

## Early History

The Three Fires Confederacy declared a war of expulsion on the Iroquois at the end of the seventeenth century. The Iroquois had expanded into Southern Ontario fifty years early and had been antagonistic neighbours. The Three Fires, who included the Ojibwe, Ottawa and Pottawatomie nations, expelled the Iroquois back to their original home land in Up-state New York. This left a vast territory unoccupied so the Saulteaux Ojibwe expanded south from the St. Mary's River district to Aamjiwnaang sometime in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Two villages were established on the west side of the St. Clair. One was located at the mouth of the Black River and one on Swan Creek which flows into Lake St. Clair. We expanded both east and west over the next fifty years.

In 1755 the French and Indian War broke out between the British and French for supremacy in North America. Initially the 'Western Nations' supported the French. Aamjiwnaang sent warriors to join General Montcalm helping him to secure early victories. But at the fall of Fort William Henry in 1757 Montcalm betrayed his First Nation allies and we abandoned him. The French went on to lose that war on the Plains of Abraham in 1760.

The British added the territory of New France to their claim of New England and Sir Jeffery Amherst was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in North America. Amherst was an arrogant man with no use for the First Nations. He instituted new trade policies that put us in a position of literal starvation. The great Ottawa War Chief Pontiac called a council which was held on the Ecorse River just south of Detroit. Aamjiwnaang's War Chiefs attended. War on the British was determined and in a synchronized attack in the summer of 1763 all but two of the British Forts fell. The war ended in a stalemate, but resulted in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Amherst was recalled and the First Nations became allies of the British.

Colonel Henry Hamilton, Commandant of Fort Detroit, called for a General Council with the First Nations in 1778. Little Thunder from Aamjiwnaang was listed among the conferees as War Chief of the Ojibwe. Hamilton was trying to enlist the help of First Nations in the American Revolution. We agreed and supported them on the frontier. We helped them take Fort Sackville at Vincennes that year, but the following year George Rogers Clark took Fort Sackville back with a force of Virginia Militia and 300 Frenchmen from New Orleans. When we observed the French with the Virginians we felt the British had deceived us by encouraging us to attack our old ally the French for whom we still had strong affection. So we withdrew from the battle and the war. The British betrayed us again at the Treaty of Paris in 1783. They were supposed to negotiate on our behalf but abandoned us by ceding our territory without our consent. Aamjiwnaang territory now lay divided by an artificial border.

Hostilities with the Americans boiled over again in the 1790s over border conflicts between America and 'Indian Country' as well as settler encroachments in the Ohio Valley. A confederacy was forged by the Miami War Chief Little Turtle. Little Thunder and his two sons Red Sky and Anchau lead warriors from Aamjiwnaang south to join Little Turtle. War was declared on the Americans in 1790 and over the next two years two American Armies were soundly defeated. A third battle in 1794 was lost by the confederacy at Fallen Timbers on the Maumee River in Ohio. Again the British abandoned its First Nation allies by refusing them sanctuary at Fort Miami. Fallen Timbers resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Greenville at Greenville, Ohio in 1795. It was first and foremost a peace treaty between George Washington and the United States of America and the First Nations Confederacy. General Anthony Wayne signed for the Americans and Little Thunder was one of six War Chiefs to sign for the Chippewa.

The War of 1812 broke out with American declaring war on the British. Yet again the British called upon the First Nations for help. Yet again we answered the call. Aamjiwnaang sent War Chief Red Sky along with such warriors as Rabbit, Wawanosh, Old Salt and Black Foot to join the celebrated Shawnee War Chief Tecumseh at Amherstburg. After repelling the Americans and taking Fort Detroit we experienced numerous successes in 1812-13. However, Tecumseh was killed at the Battle of Moravian town in October of 1813 and his confederacy of First Nations collapsed. This effectively ended First Nations involvement in the war although Wawanosh went on to fight in the Niagara theatre.

(Courtesy of David D. Plain)