



The Stewards of the Land Since Time Immemorial

By: Simone Traviss

As the City of Oshawa celebrates its 100th anniversary, it's important to recognize the first stewards of these lands.

The coastal wetland and waterways of Second Marsh and the McLaughlin Bay would have provided the Indigenous peoples with an abundance of flora and fauna, and held great importance for trade, travel, and sustenance.

According to the research report titled "[Evaluation of Second Marsh North of Colonel Sam Drive](#)", completed by Archaeological Research Associates Ltd in 2023, the property is within the traditional and treaty territory of nine First Nations and Indigenous communities.

These First Nations and Indigenous communities would fall under the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation of the Mississauga Nation. The Mississaugas are a sub-group of the greater Ojibwa Nation, which is one of the largest native groups in Canada.

The modern-day names for the nine First Nations and Indigenous communities, indicated in the report, would include Alderville First Nation (AFN), Beausoleil First

Nation (BFN), Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation (CGIFN), Chippewas of Rama First Nation (CRFN), Curve Lake First Nation (CLFN), Hiawatha First Nation (HFN), Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (MSIFN), Huron-Wendat Nation (HWN), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO).

Before the Mississaugas came into the area of Lake Scugog, the Wendat people, along with their close relatives the Petun and Neutrals, were the habitants of the land until they had all dispersed from the area in the 17th century.

The lush and abundant environment of the Second Marsh and McLaughlin Bay would have made it ideal for Indigenous peoples to create habitation and sustain themselves.

The wetlands in the area would have provided Indigenous peoples with an abundance of waterfowl, fish, and wild rice in the shallow waters.

One of the most notable ways the Indigenous peoples would have used the land was through the natural harbour that led to an inland network of waterways, which was ideal for transportation, and later would be known as the Scugog Carrying Place trail.

Second Marsh was marked as the southern end of the transportation route of the Scugog Carrying Place Trail. Further studies such as the “[Second Marsh Heritage Research Report](#),” completed by Martindale Planning Services Heritage Consultants in 2020, provide additional insight into the importance of the Carrying Place Trail for Indigenous peoples.

According to the heritage research report, this north-south trading route carried goods and people from Lake Scugog and Ontario’s interior to the shore of Lake Ontario. Canoes were the main form of transportation on these waters, until it became no longer navigable and then travelers would resort to portage.

The trail went through the Oak Ridges Moraine and divided the waters flowing into Lake Ontario and those draining into the Trent-Severn Waterway system.

According to Melissa Cole, curator of the Oshawa Museum, the Carrying Place Trail would have been one of the only footpaths through the forest, and this would have influenced the settlement patterns of the American and European settlers and colonists to this area.

The Carrying Place Trail was so well-established that Augustus Jones, an American settler, included it in the survey he conducted in 1795.

According to the evaluation report, Indigenous villages were large and populous, with distinct cultures represented archaeologically throughout this part of southern Ontario, by the time the Europeans arrived.

However, the influx of immigration, the growing number of non-Indigenous settlers, and the Crown taking possession of their land, made it impossible for Indigenous peoples to sustain their traditional lifeways and keep their share of the land.

The Indigenous peoples that once inhabited the land from time immemorial, were left landless and were forced to relocate to reserves.

Today in Canada we recognize the injustice and systemic racism towards Indigenous peoples, along with the residential school system as a form of cultural genocide.

Friends of Second Marsh also acknowledges and honours that we are on the land of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation of the Mississauga Nation, and that we are always working on incorporating the voice of Indigenous peoples in our collections, programs, and services.

Friends of Second Marsh is a registered not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to encouraging the protection and appreciation of Second Marsh, one of the last, largest, and most biodiverse coastal wetlands on the north shore of Lake Ontario. Support the Love the Marsh! Campaign at secondmarsh.ca. To contact, email staff@secondmarsh.ca.

Bio: Simone Traviss (she/her) is a budding journalist and writer from the Durham Region. Having graduated from Durham College in Journalism and Mass Media, she has been strengthening her craft of professional writing for over two years now. She is passionate about arts and culture, music, science and technology, and climate change and the environment.