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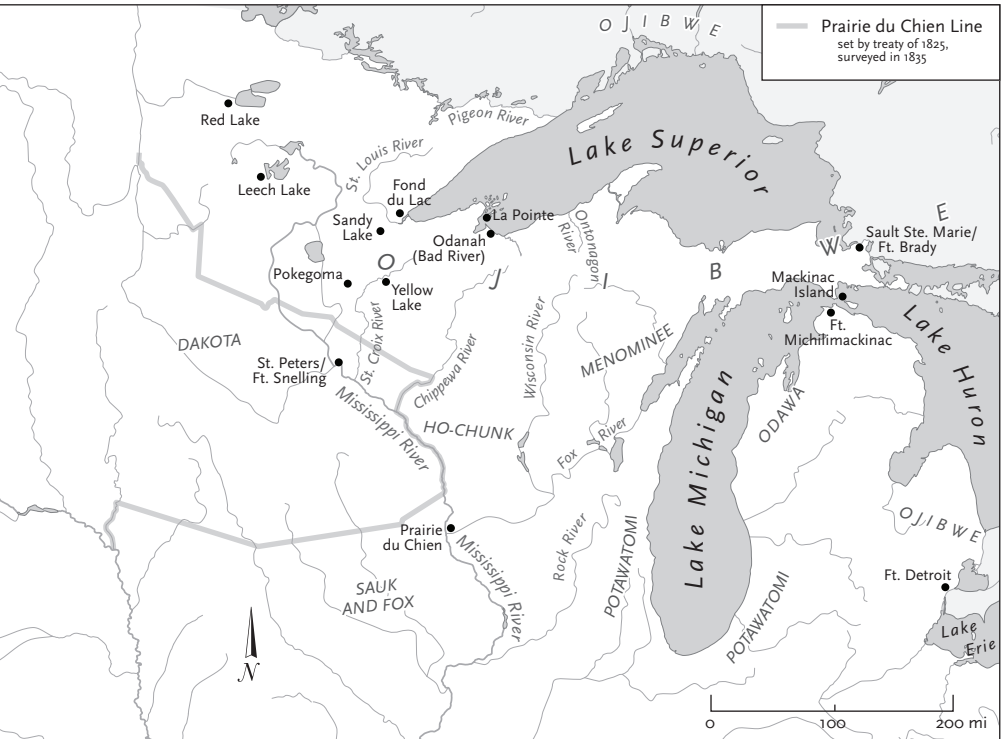


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Ogimaag



Ogimaag

*Anishinaabeg Leadership,
1760–1845*

CARY MILLER

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS

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Frontispiece:

Map of Ojibwe villages with ABCFM missions

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Introduction

Our Father: all the warriors, women, and children compliment you. We wish you to pity us.—Buffalo

My Father: I shake hands with you. There are as many as 1,000 warriors who shake hands with you through me. They are as powerful as the fire.

My Father: All the Band and Villages who met the Governor at St. Peters are of one mind with us. We have sent out messengers on the right and left to learn the minds of the different Bands and our Messengers have just brought in the messages and news to this point.—Nodin

Buffalo and Nodin were among the Ojibwe *ogimaag*, or chiefs, gathered at Snake River in the fall of 1837 in hopes of convincing President Martin Van Buren to reassess their recent treaty. Dutifully written down by American interpreters, the chiefs' pronouncements were treated as ritually formulaic by American officials, who saw the *ogimaag* as the locus of power and decision-making authority in Ojibwe communities. However, when carefully examined, their statements in fact reveal a set of underlying governing structures and assumptions about governance that are quite different from what Anglo Americans supposed. *Ogimaag* did not make unilateral decisions on the spot; rather the community reached consensus before the *ogimaa* had the authority to deliver village concerns to the Americans. As scholar David Nichols has identified, Eastern Woodlands communities were governed by three councils—the women, the

warriors (sometimes termed young men or braves in American accounts), and the old men (sometimes termed headmen, or chiefs)—and an ogimaa might speak on behalf of any one group or a combination of these groups.¹ Ogimaag always clearly identified the constituents on whose behalf they spoke, sometimes even expressing that they did not necessarily share the views of those who had asked for their concerns to be voiced. At the same time, these leaders were not just representational spokesmen. They possessed forms of authority in their own right. Such authority arose from two sources, an inherited or hereditary claim and a charismatic religious claim. Regardless of the origin of the chief's authority, he (and occasionally she) had earned the trust of the people and thus the right to lead through demonstrated results.

The ogimaag who gathered at the 1837 meeting stand in stark contrast to the common narrative of Indigenous government, which suggests that American Indian leadership systems were weak, had no conception of land ownership, and were separate from religious authorities. European colonial observers judged Native power among the tribes of the western Great Lakes according to the political notions of More, Locke, Rousseau, and absolute monarchy. These cultural interpretations of power and authority led them to critique tribes for the lack of totalitarian chiefly control and the absence of monumental constructions at static locations, citing these missing social elements as evidence of an anemic authority. Yet these same colonizers many times found themselves negotiating at the mercy of Indian aims and objectives. The organization of massive war parties against the Iroquois during the seventeenth century and Pontiac's revolt in the eighteenth demonstrated that Great Lakes village leaders, when pressed, could act in very powerful ways. Indeed, such events demonstrate that even if Indigenous governance was somewhat inscrutable to Western military, administrative, and fur trade personnel, it was strong, decisive, and effective to An-

ishinaabeg eyes.² For Indigenous people, leadership was enacted and validated on a daily basis that required leaders to bring to bear social, economic, and religious authority to address the issues and concerns of everyday life. While the contribution of kinship and gift exchange to social order in Indigenous societies has received increased attention in recent scholarship, the role charismatic religious authority played in augmenting the influence of hereditary leaders has not been fully explored.³

This religious dimension of Indigenous political authority in daily governance and in external diplomacy forms the central concern of this book. Not only does this perspective help in the revisionist process of seeing Native societies of the past as active, powerful, complex peoples, but it also leads us to important conclusions about the nature of Indigenous governance that helps us to understand more fully the demands tribal leaders made at treaty gatherings, reflects the reasons Christian conversion could bolster or weaken chiefly authority, and explains the rapid decline of Indigenous systems of leadership in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Further, studies such as this are necessary in light of the current interest of Native nations in reviving strategies of the past to cope with the problems of the future, which our Indian Reorganization Act governments cannot always address.

Because such a prodigious body of archival and scholarly sources exist on the social organization and leadership of Anishinaabeg people, this study is focused on Anishinaabeg leadership from the Seven Years' War through 1845. Anthropologists have termed societies like the Anishinaabeg *band-level* societies or acephalous societies, communities with a heightened degree of egalitarianism marked by weak and/or fluid leadership.⁴ Throughout the world, anthropologists theorize, leaders of such societies gained and maintained power through hereditary authority, skillful implementation of systems of gift exchange, and displays of religious power.⁵ However, defining

acephalous systems as having “weak guidance” and “diffuse sources of power” poses problems because it both ignores the long history of orderly political activity among these various peoples and uncritically embraces old colonial justifications for replacing Indigenous political systems with more “stable” (controllable) Western models. Acephalous political systems were neither weak nor random but highly organized and deliberate. The flexibility they display must be understood as a strength, supporting a complex and dynamic social system that could easily respond to environmental changes or intertribal conflict. Many historical moments supply critical windows to the past through which to examine how Anishinaabeg peoples constructed, used, and transferred leadership. Viewed anew through Native eyes, these moments can recast the debates about the nature of band-level societies.

For the Ojibwe this characterization of acephalous leadership rests in part on erroneous assumptions about Ojibwe social structure and the village community. In the early to mid-twentieth century many anthropologists characterized the Anishinaabeg as having a limited social and political structure, which scholars have labeled atomism.⁶ This interpretation stems from a literal reading of European sources. Fur traders, missionaries, and military personnel assumed that Anishinaabeg people were aggressive individualists who lived isolated lives in small nuclear or minimally extended family groups. They also believed that Anishinaabeg people met in larger aggregates so rarely that such gatherings, let alone any social or leadership structures related to them, were anomalies rather than the rule.⁷ Accepting such a depiction of Anishinaabeg society overlooks its complexity and marginalizes the social organization necessary for the degree of intervillage and intertribal contact, trade, and warfare with other peoples that occurred in the region both before and after Europeans arrived.⁸ Rather than being a weakness that demonstrated a lack of organization, or worse, some sort of

“primitive” condition, fluidity strengthened the Anishinaabeg, not only helping them to survive but also binding their villages more tightly together.

Some scholars have begun the work of suggesting a more complicated view of Indigenous leadership. Richard White changed the paradigm with *The Middle Ground*. He described how Great Lakes leaders pressured Europeans into cultural accommodations, an assertion that casts enormous doubt on the atomistic contention that tribal governments were weak.⁹ Rebecca Kugel further questions this view by demonstrating that factionalism within community governance could function in negotiations with external groups as a strength that resulted in greater concessions or at least successful delaying tactics. Her work also shows that women formed a distinct caucusing body within the village.¹⁰

Scholars have also studied Indigenous religion, but without fully grasping the symbiotic nature of religious and political authority in Anishinaabeg life. Yet scholarship has not completely alienated religion from Native leadership. Anthony F. C. Wallace identified the importance of religion to sociopolitical revitalization movements while Gregory Dowd emphasized the unifying role of such revitalization in the intertribal military mobilizations associated with Pontiac and Tecumseh.¹¹ However, with the exception of the role of revitalization movements defined as a somewhat extraordinary occurrence caused by societal stress, the role of religion in validating daily political authority within Indigenous societies has largely been marginalized or misunderstood.

This misunderstanding derives mainly from Western assumptions that a belief system can be classified into a polarity between sacred and profane elements. This distorts the Indigenous interpretation of the world by forcing it into ill-fitting alien categories. Power is not a cultural absolute; rather it is culturally constructed. All human societies, as part of their adaptive

strategies for understanding and interacting with their local environments, develop a world view that creates the basic rules of cause and effect, provides explanations for everyday phenomena, defines the cognitive system for organizing information and experience, and provides the rules for moral social interaction and leadership. A society's world view defines "not just our physical environment but the structures of meaning and value which describe reality."¹² The way that a society formulates its explanations determines the manner in which a people live and interact with that environment. This creates a philosophical system that does not necessarily contrast sacred or profane, a person or nonperson, real or imaginary. Further, these cognitive categories define how authority is claimed, maintained, and morally exercised.

Individuals born into a given society are instructed in these abstract categories through simple socialization. For most, religious texts or oral tradition provide a road map to appropriate or inappropriate behavior and inculcate explanations for why and how things are. Religious performances and testimonies of religious experience or phenomena constitute additional empirical sources of knowledge and authority that further reinforce a particular perception of the cosmos.¹³ From exposure to such sources of information during their formative years, individuals gradually become convinced that the way they have been taught to view the world is the way the world really is.¹⁴

Eventually even a society's language itself adapts to the categories of perception expressed by the people, thus linguistically reinforcing the perceived parameters of reality. In other words, "we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation."¹⁵ Although societies with related languages usually share similar or at least mutually intelligible world views, societies with languages from distant linguistic families generally interpret lived experience

very differently. Even basic nouns may not have a one-to-one translation, let alone abstract concepts.¹⁶ For example, the concept of *manidoo* (or *manitou*, plural *manidoog*) lies at the center of Anishinaabeg religious understanding yet cannot be directly defined in English.¹⁷ This is due to the misinterpretation of the term as a narrow one-to-one translation for the English word “spirit.” Anishinaabeg elder Basil Johnston notes that this interpretation of *manidoog* distorts what the Anishinaabe people express with this term.¹⁸ He defines *manidoo* as “spiritual, mystical, supernatural, godlike, or spiritlike, quiddity, essence. It is in these other senses that the term is often used and is to be understood, not just in the context of manitou beings. Manitou refers to realities other than the physical ones of rock, fire, water, air, wood, and flesh—to the unseen realities of individual beings and places and events that are beyond human understanding but are still clearly real.”¹⁹ This means that primary European sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries pertaining to Anishinaabe culture need to be read with the mediating process of cultural translation in mind. Indeed, the very use of English to discuss Anishinaabe culture can distort our understanding of it. Nonetheless, the attempt must be made in order to provide a context within which a broader audience can understand Anishinaabe leadership roles and the expectations Anishinaabeg communities had of United States fur traders, Indian agents, and missionaries.

But lest we depict world views as rigid and static, we must also recognize that some variation occurs within these systems of belief. An individual’s status in society, age, gender, intelligence, interests, and temperament shape personal interpretations of the culture’s world view. Despite this, “the cultural world view channels, limits, and inspires individual thought and outlook” and “provides a fund of generic notions from which the culture’s members severally draw.”²⁰ In other words, cultures and the world views that define them can be understood best

in biological terms. Like species they have discernible characteristics that are carried by most of the members but which all individuals do not manifest in equal degree. Both species and cultures contain properties characteristic of the group that some individuals do not seem to have at all.²¹ Taking this comparison further, culture and world view themselves evolve and change over time in an organic, adaptive manner, leaving room for local and individual variations that can be carried on to the next generation.²² They evolve in a symbiotic relationship with the social and economic resource needs of a culture, the availability of those resources, and the technology available for obtaining them.

Because world view forms the matrix through which members of human societies perceive and interpret their world, these systems illuminate internal sources of power and define internal forms of legitimate authority. Any study of traditional Anishinaabeg leadership at the turn of the nineteenth century must therefore begin with an understanding of their world view and the concepts that define supernatural as well as temporal power and authority. To this end, this study is focused on the ways that Anishinaabeg peoples understand religious power as inseparable from political power; it also defines and uses Anishinaabeg terms for leaders and their sources of authority within the Anishinaabeg language itself.

The Anishinaabeg understood themselves to be part of a populous world in which the spiritual definition of personhood extended far beyond the human sphere to animals, birds, plants, natural forces, and all manner of life. These manidoog entities each had important and special gifts that helped them to survive. They shared these gifts with humanity on a reciprocal basis developed through personal relationships initiated in dreams and visions. Such relationships were considered so important to survival that an individual who failed to form ties with at least one manidoo could hardly be regarded within the community

as an adult, let alone as an individual of power. Thus interaction with the sacred was a necessary and expected ingredient of living for even the least politically important person in the community, and much more so for those who claimed to be able to help others.

Given that Indigenous societies freely accepted open, direct, and personal communication with manidoog beings, new religious ideas could easily be brought in and incorporated if they proved beneficial to the lives and desired ends of an individual or community. As such, in Anishinaabeg communities, adherence to Christianity and assertion to leadership authority based on this adherence could be made on the same basis as similar claims of Indigenous religious leaders or nativist prophets of revitalization. The Anishinaabeg believed that the religions of all peoples had some truth and power to them—it must be so in order for those communities to survive and prosper—and did not decry the beliefs of others, whether of other tribes or the colonial powers, as false and without basis. The Anishinaabeg recognized that Americans had power. The Americans had beaten the British and driven them from the land. American authority must therefore have a strong spiritual basis, according to Anishinaabe definitions of power.

The presence among the newcomers of missionaries, spiritually powerful men, only reinforced this belief. In 1832, when Henry Rowe Schoolcraft made his most extensive trip through Anishinaabeg territories as Indian agent, he brought with him ABCFM missionary William T. Boutwell, introduced him to the Ojibwe ogimaag, and asked them to accept missionaries into their communities. Many of the leaders agreed. They had long sought to have American representatives closer to their communities than Schoolcraft's far-off station at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and expected the missionaries to function as representatives of the United States. Since the missionaries clearly received assistance and deference from both fur traders and

Indian agents as persons of religious authority, Native people determined that they must be powerful individuals whose spiritual connections could help the communities in which they lived. This suggested to some that Christianity could perhaps serve as an additional or even a new basis for authority within the community. Unfortunately, the introduction of Christianity led to increased factionalization in Indigenous communities, as described by Robert Berkhofer in *Salvation and the Savage*, but it did so precisely because it allowed ambitious individuals in the community another avenue to power and authority outside of traditional pathways for such ambitions.²³

For a proper examination of what leadership meant to Anishinaabe people themselves, we must first ask how they defined power and authority. In an April 1833 letter to the home office, American Board missionaries Sherman Hall and William Boutwell observed: “If any one can acquire a reputation for a conjurer or a dreamer, he is sure to pass for a great man among the Indians, and at once gains an influence.”²⁴ Heredity was an important factor in attaining chiefly status, but leaders needed the ability to guide the community successfully through any crisis it faced, whether the crisis was famine, disease, or foreign invaders. For Native Americans, power meant the ability to live, to grow crops, to court lovers, to slay animals, to heal the sick, and to defeat enemies, none of which could be successfully accomplished without aid from manidoog. Only with the aid of spiritual power could one make beneficial choices on a consistent basis. In other words, individuals who demonstrated success in life concurrently demonstrated their access to religious sources of power even if not directly observed using them. Positive political outcomes served as further proof of a person’s religious power. Continued successful decisions by leaders led to more influence. The more influential someone became, the more powerful the community assumed that person’s spiritual associates to be, and the less likely they were

to disagree with that individual's judgment. Anishinaabeg understood that when ogimaag made alliances, it brought to their aid not only the economic or military resources of other peoples but spiritual resources as well.

Although all Anishinaabeg people had relationships with manidoog forged through fasting or other means, leaders had a privileged link, sometimes enhanced through rituals or bundles passed down through the family, and could call on this powerful form of help for the whole community in times of need. Many if not all village leaders were also members of the Midewiwin, the traditional religious organization of the Anishinaabe people. In English this religious body is often referred to as the Grand Medicine Society, a clear reference to its healing abilities. Historically and today many aspects of the Midewiwin are considered protected knowledge not to be disbursed to the uninitiated.

Some scholars have sought to label Midewiwin ceremonies a revitalization movement, but core aspects of their performance call this notion into question. These seasonal rituals involved songs, dance, feasts, sweats, gifts, and tobacco offerings and were conducted in the spring to encourage the gardens to grow and in the fall to help the wild rice to mature. The ceremonies were acts related to subsistence and life-renewal rather than cultural revitalization in reaction to external pressures. The Anishinaabeg people consider this to be the religion of their people and assert a pre-contact origin for these ceremonies in their oral tradition.

The Midewiwin also had a political dimension. Midewiwin ceremonies united Anishinaabeg communities. The largest gatherings of the Anishinaabe year in the spring and fall included Midewiwin ceremonies. All leaders, from the headmen of the small winter encampments often numbering no more than six families to those claiming chieftainship over one or more bands, were members of this society. Since nearly all An-

ishinaabeg leaders were members, ceremonial gatherings also provided the opportunity for political gatherings where leaders discussed issues of war and diplomacy and resolved disputes over sugarbush, hunting, and ricing claims, both among themselves and with newcomers.

Unfortunately uncovering the daily transactions of government for Indigenous societies prior to the treaties is difficult. Self-generated documents for Anishinaabeg communities are extremely rare in archival collections prior to the twentieth century. As a result, the documentary sources that form the core of this study were written by cultural outsiders during the historical moments described. To turn the lens of these sources in upon itself so that it reveals Anishinaabeg views of their world necessarily requires the scholar to move beyond standard historical methodologies. This book combines an examination of the available Western archival sources, such as missionary records, fur trade documents, captivity narratives, government documents, and travel narratives, with ethnographic data, material culture, and Anishinaabeg oral literature in an attempt to interpret Indigenous actions within their own cultural context. This methodology, known as ethnohistory, includes using the various documentary sources to cross-check one another and cautiously using ethnographic and oral sources to evaluate the historical descriptions through the anthropological tools of “upstreaming” (interpreting the documentary record in light of more recent oral histories) and “side-streaming” with generalized ethnographic models of northeastern woodlands societies. The result is a far deeper interpretation of the available written sources.

Yet even cross-referencing sources in these various ways improves the focus of the clouded historical lens only slightly. On those rare occasions when multiple letters or diaries are available for the same fleeting event, they are obscured by the deep-seated cultural biases of their non-native authors—not to mention any personal or professional motivations that caused

authors to spin the narrative of events for their own reasons. Upstreaming, when not carefully applied, can lead to another stereotype—a timeless, frozen, changeless Native society somehow unaffected by historical pressures, colonial and otherwise, retaining instead a “pure” Indigenous essence. Such uniformity not only ignores change over time but downplays village and even personal variation within a society. Yet we also assume that cultures maintain some inheritance from their past, or they would have lost their identity as a people. Verifying past actions or interpretations by use of oral history demonstrates such continuities in the midst of other changes. Side-streaming of course risks overgeneralization despite demonstrated cultural and linguistic similarities. Anishinaabe oral tradition, however, provides grounds for cautious use of this methodology. Migration stories identify historical links between Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa peoples, and further suggest that all three groups originated from among other Algonquian peoples of the Eastern Woodlands—the Abenaki perhaps, or the Lenni Lenape. As with all methodologies, the key is moderation. Use them to improve and sharpen the image, but beware of abusive excesses that only fog our understanding.

As in other American borderlands, the initial arrival of European forces, the French and British in the case of the Great Lakes region, brought enormous economic and social change for Anishinaabeg communities south and west of Lake Superior. The period from contact through the eighteenth century represents a time in which these Indigenous societies incorporated Europeans and their goods and political aims into existing systems of kin, trade, and negotiation. Europeans did indeed pressure Anishinaabeg peoples to trade specific goods, to fight in their wars, and to allow Europeans to define their alliances. However, it was also an era in which Europeans were far from controlling the relationship. Native people chose to accept Europeans as sons-in-law to expand political and trade alliances.

They chose to accept or reject European goods and terms of trade to improve their ways of life for their own purposes. They chose to accept, reject, or syncretize missionaries and their theologies. And they chose to aid Europeans in their wars even as they drew Europeans into their own Indigenous conflicts. It was a period of change around the western Great Lakes—but a period of change directed by Indigenous motives, choices, and actions for Indigenous purposes, much as Pekka Hämäläinen suggests for the Comanche during the early years of colonial interaction on the southern plains.²⁵

Even the American Revolution brought little externally directed change to these communities and their political systems prior to the 1830s. Anishinaabeg communities, as before the exit of the French, maintained relations with at least two non-Indian powers, now the United States and Great Britain, whose representatives resided in small, isolated military forts or trading posts or made their way individually through the country peddling their wares and diplomacy. Anishinaabeg peoples still attempted to negotiate with American officials using the language, customs, and political forms developed during the height of the colonial fur trade. As late as the 1830s Anishinaabeg leaders such as Zhingwaakoons of Sault Ste. Marie and Eshkibagikoonzh of Leech Lake still negotiated with both American and British officials as they attempted to steer their communities through increasingly troubled waters.²⁶

The close of the Revolutionary War left political boundaries in the Great Lakes country uncertain, and Jay's Treaty in 1784 allowed British traders to continue to operate on American soil in a clause allowing Native, British, and American individuals to cross the borders freely for the purposes of trade. In some ways it was not much of a concession. In 1784 the United States did not yet have its own fur trade industry and certainly did not have the military capacity to close the borders in the western Great Lakes region. As a result, regional tribes continued to practice

Indigenous gift-exchange diplomacy with both powers despite American intentions to the contrary.²⁷

The War of 1812 ended overt competition between the British and United States citizens in the fur trade south of the Great Lakes, but the semi-nomadic subsistence patterns of the Anishinaabe people continued to ignore international boundaries and trade agreements. The Indigenous perception of village sovereignty further meant that Anishinaabeg leaders did not recognize the right of American or British governments to delineate political boundaries or trade or alliance ties in the region. Many bands simply continued to maintain connections with both powers, seeing the widest possible alliance network as the strongest economic and political position. Anishinaabeg leaders from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan still traveled to British posts at Malden, Drummond's Island, and Fort William to receive British gifts and advice. This only fueled American fears in the 1820s and 1830s that the British would renew warfare and once again recruit Indian allies to achieve their ends.

To demonstrate a military presence that might hold this threat in check, American officials devised a strategy for the defense of the northern frontier with a line of small forts at Sault Ste. Marie, Detroit, Mackinac, Green Bay, St. Peters, Chicago, and Prairie du Chien.²⁸ As supplying these forts from the produce of eastern farms proved cost prohibitive, the soldiers cleared and planted their own fields, raised livestock for meat, and traded with Anishinaabeg communities for surplus foods such as maple sugar and wild rice, as had the fur traders before them. The soldiers cut down trees for fort construction and also as fuel for cooking and heating. They represented an assault on the natural resources the Anishinaabeg needed for survival, both by consuming part of the gathered foods Anishinaabeg communities utilized and by destroying habitats for animal and plant resources claimed by Anishinaabeg communities. Yet they

also represented increased opportunities for the Anishinaabeg to expand social networks and perhaps levy pressures on British allies. In the early days these forts presented annual gifts to Native communities for the materials they took from the land, much as occupants of British and French fortifications had done in earlier times. To Anishinaabeg leaders, this created a fictive kinship relationship with newcomers who wished to reside among them and compensated with goods the community members who gave up their hunting and gathering sites to the new residents.

Although Americans initially appeared to have the same objectives as the French and British, within a decade of the War of 1812 it became clear to the Anishinaabeg that these newcomers had different goals. The established tribal strategies the Anishinaabeg used to incorporate outsiders during centuries of alliance diplomacy began to falter in the face of American cultural intransigence. Native peoples had long approached Europeans much as they approached their tribal neighbors—with requests for food, clothing, or other items to emphasize mutual alliance and reliance through dependence between the parties, and expected such requests to be made of them in return.²⁹ Americans, however, gradually withdrew from gift- and kin-based diplomacy over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, as they needed less and less from the tribes. This weakened the effectiveness of Indigenous leaders and challenged their time-tested methods of negotiation.

Such American efforts to distance themselves from Native peoples were not yet in evidence in 1825, when the United States held a treaty council at Prairie du Chien with the various tribes of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois to formalize their loyalty to their new political “Father.” Besides this change of alliance, the treaty aimed at ending intertribal warfare, which limited American returns from the fur trade and impeded white settlement of the region. The chiefs of various warring na-

tions agreed to set boundaries between their territories with the U.S. military as guarantor of peace. Those Anishinaabeg leaders who were present negotiated with their enemies the Dakotas a boundary that all the Anishinaabeg villages embraced at the Fond du Lac treaty council the following year.³⁰

Anishinaabeg leaders likely wanted beneficial interactions with the new American government. The Americans had not used the fort at Sault Ste. Marie to kill neighboring bands, as had been feared, nor did the treaties with the United States in the 1820s at Prairie du Chien and Fond du Lac specify any land cessions. The treaties probably appeared to the Anishinaabeg much like the earlier alliances with the French, who had mediated and settled intertribal disputes among allied Indian nations by giving gifts to “cover the dead.”³¹ General William Clark, one of the commissioners of the 1825 Prairie du Chien treaty, had promised that the president would take the various tribes and bands under his “protecting wing” to “protect the weak from the strong” and “prevent any bad people from crossing” territorial lines “to do mischief.”³² This language echoed the diplomatic speeches given in the French and English eras, further enabling the Anishinaabeg to view their new relations with the Americans as part of an ongoing political tradition.

Unfortunately, the peace between the Dakota and the Anishinaabeg established via the treaties of Prairie du Chien and Fond du Lac held for only two years. The Anishinaabeg increasingly believed that the United States had failed to fulfill the stipulated peace-keeping responsibilities promised in these treaties. The western Ojibwe ogimaag, whose villages bore the brunt of this warfare, complained that their Indian agent at Sault Ste. Marie was too far away for them to visit regularly and that he failed to act swiftly and decisively against Dakota treaty violators.³³ Nevertheless, community leaders continued to use the diplomatic customs of the past to pressure American agents to honor their promises, but with little result.

The 1830s brought important observable changes to Anishinaabeg communities. Where American settlers had constituted a largely unobtrusive presence in Anishinaabeg territories heretofore, the logging industry that emerged during this decade brought more white settlers and increased the stress on Anishinaabeg ecosystems.³⁴ There were few roads cutting through the northern forests, so the easiest way for loggers to transport timber was to use the extensive waterways of northern Wisconsin and Minnesota to float logs to market. Utilizing these waterways to transport logs often required redirecting water flow and using dams to maintain water levels. This interfered with Anishinaabeg wild rice stands either by flooding them or by siphoning off their water. These changes increased Anishinaabeg conflicts with both Native and white neighbors over subsistence resources and forced Native peoples to rely more on hunting game or trading furs to meet their subsistence needs.

The 1830s also saw the first American Christian missionaries in Anishinaabeg villages, a situation that brought many unintended sociopolitical consequences, including community political factionalization.³⁵ Anishinaabeg viewed the missionaries much like other prophets of the period and measured their power on the same basis: by their ability to bring about beneficial political and economic developments for the village. Most historical and anthropological studies have examined missionaries in this period as either religious or political actors, reflecting Western assumptions about separation of church and state and the resulting role of religious authorities in a society. Early nineteenth-century Anishinaabe society did not make this distinction or sharply differentiate the religious and political roles of the missionaries. Nor were Anishinaabeg nativist and accommodationist leaders exclusively political: both had strong religious feelings and experiences. Power came from many sources, and leaders exercised authority in many arenas simultaneously.

This brings us to the heart of the issue: how did Anishinaabeg

peoples erect and define the daily exercise of power differently from what Western observers recorded, and what did this mean for how they constructed their leadership and evaluated its effectiveness? For the Anishinaabeg the clearest demonstration of power was the lack of dependence. Hence the animal and plant beings had more power than humans, since they could exist independently of humans with little difficulty, while humans were exceedingly dependent upon them for food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. As A. Irving Hallowell wrote of the Anishinaabeg, “Human beings are conceived of as being in constant need of help, from birth to death. So essential is such help that no performance of any kind is interpreted as due to an individual’s own abilities or efforts.”³⁶ This created an odd paradox within Anishinaabeg social organization in which individuals aspired to independence but considered it achievable only through the establishment of the widest possible networks of mutual obligation with both human and manidoog partners. Leaders often had the grandest of these networks at their disposal and used these physical and spiritual resources both to meet the needs of the community and to influence the political process of consensus building that directed community action. The chapters that follow explore these sources of power and demonstrate how they supported hereditary, military, and religious leaders within Anishinaabeg communities.