

Hi. Pleased you came by! I'm a 300 year-old bur oak, proud resident of Turtle Mountain.



I've lived through fires, wars, tornadoes and drought. I've seen a lot. We oaks, coast to coast, understand this place deeply.

One thing we talk about, among ourselves, is that our local stories, based on events nearby, tend to follow from events that happen far away, often in eastern Canada, USA or Europe.

The family that lives with me, on SE13-2-21, are nice, but, they're only starting to recognize the ancient trails around here, and how significant are, the rock formations in this clearing. There's been ceremony, hunting and medicine gathering around me, for thousands of years.

In 1906 the first Euro-immigrants settled on this quarter. Late comers they were. Canada began offering land to immigrants 25 years earlier. Clearly, this mountain land wasn't appreciated as farmland, due to wetlands and large oaks like me.

But, what made Canada think it could divide the land and give it away? Well, in 1876, Rupert's Land, which included all rivers flowing into Hudson's Bay, was owned by Hudson's Bay Company. The business of furs was declining. Canada wanted to expand westward, so they simply bought Rupert's Land.



So, how did the HBC, a British company, acquire the land around here? Well, they got it as a gift from King Charles II in 1670, all 1.5 million square miles of it.

And, why did King Charles feel he could up and just give it to HBC? Here, dear neighbour, the story gets harder. In the 1400s countries in Europe were sailing amazing ships, with adventurous men and big guns to explore lands worldwide. These expeditions were funded by kings, and the church, hoping to profit from new passages and found riches. The problem was, Indigenous people lived everywhere.

How did Europeans get the land from Indigenous Nations? Well, there was only one official religion in Europe. So that church had a lot of power. Its leader proclaimed the "Doctrine of Discovery". This doctrine empowered explorers to invade, set flags, search out and subdue all "pagans", as he put it, reduce them to slavery, and, take all possessions. Seriously. He further declared lands as "vacant" if the residents were not Christian.

In 1492, when Columbus sailed, North America had 100 million people, one fifth of the world's population. Long story short, along with wars, vicious diseases and selective privilege, Britain came to dominate North America. Slick eh? Trouble is, governments, churches and those privileged citizens around the world, accepted this false way of thinking. And for 500 years the resistance has been mounting. So, now we have work to do, all over Turtle Island, to tell truthful stories.

I'm just an old tree. But I see declarations that establish, prolong domination, don't solve our problems. I want history understood, so that kind, generous humans will do what they can. Like my mama said, Attend to your roots and new leaves will gladly emerge.