

6

Some Indigenous–Colonial Wars

Chapter Outline

This chapter examines a few of the Indigenous–colonial wars that took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The chapter concentrates particularly on the Haudenosaunee War (1609–1701), the Mesquakie (Fox) War (1710–38), and the Mi'kmaq War (1713–61). The Haudenosaunee War was difficult for both sides and hard to stop because of the belief that warriors could not enter the afterlife until their death had been avenged. A key point raised in the chapter relates to the fighting techniques of the, Kanienkehaka, who used what has been termed guerrilla tactics. It was a strategy based on speed and surprise. The strategy was successful against the field warfare strategy of the French and English in which columns of men lined up and fought. The 1690s saw New France in a state of siege as the Haudenosaunee put continued pressure on the colony. After nearly a century of war in the region, the Haudenosaunee replaced the Wendat as the regional power and emerged with an expanded territory. However, the Haudenosaunee rise to power was not without consequences. They suffered from severe population losses as a result of disease and warfare. Nevertheless, they managed to keep their confederacy intact. Although they had expanded their territory, they suffered from severe population losses. And by being a formidable enemy, they had unwittingly helped to unite the colonists of New France, facilitating the establishment of the English on Hudson Bay and forcing the French to expand west.

The Mesquakie War resulted in more success for the French than they had experienced against the Haudenosaunee. The Mesquakie were trading partners with the Haudenosaunee and thus became involved in the English trading network. The Mesquakie opposed the French predominately because they did not get along with the Ojibwa, who were important French allies. The French had success as a result of two factors: the French adapted to forest fighting techniques, and the nations of the *pays d'en haut* were not as stable in their alliances as the Haudenosaunee were.

The Mi'kmaq War was unique with several distinguishing characteristics. First, much of the war was fought at sea. Second, it is one of the few examples in what became Canada that an Indigenous group fought on its own land for its own lands. As pointed out in the textbook, this war came to resemble the frontier wars in the United States.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the causes and results of the Haudenosaunee War
- To understand the causes and results of the Mesquakie (Fox) War
- To understand the causes and results of the Mi'kmaq War
- To understand how peaceful alliances between the French and Indigenous Peoples were negotiated, and in particular, the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701.

Key Terms, Figures or Sites

Great Peace of Montreal Agreement reached in 1701 between the Haudenosaunee, the Niswimishkodewin, and the French to end the near century of conflict known as the Iroquois (Mourning) War (p. 103).

guerrilla warfare Warfare characterized by irregular forces using “hit-and-run” tactics in small-scale, limited actions against European-style military forces (p. 105).

Haudenosaunee War (1609–1701) Conflict between Haudenosaunee and French that lasted almost a century and was interspersed with attempts at peace; known as the Iroquois War in Canadian historiography and as the Mourning War to the Haudenosaunee (p. 104).

Kiala (Quiala, *fl.* 1733–4) Mesquakie chief who sought to unify Indigenous Peoples of the eastern seaboard to oppose the French. The Mesquakie were based in the area to the west of Lake Michigan (p. 114).

League of Six Nations Expansion of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy by the addition of the Tuscarora, who fled north from the Carolinas and sought refuge among Five Nations around 1720 (p. 111).

longhouses Communal dwellings of some First Nations, such as the Haudenosaunee, “People of the Longhouse” (p. 110).

Mascarene’s Treaty (1725) Treaty No. 239, signed between English and Wabanaki after Indigenous military defeat at Norridgewock and later ratified by other First Nations, which stated that First Nations people must behave as British subjects; named after chief negotiator, Paul Mascarene, administrator of Nova Scotia at the time of the treaty (p. 115).

Megumaage Mi'kmaw name for their land, in the present-day Maritime provinces (p. 115).

Mesquakie War (1710–38) The resistance by the Mesquakie and other Indigenous nations to French forays inland to the Upper Great Lakes. The war chief Kiala rose to prominence during this time as a proponent of pan-Indigenous solidarity. Also called the Fox War or *Guerre des Renards* by Euro-Canadian historians (pp. 103/112).

Mourning War Haudenosaunee term for endemic, cyclical warfare; the Haudenosaunee War (1609–1701) (p. 104).

ogimaa Anishnaabe word (singular) for leader. In many First Nations there are two ogimaak, one hereditary and the other elected. In others, both are elected (p. 109).

Outoutagan An ogimaa (chief) of the Kamiga Odaawak. He was a signatory of the 1701 Great Peace of Montreal. Considered to be the most perceptive and the most volatile of the Odaawa ogimaak, he was keenly aware of the importance of the French alliance in the history of his own family. The French had a more difficult time convincing him of their ability to live up to their promises (p. 109).

Study Questions

1. What were the causes of the Mesquakie (Fox) War?
2. What is meant by the term “Mourning War”?
3. In 1645, the Haudenosaunee attempted to negotiate peace. Why was it so difficult to finalize the short-lived peace treaty at this time?
4. What is guerrilla warfare and how/why is it connected to the reputation gained by the Canadian Militia as feared ‘forest fighters’?
5. Who were the Mesquakie?
6. What were the ramifications of the Mesquakie War for the Mesquakie?
7. Why did the Mi’kmaq adopt a European custom and formally declare war on the English?
8. What type of bounty was placed on the Mi’kmaq?
9. What made the Mi’kmaq War different from other European–Amerindian wars?
10. Why was Louisbourg useful to Indigenous Peoples?
11. What was the purpose of the Mascarene’s Treaty?
12. What strategies of survival did the Mi’kmaq use after their defeat?

Essay Questions

1. Describe one example of how the Haudenosaunee played the French against the English in negotiating peace.

In 1701, the Five Nations signed a peace treaty with the French despite the objections of the English. In the same year, they also ceded lands in the south to the English in Albany to cement their alliance with them. The English did not know that the Haudenosaunee had lost that territory to the Ojibwa in the 1690s. They also did not know that the Haudenosaunee had already negotiated hunting and fishing rights in that area with the French. Furthermore, the Haudenosaunee had protected their access to the markets in Albany, which served them well in the Western expansion (pp. 108-109).

2. Name and briefly describe the three major Indigenous wars described in this chapter.

This chapter looks at the Haudenosaunee War also called the Mourning War (1609–1701), the Fox War (1710–38), and the Mi'kmaq War (1713–61). The Haudenosaunee wars were cyclical in nature and partially continued because of the belief that killed warriors could only enter the spirit world if their deaths were avenged. These wars were also characterized by the use of guerilla tactics. They ended with the signing of a peace between the Haudenosaunee and the French in 1701 (see pages 82–86). The Mesquakie (Fox) war was between the Mesquakie and the French in the northern regions also called the *pays d'en haut*. The war was triggered by the establishment of a fort at Detroit aimed at moving trade westward. The Mesquakie were disturbed by this encroachment, and fighting ensued (pp. 89–90). The Mi'kmaq War (1713–61) was different in that it was fought at sea, and it involved the Mi'kmaq fighting to protect their own territory. This was a precursor to events that would involve similar instances in the States. Some of their ancestors still live on these lands although their territory has been greatly diminished (pp. 91–92).

3. Explain three major factors that eventually caused the demise of the Haudenosaunee.

Severe population losses due to both war and disease seriously affected the power held by the Haudenosaunee. The exact nature of the war's toll is unknown. When they were hit by epidemics in the 1640s, they attempted to compensate for their losses by adopting captives from the people they defeated, but replacements continued to run out. It is estimated that between 1689 and 1698, they may have lost up to half of their fighting forces, and mass defections related to Jesuit efforts played a big role. During the 1690s, two-thirds of the Kanienkehaka defected to two French missions near Montreal (pp. 110-111).

Additional Resources

Further Readings

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Indigenous Peoples Within Canada: A Concise History, Fourth Edition
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Websites

War Paths 2 Peace Pipes - Fox Wars

- <https://www.warpaths2peacepipes.com/the-indian-wars/fox-wars.htm>

John Douglas Belshaw – Canadian History: Pre-Confederation, “5.7 The Five Nations, War, Population and Diplomacy” [see “Mourning Wars”]

- <https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/5-7-the-five-nations-war-population-and-diplomacy/>

Haudenosaunee Confederacy

- <https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/>