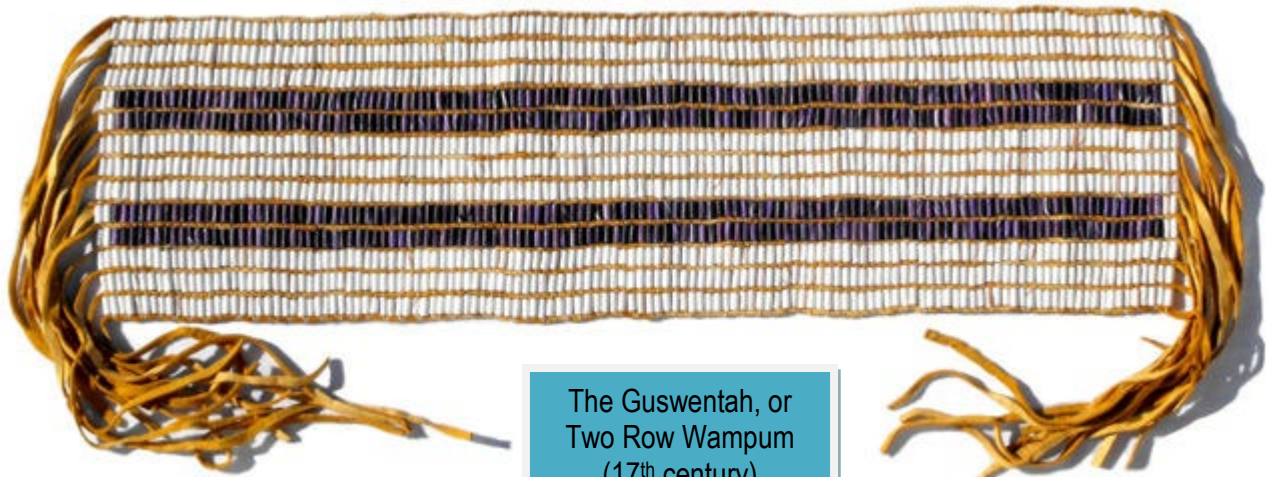


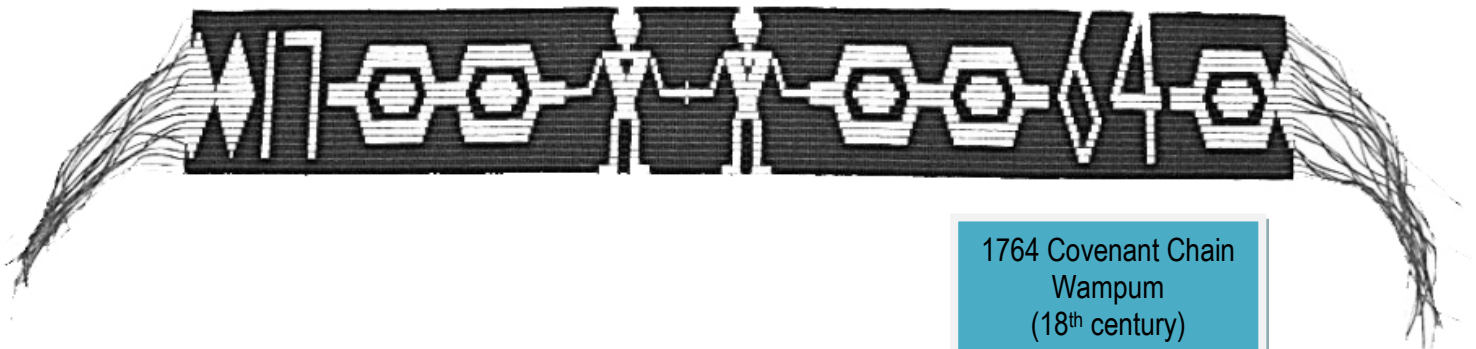
# First Nations heading into the Confederation Era Preparing for a Genocide?

Augmented with some information found in *Aboriginal History: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

- The Royal Proclamation of 1763, and later Council and Treaty of Niagara (1764) extended the Covenant Chain relationship originally established between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Dutch Crown (following 1665 the English Crown assumed the place once held by the Dutch), providing the original constitutional framework by which the Crown would be bound to Indigenous Nations (as equals and allies). Two interpretations of the relationship:



The Guswentah, or  
Two Row Wampum  
(17<sup>th</sup> century)



1764 Covenant Chain  
Wampum  
(18<sup>th</sup> century)

- Since the proclamation, British colonial officials debated on what to do about what they called the “Native Question” – each British North American colony had different perspectives, but they all largely ended up following the same policies of **assimilation into a wider European-Canadian society**.

- At first, assimilation “was generally understood to mean the First Nations peoples would participate collectively in the developing market society but would, broadly speaking, retain their autonomy.” (Hugh Shewell, *Aboriginal History: A Reader*, 170)
- In Upper and Lower Canada the *Crown Lands Protection Act* was passed in 1839 declaring all Indigenous lands to be Crown land (redefining Indigenous Peoples as “wards of the state”). A Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs would now act on behalf of the Crown.
  - Today, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations administers the Indian Act and is officially designated as “the superintendent general of Indian affairs.”

### Establishment of Residential Schools

- By the 1830s, 18,000 Indigenous peoples lived near settlements in Upper and Lower Canada. The Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs wanted to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples using money generated from the sale of Indigenous lands. This initiates the establishment of compulsory **Residential Schools**.



The Mush Hole

- The Mohawk Institute (called “Mush Hole” by its survivors) was the oldest continuously operated Anglican residential school in Canada. It was established in 1828 as the Mechanics’ Institute, a day school for native boys from the Six Nations Reserve at present day Brantford, Ontario. Three years later, the school took in boarders and girls were later admitted in 1834—this date usually taken as the founding of the residential school.

- In later years, pupils were drawn from other reserves, such as neighbouring New Credit and more distant Moraviantown, Sarnia, Walpole Island, Muncey, Scugog, Stoney Point, Saugeen, Bay of Quinte and Caughnawaga. In the twentieth century, increasing numbers of orphaned and destitute children were enrolled.
- *The Legacy of School for Aboriginal Peoples* (Oxford University Press, 2003) explains that residential schools “obliterated and replaced First Nation’s ancestry with a rigid code of temporal, linguistic, and religious/moral conduct that fed the political and economic needs of an expanding, colonizing economic Goliath. (36)
  - It was the destruction of “the Self.” (39)
- By 1841, the administration of Indigenous peoples was passed from the military to civilian authority (settler politicians). The new civil administrations that represented and promoted the interests of settlers saw Indigenous Nations as a barrier to settlement.
- The extermination of the Indigenous Peoples was considered, but permanent undersecretary of the Colonial Office (the British official overseeing the colonies), Herman Merivale, did not think this was a viable idea. Merivale instead favoured isolation and amalgamation.
  - Merivale argued this would be done through the “euthanasia of savage communities.” (Hugh Shewell, 170-1)

### **Bagot Commission, 1844 (excerpts from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples)**

- Established by Governor General Sir Charles Bagot, the Bagot Commission collected information from 1842 until its final report was issued in 1844.
- Generally, the commissioners found that there were serious problems with settlers squatting on Indigenous lands, poor records of land sales or leases, and inept official administration of band funds; that the wildlife necessary for subsistence was fast disappearing from settled areas; and that Indigenous People generally were suffering from alcohol abuse.
- To bring order to the development of settler policy toward Indigenous Peoples, and to end the varying practices in the different colonies, centralization of control over all Indian matters was recommended. The belief was that Indigenous Nations could only be assimilated when they had been brought into complete relationship with the concept of individualized property.



A totem pole in its natural state – they were never meant to be “preserved in museums,” rather they were to be allowed to return to the land

- Indigenous People were to be encouraged by the Canadian State to take up farming and other trades and were to be given the training and tools required for this purpose in lieu of diplomatic gifts and payments demanded by Treaty relationships. To combat settler encroachments and trespassing, the Bagot Commission recommended that reserves be properly surveyed and illegal timber cutting eliminated by a timber licensing system.
- Education was considered key to the entire enterprise; thus boarding schools were recommended as a way of countering the effects on young Indians of exposure to the more traditional Indian values of their parents.
- Christianity was to be fostered.
- The commissioners were concerned that Crown protection of Indigenous land was contrary to the goal of full assimilation into Euro-Canadian society. In their view, maintaining a line between Indigenous and settler lands kept Indigenous Nations sheltered from various aspects of colonial life such as voting (only landowners could vote at that time), property taxation, and liability to have one's property seized in the event of non-payment of debt.
  - The Bagot Commission therefore recommended that **Indigenous Peoples be encouraged to adopt individual ownership of plots of land** under a special “Indian land registry system.” They were to be encouraged to buy and sell their plots of land among themselves as a way of learning more about the non-Indian land tenure system and to promote a spirit of free enterprise.

- However, the reserve system was not to be eliminated all at once — the transition was to be gradual, and in the meantime, no sales of Indigenous land to non-Indigenous Peoples were to be permitted.
- Crown financial obligations were to be reduced by taking a census of all Indigenous People living in Upper Canada. This would enable officials to prepare band lists. No Indigenous Person could be added to a band list without official approval, and only persons listed as band members would be entitled to treaty payments. It was recommended that the following classes of persons be ineligible to receive these payments:
  - all persons of mixed “Indian” and “non-Indian” blood who had not been adopted by the band;
  - all Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men and produced children;
  - all Indigenous children who had been educated in industrial (residential and day) schools.
- The Bagot Commission led to the creation of a more or less permanent department of government to deal exclusively with “Indians and Indian lands.” Today there are two such ministries called the *Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada* and the *Ministry of Indigenous Services*. Both are still located in the seat of government in the Ottawa-Hull region.