



Ville de
MONT-TREMBLANT

Since the dawn of time

Imagine for a moment a file of birchbark canoes gliding across the Diable river rapids, paddled in silence by men and women dressed in animal skins. These Indigenous persons who then navigated the river were the heirs to a human adventure that began about 15,000 years earlier, when groups of people who came from Asia via the Bering Strait began to populate the American continent.



Standing, Joseph Commandant (son), who lived in Labelle at the end of the 19th century. At his feet, Michel Chichippe, who had recounted the legend of Mont Tremblant to William Douw Lighthall, author of the collection of poems Old Measures.

Source: Société d'histoire Chute-aux-Iroquois, photographer unknown.

When, in 1613, Samuel de Champlain explored the rivière des Outaouais (Ottawa River), then called the Kichesipi, he encountered the Weskarinis, an Algonquian nation that lived in the watersheds of the Lièvre, Petite Nation, Assomption and Rouge rivers, as well as, in all likelihood, the Diable river. The Iroquois Wars and the epidemics caused by bacteria and viruses brought by the Europeans decimated the Petite Nation, a nickname that the French gave to the Weskarinis. Forty years after Champlain's expedition, a missionary noted that the Petite Nation had disappeared from the banks of the Outaouais. The survivors found refuge with their French allies. After the Great Peace of 1701, members of the Algonquian diaspora and that of other nations returned slowly to their ancestral lands and, over the generations, went back to their traditional way of life.

This was the case with Joseph Commandant and his wife who, at the end of the 19th century, lived with their

Gradually, a civilization deeply connected to nature and climate developed in this crucible over the centuries. Four thousand years ago, the Laurentians were in all likelihood inhabited and traveled by bands of nomadic hunter-gatherers. These people were highly mobile, immersed in commercial trading with the peoples of neighbouring lands, as is demonstrated by artefacts found in the MRC of Antoine-Labelle north of Mont-Tremblant. One thousand years before our era, three

major cultural and linguistic groups, divided into numerous nations, shared the territory that make up today's Québec: the Inuit, the Algonquians and the Iroquoians. These thousand-year-old civilizations collided with that of the Europeans in the 15th century



These tool fragments, found by archeologists on the shores of Lac de la Maison de Pierre, north of L'Ascension (MRC of Antoine-Labelle), bear witness to human presence dating back to 2000 to 4000 years before our time.

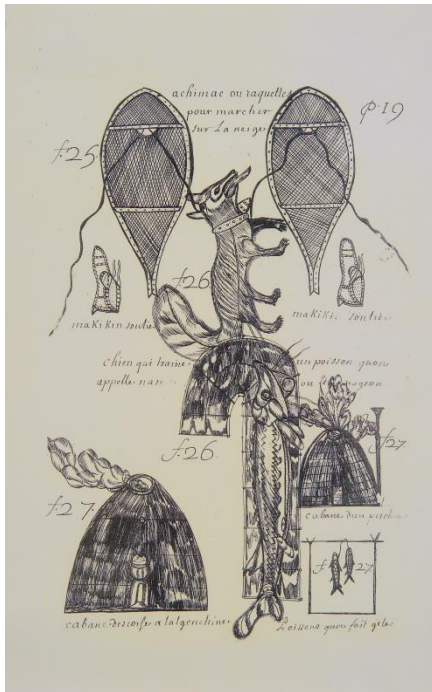
Source: Une mémoire pour l'avenir : l'archéologie et la M.R.C. d'Antoine-Labelle, photo by Gaston Beauregard and Pierre Dumais.



children on the shores of Lac Tremblant near the mouth of the Cachée river. A contemporary of his notes that Jos. Commandant was a master in the art of building birchbark canoes, those floating wonders in which his ancestors had travelled the territory since the dawn of time.

Manitonga Soutana

A legend of the Indigenous peoples, first reported in 1859 by geologist William Edmond Logan and later transmitted orally by Michel Chichippe, himself an Indigenous person, was the origin of the name of Mont Tremblant. According to this belief, the mountain was inhabited by a fearsome manitou, or great spirit—Manitonga Soutana or Manitou Ewichi Saga—which caused the mountain to shake when its peace was disturbed.



Under illustration f27, lower left, one can read: “cabane d’écorce à l’algonquine” (Algonquin-style bark cabin).

Source: *The Codex canadensis and the writings of Louis Nicolas: The natural history of the New World = Histoire naturelle des Indes occidentales*, attributed to Louis Nicolas, ca. 1667-1675. © Public domain.

Research and writing: Danielle Soucy



Represented by a drawing dated 1701, the moose, one of the game animals hunted by the Algonquians in the Diable river valley.

Source: *The Codex canadensis and the writings of Louis Nicolas : The natural history of the New World = Histoire naturelle des Indes occidentales*, attributed to Louis Nicolas, ca. 1667-1675. © Public domain.



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*Details of a birchbark canoe built at the end of the 19th century by Joseph Commandant (father).
Source: Danielle Soucy photo.*

