



Preserving, promoting, and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

CULTURAL MOMENT FOR JUNE 24, 2024

CELEBRATING THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN WELLINGTON NORTH

The area now known as the Township of Wellington North was first settled and surveyed in the early 1800s, but its history of human habitation stretches back hundreds of years earlier.

The area now known as the Township of Wellington North has a rich pre-settler history rooted in the activities of Indigenous peoples. Before European settlement, the land was primarily inhabited by the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples. These groups had complex societies with distinct cultures, languages, and traditions.

The Neutral people, known for their role in trade and diplomacy, occupied much of what is now Southern Ontario, including parts of Wellington North. They were named "Neutral" by French explorers due to their neutrality in conflicts between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Huron-Wendat Nation. The Anishinaabe, including the Ojibwe, Mississauga, and Odawa nations, also utilized the area for its rich resources and as part of their extensive trade networks.

During this period, the land that would become Wellington North was characterized by dense forests, fertile soil, and numerous waterways, making it an ideal location for hunting, fishing, and agriculture. These Indigenous groups established seasonal camps and villages, practiced sustainable agriculture, and managed the land through controlled burns to clear areas for cultivation and to attract game.

In the early 17th century, European explorers and fur traders began to arrive in the region, initiating changes that would eventually lead to significant disruption of Indigenous ways of life. Despite this, the Indigenous presence remained influential in shaping the early interactions and development of the area. There are well-known reports of the contributions of Ojibway Chief James Nawash to the early surveyors of Wellington and Grey counties, notably Charles Rankin. Rankin, who surveyed the Garafraxa Road in 1837, noted that Chief Nawash provided the most accurate information about the country and its rivers and streams. One significant piece of information shared by Chief Nawash was that the river Rankin reached outside of what is now Mount Forest was a branch of the "Saugin," now referred to as the Saugeen River.

By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, treaties and land agreements began to cede large portions of Southern Ontario to the British Crown, paving the way for European settlers and the establishment of townships such as Wellington North. The township falls within the lands covered by the Nanfan Treaty (1701), Treaty 3 (1792), the Nottawasaga Purchase/Treaty 18 (1818), the Ajetance Purchase/Treaty 19 (1818), and the Saugeen Tract Purchase/Treaty 45.5 (1836). These treaties, however, often resulted in displacement and significant changes for the Indigenous populations, whose ancestral lands were transformed by new settlements and agricultural practices.

As part of the township's ongoing reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples, Council approved a Land Acknowledgement in June 2023. This acknowledgment recognizes that the lands we now call home have been home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. It also acknowledges the impact that non-Indigenous settlers have had on this land and expresses gratitude to Indigenous Peoples for allowing us to share and respect Mother Earth with them, as well as building constructive and cooperative relationships moving forward.

Submitted by the Wellington North Cultural Roundtable