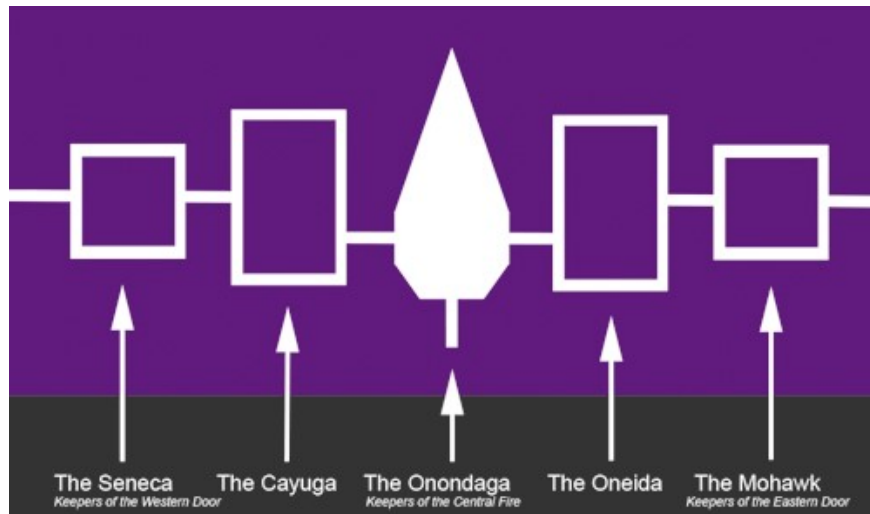
Today, the Haudenosaunee occupy 17 reserve communities that stretch from Ontario and New York State, including along the St. Lawrence. The largest of these is the *Six Nations of the Grand River*, a large territory that encompasses 6-miles on either side of the Grand River from its source to Lake Erie. The occupation of this territory was recognized by Lieutenant Governor Haldimand following the American Revolution (The Haudenosaunee were allies of the Crown during this conflict).⁴ Only 4.6% of the original territory remains intact - if you have heard about [1492 Land Back Lane](#) this is the history being referenced.



³ This identifier is no longer used.

⁴ This territory is sometime referred to as the *Haldimand Tract*. However, Lieutenant Governor Simcoe attested that the Six Nations were only allowed to use the *Haldimand Tract* rather than own or exercise sovereignty over it. His policies allowed blocks of the Haldimand Tract to be illegally tendered, seized, and/or sold without consent of the Haudenosaunee Council of Chiefs or proceeds of any leases to go back to the Six Nations' community.

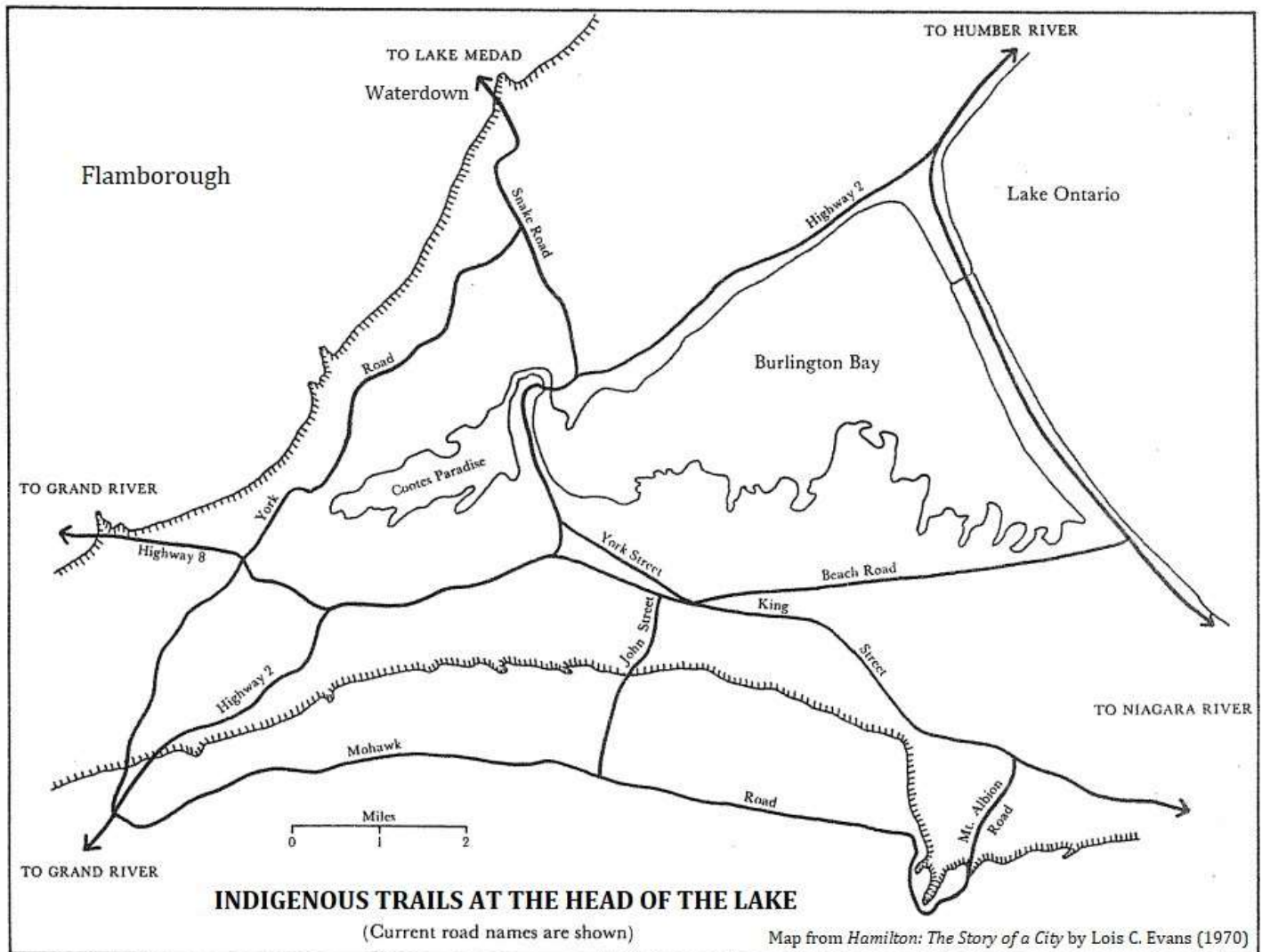
- The Haudenosaunee Confederacy considers itself the world's oldest functioning democracy. In 1924 the Canadian Government tried to overthrow the Confederacy, installing the Elected System imposed by the Indian Act - this is why there are two recognized governments (Elected Council recognized by the Government of Canada, and the Council of Chiefs by the community).
 - A great resource to learn more about the Haudenosaunee can be found here: <https://earthtotables.org/essays/haudeonsaunee-primer/>
 - The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is comprised of many nations, most notably the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and Tuscarora Nations.



The Hiawatha Flag, based on the ancient Hiawatha Wampum, is an important symbol of sovereignty for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The flag was created by Oren Lyons and Rick Hill for the Iroquois Nationals (now Haudenosaunee Nationals) Lacrosse team in preparation for their first international tournament in Australia (1990). To this day, the Haudenosaunee Nationals only travel using their Confederacy's passport.

- **Huron/Wendat Confederacy** - This Confederacy's territory was located to the north of Waterdown and they also made use of this land. The 17th century *Beaver Wars* erupted in this region following the entry of European Nations into Indigenous political relationships. The Huron/Wendat had relationships with the French Crown while the Haudenosaunee were linked to the Dutch and British. The Huron/Wendat Nation was dispersed, many moving to the outskirts of Quebec City (where they remain today), while others were absorbed into the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

- Metis - The Métis emerged from relationships between Europeans and Indigenous People as a distinct Indigenous people and nation in the historic Northwest during the late 18th century.



This map demonstrates how settlers grafted their communities onto pre-existing networks long-established by Indigenous civilizations.

In Kanyen'kehá:ka (Mohawk), the Niagara Escarpment is referred to as Kastenhraktátye (Along the Cliffs) while it is known in Anishinaabemowin as Gchi-Bimadinaa (The Great Cliff The Runs Along).⁵

⁵ Tim Johnson, ed, *The Bruce Trail Reference: Edition 30*, (The Bruce Trail Conservancy, 2023), 11-2.