

Pontiac: Local Warrior or Pan-Indian Leader?

by
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In 1848 a delegation of Menominee people from the Green Bay area of Wisconsin met a United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs to discuss the tribe's removal west of the Mississippi. One of the chiefs complained to a group of waiting Indians that the white people never gave up their quest for land. This led him to comment that Pontiac had foreseen such an outcome. His listeners asked who was Pontiac? Shono-nee, the Menominee chief, responded that he was "a noble minded Indian" who had lived long before. He had once come to Milwaukee to warn the different tribes about the white man and his ways. Pontiac had observed that they invariably came speaking softly, deluding the Indians into allowing them into their community. Once admitted they gained strength by continually encroaching on the Indians' land. Pontiac's message had been clear. It was time to "sweep the white men from our country." Much to their regret, the Menominee had failed to heed his words.¹ Now they were paying the price for not supporting a man who could have been Native America's George Washington.

This incident is indicative of the two enduring views of Pontiac. The first is that he was a great pan-Indian leader whose warnings should have been heeded by all Native Peoples. The other is that Pontiac was a relatively minor figure, forgotten even by his own people, whose deeds merit little more than a footnote in the history of North America.

Interestingly, Euro-American contemporaries of Pontiac veered toward the first view, that he was a pan-Indian leader. General Sir Jeffery Amherst had few doubts about his central role, dubbing Pontiac "the Ringleader of the Mischief" that began in May 1763 and resulted in

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¹ Louis B. Porlier, "The Capture of Mackinaw, 1763: A Menominee Tradition," *Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison: The Society, 1879), 8: 227-29. Porlier was a former Indian trader and witness to this incident.

the capture of every British post west of the Allegheny Mountains, with the exception of Forts Pitt, Detroit, and Niagara with its several outposts.² Amherst's successor, General Thomas Gage, agreed. Even two years after the outbreak of fighting, he observed that Pontiac had retained his "influence" and capacity to "do mischief," especially among the western nations. This was confirmed by Colonel John Campbell, who noted Pontiac's "vast influence" during a peace conference at Detroit in the summer of 1765, which signaled an end to the hostilities. The importance of the Ottawa leader was publicized for a short time in London by Robert Rogers in his play, *Ponteach, or, the Savages of America: A Tragedy*.³

Although both Europeans and Native Americans may have subsequently forgotten about Pontiac, as was seemingly the case at the time of the Menominee removal, his prominence as a pan-Indian leader was restated soon afterwards with the publication in 1851 of Francis Parkman's magisterial study, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada*. Parkman wrote that Pontiac's authority over the confederated Ottawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi "was almost despotic, and his power extended far beyond the limits of the three united tribes. His influence was great among all the nations of the Illinois country; while from the sources of the Ohio to those of the Mississippi, and, indeed, to the farthest boundaries of the wide-spread Algonquin race, his name was known and respected."⁴

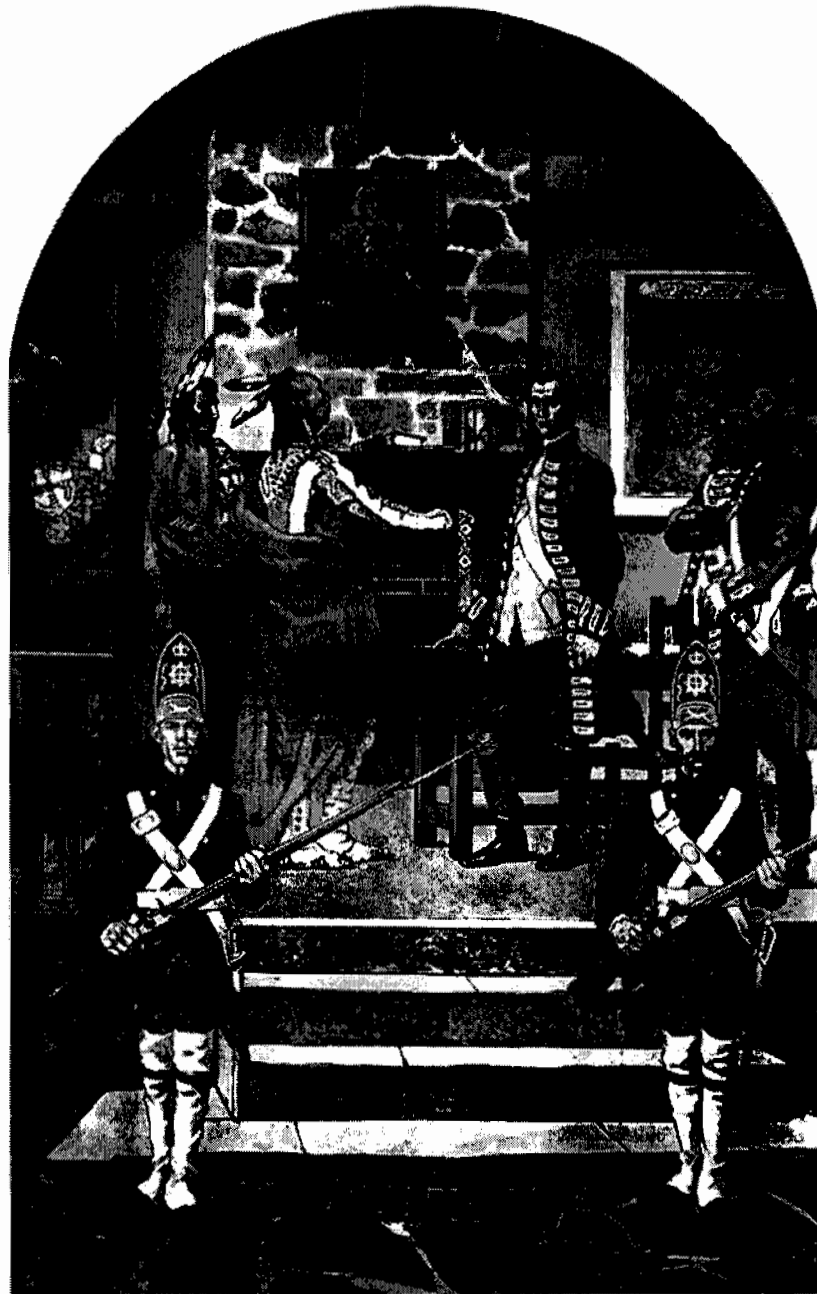
However, not everyone was convinced of Pontiac's role as a pan-Indian leader, especially by the twentieth century. Randolph G. Adams, author of the 1935 entry about Pontiac in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, asserted that in reality he was little more than "the greatest local menace."⁵ A similar view was taken by Howard Peckham in *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising*, published in 1947: "There was no grand conspiracy

² Jeffery Amherst to Major Henry Gladwin, July 2, 1763, class list 34, vol. 54, fols. 84-85, Jeffery Amherst Papers (hereafter Amherst Papers-NA), War Office, National Archives (formerly Public Record Office), London. Niagara had three additional outposts: the Lower Landing, Fort Schlosser, and Fort Erie, all of which survived.

³ Thomas Gage to George Montague Dunk, Second Earl of Halifax, January 23, 1765, in *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763-1775*, ed. Clarence E. Carter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 1: 47; John Campbell to William Johnson, September 16, 1765, in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. James Sullivan, Alexander C. Flick, and Milton W. Hamilton (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1953), 11: 938-39; Robert Rogers, *Ponteach, or, the Savages of America: A Tragedy* (London: J. Millan, 1766).

⁴ Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada* (1851; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 1: 182.

⁵ Randolph G. Adams, "Pontiac," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1935), 15: 63.



Photograph of a painting by Gari Melchers titled *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, c. 1921. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection.

Conspiracy of Pontiac
Gari Melchers, c. 1921

or pre-concerted plan on his part embracing all the western tribes. . . . In the beginning there was only a local conspiracy at Detroit directed by Pontiac." Peckham did acknowledge, though, that the Ottawa leader had "improvised a more general uprising after his initial tactics failed."⁶

This view of Pontiac has subsequently dominated scholarly assessments. Michael McConnell in his book, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724-1774*, asserts that Pontiac was a person of no great significance, at least for the struggle in the Ohio region: "Rather than a concerted pan-Indian uprising orchestrated by one man, the 1763 war was actually several local conflicts."⁷ William Nester, in his *"Haughty Conquerors": Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763*, essentially adopts the same argument, suggesting that even at Detroit "Pontiac was but one of many chiefs who . . . inspired the local tribes to revolt against the British."⁸ In his recent book, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America*, David Dixon challenges the orthodox view by suggesting that historians have underestimated the importance of Pontiac's "personal magnetism," but he does not make this a major theme in his interpretation.⁹ Most importantly, Gregory Evans Dowd, in *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations & the British Empire*, argues that the kind of leadership ascribed to Pontiac by Parkman was impossible, given the fragmented and nonauthoritarian nature of Indian society, though Dowd concedes that historians like "Peckham and Nester" have gone "too far" in their demotion of Pontiac: "The Ottawa [chief] may not have commanded many obedient men, but for three years, beginning in 1763, he commanded much respect from Detroit to southern Illinois to Michilimackinac."¹⁰

So who is correct? Was Pontiac a local player, whose influence was confined to the environs of Detroit; or was he more truly a pan-Indian leader, as the Menominee and Parkman believed; or does the answer lie somewhere in between, as Dowd suggests? These questions raise the

⁶ Howard H. Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 111.

⁷ Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 182.

⁸ William R. Nester, *"Haughty Conquerors": Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), ix-x.

⁹ David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 131.

¹⁰ Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations & the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 9.

issue of how leadership is defined and the qualities requisite for its exercise, be they charisma, respect, personality, determination, oratorical ability, intellect, political judgment, organizational skill, or foresight. Additionally, one must also consider the manner in which leadership is exercised, whether by force, or by holding a particular office, or through influence resulting from the personal attributes listed above.

No person, of course, can lead without being indebted to others. In assessing the contributions of Pontiac it is important to acknowledge that the idea of liberating Native America from British domination west of the Allegheny Mountains did not originate with him. This was the work principally of two disgruntled warrior chiefs of Seneca descent, the Genesee Tahaiadoris and the Mingo Kiashuta.¹¹ Their scheme had four basic elements. First, the nations around Detroit, notably the Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Wiandot, were to surprise the garrison there, seizing the goods of the English traders to provide their warriors with vital weaponry and ammunition. Second, the nations in the Ohio River valley and its tributaries, principally the Delaware, Shawnee, and Twightwee, were to attack the posts leading to Fort Pitt, thus making the Allegheny Mountains a secure boundary once more. Simultaneously, the Mingo and other Six Nations migrants living in the vicinity of the Allegheny River were to accomplish the third element by capturing the posts of Presque Isle, Le Boeuf, and Venango, which secured communications between Fort Pitt and Lake Erie. Fourth, the Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy was to cut communications between Niagara, Oswego, and the Mohawk valley. With these key routes secured, the major posts of Niagara and Fort Pitt could be starved into surrender, thus avoiding the necessity for a frontal assault, which was alien to Indian methods of warfare.¹²

¹¹ The Mingo were Iroquois, primarily of Seneca origin, who had migrated to the upper Ohio in the first half of the eighteenth century. Of the two, Tahaiadoris was undoubtedly the more influential because of his family connections. His father was Daniel Joncaire, a member of a prominent French-Canadian trading family, who had served as an officer at Niagara during the siege in 1759. He may have ultimately been responsible for the scheme, for according to an Onondaga informant, Joncaire "before he was made prisoner, recommended it to the Seneca that, in case the French should be conquered, they were to propose to the other Nations to unite and fall upon the English." Proceedings at Niagara, July 28, 1761, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 3: 456.

¹² Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., "George Croghan's Journal, 1759-1763," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 71, no. 4 (1947): 410-11. For the eastern Woodland Indian mode of warfare, see James Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

This scheme also had two key supplementary elements. Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta proposed that help should be sought from the Cherokee who were at that moment fighting the British in defense of their homeland. Calling on the Cherokee and other southern nations was a radical step since the two groups had been in almost permanent conflict for many centuries. This shows the extent to which some natives were thinking in terms of a pan-Indian response to the invasive presence of the British, following the fall of Canada in 1760. In addition, the two chiefs assumed that help would be forthcoming from the French. Just before the fall of Montréal in September 1760 the governor of Canada, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, had advised many Canadians like Charles Langlade at Michilimackinac to tell the Indians that the occupation of their country would only be temporary. The King of France would neither abandon his subjects nor desert his Indian children; at the very least a peace could be expected that would return Canada to France.¹³ Since peace had yet to be made, it was reasonable to assume that an army and a fleet would shortly arrive to liberate the French inhabitants and restore the "middle ground," the term given by historian Richard White to that system of harmonious cooperation, based on trade and mutual respect, which had been the hallmark of the Native Peoples' previous relationship with the French.¹⁴ Accordingly, once the French relief force arrived, the northern nations would join it while the western and southern nations harassed the British frontiers. With the help of their French "Father," the Indians everywhere would then be masters once more of their own country. "This," Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta asserted, "was the Seneca Plan, which they had concerted since the reduction of Canada and the English refusing them Ammunition."¹⁵

To implement their pan-Indian scheme, the Seneca sent war belts not only to the immediate combatants but also as far as Gaspé to the east and the Illinois country to the west.¹⁶ In addition, Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta visited the peoples of the Ohio before traveling to Sandusky,

¹³ Governor Pierre Rigaud de Vaudreuil to Charles Langlade, September 3, 1760, in *Report and Collections*, 8: 215-16.

¹⁴ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Wainwright, ed., "Croghan's Journal," 410-11. Croghan learned of the plan on July 27, 1761, at Fort Pitt from Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta, who were on their way home from Detroit. Captain Donald Campbell got a similar version from the Wiandot interpreter, Jacques St. Martin. Campbell to Jeffery Amherst, June 17, 1761, class list 34, vol. 49, fols. 38-39, Amherst Papers-NA.

¹⁶ Donald Campbell to Jeffery Amherst, June 17, 1761, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 38, Amherst Papers-NA.

where they issued invitations for a conference with the Detroit nations. Unfortunately, most of those invited were not yet ready for war. This included many of Pontiac's own people, the Ottawa of Detroit. The Great Lakes nations were still distrustful of the Iroquois, whom they blamed for the deaths of two of their chiefs during the siege of Niagara in 1759.¹⁷ In any case, the relationship of the nations with the English had yet to be clarified, since the occupation of Detroit had only been effected the previous December. As a result the Great Lakes nations not only refused to travel to Sandusky to meet Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta but also allowed the local Wiandot to reveal the scheme to the British commander at Detroit, Captain Donald Campbell.¹⁸ Although Amherst, who was in New York, was dismissive of the Indians' ability to implement such an undertaking, Campbell had no doubts about the dangerous nature of "the Whole project, which was very great."¹⁹

During the next two years, the northern and western nations' attitude toward the British became increasingly hostile as Amherst and Sir William Johnson, the Northern Superintendent of Indian Affairs, instituted a number of changes in their dealings with the Native Peoples, all of them incompatible with the Indian concept of the "middle ground."²⁰ Among the more egregious was the British insistence that all white "prisoners" be returned to "civilization." This demand directly challenged the Indian view of their captives, who in most cases had been adopted by families as replacements for lost relatives. Another cause for discontent was the British insistence that any Indian accused of committing a crime against a white person should be punished according to English law and procedures. This too was in stark contrast to the Indian notion of justice, which left disputes to the individual

¹⁷ Intelligence given to William Johnson, December 20, 1759, class list 34, vol. 46, fol. 66, Amherst Papers-NA; intelligence from George Croghan, May 22, 1760, in *Aspinwall Papers*, ed. Thomas Aspinwall (Boston: 4th Series, Massachusetts Historical Society, 1871), 9: 249-51; Governor Vaudreuil to Nicolas Berryer, June 24, 1760, in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, ed. Edmund B. O'Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1853-1887), 10: 1092-93.

¹⁸ Minute of a council held in the Wiandot town near Fort Detroit, 3-6 July 1761, forwarded by Sterling to one of his trading partners on July 8, 1761, James Sterling Letter Book, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Donald Campbell to Henry Bouquet, July 7, 1761, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. L. M. Waddell, J. L. Tottenham, and D. H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994), 5: 618-20.

¹⁹ Jeffery Amherst to William Johnson, August 9, 1761, class list 34, vol. 38, fol. 161, Amherst Papers-NA; Donald Campbell to Jeffery Amherst, July 7, 1761, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 5: 620.

²⁰ White, *Middle Ground*, 142-85.

families or clans to settle. In addition, the British failed to evacuate the former French posts as they had promised. Instead of making the forts into trade centers, the British had increased their garrisons and strengthened their defenses. To the Indians this appeared to be a prelude to conquest. Their fears were not allayed by the activities of white settlers and speculators, who often posed as hunters while surveying the land. Indeed, cheating the Indians seemed second nature to most whites, as the conduct of British traders demonstrated.²¹

The change that most offended Indian sensibilities was the reduction in the numbers of gifts that the Indians received when they visited military posts or attended conferences. They saw presents as rent for the occupancy of the posts and a necessary expression of esteem to brighten the chain of friendship. The British, in contrast, viewed such largesse as encouraging a "culture of dependency." In Amherst's view the Indians must support themselves and adapt to market forces. If the Indians returned to their traditional hunting practices, they would have food for their families and skins for the traders, who would in turn supply them with European clothing, ammunition, and other necessities. Hunting would also keep the Indians from making trouble. For this reason, Amherst ordered that presents of ammunition in particular were to be avoided. The Indians must earn what they needed by trading with the white merchants.²²

To the Native Peoples these measures were irrefutable proof of a plan to weaken them so that the English could take their lands at will. As a result war belts continued to circulate over a wide area of eastern North America during 1762, prompted in part by renewed French interest in the area. The governor of Louisiana, Louis Billouart de Kerlérec, had long wanted to attack the British. With Spain about to enter the war, the recently appointed French minister for war and the marine, the Marquis de Choiseul, acquiesced in Kerlérec's scheme, ordering the dispatch of a regiment of regulars and a large quantity of trade supplies in support.²³ Admittedly Kerlérec's principal objective was the creation of an alliance among the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and

²¹ For accounts of the increasing Indian hostility after the Detroit conference, see Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising*, 92-111; Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 54-89; Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 92-104; and Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 75-82.

²² Jeffery Amherst to William Johnson, August 9, 1761, class list 34, vol. 38, fol. 161, Amherst Papers-NA.

²³ Carl A. Brasseaux and Michael J. Leblanc, "Franco Indian Diplomacy in the Mississippi Valley, 1754-1763: Prelude to Pontiac's Uprising?" *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 68 (1982): 60-62.

Alabama nations, because they were best positioned to defend the lower Mississippi valley where the bulk of the French population of Louisiana lived. Nevertheless, Kerlérec was also responsible for the Illinois country, which the more northerly nations were better placed to protect.

Accordingly, in the late spring of 1762 an officer from New Orleans, Monsieur de Lantagnac, was dispatched with a message for the northern Indians that their French father, "Onontio," had not been crushed. Rather the French King was on his legs again and had sent an army to Louisiana to help drive the English out of the northern Indians' country.²⁴ After reaching Fort Chartres, Lantagnac set off for the Shawnee and Delaware settlements along the Ohio valley before meeting the Genesee near the source of the Allegheny River. Lantagnac did not specify how the northern nations should conduct the war. In any case he found such advice unnecessary, since the Seneca already had a well-crafted plan for expelling the British west of the mountains. But because of previous rebuffs, the Seneca responded cautiously to the French invitation, sending Kerlérec's war belt back "to the Delaware with this Message that if all the other Nations would join, they would not be backward." The Delaware, who had strong ties with their fellow Algonquian nations around the Great Lakes, forwarded the belt to Detroit inviting them to join the alliance.²⁵

The result was a conference that summer in the nearby Ottawa village (i.e., Detroit) "attended by the chiefs and principal warriors of the Wiandot, Chippewa [Ojibwa], Ottawa, and Potawatomi and some other tribes who live amongst those Indians on Lake Superior, above Michilimackinac and Fort La Bay." After the conference was over deputies were sent to the "Twightwee, Ouiatanon, Kickapoo, Piankashaw, and other Tribes settled on the Wabash," telling them about "the Determination of the Council." This decision was that the Great Lakes nations were unwilling at that time to take up arms in a pan-Indian struggle, despite French promises of support.²⁶ As the council told the

²⁴ Ibid, 62-63.

²⁵ Indian intelligence, Fort Pitt, January 30, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 155-56. The source of this information was an unnamed Shawnee chief speaking to Captain Simeon Ecuyer, the commanding officer at Fort Pitt. Croghan also refers to a belt being sent by the French in Illinois to the Delaware, Shawnee, and Seneca living on the Ohio River. George Croghan to William Johnson, December 10, 1762, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 3: 964-66.

²⁶ Intelligence from George Croghan, Fort Pitt, September 28, 1762, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 534. Croghan got this intelligence from "an Indian of good character amongst all the Western Nations who lived near Detroit."

Delaware in a separate message: "It might be that the English had an Intention to make War against the Indians by their keeping Ammunition from them and settling so many Forts in their country; but for their parts they were determined not to Quarrel with the English if they could avoid it." Nevertheless, "they would be on their Guard and watch the motions of the English for the future," and desired that the Ohio Indians should do the same.²⁷ Clearly what was lacking was someone to galvanize the Native Peoples into action by striking the first blow. The Seneca had provided a coherent plan but no one to initiate it, although the sequence of events outlined by Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta implied that the hostilities were to begin at Detroit.

In this tense situation it only required a spark to set the region ablaze, and the danger of this was increased by the news in February 1763 that a peace had been signed between Britain and France. To the Indians and most of the French inhabitants west of Montréal it was inconceivable that the great French king would abandon his people in such a manner. A much more likely explanation, it seemed, was that the announcement was a ruse by Major Henry Gladwin, the commander at Detroit, and other British officers to conceal the arrival of a French army and fleet in the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers.²⁸ In the parlance of the day, the French king had woken up and was on his way to help his Indian children.²⁹

This was the situation into which Pontiac stepped. It is not clear why he suddenly became so prominent, since very little is known about his earlier career or preparation for such a role. He was born into a family of chiefs and was of mixed parentage, with an Ottawa father (probably from a village near Detroit) and an Ojibwa mother (who is believed to have been from Saginaw). Pontiac's parentage was to prove advantageous in the impending struggle, as it meant that he was related to two of the most powerful nations in the Great Lakes area, which gave him considerable influence. During the siege of Detroit, Pontiac claimed

²⁷ Indian intelligence, Fort Pitt, January 30, 1763. At least one other belt was circulated by the Seneca in the fall and winter of 1762, as was subsequently revealed by the Twightwee to the commander of Fort Miami. "Speech of the Chiefs of the Miami" [Twightwee], March 30, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 171.

²⁸ Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, July 8, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fols. 196-99, Amherst Papers-NA.

²⁹ Indian intelligence, Journal of Indian Affairs, July 7, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 767-68. See also Gregory E. Dowd, "The French King Wakes Up in Detroit: Pontiac's War in Rumor and History," *Ethnohistory* 37 (Fall 1990): 254-78.

that the French inhabitants owed him a debt of gratitude for saving them during the second Fox War in the mid-1740s.³⁰ He was almost certainly present at the battle near the forks of the Ohio in July 1755 when a force recruited largely from the Great Lakes nations routed the British army under General Braddock.³¹ Two years later Pontiac was at Fort Duquesne where he made a speech urging its Indian defenders not to abandon their French allies.³² This supports Parkman's assertion that he was an accomplished speaker as well as an experienced warrior, both essential qualities in an Indian leader. But these visits to Fort Duquesne were important in other respects as well, for they brought Pontiac into contact with the peoples of the Ohio valley region, notably the Delaware and Shawnee, two fellow Algonquian nations. It is also likely that during his travels Pontiac met the Delaware prophet, Neolin, who had begun calling on the Indians to give up their European ways and live as they had done before the white man came. Neolin's views were gaining wider recognition by early 1763, helping to give Native Americans like Pontiac a pan-Indian ideological justification for their opposition to the British.³³

Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Pontiac voiced support for the scheme of Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta in June 1761 or the call to arms the following summer, although he was probably present on both occasions. Monsieur Jadot, a French inhabitant of Detroit, later testified: "Before Canada was taken, Pontiac and some chiefs from Detroit, suspecting a complete Conquest on the side of the English, had gone down to Fort Pitt and the other Forts on that Communication towards Pennsylvania to enquire the treatment they should have, should the English succeed." The English answered "that all the Rivers were to flow with Rum; that presents from the Great King were to be unlimited, that all Sorts of Goods were to be in the utmost Plenty, and so cheap as

³⁰ Milo Milton Quaife, ed., *The Siege of Detroit in 1763: The Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy and John Rutherford's Narrative of a Captivity* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley, 1958), 99.

³¹ Louise Phelps Kellogg, *The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1925), 425. Kellogg based her statement about Pontiac's presence at that battle on an assertion by a grandson of Charles Langlade, who had led the Great Lakes Indians against Braddock.

³² Speech of Pontague, Ottawa chief, Fort Duquesne (undated, but placed among the papers of Sir William Johnson for 1757), in *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscripts in the New York State Library*, comp. Richard E. Day (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1909), 92. The original document was destroyed by fire in 1911, along with many other components of the papers of Sir William Johnson that were in the New York State Archives.

³³ For a discussion of Neolin and his ideas, see Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 94-105; and Alfred A. Cave, "The Delaware Prophet Neolin: A Reappraisal," *Ethnohistory* 46 (Spring 1999): 265-90.

a Blanket for two Beavers." This was accompanied "with many other fair Promises." Pontiac and his companions accordingly repeated these promises "on their Return with much Joy, in consequence of which they allowed [Major] Rogers with a handful of Men to take Possession of the Fort and Colony." However, Jadot noted that this mood did not last. "About a year after, *Pontiac* in particular had been heard to Complain and say the English were *Liars*, which opinion then became general."³⁴ This suggests that Pontiac's change of heart began sometime in 1761, possibly during the visit by Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta, since the idea of a pan-Indian war complemented Neolin's message about abandoning the white man's ways. The militants were unable, however, to persuade the Detroit Wiandot to adopt their sentiments.³⁵ The same lack of support seemingly thwarted the war party in the summer of 1762, as the reply to the French war belt indicates. It was probably at this point that Pontiac visited the Menominee, seeking allies for a war against the British, to compensate for the lack of support at home.

Robert Navarre, the local French notary, whose *Journal ou Dictation d'une Conspiration* provides the best account of the war at Detroit in its early stages, asserts that Pontiac began his attempts to provoke war "under pretext of some fancied insult" from Gladwin.³⁶ Whatever the

³⁴ Declaration of Monsieur Jadeau [Jadot] to Henry Gladwin, April 5, 1764, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 13: 320-21 (emphases in original). There is another slightly later copy of this document, called the Declaration of Monsieur Jadeau, May 12, 1764, vol. 18, Thomas Gage Papers (hereafter Gage Papers), William L. Clements Library. Jadot, like Navarre, was a covert supporter of the British cause, being subsequently described by Captain James Montresor as "a faithful inhabitant below the river." J. C. Webster, ed., "Journal of John Montresor's Expedition to Detroit in 1763," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, series 3 (Ottawa: The Society, 1928), 22: 25.

³⁵ Donald Campbell to Henry Bouquet, July 7, 1761, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 5: 619.

³⁶ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 3-4. Navarre's authorship of the journal included in this work is not absolutely certain. However, the manuscript was clearly written by someone who was familiar with the participants, knowledgeable about the local situation, and relatively literate. Navarre had been in Detroit since 1729 and was acquainted with all the prominent British, French, and Indian participants in the war, including Pontiac, whom he clearly distrusted. His position as notary meant that he had the skills to compose such a document, a scarce talent in a frontier community. Equally important, as a Frenchman he was able to live outside the fort while attending to his legal duties inside, which allowed him to give covert assistance to the British garrison. Navarre was present at a meeting of the French inhabitants of Detroit on July 2, 1763, when Pontiac appealed for assistance. Declaration of Mr. Jadeau, Detroit, December 24, 1764, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 13: 317-18. Despite attending this meeting, two days later Navarre was inside Detroit, helping the

immediate provocation or long-term reasons for Pontiac's change of attitude, his chance to seize the initiative occurred in April 1763 when another war belt was received by the Detroit Ottawa, this time from the Delaware asking for help to avenge their losses at Kittanning in 1756.³⁷ Since the start of the French and Indian War in 1755, the Great Lakes and Ohio peoples had acted together on a number of occasions. Nevertheless, the council at Detroit initially resolved to put the belt "under their Feet to be considered upon, at leisure." However, the belt was accompanied by news of the death of a Delaware chief at the hands of white people.³⁸ A number of the Detroit chiefs were already more receptive to the idea of war since the rejection of Kerlérec's war belt of 1762, among them being Ninivois, the chief of the Potawatomi, Takay, a sachem of the Wiandot, and Mackatepecite, who was second only to Pontiac among the Ottawa. Their support now galvanized Pontiac into calling an emergency council for April 27, 1763, on the Ecorse River, attended by the Detroit Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Wiandot.³⁹ Here he urged "that they all knew the Meaning of the Belt" sent by the Delaware. For his own part "he was determined to help his Nephews [the Delaware] in procuring Revenge for which purpose he would attack Detroit in three days."⁴⁰

To support his call for military action, Pontiac then related the vision of Neolin, how an Indian of the Wolf or Delaware nation had

British prepare to publish the peace terms among the French and Indians. Franklin B. Hough, ed., *Diary of the Siege of Detroit in the War with Pontiac* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1860), 39. Navarre's covert support for the British was handsomely acknowledged in Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, July 8, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fols. 196-97, Amherst Papers-NA. His motive for writing the journal seems to have been to exonerate the majority of the French inhabitants from the charge of helping Pontiac, who, he feared, would attack the French after destroying the English. Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 4-5. For further analysis of the authorship and authenticity of the journal, see Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 6, 97, 281-82.

³⁷ Kittanning had been destroyed by a Pennsylvania force under Colonel John Armstrong. Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 106-7.

³⁸ Conference with the Six Nations, Serrehoana, Speaker for the "Chenussio" [Genesee], Johnson Hall, December 15, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 965-66. The murdered chief may have been Teedyuscung, who was burned to death in his cabin at Wyoming near the forks of the Susquehanna River on the night of April 19, 1763. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung, 1700-1763* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 258-60.

³⁹ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 5-6, 20.

⁴⁰ Conference with the Six Nations, Serrehoana, Speaker for the "Chenussio," December 15, 1763, 965. Navarre does not mention the belt from the Delaware in his version of the April 27, 1763, council meeting. Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 7.

visited heaven. Here the Great Spirit had beseeched his visitor to relinquish the ways of the white man, though relations with the French would still be possible. The key message was to "drive off your lands those dogs clothed in red," meaning the English. It was a powerful speech, and it consolidated Pontiac's preeminence among the Detroit chiefs. They now assured him that "he had only to speak and they were all ready to do what he demanded of them."⁴¹ This emboldened Pontiac to make it clear at a second council on May 5, 1763, that he was not just thinking of the capture of Detroit, but of a wider plan, similar to the one Tahaiaioris and Kiashuta promoted in 1761. He told his audience: "When the English are defeated [here] we shall then see what there is left to do, and we shall stop up the ways hither so that they may never come again upon our lands."⁴² It would be a war to benefit all Indians in the region.

Although the Detroit Ottawa and Potawatomi were strongly in favor of hostilities, Pontiac and his supporters still had to overcome the reluctance of the more pacific party among the Wiandot led by Chief Teata. It was for this reason that the attack on Detroit was delayed until after the second council.⁴³ However, Pontiac did not allow the Wiandots' reluctance to halt his plans for war, since he needed to inform his more distant allies of his intentions, especially if the attack on Detroit was to be followed by a wider attempt to drive the British back over the mountains. Accordingly, he dispatched emissaries with red and black wampum belts, the colors of war, to his Ojibwa relatives at Saginaw Bay, the Ojibwa on the Thames River, and the Ottawa of Michilimackinac, urging the recipients to come and join him.⁴⁴

Pontiac did not want to lose the element of surprise, so he began military operations before he received a response to his belts. The support of the Potawatomi and Wiandot meant that he now had sufficient resources to seize Detroit. Elsewhere, most of the Indian nations were familiar with the 1761 plan and their role in its execution, while the widespread anger about the alleged peace between France and

⁴¹ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 6-17. There is some debate among historians whether the dispensation concerning the French was an invention of Pontiac's or genuinely reflected Neolin's views. See Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 96-97; Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 16, 17.

⁴² Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 24.

⁴³ Teata was chief of the Wiandot Christian Indians and may have been Navarre's principal source of information concerning Pontiac's councils since he was careful to exonerate Teata and his followers from any responsibility for the war. Ibid., 6, 62-65.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24.

Britain made it likely that they would respond positively to Pontiac's signal about attacking Detroit. This assumption was justified when the Ojibwa living along the St. Clair River, learning of Pontiac's war messages to their Saginaw relatives, began hostilities by ambushing a small party of soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Charles Robertson that was surveying Lake St. Clair and the channel leading to Lake Huron.⁴⁵

This incident made it imperative for Pontiac to launch his own part of the grand design to drive out the British. His plan was to enter Detroit on May 7, 1763, under the pretense of holding a council with Gladwin, while his followers smuggled weapons inside the compound. Then at a given sign they would fall on the garrison and loot the British traders. Pontiac's scheme was, however, betrayed the night before it was to be executed. This left him no alternative but to attempt a siege, hoping that he could either frighten or starve the British into surrender, since a frontal attack would be too costly in lives and was, as mentioned earlier, contrary to the traditions of native warfare.⁴⁶ One consequence of this choice was that he would have to restrict his activities for the time being to Detroit, which would undermine his ability to act as a pan-Indian leader.

This setback explains why Pontiac decided on May 12, 1763, to send a scalp and a war belt to Kanawagus, a Seneca town high up the Allegheny River.⁴⁷ Initially, he had not intended giving the Six Nations early notice of his actions, fearing that they might compromise the operation.⁴⁸ The participation of some members of the confederacy was

⁴⁵ Details of the attack can be found in John Rutherford's journal; he was taken prisoner during this incident. Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 225-29. According to one of the French inhabitants, Monsieur Desnoyers, the Saginaw Ojibwa were also involved. *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-26. Navarre states that the plan was betrayed by "Mahiganne," one of Pontiac's own nation. There has, however, been considerable speculation as to the identity of this person. See Peckham, *Pontiac*, 122-23.

⁴⁷ Conference with the Six Nations, Serrehoana, Speaker for the "Chenussio," December 15, 1763, 964-65. Kanawagus (or Conewango) had been used before as a meeting place between the western nations and the Seneca. See William Johnson to General James Abercromby, February 17, 1758, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 9: 874.

⁴⁸ Conference with the Six Nations, Serrehoana, Speaker for the "Chenussio," December 15, 1763, 965. Pontiac knew that the eastern members of the confederacy, the Mohawk and Oneida, were likely to betray the scheme or at least hinder its implementation. For the background to the Iroquois League, see William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The*

essential, however, if the British were to be driven back across the mountains, as had been envisaged in the plan of 1761. Only the Iroquois were capable of securing control of the line of communication between Schenectady and Oswego, thus closing the principal route to the Great Lakes. Their support was also crucial to Pontiac's own survival should events not go according to plan at Detroit.

The same reasoning led Pontiac to dispatch messengers to the Delaware. He had not replied immediately to their call because there had been too many belts and rhetorical messages sent in the past two years. In any case, Pontiac had hoped to capture Detroit first and be reinforced by his more distant Ottawa and Ojibwa allies before going to the aid of the Ohio peoples. The delay in capturing Detroit meant that the Delaware and Shawnee would have to strike the line of communication to Fort Pitt on their own. Nevertheless, Pontiac's envoys were to assure the Ohioan Indians that "while the Delaware [*Shawnee, etc.*] were engaged in the affair [of Fort Pitt], they the Twightwee, Ottawa, Huron, and others would demolish Detroit and Niagara." After this "they would all Join them in a Body and March towards Philadelphia."⁴⁹ This was an even more ambitious target than the one proposed by Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta.

A key part of Pontiac's plan, like Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta's, was his expectation that the French would provide help. Although no further overtures had been made by the French in New Orleans or Fort Chartres since late 1762, rumors persisted among the Canadian inhabitants about the imminent appearance of a French army and fleet. Accordingly, ten days after the start of the siege, Pontiac dispatched emissaries to the French commander at Fort Chartres on the Mississippi, requesting assistance and the appointment of an officer to take command at Detroit.⁵⁰ Pontiac was acting perhaps in the manner of Winston Churchill in 1941, when he invited the United States to become

Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

⁴⁹ Information from Dekanandi, Seneca Chief, Johnson Hall, October 6, 1763, Journal of Indian Affairs, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 891-92 (emphasis in original). Dekanandi was a friend of Johnson's and claimed to have received his information via some Seneca warriors returning from the Cherokee country. Because the Indians kept no written records, such material, though dated after the event, has to be used to ascertain the Native Peoples' side of the story.

⁵⁰ Journal of the Siege of Detroit by Lieutenant James McDonald, May 12, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fols. 1-16, Amherst Papers-NA; Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 88-89.

the leader of the free world, seeing this as the best guarantee of success. Pontiac and his allies believed that French involvement would be the quickest way to restore the "middle ground."

The delegation's mission was not simply to seek French help, however. On the way Pontiac's emissaries would pass Forts Miami and Ouiatanon. The nations near these posts had not been included in the 1761 Seneca plan. Pontiac accordingly instructed his envoys to encourage the Wabash peoples to seize these posts. Simultaneously, he persuaded the Potawatomi war chief Ninivois to visit his relatives at St. Joseph, where the British had another small garrison. All three operations proved successful and involved minimal Indian bloodshed, since they were accomplished by stratagem, as Pontiac had wanted to do at Detroit. First Ninivois and his fellow chiefs entered St. Joseph on May 25, 1763, ostensibly for a council. They seized the British officer and massacred the unsuspecting garrison.⁵¹ Two days later, Pontiac's Fort Chartres emissaries induced the Twightwee to capture Fort Miami by luring its commander to visit a sick relative of his Indian girlfriend. The tiny garrison then surrendered.⁵² Then the emissaries proceeded to Ouiatanon, where they persuaded the Kickapoo, Piankashaw, and Wea to lure the commanding officer and several of his men outside the fort. They were then taken prisoner without any loss of Indian lives.⁵³

Other successes soon followed from Pontiac's direction. Shortly after the start of hostilities at Detroit, he had dispatched several Ottawa to the Wiandot of Sandusky, urging them to seize the post there that Amherst had established in the summer of 1761. This mission too was achieved by stratagem. Pontiac's envoys and the Sandusky Wiandot requested a conference inside the fort with its commanding officer, Lieutenant Christopher Pauli. Shortly after the gates were opened, the unsuspecting garrison was cut down, together with a number of traders, leaving the attackers a rich haul of weapons and ammunition.⁵⁴

Finally, Pontiac's search for a decisive early victory led him to attempt to deal with the problem of British naval superiority on Lake Erie. The British had two vessels, a schooner, the *Huron*, and a sloop,

⁵¹ Court of Enquiry, Testimony of Ensign Francis Schlosser, Detroit, July 6, 1763, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 731. Fort St. Joseph was taken on May 25, 1763.

⁵² Court of Enquiry, Testimony of Private James Burns, Detroit, July 6, 1763, in *ibid.*, 731-32.

⁵³ Lieutenant Edward Jenkins to Henry Gladwin, June 1, 1763, in *ibid.*, 690-91.

⁵⁴ Court of Enquiry, Testimony of Lieutenant Christopher Pauli, Detroit, July 6, 1763, in *ibid.*, 730.

the *Michigan*, both armed with cannon. While these vessels could sail between Niagara and Detroit, they could carry supplies and reinforcements unimpeded, thus preventing Pontiac from engaging in the wider struggle he envisioned. Accordingly, a few days after the capture of Sandusky, Pontiac sent some canoes to the mouth of the Detroit River to attack the *Michigan*, which was momentarily anchored there to warn approaching Euro-Americans about the outbreak of hostilities. That attempt was unsuccessful, but Pontiac's warriors received word of the approach of a British reinforcement from Niagara under Lieutenant Cornelis Cuyler.⁵⁵ News of the hostilities had yet to reach the eastern end of Lake Erie, and consequently Cuyler's company of rangers was cut to pieces on the evening of May 28, 1763, while pitching camp on the lakeshore. Sixty out of one hundred men were killed or captured in a sudden assault by the Wiandot and Potawatomi of Detroit.⁵⁶ A number of the prisoners were brought back to Detroit. Here they were paraded in front of the garrison before being taken to Pontiac's camp where several were ritually tortured and killed.⁵⁷ Apart from allowing the captives to demonstrate their courage, it was calculated such treatment would terrify the defenders into taking flight in their vessels and thus bring the siege to a speedier end. Pontiac would then have more freedom of action in prosecuting the war.

The crowning success of Pontiac's attempt to coordinate an offensive against the British in the Great Lakes area was the capture of Fort Michilimackinac on June 2, 1763. Pontiac's belt calling for action at the fort was delivered in late May to the nearby Ojibwa village. Originally the belt was to have been presented to the Ottawa at L'Arbre Croche. The Ojibwa, however, did not tell the Ottawa about Pontiac's plan, possibly because they wanted a monopoly of the spoils. Nevertheless, under their war chief Menchwehna, they easily attained their objective, seizing the fort by stratagem during a game of lacrosse.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 104-5.

⁵⁶ Report of Lieutenant Cornelis Cuyler, Niagara, June 6, 1763, class 5, vol. 63, fols. 81-82, Colonial Office Papers (hereafter Colonial Office Papers), National Archives, London; James McDonald to George Croghan, July 12, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 742-43.

⁵⁷ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 112-15; McDonald to Croghan, July 12, 1763.

⁵⁸ Captain George Ethrington to Henry Gladwin, June 12, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 207, Amherst Papers-NA. See also the account of Alexander Henry, a trader, who was present at the attack. Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760 and 1776* (1809; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 77-86. There is some dispute as to who led the attack. Henry indicates that

In sending his war belts, Pontiac had not simply asked the Great Lakes nations to attack the British garrisons in their midst. He had also invited them to come to his assistance at Detroit. Such reinforcements were even more important now, if Pontiac hoped to maintain the siege while supporting the war elsewhere. The first to respond to Pontiac's call was Chief Sekahos of the Thames River Ojibwa, who arrived at Detroit on May 21 with 120 warriors.⁵⁹ Then on May 31, 1763, Wasson, chief of the Ojibwa from Saginaw Bay, appeared with 200 men. As a result, by June 9, 1763, Pontiac had some 850 warriors, including 250 Ottawa under his own command; 150 Potawatomi under Ninivois, who had returned from St. Joseph; 50 Detroit Wiandot under Takay; 250 Ojibwa under Wasson; and 170 Ojibwa under Sekahos. Although led by different chiefs, Navarre asserts that all of the warriors "were under the authority of Pontiac, their over-chief."⁶⁰ He at least had no doubt that Pontiac was exercising an exceptional authority.

These additional forces allowed Pontiac to widen his military efforts, which, as earlier noted, he had always planned to do since the outbreak of hostilities. Accordingly, the day after Wasson arrived, Pontiac sent a substantial force of three hundred Ottawa, Ojibwa, Wiandot, and Potawatomi to "prowl around the Lake and capture the English they should find there."⁶¹ Because Sandusky had already fallen, the one remaining English fort on Lake Erie was Presque Isle, and it was to this objective that the force was directed.

As it turned out, Pontiac's task force arrived at Presque Isle about the same time as one from the Seneca. As mentioned earlier, Pontiac had sent a belt to the Seneca a few days after his attempt to surprise the garrison at Detroit. It reached the confederacy at the same time as a belt from the Delaware, which also asked for help against the British.⁶² Pontiac's message accompanying his belt can only be surmised, but it probably called for an attack on the

it was Menchwehna, the "great war chief," who spared his life. *Travels*, 99-103. Later folklore ascribes it to Matchekewis. See Lyman Copeland Draper, "Note on Matchekewis, Captor of Mackinaw," *Report and Collections*, 7: 188-94.

⁵⁹ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 23-24, 91. In his account, Navarre refers to the Thames River as the "Grand River," its former name before the conquest of Canada. *Ibid.*, 61, n. 36.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 121, 129.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Lieutenant Jehu Hay suggests that the flotilla left about June 9 rather than June 1, 1763. Hough, ed., *Diary of the Siege of Detroit*, 36.

⁶² Jean Baptiste de Couagne to William Johnson, June 6, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 4: 137-38. De Couagne was the interpreter for the Seneca at Niagara.

communication between Niagara and Schenectady in accordance with the 1761 plan. Its timing proved propitious. The Seneca were currently locked in a bitter dispute with William Johnson about the surrender of two members of their nation accused of killing a trader and his servant. Johnson and Amherst were insisting that the two warriors be tried according to English law. The Seneca argued that the matter should be resolved in the traditional manner by some form of compensation under the Covenant Chain of friendship, which the province of New York and the Iroquois confederacy had agreed upon during the previous century.⁶³ With the arrival of the two war belts, the Seneca, except for two villages, decided to join the conflict and execute their part of the 1761 plan. They told the other members of the Iroquois confederacy in a council at Onondaga that "they had given a lease to their warriors, and desired they would do the same." But despite an accompanying appeal by the Seneca women, the rest of the confederacy still demurred. The Seneca leaders then declared that the others "might follow their plan of Peace, but that they were resolved to follow the resolution they had taken, which was to carry on the War against the English."⁶⁴ They made no mention of Pontiac and clearly intended to act as independent agents rather than as followers of the Ottawa chief.

Because the rest of the Iroquois confederacy refused to participate, the Seneca had to abandon the idea of attacking the communication between Oswego and Fort Stanwix. Instead they would assist the Mingo to seize the forts on the communication between Presque Isle and Fort Pitt. Their warriors accordingly set off toward the Ohio to see if the widely anticipated French army had appeared from New Orleans. Their route took them to the post of Venango on the Allegheny River, where they were joined by Kiashuta and his Mingo warriors.⁶⁵ Here, as at the other small posts, the warriors were able to trick their way into the fort by posing as friends. After killing the garrison, they compelled the commanding officer to write a memorandum listing their complaints

⁶³ Indian conference, Johnson Hall, May 20-28, 1763, in *ibid.*, 10: 674-84; William Johnson to Jeffery Amherst, June 6, 1763, in *Documents*, ed. O'Callaghan, 7: 522-24.

⁶⁴ Journal of Indian Affairs, Johnson Hall, July 11, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 769-70. Johnson received this information from a Mohawk chief, who attended the meeting at Onondaga on his behalf.

⁶⁵ Speech of Gawehe, Johnson Hall, July 9, 1763, in *ibid.*, 768-69. It is not certain that Kiashuta was present during this campaign, though it would be surprising if he had not been there, given his later role as leader of the Mingo during the 1764 peace negotiations. See Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 146-47, 237-40.

against the British. The officer was then killed and the document taken by the Mingo to Fort Pitt in the hope that the news of Venango's fate would terrify the garrison into quitting its post.⁶⁶

After this the Seneca turned to attack Fort Le Boeuf, which guarded the portage at the head of French Creek. The commander there was aware of the outbreak of hostilities and refused them entry.⁶⁷ However, the post was poorly sited and the attackers were able to break through the stockade at the rear, forcing the defenders to flee in the night for Fort Pitt. The Seneca did not pursue them. Instead they turned northwards to a more important objective, Presque Isle.⁶⁸

It seems that at this point Seneca met Pontiac's task force from Detroit. However, the union of the two forces on this occasion was coincidental rather than planned. The assault itself began on June 20 with a hail of fire arrows. The next day Lieutenant John Christie, the fort's commander, suggested talks to find out more about his opponents with a view to launching a counterattack. Negotiations revealed that the enemy attacking the fort consisted principally of the Wiandot and Ottawa from Detroit, although one of the garrison who escaped to Fort Pitt asserted that the attack had been carried out by "the Ottawa, Chippewa [Ojibwa], Wiandot, and Seneca," indicating that there had indeed been a union of forces.⁶⁹ Faced by such a formidable array and with no hope of relief, Christie decided to surrender on the promise of good treatment. Members of the garrison were then made prisoners and divided among the captors, after which the two armies separated. Pontiac's task force returned to Detroit to

⁶⁶ Journal of Indian Affairs, Johnson Hall, July 9-11, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 768-69. Johnson heard two versions of the capture of Venango. Two Onondaga, who visited the Genesee settlements on behalf of the Six Nations confederacy "to learn the truth of the several bad reports," asserted that the fort had actually been taken "by a party of Chenussio [Mingo] who live near said place." However, the Oneida chief Gawehe stated that the attackers were "a party of Chenussio" who traveled down the river to Venango by canoe. Both accounts agree that the fort fell to warriors posing as friends.

⁶⁷ Ensign George Price to Henry Bouquet, June 26, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 266-67.

⁶⁸ William Trent, "William Trent's Journal at Fort Pitt, 1763," ed. A. T. Volwiler, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11 (December 1924): 401-2. Trent got his information about Le Boeuf from its commander, Ensign George Price, when he arrived at Fort Pitt early in the morning on June 26, 1763.

⁶⁹ Trent, "William Trent's Journal," 402.

celebrate the victory.⁷⁰ The Seneca meanwhile set off for Irondequoit at the mouth of the Genesee River. Here they would be able intercept British convoys passing down Lake Ontario, which was part of the plan to sever the communication between Oswego and Detroit.⁷¹

Despite these successes, closer to Detroit things were not so rosy, as support for the attempt to expel the British was not unanimous even among the Algonquian peoples. Although the northern Ojibwa had succeeded in capturing Michilimackinac, they discovered that most of their neighbors refused to join them.⁷² As a result the Michilimackinac Ojibwa began to regret what they had done. This was demonstrated when Kinonchamek, the "son of the great chief of the nation," arrived at Detroit on June 18, 1763, in answer to Pontiac's original message and entreaties.⁷³ Instead of appearing with a large group of reinforcements, Kinonchamek came with only a small delegation. Worse, he publicly criticized Pontiac for his conduct of the war, suggesting that the Ottawa leader had mistreated his captives, abused the French inhabitants, and failed to give sufficient thought as to how his people would be fed during the winter. The extent of the dissatisfaction with Pontiac was reflected on June 19 when some visiting Delaware and Shawnee decided to go to Kinonchamek's camp rather than Pontiac's.⁷⁴ Clearly Pontiac's leadership was under scrutiny.

⁷⁰ Court of Enquiry, July 9, 1763, Detroit, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 212, Amherst Papers-NA; John Christie to Henry Bouquet, July 10, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 301-3; Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 149-50.

⁷¹ This redeployment by the Seneca is based on information given to Johnson by one of the Six Nations. Jeffery Amherst to Major Duncan, July 16, 1763, class list 34, vol. 20, fols. 145-46, Amherst Papers-NA.

⁷² Henry, *Travels*, 107-8.

⁷³ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 140-41. It is not clear who Kinonchamek's father was. Alexander Henry, who arrived in the area in 1761 and was present at the attack on Michilimackinac, identified three separate chiefs in his narrative, a fact often overlooked by historians. The first was "Minavavana," whom Henry first met in 1761 and described as the "chief" of "the whole band of Chipeways, from the island of Michilimackinac." The second was "Menchwehna," whom he initially believed was their "great war-chief," though he subsequently corrected this to "the Great Chief of the village of Michilimackinac." However, while still confined in the fort, Henry was told of the arrival of a third leader, a "certain chief, called by the Canadians, Le Grand Sable," who had been absent on the winter hunt when the attack commenced. Henry clearly misheard what was a reference to "Le Grand Saulteur," who was called this name by the Canadians because he and his followers came from the region beyond Sault Ste. Marie, i.e., Grand Island off the southern shore of Lake Superior. Of the three chiefs, Menchwehna was most likely the father of Kinonchamek from the circumstantial evidence in Henry's account. *Travels*, 40-41, 99, 114, 104.

⁷⁴ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 142-46.

Fortunately the Ohio messengers brought better news about the reception of Pontiac's envoys, whom he had sent to the Delaware in response to their appeal for help. One emissary had traveled to the village of Tuscarawas, reaching it on May 27 with the news that Detroit was taken (which was a deliberate lie, though perhaps based on the envoy's confidence that the fort would have been captured by the time he reached Tuscarawas) and Sandusky burnt and that it was time to act.⁷⁵ However, most of the envoys had gone to a "village of Delawares at the River Adjuketa," some distance below Tuscarawas. Here, according to an eyewitness, "the Ottawa Confederacy" had delivered "the War Hatchet to the Delawares," and desired that they would "make use of it against the English, who were taking their Country from them." In accordance with the 1761 plan, Pontiac's envoys "pointed out Fort Pitt and Fort Augusta as the greatest eye sore to all the Indians in them [sic] parts."⁷⁶ The Delaware had accordingly begun hostilities on May 28, 1763, by ambushing some traders near Tuscarawas. This was followed on June 2 by an assault on Fort Ligonier, which guarded the line of communication to Fort Pitt. Fort Pitt itself was attacked with small arms fire on June 22, 1763, though without effect.⁷⁷

News of the widening hostilities may have been the reason why the Ojibwa of Sault Ste. Marie and Lake Superior (known collectively as the "Saulteurs") now came to Pontiac's assistance, despite Kinonchamek's criticisms. Rumors that a French invasion force was on its way were still prevalent, sustaining the Indians' hope of restoring the old "middle ground." Another factor may have been the desire of the Saulteurs for further spoils, since most of them, including their chief, had been returning from the winter hunt when Michilimackinac was seized.⁷⁸ The lack of trade meant that war was the only way of securing scarce European goods. Accordingly at the start of August about two hundred Ojibwa warriors arrived at Detroit under their chief, the Grand Saulteur. A similar number of reinforcements from the Potawatomi of St. Joseph were also reported to be on the way.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Trent, "William Trent's Journal," 394. The arrival of this envoy was confirmed by four Shawnee to Thomas McKee, one of Croghan's deputies. *Ibid.*, 399.

⁷⁶ Information from Dekanandi, Seneca chief.

⁷⁷ Lieutenant Archibald Blane to Henry Bouquet, June 4, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 206-7; Simeon Ecuyer to Henry Bouquet, June 26, 1763, in *ibid.*, 258-60.

⁷⁸ Henry, *Travels*, 103-4.

⁷⁹ Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, August 11, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 243, Amherst Papers-NA. Gladwin does not actually identify the "Grand Saulteur" as leading the new arrivals. However, sources in September confirmed that the "Grand

The arrival of the northern Ojibwa proved opportune because Pontiac and his allies had just inflicted a serious check on the British at Detroit, when a force commanded by Captain James Dalyell attempted a surprise night attack on the Ottawa camp. Under Pontiac's skillful direction the British had been ambushed and driven back, suffering eighteen dead and thirty-eight wounded. Dalyell was among the dead. As a result, Gladwin informed Amherst: "In a few days I shall be invested by upwards of a thousand" warriors. He could only "hope your Excellency has ordered a respectable body of troops this way, as it may prevent many other nations entering into this war, who are now only waiting to see what turn affairs take."⁸⁰ The minimum number of reinforcements Gladwin needed was one thousand to fifteen hundred men.

These events encouraged Pontiac to continue the siege of Detroit, even though it restricted him to one theater of the war. However, Detroit not only was the largest settlement in the Great Lakes area but also had at that time the largest British garrison. In addition, it was the former center of the French presence in the Great Lakes, and its capture would be a severe blow to the British throughout eastern North America. In many respects Pontiac's situation was similar to that of George Washington during the War of Independence. Distance and poor communications necessarily confined him to one theater of operations, watching the principal British army. Pontiac, like Washington, could only send messages of support and occasional reinforcements elsewhere.

Since Pontiac was still opposed to a frontal attack at Detroit, he continued the blockade while simultaneously placing his army in position to fend off any further counterattacks. In this he was highly successful. As Gladwin subsequently told Amherst, Pontiac had divided his forces into "three distinct bodies" after the action of July 31. They were "so situated that I did not think it prudent to attempt anything against them, for fear of a second defeat."⁸¹ Here was eloquent testimony to Pontiac's grasp of tactics. At the same time he maintained a

Saulteur" was the principal Ojibwa chief then at Detroit, and the only place such a large reinforcement was likely to have come from was Michilimackinac and the Ojibwa villages around Lake Superior. Pontiac himself had warned Gladwin as early as June 27 that he was expecting nine hundred warriors from Michilimackinac and that the British commander should surrender before it was too late. Hough, ed., *Diary of the Siege of Detroit*, 35.

⁸⁰ Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, August 11, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 243, Amherst Papers-NA.

⁸¹ Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, October 7, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fols. 253-54, in *ibid.*

strategic interest in events elsewhere, especially those concerning his "nephews" the Delaware, whom he had promised to help. Early in July several Ottawa from Detroit appeared at Fort Pitt, ostensibly on a peace errand. In reality they were there to solicit information about the fort's defenses, which became clear when they tried to capture two British soldiers. The probability is that Pontiac was hoping to attack Fort Pitt himself after completing the siege of Detroit, for as late as July 26 the Delaware were assuring the defenders of Fort Pitt that the Ottawa and Ojibwa were on their way to attack them.⁸²

When the promised reinforcements arrived a few days later, they proved to be the Wiandot from Sandusky rather than Pontiac's Ottawa and Ojibwa. After the capture of Sandusky, the Wiandot there had been inactive, not being required for the siege of Detroit. Sandusky was on the trail to Fort Pitt, however, and its inhabitants had close ties to the Ohio peoples.⁸³ It made sense for them, rather than Pontiac, to provide reinforcements. Their appearance at the end of July 1763 was certainly crucial, since many of the Delaware and Shawnee were ready to abandon the war in the face of an advancing British army under Colonel Henry Bouquet. The Wiandot, however, were not so fainthearted, declaring at a council on August 2, 1763, that "they would carry on the war against [the British] while there was a man of them living."⁸⁴ Morale was thus restored among the Ohio nations, as was seen three days later at the Battle of Bushy Run when the Delaware, Shawnee, Wiandot, and Mingo attacked Bouquet's relief column for almost two days. Although the Delaware and their allies finally fled the field, they had much the better of the battle overall.⁸⁵ Pontiac's allies had come tantalizingly close to repeating the triumph of 1755 when the Great Lakes Indians had routed Braddock's army. As a result of his losses, Bouquet was unable to carry out Amherst's orders to send the bulk of his forces to assist Gladwin at Detroit once Fort Pitt had been relieved.⁸⁶

The success of the Great Lakes and Ohio Indians finally seems to have convinced the Seneca of the need to do something in the vicinity of Niagara. They may also have become jealous and feared that Pontiac

⁸² Trent, "William Trent's Journal," 403-4, 407.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ For a discussion of the Indian casualty figures, see Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 310.

⁸⁶ Jeffery Amherst to Henry Bouquet, July 2, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 283-84; Henry Bouquet to Jeffery Amherst, August 26, 1763, class list 34, vol. 40, fol. 330, Amherst Papers-NA.

would undertake the task himself. In early September the Wiandot messenger, Andrew, learned from his Sandusky compatriots that "800 Western Indians in eighty canoes" were heading "towards Niagara to take post at the Carrying Place to cut off all communication with Detroit." Andrew added that a detachment of 150 "Ottawa and Chippewa who were at Presqu'Isle were not yet come back," a reference to a new task force that Pontiac had formed on Lake Erie.⁸⁷ Another 15 of Pontiac's men were simultaneously scouring the other side of the lake in the direction of Niagara looking for suitable targets.⁸⁸ Small groups of Ottawa were also reported to be patrolling the area around Fort Pitt.⁸⁹ Clearly these were not the actions of a commander concerned only for his own theater of operations.

Pontiac still needed to capture Detroit before he could send major reinforcements to the east, and this depended on his ability to destroy the two armed vessels of the British, which continued to supply the beleaguered garrison. Early in September 1763 news arrived that the schooner *Huron* was about to enter the Detroit River.⁹⁰ Pontiac immediately ordered 350 warriors in 30 canoes to attack under cover of darkness. This was three times the number of warriors that had been deployed in May. The vessel was on the point of being captured when an overzealous warrior cut the anchor cable. The current spun the vessel around, simultaneously scattering the canoes and exposing them to cannon fire. As Detroit merchant James Sterling reported, the attack, which lasted more than one hour, was fought with great courage on both sides.⁹¹ The result, nevertheless, was a grave setback for Pontiac's forces, which lost 18 dead and some 20 wounded. It was also a serious blow to his prestige and plans for a wider war.⁹² Even so, Gladwin confessed to Amherst: "The enemy are still masters of the country, and are likely to be so, if your Excellency does not send a body of men to

⁸⁷ Henry Bouquet to Jeffery Amherst, September 7, 1763, class list 34, vol. 40, fol. 343, Amherst Papers-NA.

⁸⁸ Court of Enquiry, Fort Pitt, September 1, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 386.

⁸⁹ Trent, "William Trent's Journal," 411.

⁹⁰ Hough, ed., *Diary of the Siege of Detroit*, 67.

⁹¹ "Relation of the Gallant Defence made by the Crew of the Schooner on Lake Erie," September 1763, class 5, vol. 63, fol. 388, Colonial Office Papers; James Sterling to John Rutherford's uncle, Walter Rutherford, and Mr. Livingston, September 8, 1763, Sterling Letter Book, Clements Library.

⁹² Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, September 9, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 246, Amherst Papers-NA; John Stoughton to William Johnson, September 16, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 814.

disperse them." Indian confidence was sustained by reports that the British had insufficient troops at Niagara to mount a relief operation, though Gladwin found such information hard to accept.⁹³

Had Pontiac's attack on the schooner succeeded, the garrison at Detroit would have been in great jeopardy since it occurred at the same time that the British lost their other vessel, the *Michigan*. The sloop had gone aground early in September at Catfish Creek while carrying troops to Detroit. The site of the wreck was a mere seventy miles from Presque Isle, where Pontiac's Ottawa and Ojibwa warriors were waiting for just such an opportunity. Pontiac's men had been there since August 18, endeavoring to recover two swivel guns for use against Detroit as well as waiting to waylay the British.⁹⁴ It was not long before Pontiac's forces got news of their enemy's predicament, as did the Seneca. Unfortunately for the allied Indians, by the time they were ready to attack on the morning of September 3, reinforcements had arrived from Niagara to strengthen the defenders. The Indians nevertheless advanced in two large bodies, one on each flank. During a two-hour battle the British losses were three men, the Indian casualties unknown.⁹⁵ The Mohawk messenger, Daniel Ougmour, identified the attackers as Seneca. However, he only spoke at a distance with one of the enemy detachments.⁹⁶ The Ottawa and Ojibwa from Presque Isle almost certainly comprised the other wing of the Indian attack.

Though Pontiac had not actually captured either of the British vessels, his siege of Detroit was sufficiently effective that by September Gladwin had only two weeks of provisions left and was considering

⁹³ Gladwin to Amherst, September 9, 1763. Gladwin correctly doubted the report about the absence of troops because a new task force of seven hundred men was being gathered at Niagara under Major John Wilkins. "Return of the troops at Detroit, Presque Isle, and Niagara," September 9, 1763, vol. 2, Amherst Papers, William L. Clements Library (hereafter Amherst Papers-WLC).

⁹⁴ Court of Enquiry, Fort Pitt, September 1, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 386; Henry Bouquet to Major Allan Campbell, September 7, 1763, 21653, fol. 214, additional manuscripts (hereafter Add. Mss./BL), British Library, London. A swivel gun was a miniature cannon mounted on a revolving base that could fire grapeshot.

⁹⁵ Webster, ed., "Journal of John Montresor's Expedition," 14-18; John Wilkins to Jeffery Amherst, September 10, 1763, class list 34, vol. 22, fol. 170, Amherst Papers-NA; Gavin Cochrane to Henry Bouquet, November 22, 1763, 21649, fol. 480, Add. Mss./BL.

⁹⁶ Colin Andrews to William Johnson, September 9, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 812. Montresor later asserted that the attackers were "Wiandot." James Montresor to Captain Thomas Basset, November 2, 1763, 21649, fol. 434, Add. Mss./BL.

evacuating the post.⁹⁷ But Pontiac's situation was also problematic. The siege seemed to be going nowhere, morale was weakening, and desertions were beginning to occur. As Lieutenant Jehu Hay recorded on September 18, 1763, the "Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Wiandot were to go off" the next day. Surprisingly, Pontiac was among those preparing to join the exodus. His exact reasons cannot now be ascertained, but it is most likely that he saw withdrawal as a temporary suspension of hostilities while the warriors went hunting. But not everyone was prepared to accept such reasoning, for Hay also learned that many of the Ottawa were angry with Pontiac "for proposing to go" at this time. They had in consequence chosen "Manitoo for their chief in his Place"⁹⁸ As Monsieur La Ville, one of the French inhabitants, subsequently confirmed, "the Indians began to tire and Pontiac would actually have gone off, but he had been spirited up again and made to stay by the Grand Saulteur."⁹⁹ The northern Ojibwa had only recently joined the siege and remained eager for the fray.

Clearly Pontiac's authority as a war leader was on the wane once again. Nevertheless, at the start of October he still had 180 warriors on the south shore of the Detroit River to prevent the inhabitants from sending provisions into the fort. In support was the Grand Saulteur with 300 Potawatomi, Ojibwa, and Wiandot warriors, guarding the approaches from the other side. It was the latter forces that attempted on October 2, 1763, to capture some row galleys that Gladwin had sent on reconnaissance up the Detroit River. Gladwin had taken the precaution of putting swivel guns on board as well as thick protective planking, and when the Grand Saulteur's forces approached in their fragile birch-bark canoes, they received a bloody repulse.¹⁰⁰

Despite this setback, the besiegers fired on the schooner the next day as it sailed up the Detroit River and directed some shots at the fort that night.¹⁰¹ Indeed, neither the possibility of starving the British out of

⁹⁷ Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, November 1, 1763, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 446.

⁹⁸ Hough, ed., *Diary of the Siege of Detroit*, 70-71. "Manitoo" was the word commonly used by Indians for the deity or spirit. It is likely that the author of the diary misspelled the name of the new leader.

⁹⁹ Deposition of Monsieur La Ville, Montréal, November 14, 1763, vol. 9, Gage Papers. La Ville's passport showed that he left Detroit on October 4, 1763, two days after the attack on the row galleys.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.; Henry Gladwin to Jeffery Amherst, October 7, 1763, class list 34, vol. 49, fol. 253, Amherst Papers-NA. The Indian casualties were estimated to have been between twenty and thirty.

¹⁰¹ Webster, ed., "Journal of John Montresor's Expedition," 21-22.

Detroit nor the idea of offensive action had been abandoned. As late as October 7, 1763, Robert Rogers, the ranger officer, reported that the Indians around Detroit knew that British reinforcements were approaching from Niagara under Major John Wilkins and that "all the savages here are determined to attack them at Point Pelee." This was the place where Lieutenant Cuyler had been ambushed.¹⁰² Pontiac and his allies were also boosted by the arrival on October 8, 1763, of sixty Twightwee warriors, indicating that the Wabash peoples were still supporting the Indian cause.¹⁰³ Elsewhere the Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo remained in arms, while news had filtered through of a successful attack by the Seneca against the Niagara portage. A convoy had been ambushed and two companies of British troops destroyed.¹⁰⁴ Pontiac had not given up hope of French assistance either, for it was at this time that he persuaded the Shawnee Chief, Charlot Kaské, to carry another message to the French commander at Fort Chartres.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately for them, Pontiac and his allies failed to appreciate just how close they were to forcing the British to depart. What concerned the Indians now was the approach of winter. It was time to go to their hunting grounds so that they could feed their families, many of whom were on the verge of starvation. The failure of the attack on Gladwin's gunboats seems to have been the last straw for the alliance Pontiac had assembled. Among those "anxious for peace were the Detroit Wiandot," although they still feared the consequences of incurring Pontiac's wrath if they made overtures to Gladwin. Morale was also undermined by "an epidemical disorder."¹⁰⁶ And there had been disappointments elsewhere that threatened Pontiac's hope for a world without redcoats. Since the battle of Bushy Run, the Delaware and Shawnee had limited themselves to attacks on the Pennsylvania and

¹⁰² Robert Rogers to William Johnson, October 7, 1763, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 10: 871-72. Rogers obtained this information from Aaron, a Mohawk messenger.

¹⁰³ Webster, ed., "Journal of John Montresor's Expedition," 22.

¹⁰⁴ John Wilkins to Jeffery Amherst, September 17, 1763, class list 34, vol. 22, fols. 181-82; Return of Killed, Wounded, and Missing in Action at the Carrying Place, Niagara, September 14, 1763, class list 34, vol. 22, fol. 178, both in Amherst Papers-NA.

¹⁰⁵ Captain Neyon de Villiers to Governor Jean Jacques d'Abbadie, December 1, 1763, in *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, vol. 10, *The Critical Period, 1763-1765*, ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord and Clarence Edwin Carter (Springfield: The Library, 1915): 52-53. De Villiers was the senior French officer in Illinois.

¹⁰⁶ Webster, ed., "Journal of John Montresor's Expedition," 22.

Virginia backcountry.¹⁰⁷ The Seneca too, despite their success on the Niagara portage, had not dislodged the British from the communication between Niagara, Oswego, and Albany: the enemy could still send reinforcements to the Great Lakes.¹⁰⁸ The final blow to Pontiac's plans, at least for 1763, was the arrival late that October of Monsieur Dequindre, a French officer from Fort Chartres, with the news that the peace between Britain and France was official and that the French King wanted his Indian children to cease hostilities. This admonition was addressed in particular to Pontiac.¹⁰⁹ There would be no support from Onontio this year, as Pontiac and his allies had expected.

Although the campaign had ended disappointingly, it was neither the end of Pontiac nor his vision of a world free of British redcoats and settlers. The Shawnee and western Delaware were still in arms, and a substantial number of Ottawa had stayed loyal to him. Moreover, the Wabash and Illinois nations were ready to fight in the New Year, for the belief was still widespread that the French king would wake up and come to the aid of his Indian children. This did not happen. Instead, it was the British who came to the Great Lakes and Ohio valley in the summer and fall of 1764, with two armies under Bouquet and Colonel John Bradstreet. Their aim was to talk rather than to fight, however. The armies had been assembled with great difficulty because of a lack of support from the colonies. Thus the campaign began with an invitation to all the native combatants to meet Johnson for a peace conference at Niagara. This invitation included Pontiac, who by this time had gathered an army of six hundred Ottawa, Twightwee, Kickapoo, Piankashaw, and Wea at the falls on the Maumee River, ready to strike the British at Detroit or Sandusky if the opportunity arose.¹¹⁰

British policy toward Pontiac and his allies had undergone a profound change since the departure of Amherst for England in November 1763. His successor, General Gage, was readier to acknowledge the validity of the Indian complaints. He was also more disposed to recognize their military abilities and the quality of their leadership. He told Johnson at the beginning of July 1764: "This fellow [Pontiac] should be gained to our Interest or knocked on the head. He

¹⁰⁷ For information on frontier warfare, see Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*, 219-54.

¹⁰⁸ Jeffery Amherst to John Wilkins, October 1, 1763, class list 34, vol. 23, fol. 148, Amherst Papers-NA.

¹⁰⁹ Neyon de Villiers to Cadet Dequindre, September 27, 1763, vol. 7, Amherst Papers-WLC.

¹¹⁰ William Johnson to Thomas Gage, August 5, 1764, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 11: 324-26.

has great Abilities, but his Savage Cruelty destroys the regard we should otherwise have for him. I hope you will see him at Niagara."¹¹¹ One reason why Gage favored an accommodation with Pontiac was his realization that the Ottawa chief might hold the key to British possession of the Illinois country. As he wrote to Bouquet at the end of December 1764: "From the Accounts we have hitherto had from the Illinois, it seems that Pontiac with the Shawnee and Delaware, could put us in Possession of that country, whenever they pleased."¹¹² Gage was curiously oblivious to the irony of pleading for help from the very people he was simultaneously attempting to subdue. Nevertheless, he was right to think of a peaceful accommodation, for in the spring of 1765 Pontiac was able to assemble once more a force of several hundred Illinois, Ottawa, and Ojibwa warriors at Fort Chartres to resist the British if necessary.¹¹³

Hence, the British belief in Pontiac's importance was not misplaced. During 1763 he had activated a remarkable coalition of Indian nations, loosely coordinated but prepared to fight, for the restoration of a world free of English redcoats and settlers. Of course this did not make Pontiac a military leader in the European sense, and historians rightly emphasized that he only exercised direct control over the Detroit Ottawa. For example, the Seneca fought on their own terms and even the Detroit Potawatomi and Wiandot broke ranks on occasion, as in July 1763 when they attempted to make peace.¹¹⁴ In such circumstances Pontiac could only cajole or threaten his allies, using his eloquence, force of personality, and readiness to take the initiative. Nevertheless, Pontiac did bring an element of coordination to the Native-American war effort by his use of war belts and frequent councils, as well as his readiness to send forces to other areas where there was conflict. Historians have tended to overlook these organizational achievements, which helps to explain why Pontiac's significance has perhaps been understated. Certainly George Croghan, Johnson's deputy, had no doubts about Pontiac's importance after he presided over a peace conference at Detroit that brought the war to a close in the summer of 1765. Croghan told Johnson: "Pontiac . . . commands more respect

¹¹¹ Thomas Gage to William Johnson, July 2, 1764, in *ibid.*, 249-50.

¹¹² Thomas Gage to Henry Bouquet, December 20, 1764, in *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. Waddell, Tottenham, and Kent, 6: 733-34.

¹¹³ For the conflict in Illinois, see Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 213-33.

¹¹⁴ Quaife, ed., *Siege of Detroit*, 178.

amongst those nations, than any Indian I ever saw could do amongst his own tribe."¹¹⁵

Pontiac was aided by a number of factors, of course. One was the widespread affection the northern Algonquian nations had for the French and their dislike of the British, which helped create a common purpose. Another was the philosophy of Neolin, which gave added justification and spirituality to the Native-American struggle for freedom. In addition, Pontiac was helped by the preparatory work of the Seneca. It was Tahaiadoris and Kiashuta's plan that alerted Pontiac to the possibility of military action and the need for each nation to have a clear role. But it still required someone with vision, courage, and persistence, both to strike the first blow and to recognize the need for coordination thereafter. In this sense Pontiac proved himself, however modestly, a pan-Indian leader.

Pontiac's achievements were remarkable in that they were contrary to the traditions of Indian leadership and tribal structure. In a society so fragmented by clans and local loyalties, it was difficult for anyone to exercise influence over a wide area for any length of time. Pontiac at least partially surmounted these difficulties, as had King Philip in the seventeenth century and Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, after 1800. The result was arguably the most successful military conflict that the Native Peoples undertook against the English prior to the American Revolution. They captured almost all of the smaller forts and inflicted several defeats on the British in the field. They suffered no major losses of population, nor did they have to make large land concessions. Their leaders were neither executed nor exiled. Eventually it was the British who came to the Indians seeking peace, and this was in large part due to Pontiac. It was no mean achievement.

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¹¹⁵ George Croghan to William Johnson, October 1765, class 5, vol. 66, fols. 109-10, Colonial Office Papers. There is a misdated copy of this letter in *Documents*, ed. O'Callaghan, 7: 787-88. The Detroit conference did not end the diplomatic proceedings: Johnson met Pontiac at Oswego in July 1766 to confirm the various understandings. Proceedings at a Congress with Pontiac and the Chiefs of the Ottawa, Potawatomi, Huron, and Chippewa, July 23-31, 1766, in *ibid.*, 854-67. In addition, Croghan was sent to Kaskaskia in Illinois to complete the peace process with the western nations. George Croghan to William Johnson, September 10, 1766, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Sullivan, Flick, and Hamilton, 12: 176-77.