

**The Historical and Ethnohistorical Context of Hunting and Fishing
Treaty Rights in Western and Northern Michigan.**

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was owed to them from their many treaties with the United States government and sought compensation from the government for improvements they had made to their reservations. This petition's specific request for compensation for the reservations and its explicit statement that "[w]e have purchased lands to make us homes..." suggests that the Ottawa and Chippewa leaders who participated in the council shared with the United States government the desire to stake their future on individual land ownership. The document closed with the *Anishnabeg* announcing that a delegation was on its way to Washington. On February 7, 1855, a group of thirty Grand River Ottawa men also endorsed the petition.⁴⁶⁵

As had happened in 1836, the Ottawa and the Chippewa played an active role in initiating a new round of treaty making. Also reminiscent of 1836, when the Ottawa Catholics pressed the government for negotiations, it was the most progressive *Anishnabeg* who accelerated the drift toward a new treaty. However, just as the 1836 treaty served both the needs of traditionalists and progressives among the Ottawa and Chippewa, the circumstances leading up to the 1855 negotiation again favored the formation of a consensus among the *Anishnabe* factions that a new treaty was desirable. The annuity payments mandated by the 1836 Treaty of Washington were nearing expiration. For traditionalists, who had made little progress toward farming or commercial fishing, the annuities played an important role providing access to blankets, clothing, and food staples. Indian agent Henry Gilbert dismissed these Ottawa and Chippewa as presenting "the anomaly of savage, pagan communities, existing in the very midst of civilization," and he contrasted them with the "other bands" who were making "great improvement in civilization." Yet, for both the "civilized" Ottawa and Chippewa and those viewed by the government as "savage, pagan," a new agreement with the federal government was necessary to ensure their persistence in Michigan.⁴⁶⁶

A Flawed Vision of the Future: The 1855 Treaty of Detroit

On July 35, 1855, representative chiefs of the Ottawa and Chippewa met in council with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, George W. Mannypenny. Although a number of *Anishnabe*

⁴⁶⁵ Translation of a Petition from the Chippeway and Ottawa Indians, 16 January 1855, National Archives, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Michigan Superintendency, RG 75, M-234, Roll 404, frame 561.

⁴⁶⁶ United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853* (New York: AMS Press, 1976), 278-279.