Handbook for New Teachers

Produced for
Missabay Community School

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A Brief History of Mishkeegogamang First Nation

Earliest Times

The members of the Mishkeegogamang First Nation community are Ojibway people. They are part of the Algonquian language group which includes Cree people and as many as thirty other cultures, each with their related languages and dialects. Some of the earliest Ojibway may have lived on the east coast of Canada; then, in response to a spiritual direction, moved westward in a great migration which is thought to have begun around 900 A.D. and been completed around 1400 A.D. This migration resulted in settlements along and around the Great Lakes.

The people of Mishkeegogamang acknowledge that their people originated from the Great Lakes area. They don't believe that their ancestors came over the Bering Strait to populate North America, but rather that their people have always been in this area, placed here by the Creator. The word Anishinaabe, by which Ojibway people identify themselves, comes from the root words *ani* meaning "from whence," *nishina*, meaning "lowered," and *aabe*, meaning "the male of the species." Legends say that the Creator made man from the four sacred elements, and then lowered him to the earth.

In earlier times, the people were not organized into bands as they are today. They migrated with the seasons, traveling in family groups of 12 - 30 people, depending on the circumstances, season, and availability of game. Several groups met at a traditional location in summer for celebrations, and for the annual fishing season. Only rarely were there much larger gatherings; the threat of war might be a reason for tribes from a larger area to gather at a central location. Until around 1850, the family groups were often also clan groups. These clans were exogamous - i.e. one could not marry a member of his or her own clan. Each small group had leaders for particular reasons - i.e. chief hunters, people knowledgeable about medicine, leaders in war, etc. Sometimes an elder would be respected by many family groups and be an unofficial leader/representative in time of war or negotiation.

Contact with Europeans

The Anishinaabe first met white people in the early 1600's. The Hudson's Bay Company established posts on Hudson's Bay and James Bay, and then traders moved between the Great Lakes and Hudson's Bay to find furs. In this territory they encountered Ojibway people who were willing to help and guide them. Some historians feel that the first Ojibway moved into northwestern Ontario with the traders. The people of Mishkeegogamang do not agree with this, but feel that their arrival in northwestern Ontario predated the Hudson's Bay Company. In any case, Cree used to occupy the territory which now includes Mishkeegogamang, but they were pushed northward by the Ojibway people.

Initially trappers had to make the long trek to the posts on the shores of Hudson's Bay to sell their furs. But rival companies began coming inland, and trading with the trappers right near the trap lines. So the Hudson's Bay, to compete, also had to establish interior posts. To this end, they sent an employee, John Best, along the Albany River in 1786 to find a suitable spot for a post. The place he chose, near the northeast end of Lake St. Joseph, was called Osnaburgh House. It lasted (with some minor moves due to flooding and fire) for nearly 200 years. Today there is a tourist resort at that spot called "The Old Post."

The Hudson's Bay Posts caused many cultural and social changes. Before, people had hunted and trapped for their own needs. Now they could trade their furs for the goods at the Hudson's Bay Post; the knives, guns, fabrics and multitudes of other available goods were a huge convenience for them. By the early 1800's, many depended on these goods for survival. This dependency coincided with a decrease in game due to over-harvesting and lack of regulation, and this in turn led to severe hardships between 1820 and 1880.

The Post became an important part of life for the people of Osnaburgh. Jobs were sometimes available there, and the post manager acted as the liaison between the people and the government.

Treaty Number Nine

In 1905, the government of Canada sent three commissioners to Northwestern Ontario to try to get the occupants to cede their traditional lands to the Crown by signing Treaty Number Nine. Mining companies were beginning to take interest in the rich resources of the area, and the government needed a free hand to grant them land concessions. The commissioners' first stop was Osnaburgh House, a kind of test case for them of the success of the rest of their journey. They addressed the group of about 330 people who had gathered there for their summer encampment.

A respected leader of the group, a man named Missabay, spoke for the people. After a night's consideration, he signed Treaty Number Nine on behalf of his people. The people were then listed, and each was paid $8 at the time of signing, with the promise of an additional $4 each year. It is important to note that the people who were there were not a "band." Their designation as a band was an administrative convenience for the government. They were merely a cluster of family groups who customarily traded at Osnaburgh House and who happened to be gathered there for the summer.

The treaty commissioners and the people agreed on two pieces of land for reserves, which were called Osnaburgh 63A and 63B. The commissioners promised the people they would not have to live on the reserves, and that their traditional lands, a vast territory surrounding the reserves, would be theirs to use indefinitely. The people chose Missabay as their first chief, and two councilors were also selected, on a ratio of one council member per 100 people. Thus the band and council system were instituted for the people who traded at Osnaburgh House.

Land Issues

Hydro Development Causes Flooding

In 1929, gold was discovered north of Osnaburgh, and by 1934, the Pickle Crow Gold Mine and the Central Patricia Gold Mine had requested that the Ontario government supply them with hydro at their sites about 25 miles north of Osnaburgh House. In 1934-35 Ontario Hydro built a dam and installed a generator at Rat Rapids, at the north end of Kitchi Miniss ("The Island" between the two reserves), a site that had been carefully left out of the reserves because of its potential for hydro power. The water began to rise in March, 1935, washing away homes and gardens on the reserve and gravesites along the shores of Lake St. Joseph. Band members were given no notice of the flooding.

Compensation for the damage to individual property was assessed at $845.00 by representatives of Hydro and Indian Affairs who made their inspections in 1935. They divided this sum among 18 individuals who were paid on the spot. A further $1,425.00 was paid to Indian Affairs for timber losses on flooded acreage, and $100.00 was paid in compensation for the flooded council house. Meanwhile, the Hudson's Bay Company, although its relocation costs totaled only $9,500.00, inexplicably received $17,000.00 in compensation for the flooding.

The major problem for the band in the hydro developments was the fact that they were not consulted or even told about what was happening, and that due process, according to the law and Treaty Number Nine, was not followed. For

example, Hydro paid the government $425.00 to compensate for timber loss along the power line, but there is no record that the band ever consented to or was consulted about the transmission line.

New Shipping Route

At about the same time as Rat Rapids was being developed for hydro, the mining companies were pressing to ship goods from the rail line at Hudson through Lac Seul via the Root River into Lake St. Joseph. The government of Ontario felt that this would improve transportation into northern Ontario, and agreed to pay half the cost.

Three timber crib dams were built along the route, the bed of Root Creek was widened and a dock built at Dog Hole Bay. To complete the route, Pickle Lake mining companies, along with the federal and provincial governments, pushed a road through the reserve from the end of Dog Hole Bay to Pickle Lake.

Once again the people of Mishkeegogamang were not consulted on the plans, even though the dams would raise the lake another three feet, and equipment and supplies that were to be shipped would be landed at Dog Hole Bay, *on the Reserve itself*. A 1953 petition by the band to Indian Affairs shows how frustrated they were by developments over which apparently they had no control. "There are always certain subjects at Treaty payments," reads the petition, "that are not entirely clear to us because we have no one sufficiently competent to interpret for us. First on our list is about our flooded lands, rice beds, timber and the graves of our beloved. We feel we have not been sufficiently compensated for these and we want a satisfactory explanation." Such explanations were usually a long time in coming.

Diversion of Lake St. Joseph

For years Ontario Hydro had made plans to divert the water of Lake St. Joseph, which normally emptied into the Albany River, into the Root River and from there into Lac Seul. This diversion would move water into the English River and Winnipeg River systems, and provide more hydro power to western Ontario and eastern Manitoba. This would cause great fluctuations in water levels in Lake St. Joseph, and less water flowing into the Albany River.

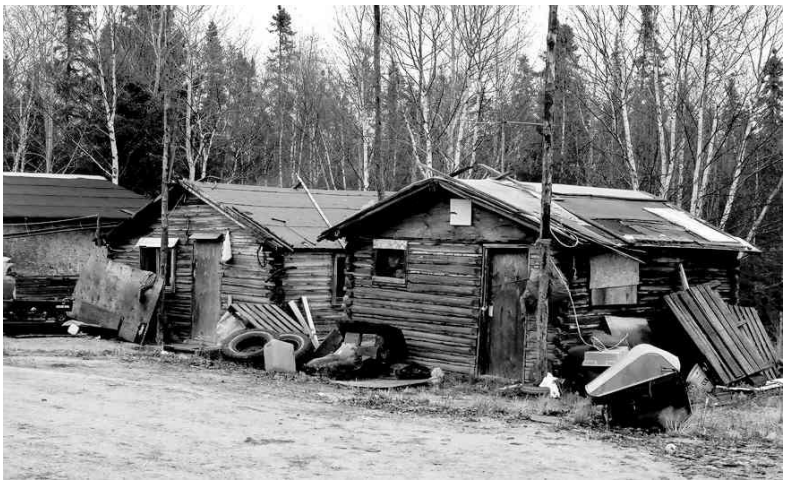
By 1957, the generators at Rat Rapids were no longer being used to produce hydro, so the dams were now converted to sluiceways to help regulate the flow of water westward. Hydro began to divert water from Lake St. Joseph on November 1, 1957. Reserve land above the natural high water mark was alternately drained and flooded, changing the vegetation and fish and wildlife habitat established since the 1935 flooding, increasing the effect of erosion and

dislodging the shoreline debris into the lake. The flow of the Albany River was reduced, adversely affecting hunting and fishing. Because of the varying water levels, fishermen had to frequently move their nets, a time-consuming process and one which meant nets needed constant repair. The cultivation of wild rice in the area soon ended, since wild rice does not tolerate irregular water levels. The fluctuation in water levels continues to this day.

Mining and Lumbering Issues

Besides these incursions onto their reserves, the people of Mishkeegogamang have had ongoing issues with mining and lumbering companies who have licenses to operate on their traditional lands outside of the reserve. The treaty gave the people the right, in perpetuity, to hunt and fish on those lands, but if the lands are destroyed by lumbering and mining, this right is denied to them. Mining and lumbering concerns promise jobs, but these have sometimes proved to be temporary and more often illusory, as white people have been hired instead. Those who view things in a traditional and more long-term manner say the companies are hiring the people to pillage their own land, leaving them, in the end, with nothing.

From the Bush to Town



In the decades after the treaty, people lived more or less as they had previously, camping around Lake St. Joseph for several weeks in the summer, and spending most of the winter in their family groups in the bush. However, some log cabins and wigwams were being built on the south shore of Lake St. Joseph, and by the 1950s there were two churches, about 30 homes and a council hall at the site of the Old Village, across the lake from Osnaburgh House. A few of the houses had begun to be occupied nearly year-round.

In 1954, Highway 599 was built from Savant Lake, to join with the road from Dog Hole Bay to Pickle Lake that had been built earlier to accommodate the mines. The people were anxious to live near the new highway, which was several kilometres east of the Old Village. A site was chosen for a new village, called New Osnaburgh, today the Main Reserve. It was closer to the highway, on Dog Hole Lake, and by 1960, most people had moved to the new location. The timing coincided with the beginning of the system of government pensions and social assistance. The money available from the government was more than what people could earn by hunting, fishing, and trapping, so many began to forego the arduous winter treks into the bush. Increasingly, families stayed year-round in the new village, while those who still hunted and trapped became “commuters.”

The Past Fifty Years

The decades of the 1950s to the 1980s were ones of many social problems for the community. The people were not used to living together year-round in a large group, and there was too little full-time employment. Children who had grown up in residential school came back to the community with little knowledge of their language or culture. In some cases they couldn’t communicate with their own parents because they had lost their language. Because of the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and because parents were not coping, many children had to be taken out of their families and even out of the community. Traditional structures had broken down, and new organizations had not yet taken their place effectively.

The 1990s and the first years of the new millennium have been times of re-building and hope, although many problems remain. In 1999 Ontario Hydro settled with the band for $17.25 million for the damage caused by the flooding of Lake St. Joseph. The band now deals systematically with threats to its traditional homelands; government, and the lumbering and mining companies increasingly are seeing the wisdom of dealing with the band before, rather than after, the fact.

Chapter

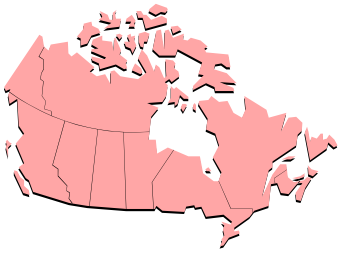
2

List of Local Resources

This is an expandable list of local resources for the use of teachers.

All the resources listed here were placed in the Missabay Community School library in June, 2003.

Maps



1. Energy, Mines and Resources Maps showing detailed landmarks, boundaries, drainage, and relief features on a scale of 2 cm = 1000 m.
    - Map number 52 - 0/1 centred on Osnaburgh I.R. 63A and 63B.
    - Map number 52 - 0/7 northwest
    - Map number 52 - 0/8 north
    - Map number 52 - P/5 northeast
    - Map number 52 - P/4 east
    - Map number 52 - 1/13 southeast
    - Map number 52 - J/16 south
    - Map number 52 - J/15 southwest
    - Map number 52 - 0/2 west

2. Political map showing both reserves in their entirety.

3. Map of the Old Village, showing location of houses, churches, and council building.

4. Trap line map showing the extent of trap lines allocated to Mishkeegogamang First Nation

5. Historic map to illustrate the Adhesion to Treaty 9, from an old newspaper, with captions.

6. NAN map showing all the First Nations belong to Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

7. Map from DIAND showing all the First Nations in Ontario.

Booklets

- ***Handbook for New Teachers*** at Missabay Community School

- ***Field Trips around Mishkeegogamang***

- ***Stories and Legends of my Grandfather*** by Floyd Joseph Gray. A collection of 21 local stories, some with reference to local lakes and landmarks.

- ***Stories and Legends of Mishkeegogamang***. An expandable collection, currently consisting of 18 stories and legends told by Mishkeegogamang elders. Teachers are encouraged to add to this collection by sending the publishers new stories they may hear in the community.

- ***The Signing of the James Bay Treaty at Osnaburgh House***. Excerpts from the journal of Samuel Stewart, Treaty 9 commissioner. June/July, 1905. The journal gives an outline of the provisions of the treaty, and describes the arrival at Osnaburgh, the presentation of the treaty, the process of the decision-making, and the selection of the first chief and councilors. It also has some wonderful descriptions of the natural beauty of the area and the lifestyle of the people.

- ***Flooding*** A series of 12 letters dated between 1934 and 1936 between the Department of Indian Affairs, the government of Ontario and Ontario Hydro about the flooding on Osnaburgh Indian Reservations 63A and 63B. Includes two emails dated 2001 between a researcher and the Legal Surveys Branch of Ontario. The researcher is trying to determine the exact acreage of land that was flooded in 1935.

- ***The Road from Dog Hole Bay*** A series of 35 letters from 1936 to 1940 documenting the building of the road from Dog Hole Bay to the Mines in Pickle Lake. The letters show how the road builders blatantly use reserve land without licenses, permission or compensation for more than four years. An additional five letters between the Indian Agent, the DIA, and the Ontario Dept. of Highways in 1949 show a similar lack of concern in the building of Highway 599 through the reserve.

- ***Claims and Grievances, Osnaburgh House***. A collection of research done by Nishnawbi-Aski Research Unit, 1983.

Books

- ***The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade***, an Historical and Ecological Study by Charles A. Bishop. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd. 1974. A history and ethnography of Osnaburgh. A very detailed and thorough historic picture of the economics of the community.

- ***The Land, the People and the Purpose:*** the story of Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation. 2002

Primary Research – Photocopied Folders

Adhesion to Treaty 9: Documents, reports, letters and newspaper clippings which document the Adhesion to Treaty 9, signed at Trout Lake in 1929.

Treaty 9 Journal*:* The handwritten 1905 journal of Treaty Commissioner Samuel Stewart documenting the entire Treaty 9 trip.

Honoring the Past, Building the Future: A glossy original folder by Nishnawbie Aski Nation about the Negotiations for Self-Governance. Includes a map of all the First Nations that belong to Nishnawbe Aski, an outline of the negotiations process and a Historical Overview that would be an excellent resource in a "leadership and governing" unit in the curriculum.

The Sister Magdalene Letters**:** Two letters from a Sister Magdalene and a response from the Acting Under Secretary of State for External Affairs. Sister Magdalene worked with bands in the Osnaburgh area in the early decades of the century. She pleads with the government and the British King to do more to help relieve the poverty of the people of the area. Her letters are revealing as to the lifestyle of the people and particularly some of the hardships they encountered. The government's response is also interesting.

Osnaburgh and Area Schools*:* A package of archive documents, teachers reports, letters, etc. related to the various Osnaburgh schools in the 1950s.

A Statement of the Responsibilities and General Functions of the Department of Indian Affairs**, circa 1930:** A very revealing document which puts spells out clearly the government's doctrines of paternalism and assimilation.

Canada's Shame*:* A five-part article written by Jacki Leroux, Ottawa Sun reporter, about Mishkeegogamang. October, 1996.

The Lost People*:* A 27-page article written about Mishkeegogamang by Toronto Star reporter Sonia Verma, April 29, 2000.

Indian Lands Register*:* Copies of certificates ("Instruments") that have been registered with DIAND every time any reserve land changes hands or is re-

allocated for any purpose, e.g. a road, a church, a hydro development, etc. There are nine instruments for Osnaburgh Reserve 63A and 31 instruments for Osnaburgh Reserve 63B. An interesting primary historical record.

Hudson's Bay Company Reports: Annual reports of Osnaburgh House and surrounding territories from the Hudson's Bay Archives.

Photos

Photo CD organized into 4 categories:

- ***archives*** - historic photos
- ***people*** - recent photos of people of the community
- ***nature*** - photos taken on and around the reserves
- ***places*** - recent photos on and around the reserves

Photo Scrapbook*:* Contains all the photos on the CD, with captions