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# Connecting Urban and Aboriginal Histories: Towards an Urban Aboriginal History in Québec

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**Abstract**

The move of Aboriginal people to the city is often perceived as a break from the reserve/rural area, as an identity loss, but the reality is far more complex. With the concept of a loss of an identity emerges the idea that Aboriginal people have no ties to the history of a city even though those cities are often situated on their traditional territories. Apart from studies mainly carried by Anglophone scholars in Canada, very few historians in Québec have paid attention to the importance of urban centers on Aboriginal communities. Like New York, Victoria, Toronto, Chicago, or Seattle, the cities of Québec have Aboriginal histories of their own. In this article, I argue that instead of being a dearth of information, the city becomes a methodological ground where different histories meet, bringing to the fore a different reality. By focusing on two communities Kahnawake and Wendake from the 1880s to the turn of the 20th century, in this preliminary study, I propose to reorient the focus by placing Native histories at the centre of a city's story.

**Keywords**

Urban areas; Kahnawake Wendake; modernity; Native histories.

**Résumé**

Le mouvement des peuples autochtones vers les villes est souvent perçu comme une rupture avec la réserve/communauté rurale, comme une perte d'identité. En fait, la réalité est beaucoup plus complexe. Avec le concept de perte d'identité émerge l'idée que les peuples autochtones n'ont pas de liens avec l'histoire des villes, même si ces villes sont souvent situées sur leurs territoires traditionnels. Outre les études menées principalement par des chercheurs anglophones au Canada, très peu d'historiens du Québec ont prêté attention à l'importance des centres urbains sur les communautés autochtones. Comme New York, Victoria, Toronto, Chicago ou Seattle, les villes du Québec ont des histoires autochtones qui leur sont propres. Dans cet article, je soutiens que la ville ne représente pas un vide documentaire, mais bien un terrain méthodologique fertile où des histoires différentes se rencontrent, mettant en évidence une réalité autochtone distincte. En me concentrant sur deux communautés, celles de Kahnawake et de Wendake des années 1880 au tournant du 20e siècle, je propose dans cette étude préliminaire de réorienter l'attention en plaçant les histoires autochtones au centre de l'histoire de la ville.

**Mots-clés**

Milieu urbain; Kahnawake; Wendake; modernité; Histoires autochtones.

**Resumen**

El movimiento de los pueblos indígenas a las ciudades es a menudo visto como una ruptura con la reserva/comunidad rural, como una pérdida de identidad. De hecho, la realidad es mucho más compleja. Con el concepto de pérdida de identidad surge la idea de que los pueblos indígenas no tienen vínculos con la historia de las ciudades, incluso si estas ciudades a menudo se encuentran en sus territorios tradicionales. Además de los estudios llevados a cabo principalmente por investigadores canadienses de habla inglesa, muy pocos historiadores de Quebec prestaronatención a la importancia de los centros urbanos en las comunidades indígenas. Al igual que Nueva York, Victoria, Toronto, Chicago o Seattle, las ciudades de Quebec cuentan con historias aborígenes propias. En este artículo, se argumenta que la ciudad no representa un documento en blanco, sino un terreno metodológico fértil en donde confluyen diferentes historias, destacando una realidad aborigen distinta. Me concentro en dos comunidades, Kahnawake y Wendake de la década de 1880 al alba del siglo 20, propongo en este estudio preliminar reorientar la atención al colocar las historias aborígenes en el centro de la historia de la ciudad.

**Palabras claves**

Medios urbanos; Kahnawake; Wendake; modernidad; historias aborígenes.

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## INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the twin towers in September 2001, a group of Mohawk men "rushed to Ground Zero to help dismantle and clean up the mangled steel beams that had come crashing down" (Quan 2011). Working in the rubble opened up a new chapter in the history of Mohawk ironwork: instead of building, they were taking apart. They helped to clear the debris of the World Trade Center that they had built in the first place. Ironworkers from Kahnawake (the Kahnawakehró:non) also built the Empire State Building, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, the Sears Tower in Chicago and the John Hancock Tower in Boston, as well as the major bridges of Montréal and Québec City, to name just a few examples of their work. Since the mid-1850s, they have been the builders of North American cities, first as quarry labourers, and then as ironworkers. At the time when they were fully involved in transforming the urban landscape through their labour, they were also fighting against the encroachment of the City of Montréal on their land (Rueck 2011). Though Indians and cities exist at opposite ends of the settler imagination,[1] the Kahnawakehró:non exemplify an undeniable connection between Indigenous and urban histories. Unfortunately, the Aboriginal imprint on the urban landscape is not widely known and remains largely invisible.

The clearing of the rubble of the twin towers in New York City after 9-11 by the Kahnawakehró:non serves as the perfect metaphor for what mainstream society has done to Aboriginal contributions to history: most have been hidden, "taken down" and dismantled. Apart from studies mainly conducted by Anglophone scholars in Canada such as Thrush (2007) for the city of Seattle, Edmonds (2010) for Victoria and Melbourne (Australia) and Freeman (2010) for Toronto, very few historians (Rueck 2011, Beaulieu and Tanguay 2012) in Québec have paid attention to the importance of urban centres for Aboriginal communities, as though Aboriginal people only belonged to an ancient past and were frozen in time, as though an impermeable barrier existed between urban centres and surrounding Aboriginal communities. According to American historian Phil Deloria, the concept of the Native American remains frozen in stereotype even when Aboriginal people can be found "in unexpected places," such as in the movies, in automobiles, and as sports heroes. In the view of the dominant society, Aboriginal people are unable to grasp technology or to feel at ease in contemporary society. Even when American Indians participated in technology, images of their supposed "primitive" state began to solidify (Deloria 2004).

The steady increase of Aboriginal people living and working in Québec cities since the 1980s is ultimately forcing a reconceptualization of what land, place, and identity constitute, since these important concepts have framed Aboriginal societies and identities around the world. In Canada, according to the 2006 census, 54% of Aboriginal people live in metropolitan centres. The move to the city is perceived by some as a break from the reserve or rural area, or as an identity loss. Of course, the reality is far more complex. Although "moving to cities poses a challenge to Aboriginal cultural identities," as Evelyn Peters has shown, "it also presents an opportunity for dynamic and resilient innovations" (Peters 2007: 25). One may ask why such resilience and dynamism would only exist in the present. What does the study of the past tell us when we look more closely at the link that has existed between cities and Aboriginal peoples?

With the concept of a loss of identity emerges the idea that Aboriginal people have no ties to the history of a city, even though those cities are often situated on Aboriginal peoples' traditional territories (Kermoal and Lévesque 2010). By focusing mainly on the province of Québec from 1880 to the turn of the 20th

[1] According to Coll Thrush, "one represents the past, the other the future" (2011: 56).

century and by using Kahnawake and Wendake as examples, I will demonstrate how one can overcome these assumptions. Instead of representing a dearth of information on Aboriginal peoples' stories, the city becomes a methodological ground where different histories (social, cultural, environmental, political, economic) meet, thus bringing a different reality to the fore. Like New York, Victoria, Toronto, Chicago, or Seattle, the cities of Québec have Aboriginal histories of their own. By proposing to reorient the traditional focus, I am placing Native histories at the centre of a city's story.

## 1. *TERRA NULLIUS* FOREVER

In an essay entitled "Quelle histoire pour l'avenir du Canada?" (Which history for the future of Canada?), Québec historian Jocelyn Létourneau (2000) states that narrating the future of Canada requires that one touch on the relationship that the country has had with its Aboriginal peoples. Létourneau objects, however, to qualifying First Peoples as founding nations of Canada due to their progressive marginalization and the fact that they were wards of the State. The author warns that by absolutely wanting to make them one of the founding nations, we are distorting history as well as the meaning of the past (Létourneau 2000).

Even though one may disagree with Létourneau's views on whether First Peoples are founding nations of Canada, there does seem to be a common view that Aboriginal people only fully entered modernity in the middle of the 20th century. Before the 1960s in Canada and the 1980s in Québec, Aboriginal people were perceived to be turned exclusively towards their traditions, to be living in rural settings, and to be invisible and marginalized and therefore not really involved in Canadian society or even in its economic development. While it is undeniable that the federal government, through the *Indian Act* (1876) and other laws, restricted the lives of First Nations people for the purpose of assimilating them, the idea of reducing the vision of Aboriginal peoples to displacement and marginalization (while important to study and comprehend) leaves little room for exploring how Indigenous peoples created Indigenous spaces in urban centres. There are many examples in Canada, as shown by Raibmon (2005), Freeman (2010), and others, where Aboriginal people have done just that.

In Québec, however, most studies still fall into the "impossible contradiction" observed by Evelyn Peters in 1996. Aboriginal people are often relegated to the past and the traditional, and thus to a rural space (the reserve), whereas the city, on the other hand, represents the future and modernity, a space that Aboriginal people have struggled to occupy (Peters 1996). In short, until the 1980s, Aboriginal people are perceived as not having had urban experiences in Québec or, if they did, as having had experiences that were so minimal that they had no impact on the evolution of today's urban Aboriginal communities. Furthermore, by moving to cities, Aboriginal peoples are said to have broken with their cultures of origin, which is said to have ultimately caused a loss of identity (Peters 1996, Kermoal and Lévesque 2010).

These images of urban Aboriginal people as an anomaly or as people who have turned their backs on their culture do not explain, for instance, the phenomenon of the Kahnawakehró:non ironworkers or even why they created their own community in downtown Brooklyn from the 1920s to the 1960s (Tarbell 2008). This narrow-minded way of looking at history gives minimal agency to the people, or to the choices that they made at a specific time to move to the city to work, to travel back and forth between the reserve and the city, or to engage in transnational movements between Canada and the United States in order to work as well as to participate in major cultural events such as world fairs and expositions in the late nineteenth century (Raibmon 2005, Thrush 2007, Lutz 2008). Overall, we have

very little knowledge of the nature of the relationship that Aboriginal people in Québec had with the city prior to the 1980s.

At the centre of the problem is our conception of modernity. Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that, "in its most common deployments as a North Atlantic universal [or Western universals], modernity disguises and misconstrues the many Others that it creates" (2002: 221). By North Atlantic universals, Trouillot is referring to concepts such as "development," "progress," "democracy," and the "West," and is contrasting "modernity and modernization as distinct and yet necessarily entangled" (2002: 221). He argues that "modernity creates its others—multiple, multifaced, multilayered. It has done so from day one: [they] have always been modern, differently modern, contradictorily modern, otherwise modern" (Trouillot 2002: 221). Using the example of the Caribbean at the time of slavery, Trouillot finds that "Caribbean slaves were modern, having internalized ideals of individual betterment through work, ownership, and personal identification to particular commodities. It was a strained and harsh modernity, to be sure. Otherwise modern they were—yet still undoubtedly modern by that definition" (Trouillot 2002: 230). For the author, "Caribbean history gives us various glimpses at the production of a modern self—a self producing itself through a particular relation to material production—even under the harshest possible conditions" (2002: 229).

Trouillot invites researchers not only to find modernity in different times and places but also to transform the terms of the debate. What the author applies to the Caribbean can well be applied to Canada and Québec since, as in the Caribbean, Aboriginal people —through enforced modernization imposed by colonization—came to the realization that the times had changed and that the world as they knew it was falling apart. Induced by the rapid modernization of Canadian society from the nineteenth century onwards, Aboriginal people in Canada and in Québec have had to reorient their economic activities, some with more success than others. As well, they had to rethink their political role, especially after the War of 1812-1814, since their military alliances with the British then became obsolete. In this "new world" where the rules are defined by the dominant society, they were able to create their own sense of belonging as well as their own spaces even while facing the most severe predicaments. In an article dedicated to François-Xavier Picard Tahourenche, Chief of the Huron-Wendat from 1840 to 1883, Alain Beaulieu and Jean Tanguay demonstrate that communities such as Jeune Lorette (Wendake) managed to navigate this "new world." Even though the Wendat no longer had the flexibility that they had had in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries since their hunting grounds were shrinking, they were nonetheless able to meet the challenges of the rapid modernization of the surrounding society, in ensuring both the economic well-being of their community and a continued respect for their identity. It often took strong leaders such as Tahourenche and a shrewd business sense to be able to move forward (Beaulieu and Tanguay 2012: 8). Moreover, another big challenge that Aboriginal people faced was to overcome their invisibility. The Québec nationalist grand narrative of the 19th and 20th centuries had the effect of making Aboriginal people even more imperceptible.

## 2. First Peoples and Québec's nationalist narrative

In the collective imagination and the dominant discourse, Aboriginal people were very visible at the time of the Europeans' first contact with them. In Québec, they were initially perceived as indispensable allies, especially in the New France era—their military help being invaluable in keeping the British at bay—and then they slowly disappeared, and came to play only minor parts in Québec's nationalist historical narrative. In this narrative, some Aboriginal groups were preferred over others, such as the Wendat in comparison with the Kahnawakehró:non. The Wendat were allies

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with the French, while the Kahnawakehró:non remained enemies. According to historian Coll Thrush, what we call "history" should be referred to as a "snapshot," since it in fact obscures more than it reveals (Thrush 2007: 18). Overall, in Québec's nationalist discourse of the 19th century and most of the 20th century, Aboriginal people were rarely part of the French Canadians' historical trajectory: they were mainly perceived as obstacles and as an archaic and inferior cultural reality with a very uncertain future (Gélinas 2007: 89).

When it comes to determining Aboriginal people's destiny, Gélinas distinguishes two schools of thought in Québec. The first, which prevailed from 1867 to the 1920s, saw Aboriginal people as a vanishing race. Perceived mainly as children that do not have the intellectual or material means to compete with non-Aboriginal people, their only chance for survival was seen as for them to become "whites." The second school of thought emerged in the 1930s and was mainly concerned with Aboriginal people's socioeconomic conditions. The dominant discourse emphasized the importance of protecting Aboriginal people by promoting the traditional aspects of their cultures (Gélinas 2007: 90). The representations of Aboriginal people were therefore stereotypical and folkloric. Overall, Aboriginal people's reality in the 19th and 20th centuries did not fit well with the nationalist discourse or city narratives of the time.

This disconnect between the dominant thinking of the time and Aboriginal people's reality is particularly telling when one looks at the examples of Montréal and Québec City. Representations of the founding of these cities can be referred to as more of a "staging of history," which reflects the values and changes of the society in question, than as history per se (Roy 1992: 9). In this story, there are stars and then there are the others, the extras (as in the movies). Until the mid-19th century, historians were not very interested in the origins of Montréal or Québec City. This changed with the creation of historical societies. After its creation in 1858, the Historical Society of Montreal started to examine the history of the city through heroes such as De Maisonneuve, Jeanne Mance, Marguerite Bourgeoys and Dollard des Ormeaux. This hero-worshipping of saints refers to a colonial ideal more than it refers to the reality of the colonial settlement (Roy 1992). In fact, it is not the founding of Montréal per se that is enhanced but rather its founders.[2] In this hero-worshipping narrative, Aboriginal people are only present as the exotic "other," living away from modernity and the historical trajectory of the city. Those who live and work in the city, such as the Mohawks in the 19th and 20th centuries, are invisible because in the minds of the dominant society they are not "Indians" anymore; they are too "civilized," and they do not fit the prevailing stereotype of the time (Freeman 2010).

The tercentenary of Québec City in 1908 is a very good example of the "staging of history." One year after the collapse of the Québec City bridge in 1907 that killed 76 workers, 33 of whom were from Kahnawake, "Quebec needed something to take its mind off the twisted wreckage in the St. Lawrence..." (Nelles 1996: 394). Even though the Wendake reserve is close to Québec City, the organizers of the event brought 200 Native people from the Great Lakes region in Ontario to perform during the celebrations (Nelles 1999). The latter emphasized a stereotypical image of the Indian as a great warrior—with a feathered headdress distinctive of the Great Plains—waiting for the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in 1608 (see pictures 1 and 2).

[2] The example of the "invention of tradition" is particularly telling when we look at the persona of Dollard des Ormeaux. To understand the concept of the invention of tradition, see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983.

**PICTURE 1: *INDIAN GROUP AT THE QUEBEC TERCENTENARY, 1908***

**Source:** Musée McCord, Wm. Notman & Son VIEW-8839.

**PICTURE 2: *"INDIAN" SCOUT WATCHING CHAMPLAIN'S APPROACH, QUEBEC TERCENTENARY***

**Source:** Musée McCord, Keystone View Company MP-1981.94.92.1

As well, the Indian agent of Kahnawake noted in his 1909 report to the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs that "Last summer many of the Caughnawaga Indians participated in the historical tableaux given at Quebec in honour of the tercentenary of the founding of the city of Quebec, and won the praise of the public for their merit and behaviour" (Department of Indian Affairs 1909: 48). Overall, the images presented during the celebrations reveal more about the portrayers and their beliefs than about the lives of the Aboriginal people of the area, who themselves remained virtually invisible.[3] While local Huron-Wendat were hired to perform, they were cast as "The Last of the Hurons" by a *Le Soleil* columnist (Nelles 1996: 402). Tourists and others had romantic ideas of Indians, saw them as a vanishing race, and were looking for some kind of authenticity through the Indians' paraphernalia. To H.V. Nelles,

> Quebec culture at this point was in what might be called the twilight of the "fearsome savage" interpretive period. Indians brought to the celebration a sense of implicit but contained danger. Native people, represented in villages, tents, costumes, and ritual performances at the Tercentenary, would reinforce progressive symbolism, showing explicitly the measure of civilization's advance. The addition of missionaries and the domesticated encampment of families framed the scene as both past and pastorale. (Nelles 1996: 401)

These representations did not evoke images of people adapting to changing circumstances. While the dominant society was focusing on "showing the measure of civilization's advance," the surrounding Aboriginal com-

[3] The images vary from one city to another and from one period to another, but they fluctuate between the "exotic other" and a rather negative image of Aboriginal people, who, it was thought, should remain on the outskirts of town since the gentrification of cities creates the desire to sanitize certain neighbourhoods, as Edmonds described in her book in regard to the city of Victoria, British Columbia (Edmonds 2010).

munities were "adapting traditional practices to the modern capitalist economy" (Raibmon 2005: 123).

### 3. The reassertion of Indigenous histories within the urban landscape

In Québec, many Indigenous groups live close to urban centres, including the Iroquois in Kahnawake and St. Regis, the Abenaki in Saint-François and Bécancour, the Hurons in Lorette, and the Iroquois, Algonquin, and Nipissing at the Mission of the Lake of Two Mountains. According to Claude Gélinas, in 1871, the population of Québec was 1,191,516. Aboriginal people living within the boundaries of the province represented around 0.7% of the population; 44.6% of them lived close to urban centres[4] while the rest were living in the subarctic areas of the province and in the Lower Saint Lawrence/Gaspésie regions. Between 1871 and 1959, the number of Aboriginal people increased significantly from 12,219 to 22,873, which as a percentage represents an 87.2% increase (Gélinas 2007). Of course, the demographic trajectories of the different groups are far from similar. For example, the Iroquois, Micmac, and Hurons experienced a constant demographic increase throughout the period, while the Abenaki did not.

Those living close to large urban centres such as Montréal and Québec City saw their way of life drastically transformed from the 1860s to the 1940s. The encroachment of the city on Aboriginal lands brought challenges as well as changes. Depending on the areas in question, game often became scarce and access to the territory was limited (which was often enforced by law). The changes forced Aboriginal people to turn to other means of subsistence. While Aboriginal territories situated close to large urban centres are naturally connected to the city geographically, they are also connected politically and economically. Decisions taken by the city to improve urban life as well as interconnectedness between the city and the hinterland tended to undermine Aboriginal peoples' traditional control and distribution of resources (Rueck 2011: 229).

From the 1850s to the 1900s, Montréal's economic expansion brought rapid urban development. To respond to the economic pressures, infrastructures were built, such as canals, bridges, railroads, roads, etc. While these urban pressures may have been perceived at times as negative, they also brought opportunities to Kahnawake. As Daniel Rueck (2011) has shown, the growth of a city such as Montréal caused resource and land pressures, which pushed the Kahnawakehró:non to adjust to new economic conditions over time. With the decline of the fur trade, they turned to other economic activities in response to the labour needs coming from Montréal. The men worked in quarries, lumbering and wood transport, and became pilots to guide ships and logs down the rapids of the St. Lawrence River and the Ottawa River (Rueck 2011: 231). According to the Indian agent in 1886:

> The excellent stone quarries on the reserve have afforded many of the Indians lucrative employment, as has also the construction of the bridge in course of erection by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company across the river from Lachine to Caughnawaga; and the proposed construction of the railway through the reserve by the same company will likewise doubtless give them an opportunity of gaining a livelihood at their doors, so to speak. The population of the band is 1,591, being an increase of 22 over the number stated in my Report for 1885. These Indians have 4,060 acres under cultivation, being 60 acres in excess of the quantity cultivated in the previous year. They raised 39,963 bushels of grain and roots, and cut 1,400 tons of hay. The other industries followed by them are stated to have netted $42,000. (Department of Indian Affairs 1886)

4 There were 2,546 Iroquois in Caughnawaga (Kahnawake) and Saint Regis, 341 Abenaki in Saint-François and Bécancour, 235 Hurons in Lorette, and 416 Iroquois, Algonquin, and Nipissing at the Mission of the Lake of Two Mountains (Gélinas 2007: 20).

The Indian agent also hoped that the establishment of an annual agricultural and industrial exhibition on the reserve would tend to promote a spirit of enterprise among the people of Kahnawake (Department of Indian Affairs 1886).

With the construction of a railroad bridge on the reserve in 1886, "some men worked in the factories of Lachine and rented winter homes to be available for work" (Katzer 1988: 43). This practice stopped when the Mercier Bridge was built in 1932, allowing for travel by car. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the Kahnawakehró:non had already built a solid reputation as skilled labourers. This reputation increased with the iron steel work, a sector they entered in 1885, for which the men are renowned today. By 1914, 90% of the adult males belonged to the National Structural Steel Workers Union (Katzer 1988: 42). They entered the iron steel workers' occupation due to the high unemployment rate on the reserve before the turn of the 1900s. As well, the trauma following the collapse of the Québec City bridge in 1907—which killed 76 workers, including 33 from Kahnawake—had a major impact on the community, and the women demanded that a big group of men no longer work on the same site (Tarbell 2008). In 1916, Indian agent J. M. Brosseau wrote in his report that: "Most of our Indians are working in the shell factories of Lachine and Montréal. Many are employed at the erection of structural steel works, in other building work and in car shops, and make good wages. Many travel in order to sell their beadwork" (Department of Indian Affairs 1916:25). Women produced "Indian" objects that were sold to visitors (mainly from the cities) for "whom 'exotic' Kahnawake had become an obligatory stop" (Rueck 2011: 233, see also Knight 1996). Attracted by rewarding wages as well as an increased access to jobs, the men extended their geographical expansion to the cities of the United States, since there were not enough bridges to build in Canada (Katzer 1988).

Transnational movements between Canada and the U.S. became more prominent in 1912 due to demands for workers on bridges and skyscrapers (Katzer 2008: 44). Before 1912, seasonal work would push people off reserve, but then they returned when the work was done. By 1912, the Kahnawakehró:non made frequent trips to the States and created enclaves in U.S. cities such as Detroit, Buffalo, and Brooklyn in New York. By the 1930s, a Little Kahnawake existed in the heart of New York (Tarbell 2008). Women joined their husbands and brought in supplementary income by taking in boarders or working in factories. These enclaves allowed for solidarity to develop, for families to be reunited, and for new migrants to find work. By the 1960s, the community had ceased to exist (Tarbell 2008).

Border-crossing activities, while frequent, were not always legal. Paul Diabo from Kahnawake was arrested in 1924. At the time of his arrest, Paul was working on the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in Philadelphia. According to the Department of Immigration, Diabo had violated the Immigration Act of 1924 and was considered an illegal alien. As a member of the Rotinonhsionni (Iroquois) Confederacy, "Diabo contended that he had a right to cross the international border without interference and restriction—a right, he argued, had been recognized by the Jay Treaty of 1794" (Reid 2007: 61). For Gerald Reid, "Diabo's trial and subsequent appeal by the Immigration Department in 1928 became an important test of Rotinonhsionni sovereignty and treaty rights" (Reid 2007: 61).

As had happened in Montréal, Québec City also encroached on reserve land. The 1886 annual report of the Department of Indian Affairs indicated for the reserve of Wendake (known at the time as Jeune Lorette) that:

> An action *en bornage*, to determine the boundary of the reserve, is before the courts of law; there being great uncertainty in respect to the correct limits, which causes frequent disputation between the Indians and the white locatees resident on farms

> adjoining the reserve. These Indians cultivate land to only a very limited extent, having had but 55 acres under tillage during the past year; from which they raised 200 bushels of grain and vegetables, and cut 18 tons of hay. (Department of Indian Affairs 1886: xvii-xviii)

The encroachment of the city on reserve land became an increasing problem over time. In 1914, the City of Québec installed a 40-inch-diameter pipe in the St. Charles River to transport water to the city. As a consequence, the river dried up and deprived the people of Wendake of water. Directly affected by this decision, Ludger Bastien, an affluent Wendat businessman who had a tannery as well as an electricity company, decided to take the City to court. In the court transcript, one can read that "the abstraction of water [by the city] had deprived [Bastien] of the pressure necessary for working his mill" for his tannery (Privy Council 1920: 3). In the end, the Privy Council of London resolved the conflict in 1920 in favour of Bastien (Privy Council 1920, Savard 2005). This example reveals the economic dynamism of the Huron-Wendat community.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Wendat engaged in manufacturing activities. Due to restrictions on hunting and fishing and the limited land available for cultivation, they were forced to turn their attention to other means of subsistence. In his report of 1886, the Indian agent indicated that:

> The Huron band of Lorette continue in a prosperous condition, although there is a decrease of 23 in their number since the date of the previous census, when the population was stated at 288 as against 265 according to the last census. It would appear advisable to furnish medical attendance to such of the sick Indians at this point as are too poor to pay for the same. The school has been maintained in operation with a good attendance. (Department of Indian Affairs 1886: xxvii)

While agriculture was limited, in the 1881 census, 20 members indicated that they were manufacturers, which represents a significant number considering that the village had around 300 people at the time (Savard 2005: 74). In 1885, the Indian agent reported that the Huron-Wendat made $46,635 from other industries, which "consist principally of the manufacture of snowshoes, moccasins, lacrosse sticks, bead work and other Indian handicraft" (Department of Indian Affairs 1885).

During the First World War, Ludger Bastien benefitted from business coming from the military base at Valcartier. His business capitalization, according to the Bradstreet & Son Book of Commercial Ratings, went from $2,000 to $3,000 in 1890 to between $10,000 and $20,000 in 1930 (Savard 2005). It should be noted that in the 1900s, the manufacturer turned exclusively to the making of moccasins. The irony in the increase in business is that the Wendat had to hire non-Aboriginal people to help to respond to the demand. Unfortunately, the Wendat then lost part of their leadership position, since non-Aboriginal people began to use what they had learned to open their own businesses in the region. In his reports at the turn of the twentieth century, the Indian agent notes year after year the boom and bust of the snowshoe and moccasin industry, and, in 1909, Antoine Bastien observed, under the heading Resources and Occupations, "that the making of snow-shoes and moccasins, the chief industry of the Indians, was far from flourishing. I regret to say that this industry, instead of becoming vigorous again, has decreased more this year." Heads of families on the reserve, according to the agent, were then "obliged in order to maintain their families to go off at a distance in order to earn money in the neighbouring towns" (Department of Indian Affairs 1909:47). The Wendat were also leading the way in making gloves, which were sold in Québec City. P.B. Savard launched a glove-making business in Loretteville. His success would prompt him to open a branch in St. Emile in order to respond to the demand

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(Société d'histoire de La Haute-Saint-Charles 2008). Glove making would remain prosperous until the 1980s.

## CONCLUSION

As we have shown, from the mid-19th century to the turn of the 20th century, the Kahnawakehró:non and the Wendat found ingenious ways to sustain the fabric of modern Aboriginal existence, but, like other Natives in the Americas, they could not "crack the thick crust of colonial assumptions" (Raibmon 2005: 116). In both cases, their "modern" existence was invisible to the dominant society: they were seen as a vanishing race. Adaptation to the surrounding capitalist economy was extremely important since traditional ways of life were disappearing for Aboriginal people living close to urban centres. They therefore found new ways of being, and adapted their culture around new sustaining activities. They developed systems of maintaining a sense of community: this is particularly true for the Mohawks and the enclaves that they created in the United States. At the same time as they lived the "fabric of a modern Aboriginal existence," they were also engaged in marketing their cultures. There are examples of Kahnawakehró:non families working in Indian shows and circuses. Some even "became peddlers of herbal medicine in New England in the summer" (Katzer 1988: 40). This is also true for Wendake. Seeing immediate economic benefits "by selling baskets and carvings, posing for photographs, and performing dances, [First nations] reinforced assumptions about authenticity that situated them in opposition to modern, civilized life" (Raibmon 2005: 116). Overall, Aboriginal people responded to the persistent demand from tourists to promote a self-portrayal of the anachronistic Indian of the past. This is what Paige Raibmon refers to as "the dark side of the ideology of authenticity" (2005: 116).

While much archival research still needs to be done, the story of a city reveals complex histories and brings different realities to the fore. Instead of consistently perceiving Aboriginal people as marginal others living outside the dominant society, by changing one's focus, it becomes quite clear that they were also refashioning their identity at a time when the dominant society thought that they were disappearing. In changing our focus, we have to be attentive to the contradictions of the time. Failing to do so may mislead many to continue to believe that Aboriginal people had no presence in Québec cities before the 1980s.

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