

Parolles de Makisabé: A Bodéwadmi Account of How the Fox Wars Began

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In August 1712, Makisabé, a Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi) chief from a village on the St. Joseph River in what is presently southwestern Michigan, traveled to Montreal, where he met with the governor-general of New France, Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil. Vaudreuil and Makisabé were allies, as their respective peoples had been since the 1670s, and Makisabé had come to explain his role in the fighting that had broken out at the French post of Detroit that June between two groups of France's Indigenous allies. The first group centered on a coalition of Anishinaabemowin-speaking peoples—the Bodéwadmi, Odawa, and Anishinaabe (Ojibwe)—but also included many Illinois, Myaamia (Miami), and Wendat (Huron). On the other side was an alliance of Central Algonquian-speaking peoples—the Meskwaki (Fox), Mascouten, and Kickapoo—who, until recently, had lived primarily west of Lake Michigan in what is currently Wisconsin. Makisabé and an Odawa chief from the Grand River named Saguima claimed to have organized the attack on the Meskwaki and their allies.

Ultimately, this fighting, which soon came to include the French, led to nearly two decades of conflict between the French and Meskwaki alliance networks, known to historians as the Fox Wars (1712–1733), the final stages of which saw a genocidal campaign by the French that nearly destroyed the Meskwaki as a people. The record of what Makisabé told Vaudreuil on August 17, 1712, titled “Parolles de Makisabé” (“Words of Makisabé”), thus provides a crucial Indigenous perspective on the beginnings of a pivotal conflict in the history of early America by one of its key participants. Taking Makisabé's account seriously challenges most scholarly narratives on the outbreak of the Fox Wars, shifting the focus from relationships between French and Indigenous peoples at Detroit to relationships among a diverse array of Indigenous people living farther west, outside the sight of French officials.¹

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¹ “Parolles de Makisabé,” Archives nationales d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, Fr. (ANOM), COL, Séries C11 A, vol. 33, fols. 85-90^v. A microform copy is available at the Library and

Parolles De Makisabé chef Potouatami

Du 17 aoust 1712

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Memoire

Je ne me suis jamais regardé moy mesme comme
 maître d'aucun endroit, j'ay toujours reconnu ceux
 que vous avez envoyez en fait leur volonté.

En ce qui concerne moy mesme l'autonne passé
 a toutes les nations d'estre toujours tranquilles
 en leur nation, mais on ne devoit pas
 en qui devoit arriver.

Je se prie de se souvenir Moy mesme que lorsque
 Monsieur de Roubilly et Deslittes font arriver au
 de trois j'ay avoué desja de mauvaisere a
 Potouatami.

avant L'arrivée de Monsieur Du buisson a de trois
 chacun vouloit estre le maître, mais frotté qui s'est
 arrivé je me souviens de bord que C'estoit Luy qui gouvernoit
 le Village et qui avoit tout parolle, j'allois Luy porter mes
 corps pour n'avoir d'autre volonté que la sienne.

Depuis que Monsieur Du buisson a de commandé
 de de trois j'ay ay de de me point Espargner quand j'el
 avois besoin de moy, que j'el avois toujours presté lorsqu'el
 me commanderoit. Depuis que j'el a donné moy mesme
 moy mesme je ne veux estre attaché qu'a vous faire toujours
 par volonté, quelque part ou en l'usage j'el a, quelque
 chose que tu m'ordonne j'el a.

quand j'el a retourné d'avec moy Village j'el a

Figure I. "Parolles de Makisabé," 1712. Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, France. COL, Série C11 A, vol. 33, fol. 85r.

Archives of Canada (LAC), Ottawa, reel C-2383, F-33 (formerly MG1-C11A), and has been digitized as "Paroles de Makisabi, chef potéouatami" (Item ID 3064570): <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&tid=3064570>. Another manuscript transcription of the original is available at LAC: "Parolles de Makisabé chef Potouatamis du 17 aoust 1712," France fonds des Colonies, série C11A, Correspondance Générale; Canada, C-2383, vol. 33, 130-42. This transcript was digitized by the Canadiana Héritage project: https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c2383/781.

The first decades of the eighteenth century were a complicated time for leaders in the Great Lakes region like Makisabé and Vaudreuil. In the second half of the seventeenth century, French traders and missionaries began entering the region and the present-day states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The politics and diplomacy of this region were defined by a series of overlapping and intersecting Indigenous alliance networks based on kinship, marriage, and negotiation that bound the region's diverse inhabitants together, though not always harmoniously. Broadly speaking, there were five overarching Indigenous alliance networks. Farthest east, located in present-day upstate New York, were the Haudenosaunee, or the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. From the area surrounding Lake Superior, including northern Michigan, came the Anishinaabe alliance, including the Anishinaabe, Odawa, and Odéwadmí. West of Lake Michigan, centered on Green Bay in what is currently Wisconsin, were the *gens de la baie* (people of the bay), including the closely related Meskwaki, Kickapoo, and Mascouten, as well as the Menominee and Ho-Chunk. To their south was the Illinois alliance, which included the Illinois as well as related peoples like the Myaamia. And finally, farthest west in what is currently Minnesota, were the Siouan-speaking Dakota.²

This overview only scratches the surface of the diversity of people, politics, and interests that defined the region. These broad alliance networks were each composed of a diverse and kaleidoscopic array of villages, kin groups, and nations—each with their own alliances, interests, friendships, and enmities—that subdivided and crossed the boundaries of the larger alliance networks. Social relationships of kinship, marriage, and mutual obligation structured both the day-to-day lives of the Great Lakes' Indigenous people as well as the politics and diplomacy of their alliances.³

² Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*, Twentieth Anniversary ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11, 14; Michael J. Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 6-13, 121-25; Robert Michael Morrissey, *Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 14-6, 29; Jacob F. Lee, *Masters of the Middle Waters: Indian Nations and Colonial Ambitions along the Mississippi* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 37-40; Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 23-5; Raymond J. DeMallie, "Sioux until 1850," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 13, *Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 718-60.

³ For a full account of the politics of these alliances, see Ian Edward Tonat, "The People of the Bay: Native Society and Alliance in the Green Bay Region, 1650–1750" (Ph.D. diss., William & Mary, 2021).

As the French entered the region, which they called the *pays d'en haut* (upper country), in the late seventeenth century, the alliance networks of the Anishinaabeg, Illinois, and people of the bay were loosely allied in the face of hostility from the Haudenosaunee in the east and the Dakota in the west. The French—seeking to expand their influence across the continent, access new trading partners, and find allies in their own conflict with the Haudenosaunee—formed alliances with the region's Native people and pursued hegemony over them. However, this pursuit conflicted with the reasons Native people made alliances with the French—primarily, advantage against other Native people, including other French allies—and caused serious dissatisfaction among France's allies.

In 1701, the French attempted to resolve these issues with a great council at Montreal that included some 1,300 Native ambassadors from about forty different nations, including the Haudenosaunee. The immediate purpose of the Great Peace of Montreal, as the council became known, was to end the wars between the French, their allies, and the Haudenosaunee, a goal it largely achieved. However, French officials also sought to place themselves at the center of diplomacy and alliance in the region and to impose, as the historian Gilles Havard puts it, a “Pax Gallica” between the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers. In this goal, French officials were much less successful. Even worse for the French was the decision a few years earlier to abandon all posts and rescind all trading licenses west of Detroit. This made Detroit the sole point of contact between New France and its western allies, effectively removing French agents from Native communities and the daily social interactions and personal connections that structured Native alliances.⁴

In the years following the Great Peace of Montreal, Detroit became the hub of diplomacy and trade between France and its western allies, and the post saw both occasional visits from chiefs and migrations of whole Native villages seeking to be closer to the French. By around 1705, Wendat and Odawa peoples had established villages at Detroit, and a significant number of Myaamia had moved to live there among the Wendat. Through intermarriage, kinship, and alliance, these villages brought a constant stream of people from other nations to visit or reside long-term at Detroit, including some Bodéwadmi, Makisabé's people. Over the first decade of the eighteenth century, Antoine Laumet de Lamothe Cadillac, the French commandant at Detroit, invited as many Native people to come live at his post as possible. But, late in the decade, his superior Vaudreuil worried that they were only moving to get closer to the English. He was especially

⁴ On the Great Peace of Montreal, see Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), esp., 4-7, 34, 82-88, 111, 119-22, 155-58, 166-76.

concerned about the Meskwaki, whom he had heard were treating with the Haudenosaunee, and in 1711 Vaudreuil encouraged those who had relocated to leave Detroit and return west of Lake Michigan.⁵

However, glimpses in French documents show that tensions were rising in the west, largely out from under the eyes of the French, particularly between the alliances of the Anishinaabeg and the people of the bay. Around 1700, the illegal fur trader Pierre Le Sueur recorded an alliance of Piankeshaw, Kickapoo, Mascouten, and Meskwaki making attacks on the Iowa, and another party of Bodéwadmí, Meskwaki, Sauk, and Ho-Chunk going to attack the Dakota. In 1703, Odawa who came to Montreal from Michilimackinac complained to Vaudreuil that the Sauk and Meskwaki were again at war with the Anishinaabeg and were worried they would be caught up in it. But only three years later, the Odawa convinced members of the same two nations to attack the Myaamia living on the St. Joseph River, which by this time was also home to groups of Bodéwadmí, Sauk, Mascouten, and others. This created an awkward situation when the Meskwaki and Kickapoo, to various degrees allied with all of these people, began to war with the Wea and Illinois, who were also allies of the diverse people living on the St. Joseph River.⁶

These rising tensions and conflicts around the St. Joseph River provide the immediate context for the events Makisabé participated in and relayed, and in the summer of 1712 culminated in open fighting at Detroit between the Meskwaki, Mascouten, and Kickapoo on the one hand and the French, Bodéwadmí, Odawa, Wendat, and many other Indigenous allies on the other. This fighting opened the Fox Wars, which threatened to tear New France's alliance network apart. In the conflict's final stages, the French waged a genocidal campaign

⁵ Andrew Sturtevant, "Jealous Neighbors: Rivalry and Alliance among the Native Communities of Detroit, 1701–1766" (Ph.D. diss., William & Mary, 2011), 8, 24, 25, 29, 63; R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser, *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 58; Karen L. Marrero, *Detroit's Hidden Channels: The Power of French-Indigenous Families in the Eighteenth Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2020): 6-7; "Memorandum to Serve as Instructions from the Marquis de Vaudreuil to the Officers and *Voyageurs* Despatched to Bring Down to Montreal the Savages of the Upper Country," in *Collections and Researches Made by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society* [hereafter *MHC*], ed. C. M. Burton, (Lansing: Robert Smith, 1904), 33: 497-502; "Report from M. de Vaudreuil on the Condition of the Colony," in *MHC* 33: 528-36, esp. 532.

⁶ "Le Sueur's Voyage up the Mississippi," in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* [hereafter *WHC*], ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: The Society, 1902), 16: 177-93, esp. 180-81; "Conference of Indian Envoys with Governor de Vaudreuil," *WHC* 16: 221-27, esp. 222; "Detroit Attacked by Ottawas and Miamis; Jesuits Pacify Michilimackinac Savages," *WHC* 16: 232-39, esp. 236. See also Edmunds and Peyser, *Fox Wars*, 55-61; "Words of the Marquis de Vaudreuil to the Savages Who Came Down from the Upper Country," *MHC* 33: 503-6.

against the Meskwaki, whose population was devastated by violence and slaving, until the intervention of some of their allies brought the conflict to a close.⁷



The “Parolles de Makisabé” recounts the events that led to the fighting at Detroit in 1712—and thus the launch of the Fox Wars—from the perspective of Makisabé, a Bodéwadmi chief from the St. Joseph River and one of the self-confessed instigators of the violence. His account is the only detailed, contemporary, Indigenous narrative of the Fox Wars’ beginnings.⁸ The document itself was produced on August 17, 1712, when Makisabé journeyed to Montreal—the usual site of western diplomacy for New France—to explain his role in the fighting that had occurred the previous summer to Governor General Vaudreuil. French officials recorded what Makisabé told Vaudreuil and sent it to France as a supporting document to Vaudreuil’s official report to the minister of the navy (who was also responsible for the colonies), where it was entered into the colonial archive.⁹

Makisabé began his narrative in the autumn of 1711, when he and his allies had already decided to attack and “completely destroy” the Meskwaki and their allies the following spring. Makisabé described a number of incidents of violence in the communities near the St. Joseph River, as well as his attempts to negotiate a peace between the Myaamia and Illinois and how he convinced the Illinois to join his coalition. He then described the arrival of Saguima, an Odawa chief, who urged all the allies to immediately attack the Mascouten, the Meskwaki’s close allies. After attacking some Mascouten living in their own communities, Makisabé and his allies attacked and destroyed a nearby Mascouten village. To

⁷ For histories of the Fox Wars, see Edmunds and Peyser, *Fox Wars*; White, *Middle Ground*, 149-75; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 197-221; and Tonat, “The People of the Bay,” esp. chaps. 2-4.

⁸ Other Indigenous accounts of the Fox Wars in the form of oral histories were recorded in the years following the conflict, primarily the nineteenth century. These accounts also put the emphasis on conflicts among Native people, particularly the Meskwaki and their neighbors. See, for example, Peter Dooyentate Clarke, *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts...* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, & Co., 1870), 20-21; William W. Warren, “History of the Ojibways, Based upon Traditions and Oral Statements,” in *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* (St. Paul: The Society, 1885), 5: 21-394, esp. 148-54; William Jones, *Fox Texts* (Leyden: Brill, 1907), 8-31; Johnathan Lantz Buffalo, “Oral History of the Meskwaki,” *Wisconsin Archeologist* 89, no. 1 & 2 (2008): 3-6.

⁹ Vaudreuil’s report: Philippe de Rigaud Vaudreuil to Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, comte de Maurepas, November 6, 1712, ANOM, COL, Série C11 A, vol. 33, fols. 50-70v. A partial translation of this report is available in “Reports from the Upper Country,” *MHC* 33: 559-67. This translation gives the date of the letter as September 6, but this appears to be a misunderstanding of the abbreviation “9^{bre}.”

Makisabé's surprise, the Mascouten survivors fled not to their Native allies but to the French fort at Detroit. Makisabé and his allies followed their tracks, arriving at the fort to find the French besieged by the Mascouten and Meskwaki. Makisabé described the opening of the siege, but his narrative ends abruptly, as he fell ill and died before finishing it.

Though the "Parolles de Makisabé" provides a unique Indigenous perspective on the beginnings of the Fox Wars and insight into events that appear nowhere else, this very uniqueness creates issues with establishing its full context. Perhaps most frustrating is the narrative's incompleteness. Combined with the lack of French sources due to their abandonment of all posts west of Detroit, that Makisabé's account begins after he and his allies have already decided to attack the Meskwaki and their allies means that the events leading up to that decision are shadowy at best. Similarly, Makisabé's illness and death prevented him from completing his narrative of the siege of Detroit, which culminated in the destruction of the Meskwaki and Mascouten villages near Detroit and the death or enslavement of nearly all of those living in them. There are also the issues of language and authorship. The "Parolles" of the title ("words" or "speech") indicate that Makisabé delivered his narrative orally. While it is possible that Makisabé spoke French—as some other Bodéwadmi leaders did—it is much more likely that he addressed Vaudreuil through a translator, raising questions about the accuracy of the transcription and translation of his words.

Makisabé is himself an obscure figure, as he appears in the French record only in relation to the events narrated in this document, making determining his motivations and interests difficult beyond the broadest strokes.¹⁰ Indeed, neither Makisabé nor Vaudreuil ever explicitly mention where the events of Makisabé's narrative occur. Their precise location can only be determined by reading a letter, appended to Vaudreuil's report, from Joseph-Jacques Marest, the Jesuit missionary at Michilimackinac and one of the few Frenchmen remaining west of Detroit. He said that the Bodéwadmi involved in the attack were from the St. Joseph River and the Odawa from the Grand River.¹¹ Due to his death while relating his narrative and the lack of documentary evidence beforehand, Makisabé's

¹⁰ Makisabé is by far the most common spelling, though his name is also variously spelled Makisabe, Makisabi, Makisabie, and Mâquisabé. To some extent, this variation reflects different spellings in the primary sources, sometimes within the same document. However, "Makisabi" seems to be a transcription error caused by ambiguity between *é* and *i* which is especially prominent in the title of the "Parolles," though subsequent uses are all clearly "Makisabé." "Makisabie" appears to be an attempt by Thwaites in *WHC* to create a standardized version.

¹¹ Joseph-Jacques Marest to Philippe de Rigaud Vaudreuil, June 21, 1712, ANOM, COL, Séries C11 A, vol. 33, fols. 71-76v. A full translation is available, "Indians on the St. Joseph River," *MHC* 33: 553-57; as well as a partial one in E.M. Sheldon, *The Early History of Michigan, from the First Settlement to 1815* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1874), 299-305.

presentation of himself and his own actions, alongside brief French descriptions, are the only means we have to contextualize and assess his narrative beyond generalities. The available information suggests that Makisabé was a prominent leader among the Bodéwadmī, deeply involved in diplomacy and war, and likely from an influential family. Dubuisson describes him as a “war chief” and notes that his brother Tekamasimon accompanied him. Throughout his account, Makisabé presents himself as a widely respected leader, having another Bodéwadmī describe him as “chief of the nation” and the Illinois address him in relation to his “father, who was highly respected.” Makisabé also portrays himself as a loyal ally of the French, often in contrast to his ally Saguima, whom he accuses of trading with the English and even of threatening to attack the French if they were to give shelter to the Mascouten. Such a flattering (and useful) self-portrayal naturally raises questions, but there is little else in the documentary record to compare it with.¹²

Nonetheless, what the “Parolles de Makisabé” tells us about the beginnings of the Fox Wars is critical and raises serious questions about most scholarly portrayals by instead emphasizing relations between Native peoples and making the French peripheral. Makisabé’s narrative is reasonably well known among scholars, with two widely cited works on the Fox Wars—Richard White’s *The Middle Ground* and R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser’s *The Fox Wars*—drawing substantially from it. However, these decades-old works primarily see the Fox Wars through the lens of conflict between the French and the Meskwaki, putting undue weight on the French as protagonists. Even White, who explicitly argues that the Fox Wars were “intertribal wars that eventually became an imperial war by default,” sees the wars primarily through a French lens, as a failure of the French to maintain their alliance and fulfill their role as mediators.¹³ Surprisingly, given increasing interest in Native agency and diplomacy among Native people, more recent works on the Fox Wars rarely give serious consideration to the “Parolles de Makisabé” and continue to see the conflict’s beginnings in the geographic and diplomatic context of Detroit. These works tend to draw heavily on the report of Jacques-Charles Renaud Dubuisson, acting commandant of Detroit at the time of the siege, who had little sense of the wider Indigenous context for

¹² “Siege of Detroit by Wisconsin Indians,” *WHC* 16: 267-88, esp. 271. Note that Thwaites renders Makisabé’s brother’s name as “Tehamasimon,” but the original document clearly features a *k*. See Jacques-Charles Renaud Dubuisson to Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, July 15, 1712, ANOM, COL, Séries C11 A, vol. 33, fols. 160-178^v, esp. 164. See also “Parolles de Makisabé,” fols. 86-87. Makisabé’s self-portrayal as an influential and loyal French ally is especially relevant because Bodéwadmī leaders often presented themselves as intermediaries between the French and their allies living west of Lake Michigan.

¹³ White, *Middle Ground*, 153-59, quotation 154 n. 19. Edmunds and Peyser, *Fox Wars*, 65-68.

the fighting at Detroit and, as a result, seemed baffled at the hostility of his Native allies.¹⁴

But Makisabé's narrative of the Fox Wars' beginnings raises a number of issues with the idea that Detroit was the flashpoint. The first is the planning of the Meskwaki's Native enemies. According to Makisabé, many of his allies, including the Myaamia and Bodéwadmi elders, made clear in the winter of 1711–12 that they were already planning to attack the Meskwaki and their allies in the spring. The origin of the enmity between the Bodéwadmi and their allies on the one hand and the Meskwaki, Kickapoo, and Mascouten on the other isn't clear, though Makisabé relates that violence was already ongoing, as he claimed he helped prevent a Kickapoo attack on the Myaamia that winter. Many scholars have been content to label the different peoples as traditional enemies and argue that they were ultimately fighting over access to the French, but the events of the preceding decades and Makisabé's account raise questions about these interpretations. First, some of the Meskwaki's closest relatives and allies were Bodéwadmi. Second, as Makisabé's testimony makes clear, the war did not begin with attacks on the Meskwaki who had moved to Detroit but on Kickapoo and Mascouten living near St. Joseph River—both points underlined by the fact that some of the first victims were Mascouten living in Makisabé's village. Instead, the most likely initial cause of the violence seems to have been a confluence of relatively recent diplomatic developments in the Indigenous alliance networks west of Detroit that were largely invisible to the French because they had been mostly absent from the region for a decade. Particularly salient seems to have been the increasingly close relationship between the Bodéwadmi and the Illinois—as evidenced by Makisabé's decision to take half his village to winter with the Illinois—combined with a war between the Illinois on one side and the Meskwaki, Kickapoo, and Mascouten on the other. There may also have been personal reasons, as Makisabé (and others) noted that the Mascouten had been openly insulting Saguima for the better part of a year. These all shift the focus from Detroit to the St. Joseph River.¹⁵

¹⁴ For instance, Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance* and Marrero, *Detroit's Hidden Channels* do not cite "Parolles de Makisabé." Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), 83–85, 348 n. 56 does, but like Rushforth he primarily sees the conflict as a result of France's Anishinaabe allies working to shape the French alliance network to their benefit by removing the Meskwaki. Given his focus on the Odawa, McDonnell emphasizes the role of Saguima (spelled "Sakima") and does not mention Makisabé in the text. For a translation of Dubuisson's narrative, see "Siege of Detroit."

¹⁵ "Memorandum to Serve as Instructions," 501; "Words of the Marquis de Vaudreuil," 504–6. For the traditional enemy narrative, see Edmunds and Peyser, *Fox Wars*, 86; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 196, 199. Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 418 n. 78 rightly pushes back against this framing.

If the background and planning of the attacks described by Makisabé move the location of the Fox Wars' beginnings further west, his narrative also shows how little the French influenced the events leading up to the siege of Detroit and the Fox Wars. Makisabé's narrative stresses coalition building among Native people, which allowed him and Saguima to assemble a large and diverse alliance. While it is apparent that the Odawa, Bodéwadmi, Myaamia, and Wendat at least had determined to go to war before the autumn of 1711, when Makisabé's narrative gives us a clearer view of the political situation, his narrative shows how he was able to convince the Illinois to join his alliance by presenting them with a common enemy, removing the threat of Myaamia attacks by brokering a peace, and leveraging an unsanctioned attack on the Bodéwadmi by Illinois warriors into a pledge to follow Makisabé. Unfortunately, Makisabé's narrative only gives us a glimpse into the complicated diplomatic wrangling that went into this attack.¹⁶

Even more telling is this conflict's relative invisibility to the French. French sources make little to no mention of hostility between the Mascouten, Meskwaki, Kickapoo, and others before Makisabé and Saguima attacked. Indeed, even when six hundred warriors arrived on his doorstep, Dubuisson found it "surprising how much all these nations are irritated against the Mascoutins and the Ottagamies [Meskwaki]." Far from a conspiracy to involve the French, if we are to believe Makisabé, his allies did not want to involve the French at all. He said it was the Mascouten who sought the French out after they had been attacked, and even at that point, Makisabé stated that he and his allies had expected the Mascouten to flee to their Kickapoo allies. Indeed, Makisabé claimed Saguima, one of the principal instigators, was willing to attack the French if they sided with the enemy.¹⁷

Further, though it is clear from statements of the Myaamia warriors and Bodéwadmi elders that the plan was to attack the Meskwaki, Makisabé emphasized conflict with the Mascouten. Even once his party reached Detroit, where the Meskwaki were present, Makisabé suspected that it was the Mascouten who had initiated hostilities with the French. He said it was the Mascouten who prevented him from reaching the French fort and that he resolved to fight because he did not want to "leave our father in the hands of the Mascouten."¹⁸ While most scholarly accounts, drawing on Dubuisson's narrative, emphasize the rising tensions between the Meskwaki and French at Detroit in the escalation of hostilities that

¹⁶ "Parolles de Makisabé," fols. 85^v-87^v.

¹⁷ "Siege of Detroit," 272; "Parolles de Makisabé," fols. 88^v-89. On the narrative of a Native conspiracy to create a war between the Meskwaki and French, see White, *Middle Ground*, 155-59; McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 84-85.

¹⁸ "Parolles de Makisabé," fol. 90.

led to the Fox Wars, a close examination, combined with the context provided by Makisabé, shows that the arrival of the Mascouten refugees was the turning point. Tensions between the French and Meskwaki had been rising for some time, and some Meskwaki had even tried to kill two French people inside the fort. But when the Mascouten refugees informed their Meskwaki allies of Makisabé and Saguima's attack, the Meskwaki burnt an Odawa cabin at the fort's entrance. Dubuisson perceived this Meskwaki act of retribution against the Odawa as an attack on the French, which led him to secure himself, the French population, and whatever supplies they could gather in the half of the fort he thought he could defend. Dubuisson prepared for war, sending word to his local allies, but tried to prevent (or at least delay) further violence by pretending to the Meskwaki and Mascouten that he feared an attack from the Myaamia. But as yet there had been no further violence, and Dubuisson even continued to allow the Meskwaki and Mascouten to enter his fort to trade until Makisabé and his allies arrived, demanding to press the attack.¹⁹

Makisabé's account thus places the French and the incidents at Detroit as secondary in the events that led to the Fox Wars. Marest, the Jesuit at Michilimackinac, agreed, writing that the "first attack" on the St. Joseph River "was as it were the seed" for the fighting at Detroit and the events that came after.²⁰ The only detailed, contemporary, Indigenous narrative of the Fox Wars' beginnings—created by a person who openly claimed to have planned and instigated the attacks that began the war—therefore reveals a very different picture than that of most scholars. According to Makisabé, the war began not at Detroit but on the St. Joseph River. The primary antagonists were not the French and the Meskwaki but an alliance of Bodéwadmi, Odawa, Illinois, Myaamia, and Wendat people on one side, and Mascouten, Kickapoo, and Meskwaki—with most emphasis put on the Mascouten—on the other. The reason behind the conflict was

¹⁹ "Siege of Detroit," 268-70. The siege of Detroit has been recounted in many places, see "Another account of the Siege of Detroit," *WHC* 16: 293-95; White, *Middle Ground*, 156-59; Edmunds and Peyser, *Fox Wars*, 64-76. Most recently, Marrero has emphasized the initial Meskwaki attack against two people in the French fort—La Jeunesse and a daughter or girl belonging to Pierre Roy, who had married Marguerite Ouabankikoué, a prominent Miami woman—as the inciting incident for the Fox Wars, after Dubuisson, new to the post and unsure of local dynamics, reacted with force. While Marrero is right to emphasize the complicated kin dynamics in play at Detroit, her interpretation places too much emphasis on Detroit and the French. She ignores the context of the previous events on the St. Joseph River and the lack of continued violence following the attack until the arrival of Makisabé and Saguima, who, unaware of events at Detroit, were already intent on attacking the Meskwaki and Mascouten in the face of resistance from Dubuisson, who only became seriously concerned after the arrival of the Mascouten and the Meskwaki burning of the Odawa cabin near the gates of the fort. See Marrero, *Detroit's Hidden Channels*, chap. 3.

²⁰ "Indians on the St. Joseph River," *MHC* 33: 553-57, esp. 554.

not French expansion or favoritism within its alliance networks but seems to have been the shifting of Native alliances surrounding the wars and movements of Native people living west of Detroit. To the extent that the French were involved, it was because they were a part of multiple Indigenous alliance networks that sought to call upon their relationships to the French in conflicting ways. According to Makisabé, the onset of the Fox Wars in 1712 was firmly rooted in the context of the Indigenous alliances and was driven at every stage, on both sides, by the actions and priorities of Native people.

Parolles De Makisabé chef P8t8atamis¹

du 17 aout 1712

Je ne me suis jamais regardé mon pere comme maistre dans aucun endroit, J[']ay toujours reconnu ceux que vous avez Envoyé et fait leurs volonte.

Tu as recommandé mon pere l'automne passé a toutes les nations d'estre toujours unies et de demeurer tranquilles sur leurs nattes mais on ne prevoiyot pas ce qui devoit arriver.

Je te prie d[']ete souvenir Mon pere que lorsque messieurs de Tonty et Desliettes sont arrivez au detroit il y avoit desja des mauvaises affaires avec L8tagamis.

Avant l'arrivé de Monsieur Debuissou au detroit chacun vouloit estre le maistre, mais sitost qu'il fut arrivé je me souviens dabord que C'estoit luy qui gouvernoit Le Village et qui avoit ta parole, J'allay luy porter mon corps pour n'avoir d[']autre volonté que la tienne.

Depuis que Monsieur Dubuissou a esté command^t du detroit Je luy ay dit de ne me point Epargnes quand il auroit besoin de moy, que Je serois toujours prest lorsqu'il me commanderait. Depuis que je t'ay donné mon corps mon pere je ne veux estre attache qu'a toy et faire toujours ta volonté, quelque part on tu m'Envoye J'iray, quelque chose que tu m'ordonne Je le feray.

Quand Je seray retourné dans mon village peuestre [end 85^e] que nos femmes et Ceux que J'ay laissé me diront que L8tagamis Les a tuez et qu'il s'est vengé, pour lors nous verrons ce qu'il y aura a faire.

L'automne passé mon pere J'avois levé La moitié du Village pour aller hiverner avec l'ilinois, mais Je revins sur des cris de mort que J'entendis a quelques journées de notre village, ou nous aprismes que c'estoit L8tagamis qui nous avoit tué.

¹ 8 is a ligature of *ou*, used frequently in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French renderings of Algonquian words.

Lorsque nous fusmes de retour a notre village nous nous aperçusmes qu'il nous manquois un homme sans sçavoir ou il pouroit estre, Je le trouvoy chez les Miamis, Je resolu Ensuite de faire La paix entre les Ilinois et Eux puisque C'estoit ta volonté, comme J'estois chez les miamis nous Entendismes des jeunes gens qui venoient fraper sur leurs Cabannes, ils me prierent de me joindre a Eux pour aller avec leurs guerriers au devant de Ceux qui venoient pour fraper et qui se trouverent estre les Kikapous dont nous tuasmes deux hommes et fismes un prisonnier.

Ce coup estant fait je fus fort embarrassé comment me tirer de cette affaire, Je la mis sur le corps des Miamis ausquels je dis de faire comme ils pouroient, que pour moy Je m'en retournois a mon village et que Je leur laissois Les deux [end 85r] chevelures et le prisonnier, que meme Je m'offrois de reparer les morts, ils me dirent qu'ils m'estoient obligez, que les Kikapous avoient tort puisqu'ils venoient pour les fraper, que d[']ailleurs comme C'estoit la meme nation que L8tagamis il n'y avoit pas grand mal puisque le printems ils croyoient qu'on mangeroit L8tagamis.

Estant de retour a mon village Les anciens m'approuverent d'avoir frapé sur le Kikapou parceque c'estoit le meme que l8tagamis sur lequel ils vouloient fraper le printems, Je fis avertir ceux qui estoient en chasse de revenir, n'estant pas en sureté a cause du Coup fait sur le Kikapou, a leur arrivée ils dirent que l'ilinois leur avoit tué un homme et Emmené une femme, et que contre l'ordinaire de la guerre ils avoient planté leur Casseteste dans le Corps du mort.

Quoy que les vieillards fussent d'avis apres ce coup de fraper sur l'ilinois, Je dis au pere que je ne le voulois point Souffrir, pour cet effet j'allay trouver le pere du mort qui me dit que C'estoit a moy a le venger, puisque J[']estois chef de la nation, je luy dis que je me souviendrons de ce qu'il me disoit, et par un collier que je luy presenté je luy dis que Je Couvrois le mort Jusques a l[']esté prochain et que je plantois le Casseteste. Ensuite J'allay aux [end 86r] Ilinois pour sçavois comment cette affaire C'estoit passee. Je rencontré les vieillards Ilinois en chemin

qui pleuroient du Coup qu'on avoit fait sur nous, et qui me rendirent La femme qu'on avoit prise, ils me dirent qu'ils me prièrent de leur pardonner, que le Coup avoit este fair par un fou sans le Consentement des vieillards. Je leur fis reponse que je voulois parler au pere pour qui J'avois des lettres et que d[']ailleurs Je voulois que tous les autres chefs des nations Illinois en me confirmassent ce qu'ils me disoient, J'allay a leur village ou apres avoir longtems parlé sans recevoir aucune reponse Je leur dis que Je ne les Craignois point que je ne craignois que le françois mon pere a qui J'avois porté mon corps l'automne dernier.

Ayant ainsy parlé le neveu du plus consideré me dit qu'il Ecoutoit ma parole, qu'il me prioit de ne pas croire qu'on Eust voulu me fraper, que je disois que Je suivois La parole du Gouverneur mon pere, qu'il estoit aussi le sien et que pour reparer le tort qu'on nous avoit fait il me donnoit son corps et vouloit faire feu avec moy et suivre La parole du Gouverneur mon pere et Le sien:

L'illinois apres m'avoir ainsy parlé me dit [end 86^v] nous te regardons comme ton pere qui estoit fort consideré, Nous sommes ravis de te voir, Nous te donnons cinq calumets de paix, trois Esclaves pour abrier le mort, dix barres de Plomb pour qu'on n'entende plus parler de luy, deux pendants d'oreille et plusieurs peaux afin que la paix soit stable entre nous et que nous ne soyons plus qu'un meme Corps.

Estant de retour a mon village, J'entray dans ma Cabanne ou je ne fis que passer et dis aux Illinois, mes freres allons a celle du mort ou nous l'enterrerons et boirons et mangerons.

Ceux de notre village avaient peine a croire ces choses Jusques a ce qu'ils Eussent vue les presents et Entendu le neveu de ce Consideré dont Je viens de parler.

Comme nous estions mon pere a faire de bonnes affaires avec l'illinois, Saguima arriva avec un collier rouge de vermillon, et me dit que comme nous avions intention de detruire L8tagamis qu'il faloit autant commencer par le Mask8tin qui luy estoit allié, et boire du bouillon d'un qui estoit chez nous avec

plusieurs autres, Nous en tuasmes un avec une femme et gardasmes le reste, Ensuite les [end 87^r] Illinois prirent leurs chevelures et du bouillon pour Inviter leur nation a venir se joindre a nous pour detruire Entierement L8tagamis et Le mask8.²

Après le depart des Illinois J'allay avec cinquante hommes pour Joindre Saguima que Je croyois allé frap[er] sur le mask8tin, Je le trouvoy paisible sur sa natte qui me dit qu'il m'attendoit pour fraper tous Ensemble. Je luy dis que s'il m'en vouloit croire nous ne fraperions point, et que Je me faisois fort de satisfaire a la mort de Ceux qui avoient esté tuez auprès de moy, mais sans Ecouter mes raisons, il me dit qu'il falloit absolument fraper sur le Mask8tin, il me fit des presents par un collier de plusieurs fusils poudre et Balles pour m'engager a cette guerre, J'acceptay son present, Je luy dis qu'il ne descendoit point icy pour te voir que tu serois peutestre outré que pour moy J'y avois descendu l[']année passée et que J[']esperois y descendre Cette année pour t'informer de tout ce qui se seroit passé ne te voulant rien cacher.

Nous partismes le lendemain de ce discours pour aller fraper sur le Mask8tin qui estoit en chasse aussy proche du village [end 87^v] de Saguima que d'icy a Lachine, nous estions Environ Cent hommes et Eux deux Cent, nous fismes plusieurs poses pour arriver a leur village en attendant le jour, quand nous y arrivasmes ils se preparoient pour aller en guerre contre L8ta8as et en chantoient desja la chasson. Souvent quand une nation doit perir elle contribue a son malheur il y avoit Longtems qu'ils menacoient Saguima et qu'ils Le traittoient de Lache, ce qui L'a irité et porté a faire coup sur eux. Le Combat fut sanglant, Saguima perdit neuf hommes et moy quatre qui furent tuez et nous en Eusmes quarante sept de Blessez, Les mask8tins Eurent soixante guerriers de tuez sans compter Les vieillards Les femmes et les enfants.

Après trois jours de Combat nous nous parlasmes et Le mask8tin demanda qui Estce qui Le tuoit, nous repondismes que C'estoit Les P8t8atamis, L8ta8as

² "mask8tin" has been abbreviated to "mask8" to fit at the end of a line.

et toutes Les nations des Lacs, ils nous demanderent a faire treve en attendant que nous seussions La volonté du Commandant du detroit qui tient ta place mon pere, nous leur [end 88^r] accordasmes et nous leur dismes qu'ils pouvoient se retirer et que nous nous retirerions aussy et que si Le Commandant du detroit qu'ils avoient Insulté nous ordonnoit de fraper, nous fraperions sinon que nous demeurions tranquils, nous brulasmes Les Cabanes emportasmes le butin et tuasmes les prisonniers.

Au retour de Cette action J'arrivay a mon Village Incertain si j'irois au detroit ou a Michillimakina. Je trouvay qu'il falloit mieux aller a Ce dernier a cause de la Commodité des Canots.

L'ilinois s'estant joint a nous nous fit present de Cent Calumets rouges, de plusmes de Calumets et d'un esclave et nous dit qu'il se joignoit a nous qu'il Venoit pleurer les morts et mon frere et qu'il nous faisoit le present pour continuer cette guerre ensemble.

Saguima receut Ce present, ensuite nous nous donnasmes rendez Vous a Un fort ou estant Saguima nous fit present de poudre et de Balles pour desfaire entierement Le mask8tin et nous promit mon pere que tu n'en serois pas fache, L'ilinois accepta Le present de Saguima comme Saguima avoit accepté Le Sien.

Nous suivismes les pistes du mask8tin [end 88^v] que nous Crusmes aller Vers le Kikap8s, mais nous nous apercusmes qu'il alloit du Costé du detroit, surquoy nous tinsmes Conseil pour sçavoir quel chemin ils pouvoient prendre et s'ils nalloient point du Costé du françois, Saguima dit qu'il vouloit detruire Le mask8tin et toutes Les nations qui prendroient son party, qu'il fraperoit meme le françois s'il le prenoit, Je luy fis reponse que Ce n'estoit pas mon sentiment qu'il falloit mieux aller au detroit aupres de notre pere, et qu'ensuite nous fraperions Le Mask8tin et les nations qui prendroient son party, mais que pour le françois Je ne le fraperois Jamais, et qu'il falloit avoir perdu l'esprit pour Cela, puisque nous nous priverions par la de toutes nos necessitez que Je n'estois pas comme luy qui alloit chez L'anglois. Je parlay la dessus aux chefs et anciens de notre

nation pour sçavoir quels estoient Leurs sentiments, ils me repondirent qu'ils n'en avoient point d[']autres que les miens, dont Je les remercié et leur dis que J'allois partir pour aller trouver notre pere Monsieur Dubuisson au Detroit, et luy demander son avis [end 89^e] La dessus que J'estois resolu de Suivre.

Je parlay a toutes les nations pour leur dire Les Sujet de ma marche, L'ilinois s'estant donné a nous ne fit aucune difficulté de promettre de Suivre ce que Je pouvois faire pour Saguima Je luy dis qu'il pouvoit faire ce qu'il voudroit, mais qu'il prit bien garde a ce qu'il seroit, que pour moy J'allois voir Monsieur Dubuisson notre pere.

Je leur dis qu'il estoit bon que J'arrivasse devant pour avertir Monsieur Dubuisson que nous venions en grand nombre afin qu'il ne fust point surpris de nous voir et qu'il n'eust aucun soupçon de nous.

Je fus Surpris mon pere en approchant du village de voir le retranchement de M. Dubuisson et une autre maison et un fort aupres; Je me douttay que Monsieur Dubuisson s'estoit battu avec le Mask8tin. Je vis bien en m'approchant de plus prest qu'il estoit sur le point d'estre attaqué et qu'il avoit besoin de Secour, sur quoy J'allay en diligence au fort des hurons qui m'ouvrirent une de leurs portes m'ayant reconnu. Je fus aperçu par un mask8tin qui fust dire au village des Regnards que j'estois arrivé.

Je parlay aux hurons et leur dis Le Sujet de [end 89^e] mon voyage, que Je venois pour Continuer La guerre contre le mask8ten que nous poursuivions et que nous avions dessein de detruire. Je leur presenté mon Calumet dans lequel ils fumerent et me dirent que mon arriveé Leur faisoit plaisir et que notre pere en auroit de nous voir parceq^l. estoit attaqué par L8tagamis.

Pendant que J'estois dans le fort des hurons Les Regnards firent dire a Monsieur Dubuisson qu'ils sçavoient que Makisabé estoit dans le fort des hurons et qu'ils vouloient Le manger, et que si par hazard il s'y opposoit ils bruleroient ses Cabannes et luy en seroient autant.

Monsieur Dubuisson me fit dire par ~~des [?]~~ Monsieur De Vincennes de ne me point chagriner, et de ne me point exposer a venir a Son fort crainte qu'il ne m'arrivant mal parceque les avenues en estoient gardeés par les Mask8tins, La dessus Je resolu de perir plutost que de Laisser notre pere entre les mains du Mask8tin. J'envoyay deux hurons pour avertir nos gens de venir et Je pris ma resolution de detruire entierem^t. L8tagamis et le Mask8tin puisquils vouloient me manger et qu'ils chagrinoient notre pere Monsieur Dubuisson a qui Je fis dire qu'il falloit qu'il [end 90^r] nous donnast de la poudre des balles et des vivres pour pouvoir nous battre.

Quand L8tagamis sceut que nous venions au nombre d'environ six cent, il s'empara de la moitié du fort des françois, nous ne voulusmes pas fraper dabord voulant tacher d'avoir par douceur la femme de Saguima qu'ils avoient prise avec quelques autres.

Makisabé estant tombé malade ne peut achever tout ce qu'il avoit a dire, et deux jours apres il mourut.³

³ The right margin, in the same hand, reads:
 "Vaudreuil du 6^r Novembr^e 1712
 Parolles des Makisabé
 chef P8t8atamis du 17 aoust
 Poutouatamis"

Words of Makisabé, Bodéwadmi Chief

17 August 1712

I have never considered myself, my father,⁴ as master in any place, I always recognized those whom you sent and did their will.

You recommended, my father, last autumn to all the nations to always be united and to remain calm on their mats, but it was not foreseen what was to happen.

I beg you to remember, my father, that when Messieurs de Tonty and Desliettes⁵ arrived in Detroit there were already troubles with the Outagamis.⁶

Before the arrival of Monsieur Dubuisson⁷ in Detroit everyone wanted to be the master, but from the moment he arrived I have remembered that it was he who governed the village and who had your word, I went to take my body to him to have no other will than yours.

Since Monsieur Dubuisson has been commandant of Detroit, I have told him not to spare me when he needed me, that I would always be ready when he commanded me. Since I gave you my body, my father, I only want to be attached to you and always do your will, wherever you send me I will go, whatever you order I will do.

When I have returned to my village, perhaps [end 85r] our women and those I left behind will tell me that the Outagamis killed them and that he has taken revenge, at that time we will see what needs to be done.

⁴ France's Native allies conventionally referred to the governor (and other French officials) as father. For a discussion of the use of this term, see White, *Middle Ground*, 84-85 and McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 93-94. At this time, the governor general of New France was Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, see Yves F. Zoltvany, "Rigaud de Vaudreuil, Philippe de, Marquis de Vaudreuil," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2 (1969, rev. 2013).

⁵ Alphonse de Tonty was second in command at Detroit under Antoine Laumet de La Mothe Cadillac from 1701 to 1705 and frequently acted as commandant in his absence. Pierre-Charles Desliettes (de Liette, Deliette) was Tonty's cousin and a prominent French official in the Illinois country during the first decade of the eighteenth century. See C. J. Russ, "Tonty, Alphonse, Baron de Paludy," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2 (1969, rev. 1982); and C. J. Russ, "Liette, Pierre-Charles de," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2 (1969, rev. 1982).

⁶ "Outagamis" is an Anishinaabemowin term meaning "people over the water." It refers to the people who called themselves the Meskwaki ("red earth people," also spelled Mesquakie or Meshkwahkihaki). The French and other Europeans also frequently referred to them as Renards, or Foxes. Charles Callender, "Fox," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 636-47.

⁷ Jacques-Charles Renaud Dubuisson, acting commandant of Detroit. See Donald Chaput, "Renaud Dubuisson, Jacques-Charles," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2. (1969, rev. 1982).

Last autumn, my father, I had raised half of the village to go winter with the Illinois, but I came back to the cries of death that I heard a few days from our village, where we learned that it was the Outagamis who had killed us.

When we returned to our village we realized that we were missing a man, without knowing where he could be, I found him among the Myaamia. I then resolved to make peace between the Illinois and them since it was your will, as I was among the Myaamia we heard young people who were coming to strike their cabins, they asked me to join them to go with their warriors to meet those who came to attack and who turned out to be the Kickapoo, of whom we killed two men and took one prisoner.

This blow being done I was very embarrassed about how to get out of this affair, I put it on the body of the Myaamia, whom I told to do what they would, that for me I was returning to my village, and that I was leaving them the two [end 85v] scalps and the prisoner, that I even offered myself to redress the dead, they told me that the Kickapoo were wrong because they came to attack, that besides, since they were the same nation as the Outagamis, there was no great harm because in the spring they believed that we would eat⁸ the Outagamis.

Being back in my village, the elders approved of me having struck the Kickapoo because they were the same as the Outagamis, whom they wanted to attack in the spring, I warned those who were out hunting to come back, it not being safe because of the blow done to the Kickapoo. On their arrival they said that the Illinois had killed a man and taken away a woman, and that contrary to the normal way of war they had stuck their tomahawk⁹ in the dead body.

Although after this blow the elders thought we should strike the Illinois, I told the father that I did not want him to suffer, for this purpose I went to find the father of the deceased who told me that it was upon me to avenge him since I was chief of the nation. I told him that I would remember what he said to me, and by a belt [of wampum] that I presented to him I told him that I covered the dead until the next summer and that I [planted?] the tomahawk.¹⁰ Then I went to [end 86r] the Illinois to find how this affair came to pass. On the way I met the

⁸ Native people of the Great Lakes often used eating as a metaphor for warfare, especially captive taking. See Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 38-39.

⁹ Literally “head breaker,” *Casseteste* can be translated as “tomahawk” or “war club.”

¹⁰ Covering the dead refers to the practice of giving gifts to relatives of the deceased to compensate for their death. See White, *Middle Ground*, 76-77. The exact meaning of *Je plante le Casseteste* is unclear here. Literally “I planted the tomahawk,” it could mean “I buried the tomahawk,” signifying that Makisabé had made amends and would not respond violently. This also fits the context, where Makisabé is covering the dead and forgoing revenge against the Illinois. However, *planter* suggests that some portion remains above ground, and *enterrer* (to bury) is more common in “to bury the tomahawk.” The previous use in *ils avoient planté leur Casseteste dans le Corps du mort* (they had stuck their tomahawk in the dead body) described an act of mutilation that also suggests a violent action.

Illinois elders, who wept at the blow that had been done to us, and who gave me back the woman they had taken. They asked me to forgive them, that the blow had been made by a madman without the consent of the elders. I answered them that I wanted to speak to the father, for whom I had letters,¹¹ and that moreover I wanted all the other chiefs of the Illinois nations to confirm to me what they were telling me. I went to their village, where after having talked for a long time without receiving any answer, I told them that I did not fear them, that I feared only the Frenchman, my father, to whom I had carried my body last autumn.

Having thus spoken, the nephew of the most respected one¹² told me that he listened to my words, that he begged me not to believe that anyone had wanted to strike me, that I said that I followed the word of the governor, my father, that he was also his [father], and that to repair the wrong that had been done to us he gave me his body and wanted to make fire with me and follow the word of the governor, my father and his own.

The Illinois, after having spoken to me thus, told me [end 86^v] “We look on you as your father, who was highly respected. We are delighted to see you. We give you five calumets of peace, three slaves to cover the dead, ten bars of lead so that no more talk of him is heard, two earrings and several pelts so that peace is stable between us and that we will be one and the same body.”

Being back in my village, I entered my cabin, where I only passed through, and said to the Illinois, “My brothers, let’s go to the cabin of the dead man, where we will bury him and drink and eat.”

Those of our village could hardly believe these things until they had seen the presents and heard the nephew of the esteemed person of whom I have just spoken.

As we were, my father, doing good things with the Illinois, Saguima arrived with a belt [of wampum] red with vermilion, and told me that as we intended to destroy the Outagamis that we might as well start with the Mascouten to whom he was allied, and drink the broth of one who was with us with several others, we killed one with a woman and kept the rest, Then the [end 87^r] Illinois took their scalps and broth to invite their nation to come join us to completely destroy the Outagamis and the Mascouten.

After the departure of the Illinois, I went with fifty men to join Saguima, who I thought had gone to strike the Mascouten. I found him peaceful on his

¹¹ In this case, “father” seems to refer to the missionary among the Illinois. French officials and missionaries often entrusted Native people with their letters.

¹² The “most respected one” is likely the Illinois chief Chachagouesse, who accompanied Makisabé to Detroit and then to Montreal, where he also gave a speech to Vaudreuil. See “Parolles de Chachagouesse, chef Illinois,” August 20, 1712, ANOM, C11A, vol. 33, fols. 91-94^v; Donald J. Horton, “Chachagouesse,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2 (1969, rev. 1982).

mat. He told me that he was waiting for me to strike all together. I told him that if he wanted to trust me, we would not strike at all, and that I was determined to satisfy the death of those who had been killed near me, but without listening to my reasons, he told me that it was absolutely necessary to strike the Mascouten, he made me presents of a belt [of wampum], several muskets, powder, and bullets to engage me in this war. I accepted his present. I told him that if he was not coming down here to see you that you might be outraged; that for me I had gone down there last year and that I was hoping to go down there this year to inform you of everything that had happened, not wanting to hide anything from you.

We left the day after this discourse to strike the Mascouten who were hunting as close to the village of [end 87^v] Saguima as from here to Lachine.¹³ We were about a hundred men and they two hundred. We made several stops to arrive at their village, waiting for the day. When we arrived there they were preparing to go to war against the Odawa and were already singing the war song. Often when a nation is to perish it contributes to its misfortune, they had been threatening Saguima for a long time and called him a coward, which angered him and inclined him to attack them. The fight was bloody, Saguima lost nine men and I four who were killed, and we had forty-seven wounded. The Mascoutens had sixty warriors killed, not counting the old men, women, and children.

After three days of fighting we spoke to each other and the Mascouten asked who was killing him. We responded that it was the Bodéwadmi, the Odawa, and all the nations of the Lakes.¹⁴ They asked us to make a truce while awaiting the will of the commandant of Detroit, who holds your place, my father. We agreed [end 88^r] and told them that they could withdraw and that we would also withdraw, and that if the commandant of Detroit, whom they had insulted, ordered us to strike we would strike, otherwise we would remain peaceful. We burned the cabins, took the loot, and killed the prisoners.

On returning from this action I arrived in my village uncertain whether I would go to Detroit or Michilimackinac. I found that it was better to go to the latter because of the convenience of the canoes.

The Illinois, having joined with us, gave us a present of one hundred red calumets, calumet feathers, and a slave and told us that he was joining us, that he was coming to mourn the dead and my brother, and that he gave us the present in order to continue this war together.

¹³ Currently a borough of Montreal, eighteenth-century Lachine was a separate settlement approximately seven miles from old Montreal.

¹⁴ When the entire party arrived at Detroit, Dubuisson identified Odawa, Bodéwadmi, Illinois, Sauk, Menominee, Missouri, Osage, and “other nations yet more remote,” see “Siege of Detroit,” 272.

Saguima received this present, then we rendezvoused at a fort, where Saguima made us a present of powder and bullets to completely defeat the Mascouten and promised us, my father, that you would not be angry. The Illinois accepted Saguima's present as Saguima had accepted his.

We followed the tracks of the Mascouten, [end 88^v] which we believed to go towards the Kickapoo, but we realized that it was going towards Detroit, whereupon we took council to know which path they could take and if they were not going towards the French. Saguima said he wanted to destroy the Mascouten and all the nations that would take his side, that he would even strike the Frenchman if he took his side. I responded to him that it was not my feeling, that it was better to go to Detroit nearby our father, and that then we would strike the Mascouten and the nations which would take his party, but that as for the Frenchman, I would never strike him, and that we would have to have lost our minds to do that, since we would thereby deprive ourselves of all our necessities, that I was not like him who went to the English [to trade]. I spoke about it to the chiefs and elders of our nation to find out what their feelings were, they told me that they had none other than mine, for which I thanked them and told them that I was going to go to find our father, Monsieur Dubuisson, at Detroit, and ask his opinion [end 89^r] on it, which I was resolved to follow.

I spoke to all the nations to tell them about my journey, the Illinois having given himself to us made no difficulty in promising to follow what I could do. As for Saguima, I told him that he could do what he wanted, but that he should beware, that for me I was going to see Monsieur Dubuisson, our father.

I told them that it was good for me to arrive before them, to warn Monsieur Dubuisson that we were coming in large numbers so that he would not be surprised to see us and would have no suspicion of us.

I was surprised, my father, on approaching the village I saw Monsieur Dubuisson's entrenchment¹⁵ and another house and a fort near it; I suspected that Monsieur Dubuisson had fought with the Mascouten. I saw clearly as I approached closer that he was on the point of being attacked and that he needed help, whereupon I went quickly to the fort of the Hurons, who opened one of their doors, having recognized me. I was seen by a Mascouten who went to tell the village of the Foxes¹⁶ that I had arrived.

¹⁵ Tensions had been rising between the French and the Meskwaki living near Detroit. The situation escalated further when the Meskwaki heard that their Mascouten allies had been attacked by Saguima and Makisabé, leading them to burn an Odawa house just outside the gate of the French fort, which led Dubuisson to construct a redoubt around some of the French buildings outside the fort, see "Siege of Detroit," 268-69.

¹⁶ Here, the text refers to the Meskwaki as Regnards (Foxes), rather than Outagamis as in most of the rest of the document. Though potentially an oversight, this may also be a reference to

I spoke to the Hurons and told them the subject [end 89^v] of my trip, that I came to continue the war against the Mascouten, whom we were pursuing and whom we intended to destroy. I presented them with my calumet from which they smoked and told me that my arrival gave them pleasure and that our father would be pleased see us because he had been attacked by the Outagamis.

While I was in the Hurons' fort the Foxes told Monsieur Dubuisson that they knew that Makisabé was in the Hurons' fort and that they wanted to eat him, and that if by chance he opposed it they would burn his cabins and do the same to him.

Monsieur Dubuisson told me by Monsieur de Vincennes not to be upset, and not to expose myself due to his strong fear that something bad would happen to me because the roads were guarded by the Mascouten, thereupon I resolved to die rather than leave our father in the hands of the Mascouten. I sent two Hurons to tell our people to come and I made up my mind to completely destroy the Outagamis and the Mascouten since they wanted to eat me and they upset our father, Monsieur Dubuisson, whom I told that he had to [end 90^r] give us powder, bullets, and food so that we could fight.

When the Outagamis learned that about six hundred of us were coming, he seized half the French fort. We did not want to strike at first, wanting to try to get, by gentle means, Saguima's wife, who they had taken with a few others.

Makisabé, having fallen ill, could not finish all he had to say, and two days later he died.

the prominent Meskwikai Fox clan, since Meskwaki war chiefs traditionally came from this clan. See William Jones, *Ethnography of the Fox Indians*, ed. Margaret W. Fisher, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 125 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Print Office, 1939), 73-76, 81.