
Potawatomi Relations with British and American Governance

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Potawatomi Relations with British and American Governance

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Introduction:

“On the far end of the Trail of Tears was a promise. ... Because Congress has not said otherwise, we hold the government to its word.”¹

- *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, 140 S. Ct. 2452, (2020)

“Oral tradition is our history. I believe our oral tradition is the same as our language, which is teaching. Once our oral history and language are gone, then we’re gone. No more language, no more Potawatomi, no more world to us.”²

- Gary Morseau, Chair of the Pokagon Band’s Food Sovereignty Committee, (2021)

Do issues of Native American sovereignty still matter? They certainly did during the era of European colonialism in North America when the French and British traded and fought with Native Americans across the continent. They also did during the United States’ early years, and especially during the removal period of the 1830s when the American government sought to push tribes further west off their ancestral lands. But are these questions relevant anymore? It is tempting to view them as relics of the past, but one needs only to look at *McGirt v. Oklahoma* to realize how significant questions of sovereignty remain to Native and non-Native peoples alike.

McGirt is a landmark Supreme Court case that was decided in 2020 which holds that the Muscogee (Creek) Reservation still exists in eastern Oklahoma as well as smaller reservations of the Cherokee, Seminole, Chickasaw, Choctaw tribes. Even though “Oklahoma began acting as though the reservation was no more” over a century ago, Congress never took any formal action to disestablish the reservation, so the state of Oklahoma was unable to prosecute Jimcy McGirt for his later crimes on the reservation.³ According to the majority decision, this authority lay solely with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation—because McGirt is a Muscogee citizen whose alleged crimes occurred on Muscogee territory. The implications of this decision are enormous. This

¹ *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, 140 S. Ct. 2452, 2459 (2020).

² Morseau, G. (2021, December 8). Personal communication [Personal interview].

³ Berger, B. (2021) “McGirt v. Oklahoma and the Past, Present, and Future Reservation Boundaries,” *U. Pa. L. Rev. Online*, 169, 253.

long-forgotten reservation now is recognized to “cover 3.25 million acres” with an additional “one million Oklahomans liv[ing] on an Indian reservation, including 400,000 in the city of Tulsa.”⁴

It is difficult to overestimate the magnitude of the Supreme Court making such a recognition. While the full implications of the decision remain to be seen, and questions remain about specific state, federal, and tribal jurisdictions, Indian Country is right to rejoice after this ruling. The United States has a history of “acquiesc[ing] and fail[ing] to support Indian nations,” so the tribes involved were far from confident that the decision would go their way.⁵ Throughout its relationships with Native tribes, the United States has constantly taken advantage of tribes in treaties and in the court system, so tribal governments are rightfully cautious that they “can win simply by relying on the word of the United States.”⁶ This time, though, the tribes won. *McGirt* demonstrates that Native sovereignty will not go away.

At its core, *McGirt* is about the relationship between Native peoples, Native nations, and the American state. As much as assimilationist voices in the history of the United States may have hoped, Native peoples and Native nations will not silently accede to becoming just another thread in the American tapestry. With this contemporary interest in mind, my thesis is an effort to improve our understanding of how the American state has engaged with Native nations. I do this by focusing on a key period in American history, and by looking at American Indian policy in contrast to British Indian policy with the *Neshnabek* people in the Old Northwest.⁷

⁴ Miller, R., & Dolan T. (2021). “The Indian Law Bombshell: *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.” *Boston University Law Review*, 101:2049, 2051.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2102.

⁶ Reese, E. A. (2020). “Welcome to the Maze: Race, Justice, and Jurisdiction in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.” *University of Chicago Law Review Online*, 4.

⁷ The Potawatomi call themselves the *Neshnabek*, meaning “the Original People.” Low, J. (2015). “The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians: A History and Introduction to the Community through Text and Images” (PDF). *Self-published*, p. 2.
https://americanindianstudies.osu.edu/sites/americanindianstudies.osu.edu/files/Pokagon%20website%202015%20final_0.pdf

But this relationship has two sides: it is not simply a matter of America deciding and Indian country accepting. I will also be focusing, then, on *Neshnabek* reactions to American and British colonialism and the eventual removal period in the 1830s. This thesis explores the differences between British and American Indian policy from 1754 until 1841 with a particular focus on the Potawatomi tribe. It also examines the various strategies and responses of three Potawatomi villages as they were pressured to leave their homeland. 1754-1841 is a particularly illuminative period in Potawatomi history because these dates mark two key moments for the nation and bracket a third and fourth: its alliance with French against the British in the war of 1754; its shift in allegiance in allying with the British against the Americans in the War of 1812; its forceful removal by the United States government along the Potawatomi Trail of Death in 1838; and Judge Epaphroditus Ransom's confirmation of the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi's legal right to remain in their homeland in 1841.⁸

Questions and Hypotheses

In this project, I will examine Potawatomi engagement with—and resistance to—the British and American colonial powers. I have two main objectives. I want to better understand the difference between British and American Indian policy, and I want to better understand why separate Potawatomi villages behaved differently to these policies. Specifically, I hope to answer: How and why did British and American Indian policy differ from 1754 until 1841? Why were their incentive structures different? When and how did the Pokagon, Kikito, and Menominee Potawatomi villages resist removal and when did they, if they ever, finally accept it?

I am interested in the incentives and actions of the British, Americans, and the Potawatomi. My first hypothesis investigates why British and American Indian policy differed by exploring their divergent military capabilities. My second hypothesis considers the role of

⁸ The Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi is also known as the *Pokégnek Bodéwadmik*. See Low (2015).

geography, available resources, and relational aspects between the Potawatomi and American government to explain when and why some bands left and others did not.

H1: British and American Indian policy differed because the British had a smaller relative military capability than the United States had in the region of the Potawatomi during this period.

Richard White posits that Britain never had the military numbers to compel the Great Lakes Indians, but America did by the early 1800s, which is why Britain sought a “middle ground” compromise and why America did not.⁹ I suspect that since Britain eventually did engage in settler colonialism by removing First Nations in Canada on to reserves and annexing vast stretches of Native territory, they then would have done the same to the Potawatomi once they were strong enough. The British could have compelled the Potawatomi to join their military or forced them to give up their furs. I believe they had to trade and negotiate with the Potawatomi since they could not force them to give them what they wanted. The military capability of the United States, however, far exceeded the British military capability later in this period. The United States’ relationship with the Potawatomi first started with agreements and treaties since the US was still weak after the Revolutionary War and wanted to remain at peace. Once the British were largely expelled from the Old Northwest after the War of 1812 and American military forces increased, the United States started to forcefully remove the Potawatomi. Thus, I believe that relative military capability was the deciding factor between British and American Indian policy.

H2: The Kikito, Pokagon, and Menominee Potawatomi villages resisted removal differently due to their geographic locations, available resources, and leaders’

⁹ White, R. (2011). *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires & Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. xii, 33, 52.

relationship with the American government. The villages accepted removal when rapidly increasing white settlement, the lack of needed resources, and the increasingly superior military might of the United States made forced removal seemingly inevitable.

James Clifton and R. David Edmunds explain how various villages of the Potawatomi combatted removal in different ways from military conflict to adaptive resistance through treaties or trade.¹⁰ I suspect that the various bands reacted differently to the threat of removal based on their geography because white settlement would take time to reach the bands farther out west, and the United States differed on which land it most desired to take. Moreover, I suspect that many Potawatomi left their territory because American Indian policy made it more difficult for them to survive off the land, and they feared starvation. I believe that tribal leaders who had more harmonious relationships with the American government would have a greater chance of resisting removal, and they would lean into these relationships to avoid removal. Since both the Pokagon and Menominee villages practiced Catholicism at the time of their removal, something beyond religion had to play a role in their decision-making, and I imagine that Pokagon's adaptive resistance as compared to Menominee's outright resistance contributed to both of their fates.

Potawatomi Background

I was drawn to this question because of the Pokagon Band's proximity to my school, the University of Notre Dame, and because the Pokagon Band represents a curious anomaly in the history of American colonialism since they successfully resisted removal and currently remain in

¹⁰ Clifton, J. (1977). *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965*. The Regents Press of Kansas; Clifton, J. (1984). *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley*. New York: Lanham; Edmunds, R. (1972). "The Prairie Potawatomi Removal of 1833." *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 68, No. 3, pp. 240-253; Edmunds, R. (1978). *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

their ancestral homeland. The two other villages I focus on are Kikito's Potawatomi village in Illinois, who opted to voluntarily remove in 1833, although the removal was more coerced than voluntary, and Menominee's Potawatomi village in Indiana, who were removed by military force on the Trail of Death in 1838.¹¹ I believe that understanding the conditions that led one village to successfully remain and that led two other villages to be removed voluntarily and forcibly will help explain why and when Native American tribes were removed. The bands of the Potawatomi were removed separately to different areas several times. Besides the Pokagon Band, who live in southern Michigan currently, the eight other recognized bands—the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, the Forest County Potawatomi Community, the Hannahville Indian Community, the Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (Gun Lake), the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, the Walpole Island First Nation, and the Wasauksing First Nation Council—reside today in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Canada, Michigan, and Kansas. They previously were villages scattered throughout Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin with a loosely defined political and social structure that still belonged to a “larger, inclusive tribal organization.”¹² The Potawatomi had no overarching chief; instead, each village had several leaders tasked with a variety of responsibilities. For example, they had *wkema*, who were civic chiefs, and *ogema*, who were war chiefs, and intratribal decisions were often decided by a consensus of tribal members.¹³ The bands that are currently recognized were formed because of the removal period when the Potawatomi were shepherded to the west, fled the United States, or remained in their homeland.

Answers to the earlier questions are important because they can highlight when and why Native tribes in general allied themselves with colonial powers and when and why they fought

¹¹ Kikito is also spelled Quiquito, and Menominee is spelled Menomini in numerous academic sources.

¹² Clifton (1977), pp. 23-24.

¹³ Ibid., p. 276; Low (2015), p. 47.

with colonial powers. The Potawatomi originally fought with the French in the French & Indian War, and then they mostly fought with the British in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. This rapid shift in allegiance makes the Potawatomi a useful case study in understanding the incentives behind Native alliances. The Potawatomi cases are also important because they allow one to compare the United States and Britain directly as they dealt with the same bands in the same locations. From 1789 until 1841, the United States federal government completed over thirty treaties with the Potawatomi.¹⁴ The sheer number of treaties between the United States and the Potawatomi indicates the significance of the nation to 18th and 19th century politics.

Since the Potawatomi villages are so culturally similar and were removed at different times, they are an excellent case study on when and why the American government removed Native Americans. Exploring the distinctions between these villages can underline the history behind Native resistance to colonialism and behind American incentives to remove. It is impossible to adequately understand why the Potawatomi throughout North America are located where they are and why various bands live in different conditions without understanding the history behind their alliances and their removal.

In this thesis, I use the terms Native American, American Indian, and Indigenous interchangeably. I define the term “right of conquest” as “the legal precept that a nation, either through military victory or conquest, can assert ownership over territories and their inhabitants.”¹⁵ Paternalism is “the interference of a state or an individual with another person, against their will, and defended or motivated by a claim that the person interfered with will be better off or protected from harm.”¹⁶ I reference colonialism as “an ideological system that

¹⁴ See Prucha, F. (1994). *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, Appendix B: Ratified Indian Treaties.

¹⁵ Vox, L. (2008). “Right of Conquest.” In S. C. Tucker (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of North American Colonial Conflicts to 1775: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Vol. 2). ABC-CLIO, p. 684.

¹⁶ Dworkin, G. (2020) “Paternalism.” In E. N. Zalta (Ed.) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paternalism/>

demands and justifies ‘an appropriation of land, bodies, and labor followed by the insistence of [an imperial force’s] governmental structures, languages, and logics.’”¹⁷ The term “middle ground” references the “elaborate network of economic, political, cultural, and social ties that two peoples create to meet the demands of a particular historical situation.”¹⁸ Much academic discussion regarding the Great Lakes Indians in Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois is centered around the idea of the “middle ground,” so it is necessary to understand its specific definition. Finally, I define capability as “the ability to achieve a desired effect under specified standards and conditions through combinations of means and ways to perform a set of tasks.”¹⁹ This term will be useful when discussing and comparing the military capability of the British, American, and Potawatomi forces.

To test my hypotheses, I looked at several archival sources on British and American Indian policy. I traveled to London to conduct research in the Kew National Archives, and I explored archival sources from the United States Library of Congress, the American State Papers: Indian Affairs, the Miller Center at the University of Virginia, and the Journals of the Continental Congress. My thesis is primarily historical, so I sought to read primary source materials to supplement other secondary sources and understand the incentive structures of each government.

To gather the pertinent Potawatomi sources, I engaged in discussion with members of the Potawatomi tribe who shared their oral histories with me and provided me with further information on relevant historical sources that the bands trust to inform my thesis. Gary Morseau, John Low, and Blaire Topash-Caldwell, all of the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi,

¹⁷ See Black, J. (2012). “Native Authenticity, Rhetorical Circulation, and Neocolonial Decay: The Case of Chief Seattle’s Controversial Speech.” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 15, no. 4: 638. As taken from Black, J. (2015). *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, p. 4.

¹⁸ White (2011), p. 33.

¹⁹ *DM2 Data Groups: Capability*. Chief Information Officer - Department of Defense. (n.d.). Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://dodcio.defense.gov/Library/DoD-Architecture-Framework/dodaf20_capability_mm/

were invaluable resources in instructing me on Potawatomi history.²⁰ The Chairman of the Prairie Band of the Potawatomi, Joseph “Zeke” Rupnick, also emphasized Clifton’s *The Prairie People* since it is predominantly based on the Prairie Band’s history and facts after Clifton conducted several interviews within the tribe during the 1960s.²¹ These oral histories are crucial because not everything in their history is written down. My meetings and conversations with leading academics on the Potawatomi outside of the tribe, including R. David Edmunds, Christopher Wetzel, and Ben Secunda, were also instructive and pointed me in the right direction for applicable sources.²² My study aims to combine British and American sources with the oral history of the Potawatomi, so that the history of Euro-American colonialism and the Potawatomi can be refined and illuminated.

The remainder of the thesis will proceed as follows. I will first detail a literature review of secondary sources related to my research. This review will highlight where my project stands in relation to similar works. Then, I will present the body of my argument in five sections—British Relationship and Policy with Potawatomi, American Relationship and Policy with Potawatomi, Kikito Village Resistance to Removal, Pokagon Village Resistance to Removal, and Menominee Village Resistance to Removal. These body sections will test my hypotheses and answer the questions I have previously laid out by isolating each colonial power

²⁰ Gary Morseau is the Chair of the Pokagon Band’s Food Sovereignty Committee. John Low is an Associate Professor at the University of Ohio State – Newark in the Department of Comparative Studies where he focuses his research on Native American identity and history. Blaire Topash-Caldwell is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts - Boston, and her research interests center around Indigenous science fiction and reclaiming space. She formerly worked as the Pokagon Band’s first archivist.

²¹ I would have liked to meet with more Potawatomi tribal members to discuss and learn their oral history, but this was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the busy timelines of the tribal members I contacted. I was not able to talk to as many Potawatomi members as I would have liked, so I relied on secondary sources that they recommended to me when we were unable to meet.

²² R. David Edmunds is a Professor of History at the University of Texas in Dallas where he studies Native American people and the American West. Christopher Wetzel is a Professor of Sociology at Stonehill College where he has studied the national revitalization among Potawatomi Indian tribes in the United States and Canada. Ben Secunda is the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Project Manager at the University of Michigan’s Office of Research.

and Potawatomi village. Following the American and Menominee sections, I will answer potential counterarguments. Finally, I will conclude this paper with a summary of the results from the body sections.

Literature Review

The current literature on Potawatomi history has sought to understand it from a range of perspectives—French, British, American, and Native.

The British empire was the main colonial power in North America following the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and until the Treaty of Ghent in 1815 which ended the War of 1812. Much of the literature around this period focuses on the British perspective and their Indian policymaking with limited reference to Native American perspectives. Contrary to the 19th-century historian Francis Parkman's quote that the "English civilization scorned and neglected [the Native Americans]," some scholars argue that the British were reliant on their Indian allies for maintaining their monopoly on the fur trade in the Old Northwest—Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois—and for the protection of Canada, so they attempted to strengthen their relationship with them.²³ The British were first vulnerable when they came to North America which led to their dependency on Indigenous peoples for survival. This dependency led to the necessity of agreements between the British and Indians, so the British, following in the footsteps of the French before them, created a "middle ground" with the Native Americans where both cultural traditions overlapped, where each side relied on the other for certain needs, and where neither side could forcefully compel the other to do what they wanted.²⁴ The "middle

²³ Allen, R. (1975). *The British Indian Department and the Frontier in North America, 1755-1830*. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, p. 83; Allen, R. (1996). *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defense of Canada, 1774-1815*. Toronto: Dundurn, p. 13; Calloway, C. (1986). "The End of an Era: British-Indian Relations in the Great Lakes Region after the War of 1812." *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 2; Calloway, C. (1987). *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 3; White (2011), p. 516; See Parkman, F. (1983). *France and England in North America*. New York: Library of America; Quotation from Cave, A. A. (2004). *The French and Indian War*. Greenwood, p. 42.

²⁴ White (2011), pp. xii, 52.

ground” was often found in relation to the fur trade and in political alliances. The British reliance on Native Americans caused them to satiate the Native’s desire for presents in the forms of clothes, tools, and weapons in return for their loyalty or neutrality.²⁵

The next step in the relationship between Native Americans and the British would be the British eventually growing strong enough to dominate the Indigenous people and being able to compel them to do what they wish. This step did eventually happen in Canada in the late 19th century with the establishment of reserves, residential schools, and outlaw of Indigenous languages and spiritual practices as British military strength increased.²⁶ In the period I am studying in the Old Northwest, however, the British never achieved the military strength necessary to compel the Potawatomi, so a key part of British Indian policy centered on placating the Native Americans. Along with giving presents, this strategy included attempting to stop eager colonists from overrunning Native lands, as with the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which was meant to stymie settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains.²⁷ While King George III did issue this edict, the British government only meant for it to be temporary, and they could not strictly enforce it because their Indian Department and provincial governments in North America did not have the manpower or reach to stop the trespassing settlers. Their apparent kindness did not stop Britain from giving away Native lands to the United States that did not belong to them as far as the Great Lakes at the Treaty of Paris in 1783 based on the claim of the United States’ right of conquest, and the British continued to abandon their Native allies at Ghent in 1815.²⁸

²⁵ Calloway (1987), pp. 62, 233; Jacobs, R. (1948). “Presents to Indians along the French Frontiers in the Old Northwest, 1748-1763.” *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 245-248; White (2011), p. 286.

²⁶ See Nichols, R. (2010). “The Canada-US Border and Indigenous Peoples in the Nineteenth Century.” *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, 40, 416-428.

²⁷ Allen (1975), p. 16; Calloway (1987), p. 31; Clifton (1984), p. 26; Clinton, R. N. (1989). “The Proclamation of 1763: Colonial Prelude to Two Centuries of Federal-State Conflict over the Management of Indian Affairs.” *Boston University Law Review*, 69(2), pp. 357-58; Jacobs, R. (1951). “The Indian Frontier of 1763.” *Western Pennsylvania History*, p. 189; See Nichols (2010).

²⁸ Allen (1996), p. 168; Allen (1975), pp. 32-33; Calloway (1986), pp. 2-3; Calloway (1987), pp. 4-5; Edmunds (1978), p. 116.

Later American removal also makes use of the right of conquest and the doctrine of discovery to justify their encroachment on Native lands.²⁹

While these studies delve deeply into the incentives of British policymaking, they do not fully consider the Native American perspective through oral histories. Colin Calloway does include Native voices, but they are used to supplement the British perspective which takes precedence in his book. White also includes Native voices, but he emphasizes their relationship with the French more so than with the British later. Additionally, the Potawatomi are only mentioned briefly in these works even though the British policy described directly impacted them.

The United States of America became a relevant colonial power in 1783 after the Treaty of Paris, and it became the sole colonial power in the region after the Treaty of Ghent. The Americans, unlike the British, did not seek to maintain a “middle ground” with the Native Americans.³⁰ Unlike the British who saw the Native Americans as allies who helped protect their monetary and political interests, the early American colonists saw the Native Americans as a potential military threat who threatened the existence of their nation.³¹ The American government originally sought to continue a peaceful coexistence with the Native tribes, but in the late 18th and early 19th century it became strong enough militarily to compel them to do what it wanted. American Indian policy shifted from goals of coexistence to assimilation and removal in this period as American military strength increased, but all of these policies commonly hoped to eradicate Native religious, cultural, and landholding practices.³² Some examples of removal followed the pattern of the United States outlawing colonists officially from moving westward,

²⁹ Black (2015), p. 25; Miller, R. (2011). “American Indians, the Doctrine of Discovery, and Manifest Destiny.” *Wyoming Law Review*, 11(2), p. 331.

³⁰ White (2011), pp. 380, 473.

³¹ See Nichols (2010).

³² Bowes, J. (2014). “American Indian Removal beyond the Removal Act.” *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 66.

but implicitly allowing it. Then, when conflict arose between the Native Americans and white settlers, the federal government would send the military to remove the supposedly violent tribes.³³

Some scholars argue that the overarching theme of American Indian policy was one of paternalism, as what the British would do in the late 19th century in Canada as their own military strength increased.³⁴ The United States was paternalistic because it dictated policy to Native Americans that it thought would help them most based on white norms.³⁵ To the American government, the best course of action for Native Americans was to become “civilized,” and this meant becoming Christian yeoman farmers who had private ownership of their own land.³⁶ After this policy failed, the government justified removal of the Native Americans saying that it was saving them from the disastrous effects of encroaching white civilization.³⁷ The undercurrent of these arguments, however, betrays the idea that the American government saw Native American lands as underutilized and uninhabited since a large portion of Native Americans were hunter-gatherers, and since the idea of land ownership became tied with citizenship, the government pushed to remove the Native Americans so that settlers could move onto their land.³⁸ Other scholars contend that removal was not paternalistic; rather it was “an act of all-encompassing violence” committed by the government and at the behest of the White House without any regard for Native life or culture.³⁹

³³ Conway, T. (1972). “Potawatomi Politics.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 65, No. 4, p. 413; Edmunds (1972), p. 245; Edmunds (1978), p. 267; Fierst, J. (2010). “Rationalizing Removal: Anti-Indianism in Lewis Cass’s North American Review Essays.” *Michigan Historical Review*, Volume 36, Number 2, p. 33.

³⁴ Black (2015), p. 5; Prucha, F. (1984). *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, p. xxviii.

³⁵ Fierst (2010), p. 33.

³⁶ Berkhofer Jr., R. (1988). “Americans versus Indians: The Northwest Ordinance, Territory Making, and Native Americans.” *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 84, No. 1, p. 93; Black (2015), p. 28; Prucha (1984), p. 139; Prucha (1994), p. 9; White (2011), p. 473. See Nichols (2010).

³⁷ Black (2015), p. 5; Prucha (1984), p. xxviii; Prucha (1994), p. 13.

³⁸ Black (2015), pp. 5, 10.

³⁹ Bowes (2014), p. 66; Cave, A. (2003). “Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830.” *The Historian*, Vol. 65, No. 6, p. 1353.

Like the previous works on British colonialism, Native voices are seldom heard in these books and articles with the history of American Indian policy largely being told through an American perspective. Potawatomi voices are heard even less. While Jason Edward Black frequently includes Native voices in his work, he only mentions the Potawatomi once. John Bowes describes the plight of the Potawatomi with the Indian Removal Act of 1830, but only discusses the Potawatomi reaction to American colonialism. The Potawatomi participated in more treaties with the American government from 1789 until 1841 than any other tribe, so it is vital to hear their perspective on their relationship with the American government and their subsequent decision-making in response to federal Native policies. Any understanding of these relationships, however, must be supplemented with discussion on Potawatomi interactions with other colonial powers like the British.

After the introduction of European colonial powers in the Great Lakes region, the Potawatomi constantly had to defend their culture and lifestyle against the onslaught of “civilization.”⁴⁰ The Potawatomi Nation is fundamentally distinct from the American nation because nationhood to the Potawatomi is centered on social, cultural, and ceremonial ties instead of a central state.⁴¹ This conception of nationhood is partially due to all of the villages of the Potawatomi being removed several times to different places. The history of the Potawatomi is difficult to encapsulate since information on them is scattered throughout all these areas. Some works therefore focus on specific bands or moments in history like the Pokagon Band who remained in Michigan or the Treaty of Chicago in 1833 where promises of annuity payments and fear of forced removal convinced the Potawatomi to give up their lands.⁴² Clifton provides an

⁴⁰ Low, J. (2016). *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the City of Chicago*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, p. 7.

⁴¹ Bowes (2014), p. 77; Clifton (1984), pp. 4-6; Wetzel, C. (2015). *Gathering the Potawatomi Nation*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, pp. 3, 9-12.

⁴² See Clifton, J. (1980). “Chicago, September 14, 1833: The Last Great Indian Treaty in the Old Northwest.” *Chicago History*, Vol. 0, pp. 86-97; Clifton (1984); Edmunds (1978).

overall study of the Prairie Band's history and emphasizes how lack of necessary resources led to many villages' removals, but the author mainly focuses on one specific band and only briefly mentions other Potawatomi bands.⁴³ The most complete work on Potawatomi history is Edmunds' *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* which summarizes Potawatomi band distinctions and relates how each band resisted colonialism differently. Stalling, meeting with both the British and Americans, and outright fighting were some of the resistance efforts practiced by the Potawatomi.⁴⁴ Despite these efforts, the Potawatomi were also increasingly cut down by disease, alcoholism, and overreliance on European and American goods which contributed to their removal.⁴⁵

The major weakness of most of these works is that they describe singular bands or singular events. Edmunds takes a sweeping look at all Potawatomi history, but he focuses primarily on the Potawatomi perspective and less so on the British and American perspectives. Meanwhile, other accounts do not focus on the significance of the interactions between the Potawatomi and the Americans and the British.

In this thesis, I will fill the gaps between all these works by exploring in detail the Potawatomi relationship with British and American colonialism while considering the incentive structures of these colonial powers. I will not focus on one singular event; rather, I will detail how the Pokagon, Menominee, and Kikito villages of the Potawatomi reacted differently to the colonial threat while using sources from all the British, American, and Potawatomi perspectives.

British Relationship and Policy with Potawatomi

⁴³ Clifton (1977), pp. 212-19.

⁴⁴ Stalling efforts found in first Clifton (1977), p. 288 while meeting with both governments is demonstrated in Clifton (1977), p. 187 and Edmunds (1978), p. 216. Resistance as fighting is demonstrated throughout the entirety of Clifton and Edmunds' works with the Potawatomi fighting against the British in the French & Indian War and against the Americans in the Revolutionary War and in the War of 1812.

⁴⁵ Instances of disease can be found in Carroway (1987), p. 28, instances of alcoholism being used by traders to make treaties found in Clifton (1977), p. 230, and instances of overreliance on Euro-American goods shown in Edmunds (1978), p. 215.

I argue that Britain's smaller relative military capability in relation to surrounding Native tribes was the main difference between the Native policy of Britain and America. The British never had the necessary military force to compel the Potawatomi to do what they wanted, so they often had to compromise and accommodate them. I will demonstrate this by examining British objectives, their specific Native policies, and their eventual betrayals of the Potawatomi.

At the beginning of the French & Indian War in 1754, Great Britain found itself entering a world within the Old Northwest unlike any it had previously seen. There, the Potawatomi and other tribes worked and traded together with the French to get what they wanted – safety, food, and European goods. The relationship was far from perfect, but Gary Morseau argues that it was at least reciprocal as the French relied on the Potawatomi to survive.⁴⁶ The French engaged in this relationship and gave presents to the Potawatomi for this reason, and because the French “found this procedure to be far cheaper than maintaining an expensive army throughout New France in order to keep the natives pacified by force.”⁴⁷ Britain tried to recreate this relationship with the creation of the British Indian Department (BID) in 1755 with William Johnson as its Superintendent, but the relationship was never the same. Johnson sought to copy the French by setting up a system of regulated trade with presents given to the Natives with officers, traders, and interpreters working under him, but “he failed to persuade the British government to bear the costs such an alliance demanded.”⁴⁸ British Indian policy in the Old Northwest from 1755 onward relied heavily on their relationships with the tribes since the British never had the resources and military capability available to them to force the Potawatomi or other tribes to do what they wanted.

⁴⁶ Morseau (2021).

⁴⁷ Jacobs (1948), p. 248.

⁴⁸ White (2011), p. 315.

The primary incentives surrounding Britain's relationship with the Potawatomi were to keep peace, to protect their colonies in Canada, and to continue their monopoly on the fur trade. Since they lacked the military capability to force the Potawatomi to do what they wanted, they frequently engaged in present-giving to the Potawatomi and other Natives to reach these ends. Major Robert Rogers, the commandant at Michilimackinac, wrote in his accounting of goods to the BID on July 6, 1767, that:

“[The subscribers] are confident that the within and other presents given to the Indians which we have this day certified were absolutely necessary and well timed otherwise an Indian War must have taken place in this country instead of a peace which he has with great pains, care, and fatigue to himself settled amongst all the different nations that resort this post greatly to the advantage of His Majesty's Interest and to those of his subjects trading in this country who must have been totally ruined by a war.”⁴⁹

British policy hoped to stop Indian wars from occurring because they could potentially bring Britain into the wars, and they risked the security and economic interests of British citizens in the area. The British hoped to win Native loyalty through presents. Moreover, to keep the peace, Johnson wrote to his fellow officials in the BID that one of their primary responsibilities was to “hear [the Natives'] complaints, and to do [their] utmost to redress them” since these complaints “tend[ed] to disturb the jubile tranquility” that Britain desired in the Old Northwest.⁵⁰ The BID, however, was rarely able to stop white settlers from encroaching on Native lands because of the department's limited presence and lack of manpower in the Old Northwest which failed to stop clashes between Natives and the white settlers.

⁴⁹ Rogers, R. (1767, July 6). [North America: Miscellaneous: Accounts of goods accompanying Memorial of Major Robert Rogers, for £7,179 expended on presents to the Indians at Michilimackinac in order to ally them to the British: 9) Goods purchased from William Bruce: 24 June-3 July 1767]. Kew National Archives (T 1/478/357-358), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁵⁰ Johnson, W. (1766, June 3). [North America, Miscellaneous: Instructions to Maj. Robert Rogers, commandant at Michilimackinac regarding his conduct towards the Indians]. Kew National Archives (T 1/449/413-414), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

British Indian policy in this period also centered on protecting Canada. During the French & Indian War, the British Commander-in-Chief in North America, Jeffery Amherst, wrote to William Johnson that he had “not the least doubt but [this war] will end in the entire reduction of Canada,” and it was therefore necessary to employ “the Confederate Nations of Indians in the interest of His Majesty” and have them “join heartily in the present cause.”⁵¹ Later in the Revolutionary War, George Germain, the Secretary of State for America, wrote to the Governor General of British North America, Guy Carleton, that the king ordered him to bring “together with as many Canadians and Indians as may be thought necessary for this service [of protecting Canada].”⁵² The Earl of Shelburne also wrote to the British General Frederick Haldimand that “the preservation of Canada is so strongly commended,” and that “the Indians in this case will acquire particular attention.”⁵³ The correspondence of these British military and political leaders demonstrates the importance they placed in Native alliances for the preservation of Canada. British leaders even tried to protect Canada through the creation of an Indian buffer state that would “leave a sufficient Interval between His Majesty's Provinces and the American States” and which was “the greatest object to aim at” as Henry Dundas, the Secretary of State at the Home Department, wrote to John Simcoe, the lieutenant governor of Canada, in 1794.⁵⁴ The desire for this buffer state showcases the reasoning of British officials in protecting Native lands from American expansion after the Revolutionary War – they did not want the Americans to attack them next.

⁵¹ Amherst, J. (1760, March 16). [Correspondence between Commander-in-Chief and Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Northern Indiana (1758 Aug.-1763 Nov.)]. Kew National Archives, (WO 34/38), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁵² Carleton, G. (1777, March 26). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America (Dec. 1, 1776 - March 31, 1777) – 461 – Germain to Sir Guy Carleton. Whitehall]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/4), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁵³ Earl of Shelburne. (1782, April 22). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America (April 20 - April 30, 1782) – 4452 – Earl of Shelburne to General Haldimand. Whitehall. Most Secret]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/39), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁵⁴ Allen (1975), p. 49.

The British sought Native alliances to protect Canada because they did not have the required military power to protect it themselves, and their constant present-giving and pleas to Native tribes reflect this weakness. The British military had been beaten down by disease and conflict in North America, and by 1812, “Canada’s defenses comprised 5,500 regular troops and 4,000/11,000 available militia who were reliable enough to arm.”⁵⁵ These troops were not enough to defend Canada by themselves or even enough to potentially fight the Potawatomi and surrounding tribes. The British needed their Native auxiliaries to defend Canada, especially during the beginning of the 19th century as they were more focused on Napoleon in Europe. Even though the British did not focus all their efforts in North America, they still feared the Natives would turn on them and work with the Americans to expel them from Canada, and they would then lose their monopoly of the fur trade.⁵⁶

Keeping their monopoly on the fur trade in the Old Northwest was a key incentive for British Indian policy. The fur trade was incredibly valuable to the British in this period. In 1783, “the fur trade was estimated to be worth some 200,000 pounds per annum to Great Britain,” and it increased in value for the next few decades until the Industrial Revolution eventually outpaced it.⁵⁷ Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company were the two main British players in the fur trade, and their fur-trading profits depended on good relations with the Natives in the Old Northwest, including the Potawatomi. Since they were not strong enough to conquer the Potawatomi and take their lands, it was in the best interest of the British elite to continue these good relations and to preserve Native lands where fur trading was prevalent. During the Revolutionary War, the British feared that “[the rebels] [were] bent upon reducing the upper

⁵⁵ Calloway (1987), pp. 220-21.

⁵⁶ See British officer’s Robert McDouall’s quote in Allen (1975), p. 83. – ““The total subjugation of the Indians on the Mississippi would either lead to their extermination by the enemy or they would be spared on the express condition of assisting them to expel us from Upper Canada.””

⁵⁷ Calloway (1987), p. 131.

posts, to secure the Indian interest, and for the benefit of the fur trade,” so the British sought to sway the Old Northwest Natives to their side with promises and presents since their military was not strong enough to win the war.⁵⁸ At the end of the War of 1812, the British officer Robert McDouall even lamented that at the peace “there was an end to our connection with the Indians, ... tribe after tribe would be graned [sic] over or subdued, & thus would be destroyed the only barrier which protects the Great trading establishments of the North West & the Hudson's Bay Company.”⁵⁹ The British had little concern for the Natives; they were mainly concerned about their own financial and political interests which relied on the combined strength of their Native alliances.

The undercurrent of all these policy goals – to maintain peace, protect Canada, and keep their monopoly on the fur trade – was one that saw Natives only as a means to an end. The British government acted out of its own self-interest, and their Native allies, including the Potawatomi, were only seen as useful insofar as they could bring value to Britain. The British saw the Potawatomi as “savages” who could not be trusted.⁶⁰ They never fully understood the loose political structures that made up the Potawatomi tribal organization which had no overarching chief, so the British frequently attempted to install their own “chiefs” to do business with, a tactic later practiced by the Americans.⁶¹ The British also sought to make the Native as dependent as possible on their trading goods which was later copied by the Americans as well.⁶²

⁵⁸ Haldimand, F. (1779, Nov. 2) [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America (Nov. 1 - Dec. 31, 1779) – 2400 – Haldimand to Clinton]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/20), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁵⁹ McDouall, R. (1814, July 16). [MPHSC. Vol. 15 (1890). p. 611, McDouall to Drummond, Michilimackinac]. (PAC, RG8. C series, Vol. 685.) As found in Allen (1975), p. 83.

⁶⁰ Amherst, J. (1759, Sept. 11). [Correspondence between Commander-in-Chief and Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Northern Indiana (1758 Aug.-1763 Nov.) Amherst to Sir William Johnson]. Kew National Archives, (WO 34/38), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom. See quote on page 27-29 – “ ...from the little dependence that can be made on Indian promises ... ”

⁶¹ Calloway (1987), pp. 42-43.

⁶² Prucha (1984), p. 18.

While the British military was not strong enough to compel the Potawatomi, the British still tried to deceive and control them through their Indian policies.

The British tried to achieve these policy goals during the French & Indian War all the way until years after the War of 1812. In this period, they would famously betray their Native allies three times in 1783, 1794, and 1815 at the Treaty of Paris, the Battle of Fallen Timbers, and at the Treaty of Ghent. Contrary to popular belief, however, the Potawatomi were not passive bystanders to British colonialism and later American colonialism. They fought, adapted, and resisted, and their leaders tried to make the best possible deals for their people. A look into Britain's complex history with the Potawatomi is necessary to understand why the British did not forcibly remove them and why the American government was later able to remove most of the Potawatomi.

The Potawatomi were allied with the French during the French & Indian War, but a smallpox epidemic in 1757 and the British victories at Quebec and Fort Niagara in 1759 cut them off from their French allies, leaving the Potawatomi without needed trade goods.⁶³ The North American theater of the French & Indian War would end in 1760 with the British victorious, and some of the Potawatomi, most notably ones near Detroit, began to befriend the British as they arrived with trade goods.⁶⁴ Other Potawatomi remained cautious towards the British. John Low describes the early relationship between the British and Potawatomi as one that “terminat[ed] the previous kinship relationships established by the French” and focused on “trading on European terms with an emphasis on maximizing profits” which then led to increased Potawatomi dependency on European goods.⁶⁵ Indeed, the Earl of Loudoun ordered William Johnson to “fix the price of those goods as low as possible ... by which means the Indians will receive those

⁶³ Clifton (1977), pp. 102-104; Edmunds (1978), pp. 56-57.

⁶⁴ Edmunds (1978), p. 57.

⁶⁵ Low (2015), p. 61.

goods cheaper than the French can afford them,” so that more Natives would be brought to the British cause.⁶⁶ The British blockaded the French from giving goods to their allies, and then they sold their own British goods at cheaper prices to force the Natives to forsake their French ally. They did not want to continually use their weakened military, so they sought to trade with the Potawatomi more.

The British committed two major policy blunders, however, which led to more armed conflict with the Potawatomi. William Johnson led a council in Detroit in September 1761 with his Mohawk allies where they “patronized the other tribes insufferably during a long council” and then Johnson “informed the gathering that he regarded the Wyandot as the leaders of the incipient western confederacy” which angered the Potawatomi and their Odawa and Ojibwa allies.⁶⁷ Amherst committed a larger mistake. The general “directed his subordinates to refuse the delivery of any presents to their new allies and to inform them that this custom was ended” which had been the bedrock of the French and Potawatomi alliance.⁶⁸ Johnson tried to get Amherst to change his decision, and some British Indian agents continued to give out presents as they feared the Natives’ reaction if they did not, but the general would not concede. British officials then attempted to hide “Amherst’s new policy [from the Natives] because they knew it would infuriate them,” but the Potawatomi still found out.⁶⁹ Their frustration over Amherst’s decision would push them to participate in Pontiac’s War.

Pontiac’s War occurred in 1763 under the leadership of the Odawa Pontiac who recruited western Natives like the Potawatomi who were upset about increasing “encroachment on Indian land by white settlers, Amherst no longer giving Indians’ presents, occupation of western posts

⁶⁶ Earl of Loudoun. (1758, Jan. 16). [Correspondence between Commander-in-Chief and Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Northern Indiana (1758 Aug.-1763 Nov.) By Earl of Loudoun to Sir William Johnson]. Kew National Archives, (WO 34/38), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁶⁷ Allen (1975), p. 16.

⁶⁸ Clifton (1984), p. 24.

⁶⁹ Edmunds (1978), p. 77.

by British military,” and the Natives falsely believed that “the French would join them in a war.”⁷⁰ The British realized that the Potawatomi and other “Indian Nations this way seem[ed] somewhat dissatisfied” after hearing their land was given away at the Treaty of Paris since they believed “the French had no right to give away their country as they say they were never conquered by any nation.”⁷¹ Pontiac and his allies then began attacking British forts on the frontier. The Natives had initial success with “all British posts west of the Niagara ha[ving] been destroyed except Detroit and Fort Pitt which were under siege,” but the Natives suffered severe losses later that year due to a lack of supplies and with no French backup.⁷² They were unable to match the numbers of the British forces, but the British were also unable to soundly defeat them, so the war ended as a stalemate.⁷³ The British military’s inability to completely defeat the western Natives became increasingly apparent.

Amherst hated the western Natives like the Potawatomi. He wrote to one lieutenant during Pontiac’s War that his orders were to:

“... destroy [the Seneca’s] huts and plantations, putting to death everyone of that nation that may fall in your hands. The same is to be observed in regard to any other of the Western tribes; for they are all equally guilty of the late depredations; are to be deemed our enemies, such not as a generous enemy, but as the vilest race of beings that ever infested the Earth and whose riddance from it must be esteemed a meritorious act, for the good of mankind.”⁷⁴

The British government had little use for the overtly hateful Amherst who also suggested sending smallpox-infested blankets to the Natives.⁷⁵ They knew that they needed to maintain a friendly appearance with the Natives to achieve their goals, and military action was not the way to attain

⁷⁰ Jacobs (1951), pp. 187-88.

⁷¹ Croghan, G. (1763, April 30). [Correspondence between Commander-in-Chief and Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Northern Indiana (1756 Nov.-1763 Oct.) George Croghan to Sir Jeffery Amherst]. Kew National Archives, (WO 34/39), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁷² Clifton (1977, 1984), pp. 133 and 25.

⁷³ Low (2015), p. 62; White (2011), p. 289.

⁷⁴ Amherst, J. (1763, Aug. 15). [Miscellaneous Papers and Letters from the Commander-in-Chief. (1763 July - 1764 Feb.) Amherst to Lieut. Gamble]. Kew National Archives, (WO 34/97), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁷⁵ White (2011), p. 288.

them. Among the British, it was widely believed that Amherst's policy regarding presents was what led to the conflict, so when he returned to England in 1763, "his policies [were] condemned by the lords of trade," and he was relieved of his duties.⁷⁶ General Thomas Gage replaced him, and he agreed with Johnson that Pyrrhic victories like Pontiac's War were unsustainable. The British government began giving presents to the Natives again, and the king established a boundary line between Indian country and European settlement known as the Proclamation of 1763. British Indian policy recognized where they had erred, so they partially conceded to the Potawatomi and their allies because they knew they could not afford a continuous war in North America. Their new policy centered on present-giving and agreements.

The Proclamation of 1763 was meant to keep the peace on the frontier by separating the settlers from the Natives, but it was hardly enforced. This proclamation was still significant, however, because it "represented the culmination of British Crown experience in seeking an effective model for the management of Euro-American/Indian relations."⁷⁷ No British governor or citizen could buy Native land, all traders had to get a license with the British government, and any settlement westward was prohibited. This model "centraliz[ed] ... the management of land cessions, diplomatic and other relations, and trade with the Indian tribes in British agents and officials," and it guaranteed "to Indian tribes ... their lands and resources" and "protection of Indian autonomy and sovereignty."⁷⁸ The 1764 Treaty of Fort Niagara soon followed which established a friendship and covenant between the Indigenous nations in the Great Lakes area and the British government.⁷⁹ This proclamation and this treaty laid the foundation for eventual conflict as the British failed to hold true to their promises to the Natives. This failure led to

⁷⁶ Johnson blaming Amherst's policy for the war found in Jacobs (1948), p. 256; Dissatisfaction within the British government over Amherst found in White (2011), p. 289.

⁷⁷ Clinton (1989), p. 356.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 357-58.

⁷⁹ See Tidridge, N. (2015). *The Queen at the Council Fire: The Treaty of Niagara, Reconciliation and the Dignified Crown in Canada*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

growing frustration among the Potawatomi, and skirmishes continued as white settlement increased with Gage even writing to Johnson that “scarce a year passes that the Pouteatamies are not guilty of killing Some of the Traders and of course plundering their Effects.”⁸⁰ Even so, a larger conflict soon emerged that called forward the Potawatomi’s attention – the Revolutionary War.

The British were unable to force the Potawatomi and other Native tribes to join their side in this war, but they were desperate. They recognized that “it would nevertheless be impossible to succeed in any attempt in those countries without the friendship of the Indians (by which alone we have kept possession of it)” in the Old Northwest.⁸¹ They feared that if the Natives turned on them, then they “could never subdue the rebellion,” and they would be locked in constant warfare.⁸² The Potawatomi, as well as other western tribes, were seen as having “an inclination ... for war,” so British officials announced that it was the king’s wishes for “Lieutenant Governor [Henry] Hamilton to assemble as many of the Indians of his district [in Detroit] as he conveniently can,” to subdue the rebels.⁸³ To convince their past enemies to join them, the British sent them presents and reasoned with them that they were on the same side since the rebels were “the bad white people who ... have raised the hatchet against the Red brethren as well as against their father the great King.”⁸⁴ The British further argued that the Americans would not partake in

⁸⁰ Gage, T. (1773, March 31). [Flick, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, VIII, 749, Gage to Johnson]. Found in Edmunds (1978), p. 98.

⁸¹ Haldimand, F. (1781, Sept. 29). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America. (August 16 - September 30, 1781) – 3801 – Haldimand to Clinton. Quebec]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/32), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁸² Wright, J. (1780, Mar. 18). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America. (March 1 - April 30, 1780) – 2646 – General Sir James Wright to General Sir Henry Clinton. Savannah.] Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/22), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁸³ Germain, G. (1777, March 26). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America. (Dec. 1 1776 - March 31, 1777) – 462 – Germain to Carleton. Whitehall]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/4), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁸⁴ Howe W. (1777, May 9). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America. (April 1 - June 24, 1777) – 521 – Howe to the Cherokee and other Indians]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/5), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

the same kinship relationship as they had, and that “the presents which the great King has at all times sent to his Red children is a strong mark of his regard for them,” and “the rebels are endeavoring to stop that trade which enabled the Red people to procure the comforts of life.”⁸⁵ Just as the French did before them, the British understood that present-giving was central to their relationship with the Potawatomi and other tribes since they could not conquer them, and they also knew that they could not maintain their military or economic supremacy in this area without the help of the Natives.

The Detroit Potawatomi joined the British and the Potawatomi in western Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin remained neutral because they saw the rebellious colonies as a common enemy. The Potawatomi were “suspicious of the colonists’ desires for their land,” and they felt as though their survival depended on defeating the rebels.⁸⁶ The British economic and military support allowed the Potawatomi to defend their homelands for a time with the Detroit Potawatomi successfully raiding American settlements around Kentucky and West Virginia, but the Potawatomi rarely listened to the orders of the British military and often left for home after battles.⁸⁷ The Potawatomi felt as though they had won the war in the west, so they were shocked to see that the British had surrendered and that “American officials announced that Indian claims to Ohio had been forfeited because the tribes had supported the British” in 1783.⁸⁸ The Natives did not believe the British had a right to give away their land to the Americans, and Haldimand wrote to General Clinton that “the Indians are alarmed [to be] ... deprived of their lands and driven out of their country. They reproach us with their ruin and the prospect of severe retaliation

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Low (2015), p. 64; Morseau (2021).

⁸⁷ Calloway (1987), p. 217.

⁸⁸ Edmunds (1978), p. 116.

by the Rebels.”⁸⁹ Haldimand does express concern for the Potawatomi “who have been loyal and suffered equally from the shameful encroachment ... on their most valuable hunting grounds,” but nothing was done to stop the Americans who were now at the Potawatomi’s doorstep.⁹⁰ Even though some British officials feigned concern for their Native allies, “only two members [of Parliament] voiced any concern over the Indians’ treatment” in the Treaty of Paris in 1783.⁹¹ The British abandoned the Potawatomi, and left them alone to defend themselves after the British realized they were unable to defeat the rebels. Nevertheless, this loss did not stop the British from attempting “to maintain their influence with their tribes and their ascendancy in the fur trade.”⁹² The newly victorious United States allowed the tribes to remain in Ohio, but settlers would continue to pass into Native lands leading to more conflict in the coming decades.

The British would remain neutral over the next few decades as they avoided open conflict with the Americans. They did not believe that they were not strong enough to win a war yet. This neutrality, however, did not stop them from trading with the more eastern Potawatomi in Michigan and Indiana who were the first to encounter the Americans. The British wanted peace between the sides, but they also “insisted that security of the Indians’ lands should be the prerequisite of such peace.”⁹³ British officials still wanted a Native barrier state in between America and Canada, and around 1791 “[Simcoe] encouraged tribes south of the Great Lakes to continue their demands to have the Ohio River serve as the border between Indian land and the United States.”⁹⁴ These Potawatomi and their Native allies won a significant battle in 1791 where they routed Arthur St. Clair, the American governor of the Northwest Territories, in the largest

⁸⁹ Haldimand, F. (1782, Sept.). [Headquarters Papers of the British Army in America. (September 10 - September 22, 1782) – 5636 – Haldimand to Carleton. Quebec]. Kew National Archives, (PRO/30/55/49), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Calloway (1987), p. 8.

⁹² Clifton (1977), p. 140.

⁹³ Calloway (1987), pp. 16-17.

⁹⁴ See Nichols (2010).

American defeat ever at the hands of the Natives.⁹⁵ The British encouraged the Potawatomi without giving them full-on military aid by building Fort Miami in 1794 and with supportive speeches from their Indian officers.⁹⁶ The Potawatomi would continue to fight the Americans, but they suffered a crippling defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. They fled to the nearby Fort Miami, but the British officers in the fort were given strict orders to not give aid to the fleeing Natives as it would risk open conflict with the Americans.⁹⁷ British Indian policy was thus again dictated by the lack of British military presence in the Old Northwest which led them to, again, forsake the Potawatomi.

The British wanted to keep the Natives in between them and the Americans, but they would not risk all-out war to achieve this goal yet. They wanted to keep the peace at least momentarily to guarantee the protection of Canada and their monopoly on the fur trade which still remained. The Potawatomi and their confederation disbanded after their rejection from Fort Miami. Morale was low among the tribe. Jay's Treaty would follow in 1794 where the British gave up their frontier forts, and the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 forced the Potawatomi out of Ohio and sold parts of Potawatomi territory in Indiana to America. The Americans crept closer to larger Potawatomi lands.

The British paid little attention to the Old Northwest in the late 1790s and early 1800s with the British government's eyes focused on Europe. Since the British military was still relatively weak in the Old Northwest, the BID continued to "maintain the allegiance of the various tribes" through exchanges of presents at British forts in Canada including the Potawatomi who were growing increasingly frustrated at their land being taken from them by the

⁹⁵ See Edmunds (1978) pp. 123-25 for the specifics of St. Clair's calamitous defeat.

⁹⁶ Allen (1975), pp. 49-50.

⁹⁷ Clifton (1984), pp. 33-34; Edmunds (1978), p. 133.

Americans.⁹⁸ In the early 1800s, Tecumseh, a Shawnee warrior, and his brother, the Prophet, unified some of the frustrated Potawatomi, mostly younger members of the tribe, with a larger Native confederacy meant to defeat America and bring together all Natives. The rise of this confederation coincided with rising tensions between the British and Americans, and the British convinced Tecumseh and his brother to get the western Natives on their side during what would become the War of 1812. Tecumseh was aware of the British's past betrayals, but his "distrust of faithless redcoats was far outweighed by hatred of Americans who seemed only too willing to implement the extermination of the Indians which the expansion of their settlements demanded."⁹⁹ A new war had begun, but the British would again betray their allies.

The War of 1812 began with several British and Native victories over the Americans – Fort Mackinac fell in 1812, Fort Dearborn was evacuated soon thereafter, and Fort Detroit was abandoned by the Americans. The turning point in the war occurred in the Americans' favor when Lieutenant Oliver Perry defeated the British in a naval engagement on Lake Erie in 1813, and then he cut off the British supply lines.¹⁰⁰ The British then renounced their goals of stopping American expansion westward in an effort to consolidate their resources to protect Canada.¹⁰¹ The reassessment of the British's immediate goals in the face of the American blockade and as American Major-General William Henry Harrison marched to Fort Detroit led British Major-General Henry Procter to begin a retreat from the fort across the Thames River "despite the protestations of the chiefs" including Tecumseh.¹⁰² This retreat would prove disastrous as many of the Potawatomi deserted, and the Americans would catch up to the retreat and kill Tecumseh in the skirmish. This battle ended the Potawatomi resistance in the War of 1812.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Allen (1996), pp. 115-16.

⁹⁹ Calloway (1987), pp. 230-31.

¹⁰⁰ Clifton (1977), pp. 209-10.

¹⁰¹ White (2011), pp. 516-17.

¹⁰² Allen (1975, 1996), p. 77 and p. 144.

¹⁰³ Low (2015), p. 73.

The third British betrayal of the Potawatomi occurred at the Treaty of Ghent in 1814-5. The British originally tried to include their Native allies in the treaty and establish another boundary line in between the tribes and America, but the American negotiators refused both demands.¹⁰⁴ Britain, knowing they could not continue this war, conceded on these requests after the American promised to negotiate with the tribes separately in Article IX. This article agreed “to restore to such Tribes or Nations respectively all the possessions, rights, and privileges,” but it was meaningless.¹⁰⁵ Article IX did not protect the Potawatomi and other Native tribes from future invasion, it only promised to maintain the status quo currently. The Secretary for War and the Colonies, Earl Bathurst, would even say that the article “does not nor was it ever intended on the part of Great Britain to guarantee those territories and possessions against future invasion after they had been restored.”¹⁰⁶ The Potawatomi were left alone again to defend themselves against the expansionist Americans, and even though they still traded with the British, their relationship was effectively severed. The British would stop supporting the Natives militarily, and as the fur trade declined in value and the Industrial Revolution quickened in the following years, the British would turn away from their partnership with the western Natives.

The British never had the military might to forcefully compel the Potawatomi to do what they wanted – to keep the peace, to protect Canada and to engage in the fur trade. They fought with the Potawatomi and other western tribes in Pontiac’s War, but it ended in a stalemate, and British officials realized they could not continually engage in warfare with the tribes because it was too costly. The main military official responsible for this war was relieved of his duties after the war. Afterwards, the BID did not have the manpower necessary to stop settlers from

¹⁰⁴ Calloway (1987), p. 240.

¹⁰⁵ Treaty of Ghent (1815). Accessed through https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/ghent.asp#:~:text=ARTICLE%20THE%20NINTH.&text=Provided%20al ways%20that%20such%20Tribes.and%20shall%20so%20desist%20accordingly.

¹⁰⁶ Earl Bathurst. (1816, Oct. 31). Letter to Lt. Gen. J. C. Sherbrooke, FO 5/119: 142-43. Found in Calloway (1986) p. 4.

encroaching on Native lands, and British officials admitted that they needed the Potawatomi and other tribes to defend their territory in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. British Indian policy thus relied on the allegiance of tribes like the Potawatomi to achieve their goals which explains why they gave them presents and promised to defend them. British officials were constantly afraid of their western Native allies turning on them, and they would abandon the Potawatomi three times in 1783, 1794, and 1815 which demonstrates that they were primarily concerned with their own objectives and not the interests of their Native allies. The British would have forced the Potawatomi to comply with their demands if they had the ability to do so, but they never achieved this strength. Their reciprocal relationship was forged through a common enemy, not trust.

American Relationship and Policy with Potawatomi

I argue that the increasing strength of America's relative military capability in relation to surrounding Native tribes was the core difference between the Native policy of America and Britain. After the Revolutionary War, America was militarily weak like Britain was in the Old Northwest, so they engaged in present-giving and treaty-making with the western Natives. As time went on, America's relative military strength grew, and once British influence waned after the War of 1812, American Indian policy shifted to one that compelled most of the Potawatomi to remove. I will demonstrate this by examining American objectives, their specific Native policies, and their eventual attempts to remove the Potawatomi. The pattern of American colonialism first started with securing the frontier. It then shifted to a "civilizing" mission, and it ended with forcible removal. The first two policies acted as cover, but the final one always happened one way or the other.

Trouble persisted for the fledgling nation after their victory over the British in 1783. The United States inherited many of the same problems with surrounding Native populations as the British empire had before them. What were they to do with Natives who felt as though they had won the war in the west? Were they conquered states? Foreign nations? Who oversaw them – the state governments or the federal government? How would the new nation balance the autonomy of these tribes with its citizens' voracious desires for more land? What were the goals of American Indian policy, and how did they achieve them?

The United States had two main aims in its Indian policy. First, the government hoped to maintain peace at the time of its inception to ensure its security because at first the Natives constituted a legitimate threat to the nation's survival. Second, and most importantly, American Indian policy was always geared towards gaining the Natives' land. Gaining the benefits of the fur trade was also an incentive but was not as important as gaining the land itself. The government would shift from policies supporting coexistence with Native communities to ones encouraging assimilation until eventually villages and tribes were compelled to remove or forcefully removed westward. The main impediment to removal policy – the reason it did not come sooner than around the 1830s – was the United States not having the military strength to completely defeat the western Natives and fearing the British could get involved at least until after 1815. Removal policy was considered more seriously following the British's decline in influence. America's relative military capability was why their Native policy differed from the British.

The early United States feared the hostile tribes to its west and were unsure it could completely defeat them. A committee reporting on Native affairs in 1783 appointed by the Continental Congress illustrated this caution with a letter from General Philip Schuyler who said:

“That if an Indian war should be re-kindled, repeated victories might produce the retreat of the Indians, but could not prevent them from regaining possession of some part of the distant and extensive territories which appertain to the United States: that while such temporary expulsions could only be effected at a great charge, they could not be improved to the smallest advantage, but by maintaining numerous garrisons and an expensive peace-establishment. That even if all the northern and western tribes of Indians inhabiting the territories of the United States, could be totally expelled, the policy of reducing them to such an extremity is deemed to be questionable; for in such an event, it is obvious that they would find a welcome reception from the British government in Canada, which by so great an accession of strength would become formidable in case of any future rupture: and in peace, by keeping alive the resentment of the Indians for the loss of their country, would secure to its own subjects the entire benefit of the fur trade.”¹⁰⁷

Schuyler realized that the United States was in no position after the Revolutionary War to fight again, especially since they never fully conquered or defeated the Natives to the west. On the chance that they could defeat the Natives though, which Schuyler doubted, the United States would have to potentially fight the British again and then must worry about keeping this territory secure which was not financially feasible for the young nation. The Secretary of War Henry Knox echoed Schuyler’s ideas when he “reported to Congress that there was neither sufficient money nor an adequate army to carry on an Indian war” in 1787.¹⁰⁸ So great was the terror of an American Indian war that Congress established a standing army in 1789 which was unpopular during the Revolutionary War years due to fears of tyranny but had become more popular to ward off Native conflict. In his decision in *Worcester v. Georgia* in 1832, even Chief Justice John Marshall highlighted how in its early years Congress had “the most anxious desire” to steer clear of conflict with the western Natives, and Congress would make “strenuous exertions” of presents

¹⁰⁷ United States Continental Congress, Claypoole, D. C. & Continental Congress Broadside Collection. (1783) The committee, consisting of Mr. Duane, Mr. Peters, Mr. Carrol i.e. Carroll, Mr. Hawkins and Mr. Lee, to whom were referred a report on Indian affairs, read in Congress on the 21st of April last, a letter from General Schuyler ... with messages to and from certain hostile Indians on the subject of peace ... submit the following detail of facts and resolutions. [Philadelphia: Printed by David C. Claypoole] [Online Text] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898080/>.

¹⁰⁸ Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, 1934-), II, 47, 31-35. Found in Horsman, R. (1961). “American Indian Policy in the Old Northwest, 1783-1812.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 40-41.

so they could keep this desired peace.¹⁰⁹ The United States in its formative years ironically sought to claim Native lands by right of conquest, but their political and military leaders also admitted they could not defeat the western Natives due to their lack of military capability and finances along with the fear of another war with the British. Young America had to think of creative ways to enact its Native policy before it was militarily strong enough to compel the Potawatomi and other tribes to give up their land.

Even though American leaders were initially hesitant to commit to war with the Potawatomi and other Native tribes, they were still abundantly clear that their goal was to gain the Natives' land. George Washington agreed with Schuyler's assessment of America's tense relationship with the Natives. He thought the American settlers should be patient, and America would inevitably own the Natives' land. Shortly after hearing Schuyler's letter, Washington wrote to James Duane that western Natives "will ever retreat as our Settlements advance upon them and they will ever be ready to sell, as we are to buy," and that "the gradual extension of our Settlements will as certainly cause the Savage as the Wolf to retire; both being beasts of prey tho' they differ in shape."¹¹⁰ The Founding Fathers believed that the easiest way to gain Native land was to gradually wait for American settlements to emerge westward and to worsen the lives of Natives who would then sell their land cheaply. Moreover, St. Clair was instructed in 1787 in his conversations with the western Natives that he should "not neglect any opportunity that may offer of extinguishing the Indian rights to the westward."¹¹¹ The Senate would even reject a treaty with the Potawatomi in 1792 which did not promise the federal government the right of

¹⁰⁹ *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. (6 Pet.) 515, 549 (1832). Found in Miller, R. (1993). "American Indian Influence on the United States Constitution and Its Framers." *American Indian Law Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 138-39.

¹¹⁰ To James Duane, Sept. 7, 1783, Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, XXVII, 133-140. Found in Horsman (1961), pp. 37-8.

¹¹¹ Secretary of Congress to St. Clair, Oct. 26, 1787, Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, II, 78-79. Found in Horsman (1961), p. 41.

pre-emption to buy Native lands in the future.¹¹² The right of pre-emption means that one party has the first option to buy something, in this case Native land. Early American government, though militarily weak, did not hesitate to acknowledge that their end goal was the acquisition of Native lands. Removal was not an idea that just emerged in the 1830s; instead, it began with the founding of the country.

Was the United States that militarily weak during its founding? Yes. According to the Department of Defense's Selected Manpower Statistics, there were only 718 professional, active duty American military personnel in 1789.¹¹³ This number would rise to around 5,000 military members in the 1790s and 1800s before increasing again to around 12,000 in the 1810s, peaking at over 46,000 during the War of 1812, and decreasing again to around 12,000 soldiers in the 1820s and 1830s.¹¹⁴ For context, the Potawatomi totaled around 7,000 members in 1795 after their defeat at Fallen Timbers, and they probably totaled around 6,000 during the 1820s.¹¹⁵ The United States did not originally have the soldiers necessary to engage in a long-winded campaign against the Potawatomi and other tribes, especially if they were backed by the British. After the British left the Old Northwest after the War of 1812 and American forces increased dramatically, the United States was able to cast away the middle ground which required the western tribes and other European powers to work together. Starting in the 1820s and into the 1830s, America would compel the Potawatomi to remove, so that the Americans could get the Native land they desired.

The Americans tried to achieve their policy goals – maintaining peace and acquiring Native land – from the Treaty of Paris in 1783 to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 through a

¹¹² White (2011), pp. 460-61.

¹¹³ Table 2-11 from *Department of Defense: Selected Manpower Statistics – Fiscal Year 1997*, pp. 46-47. Accessed through <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA347153>.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Clifton (1977), p. 180; Edmunds (1978), pp. 233-34.

variety of measures. The American government established treaties to avoid war with the Potawatomi before often reneging on and failing to honor the treaties. They passed the Northwest Ordinance to lay out a plan to acquire Native lands, and they replaced the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution which focused Native affairs squarely on the federal government. Subsequent American Indian policy fell under the influence of ideas like “Expansion with Honor” and spreading “Civilization” which were meant to show respect to the western Natives and bring them into the American civilization by encouraging them to abandon their ancestral and cultural practices. These policies allowed the American government to remove the Potawatomi without negatively impacting the moral consciousness of the nation. When these policies “failed,” the American government took action to remove the Potawatomi in the 1830s which was now possible with their greater military strength and the absence of the British. Like their relationship with the British, the Potawatomi would continue to resist American colonialism, sometimes through outright conflict and other times through artful adaptation. Learning about the Potawatomi’s history with the new American nation is necessary to understand their eventual removal from the Old Northwest.

Securing the Frontier

After the Revolutionary War, the Potawatomi now faced an even more dangerous enemy. Many Americans now believed that they had the full legal rights to lands east of the Mississippi River.¹¹⁶ John Low comments that the situation for the Potawatomi “worsened, as the Americans ... sought the land of the Native peoples rather than only furs or other resources” as they moved westward.¹¹⁷ Soon, the Americans began to attempt to take this land. The Potawatomi were still far away from American settlement, but the settlers were getting closer. American officials

¹¹⁶ Clifton (1984), p. 29.

¹¹⁷ Low (2015), p. 65.

negotiated the Treaty of Fort Stanwix with the Iroquois Confederacy in 1784 and the Treaty of McIntosh in 1785 with a host of tribes which sold land to the American government in the Ohio Valley.¹¹⁸ Washington himself recognized that settlers had begun to “roam over the Country on the Indian side of the Ohio, mark our Lands, Survey, and even settle them” which was against the law and risked “produc[ing] a war with the western Tribes,” but this policy continued to be rarely enforced.¹¹⁹ The Potawatomi, frustrated over these land cessions, began skirmishing with American settlements near the Ohio River, and the American government was unable to properly defend itself due to lacking finances and manpower.¹²⁰ In 1787, much to the chagrin of the Potawatomi, the United States passed the Northwest Ordinance which would further encourage expansion to the west.

The Northwest Ordinance established the model for how the federal government could admit new states into the union. This law would soon become “the basis for United States expansion” into the Old Northwest.¹²¹ Article III details that:

“The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall from time to time be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them; and for preserving peace and friendship with them.”¹²²

This article, while promising that the Native populations will be protected, also provides an out for the American government in taking their lands. If Congress authorized a “just and lawful war” or made laws that “prevent wrongs being done” to Native people, then their land can be

¹¹⁸ Edmunds (1978), pp. 116-17; See Nichols (2010).

¹¹⁹ Washington to Jacob Read, November 3, 1784, *Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 27:486. Found in Prucha (1994), p. 53.

¹²⁰ Clifton (1984), p. 31; Horsman (1961), p. 40.

¹²¹ Low (2015), p. 66.

¹²² United States, Thomson, C., United States Continental Congress & Continental Congress Broadside Collection. (1787) An ordinance for the government of the territory of the United States, North-west of the river Ohio. [New York: s.n] [Online Text] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898154/>.

invaded, and their property taken without their consent. This ordinance is incredibly significant because it outlined what the future relations the American government would look like with the Potawatomi, and the excuses that they would use to remove them.¹²³

During this time, some of the Founding Fathers began doubting the strengths of the Articles of Confederation regarding Native affairs. James Madison, for example, wrote in Federalist 42 that the commerce regulation with the Native tribes was “obscure and contradictory” and “absolutely incomprehensible” within the Articles.¹²⁴ Later that year, the Constitution would be ratified to replace the Articles. Tribes are only mentioned twice in the Constitution with the most significant mention being that Congress holds the only right to “regulate[s] Commerce with ... the Indian tribes.”¹²⁵ Now, the federal government had increased control to deal with the Potawatomi and other tribes when the previous Articles left this policy largely to the states.

The first treaty the Potawatomi signed, though many of their leaders protested the legitimacy of the treaty, with the United States was at the Treaty of Fort Harmar in 1789.¹²⁶ This treaty did little to stop the violence between the Potawatomi and their Western Confederacy with the American settlers. This treaty recognized American sovereignty while re-emphasizing the boundaries established at Fort Stanwix and Fort McIntosh which angered the Potawatomi. Nonetheless, Knox believed that the treaty was a success, and he thought that the “interest of the nation will be advanced by making [the Treaty of Fort Harmar] the basis of the future administration of justice toward the Indian tribes.”¹²⁷ This treaty allowed the Americans to “set

¹²³ Berkhofer Jr. (1988), pp. 94-95.

¹²⁴ Madison, J. (1788). “Federalist 42.” *New York Packet*. Accessed through <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-41-50#s-lg-box-wrapper-25493406>. Found in Clinton (1989), p. 372.

¹²⁵ U.S. CONST. art. I, § 8, cl. 3. Mentioned in Miller (1993), p. 150.

¹²⁶ Clifton (1984), p. 32.

¹²⁷ Knox, H. (1789, June 15). [Report of Henry Knox on the Northwestern Indians.] *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I: 13-14. Accessed through https://pages.uoregon.edu/mjdennis/courses/hist469_Knox.htm.

[the] precedent of buying land” which they would use for decades to come until they no longer felt the need to do so once their relative military capability increased.¹²⁸

As the United States began engaging in treaties with the Potawatomi and buying land, another idea emerged in their Native policy – expansion with honor. This concept appeared in the Continental Congress papers and in later writings of Washington and Knox who used it as justification in attempts to civilize the Native tribes. American officials were ordered to treat Native tribes with respect and “preserve peace with the Indian nations, not permitting any settlement upon their lands until a previous purchase has been made from them.”¹²⁹ The American government conceded that “the safety and tranquility of the frontiers of the United States, do in some measure, depend on maintaining a good correspondence between their citizens and the several nations of Indians,” so they tried to keep the Natives happy by stopping illegal settlements in Native lands by their citizens.¹³⁰ Even though these officials stated that “justice and public faith shall be the basis of all their transactions with the Indians” and that America would “reject every temporary advantage obtained at the expense of these important national principles” based around honor, the end goal of this policy was still to eventually take the Native tribes’ land.¹³¹ Knox thought war with the Natives could “stain the character of the nation ‘beyond all pecuniary calculation,’” so America should treat the Native nations justly, but he was

¹²⁸ Horsman (1961), p. 41.

¹²⁹ United States Continental Congress, Johnson, W. S. & Continental Congress Broadside Collection. (1785) The committee to whom were referred the petition of the sic inhabitants of the Kaskaskies and its vicinity, and the papers relative thereto, report. [New York: s.n] [Online Text] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898124/>.

¹³⁰ United States, United States Continental Congress & Continental Congress Broadside Collection. (1786) By the United States in Congress assembled. August 7,: An ordinance for the regulation of Indian affairs. [New York: s.n] [Online Text] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898173/>.

¹³¹ United States War Office, Johnson, W. S., United States Continental Congress & Continental Congress Broadside Collection. (1787) Instructions to superintendent of Indian affairs. [New York: s.n] [Online Text] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898190/>.

more anxious about appearing virtuous than being virtuous since he still believed that Americans would acquire this land eventually.¹³²

Knox and Washington wanted to avoid war with the Potawatomi and other western tribes. The Secretary of War believed “it would be unjust ... to make war on those tribes without having previously invited them to a treaty” since they “possess the right of the soil” and “it cannot be taken from them unless by their free consent,” but he also admitted that the United States was not in a position to forcefully remove the Western tribes since “the finances of the United States would not at present admit” such a war.¹³³ For these reasons, Knox wrote to Washington that the United States should adopt a “liberal system of justice ... for the various Indian tribes.”¹³⁴ Washington agreed. He would tell the Seneca Nation in 1790 that America would “protect [them] in all your just rights” along with all the other tribes, and he promised that they could not “be defrauded of [their] lands” since they “possess the right to sell, and the right of refusing to sell your lands.”¹³⁵ Washington promised that America’s Native policy was one founded “upon terms of justice and humanity.”¹³⁶ The lofty morals of the Founding Fathers did seem to contribute to their honorable policies, but the logistics of American finances played a large role as well. America’s finances were in bad shape, and one tempting way to alleviate this problem was to sell off Native lands to individuals. America was incentivized since its inception to take Native lands.

At the end of the 1780s and in the early 1790s, America was unable to properly finance an army or pay for a war effort and lacked the military capability to force out the Western tribes.

¹³² *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I (Washington, 1832), 12-14. Found in Horsman (1961), p. 43 and Prucha (1984), p. 62.

¹³³ Knox (1789), Report of Henry Knox on the Northwestern Indians.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Washington, G. (1790, December 29). George Washington Talk to the Chiefs and Counselors of the Seneca Nation. Accessed through <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-29-1790-talk-chiefs-and-counselors-seneca-nation>

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

They could not remove the Potawatomi completely at this time. This deficiency also made it onerous for the new nation to back up their promises and prevent settlers from encroaching on Native land. It is difficult to completely decipher the intentions of these American actors, but it is evident that they believed Native cultures to be inferior through their attempts to civilize them and have them adopt Western customs as American power grew.

America had good reason to fear military conflict with Native nations. The Potawatomi and their Native allies would deal disastrous blows to the American military under Josiah Harmar and St. Clair in 1791 which caused the United States to “subsequently renew their diplomatic efforts” with the tribes.¹³⁷ St. Clair led a force of around 3,000 men, almost the entire standing army of the United States, and after his battle with the Potawatomi and their allies, 630 of his men were killed and 283 seriously wounded.¹³⁸ This American defeat was catastrophic. Around this time, Wayne was put in charge of the American Army, and he would build up their forces and defeat the Potawatomi at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 where the British abandoned their Native allies and where the Western Confederacy was extinguished. What followed would be the second treaty the Potawatomi signed with the Americans. At the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, Wayne accepted that the Native tribes assembled “had free and exclusive use of all lands not specifically ceded,” but the Potawatomi and their allies were compelled to acknowledge American sovereignty, accept the land sales from prior treaties, and promise the right of pre-emption to the Americans.¹³⁹ This right outlined the intentions of America to continue to acquire Native land in the future. Parts of modern-day Indiana and Ohio were also ceded to America and annuities were granted to the participating tribes. After this victory, the

¹³⁷ Edmunds (1978), pp. 123-25.

¹³⁸ Clifton (1984), p. 32.

¹³⁹ Clifton (1977), p. 148; Low (2015), p. 69.

United States sought to spread civilization to the Natives in another attempt to take their lands from them.

“Civilizing” Mission

The prospect of civilizing the Potawatomi began with the founding of the country, but it was sped up after the Treaty of Greenville when more treaties were signed between them and the United States. Knox believed that an alternative to the extermination of the Native tribes could be civilization. America could send missionaries to the Natives and take up farming, and as they converted and became civilized, then the tribes would be more willing to sell their lands since they would not need massive amounts of it to hunt.¹⁴⁰ In his fourth annual message to Congress, Washington announced that he hoped that the United States could create a system “for promoting civilization among the friendly tribes, and for carrying on trade with them, upon a scale equal to their wants, and under regulations calculated to protect them from imposition and extortion.”¹⁴¹ This system could help keep the peace between the Natives and America, but, additionally, “the establishment of commerce with the Indian nations in behalf of the United States [would] most likely to conciliate their attachment” to their land and make it easier for America to acquire it.¹⁴² Washington sponsored trading houses to be established with tribes where they could buy American goods and assimilate to American culture while often falling into debt that made them again more willing to sell their land.¹⁴³ Some Potawatomi, including Five Medals and Topinabee, leaders around the Elkhart and Saint Joseph Rivers respectively, became encouraged to try agriculture in 1796 and asked for government agricultural assistance after visiting Philadelphia

¹⁴⁰ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 52-52 (1789, July 7). Found in Horsman (1961), p. 43.

¹⁴¹ Washington, G. (1792, Nov. 6). Fourth Annual Message to Congress. Accessed through <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/november-6-1792-fourth-annual-message-congress>.

¹⁴² Washington, G. (1793, Dec. 3). Fifth Annual Message to Congress. Accessed through <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-3-1793-fifth-annual-message-congress>.

¹⁴³ Black (2015), p. 28.

by request of the federal government.¹⁴⁴ George Washington wanted the Potawatomi to move away from hunting and turn to farming.

Civilization policy called on tribes to give up their customs like “tribal government, communal land ownership, and supposedly loose morals” for the superior American culture centered on “bourgeois farming, Christian religion, elective government, and the middle-class family.”¹⁴⁵ Washington’s civilization experiments were meant to bring the tribes “nearer to the civilized state; and inspire them with correct conceptions of the Power, as well as justice of the Government.”¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Gary Morseau argues that the civilization policy constituted an abandonment of the Potawatomi by American leaders since they did not respect Indigenous ways of life..¹⁴⁷ These leaders, through their honorable policies, ironically gave little honor or respect to Indigenous customs which they saw as barbaric. American officials instead believed civilizing the tribes would make it easier for them to sell their lands, and that it would reflect positively on the country’s national character. The new few presidents would expand this civilization policy.

Thomas Jefferson became one of the leading proponents for the civilization policy. In his first annual message to Congress as president, he reported that “the continued efforts to introduce among [the tribes] the implements and the practice of husbandry, and of the household arts, have not been without success” and that this has led them to pick up farming instead of hunting.¹⁴⁸ Jefferson emphasized his desire for the Natives to civilize when he told a visiting party of Potawatomi that America would “with great pleasure see your people become disposed to cultivate the earth, to raise herds of the useful animals and to spin and weave, for their food and

¹⁴⁴ Edmunds (1978), pp. 158-59.

¹⁴⁵ Berkhofer Jr. (1988), p. 93.

¹⁴⁶ Washington, G. (1796, Dec. 7). Eight Annual Message to Congress. Accessed through (<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-7-1796-eighth-annual-message-congress>)

¹⁴⁷ Morseau (2021).

¹⁴⁸ Jefferson, T. (1801, Dec. 8). First Annual Message to Congress. Accessed through <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-8-1801-first-annual-message>.

clothing, these resources are certain, they will never disappoint you, while those of hunting may fail.”¹⁴⁹ Unlike many in America, Jefferson seemed to earnestly believe that Natives were equal to white Americans in their ability to learn which is why he thought he could civilize them, but this optimism was coupled with the belief that Native cultures were inferior in comparison to the superior American culture. His true beliefs, however, about civilization policy became apparent in his messages to Congress and his letters.

Jefferson saw civilization policy as a way for Americans to gain the Natives’ land. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 demonstrated his resolve to push white settlement westward and remove the Natives. During a special message to Congress on Indian policy in 1803, Jefferson communicated that the goal of their Native policy was to “to provide an extension of territory which the rapid increase of our numbers will call for.”¹⁵⁰ America would achieve this goal by getting the tribes “to abandon hunting” and by “multipl[ing] trading houses among them,” and these policies were meant to make the Natives require less land and be more willing to sell it as they accrued larger debts.¹⁵¹ The government would also “undersell private traders, foreign and domestic” and “drive them from the competition,” so that the Natives would lose their trading allies and become more dependent on the United States.¹⁵² The Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 furthered this idea by only allowing Natives to trade with the American government.¹⁵³ Land acquisition was always the main goal of America’s Native policy, and the United States enacted creative policies to achieve this end without risking war since they still feared the influence of the British with the western Natives like the Potawatomi.

¹⁴⁹ Jan. 7, 1802, War Department, Secretary's Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, A, 143, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Found in Black (2015), p. 30 and Horsman (1961), pp. 47-48.

¹⁵⁰ Jefferson, T. (1803, Jan. 18). Special Message to Congress on Indian Policy. Accessed through <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-18-1803-special-message-congress-indian-policy>.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Black (2015), p. 29.

Jefferson conveyed the purpose of these ideas in a private letter to William Henry Harrison, the Governor of the Indiana Territory at the time. In this 1803 letter, Jefferson remarked that “this letter being unofficial, & private, I may with safety give you a more extensive view of our policy respecting the Indians,” so that Harrison could make his own decisions in his territory regarding Native affairs.¹⁵⁴ He emphasized that “this letter [was] to be considered as private & friendly” because he knew the Natives would be infuriated by the views of America’s Native policy.¹⁵⁵ This view was that to draw the Natives to agriculture, the United States hoped to “push [American] trading houses, and be glad to see the good & influential individuals among [the tribes] run in debt” since then these tribal members would “become willing to lop th[em off] by a cession of lands.”¹⁵⁶ America did not have the best interests of the Natives in its mind. Instead, it sought to cut off private traders from the Native by undercutting their sales, and then they hoped American “settlements [would] gradually circumscribe & approach the Indians” who would then assimilate or remove.¹⁵⁷ The end goal for Jefferson was the “purchase and settlement of the country on the Mississippi from it’s mouth to it’s Northern regions” and this required “settling their boundaries with the Poutewatamies.”¹⁵⁸ It was imperative, however, that the Potawatomi’s minds “should be soothed & consiliated by liberalities and sincere assurances of friendship,” so Harrison was not to tell them of America’s true objectives. Civilization policy was just another way for America to remove the Potawatomi.

Harrison followed Jefferson’s instructions for all his years as Governor. He continually sought further land cessions from the Potawatomi and surrounding tribes.¹⁵⁹ He wrote to

¹⁵⁴ Jefferson, T. (1803, Feb. 27). From Thomas Jefferson to William Henry Harrison. Accessed through <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0500>.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ White (2011), p. 474.

President Madison's Secretary of War, William Eustis, in 1811 that Jefferson's past letter "has served for [his] guide" in his decisions in Indiana, and he asked if America's Native policy still surrounded "the further extinguishment of Indian title."¹⁶⁰ Harrison carried out the establishment of trading houses, but he feared the influence of the British with the Potawatomi. He wrote that the Potawatomi were "entirely devoted to the British" and "only wait[ed] for the signal from the British Indian Agents to commence the attack" against the United States.¹⁶¹ He saw the Detroit area Potawatomi as "are the most perfidious of their race" playing "a double game between our agents and those of the British that they are perfect in the arts of deception," as the Potawatomi tried to get annuities and presents from both sides.¹⁶² The Potawatomi were growing angry with their land being trampled on and taken from them. Even Harrison agreed that the Potawatomi and other tribes were treated poorly and that their members were "killed—their lands settled on—their game wontonly destroyed—& their young men made drunk & cheated of the peltries which formerly procured them necessary articles of Cloathing, arms and amunition to hunt with."¹⁶³ Harrison admitted that he "wish[ed] [he] could say the Indians were treated with justice and propriety on all occasions by our own citizens but it is far otherwise" in his territory.¹⁶⁴ The Potawatomi thought they were cheated out of annuity payments by the government and that their land was being illegally sold. The Potawatomi had six treaties with the United States from 1803 to 1809 culminating with the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809 which "pass[ed] three million acres to the Americans which further split the tribe."¹⁶⁵ Many Potawatomi questioned the credibility of these treaties, but villages were split on how to address them. Some wanted peace. Others wanted

¹⁶⁰ Harrison, W. (1922). *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*. (Logan Esarey, Ed.). Indiana Historical Commission. [Harrison to Secretary of War (Feb. 6, 1811), p. 504].

¹⁶¹ Ibid. [Harrison to Secretary of War (August 29, 1807), p. 243; Harrison to Secretary of War (September 5, 1807), p. 247].

¹⁶² Ibid. [Harrison to Secretary of War (Feb. 18, 1808), p. 284].

¹⁶³ Ibid. [Harrison to the Secretary of War (July 15th, 1801), p. 25].

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. [Harrison to Secretary of War (June 6, 1811), p. 515].

¹⁶⁵ Clifton (1977), pp. 185-86; Edmunds (1978), p. 169.

to fight. Some wanted to put to death the Potawatomi leaders who signed the treaties.¹⁶⁶

Frustrations grew within the tribe that would eventually coincide with the rise of Tecumseh and the onset of British tensions with the United States to create the War of 1812.

Potawatomi anger did not grow from nothing. By 1812, they were surrounded by American settlement. Along with resentment towards treaties giving away their lands and uneven distribution of annuity payments, the fur trade began weakening in influence, more settlers began appearing on Native lands, hunting became more difficult with the reduction of game, and alcohol became abundant from illegal traders who tried to push it onto despondent Natives.¹⁶⁷ All of these factors led to the breakdown of the Potawatomi's traditional cultural and political structures, and Tecumseh zeroed in on these concerns to convince many of the Potawatomi to join his Native confederacy in fighting the Americans.

As mentioned in the prior section, the Potawatomi and British had initial success against the Americans, but it was short-lived. The British were largely concerned about the preservation of Canada, so they did not support the Potawatomi when the Americans pushed against them. The Americans under Harrison were incensed at the Potawatomi who he believed were their "most cruel and inveterate enemies," and he began targeting Potawatomi villages specifically.¹⁶⁸ American opinion of the Potawatomi also plunged during this war after the Battle of Fort Dearborn after it was reported that the Potawatomi committed a massacre.¹⁶⁹ This negative association with the Potawatomi would later be used to justify their removal.

Most of the eastern Potawatomi agreed to an armistice with the Americans in 1814, and the western Potawatomi would slowly stop fighting the next year once it became more apparent

¹⁶⁶ Conway (1972), p. 403.

¹⁶⁷ Clifton (1977), p. 191.

¹⁶⁸ Edmunds (1978), pp. 191-98.

¹⁶⁹ Allen (1996), p. 197.

they would not have support from the British.¹⁷⁰ The Potawatomi could no longer count on the British as allies, and though the Treaty of Ghent promised to restore their territory as it was before the war, the Americans would quickly move to acquire these lands. The Potawatomi soon signed two separate treaties at Portage des Sioux and Spring Wells in 1815 where they “were forced to accept all the land cessions negotiated by the government between 1795 and 1811 and also to break themselves off from the British.”¹⁷¹ Americans now began to build even more forts and trading houses around the Potawatomi, and the Potawatomi were left alone to defend themselves against American settlers who knew the British could no longer help them.¹⁷²

The American government now had the relative military capability to remove the Potawatomi, but this policy was not enacted for another twenty years. At the treaties at Portage des Sioux in 1815, the United States “gave peace” to the Potawatomi which demonstrated their dominance over them.¹⁷³ Peace was something the United States could now give, not just something they compromised on. Before the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830, the United States continued to chip away at Potawatomi lands through treaties. Forced removal was not needed until small pockets of Native villages refused to sell their lands even after surrounding tribes did. The difference between British and American policy was that the Americans now had the ability to force the Potawatomi to do what they wanted whereas the British never could do that when the Potawatomi refused to do their bidding. Kikito’s village was coerced into voluntarily removing. Menominee’s village was forced to remove after they refused to leave. Only Pokagon’s village was able to withstand American removal through their adaptive resistance which made it appear as though they were assimilating to American culture.

¹⁷⁰ Edmunds (1978), pp. 199-205.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 205-06.

¹⁷² Prucha (1984), p. 81.

¹⁷³ Prucha (1994), p. 3.

American officials wanted to see their “civilizing” policy work. The reasoning behind this policy made up their “government’s ethical rationale justifying the surrender of Indian lands,” and to see it fail would mean to see their past excuses for taking Native land fail.¹⁷⁴ The United States thus still funded its civilizing policy, and in 1819 Congress allotted \$10,000 to be used to support American Indian agencies and schools in teaching Native tribes about American civilization through schoolwork, farm work, and Christian missionaries.¹⁷⁵ The Potawatomi for the most part rejected attempts to move to agriculture and completely convert to Christianity.¹⁷⁶ Even though money was still being allotted to civilize the Natives, Lewis Cass, at the time the Governor of the Michigan Territory, was ordered by the War Department in 1818 that the end goal of American Native policy was to completely remove all of the tribes east of the Mississippi to the west.¹⁷⁷ Cass later advised patience in 1826 with what he believed would be the Potawatomi’s inevitable removal when he wrote that “time, the destruction of the game, and the approximation of our settlements are necessary before the measure [of removal] can be successfully proposed to them.”¹⁷⁸ These conditions were needed to make the process of removal as easy as possible and maintain the nation’s character. The United States’ underlying policy was always to take the Natives’ land, and the civilization policy merely helped them move tribes off their lands in a way that was seen as humane. America first attempted to secure its border with the Native tribes and protect its hold on the fur trade with the building of over a dozen forts near the Old Northwest in just an eight-year period after the war ended.¹⁷⁹ These forts and the

¹⁷⁴ Fierst (2010), p. 11.

¹⁷⁵ See Nichols (2010); Prucha (1994), p. 12.

¹⁷⁶ Edmunds (1978), p. 227.

¹⁷⁷ Prucha (1994), p. 136.

¹⁷⁸ *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, 2: 684. Accessed through <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsp&fileName=008/llsp008.db&recNum=691>. Found in Clifton (1977), p. 183.

¹⁷⁹ Clifton (1977), p. 216; Edmunds (1978), p. 216; Prucha (1984), p. 82-84.

subsequent treaties with the Potawatomi were established to compel the Potawatomi to move westward even as attempts to civilize were ongoing.

The United States felt as though they needed someplace to put their growing population, and they saw Native land as their best option. In the Old Northwest alone, the American population grew from around 51,000 to 1,500,000 from 1800 to 1830.¹⁸⁰ The construction of the Erie Canal in 1825 also made it much easier for Americans to gain access to Potawatomi land.¹⁸¹ Treaties were the answer after the War of 1812 on how the Americans would expand to the west. The Potawatomi signed fifteen treaties with the United States before most of them were removed at the Treaty of Chicago in 1833. These treaties typically sold Potawatomi land “at a fraction of the lands’ true value” and the Americans would frequently employ “underhanded tactics to secure the signatures [they] need[ed].”¹⁸² Acquiring the Potawatomi land demonstrated Americans’ uncontrollable desire for new land.

A key instance of American negotiation with the Potawatomi occurred at the Treaty of 1821 in Chicago. There, one of the leaders of the Potawatomi, Metea, complained that the Americans “[were] never satisfied!”¹⁸³ Metea faced the American negotiators and said that the Potawatomi “[were] growing uneasy. What lands you have, you may retain forever; but we shall sell no more.”¹⁸⁴ Cass, one of the American negotiators who had been tasked by John Calhoun, the Secretary of War, to obtain this land, grew frustrated with Metea’s refusal, so he “said that the remainder of their trade goods would be distributed only to the other Potawatomis” until these Potawatomi agreed to sell their lands.¹⁸⁵ Many of the Potawatomi were in dire straits and needed

¹⁸⁰ Clifton (1977), p. 179.

¹⁸¹ Clifton (1984), p. 31; Low (2015), p. 78.

¹⁸² Low (2015), pp. 76-78.

¹⁸³ Metea. 1821 Treaty of Chicago. Accessed through <https://www.potawatomi.org/blog/2021/08/27/1821-treaty-of-chicagos-bicentennial/>.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Edmunds (1978), p. 221.

the trading goods that the American provided, so they eventually capitulated against Metea's wishes, and they gave away "almost 4 million acres of Native land" in the Old Northwest.¹⁸⁶ One tribal leader even admitted that he agreed to the land cession just because he needed American whiskey.¹⁸⁷ Most treaties during this period sold Potawatomi land in exchange for annuities and trading goods while others like Prairie du Chien in 1825 established boundaries between America and the Potawatomi which then facilitated more land sales.¹⁸⁸ Treaties after the Indian Removal Act would give away land west of the Mississippi as reward along with annuities and trading goods.

In the 1820s, the American government began losing faith in their ability to civilize the Potawatomi and other Natives. Thomas McKenney, the Superintendent of Indian Trade from 1816-1822 and the first Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1824-1830, was in charge of the civilization fund, and he was originally hopeful that the trading houses could help the Natives civilize.¹⁸⁹ President Monroe agreed with him that it was their "duty to make new efforts for the preservation, improvement, and civilization of the native inhabitants."¹⁹⁰ Congress, however, voted down the trading house system in 1822 as they saw no need for it after the decline in British influence with the Natives and after the military threat of the Natives also diminished.¹⁹¹ The policy was aimed more at keeping the peace than it was in civilizing the Natives. The Office of Indian Affairs then lamented that the Potawatomis were taking on the "all of the white vices"

¹⁸⁶ 1821 Treaty of Chicago. Accessed through <https://www.potawatomi.org/blog/2021/08/27/1821-treaty-of-chicagos-bicentennial/>.

¹⁸⁷ Excerpt of Topinabee begging Cass for whiskey found in Edmunds (1978), p. 221.

¹⁸⁸ Prucha (1994), pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁹ Belko, W. (2004). "John C. Calhoun and the Creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs: An Essay on Political Rivalry, Ideology, and Policymaking in the Early Republic." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 105, No. 3, p. 194; Prucha (1984), pp. 148-52; Superintendent of Indian Affairs is now what is known as the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

¹⁹⁰ Israel, F. (1966). *State of the Union Messages*. Chelsea House Publishers, I: 152-3. Found in Prucha (1984), p. 149.

¹⁹¹ Belko (2004), pp. 170-77.

through their interactions with frontier people, and McKenney reported in 1827 that the civilization policy among the Native was failing.¹⁹² The obvious compassionate and humane next step for the Americans was to remove the Potawatomi to the west away from the evil influences of white traders until they were ready to civilize. Cass would point to the decrepit conditions of the tribes as reason for this decision, but, ironically, the true causes were due to American colonization.¹⁹³ Monroe agreed with this conclusion, and he put forward a message in 1825 recommending that the Natives be voluntarily removed westward for their own good.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, Monroe emphasized that this removal had to be voluntary since anything else would be “revolting to humanity, and utterly unjustifiable.”¹⁹⁵ At the end of their terms, both McKenney and Monroe both began to believe that voluntary removal westward was necessary for the survival of the Potawatomi.

President Andrew Jackson echoed McKenney and Monroe’s vision, but he took it a step further. He announced to Congress in 1829 that the Native “emigration should be voluntary, for it would be as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers and seek a home in a distant land,” but he also believed that past “Indian treaties were not really binding on the nation.”¹⁹⁶ The only reason that the United States originally agreed to treaties with the Native tribes was because it was initially weak, but they no longer had to fear Native military efforts, so it made no sense to keep participating in these treaties.¹⁹⁷ He did not believe the Natives had any right to the land unlike what had been established in past treaties, and that they

¹⁹² Edmunds (1978), p. 240.

¹⁹³ Fierst (2010), p. 15.

¹⁹⁴ Clifton (1977), p. 254; Fierst (2010), p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ Israel (1966), I: 228. Found in Prucha (1984), p. 187.

¹⁹⁶ First quote from Jackson, A. (1829, Dec. 8). First Annual Message to Congress. Accessed through <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-8-1829-first-annual-message-congress>. Both quotes found in Cave (2003), p. 1332.

¹⁹⁷ Prucha, F. (1969). “Andrew Jackson's Indian Policy: A Reassessment.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 56, No. 3, p. 532.

“only [had] a possessory right to the soil, for the purpose of hunting and not the right of domain, hence [he] conclud[ed] that Congress ha[d] full power, by law, to regulate all the concerns of the Indians.”¹⁹⁸ Natives were a dependent and conquered people. Jackson wished to open Native lands for settlement and to protect the frontier for white citizens, and he was prepared to remove tribes westward and see them lose their status as sovereign nations to do so.¹⁹⁹ During his presidency, treaty-making slowed down, and removal quickened after the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was passed.

Forcible Removal

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was the culmination of America’s Native policy, though dissenting perspectives remained in American government. A notable dissent comes from Chief Justice John Marshall in the 1832 Supreme Court case *Worcester v. Georgia*. In this case, Marshall argues that the Cherokee Nation was a sovereign nation, and that issues of tribal affairs were in the dominion of the federal government, not the states.²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, this decision that highlighted Native sovereignty was ultimately ignored by the federal government. The main goal of American’s Native policy was to obtain Native lands, and the Removal Act, and the illegal enforcement of it, allowed the United States to achieve this end. Jackson, though a proponent of this bill, was not the only person responsible for it. His approach to acquiring Native lands was like Jefferson’s approach in wanting to protect the frontier and encourage farming amongst the Natives, and he was not solely responsible for the illegal white settlement that had been pouring into Native lands for decades before his presidency.²⁰¹ The problems with

¹⁹⁸ Jackson, A. *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, ed. John Spencer Bassett, 6 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-1933), 2: 279-81. Found in Prucha (1984), p. 192.

¹⁹⁹ Satz, R. (1979). “Remini’s Andrew Jackson (1767-1821): Jackson and the Indians.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 162.

²⁰⁰ *Worcester v. Georgia*. (1832). *Oyez*. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/31us515>.

²⁰¹ Prucha (1969), p. 534.

America's Native policy and removal efforts were entwined within all levels of government. Nonetheless, Jackson did fail to honor Native treaties and the laws of the United States by forcibly removing the Natives, including some of the Potawatomi.²⁰²

This law never permitted the forced removal of Native east of the Mississippi River, but this was the intended effect.²⁰³ This act took on similar language to laws before it by seeking "authorization and funding to continue ... granting land west of the Mississippi to tribes willing to relinquish their eastern holdings," since Jackson knew a bill advocating for forced removal would not pass Congress.²⁰⁴ The Indian Removal Act, even the watered down version, barely passed Congress with a 28-19 vote in the Senate and a 102-97 vote in the House. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs stated that the reasons behind the bill were to allow the Natives to "be secured against the intrusion of any other people, where, under the protection of the United States, and with their *aid*, they can pursue their plan of civilization," and Cass believed that removal would allow Natives to "not be molested and where they would have time to improve, so that eventually they could be incorporated as citizens," but the main driving force behind the bill was to open up land for white settlement.²⁰⁵ In contrast to these liberating ideas, in carrying out this law Jackson and President Martin Van Buren's agents "resorted to extensive bribery of compliant and corrupt tribal officials and frequently threatened independent Indian leaders opposed to relocation," and Jackson himself looked the other way as white settlers encroached on Native lands.²⁰⁶ This bill did not allow tribes to voluntarily remove as it was supposed to do. Rather, it laid out the mechanism for the American government to forcibly remove tribes or

²⁰² Cave (2003), p. 1353.

²⁰³ Low (2015), p. 78.

²⁰⁴ Cave (2003), p. 1333.

²⁰⁵ Fierst (2010), pp. 32-33; Prucha (1984), pp. 195-201. Italics not my own.

²⁰⁶ Cave (2003), p. 1337-41.

coerce them into removing much like what will be illustrated with the following Potawatomi examples.²⁰⁷

Unlike the British, who never had the military might to forcefully compel the Potawatomi to do what they wanted which caused their Indian policy to change as they engaged with the tribe, America eventually did obtain the military strength necessary to force Native tribes—including the Potawatomi—to do what it wanted. American Indian policy differed from British Indian policy because of its stronger relative military capability. Right after the Revolutionary War, the United States engaged in treaty-making and trade with the Potawatomi much like the British did before them since America was not strong enough to defeat the western Natives during this time. Once the British abandoned their Native allies in the War of 1812 and the American population and military increased, America no longer had to engage in a middle ground with the Potawatomi or concede to their demands. American Native policy from the 1820s and onward coerced or forced the Potawatomi and other tribes to sign treaties giving away their land, and the Potawatomi signed these because they knew they could not militarily defeat the United States, and they needed trading goods and supplies. Britain had to work alongside their Native allies due to their similar capabilities, but America moved beyond the need for compromise, and it allowed them to reach their goal quickly – obtaining the Natives' land.

Counterarguments to *HI*

Financial Linkages

One alternative to my thesis is that British policy differed from American because the British were financially tied to the Potawatomi through the fur trade while the Americans were never reliant on the fur trade. The British did value their monopoly on the Old Northwest fur trade highly, and British officials frequently mentioned the fur trade as a reason for their policies.

²⁰⁷ Bowes (2014), p. 66.

But crucially, they would have forced the Potawatomi to engage in the fur trade at more uneven rates if they could have. Amherst wrote to Colonel John Bradstreet in 1759 that he could “easily imagine [that] the Indians have expended a vast deal of provision, they would not be Indians if they did not, and the misfortune is when they are so numerous, I don’t see how it can be helped.”²⁰⁸ The British saw their inability to dominate the Potawatomi as a misfortune. The Potawatomi regularly took advantage of British traders who were “obliged to pander to them and pay extravagantly lest they take their business elsewhere.”²⁰⁹ If the British had the necessary military might, they would have stopped the Potawatomi from setting the terms and made them trade on British terms. The Old Northwest was a Native world and the middle ground emerged because of the British’s weaker military capability. This counterargument also downplays the importance of the British goal to defend its territory in Canada. When Canada was threatened in the War of 1812, British policy shifted to deprioritize their goal of stopping American expansion westward which risked their monopoly on the fur trade. The fur trade was not the reason British and American Indian policy differed.

Others might say that the characterization of the British as uncaring towards the Potawatomi is unfair, and that some of the officials did sincerely care for their Native allies. Some officials did seem to care. For example, McDouall laments that the British had abandoned their Native allies at the Treaty of Ghent, and he:

“bewail[ed] the hapless Destiny of those devoted Nations who listened to our solicitations and confiding in our promises faithfully adhered to us during the war, but found the Peace which *promised* security to them and their Country only led to their utter ruin and annihilation.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Amherst, J. (1759, Aug. 28). [Letters from Commander-in-Chief to Colonel John Bradstreet, D.Q.M.G. (1757 Mar.-1763 Nov.) – 43 – Amherst to Bradstreet]. Kew National Archives, (WO 34/58), Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom.

²⁰⁹ Calloway (1987), pp. 153-54.

²¹⁰ McDouall, R. (1815, Sept. 22). [Lieut. Col. McDouall to Maj. Gen. Robinson. Drummond Island]. Found in Calloway (1987) p. 245. Italics not my own.

Nonetheless, McDouall still participated in the abandonment of his Native allies. British officials did bring up Native concerns during the Treaty of Ghent, but they threw these concerns out almost immediately. The British Indian agents did sometimes diverge from official policy from generals or from London in ways that benefited the Natives like when officials continued to give presents to the Potawatomi in 1763 after Amherst forbade it, but this was only done with the British interests in mind and only happened to help the tribes. Some of the British did care for the Potawatomi, but they always put British interests first even to the detriment of their Native allies.

American Benevolent Interest

Some might argue that the United States was primarily concerned with the welfare of the Natives. Francis Paul Prucha contends that Jackson was “genuinely concerned for the well-being of the Indians and for their civilization.”²¹¹ Jackson claimed that the benefits of voluntary removal for the Natives far outweighed the inevitable disappearances of the tribes if they remained, but this destruction was far from inevitable.²¹² The United States may have convinced itself that it was actually working for the good of the Natives, but it was not.²¹³ American own Native policies contributed to the decline of the Potawatomi. Blaire Topash-Caldwell relates that American removal was based on a separate, but equal mentality, but there was no equality for Natives with their American counterparts.²¹⁴ Removal, just as in the civilization policy that came before it, saw the Native as an inferior “other” who had to abandon their cultural and religious practices and adopt the Western conception of civilization to survive.²¹⁵ For the Potawatomi, the Indian Removal Act would set a precedent that would lead to their removal in the coming

²¹¹ Satz (1979), p. 158.

²¹² Prucha (1969), p. 533. Also found in Satz (1979), p. 162; Saunt, C. (2020). *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. xviii.

²¹³ Black (2015), p. 5; Horsman (1961), p. 35.

²¹⁴ Topash-Caldwell, B. (2021, Jan. 14). Personal communication [Personal interview].

²¹⁵ Bowes (2014), p. 66.

decade. Just because one says that they are looking out for someone else's best interest does not mean that they truly are. America tried to uphold its national character and its moral consciousness, but "the lot of a colonizer with a conscience is not a happy one."²¹⁶ Their intentions do not mask their actions.

Others might argue that military capability was not linked to why American Indian policy differed from British Indian policy because forced removal did not occur until twenty years after the British left the Potawatomi. While forced removal did occur later, coerced removal and the selling of land by the Potawatomi to the United States was only possible because of America's military might. The Potawatomi would have never agreed to the treaties in the 1820s if they were not coerced and compelled to do so.

Kikito Village Resistance to Removal

So far, I have been focused on how American and British colonial policies differed. In the rest of this thesis, however, I will move to consider the behavior of the other, oft-neglected side, of colonial relations: the Indigenous nations themselves. In this section, my aim is to understand why different bands of Potawatomi acted in different ways, with some choosing under duress to abandon their lands, and others finding a way to stay. My argument is that Potawatomi villages resisted removal differently due to their geographic location, available resources, and leaders' relationships with the government. Villages accepted removal when white settlement on their lands increased, when they did not have necessary resources to survive, and when the American military was threatened. Villages who had less settler pressure, more available resources, and had leaders who had a more positive relationship with officials in the American government would adaptively resist removal. The strategy of Potawatomi leaders with a negative reputation amongst American officials would be to resist openly.

²¹⁶ Horsman (1961), p. 53.

Although the Potawatomi ceded most of their territory in Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin to the United States by 1830, their removal westward did not start until Kikito (Moving Sun), a Potawatomi leader from the Kankakee River, approached William Marshall, an American agent at Logansport, Indiana, and told him that his people were ready to remove in 1832.²¹⁷ Why did Kikito and his villagers voluntarily remove? Firstly, they were coerced to remove. Secondly, his Potawatomi village resided in heavily desired land by the white settlers, they were starving, and, although his village had a bad reputation among the local American settlers and politicians who would threaten military force against the tribe, Kikito trusted Marshall.

Kikito and his villagers lived by the Kankakee River in Illinois. Members of the Potawatomi along this river infamously participated in the Battle of Fort Dearborn against America in the War of 1812 which the Americans dubbed a massacre.²¹⁸ Public opinion of the Kankakee River Potawatomi would never recover after this battle. At this time, surrounding tribes began removing to the west, including the Kickapoo who in 1819 ceded land to the United States right next to the Potawatomi in Illinois.²¹⁹ This cession brought American settlers and developers to the doorstep of the Illinois Potawatomi who had previously avoided their original onslaught. At this time, the Kankakee Potawatomi's supply of game rapidly declined as Americans squatted on Native land and brought whiskey into the Illinois villages.²²⁰ Kikito, however, would later be seen by some Americans officials as "pious" since he refused to drink.²²¹ Nonetheless, the large influx of settlers made living in Illinois inhospitable for the Potawatomi in the 1820s.

²¹⁷ Edmunds (1972, 1978), pp. 246, 244; Prucha (1984), p. 248.

²¹⁸ Edmunds (1972), p. 240.

²¹⁹ Edmunds (1978), p. 241.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 224-26.

²²¹ Foreman, G. (1946). *The Last Trek of the Indians*. University of Chicago Press, p. 101.

The Black Hawk War of 1832 was the final nail in the coffin for the Illinois Potawatomi. Black Hawk, a Sauk leader, tried to convince the Potawatomi to join his side as he fought the United States during the summer of 1832, but most of the Potawatomi refused to join him “in an uprising they knew was doomed to fail.”²²² They were afraid of the American response if they joined the war, so most of the Illinois Potawatomi joined the American side, providing intelligence, acting as guides, and even donning “white headbands” to differentiate themselves to the American “volunteer and militia units [who] ... were unfamiliar with the Potawatomis and were prone to consider any Indian they met to be hostile.”²²³ Many Potawatomi villages even fled to the Des Plaines River to avoid hostilities and being associated with the warring Sauks leading to a disruption of their ability to hunt, farm, and plant food which was necessary for their survival.²²⁴ Nevertheless, American settlers and politicians saw this war as an opportunity to remove the western Potawatomi.

Only a few weeks before the official end of the Black Hawk War, the United States called together the various Potawatomi villages at Tippecanoe where they hoped to negotiate their removal.²²⁵ There, Cass privately told his appointed commissioners that the end goal of the treaties was the removal of all of the Potawatomi from Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan past the Mississippi River.²²⁶ Thousands of Potawatomi attended the treaty proceedings, but the tribe was split along different interests, so three treaties were finalized which ceded large portions of Potawatomi land, and in their treaty the “Potawatomis of ‘the Prairie and Kankakee’ band

²²² Bowes (2014), p. 79; Clifton (1977), p. 233; Edmunds (1978), pp. 235-39; Foreman (1946), p. 101; Ostler, J. (2019). *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 311.

²²³ Clifton (1977), p. 234; Edmunds (1978), p. 239.

²²⁴ Conway (1972), p. 413; Edmunds (1978), pp. 238-40.

²²⁵ Bowes (2014), p. 79.

²²⁶ Ibid.; Edmunds (1972), p. 243.

relinquished title to lands in eastern Illinois along the Kankakee River.”²²⁷ These treaties did not explicitly state that the Potawatomi had to be removed, however, and the commissioners awarded many of the Potawatomi small reservations where they could remain to quicken the treaty proceedings.²²⁸ The Potawatomi also were granted trading goods and annuities that totaled \$1,374,279 across all three treaties at Tippecanoe in 1832 for the selling of their lands.²²⁹ Although they gained these much needed goods and annuities, the Potawatomi’s land was growing increasingly smaller, and it became apparent that the United States would not stop at acquiring their lands. Concessions on the small reservations angered the American settlers and politicians who hoped to see all the Potawatomi removed westward, so another treaty, one of the most momentous in Potawatomi history, would occur a year later that would remove most of the Potawatomi who remained in the Old Northwest, the Treaty of Chicago of 1833.

Before this treaty occurred, the United States defeated Black Hawk in August of 1832 with help from the Potawatomi, but settlers and politicians still blamed the Potawatomi for the war. American settlers continually harrassed tribal members by burning down their corn fields and refused to trade with them.²³⁰ Later that year, the governor of Illinois, John Reynolds, announced to the Illinois General Assembly that he believed that the Potawatomi should be removed since “when they [were] permitted to remain intermixed with the white population, it [was] almost certain that contests, and collisions [would] arise, and thereby, both parties be injured.”²³¹ Though the Potawatomi had helped the United States, they were being punished for the actions of the Sauks. American citizens spread rumors alleging the violence of the

²²⁷ Clifton (1977), pp. 234-37; Edmunds (1978), p. 242; Foreman (1946), p. 100; Ostler (2019), p. 311; Prucha (1984), p. 249.

²²⁸ Edmunds (1972), p. 245; Ostler (2019), p. 31; Prucha (1994), pp. 187-92.

²²⁹ Prucha (1994), p. 187-92.

²³⁰ Conway (1972), p. 413; Edmunds (1972), p. 246.

²³¹ John Reynolds: Message to Both Houses of the Illinois General Assembly, December 4, 1832, in *The Black Hawk War 1831–1832*, comp. and ed., Ellen M. Whitney, 3 vols. (Springfield: Illinois Historical Society, 1973), 2:1218–22; Found in Bowes (2014), p. 79.

Potawatomi which caused Reynolds, who saw his top priority as preserving his political career and the safety of his citizens, to send the military to prepare to remove the western Potawatomi.²³² While some of these Potawatomi did at times encroach upon settler lands, kill farm animals since they were starving, and even though isolated incidents did occur with Potawatomi killing Americans on the frontier, there was no question of the Potawatomi's loyalty to the United States during the Black Hawk War.²³³ The Indian agent Thomas Owen even praised "Potawatomi fidelity" during the war, and he "was angered by Reynolds' irresponsible proclamation that the tribe had joined with Black Hawk."²³⁴ A later American investigation would find the Potawatomi completely innocent of helping the Sauks, but the United States did not change their course in trying to remove the Kankakee River Potawatomi.²³⁵

Kikito disagreed with Reynolds' statements that they helped the Sauks in the Black Hawk War, but he and his villagers still fled to Logansport, Indiana in December of 1832 to avoid the military which Reynolds ordered to move through Potawatomi land in Illinois.²³⁶ There, he sought out William Marshall since Marshall had helped feed starving Natives who had come to his agency during the Black Hawk War.²³⁷ Kikito's villagers were starving and desperate for food. Their cornfields had been razed by American settlers, and settlers increased their squatting on Potawatomi lands after the Black Hawk War. Now, with a military force threatening their removal, Kikito faced a difficult choice. Marshall fed the villagers, and reported that these Potawatomi were "very industrious" and that the white citizens in the area found them very friendly, especially Kikito who was seen as a pious man who refrained from alcohol.²³⁸ After

²³² Edmunds (1972, 1978), pp. 240-245, p. 243; Foreman (1946), p. 101; McHarry, J. (1913). "John Reynolds." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 39-41.

²³³ Edmunds (1972), pp. 240-41.

²³⁴ Edmunds (1978), p. 239.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Edmunds (1972), p. 246.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.; Foreman (1946), p. 101.

being taken care of by Marshall, Kikito “requested that his people be moved west of the Mississippi” to ensure their survival.²³⁹ Kikito additionally asked that his people be removed near “Kannekuk, or the Kickapoo Prophet, in the vicinity of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas” since many of Kikito’s villagers had become disciples of the holy man.²⁴⁰ American officials were ecstatic to hear this news. They prepared annuities, supplies and trading goods to assist in the removal, and other preparations began immediately to remove Kikito’s villagers the following spring.

The American removal efforts ended up being disastrous. American Indian agent Abel C. Pepper was put in charge of this removal, and he came to Logansport to facilitate it in April 1833. Kikito’s village made up 256 Natives, but by the end of the trip only sixty-seven Natives completed the journey to Fort Leavenworth.²⁴¹ The journey was delayed for months by the incompetence of American officials, a cholera epidemic, and rumblings of the Treaty of Chicago about to take place which caused many tribal members to flee to Chicago to obtain annuities.²⁴² Kikito would still settle in Fort Leavenworth near the Kickapoo Prophet, and his villagers would even stretch their living quarters westward into Platte Country, a highly sought after piece of land in modern-day Missouri, which would become relevant in the 1833 Treaty of Chicago.

Kikito removed westward once it became apparent that there was no future for his villagers in Illinois. They were destitute. They had no trading goods, supplies, or prospects for farming or hunting, and the American military was sent to remove them if they returned to Illinois. Kikito asked for aid from an Indian agent whom he knew had helped Natives in the past. Luckily, since Kikito was seen as a pious man and was well-regarded by the local white community, and since he was the first Potawatomi tribal leader to be coerced into voluntarily

²³⁹ Clifton (1977), pp. 283-84; Edmunds (1972, 1978), pp. 246, 244.

²⁴⁰ Clifton (1977), pp. 269-70; Edmunds (1978), p. 244.

²⁴¹ Edmunds (1972, 1978), pp. 247-52, 244-47; Foreman (1946), p. 102.

²⁴² Ibid.

removing beyond the Mississippi, American officials were keen to honor any requests he had to facilitate the removal. He got to remove to the area he wanted to, when he wanted to, and he was able to initially extend his territory into extremely desirable lands in Missouri. Kikito believed the best course of action to ensure his village's survival was to remove westward, so he did. Accepting removal was a form of resistance with Kikito. He took up desirable lands near his allies in the west and pushed the American government to honor these demands because they were desperate to remove his village. He turned around a situation where his village was originally impoverished and threatened by military action into one where they gained new land, annuities, and supplies.

Kikito accepted removal after it appeared inevitable that his village would be decimated by the American military and due to increasing white settlement and the lack of needed resources. He resisted this situation differently than Pokagon or Menominee resisted theirs because of his village's location being overrun by settlers, because of the resources available to him, and because of his relationship with American officials. All these factors had to be true for him to go through with his strategy.

Pokagon Village Resistance to Removal

The Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi were not removed like Kikito or Menominee's villages, and they remain today in southern Michigan and northern Indiana. Why were they not removed like the rest of the Potawatomi? There were four key reasons. They abstained from alcohol and appeared as pious Christians, they strategically used their Catholic allies, they effectively bought private land with treaty funds, and they had positive relationships with American officials. In Morseau's opinion, he emphasized that they were not removed because they were helped by the Catholics, and they were seen by the Americans as civilized Natives

who abstained from alcohol.²⁴³ Low also asserts that Leopold Pokagon was able to remain in Michigan “by abstaining from alcohol and emphasizing the conversion of himself and his followers to Catholicism” and by paying for private lands in Silver Creek Township in Michigan.²⁴⁴ Additionally, Low and Topash-Caldwell both highlight the political strategy that Pokagon used to ally himself with the Catholics.²⁴⁵ Pokagon was not only looking for spiritual guidance. He needed an American ally to successfully fight back against removal. Pokagon and his villagers remained in Michigan because he used his Catholicism and sobriety to win allies in the Catholic Church and appear civilized to the Americans while buying private lands and winning allies in the American government allowed them to continue to stay in Michigan.

The Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi resided along the Saint Joseph River in Michigan. Leopold Pokagon, for whom the band would later be named after, was not born within the tribe, but emerged as a *wkema* in the mid-1820s with support from Joseph Bertrand, a powerful trader in the area, and from Topinabe, an older, more established Potawatomi *wkema* whose relative Pokagon married.²⁴⁶ John Tipton, an American Indian agent, remarked during this period that Pokagon and his villagers were incredibly frugal unlike their fellow Potawatomi.²⁴⁷ Topinabe would die in 1826, and Pokagon began to gain more influence within the Saint Joseph River Potawatomi. Under the American civilization policy, the Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy started the Carey Mission in 1822 which hoped to civilize the local Natives by teaching them about Christianity and the more practical skills of agriculture. Pokagon moved his village closer to this mission in 1826, hoping for an ally who could teach his people relevant skills, but, to his dismay, he found McCoy to be pro-removal, and the mission never achieved the foothold it wanted with

²⁴³ Morseau (2021).

²⁴⁴ Low (2015), p. 81.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 80; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

²⁴⁶ Clifton (1984), pp. 58-60; Low (2015), p. 79.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

the Potawatomi before it shut down a few years later.²⁴⁸ Throughout his rise to power, Pokagon was constantly looking for allies who could keep him in power and keep his village in their homeland.

Pokagon's fears of removal were accelerated after the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830 which sought to remove all the Natives west of the Mississippi. Just two months after this bill was passed, Pokagon traveled up to Detroit to beseech Father Gabriel Richard, who was vicar-general of the Bishop of Cincinnati, to send a Catholic priest to serve his community.²⁴⁹ French Jesuits had previously run a mission for the Saint Joseph Potawatomi in the late 17th century, so Pokagon told Richard that his Potawatomi had "preserved the way of prayer taught our ancestors by the black robe who used to be at St. Joseph," and he recited catechisms to him in French.²⁵⁰ Richard then sent Father Stephen Badin to start a mission with the Pokagon village, and he worked with and lived among them until 1835 when he was replaced by Father Louis Deseille.²⁵¹ Pokagon knew that the Catholics could be allies in ways that McCoy never was – they could help the Potawatomi resist removal. The Catholic missionaries were useful allies and politically advantageous for the Pokagon Band: they spoke French, which called back to the earlier French alliance with the Potawatomi; they represented a marginalized minority in America which was opposed by the Protestant majority; and they were establishing schools in the area, and the priests themselves opposed the Indian Removal policy.²⁵² Deseille, and his successor Father Benjamin Petit in Menominee's village, would be a thorn in the side of local American Indian agents since they would continually fight for their Potawatomi's right to

²⁴⁸ Clifton (1984), pp. 60-61; Edmunds (1978), p. 224; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

²⁴⁹ Clifton (1984), p. 68; Low (2015), p. 80; McKee, I. (1941). *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit*. Indiana Historical Society, Vol. 14, p. 14.

²⁵⁰ McKee (1941), p. 14; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

²⁵¹ Clifton (1984), p. 69; Low (2015), p. 80; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

²⁵² Clifton (1984), pp. 65-66.

remain. Pokagon gained valuable allies, but the Catholic missionaries were not enough by themselves to keep the American government from removing the Potawatomi.

The Black Hawk War of 1832 turned public opinion against the Potawatomi even though most of the Potawatomi joined the Americans' side. At the subsequent treaty negotiations at Tippecanoe in which the Americans attempted to remove the Potawatomi, the tribe was divided.²⁵³ Of all the Potawatomi villages, the Saint Joseph villages were the least willing to give up their lands, and the American officials grew tired of trying to get all the Potawatomi to agree to one treaty. To solve this problem, three treaties were agreed with the Illinois Potawatomi, the Indiana Potawatomi, and with the Saint Joseph Potawatomi under Pokagon who gave up "whatever residual claims they might have to lands previously sold in the region and in addition they ceded one more large parcel in northern Indiana."²⁵⁴ Pokagon only agreed to this treaty after the United States granted 120 small reservations of land to the Potawatomi which they could stay on, and this concession "confirmed the tenure rights of Leopold Pokagon's villagers to the small reservation south of Niles on the Indian state line."²⁵⁵ In this treaty, Pokagon also received thousands of dollars in annuities.²⁵⁶ The Pokagon did not have to be removed yet, but American officials were persistent. The Michigan Territorial Governor, George Porter, announced that the Potawatomi had to be removed since "they caused so much trouble during the past year."²⁵⁷ Only a few months after the Tippecanoe treaties were signed, America moved to completely remove the Potawatomi again at the Treaty of Chicago in 1833.

²⁵³ To see Cass' comments calling for his commissioners to "extinguish entirely" Native rights to the land during the Tippecanoe treaties, see Bowes (2014), p. 79; Prucha (1984), p. 249.

²⁵⁴ Clifton (1984), p. 63.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 40; Prucha (1994), pp. 187-92.

²⁵⁶ Low (2015), p. 85.

²⁵⁷ George Porter to Elbert Herring, March 16, 1833, roll 132, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Found in Bowes (2014), p. 79.

Porter led the treaty negotiations at Chicago, and he demanded that the Potawatomi give up all their land in the Old Northwest and proceed to move west past the Mississippi as permitted by the Indian Removal Act of 1830.²⁵⁸ The commissioners were ordered by Cass not to give away any small reservations; the time had come to finally get rid of the Potawatomi.²⁵⁹ Pokagon and his villagers were the most vehemently opposed to removal. He attempted to show the American commissioners that his people “possessed only small tracts of land,” and he differentiated his band from the western Potawatomi by saying that “some of us [the Potawatomi] are called ‘wood Indians’ altho we are Potawattomies, and others are called ‘Prairie Indians.’”²⁶⁰ The western Potawatomi were more willing to remove, so Pokagon wanted to distance himself from them. Pokagon was ultimately successful in his negotiations to keep his band from being removed with a second party of the treaty guaranteeing their right to remain, but he had to give some things up. Pokagon still had to cede his lands, but his band was allowed to stay in the Great Lakes area if they moved up into northern Michigan into Ojibwe territory within three years.²⁶¹ He was also given thousands of dollars as a personal reward for agreeing to the treaty, something no other Potawatomi *wkema* received.²⁶² The rest of the Potawatomi agreed to cede their remaining lands in the area in exchange for around five million acres in western Iowa and in the Platte Country west of Missouri along with “over half a million dollars in cash and goods,” and “another half million dollars ... appropriated for later annuity payments, educational and development funds.”²⁶³ The treaty they agreed to, however, changed as it underwent review in the Senate.

²⁵⁸ Ostler (2019), p. 313; Prucha (1984), p. 251.

²⁵⁹ Prucha (1984), p. 247.

²⁶⁰ Bowes (2014), p. 80; Clifton (1980, 1984), pp. 93, 47.

²⁶¹ Ostler (2019), pp. 313-14; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

²⁶² Clifton (1984), pp. 47-48.

²⁶³ Clifton (1977, 1980, 1984), pp. 240-45, 86-90, 46-49; Edmunds (1978), pp. 248-49; Ostler (2019), pp. 313-14; Prucha (1984), p. 247-51.

The Senate would not ratify the treaty until February 21, 1835 since the two Missouri senators wished to include the Platte Country into their own state due to its fertile soil.²⁶⁴ The newly ratified treaty thus promised less desirable lands in Iowa for the Potawatomi after Missouri added the Platte Country, but only six Potawatomi signed this new treaty of the 120 who signed the original one.²⁶⁵ The few Potawatomi who did sign the revised treaty were promised additional goods and annuities for their services.²⁶⁶ Incensed, many of the Potawatomi refused to go to their newly promised lands, and they still went to the Platte Country where they found members of Kikito's village.²⁶⁷ Nonetheless, these Potawatomi were soon forced to leave the area and go into Kansas with Kikito or Iowa after military force was threatened by the United States.²⁶⁸ The Treaty of Chicago was the last great Native treaty in the Old Northwest as the frontier between Native lands and American colonization moved west of the Mississippi.²⁶⁹

One amendment that remained in the treaty was Pokagon and his villagers' right to stay in the Great Lakes area, but the United States continued to try to remove them. The exact language of the amendment stated that:

“And, as since the signing of the treaty a part of the band residing on the reservations in the Territory of Michigan, have requested, *on account of their religious creed*, permission to remove to the northern part of the peninsula of Michigan, it is agreed that in case of such removal the just proportion of all annuities payable to them under former treaties and that arising from the sale of the reservation on which they now reside shall be paid to them at, L'arbe, Croche.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁴ Edmunds (1978), p. 250; Ostler (2019), p. 311; Prucha (1984, 1994), pp. 251-52, 187-92.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Edmunds (1978), p. 250.

²⁶⁷ Ostler (2019), p. 312.

²⁶⁸ Prucha (1994), pp. 187-92.

²⁶⁹ See Clifton (1980).

²⁷⁰ Low (2015), p. 79; Fay, G. (1971). *Treaties Between the Potawatomi Tribe of Indians and the United States of America, 1789 - 1867*. Greeley, Colorado, University of Northern Colorado, p. 112. I added the italics to demonstrate the importance of Pokagon's Catholicism in helping them resist removal during the treaty.

Pokagon and his villagers got to remain in the Great Lakes area, albeit by selling their lands and moving north, because of their religious creed. These Potawatomi were seen as civilized by the American officials through their adoption of the Christian faith, but their Catholicism was not enough to stave off removal forever. When Pokagon tried to move his villagers up to the territory of the Ojibwe with whom they were supposed to reside alongside, he found that this land had been ceded to the American government.²⁷¹ The remaining Potawatomi could no longer move to the land that had been promised to them, and American officials again pressured them to remove. The Superintendent for Indian Affairs in Michigan, Henry Schoolcraft, actively “refused to pay [the Potawatomi] the annuities they were due” from the 1833 Treaty of Chicago, and he tried to block any of their attempts to relocate in Michigan.²⁷² America was not honoring its promises, but the band of Potawatomi found another way to resist removal.

Pokagon resisted by buying private land. He used money allotted to him under previous treaties to purchase 874 acres of land in Silver Creek Township in southwestern Michigan for himself and his villagers in 1837.²⁷³ He was resisting American attempts to remove his people by appearing to adopt Christianity and buying private land – the very things the American government had been trying to teach the Natives. Their excuse to remove the Natives was that they could not yet adopt American ways, but Pokagon was showing that this was not the case. He was adopting American “civilization,” but he was using it as a form of resistance against removal. The Americans did not care. They just wanted the Potawatomi to remove, so they would try again to remove this small band four years later.

Joel Roberts Poinsett, the Secretary of War, ordered Hugh Brady, the Commanding General of the Seventh Military District stationed in Detroit, to remove the remaining

²⁷¹ Clifton (1984), pp. 51-52; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

²⁷² Clifton (1984), p. 50.

²⁷³ Ibid., pp. xii, 51-53, 69-71; Low (2015), p. 79; Ostler (2019), pp. 313-14; Topash-Caldwell (2021).

Potawatomi in Michigan in 1840.²⁷⁴ Brady was unsure of the necessity to use military force, and later refused to remove the Potawatomi after Epaphroditus Ransom, the Associate Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, wrote him a letter and met with him to confirm the legal rights of the Pokagon to stay in Michigan.²⁷⁵ Ransom, who would later become the governor of Michigan, came to the defense of the Pokagon Band after Leopold Pokagon, with the help of local Catholic priests, wrote to him for aid.²⁷⁶ 108 members of the Potawatomi were able to stay with Pokagon, who died in 1841, after he had helped guarantee their rights to stay in Michigan.²⁷⁷

Leopold Pokagon did not achieve this success by himself; instead, he was helped by members of his own Potawatomi community, and some modern tribal members have mixed feelings about him getting all of the credit and wish he brought more Potawatomi to stay on his reservation in southern Michigan.²⁷⁸ The Pokagon Band successfully resisted removal in ways that Kikito and Memoniee were unable to do. For one, the Pokagon did not have their sources of food devastated to the extent of Kikito's band because of the Black Hawk War in 1832. Moreover, Pokagon had people willing to sell him land in Michigan whereas the settlers surrounding Kikito were eager for them to be removed. Finally, and most importantly, Pokagon had a good relationship with many powerful American officials. He was seen as pious as he refrained from alcohol, just like Kikito, and because he was a Christian, just like Memominee, but he developed relationships with sympathetic American officials like Ransom which the other two leaders never did. As Mark Schurr, an archaeologist from the University of Notre Dame, stated, "the ability to forge useful social ties with the colonizers was the single-most important

²⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

²⁷⁵ Clifton (1984), p. 72; Low (2015), p. 80; Ostler (2019), pp. 313-14.

²⁷⁶ Ostler (2019), p. 314.

²⁷⁷ Clifton (1984), p. 72.

²⁷⁸ Morseau (2021).

determinant of successful resistance.”²⁷⁹ Pokagon was able to stay in Michigan after the 1833 Treaty of Chicago because he was seen as a pious Christian by American officials and treaty commissioners. He was able to stay in this area afterwards because he never was completely desperate to get needed goods and services to survive, he bought private land, and he won over sympathetic American officials to his cause. All these factors contributed heavily to the Pokagon Band resisting removal. Appearing Catholic alone was not enough to stop Potawatomi removal which will become more evident with the forced removal of Menominee and his village in 1838.

Menominee Village Resistance to Removal

Menominee’s village resided along the Yellow River in northern Indiana, and they were forcibly removed westward by the United States government in 1838. Why was this village removed at gunpoint while Kikito’s and Pokagon’s villages were not? Menominee’s land was seen as extremely valuable, and settlers frequently encroached on the land. He was not as desperate as Kikito was for goods and resources to ensure his people’s survival, so he never voluntarily chose to be removed. Menominee was Catholic like Pokagon, but he never won the necessary allies like Pokagon did in the American government that could have helped him stay in Indiana. Instead, he resisted American attempts to remove him more visibly, and his village became a breeding ground of dissent against American removal.²⁸⁰ Menominee earnestly believed that the American government was mistaken in trying to remove his village, so he never stopped resisting which resulted in military force being used to remove his people.

American officials wanted all the Potawatomi gone after the Black Hawk War of 1832. Menominee, like Pokagon, was awarded small reservations in Indiana at the Tippecanoe treaties in 1832 in exchange for ceding more lands and giving up claims to other areas in Indiana to the

²⁷⁹ Schurr, M. (2010). “Archaeological Indices of Resistance: Diversity in the Removal Period Potawatomi of the Western Great Lakes,” *American Antiquity*, 75, pp. 44–60; Found in Bowes (2014), p. 76.

²⁸⁰ Clifton (1977), p. 298.

American government.²⁸¹ The American government still wanted the rest of the Potawatomi removed westward even after these treaties, and Abel C. Pepper was put in charge of removing the Natives from Indiana in 1833.²⁸² American officials tried to coax the Potawatomi who were present at the Tippecanoe treaties to remove by offering them an expedition westward, so that they could “examin the Country west.”²⁸³ Still, Menominee and his villagers were not interested in removal. The Native leader received assurances from Cass in 1836 that he was not going to be removed, but at the same time the Secretary of War was ordering Pepper to get rid of the Potawatomi.²⁸⁴

Menominee was a pious Catholic, and at this time his village was being served by Fr. Deseille who was also administering to Pokagon’s village.²⁸⁵ Deseille was seen as a threat by Pepper since he defended Menominee’s right to stay and even wrote to Pepper that “the Indians of the reserve of Me-no-mi-nie Muc-ka-tah-mo-ah [had] obtained from the General Government the special favour of remaining undisturbed upon their reserve as long as they shall wish to remain there.”²⁸⁶ Pepper furiously wrote to Tipton that he “failed in a late effort to conclude a treaty with the Yellow river band” because Menominee pointed to a paper “which he said the Priest had authorizing the band to remain permanently on their reservation.”²⁸⁷ Deseille was getting in the way of Pepper’s attempts to remove Menominee’s village. Pepper would

²⁸¹ Bowes (2014), p. 79; Edmunds (1978), p. 242; Low (2015), p. 85; Ostler (2019), pp. 312-13; Prucha (1984), p. 249.

²⁸² McKee (1941), p. 18.

²⁸³ Tipton, J., & Hendricks, W., et al. (1834, April 15). [Tipton, William Hendricks, et al., to Lewis Cass.] Found in Tipton, J. (1942). *John Tipton Papers – Volume 3: 1834-1839*. (Nellie Armstrong Robertson and Dorothy Riker, Ed.). The Indiana Historical Bureau, p. 50.

²⁸⁴ Edmunds (1978), p. 265; Ostler (2019), pp. 312-13

²⁸⁵ McKee (1941), p. 12.

²⁸⁶ Deseille, L. (1836, March 21). [Louis Deseille to A.C. Pepper]. Found in Tipton (1942), p. 246; Edmunds (1978), p. 264.

²⁸⁷ Pepper, A. (1836, April 16). [Abel C. Pepper to Tipton]. Found in Tipton (1942), p. 259.

eventually succeed in ceding Menominee's lands through an 1836 treaty, but Menominee and Deseille would protest its legitimacy.

Pepper finalized a treaty on August 5, 1836, which ceded Menominee's lands to the American government. This treaty, however, did not have Menominee's name on it, and the three other leaders of the village who did sign were allegedly bribed or made drunk before they signed.²⁸⁸ Menominee protested the treaty along with Deseille, whom the Americans blamed for inciting the Potawatomi leader. They subsequently threatened legal action against Deseille, who was a foreigner, and Deseille stepped down.²⁸⁹ He would be replaced by Father Benjamin Petit in 1837. Menominee wrote to Pepper, Tipton, and the president that he did not agree to this fraudulent sale of his land. He wrote to Tipton that:

“The Chiefs and Family heads of the Indian Reservation at Yellow River – Marshall County, Being Informed by the white People that Some thing like a Treaty is made in the first part of August last and directed to our great Father the President By which our Reservation is Said to be Sold, Beg leaf to State through you Intermedeation to our great Father the President and Senate of the United States, that [the real chiefs of the band] ... are the only owners of the Reservation, were Peacebley working at our Fields Duing all that time, ... Consequently we Chiefs and familys heads of Said Reservation Do by this protest and object against any such thing like a Treaty or Sale of our land as having had no part in it or give any Authorization to it, and as we Know that our Great Father and his Government are right – we Trust they will never Sanction Such unjust and Shameful deed, for this purpose we undersigned Chiefs and famly heads do Certify by the that we have never Consented to any Sale of our Reserves or give any authorization to it or have had any part in Said Treaty.”²⁹⁰

Menominee refused to leave his lands, and he called on the government to make good on their promises. He was not even present at the signing of the treaty, so he was bewildered that a treaty had occurred selling his lands, especially since he was previously promised that he could remain

²⁸⁸ Bowes (2014), pp. 72-73; Clifton (1977), p. 298; Edmunds (1978), p. 265; McKee (1941), p. 23; Ostler (2019), pp. 312-13.

²⁸⁹ Edmunds (1978), p. 276; Ewing, G., & Taber, C. (1836, Aug. 21). [George W. Ewing and Cyrus Taber to Tipton]. Found in Tipton (1942), pp. 304-05; Ostler (2019), pp. 312-313; Pepper, A. (1837, May 16). [Abel C. Pepper to Father Deseille]. Found in McKee (1941), pp. 24-25.

²⁹⁰ Menominee et al. (1836, Nov. 4). [Menominee et al. to Tipton]. Found in Tipton (1942), pp. 312-13.

in these lands. Menominee continued to fight for his villages' right when he wrote to Pepper in 1838 that:

“The President does not know the truth. He, like me, has been used unfairly. He does not know that you made my young chiefs drunk and got their agreement and pretended to get mine. He would not drive me from my home and the graves of my tribe, and my children, who have gone to the Great Spirit, nor allow you to tell me that your warriors will take me, tied like a dog. The President is fair, but he listens to the words of his young treaty makers who have lied; and when he knows the truth, he will leave me to my own. I have not sold my lands. I will not sell them. I have not signed any treaty, and will not sign any. I am not going to leave my lands.”²⁹¹

Menominee thought that the land-hungry settlers and the local agents were trying to trick him out of his land, so he wanted to reach the president to undo the treaty. He was not alone in his disbelief towards the treaty. Petit, in just his first month of serving Menominee, wrote to his bishop that the 1836 treaty was “indeed a thing as illegal as possible and in no wise applicable to our people, who have sold nothing. ... It seems to me that if the government has not decided to be completely unjust, they will be listened to.”²⁹² Petit, who was trained as a lawyer in his home country of France, helped Menominee by explaining the legal rationale that would back up his case when the tribal leader spoke to American officials, but it was useless.²⁹³ Petit eventually confronted Tipton weeks before the forced removal would occur, telling him that “to make from free men slaves, no man can take upon himself to do so in this free country,” and that “it is impossible for me, and for many to conceive how such events may take place in this country of liberty.”²⁹⁴ Unfortunately for Menominee and Petit, the government never answered their calls for justice. Military force would soon be used to remove Menominee's village.

²⁹¹ Edmunds (1978), p. 267.

²⁹² Petit, B. (1837, Nov. 27). [Petit to Bishop Bruté]. Found in Tipton (1942), p. 38.

²⁹³ Petit, B. (1837, Dec. 9). [Petit to Bishop Bruté]; Petit, B. (1838, July. 16). [Petit to Bishop Bruté]. Found in Tipton (1942), pp. 41, 81.

²⁹⁴ Petit, B. (1838, Sept. 3). [Petit to Tipton]. Found in Tipton (1942), p. 89.

American officials were afraid of the example that Menominee would set if he were allowed to stay. Menominee openly defied the American government by refusing to remove, and “his village attracted many landless Potawatomi who also were determined to remain in the east.”²⁹⁵ Tipton emphasized that “it is time these people [the Potawatomi] will go west,” and that he was frustrated that “our pottawatomies are stubborn. ... & they s[hall not] tell me they wont go, *they must go*.”²⁹⁶ Pepper remarked that the local citizens were growing tired of Menominee’s refusal to leave, and that they “petitioned the governor to detail a military force with Instructions to put the Indians off the land” on account of their pre-emption rights to the land.²⁹⁷ He feared that violence could erupt, and he believed that “nothing could prevent serious difficulty between the parties but the removal of the Indians from the lands Claimed.”²⁹⁸ Pepper recommended that David Wallace, the Governor of Indiana, put in charge someone who could lead a group of volunteers to cope with this removal. Wallace agreed with Pepper’s assessment, and he announced to the Indiana General Assembly that he had appointed John Tipton to lead one hundred volunteers to remove Menominee’s village who “disregard the [1836] treaty entirely and ... cling to the homes and the graves of their fathers at all hazards” which has led to “a collision of the most serious character was likely to ensue between them and the surrounding settlers.”²⁹⁹ Wallace and Pepper hoped to protect the “public interest, peace, and security of the citizens of Indiana, as well as the future welfare of the Indians,” and this required the Potawatomi to be removed.³⁰⁰ Wallace alleged that at the arrival of Tipton “opposition to removal ceased” and the

²⁹⁵ Clifton (1977), p. 298; Edmunds (1978), p. 266.

²⁹⁶ Tipton, J. (1837, June 29). [Tipton to Carey A. Harris]; Tipton, J. (1838, Aug. 24). [Tipton to Isaac McCoy]. Found in Tipton (1942), pp. 412-13, 672. Italics not my own.

²⁹⁷ Pepper, A. (1838, Aug. 13). [Abel C. Pepper to Carey A. Harris]. Found in Tipton (1942), pp. 662-63.

²⁹⁸ Pepper, A. (1838, Sept. 6). [Abel C. Pepper to Carey A. Harris]. Found in Tipton (1942), pp. 696.

²⁹⁹ Wallace, D. (1838, Dec. 4). [Wallace: Message to the General Assembly]. Found in Wallace, D. (1963). *Messages and Papers of David Wallace, 1837-1840*. (Dorothy Riker, Ed.). The Indiana Historical Bureau, pp. 180-81.

³⁰⁰ Pepper, A. (1838, Oct. 2). [Abel C. Pepper to Wallace]. Found in Wallace (1963), pp. 148-50.

Potawatomi “voluntarily prepared to emigrate” besides a few extremists amongst them, including Menominee.³⁰¹ The real story of their removal is much more horrifying, however.

On August 29, 1838, Tipton faked a council to bring together Menominee’s village, and then with his army he captured the attending Natives before surrounding the church where the rest of the village was before also making prisoners of them.³⁰² Menominee was put in handcuffs.³⁰³ A week later, Tipton began the march where 850 Potawatomi were forced from their homes in Indiana to a reservation near the Osage River in Kansas, the infamous Trail of Death. Petit, choosing to leave with the Potawatomi, described the mayhem of this removal as “heart-rending” as the Potawatomi “had been surprised and taken prisoners of war ... with bayonets prodding their backs” and many “died of heat and thirst” as they were pushed into baggage wagons on the journey.³⁰⁴ By the end of their removal, only around 750 Potawatomi arrived in Kansas with forty-two tribal members dying along the way due to a typhoid epidemic and exhaustion.³⁰⁵ Over half of the dead were children. Some fifty Potawatomi escaped from this arduous journey. While serving his villagers, Petit also died at the age of twenty-nine.³⁰⁶ Menominee and his village had been forcibly removed by the American government.

Menominee resisted American colonialism just like Kikito and Pokagon, but his village was the only one that was forcibly removed. Their land was desirable, and they faced insatiable settlers squatting on their lands and pushing for their removal just like both other villages. In

³⁰¹ Wallace, D. (1838, Dec. 4). [Wallace: Message to the General Assembly]. Found in Wallace (1963), pp. 180-81.

³⁰² Bowes (2014), pp. 72-73; Clifton (1977), pp. 298-99; Edmunds (1978), p. 267; Foreman (1946), p. 110; Low (2015), p. 86; Ostler (2019), pp. 312-13; Polke, W. (1925). “Journal of an Emigrating Party of Pottawattomie Indians, 1838.” *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 315-16; Prucha (1984, 1994), pp. 252, 192.

³⁰³ Clifton (1977), p. 272.

³⁰⁴ Petit, B. (1838, Sept. 14). [Petit to His Family, Sept. 14, 1838]. Found in McKee (1941), pp. 91-92. My roommate, Jacob Messineo, is a big believer that Fr. Petit should be considered for sainthood!

³⁰⁵ Bowes (2014), pp. 72-73; Clifton (1977), pp. 298-99; Edmunds (1978), p. 268; Foreman (1946), pp. 111-17; Low (2015), p. 86; Ostler (2019), p. 313. For specifics of the tragedies occurring during the removal see Polke (1925) and Foreman (1946).

³⁰⁶ McKee (1941), p. 114.

contrast, Menominee never faced the same food insecurity as Kikito's village until their removal began, he believed the treaty removing them was illegitimate, and he thought the president was unaware of the injustices being committed, so he never opted to be voluntarily removed. He was Catholic like Pokagon, and he worked with the same priests that Pokagon's village did. His village was forcibly removed because of pressure from the settlers and because Menominee never won the necessary allies that Pokagon had won to defend his right to remain, so his strategy differed from Pokagon. He could not trust his local American officials. Menominee refused to cooperate with these officials, and thus he became a beacon for resistance against the government with many similar dissenting Potawatomi flocking to his village. Pokagon ceded the lands that the government wanted him to cede, but then he bought nearby lands to house his people. Menominee never did this, and he refused to cede the lands he was awarded in the 1832 Tippecanoe Treaty. Without any allies in the government, Menominee's options were limited, and his letters to American officials were unsuccessful. The American government used the military force they had threatened the other villages with to remove Menominee's village, and he was unable to stop this because of his poor relationship with American officials and his open defiance of the government.

Counterarguments to *H2*

These arguments are not the only ones that attempt to explain Potawatomi resistance and removal. One could argue that the Kikito's relationship with American officials did not play a large role in his voluntary removal. He was praised by local Indian agents for his pious nature and loyalty to America during the Black Hawk War, and an American investigation found his Potawatomi not guilty of conspiring with the Sauks, but he was still coerced into removal. The context of Kikito's removal was different from the other Potawatomi leader who had positive

relationships in the American government, Pokagon. Kikito's village faced starvation after their fields had been razed, and squatters pushed into their territory. He never had the ability or resources available to wait on his allies in the American government like Pokagon could when he enlisted the help of his sympathetic American allies to help his village resist removal. Kikito elected to be removed because he had to find a way to ensure his band's survival. His positive relationships with American officials were unable to bring back destroyed fields or stop squatters, but these relationships gave him the option of voluntarily removing where and when he wanted to go. When Marshall communicated Kikito's desire to remove to other American officials, they were excited to organize the removal effort, especially on hearing Marshall's cheery description of the Potawatomi leader. Menominee's description by his local American Indian agents as a fanatical threat to American removal efforts stands in stark contrast. Without Marshall on his side, one could plausibly see the American government forcing Kikito to remove where and when they wanted him to go. Kikito's adaptive resistance against American removal was only possible because of his positive relationships with American officials.

The story I was told when I asked my professors why the Pokagon Band was never removed solely referenced Leopold Pokagon's Catholicism, but this account is only partially correct. After all, the amendment in the 1833 Treaty of Chicago that excluded Pokagon's village from removal did specifically state that they could stay because of their religious creed. This argument would hold that the United States only removed those who would not acculturate, and since Pokagon did acculturate by adopting the Christian faith, he was then safe from removal. While his faith did play an important role in Pokagon's strategy to resist removal, the American government kept trying to remove his village even after the 1833 Treaty of Chicago. Menominee was also Catholic and worked with the same priests that Pokagon did, but his village was

forcibly removed. Catholicism was not the only factor that helped Pokagon. Menominee's Catholicism was actually seen as a point of resistance since his priests openly advocated for his right to stay. Pokagon did appear more civilized by American standards through his Catholicism, but this only bought him a little amount of time in 1833. Pokagon was able to stay because he passively resisted the American government by buying private land instead of openly doing so. He was able to resist in this way since his village won sympathetic and powerful allies like Judge Ransom who could convince American officials of the village's legal right to stay.

Some could say that Menominee's strategy differed from Kikito and Pokagon not because he lacked sympathetic relationships with American officials but because he was willing to encourage violence between his villagers and settlers. Unlike Kikito who voluntarily removed and Pokagon who agreed to partially cede his lands at the 1833 Treaty of Chicago, Menominee refused to give an inch to the Americans. Pepper, Tipton, and Wallace thought that if Menominee stayed on his land, then there would be armed conflict between his villagers and Americans trying to reside on their land. Since Menominee refused to sell the land, they believed that he wished to stir up violence. In their minds, to preserve the Natives' safety and the well-being of the local American citizens, forced removal had to occur. They were wrong. Menominee's resistance was like Kikito's and Pokagon's strategies because he never encouraged violence. In all his letters to American officials, Menominee emphasized that he believed there must be a misunderstanding. If he was truly willing to physically fight, he would have armed the dissenting Potawatomi in his village, but he never did this. He recognized that he could not militarily defeat the United States which is why he resorted to letters and speeches to plead his case. The reason his pleas were ignored was not because he was a warmonger; rather, he did not have someone like Ransom to defend his legal rights to the land like Pokagon had. Menominee never had

American Indian agents defending him like Kikito did which allowed them to choose when and where they removed. His lack of sympathetic American officials is what led to his strategy of resistance and is what ultimately led to his forced removal. In not buying private land and refusing to compromise with the American government, Menominee failed to see the potential ways he could resist removal like Pokagon did.

Conclusion

Issues of Native American sovereignty still matter today. *McGirt* makes this abundantly clear. The Muscogee are not the Potawatomi, but their removal was contemporaneous with the Potawatomi's, and they were removed under the same policy. Further, the *McGirt* precedent opens up relitigation on the lands of other Native nations. The Standing Rock protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline from 2016 to 2017 provide another modern example of disagreement between Native nations and the government over who gets to decide what happens on the land. These contemporary examples get to an active question: what is the relationship between the United States and the Native nations that live within its borders?

Studying the Potawatomi story can help us better understand these relationships because it demonstrates why multiple villages within one tribe reacted differently to American colonialism and how this led to varying outcomes for them. One of their villages was coerced into voluntarily removing. A second village was able to successfully resist removal, and another was forcibly removed. Since these villages shared many characteristics, they are useful case studies in understanding why and when tribes resisted removal and why and when they accepted removal. This historical knowledge then makes it easier for one to understand the current situations of the Potawatomi as they are scattered throughout the United States and Canada today because of removal. Similarly, to understand the current situation of the Muscogee (Creek)

Nation and the consequences of the *McGirt* decision for Native and non-Native people living in eastern Oklahoma, one must understand the history of the tribe and its relationship with colonial powers. These relationships have not always been positive or encouraging. Jonodev Chaudhuri, the Ambassador of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, highlighted this fact when he wrote that:

“For the first time in my life, and my mother’s, and her mother’s and her mother’s – for pretty much the first time that anyone can remember, the law was not bent or altered or discarded through the crafting of a false story about my people and my Nation. The law was applied as is, because it is *the law*.”³⁰⁷

A glimmer of hope remains for Native American sovereignty, but it is dependent on people listening to Native voices. In his article, Chaudhuri stressed that “stories matter.”³⁰⁸ Native stories matter because they challenge the false narratives that are used to label them as primitive, violent, savage, and simple. These stories back up Native rights that have been previously walked over by colonial powers. The voices of Morseau, Low, and Topash-Caldwell matter because they illuminate the history of the Potawatomi from the Potawatomi perspective.

The Potawatomi currently reside in Oklahoma, Kansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Canada, but they used to live around Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan before most of them were removed in the 1830s. The Potawatomi alliance with the British after the French & Indian War and Pontiac’s War in 1763 was reliant on the middle ground where each side did not have the military capability to force the other side to do what they wanted. The Potawatomi wanted survival, and goods and supplies from the British. The British wanted to maintain their monopoly on the fur trade and protect Canada. This middle ground forced them to work and trade together to achieve these ends. It also drove them to fight together against their common enemy, the Americans, because they wanted to maintain their mutual alliance. Once the

³⁰⁷ Chaudhuri, J. (2020). “Reflection on *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.” *Harvard Law Review Forum*, 134(2), 85. Italics not my own.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

Americans won, they continued to engage in treaty-making with the Potawatomi since they were not weak enough to compel them to remove. The Potawatomi again wanted to ensure their survival and to keep receiving goods and supplies. The Americans, however, wanted the Potawatomi's land. They only began forcibly taking this land after the War of 1812 when the British abandoned their Native allies. America, now strong enough to take what they wanted, attempted to remove the Potawatomi.

The Potawatomi villages faced removal differently. The tribe always had a fluid political and social structure, but by the 1830s so much Potawatomi land had been ceded that the villages had to disperse throughout the Old Northwest for their own survival. Their reactions to potential removal were reliant on these separations. Kikito's village opted to voluntarily remove because white settlers were encroaching on his lands, and his people were starving with their fields razed after the Black Hawk War of 1832. He felt as though removal was inevitable with a military force coming to his territory and he could no longer wait as his people starved, so he relied on his positive relationships with local American Indian officials to have him voluntarily removed where and when he wanted to go. Pokagon's village was able to adaptively resist and stay in their ancestral lands even as settlers were encroaching on their territory because Pokagon convinced American treaty commissioners of his village's acculturation at the 1833 Treaty of Chicago which had an amendment that guaranteed his right to remain as a Christian. This amendment was not enough, though. Americans still tried to remove Pokagon, but he successfully resisted because he ceded his lands at the 1833 Treaty of Chicago and then bought private lands and had the support of powerful American leaders like Judge Epaphroditus Ransom who defended his village's legal rights to remain. Menominee's village was forcibly removed because he had settlers encroaching on his territory, he refused to cede the lands he was awarded at the 1832

Tippecanoe treaties unlike Pokagon, and he never had the support of influential American officials. Even though Menominee frequently wrote letters to American officials pleading his case, he knew he had little support in the government, so he openly defied them by refusing to accept their fraudulent treaty that gave away his lands. This defiance led to his village's forced removal westward on the Trail of Death.

The Potawatomi story illuminates the current relationships between Native tribes and the American government because it highlights the various historical motivations and results of Native resistance to American colonialism. This knowledge can then help one understand the relationships between Native tribes and the American government after the removal period and the issues of sovereignty that have emerged since then. One cannot understand current Potawatomi issues without knowing their history. One cannot understand the *McGirt* case without knowing the history of the Muscogee. One cannot understand the implications of the Dakota Access Pipeline without knowing the history of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Moreover, knowledge of these historical and current issues of Native American sovereignty are only truly complete when one examines Native perspectives and oral history.

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