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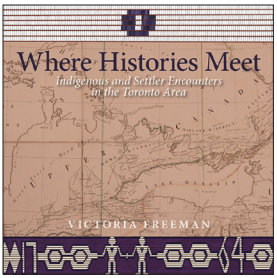

WHERE HISTORIES MEET: INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER ENCOUNTERS IN THE TORONTO AREA

Victoria Freeman

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17

Defending the Crown

Anishinaabe decisions about where to relocate and the resolution of issues concerning the mills at Coldwater were complicated by the outbreak of the rebellion in Upper Canada, led by William Lyon Mackenzie, in 1837.

Mackenzie had many supporters east and west of Yonge Street to the north of Toronto, especially settlers who came from the United States before the War of 1812, including families of German and Irish heritage.[1] Well-established farmers and artisans, they believed British immigrants were favoured by the government. They felt discriminated against and were angry about the long-running alien controversy, which relegated them to second-class status and labelled them "residents of dubious loyalty." Farmers resented that many Clergy Reserve road allowances had yet to be cleared, impeding travel, while they were required to clear their own before receiving the deeds to their land.[2] Reformers resented and criticized the power of the Family Compact; they accused its members (including the Robinsons) of lining their own pockets, advancing friends, and controlling government through the appointed Executive Council. When reform by the elected Legislative Assembly appeared to be blocked, some turned to more radical action.

Daniel Stong sided with Mackenzie in the uprising when it broke out on December 4.[3] The related family of Joseph Shepard had close connections to Mackenzie. Shepard was Mackenzie's close friend and nominated him several times for election in York County. Although Shepard died a few months before the rebellion, all four of his sons participated. His farm was used as a staging area for the seven hundred to eight hundred farmers who, on December 7, went south to Montgomery's Tavern on Yonge Street with the intent to march south to Toronto (York was renamed and incorporated as a city in 1834) to seize a government arms cache.

Shepard's wife, Catherine Fisher, daughter of Jacob Fisher Sr. and aunt of Elizabeth Fisher Stong, tied strips of cloth around their arms to identify them to one another.[4] Before the rebellion, the Shepard boys went four or five times to their uncle Jake Fisher's farm in Vaughan to drill with muskets. A family mill—"an old structure a short distance in the rear of Gibson's farm, known as Shepard's mill"—had long been "a secret rendezvous for the radicals of the neighbourhood."[5]

One thousand militia sent from Toronto quickly put down the initial uprising and arrested some of the ringleaders. Mackenzie escaped to Buffalo, New York. An unconfirmed story suggests Daniel Stong was arrested and held in jail while Elizabeth Fisher Stong cared for their eight children.[6] Her relatives, Thomas and Michael Shepard, were captured at the home of the Silverthorne family in Etobicoke.[7] Although they were sent to Kingston to await deportation to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), they made a daring escape from Fort Henry to the United States. Their brothers, Joseph Shepard II and Jacob, were imprisoned on December 11 and released on May 12.[8] Mackenzie's good friend John Cummer was also arrested but released, while Samuel Cummer was drafted into the government's forces and locked up all night.[9] MacKenzie's printing press was apparently hidden in a dried-up well on Joshua Cummer's farm. Although two rebel leaders were hanged, Daniel Stong and Elizabeth Fisher's relations were all released. Everyone but Mackenzie received a general pardon in 1845.

Chippewa and Mississauga settlements to the north of Toronto were well located to help the Crown defend against the rebels, particularly since the loyalty of settlers in the Home District was uncertain, the militia was depleted, and Bond Head had sent regular troops to put down the Lower Canada rebellion.[10] Superintendent Anderson sent twenty-one warriors under Assance to Holland Landing, and militia captain Gerald Alley led an unknown number of Chippewas out to Yonge Street in the first days of the rebellion. Runners contacted other warriors in their hunting grounds, and on December 10, twenty Potawatomi warriors under Waukai joined them. On December 12, six warriors arrived from the Narrows under Chief Nainigishkung; thirteen more arrived the next day, followed by twelve Potawatomi under Chief Waubekan. In total, ninety Anishinaabek served at Holland Landing.[11] Because of the warriors' stereotyped reputation for ferocity, their presence suppressed rebel activity far more easily than the regular militia would have, especially since the militia's loyalty was not assured.[12]

Given the recent upheaval and protest over the surrender of their lands, why did the Chippewas and Mississaugas support the government? Anishinaabe involvement may have reflected broader tensions with farmers and ongoing efforts to secure government support. Chiefs and warriors may have felt obliged to heed the Indian agent's call or to honour their alliance with the Crown, despite the Crown's frequent failure to uphold its side of the relationship.

There could also be a practical motive. Because of changes to government present giving, most Indigenous men had no working guns by 1837. They needed to hunt to provide food, particularly since their fields had not been sown the previous summer.[13] Warriors who joined in the government's defence were issued guns and were promised they could keep them as well as clothing and rations after their service.

They were also willing to defend the government—or at least the Crown—"to preclude the possibility of annexation by the United States and the imposition of a massive removal policy

similar to the one that was underway south of the border." Although the uprising was put down within days, American incursions into Upper Canada by rebel supporters led to fears of an invasion in the spring of 1838. Successful American attacks were mounted at Point Pelee in Lake Erie and on islands in the Detroit and Niagara Rivers; there were also pirate raids along the St. Clair frontier. It was feared that the Americans would try a reverse attack by landing at Penetanguishene and marching south to link up with rebels at Lloydtown and Newmarket.[14] The Chippewas and Mississaugas likely hoped their demonstrated loyalty would support their assertions that the government was obligated to assist them and treat them generously.[15]

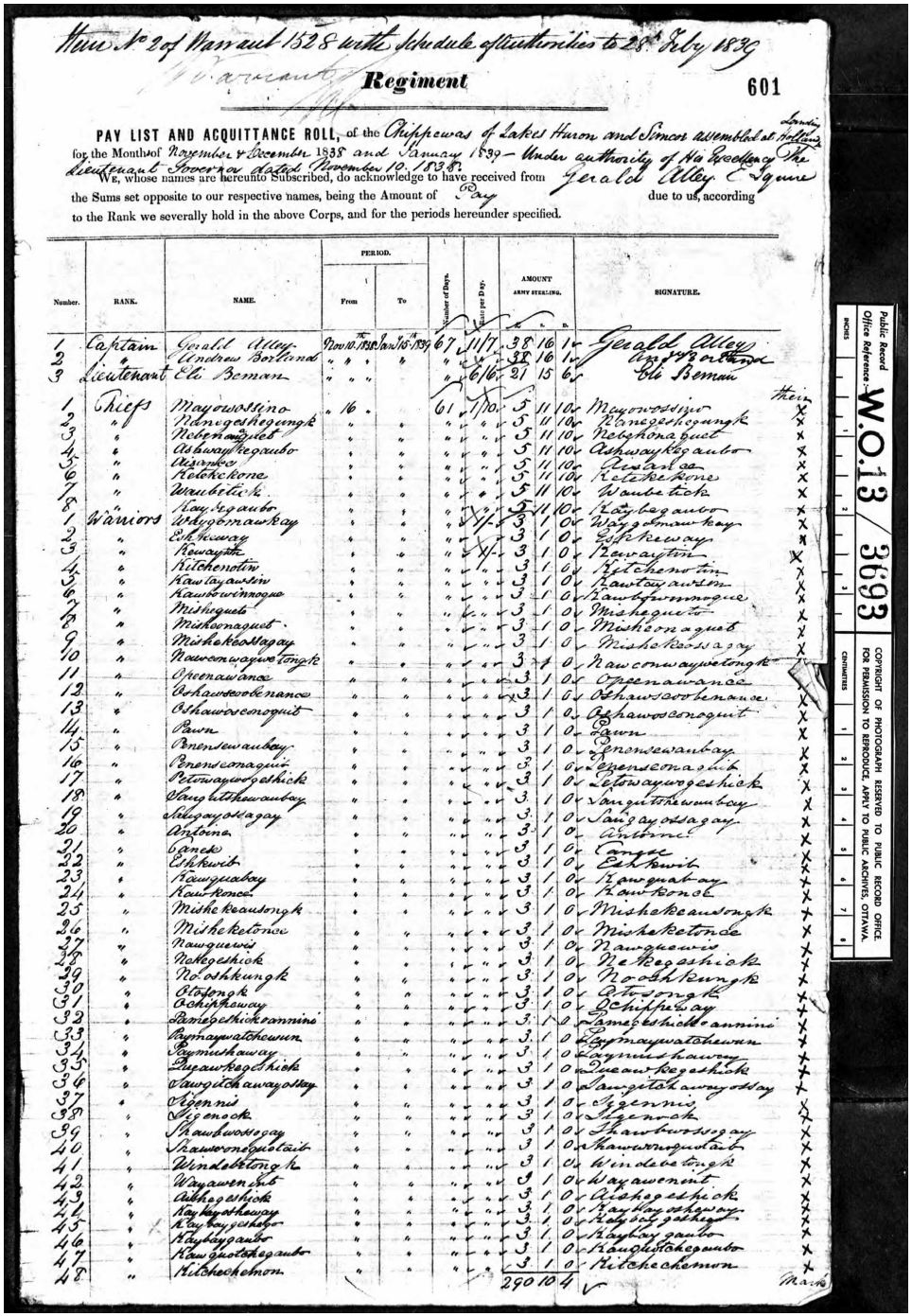
During the rebellion, the government downplayed ongoing conflict over ownership of the mills for fear of alienating the Anishinaabek, whose loyalty was an open question. Local militia leaders recognized the necessity of maintaining an alliance with the Chippewas, so it was only during periods when the threat of insurrection and American invasion subsided that the thorny issue was raised. The Anishinaabek's Methodist supporters, hoping that the government's reliance on Indigenous warriors might make it more receptive, demanded that Lord Glenelg, secretary of the Colonies, issue title deeds. Samuel Peters Jarvis, the new chief superintendent of the Indian Department, was strongly opposed.[16]

As the likelihood of an American invasion faded, the Indian Department approved a rental proposal for the Coldwater mill and its surrounding land from two settlers, Miles Stennett and Mr. Barret. Lease terms were drafted without consulting the Chippewas. Chief Assance told Stennett the mills had not been given up and asked him to leave. Stennett claimed someone named Fan-gai-win-e-ne (likely Taugaiwinini, the Potaganesee speaker) incited the Chippewas to set fire to the mills rather than hand them over. The mills were damaged and some of the surrounding buildings dismantled. The Indian Department threatened that Assance would be held financially accountable. White settlers from five surrounding townships petitioned Jarvis to not allow the Anishinaabek to keep the mill.[17]

Nothing came of this confrontation because in November 1838 there were renewed fears of a US invasion, and the Chippewas were again needed to defend the colony. All the Indigenous Nations south of the Severn were organized into militia units. Captain Alley was ordered to gather all the Chiefs and warriors from Lakes Huron and Simcoe, and Saugeen at Holland Landing, where they'd be outfitted and supplied with ammunition and provisions. Nearly 170 warriors were placed under the command of Alley, Andrew Borland, and Lieutenant Eli Beman. Warriors from the Credit and Six Nations were also called out, and many warriors served at posts throughout the province in November and December 1838 and into January 1839.[18]

> *I've heard of gatherings in Holland Landing for the Rebellion. There's a list of our men who were there. I think it was 147 or so Anishinaabe men who were at*

Pay list of Chiefs and Warriors from Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe at Holland Landing, 1839 | National Archives of Great Britain, PRO War Office, 13/3693, folio 601



Vide No 2 of Warrant 1528 with Schedule of Authorities to 28th Feby 1839

Regiment

601

PAY LIST AND ACQUITTANCE ROLL, of the Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe assembled at Holland Landing for the Months of November & December 1838 and January 1839 – Under authority of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor dated November 10. 1838.

We, whose names are hereunto Subscribed, do acknowledge to have received from Gerald Alley Esquire the Sums set opposite to our respective names, being the Amount of Pay due to us, according to the Rank we severally hold in the above Corps, and for the periods hereunder specified.

Number.	RANK.	NAME.	PERIOD. From	PERIOD. To	Number of Days.	Number per Day.	AMOUNT ARMY STERLING. £	s.	d.	SIGNATURE.
1	Captain	Gerald Alley	9th Nov 10. 1838	8th Jan 28th 1839	67	1	38	16	1	Gerald Alley
2	"	Andrew Borland	"	"	"	1	38	16	1	Andrew Borland
3	Lieutenant	Eli Beman	"	"	"	1/6	21	15	6	Eli Beman
1	Chiefs	Mayowossino	"	16	61	1/10	5	11	10	Mayowossino
2	"	Manegeshegungk	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Manegeshegungk
3	"	Nebenaquet	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Nebenaquet
4	"	Ashwaykegaubo	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Ashwaykegaubo
5	"	Assinko	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Assinko
6	"	Ketoketone	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Ketoketone
7	"	Wambetick	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Wambetick
8	"	Kaygegaubo	"	"	"	"	5	11	10	Kaygegaubo
1	Warriors	Wabigomaukay	"	"	"	1/	3	1	0	Wabigomaukay
2	"	Ekkeway	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Ekkeway
3	"	Rewaytin	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Rewaytin
4	"	Kitchenotin	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kitchenotin
5	"	Kawtayawsin	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kawtayawsin
6	"	Kawbowinnogue	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kawbowinnogue
7	"	Mishequet	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Mishequet
8	"	Mishenaquet	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Mishenaquet
9	"	Mishekeossagay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Mishekeossagay
10	"	Nawconwayjuetongk	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Nawconwayjuetongk
11	"	Openawance	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Openawance
12	"	Oshawsookenance	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Oshawsookenance
13	"	Oshawsenoquet	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Oshawsenoquet
14	"	Pawn	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Pawn
15	"	Onenswaubay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Onenswaubay
16	"	Penenseniaquis	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Penenseniaquis
17	"	Petowaywogeshick	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Petowaywogeshick
18	"	Vaughitkewaubay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Vaughitkewaubay
19	"	Nebgayossagay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Saugayossagay
20	"	Antoine	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Antoine
21	"	Canoe	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Canoe
22	"	Ekkewit	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Ekkewit
23	"	Kawguabay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kawguabay
24	"	Kawbence	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kawbence
25	"	Mishekeausongk	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Mishekeausongk
26	"	Mishketonce	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Mishketonce
27	"	Nauguewis	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Nauguewis
28	"	Nekegeshick	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Nekegeshick
29	"	Noshkungk	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Noshkungk
30	"	Otosongk	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Otosongk
31	"	Ochipkeway	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Ochipkeway
32	"	Pamegeshickrammini	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Pamegeshickrammini
33	"	Paymaywatchewun	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Paymaywatchewun
34	"	Paymuskaway	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Paymuskaway
35	"	Pupawkegeshick	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Pupawkegeshick
36	"	Pawgitchawayoskay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Pawgitchawayoskay
37	"	Pegonnis	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Pegonnis
38	"	Pegenock	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Pegenock
39	"	Shawbwossogay	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Shawbwossogay
40	"	Shawsonequbtait	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Shawsonequbtait
41	"	Windebetongk	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Windebetongk
42	"	Wayawennt	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Wayawennt
43	"	Ashkegeshick	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Ashkegeshick
44	"	Kaykaygeshaway	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kaykaygeshaway
45	"	Kaykaygeshabo	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kaykaygeshabo
46	"	Kaybaygaubo	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kaybaygaubo
47	"	Kawquotchegaubo	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kawquotchegaubo
48	"	Kitchechemon	"	"	"	"	3	1	0	Kitchechemon
							290	10	4	

Public Record Office Reference W.O. 13/3693

Holland Landing trying to stop all these angry people from overthrowing the government.

—Ben Cousineau, Chippewas of Rama[19]

We look at a militia role document from the Rebellion of 1837. And who's there? The whole New Credit band list. Well, not New Credit, pardon me. The Credit River people are on there.

—Darin Wybenga, Mississaugas of the Credit[20]

When the threat of invasion receded, Jarvis summoned Chiefs Musquakie and Assance to Toronto to discuss the mills. The warriors at Holland Landing had not yet been disbanded. While in Toronto, Assance made no promise to hand over the mills, and Alley suggested the matter be dropped because the Chippewas' military support was too valuable to lose. Alley told Jarvis: "I well know the disposition of J. Aisance . . . I have not the slightest power to change the determination of John Aisance or his band in this local affair—His answer has been repeatedly given in a similar way, and I am obliged to confess that, I should fear the result of strong measures at this critical moment."[21]

However, Assance was eventually brought together with Stennett in Toronto, and Jarvis somehow extracted a Doodem signature from Assance on a document affirming Stennett and Barret's possession of the Coldwater mill and outbuildings, through unknown means.[22] Assance, Musquakie, and other Chiefs of Rama, Coldwater, and Snake Island insisted the Chippewas had not given up ownership.[23]

In January 1839, the government disbanded Indigenous military units at Holland Landing, and rations continued only until the month's end. Losing military employment in the middle of winter was deeply distressing to the warriors and worried their commanders. Alley was concerned they'd be hunting in townships that were disloyal.[24] Andrew Borland wrote to Alley:

> Since your absence the Indians have been Complaining most bitterly that they should be called out for so short a time Comming many of them a long distance to serve their Queen & Country & their pay to be stoped at so early period it is going to leave them destitute of means to return to their places from whence they started, they say if their great Mother sends them off in this way, their familys must starve, before they can reach their Hunting grounds, & not only that, but calling them out at that Season of the year, has destroy the means of their making a living for the remaining part of the Winter, notwithstanding those difacultys they are always ready to serve their great Mother when called upon, but they hope their father at Toronto will make some further provision for them.[25]

To make matters worse, Jarvis tried to make the warriors return the weapons they had been issued, an extremely unpopular move, as they needed the guns to hunt. In the face of rising discontent, Jarvis was forced to abandon this policy. Indigenous groups were thus able to leverage the 1837 uprising to secure new weapons at a critical time, while also fighting against possible US annexation and the threat of a removal policy similar to that experienced by Indigenous peoples south of the border.[26]

As historian Rhonda Telford notes, "On a per capita basis, many more Native people defended the province than did peoples of other origins . . . The Chippewas and Mississaugas played a significant and unique role in the defence of the Home District, one of the most troubled with pockets of rebel activity."[27]

Where to Go?

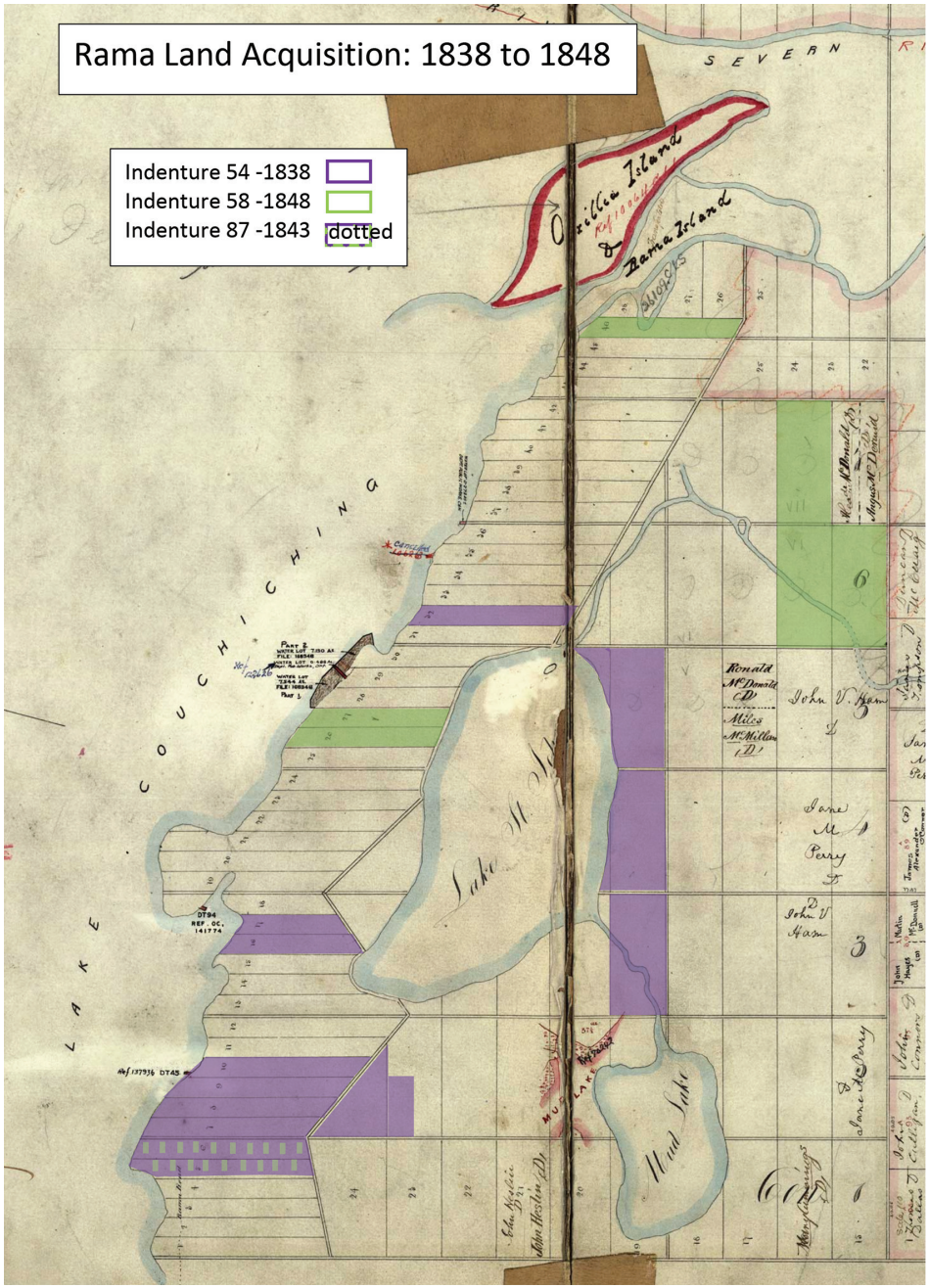
Bond Head's removal policy, unpopular with the Colonial Office, was abandoned after Bond Head was recalled to Britain in early 1838. Notwithstanding the Chippewas' demonstration of loyalty, the surrender of the Coldwater-Narrows Reserve was allowed to stand, and the Chippewas had to leave their homes. Anishinaabe scholar Darrel Manitowabi wrote in 2007, "For 170 years the Anishinaabeg have refuted the validity of this claim."[28]

In June 1838, Jarvis, the newly appointed chief superintendent of Indian affairs, wrote to the secretary of George Arthur, the new lieutenant-governor, to report that the majority of the Chippewas of the Coldwater-Narrows Reserve did not want to go to Manitoulin Island. Instead, they hoped to relocate as near as possible to their villages:

> With this view the tribe has proposed to purchase about 1000 acres of land on the east side of Lake Simcoe in the Township of Rama, for the accommodation of the principal Chief "Yellow Head," and his followers, the remainder under "John Assance" the Second Chief removing to the mouth of the River Severn where they already possess a tract of Land and Saw Mill.
>
> By this arrangement the Public High Way between the Narrows and Cold Water will cease to pass through an Indian Settlement, which I am of opinion will very soon become the residences of Industrious Farmers.[29]

In 1839, white settlers petitioned the government to remove the Chippewas. They quickly bought up the land and acquired the houses and barns of the former Narrows Village.

> *They'd cleaned it up, and they'd started growing stuff, and they were doing so good that the government took it all back off them and gave it to the settlers. Because it was a good place to grow stuff, "Natives shouldn't be living on that. It's too good for them."*
>
> —Andrew Big Canoe, Chippewas of Georgina Island[30]



Extract of plan of Rama Township, 1856. Coloured annotations by Laurie Leclair show lots purchased for the Chippewas of Rama Reserve. The red outlined island is not part of the reserve | Ontario Archives, RG1-100-0-0-2359

Titus Hibbert Ware, *Indian Village at Rama, Lake Couchiching,* 1844 | Toronto Public Library, PICTURES-R-211

With their portion of the annuities being shared with the bands led by Assance and Snake, Musquakie's people purchased 1,600 acres in Rama Township on the east side of Lake Couchiching across the lake from their former village and moved there in the summer of 1839.[31] The land consisted of several farms separated by land owned by speculators. The farms had been cleared but abandoned by white settlers. The soil was rocky or swampy, and the speculators had refused to cooperate in building a road. The purchase is part of contemporary oral memory.

Once that 10,000 acres between the Narrow and Coldwater was surrendered, we had no land now. The rest of our 3 million acres in the area was surrendered in 1816 and 1818. So, from there, we are basically homeless. We're squatters. And we kind of move to the Narrows. Some go to Chief Island. And a couple of years later, we start to . . . actually, Chief Yellowhead buys up land in Rama Township, which was basically abandoned farmland from the non-Indigenous War of 1812 veterans.

—Ben Cousineau, Chippewas of Rama[32]

The guy we buy the land from is the guy that led the petition to get us off the Coldwater-Narrows Reservation. There was a petition signed by fifty prominent, well-to-do, connected British Anglicans. But meanwhile, he owns all this land here in Rama Township that's not been assigned to various soldiers or has been collected back. He's got this piece of land for sale. And Rama is one of the only three reservations in all of Canada that supposedly went and bought our own land. And then they deemed that we were children, and we didn't really deserve to own it. We'd bought and paid for it.

—Mark Douglas, Chippewas of Rama[33]

They wanted the good farmland. That's why they sent us out here to farm rocks.

—Sherry Lawson, Chippewas of Rama[34]

On the biggest farm, the Indian Department constructed twelve houses (housing two families each), barns, and a schoolhouse, and it distributed farm implements and tools. By 1839, 184 Chippewas and one of the Methodist missionaries from Narrows had moved to the new reserve. Musquakie's people rebuilt their lives and community and became known as the Chippewas of Rama.

Coldwater Mill Museum | Photo by Victoria Freeman

Mnjikaning is our traditional name. We changed in 2010 from Mnjikaning back to Rama. There is a split in the community, and I think it goes back to religion, where people didn't like the word "Mnjikaning" because it was, in their words, too hard to say, too hard to spell, and they didn't understand the meaning of it. When, if you read a bit of history or understand any language, you know that the word is important to us. And not just us, but across Indigenous peoples in Ontario.

—Ben Cousineau, Chippewas of Rama[35]

In 1840, a new Methodist missionary, the Reverend Sylvester Hurlburt, wrote of the legacy of the move:

> After they had laboured on these lands, under great disadvantages, for some years, and then to be driven out unceremoniously as they were, or rather forced to surrender them, could not but have an unfavourable effect. To see white men, who are strangers in the country, come into the possession of their houses and lands, without, as yet, their getting any remuneration, and themselves obliged to seek a habitation elsewhere must cause feeling, deep feeling, and though a small portion of land has been granted in another place, but as they have no title for it, dissatisfaction is still felt and fears are entertained that the same act of injustice may be repeated whenever the cupidity of white men may lead them to covet their present location.[36]

Although Assance's people stayed at Coldwater a bit longer and the Chief wanted to settle at the mouth of the Severn River, where they had land and a sawmill, many members of the band moved to Beausoleil Island in Georgian Bay and later to Christian Island, where the land was better for farming.[37] Today, they are known as Beausoleil First Nation. After the Chippewas relocated to Beausoleil, Miles Stennett took over the Coldwater mill, but it's unclear if the Chippewas received payments.

In 1845, Musquakie complained that they hadn't received payments for three years.[38] In 1849, the Chippewas sold the Coldwater gristmill to prominent businessman and mill owner George Copeland (who also took over the Coldwater sawmill). Copeland hired Jacob Gill's son John to operate it and John's brother Joseph to manufacture flour barrels and casks. The mill went through various owners and renovations, ceasing operations in 1994. Today, it's a museum.

Chief Snake's Band moved back to their islands on Lake Simcoe, where they had lived before moving to the Narrows. Today, they are known as the Chippewas of Georgina Island. A few others moved to the Saugeen Tract and Manitoulin Island.

So our people lived on Snake Island, and that was after our people were expelled and tricked out of our land at Coldwater.

—Kory Snache, Chippewas of Rama[39]

In 1991, a land claim was launched by the Chippewa Tri-Council and Chippewas of Nawash with reference to the cession of the Coldwater-Narrows Reserve. The Coldwater-Narrows claim concerned "the alleged surrender of the reserve in 1836 and the subsequent sale of those lands. The basis of the claim is that the alleged 1836 surrender of the reserve was invalid because it was conducted improperly and that the land was then sold below its value and in an untimely fashion."[40] The $307 million Coldwater-Narrows Land Claim Settlement Agreement was accepted by First Nations in 2012.