

SAVAGES IN A CIVILIZED WAR: THE NATIVE AMERICANS AS FRENCH ALLIES  
IN THE SEVEN YEARS WAR, 1754-1763

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

SAVAGES IN A CIVILIZED WAR: THE NATIVE AMERICANS AS FRENCH ALLIES IN THE SEVEN YEARS WAR, 1754-1763, by MAJ Adam Bancroft, 143 pages.

The Seven Years' War was the first truly global war but it will forever be recognized in North America as the French and Indian War because of the extensive use of Native American allies by the French from 1754-1758. These irregular forces were needed to offset the massive manpower advantage the British possessed in North America, 1.5 million British colonists to 55,000 French colonists. This thesis examines the complex relationship the French had with their Indian allies who were spread throughout their territorial holdings in North America. It examines French and Indian diplomatic relations and wartime strategy, and moves to describe and form an understanding of the savage frontier warfare practiced by the Indians and its adaption by the French settlers known as *la petite guerre*. The thesis examines the French employment of the Indians as frontier raiders, setting the conditions for conventional army operations, and counter-irregular force operations and how understanding an irregular force's culture is crucial for success. The thesis examined these cultural differences and why the Indians began to move away from the French in 1758 after the massacre of the British prisoners at the surrender of Fort William Henry. This examination of the employment of Native Americans provides a concise understanding of their use and where understanding the lessons of the past benefits the modern military officer working with partner forces today.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The more prescient colonial military and political leaders understood that the Indians were a critical element in the successful prosecution of war in the colonies. Their participation, or even neutrality, could represent the difference between victory and defeat.<sup>1</sup>

— Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn, *Terror on the Frontier*

The Seven Years' War (1754-1763) was a watershed moment in the history of not only France and England, but also of the North American continent as a whole. It would not only affect which European power dominated the continent as the premier colonial world power, but it also shaped the history of the many Indian tribes that inhabited the spaces claimed and managed by the European powers. By the end of the war and the defeat of the French in 1763, Britain had established itself as the sole colonial power in North America and had set the stage for American history as we know it today.<sup>2</sup>

However, the war had another name. In modern American and British history, the war would come to be known as, The French and Indian War. This name was not merely a moniker applied because those were the parties that fought the war against the British, but so named because of the deep seated and long standing alliance between the French

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<sup>1</sup>Bernd Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," in *Forging a Nation: Perspectives on the Canadian Military Experience*, ed. Bernd Horn (St Catherines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing, 2002), 44.

<sup>2</sup>Fred Anderson, *The War That Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War* (New York: Viking, 2005), xxv.

and the Native Americans of the continent. This alliance permeated every aspect of French life, from trade, to missionaries, and most especially to warfare.<sup>3</sup>

This alliance was critical to the French during wartime because it enabled them to counter the amazing advantage the British had in resources and manpower, which in 1754 stood a staggering 1.5 million people in British territory to a meager fifty five thousand in New France, by practicing a form of warfare known as *la petite guerre*. This form of war, adapted from the Indian style of frontier warfare, focused on ambushes, raids, and other irregular tactics. The French used this non-European style of warfare to keep the British contained in their colonies by utilizing disruptive attacks on points of British weakness, combined with an unrelenting series of raids on the British frontier to terrorize the colonists. In 1756 this form of war would be integrated into the French operational plans, using native North American Indian warriors combined with the French regular army to shape an efficient form of combined irregular and regular warfare that would see the Indians, and their non-European fighting tactics, used where they could be the most successful. This strategy would keep the British off balance through a series of French tactical victories until 1758, when a series of cultural misunderstandings would ultimately force the Indians to cease their mass support of the French and move towards neutrality until the end of the war.<sup>4</sup>

This alliance was so critical to the French that a wide scale system of diplomacy and gifts was established to maintain positive relations with the Indians. These relations

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<sup>3</sup>Bernd Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," in *The Canadian Way of War*, ed. Bernd Horn (Toronto, Ontario: Dundurn Press, 2006), 24.

<sup>4</sup>Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 205.



served to secure the French frontier against the punishing raids of the Indians, gain and maintain profitable trade in New France and provide warriors in time of war. An added benefit of this relationship was that it also prevented the British from gaining similar benefits from the Indians as well. This system led to the establishment of numerous forts and trading outposts along the British and French borderlands that would become the focus of the military actions of the war. The French devoted a staggering amount of resources to this trade with the Indians over the 150 years before the Seven Years' War (1609-1754).<sup>5</sup>

Though the war would ultimately be a defeat for the French and they would be pushed out of North America, they held the far larger British military force for the first three years of the war due to their solid and prosperous alliance with the Native Americans and the Canadians adoption of the irregular war fighting tactics of *la petite guerre*. Their use of the Indians as auxiliaries, raiders integrated into a campaign plan, reconnaissance scouts, and frontier raiders on the periphery of the theater, allowed the French to practice a strategy of defending Canada by attacking the British deep in their own territory and keeping them off guard.<sup>6</sup> While the British would eventually overwhelm the French with regular troops and mitigate the advantage the Indians provided, the French and Indian War showed that the successful combination of regular and irregular warfare could be effective against a superior force. But success is dependent

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<sup>5</sup>Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts: Anglo-French Rivalry Along the Ohio and Northwest Frontiers, 1748-1763* (Lewisburg, PA: Wennawoods Publishing, 2001), 250.

<sup>6</sup>Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815* (Oxford, UK: Taylor and Francis, 1998), LOC 1928.

on understanding the two keys to successful implementation of this tactic; the knowledgeable and appropriate use of this partner force as well as recognizing the dangers of misunderstanding their culture or using them inappropriately.<sup>7</sup> These are lessons that echo today with the modern military officer as he seeks to understand the contemporary operating environment.

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<sup>7</sup>John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122.

## CHAPTER 2

### CANADIAN-INDIAN RELATIONS AND FRENCH WARTIME STRATEGY

#### FOR NATIVE AMERICAN USE

What has resulted from this? And what is resulting from this? Our Indians, disgusted, and dissatisfied, are taking their furs to the English, are becoming attached to them to the prejudice of our interests and to the detriment of the trade. . . . The presents that the king has given to them keep them loyal to him.<sup>8</sup>

— Charles de Raymond, *On the Eve of Conquest*

The Native Americans played an essential role for both the British and French Empires in North America during the Seven Years' War (1754-1763). They were essential to the survival of the colonists that inhabited the areas. They were vital trading partners; they acted as guides, and in the case of some British agreements, also hunted to provide food for the settlers.<sup>9</sup> The Indians also provided the essential manpower that the French relied upon to help offset the British settlements vast advantage on the continent, 1.5 million settlers to the French 55,000.<sup>10</sup>

This employment as soldiers in the army did not develop only in the years leading up to war. Instead, securing the alliances and good relations with the Indians that were needed to develop the constant flow of manpower the war demanded were the result of carefully molded colonial policy and diplomatic relations with their neighboring tribes in

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<sup>8</sup>Charles de Raymond, Chevalier of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis, Captain, Troops de La Marine in Joseph Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest: The Chevalier De Raymond's Critique of New France in 1754* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 55.

<sup>9</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 43.

<sup>10</sup>Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *French and Indian War* (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2003).

the vast areas that were settled by the French. This policy, relying on gifts, flattery, and favors, and not the purchase or outright control of the Indians' land allowed them to rapidly expand and trade for the furs that were so valued in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

This relationship also had a double edge to it. When the style of warfare of the Seven Years' War moved past the small-scale frontier war of the late 16th and early 17th centuries to a large European style war, the French had trouble adapting their small regular force augmented by Indians to the European style. Conversely, the large European armies had trouble maneuvering in the dense terrain of the Americas. In the middle were the Native Americans. The Canadian Governor-General Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial, Marquis de Vaudreuil (known here after as Vaudreuil) advocated a much more defensive forward guerilla style campaign<sup>12</sup> as the French leadership's best strategy to employ the Native Americans, while the French military commander, Major General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, Marquis de Montcalm (known here after as Montcalm) sought a more European maneuver army strategy of massing for decisive battles with the Indians as auxiliaries.<sup>13</sup> Their eventual usage, as scouts and guerillas, would be born of the relationship between the Indians and the French as allies

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<sup>11</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 11.

<sup>12</sup>W. J. Eccles, "Rigaud De Vaudreuil De Cavagnial, Pierre De, Marquis De Vaudreuil," University of Toronto, [http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=2142](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=2142) (accessed 1 November 2012).

<sup>13</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 59.

and partners and not as subjects or subordinates, a direct result of the relations cultivated between them outside of war.<sup>14</sup>

At the start of the Seven Years' War (1754-1763), the French and the British both commanded vast numbers of men and resources on the continent. The French commanded 55,000 permanent settlers in North America. These settlers were spread around a territory that stretched from Canada in the north, the Atlantic to the Great Lakes region east west, and south down the Mississippi to Louisiana and eastward to the Ohio Valley. The 1.5 million citizens of the British colonial holdings were inside this buffer in the commonly understood thirteen colonies. Key to managing, exploiting, and more importantly, protecting and maintaining this vast swathe of territory were the Native Americans.<sup>15</sup>

The Native Americans of the vast French territory represented over 15 different tribal groups. Realizing that their survival depended on these groups, Samuel Champlain, the founder of Quebec, immediately started a relationship with the Algonquin Indians he made contact with in 1609. From that point on the survival of the French settlers and Indians were merged. Indians would trade with the French for muskets, tomahawks, iron, clothes, blankets, and other goods required for survival, while teaching the settlers how to survive on the land and trading furs, foodstuffs, and skins the settlers required. Over the next 150 years, the French would form alliances with the Pequot, Illinois, Kickapoo, Menomoni, Miami Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi Indians throughout the northeast

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<sup>14</sup>W. J. Eccles, "Montcalm, Louis-Joseph De, Marquis De Montcalm," University of Toronto, [http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=1542](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=1542) (accessed 1 November 2012).

<sup>15</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 29.

and Great Lakes, or *pays d'en haut*, area.<sup>16</sup> At the same time the British would be engaging in the same sorts of activities in order to bring the native tribes in their areas under their control. Where the two empires met, this led to the empires competing over the same Indians. For 150 years, the French would consistently surpass the British in almost every regard in Indian relations. This could not have been achieved without a strong system of Indian relations and a developed knowledge of their culture and what was required to sway the Indians to their cause. In 1753, the French were using three primary methods to secure Indian alliances: religion, trade and gifts, and force, if necessary. This battle over Native American influence would be the catalyst to start the Seven Years' War.<sup>17</sup>

For the French, the need for good relations and strong alliances with Native Americans was key to their survival and retaining the hegemony it had in the frontier areas of the continent in the 1700s. New France, particularly Canada, was founded as a trading and resource monopoly base, not as a full-fledged colony where excess population from the mother country could be sent. In fact, the French government did little to actively encourage large scale settlement of the new colony. This is in contrast to the British colonies that experienced consistent growth in their colonies along the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>18</sup> The French method of empire was not one of land grabs and gain, but one of commerce and trade with the Native Indian population.<sup>19</sup> This made the

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<sup>16</sup>Hillstrom, *French and Indian War*, 6.

<sup>17</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 182.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>19</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 86.

colony devoid of any real troop base to call upon in time of war. As will be discussed in chapter 3, the colonists depended on the Native Americans to assist them in their fighting, both as teachers and allied soldiers. Throughout the history of the colony, the French had been subjected to constant raids by Iroquois raiding parties (1610-1701), numerous small Indian wars, and three small frontier wars against their southern British neighborhoods, King William's War (1688-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), and King George's War (1744-1748). In each of these wars, the French learned that they could not achieve lasting strategic victory against the British; they could only achieve tactical victories that would have the strategic effect of disrupting British invasion plans.<sup>20</sup> The key to their success was the consistent ability to recruit warriors from the Native Americans, and almost as essential, deny the same ability to the British. In 1753, the populations of French allied Native Americans in the Ohio Valley and *pays d'en haut* region provided the French with access to potentially 16,000 warriors that they could recruit from.<sup>21</sup>

These wars created a power vacuum in the western portions of New France due to a lack of French presence. The French Governor-General Roland-Michel Barrin de La Galissonière (1693-1756) correctly assessed that the next point of conflict between the British and the French would shift from the Lake Champlain/New England region to the Ohio Valley on the British western frontier.<sup>22</sup> The British had already made inroads in the Ohio Valley through the Ohio Company, a land trading company, and quickly moved to

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<sup>20</sup>Frank Hayward Severance, *The Story of Joncaire, His Life and Times on the Niagara* (New York: Cornell University Library, 1906), 85.

<sup>21</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 35.

<sup>22</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 18.

counter their expansion by reasserting French dominance over the region. To do this, he would employ the French methods of religion, trade and gifts, and force.<sup>23</sup>

Religion had always been a driving force in New France and the relations with the Indians within its borders. From the beginning of the colony in the 1600s, Jesuit missionaries were sent to New France in order to bring the “savage” into the fold, as Champlain believed that the soul was all that mattered and feared for the soul of his new found allies.<sup>24</sup> This drive started the process of linking some of the native population with the French.

In the 1600s the Jesuits came to New France and established a series of missions, the most famous of these, the Huron Mission, worked ceaselessly to convert Indians to Catholicism. Though this mission would be destroyed and its priests martyred in the Beaver Wars (the series of French and Iroquois conflicts that lasted until a lasting peace was signed in 1701), the precedent was established for French Catholics from the Society of Jesus and the Society of Saint-Sulpice to work to convert more and more Indians and bring them under the French banner.<sup>25</sup> This conversion was loathed by their British neighbors as the Indians would believe that baptism to Catholicism made them allies and subjects of the French crown.<sup>26</sup> These missions were established at logical confluences of

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<sup>23</sup>Étienne Taillemite, “Barrin De La Galissonière, Roland-Michel, Marquis De La Galissonière,” [http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id\\_nbr=1196](http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=1196) (accessed 1 December 2012).

<sup>24</sup>Thomas B. Costain, *The White and the Gold: The French Regime in Canada* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1954), 100.

<sup>25</sup>Francis Parkman, *France and England in North America*, vol. 1 (New York: Library of America, 1983), 431.

<sup>26</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 31.



the water lines of communication in order to attract the most Indians to live there. The priests then used a combination of gifts, presents, and religious education to get the Indians to convert to Catholicism. This religious conversion had multiple effects on the Indians. Not only did it tie them religiously and culturally to the Catholic French, the missions provided a stable community where Indians and French citizens could intermingle.<sup>27</sup> This created a shared acceptance and tolerance in regards to the Native Americans. This was not found in the British colonies. This goal is seen in the words of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the French Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1667 who stated to the intendant of New France, “You must try to draw these people and especially those who have embraced Christianity in to the neighborhood of settlements and, if possible, intermingle them there so that, with the passage of time having but one law, and one master, the king.”<sup>28</sup>

The missions also provided another more tangible benefit be used extensively in the Imperial Wars and the years leading up to the Seven Years’ War, which was to use the missions and the “praying Indians” to conduct wartime and peace time activities. In fact these missions provided a ready recruiting ground for Indians who already were inclined to French direction and a healthy dislike for the British and their non-Catholic allies. Indians were molded to conduct activities for the French benefits. The most famous mission, *La Presentation*, near modern day Montreal, is an example of these behaviors. Founded in 1747 by Abbe Francis Piquet, the fort would grow to house 3,000

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<sup>27</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:430.

<sup>28</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” 35.

Indians, when the population of Montreal was only 4,000.<sup>29</sup> The fort ostensibly worked to convert Indians to Catholicism,<sup>30</sup> but its actual purpose was to wean the Iroquois off of their British Alliance.<sup>31</sup> Indian spies would be dispatched and presents and bribes designed to sway Indian loyalty would be sent down river to their targets. In short, Abbe Piquet conducted some of what the modern day military would call unconventional and information warfare operations in North America. Not all of his activity was benign; Piquet also recruited Indians to conduct raids and military operations against the British and their frontier towns. Piquet was placed in charge of using his converted Iroquois to entice their non-converted brethren to attack the British at Fort Oswego, and avoid having the French implicated in the attack. General Jeffery Amherst, the commander who captured Louisburg for the British in 1758, accused Piquet of raising 150 Indians to war and to grant no mercy. Piquet was not unique in this fact and “praying Indians” were feared all over the frontier. Governor George Clinton wanted a specific church in New York destroyed because he feared the French were using it to incite the local Oneidas to war against the British.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Francis Parkman, *France and England in North America*, vol. 2 (New York: The Library of America, 1983), 899.

<sup>30</sup>Pierre-Joseph Celoron and Father Bonneamps, *The Celoron Expedition to the Ohio Country, 1749: The Reports of Pierre-Joseph Celoron and Father Bonnecamps*, ed. Andrew Gallup (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1997), 23.

<sup>31</sup>Robert Lahaise, “Picquet, François,” University of Toronto/Université Laval, <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36242> (accessed 14 December 2012).

<sup>32</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 34.

In 1753, through religious conversions and missions, the French were able to solidify their alliances with the native peoples of America and secure their warriors and resources in future conflicts. *Fort de la Presentation* was in full working order and the French were looking to again exert their dominion over the Ohio valley. They will do this with the ability to call upon the “praying Indians” and their tribal allies to assist them in pacifying other tribes that had allied with the British. When the Seven Years’ War began, they would be crucial in the fight against the British as well.<sup>33</sup>

The second method that the French used to gain and solidify alliances and relations with the Native Americans was trade and gift giving. Founded as a fur trading colony to secure the monopoly in North America, this practice not only gave the French access to the furs that the continental French and settlers alike desired, it also fostered good relations and mutual assistance between the Indians and the French. This was beneficial in assisting the French; not only as a means to protect and dissuade attacks by neighboring Indian tribes, but also against the British in the imperial wars of the early 18th century. The French would use multiple methods to secure this trade but would rely mostly on forts and trading outposts to conduct their activities. As the 18th century continued, this battle for the Indians through trade and giving of gifts would play a key role in leading to the start of the Seven Years’ War.<sup>34</sup>

New France, specifically Canada, was dependent on trade for its essential resources and for protection. The French settlers, outnumbered both by the British and

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<sup>33</sup>Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 26.

<sup>34</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 31.

Indians that neighbored their colonies as has been previously stated, needed strong relations with the Indians to offset this weakness. Good relations with the tribes in their surrounding areas, such as the Huron, Algonquians, Abnaki, and others in the Ohio Valley were formed. Developing trading relations with the Illinois, Kickapoo, and Menomini tribes' furthered French influence in the Ohio Valley. Friendly relations with multiple tribes would assist in preventing them from going to war with each other and decimating the numbers of warriors the French could recruit from. With only 55,000 persons in the valley, the French would often have to rely on solid relations with their Indian partners to counter British influence on them and collect the furs and trade goods the colony desired.<sup>35</sup> To this end, expeditions were often sent through French claimed areas to remind the Indians who they would gain the most benefit from trading with and to expel any British traders in their area. Expeditions such as the 1749 Celeron expedition were mounted to expel British traders from the Ohio Valley and win back defecting Indians to the French banner. These expeditions were mounted with great expense, requiring infusions of capital from France to fund them, but were necessary to keep the integrity of the colony as well as provide a firm recruiting and operating base for operations during war.<sup>36</sup>

The Canadian government was integral in ensuring that this policy was synchronized across the colony. This diplomatic effort was so important that the Canadian government tracked the giving of gifts and trade at the national level to the individual gift and which agent had provided it to the Indians. Their hierarchical

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<sup>35</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 18.

<sup>36</sup>Celorn and Bonneamps, *The Celeron Expedition*, 15.

government structure unified this process as a singular entity, merged with its military and diplomatic efforts and tracked the expenses that these gifts cost the crown. It also provided a large resource block for the purchase of large or numerous gifts and trade goods. This contrasted to the British who spread Indian relations and trade throughout their colonies. This strict system also solidified loyalty of the Indians to the French king versus a singular British colony. As the Chevalier de Raymond stated in his *Enumeration of All the Canadian Posts*, the “Indians are self-interested and attach themselves only to the ones who gives them the most, and they like the benefactor only through the benefit that they receive and expect from him.”<sup>37</sup> To this end, French traders and officers ensured that all the Indians they traded with knew that the gifts and goods traded were from the Father Ontontio as the French king was known to the Indians<sup>38</sup> and that gifts were given in enough frequency to solidify their loyalty.

The specific types of gifts and trade goods did not have to be valuable metals or coinage. More often than not the goods were of an everyday nature necessary to daily life as the need of the Indian home life often outweighed the more ostentatious gifts of jewelry and gold and silver. The goods often included tomahawks, blankets, clothes, gunpowder, knives, and other goods a post-stone age culture would desire from a foreign pre-industrial power and would often be paid for by the agent giving the gift and later reimbursed from the French government. This would allow the giving of little gifts as needed from the garrisons of trading outposts on the frontier while they awaited the

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<sup>37</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 55.

<sup>38</sup>“Jolicoeur” Charles Bonin, *Memoir of a French and Indian War Soldier* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1993), 66.

annual shipment of gifts and good from France.<sup>39</sup> Most gifts and trade goods were practical tools that could be used in the village. More colorful and “loud” clothing were reserved for chiefs and warriors of high regard and consisted mostly of bright stripes and trim. Rum and brandy was avoided as much as possible in order to prevent the intoxication of the Indians and violence and mayhem that often followed, but was provided when necessary to ply the Indians, or influence their decision making in certain times of negotiations. As the competition for Indian loyalty increased in the 18th century, most metal goods and decorations, i.e. gorgets, were stamped with the French king on one side and the royal coat of arms on the other. This would solidify in the Indians mind who had provided the gift and where his loyalty should lie.

In order to maintain this constant flow of goods and gifts into the Ohio Valley and their allied tribes, the French established a series of trading posts and forts to act as protectors of their dominion. These forts would run down the Ohio River Valley from Lake Erie to the furs of the Ohio, modern day Pittsburgh. These forts were designed to protect the Ohio Valley from British incursion. The forts, Presque Isle, Le Beouf, Machault, Vernago, and eventually Duquesne were to facilitate trade with the local Indian population and protect the water lines of communication in the area. Unlike the British, the French did not establish their forts and begin to absorb Indian land and claim it from them. Instead, the French established smaller trading posts to trade with Indians and did not threaten their autonomy.<sup>40</sup> These posts, located at key strategic points where lines of communication and French and Indian territory would align, would usually

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<sup>39</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 57.

<sup>40</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 86.

consist of a blockhouse, warehouse, and wooden palisade to protect those that lived inside.<sup>41</sup> In some cases, such as *La Presentation*, a mission would be present to convert the Indians that chose to remain at the post. This would cause Indian settlements to spring up alongside the European post, further cementing French and Indian relations. The post would be minimally manned with a small garrison, sometimes only three to five, *Troops de la Marine*, the French regular army soldiers stationed in Canada.<sup>42</sup> The forts also served as a jumping off point for offensive actions against the British and hostile Indian forces in the area. This extended the French's ability to penetrate deep into British territory and would be the centers of the struggle in the Seven Years' War.<sup>43</sup>

Trade and gift giving along with the infrastructure that developed alongside it provided the means for the French to secure the native allies it would need to secure its vast terrain and exploit the land for its purpose as a commercial outpost. These positive Indian relations would provide a recruiting ground for warriors and act as a buffer against expanding British influence prior to the Seven Years' War.<sup>44</sup>

The last method the French would use would be force. If all other measures of securing the positive relations with an Indian group were exhausted or if time was short, the French would resort to the use of force to reassert its colonial domination over an area. This would prevent British domination, enforce treaties, expel British traders, and

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<sup>41</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 34.

<sup>42</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 13.

<sup>43</sup>Timothy J. Todish, *America's First First World War: The French and Indian War, 1754-1763* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2002).

<sup>44</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*.

force the Indians in an area either to accept French rule, in the case of the Miamis in the Ohio Valley, or to remain neutral, such as the Iroquois after 1701.<sup>45</sup>

The French did not want to resort to force for two main reasons. First it squandered already limited resources. The French needed positive Indian relations to counter the fact that it did not have many settlers or soldiers in the colony. Fighting protracted wars with the Iroquois in the 1600s had shown that frontier wars against the Amerindians would be a war of attrition that would cost many lives and hinder trade. As the same time, positive Indian relations that had been generated through trade and mutual trust and respect, as with the Hurons and Ababi's, had gained strong allies that were used to great effect in the imperial wars of the early 1700s. Using force to subdue Native American groups would not allow this recruitment and would not benefit the colony.<sup>46</sup> Secondly, during the previous conflicts, the French had relied heavily on native warriors to assist them. Using force to subdue an opponent would cause tribal disruptions in the area that would cause the Indians to fight each other outside of European influence in retaliation for fighting with the Europeans, as was the case with the Iroquois extermination of the Huron nation in 1634 during the Iroquois wars. This would lessen the ability of the Indians to come to the French aid and may even draw the French into a new war because of allied ties.<sup>47</sup>

In 1751, the French were forced to use force in the opening rounds of the Ohio River valley conflict that would become the Seven Years' War. The Canadian Governor-

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<sup>45</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 90.

<sup>46</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*.

<sup>47</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 94.



General had sent an expedition of 200 men in 1749 under Pierre-Joseph Celoron to reinforce the claims of the French to the Ohio River valley. This is the so called lead plate expedition, named because of Celoron's placing of lead plates along the route to mark French claim, which also had the secondary missions of expelling British traders that it found in French territory, ascertain which Indians had defected to the British due to the undercutting of French goods, and had attacked a French trading post as reported by Chevalier Raymond, and neighboring *Troops de La Marine* commander in the Miami Post.<sup>48</sup>

Over the course of his expedition, he traveled to every Indian village along his path and discovered that English traders were indeed undercutting French goods in the valley and were defecting to the British. Almost all of the Indian villages respond to the giving of gifts and negotiations to remain solely trading partners with the French. He also expelled six British traders with a letter to the Pennsylvania Governor to remove all his traders from the French territory. One village of Miamis, Pickawillany and its chief, La Demoiselle violently expel the French expedition and Celoron returned to Montreal to report his findings.<sup>49</sup> The French government, seeing negotiations fail, decided to send an armed force to capture Demoiselle and bring the Miamis back into the fold. Charles-Michel Mouet de Langlade was dispatched in 1752 to deal with the rebellious village. With 272 Indians and *Troops de La Marine*, Langlade killed La Demoiselle, and destroyed the village. The remaining Miamis were dispersed to other Miami villages in the area. This sudden and decisive use of force against a British ally, and subsequent lack

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<sup>48</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*.

<sup>49</sup>Celorn and Bonneamps, *The Celoron Expedition*.

of British response brought a majority of the Indians in the Ohio back into the fold of the French due to the Indians proclivity towards respecting strength and victory. This would work in providing a buffer against the British in the upcoming war, while at the same time providing a recruiting ground for allied fighters during the war.<sup>50</sup>

French policy towards the Indians in the 1700s resulted in strong alliances with many of the Native American tribes that inhabited the Ohio River valley and the vast territory of New France. Their relationship would provide a solid base of fighters to augment the low number of French soldiers in the colony as well as provide a solid augmentation force for the large European armies that would fight in the Seven Years' War. What the French did not expect was how their relationship would shape what would develop into the strategy for how the French would fight the next war. The dependence on the Indians and their effectiveness as allies would lead to a great conflict over how they were to be used in the coming conflict.<sup>51</sup>

When war broke in 1754, the use of the Native Americans was the key pillar to how the French would fight the war. Their employment alongside the Canadian regulars and militias in the earlier imperial wars of the 1700s cemented their place on the battle field to the government of Canada. Vaudreuil's trust of the Indians' fighting style and the French's alliances and relations would drive their desire to use them as a light fighting force, attacking the enemy deep in the British colonies and forcing the British to defend at home rather than push into Canada. As the war became heavily European, with large

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<sup>50</sup>Bob Bearor, *Leading by Example: Partisan Leaders and the Fighters of New France: 1660-1760*, vol. 3 (2004).

<sup>51</sup>Grenier, *First Way of War*.

moving armies of regular troops, the recently arrived commander of the French regulars, Montcalm, saw the Canadian irregular war as a savage war that was uncivilized and lobbied for a more traditional approach with the Indians in a supporting role.<sup>52</sup> Although in the end neither strategy could win the war with the amount of resources the British could array against them, Vaudreuil's and Montcalm's strategic conflict would result in a dysfunctional strategy that would simultaneously use the Indians in the most effective ways, while at the same time alienate them culturally.<sup>53</sup>

At the start of the war in 1754, the French were in a precarious position regarding their ability to resource another war in North America. The events in the Ohio Valley, unresolved status of the valley and its Indian nations had given the French cause to prepare for a war in North America. It was not ready strategically to withstand a determined war from the British. First, the goals of their strategy were never in conflict; the preservation of New France as a French holding was always the ultimate objective. The basis for their strategy was primarily on a limitation of ways to conduct the war and the means to do so, both manpower and monetarily. These limitations would not allow Canadian forces to create a strategic victory out of tactical success due to their limited exploitation capability. This problem would remain a Canadian problem as the

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<sup>52</sup>Louis Antoine de Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine De Bougainville, 1756-1760*, trans., Edward P. Hamilton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964).

<sup>53</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 204-205.

government of France had made it well known that it was willing to sacrifice the Canadian colony for the lucrative sugar island colonies in the Caribbean.<sup>54</sup>

Militarily, Canada lagged far behind the British colonies to the south and this gap would form the basis for its strategy. Outnumbered 1.5 million inhabitants to 55,000, the French could not muster the manpower to compete man for man with the British, let alone reinforcements from Europe.<sup>55</sup> To compound this, there were no French regular soldiers stationed in Canada. The “regular” troops were actually *Troops de La Marine*, French soldiers stationed in Canada but led by Canadian or French officers.<sup>56</sup> The Canadian answer to this was *la petite guerre*, or little war. Explained in detail in chapter 3, this style of guerilla tactics aimed at causing terror and disrupting the British forces in their own territory that had characterized the warfare of the imperial wars that had allowed the French to fight the British to stalemates and maintain their territorial integrity. This style of warfare was an attrition based style that was heavily reliant on large numbers of Indian allies and warriors to fight alongside the French and Canadian forces in order to make up the manpower shortages.

The Canadians were also deprived of resources to generate and train large numbers of regular troops. The French empire was stretched thin monetarily in the 1600-1700s and was dependent on their colonies to supply the resources needed to support the mother country. To this end, the French government had always made known that they

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<sup>54</sup>Horn, “Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760.”

<sup>55</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival.”

<sup>56</sup>Andrew Gallup and Donald F. Schaffer, *La Marine: The French Colonial Soldier in Canada 1745-1761* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2008), 11.

would not support the colony unless its fate was in jeopardy. This is shown through their lack of support in the Iroquois Wars of the 1600s until the short commitment of the Tracy expedition.<sup>57</sup> The French government had also made it plain that in the event of a war in North America, the French army would be used to fight the war in Europe and not be able to fully support or reinforce any French soldiers sent to fight on the continent.<sup>58</sup> This meant that the French army would unlikely be able to eventually match the overwhelming numbers of British troops in the field and necessitated a strategy that could delay the British and exhaust them until a peace could be agreed upon in Europe.

Based on these limitations both Vaudreuil and Montcalm derived their own strategies as to how to fight the coming war. These strategies would come into direct conflict with one another and force the decision to be made ultimately from France itself. These strategies, each with its own merits and flaws could not prevent the ultimate British victory when the British committed overwhelming resources and forces to the conflict.

Vaudreuil, the Governor-General of New France, looked at the limitations above and quickly decided to maintain the strategy that had worked so well in the previous imperial wars. He advocated the strategy of *la petite guerre* and the terror it would sow among the population of the British colonies. He is quoted as saying in his journal, “Nothing is more calculated to discourage the people of these English colonies and make them wish to return to peace.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*.

<sup>58</sup>Hillstrom, *French and Indian War*, 72.

<sup>59</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” 33.

His strategy would consist of an aggressive forward defense using the guerilla tactics of year round raids, ambushes, and spoiling attacks to keep the British armies penned inside their own colonial territories. Much like in the previous wars, Vaudreuil saw how the French dominated the British and exhausted them monetarily and militarily by forcing them to remain on the defensive in their own territory. He thought this could be repeated and even expanded upon as he could raise a war party of Indian allies and attack faster than the British could mass and move an invasion army into Canada.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, valuable manpower in the form of British militia forces would be raised to defend their frontiers, and not be allowed “to cause mischief elsewhere.”<sup>61</sup>

Forts would be key to Vaudreuil’s strategy. Garrisoned by the French regular army who was trained in siege warfare, they would be used as jumping off points for offensive actions by the *Troops de La Marine*, the Canadian militia, and their Indian allies to conduct raids into British territory.<sup>62</sup> The forts would also serve to lengthen the supply lines of the British and leave them open to attack by the Canadians operating out them. Since the French government had already built the forts, this strategy could be conducted very inexpensively for the Canadians and they could retain their resources to supply and support the larger French army when it arrived from France.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Todish, *America’s First World War*.

<sup>61</sup>Louis de Corville, *Memoires Sur Le Canada Depuis 1749 Jusqu’a 1760* (Quebec City: Imprimerie de Middleton and Dawson, 1873), 116.

<sup>62</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 25.

<sup>63</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” 86.

There were two main drawbacks to this strategy. First it was heavily dependent on the Native Americans as early warning and allied warriors. In order to maintain surprise and mass enough raiders on the attacks, friendly Indians would have to be used to maintain secrecy of the attack from neighboring tribes and to prevent interception or counterattack as they made their way back to the forts. These alliances relied heavily on positive relations with Indians throughout territory, which was resource intensive on the government.<sup>64</sup> The second drawback was that it was a strategy of exhaustion and relied on the British tiring of war and suing for peace. Although it was extremely and effective from 1754-1756, it could not obtain more than tactical victories against the British forces and their own forts in the area. As the British committed more and more resources to the fight, they began to outlast the French and outpace their ability to counter their plans. The fight became a more conventional European campaigning war and the raids of the guerrillas could do little to stop them.<sup>65</sup>

Montcalm, conversely, called for a more European style of warfare. Montcalm arrived in North America in 1756 and immediately set to create a strategy that could win the war. Unlike Vaudreuil, Montcalm saw a role for the French Army, *Troops de Terre*, and the *Troops de la Marine* to work together in a defensive strategy to mass forces at a decisive point and bring the British army to battle at a time and place of his choosing.<sup>66</sup>

Schooled in European conflict, he saw the war as one of siege and counter siege in the frontier to defeat the British Forces while using the guerilla forces of the militia

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<sup>64</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 136.

<sup>65</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 83.

<sup>66</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1104.

and Indians as auxiliaries and shaping operations. By conducting sieges of British forts on the periphery, but still close to French territory, he could draw forces off of the invasion of Canada and engage them in battle.<sup>67</sup> Though Montcalm did not initially see many issues with utilizing the Indians as part of his army, he did not like them as people. He found them brutish and selfish, lacking any discipline or will to stay and fight.<sup>68</sup> While he did not approve of their fighting style, discipline, or civility, Montcalm did respect their ability to fight at the tactical level.

His first committed action on the continent was at Fort Oswego, a series of three British forts near modern day Oswego, New York on Lake Ontario in August 1756.<sup>69</sup> After a short battle, his force of 3,000 men attacked and captured the fort which was garrisoned by approximately 1,800 British soldiers. This was a successful campaign that proved Montcalm's tactics of using regular forces in conjunction with irregular forces in support to achieve a tactical victory. While the quickness of the campaign did not pull off the forces he wanted from the British, it could work the next time at William Henry. However, the lasting impact of Oswego and what would negatively impact Montcalm's strategy was his first taste of frontier warfare with Indian allies.<sup>70</sup>

To his chagrin, Montcalm's Indians killed 30 and wounded 100 prisoners after the surrender and proceeded to loot the bodies and the fort for payment. This embarrassed Montcalm greatly as the prisoners were under his charge and deemed protected by the

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<sup>67</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 32.

<sup>68</sup>Eccles, "Montcalm, Louis-Joseph De, Marquis De Montcalm."

<sup>69</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 151.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.



rules of European warfare. Montcalm decided that the barbarities of frontier warfare were to be avoided at all costs. Prisoners were to be protected and surrenders honored and the less fighting he did with the Indians the better.<sup>71</sup>

Montcalm, however, failed to understand the Native Americans' culture and reasons for fighting. The Native Americans fought for prisoners, loot, and plunder and fought as long as their reasons were there and their allies appeared strong. When Montcalm accepted the surrender of the British forces at William Henry, he deprived them of these spoils. The Indians were angered by this slight and took matter into their own hands. Montcalm's even poorer handling of the massacre that occurred after the fort was captured when the Indians kill or capture over 100 British surrendered persons further exasperated the problem. Montcalm attempted to purchase back prisoners and shamed the Indians who remained behind for their lack of civility. Upset, one Indian said, "I make war for plunder, scalps, and prisoner. You are satisfied with a fort, and you let your enemy and mine live."<sup>72</sup> Most of his 1,600 Indians left the fort and few returned to fight for the French again.

Montcalm's strategy was hampered by two shortcomings. First, like Vaudreuil's it relied on the use of Native Americans to act as auxiliaries, scouts, spies, and the bulk of the irregular guerilla force to shape conditions for his main effort. This relied on a balanced cultural knowledge of how and why they fought, and strong relations with them. This was resource intensive and heavily unpalatable to conventional minded French

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>72</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 202-204.

officers of the *Troupes de Terre*.<sup>73</sup> Secondly, this strategy involved European style sieges and counterseiges which required European style armies and reinforcement from mainland Europe. In 1757, with British forces increasing heavily in North America, the war in Europe increasing, and fronts in India all needing reinforcement, the French government was simply not able to reinforce them all and decided that the North American front would be put on the defensive and minimally reinforced until peace with Britain could be sued for on the European front. In 1758, Montcalm was given overall command of the French forces, outranking Vaudreuil as Governor-General, as a reward for his defeat of the forces of Ticonderoga. Against Vaudreuil's wishes, who still wanted to fight an offensive campaign and "contest every inch of territory,"<sup>74</sup> Montcalm withdrew from the frontier forts as the British approach until the final battle of Quebec in 1759.<sup>75</sup>

The one constant both strategies employed was use of Native Americans as scouts and raiders in a guerilla role. Montcalm used the guerrillas as shaping operation, an operation that sets the conditions for the decisive operation, and Vaudreuil advocated their use as part of the colony's decisive operation, or main operation that would defeat the British. While neither strategy could defeat the overwhelming resources of the British at the end of war, both fought to stave off defeat as long as possible. Vaudreuil's strategy, however, delayed the inevitable the longest and caused the British the most heartache and maintained the initiative of the French forces until 1757. Without their use as raiders and

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<sup>73</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1124.

<sup>74</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 53.

<sup>75</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 205.

allies, the Seven Years' War would have been a short campaign dominated by overwhelming British regulars.<sup>76</sup>

The Native Americans played a key role in the outcome of the Seven Years' War. Their use as raiders and to conduct ambushes was critical to the French war effort, not only in the Seven Years' War, but also throughout the history of the colony. Their ability to train, teach, trade with, and cohabitate with the Europeans ensured that New France could continue to survive in the growing face of British and hostile Indian confrontation.<sup>77</sup>

This ability was built on a solid base of positive relations cultivated by a central government system of managing, coordinating, and funding efforts to shape relations with the neighboring tribal groups. Whether by religion, trade and gifts, or force, the French government worked to maintain its sphere of influence and buffer against the encroaching British.<sup>78</sup> When the final imperial war of the 1700s, the Seven Years' War finally started, the French found a solid base of allies to call upon to fight *la petite guerre* against a common British adversary. This style of war would be key to prolonging the French war effort against inevitable defeat and would last only as long as the French could meet their cultural and economic obligations to their Indian allies.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 60.

<sup>77</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 51.

<sup>78</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 101.

<sup>79</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 54.

## CHAPTER 3

### NORTH AMERICAN IRREGULAR WARFARE

In our first war with the Indians, God pleased to show us the vanity of our military skill, in managing our arms, after the European mode. Now we are glad to learn the skulking way of war.<sup>80</sup>

— John Elliot, *The Skulking Way of War*, 1667

Irregular warfare was a factor of day to day life for the Indians, the Dutch, British, and French colonies of North America. Raids and ambushes were common occurrences and comprised the majority of military action between the major actors in the area, Indians versus Indians, and Indians versus European colonists. This style of war, the “skulking way of war,” as John Elliot (1667) called it, was a systemic shock to the European colonists whose concepts were comprised of wars fought by large, well disciplined, armies. The frontier brought with it new challenges and changes to the ways wars would be waged to secure victory.<sup>81</sup>

To the Native Americans, the skulking way of war was the natural way of war. Comprised of raids and ambushes as the preferred tactic and fought for prisoners, pillage, and to sow terror, it had been practiced for generations. It was an extension of their hunting culture and they were very proficient at its conduct. Indian children were instructed in hunting and moving through the woods at very young ages. These skills, critical to the supporting of the village, were also the hallmarks of the skulking way of

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<sup>80</sup>Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), LOC 164.

<sup>81</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” 32.

war. These skills would prove the defining factor in their ability to confront larger, better trained forces of European regulars and to stave off European conquest.<sup>82</sup>

The skulking way of war was also critical to the survival of the small number of French colonists that sought to expand their territorial and commercial empire of New France in North America. To these Canadians, long hard fought battles with the Iroquois throughout the 17th centuries taught them that to be successful in the wilderness; against the Indians they would have to adopt their method of fighting. The Canadians learned from their Native allies and, through experience, developed the methodology of the *La Petite Guerre*. Together with their Indian allies, the skulking way of war and *la petite guerre* proved to be quite effective during the imperial wars of the 17th and 18th Centuries and a critical component of the French strategy during the Seven Years' War. They proved to be more than a match for the British colonial forces until the introduction of British regular forces in the latter half of the war.<sup>83</sup>

The Native American way of war that fought the British and French forces during the Seven Years' War was a hybrid of the original aboriginal style of warfare practiced by Indians and the technology that the Europeans brought with them when they arrived in 17th and 18th centuries. That combination, when applied to the terrain, created a practice of warfare in North America that directly contrasted the European way of war.<sup>84</sup> In addition, it was shaped by the early conflicts with colonists that shocked the Natives into

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<sup>82</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

<sup>83</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 48.

<sup>84</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 29.

understanding what it meant to fight a European style war that was terrain focused rather than force focused.<sup>85</sup> It consisted of limited long range raids and ambushes designed to terrorize and subdue a population through fear. Their wars focused on the acquisition of prisoners, plunder, and attrition of the opposing force versus a terrain-based warfare focusing on capturing enemy villages and exterminating the populace.

To European colonists, this style of warfare appeared to be a campaign of fickleness, terror, and violence; it was in actuality a well-developed system of tactics and traditions.<sup>86</sup> It utilized cunning, cover, stealth, marksmanship, raids, and ambushes to achieve limited objectives.<sup>87</sup> The skulking way of war as it was encountered by the French in the 17th century and employed to great effect in the imperial wars of the 18th century was the blending of European technology and the natives own military culture. The understanding of military culture, along with the strategy and tactics employed, and the impact of Europeans on the Indians are essential to the understanding the skulking way.

The military culture of the Algonquins, Hurons, Ottawas, and the tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy was something unlike anything the Europeans had encountered.<sup>88</sup> Rooted in the long history of the Indians in North America, it shaped how the Indians approached war. The military culture is not only illustrated in their wartime leadership,

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<sup>85</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 30.

<sup>88</sup>Clairborne Skinner, *The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes*, Kindle ed., 2012 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 141.

thoughts on just war, and views of bravery and the importance of strength, but is also shown through their treatment of prisoners and moral conduct, their hunting practices, use of the supernatural and superstitions, and the actions of scalping.

Perhaps the largest factor that impacted the Indians' military culture and how they conducted warfare was their nature as a hunting people. By the 17th century, when Europeans arrived in New France and New England, the Indians that lived in the area surrounding the Great Lakes and the area of the North East United States and Quebec were a largely agricultural people with established settlements and farm land.<sup>89</sup> They grew maize, or Indian corn, that could sustain the people during long periods through drying and storing in their villages.<sup>90</sup> This diet was supplanted through hunting and gathering of nearby animals and wild plants and berries. The Indians of the Great Lakes and New France also supplanted their income through the trapping and hunting animals for the lucrative fur trade that was starting to develop in the in the 1600s. This hunting culture and its associated skills provided the Amerindians with three main advantages: it taught them the skills necessary for skulking, made them an extremely hardy people, and shaped their views on war.

Hunting required the Indians to range out of their settlements in search of game. They would do this year round and it was especially important in the winter when game was scarce and the human body was burning more calories to stay warm. The Indians would travel in small groups or as individuals to seek out this game. French *coeurs de bois*, fur traders reported that the Indians could move upwards of 30-50 miles in a day in

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<sup>89</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 219.

<sup>90</sup>Skinner, *The Upper Country*, 141.

search of game. While this is most likely an exaggeration, movement thorough the heavily forested terrain of North America required great endurance especially during the winter and on limited sustance that consisted mostly of maize, and locally foraged foods.<sup>91</sup> This endurance would be applied militarily when the diet would conduct long distance raids into enemy territory at times when the Europeans thought that movement was impossible. This hardiness was shown in the raids of the Abnaki war chief Grey Lock. His raids during Friar Rasle's War (1722) and Grey Lock War (1722-1724) routinely penetrated the fertile lands of Northfield, Massachusetts from his headquarters in Missisquoi Bay at the northern end of Lake Champlain. This was a total distance of over 210 miles away during the harsh winter months and his parties eluded capture until peace in 1724.<sup>92</sup>

Hunting also taught the Native Americans the key skills necessary for the skulking way and the need for specialized tools and equipment. The Indians started their training at a young age. Boys as young as eight began to learn to hunt and move through the woods. They carried a bow or musket wherever they went.<sup>93</sup> The Indians learned how to shoot at elusive prey such as deer, rabbits, and beavers. These shots were first made with a bow, but were easily adapted to the flintlock musket when the Europeans introduced the weapons to the Natives through trade. They also learn to use deadfall traps, nets, and cover and concealment to hide their positions and strike animals and

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<sup>91</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 18.

<sup>92</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:103.

<sup>93</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 287.



persons from afar and not expose themselves to attack.<sup>94</sup> Indians developed snowshoes to assist them in moving through the high snow and moccasins to move quietly through the underbrush. The Indians also developed lightweight and warm clothing that was subdued in color to assist them in hiding from game, but also allowed them to move quietly when needed. Self-reliance and the ability to repair their bow, make arrows, make basic field repairs to their muskets, cloths and even cast lead ammunition when needed were also critical skills taught at a young age. In total, the Native American fighters that the French and English faced in the Seven Year's War often had a decade or more of experience in moving and shooting in the frontier forests of North America.

The Native American view on hunting also influenced their view on warfare. Since the skills were so similar and the techniques transferrable from war to hunting, the Indians saw little distinction between the two at an individual level. Children were taught how to shoot and move at a young age and were proficient with their equipment. As such, the harsh discipline and constant drill that typified European armies of the day were not needed among the Native Americans. The Indians also did not possess a distinction between soldiers and civilians during war. All targets were lawful in war and hunting. W. Smith, while traveling with the British Army in the Ohio Country, noted that Native warriors "use the same stratagems and cruelty as against the wild beasts."<sup>95</sup>

Native American wartime leadership differed from peace time leadership. The tribes of the Upper Country and New England often had two leadership structures, peace and war. The peace structure consisted of a *sachem*, or paramount chief, as a leader of the

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<sup>94</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 19.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

Indian group. He led the group through a council of advisors comprised of other sachems that each had their own supporters within the tribe. The lead *sachem*'s power was not absolute and he ruled through persuasion and oratory skills. Other sachems could leave if they did not agree with his decisions. He would negotiate treaties and alliances with Europeans and other Indian groups, as well as domestic decisions for the group. These alliances could hold great prestige for the sachem if they were successful. Their impact and the empowering of key sachems would hold great influence and, if influenced with gifts and support, could pay huge dividends for the French cause. At the end of the 1701, the Huron Sachem Kondiaronk, a *sachem* heavily supported by French gifts and support against his Iroquois Indians, solidified the obligations of the French to his people and gave a rousing speech that convinced the leaders of the Iroquois, Ottawa, and over 40 other Indian nations to agree to peace and end the various wars that had lasted for nearly the entirety of the 17th century.<sup>96</sup>

When negotiations failed, war became the only recourse. The Indians would then turn to a war chief, separate from the sachem. These war chiefs were typically younger than the sachems that presided over the councils, though in some cases they could be the same individual. The war chief was typically a warrior who had great experience fighting and was a successful leader and tactician.<sup>97</sup> Indian warriors would not fight for a war chief who suffered too many casualties or defeats. The young war chief kept discipline in his ranks through success, and by sharing glory and spoils with the warriors who followed him. Their own reputations increased through success and they could become

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<sup>96</sup>Skinner, *The Upper Country*, 1120.

<sup>97</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 29.

respected leaders and pass to the role of sachem, when they became too old for war.<sup>98</sup>

Grey Lock is an example of a war chief of the Abnaki people. During the height of his time as war chief, during the Grey Lock War, his war party had attracted many members of neighboring tribes, including some that had historically been enemies. It grew to consist of members from both the Abnaki and Iroquois nations who had recently made peace in 1701. He remained very prominent due to his success and defied a peace treaty in Boston that had been negotiated between the Indians, the French, and the British. It was only through the weariness of his fighters that he stopped his fight against the Europeans.<sup>99</sup>

The Indians' view of bravery and warfare also influenced the skulking way of war. The skulking way was fought by groups of individuals on personal "endeavors," and the opportunities for personal reputation, prestige and a chance to showcase individual skills were high. Because of this, Indians were often accused of being brave to the point of recklessness, but it pushed them to perform harder, faster, and better than their fellow warriors and the group benefitted overall. Indians followed successful war chiefs and the strongest warriors in the tribe. At the strategic level, Indian alliances were only as good as the other party was perceived to be strong and capable of meeting the Indians interests. There was no shame in backing out of an agreement with a person who no longer was strong enough to meet the tribe's interests. The French would learn this fact when their Indian allies began to withdraw from their alliances as the British began to dominate the Seven Years' War. Individually, the Indians showed little respect for enemies who

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<sup>98</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 405.

<sup>99</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*: 3:113.

surrender and were taken prisoner though their own volition. This showed a lack of individual bravery and they held no respect for them as warriors.<sup>100</sup>

The Native Americans also viewed war in a way that contradicted the European view of national war. Indians saw war a personal endeavor. Bernd Horn writes that the Indians saw wars an opportunity to gain individual prestige and honor by participating in battles and raids. There was honor in success shown by loot, scalps, and prisoners.<sup>101</sup> Unlike Europeans for whom war was a national act and controlled by the state, the Indians had a dual concept of national war and personal war. National war was a war that was declared by the sachems and sanctioned by the elders of the tribe. Personal war is war that an individual could embark upon for personal reasons to avenge a slight or death of a family or group member. Individuals were encouraged to engage in individual war as a means of gaining personal honor and fame through raiding of one's opponents. To complicate the concept of personal war, the Indians did not see a difference between killing on the battlefield and murder and did not understand the European distinction between the two. A death in battle demanded as much vengeance as a death off the field.<sup>102</sup> This led to many cultural differences and loss of rapport between the French and the Natives such as what happened after the surrender of Fort William Henry. As discussed in chapter 5, the French did not allow the Indians a chance to avenge their own comrades' deaths in battle or to attain plunder and prisoners as payment.

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<sup>100</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 23.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, 31.

<sup>102</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 34.

The Indians' moral attitudes towards warfare and the treatment of prisoners dictated how they approached war. Indians defined success differently than Europeans. They defined tactical victory as the defeat of the opponent, few casualties, and more importantly, by the amount of scalps, plunder, and prisoners seized. This meant that Indians did not fight a terrain focused battle.<sup>103</sup> Because of this, Indians often followed military necessity rather than the niceties of honor on the field Europeans held. Indians did not seek a fair fight that could jeopardize lives of prisoners and Indians, and also risked the life of the warrior himself. Risk had to be worth the material and personal reward.<sup>104</sup>

This view of warfare, coupled with the hunting culture of the Natives, led to an often misunderstood treatment of prisoners by the Indians. Indians made the taking of prisoners the number one priority in battle. To most groups, especially the Iroquois, prisoners were a form of population control. Prisoners taken during raids were often integrated into the community as fully-adopted members of the groups. Through this adoption ritual, they were made part of the tribe to make up for losses in women or men. This practice was extended, though rarely, to European prisoners. Europeans were usually ransomed back to their colonies, if they were not killed outright. This meant that prisoners were treated well until a decision was made as to their fate. Once this decision was made they could then be subjected to cruel torture, such as beating and being burned alive regardless of age or gender. This treatment was linked back to the Indian's view of

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<sup>103</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 50.

<sup>104</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 25.

warfare as hunting. The treatment of prisoners was akin to their treatment of animals. Indian cosmology also made no distinction between animals and people and the torture fulfilled a ritualistic aspect to please ancestors. Revenge for perceived slights most likely also played a role in their fate. Contrary to some accounts, Indians rarely sexually assaulted female prisoners as that could mix the woman's spirit and dilute the warrior's own manhood. Europeans did their best to prevent these "atrocities" but their failure to understand the cultural implications of this prevention often led to a failure of rapport and a loss of respect and support of the local Indian groups. To deprive the Indians of prisoners or decry their treatment would be detrimental to the relations of Europeans and their allies. The French even went so far as to buy back British prisoners for 25–50 British pounds to prevent their torture and executions after the "massacre" after the fall of Ft William Henry. This caused a catastrophic loss of rapport with the Indian allies.<sup>105</sup>

No discussion of the Indians' conduct of warfare in the Seven Years' War would be complete without touching upon the practice of scalping. According to J. Axtell of the University of William and Mary, evidence now indicates that scalping had been conducted prior to the arrival of Europeans. It was a means of showing that a warrior had been successful in his personal war and his raiding as a means of offering proof of that success. Woman's scalps were especially prized as they showed that a warrior had been able to penetrate deep into enemy territory.<sup>106</sup> Europeans however were guilty of rapidly expanding its use through the offering of bounties. What had once been a medium of

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>106</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 30.

showing prowess on the battlefield now became a way to make money. This drove an increase of Indian on Indian violence as bounties as high as 35 British pounds for a male scalp and 10 pounds for a woman's.<sup>107</sup> During the period covered in this study, scalping was still very much in practice and an essential part of proving a warrior's prowess and skill.

The strategy behind the Indians' wars was a very different kind than the Europeans were used to. The Indians did not fight in campaigns based on seizing territory. They fought for various reasons, such as economic boons, revenge, prisoners, loot, and, more importantly, to secure their autonomy. Regardless of the objectives, the Indians did not take and hold land as the Europeans did. Instead they conducted raids to seize prisoners and absorb the other group into their tribe. Once successful they would retreat back to their villages to plan the next raid. Captain Louis Antoine de Bougainville, an aide to the Marquis du Montcalm remarked, "to go through the woods, to take a few scalps, to return at full speed once the blow was struck, that is what they called war, a campaign, success, victory."<sup>108</sup> The Indians dominated their neighbors rather than conquering them outright. The total destruction of the opponent's force was never the goal. Rather, the Indians fought a limited war of attrition. Any means necessary could be used to meet their ends; if fighting could be avoided, then alliances with other tribes and the Imperial powers could be used to secure their interests. Indians would back out of alliances and retreat from battles if the outcome would no longer benefit them. This made them dubious allies at best according to the European powers. Once war was decided

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>108</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 251.

upon this strategy would then be enacted through the two key tactical actions of the skulking way of war, the raid, and the ambush.

The raid was a staple of the small-scale limited warfare practiced by the Native Americans. It allowed the Indians to achieve their objectives in a single blow and to retreat back to a safe haven.<sup>109</sup> Indians would raid villages for prisoners, kill enemy warriors, take plunder, or destroy enemy supplies. Indians would also raid settlements to capture enemy supplies. Due to technological and resource limitations, Indians could not produce gunpowder. As such, many raids in the 17th and 18th centuries were to capture gunpowder as well as resupply their stocks of muskets and ammunition. More important to the overall strategy of the Indians, the raid sowed terror in the enemy. During the 18th century, raids against Virginia and Pennsylvania colonies forced the governors there to raise over 100 militia companies to protect the frontier.<sup>110</sup> This fixed those forces in the existing colonies and prevented the expansion of the Europeans into Indian territory.

In execution the Indians were meticulous in their planning. The Indians sent reconnaissance parties in advance and to the flank of the main war party. They travelled great distances and moved at night to avoid detection. Once they arrived near their objective, they would establish a base and conduct a final reconnaissance of their target. They would return to the base area and finalize their plan and conduct rehearsals. Samuel Champlain in his travels with the Algonquian and Huron noted that they made mockups of the target on the ground in a space of “five or six square feet” and “the chief shows them (the warriors) the rank and order in which they are to observe when they fight with

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<sup>109</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 183.

<sup>110</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 45.



the enemy.”<sup>111</sup> Prior to execution, an ambush would be established to attack any relief effort that could come to the target’s relief. Raids were timed to maintain surprise utilizing terrain, time, light, and weather to advantage. The attacks were then executed with maximum violence. The preferred tactic was to infiltrate the village at night, if fortified, and slaughter the inhabitants by hand to hand combat if possible. If at daylight, the Indians would attack people outside the protective lines of the village and kill or capture them. They would then use muskets to attack people they could not reach and attempt to gain entry to the settlement proper. If they could not, they would retreat with their spoils. Indians, however, would rarely conduct a direct siege on a fortified village and would often resort to ruses to gain entry. In 1763 at Fort Michilimackinac, the attacking Indians pretended to be seeking a lacrosse ball that had been launched over the walls of the fort.<sup>112</sup>

The second hallmark of the skulking way of war and one most likely to be encountered was the ambush. Europeans thought the ambush was unfair; however it was a perfect fit for the Native way of war.<sup>113</sup> Ambushes were developed out of hunting game and were designed to inflict the maximum amount of damage on the foe in the least amount of time and retreat back to a safe haven.<sup>114</sup> They were the main form of engagement sought by the Native Americans. They often used it as an economy of force measure to attack a larger force and attrit them as the force advanced towards the Indian’s

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<sup>111</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 445.

<sup>112</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 23.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>114</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 409.

village and Indians would often retreat in order to gain a more advantageous position from which to ambush an attacking force. Colonel Henry Bouquet stated that the “Indian tactics in battle could be reduced to three principles, surround the enemy, fight in scattered formation, and always give ground when attacked.”<sup>115</sup>

As with the raid, the execution of the ambush was just as well developed. The ambush was planned to take place at a point that consisted of natural blocking terrain features, such as cliffs, rivers, lakes, etc. that would prevent the enemy force from retreating. If no obstacle was present, the Indians would encircle their enemy as soon as possible. For larger forces, human decoys would be used to lure the target into the kill zone. The Indian force would then position themselves in cover and concealed positions where they could inflict the maximum amount of damage in the first shot. Indian warriors would aim at specific targets, officers and NCOs, to start and seek to kill that individual.<sup>116</sup> Once the initial attack of one or two shots was over, Indians would leave their covered positions and would attack the survivors in melee with clubs, tomahawks, and knives. To make themselves look more ferocious and intimidate their foes, they would paint themselves different colors in different designs and utilize bird feathers along with war cries. They would then scalp the dead for the bounty and secure any prisoners for movement back to their village. For example, in 1645, an Algonquin force of six warriors ambushed a force of 16 Iroquois in canoes, killing seven in the first volley. The surviving Iroquois moved to land the canoes down the shore from the initial ambush, only to find that the Algonquins had displaced and set up a second ambush to attack them

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<sup>115</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” 37.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 30.

where they had landed. The Algonquins attacked and the remaining Iroquois were killed.<sup>117</sup> The violence and surprise nature of these attacks were condemned by the Europeans as “cowardice”<sup>118</sup> and butchery, but none denied their effectiveness in achieving their objectives.

The introduction of Europeans, their philosophies, and their technology to North America altered the tactics and techniques of Native American warfare in the 17th century. These changes, solidified in the 18th century, did not occur in a manner that the Europeans intended, that is to make the Indians fight a more European style battle. The Indians instead took the European philosophy for war and technology and adapted it to their own fighting style, often employing the weapons fare more effectively than the Europeans themselves.<sup>119</sup> The Europeans had three lasting effects on Native American warfare. The first was the concept of war on a national scale, the second was firearms and trade goods, and the third was disease.

The traditional view of warfare in North America is that the brutality visited upon colonists was a factor of native war and native war alone. Native Americans typically fought limited wars for limited objectives. Their objective was the taking of prisoners and loot and retreating back to their own village. The European concept of warfare was one of seizing ground and holding it while annihilating the enemy.<sup>120</sup> The Indians first brush

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<sup>117</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, III:37.

<sup>118</sup>Horn, “Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760,” 49.

<sup>119</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 1409.

<sup>120</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 34.

with this total war was during the Pequot War of the 17th century. In 1637 British forces destroyed a Pequot village in Connecticut along the Mystic River. Not only did they destroy the village, but killed all the women and children prior to putting the village to the torch. This affected the allied Indians so significantly that they left rather than take part in the massacre.<sup>121</sup> This was a direct contradiction to the skulking way of war and its objectives; however it was a clear message to the Indians as to how the Europeans would fight their wars in the future and how they would be treated in future wars between Indians and Europeans. In 100 years of war, the French successfully annihilated over 50 percent of the Iroquois Mohawk population while at the same time allowed the Huron to be culturally and anthropologically driven to extinction in between 1609 and 1701.

The second and arguably most important effect of Europeans on the Native Americans is through the introduction of firearms and other trade goods. Firearms fundamentally changed how the Indians fought. From its introduction in New France in 1609 by Samuel Champlain, the firearm has been a key component of the nature of Indian warfare and its economy. While the Indians largely ignored adaptation of the matchlock because the burning matches gave their positions away at night and to game, they quickly adopted the flintlock musket. This was adapted as a one for one exchange with the bow and arrow weapon systems that were being carried by the Indians. The musket could fire faster, straighter, and had more killing power than an arrow and it could kill a man at longer range. The hunting culture of the Indians merged well with the

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 24.

flintlock. They could shoot quickly at fleeting targets from a variety of positions.<sup>122</sup> The Indians aimed their shots for precise targeting of game and enemy forces. Aimed fire proved to be a great tactical advantage in the forests of North America. The Indians also adopted the musket to the ambushes and raids of the skulking way of war. The Europeans spent most of the 17th century passing laws restricting the sales of muskets and powder to the Indians, but rivalries between the French, English, and Dutch kept the trade alive and by 1701, most of all Indians encountered in the forest were armed. The combination of the Indian, trained from youth for marksmanship and stealth, and the musket made the skulking way of war the effective tactical system on the frontier.<sup>123</sup>

The adaptation of the musket, while making the Indians more deadly and able to defend themselves against the Europeans, also made them dependent on the Europeans. The Europeans were the only people in North America with a consistent supply of gunpowder and spare parts for their muskets. While the Indians could do some minor repairs on their weapons, they could not make gunpowder. This strategic dependency meant that the Indians would always be tied to some sort of alliance system with the Europeans to supply themselves with vital war material.<sup>124</sup>

The last major effect Europeans had on the Native American method of war was through disease. Disease ravaged the population of Indians, reducing their numbers from 75,000 to 35,300, or roughly half, over the 17th century in the areas settled by Europeans.

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<sup>122</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 51.

<sup>123</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*.

<sup>124</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

This disrupted the balance of power in the regions both between Indian groups as well as Indian groups and Europeans. Intertribal warfare became more common as groups attempted to replenish their numbers through raiding and adoption. Indian groups also allied themselves with Europeans to protect themselves and secure their access to resources as both Indians and Europeans moved in to fill the vacuums caused by declining populations. In the end, the majority of the Huron, Algonquin, and Ottawa people allied with the French and the Iroquois Confederacy allied with the English.<sup>125</sup>

The skulking way of war quickly became the most effective tactical system in North America. Both sides actively courted the Indians despite having grave misgivings about torture, scalping, and pillaging after a battle.<sup>126</sup> Louis Antoine de Bougainville, Montcalm's aide-de-camp, even went so far as to say that "One must be a slave to these savages,"<sup>127</sup> in regards to negotiating with them. Their prowess was that essential to war efforts of the Europeans. If they could not be allied with, then they would have to be negotiated to a state of neutrality so as not to face them in battle.<sup>128</sup> Throughout the 17th century the Indians were able to raid the frontiers of Canada, Virginia, and Pennsylvania with impunity.<sup>129</sup> They could not defeat the regular soldiers of Britain and France in open battle, nor could they exploit their tactical success with operational level campaign planning or logistical independence. To that end, the Indians needed the skills of the

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<sup>125</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 569.

<sup>126</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*.

<sup>127</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*.

<sup>128</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760," 55.

<sup>129</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 85.

Europeans. Together, the skulking way of war and the resources and planning of the Europeans could be fully merged into a system that kept the British at arm's length for nine years. That system was *la petite guerre*.<sup>130</sup>

The key to New France's military success during the Indian Wars of the 17th century, and the wars between the British and French Empires in the 18th century, up to the early half of the Seven Years' War, was the method of fighting known as the *la petite guerre*. This small-scale irregular warfare was the employment of the ambush, raid, and terror tactics of the Indians, the skulking way of war, practiced by French militia and *Troops de la Marine* in North America. It was warfare that was a strategy of survival, fought for limited objectives to disrupt enemy offensive actions. It was a key component to the colonies' survival as France was unwilling and unable to supply regular troops to New France for her protection.<sup>131</sup> In the face of unrelenting Indian raids and ambushes in the wars over access to the fur trade, the Canadian colonists adopted the fighting style of the Indians and started to merge it with European planning and technology. By learning from, leading, and utilizing the Indians and their manner of warfare, the colonists became a hybrid force of Indian allies and French militias that secured New France until the surrender of the colony in 1763 after a European style war fought in the latter half of the Seven Years' War.

Several factors combined to create *la petite guerre*. The first were the harsh realities of New France in terms of its location, its resource base, and the attitudes of the French government. The second was the history of the colony that drove the colonists to

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<sup>130</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival."

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

adopt this method of fighting. The North American warfare of the 17th century cemented the need for the colonists to fight in their own defense. These two factors are key to understanding the formation of *la petite guerre*.<sup>132</sup>

The location of New France was a key factor in the adoption of *la petite guerre*. Its location in the New World, far from Europe made resourcing the colonists and troops stationed there difficult. The Canadian leadership realized that it was unlikely that the French government will send troops to garrison the frontier colony. The King of France, Louis XIV, and his government had decided that troops would be sent to garrison the more profitable colonies of the Caribbean and not the frontier colony of New France.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, they would not risk a war with the other European powers that could draw France's troop strength away from the homeland in Europe. This was a result of French military might waning due to the expensive Thirty Years War of the 1600s which had reduced France's ability to project French troops throughout their empire. Any response by French regulars required reinforcement from the Caribbean. This placed the onus of defense on the colonists themselves and their militias who had little training except what they experienced fighting and interacting with the local Indians and through military necessity. This interaction and fighting experience led to the tactics of *la petite guerre*.

The second factor for the adoption of *la petite guerre* was the amount of resources required in the colony for the equipping and training of regular forces. The French Canadians were economically and numerically inferior to the British throughout the

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<sup>132</sup>Bob Bearor, *Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters and the Leaders of New France: 1660-1760*, vol. 1 (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2002).

<sup>133</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 21.



history of their colonies in the New World. In 1687 the British had a 20:1 advantage over the France's population with a staggering 200,000 to 10,000 advantage. This remained consistent and, at the height of both colonies' populations prior to the start of the Seven Years' War, the British population outnumbered the French, 1.5 million to 55,000.<sup>134</sup> Combined with poor agricultural production to support a larger population, this ratio made the utilization of Indians as allies and surrogates as an economy of force measure essential. Canadian warfare would have to be on the cheap and with limited resources; long campaigns and the exploitation of tactical victories were not possible. Survival was the sole objective.<sup>135</sup> The government of New France spent a significant amount of money courting the Indians to fight with and for them as they were now essential to survival of the colony.<sup>136</sup> As more Indians joined the French settlements near missionaries, or traded with the French near frontier forts, the French learned the fishing, trapping, navigating, and other essential skills for survival on the frontier. They also were students of how the Indians conducted warfare and the militias and *Troops de la Marine*, colonial uniformed soldiers, learned the skulking way of war and its application on the frontier.<sup>137</sup>

The attitude of the French government and warfare in the North American theater of the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries also played a part in the adaptation of *la petite guerre*. Warfare on the European continent was on a massive scale compared to the North

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<sup>134</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 133.

<sup>135</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 33.

<sup>136</sup>Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 29.

<sup>137</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 18.

American continent. An engagement near the French village of Malplaquet in 1709 was fought by 190,000. This was more than fought in the entirety of the North American conflicts during King William's War (1689-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), and King George's War (1744-1748) combined.<sup>138</sup> New France was not a theater of note to the French government, nor did they have the material to fully resource warfare there. This meant that wars in North America, particularly for the French, were fought entirely by French Canadian militias, *Troops de La Marine*, and their Indian allies against the far more numerous English militias and their Indian allies. The French forces were not able to make any lasting contributions to the war, except to defend the colony against English incursions until France could negotiate a settlement that would retain the colony and its territory.<sup>139</sup> Like the lack of resources, the lack of importance placed on New France and the diversion of resources to fight on the European continent drove the Canadians to adopt *la petite guerre* in an attempt disrupt larger British forces before they could invade the colony.<sup>140</sup>

The need to adopt *la petite guerre* is also a result of the military history of the colony. From Champlain's first interactions with the Indians in 1609, the colony began a nearly 150 years of constant conflict between either the Indians or the British and their Indian allies.<sup>141</sup> French military history in North America can be characterized into two major areas that taught the Canadians the value of *la petite guerre*: the wars with the

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<sup>138</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 132.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>140</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 30.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

Iroquois in the 17th century including the only employment of French army regulars, or *Troops de Terre*, in North America until the Seven Years' War, and the frontier raiding of the Imperial wars of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These conflicts provided the breadth of experience and the justification behind adopting *la petite guerre*.

The history of war between the Canadians of New France and the Iroquois began as early as the colony itself, when Champlain killed two Iroquois chiefs with one shot of his harquebus at a battle with his allied Huron and Algonquin near Ticonderoga, New York in 1609.<sup>142</sup> This conflict would continue until a final peace in 1701 and was fought, as intendant of New France Jean Talon stated in 1667, "no more good faith than between the most ferocious animals"<sup>143</sup> Champlain had allied the French settlements with the Huron, Abenakis, Algonquin, Huron, and other tribes in the area to ensure trading and the economic survival of the new colony. In exchange, these Indians asked for the assistance from the French with their conflicts with the Iroquois. From 1610-1615, Champlain and the allied tribes were successful in routing a 100+man Iroquois war party from the Richelieu Valley and the surrounding areas near modern day Montreal, Quebec. The Iroquois had "not recovered from their first terror of the arquebuse."<sup>144</sup> That would soon change. In 1615 Champlain assisted his allies in an invasion of the Iroquois territory. This attack failed to capture a single Iroquois village and they were repulsed after suffering heavy casualties in an attack on a fortified Iroquois village. The air of invulnerability that

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<sup>142</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:258.

<sup>143</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 30.

<sup>144</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:262-265.

Champlain brought with him had ended and the ability of the French and their Indian allies to disrupt and prevent Iroquois raiders had ended as well.<sup>145</sup>

From 1615-1627 Iroquois raids on the missions and settlements of New France increased steadily and the Iroquois could raid with impunity along the frontier. They focused their attacks on the St. Lawrence valley settlements and prevented any meaningful expansion of the colony or fur trading. Quebec's population still remained low, with approximately 60-81 colonists and only 17 cultivated acres. In 1630, with the population of only 100, Champlain and his allies again attempted to go to war with the Iroquois with disastrous results. The French learned that the skulking way of war was a war of exhaustion and one that the Indians would eventually win if things went unchecked. In 1649 the Huron nation was essentially destroyed by the Iroquois and its power base removed from the region.<sup>146</sup> The removal of the key partner from the French fully exposed the French to the Iroquois war parties. Surviving Huron were absorbed into neighboring tribal groups. For 15 years, without benefit of early warning or support, the French remained bottled up in their stockades. They could only move to farm their land when they could mass a large enough group of armed men to scare off the raiders or as a Jesuit missionary stated, "The Iroquois used to keep up closely confined that we did not even dare to till lands that were under the cannon of the forts."<sup>147</sup> These raids gave the Canadians ample opportunity to suffer at the hands of the skulking way of war and to learn its tactics, techniques, and procedures. They absorbed the violence of action the

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<sup>145</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 24.

<sup>146</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 71-74.

<sup>147</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 25.

raids were conducted with and knew that no quarter could be expected and that no individual, man, woman, or child was safe. The Canadians countered when possible with raids of their own and patrols to deter Iroquois raiding parties. When the French government finally committed French regular army soldiers to fight in Canada, the Canadian settlers there would assist through the adaptation and application of the same tactics that had been applied against them.<sup>148</sup>

In 1661 the French government reorganized the government of Quebec in response to the problems with population and the growing Indian threat to the region. They named a veteran soldier as Governor-General, Daniel de Remy, and dispatched 1200 French Regular soldiers of the Carignan-Salieres Regiment from Quadalope under Lieutenant-General Alexandre de Prouville, marquis de Tracy to Canada to either bring the Iroquois to terms or destroy them.<sup>149</sup> Tracy's two expeditions taught the Canadians two things. The first lesson was that regulars could use overwhelming force to defeat the Iroquois in tactical and operational campaigns; however strategic defeat was not possible. Second, it taught them that European army tactics would suffer horrendous casualties in the frontier war against the Indians. Ultimately, the key lesson was that a hybrid force consisting of professional soldiers and capable of fighting the frontier war of the Indians was the best force to defend themselves with.<sup>150</sup>

Tracy's first action was to conduct an assessment of where the Iroquois raiding parties were coming from. As they were coming by way of Lake Chaplain, to the

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>149</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 74.

<sup>150</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 38.

Richelieu River and into the St Lawrence valley, Tracy built four forts along that route to deny the Iroquois access to this line of communication; Fort Sorel where the Richelieu meets the St Lawrence; Fort Chambly near the rapids at the mouth of the river in to Lake Champlain; Fort Theresa at the mouth of the river into Lake Champlain; and Fort St Anne at Ile La Motte near the outlet of Lake Champlain.<sup>151</sup> These forts did not stop the Iroquois raids; instead they altered their landing points and provided early warning for the settlers of impending Iroquois raids and extending the line of defense away from the fertile St Lawrence. The key benefit these forts provided was as a launching point for actions against the Iroquois. The Canadians could finally take the fight to the Indians.<sup>152</sup>

Tracy's first expedition and the first major offensive action against the Iroquois since Champlain's in 1615, departed on 9 January 1666 and consisted of a mixed force of 300 French regulars, 200 Canadians and their Indian allies.<sup>153</sup> This force was largely unsuccessful in bringing the Mohawk to battle and suffered casualties in Mohawk ambushes, losing four French soldiers, and due to the harsh winter conditions, losing 300 soldiers to cold weather injuries. The force travelled from Quebec City through the Richelieu valley and ultimately to Schenectady, New York, a distance of over 359 miles, where they skirmished with an Iroquois trading party, losing ten soldiers. They conducted two patrols around Schenectady and located an Iroquois village that was empty of

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<sup>151</sup>T. Wood Clarke, *The Bloody Mohawk* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), 68.

<sup>152</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 32.

<sup>153</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:1244-1245.

warriors. The French burned the village's supplies and returned to Canada over the next two weeks being harassed by Iroquois ambushes but without losing soldiers.<sup>154</sup>

This campaign taught the French many lessons. The French regulars, used to warfare in the spring campaign seasons of Europe, were unable to cope with the harsh conditions of travelling with heavy loads over rough terrain using snowshoes and were not equipped for the frigid cold. The Canadians on the other hand had learned from their native allies and were properly equipped and were rugged travelers. Second was that a European force could not move in the forest without coming under attack from Indians. They needed the security of soldiers skilled in forest warfare.<sup>155</sup> The leader of the operation, Daniel de Remy de Courcelle, the new governor of New France, was so impressed with the Canadian's ability to operate in the forest that he used them as vanguard, rearguard, and flankers for the security of his force. He also mandated that any action by French regulars must take a contingent of Canadians. Expected engagements were skirmishes for which the French regulars were not trained. The Canadians, used to forest engagements and guerilla tactics, inflicted the majority of the casualties on the Indians. The volley fire of the regulars was not as effective as the aimed shots of the Indians and Canadians. More importantly, the raid showed the Iroquois that they were not safe in their own territory and that attack could come at any time of year.<sup>156</sup>

Tracy dispatched a second expedition in October 1666 in response to Iroquois raids during the spring and summer months while at the same time they conducted peace

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<sup>154</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 74.

<sup>155</sup>Clarke, *Bloody Mohawk*, 70.

<sup>156</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 35.

talks with the French. This time Tracy sought to use overwhelming force against the Iroquois to bring them to the peace table. He departed with a force of 600 French regulars, 600 Canadians, and 100 Indian allies. The French were again impressed with the ability of the Canadians to conduct themselves in the forests and as reconnaissance force in support of the main body of French soldiers. The force sailed through Lake Champlain to Lake George and up the Mohawk River to the main support area of the Iroquois. Rather than face Tracy's force, the Iroquois abandoned their forts and moved further up river and away from the French. The French burned four of the Iroquois' main villages and enough supplies, crops, and foodstuffs to "nourish all of Canada for two years."<sup>157</sup> This forced the Iroquois to come to the negotiation table and sign a peace treaty with the French in 1667.

Though this victory was a victory for French military might, it did not defeat the Iroquois who would again begin to raid the colony again in the 1680s. The Tracy operations showed the value of regular soldiers; however the French government was unwilling to permanently station soldiers in Canada due to the cost and vulnerability of the Caribbean colonies. The French government devised a plan that encouraged any soldiers from the Carignan-Salieres to settle in Canada as the unit was redeployed to France in 1668 through payments. Four hundred soldiers settled and became the independent companies of the *Troops de la Marine*.<sup>158</sup> They formed a nucleus of formal military experience to add to the Canadian militia. This experience and training formed the last part of *la petite guerre*, French regular soldiers, led by Canadian officers

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<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>158</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 11.



experienced in the Indian way of war, and augmented by Canadian militia and Indian allies. With the departure of Tracy's *Troops de Terre*, France would not deploy regulars to North America again until 1755.<sup>159</sup> This meant that defense of the colony again fell on to the under-resourced and undermanned Canadian militia and newly formed *Troops de la Marine*. When the Iroquois began to raid the colony again in the 1680s and the Imperial wars of the 18th Century began, the Canadians were much more proficient at defending themselves and taking the fight to the enemy through *la petite guerre*. As Jacques de Meulles stated in 1683, "They have two thousand six hundred soldiers, and are well seasoned for war. But our youth is hardened and quite used to the woods. Besides we make war better than they do."<sup>160</sup>

From 1689-1748 the colony of New France was involved in the North American theater of the wars between England and France in the European continent collectively known as the Imperial Wars. These wars, King William's War (1689-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), and King George's War (1744-1748), would serve as an opportunity for the Canadians to perfect *la petite guerre* and would be a preview of the first half of the Seven Years' War. As this theater was the ancillary theater in the wars, no regular troops were dispatched to fight on the continent. Instead, these wars were fought by the militias and Indian allies on both sides. While the Canadians possessed the better fighter, a man who in "the forest warfare of skirmish and surprise there were few to match him," the advantage lay with the British who had the superior resources and fighting men. Though as most historians agree and Francis Parkman states, "The New

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<sup>159</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 43.

<sup>160</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 29.

England Man was the same material that Cromwell formed his invincible “Ironsides” but had little forest experience.”<sup>161</sup>

During these wars *la petite guerre* was practiced to great effect, however the fact that the war would be fought for survival also was maintained. Canada simply did not have the manpower to seize the strategic initiative and exploit a tactical victory. At the start of King William’s War in 1690, New France went on the offensive. Frontenac, the new governor of Canada sent three raiding forces deep into English territory to discourage any attacks on New France and to secure the neutrality or alliances of Indians in the area through a show of strength.<sup>162</sup> The Indians of North America often sided on the side who had the most promise of victory. The three forces, all mixed forces consisting of *Troops de La Marine*, Canadian militia, and allied Indians, mostly Abnaki, targeted Fort Loyal in Portland, Maine, Salmon Falls in New Hampshire, and Schenectady, New York in the dead of winter when the English thought they were safe. All of these attacks were successful. In the case of Fort Loyal and Salmon Falls, both surrendered in exchange for safety. After they had been captured, the men, women, and children were handed over to the Indians, tortured, and killed.

As previously mentioned, the Indians fought for prisoners and spoils. To deny them this would have lost the respect of the Indians at a time when they were needed the most. In the town of Schenectady the French and Indians infiltrated the town and simultaneously attacked and killed all the inhabitants minus the Iroquois trading party that was there at the same time. The British were incensed by this violence and retaliated

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<sup>161</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:1380.

<sup>162</sup>Clarke, *Bloody Mohawk*, 96-98.

with raids of their own into Canada.<sup>163</sup> Most of these raids were defeated by French and Indian allies ambushing and disrupting these attacks, however a few managed to penetrate these defenses and attack French settlements near Montreal. When the Peace of Ryswick came in 1697, the frontier was largely unchanged and the Canadians had practiced the strategy and tactics of *la petite guerre* to keep Canada safe from invasion.<sup>164</sup>

In 1693, Frontenac took his forces to war against the English allies, the Iroquois. In three years he succeeded in conducting deep long distance raids utilizing mixed forces that destroyed three Iroquois villages in 1693 and two more villages in 1696. From 1697–1699 these mixed forces continued their destruction of Iroquois raiding war parties, taking more than seventy casualties per war party destroyed, by launching offensive actions from the forts that guarded the Canadian frontier. The French were also able to penetrate deeply into Iroquois territory again and razed the Iroquois fortifications and home settlements. These stunning blows, coupled with the neutrality of the English due to the treaties that ended King William’s War, forced the Iroquois to the peace table that culminated with the peace treaty signed in 1701 at Montreal. This peace secured Iroquois neutrality until the Seven Years’ War.<sup>165</sup>

Queen Anne’s War was mostly a repeat of King William’s War. *La petite guerre* was refined and practiced by the French continuing to raid British settlements. This time, they took care to avoid the Iroquois territory in the Mohawk River valley and confined

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>164</sup>Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” 32.

<sup>165</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 150.

their raids to New England.<sup>166</sup> A particularly deadly raid typified *la petite guerre*. In the dead of winter 1704, covering a distance of over 500 miles, a force of 50 Canadians and 200 Indian allies attacked Deerfield, Massachusetts. The British again believed themselves to be protected due to the season and had little in the way of defense of the settlement. The result was 180 of the 250 population was killed or captured and half of the town was burned. *La petite guerre* had struck a devastating blow.<sup>167</sup> However, this would be the only real attack of note. The French continued to raid the frontier settlements of New England while the English militias attempted to defend themselves. Attempts by the British to raid Canadian settlements ended in confusion or defeat at the hands of French ambushes due to the British colonies' inability to coordinate and work together. The British navy and army attempted to take Quebec with 55 ships and 5,300 men and failed, losing 900 men and nine ships to wrecks caused by fog and storms near the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River.<sup>168</sup> This ended their furthest incursion into New France. The Peace of Utrecht (1713) brought an end to the war and true peace for the Anglo-French conflict in North America for 30 years, although for allied Indians of the French, the war was not over and war chiefs, like the Grey Lock, would continue to raid New England for their own reasons.<sup>169</sup>

During King George's War, the French again practiced *la petite guerre* to frightening effect. Once war was declared in 1744, the French opened with a devastating

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<sup>166</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

<sup>167</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 155-158.

<sup>168</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

<sup>169</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:113.

act of *la petite guerre* by raiding the towns of Saratoga and Hoosic in New York. Over 27 raids were so successful that over 100 prisoners were taken, all of the houses and crops were burned and citizens had abandoned the colony north of Albany.<sup>170</sup> Any counter raid was either ambushed by the French and Indians or never sighted Canadian or Canadian settlements. As one English observer stated, “The only Englishman to have sighted a French settlement during the course of the war had either been a prisoner or under a banner of truce.”<sup>171</sup> In the east, the French launched a daring raid on Cans, Nova Scotia. The French successfully raided and captured the settlement that was lost in the Treaty of Utrecht. The French attempted to follow up this success and in retaliation the English captured the strategic fort of Louisburg. This was the only real victory for the English and tactically the war was a victory for the French having fended off any invasion of Canada proper and any retaliatory attacks in the Vermont-New York Theater.<sup>172</sup> *La petite guerre* was a stunning success achieving great results considering the fact that the French were outnumbered 1.5 million to 55,000. At this point the Canadians had gained experience in *la petite guerre* and considered themselves to be a challenge tactically for the English or Indians they would face on the field of battle. This would benefit them in the coming conflict with the British, although it would not be as beneficial to them once the conflict was turned in to a European conflict.

The strategy of *la petite guerre* was formed around the Canadian’s particular strategic situation. The territorial span of New France at the beginning of the Seven

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<sup>170</sup>Clarke, *Bloody Mohawk*, 125.

<sup>171</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 91.

<sup>172</sup>Clarke, *Bloody Mohawk*, 126.

Years' War spread from the Saint Lawrence River in the east to Lake Superior in the west and down the Mississippi River to Louisiana. With a population of only 55,000, *la petite guerre* was designed to grant Canada the ability to project more power than its population and military resources allowed. Bernd Horn puts it clearly when he states "it was a strategy designed from a position of weakness." Its means was not to seize territory or to destroy the enemy's army. It was designed to sow terror by attacking the enemy's population year round and deprive them of the will to fight. It was also designed to disrupt large forces and prevent them from massing for an invasion. If the British were too busy defending their frontier they could not invade Canada. Governor Vaudreuil, who would use the strategy to great effect during the Seven Years' War, said that "nothing is more calculated to discourage the people of these English colonies and to make them wish for a return to peace."<sup>173</sup> *La petite guerre* was designed as a low budget, minimal resource, guerrilla style warfare. The French were able to use it to conduct raids and spoiling attacks into enemy territory from a series of fortifications along the frontier located at key locations, such as Fort Niagara, Little Niagara, and Petit Rapide on Lake Ontario, which allowed access into and out of New France.<sup>174</sup> By monitoring these lines of communication, the Canadians could attack a force that was emerging or ambush passing war parties. These forts were key in maintaining the key social, political, and economic links to the local native populations who could also provide early warning extending the reach of the French as well as extending and exposing the lines of communication of the invading forces. These Indian allies were essential in providing the

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<sup>173</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 30-33.

<sup>174</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 95.

manpower to make up for the lack of French soldiers needed to fight *la petite guerre*.<sup>175</sup> These Indians, their methods of warfare, and the theory of terror to dishearten the enemy would be echoed in the tactics of *la petite guerre* as well.

Much like the strategy, the tactics of *la petite guerre* emphasized terror and surprise. The tactics of *la petite guerre* were nothing more than the Indian's skulking tactics of raids and ambushes coupled with more detailed planning on an operational level to link these actions into a campaign plan. They took the Indian way of war and applied European planning to it. In King George's War the raids in the Vermont-New York Theater were able to fix the militias of those two states in place at the same time a raid in Nova Scotia took place to harass British troops there.<sup>176</sup> Unlike their European counterparts, the Canadians practiced marksmanship and took aimed shots at specific targets. Unique to the Canadians is the ability to develop tactics combining the raid and ambush tactics of the Indians while augmenting them by overcoming their hesitation to attack fixed sites.

They coupled these tactics with an essential part of any action that is conducted by a numerically inferior force, speed and violence of action. The attacking force must move quickly and overwhelm the enemy with sheer raw violence or the superior numbers will eventually dominate. This is a technique still taught to modern army organizations in their infantry schools.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>176</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*.

<sup>177</sup>Bob Bearor, *Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters and the Leaders of New France: 1660-1760* vol. 2 (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007), 37.

An illustration of these tactics coupled with the violence of action, indeed the whole of *la petite guerre* concept, was a raid on Fort Clinton in Orange Country, New York on 30 June 1747 by St Luc de la Corne. The French force consisted of 20 French *Troops de la Marine* and 200 Indian allies. The fort was defended by over 400 British soldiers. Most of the Indians refused to attack a fixed position. Instead St Luc designed a ruse to draw out the defenders. Starting from a position a little over a mile away, he moved forward and established an ambush in the woods near the fort and had several Indians who were present fire their muskets at the fort. When the British returned fire the Indians pretended to run away acting as if they had been wounded or were scared off. As he predicted, the British sallied 120 soldiers to pursue the Indians. When the British were out of musket range from the fort but still within sight, St Luc sprung his ambush. The force fired one full fusillade and then without reloading attacked the British with tomahawks and knives. In the end they took 40 prisoners and 28 scalps. Only 25 returned to the fort. The British would later call St Luc the “Bloody Morning Scout.” This ambush was violent and succeeded in demoralizing the British into staying in the fort, which allowed the French freedom of maneuver through the area. It also showed the British that the French could strike wherever and whenever they wanted. This caused the British to send larger forces into the area and prevented them from massing for an invasion of Canada.<sup>178</sup>

The mixed force represented above was a key component to the success of *la petite guerre*. It was comprised of four parts, Canadian or French officers, *Troops de la*

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 37-39.



*Marine*, Canadian militia, and Indian allies.<sup>179</sup> A force typically was led by one or more officers, and formed around a nucleolus of 10-20 *Troops de la Marine*, a similar number of militia and a slightly larger number of native allies. This could be subdivided down into smaller organizations to control a larger force or individual pieces. It was common for a force of just *Troops de la Marines* and native allies to conduct operations. Although each of these were effective on their in their own right, together they were force that no continental force, Colonial or Indian, could match in battle.<sup>180</sup>

The force was led by trained officers that were either Canadian or French born officers that were enticed to settle in the colonies. The French government handed out payments as incentives for French officers and military personnel to serve and live in the colonies rather than station soldiers there permanently.<sup>181</sup> These officers were absorbed into the colonial culture and readily adopted by the Canadians. Unlike their English regular counterparts, these officers were involved in nearly constant frontier war that exposed them to the Indian way of war from their arrival all the way to the beginning of the Seven Years' War. At the start of the war, some officers such as St Luc de la Corne had been actively fighting against the Iroquois and Fox Indians since 1732. This meant he had 15 years of experience in *la petite guerre* when he mounted his raid on Fort Clinton in 1747.<sup>182</sup> Additionally these officers were key in manning and running of frontier forts. They were on the front line of managing the relations with the Indian allies on the borders

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<sup>179</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 1.

<sup>180</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 35.

<sup>181</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*.

<sup>182</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 2:35.

of the frontier and containing any unrest while keeping British influence away from French Indian allies. Their experience in these relations was critical to keeping Indian allies happy and shaping their interests to match those of the French.<sup>183</sup>

The second part of this force was the *Troops de la Marine*. These soldiers were trained professional soldiers that had been recruited in France by the Ministry of the Marine by offering incentives to French soldiers to settle in the colonies. They were charged with protecting crown property and acting as regular soldiers should they be needed to fight a conflict. They were independent of the army and served at the direction of the Governor-General of New France. They were organized into companies of about 100-120 men each and served throughout the frontier. Each company was led by a captain, with two lieutenants, two ensigns, and two cadets. The enlisted soldiers comprised of two sergeants, two corporals, and the rest were privates. Sometimes there would only be an officer or NCO together with three to four soldiers manning a fort. At the larger forts, like Detroit, a full company could be stationed. As with the officers, these men were involved in the frontier style of warfare from the time they arrived at the garrison until the start of the Seven Years' War and some of the could have over thirty years of experience in *la petite guerre* when the war started.<sup>184</sup>

The third element of the force was the Canadian militia. These were volunteer organizations that were comprised of local settlers and trappers, the *coeurs de bois*, which would fight as needed for the colonies' and their settlement's defense. While these men were not fully trained soldiers their significant experience defending against Indian raids

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<sup>183</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 110.

<sup>184</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 25-31.

and surviving in the wilderness made them naturals at the frontier way of warfare. They performed very well in combat and Montcalm commended their action to Governor Vaudreuil after the battle of Carillon by saying, “The colonial troops and the Canadians have caused us great regret that there were not in greater number.”<sup>185</sup> Quite simply the Canadian militia was the most experienced militia in frontier warfare and more trained than his counterpart in the British colonies.<sup>186</sup>

The fourth part of the force was the native allies. These were often the most important and most numerous portion of the force. They saw themselves as allies and not members of the force. As such, great care had to be taken when dealing with them to maximize their effectiveness and to keep them involved in the fight. Though they could be fickle and leave if the risk was too high, or if they perceived that there was no chance of plunder or prisoners, there was no other force as skilled in frontier warfare or with better knowledge of the terrain. Most importantly their numbers were essential to the French in order to minimize greater strength of the British as much as possible. French survival depended on the Indians being a member of their forces.<sup>187</sup>

*La petite guerre* was a system of war fighting that was essential to the French survival and expansion in North America. Its origins were nested in the harsh reality of poor resources and the fact that France was unable to dedicate regular troops to the protection of its colony. Without this clever combination of native tactics applied with the concept of European operational planning, France would have been defeated long before

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<sup>185</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>186</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:1125.

<sup>187</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

the Seven Years' War since it was vastly outnumbered by both the hostile Iroquois nations and British colonies to the south. Its very survival depended on allying with the Indians and learning the way they fought

The strategy of using raids and ambushes to sow terror throughout the British and Indian colonies was extremely effective and allowed New France to attain the strategic goal of survival through purely tactical means. It defeated the Iroquois nation in a war of exhaustion that lasted over 100 years and kept the English from mounting a successful invasion of Canada over three wars.<sup>188</sup> It was so successful in fixing British forces in British controlled territory through long distance winter raids that the governors of Virginia and Pennsylvania each raised over 1,000 men purely for the defense of the colonies.<sup>189</sup>

*La petite guerre* was not learned overnight but perfected through 150 years of consistent military action and exposure to Indian warfare. In the end it was a devastating way of warfare that the British regular army was not used to. Defeats of larger regular forces, such as Major General Edward Braddock's at Fort Duquesne in 1755, showed the method would be a force to be reckoned. War in North America would be a long and bitter struggle that had the first half of the Seven Years' War being to the French advantage.<sup>190</sup>

Irregular warfare was a way of life for the Indians and European colonists of the 17th and 18th centuries in North America. For the Indians, the skulking way of war was a

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<sup>188</sup>Clarke, *Bloody Mohawk*.

<sup>189</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 37.

<sup>190</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

natural way of fighting that adapted their hunting culture, terrain, and world view into a method of warfare that accentuated speed, surprise, and violence of action into a cohesive fighting system. It caught the Europeans off guard and shocked them into adapting to a totally new way of fighting that conflicted at the base level with their own outlook on war.<sup>191</sup>

For the badly outnumbered French Canadian colonists in New France, it was essential for their survival that they make friends with the friendly Indian nations of New France and co-opt their way of war.<sup>192</sup> This adaptation into *la petite guerre* and their combined forces of well experienced soldiers and militia members enabled the small number of French colonists to expand their territorial and commercial empire in North America but was dependent on the use of Indian allies to make up for the fact that the Canadians were vastly outnumbered at the outset of the war. The Canadians learned from their Indian allies and *la petite guerre* was key during the Imperial wars of the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>193</sup> Skillful use of *la petite guerre* and the skulking way of war defeated large British forces, terrorized the British settlements and was capable of striking in any season at seemingly any target. These styles of warfare would form the basis of French colonial strategy during the 17th and 18th century as well as their military strategy during the Imperial wars of the early 1700s.<sup>194</sup> This would continue to be the case during the

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<sup>191</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760."

<sup>192</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

<sup>193</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival."

<sup>194</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 1:1125.

Seven Years' War until the introduction of the French Army and Montcalm in 1756.<sup>195</sup>

*La petite guerre* would truly make it a French and Indian War.

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<sup>195</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival."

## CHAPTER 4

### VICTORIES IN *LA PETITE GUERRE*

We was cowards, was, we because we knowed better than to fight Injuns like red-backed ijits across the ocean is used to fight: because we wouldn't stand up rubbin' shoulders like a passel o'sheep and let the red-skins make sieves outen us!<sup>196</sup>

— Tom Faucett, Provincial soldier at the  
Battle of Monongahela

For the entirety of its existence, New France, specifically Canada, has been a colony in conflict. Whether against the Iroquois for almost the entire 17th century or fighting the imperial wars against the British over the undefined borderlands between their colonies, the French colonists in the French and Indian War were no strangers to conflict. As has been discussed, the Canadians met these challenges through *la petite guerre*.<sup>197</sup>

The war was fought starting with the fall of Fort Necessity on 4 July 1754 in Pennsylvania and would be fought by leaders who had been raised in the *Troupes de la Marine*. They had honed their skills in the wars against the Iroquois and the British and most had over ten years of fighting in North America when they met their British counterparts on the fields, trails, and in the forts during the war. The war would not be fought with French troops and experience alone, the French war effort relied upon numerous factors to be successful. It needed solid relations with the Native Americans to

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<sup>196</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid.

provide fighters and intelligence support; it needed soldiers, *Troupes de la Marine*, and it needed a strategy, in this case Vaudreuil's defense forward utilizing *la petite guerre*.<sup>198</sup>

This combination would help the French to dominate the tactical battlefield in the early part of the war, from 1754-1758. These victories were not due to French fighters alone. The key component to their mixed forces that terrorized the farms and frontier of the North American borderlands, as we have seen in chapter 3, was the Native Americans.<sup>199</sup> The Indians allowed the French to even out the disparity in numbers of colonists and military forces between the French and the British in North America. The Indians also provided the French the manpower and expertise to fully exploit the wilderness environment and the tactics of *la petite guerre*. These benefits were seen in almost every French victory of the war. Indians were used as partisans throughout the war in raids and ambushes to disrupt or destroy larger British forces in the wilderness and they were used to shape operations during sieges of fixed fortifications by conducting cordons, reconnaissance, or raids on smaller outposts. They were useful in meeting engagements and battles to defeat British irregular forces.<sup>200</sup>

Though the French and Indian War is rife with examples of the French utilizing their Native American allies to great effect to achieve tactical victories, three stand out as principal examples that are definitive, and clear in their illustration. First, the defeat of Major-General Edward Braddock at Fort Duquesne in 1755 shows the utilization of Indians for the survival of the fort and also their use in defeating a larger British force.

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<sup>198</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 84.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>200</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 175.



Second, their use as shaping operations to facilitate and set conditions for the capture of Fort Oswego, New York in 1756 by combining regular and irregular warfare to achieve operational effects was as important as was their defeat of a British irregular force, the famous Rogers Rangers, at the Battle on Snowshoes near Fort Ticonderoga, New York in 1758.<sup>201</sup>

Following the start of hostilities in North America with the defeat of George Washington at Fort Necessity on 4 July 1754, the French landed another stunning defeat on a numerically superior British force. The defeat of Braddock (1695-1755) one year later was the first major military engagement of British regular forces of the Seven Years' War and a stinging reminder of how the French planned to conduct the war by using the same frontier warfare methods they had in the wars of the early 18th century to counter the British advantage in numbers. How the French and Indians conducted this battle as a mixed force, led by a French officer, to defeat a larger British force would be a preview of the tactics and use of Indian allies that the French would employ throughout the war and would have profound impacts on the Indian-European relationships shaping the war effort on both sides.<sup>202</sup>

After the defeat of Washington, the French and British both took stock of their strategic situations. The French were not prepared for another war and were still heavily in debt after the wars of the early 18th century. While they had a large army, their navy was small in comparison to the British. As result the French government would rather

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<sup>201</sup>Bob Bearor, *The Battle on Snowshoes* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 1997), 47.

<sup>202</sup>Todish, *America's First World War*, 23.

pursue a campaign in Europe to confront England where they had superior numbers. The British would rather fight in North America, where the navy would prevent reinforcements from arriving for the French and they could win. Nevertheless, both sides dispatched troops to North America, the British sent two regiments under Braddock to Virginia, and the French dispatched six regiments to Canada. These six regiments would not take part in the battle, as they arrived in Louisburg and Quebec, Canada too late. They would take part in the fighting for Lake George later that same year.<sup>203</sup>

When Braddock arrived in North America on 19 February 1755, he immediately began to implement the strategy that the British government had developed. This plan was ignorant of the effects the North American terrain would have on its execution and feasibility. At a meeting of governors in Alexandria, Virginia, in April 1755, Braddock laid out the four-part strategy. He would attack Fort Duquesne in Pennsylvania with his newly arrived 44th and 48th Regiments. The 50th and 51st regiments, reactivated from the King George's War and manned with colonials, under the command of William Shirley would seize Fort Niagara. William Johnson was made superintendent of the Iroquois and would use Mohawk and colonial soldiers to attack Fort St Frederic at Crown Point, New York. The last component would seize the French forts, Fort St John and Fort Beausejour, on the Chignecto isthmus in Nova Scotia.<sup>204</sup>

Braddock, the main effort of the campaign, had the most difficult movement of the attacks. He would march his forces along the Potomac River from Fort Cumberland, Virginia, and north into the Youghiogheny drainage and into the Monongahela Valley.

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<sup>203</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 187.

<sup>204</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:976.

He would have to build the road to carry his supplies and cannon as he went, which slowed his advance and spread out his forces. A sea movement to Philadelphia and an overland movement through the easily, relatively, traversable terrain of Pennsylvania to the Forks would have shortened the journey by as many as 100 miles, however this was in contradiction to the plans that had been made in London by the British government and Braddock would not change his mind. His reputation for inflexibility and for strict discipline would hinder him tactically in the coming battle as well. Braddock would have one more mistake to make before he departed on his attack on 29 May 1755 and that was in his interactions with the Indians.<sup>205</sup>

Shortly before Braddock and his force left for the campaign, Braddock met with George Croghan, the deputy intendant to William Johnson who was the Superintendent for Indian Affairs, about Indian support to his expedition. In late May, a conference was held between Braddock and Oneida, Delaware, and Mohawk chiefs. Braddock's contempt for the Indians caused him to commit two errors that would have grave repercussions. First, Braddock disregarded a sketch of Fort Duquesne that was presented by a Mohawk chief, despite it being drawn by a British officer. The second was simple lack of strategic vision. The Ohio Indians were interested in removing the many allied Indians that the French had brought with them from Canada and the *pays d'en haut*. These Indians were dominating the Ohio Valley's native Indians of Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingos. The Delaware Chief Shingas asked Braddock what he intended to do with the land once he had driven the French away. Braddock replied that the British should inherit the land. Shingas then asked that Braddock allow the Indians that were

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<sup>205</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*, 69.

friends to the British to be permitted to cohabitate freely with self-rule, so as not to be driven to their enemies the French. Braddock again replied that “no savage should inherit the land.”<sup>206</sup> The Indians, enraged, left and, of the 40 that came to join the attack only seven stayed.<sup>207</sup>

On 29 May 1755, Braddock departed with his 2,200 man force and began his movement from Fort Cumberland to attack Fort Duquesne. His army marched for six weeks building a road through the forest. He deployed his Indian scouts, along with flank and lead security. By 18 June, he had only advanced 30 miles from Fort Cumberland. His men were suffering from dysentery, fever, and dehydration.<sup>208</sup> Braddock, who saw the pace as unreasonable, decided to detach an advance force that would move ahead of the main body, which would remain with the cannon and heavy baggage. This advance guard moved far quicker than the baggage and artillery portions. Braddock continued to be optimistic about his prospects and continued to push forward, dispersing the few Indian and French scouts encountered along the way, and suffering no casualties. On 9 July 1755, he had advanced to ten miles of Fort Duquesne, and met the French spoiling attack.<sup>209</sup>

In contrast the French were consolidating their position following the victory at Fort Necessity the year earlier. The French government had dispatched troops in the summer of 1755, but they would not arrive in time to assist in the battle against Braddock

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<sup>206</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 95.

<sup>207</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

<sup>208</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:986.

<sup>209</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 97.

and the other movements the British were planning. Instead the French in North America would be on their own until those reinforcements arrived. This was not unfamiliar to them, as this had been the situation in the imperial wars of the 18th century to date.<sup>210</sup>

After Washington's defeat, both sides understood the strategic importance of fortifications along the river and the key terrain that Fort Duquesne represented due to its location at the forks of three strategic lines of communication, the Allegheny, the Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. The French immediately set about consolidating and reinforcing their position in the fort awaiting the inevitable British counterattack.<sup>211</sup>

The leadership and situation of the French were ideal for the battle they were about to face. A captain in the *Troupes de la Marine* named Claude-Pierre Pecaudy de Contrecoeur commanded the French. He had a mixed force of approximately 1,600 men, two companies of *Troupes de la Marine*, Canadian militia and allied Indians. The Indians were the majority of the fighters numbering at approximately 800. Contrecoeur realized that these Indians could not be depended upon to defend the ground of the Fort, but would have to be enticed to fight for the French with promises of loot and plunder. He decided to launch a spoiling attack to defeat the British prior to them getting into siege range of the fort. Contrecoeur's second in command, and his replacement, Captain Daniel-Hyacinthe-Marie Lienard de Beaujeu, would lead the attack. Beaujeu selected Jen-Daniel Dumas, another partisan leader of the *Troupes de la Marine* to be his second in command. Leading the Indian contingent of the force would be Sieur Charles-Michel de Langlade, a half-Ottawa captain in the *Troupes de la Marine*. It is important to note

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<sup>210</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 187.

<sup>211</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:987.

that all four of these individuals had extensive experience as raiders in King George's War, whereas Braddock was a novice in North American frontier warfare.<sup>212</sup>

Beaujeu knew from his experience as a raider that the French needed to convince the Indians to fight the battle with them. This was due as much to their fighting ability as it was to the need for the French to make up their numbers to counter Braddock's force. Unlike Braddock however, Beaujeu also knew how to convince the Indians to fight for him. On 8 July, he addressed the Indians that were at the fort dressed not as a French officer but as a Native American war chief. He wore only his pants and painted his chest in the style of an Indian warrior. His only indication of French military was his silver gorget. After speaking to the Indians at length about fighting the British they asked for the night to deliberate. On the morning of 9 July, Beaujeu departed to attack the British. As he approached the assembled chiefs, again dressed as a Native warrior, they told him they would not march. Beaujeu flexed his last muscle of cultural knowledge to secure their efforts to fight by saying "I am determined to confront the enemy. What? Would you let your Father go alone? I am certain to defeat them!"<sup>213</sup> The Indian chiefs agreed to fight with the French and Beaujeu's war party departed with 637 Indians, 146 Canadian Militia, and 108 *Trouped de La Marine*. Using the ground as cover and moving as Native American hunters through the brush they made contact with Braddock's advance force at one o'clock in the afternoon on 9 July 1755.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters and the Leaders of New France: 1660-1760*, 51.

<sup>213</sup>Paul Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 28-29.

<sup>214</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 2:87.

The two forces fought a meeting engagement just seven miles away from the fort. This area was dominated by a large hill to the east of the road. Braddock, having crossed the river unopposed and thinking the French would not defend the fort did not push out a scouting team to reconnoiter the fort. His advance force, led by Captain Gage, fired three volley at the mixed French force at the extreme range of 200 yards. A lucky shot hit Beaujeu in the head and he was killed instantly. Rather than flee, though their morale was shaken, Dumas rallied his forces. While the *Troupes de la Marine* formed a blocking position, Langlade, the Indians, and the Canadian militia began to deploy as skirmishers around the flanks of the British column. This meeting engagement could not have worked more effectively as an ambush if it was planned.<sup>215</sup> The Indians and Canadians began to pour fire into the flanks and rear of the British forces. Their superior marksmanship, taught since childhood, honed in hunting, and constant frontier raids made them far more accurate than their British counterparts and allowed them to begin targeting the officers and drummers to disrupt their orders. Indeed Lieutenant William Dunbar revealed that almost all the officers in the advance party were killed when Braddock arrived on the field.<sup>216</sup> This was coupled with the ample cover the surrounding terrain provided them. This area, just north of the Monongahela River was cleared of underbrush and served, in times of peace, as a traditional hunting ground of the Indians in the area.<sup>217</sup>

The ferocity of the Indian and Canadian fire with sporadic hand-to-hand combat quickly combined with the loss of leadership to break the British formation. The clear

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<sup>215</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>216</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 39.

<sup>217</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 99.

fields of fire allowed the Indians to fire on the British, while the British could not return fire as they could not identify any targets other than the French troops to their front. As Francis Parkman stated in his history of the French and Indian War, “The troops broke their ranks and huddled together in a bewildered mass, shirking from the bullets that cut them down by scores.”<sup>218</sup> As his advance force laid destroyed, having abandoned two cannons and in general retreat, Braddock arrived on the field and attempted to rally his men. The regulars of the main force mixed with the survivors of the relief force and instead of new organized lines, the men formed clumps of missed soldiers firing in all directions while the Indians and Canadians continued to fire into their massed ranks. Braddock rode to his men attempting to rally them and form them into lines, but it was for naught. The men were too disorganized and too many of his junior officers were killed or wounded, a full 63 of 86 were casualties. Braddock himself had four horses shot out from underneath him and his aide George Washington had two.<sup>219</sup> After a three hour battle and unable to gain fire superiority, Braddock ordered the retreat. As they retired from the field, he was mortally wounded from a bullet that went through his arm and into his lung. His force retreated in disorder leaving behind wounded, material, and baggage. The French retired to the fort, and the Indians were allowed to plunder the field before they returned to the fort. Of the 1400 man force engaged, Braddock lost a total of 1.060 men, of which 63 were officers and 997 enlisted, while French and Indian losses

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<sup>218</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:993.

<sup>219</sup>*Ibid.*, 997.



numbered less than 50. The day was a total victory for *la petite guerre* and a shock for the British regular army in North America.<sup>220</sup>

There are two lessons to be learned from Braddock's defeat. First it showed the French employing Native Americans in ways for which they were best suited. Second it showed that cultural understanding was paramount in gaining and maintaining the support of the Native Americans in the conflict.<sup>221</sup>

The Battle at the Monongahela displayed a sound knowledge of *la petite guerre* by the French and its application. Further it illustrated that they understood the fighting style of the Native Americans. The French took the tactical lessons learned from fighting the frontier wars of the early 18th century and capitalized on them.<sup>222</sup> When they employed the Indians on the flanks and utilized cover to engage in aimed shots versus volley fire, the French employed the Native Americans where they could do the most damage on the battlefield.<sup>223</sup>

The second lesson of Braddock's defeat was the importance of knowing the Indians' culture and motivations in order to secure their assistance. The French prior to the battle exploited their knowledge of the Indians' culture by appealing to their pride and warrior nature, at one point calling them cowards for not fighting in order to cajole them into fighting the British. They also allowed them to plunder the field for payment, a

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<sup>220</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 2:92.

<sup>221</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760."

<sup>222</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*.

<sup>223</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*.

further exploitation of their culture.<sup>224</sup> Lastly, the French were victorious. Native Americans supported strength and sided with the nation that met their interests and was perceived as strongest. By securing victory against the British, assisted by Braddock's cultural ignorance, the French secured the continued neutrality of the Iroquois, as well as securing the allegiance of the Ohio Valley tribes of the Shawnee, Delaware, and Mingos.<sup>225</sup>

The second example of Native American employment by the French in the French and Indian War was the raiding and destruction of Fort Bull in New York during the Fort Oswego, campaign in 1756. This is an important example because it shows that the French, understanding Indian culture and *la petite guerre*, combined irregular and regular operations and employed them as a shaping operation, an operation that sets conditions for the successful completion of the main or decisive operation, in a larger campaign to take a fixed fortification. An attack against a fixed site was something the Indians would not do.<sup>226</sup>

The forts at Oswego were a key strategic outpost for the British, and was going to be the launching point for William Shirley's attack in 1755 against the French at Fort Niagara. It was built in 1724 as a British trading post in order to trade with the Indians along the southern banks of Lake Ontario. Over the next thirty years until the start of the Seven Years' War, the trading post grew into a fort and eventually was reinforced by the

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<sup>224</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters and the Leaders of New France: 1660-1760*.

<sup>225</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 109.

<sup>226</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*.

British into a stone fort.<sup>227</sup> The fort of Oswego rapidly became a thorn in the side of French trade with the English and Abbey Piquet noted that Fort Frontenac, Kingston, Ontario, was devoid of Indian traders as they had all traveled to Oswego for cheaper British goods.<sup>228</sup>

More important than trade however, was the fort's strategic location on the lake. This gave the British excellent access to the interior of New France and positioned them to attack via very rapid water transportation and access to the Saint Lawrence River. It also provided the British with contact through which to lure away, or dissuade, the Indians on which the French heavily relied.<sup>229</sup> This contact was so noticeable and significant a threat that Charles de Raymond, a Captain in the *Troops de La Marine*, in his 1754 work the *Enumerations of All the Posts in Canada*, spends over seven pages discussing the importance of the Indians to their cause and the negative effect that Oswego had on their trade with the French.<sup>230</sup> As the farthest penetration of British dominion into the undefined borderlands of New France and the British colonies, it was also a staging post for attacks to seize the French's southern forts and interrupt movement into the Ohio Valley. William Shirley staged there for his attack on Fort Niagara, which was cancelled due to the defeat of Braddock at Duquesne. For the French governor-general Vaudreuil, it had long been an objective for him to eliminate and seize complete control of Lake Ontario. With the defeat of Braddock and the new arrival of French

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<sup>227</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 15.

<sup>228</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:891-894.

<sup>229</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup>Peyser, *On the Eve of Conquest*, 63-67.

regular army forces with Baron le Diesku<sup>231</sup> the French had their opportunity to strike. To be successful however, the supply lines that supplied this major stone fort would have to be interrupted in order to allow the mixed force to be successful.<sup>232</sup>

Fort Oswego was supplied by a long logistics train from Albany that utilized the Mohawk River, Wood Creek, and the various waterways to get the supplies from Schenectady, New York, to the fort. This supply chain was over 90 miles long against the current of the Mohawk River to its termination in the vicinity of present day Rome, New York. It was then necessary to carry the supplies overland via portage known as the Great Carrying Place, or the Oneida Carry, to Wood Creek.<sup>233</sup> Supplies were then moved by water to the Fort. The New York government and British military officials had long viewed this portage as the key, and also weakest, link in the Oswego supply chain and decided to build two forts to secure it. The eastern fort was Fort Williams, and the western fort nearest Oswego, was Fort Bull. These forts were located at the halfway point of the journey to Oswego and were also the holding point for supplies moving to the fort as they awaited any weather to clear, threats to disperse, or escorts to assemble.<sup>234</sup>

Vaudreuil was informed by allied Indians that Oswego was garrisoned by the remnants of 50th and 51st Foot Regiments, as well as cannons, chose a strike against the

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<sup>231</sup>The Baron le Diesku was defeated at the Battle of Lake George in 1755 and was replaced when Montcalm when he arrives in 1756.

<sup>232</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 150.

<sup>233</sup>F. J. Thorpe, "Chaussegros De Léry, Gaspard-Joseph (Joseph-Gaspard)," University of Toronto/Université Laval, [http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=1803](http://biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=1803) (accessed 2 February 2013).

<sup>234</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 137.

supply lines of the fort, specifically at the forts of Williams and Bull. This would weaken the forts at Oswego, as well as limit the material available to resist the siege that would be conducted by Montcalm's forces that spring. Vaudreuil stated that he hoped the forts at Oswego would just "die on the vine and wither due to lack of supplies"<sup>235</sup> Vaudreuil favored a *la petite guerre* style raid to destroy the forts, and chose Gaspard-Joseph Chaussergros de Lery, to lead the strike. De Lery, a veteran of the King George's War strikes on Saratoga, assembled a force of 360 men, including 100 Indians, 250 Canadian militia, 10 *Troupes de la Marine*, and one Father Piquet.<sup>236</sup> Vaudreuil and de Lery chose winter as the appropriate time for the strike for two reasons: first the fort was already low on supplies due to the route being untrafficable due to the winter weather and frozen waterways, and second because the British defenses were at their lowest. The British continued to think that they were safe in the winter time and continually failed to learn the lessons of the raids during all seasons of the previous wars.<sup>237</sup>

De Lery and his force departed on 12 March 1756 from *Fort La Presentation*, Canada on the 296 mile journey to Fort Bull. Over the course of the next two weeks the men moved through snow storms, freezing rain, and sub-freezing temperatures. There was little food other than what they carried, and no fires were allowed. The men only carried enough supplies for a one way trip and planned to resupply from the stores of the captured forts.<sup>238</sup> The force lost 17 Frenchman due to exposure and frost bite who were

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<sup>235</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:142.

<sup>236</sup>Thorpe, "Chaussegros De Léry, Gaspard-Joseph (Joseph-Gaspard)."

<sup>237</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:142.

<sup>238</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1099-1100.

sent back to *La Presentation* for treatment, and five additional soldiers from food poisoning. The force reached Fort Bull on 26 March 1756, and immediately began to reconnoiter the forts. The force had not eaten for two days and needed to attack quickly.<sup>239</sup>

The next day de Lery and his men advanced to the Great Carrying Road and ambushed a supply wagon to capture prisoners and provisions. They captured food and ten prisoners, but in their haste for the food, the wagon driver was able to escape and run back to Fort Bull. De Lery, surprise now lost, decided that a swift violent strike was needed to attack the forts. The prisoners revealed that Fort Williams was heavily defended with cannon and a large garrison, where Fort Bull had no cannon, a smaller garrison, and was the location of all the munitions staged for transport to the Oswego forts. De Lery chose to attack Fort Bull. The Indians, who at this point were satisfied with their ambush of the wagon train, needed to be cajoled and bribed to continue the attack, but de Lery was able to do this and set out with his force to attack the fort. The British were moving supplies from the river to the fort and were taken by surprise when the Indians and French charged out of the forest to attack them. The British in the fort closed the gates and the Indians turned on the British at the river, while the French attacked the fort. Seizing on the fact that the British were not in position, the French fired their muskets at the defenders through the loopholes in the wall, while Canadian militia used axes to cut through the wall. De Lery asked three times for the fort to surrender, each

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<sup>239</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 2:147-148.

time with no reply. When the gate was finally breeched, the call for surrender was repealed and the French killed every British soldier in the fort.<sup>240</sup>

The French set about exploiting their victory. De Lery found 260 kegs of gunpowder each weighing over 100 pounds for an estimated total of 26,000 pounds of gunpowder. De Lery ordered it dumped into the river along with the musket balls, cannon balls, and grenades. He also ordered the fort razed to the ground. Unfortunately for de Lery, these things were executed simultaneously, not sequentially. Before the powder could be fully emptied from the magazine, de Lery noticed the fires from the fort approaching the magazine and ordered everyone to evacuate the fort. P.S. Garand, in his 1927 history of the city of Ogdensburg stated that “Building and palisades were reduced to atoms, all was destroyed in the interior of the fort: food, munitions, and all war material. The fort was razed to the ground.”<sup>241</sup> The fight for the fort elicited a relief force of 17 soldiers that was sent from Fort Williams to the aid of Fort Bull; however it was intercepted and destroyed along the road by de Lery’s Indian and Canadian reserve. De Lery made the decision to retreat rather than attack the now alerted Fort Williams, and made his way back to Sackets Harbor, New York and awaited the relief force from the Bearn regiment of the *Troupes de Terre*.<sup>242</sup> De Lery reported in his journal that his force had taken 80 prisoners with “heads of hair” and had suffered “one marine killed, one

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<sup>240</sup>Gilbert Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull* (np: Mowbray Company Publishers, 1971), 55-56.

<sup>241</sup>P. S. Garand, *History of the City of Ogdensburg* (Ogdensburg, NY: np, 1927).

<sup>242</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:150-152.

Indian killed, four were wounded, and three Canadians were wounded, as well as two soldiers from the land troops.”<sup>243</sup>

With the Fort Bull at the western end of the Oneida Carry destroyed, there was now no security for the bateaux men and British supply convoys moving to the Oswego forts. Raids and poor weather forced the supplies flow to slow to a trickle. In fact, from March to July, only one major supply convoy reached the fort and its defenders. For the garrison of Oswego, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Mercer, the situation was rapidly getting worse. His men were dying from disease, lacked adequate supply, had low morale, and there was little relief. By the time Montcalm’s army of 3,000 strong force arrived on 10 August 1756 to begin the siege of Oswego, taking the garrison by surprise, the garrison was reduced to only 1,135 soldiers. A short siege followed where the French systematically seized the high ground around the main fort, surrounded it, and fired into the fort. Lieutenant Colonel Mercer was beheaded by a cannonball on 13 August 1756, and his subordinate surrendered the fort on 14 August 1756. The taking of this fort provided the French secure waterborne lines of communication throughout the Great Lakes from Quebec to the *pays d’en haut* and would remain that way until 1758.<sup>244</sup>

The raid on Fort Bull showed that the French were keen on utilizing the Indians and their skills at *la petite guerre* to combine regular and irregular warfare actions in order to shape larger operations. Multiple long distance raids against fortified positions, such as the raid against Fort Clinton in June 1747, in the King George’s War and Queen Anne’s War had shown that the Indians were reluctant to attack fortified positions and

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<sup>243</sup>Journal of de Lery quoted in Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 62.

<sup>244</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 152-153.



would be unwilling to commit, or participate in, a frontal attack against the forts of Oswego with the army of Montcalm. As a side note, though the Indians were there in large numbers, they participated only on the periphery not in the siege works themselves against the main fort.<sup>245</sup> Vaudreuil and his Canadian partisan officers understood this facet of Indian culture and warfare and sought to capitalize on it. Through the raid on Fort Bull, Vaudreuil was able to apply the irregular capabilities of *la petite guerre* and make it part of an operational level campaign plan. He would use their raiding ability to conduct tactical actions at one point, Fort Bull, to facilitate easier completion of the French main objective, the capture of Oswego. Certainly more variables played into the fall of Oswego, such as the lack of many Indian scouts and counter-reconnaissance assets of the British and the harsh weather and the dominance of the French. However the lack of constant supplies, men, and powder from the supply line along the Mohawk River and the Oneida Carry was a major factor in the defeat of the British at Oswego.<sup>246</sup>

The third method of French employment of Native Americans was a part of a mixed force to engage and counter the British employment of irregular forces, or rangers, as the British termed them. The meeting engagement known as the “Battle on Snowshoes” took place on 13 March 1758 between Rogers Rangers and a mixed force led by Langy of the *Troupes de la Marine* and shows the continued French dominance in the irregular warfare front of the war. It also clearly shows their employment of Indians and their understanding that Indians and *la petite guerre* were key to disrupting, and if

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<sup>245</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 199.

<sup>246</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:152.

possible, destroying the British's irregular capabilities to raid and reconnoiter French forts and troop movements.<sup>247</sup>

The year 1758 marked a pivotal year for the French and Indian War as the tide began to turn against the French. For the British it marked a transition to new leadership, William Pitt as prime minister and General James Abercromby as Commander in Chief of North America as well a surge of British resources to defeat the French and seize North America. The British government had made the conquering of North America its main effort in the war and had finally mobilized the resources to overwhelm the French defenders. By the campaign season of 1758, the British had 50,000 troops under arms in North America. This was equivalent to almost 2/3 of the total population of New France.<sup>248</sup> Pitt designed a three pronged attack against the French; the first was to seize Louisburg at the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River as a staging base for an attack on Quebec itself. The second was a move to seize Fort Carillon, now Ticonderoga, New York in order to facilitate the invasion along the Lake Champlain-Lake George Corridor, and lastly to seize Fort Duquesne in the Ohio Valley to finally end the plague of raids and ambushes in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania that had hampered the British's previous attempts at invasion by draining valuable men and logistics to defend the frontier and establish control, and the support of the Ohio Indians.<sup>249</sup>

However before any action against Fort Carillon could be taken, the conditions needed to be set. Troop dispositions and defensive works would need to be mapped. This

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<sup>247</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, loc 2087.

<sup>248</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 236.

<sup>249</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1228.

would take reconnaissance patrols of a new force the British created to compensate for the lack of Indian scouts and to counter the effectiveness of French irregulars against British regulars. This force were the Independent Companies of Rangers. The most famous were Rogers Rangers led by, at this point in the war, Captain Robert Rogers. Formed in 1755 to protect the frontier against, as Robert Dinwiddie, governor of Virginia, called them the “flying parties of the enemy,”<sup>250</sup> the rangers would be incorporated into the British forces by William Shirley and William Johnson. They were to be separated from the rest of the New Hampshire provincials and screen Shirley’s forces in his aborted Lake George campaign. Loudoun quickly saw the value of having the rangers in their ability to counter the partisan mixed forces of the *Troupes de la Marine* and their Indian allies, as well as their ability to conduct independent raids to harass enemy troops. He called for the creation of 1,100 rangers to counter the threat of the *Marines*. In 1758 when he was replaced by Abercromby, who, though a critic of the rangers admitted that they were key to the British war effort.<sup>251</sup> To this end, Rogers was ordered to create five companies of Rangers, four to be sent to Louisburg, and one with Rogers, to go to Fort Edward to support the campaign against Fort Carillon.<sup>252</sup>

For New France, 1758 marked the start of the end of their ability to win the war, and began a race to delay and exhaust the British until the two countries could sue for peace. Two straight failed harvests, and rampant internal corruption, drove up food prices

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<sup>250</sup>Grenier, *First Way of War*, 125.

<sup>251</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>252</sup>Robert Rogers, *The Journals of Robert Rogers* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell’s Sons, 1883), 91.

among the population and the Indian allies that they paid for support. It also reduced the morale of the people in Quebec and Montreal, and also limited the full supply of Montcalm's army and the many forts that served as the life line for New France and their Indian allies. This, coupled with increasing British dominance of the sea and the blockade of French trade, prevented what small trickle of supplies and specie that was sent to the colony to pay for food. By the spring of 1758, when the battle took place, the French government turned to protecting France from cross channel British raids and defending the more profitable sugar islands of the Caribbean. They would send no more meaningful replacements to defend a financially draining colony the British were sending large armies to capture.<sup>253</sup>

Vaudreuil and Montcalm, their rivalry increasing by this point in the conflict, were faced with bleak prospects. They were able to muster a force of approximately 6,800 *Troupes de Terre*, 2,700 *Troupes de la Marine*, and, if all military aged males from 15-60 years of age were called to service, 16,000 militia. This total force of approximately 25,500 men comprised all the forces they could muster against the British's 50,000 soldiers.<sup>254</sup> Their Native American allies, whom they had depended on for the first years of the war, not did not turn out in as large of numbers. A small pox epidemic ravaged the western *pays d'en haut* convincing some of the more superstitious that the French had done something to them. Most of the other tribes offered excuses not to come to the aid of the French. This was due in part to treatment of the Indians after the victories at Oswego and William Henry where they were admonished for plunder and

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<sup>253</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 205.

<sup>254</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 236.

scalping British wounded and insulted by the allowed surrender of the British denying them of their rightful compensation for their assistance in the campaigns.<sup>255</sup>

Montcalm, now a lieutenant general and given command over Vaudreuil by the French government, now had to choose where to defend New France from the British invasion. He chose to make the strategy of trading space for time. He would withdraw from unnecessary frontier posts and concentrate his forces along the invasion routes into Canada. As forts were attacked, they were to be abandoned and the forces retreat to the next fort in the line. Key forts necessary to the defense of the essential lines of communication to the Illinois country of southern New France, Fort Duquesne and those along the Mississippi, as well as Forts Niagara and St Frederic on Lake Ontario, maintained the line of communication with the *pays d'en haut*, and Louisburg along the St Lawrence.<sup>256</sup> The last avenue approach into Canada that was to be defended, and the most likely for the British to utilize, the Lake Champlain-Lake George corridor, was where Montcalm stationed himself, at Fort Carillon, now Fort Ticonderoga, New York. The reconnaissance and harassing raids conducted both against this fort by the British at Fort Edward, and the counter operations of the French is where the Battle on Snowshoes finds its place.<sup>257</sup>

The battle took place on 13 March 1758 and would become one of the most famous battles of the French and Indian War. Roger's defeat at the hands of Jean–

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<sup>255</sup>Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 130.

<sup>256</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival."

<sup>257</sup>Gallup and Schaffer, *La Marine*, 41.

Baptiste Levreault de Langis (Langy) de Montegron, a scout who Montcalm called excellent and above all others in his journals, and a mixed force of Indians, Canadians, and French was a key victory for the French.<sup>258</sup> It was the culmination of an intensive winter season of raids, counter-raids, ambushes, and reconnaissance operations that were undertaken by the irregular forces of both sides around the French Fort Carillon and the British Fort Edward. For the British this fight culminated in December, when Roberts left a bragging note on a horn of a slaughtered ox within sight of the fort and burned a good deal of its stored firewood. For the French, the fight peaked in February when Langy, as reported by Montcalm's letters to France, had ambushed multiple patrols and convoys killing 25 British personnel and taking three prisoners. The British responded by sending Rogers and Rangers in pursuit of Langy when he attacked, but he had always managed to elude capture.

On 10 March, Rogers was ordered to undertake a patrol to reconnoiter Fort Carillon by the commander of Fort Edward Colonel Haviland. Instead of maintaining the usual secrecy of the reconnaissance missions due to the fear of Indian warning to the French, or of prisoners being taken, Haviland announced the mission in public to the garrison. This made Rogers uneasy of the mission, but he proceeded to plan and ask for volunteers. Though Haviland had announced that the mission would be undertaken by 400 Rangers, Rogers departed with only 183, not knowing if his mission had been tipped to the French or if they were waiting in ambush for his force.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup>Documents Relating to the Colonial History the State of New York (DRCHSNY), 14:687 in Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:183.

<sup>259</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1205.

They travelled uneventfully along the ice of Lake George until the 13th. In the morning Rogers decided to move up Trout Brook Valley to lay in ambush for the daily French patrol that was known to use that pass as they moved through the area. As an added bonus, the route would also prevent discovery by French soldiers observing the lake for signs of British activity. Rogers force moved along the valley, keeping the ridge in between them and the French trails on the lake, cached their sleds, and established a resting point at 1100 where they planned to rest until 1500 that day.<sup>260</sup> At 1500, the French patrol had returned to their fort. Rogers and his force would then move to the other end of the valley closest to the fort and establish another ambush for the patrol in the morning. Unfortunately, earlier that morning, a French allied Abenaki Indian scouting mission returning from Fort Edward discovered the trail of Rogers and his Rangers on the ice and followed it to the point where they had camped that morning. The Indians immediately returned to Fort Carillon to report their findings.<sup>261</sup>

Upon receiving word of the Rangers, the commandant of Fort Carillon, Captain D'Hebecourt ordered a patrol dispatched to destroy the Rangers. The Indians, incited by the prospect for battle by the Abenakis that had returned, immediately began to depart for an attack. In order to control those that had departed early, Sieur de La Durantaye gathered them up at the gate and departed with 96 Indians in tow. Langy departed 30 minutes later with a force of 205 Indians, *Troupes de la Marine*, and Canadian militia.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup>Rogers, *Journals*, 96.

<sup>261</sup>Bearor, *Battle on Snowshoes*, 51.

<sup>262</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 3:186.

Durantaye's force of 96 Indians moved into Trout Brook Valley along the exact trail that Rogers was watching and at 1500 Rogers' advance guard of three scouts spotted the approaching French force. They quickly estimated the number of Indians in the clearing and returned to report to Rogers. As they left their hiding place, their route of travel obscured their view of the 200 men in Langy's force only a half mile behind Durantaye's. Rogers immediately ordered the force to establish an ambush for the approaching French force and the Rangers dispersed along the trail, laying down in the snow and awaited the French force.<sup>263</sup> Rogers initiated the ambush at approximately 1600, and according to his own estimation killed 40 Indians. As the French force was now in disarray, Rogers ordered his force forward to complete the victory in hand-to-hand combat and run down the now retreating Indians. To his dismay, he ran right into Langy's force that, having been alerted by the gunfire, deployed into crescent shaped firing position and fired into Rogers' force from three sides when Rogers crossed Trout Creek in pursuit. Langy's initial volley killed or wounded 50 rangers, and the rest immediately began to retreat in disarray with Langy's force in pursuit killing the wounded in hand-to-hand combat and shooting at the retreating Rangers.<sup>264</sup>

As sunset fell, Rogers and his remaining 60 men retreated up Bear Mountain and established their position on the high ground. They waited there until darkness when they would make their escape. Unfortunately, the white snow increased the ambient light and allowed the Canadians to continue firing. This continued for two hours, with neither the Rangers nor Langy's force gaining superiority. The superior marksmanship of the French

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<sup>263</sup>Bearor, *Battle on Snowshoes*, 53.

<sup>264</sup>Rogers, *Journals*, 97.



and Indians allowed them to continue to pick off Rangers as they attempted to fire. A small isolated group surrendered to the Indians, only to be tied to trees and killed. When darkness finally fell, Langy ordered his force to make camp and they would pursue the scattered Rangers, now numbering less than 50 men and the Indians could plunder the field in the morning. The Rangers retreated back to Lake George where they had cached their sleighs, and retreated to Fort Edward.<sup>265</sup> Final casualty counts vary from 140 Rangers killed and many of the rest wounded, to what Bougainville recorded in his journal as “the Indians brought back 144 scalps and took seven prisoners. We had two cadets wounded, a Canadian wounded, three Iroquois and a Nipissing killed, 18 Iroquois wounded.”<sup>266</sup> Those estimates would mean that of Rogers’ 186 man force, only 35 returned to Fort Edward, not counting wounded who may have been left on the field.<sup>267</sup>

The Battle on Snowshoes, and indeed the entire *la petit guerre* campaign around Forts Edward and Carillon is another example that the French knew how to best employ their Indian allies to achieve victory against the British. In this example, the French very successfully employed their Indians as an effective counter guerrilla force to disrupt British operations against Fort Carillon. Having observed the British regulars attempt to respond to the mixed forces of *la petite guerre* and observed their own success in the imperial wars and the early years of the Seven Years’ War, the French understood that regular troops did not have a reasonable chance of success against the ambushes and raids of the Rangers and countered by overmatching their strength in that area with Indians and

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<sup>265</sup>Ibid., 98-100.

<sup>266</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 199.

<sup>267</sup>Bearor, *Battle on Snowshoes*, 66.

skilled partisan leaders such as Langy. In the 13 March battle, the French effectively destroyed a guerrilla force with minimal losses by dispatching a small force well suited for counter guerrilla operations while preserving the fighting strength of Fort Carillon by not dispatching large numbers of troops that could be ambushed, leaving the fort more vulnerable to attack.

During the Seven Years' War, the armies and population of New France were not large enough to defeat the growing number of British soldiers, ships, money and resources that the British poured in to North America to conquer the continent. Indeed, by 1758, when the French military might was at its highest in Canada, they could only muster 25,500 men to combat the British Empire's 50,000 soldiers.<sup>268</sup> The key to making up this difference was the vast number of Indian allies that the last 100 years of aggressive diplomacy and gift giving had provided them. The ability to combine these Indian warriors and their tactics, with skilled partisan leadership, and a plan that linked their tactical actions into an operational and strategic vision for the conduct of the war would be key in the French victories of 1755-1758.<sup>269</sup>

Successful employment of the Indians was developed over 100 years of constant warfare in the style of *la petite guerre*. The wars against the Iroquois in the 1600s and the British in the 1700s had taught the French that there were some lessons to be learned about employing the Indians where their superior marksmanship, superior abilities in

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<sup>268</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*.

<sup>269</sup>Horn, "Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America, 1754-1760."

stealth and scouting, and aggressive natures could be of the most benefit.<sup>270</sup> In looking at three examples taken from the early war period, Battle of the Monongahela in July 1755, the raid on Fort Bull during the campaign to seize of the Forts at Oswego, New York in 1756, and the successful counter guerrilla operations of winter 1757-1758 around Fort Carillon and the Battle on Snowshoes, we can see where the French correctly applied these lessons to develop and maintain the upper hand until the second half of 1758.<sup>271</sup>

The problem that would develop for New France is that this success depended on the constant utilization and influx of Indian fighters. This allegiance relied on beneficial trade, battlefield victories, and allowance for the Indian custom of plunder, scalping, and prisoner taking. In 1758 this supply of Native Americans begins to dry up and support moved to the British, and the French lose the ability to stave of the British and maintain their hold over the *pays d'en haut* and Ohio Valley. When Fort Niagara is captured without a single Indian fighting for the French by a British army supported by local Iroquois, the way is paved for a British victory where overwhelming numbers cannot be matched by the French without their Native allies.

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<sup>270</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 49.

<sup>271</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*.

## CHAPTER 5

### A FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND

I am obligated in humanity, to desire you to surrender your Fort. I have yet in my power to restrain the savages, and oblige them to observe capitulation, as hitherto none of them have been killed, which will not be in my power in other circumstances.<sup>272</sup>

— Lieutenant-General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm,  
*Relief Is Greatly Wanted*

The fall and spring of 1757-1758 proved to be turning point in the French and Indian War. It was not, however, the decisive point that the French and Canadians sought. Though the French army under Montcalm and French guerrilla fighters using Vaudreuil's strategy would achieve stunning victories at Fort William Henry and Fort Carollin in New York, the year proved to mark the beginning of the end of France's reign in North America. This point of tipping point was not due to losses on the battlefield. Indeed, the early part of 1758 proved to be a banner year for the French and their Indian allies. It was this latter factor, the Indian allies that proved to be the undoing of France's chances to stall the British enough to sue for a peaceful settlement.<sup>273</sup>

For the campaign season of 1758 through the end of the war, the Indians that Vaudreuil and the Canadians put their faith in to match the overwhelming resources of British North America, failed to turn out in the large numbers as they had in the previous years. When the 1759 campaign started, the Canadians were augmented with only 1,800

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<sup>272</sup>Montcalm to Monro, 2 August 1757, Edward Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted: The Battle of Fort William Henry* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007), 63.

<sup>273</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 248-249.

Indian warriors to combat the British invasion by both irregular and regular means.<sup>274</sup>

This is compared to over 2,000 Indians who, drawn by French victories and gifts, assisted in just the battle for Fort William Henry in 1757.<sup>275</sup> It is estimated that at one point, the Indians of the Ohio Valley and the *pays d'en haut* were a pool of over 16,000 Indian warriors the French could call upon. Without the augmentation of Indians, the British maintained a 2:1 advantage over the French, and more importantly, the war increasingly became Europeanized, and the British drove the French from North America.<sup>276</sup>

The French, separate from the Canadians, had a general misunderstanding and dislike of Indian culture and their way of war by Montcalm and the French officers of the *Troupe de Terre* possessed this dislike. Montcalm's general disdain grew from his first major campaigns in 1756, and was clearly shown in his reaction to the "massacre" of British prisoners at Fort William Henry in 1757. This one incident was the turning point for the Indians and the French alliance.<sup>277</sup>

The most prominent reasons the French lost the robust support of their Indian allies was the continued negative reaction to Indian actions and their style of warfare. The most famous was Montcalm's acceptance of the surrender of Fort William Henry, New York, in 1757 and his reaction to the massacre of the British soldiers and camp followers by his Indian allies after the fort's surrender. This was the main event that resulted in the majority of Indian support not turning out to assist the French in large numbers from

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<sup>274</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*, 114.

<sup>275</sup>Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*.

<sup>276</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 41.

<sup>277</sup>Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 102.

1758 forward.<sup>278</sup> The battle at the fort also showed Montcalm that in order to fight a civilized war, and ensure that French troops would be offered the honors of war in the future; he would have to Europeanize the war and avoid putting himself in situations where he would be unable to control his allies or not use them at all. This further drove the Indians away as they would not have the opportunity for plunder or scalps.<sup>279</sup>

While massacre may have been the main catalyst for the Indian, it was the culmination of a series of savage acts that caused a resentment of the savagery of the Native American style of warfare and that of his Canadian militia. Montcalm routinely criticized the Indian way of war for its savagery and was disdainful of their treatment of prisoners. From the time he arrived in 1756, he and his officers wrote in their journals about the shock they had while utilizing their allies and the concern over the dishonor it would bring. Montcalm's aide-de-camp, Captain Louis Antoine de Bougainville, kept a prolific journal about his time in North America. He often wrote about his and his commander's disdain for the Indian treatment of prisoners and their way of war in general. In September 1756 during the campaign around Fort Carillon he wrote, "The Indians have seventeen prisoners; they have already knocked several of them on the head. . . . The cruelties and the insolence of these barbarians is horrible, their souls are as black as pitch, it is an abominable to make war; the retaliation is frightening."<sup>280</sup> Routinely Bougainville wrote to his family deriding the behavior of the Indians. Throughout 1756 and 1757 he expressed fear and shock in these letters regarding the Indian use of

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<sup>278</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 204.

<sup>279</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*, 115.

<sup>280</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 41.

cannibalism and savagery towards prisoners, they were “dancing the war song, getting drunk and, yelling for broth, that is to say blood, drawn from 500 leagues by the smell of fresh human flesh.”<sup>281</sup> Bougainville and his French compatriots were concerned about their allies’ behavior and sought to distance themselves from the Indian way of fighting. Indeed, as was noted in chapter 2, concern and fear over how the Indians waged war was a major component of why Montcalm opposed Vaudreuil’s strategy of raiding and *la petite guerre*.

It should be noted that while Montcalm viewed the Indians as savages and wrote to the French government about their excesses and savagery on the field of battle, he made every effort to maintain positive relations with their leadership.<sup>282</sup> Montcalm’s strategy called for the use of Indians as scouts and as a counter-reconnaissance force against the British and he needed them fight for the French army. He placated Indian *sachems* and sought to use them where he could, but he was always wary of their actions on the field and after the battles. He held war councils with their chiefs and worked to make sure that Indian allies were part of the team in order for him to better control them on the battlefield and work for his own operational ends and also acting as a representative of the French crown. Before the battle of William Henry, a great Ottawa chief is recorded as saying, “we have come to see this great man who tramples the English.”<sup>283</sup> Montcalm also presented Indian chiefs with wampum belts of 6,000 beads as

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<sup>281</sup>Ibid., 331.

<sup>282</sup>William M. Fowler Jr., *Empires at War: The French and Indian War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (New York: Walker and Company, 2005).

<sup>283</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1176.

a sign of friendship and an enticement to battle for him. These would indicate that Montcalm had embraced Indian culture, or at least accepted it enough to get them to fight for him. However, this would not be the case, as Montcalm's actions at William Henry would show that these words and actions were all for show, and he did not care for the Indian way of war or the frontier waging of *la petite guerre*.

Montcalm's disdain for the Indian was not based solely on his views of how a war should be fought tactically. He viewed war as a matter of honor, and that the Indian way of war and *la petite guerre* was uncivilized and dishonorable.<sup>284</sup> More importantly, Bougainville and Montcalm were concerned about their reputations and the honor of French forces if forced to surrender to British troops. Montcalm would make every effort to preserve European honor of war by making war in the European way and not paying heed to the Indians, their previous wars alongside the Canadians, or the culture of *la petite guerre*. As seen in the aftermath of William Henry, Montcalm was worried about how the treatment of British soldiers after terms of capitulation would affect the treatment of French soldiers in future battles.

This concern was based on the fact that Montcalm had a persistent fear of not being able to control his Indian allies after battle and their inability to abide by the rules of European war. He often sought terms in accordance with these rules for the honorable and peaceful surrender of forts and their garrisons to protect the lives of the surrounding soldiers.<sup>285</sup> This led him to alienate his Indian allies in a very significant way. By preserving his sense of honor on the field and denying his Indian allies plunder and

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<sup>284</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 42.

<sup>285</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 330.



prisoners from the battle, he was denying them the honor, pay, and prestige these actions had for the Indians. This upset the Indians and caused many to question their willingness to fight for Montcalm in the future. This mentality was exemplified in his actions at William Henry and the acceptance of the British surrender and the subsequent massacre.<sup>286</sup>

This fear was based on his very real and tangible experiences of working with Indians throughout the war. Montcalm consistently criticized the Canadian and Indian way of war, but he appreciated its usefulness. His fears and concern over using them in the war stemmed most pointedly from his experiences in the aftermath of the capture of the forts at Oswego and the murder of prisoners by his Native American allies.<sup>287</sup>

When the French captured Fort Oswego in 1756, the battle had been short and the garrison surrendered without the need for a protracted siege. The only real promise that Montcalm had made in the capitulation agreement was that he would protect the British soldiers from the predations of the Indians. He failed. In the aftermath of the battle Montcalm's Indian allies began to gather what they had always taken after battles: scalps, prisoners, and plunder. In total the Indians killed 30 to 100 British soldiers and civilians and took many prisoners before Montcalm and the French could restore order. The Indians had never been denied these trophies during the previous imperial wars by their Canadian counterparts, and had no reason to think they were out of line in doing so again. Montcalm was intensely embarrassed and dishonored by this. They were so embarrassed

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<sup>286</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*.

<sup>287</sup>See chapter 4 for a description of Montcalm's victory.

that neither he nor Bougainville mentioned the incident in their official reports.<sup>288</sup> The only mention Montcalm makes of this incident is in recording that he paid “8,000-10,000 livres in order to maintain good relations with the Indians after the battle. It is unknown how many prisoners he was able to ransom back.”<sup>289</sup> This set two dangerous precedents that would replay at William Henry: first, that Montcalm did not understand the Indian reasoning for fighting or how their culture viewed warfare and its aftermath, and, secondly, he tipped his hand that the French would pay a ransom for British prisoners in order to preserve their honor. These two lessons would come to haunt Montcalm at William Henry less than a year later.<sup>290</sup>

At the start of 1757 the war still appeared to be going in France’s favor. The capturing of Fort William Henry would prove to be a continuation in those victories and the most famous of the war, thanks to its immortalization in the novel *Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper. Postured at the south end of Lake George in New York, the fort was a strategic point for control of the lake and the movement into the British colony of New York. It was captured by a combined force of French and Indian allies led by Montcalm in a very effective siege.<sup>291</sup> However, the fort is more famous for the events that occurred after the battle. The massacre of the British soldiers and camp followers after the battle and Montcalm’s and the Canadian government’s actions after

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<sup>288</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 41.

<sup>289</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 154.

<sup>290</sup>Steele, *Betrayals*, 79.

<sup>291</sup>Pierre Pouchot, *Memoirs Upon the Late War in North America, between the French and English, 1755-60*, ed. Franklin Hough, trans., Franklin Hough, vol. 1 (Roxbury, MA: W. Elliot Woodward, 1866), 89.

the massacre marked a turning point and high water mark for Indian support for the French. After the battle, the French would never see the same large numbers of Indian warriors turn out for the remainder of the war.<sup>292</sup>

As was discussed in chapter 4, the British had a number of different strategic options in 1756-1757. One of the thrusts planned for the year by Loudoun was toward Louisburg with a large fleet from New York. As his fleet weighed anchor and sailed to Louisburg, Loudoun left General Daniel Webb in charge of the strategic lakes frontier of Lake George and Lake Champlain in upstate New York as a blocking force to prevent the French from moving down the valley into New York. Failure to block these forces would have forced Loudoun to call off his attack on Louisburg and return to defend the British frontier.<sup>293</sup>

The long water line of communication that was Lake George and its connected northern neighbor Lake Champlain provided a rapid and continuous avenue of approach from the St Lawrence valley, the heartland of New France, down into the heart of New York and the British colonies. By moving down the lakes, raiders and Indians had raided the northern frontier of the British throughout the wars of the 18th century.<sup>294</sup> To prevent this both the British and the French established forts to defend the waterway and provide early warning of enemy movements. The French constructed Fort St. Frederic at the southern end of Lake Champlain and Fort Carillon on the rocky promontory that was between Lake George and Lake Champlain. The British countered with Fort William

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<sup>292</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 205.

<sup>293</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*.

<sup>294</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 200.

Henry at the southern edge of Lake George, and Fort Edward 16 miles to the south of William Henry along the only good road south from the lakes into the inhabited areas of New York.<sup>295</sup>

Loudoun strongly suggested that Webb move to the northern end of Lake George and besiege Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga). The capture of this fort would prevent the French from moving deep into the heart of British New York and prevent some of the raiding that was taking place in the borderlands. While he would have liked this to happen, Loudoun realized that Webb was unlikely to do so based on his tendencies to panic and overreact as he did when rebuilding Fort Bull in late 1756 only to destroy it at the rumor of a French force moving to attack. Loudoun also wanted to make Louisburg an all regular army force and left Webb with only two regiments to defend the fort and the frontiers. Five companies of the 35th Foot, totaling 1,500 men, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Monro would defend Fort William Henry.<sup>296</sup>

Fresh from their victory at Fort Oswego, Montcalm and Vaudreuil sought to exploit their victory. While doing so, they also sought to strengthen the defenses of New France and prevent a British invasion of New France through the Lakes area while they were massed in the western portion of the state. This attack did not occur. Montcalm and Vaudreuil both saw William Henry as a key point to their defense of Canada. A successful strike would close off the water line of communication to the St Lawrence Valley and remove an obstacle to French raiding forces in the area.<sup>297</sup> To do this the

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<sup>295</sup>Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*, 21.

<sup>296</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*.

<sup>297</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 201.

French developed two plans. The first was a classical *la petite guerre* style raid in March 1757. This raid, led by Vaudreuil's brother Rigaud, failed to capture the fort due to a lack of manpower and artillery, but did succeed in destroying a sloop, a significant amount of firewood stored for the winter, and several buildings. While the fort was undamaged, the raid destroyed all of the out buildings around the fort including a hospital, sawmill, numerous *bateaux*, storehouses, and a barracks building. This destruction prevented the garrison from mounting reconnaissance patrols outside the fort and a maritime patrol of the lake.<sup>298</sup> This exposed the fort to a siege at any time of Montcalm's choosing. The siege army would arrive that summer.

Montcalm's army, the largest force assembled to date in the French and Indian war, staged at Fort Carillon in the spring and summer of 1757. It numbered over 8,000 men, including 6,000 French *Troupes de Terre*, *Troupes de la Marine*, and Canadian militia. It contained multiple pieces of heavy artillery, including howitzers, cannons, and mortars. Some of these pieces had been captured from Oswego a year earlier. The manpower was a critical factor. Montcalm was accompanied by 2,000 Native American allies. Drawn by the victories against Braddock, the capture of Oswego, and the promise of plunder and prisoners, this was the largest single turn out to date of allied Indian warriors. These Indians were made up of Indian tribes from all over French territory in North America, including the Ohio Valley, Canada, and the *pays d'en haut*. It included "uncivilized," Indians from the Ottawa, Ojibwa, Menominee, Potawatomi, Winnebago,

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<sup>298</sup>Major Eyre to Lord Loudon, 26 March 1757, Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*, 41.

Sauk, Iowa, Fox, Miami and Delaware and “domiciled,” or converted, Indians from the Abenaki, Algonquin, Caughnawaga, and Nipissing tribes.<sup>299</sup>

This great variety of tribes created multiple tensions in the army due to long standing feuds between some of the Ohio Valley tribes. The different tribes also produced Montcalm’s worst fear about fighting with Indians, which was his inability to control their actions. Montcalm only possessed a dozen Canadian officers who spoke the Indians’ languages through interpreters and were attached, not assigned to the Indians in order to try and control some of their actions on the battlefield and in the camp. While encamped around Carillon, French officers and camp followers, including a Jesuit Missionary names Roubaud reported the savagery and uncivilized behaviors of the Indians. They stated that the Indians were constantly drunk and warlike. He and Bougainville also described the lack of compassion towards the British prisoners taken by their patrols around William Henry. Roubaud described in his journal how the Indians made the prisoners run the gauntlet while warriors hit them with their clubs or about the suspected and confirmed cases of cannibalism of British prisoners.<sup>300</sup> This included cooking and eating prisoners in front of other prisoners or making the prisoner eat part of himself. This behavior shocked French persons who had not worked with the Indians up close before and worried Montcalm and his deputy, Francis de Gaston, Chevalier de Levis, about the span of control they would be able to exert among such a large group of Indians

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<sup>299</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 151.

<sup>300</sup>*Journal Lettre du P. Roubaud* in Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1172-1173.

when battle was joined.<sup>301</sup> This lack of control prevented Montcalm from controlling his Indians after the capitulation of the garrison and the ensuing massacre.<sup>302</sup>

The assembled forces moved by boat from Fort Carillon in late July 1757 and arrived on 2 August, outside William Henry. Levis and his advance party opened fire on the fort in the early hours of 3 August 1757. Montcalm had ordered him to move to the south and secure the southern road to Fort Edward with his Indians and Canadians. Once they had secured this road, some of his Indians began to snipe at the defenders of William Henry on the walls. Montcalm landed his forces to the west of the fort and began preparations to build siege trenches for his cannon. At 1500 hours on 3 August, Montcalm formally began the siege with the presentation of a letter demanding Monro's surrender.

This letter is significant because it shows that Montcalm was worried about his Indians behavior and his ability to protect English prisoners prior to the formal beginning of battle. He states, "I am obligated in humanity, to desire you to surrender your Fort. I have yet in my power to retrain the savages, and oblige them to observe capitulation, as hitherto none of them have been killed, which will not be in my power in other circumstances."<sup>303</sup> Monro declined this offer and the firing resumed. For the next four days the French besieged the fort, firing on it with musket and cannon fire and building trenches to move the cannon closer to the fort where they can be more effective. Monro

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<sup>301</sup>Bougainville, *Journal de l'Expedition contre le Fort George* in Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1174-1175.

<sup>302</sup>Steele, *Betrayals*, 82.

<sup>303</sup>Montcalm to Monro, 7 August 1757, in Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*, 63.

wrote multiple reports to Webb at Fort Edward asking for relief and describing the situation. While some of the letters went through, most were intercepted by the Canadians and Indians to the south of the fort. They also intercepted a letter on 4 August from Webb, stating that he would not relieve William Henry and that Monro should seek honorable terms of surrender.<sup>304</sup> Monro did not receive this letter until 7 August 1757, when Montcalm presented it to him while demanding the fort's surrender a second time.

When Monro received the letter from Montcalm, the siege had been raging 24 hours a day for four days. Montcalm's Indians had been scouting the edge of the battlefield keeping the fort isolated, and at Montcalm's request, patrolling for any signs of movement from Fort Edward. The Indians were so successful that Webb wrote to Loudoun complaining that he did not have situational awareness of what was transpiring at the fort.<sup>305</sup> The state of the defenders on the 8th was harsh and deplorable. They had suffered more than 300 casualties; all of their heavy cannon and mortars had burst or were rendered useless by the French barrage leaving only seven small pieces for the defense. Smallpox infected a large number of the remaining garrison. The fighting continued on the 8th as the French expanded their siege lines. The British officers, tired, and with little ammunition or medical supplies remaining, held a council of war and decided to seek terms of surrender. At 1300 on 9 August 1757, Fort William Henry, surrendered to Montcalm.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 194.

<sup>305</sup>Journal of Frye in Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1186.

<sup>306</sup>Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*, 74.



The terms of surrender were generous. The agreement contained nine articles which allowed British to march from the fort with their weapons and other honors of war, i.e. unit and national colors. The British would not be able to fight the French in North America for a period of eighteen months. Two of the articles posed problems for Montcalm and the Indians. The first was article 1 that stated the soldiers would be able to keep their personal effects, minus implements of war beyond their personal arms. The second was article 7 which stated that Montcalm would protect the British sick and wounded until they healed enough to be returned to the British.<sup>307</sup> These articles would clearly be issues for the Indians who, up until this point, had not been paid for their part in the campaign. As was custom from fighting in the previous wars, the Indians claimed the right of pillage to the fort after the surrender.<sup>308</sup>

Montcalm was also extremely worried about the Indians and their actions in light of the capitulation. He sought to mitigate this risk and held a council with the assembled Indian chiefs before he signed the capitulation agreement. Montcalm explained the terms of the surrender to the assembled chiefs and trusted them and the Canadian officers to explain the terms to the 1,600 remaining Indian warriors. They agreed to restrain their Indians and wait until the British had left the fort before plundering it. They agreed to take whatever was not a provision, war material, or personal effects. Those belonged to the French. This left very for the Indians.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>308</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*.

<sup>309</sup>Steele, *Betrayals*, 111.

The British garrison turned over the fort to the French and they marched to the camp outside of the fort to remain until they were to march to Fort Edward the next morning. Trouble began almost immediately. As the French entered the fort, Indians immediately began to enter the fort and plunder it. While that was expected to a degree by the French, the Indians also entered the hospital and began to kill and scalp wounded and sick British that had remained under care of the French. Roubaud wrote that he saw “one of these barbarians come out of the casemates with a human head in his hand, from which the blood ran in streams.”<sup>310</sup> French soldiers attempted to protect the British in the fort, but the Indians were disgruntled that the French were keeping the best plunder for themselves and that much of the good plunder was being protected by British claiming personal baggage. For the next day, the Indians roamed the camp of the British stealing personal effects and harassing soldiers. British officers offered money to the Indians to protect their belongings which only added to the amount of harassment. Some of the confrontations turned violent with Indians accusing the French of lying to them and siding with the British. By nightfall the situation had gotten so bad that Montcalm was called in to mediate. Montcalm used every tool he had from praise, to cajoling, to bribery, and prayers to sooth the Indians and move them towards honoring the capitulation. While details are lacking about what specifically he did, he returned to his camp at 2100 that night and the Indians left the British camp. It was announced throughout the French camp that the British would march at first light. Monro and Montcalm attempted to march earlier during the night, however a warning was given that 600 warriors were not present in the Indian camps and it was suspected that they would ambush the column as it

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<sup>310</sup>Journal of Roubaud in Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1188.

marched to Fort Edward. Three of the surrendered regiments had begun to march when they were turned back to the camp at William Henry.<sup>311</sup>

The next morning, the British assembled to march and the Indians returned to the camp. This time though each British soldier carried a tomahawk, knife, or firearm. The Indians were extremely angry at their situation and it continued to get worse. They had been denied the best plunder and had nearly been tricked out of more by the attempted midnight march. They again harassed the British for personal baggage, but this time were more willing to use force. The small French escort arrived shortly after dawn, and the British began to march to Fort Edward. As the British began to leave, the Indians became more and more agitated. As the column marched, the Indians continued their harassment and were taking packs, materials, and other implements of war, including muskets from the marching soldiers. Inside the camp, the remaining British waiting to march were also harassed. Seventeen wounded soldiers were killed and scalped. By this time, Indians that had taken plunder from the column and fort had returned to the Indian camp to display their trophies. This caused more Indians to join in the plundering. These Indians, numbered by witnesses in the hundreds, descended on the entrenched camp and the rear of the column where the provincials and followers marched and began to strip them of any plunder. The Massachusetts Regiment at the rear of the column heard a war whoop from the Indians as they began to attack and kill the stragglers that resisted. The Indians began to attack and take prisoners from the rear of the column. They killed those that resisted and took their scalps instead.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>311</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 172.

<sup>312</sup>Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*.

The arrival of more French forces made the situation worse. Montcalm hearing the attack ran to the site of the massacre and immediately began to try to protect the British. He met with chiefs and tried the same methods that he had used the night before. As those failed, he finally resorted to force. He seized a child from an Indian and prevented him from being taken prisoner. The Indian immediately killed and scalped his remaining prisoner. As the French began to negotiate for the reclamation of prisoners, some Indians began to kill some of their prisoners for the scalps, rather than come away with nothing. The French used various methods including intimidation and negotiations to get prisoners back from the Indians. Most prisoners however were taken by the Indians and those that could not move were killed and scalped. By the end of 10 August 1757, 69-185 British were killed and over 500 were prisoners of the Indians. Most of the Indians had left by the night of the 10th, either moving to Montreal to ransom their prisoners and scalps, or to return to their home with their prisoners in the *pays d'en haut*. Some dug up British who had died of smallpox for their scalps and took the disease back with them.<sup>313</sup>

For the next month and half, Montcalm and Vaudreuil were engaged in a full blown effort to mitigate the damage done by the massacre, recover any lost prisoners, and minimize counter reports that came out about the massacre. Montcalm worked on reclaiming prisoners he could in the local area but remained wary of Webb at Fort Edward. He wrote letters to Vaudreuil and the French government in Europe about what had transpired and attempted to minimize the damage that would surely have national consequences in the dialogue between the British and French governments. Vaudreuil, on

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<sup>313</sup>Steele, *Betrayals*, 135.

the other hand, began to pay ransom for the prisoners that Indians brought to Montreal realizing that their happiness was key to remaining in the alliance and fighting for the French. Vaudreuil also realized that reclaiming the prisoners would also keep his general happy and would reduce his negative letters to France. The Indians arrived at the same time as Bougainville did carrying Montcalm's report of the massacre. Vaudreuil immediately rebuked the Indians for breaking the capitulation. These Indians, who were unbaptized Indians from the west, blamed Montcalm for tricking them and denying them plunder, as well as blaming the Christian natives for beginning the killing. One Indian complained that, "I make wars for plunder, scalps, and prisoners. You are satisfied with a fort, and you let your enemy and mine live."<sup>314</sup> Montcalm ransomed the prisoners for the outrageous sum of 30 bottles of brandy and 130 livres a piece. Most of the others were recovered through trade and ransom and by the end of 1757 only 200 would still be in Indian hands and would remain there after the end of the war in 1763.<sup>315</sup>

The aftermath of the massacre was critical for the French war effort. No single event so soured relations on both sides of the French and Indian alliance. For the French, the massacre was a public relations and military disaster. The departure of 1,300 of his 1,600 Indian allied force left Montcalm with insufficient military power to successfully attack and capture Fort Edward. Their departure deprived him of valuable scouts and raiding forces who could shape the operations by providing reconnaissance, intelligence, and the raiding of supply lines to disrupt the fort.<sup>316</sup> Montcalm also saw the massacre as a

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<sup>314</sup>Piquet, *Reduction du Fort Georges*, in Steele, *Warpaths*, 205.

<sup>315</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 199.

<sup>316</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*, 114

potential sticking point in all future actions with the British in siege actions. He foresaw the British denying French forces the right to surrender, or if they did, the right to honors of war, or to the paroling of prisoners who do surrender. The massacre would also prove to be a black mark on Montcalm's honor as he could not live up to the terms he dictated in surrender. His worst dreams would come true, when Amherst and the British denied the honors of war to the surrendering forces in the Battles of Louisburg (1758) and Montreal (1760). There, French troops were denied the honors of war and forced to turn over colors, drums, and weapons to the British.<sup>317</sup> The British honored the terms of the capitulation by not having the paroles fight in active units for 90 days, after which Loudoun ordered every unit to move for the 1758 campaigns. Citing the massacre as a breach of the capitulation agreement, all soldiers were back in the fight in 1758 for the Louisburg campaign.

For the Indian allies of the French, the massacre was also a high water mark. Both western "undomesticated" Indians and "civilized" Indians were disgruntled about the attack. The groups left on 10-11 August 1757, to return to their homes as they viewed the campaign over with the plundering of the fort. The western Indians of the *pays d'en haut* were so insulted by their treatment and of the terms that robbed them of plunder and they blamed Montcalm for their poor situation. The most damning insults were heard by Pouchot at Fort Niagara as the western Indians returned to their homes through the fort.<sup>318</sup> They complained that Montcalm had colluded with the British and that that he had deprived them of the plunder that was rightful to their success through this collusion.

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<sup>317</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 205.

<sup>318</sup>Pouchot, *Memoirs Upon the Late War*, 1:90.

Though most of them returned with gifts of some kind, tobacco, cloths, weapons, and alcohol, most saw this as a pittance compared to what they feel they justly deserved for their part in the campaign. To add insult to injury, smallpox was prevalent in the fort during the siege and during the aftermath. Indians that had taken part in the battle did not have the natural inoculation that been developed by the generations of domiciled Indians that took part in the battle and they brought the disease back with them to their villages. The combination of the betrayal of Montcalm and small pox crushed the desire for the Indians to support the French army again.<sup>319</sup>

The “domiciled” or Indians from the missions in New France were also disgruntled with Montcalm and his treatment of the western Indians. While they were able to trade their prisoners and were inoculated against the small pox, they saw Montcalm’s actions towards their allies as a betrayal of the agreement between them and the French army. As a result, the Indians were reluctant to take part in future campaign. Bougainville writes that the Indians were “hunting” and not able to come to the war in 1758 as Montcalm was beginning to prepare his defense of Fort Carillon. This lack of support was first noted in April and continued on into the summer.<sup>320</sup> By the time the French army prepared its defenses only sixteen<sup>321</sup> of the estimated 800 domiciled Indians in Canada showed for the campaign.<sup>322</sup> This disturbing trend would continue through the end of the war. Native American warriors continued to participate as irregulars with the

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<sup>319</sup>Dodge, *Relief Is Greatly Wanted*.

<sup>320</sup>Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 201.

<sup>321</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>322</sup>Steele, *Betrayals*, 132.

*Troupes de la Marine*, however, they would never turnout for Montcalm's banner as they had in 1756-1757.

The capture of Fort William Henry marked a transition point in the French and Indian War. The French army, relying heavily on Indian allies, had been successful in the first two full years of the war from 1755-1756 based on their ability to combine irregular and regular warfare to great success in defeating the British and keeping them in their Atlantic colonies. These victories were celebrated across the Native American territory and more Indians flocked to Montcalm's army to fight for the chances of plunder and prisoners.<sup>323</sup>

The capture and subsequent massacre, as well as Montcalm's handling of the massacre, changed this dynamic and made such a negative impression that the Native Americans refused to fight for Montcalm in numbers enough to positively affect a battle again. The capitulation agreements that denied the Indians plunder or prisoners, coupled with the gross mishandling by ransoming prisoners back and giving the impression of siding with the British so jaded the Indians that they would return to their homes and spread these negative feelings and prevent more Indians from assisting the French. The situation grew so grave, that even domiciled Indians that were used to French mannerisms refused to fight for Montcalm.<sup>324</sup>

The effect on the French war effort would be profound. For Vaudreuil, this was a disaster as the combination of *la petite guerre* and regular forces was key to his strategy of defending by raiding and attacking the British before they could invade. While some

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<sup>323</sup>Parkman, *France and England*, 2:1169.

<sup>324</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 200.



Indians continued to appear for irregular operations with known and proven leaders of *the Troupes de La Marine*, like those discussed in chapter 4, they would never appear in numbers for Montcalm to be effective.<sup>325</sup> For Montcalm, who never fully overcame the lasting negative impression of the Indians that Oswego and William Henry gave him, this lack of Indians was a blessing and curse. Immediately, he was not able to exploit his victory and attack Fort Edward because his scout and reconnaissance force had vanished. He did, however, get his wish of being able to more Europeanize the war and fight it in a civilized manner not reliant on Indians. As Vaudreuil and Montcalm fought to mitigate the fallout from the massacre with the French government and argue over strategy and the implications of Britain's reinforcement of their regular troops in North America, Montcalm scored a stunning victory at Fort Carillon in 1758 by defeating a superior British force with a smaller, all regular, French force.<sup>326</sup> The French government, weary of the massacre, having written off Canada in favor of the islands of the Caribbean, and buoyed by Montcalm's regular army victory, promoted him to lieutenant general and made him military commander in North America. At the same time the French switched tactics and moved to the defensive, retreating back to Canada as the British and their superior numbers pushed up the river valleys, down the St Lawrence, and into Quebec. This left the way open for the British offensives of 1758 and marked the beginning of the end of the French empire in North America. When the British attacked Quebec in the decisive battle on the Plains of Abraham on 13 September 1759, Montcalm defended the city against the 4,426 British regular forces with a force of 4,400. This force was

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<sup>325</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival."

<sup>326</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America*, 114.

comprised of 2,000 *Troupes de Terre*, 600 *Troupes de la Marine*, 1,000 Canadian militia, and only 300 Native Americans, most of whom were Cree and had no past dealings with Montcalm.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>327</sup>Serge Bernier, *Military History of Quebec City: 1608-2008* (Montreal: Art Global, 2008), 106.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The Seven Years' War was a critical event that swung the balance of power in North America and one that still has lessons to be learned today. It started as the result of a dispute over the territorial expansion of British colonies into the Ohio River valley and the efforts of the French colonists of New France to stop them. It expanded into a world war on many fronts both in Europe and in the Americas that forced the French and the British to fight over their colonial holdings. For the French, the campaign in North America would at the end of the day, be a losing one. What started as a victory in a small skirmish at Fort Necessity would ultimately result in the end of the French in North America.<sup>328</sup>

Both sides fought the war the best way they knew how, the British relying on their resources, large population base, strong regular army, and traditional European tactics to defeat a smaller French army that relied heavily on Native American allies who used non-conventional tactics to make up the numbers they lacked in regular troops.<sup>329</sup> Despite this augmentation, the French would eventually be overcome by British resources, and despite numerous tactical victories, the French were unable to merge these into a strategic defeat of the British.

It was this French reliance on the Indians, and their fighting style of frontier warfare known as *la petite guerre*, that characterized this war as the French and Indian

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<sup>328</sup>Todish, *America's First World War*, 15.

<sup>329</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 151.

War and gave the French their best way to fight the British. To counter Britain's large 1.5 million person population in North America, the 55,000 persons of New France were forced to ally with and use the many Native American tribes that lived and traded in the vast territory they controlled. This territory, ranging from the Great Lakes in the West, Atlantic Ocean in the East, and down the Mississippi to Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico in the south contained over 16,000 warriors.<sup>330</sup> The French could call upon these tribes to augment their relatively small army of *Troupes de la Marine* militia, and, from 1756 on, the regular troops of the *Troupes de Terre*. This army at its height comprised only 25,000 men at arms compared to the British's 50,000 regular troops alone.<sup>331</sup> The French would seek to mitigate this disadvantage using North American Indians to fight a strategy they had used successfully against the numerically superior British in the frontier wars of the early 18th century. This tactic utilized the frontier way of war they learned during the nearly century of war with the Indians in the 1700s, *la petite guerre*.<sup>332</sup> This style of war fighting allowed the French to fight a numerically superior British force on their terms. Using raids and ambushes to disrupt British troops prior to sieges as in the Battle of the Monongahela, setting conditions for the French army to be successful as seen in Oswego, countering British irregulars near Carillon, or raiding the British frontier to prevent the provincials from joining the British army, all served to keep the war predominantly on British territory. The French sought not to defeat the British and

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<sup>330</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 179.

<sup>331</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 236.

<sup>332</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 39.

conquer their land, but to stall the British in North America so that the French in Europe could force a peace.<sup>333</sup>

This reliance on the Indian fighter and their ways of war also proved to be their downfall. Montcalm's actions over a two year period in attempting to control the savagery of the Indians as well as force European concepts of honor and what he considered a proper civilized war ethic on the Indian warrior after the massacre at Fort William Henry, resulted in the Indians ceasing to support the French in any large numbers through the end of the war. This lack of support prevented the French from being able to match the British in manpower. While Montcalm got his wish of fighting a European "civilized war," he was forced to switch his battle strategy to one of strategic withdrawal. In the face of overwhelming numbers, and lacking the robust scouts and intelligence from his Indians allies, he pulled back from the French and British contested borderlands.<sup>334</sup> This allowed the British armies to cut off French territory from the capital, isolate Montcalm's forces at Quebec and defeat them. Flooding into the terrain behind his forces were English traders and business people who were eager to exploit the lack of French goods and convert the Indians to their cause. As British victories increased in 1758 and British-Indian diplomacy increased in the same period, the French lost more and more of their Native American support forcing them to withdraw further into Canada to mass their forces. After the Battle of Quebec in 1759, the French army, on the retreat, grew more and more isolated from their Indian allies, and surrendered in 1763.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup>Steele, *Warpaths*, 202.

<sup>334</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 41.

<sup>335</sup>Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 503.

The French reliance on Indians and, as noted in chapter 2, the government's decision to fight the North American theater as an economy of force action prevented the large reinforcements needed to match the British in a conventional fight. The only hope of success for the French was that the *la petite guerre* could cause enough havoc and destruction in the British territory that it would be able to force a peace. Unfortunately, this was not the case and the British chose to defeat the French permanently in North America. While *la petite guerre* and the Indian allies could inflict many tactical victories on the British, it was ultimately not able to turn any of these into a strategic victory.

The modern army officer can learn much from the study of the French and Indian War. While a scholar would most likely focus on the British as the victors, the French, in defeat, also hold many valuable lessons for today's soldier. These are lessons that we see executed day after day in the hybrid battlefields of Afghanistan and other places where the light footprint combined force will be used with an allied partner force. We find that knowledge of culture, of understanding your allies, and the very nature of warfare in your environment is key. The hard lessons of Braddock and Montcalm in their cultural and tactical errors show that understanding your environment and how war is waged in that environment is critical to being successful. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mao Zedong would lay down the lessons that Montcalm and Braddock failed to learn. Mao stated that to be successful, one must first understand war, then understand your environment, then

understand how war is applied in that environment.<sup>336</sup> Braddock's defeat in 1755 is a clear example in how failing the last two lessons will spell defeat.

Montcalm also teaches the modern officer that the officer must be smart in applying his way of war and culture onto that of allies. If the officer pushes too hard to drastic of a change, they risk losing their allies altogether. This is countered with the valuable positive lessons of La Corne, de Leary, and the other French partisan leaders who successfully exploited the way of war and culture of their allied force to maintain their allegiance and put them to the best use on the battlefield.<sup>337</sup>

Could the French have won the Seven Years' War? It is highly unlikely that true victory by conquering British territory was possible. The French lacked the manpower and resources to defeat the British in the face of a blockade in the Atlantic and the massive numbers of regular troops the British were willing to spend in order to defeat the French permanently in North America. The French had one option, use their allies to fight the British to a standstill and sue for peace. While they were not able to this, the French, their Indian allies, and *la petite guerre* stand as a testament to how a successful integration and combined allied force of regular and irregular forces can be used to fight a larger force and all but snatch victory from defeat.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup>Mao Tse-Tung, "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," in *H300: Roots of Today's Operational Environment* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2012), 96.

<sup>337</sup>Bearor, *Leading by Example*, II:37.

<sup>338</sup>Horn, "La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival," 43.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Illustration 1. Map of New France c. 1750

Source: New Boston Historical Society, [www.newbostonhistoricalsociety.com/cannon.html](http://www.newbostonhistoricalsociety.com/cannon.html), (accessed 1 November 2012).





Illustration 2. Principal Campaigns of the French and Indian War

Source : West Point Department of History, [www.westpoint.edu/history](http://www.westpoint.edu/history) (accessed 1 November 2012).

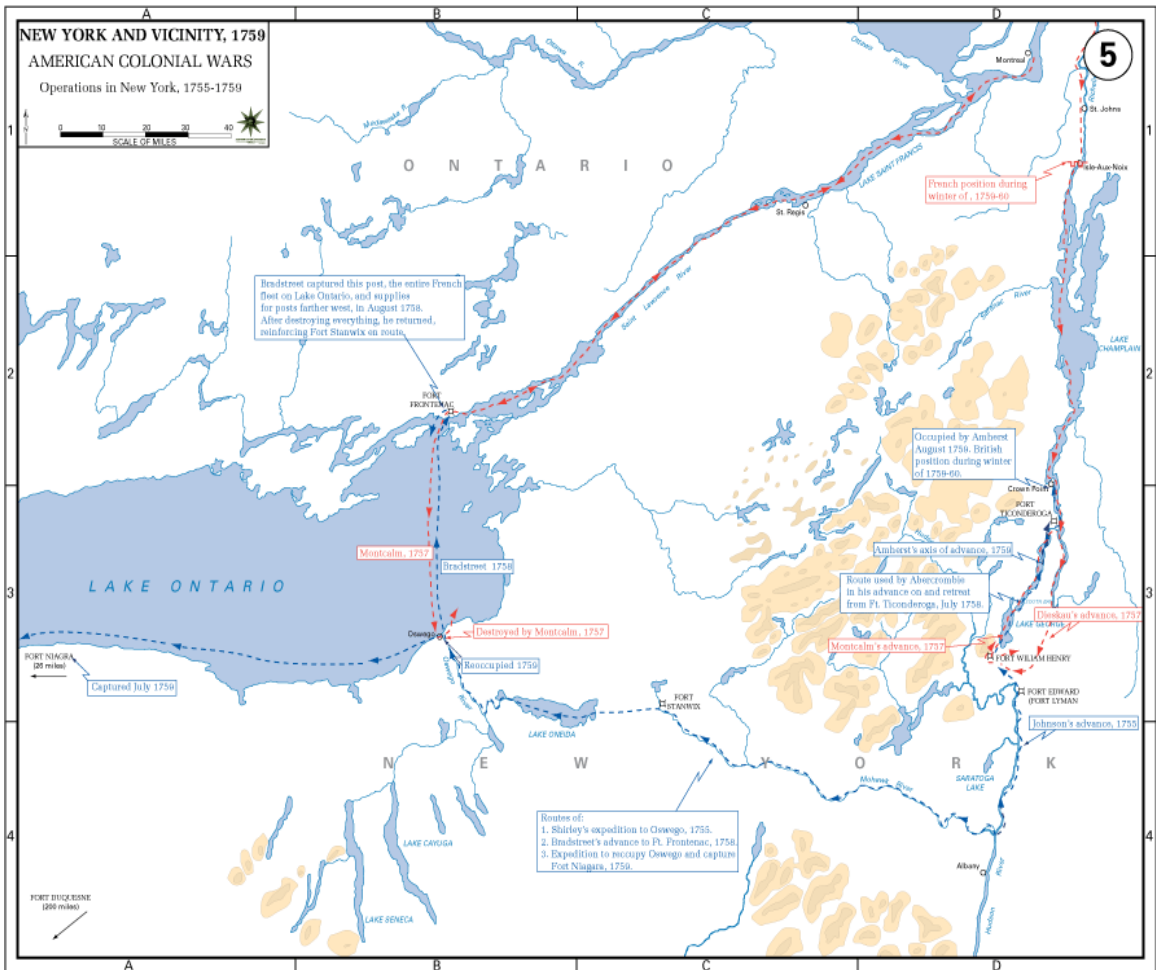


Illustration 3. Military Operations in New York

Source: West Point Department of History, [www.westpoint.edu/history](http://www.westpoint.edu/history) (accessed 1 November 2012).

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