

Information and More Information
Sections of Database

Rimpy Saha: Product Owner
Sowmya Movva: Scrum Master

April 18, 2023

More Information

Native people have inhabited Niagara for over 11,000 years, long before European explorers discovered the Americas in the 15th century. These earliest inhabitants were nomadic hunters and gatherers. Over time, Native settlements became more permanent as the cultivation of crops became an increasingly important food source. Around 1300 AD, distinctive nations emerged, including the Neutral nation, which inhabited Niagara until they were overcome by the Iroquois around 1650. Following the Neutral demise, Seneca and Mississauga settled briefly in the Niagara region.

Early Fishing in Niagara

The Attawandaron (neutral nation), Anishinaabe, and the Haudenosaunee have been fishing in the Niagara River and Lake Ontario using spears, nets, weirs, and hooks for thousands of years. Over millennia, they have engaged in subsistence fishing and built fisheries-based economies that involved trade with other Indigenous Nations and early European settlers. These Nations sustainably regulated and managed their fisheries by using selective fishing gear according to season, and imposed limits on when they could fish to ensure the continued existence of this resource for all.

When colonization happened, settlers and Indigenous Nations fished alongside each other. Over time tensions grew, which resulted in unfavourable outcomes for First Nations people. Indigenous peoples' fishing methods and rights clashed with the settler commercial fishing industry that had developed on these waters. Indigenous subsistence fishing practices went from being self-determined to entirely state-controlled in order to support the growth and expansion of commercial fisheries.

Early Settler Fishing

Salmon, trout, sturgeon, whitefish, pike, and perch are just a few of the dozens of species of fish that once called the Niagara River and Lake Ontario home. Our town's early European settlers must have been amazed by the number of fish in our waters. They were plentiful, large, and vital to feeding a growing population.

In the journals of Elizabeth Simcoe, she mentions that residents were catching 100 sturgeon and 600 whitefish a day in nets. By the 1840s, a fishing industry had established itself, resulting in dozens of locals becoming dependent on the fish pulled from the Lake and River to support their families.

Enormous catches were hauled, and locals were noted to bring in thousands of whitefish per day. Before the railway came into town, fish would have been sold by peddlers locally and in nearby cities like St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, or they were transported to Toronto via steamships.

Seasonal limitations led to its demise but in 1854, Samuel Zimmerman revived the railway using steam locomotives and extended the line as far as the Niagara Dock. The Niagara Mail enthusiastically observed that Niagara will not remain set down in a corner by herself but will soon be in the thick of railway progress. Extension of the line to Fort Erie and Buffalo in 1863 with connections at Niagara Falls for New York, Albany and Boston made Niagara a major transit point for international travellers. By the end of the century local electric trams linked St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Queenston, Lewiston and Niagara Falls in a network used by local tourists alike.

Onigara A

The Queenston-Lewiston Bridge has been an enduring fixture on the landscape of Queenston since the 1850s. Before its construction, ferries were established along the Niagara River, starting in 1792, to transport people, goods, and information between Canada and the United States, making it a vital link in the Portage Route.

Initially, ferries were rowed across the river, but horsepower eventually became the preferred method. A precursor to the steamship, the houseboat transported people and goods across the river using horses that would walk a treadmill connected to a paddle wheel.

Ferry boats have been used on and off in our community's history since they were first established. Even when the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge was constructed, the Ongiara steamboat ran between Queenston and Lewiston from 1888 until 1912, and the Linda Lee brought visitors from the U.S Coast Guard docks at Youngstown to Niagara-on-the-Lake between the 1940s and 1970s. In recent years, talks of a ferry service between Niagara-on-the-Lake and Toronto have been proposed.

QueensRoyalA

By the early 1870s Niagara on the Lake had experienced a number of economic setbacks, with the removal of the company and military garrison in the 1860s. However, its residents found other ways sustaining Niagara. Tourism and commemoration of Niagaras past became important features of the town.

Built in the 1869 as the Royal Niagara, the luxurious and elegant Queens Royal was known as one of the best hotels in North America. It was the site of many social gatherings for wealthy tourists. However, tourism's decline in the 1920s led to the hotel's demolition in 1930.

CayugaA

The S.S. Cayuga was sometimes referred to as The Ship of Romance for all those who met their future husbands/ wives on its travels, and for the many proposals that happened during moonlight cruises and dances. Each summer on its first voyage of the season, children and parents from Niagara were invited for a free trip up the Niagara River to Queenston and back.

After WWII, it was renovated and refitted, but its popularity diminished. CSL ceased its service, and after a short stint with its owner, the last voyage was in 1957. Low ticket sales and increased debt were responsible for the S.S. Cayugas failure. In 1961, it was scraped. It is believed that more than 15 million people travelled on the ship during its lifetime.

Information

IndigenousA

Native people have inhabited Niagara for over 11,000 years, long before European explorers “discovered” the Americas in the 15th century. These earliest inhabitants were nomadic hunters and gatherers. Over time, Native settlements became more permanent as the cultivation of crops became an increasingly important food source. Around 1300 AD, distinctive nations emerged, including the Neutral nation, which inhabited Niagara until they were overcome by the Iroquois around 1650. Following the Neutral demise, Seneca and Mississauga settled briefly in the Niagara region.

EurContactA

By the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Neutral nation had some interaction with Europeans. This late fate of contact is due in part to the actions of nations like the Huron, who protected their monopoly over the lucrative European trade by keeping the French and English traders out of the competitors’ territories. The Neutral, like the other nations, became embroiled in a cycle of dependence on the Europeans, mainly for muskets, alcohol and novelty items.

WampumA

The Dish with One Spoon Wampum is a formal peace agreement Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples that settled in the Great Lakes region and along the St. Lawrence River. At its core, this agreement describes how the land, and its resources, will be shared for the benefit of all: Take only what we need, leave resources behind for others, and make sure that we do not pollute the land.

FortNiagaraA

Under col. Mason Bolton with the help of col. Butler sought to expand the ranger companies, the Indian Department, Native warriors, and civilian refugees. Extra food and supplies were needed for almost 5,000 people. Col. Butler then facilitated the revival of Sir William Johnson's 1764 Treaty with the Senecas ceding four miles on the east and west bank of the Niagara River. This allowed for agricultural developments and the construction of a new mill.

WilliamDicksonA

Originally born in Dumfries, Scotland in 1769, Dickson emigrated to Canada when he was 15. By 1790, Dickson had become a successful businessman and is credited with building the first brick house in Niagara. He was a member of the Niagara Library and the Niagara Agricultural Society, a trustee of the Niagara district grammar school, and a justice of peace. During the War of 1812, invading American forces arrested Dickson and held him as a prisoner in Albany.

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