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American Indians and the American Revolution, 1775–1783

On the one hand we are forgotten, abandoned; on the other hand we are solicited and at times threatened by the English; in such a situation what can we do, what ought we to do?

—Indians in the Great Lakes region to French emissary Godefroy de Lincourt, 1780

That event was for us the greatest blow that could have been dealt us, unless it had been our total destruction.

—Indian Leaders to Spanish Governor Crural, St. Louis, 1784

Scholars of Indian history have often neglected the impact of the American Revolution on American Indians, preferring to lump the Revolution together with the other wars and calamities of the late eighteenth century and pointing out that replacing King George III with President George Washington meant little to Indian peoples whose struggle to preserve their lands and cultures continued. But the Revolution was a devastating experience for many Indian people and marked the beginning of a new era in their history.

The outbreak of the American Revolution took many Native Americans by surprise. At first, most tried to keep out of it, regarding it as a family quarrel between the king and his children. As each side pressed them to get involved, however, Indians often found that they had to choose sides. In general, most tribes eventually supported the British. The British had more of the trade goods on which they had become dependent, they had an Indian department whose personnel were experienced and well connected among the tribes, and they had demonstrated in the past that they would try to restrain trespass onto Indian lands. The Americans, by contrast, were frequently short of supplies and could do little to stop their backcountry settlers encroaching on Indian lands. In fact, American militia, who apparently regarded all Indians as "savages," murdered influential Indian leaders like White Eyes of the Delawares and Corntalk of the Shawnees who had been working for peace, thereby driving their people into the arms of the British.

Not all Indians joined the British cause, however. Indians from Stockbridge, Massachusetts, enlisted as minutemen in the American army; the Oneidas of New York fought for the Americans even though that entailed fighting against relatives in other Iroquois tribes; the Micmacs, Passamaquoddi, and Penobscots of Maine and Nova Scotia supported the Americans, as did the Catawbas of South Carolina. Even in tribes that allied with the British, there were pro-American factions and plenty of people who just wanted to keep out of it. The Revolution split the ancient unity of the Iroquois Confederacy, turning Mohawks, Oneondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas against Oneidas and Tuscaroras; the Cherokee Nation divided along generational lines, with older chiefs trying to preserve peace and friendship with the Americans while younger warriors joined the British in an effort to win back their lands. Just as colonial society split into Loyalist and Patriot factions, with perhaps a majority of people trying to remain neutral, so throughout the length and breadth of Indian country, the Revolution divided tribes and communities.

Indian warriors raided the American frontier in New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Georgia, and the Carolinas, sometimes in company with British troops and Loyalist Rangers. Indian raids sapped American resources and diverted American energies, and stories of Indian "massacres," such as at Cherry Valley in New York in 1778, sent terror through American settlements. But the Revolution was also fought in Indian country. The Americans responded to Cherokee attacks in 1776 by dispatching expeditions from Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas to carry fire and sword through Cherokee country.

In 1778, in an effort to cripple the Iroquois war effort by striking at their home base, George Washington ordered invasions of Iroquois country that destroyed forty towns, burned countless crops, and cut down orchards. Homeless and hungry Iroquois fled to the British at Fort Niagara for food and shelter and even, after remembered George Washington as "Town Destroyer." Thomas Jefferson, who was governor of Virginia during the Revolution, urged a war of extermination against the Shawnees in Ohio, and the Shawnees saw their villages burned and time and again by Kentucky militia who crossed the Ohio River. Armies and war parties crossed back and forth through Indian country. Individuals and communities were caught up in the fighting, and neutrals sometimes suffered more than others. In 1782, at Guadinabuten in Ohio, American militia murdered ninety-six Delaware Indians who had converted to the Moravian faith and as pacifists refused to participate in the fighting.

American Indians made great sacrifices and suffered great losses as
result of the American Revolution. White Americans remember the event as securing their liberty; for Native Americans it represented another step toward the loss of their freedom. At the end of the war, the British and the Americans signed the Peace of Paris, ignoring the Indians who had been their allies and their enemies. Britain handed Indian lands to the United States and left Indian people to confront the renewed American assaults on their land and culture. The Cherokee chief Keetela, or Rising Fawn, making his peace with the Virginians in 1783, threw a handful of ashes into the air to symbolically cast off his allegiance to the British. “They have been the ruin of my People,” he said. Indians who had supported the American cause fared little better. While Miamis from Stockbridge were away fighting with the American army, their lands continued to slip into the hands of covetous neighbors. By the end of the Revolution, Stockbridge ceased to exist as an Indian town. The Miamis petitioned their former allies for help, but to no avail. They migrated first to New York and then to new homes in Wisconsin.

The selections in this chapter contain many themes familiar to Indians in colonial times—protests over loss of land, distrust of allies, and anguish at their people’s plight. They also show Indian people struggling to come to terms with a new era and new challenges. Although Indian people fought for their freedom, too, in the Revolutionary War, they would enjoy few liberties in the new society born out of that conflict.

**THE ONEIDAS DECLARE NEUTRALITY**

The Declaration of Independence implies that all Indians were willing and ruthless allies of a tyrannical king. (“He [the king] ... has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.”) In fact, most tried to stand apart from what they saw as a “family” quarrel. As the following speech to Governor John Trumbull of Connecticut demonstrates, the Oneidas initially hoped to remain neutral. But the Revolution was a conflict that tolerated no neutrality. Eventually, owing in large measure to the efforts of their Presbyterian missionary Samuel Kirkland, most Oneidas decided to support the Americans. Their actions split the Iroquois Confederacy as Oneidas clashed in battle with warriors from other Iroquois tribes, and their allegiance to the Americans caused them tremendous suffering. British and Iroquois war parties burned their villages in retaliation, and many Oneidas sought shelter in squallid refugee camps around Schenectady, New York.

**ONEIDA INDIANS**

**Speech to Governor Trumbull, 1775**

As my younger brothers of the New England Indians, who have settled in our vicinity, are now going down to visit their friends, and to move up parts of their families that were left behind—with this belt by them, I open the road wide; clearing it of all obstacles, that they may visit their friends and return to their settlements here in peace.

We Oneidas are induced to this measure on account of the disagreeable situation of affairs that way; and we hope, by the help of God, they may return in peace. We earnestly recommend them to your charity through their long journey.

Now we more immediately address you, our brother, the Governor, and the chiefs of New England.

Brothers: We have heard of the unhappy differences and great contention between you and Old England. We wonder greatly, and are troubled in our minds.

Brothers: Possess your minds in peace respecting us Indians. We cannot intermeddle in this dispute between two brothers. The quarrel seems to be unnatural. You are two brothers of one blood. We are unwilling to join on either side in such a contest, for we bear an equal affection to both you Old and New England. Should the great king of England apply to us for aid, we shall deny him; if the Colonies apply, we shall refuse. The present situation of you two brothers is new and strange to us. We Indians cannot find, nor recollect in the traditions of our ancestors, the like case, or a similar instance.

Brothers: For these reasons possess your minds in peace, and take no umbrage that we Indians refuse joining in the contest. We are for peace.

Brothers: Was it an alien, a foreign nation, who had struck you, we should look into the matter. We hope, through the wise government and good pleasure of God, your distresses may be soon removed and the dark clouds be dispersed.

Brothers: As we have declared for peace, we desire you will not apply to our Indian brethren in New England for their assistance. Let us Indians be all of one mind, and live with one another; and you white people settle your own disputes between yourselves.
Brothers: We have now declared our minds; please to write to us, that we may know yours. We, the sachems and warriors, and female governesses of Oneida, send our love to you, brother governor, and all the other chiefs in New England.

JOSEPH BRANT ADDRESSES
HIS MAJESTY’S SECRETARY OF STATE

Joseph Brant, or Thayendanege (1742–1807), was a Mohawk Indian who had been educated in Eleanor Wheelock’s school and was a protégé of Sir William Johnson. He was instrumental in securing Mohawk support for the British war effort in the Revolution. In 1776 Brant, together with a warrior named Oteroughyaneets, Colonel Guy Johnson, and other members of the British Indian department, sailed to England. There, Brant met the king and queen, enjoyed London’s night life with the prince of Wales, and had his portrait painted by the well-known artist George Romney. However, as shown by this letter to Secretary of State Lord Germain (to whom he gave the Iroquois name Gorah), Brant was in London on business of vital importance to his people.

JOSEPH BRANT

Address to Lord Germain

1776

Brother Gorah:

We have cross’d the great Lake and come to this kingdom with our Superintendent Col. Johnson from our Confederacy the Six Nations and their Allies, that we might see our Father the Great King, and joyn in informing him, his Councillors and wise men, of the good intentions of the Indians our brethren, and of their attachment to His Majesty and his Government.

Brother: The Disturbances in America give great trouble to all our Na-


Figure 17. Joseph Brant
Portrait of the Mohawk painted by George Romney when Brant was in London in 1776.

tions, as many strange stories have been told to us by the people in that country. The Six Nations who always loved the King, sent a number of their Chiefs and Warriors with their Superintendent to Canada last summer, where they engaged their allies to joyn with them in the defence of that country, and when it was invaded by the New England people, they alone defeated them.

Brother: In that engagement we had several of our best Warriors killed and wounded, and the Indians think it very hard they should have been so
deceived by the White people in that country, the enemy returning in great numbers, and no White people supporting the Indians, they were obliged to retire to their villages and sit still. We now Brother hope to see these bad children chastised, and that we may be enabled to tell the Indians, who have always been faithful and ready to assist the King, what His Majesty intends.

Brother: The Mohocks our particular Nation, have on all occasions shown their zeal and loyalty to the Great King; yet they have been very badly treated by his people in that country, the City of Albany laying an unjust claim to the lands on which our Lower Castle is built, as one Klock and others do to those of Conipharrie our Upper Village.5 We have been often assured by our late great friend Sir William Johnson who never deceived us, and we know he was told so that the King and wise men here would do us justice; but this notwithstanding all our applications has never been done, and it makes us very uneasy. We also feel for the distress in which our Brethren on the Susquehanna are likely to be involved by a mistake made in the Boundary we settled in 1768. This also our Superintendent has laid before the King, and we beg it may be remembered. And also concerning Religion and the want of Ministers of the Church of England, he knows the designs of those bad people and informs us he has laid the same before the King. We have only therefore to request that his Majesty will attend to this matter: it troubles our Nation & they cannot sleep easy in their beds. Indeed it is very hard when we have let the Kings subjects have so much of our lands for so little value, they should want to cheat us in this manner of the small spots we have left for our women and children to live on. We are tired out in making complaints & getting no redress. We therefore hope that the Assurances now given us by the Superintendent may take place, and that he may have it in his power to procure us justice.

Brother: We shall truly report all that we hear from you, to the Six Nations at our return. We are well informed there has been many Indians in this Country who came without any authority, from their own, and gave much trouble. We desire Brother to tell you this is not our case. We are warriors known to all the Nations, and are now here by approbation of many of them, whose sentiments we speak.

Brother: We hope these things will be considered and that the King or his great men will give us such an answer as will make our hearts light and glad before we go, and strengthen our hands, so that we may join our Superintendent Col. Johnson in giving satisfaction to all our Nations, when we report to them, on our return; for which purpose we hope soon to be accommodated with a passage.

Dictated by the Indians and taken down by

Jno. Chew. Sec'y
CORN TASSEL

Speech at Treaty Talks with Virginia and North Carolina
1777

Now the beloved men of North Carolina shall hear my reply to what they said to me last night. The talks you gave me came from the Governor to make a path from your Country to mine and was very good till you came to talk of the boundary line. My beloved man and the beloved man of Virginia have taken hold of each other fast up high up the arm.

It may be the same by my brothers of North Carolina. But by their asking so much land it seems as if they want to see what we would say, that we might refuse something, and they might catch us in a trap for an excuse. I left people both at home and in the woods far beyond there, who are waiting and listening to hear what I do. As you are talking of much land I don't know how they would like that part of your proposal. As I said before the beloved men are here together. My beloved Man has been to see the Great beloved man of Virginia who I suppose wrote to your Great beloved man to send you here, and talk about making Peace. I want to know whether he wrote anything to him to require so much land as you seem to do. I am talking to my Brothers so I call you all as to hand I did not expect any thing on that subject; but only concerning peace. The man above both ordered it so that the white benches shall be set down for us, and I hope nothing will enter either of our hearts but good thoughts. I would leave it to the beloved man of Virginia to settle all things (about Lands) between us. I am talking with my elder Brothers on a subject I cannot clearly comprehend. I did not expect it would have been put to me at this time; for my elder Brothers have imposed much on me in the land way. If this and another house was packed full of goods they would not make satisfaction. But I will leave the difference between us to the great Warrior of all America. It seems mysterious to me why you should ask so much land so near me. I am sensible that if we give up these lands they will bring you more a great deal than hundreds of pounds. It spells our hunting ground; but always remains good to you to raise families and stocks on, when the goods we receive of you are rotten and gone to nothing.

North Carolina Historical Records (III), 90-91.

THE DELAWARES AND THE TREATY OF FORT PITT

The Delaware Indians in the Ohio Valley occupied a precarious position during the Revolution, caught between the British at Detroit with their Indian allies to the north and west and the Americans at Fort Pitt to the east. For a long time the Delawares tried to preserve their neutrality, and Chief White Eyes cultivated good relations with George Morgan, the American Indian agent at Fort Pitt, whom the Delawares called Tainemond.

In 1778, White Eyes and the Delawares signed a treaty with the United States at Fort Pitt (reproduced in Appendix B). In return for the right to cross Delawary lands, the Americans guaranteed the territorial rights of the Delawares and even suggested the possibility of an Indian state with representation in Congress. The final version of the treaty committed the Delawares to a military alliance with the United States. George Morgan, who was not present at the treaty, denounced it as a fraud, and Delawares who saw the written document were vociferous in their complaints to Morgan, as this letter of January 1779 attests.

Most Delawares eventually sided with the British after American militia murdered White Eyes, who was killed even as he carried out his treaty commitment to guide American troops through the Ohio country. Captain Pipe, or Hopocan, who attended the treaty, made common cause with the British. In 1782, in retaliation for the murder of their relatives at the Moravian mission of Gnadenhutten, the Delawares captured and ritually tortured Colonel William Crawford, who had been present as a witness at the treaty.
DELAWARE INDIANS
Letter to George Morgan
1779

Brother Taimeneend:
Since the Treaty last Fall at Fort Pitt I have observed that some matters have been spoken of which I & the Commissioners should have agreed to, but which are quite strange to me & to which I never agreed & though I never could find out right how matters was I yet thought a time would come when the truth would be known. I have now looked over the Articles of the Treaty again & find that they are writ down false, & as I did not understand the Interpreter what he spoke I could not contradict his Interpretation, but now I will speak the truth plain & tell you what I spoke.
The following are the complaints made by the Delaware Council of Cochackeck which they lay before Colonel George Morgan (their much beloved Brother and faithful Agent, granted to them by the great Council of the United States) in order that an enquiry he made in the same... 

Brother Taimeneend:
I remember very well that when I was at the Treaty at Fort Pitt, I throwed down everything that was bad, & which came from our Enemies the English to my Brothers the Americans; my heart became quite easy, & I was determined to continue in that which I was so often told to do by you, which was to sit quite still & let you & the English make out the matter together; but was very much surprised when I found after my return from the Treaty, that I was looked upon as a Warrior, & which was the cause of so much confusion among my People.
The Tomhawk was handed to me at Fort Pitt but not in a Warlike manner, we all standing & at no Council Fire, neither did I understand the meaning of it. I neither desired any Implements of War, all what I agreed to was to pilot the Army 'till beyond our bounds, & my great Cap' White Eyes with several others to go before the Army & convey them to the Enemy in order to be of use to both Parties, in case they should desire to speak or treat with one another.


THE REVOLUTION THROUGH THE EYES OF A SENECA WOMAN

MARY JEMISON
A View of the Revolution 1775–1779

Thus, at peace amongst themselves, and with the neighboring whites, though there were none at that time very near, our Indians lived quietly and peaceably at home, till a little before the breaking out of the revolutionary war, when they were sent for, together with the Chiefs and members of the Six Nations generally, by the people of the States, to go to the German Plains, and there hold a general council, in order that the people of the states might ascertain, in good season, who they should esteem and treat as enemies, and who as friends, in the great war which was then upon the point of breaking out between them and the King of England.
Our Indians obeyed the call, and the council was held, at which the pipe of peace was smoked, and a treaty made, in which the Six Nations solemnly agreed that if a war should eventually break out, they would not take up

James Scriver, ed., The Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison (1824 and various editions).
arms on either side; but that they would observe a strict neutrality. With that
the people of the states were satisfied, as they had not asked their assistance,
only that they might observe the same. The Indians returned to their homes well pleased
that they could live on neutral ground, surrounded by the din of war, without
being engaged in it.

About a year passed off, and we, as usual, were enjoying ourselves in the
employments of pleasant times, when a messenger arrived from the British
Commissioners, requesting all the Indians of our tribe to attend a general
council which was soon to be held at Oswego. The council convened, and
being opened, the British Commissioners informed the Chiefs that the object
of calling a council of the Six Nations was, to engage their assistance in
subduing the rebels, the people of the states, who had risen up against the
goal King, their master, and were about to rob him of a great part of his
possessions and wealth, and added that they would amply reward them for
all their services.

The Chiefs then arose, and informed the Commissioners of the nature and
effect of the treaty which they had entered into with the people of the states,
the year before, and that they should not violate it by taking up the hatchet
against them.

The Commissioners continued their entreaties without success, till they
addressed their avarice, by telling our people that the people of the states
were few in number, and easily subdued; and that on the account of their
disobedience to the King, they justly merited all the punishment that it was
possible for white men and Indians to inflict upon them; and added, that the
King was rich and powerful, both in money and subjects: That his war was
as plenty as the water in lake Ontario: that his men were as numerous as the
sand upon the lake shore:—and that the Indians, if they would assist in the
war, and persevere in their friendship to the King, till it was closed, should
never want for money or goods. Upon this the Chiefs concluded a treaty with
the British Commissioners, in which they agreed to take up arms against the
rebels, and continue in the service of his Majesty till they were subdued, in
consideration of certain conditions which were stipulated in the treaty to be
performed by the British government and its agents.

As soon as the treaty was finished, the Commissioners made a present to
each Indian of a suit of clothes, a brass kettle, a gun and tomahawk, a
scalloping knife, a quantity of powder and lead, a piece of gold, and promised
a bounty on every scalp that should be brought in. Thus richly clad
and equipped, they returned home, after an absence of about two weeks, full of
the fire of war, and anxious to encounter their enemies. Many of the kettles
which the Indians received at that time are now in use on the Genesee
Flats...

Previous to the battle at Fort Stanwix, the British sent for the Indians to
come and see them whip the rebels; and, at the same time stated that they
did not wish to have them fight, but wanted to have them just sit down,
smoke their pipes, and look on. Our Indians went, to a man; but contrary to
their expectation, instead of amending and looking on, they were obliged to
fight for their lives, and in the end of the battle were completely beaten, with
a great loss in killed and wounded. Our Indians alone had thirty-six killed,
and a great number wounded. Our town exhibited a scene of real sorrow and
distress, when our warriors returned and recounted their misfortunes, and
stated the real loss they had sustained in the engagement. The mourning
was excessive, and was expressed by the most distressing yells, shrieks, and
howlings, and by inimitable gesticulations.

During the revolution, my house was the home of Col's Butler* and
Brandt, whenever they chanced to come into our neighborhood as they
passed to and from Fort Niagara, which was the seat of their military
operations. Many and many a night I have stood at their door at
sunrise till sun-rise, and furnished them with necessary provision and clean
clothing for their journey... 

At that time I had three children who went with me on foot, one who rode
on horse back, and one whom I carried on my back.

Our corn was good that year; a part of which we had gathered
and secured for winter.

In one or two days after the skirmish at Canasawannaga, Sullivan and his
army arrived at Genesee river, where they destroyed every article of the food
kind that they could lay their hands on. A part of our corn they burnt, and
threw the remainder into the river. They burnt our houses, killed what few
cattle and horses they could find, destroyed our fruit trees, and left nothing
but the bare soil and timber. But the Indians had eloped and were not to be
found.

Having crossed and recrossed the river, and finished the work of destruc-
tion, the army marched off to the east. Our Indians saw them move off, but
suspecting that it was Sullivan's intention to watch our return, and then to
take us by surprise, resolved that the main body of our tribe should hunt
where we were then, till Sullivan had gone so far that there would be no
danger of his returning to molest us.

This being agreed to, we hunted continually till the Indians concluded that
there could be no risk in our once more taking possession of our lands.
Accordingly we all returned; but what were our feelings when we found that
there was not a mouthful of any kind of sustenance left, not even enough to
keep a child one day from perishing with hunger.
The weather by this time had become cold and stormy; and as we were destitute of horses and food too, I immediately resolved to take my children and look out for myself, without delay. With this intention I took two of my little ones on my back, take the other three follow, and the same night arrived on the Gardow Flats, where I have ever since resided. . . . The snow fell about five feet deep, and remained so for a long time, and the weather was extremely cold; so much so indeed, that almost all the game upon which the Indians depended for subsistence, perished, and reduced them almost to a state of starvations through that and three or four succeeding years. When the snow melted in the spring, deer were found dead upon the ground in vast numbers; and other animals, of every description, perished from the cold also, and were found dead, in multitudes. Many of our people barely escaped with their lives, and some actually died of hunger and freezing.

THE REVOLUTION THROUGH CAPTAIN PIPE'S EYES

Although he attended the Treaty of Fort Pitt in 1778, Captain Pipe, or Hopocan, became one of the principal Delaware advocates of siding with the British. He was not, however, a pliant tool of King George, as he demonstrated in this speech to Colonel Arent Schuyler DePeyster, the British commander at Detroit, in November 1781. In fact, Pipe made it clear that he regarded the British as usurpers to the title of "Father," which rightly belonged to the French, and that only economic necessity drove the Delawares to take up arms in a "white man's" war.

The Revolution was a disaster for the Delawares. Those who had converted to the Moravian faith tried to sit out the war at their village of Gnadenhutten, only to be murdered in cold blood by American militia who suspected them of carrying out raids. At the same time, Indians who supported the Crown were regarded as expendable by their British allies. As Pipe realized, the Indians had much to lose and little to gain by getting involved in this war.

The Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, who recorded this speech, was extremely impressed with Pipe's oratorical power. Given his own pro-American sympathies, however, it is likely that Heckewelder was most impressed by the anti-British sentiments expressed by one of Britain's Indian allies, and he may have embellished the anti-British tenor of the speech.

CAPTAIN PIPE

Speech to British Colonel DePeyster

November 1781

Father! I have said Father, tho' I am ignorant of the cause for so calling him having never known of any other Father than the French, and considering the English as Brothers. But as this Name is now also imposed upon us, I therefore make use of it and say:

Father! Some time ago You put a War hatchet into my hands, saying take this Weapon, and try it on the heads of my Enemies, the Long Knives (the American People) and let me afterwards know if it was sharp and good.

Father! Altho' at the time You gave me this Weapon, I had neither cause nor inclination to go to War against a People who had done me no injury: yet out of obedience to You, who say You are my Father, and call me your child, I received the Hatchet, well knowing, that if I did not obey, he would withhold from the necessities of life, without which I could not subsist, and which were not elsewhere to be procured and had, at the House of my Father!

Father! Withal You may perhaps think me a fool, in risking my life at your call and in a cause too, by which I have no prospect of gaining any thing; for it is your cause, and not mine to fight the Long Knives (the Virginians or American People). You both have raised the quarrel within yourselves; and by right, you ought to fight it out Yourselves and not compel Your Children, the Indians, to expose themselves to Danger for Your sake!

Father! Many lives have already been lost on your account: Nations have suffered and been weakened! Children have lost Parents, brothers, and relatives! Wives have lost Husbands! It is not known how many more may perish before Your war will be at end!

Father! I have said that You may perhaps think me a fool, rushing thoughtless on Your Enemy! Do not believe this Father! Think not that I lack sense sufficient to consider me, that altho' You may pretend to keep up a perpetual enmity to the Long Knives (American People) you may, e're long, conclude a Peace with them!

Father! You say you love your children the Indians! This You have often

told them; and indeed it is your interest to say so to them, in order to have them at your service!

But Father! who of us can believe, that you could love a People differing in Colour to that of Yours, more than those of (each of) who have a white Skin like unto that of Yours!

Father! Pay attention to what I now shall say! While You! Father! are setting me on Your Enemy, much in the same manner as a hunter sets on his Dogs at the game—while I be in the act of rushing on this Enemy of Yours, with the bloody destructive Weapon You gave me: I May perchance happen to look back, from whence you started me; and what may I see? I shall probably see my Father shaking hands with the Long Curves. Yes! with those very People he now calls his Enemy! and while doing this he may be laughing at my folly, and having obeyed him and am now risking my life at his command. Father! how what I have said in remembrance!

Now Father! here is what hath been done with the Hatchet you gave me! (The Pipe bands DePrester the stick with the one scalp attached) I have done what you bid me to do with the Hatchet, and found it sharp. Nevertheless I did not do all what I might have done! No! I did not! my heart failed me! I felt compassion for Your Enemy! Innocence has no share in Your quarrel; therefore I distinguished! I spared! I took some live flesh (prisoners) which, while bringing on to You, I expost one of You large Canoes on which I put the same for You! In a few days You will receive this flesh, and find, that the Skin is of the same colour as Yours!

Father! I hope you will not destroy what I have saved! You! Father! have the means of keeping alive what with me would have to starve for want! The Warriors Cabin is generally empty! Your House is always full.

ADJUSTING TO NEW REALITIES: THE CHICKASAW'S REVOLUTION

The Chickasaw Indians controlled an important strategic location on the banks of the Mississippi River in northern Mississippi. Throughout the eighteenth century they had been firm allies of the British, who had armed and supported them against the French and their Choctaw allies. During the Revolution, the Chickasaws conducted small-scale operations, mainly patrolling the banks of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. When the Americans sent them a message in the spring of 1779 threatening destruction if they did not make peace, the Chickasaw chiefs Minga Heuma, Payamahula, and Taskau Putapau sent a defiant reply:

We desire no other friendship of you but only desire you will inform us when you are Coming and we will meet you half Way, for we have heard so much of it that it makes our heads Ach[er]. Take care that we dont serve you as we have served the French before with all their Indians, send you back without your heads. We are a Nation that fears or Valuer no Nation as long as our Great Father King George stands by us for you may depend as long as life lasts with us we will hold him fast by the hand. . . . This is our Talk to you and we desire that you may not keep it hid but have it printed in your News Papers that all your people may see it and know who it was from; We are men & Warriors and dont want our Talk hid.

During the Revolution, Spain won West Florida from the British, and the geopolitical landscape of the Mississippi Valley took on a very different appearance. Instead of unquestioned support from the British, the Chickasaws now found themselves without allies in the midst of competition among Spain, the new United States government, and several states. Different factions within the Chickasaw Nation cultivated relations with Spaniards and Americans in an attempt to secure the trade Britain previously had supplied. Realizing that the end of the Revolution meant the beginning of a new era, the formerly defiant and independent Chickasaw chiefs attempted to mend diplomatic fences by sending the following message to Congress.
CHICKASAW CHIEFS
Message to Congress
July 1783

To His Excellency the President of the
Honorable Congress of the
United American States

Friend & Brother,
This is the first talk we ever sent you—we hope it will not be the last. We desire you to open your Ears to hear, and your heart to understand us, as we shall always be ready to do to your talks, which we expect will be good, as you are a great and wise man.

Brother,
When our great father the King of England called away his warriors, he told us to take your People by the hand as friends and brothers. Our hearts were always inclined to do so & as far as our circumstances permitted us, we evinced our good intentions as Brothers the Virginians can testify. It makes our hearts rejoice to find that our great father, and his children the Americans have at length made peace, which we wish may continue as long as the Sun and Moon, And to find that our Brothers the Americans are inclined to take us by the hand, and Smoke with us at the great Fire, which we hope will never be extinguished.

Brother,
Notwithstanding the Satisfaction all these things give us we are yet in confusion & uncertainty. The Spaniards are sending talks amongst us, and inviting our young Men to trade with them. We also receive talks from the Governor of Georgia to the same effect—We have had Speeches from the Illinois inviting us to a Trade and Intercourse with them—Our Brothers, the Virginians call upon us to a Treaty, and want part of our land, and we expect our Neighbors who live on Cumberland River, will in a little time Demand, if not forcibly take part of it from us, also as we are informed they have been marking Lines through our hunting grounds; we are daily receiving Talks from one Place or other, and from People we Know nothing about. We Know not who to mind or who to neglect. We are told that the Americans have 13 Councils Compriz’d of Chiefs and Warriors. We Know not which of them we are to Listen to, or if we are to hear some, and Reject others, we are at a loss to Distinguish those we are to hear. We are told that you are the Head Chief of the Grand Council, which is above these 13 Councils if so why have we not had Talks from you,—We are head Men and Chiefs and Warriors also, and have always been accustomed to speak with great Chiefs & warriors—We are Likewise told that you and the Great men of your Council are Very Wise—we are glad to hear it, being assured that you will not do us any Wrong, and therefore we wish to Speak with you and your Council, or if you Do not approve of our so Doing, as you are wise, you will tell us who shall speak with us, in behalf of all our Brothers the Americans, and from whare and whomse we are to be supplied with necessaries in the manner our great father supplied us—We hope you will also put a stop to any encroachments on our lands, without our consent, and silence all those People who sends us Such Talks as inflame & exasperate our Young Men, as it is our earnest desire to remain in peace and friendship with our Br. the Americans for ever.

Brother,
The King our Common father always left one of his beloved Men among us, to whom we told anything we had to say, and he soon obtained an answer—and by him our great Father, his Chiefs & headmen spoke to us.
Our great father always gave him goods to cover the nakedness of our old men who could not hunt, our women and our children, and he was as our man, and one tongue between us, and was beloved of us all. Such a man living among us particularly at this time, would reduce us from the darkness and confusion we are in. By directing us to whom we should speak, and putting us in the right Path that we should not go wrong.

We have desired our Br. Mr. Boone, who brought talks from General Clark,* and has been some time among us, to deliver this talk to you, and speak it in our behalf to your Grand Council, that you may know our want, and as you are wise, that you may direct us what to do for the best. He has Promised, at our desire to take it to your great council fire & to bring as your answer, that you may be no more in the dark—believe what he tells you from us; we have told him all that is in our hearts.

*General Clark was an American soldier and explorer who played a significant role in the settlement of the western territories during the late 18th century.
Brothers, we are very poor for necessaries, for Ammunition particularly. We can supply ourselves from the Spaniards but we are averse to hold any intercourse with them, as our hearts are always with our Brothers the Americans. We have advised our young men to wait with patience for the answer to this talk, when we rest assured of having supplies, and every thing so regulated that no further confusion may ensue. We wish that this land may never again be stained with the blood of either white or Red men, that peace may last forever and that both our women and children may sit down in safety under their own shade to enjoy without fear or apprehension the Blessing which the good Spirit enriched them with. Brother, we again desire you and your chiefs to listen to what we say that we shall not have to Repeat it again, and as you are all wise, you will know what to do.

Done at Chack-alsiah our Great Town the 28th Day of July, 1783.
Minhthora,  
Nyanmathawac,  
Kushiputhams,  
Pymingoes of Christhastra,  
Pymingoes of Chuckalorah.9

BRANT DEMANDS THE TRUTH

At the Peace of Paris in 1783, British diplomats recognized the independence of their thirteen former colonies and ceded to the new United States all territory between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River, from north of Florida to the Great Lakes. Florida, which had remained loyal to Britain, was transferred to Spain. Despite the fact that most of this territory was still Indian country, Britain made these concessions without any reference to or discussion with her Indian allies, who would be devastated by the changes in sovereignty. As rumors of the peace terms filtered into Indian country, Native Americans reacted in anger, bewilderment, and disbelief. Joseph Brant sent a long message to Governor Frederick Haldimand of Quebec, reminding him of the Mohawks' longstanding loyalty to the Crown and asking for the "real truth." Britain's Indian allies in the South were equally alarmed at the news of peace. Some reacted in anger, accusing the British of betraying them; others asked to accompany the redcoats as they evacuated the mainland, rather than stay and come to terms with the Americans or Spaniards.

JOSEPH BRANT
Message to Governor Frederick Haldimand
1783

Brother Asharelowa and Representatives of the King, the sachems and War Chiefs of the Six United Nations of Indians and their Allies have heard that the King, their Father, has made peace with his children the Bostonians. The Indians distinguish by Bostonians, the Americans in Rebellion, as it first began in Boston, and when they heard of it, they found that they were largest and no mention made of them in said Peace, wherefore they have now sent me to inform themselves before you of the real truth, whether it is so or not, that they are not partakers of that Peace with the King and the Bostonians. Brother, listen with great attention to our words, we were greatly alarmed and cast down when we heard that news, and it occasions great discontent and surprise with our People; wherefore tell us the real truth from your heart, and we beg that the King will be put in mind by you and recollect what we have been when his people first saw us, and what we have since done for him and his subjects.

Brother, we, the Mohawks, were the first Indian Nation that took you by the hand like friends and brothers, and invited you to live amongst us, trusting you with kindness upon your departure in small parties. The Oneidas, our neighbors, were equally well disposed towards you and as a mark of our sincerity and love towards you we fastened your ship to a great mountain at Oondaga, the Center of our Confederacy, the rest of the Five Nations approving of it. We wore then a great people, conquering all Indian Nations round about us, and you in a manner but a handful, after which you increased by degrees and we continued your friends and allies, joining you from time to time against your enemies, sacrificing numbers of our people and leaving their bones scattered in your enemies country. At last we assisted you in conquering all Canada, and then again, for joining you so firmly and faithfully, you renewed your assurances of protecting and defending ourselves, lands and possessions against any encroachment whatsoever, procuring for us the enjoyment of fair and plentiful trade of your people, and sat contented under the shade of the Tree of Peace, tasting the favour and

friendship of a great Nation bound to us by Treaty, and able to protect us against all the world.

Brother, you have books and records of our mutual Treaties and Engagements, which will confirm the truth of what I have been telling, and as we are unacquainted with the art of writing, we keep it fresh in our memory by Belts of Wampum deposited in our Council House at Onondaga. We have also received an ornament for the Head, i.e. a crown, from her late Majesty, Queen Ann, as a token of her mutual and unalterable friendship and alliance with us and our Confederacy. Wherefore, we on our side have maintained an uninterrupted attachment towards you, in confidence and expectation of a Reciprocity, and to establish a Perpetual Friendship and Alliance between us, of which we can give you several instances, to wit, when a few years after the Conquest of Canada, your people in this country thought themselves confined on account of their numbers with regard to a Scarcity of Land, we were applied to for giving up some of ours, and fix a Line or mark between them and Us. We considered upon it, and relinquished a great Territory to the King for the use of his Subjects, for a Trifling consideration, merely as a Confirmation of said Act, and as a proof of our sincere Regard towards them. This happened so late as the year 1768 at Fort Stanwix, and was gratefully Accepted and Ratified by the different Governors and Great men of the respective Colonies on the Sea Side, in presence of our late Worthy Friend and Superintendent, Sir William Johnson, when we expected a Permanent, Brotherly Love and Amity, would be the Consequence, but in vain. The insatiable thirst for Power and the next Object of dissatisfaction to the King's Subjects on the Sea Coast, and they to blind our Eyes, Sent Prizes from New England amongst us, whom we took for Messengers of Peace, but we were Surprisingly undeceived when we found soon after, that they came to sow the Seeds of discord among our People, in order to alienate our ancient attachments and Alliance from the King our Father, and join them in Rebellion against him, and when they stood up against him, they first endeavored to ensure us, the Mohawks, and the Indians of the Six Nations living on the Susquehanna River, and the Onondagas, by which division they imagined the remainder of the Confederacy would soon follow, but to not the Least effect.

About this Sad Period we lost our Greatest Friend, Sir William Johnson, notwithstanding we were unalterably determined to stick to our Ancient Treaties with the Crown of England and when the Rebels attempted to insult the Families and Descendants of our late Superintendent, on whom the management of our affairs devolved, we stuck to them and Protected them as much as in our Power, conducting them to Canada with a determined Resolution inviolably to adhere to our Alliance at the Risk of our Lives, Families and Property, the rest of the Six Nations finding the Firmness and Steadiness of us, the Mohawks, and Auhauguns, followed our Example and espoused the King's cause to this Present Instant.

It is as I tell you, Brother, and would be too tedious to repeat on this pressing occasion the many proofs of fidelity we have given the King our Father.

Wherefore Brother, I am now sent in behalf of all the King's Indian Allies to receive a decisive answer from you, and to know whether they are included in the Treaty with the Americans, as faithful Allies should be or not, and whether those Lands which the Great Being above has pointed out for Our Ancestors, and their descendants, and Placed them there from the beginning and where the Bones of our forefathers are laid, is secure to them, or whether the Blood of their Grand Children is to be mingled with their Bones, thro' the means of Our Allies for whom we have often so freely Bled.

NOTES

4. The present Mohawk castle or village was near Fort Hunter on the Mohawk River.
5. Colonel William Prentice, one of Virginia's Indian commissioners.
6. General John Butler of the British Indian Department. Based at Fort Niagara, Butler and Joseph Brant made frequent forays against the American frontier.
8. George Rogers Clark had sent John Dunne as an emissary to the Chickasaws to arrange peace between them and Virginia.
9. Kaskaskia is probably a garbled spelling of Teutaw Pahitakw, Poyamah's brother. Poyamah's town of Toledakwa is nearer the source of American party in the Chickasaw Nation after the Revolution.
10. His grandson had been among the delegation who visited Queen Anne in 1700.
11. Sir William Johnson died in council with the Iroquois in 1774. His death on the eve of the Revolution added to the turmoil in Iroquois society.
12. The Aohauguns were the inhabitants of Onosga or Onaugus, a mixed Iroquois settlement on the upper Susquehanna River. The Americans destroyed their village in 1778.
6
Indian Voices from the New Nation

The Americans, a great deal more ambitious and numerous than the English, put us out of our lands, forming therein great settlements, extending themselves like a plague of locusts in the territories of the Ohio River which we inhabit.

—Indian leaders to Spanish Governor Cruzat, St. Louis, August 1784

I observe in every Treaty we have had that a bound is fast, but we always find that your people settle much faster shortly after a Treaty than before. It is well known that you have taken almost all our Country from us without our consent. . . . Truth is, if we had no Land we should have fewer Enemies.

—Corn Tassel, 1787

As American Patriots celebrated the victory that brought them independence from Britain, Native Americans braced themselves for the invasion of their lands that was sure to come. Faced with an empty treasury after a long war, the new government hoped to sell off Indian lands to pay its bills and looked to Indian lands as the basis of the new Republic's empire. But state governments, land companies, and individual speculators also had their eyes on Indian lands. The years following the Revolution thus witnessed renewed competition for land. At first, the United States took the position that it had acquired the Indians' territory from Britain by right of conquest. American commissioners dictated treaties, demanding that the tribes give up vast amounts of land at the price of peace. But the Indians soon recovered from their shock and began to unite in resistance to American demands. A new round of wars began in the late 1780s, although to many Indians the conflict was simply a continuation of their long struggle to defend their cultural and territorial boundaries.

Some in the new American government also wrestled with the question of where Indian people fit in the new society that was developing in America. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Henry Knox, and others advocated a policy of extending to Indian people “the blessings of civilization,” by which they meant Christianity and a settled, agricultural way of life. Some Native Americans accepted these “blessings” and attempted to learn new ways, others rejected them outright. Many tribes united in opposition to American expansion, forcing the United States to modify its policies.

Whatever their response, however, Indian people found they could do little to stem the tide of expansion. Oneida Indians, who had fought for the Americans in the Revolution, lost their lands in New York. Cherokee who made great efforts to adopt the new way of life were unable to preserve their homelands in Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. American officials might talk of “civilizing” Indian people, but Indians realized that land lay at the root of American Indian policy and of United States–Indian relations.

ALEXANDER Mcgillivray Rejects American Pretensions

During colonial times, Scottish and English traders active in the southeastern deer skin trade frequently married Indian women. Those unions produced children of mixed heritage who often grew up to play influential roles as cultural intermediaries between Indian and European societies. Alexander McGillivray was the son of a Scottish father and a Creek-French mother. Because Creek society was matrilocal, he inherited membership in his mother’s clan, the Wind clan. His father gave Alexander an English education in Charleston, and the young man served the British during the Revolution, but his first allegiance was always to the Creeks.

After the Revolution, McGillivray emerged as the most prominent southeastern Indian of his day. Confronted with aggression from Georgia and South Carolina, the Creeks and other southern tribes cultivated relations with Spain as a potential ally against American expansion. At Pensacola in 1784, they placed themselves under Spanish protection and secured assurances of trade, thereby freeing themselves from dependence on the Americans. Educated in European ways and experienced in Indian diplomacy, McGillivray was well equipped to conduct Creek foreign policies in the turbulent years after the Revolution. As this speech, delivered to the Spanish governor Arturo O’Neill, illustrates, he was also able to express the fraudulent American claims to his people’s lands.

Plagued by ill health, McGillivray died in his early thirties in 1793. By 1795, Spain began to pull back from the Mississippi Valley, and the southern Indians found themselves left alone to deal with the expanding American Republic.
ALEXANDER McGILLIVRAY

Letter to Governor Arturo O'Neill
July 10, 1785

Whereas We the Cheifs and Warriors of the Creek Chickasaw and Cherokee Nations having received information that an Envoy has been appointed by his Most Catholic Majesty the King of Spain for the purpose of settling the boundaries of his territories and those of the States of America, and as we have reason to apprehend that the American Congress in those important matters will endeavour to avail themselves of the late treaty of peace between them & the British Nation and that they will aim at getting his Majesty the King of Spain to confirm to them that Extensive Territory the Lines of which are drawn by the Said treaty and which includes the whole of our hunting Grounds to our Great injury and ruin—It behoves us therefore to object to, and We Chiefs and Warriors of the Creek Chickasaw and Cherokee Nations, do hereby in the most solemn manner protest against any title claim or demand the American Congress may set up for or against our lands, Settlements, and hunting Grounds in Consequence of the Said treaty of peace between the King of Great Britain and the States of America declaring that as we were not parties, so we are determined to pay no attention to the Mariner in which the British Negotiators has drawn out the Lines of the Lands in question Ceded to the States of America—it being a Notorious fact known to the Americans, known to every person who is in any ways conversant in, or acquainted with American affairs, that his Britannick Majesty was never possessed either by session purchase or by right of Conquest of our Territories and which the Said treaty gives away. On the contrary it is well known that from the first Settlement of the English colonies of Carolina and Georgia up to the date of the Said treaty no title has ever been or pretended to be made by his Britannick Majesty to our lands except what was obtained by free Gift or by purchase for good and valuable Considerations.

We can urge in Evidence upon this occasion the Cessions of Lands made to the Carolinians and Georgians by us at different periods and one so late as June 1773 of the Lands lying on the banks of the River Ochechee for which we were paid a Sum not less than one hundred and twenty thousand pounds Sterling nor has any treaty been held by us Since that period for the purpose of granting any Land to any people whatever nor did we the Nations of Creeks, Chickasaws and Cherokee do any act to forfeit our Independence and natural Rights to the Said King of Great Britain that could invest him with the power of giving our property away unless fighting by the side of his soldiers in the day of battle and Spilling our best blood in the Service of his Nation can be deemed so.

The Americans altoha sensible of the injustice done to us on this occasion in consequence of this pretended claim have divided our territories into counties and Sate themselves down on our land, as if they were their own. Witness the Large Settlement called Cumberland and others on the Mississippi which with the late attempts on the Occocee Lands are all encroachments on our hunting Grounds.

We have repeatedly warned the States of Carolina and Georgia to desist from these Encroachments and to confine themselves within the Lands granted to Britain in the Year 1773. To these remonstrances we have received friendly talks and replies it is true but while they are addressing us by the flattering apppellations of Friends and Brothers they are stripping us of our natural rights by depriving us of that inheritance which belonged to our ancestors and hath descended from them to us Since the beginning of time.

As His most Gracious Majesty was pleased to Express his favorable disposition toward all those Nations of Indians who implored his favor and protection and which we the Chiefs and Warriors of the Nations aforesaid did do in General Congress, held at Pensacola in June 1784 receiving at the same time his Gracious assurances of protection to us, our respective territories and Hunting Grounds—Relying thereupon and having the greatest Confidence in the Good Faith, humanity and Justice of His Most Gracious Majesty the King of Spain we trust that he will enter into no terms with the American States that may Strengthen their claims or that may tend to deprive us of our Just inheritance.

And we request that your Excellency will have the Goodness to forward this Memorial and representation so that it may reach the foot of his Majestys throne. Humbly expressing that He will be pleased to take the same into his Royal consideration and that he will give his Said Envoy at the American Congress such orders respecting the premises as be in his great wisdom and Goodness may think fit.

We conclude with the Sincerest assurances of our firmest attachment to Him and Gratitude for any favor His Most Gracious Majesty may procure us on this occasion.

THE UNITED INDIAN NATIONS
ANNOUNCE A NEW POLICY

As the new American nation grew and flexed its muscles, it committed itself to expansion across the area of the Old Northwest, bordered by the Ohio River, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi. Indian peoples found themselves fighting a desperate holding action as the by-now-familiar pressures on their lands intensified. At the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784, American commissioners browbeat Iroquois delegations into ceding large amounts of their territory. When those delegates returned home, they were scorned by their people, who disapproved their actions. At the Treaty of Fort McIntosh in 1785, Delawares, Wyandots (also known as Hurons), Miami (whom the English and Americans often called Twightwees), and other tribes from the Ohio region were coerced into making similar cessions. The Shawnees, who refused to attend the Fort McIntosh treaty, met the Americans the next year at Fort Finney and received similar treatment.

By 1786, however, the northern tribes were coming to realize what was happening and how they could prevent it. As in colonial times, Indian lands were being lost piecemeal in sales and agreements made by individuals, unauthorized spokesmen, and single tribes. Only by taking a united stance could the Indians hope to halt the loss of their lands. As the newly independent states tried to form themselves into a new, unified nation, so Indian nations strove to present a united front against American expansion. The following message from the united tribes to Congress gave the United States clear warning that the Indians regarded the Ohio River as the boundary between Indian lands and American settlers and that henceforth they would consider no land sales as valid without the unanimous agreement of all the tribes. This united opposition checked American expansion beyond the Ohio River for almost ten years.

UNITED INDIAN NATIONS
Speech at the Confederate Council
November 28 and December 18, 1786

Present:—The Five Nations, the Hurons, Delawares, Shawanees, Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatimins, Twightwees, Cherokees, and the Wabash confederates

To the Congress of the United States of America:

Brethren of the United States of America: It is now more than three years since peace was made between the King of Great Britain and you, but we, the Indians, were disappointed, finding ourselves not included in that peace, according to our expectations: for we thought that its conclusion would have promoted a friendship between the United States and Indians, and that we might enjoy that happiness that formerly subsisted between us and our elder brethren. We have received two very agreeable messages from the thirteen United States. We also received a message from the King, whose war we were engaged in, desiring us to remain quiet, which we accordingly complied with. During the time of this tranquillity, we were deliberating the best method we could to form a lasting reconciliation with the thirteen United States. Pleased at the same time, we thought we were entering upon a reconciliation and friendship with a set of people born on the same continent with ourselves, certain that the quarrel between us was not of our own making. In the course of our councils, we imagined we hit upon an expedient that would promote a lasting peace between us.

Brothers: We still are of the same opinion as to the means which may tend to reconcile us to each other; and we are sorry to find, although we had the best thoughts in our minds, during the forementioned period, mischief has, nevertheless, happened between you and us. We are still anxious of putting our plan of accommodation into execution, and we shall briefly inform you of the means that seem most probable to us of effecting a firm and lasting peace and reconciliation: the first step towards which should, in our opinion, be, that all treaties carried on with the United States, on our parts, should be with the general voice of the whole confederacy, and carried on in the most open manner, without any restraint on either side; and especially as landed matters are often the subject of our councils with you, a matter of the...
greatest importance and of general concern to us, in this case we hold it indispensably necessary that any cession of our lands should be made in the most public manner, and by the united voice of the confederacy; holding all partial treaties as void and of no effect.

Brothers: We think it is owing to you that the tranquillity which, since the peace between us, has not lasted, and that that essential good has been followed by mischief and confusion, having managed every thing respecting us your own way: You kindled your council fires where you thought proper, without consulting us, at which you held separate treaties, and have entirely neglected our plans of having a general conference with the different nations of the confederacy. Had this happened, we have reason to believe even thing would now have been settled between us in a most friendly manner. We did every thing in our power, at the treaty of Fort Stanwix, to induce you to follow this plan, as our real intentions were, at that very time, to promote peace and concord between us, and that we might look upon each other as friends, having given you no cause or provocation to be otherwise.

Brothers: Notwithstanding the mischief that has happened, we are still sincere in our wishes to have peace and tranquillity established between us, earnestly hoping to find the same inclination in you. We wish, therefore, you would take it into serious consideration, and let us speak to you in the manner we proposed. Let us have a treaty with you early in the spring; let us pursue reasonable steps; let us meet half ways, for our mutual convenience; we shall then bring [hur] to oblivion the misfortunes that have happened, and meet each other on a footing of friendship.

Brothers: We say let us meet half way, and let us pursue such steps as become upright and honest men. We beg that you will prevent your surveyors and other people from coming upon our side the Ohio river. We have told you before, we wished to pursue just steps, and we are determined they shall appear just and reasonable in the eyes of the world. This is the determination of all the chiefs of our confederacy now assembled here, notwithstanding the accidents that have happened in our villages, even when in council, where several innocent chiefs were killed when absolutely engaged in promoting a peace with you, the thirteen United States. Although then interrupted, the chiefs here present still wish to meet you in the spring, for the beforementioned good purpose, when we hope to speak to each other without either haughtiness or menace.

Brothers: We again request of you, in the most earnest manner, to order your surveyors and others, that mark out lands, to cease from crossing the Ohio, until we shall have spoken to you, because the mischief that has recently happened has originated in that quarter; we shall likewise prevent our people from going over until that time.

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Brothers: It shall not be our fault if the plans which we have suggested to you should not be carried into execution; in that case the event will be very precocious, and if fresh ruptures ensue, we hope to be able to execute ourselves, and shall most assuredly, with our united force, be obliged to defend those rights and privileges which have been transmitted to us by our ancestors; and if we should be thereby reduced to misfortunes, the world will pity us when they think of the amicable proposals we now make to prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood. These are our thoughts and firm resolves, and we earnestly desire that you will transmit to us, as soon as possible, your answer, be it what it may.

Done at our Confederated Council Fire, at the Huron village, near the mouth of the Detroit river, December 18th, 1786.

The Five Nations,
Hurons, Ottawas, Twichwees, Shawanese, Chippewas, Cherokees, Delawares, Powhatanites, The Wabash Confederates.

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THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

By the time the American colonists had won their independence and created a new nation, the original inhabitants of this country had seen truly revolutionary changes in their own lives. Many Indian people in New England were reduced to petitioning state legislatures for relief from the poverty that now afflicted them. As two Mohican speakers, Henry Quaquagool and Robert Ashpo, explain in this petition to the Connecticut State Assembly in May 1788, the forces that had disrupted their world were not only political. The Mohicans may have been playing to their audience by admitting their own responsibility for many of the changes, and nostalgia certainly colored their view of past days as a golden age. Nevertheless, their words convey the bewilderment many Indian people must have felt as their world changed around them.
HENRY QUAIQUAQUID
AND ROBERT ASHPO

Petition to the
Connecticut State Assembly
May 1789

We beg leave to lay our concerns and burdens at your excellencies’ feet. The times are exceedingly altered, yet the times are turned upside down; or rather we have changed the good times, chiefly by the help of the white people. For in times past our forefathers lived in peace, love and great harmony, and had every thing in great plenty. When they wanted meat, they would just run into the bush a little way, with their weapons, and would soon return, bringing home good venison, raccoon, bear and fowl. If they chose to have fish, they would only go to the river, or along the seashore and they would presently fill their canoes with variety of fish, both scaled and shell-fish. And they had abundance of nuts, wild fruits, ground nuts and ground beans; and they planted but little corn and beans. They had no contention about their lands, for they lay in common; and they had but one large dish, and could all eat together in peace and love. But alas! it is not so now; all our hunting and fowling and fishing is entirely gone. And we have begun to work our land, keep horses and cattle and hogs; and we build houses and forests in lots. And now we plainly see that one dish and one fire will not do any longer for us. Some few there are that are stronger than others; and they will keep off the poor, weak, the halt and blind, and will take the dish to themselves. Yes, they will rather call the white people and the mulattoes to eat out of our dish; and poor widows and orphans must be pushed aside; and there they must sit, crying and starving, and die. And so we are now come to our good brethren of the Assembly, with hearts full of sorrow and grief, for immediate help. And therefore our most humble and earnest request is, that our dish of succotash may be equally divided amongst us, so that every one may have his own little dish by himself, that he may eat quietly and do with his dish as he pleases, that every one may have his own fire.

The original is in the Connecticut State Library, Hartford. The version reprinted here is from John W. DeForest, History of the Indians of Connecticut (Hartford, 1880); other versions elsewhere.

JOSEPH BRANT

Indian vs. White Civilization
1789

I was, sir, born of Indian parents, and lived while a child, among those you are pleased to call savages; I was afterwards sent to live among the white people, and educated at one of your schools; since which period, I have been honoured, much beyond my deserts, by an acquaintance with a number of principal characters both in Europe and America. After all this experience, and after every exertion to divest myself of prejudice, I am obliged to give my opinion in favour of my own people. . . . I will not enlarge on an idea so singular in civilized life, and perhaps disgusting to you; and will only observe, that among us, we have no law but that written on the heart of every rational creature by the immediate finger of the great Spirit of the

universe himself. We have no prisons—we have no pompous parade of courts; and yet judges are as highly esteemed among us, as they are among you, and their decisions as highly revered; property, to say the least, is as well guarded, and crimes are as impartially punished. We have among us no splendid villains, above the control of that law, which influences our decisions; in a word, we have no brutality under the colour of law—during wickedness here is never suffered to triumph over helpless innocence—the estates of widows and orphans are never devoured by enterprising sharpers, Our sages, and our warriors, eat their own bread, and not the bread of superstition. No person, among us, desires any other reward for performing a brave and worthy action, than the consciousness of serving his nation. Our wise men are called fathers—they are truly deserving the character; they are always accessible—I will not say to the meanest of our people—for we have none mean, but such as render themselves so by their vices.

... We do not hunger and thirst after those superfluities of life, that are the ruin of thousands of families among you. Our ornaments, in general, are simple, and easily obtained. Envy and covetousness, those worms that destroy the fair flower of human happiness, are unknown in this climate.

The palaces and prisons among you, form a most dreadful contrast. Go to the former places, and you will see, perhaps, a deformed piece of earth swelled with pride, and assuming airs, that become none but the Spirit above. Go to one of your prisons—there description utterly fails—certainly the sight of an Indian torture, is not half so painful to a well informed mind. Kill them [the prisoners], if you please—kill them, too, by torture; but let the torture last no longer than a day... Those you call savages, relent—the most furious of our tormentors exhausts his rage in a few hours, and dispatches the unhappy victim with a sudden stroke.

But for what are many of your prisoners confined? For debt! Astonishing! and will you ever again call the Indian nations cruel? —Liberty, to a rational creature, as much exceeds property, as the light of the sun does that of the most twinkling star: but you put them on a level, to the everlasting disgrace of civilization... And I seriously declare, that I had rather die by the most severe tortures ever inflicted by any savage nation on the continent, than languish in one of your prisons for a single year. Great Maker of the world, and do you call yourselves Christians?... Does then the religion of him whom you call your Saviour, inspire this conduct, and lead to this practice? Surely no. It was a sentence that once struck my mind with some force, that "a bruised reed he never broke." Cease then, while those practices continue among you, to call yourselves christians, lest you publish to the world your hypocrisy. Cease to call other nations savage, when you are tenfold more the children of cruelty, than they.

THE CONTINUING CONFLICT OVER LAND

In 1790, warriors of the northwestern Indian confederacy, led by the Miami war chief Little Turtle and the Shawnee Blue Jacket, inflicted a smashing defeat on the United States, destroying an American army under General Arthur St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory. In the wake of that defeat the United States dispatched commissioners to meet with the Indians and negotiate a settlement, but the Americans would not agree to the Indian demand that the Ohio River remain the boundary to their lands.

In a general council held at the foot of the Miami Rapids in northwestern Ohio in August 1793, delegates from the Wyandots, Shawnees, Miami, Ottawas, Chippewas, Senecas, Potawatomis, Comosus, Munsees, Nanticoke, Mohicans, Mississaugas, Creek, and Cherokee met with the American commissioners. The Indian speakers reviewed the history of their relations with the United States, showing how past treaties had failed to stop white expansion onto their lands, and then offered their own solution to the problem.

INDIAN REPRESENTATIVES

Proposal to Maintain Indian Lands

1793

Brothers,—Money, to us, is of no value, & to most of us unknown, and as no consideration whatever can induce us to sell the lands on which we get sustenance for our women and children; we hope we may be allowed to point out a road by which your settlers may be easily removed, and peace thereby obtained.

Brothers,—We know that these settlers are poor, or they would never have ventured to live in a country which have been in continual trouble ever since they crossed the Ohio; divide therefore this large sum of money which you have

offered to us, among these people, give to each also a portion of what you say you would give us annually over and above this very large sum of money, and we are persuaded they would most readily accept of it in lieu of the lands you sold to them, if you add also the great sums you must expend in raising and paying Armies, with a view to force us to yield you our Country, you will certainly have more than sufficient for the purposes of repaying these settlers for all their labour and improvements.

Brothers,—
You have talked to us about concessions. It appears strange that you should expect any from us, who have only been defending our just Rights against your invasion; We want Peace; Restore to us our Country and we shall be Enemies no longer.

Brothers,—
You make one concession to us, by offering us your money, and another by having agreed to do us justice, after having long and injuriously withheld it. We mean in the acknowledgment you have now made, that the King of England never did, nor never had a right, to give you our Country, by the Treaty of peace, and you want to make this act of Common Justice, a great part of your concessions, and seem to expect that because you have at last acknowledged our independence, we should for such a favor surrender to you our Country.

Brothers,—
You have talked also a great deal about pre-emption and your exclusive right to purchase Indian lands, as ceded to you by the King at the Treaty of peace.

Brothers,—
We never made any agreement with the King, nor with any other Nation that we would give to either the exclusive right of purchasing our lands. And we declare to you that we consider ourselves free to make any bargain or cession of lands, whenever & to whomever we please, if the white people as you say, made a treaty that none of them but the King should purchase of us, and that he has given that right to the U. States, it is an affair which concerns you & him & not us. We have never parted with such a power.

Brothers,—
At our General Council held at the Glasse* last Fall, we agreed to meet Commissioners from the U. States, for the purpose of restoring Peace, provided they consented to acknowledge and confirm our boundary line to be

the Ohio, and we determined not to meet you until you gave us satisfaction on that point; that is the reason we have never met.

We desire you to consider Brothers, that our only demand, is the peaceable possession of a small part of our once great Country. Look back and view the lands from whence we have been driven to this spot, we can retreat no further, because the country behind hardly affords food for its present inhabitants. And we have therefore resolved, to leave our bones in this small space, to which we are now confined.

Brothers,—
We shall be persuaded that you mean to do us justice if you agree, that the Ohio, shall remain the boundary line between us, if you will not consent thereto, our meeting will be altogether unnecessary.

NOTES

*The Seven Nations of Canadas was a confederacy of the mission communities along the St. Lawrence River. Centered at Caughnawaga, it included Ohia, Oneida, Attewairot, and other groups.
*The Glasse was the area at the junction of the Alleghany and Muskeet rivers in northeastern Ohio. By the time many Indian peoples had congregated in the region an American expansion pushed them from their traditional homelands.
EPISODE
Surviving as Vanishing Americans

The Indians' hope that the United States might forgo expansion in return for peace and agree to the Ohio as a permanent boundary was not to be realized. The 1795 meeting broke up, the Americans split the Indian confederacy by playing on different tribal interests, and a year later General Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in northwestern Ohio. At the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, tribal leaders ceded most of Ohio to the United States. Indian resistance shifted westward. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Shawnee war chief Tecumseh and his brother the Shawnee Prophet revived Indian resistance in the North and preached a message of pan-Indian unity throughout the eastern woodlands; from 1813 to 1814 the Creeks fought a bloody war against American expansion in the South. But it was too little and too late. The Indians' war for independence was lost. They now had to find ways to continue being Indians in the midst of a society that insisted that Indians were a "vanishing race."

For more than two hundred years, Indian peoples in the eastern woodlands of North America had adjusted to massive changes in their world generated by the European invasion of America. Amid the chaos, they dealt with the newcomers in a variety of ways. They traded with them and negotiated with them; they listened to their teachings and offered them alternative ways of life; they made war and made love; they avoided them and lived alongside them. However, as Americans in the new nation looked back across the long span of colonial history, they rarely saw anything but instances of Indian hostility. All Indians came to be regarded as warlike "savages" who had fought against the pioneers and had resisted "civilization" every step of the way. The struggles of Indian peoples to defend their lands and cultures provided their conquerors with further justification to take what was left of their land and destroy what remained of their traditional ways of life. Indian people had been virtually everywhere in colonial America, but there could be no place for "savages" in the new society Americans hoped to create.

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, and thousands of Indian people were driven from their ancestral homes in eastern America to seek new homes beyond the Mississippi. Americans assumed that Indians were doomed to extinction. They were wrong, of course, and the removal policies of the 1830s simply opened another chapter in the history of Indian peoples. The 1900 census recorded almost two million Indian people in the United States. There are 510 federally recognized tribes in the country and perhaps as many as 200 groups who are not recognized. Contrary to popular notions that Indians inhabit rural reservations in the West, more than half of Indian people live in cities, and many continue to live in the eastern United States. Some tribes, like the Penobscots and Passamaquoddiies in Maine, have brought and won substantial lawsuits for lands taken from them illegally in the past; others, like the Mashpees on Cape Cod or the Abenakis in Vermont, have little or no land. Some, like the Iroquois in New York and Canada, are involved in recurrent conflict with state and federal governments over issues that affect their sovereignty; others, like the Abenakis of Vermont or the Lumbees of North Carolina, struggle simply to achieve state and federal recognition of their status as Indian tribes. Some, like the Mashantucket Pequots in Connecticut, have achieved unprecedented economic success through operating bingo halls and gambling casinos; many more live in poverty. Some Indian people live in communities that are distinctly Indian; others live and work alongside other Americans. Some Indian people have successfully demanded their rights in twentieth-century America. Many others, like indigenous people elsewhere in the world, still struggle to have their voices heard.
APPENDIX I

Treaty between the Abenaki Indians and the English at Casco Bay, 1727

The Submission and Agreement of the Delegates of the Eastern Indians

Whereas the several Tribes of the Eastern Indians viz. The Penobscot, Narragansett, St. John's, Cape Sabies, and other Tribes Inhabiting within His Majesties Territories of New England and Nova Scotia, who have been engaged in the present War, from whom we, Saguarun alias Loren, Arexis, Francois Xavier, & Megumnum, are Delegated and fully Empowered to enter into Articles of Pacification with His Majesties Governments of the Massachusetts-Bay, New-Hampshire and Nova Scotia, have contrary to the several Treaties they have Solemnly entered into with the said Governments, made an Open Rupture, and have continued some Years in Acts of Hostility against the Subjects of His Majesty King George within the said Governments.

They being now sensible of the Miseries and Troubles they have involved themselves in, and being desirous to be restored to His Majesties Grace and Favour, and to Live in Peace with all His Majesties Subjects of the said Three Governments, and the Province of New York and Colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island and that all former Acts of Injury be forgotten, have Concluded to make, and we do by these Presents in the Name and Behalf of the said Tribes, make Our Submission unto His most Excellent Majesty George by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King Defender of the Faith &c. in as Full and Ample Manner, as any of our Predecessors have heretofore done.

"Indian Treaties," Collections of the Maine Historical Society (1856), 4318-84.
all Acts of Hostility Force and Violence towards all and every the Subjects of His Majesty the King of Great Britain.

We do further in Behalf of the Tribe of the Penobscot Indians, promise and engage, that if any of the other Tribes intended to be Included in this Treaty, shall notwithstanding refuse to Confirm and Ratifie this present Treaty entered into on their Behalf and continue or Renew Acts of Hostility against the English, in such case the said Penobscot Tribe shall join their Young Men with the English in reducing them to Reason.

In the next place we the aforesaid Delegates do promise and engage with the Honourable John Wentworth Esq; as he is Lieut. Governour and Commander in Chief of His Majesties Province of New Hampshire, and with the Governours and Commdier in Chief of the said Province for the time being, that we and the Tribes we are deputed from will henceforth cease and forbear all Acts of Hostility, Injuries & Discords towards all the Subjects of His Majesties King George within the said Province, And we do understand and take it that the said Government of New Hampshire is also included and comprehended in all and every the Articles aforesaid excepting that respecting the regulating the Trade with us.

And further we the aforesaid Delegates do promise and engage with the Honourable Lawrence Armstrong Esq; Lieutenant Governour and Commander in Chief of His Majesties Province of Nova Scotia or L’Acadie to live in peace with His Majesties Good Subjects and their Dependants in that Government according to the Articles agreed on with Major Paul Massearen commissioned for that purpose, and further to be Ratified as mentioned in the said Articles.

That this present Treaty shall be Accepted Ratified and Confirmed in a Publick and Solemn manner by the Chiefs of the several Eastern Tribes of Indians included therein at Falmouth in Casco Bay some time in the Month of May next. In Testimony whereof we have Signed these Presents, and Affixed our Seals. Dated at the Council Chamber in Boston in New England, this Fifteenth Day of December, Anno Domini, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty-Five, Annoque Regni Regis George, Magnae Britanniae, &c. Duodecimo.

Sig. Siasgussarum alias Loron

Sig. Acarus

Sig. Francois Xavier

Sig. Alagamumbe

Done in the presence of the Great and General Court or Assembly of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay aforesaid, being first Read distinctly, and Interpreted by Capt. John Gyles, Capt. Samuel Jordan, and Capt. Joseph Blake, Sworn Interpreters.

Attest J. Willard, Secr.
APPENDIX II

Treaty with the Delawares, 1778

Articles of agreement and confederation, made and entered into by Andrew and Thomas Lewis, Esquires, Commissioners for, and in Behalf of the United States of North-America of the one Part, and Capt. White Eyes, Capt. John Killbuck, Junior, and Capt. Pipe, Deputies and Chief Men of the Delaware Nation of the other Part.

Article I

That all offences or acts of hostilities by one, or either of the contracting parties against the other, be mutually forgiven, and buried in the depth of oblivion, never more to be had in remembrance.

Article II

That a perpetual peace and friendship shall from henceforth take place, and subsist between the contracting parties aforesaid, through all succeeding generations: and if either of the parties are engaged in a just and necessary war with any other nation or nations, that then each shall assist the other in due proportion to their abilities, till their enemies are brought to reasonable terms of accommodation: and that if either of them shall discover any hostile designs forming against the other, they shall give the earliest notice thereof, that timely measures may be taken to prevent their ill effect.

Article III

And whereas the United States are engaged in a just and necessary war, in defense and support of life, liberty and independence, against the King of England and his adherents, and as said King is yet possessed of several posts and forts on the lakes and other places, the reduction of which is of great importance to the peace and security of the contracting parties, and as the most practicable way for the troops of the United States to some of the posts and forts is by passing through the country of the Delaware nation, the aforesaid deputies, on behalf of themselves and their nation, do hereby stipulate and agree to give a free passage through their country to the troops aforesaid, and the same to conduct by the nearest and best ways to the posts, forts or towns of the enemies of the United States, affording to said troops such supplies of corn, meat, horses, or whatever may be in their power for the accommodation of such troops, on the commanding officer's, &c. paying, or engaging to pay, the full value of whatever they can supply them with. And the said deputies, on behalf of their nation, engage to join the troops of the United States aforesaid, with such a number of their best and most expert warriors as they can spare, consistent with their own safety, and act in concert with them; and for the better security of the old men, women and children of the aforesaid nation, whilst their warriors are engaged against the common enemy, it is agreed on the part of the United States, that a fort of sufficient strength and capacity be built at the expense of the said States, with such assistance as it may be in the power of the said Delaware Nation to give, in the most convenient place, and advantageous situation, as shall be agreed on by the commanding officer of the troops aforesaid, with the advice and concurrence of the deputies of the aforesaid Delaware Nation, which fort shall be garrisoned by such a number of the troops of the United States, as the commanding officer can spare for the present, and hereafter by such numbers, as the wise men of the United States in council, shall think most conducive to the common good.

Article IV

For the better security of the peace and friendship now entered into by the contracting parties, against all infractions of the same by the citizens of either party, to the prejudice of the other, neither party shall proceed to the infliction of punishments on the citizens of the other, otherwise than by securing the offender or offenders by imprisonment, or any other competent means; till a fair and impartial trial can be had by judges or juries of both parties, as near as can be to the laws, customs and usages of the contracting parties and natural justice: The mode of such trials to be hereafter fixed by the wise men of the United States in Congress assembled, with the assistance of such deputies of the Delaware nation, as may be appointed to act in concert with them in adjusting this matter to their mutual liking. And it is
further agreed between the parties aforesaid, that neither shall entertain or give countenance to the enemies of the other, or protect in their respective states, criminal fugitives, servants or slaves, but the same to apprehend, and secure and deliver to the State or States, to which such enemies, criminals, servants or slaves respectively belong.

Article V
Whereas the confederation entered into by the Delaware nation and the United States, renders the first dependent on the latter for all the articles of clothing, utensils and implements of war, and it is judged not only reasonable, but indispensably necessary, that the aforesaid Nation be supplied with such articles from time to time, as far as the United States may have it in their power, by a well-regulated trade, under the conduct of an intelligent, candid agent, with an adequate salary, one more influenced by the love of his country, and a constant attention to the duties of his department by promoting the common interest, than the sinister purposes of converting and binding all the duties of his office to his private emolument: Convinced of the necessity of such measures, the Commissioners of the United States, at the earnest solicitation of the deputies aforesaid, have engaged in behalf of the United States, that such a trade shall be afforded said nation, conducted on such principles of mutual interest as the wisdom of the United States in Congress assembled shall think most conducive to adopt for their mutual convenience.

Article VI
Whereas the enemies of the United States have endeavored, by every artifice in their power, to possess the Indians in general with an opinion, that it is the design of the States aforesaid, to extirpate the Indians and take possession of their country: to obviate such false suggestion, the United States do engage to guarantee to the aforesaid nation of Delawares, and their heirs, all their territorial rights in the fullest and most ample manner, as it hath been bounded by former treaties, as long as they the said Delaware nation shall abide by, and hold fast the chain of friendship now entered into. And it is further agreed on between the contracting parties should it for the future be found conducive for the mutual interest of both parties to invite any other tribes who have been friends to the interest of the United States, to join the present confederation, and to form a state whereof the Delaware nation shall be the head, and have a representation in Congress: Provided, nothing contained in this article to be considered as conclusive until it meets with the approbation of Congress. And it is also the intent and meaning of this article, that no protection or countenance shall be afforded to any who are at present our enemies, by which they might escape the punishment they deserve.

In witness whereof, the parties have hereunto interchangedly set their hands and seals, at Fort Pitt, September seventeenth, anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight.

Andrew Lewis,
Thomas Lewis,
White Eyes, his x mark,
The Pipe, his x mark,
Johnskill Buck, his x mark,
In presence of—
Lach’n McIntosh, brigadier general, commander the Western Department.
Daniel Brodhead, colonel Eighth Pennsylvania Regiment,
W. Crawford, colonel,
John Campbell,
John Stephenson,
John Gibson, colonel Thirteenth Virginia Regiment,
A. Graham, brigade major,
Lach McIntosh, jr., major brigade,
Benjamin Mills,
Joseph L. Finley, captain Eighth Pennsylvania Regiment,
John Finley, captain Eighth Pennsylvania Regiment.