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# ORISKANY: A PLACE OF GREAT SADNESS A MOHAWK VALLEY BATTLEFIELD ETHNOGRAPHY



FORT STANWIX NATIONAL MONUMENT  
SPECIAL ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT



# ORISKANY: A PLACE OF GREAT SADNESS

## A Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography

by

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With assistance from Trish Rae

Fort Stanwix National Monument

Special Ethnographic Report

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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National Park Service  
Boston, MA

February 2009

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*The title of this report was provided by a Mohawk elder during an interview conducted for this project. It is used because it so eloquently summarizes the feelings of all the Indians consulted.*

Cover Photo: View of Oriskany Battlefield with the 1884 monument to the rebels and their allies. 1996. Photograph by Joy Bilharz.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography Project was designed to document the relationships between contemporary Indian peoples and the events that occurred in central New York during the mid to late eighteenth century. The particular focus was Fort Stanwix, located near the Oneida Carry, which linked the Mohawk and St. Lawrence Rivers via Wood Creek, and the Oriskany Battlefield. Because of its strategic location, Fort Stanwix was the site of several critical treaties between the British and the Iroquois and, following the American Revolution, between the latter and the United States. This region was the homeland of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy whose neutrality or military support was desired by both the British and the rebels during the Revolution. The Battle of Oriskany, 6 August 1777, occurred as the Tryon County militia, aided by Oneida warriors, was marching to relieve the British siege of Ft. Stanwix. Within a few miles of the fort it was ambushed by a British force comprised primarily of Indian warriors, most of whom were Senecas and Mohawks, and, like the Oneidas members of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Among the project's ethnographic objectives was to determine if there were oral histories of either the battle or the treaties which could balance the ethnocentric eighteenth century documents. Descendants of participants in those events were to be identified and their concerns and interests about the sites documented. This information could then be used by site managers to provide more accurate and culturally appropriate interpretations to the public and to inform management decisions. Another objective was to open lines of communication between park managers and Indian nations and individuals that would become part of an ongoing collaborative process. In addition to the ethnographic research, an archival component was designed to develop a history of the events surrounding the siege and battle as recorded in primary sources.

Because the bulk of the Indian warriors were Iroquois, the first phase of the project focused exclusively on contemporary Iroquois peoples in the United States and Canada. During the course of the archival research it became apparent that other Indian nations were also represented at the battle and siege and the second phase, with similar objectives, focused on the Mississaugas, Hurons/Wyandots, Ottawas, Potawatomes, and Chippewas.

No significant oral histories of either the battle or the siege were found. We believe that this is a reflection of both the length of time elapsed and the massive relocations and traumas that occurred as a result of the Revolution. Interest was greatest among the Oneidas and Mohawks as the area is closest to their traditional homelands. Familiarity with the battle was much less among non-Iroquois who nevertheless eagerly sought what information we could give them about their ancestors' participation. Attempts to identify descendants of particular warriors were unsuccessful due to restrictions on the use of tribal enrollment records. For the Iroquois it is reasonable to assume that all contemporary people have some ancestral connection.

Community consultants who had visited Fort Stanwix National Monument were unanimous and outspoken in their objections to the orientation film then shown at the fort because it ignored the roles played by Indian warriors, dismissing them as "savages." (The film was withdrawn within a few months of the receipt of the final report of the project's first phase).

The primary management concern expressed by both Iroquois and non-Iroquois was for the protection of both the battlefield and the bodies that remain buried there, even though they are most likely those of the militia. Concern was expressed that the site was not adequately protected from treasure hunters seeking artifacts or bones. There was strong, though not unanimous, opposition to any attempts to locate bodies or any activities at the site that might result in disturbance of burials. For the Iroquois, Oriskany is a sacred site where events contrary to the Great Law occurred. Divisions between Oneidas and other members of the Confederacy which erupted into armed conflict at the battle have had ramifications lasting to the present day. As the Iroquois nations seek to reaffirm their prehistoric and historic ties, any glorification of the site or the events that occurred would be inappropriate. For many years it has been a place where private rituals were held for those who fell. It is "a place of great sadness" that should remain a place for remembrance and reflection. The ongoing historical and cultural importance of Oriskany Battlefield to Iroquois people mandates that its documentation for the National Register of Historic Places be updated to include recognition as a Traditional Cultural Property.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When the National Park Service released the Request for Proposals for this project, the Scope of Work focused the research on Iroquois groups residing within the United States. Iroquois communities today are found not only in New York but in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Ontario, and Quebec and most Iroquois live within Canadian boundaries. Before deciding whether to submit a proposal, I contacted Dr. Rebecca Joseph, then the director of the Northeast Region's Applied Ethnography Program, and explained my dilemma: in order to accomplish the stated goals, the sphere of research had to include fieldwork in Canada but it was not clear that a proposal which incorporated a Canadian component would be acceptable. She explained that the federal government was required to include native populations within U.S. boundaries but could not mandate research in a foreign country; however, a proposal that demonstrated the need for such research would not be eliminated from consideration. Trish Rae, a Canadian ethnographer working on land claims for the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, agreed to participate in the project should it be funded. With Trish on board, Drs. Glen Sheehan and Anne Jensen of SJS Archaeological Services, Inc. and I decided to submit a proposal that was ultimately funded.

The final report recommended that a similar study be carried out among descendants of the Mississaugas and "Western Indians." The National Park Service acted quickly to initiate what became the second phase of the project. Because Anne and Glenn had moved to Barrow, AK, I submitted a proposal for the second phase of the project which was funded through the Research Foundation at SUNY Fredonia, and the help of Maggie Bryan-Peterson, director, and Cathe Kilpatrick, assistant director, is gratefully acknowledged. Trish and I once again cooperated in the archival and field research.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was the level of enthusiasm and support for this project at all levels within the National Park Service, from the late Dr. Muriel (Miki) Crespi, Chief Ethnographer and director of the NPS-wide Applied Ethnography Program, to seasonal employees at Ft. Stanwix National Monument. Special thanks go to Becky Joseph and Gary Warshefski, then superintendent at Ft. Stanwix, for their unfailing support of the project and the ethnographers, their sound advice and good humor. Gary's rapid implementation of several of the major recommendations of the first report demonstrate that a government bureaucracy can respond quickly and effectively when it

is headed by a caring and dedicated public servant. At Ft. Stanwix National Monument, Michael Kusch, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management, and Craig Davis, Collections Manager, were always willing to share their insights and serve as sounding boards. In 2007, Dr. Chuck Smythe, the current manager of the Northeast Region's Ethnography Program, spearheaded the decision to publish these reports and supplied constant encouragement and hours of restorative conversation when my own enthusiasm flagged.

Nancy Demyttenaere, site manager at Oriskany Battlefield (a unit of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation), was unfailingly helpful. Joseph Robertaccio of Utica, NY and Gavin Watt of Toronto, both dedicated re-enactors of Revolutionary War battles, provided insight into military strategies and armaments of the period. Joe spent many hours walking over the battlefield with us and describing his reconstruction of the events of 6 August 1777. His lengthy chronology of the battle and siege provided our initial chronological framework for the research. We are grateful for their enthusiasm and time. Ken D. Johnson, historian at Fort Plank, provided copies of eighteenth century maps and transcripts of pension requests for Revolutionary War veterans who fought at Oriskany. His interest in this project and willingness to share his knowledge and data are appreciated.

Janet Ferry, Reed Library, SUNY Fredonia, found obscure sources quickly and Gerda Morrissey provided translations of German sources. Patricia Kennedy of the Economic and Governance Archives section, Canadian Archives Branch, Library and Archives Canada, alerted us to newly available documents in the U.S. and Canada, in particular to John Butler's journal in the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Their help is also gratefully acknowledged. Dr. Ann Deakin, Associate Professor of Geosciences and Director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Geographic Information Services (GIS) at SUNY Fredonia, created new maps for this report.

Many professional colleagues in anthropology and history were also helpful in many ways. Dr. Carl Benn, Chair of the Department of History at Ryerson University, and an expert on the Iroquois in the War of 1812, provided comparisons with later battles and insights into the relationship between Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) and John Norton. Dr. Thomas Abler, Department of Anthropology, University of Waterloo, shared unpublished (at the time) information on Red Jacket, Cornplanter, and Joseph Brant. He and Dr. Donald Smith, Department of History, University of Calgary, read the initial draft



of the first report. The Annual Conference on Iroquois Research provided an excellent opportunity to meet with fellow Iroquoianists and discuss the research.

We are deeply grateful to the many Native peoples and communities in the U.S. and Canada who shared their ideas, opinions, and insights into the battle and the Mohawk Valley. They welcomed us into their homes and communities, took us to important places on their reserves and reservations, and made the fieldwork process truly enjoyable.

My deepest gratitude is to Trish Rae whose Canadian perspective provided a useful counterpoint to my U. S. one. Although with one short exception we worked separately in the field, the archival research was done jointly. This was particularly advantageous in recognizing (and interpreting) different scripts and provided us with long evenings to debate the perspectives of various sources. My use of the plural pronoun reflects the closeness of our collaboration.



## FORWARD

The National Park Service is pleased to publish this study about the participation of American Indian tribes in what has been described as the bloodiest battle of the Revolutionary War, and present contemporary tribal views and perspectives concerning the preservation of the historic sites at which these events occurred. This report revises, expands and integrates two previously printed technical reports. Taking place in a ravine near the Oneida village of Oriska in New York's Mohawk Valley, members of Iroquois nations, other tribes and non-Indian residents of the Mohawk Valley fought each other in hand-to-hand combat, on land that is now the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site. This battle is very significant in the history of the Iroquois Nations (whose homelands are in New York State), and the present geographical distribution of Iroquoian tribes can be traced to this significant event. In 1996, then Fort Stanwix National Monument Superintendent Gary Warshefski initiated the first of what would be two studies to seek out more information about the historical and on-going relationships between Iroquois Nations in the Mohawk Valley and Fort Stanwix NM, for the purpose of expanding relationships with them.

The first of these studies, entitled *A Place of Great Sadness: Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography*, was completed in 1998. The project resulted in the development of substantial ethnohistory of the Battle of Oriskany, as well as providing important information about the views and perceptions of Iroquois people about the park and the park's presentation of their history to the public. During the course of the research, it became evident to the researchers that the British forces included members of other tribes which did not belong to the Iroquois nations calling New York their homeland. These tribes, collectively referred to in these reports as the "Western Indians" and the "Mississaugas," had been recruited by the British from around the Great Lakes to assist them in their planned siege of revolutionary forces (and their numerous Iroquois, mainly Oneida, allies) located at Fort Stanwix. Little was known about the involvement of these Indian people in the battle, or about their traditional knowledge and ongoing perspectives concerning Fort Stanwix and the battle site. It was decided that a follow-up research project was needed to gather historical and ethnographic information about these Indian tribes and their past and ongoing relationships to the park, including the Battle of

Oriskany. This study, *Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography, Phase II: The "Western Indians" and the Mississaugas*, was completed in 2002.

The original reports were focused on the presentation of ethnographic information about American Indian perceptions of and relationships with the battlefield and the park. These studies were very useful to park managers and staff as they planned and developed a new interpretive center at Fort Stanwix, the Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center, which today houses new and expanded exhibits and a new orientation film. However, these reports became somewhat dated as many of the recommendations were acted upon, and the important ethnohistory of the battle of Oriskany, which had been relegated to an appendix, was not readily available. The reports, which were not produced in large numbers, have never received wide distribution, yet they discuss an historical event that continues to shape the present day configuration and inter-relationships of Iroquois nations. After determining that these reports were not in a form that could easily be made available in electronic form, we arrived at the decision to re-publish them in one document.

In this publication, Dr. Joy Bilharz has reorganized the information and presented the ethnohistory in the main body of the report. This is followed by a presentation of the ethnographic information relating the historical and cultural significance of both historical sites to the contemporary Indian tribes contacted during research. While the material has been reorganized, the original text has been retained as fully as possible to preserve all of the information originally presented in these two separate reports. It is clear that a great deal of new information was uncovered during these studies, which is not generally known among the tribes or by the wider American public which visits the park. The goal of republishing these studies is to combine them into one integrated report and publish them in a form that will be more widely available to park-associated Indian tribes as well as libraries, museums, historical societies and scholars in the Mohawk Valley and beyond.

Park managers and staff at Fort Stanwix NM work with members of area Indian tribes, particularly the Oneida Indian Nation of New York, on a daily basis. We are lucky to have members of the Oneida Nation of New York on site at Fort Stanwix conveying their history to visitors and sharing their culture as part of the Oneida Nation Living History Program – First Allies. Not only does their presence help to bring the fort to life, but allows visitors to learn about the Oneida Carry, the battle and siege from their

perspective as descendants of Native people involved in these events. These studies have broadened our understanding of who was involved in these critical events in our young nation's history and provided insight into the views and perceptions of the various tribes relating to these events. The small communities of the Mohawk Valley were also culturally rich. These reports provide insight into how the Germans, British, colonial military and others inter-related with the Native people on both sides of this conflict for freedom. These views and perceptions were incorporated into the new visitor center exhibits at Fort Stanwix and will continue to shape the interpretation at this site and the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site.

The Battle of Oriskany is indelibly linked to Fort Stanwix, now a national monument administered by the National Park Service, and the events that occurred there during August of 1777. One cannot speak about the battle without referring to Fort Stanwix and vice versa. Therefore it is only common sense that the two sites should be linked today. In 2008, the National Park Service and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation entered into a cooperative management agreement by which Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site (and the Steuben Memorial State Historic Site) would be managed and operated on a day-to-day basis by the NPS at Fort Stanwix National Monument. This partnership allows for visitors to have a seamless experience between the two sites. Interpretive staff from Fort Stanwix provides programs and orientation at Oriskany and can help visitors understand the events that took place at each site and their interconnectedness.

Deborah L. Conway, Superintendent  
Fort Stanwix National Monument

Charles W. Smythe, Ph.D.  
Ethnography Program Manager, Northeast Region



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Mohawk Valley Battlefield Project began in 1995 as an ethnohistorical and ethnographic study of the relationships between contemporary Iroquois groups and Fort Stanwix National Monument, a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), and Oriskany Battlefield, owned and operated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Native peoples, particularly members of the Iroquois (Six Nations) Confederacy (Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras), played important roles in the history of the Mohawk Valley and many of them continue to reside there. However, a majority of the descendants of these people no longer live in the region and are spread throughout much of New York, Ontario, and parts of Wisconsin and Oklahoma. Their diaspora occurred as a direct result of the events of the late eighteenth century in which groups of Iroquois and other Indians became involved on opposing sides of the American Revolution.

Fort Stanwix was built by the British in 1758 to protect the portage between Wood Creek and the Mohawk River. Linking the St. Lawrence and Mohawk Rivers, the Oneida Carry provided a water entry from Canada to central New York and thus a gateway to Albany via the Mohawk River. Compounding its strategic military significance, a nearby salt spring provided a valued economic resource. Both the Carry and the salt spring had been utilized by the Iroquois prior to European contact. The fort was the site of numerous councils with Indian nations. The most important of these resulted in the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix that set the western boundary between the British colonies and Indian country (Map 1). By the time of the American Revolution, the fort had fallen into ruins. At the urging of local Oneida Indians, colonial forces undertook major repairs and Colonel Peter Gansevoort took command of the post in 1777.

Mistakenly believing that revolutionary sentiments were localized in New England, the British developed a military plan to isolate the region. This entailed a three-pronged attack, with one army moving south from Canada via Lake Champlain and the Hudson Valley and another moving north from New York City, eventually joining the first at Albany. A third force was to ascend the St. Lawrence River, move south through Oneida Lake, the Oneida River, and Wood Creek and descend the Mohawk River. The British assumed that Loyalist inhabitants of the Mohawk Valley would join this force as it made its way to Albany. Ft. Stanwix, strategically located at the Oneida Carry, lay athwart this route.

In July 1777 the British forces, under the nominal command of Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger, laid siege to the fort. The bulk of his men were Iroquois warriors, primarily Senecas and Mohawks, but including Cayugas and Onondagas. Non-Iroquois Natives with St. Leger included Mississaugas and a group referred to as “Western Indians.” Militia from Tryon County, joined by Oneida scouts and warriors, marched to relieve the siege. Learning of the militia’s movement, the Indians at Ft. Stanwix moved to intercept it and set up an ambush along a wooded ravine near the Oneida village of Oriska. There, in what has been described as the bloodiest battle of the Revolution<sup>1</sup>, current and former residents of the Mohawk Valley fought hand-to-hand in a battle that had no obvious winner. The militia did not reach Ft. Stanwix but the siege was finally ended two weeks later when the Iroquois, disgusted with St. Leger’s weakness, returned to their homes, and St. Leger fled back to the St. Lawrence amid rumors of a massive force advancing under Benedict Arnold.

For Iroquois people, cultural orientation to these sites is not based upon their military or political significance in the history of North America, but instead upon violations of the Great Law which occurred there. The Great Law, given by Deganawidah, the Peacemaker, enjoined the Iroquois people from taking up weapons against each other. It provided the moral and spiritual underpinning of the Iroquois Confederacy as well as the protocols for its rituals and political activities. Breaking the Great Law, therefore, had major spiritual as well as political repercussions. At Oriskany Iroquois warriors engaged in hand-to-hand combat against each other.

Some of the wounds resulting from that conflict have yet to heal. The Confederacy was resurrected after the Revolution in Canada and the United States although the Oneidas were not included in the latter. In 1848 most of the Senecas in New York withdrew from the Confederacy with the establishment of a constitutional government (the Seneca Nation of Indians) at the Allegany and Cattaraugus Reservations, although Seneca titles continued and were held by the Tonawanda Band of Senecas. Most Oneidas removed during the nineteenth century to Wisconsin and Canada with only a small group remaining in the traditional homeland area. As more Oneidas returned to New York in the twentieth century differences between them and those residing in Green Bay were exacerbated by a major land claims case. Map 2 illustrates the Iroquois diaspora and the dramatic reduction in lands claimed or occupied by the Iroquois after the Revolution.

Phase I of the project documented participation by the Iroquois utilizing archival sources and ethnographic research within contemporary Iroquois communities in the





- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Six Nations Grand River                | 8. Onondaga Reservation              |
| 2. St. Regis/Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation | 9. Seneca – Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma |
| 3. Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory            | 10. Tonawanda Seneca Reservation     |
| 4. Oneida Nation of Wisconsin             | 11. Cattaraugus Seneca Reservation   |
| 5. Oneida of the Thames                   | 12. Allegany Seneca Reservation      |
| 6. Oneida Reservation                     | 13. Oil Springs Seneca Reservation   |
| 7. Tuscarora Reservation                  |                                      |

Map 2. Current Iroquois Reservations. (Vecsey & Starna 1988:9; Snow 1996:199; ESRI Data & Maps 1999)

U.S. and Canada. The field component was necessary in order to learn if there were oral histories or other information relevant to Iroquois participation in events in the Mohawk Valley in the mid-eighteenth century. Because the NPS seeks to manage its resources in a culturally informed manner, it was important to document continuing ties between Indian communities and specific park locations. Such information helps park managers identify sacred resources requiring special treatment, evaluate requests for access to park resources, and assess the potential impacts of projects on culturally significant resources.

The ethnographic research provided a way for Iroquois individuals and nations to share their ideas on management and planning issues and set up a mechanism for direct consultation between Iroquois representatives and NPS personnel.

Phase I research identified serious Iroquois concerns about the interpretation of the siege and battle presented in the film then shown at the Visitors Center at Ft. Stanwix National Monument, and archival research showed the film to be historically inaccurate as well as culturally insensitive. As a result of recommendations in the Phase I final report, Park Superintendent Gary Warshefski withdrew the film, an action that both pleased and surprised the Iroquois and made a significant contribution to good will between the park and Iroquois communities. The primary concern of Iroquois community consultants was the protection of burials of all battle participants, although we were unable to learn of any oral histories that might allow a precise location of the original burials or a major secondary reburial that took place in the nineteenth century.

The final report also included a recommendation for additional research into non-Iroquois participants in the battle and/or siege. Archival research had uncovered numerous references to warriors glossed as “Western Indians,” whose tribal affiliation(s) and geographic origins were not indicated, as well as to Mississaugas, an Algonquian-speaking people. It became apparent that the number of groups with ties to the Mohawk Valley sites was far greater than initially envisioned. Phase II was therefore designed to identify those non-Iroquois groups whose warriors were present and to locate the communities in which their descendants were likely to be living today.

Phase II was designed to document the participation of non-Iroquois warriors and had the same goals as Phase I. However, the lack of significant oral histories of the battle among contemporary Iroquois suggested that this would also be true among the descendants of non-Iroquois warriors whose numbers were far lower. As a result, plans for a major field component were reduced and emphasis placed on archival documentation. Personal contacts were carried out primarily through telephone, e-mail, and letters with tribal and national historians, cultural affairs specialists and political leaders in modern reserves and reservations of the Hurons, Ottawas, Potawatomies, Chippewas, and Mississaugas. The concerns expressed by these individuals mirrored those of the Iroquois.

## Terminology

A major difficulty in any project dealing the indigenous populations of the U.S. and Canada is finding appropriate and acceptable terminology. In the U.S. the terms “Indian” and “Native American” are used interchangeably, with the former increasingly preferred by descendants of aboriginal populations and reflected in formal names of tribal/national groups as well as politically activist groups (*e.g.* American Indian Movement). “Native American” is perceived as more politically correct and tends to be used in more formal contexts and by those with fewer face-to-face contacts with Indian people.

Unlike the relatively generic use of “Indian” in the U.S. to refer to anyone with cultural ties to indigenous groups, the term has a very specific legal definition in Canada where it refers to anyone defined as Indian under the Indian Act. The closest parallel in the U.S. would be membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe. The preferred Canadian terminology is Native or aboriginal for an individual and First Nation for a group. However, these terms have little meaning for people in the U.S.

This report primarily uses the term “Indian” because it reflects the language used in the documents and it was used by most of the people interviewed for this study. In this report, “Indian” is a generic category where specific tribal affiliations are unknown or unspecified, which is frequently the case in eighteenth century documents. Specific national affiliations are included whenever they appear in the source material.

The term “Iroquois” has multiple meanings. At its most broad, it refers to speakers of a language that linguists have grouped into the Iroquoian language family, and would include such tribes as the Huron, Cherokee, Susquehannock, etc., although these groups are most appropriately referred to as Iroquoian rather than Iroquois. The generally accepted use of “Iroquois” is to refer to members of the Haudenosaunee or League of the Iroquois, which is a political confederation initially comprised of five member nations (from east to west, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca) whose homelands stretched across almost the entire area that became the state of New York. In the early eighteenth century they were joined by members of other tribes fleeing from the south, including the Tuscarora which moved north from the Carolinas. This group was known collectively as the Five (later Six) Nations Confederacy. The Confederacy remained neutral during the conflict between Britain and her American colonies, thus freeing member nations to follow their own courses. The constituent

tribes of the Confederacy also did not take formal positions and thus individual Iroquois warriors were free to act as they saw fit. In general, Mohawks and Senecas tended to favor the British and Oneidas tended to favor the rebels.

The use of the term “Iroquois” in the Ohio country is problematic as the power and/or influence of the Confederacy in this region varied according to the conditions and the participants at a particular time and place. Some Iroquois, mostly Senecas and known in the Ohio Valley as Mingoes, acted independently of the Confederacy when it suited their purposes, but were also willing to use threats of Confederacy sanction when that was advantageous. In the same vein, the Confederacy claimed to speak for these Ohio “Iroquois” groups when it was beneficial for the League’s intentions. Both British and rebel forces participated in this pragmatic model of expedient, flexible relationships.

Because the terms “Confederacy” and “Six Nations” both refer to a political entity that was formally neutral, it would be inaccurate to refer to siege and battle participants as representing the Confederacy. Therefore, in this report “Iroquois” is used as a collective term referring to participants in the eighteenth century events as well as their descendants. This allows greater flexibility to consider the roles of individuals because this was the level on which decisions were made.

Indian names are problematic because the primary sources are rarely consistent in the way they are transcribed, even within the same document by a single author. Among different writers the variation is even greater. This reflects the native language of the writer (native French speakers will hear an Indian name somewhat differently than native English speakers will) as well as his knowledge of Indian languages. Names of chiefs and warriors are given in this report as they appear in the primary documents being cited. While this means there are numerous synonyms that may not be immediately apparent, it also represents the variation that appears within the primary record and facilitates comparison with other documents. Individual Iroquois who are well known by the English translations of their names, (*e.g.* Cornplanter, Red Jacket, etc.) will be introduced by their Indian names.

Similar difficulties are encountered when trying to identify the non-Indian participants in councils and battles. Those in rebellion preferred to call themselves “patriots,” with the obvious implication that opponents, particularly Tories, were unpatriotic. Those who wanted a reform rather than disruption of existing arrangements between the colonies and Britain, were more comfortable with the term Tory, but often

called themselves “Loyalists” and saw their own actions as patriotic in defense of King and country. Both sides considered themselves loyal and patriotic. Eighteenth century documents also distinguish groups defined as “Canadian” which consistently fight alongside the British but are conceptually distinguished from both them and Loyalists. This distinction seems to be based more upon geographical than political or ideological considerations, and may refer specifically to people living in Lower Canada (primarily the modern province of Quebec). The term “American” is often used as a synonym for “patriot” but is clearly inappropriate since at the time “America” referred to the entire continent, thereby encompassing all except mercenary groups. Only after the 1783 Treaty of Paris can one speak of Americans as a political category, *i.e.* citizens of the United States. Further complicating the picture are the thousands of troops whose participation in the American Revolution was based not on political ideology but upon mercenary service, such as the Hesse-Hannau Chasseurs present at Fort Stanwix in 1777.

Also motivated by ideals of patriotism and loyalty, tinged certainly with some mercenary concerns, were the Indians. The fact that Indians fought for their own agendas and ideals and not as the mere pawns of European or colonial interests needs to be stressed. The terms “patriot” and “loyalist” are not used because they could accurately be applied to nearly all participants. Additionally, as the winds of war blew one way or the other, Indian individuals redefined their own positions and identities, in part, because their primary concerns were with their own survival and that of their families rather than with ideologies. As the events in the Mohawk Valley demonstrate, divisions and alliances were fluid and reflected seasonal needs as well as perceived and actual threats.

In order to facilitate description of peoples and positions, the term “rebel” is used to denote those individuals of European or African descent who were active participants as militiamen, suppliers, spies, or providers of refuge for the same in the American Revolution. That they were in rebellion against the King, the acts of Parliament, and/or Britain would be agreed upon by most participants. The opponents of the rebels will be referred to as “British” since in the Mohawk Valley they fought under the British high command; field officers and troops, however, might be of other nationalities. Because they never defined themselves as subjects of King or colony, Indians are not included in either term. They fought on their own terms as allies, not subjects of either side. The extent to which this was recognized at the time by British and rebel leadership depended upon the strength or desperation of their respective positions.

Although the fort was briefly renamed Fort Schuyler by military personnel during the Revolution, Fort Stanwix is used to refer to the original as well as the reconstructed fort which was built on the site of the original and is operated by the NPS as a National Monument (Fig. 1). Exceptions to this occur only when original documents are quoted.

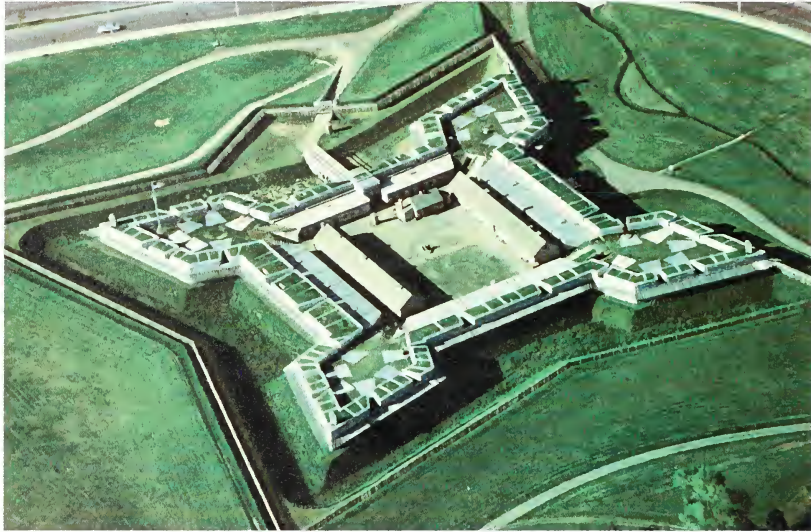


Fig. 1. The reconstructed Fort Stanwix. (Fort Stanwix National Monument)

Assuming that all Iroquois have at least some connection to this region, distinctions among contemporary factions, reserves, or reservations of Iroquois nations are not made in the ethnographic data. This decision is based on two considerations which emerged from the data collection process. First, from a purely academic perspective, there were no significant historical differences among members of a nation, regardless of where they currently reside. Differences within groups were neither greater nor less than those among groups. Second, from an ethical perspective, everyone we spoke with emphasized a need for healing both within and between nations. Reporting data by sub-divisions, *e.g.* New York Oneidas, Wisconsin Oneidas, Southwold Oneidas, Akwesasne Mohawks, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, serves no purpose and might be interpreted by some as exacerbating current differences.



## CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

### Field Research

In Phase I initial contacts with Indian governments were made by Mr. Gary Warshefski, Superintendent of Fort Stanwix National Monument, and followed up by the field researchers with letters and/or telephone calls (see Appendix 3 for list of communities). A copy of the Project Overview (Appendix 1) was sent to each person contacted by the Superintendent and was also given to all community consultants..

The first personal contacts by ethnographers with Iroquois peoples relied upon already established personal networks to identify individuals or groups who might have either a particular interest or specialized knowledge. Concurrently, permission was sought and received from governments where necessary. In several cases this was not required as the leadership responded to initial contacts by appointing individuals to aid in the research. Where additional permission was needed, formal presentations were made to governing bodies on the project, its methods and goals. This led, in most cases, to a broader discussion of issues of concern and requests for information about the battle. Because some background archival research had been completed prior to the initiation of fieldwork, we were in a position to accede to these requests, sometimes in the form of illustrated talks using slides and maps taken on our initial visit to Fort Stanwix and Oriskany.

As the work proceeded, it became increasingly clear that the most useful forums were those which brought together individuals with a deep interest in the fort and battleground. These were arranged by Iroquois individuals or governments through a variety of means, including word-of-mouth, invitations to presentations by the researchers at local historical associations and libraries, and government newsletters which described the project and invited people to share their feelings. One man even arranged for a half-hour presentation on the local radio station and a short presentation was made to a group of school children. These meetings identified people with particular interests for more intensive discussions and with whom data could later be checked by phone or letter. Random discussions with individuals in non-specific settings provided virtually no data. Although contacts were made with several hundred individuals, intensive work with about three dozen people yielded most of the relevant data.

Colleagues in Indian history and ethnohistory were consulted where clarifications were needed for published work and to identify additional sources. Descriptions of the research at the Annual Conference on Iroquois Research and the Lake Ontario Archives Conference brought us into contact with individuals whom we hoped would have additional information not included in publications. The latter conference allowed us to alert state and local archivists of the letter from Herkimer to Schuyler which is mentioned in German sources but has been missing since at least 1909. A request to an Internet bulletin board (Minerva-L) on women and the military for information about female participants in the battle of Oriskany and siege of Fort Stanwix yielded no additional data. Although Internet searches were unsuccessful in eliciting new information, they did put us in contact with individuals who were able to put data in broader contexts.

In Phase II, contacts with U.S. and Canadian communities were initiated by Mr. Craig Davis, then Acting Superintendent at Ft. Stanwix National Monument, who described the project and its goals in a letter to community heads (see Appendix 3 for a complete list of the communities contacted during Phases I and II). Following Human Subjects Review Board approval at SUNY Fredonia, project personnel followed this with their own letters to each community describing the intended research and including what was learned about the participation of each group during archival research on the project (Appendix 2). Two groups responded immediately and identified those individuals who would serve as contact people for the project. Phone calls to the remaining communities produced the same result. Contacts tended to be individuals involved in departments of education, cultural and historic preservation, and libraries and/or archives. At least one community is known to have published our initial letter in its newsletter and asked people with interest or information to contact the ethnographers. Most of our contacts were aware of their nation's participation in the American Revolution but had more specific information only on frontier campaigns within the Ohio Valley. Some had suspected the participation of their ancestors and were glad to receive confirmation. None of those contacted had any knowledge of ancestral presence or participation in events in the Mohawk Valley.

We asked the initial contacts in each community to identify those who might have a special knowledge of or interest in this period. All references to additional community members were followed up by phone or e-mail but produced no new information although the discussions were usually wide-ranging and produced insights into the



contemporary communities and their concerns. Approximately fifty individuals were consulted in the U.S. and Canada.

In Phase II each community was surprised by the depth of National Park Service interest and concern but the flow of information was primarily from the researchers to the communities. Many of those contacted requested references to data sources or copies of transcripts of actual documents. Because the archival research had mostly been completed prior to the field research, it was possible to comply with all requests. These interactions will contribute to the establishment and/or maintenance of good relations between Indian communities and the NPS in the mid-west even though they produced no additional historical data.

### **Difficulties Encountered**

The following section relates primarily to Phase I research. The release forms proved to be highly intimidating as expected. Social relationships are important in fieldwork and the interjection of the forms moved informal, useful, personal discussions into bureaucratic encounters which stultified further discussion. This reticence seemed related to a broader distrust of governments in general, rather than the project or its personnel. As a result of this common theme, we determined to use no names, either personal or code, in reporting our findings. Individuals are identified by nation, age, sex, or profession only if that information is relevant to the data. Overall, the data showed no differences based on these categories. Where there is any chance that an individual might be identified, we have omitted even this information. No direct quotes appear in the report (except for the title) and only in fieldnotes are people associated by name with the information they provided. Restrictions on data distribution were fully explained and any information which was identified as sensitive is so indicated in the report.

Another major impediment to the research was factionalism. Many of the reserves and reservations visited were in the midst of electoral campaigns or were suffering from serious internal divisions. A number of chiefs died during the course of the fieldwork and successors were often not condoled in time for us to contact them. It is important to note that, with one exception, there were no attempts by either individuals or governments to manipulate the data or the researchers. Despite trying times, people were unfailingly polite, eager to help, and extremely generous with their time. During these times we hesitated and, in several cases, refused to intrude. This was also the reason no paid local assistants were used. Because of lack of familiarity with the local political

landscape, the choice of assistants who might be closely identified with a particular political group or issue could have inadvertently closed off access to others. We decided that sensitive issues were best handled by the ethnographers.

No visit was made to the Seneca-Cayugas of Oklahoma. This was due in part to financial and temporal limitations imposed by the necessity of multiple visits to one community. Furthermore, these Iroquois were among the first to move into the Ohio country in the mid-18th century and by the time of the Revolution the Confederacy would have had little, if any, control over them. By 1819 most were on a reservation near Sandusky, Ohio where they were subsequently joined by some Oneidas and Mohawks. In 1832 they removed to Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup> All contacts with representatives of the “western Indian” nations were also made by phone, mail, and e-mail. This too reflected financial constraints but conversations with individuals in those groups also demonstrated that it was unlikely that personal visits would elicit more information than that already obtained. Genealogical research was limited by the extremely time-consuming nature of this type of research and the need for access to tribal enrollment records, which are not available to outsiders. Census records proved unreliable as it is difficult to track people moving among several reservations and because names are frequently recorded in Iroquois languages or English and correlations are difficult. The descendants of Chief Cornplanter, who number in the hundreds, allowed access to their records. Because they are all also related to Governor Blacksnake and Red Jacket who were present at Oriskany, it was possible to identify many of these as well. Genealogical data on the descendants of Captain John Deserontyon was provided by Shelly Price-Jones, and Professor Donald Smith provided data he had collected confirming the intermarriages between the Herkimers and the Brants in Canada. Consultation with other private genealogists confirmed that for Oneidas, Mohawks, and Senecas, it is likely that many, if not most, are descendants of participants in the battle of Oriskany or the treaty making at Fort Stanwix. Lack of access to enrollment records makes this impossible to prove. Furthermore, because band enrollment in Canada was determined patrilineally until 1985 by fiat of the Canadian government, and matrilineally by the Iroquois people of the U.S., there will be those who are lineal descendants of Iroquois participants but have no formal Iroquois affiliation now.

Another genealogical twist is provided by political interpretation of the actions of historical figures. Among many Iroquois, Joseph Brant and Captain John Deserontyon

are controversial, especially for their roles in selling traditional lands in the Mohawk Valley. Red Jacket and Cornplanter are sometimes perceived in a similar light. There are contemporary people whom we strongly believe to be their descendants but who deny any connection. This wish has been honored in the same way that sensitive data is identified. Furthermore, field data demonstrated clearly that, for contemporary Iroquois, attachment to these sites is *not* based primarily on having relatives who may have fought and died there.

An unexpected, but welcome, addition to the research personnel was a native German woman, raised in the Palatine district (from which many of the eighteenth century residents of Tryon County also originated) and trained as a librarian and historian. The discovery of a German language battle report necessitated hiring her as a translator.

## **Archival Research**

The ethnohistory of the events which culminated in the Battle of Oriskany and the battle itself is based exclusively upon primary sources and fully cited for verification. Wherever possible, original documents were used as written and available on microfilm. Temporal constraints made it impossible to always locate the original document, and in some cases required reliance on “fair copy,” a contemporary hand-written copy, often made to accompany another letter or document. This was the eighteenth century version of a xerox, but unlike a xerox, may contain inaccuracies of spelling and/or content due to transcription error. It is likely that some of these have found their way into this report. We, too, have struggled with interpreting eighteenth century script and the transcriptions are included as we have made them.

The most useful manuscript collections were WO/28 (Records of the War Office), MG 19 (Claus Papers; Draper Manuscripts; Records of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs), MG 21 (Haldimand Papers), and RG 10 (Indian Affairs Records). Although several historians and military archivists suggested that RG 8 (British Military and Naval Records) should contain useful data, a review of the Finding Aid indicated nothing of significance for the project. A search of the typed card catalogue made when the original documents were filmed confirmed the absence of relevant materials. There are no maps of the St. Leger campaign in any primary sources. This is not surprising as the Oriskany battle was an unplanned ambush rather than part of a strategic effort. Nevertheless we had hoped to find at least a sketch of the encounter in one of the reports.

Other microfilmed sources include the Papers of the Continental Congress, Journals of the Continental Congress, and the Draper Manuscripts, series F, S, and U. An invaluable source which contains many items listed above is the microfilm series *Iroquois Indians: A Documentary History* compiled and edited by Francis Jennings, William Fenton, and Mary Druke.

Published collections of primary documents which were utilized included: the Public Papers of George Clinton, Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York, Documents of the American Revolution, the William Johnson Papers, the Court Martial of General Philip Schuyler, The Writings of George Washington (Sparks, ed.), the Indian Affairs Papers, (Penrose, ed.), the Committee of Safety Papers (Penrose, ed.), and the Journals of Samuel Kirkland (Pilkington, ed.). The latter three are edited volumes, and although it was possible to supplement Pilkington with Dr. Christine Patrick's dissertation, the originals in the Hamilton College library have not been reviewed. This is also true for the Penrose volumes, although many of the papers included therein were located either in Jennings *et al.* or other archival sources. Documents in the Gates Papers, the American Antiquarian Society Letters, American Archives, 4th and 5th series (Force, ed.), and the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society have been accessed through typescripts in the files of Ft. Stanwix National Monument. They are cited as FOST (Fort Stanwix National Monument) and their original source identified. Several copies of the same document occasionally exist in typescript form, recorded under different numbers and often differing in transcription. In some cases, one version of the document has been given in modern English usage while the other retains eighteenth century spelling.

Primary accounts by participants in either the siege or battle tend to be by military officers whose primary motivation appears to be justification for their own activities. These include the reports by General Burgoyne, Colonel St. Leger, Col. Marinus Willett, Daniel Claus, letters of Brunswick and Hessian Officers, and the Orderly Book of Sir John Johnson. There is also a journal by William Colbreath or Colbreth, which may also be a "fair copy" or an edited recopy by the man himself since it includes some oddities (such as descriptions of events at Fort Stanwix that occurred before he was present). The advantage of Colbreath's report is that he had no particular axe to grind although he also was not privy to all the information available to the commanders. Comparison of the published copy of the journal with the original by Dr. Karim Tiro indicated that the printed version is both accurate and complete.

Other primary accounts by non-participants help document when information arrived at particular sites and the interpretations made of that data. These also provide insight into the concerns of contemporary people not directly involved. These include: the court martial of General Philip Schuyler, the Bronck Family Papers, the journals of Joseph Bloomfield, Henry Dearborn, Col. Adam Gordon, James Thacher, Ebenezer Elmer, the journal and orderly books of Lieut. James Hadden, the memoirs of Maj. Gen. William Heath, and the narrative of Mary Jemison (Seaver, ed.). Major John Norton, although present at neither the battle nor the siege, was later a close confidant of Joseph Brant at the Six Nations Reserve in Canada. Brant himself left no description of the battle and it is reasonable to assume that Norton's description is his recollection of Brant's reports. Professor Carl Benn, who has compared the writings of Brant and Norton, thinks that the account of the battle by Norton is fundamentally Brant's text and may be from his lost history of the Six Nations since its prose style differs from parts of the journal known to have been written by Norton. Alternatively, Norton could be presenting a revised version of Brant's text or Brant's oral recollection. In either case, the report in Norton is a "heavily – if not exclusively – Brant focused description of the battle."<sup>3</sup>

Primary sources unavailable elsewhere are also quoted extensively, and in some cases given in their entirety, in books by William Stone, his son (also William Stone, but who does not append "Junior" to his name), William Campbell, and Jephtha Simms. More than two dozen accounts of the battle and siege by participants are included in these books but their accuracy cannot be verified. All four men made great efforts to collect reports and recollections by survivors or their relatives. In many cases, however, these were the reminiscences of old men whose memories may well have been colored by subsequent events and reflections. These tend to be stories of individual experiences rather than strategic or tactical analyses and are useful in portraying the horror of the battle. Reading them in conjunction with official reports by military leaders decrying the "pusillanimous spirit" of the Mohawk Valley militias provides insight into their actions which, in hindsight, often makes the generals' interpretations seem harsh or unrealistic. None of these men were trained historians, but were motivated by a deep interest in their region, and, no doubt, by a desire to call attention to it by emphasizing the importance of the battle of Oriskany. We have found several errors in Stone, often cited as a major source by subsequent authors, which show his lack of expertise in dealing with primary

documents. In several cases he has conflated letters and confused dates. These appear to be honest mistakes. Where primary documents cited by these authors are used, they are cited to the appropriate author. It is important to note that these books are those most often used by subsequent writers so that any inaccuracies tended to be continued. It was for this reason that we worked solely from primary sources. Another important primary source that parallels those of both Stones and Simms is Draper's Frontier Papers (Draper 11U) which contains oral reports of Oneidas then living in Green Bay, Wisconsin, whose relatives fought at Oriskany. These have the same strengths and weaknesses as noted for the reports of rebel participants noted above.

As the Phase I report was in final draft stage, documents never before available to scholars were acquired by the Library and Archives Canada. These documents cover the period from 1762 to 1818 and are concerned primarily with British Indian Affairs. Several of these (we were only able to review the original sale catalogue) are clearly about the Oriskany battle and the siege of Fort Stanwix. It is likely that documents relating to the boundary treaty are also present in this collection.

Using data from Phase I that included references to Mississaugas and "western Indians" and Paul Lawrence Stevens's monumental four volume dissertation, *His Majesty's "Savage" Allies: British Policy and the Northern Indians During the Revolutionary War: The Carleton Years, 1774-1778*, as starting points, archival research in Phase II was conducted at the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa. Finding Aids for manuscript and record groups were consulted in order to identify documents which related to Indian policy, Indian councils, and military actions that included Indian/Native warriors in the mid to late eighteenth century. Appropriate documents were located in microfilm form, xeroxed, and transcribed. The most important of these are provided in Appendix 4. These transcripts represent our best reading of the manuscripts and may contain inaccuracies because of the illegibility of some sections and the difficulties encountered in interpreting handwriting. The fact that both ethnographers worked on the documents together increases the accuracy of the transcriptions. The David Library of the American Revolution in Washington Crossing, PA contains microfilms of a number of manuscript collections that had already been examined in Canada as well as secondary sources that also shed light on the participation of a number of non-Indian groups.

Research at the Archives of Ontario in Toronto focused on family records cited by Stevens and on those individuals known to be Indian traders but yielded no useful data.

The Toronto Reference Library had a copy of the petition by the sons of Wabakinine for a pension for his family based upon his services with the British forces during the Revolution. It also contained secondary sources of which we were previously unaware that helped place events and locations in a clearer geographic context. This was especially important in understanding how the St. Leger expedition was provisioned on the way to and from Fort Stanwix but did not allow identification of the place(s) where the Mississaugas joined the march. This knowledge would have been important in helping to identify the location of eighteenth century Mississauga settlements that in turn could aid in the identification of the contemporary communities of their descendants. Considerable effort was placed in tracing the post-Revolution settlements of the Mississaugas and petitions for military pensions in the hope that these records would mention participation in particular battles.

The most useful documents for this phase were “Council held at Detroit June 17th By Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton Esq – Superinten etc etc with His Majesty’s Western Indian Allies”<sup>4</sup> and “Return of Parties of Indians sent from Detroit.”<sup>5</sup> From these records it is possible to document the recruitment process for the “western Indians” and identify the individual major chiefs and warriors present at the council who subsequently joined the St. Leger campaign. Although reports suggest there were nearly twice as many Mississaugas than “western Indians” in the St. Leger expedition, the archival records are remarkably silent in this regard. The Mississaugas were recruited by Daniel Claus, son-in-law of the late Sir William Johnson, who was appointed by Lord George Germain to lead the Indians accompanying St. Leger. They joined the expedition somewhere between Lachine and Buck (Carleton) Island. We have provided several possible explanations for this dearth of data.

In the spring of 2001, Patricia Kennedy of the Economic and Governance Archives section, Canadian Archives Branch, Library and Archives Canada, e-mailed us about a large collection of Americana donated to Yale University by Richard Mellon. This included papers of Guy Johnson who succeeded his uncle, Sir William Johnson, as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department; among these was a journal kept by John Butler, interpreter and agent of the Indian Department, who was present at both the siege and battle. This collection was reviewed when it was made available at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and transcriptions were made of the Butler diary and all of the relevant Johnson papers. A letter, apparently



unsent, or perhaps a draft, contains Guy Johnson's description of the siege of Ft. Stanwix and the Battle of Oriskany. As Guy was in New York City during this time, his information probably came from one (or possibly both) of two men who were present at the siege and the battle, his cousin, Sir John Johnson, or Daniel Claus, his brother-in-law. According to Guy Johnson, the shot that felled General Herkimer was fired by an Indian warrior. Although the documents at Beinecke did not contain any information about the "western Indians" and the Mississaugas, the letter from Guy Johnson was important to the overall project.

An initial chronology was developed based primarily on Barbara Graymont's *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* and one compiled and provided by Joseph Robertaccio, who was also very helpful in providing his insight into the military formations during the battle. Because it was not possible to read the original sources in chronological order, the existence of a timeline for major events was critical in organizing and interpreting the many letters and reports. Information from these documents was then used to expand the chronology.



## CHAPTER THREE: THE ETHNOHISTORY OF THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY

### THE IROQUOIS AND OTHERS IN NEW YORK

#### The Iroquois

Long before the advent of Europeans in the area, the Mohawk Valley was the domain of the Iroquois, a horticultural people whose women produced maize, beans, and squash supplemented by the products of the hunt provided by men. Organized into clans and lineages, they reckoned descent matrilineally. Revenge-based raiding among the various Iroquoian speaking tribes came to an end with the formation of the League of the Iroquois after Deganawidah, the Peacemaker, and his helper Hiawatha convinced the different groups to accept the Good Tidings that substituted compensation for killing. Because it was the women who first agreed to the new order, the fifty hereditary chieftainships were passed through the female line. Although women could not be chiefs, they, and only they, were able to name chiefs and remove them from office if they did not act in the best interests of those they represented. Unlike contemporary European societies, Iroquois women had high status and a great deal of political influence.

The Iroquois Confederacy, also known as the Five Nations, included (from east to west) the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. The Onondagas were the Keepers of the Confederacy Council Fire, whose light symbolized the continuity of the confederacy. In the second decade of the eighteenth century, the Tuscaroras, who also spoke an Iroquoian language, moved north from the Carolinas and were taken into the confederacy under the protection of the Oneidas and henceforth the League was known as the Six Nations. Unlike the other nations, however, the Tuscaroras had no chiefs and their interests were represented by the Oneidas. Remnants of other groups also moved into Iroquois territory but did not become formal members of the Confederacy.

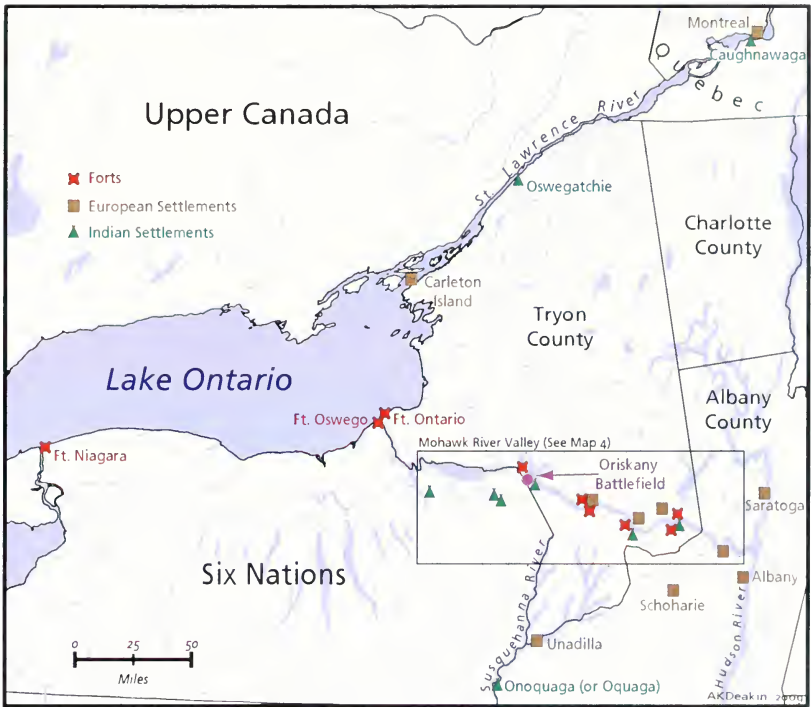
It was the Mohawks, as the easternmost nation, who first felt the impact of European invasion in the form of the three horsemen of the Indian apocalypse – war, disease, and settlement.<sup>6</sup> A brief examination of population figures demonstrates the impact of the latter. More than a century after initial contact, William Johnson estimated the population of the Mohawks as 640 in 1768, 420 in 1770, and 406 in 1774.<sup>7</sup> In the

Mohawk homeland, now known to European settlers as Tryon and Albany Counties, the white population in 1775 stood at 42,000.<sup>8</sup> Map 3 shows the progression of European settlement up the Mohawk River.

The Senecas, Keepers of the Western Door of the Confederacy, were most numerous and less affected by Euro-American society than the more eastern nations. The result of this was that the interests and agendas of the Iroquois nations often diverged as the result of different pressures. The Mohawks and the Oneidas were most affected by Protestant missionaries who rarely ventured beyond the seaboard.<sup>9</sup> French Roman Catholics were far more willing to go to distant villages to seek converts but by the mid-eighteenth century, most Catholic Iroquois had gone north of the St. Lawrence to villages such as Caughnawaga (Kahnawake). The Mohawks had greater exposure to Anglican missionaries who were resident in or near their major villages of Canajoharie (the “upper castle”) and Tiononderoge (the “lower castle,” also known as Fort Hunter after the nearby fort built by the British in 1712). The Oneidas had as their minister Samuel Kirkland, a Presbyterian whose initial attempt to evangelize the Senecas ended in failure. The influence of religious differences between the Mohawks and Oneidas may partially explain the different courses most tribal members took during the Revolution.

No one in Iroquois society could force another to take any particular line of action; individual men could chose to take (or not) the warpath as they saw fit. For Europeans these aspects of Iroquois culture were perceived as both incomprehensible and as a sign of weakness. Until the end of the Revolution, however, they provided a source of strength for Iroquois nations. The factionalism that divided tribes and villages at the same time provided different potential alliances that could be activated when useful and therefore provided multiple options in times of crisis.<sup>10</sup> Those who were able and willing to recognize and appreciate cultural differences could use that knowledge to further their political agendas whether they were Iroquois, European or American.

The British saw the Iroquois Confederacy as a natural ally because of the long-term antipathy between the Iroquois and the French and the large number of warriors that the Confederacy could field should its interests parallel those of Britain. After the defeat of the French in 1763, the British need for Iroquois support was less pressing and the Iroquois found themselves subjected to increasing inroads into their traditional territories. Attempts to relieve the disputes along the Indian/white frontier and open lands to colonial settlement resulted in the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix which created a



Map 3. European settlements in the Mohawk River Valley circa 1775. See Map 4 for a detailed map of the Mohawk River Valley. (Sauthier 1776; Skaggs & Nelson 2001; A Map of the Lands of the Five Indian Nations, Library of Congress Map No. 156; Map of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, & New York by Captain A. Mitchell 1766; Map of the County of Albany, Tryon & Part of Charlotte by I. Vrooman (1779), New York Historical Society Map No. 7562-A; ESRI Data & Maps 1999)

boundary line west of which white settlements were not permitted (see Map 1). The location of the boundary was open to some dispute, particularly the area around the portage from Wood Creek to the Mohawk River. The Iroquois had understood that this place, which they knew as the Carrying Place, was west of the boundary in Indian territory, but the English placed it to the east. Also under dispute was the southern part of the line, however, the disagreement here was between the Iroquois and the Shawnees. In agreeing to the southern demarcation, the Iroquois ceded traditional Shawnee territory. It was to the British advantage to agree to Iroquois claims to hegemony over other tribes

because those lands could then be ceded to the British with no impact on Iroquois territory. This worked to the advantage of both groups in the east but created problems between the Iroquois and more western Indian nations. Furthermore, French and Spanish interests operating in New Orleans and around the western posts could utilize these divisions among the Indians in their own intrigues.

### **Sir William Johnson**

William Johnson, arguably the most important non-Iroquois in central New York through the middle of the eighteenth century, was dead before the Revolution began but his specter reigned over it nonetheless. Johnson was born in Ireland, the son of a family that had Anglicized its name from MacShane to Johnson.<sup>11</sup> Although many of the Johnsons remained Catholic, others, such as Peter Warren, the uncle of William Johnson, and Johnson himself, were at least nominal Anglicans. Because of the restrictions against non-Anglicans, conversion was a major prerequisite for social advancement and economic success. Johnson's personal religious beliefs, if he had any, remain hidden. His sexual exploits, however, would have been anathema to both Catholic and Protestant clergy. While the founding fathers of the leading provincial families were all self-made men, Johnson took a somewhat different route to success than the DeLanceys or Livingstons who are described below.

O'Toole describes Johnson as “amphibious” as a result of growing up in an environment that was “one of hidden layers and quiet undercurrents” and claims he was thereby ideally suited to thrive on the frontiers of America.<sup>12</sup> Arriving in New York to manage his uncle's property south of the Mohawk River, he soon began to acquire his own lands to the north of it. The alliances he forged with local peoples were not through marital ties to leading colonial families (the route taken by Peter Warren) but sexual connections with leading Mohawk families. Although this may not have been the “purposeful imitation” suggested by Shannon, Johnson no doubt realized that Mohawk women were politically important.<sup>13</sup> His first known Mohawk child was born in 1742 to Elizabeth Brant, the daughter of the Wolf Clan sachem. A second son was born to them in 1744 and another in 1745. In each of the first two years he also produced children with Catherine Weissenberg, a runaway Palatine German servant. Another son was born to Brant and a Mohawk woman who may have been Elizabeth Brant's younger sister Margaret. This son, William (Tagawirunta) was killed at the Battle of Oriskany.<sup>14</sup> Prior to the death of Catherine Weissenberg in 1759, Johnson had begun a relationship with

Molly Brant, whose stepfather was a sachem of the Turtle clan.<sup>15</sup> Molly's brother Thayendanegea, better known to English speakers as Joseph Brant, was mentored by Johnson and sent to Eleazar Wheelock's Indian school where a fellow pupil was Samuel Kirkland who would become the missionary to the Oneidas. Thayendanegea would be among the leaders of the Indians at Oriskany and probably the most feared warrior throughout the Mohawk Valley. Johnson spoke Mohawk, sometimes dressed as one, and participated in Iroquois ceremonies.

Because of his ties to the Mohawks and his clever manipulation of provincial governors, Johnson was appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern District in 1756. In November of the same year he was named the first Baronet of New York in recognition of his military role at the Battle of Lake George. Henceforth he would be known as Sir William to English speakers. To the Mohawks he remained Warraghiyagey, "a man who undertakes great things," the name given him at his adoption in the mid 1740s.<sup>16</sup> The Johnson – Mohawk connection was mutually beneficial. Greatly reduced in numbers as a result of disease and colonization, Johnson's courting of them was used by the Mohawks to enhance their status within the confederacy while Johnson used the support of the Mohawks to convince officials that he was the sole route to bringing the confederacy into alliance with England.

The 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which set the boundaries of Indian country on the western frontier, represented the "largest assembly ever gathered in colonial North America." In this treaty the Six Nations ceded 2.5 million acres of the Ohio Valley, land primarily occupied by Shawnees, Delawares, and Mingoes (Ohio Iroquois). Johnson deviated from his instructions in extending the boundary south to the Cherokee River, thereby including lands already ceded by the Cherokees, and north past the Oneida Carry so that it was no longer within Iroquois territory, a line hotly contested by the Oneidas.<sup>17</sup> The ultimate success of the treaty would depend upon the ability of Johnson and the Iroquois to maintain the façades of their power. For Johnson this meant prohibiting colonial settlement west of the line and for the Iroquois containing Indian attacks on colonists. In the words of Jon Parmenter

To argue that the Iroquois Confederacy did not exert effective control over their Ohio migrants attributes statist political concepts to the Confederacy that it did not possess. What the Iroquois leadership could and did do was to remain in contact with their migrant population, creating a nexus of

communications and a network for intelligence gathering which the confederacy nations wielded as a means of retaining a prominent position for themselves in the diplomacy of northeastern north [sic] America from 1754 to 1794.<sup>18</sup>

The Iroquois and Johnson knew this; most colonists and colonial officials did not.<sup>19</sup>

In 1774 war broke out in the Ohio Valley because of assaults by Virginians on the Mingoes and Shawnees. The Ohio Indians requested aid from the Six Nations (they too knew how to use allegations of Confederacy hegemony to their benefit!) and especially the Seneca warriors who were their immediate Confederacy neighbors and most loosely connected to the British. Johnson called a council at Johnson Hall of five hundred Iroquois chiefs and he and Seneca chief Serihowane both berated each other for their inability to control their people.<sup>20</sup> Within hours of the council meeting Johnson was dead. "In hindsight, the timing of Johnson's death was exquisite, for the world that had made him was on the verge of collapse in 1774."<sup>21</sup> His oldest white son, Sir John Johnson, and his nephew, Guy Johnson, were the most apparent heirs to his authority and position from the perspective of white leaders though neither of them came close to him in either ability or charisma. Only Thayendanegea approached him in those respects.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Provincial Elite: The DeLanceys and the Livingstons**

New York had long been under the control of manorial lords whose primary goals were maintaining their political, economic, and social dominance. Whether they allied with colonial governors as the "court Party" or against them as the "country party," their allegiance was determined by self-interest as demonstrated by their inconsistent and often contradictory political ideologies. As Philip Livingston noted "we change Sides as Serves our Interest best, not ye Countries."<sup>23</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, the factions were primarily associated with two major families, the Livingstons and the DeLanceys.<sup>24</sup>

The DeLanceys were originally French Huguenots who fled to America in 1686, becoming naturalized in 1715. Their politics were generally Tory although their attitude toward trade was more like that of the Whigs and their religion was Anglican. Both of these would eventually lead them to repudiate the rebellion and return to England. Stephen DeLancey was the brother-in-law of Admiral Peter Warren, the uncle and mentor of William Johnson, thus potentially providing Johnson with his own entrée into the provincial elite. The DeLanceys, however, became opponents of the royal governor,

George Clinton, who named Johnson Indian Agent and asked him to recruit Iroquois warriors to aid the British in King George's War. Thus Johnson and his uncle were on opposite sides of the colonial divide.

Robert Livingston, the son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister, migrated first to the Netherlands, then to Boston, and finally to New York where he married the widow Alida Schuyler Van Rensselaer, thus providing him with ties to two of the province's most powerful families. Originally granted a patent for 2600 acres (the lordship and manor of Livingston), he acquired an additional patent for 160,000 acres in 1715 in exchange for debt forgiveness for royal governor Robert Hunter who owed him for expenses Livingston incurred in provisioning over two thousand Palatine Germans in New York.<sup>25</sup> Violating standard procedure, Philip Livingston purchased eight thousand acres from three drunken Mohawks in 1730, property that included the "upper castle" of Canajoharie and its surrounding farmland and provided a continuing cause of Mohawk discontent.<sup>26</sup> William Johnson insisted that the patent was illegal, eventually forcing Livingston's heirs to sell their shares to George Klock. As a result the Livingstons became the implacable foes of Johnson.<sup>27</sup> Johnson reciprocated their feelings. As Indian Agent he came to hold the Albany traders, including the Livingstons, in contempt and purchased his supplies from merchants in New York City instead.<sup>28</sup> From the Mohawks' perspective Klock was not an improvement on the Livingstons and remained a constant annoyance. He was not only despised by most of the Mohawks but also alienated members of his family, church, and neighborhood.<sup>29</sup>

The Livingstons were as conservative as the DeLanceys but were religious dissenters with Whiggish sympathies which would lead them toward alliance with the rebels, not because they shared democratic revolutionary ideals but because they feared the leveling process that would occur if the revolution were successful. Only by wresting leadership from the radical elements of the Sons of Liberty could they be assured of control and be able to maintain their authority.

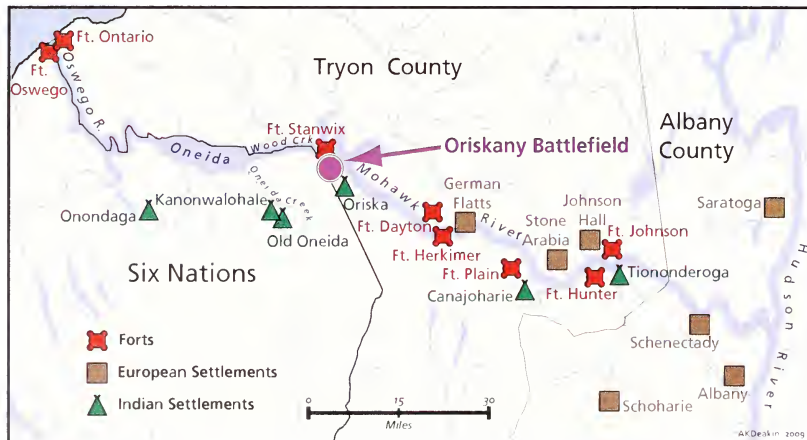
## **The Others**

Increasing migration to New York from Europe meant that the majority of the people who lived in the Mohawk Valley were neither Iroquois nor elite. New York was unique among the colonies for the great diversity of its population in terms of ethnicity and religion and probably had the largest percentage of pro-British colonists. New York's diversity also had military ramifications.



More straggling in its pattern of settlement than Virginia, and with much less of the sense of community that makes men fight for one another, New York depended for protection on its diplomatic and commercial connection with the Iroquo Confederation rather than on an effective militia; in time of trouble, it had to call for help.<sup>30</sup>

German immigrants began arriving in 1712 from the Palatine region and another wave came eight years later. Moving west they followed the Mohawk River into the traditional territory of the Mohawks, establishing settlements along the river at Stone Arabia and German Flatts (Map 4). By mid-century nearly 4500 Europeans were living in the Mohawk homeland.<sup>31</sup> Many of them came as a result of the failed scheme to develop the production of naval stores in New York. Livingston's huge patent was the result of his loans to Governor Hunter for support of the Palatine Germans. Relations between the Palatines and the Oneidas developed as an outgrowth of long-standing personal, religious, and economic ties. As Preston noted, relations between colonists and Indians in New York were quite different from those between the same groups in Pennsylvania and colonists and Iroquois coexisted relatively peacefully into the 1770s, seeing each other as potential allies rather than enemies.<sup>32</sup> Of course there were individual exceptions



Map 4. Detailed map of the Mohawk River Valley circa 1775. See Map 3 for an overview of the area. (Sauthier 1776; Skaggs & Nelson 2001; A Map of the Lands of the Five Indian Nations, Library of Congress Map No. 156; Map of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, & New York by Captain Holland (1768), Library of Congress Map No. ar103900; A Map of the County of Albany, Tryon & Part of Charlotte by I. Vrooman (1779), New York Historical Society Map No. 7562-A; ESRI Data & Maps 1999)



to this such as George Klock, but even such partisans as Nicholas Herkimer and Thayendanegea were able to meet together at Unadilla and remind each other that they had been peaceable neighbors.

Between 1760 and 1775 between 25,000 and 40,000 Scots immigrated to America and nearly two-thirds of these were from the Highlands. Sir William viewed them as industrious tenants and welcomed them to settle on his lands along the Mohawk River. Many had fought in America during the French and Indian War and settled on lands they had become familiar with. This was true of veterans from Fraser's 78th Highland Regiment who settled on Johnson's lands. When hostilities broke out in 1775, "Mohawks who had lost their lands, and Highlanders who had settled and then lost Mohawk lands, made common cause against Americans who seized and settled those lands." Not only Scots, but also Palatine Germans were among those who escaped with Sir John Johnson and the Highlanders through the Adirondacks to St. Regis and Canada. Royal Highland emigrants joined the 84th Highland Regiment raised by Allan McLean in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Québec and fought at Oriskany.<sup>33</sup>

Johnson also settled immigrants from England and Ireland as well as German Palatines on his Warrenbush lands. Not all of the settlers were white; among them were a handful of free blacks known as the Willegee Negroes.<sup>34</sup> Archival research for this project was able to document the participation of a number of free African-Americans who were as likely to be supporters of the British as they were of the rebels. Neither race nor ethnicity was a good predictor of allegiance during the Revolution.

## THE ROAD TO ORISKANY

The road to the Oriskany battlefield began decades before the actual event and is deeply enmeshed with Iroquois, European, and colonial activities throughout much of northeastern North America and the Great Lakes region. This report concentrates on reconstructing the period from 1776 through the spring of 1778 in the Mohawk River Valley as it is involved in a complex web of personal, regional, and political agendas. It should be noted, however, that a complete understanding of the importance of the battle and of Fort Stanwix can best be understood in an even broader context in which the forts in the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys and the Great Lakes are included, an area encompassing much of central and eastern New York, parts of New England, southern Ontario and Quebec, northeastern Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley (see Maps 3 and 4).

By the beginning of January 1777, General Philip Schuyler was aware that Fort Stanwix was likely to be attacked in the spring, having received a warning from the Tuscaroras via Samuel Kirkland that John Butler had sent two Senecas and a Mohawk to scout the area about the fort in preparation for a spring assault. As reported by Kirkland, the attack would be primarily by Indians under Seneca leadership.<sup>35</sup> At this time Kirkland was acting as both chaplain at Fort Stanwix and as missionary to the Oneidas. Despite his residence at Fort Stanwix, Kirkland remained in close contact with the Oneidas and took them the news of Washington's victory at Trenton. His activities were not restricted to his long-time Oneida friends and he also traveled to Onondaga to inform the Indians there of the rebel triumph. Kirkland reported to the Six Nations that France would soon be involved in war with Britain which would make her the ally of the rebels. Countering the British strong card of plentiful trade goods and presents for the Indians, Kirkland noted that French warships would open American coasts to trade thereby increasing the supply of goods, which, by implication, would be available to the rebels' Indian allies. He noted that the rebels were satisfied with the neutrality exhibited thus far by the Six Nations and encouraged them to remain so as they had nothing to gain and much to lose by a shift in position. Saluting the strength of Iroquois warriors, he pointed to rebel power, stating: "Tho' your Assistance would be powerful yet we shall never ask it, first because we do not wish to involve you in a War, and secondly because we are capable of defending ourselves against our Enemies."<sup>36</sup>

While Kirkland was talking to the Six Nations, long time Indian agent John Butler was at Niagara, reportedly offering Howe's hatchet to the Indians there and noting that only one fort, Fort Stanwix, remained between the British army and Albany. The Indians responded by noting that if this was true, the King had no need of their aid. Oneidas were present at Niagara, and one of the reasons Kirkland went to their castle was to discover what Butler had said. Kirkland was using the Oneidas, in this instance at least, as spies, but the Oneidas were acting out of their own interests, waiting to see what response the Mohawks would make. Their skepticism about Kirkland is indicated by the fact that they wanted to see for themselves the French troops and ships which he reported.<sup>37</sup> Six Oneidas, including a chief warrior, traveled to Boston and expressed their pleasure at French support of the rebel cause. That Kirkland was reporting directly to George Washington is confirmed by Washington's letter to John Hancock stating that Kirkland and the Oneidas, having just been at Boston, would arrive at his Morristown, New Jersey

headquarters that week. This is the first evidence of contact between Washington and the Oneidas.<sup>38</sup>

Kirkland apparently saw no conflict between his role as a missionary and his distribution of liquor to the Indians. In fact, he described this as a cost-effective tactic, telling Schuyler that the barrel of rum he gave to each of the Six Nations was of greater use to the rebels than a thousand distributed at a treaty.<sup>39</sup> Oneida chiefs at Fort Stanwix were aware, however, that individuals had some responsibility for their actions in accepting liquor from whites and pointedly told General Schuyler after an Oneida died from the effects of alcohol and severe cold on his return from Fort Stanwix “...You will lay no Blame to our Brother the Commander at Fort Schuyler; he is much Grieved for our Misfortunes, but he is also clear in this Matter.”<sup>40</sup> Throughout the campaign of 1777, the British too displayed a concern over the quantity of alcohol available and its distribution to all combatants regardless of ethnicity.

### **The Confederacy Council Fire is Covered/Extinguished**

By the middle of January, a more severe threat faced the Indians and those who wished to manipulate them. The council fire at Onondaga was extinguished. A delegation of Oneida chiefs relayed the message from an Onondaga chief to Colonel Elmore at Fort Stanwix.<sup>41</sup>

We have lost out of their Town by Death ninty out of which are three principal Sachems; We the remaining part of the Onondaugas Do now inform our Brother that there is no longer a Council Fire at the Capitol of Six Nations. However we are determined to use our feeble Endeavors to support peace through the Confederate Nations But let this be kept in Mind that the Central Council fire is extinguished...and can no longer burn.

This indicates that the fire is extinguished because of an epidemic of some kind which went through (at least) the Onondagas. It is likely that this epidemic was smallpox since an epidemic was present in the Americas from 1775 to 1782. The probable source for the Onondaga outbreak was the conflict in Canada. Ottawa Indians returning to Michilimackinac carried it to that post, which ironically enhanced their value to the Crown as warriors since the survivors had acquired immunity.<sup>42</sup> Ottawa warriors would fight with the Iroquois as British allies at the siege of Fort Stanwix and the Battle of Oriskany. Because the Iroquois were familiar with smallpox it is surprising that they did not name it, but perhaps they knew that Elmore would know the cause.

The message is also important because it contradicts claims that the Six Nations refused to take a unified stand on the American Revolution because of an inability to agree on a course of action. That the different nations were being pulled in different directions and that there were serious divisions on how to proceed within each nation can be taken as a given, but the fate of the fire seems to have been related to medical rather than political concerns.

A full complement of chiefs was necessary for the Confederacy to consider any action. Until replacements were selected for the chiefs who died in the epidemic, formal condolence ceremonies undertaken, and new chiefs installed, the Confederacy could not consider its role, if any, in the looming conflict. The fire had been extinguished/covered and, along with it, any hope of a united Iroquois position, either as combatants or neutrals, disappeared. Both sides moved to take advantage of the situation. Kirkland warned Schuyler of the consequences of the dissolution of the Confederacy and urged him to initiate a condolence and provide the wherewithal for this in order that the fire might be rekindled. From the rebel perspective, it was critical that the fire be rekindled at its traditional location with the Onondagas since their territory was much closer to the Oneidas and activities could be closely monitored by Kirkland and his spies. In the meantime, Teyohagueanda, an Onondaga chief, had come to Oneida from Niagara with a belt from Butler inviting the Indians to Oswego in the spring. Kirkland believed this was a pretext for the rekindling of the fire at Fort Niagara in the territory of the mostly pro-British Senecas, where the influence of Butler would be a strong counter to his own.<sup>43</sup>

English sources variously use the words “covered” and “extinguished” to refer to the fate of the fire at Onondaga. A traditional person reported that there is a critical difference between the terms. If the fire was “covered,” it had, in effect, gone underground (*i.e.* not extinguished but covered with soil or dirt). This would only occur in a time of great distress. An extinguished fire is one put out with water which, therefore, no longer burns. The latter would mean the Confederacy was ended. It was his understanding that the fire at Onondaga had been covered by the Senecas prior to the Revolution. Either way, individual warriors and nations would have been free to chart their own course.

Covering the fire probably represented a strategic maneuver by the surviving chiefs, justified by the large number of deaths of chiefs and others, to avoid the risk of permanent dissolution of the Confederacy as Iroquois communities followed increasingly

divergent paths. Although the precipitating factor was the smallpox epidemic, it was ideally suited to Iroquois diplomatic and military goals that focused on survival and well-being and recognized the potential long-term benefits to following multiple adaptive strategies. Alternatively, the epidemic and its aftermath may have disrupted the Confederacy to such an extent that by the time it would have been possible to install new chiefs, the divisions were so great that the time for discussion had passed.

Within a week, Butler sent a message inviting the Six Nations to meet at Niagara in February, which would leave no time for a condolence ceremony and a rekindling of the fire at Onondaga. This was reported to Kirkland by an Oneida who noted the presence of three “Tory” chiefs among the Oneidas but discounted these men as being of no great influence. Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) sent a belt to Oneida also, specifically to Skenanden, Thayendalongive, Thomas, and Thomas’s brother Peter, to whom he appealed on the basis of family connections. The latter three refused to go to Niagara although an Onondaga sachem at Oneida assured them that Butler only wanted peace, realizing that the shedding of blood on the territory of the Six Nations could bring them into the war. The sachem reported that Fort Stanwix would not be attacked since it was too near the Oneidas and Mohawks but that a winter expedition against Fort Ticonderoga was planned. Kirkland immediately passed this information to Schuyler.<sup>44</sup> Trade was reopened at Fort Stanwix at this time, most likely to maintain a regular Indian presence there which Kirkland could use for intelligence gathering.

Although Fort Stanwix was still functioning primarily as a conduit for information and trade goods, there was increasing realization on the part of the rebels of its military importance. On March 17, Assistant Engineer Captain de la Marquisie was ordered to alter and strengthen it.<sup>45</sup> The Oneidas agreed that the rebels could have use of their salt spring, provided that they left the works and kettles to them once the whites no longer needed them. As for the British, Oneidas at Niagara told of unconfirmed reports of shipbuilding and fortifications at Oswegatchie.<sup>46</sup> Both sides had begun the military buildup which would ultimately end in the siege of Fort Stanwix and the battle of Oriskany.

### **The Plan of Invasion**

Lord Germain, the Secretary of State for America, sent orders from London to General Carleton, governor of the province of Quebec, on March 26 which outlined the proposed campaign and appointed Lieut.-Gen. John “Gentleman Johnny” Burgoyne and



Map 5. The original plan for the British invasion of New York. (National Park Service, Burgoyne's Campaign: June-October 1777; Furneaux 1971; Bird 1963; ESRI Data & Maps 1999)

Lieut.-Col. Barry St. Leger as leaders of the expedition. As outlined by Germain, Burgoyne was to proceed south via Lake Champlain to Albany while St. Leger directed a diversion along the Mohawk River (Map 5). The objective of the campaign was to isolate New England, which the British believed to be the primary locus of rebellion, from the rest of the colonies. The British also believed that their sympathizers in New York would join the campaign in large numbers. This was not an altogether unreasonable assumption since New York probably had more pro-British residents than any other colony. The error in British thinking lay in assuming that their political sympathies would outweigh all other interests. Burgoyne and St. Leger were to join up with Sir William Howe, who would move north from New York, at Albany. Carleton was instructed to remain in Canada to ensure security there as well as good government, but he was to provide the leaders of the expedition with troops and supplies from his command, together with “as

many Canadians and Indians as may be thought necessary for this service.”<sup>47</sup> While Germain dispatched orders to Carleton, Howe was unaware of his proposed role. Orders were drafted for him, but when reviewed by Germain were determined not to be “fair copy” and were sent to be redone. By the time this was completed, Germain was on vacation and, as a result, they remained on file, to be discovered by historians at a much later time. Howe went to Philadelphia to the amazement, and eventual relief, of Washington. Nickerson suggests that had Howe received the intended orders, the success of the original plan would have been assured.<sup>48</sup>

Schuyler’s January statement to the Six Nations that the rebels did not need their services was echoed by General Gates in May, who again noted the strength of Iroquois warriors, but said it would be “ungenerous” to ask them to suffer in a quarrel not of their making. He noted that attacks had been made against the rebels at Sabbath Day Point and asked the Six Nations to “Order that Hatchet to be thrown immediately into the middle of the Great Lake. Sink it deep enough, for should it again be found, it may Fall in Vengeance upon the Heads of those, who were so wicked as to Strike the Bostonians.”<sup>49</sup> The rebels were willing to show the iron fist within the velvet glove. At the same time, Butler had concluded his meeting with the Six Nations at Niagara at which he reported that they had approved of the instructions from Carleton and agreed to carry them out.<sup>50</sup> But the British, too, were threatening potential Indian allies. In April, General Carleton sent Captain Fraser a message for the Oneidas which contained overt threats couched within a framework of empathy for their difficult position.

... he [Carleton] is well acquainted who they are, and with the business they are upon; that he knows them the Emissaries from, and in the pay of the people in Rebellion against their King; that he has from the beginning understood that their nation, alone, espoused the cause of those Traitors; at the same time, he feels extremely for their melancholy situation, as he is convinced that it was fear alone, which induced them to act this contemptible part: no nation of Indians so insensible to morality, as not to feel the heinousness of the crime of taking up arms against the King their Father; - no nation of Indians so blind to their own interest as not clearly to see, that he alone can protect them from the oppression of those Rebels, and supply them with all they want. It is therefore that their Father pities very much for their miserable situation, which throws them at the mercy of those contemptible Traitors, and compells them to serve as mouths for those Rebels, for the language they utter is the language of Rebellion: as the Oneidas seem to plead ignorance of the manners of white people their Father tells them what they are and begs them to listen



attentively. To take up arms against their King is death, not only by the laws of the English but by the laws of every nation whatever; - to be aiding and assisting people in areas against their King; - to serve as emissaries to or be the least in communication with, such people is death by the same laws, unless it be by express permission of their Father. - It is very true their Father has hitherto spared the shedding of their blood as much as possible in hopes to restore them to a proper sense of their duty and obedience, but he is greatly afraid that the time must come when a different conduct must be observed towards them; and the Father desires the Oneidas will never forget how much levity and mildness has thitherto been observed towards those ungrateful people, which has only rendered them more insolent and wanton than before, and that, if their blood should be spilt in large quantities they will bear witness to one another, that it was because they could not be reduced by gentler methods to a due sense of their duty. Their Father likewise advises the Oneidas, as their unfortunate situation, allmost in the midst of the Rebels renders it dangerous for them to act, in conjunction with the other Indians, in support of the King their father, that they would remain quiet till his troops were at hand to support & protect them, and never more to come with their messages, not serve as their spies, and publishers of their lies and Rebellion, least they should be confounded in the same destruction as them. For the present they may return in peace and bear this message from their Father to their Nation.<sup>51</sup>

Carleton was correct in recognizing the difficult position of the Oneidas but he was wrong in thinking they were united in the rebel cause. The most important leaders at Oneida were sympathetic to the rebels and they were encouraged in this by their missionary who was, by the beginning of 1777, more dedicated to political than religious evangelism. The settlement of Oquaga, however, was a mixed Six Nations series of four villages, in which there were strong pro-British sentiments.<sup>52</sup> This is probably because it was the birthplace of Joseph Brant's first wife and his father-in-law, Isaac Dekayensere ("Old Isaac") who was a devout Anglican and opponent of Kirkland. In retrospect, Carleton is clearly setting the Oneidas up for the planned invasion of the Mohawk Valley, hoping that with the arrival of St. Leger's forces and the assumed rising of the pro-British residents of the area, they will actively join the British once the threat of rebel reprisals was removed. Both the British and the rebels were publicly speaking of their desire for Indian neutrality while at the same time actively maneuvering to assure themselves of Indian military support. Both claimed to hold the other end of the covenant chain,<sup>53</sup> that "complex set of alliances among the Indians and English in which Iroquois and New Yorkers played dominant but seldom dictatorial roles."<sup>54</sup>



Oneida contacts with the rebel leadership were not limited to General Washington. On a local level, they had offered to send scouts to cover the movements of the British forces near Oswegatchie. While the offer was made to Colonel Elmore, the commanding officer at Fort Stanwix, the Oneidas requested that a copy of it be delivered to the Indian Commissioners at Albany.<sup>55</sup> The relationship between the Oneidas and the people at Fort Stanwix was a mutually beneficial one; the Indians wanted ball and powder and recognition for their help and the commander wanted salt and information.<sup>56</sup> Need for Oneida good will was stressed by Elmore when he turned over command of the fort to Peter Gansevoort in April.<sup>57</sup> The importance of the fort's location at the portage from Wood Creek to the Mohawk River became more critical as rumors of a planned British invasion circulated, and work began on strengthening the fort in March, under the direction of Assistant Engineer Captain de la Marquisie.<sup>58</sup> Marquisie was a terrible engineer who would eventually be fired for incompetence. He reported to General Schuyler that he had met with Six Nations Indians who had agreed to remain neutral.<sup>59</sup> The rebels were attempting to maintain a consistent approach to the Indians and Schuyler was either concerned that Marquisie would disrupt this or had begun to realize Marquisie's incompetence when he ordered Gansevoort not to let Marquisie make speeches to the Indians. Schuyler also requested that Gansevoort keep copies of any speeches he made to the Indians in order that the Commissioners remained apprised of what was transpiring along the frontier.<sup>60</sup>

British plans, as outlined by Germain, became more formal when Daniel Claus arrived at Quebec on June 1 with a letter from Germain appointing him superintendent of the Indians for St. Leger's expedition.<sup>61</sup> This came as a surprise to Carleton who had sent letters to John Butler at Niagara in May describing the expedition and asking him to assemble Indians to join it. Carleton wrote to Germain expressing his embarrassment at Claus's appointment since he had already chosen Butler to command the Indians.<sup>62</sup> Communication between Quebec and Niagara took six weeks in the best weather, which makes this kind of foul-up understandable but it also served to exacerbate an already antagonistic relationship.<sup>63</sup> Upon receipt of Carleton's letters, Butler sent runners to the Six Nations and to Detroit, asking the Indians to come to a council at Oswego in order to make arrangements with the King and to receive presents. There is no evidence that Butler was aware that once assembled, Carleton planned to send the Indians immediately to Fort Stanwix. This would seem to be confirmed by the kinds of supplies Butler had

forwarded to Oswego, which were appropriate for a council but not for a military expedition. Mary Jemison's narrative also supports this interpretation. In an attempt to save provisions, Butler asked the Senecas to meet him at Irondequoit, which was closer to Niagara than Oswego. Butler learned of Claus's appointment at Oswego and claimed to be "mortified" to see the "success of all my labours conferred upon another."<sup>64</sup>

If there is a thread running through British reports of the happenings on the New York frontier in 1777, it is the rivalry and constant sniping that went on between Daniel Claus and John Butler. Carleton was a Butler partisan who had developed a deep dislike for Sir William Johnson and shifted that emotion to Claus, Johnson's son-in-law. Carleton was also hurt that Burgoyne, and not he, had been selected to lead the British forces. The appointment of Claus only aggravated this feeling. Thayendanegea (Brant), because his sister Molly had been Sir William's common-law wife, was closer to Claus. These alliances need to be considered in interpreting the reports made by each.

On June 8, General Schuyler reported to John Hancock that "some trusty Indians with two of the French Officers, accompanied by an approved Canadians ... are going into Canada to try to gain some Intelligence of the Enemy's Strength & Intentions."<sup>65</sup> Among the Indians was probably Thomas, the Oneida sachem. Thomas's plea to the Committee of Safety for Tryon County served as the major incentive for the strengthening of Fort Stanwix and a clarion call to the militia to protect themselves and their homes.

There were two men named Thomas among the Oneidas in 1777. One was Thomas Spencer, a white man whose family lived in Cherry Valley, who served as a blacksmith and interpreter. The other was an Oneida sachem with the Christian name Thomas. With the exception of Campbell, nearly all writers have conflated these two men and identified Thomas as a half-breed sachem.<sup>66</sup> Jones states unequivocally, based on the style of remarks attributed to Thomas and Thomas Spencer, that they are the same person.<sup>67</sup> We believe that this analysis indicates the precise opposite. Campbell clearly distinguished Thomas Spencer<sup>68</sup> and the sachem Thomas.<sup>69</sup> Stone identifies Thomas Spencer as a blacksmith "greatly beloved" by the Indians<sup>70</sup> as well as an Oneida half-breed sachem.<sup>71</sup> Both men were rebel partisans and both played important roles in events leading to the battle of Oriskany. Thomas Spencer would lose his life in the battle. The misunderstanding is due to the confusion of "Oneida" as a geographic term and "Oneida" as a tribal affiliation. Thomas Spencer *was* an Oneida blacksmith in that he was a resident at Oneida, but he was not Iroquois. The sachem Thomas has been identified from Oneida

records by Dr. Tony Wonderly, the Oneida Indian Nation of New York historian, as Thomas Sawegis.<sup>72</sup>

The intelligence that Carleton received from Butler about the fort indicated that it was “60 men in a picketed place” but, just to be sure (perhaps because of his distrust of Butler and Carleton), Claus dispatched Indian Officer John Hare, whose body would be left on the Oriskany battlefield, and the Mohawk chief John Odiserundy to collect a small party of Indians and reconnoiter the fort, taking prisoners if possible.<sup>73</sup> Blacksnake reported that the Seneca war chief Cornplanter (Gyantwahia) was a member of the group of Indians on scout which attacked and scalped Captain Gregg and Corporal Madison between Forts Newport and Bull on 25 June.<sup>74</sup> Madison died of his wounds.<sup>75</sup>

### **Encounter at Unadilla**

The residents of the Mohawk Valley at this time were more concerned with the activities of Joseph Brant than a possible invasion from the west (Fig. 2). Brant, gathering intelligence and seeking warrior recruits, had arrived at Unadilla asking for provisions and complaining about the ill treatment of his friends.<sup>76</sup> Brant promised he or Butler would pay for the provisions but the residents were intimidated and assumed he would take whatever he wanted one way or the other so he was given cattle and corn. Brant warned of trouble and reported he would bring his friends from the Mohawk River when he returned from Oquaga. As a result of Brant’s actions, John Harper reported that rebel sympathizers fled the area.<sup>77</sup> Schuyler tried to assure the people in the Schoharie Valley by sending 150 men under Colonel Van Schaik to protect the frontier. He also sent a message to the Oneidas, apparently hoping their influence could be used to restrain Brant.<sup>78</sup> The Oneidas, however, asked that Schuyler take no action against Brant, probably because they planned to appeal to him on the basis of family ties in order to prevent open hostilities.<sup>79</sup>

Nicholas Herkimer, leader of the Tryon County militia, went to Unadilla with 380 men to investigate Brant’s activities and requested a meeting with the Indian leader to which Brant agreed, provided all were unarmed. The meeting took place on June 29-30. Despite Kelsay’s<sup>80</sup> claim that there are no accounts by the principals at the meeting, Herkimer described it in a letter to Schuyler<sup>81</sup> and John Dusler, a member of Herkimer’s militia, described it in his Declaration made in February 1833.<sup>82</sup> Dusler’s recollections may be distorted by time and Herkimer’s by bias, but there is also another, albeit second-



Fig. 2. Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant). Print of 1838 engraving by George Romney. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (INV 10000133).

hand, report by Daniel Claus who was told of the incident by Brant, thereby countering any bias in Herkimer.<sup>83</sup> In fact, all three reports agree in general about what happened at the meeting. Brant stated the Indians' grievances, in particular the building of forts within their territory, restrictions on travel, and the rebels' refusal to permit Rev. Stuart, the missionary to the Mohawks at Ft. Hunter, and the wife of John Butler to go to the upper Mohawk castle at Canajoharie. Herkimer asked that the Indians remain neutral but Brant refused, stating the Indians owed loyalty to the King. At some point during the meeting, Colonel Ebenzer Cox (who would be among the first to die at Oriskany) insulted Brant, whose supporters went back to their camp and shot off their weapons. Herkimer took Brant aside, reminded him that they were old neighbors who had agreed to meet in peace, and urged him to pay no mind to Cox; Brant restrained his men. Brant's force consisted of about 200 warriors, inadequately armed, a fact that he later blamed on Butler's stinginess.<sup>84</sup> Despite his stronger military position, Herkimer agreed to allow Stuart and Mrs. Butler passage from Ft. Hunter to Canajoharie. He explained this to Schuyler by referring to Brant's insistence upon an immediate settlement which made it impossible to get Schuyler's prior approval. Herkimer did, however, send a report to the county committee which stated "We have acted prudently in a dangerous situation."<sup>85</sup> The General was nevertheless displeased and thought it an "improper agreement" which would only lead to trouble.<sup>86</sup> Kelsay points out that even though Brant was annoyed at Butler, he still showed consideration for his wife.<sup>87</sup>

Herkimer's primary consideration was his desire to maintain peace and ensure the neutrality of Brant and his followers and there is no indication that he acted in any other than an honorable way. Stone claimed that Herkimer had made plans on the second day of the conference to assassinate Brant should the meeting get out of hand, but this did not occur because Brant was too wary for the militiaman assigned the job to accomplish it.<sup>88</sup> Jephtha Simms, a nineteenth century chronicler of events in the Mohawk Valley, referred to this as slander on Herkimer's character and stated that the source cited by Stone, a manuscript attributed to Joseph Wagner, never existed. Wagner, Simms claimed, assured him that he furnished no one with a manuscript.<sup>89</sup> During the two day meeting, Brant privately told Herkimer that an expedition was forming at Oswegatchie which would go to Oswego and then to the western country. Brant was going to Onondaga to meet in council with Butler and planned to join the expedition. Herkimer passed this on to Schuyler, adding "As it is no more in doubt, that the enemies will make an Attack on our

Frontiers, very soon, and very likely a large number of disaffected Indians will join them.” Herkimer requested the aid of Continental troops since the militia could not provide adequate protection and certainly none could be spared to regarrison Fort Stanwix. Unless such help was forthcoming, Indians would ravage the frontier, return property to the Tories who fled, and have an easy penetration into the rest of New York.<sup>90</sup>

Schuyler already knew about the planned expedition from Dean’s letter which noted that Sir John would be at Oswego with a large number of Indians on July 1 and would be joined there by Butler and his party from Niagara. The forces meeting at Oswego would move to attack Fort Stanwix and a concurrent expedition would move against Fort Ticonderoga.<sup>91</sup> Thomas Spencer, at Oneida, also confirmed the report and made it clear that knowledge of the planned attack was widespread “They all [the white inhabitants] think the treaty at Oswego will end in the Siege of fort Schuyler...”<sup>92</sup>

Schuyler alerted Gansevoort at Fort Stanwix on June 30 of an impending attack by Sir John Johnson, the son of Sir William and a member of St. Leger’s force, and ordered him to keep scouts toward Oswego and any other source of attack, adding that he had requested Herkimer to send militia to come to the aid of the fort, not knowing that Herkimer would be requesting help for himself. In particular, Schuyler wanted to know the numbers and nationalities of the British forces.<sup>93</sup> By July 3, Gansevoort had his own proof that military action might be imminent. Eight men cutting sod for Fort Newport were attacked by a party of Indians who killed and scalped one, scalped another, and took Ensign Spoor and four men prisoners.<sup>94</sup> Gansevoort promised Schuyler that he would do everything possible to maintain his post but that he had only a small number of men and needed provisions to replace some spoiled beef. The bullets that had been provided didn’t fit the muskets and the supply of powder was also low. Furthermore, increasing numbers of hostile Indians had been observed in the area, culminating in the attack on Ensign Spoor and his men. Gansevoort wanted Captain de la Marquisie to improve the defenses of the fort and needed men to dam Wood Creek and open the road to Fort Dayton. The only good news he reported was that some Six Nations chiefs came to the fort on July 2 bearing a belt of friendship.<sup>95</sup>

The scouting party sent by Claus to reconnoitre Fort Stanwix took several prisoners who, following interrogation by Claus, were sent to St. Leger for further questioning. This seemingly minor occurrence would take on greater significance as Claus would later use it to blame St. Leger for the failure of the siege. In retrospect, Claus



would appear to be correct in his assessment. The prisoners reported a garrison of six hundred men and St. Leger concluded (according to Claus) that his artillery would be inadequate if the reports about the fort were correct. Claus, who had questioned the men individually, pointed out that their stories were the same. St. Leger, however, refused to send for more powerful artillery or wait for the Hessian Chasseurs, which might have assured a successful siege; he was “full of his Alert making little of the prisoners intelligence.”<sup>96</sup>

On July 6th, Gansevoort wrote to Schuyler that he heard the cannon fired at Oswego which he incorrectly interpreted as indicating Butler’s arrival, as Edward Spencer had earlier reported this to be the agreed upon signal. Spencer also reported that attempts to turn the Genesee Seneca chiefs to peace had been unsuccessful and that the Oswego meeting would be an attempt by the British to seduce the Six Nations into an attack on Fort Stanwix.<sup>97</sup> Volker Douw, one of the rebel Indian Commissioners, wrote Schuyler three days later that an Oquaga Indian had been sent by the chiefs to tell the commissioners that Sir John was at Oswego, intending to treat with the Six Nations and request their neutrality. But he also reported that two Caughnawagas<sup>98</sup> had told the Onondagas that Sir John had a thousand regulars with him and planned to take Fort Stanwix on his way down the Mohawk River.<sup>99</sup>

Although Schuyler was getting contradictory reports, it was obvious that an expedition was being organized which would at least include some Indians, primarily Mohawks fighting with Joseph Brant, as well as others with Butler and Claus. The covering or extinguishing of the Council fire at Onondaga meant that each Iroquois nation was free to choose its own course. Graymont argues that “never at any time prior to 1777 would a whole tribe of the Iroquois Confederacy make a full commitment to join the war” but no documentary evidence was found that indicated any Iroquois nation entered the Revolution *as a nation* (Graymont’s “tribe”) during 1777; rather individual warriors chose to support a particular side or remain neutral as best suited their interests.<sup>100</sup> That large numbers of Oneidas, Senecas, Mohawks, Cayugas, Mississaugas or others may have joined a particular side in a battle cannot be taken as a commitment of that nation to a particular political or military position. If a majority took a specific action, it was the result of individuals identifying their best interests within a temporal, social, and geographic context; under different circumstances, each person might well have made a different choice. No Iroquois individual, regardless of sex or age, could be compelled to take or desist from any action.

Faced with Burgoyne's advance to the south, Schuyler, who was at Fort Edward, requested Herkimer to send reinforcements to Fort Stanwix and ordered ammunition and provisions sent to the fort even though he did not expect that a large body would attack. Schuyler, perhaps unsure of Herkimer's ability to commit militia to the defense of Fort Stanwix, also ordered Major Badlam to take a detachment to the fort if requested by Gansevoort.<sup>101</sup> Responding to Schuyler's request, Herkimer ordered 200 of his men to Fort Stanwix but they did not want to go and his orders were countermanded by Lieut. Col. William Seeber as well as the members of the Tryon County Committee. A subsequent Committee meeting led to new orders by Herkimer and the Committee which directed the militia to Fort Stanwix. Herkimer reported to Schuyler that the men were discouraged and fearful of the Indians; he suspected that many would disobey orders and some would join the "Tories." The source of their discontent was the recall of Continental troops and the fall of Ticonderoga on July 6.<sup>102</sup> Schuyler was hard pressed to understand the reluctance of the Tryon County militia to turn out and complained to the Albany County Committee: "Be assured that I would most readily assist them with troops if I had them, and that I have not failed to pay my attention to that quarter, for I have already sent a detachment of the few continental troops I have [150 men under Van Schaik after Brant's threats at Unadilla], and have not called upon one man of their militia. It is surely not harder on them to turn out the militia, than it is for you and every other county, not so much so, as they need not go much beyond the inhabited part of their county to defend themselves."<sup>103</sup>

### **The Council at Oswego**

As the British forces began their approaches to the planned union at Oswego, tensions among the white leadership became more apparent. St. Leger arrived at Buck Island (also known as Carleton Island) and on July 12, formally appointed Claus as superintendent of the Indians on the expedition, empowered to act in his best judgment in managing them and the equipment they would need.<sup>104</sup> Although Germain had selected Claus over a month before, Carleton's pique at being refused leadership of the expedition to Albany via Ticonderoga and the imposition of Claus over his own preference for Butler seems to have resulted in his giving St. Leger the responsibility for issuing the military appointment.<sup>105</sup> Claus was already annoyed with St. Leger for refusing to order artillery which he thought would be needed for the assault on Fort Stanwix and to wait for the Chasseurs; now he discovered that the supplies Butler was to have sent for



the Indians were deficient. In an ill-disguised swipe at Butler, Claus reported to Knox that he had fortunately purchased supplies at his own expense in Montreal but that he had to work hard to keep the good feelings of the Indians who had been promised goods. Fortunately for the expedition, St. Leger had discovered thirty stand of arms at Oswegatchie.<sup>106</sup> Butler, still at Niagara, may or may not have known of Claus's appointment, but he was already complaining to Carleton because he wasn't being paid more than Claus.<sup>107</sup>

The fall of Fort Ticonderoga was a critical event which had major impacts on everyone. Herkimer noted its effect on the morale of the militia, and by extension, all the people of Tryon County. The Oneida sachem Thomas used it to appeal to the Tryon County Committee at a meeting on July 17 at the house of William Seeber. The occasion of the meeting was the notification that the enemy had arrived at Oswego, which all believed was a prelude to an attack on Fort Stanwix. Thomas had returned from Cassasseny in Canada (probably Caughnawaga) where from his hiding place near the Council house he was able to hear Claus invite the Indians to join in an attack on Fort Stanwix and note that a number of Indians were with Burgoyne at Ticonderoga. Claus, too, used Ticonderoga to make his point stating "Ticonderoga is mine" and suggesting that Stanwix too would fall without the firing of a single shot. The sachem further reported that Sir John and Claus were now at Oswego with their families, 400 regulars and 600 Tories and Butler was due on the 15th to offer the hatchet to the Five Nations. He prodded the rebels:

Therefore now is your Time, Brothers, to awake, and not to sleep longer, or on the Contrary it shall go with Fort Schuyler, as It went already with Ticonderoga... Brothers, I therefore desire you to be Spirited and to encourage one another to march on in assistance of Fort Schuyler, Come Up and Shew yourselves as Men, to defend and Save your Country before it is too late. Dispatch yourselves, to clear the Brushes about the fort, and send a party to cut Trees in the Wood Creek to Stop up the same. Brothers, If you don't come soon, without delay to assist this place, we cannot Stay much Longer on your side, for if you leave this Fort without assistance, and the Enemy shall get possession thereof, we shall Suffer like you in your Settlement and shall be destroyed with you....You may judge yourselves, if you don't try to resist, we will be obliged to join them or fly from our Castles - as we cannot hinder them alone. We, the good friends of the Country, are of opinion that if more Force appears at Fort Schuyler, the Enemy will not move from Oswego to invade these Frontiers. You may depend on, we are heartily willing to help you if you will do some Efforts too...<sup>108</sup>

Like Thomas, Schuyler continued to be dismayed by the lack of patriotism among the people of Tryon County. Writing to the Council of Safety in New York, he decried “the pusillanimous spirit which prevails in the county of Tryon. I apprehend much of it is to be imputed to the timidity of the leading persons in that quarter.”<sup>109</sup> John Jay also expressed similar concern, stating: “Were they alone interested in their fate, I should be for leaving their cart in the slough till they would put their shoulders to the wheel.”<sup>110</sup> The people of Tryon County, like the Oneidas and all the other groups resident in New York, were divided in their loyalties. For the average person, daily subsistence activities and protection of life and property took priority over remote debates about the nature of government. There were class, ethnic, and religious differences reflected in the allegiance of various families.

But although there might be Liberty Trees and Committees of Safety, the rebel leadership in New York in 1777 was in the firm control of men of property who were frightened of a grassroots democratic movement. Philip Schuyler and George Clinton, both part of the Livingstone faction, were pushed to accept independence as a means of controlling the more radical populist groups as well as a way of assuming long sought priority over the DeLanceys.<sup>111</sup> In the same way that traditional political factions (both Indian and non-Indian) in the colony were divided, so were individual families. The confluence of class, ethnic, religious, economic, family, and tribal divisions would play itself out on the Oriskany battlefield, creating a microcosm of what British historian John Shy described for the entire war: “The American Revolution was a civil war. In proportion to population, almost as many Americans were engaged in fighting other Americans during the Revolution as did so during the Civil War.”<sup>112</sup>

As Thomas and Schuyler were attempting to goad the Tryon County militia to action, the Indians were meeting with Butler in council. Where this council was held is open to some question. It is variously reported at having been at Oswego, Irondequoit, and Three Rivers (the junction of the Oneida, Oswego, and Seneca Rivers). Clearly Oswego was named as the meeting place for the expedition, and the Seneca Blacksnake, talking to Draper when he was an old man, claims this is where it took place. He said there were two thousand Senecas present, including women and children and that Senecas outnumbered all the other Indians combined. As Butler urged them to take up the hatchet in the King’s cause, the Senecas were almost unanimously opposed. In particular he noted the opposition of Cornplanter (Fig. 3), Handsome Lake, Red Jacket,



Fig. 3. Gyantwakhia (Cornplanter). Print of 1796 portrait by F. Bartoli. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (INV 8957700).

and Gi-ya-so-do. Despite Seneca opposition, Brant and the Mohawks swayed the council from a position of neutrality to one of alliance with the British side. Blacksnake suggests that this conversion of Cornplanter and others may have been helped by brandy given to the Senecas by the British. The war belt was taken up, first by Brant for the Mohawks, followed by Cornplanter, Gi-ya-so-do and the other Senecas, then Jug-ge-te (Fish Carrier) for the Cayugas, Gah-koon-de-noi-ya (Lying Nose) for the Onondagas, To-wah-wah-gah-que (Rail Carrier) for the Oneidas, and She-gwoi-e-sch for the Tuscaroras. Tribal councils appointed war chiefs after Gyantwahia (Cornplanter) and Thayendanegea (Brant) were appointed as head war leaders.<sup>113</sup>

Thomas Spencer wrote to the Committee on July 29 that some Oneida chiefs were going to Three Rivers the following day and expected to meet the warriors and be sent away after declaring for peace. He also relayed to them that the chiefs desired that the commanding officer at Fort Stanwix “not make a Ticonderoga of it...”<sup>114</sup> Either the date is wrong or the Oneidas were given false information, for by this time the fully assembled expedition had already departed. Alternately, the Oneida chiefs may have planned to meet the Senecas who had been sent to Three Rivers by Claus, knowing that the Senecas had been most inclined to neutrality.

Graymont argues that Blacksnake erred in locating the council at Oswego and that his description is of a council held at Irondequoit.<sup>115</sup> According to her interpretation, Butler reminded the Indians of their ancient alliance with the king and said it was their duty to take up the hatchet. Seneca orators reminded the Indians of their promises to the rebels to remain neutral. The initial Indian decision was to remain neutral and this was formally reported to Butler, who then emphasized the economic advantages to be had by alignment with the British and sent the Indians back to reconsider. Eventually British appeals to avarice and honor, “with a heavy emphasis on the former,”<sup>116</sup> won the day and resulted in the taking up of the hatchet.<sup>117</sup> Blacksnake possibly was confused because Brant does not appear to have been present. Neither Butler nor Claus report Brant as having been present but it is hard to see how Blacksnake could have been wrong since he and Brant were well acquainted.<sup>118</sup> Regardless of where the council was held, a large number of Indians, mostly Senecas, took up the hatchet in the King’s cause.

On July 19 Butler was at Irondequoit where he received orders from St. Leger to send him 150 warriors for a surprise attack on Fort Stanwix.<sup>119</sup> St. Leger had left Buck Island on his way to Oswego and Claus was also ordered there with Sir John’s regiment and a company of Chasseurs.<sup>120</sup> Butler sent the requested warriors to St. Leger but remained behind, according to Graymont, in order to complete his arrangements with the Senecas.<sup>121</sup>

On July 23 Claus and Sir John arrived at Oswego and found Brant already there, expecting his own party of three hundred Indians to arrive later in the day. Brant complained that his troops had been in service for over two months and needed arms, supplies, and ammunition and remarked that if Butler had been more generous with his supplies at Niagara, Brant would have been able to take on and defeat Herkimer when they met at Unadilla in June. When Claus looked into the supply issue, he discovered that

the supplies Butler ordered to Oswego were appropriate for trade, not warfare.<sup>122</sup> Butler was planning to enlist Indian aid at Oswego and he planned to use the supplies to get the Indians to take up the hatchet as was indicated by the message he sent to them in June. Therefore, although the goods he had sent to Oswego were appropriate for his intended purpose, they were not so for Claus's. This would explain not only the goods reported by Claus but also Mary Jemison's report that the Senecas were not expecting to fight, but only to smoke their pipes and observe the battle.<sup>123</sup> If and how miscommunication occurred is unknown. Neither Claus nor Butler was well-served by what occurred and it is unlikely that either would have purposely misled the other in such a critical matter.

Claus, angered over Butler's actions, was further upset when he received an order from St. Leger at Salmon Creek to join him with whatever arms and vermilion he had and be ready to march through the woods. Captain Tice, the messenger from St. Leger, reported that the Indians at Salmon Creek were "beastly drunk" because St. Leger had given them each a quart of rum. Claus flatly refused to go, in part because he realized there was nothing to be done with and for the Indians in their current state, and also, no doubt, because he saw this as another example of St. Leger's poor judgment. Furthermore, Brant told him that if he left, the Indians would too, which could prevent the rest of the Six Nations from assembling. Claus told St. Leger that more Indians were expected at Oswego and he could not leave. Because Claus would not come to him, St. Leger went to Oswego with companies of the 8th and 34th units of the Kings Royal Regiment of New York and 250 Indians, probably Mississaugas who had come with him from Lachine.<sup>124</sup> When Butler arrived at Oswego on July 25, he learned that the Six Nations Indians he had asked to meet him there had been stopped at Three Rivers on the orders of Claus and that Claus had already distributed to Brant's Indians the goods which he had promised the Indians now detained at Three Rivers. Not surprisingly, Butler blamed Claus.<sup>125</sup> With the arrival of Butler, all the forces involved in the assault on Fort Stanwix were assembled with the exception of the Indians at Three Rivers, twenty-five miles south of Oswego on the route to the fort. On the following day, the expedition left for Fort Stanwix.<sup>126</sup>

Meanwhile, back at the fort, Gansevoort wrote to Schuyler that Herkimer had not reinforced him as ordered and that the militia then at the fort was leaving in two days; and to make a bad situation worse, he had not received any supplies. The Colonel was aware of how serious his predicament was. He had learned the previous day that Butler had

arrived at Oswego and that Sir John was on an island near Oswego. Trying to buy time, he sent 130 men to obstruct Wood Creek, an action he had previously decided upon and which was also called for by the Oneida sachem Thomas.<sup>127</sup> Intelligence at the fort was coming from friendly Oneidas and Caughnawagas while hostile Indians were scouting about the fort.<sup>128</sup> Three girls picking berries were intercepted by such a party and two of them were scalped and killed and the third wounded.<sup>129</sup> Stone reported that when Cornplanter was in Albany in 1797 he visited with Major Hendrick Frey in Canajoharie where they spent the evening in a tavern recounting their Revolutionary War exploits.<sup>130</sup> Stone claimed he was told by a Dr. Eights, who lived with Frey at the time and was part of the group at the tavern, that Cornplanter claimed it was he who killed the girls when he was about the fort seeking to take a prisoner. Blacksnake, however, had no recollection of Cornplanter being responsible for the murders.<sup>131</sup>

With Ticonderoga lost and an attack on Fort Stanwix imminent, General Washington was incredulous that Howe's movements indicated he was not coordinating his actions with Burgoyne. From his headquarters at Coryell's Ferry in New Jersey, Washington wrote to Gates that "General Howe's in a manner abandoning General Burgoyne is so unaccountable a matter, that, till I am fully assured it is so, I cannot help casting my eyes continually behind me."<sup>132</sup> Nearly a week later, Washington was still concerned about Howe joining Burgoyne but realized that if this did not occur, then Burgoyne's success would prove temporary. Later, in Philadelphia, pressed by the New York Council of Safety, Washington addressed the fall of Ticonderoga and stated that the worst effect was on morale, not military strategy. He realized that British success in New York could have disastrous consequences for the rebels, but emphasized that strategically it was far more important to control the enemy's main army than be drawn off by St Leger's diversion in the Mohawk Valley.<sup>133</sup> This was probably not what the Committee wanted to hear, but as Commander-in-Chief, it was Washington's responsibility to look beyond provincial interests.

By the first of August, Fort Stanwix was on alert and three Oneidas had come from their castle to report that they had encountered three strange Indians who said there were a hundred more at the Royal Block House at Oneida Lake headed for Fort Stanwix. Gansevoort assumed they were sent to cut off his communication and he detached one hundred men to meet the *batteaux* that were expected to reinforce the guard sent with them from Fort Dayton.<sup>134</sup>

As St. Leger's expedition neared Fort Stanwix, a party under Lieut. Bird was sent forward to the fort. Accompanied by Senecas and Mississaugas, Bird wanted to approach the garrison. Despite Bird being formally in charge, the tactics were determined by the Indians who refused to go as a body. When Bird said he would go without them, the Mississaugas decided to join, but reminded him that he had promised to be guided by their chiefs who urged caution. Bird therefore agreed to wait until the next morning and the Indians sent out eighteen to twenty scouts that evening to prepare the way.<sup>135</sup> Bird believed he would be able to invest the fort with just twenty-seven Indians, even though it was clear they had little faith in his command. St. Leger told him that he was sending Brant and his corps as reinforcement and warned the young officer that he wanted them only to begin the siege but should the fort wish to surrender, Bird could inform the rebels that St. Leger would listen to them. St. Leger assured Bird that he was not trying to take glory from the young soldier but was trying to prevent "...the barbarity and carnage which will ever obtain where Indians make so superior a part of the detachment ..."<sup>136</sup> It is ironic that an officer who was so openly contemptuous of Indians and had so little comprehension of their culture should have headed a force which was nearly fifty percent Indian. For their part, the Indians held St. Leger in equally low regard, with perhaps more justification.

### **The Siege Begins**

The main British army arrived at Fort Stanwix on August 2nd and the fort was placed under siege the following evening. Gansevoort, working under extremely difficult conditions, had successfully stopped up Wood Creek which forced St. Leger to cut a sixteen mile road through the woods for his artillery.<sup>137</sup> The batteaux carrying the requested supplies arrived and were unloaded safely but the men who remained behind when the guard marched to the fort were fired upon, the batteaux master captured, two men wounded, and one missing. Word of the attack was brought to the garrison by men who ran from the landing to the garrison.<sup>138</sup> A small group sent to the landing found the missing batteau master shot in the head, stabbed, and scalped; he died shortly thereafter in the fort. Lt. Bird with his thirty troops and two hundred Indians arrived after the boats had been unloaded, but was successful in capturing the Lower Landing Place.

Characteristically, St. Leger blamed the resupply of Fort Stanwix on the "slackness of the Mississaugas."<sup>139</sup> The British set their camp a mile below the fort and took a position there to attack and cut off communication. A flag was sent to the fort with



Captain Tice who offered protection if the fort surrendered but his proposition was disdainfully rejected.<sup>140</sup> Willett stated that the “Tories” described their position in such a way as to make the rebels doubt the enemy had a strong enough force to take the fort.<sup>141</sup> The officers in Gansevoort’s regiment made a “Continental Flagg....which was hoisted and a Cannon Levelled at the Enemies Camp was fired on the Occasion.”<sup>142</sup> None of the contemporary documents indicate that there was anything special or unusual about the flag; it appears to have been raised in response to the presence of the enemy. Subsequently, popular Mohawk Valley oral traditions claimed this as the first time the Stars and Stripes was flown under attack.

Constant firing by Indians and the Hesse-Hannau Chasseurs made it difficult for the men in the fort to make needed repairs and several were killed and wounded in the attempt. Both sides took hay from surrounding fields and Gansevoort sent a party out on the evening of August 4 to burn a house which had belonged to a Mr. Roof in order to prevent it being used by the enemy. The British torched the new barracks inexplicably constructed by Marquisie a hundred yards from the fort.<sup>143</sup> Colonel Millen and the men who had come from Fort Dayton to guard the batteaux were unable to leave because of the siege.<sup>144</sup> The same day, St. Leger began to open Wood Creek and cut a road in order to bring in supplies and artillery. In charge of opening the creek was Captain Roseville, assisted by Captain Herkimer of the Indian Department, the brother of General Nicholas Herkimer who would soon begin his march to raise the siege. It would take 110 men nine days to open the creek, although the road was finished in two days.<sup>145</sup>

Schuyler was still attempting to get reinforcements to Fort Stanwix. Colonel Van Schaik wrote to him that no one would join him and that he had ordered the Schoharie and Schenectady militia to march to German Flatts but the Schoharie Committee had countermanded the order, claiming they could not spare their militia. Van Schaik had one hundred Continentals and wanted to know if he should send them to German Flatts under Lt. Col. Brooks or take them and place himself under Herkimer’s command. Arguing, almost pleading, against the latter option, Van Schaick noted that the fort had received reinforcements and that, although the Tryon County Committee claimed the fort was besieged, they have “no other reason for it than common report.”<sup>146</sup> Clinton instructed Herkimer on August 2 to raise five hundred men from his militia to protect the population and reinforce the garrison at Fort Stanwix. As an incentive he offered them Continental pay and rations and sent Colonel Wynkoop to help with morale. Echoing



Washington, he told Herkimer that Continental troops could not be spared. "It cannot be expected that the Continental army can be scattered on the Frontiers of any particular State but must be so posted as to oppose the main Body of the Enemy."<sup>147</sup> Recruitment may have been aided by stories of the murder of Jane McCrea in the Hampshire Grants although this could also have had the opposite effect.

## THE BATTLE

Intelligence on both sides was good. On August 5, the day Butler arrived, Molly Brant, Joseph's sister, sent word to the British from Canajoharie that a group of rebels was on the march and would be within ten or twelve miles of the British camp by nightfall. This was confirmed by a scouting party sent out by St. Leger which reported that eight hundred militia were on their way to relieve the garrison and were now at the Oneida settlement of Oriska.<sup>148</sup> St. Leger sent a detachment of four hundred Indians to reconnoiter the enemy. At his request, the party was headed by Sir John Johnson who was accompanied by the other Indian Officers. Claus would later claim that the rebels marched because they knew the weakness of St. Leger's artillery and underestimated the size of the Indian forces by seventy-five per cent.<sup>149</sup>

The result was the battle of Oriskany which occurred on August 6, 1777. Daniel Claus described the battle to Knox within a few days of its occurrence and Governor Blacksnake, as an old man, shared his recollections with Lyman Draper.<sup>150</sup> There is also the journal of John Norton, a Cherokee/Scot who was a close friend of Joseph Brant and who eventually lived at the Six Nations reserve along the Grand River after the war. Norton's journal dates from 1816 and his report was probably taken from the notes or recollections of Brant but how long after the event is not known.<sup>151</sup>

There are also three accounts relating to events at Fort Stanwix. From the British side, there is St. Leger's letter to Carleton dated 27 August 1777,<sup>152</sup> which provides an interesting parallel to Claus's report to Knox.<sup>153</sup> Both reports are clearly self-serving as they attempt to explain both the battle and the end of the siege. The journal of William Colbreth<sup>154</sup> documents events inside the fort from a soldier's perspective and the report of Colonel Marinus Willett,<sup>155</sup> written a week or so after the battle, incorporates events at the fort with attempts to secure more assistance after the battle results were learned. In attempting to reconstruct the raid, reliance was based on Willett's contemporary report, rather than the retrospective narrative written when he was eighty.

Joseph Robertaccio, a re-enactor from Utica, New York, who has devoted much of his life to describing the military actions in the battle of Oriskany, believes strongly that General Herkimer dictated or wrote a battle report which was sent to his superiors, probably General Schuyler or perhaps the Tryon County Committee. Herkimer survived his wounds for ten days, dying after the amputation of his leg. Both of the Stones and Simms clearly document their written and oral sources, often quoting them at great length, and it would be logical to expect that if they had access to such a report it would have been duly noted, there being no reason to keep it secret. A German source states: "In the first days after the battle the condition of the wounded general did not cause the least concern. He wrote letters with his own hand and transacted his business in the usual manner."<sup>156</sup> On August 8th he reported to General Philip Schuyler, the commander-in-chief of the Northern section the events of the last days and the favorable outcome of the battle. Schuyler answered on August 9th from Albany..." Haberle searched in both Albany and Washington for this report but was unable to locate it.<sup>157</sup> A response to Herkimer is not found among Schuyler's papers. It is also possible that the loss of blood as well as pain associated with the injury Herkimer sustained and the subsequent amputation of his leg would result in greatly diminished lucidity so that even if he composed a report its accuracy might be questionable.<sup>158</sup>

On the morning of August 6 (Colbreth says between nine and ten, Willett eleven, St. Leger "in the morning"), three men arrived at Fort Stanwix, having been sent by Herkimer to inform Gansevoort of his arrival at Oriskany with one thousand militia and his intention to relieve the fort. Adam Hellmer stated after the battle that he arrived at the fort at one in the afternoon.<sup>159</sup> According to Colbreth, Herkimer requested that Gansevoort fire a cannon to signal the men's safe arrival at Fort Stanwix and this was done. Herkimer also asked that, should the fire of small arms be heard at the fort, reinforcement be sent to his aid.<sup>160</sup> Neither Colbreth nor Willett indicate that any firing was heard but Gansevoort sent Willett on a sortie from the fort. It is not clear if this was in response to a request from Herkimer which had been misunderstood by Colbreth, or was decided upon by Gansevoort and/or Willett independently. Willett seems to suggest that the idea originated at the fort. "In order to render him what service we could in his march, it was agreed that I should make a sally from the fort with 250 men, consisting of one half Gansevoorts, one half Massachusetts ditto and one field piece (an iron three pounder)."<sup>161</sup> Whether he intended to join up with Herkimer or simply act as a diversion

for troops besieging the fort is also unknown, but he did raid two Indian camps, destroying provisions, and carrying off wagonloads of blankets, spears, tomahawks, and clothing and capturing five colors which were subsequently flown from the fort as a symbol of victory. Colbreth reported that four scalps were also brought in by Willett's men, including those of the girls killed while picking berries.<sup>162</sup> Six people in the camps were killed, four taken prisoner (three of whom were wounded), and the rest scattered in the woods. Willett's party sustained no losses.

One of the prisoners was Lieut. George Singleton of Montreal who was in Stephen Watts' company and it was from Singleton that Willet claimed the people in Fort Stanwix first learned of the battle of Oriskany. Singleton also reported to Willett that Sir John Johnson was with him in the camp and ran off toward the river.<sup>163</sup> Since, according to St. Leger, Sir John was in charge of the Indians, this would seem to be unlikely since the battle was still going on.<sup>164</sup> However, the battle itself may have only been assumed by Singleton since he did know that troops had been dispatched to intercept Herkimer and the rebel militia. Alternately, Singleton or others (perhaps some of the wounded) may have returned from Oriskany to bring word to St. Leger but there is no indication of this.

Having learned from Molly Brant of Herkimer's approach and seeing four men enter the fort that morning through what he had believed to be an impenetrable swamp, St. Leger assumed that Gansevoort knew help was on the way. He therefore decided to send the entire corps of Indians as well as Butler's Rangers and as many troops as he could spare (he reported the total number of white men was eighty) to meet Herkimer, fearing that if he waited, his forces would be caught between Herkimer's militia and a sally from Fort Stanwix. Sir John was placed at the head of the party. At this time the British had 110 men working to re-open Wood Creek which explains why there were so few regular troops to be spared. According to St. Leger, the troops were to be in front with the Indians on the flanks.<sup>165</sup>

The most coherent description of the battle at Oriskany comes from Norton, though it is no doubt colored, as is St. Leger's, by his own bias. The importance of Norton's account rests upon it being the only report made within a reasonable time of the event from an Indian perspective and his recounting is the closest we can get to Brant's interpretation since Brant himself did not write about the battle.<sup>166</sup>

The arrangement for the Battle was made about half way between the Fort and a Stream called Orhiska or Ariska. The Line extended obliquely to the

right, along the path by which the Enemy were to advance. The left Wing extended a small distance beyond the path. Immediately where it met the Line, Sir John Johnson, with a part of his Regiment, took position.

The Ondowaga [Senecas] were on the right. The Americans, advancing by Divisions with full front, came in contact with the Center of their Line a considerable time before it was intersected by the Path, - and then the Ondowaga Warriors began the fight with their usual Spirit: - They soon broke that part of the American Line which fronted them, but were not sufficiently numerous to assail the whole, the Contest however was maintained with great warmth for a considerable part of the Day. Finally a remnant of the Enemy retreated in good order to a Pine Wood Thicket, of a very difficult access, encumbered with fallen Trees, - where they could not be assailed, but at a great disadvantage. The Warriors, returning from the pursuit & slaughter of the routed Enemy, had begun to surround this hold, when their Attention was called to their own encampment at the Fort, which from the firing they heard from that Quarter, - they had reason to suppose had been attacked.

On returning, they found that the Americans had made a sally from the Fort, & done some trifling mischief. In this Battle the Five Nations lost about Fifty men, - a great part of whom belonged to the Ondowaga. On the part of the Enemy however, the loss was more considerable, it being computed at Five Hundred Men, together with General Herkemer. On the side of these, a Party of the Oniadass fought. It is said that in the commencement, the Warriors of the Five Nations immediately advancing in the front, were more annoyed by the Loyalists in the rear keeping up an inconsiderate Fire, - which as they were mixed in combat with the Enemy, did equal injury to both: A celebrated War Chief of the Ondagawa, - (of the Ottigaumi race,) appeared to have fallen by their Fire, - as he was found after the Battle shot through the Back, with his face towards the Enemy.

Although the event of this Day was glorious for the Nottowegui [Seneca] Warriors, who gained so complete a Victory over an Enemy nearly double their number, without being more than half armed, yet the effect was such as could only have been expected from a Defeat: - The number of the Wounded being very great, & the Villages of the confederates at a small Distance, (the most remote three or four Days Journey,) - they began to remove from there, where they might be better taken care of, without incommoding their operations. From this movement, - Col: St. Leger, imagining that the Warriors were about to abandon him, immediately raised the Siege, leaving his Baggage and Tents standing; - It is not improbable that his retreat might have been hastened by a false rumour of General Arnold's being on his march to raise the Siege, - with Ten Thousand Men.<sup>167</sup>

Norton's account is quite similar to reports made by others with the exception of his dismissal of Willett's raid as resulting in only "trifling mischief" when it is clear that the impact on the Indians was critical in that they were left without clothing. The loss of weapons and ammunition was also important as the Indians (except for those with Brant) were probably underarmed from the beginning. This was the result of many of them believing they had been invited to a council or to trade and therefore not bringing weapons or it could be attributed to errors made by Butler and/or Claus in allocating and/or collecting supplies. Norton's account also makes it very clear that the Indians left the Oriskany battle because they heard the firing at their own camps. Therefore, their actions stemmed not from cowardice or shattered morale as imputed by Thacher but self-defense, since they knew that St. Leger had no forces with which to protect their camps.<sup>168</sup>

Without Herkimer's report, only early secondary sources remain to reconstruct what occurred from the rebel perspective.<sup>169</sup> These were collected either by their authors or their paid representatives as oral or written recollections, some of which are the first-hand reports of participants, who by then were quite elderly, but others are the oral traditions of their descendants or residents of the Mohawk Valley. Reports by Oneidas then living in Wisconsin appear in Draper.<sup>170</sup> These recollections concern personal exploits and experiences rather than overall strategy and tactics. Nevertheless, they provide an important human perspective to a bloody and violent battle which is missing in the formal accounts of military leaders, often concerned more with justifying their own actions or inactions and assigning blame to someone else.

Herkimer sent Adam Hellmer and two others to Fort Stanwix to alert Gansevoort of the advancing relief column. It would seem that Herkimer was awaiting the cannon signal from the fort confirming their arrival before beginning his march. However, other officers in the militia were impatient to begin (among them was Col. Ebenezer Cox whose outburst at Unadilla almost triggered violence) and suggested that Herkimer's delay was occasioned by cowardice rather than prudence and reminding the militia that his brother was a Tory.

Nicholas Herkimer was a powerful man in Tryon County, continuing his father's enterprises of portaging goods around the Little Falls Carrying Place, renting land, lending money, grinding grain, and selling rum. As early as 1756 Sir William complained about the Herkimers providing "unreasonable quantities" of rum to the Indians. At his death Nicholas owned 2,330 acres and controlled many more. Although most

landowners in the county owned slaves, the Herkimers were unusual in the number they owned (thirty-three in August of 1777) and their dependence on slave labor. It is quite possible that their “hegemonic dominance in the region” contributed to the overt hostility expressed by Ebenzer Cox toward Nicholas Herkimer at Unadilla and prior to the march to Oriskany.<sup>171</sup>

Herkimer was probably still wary of his troops as they had refused his orders in the past and wanted to ensure a successful march to the fort. In addition to his military concerns, Herkimer may also have considered more personal issues. Henry A. Flanders, who claimed to have been present at conversations between Herkimer and the Committee, stated that Herkimer wished to wait for reinforcements but when accused of cowardice by a member of the Committee, Herkimer pointed out that “he [Herkimer] could go better than the others for he had no children, but he felt for his soldiers who had families and no one to depend on if they were killed.”<sup>172</sup> It is also possible that Flanders’ memory was influenced by the outcome of the battle and the devastation it brought to the families in the valley. Finally Herkimer relented and the militia began to move toward Fort Stanwix. Norton reported the rebels advanced by divisions, implying an order to a march which others described as disorganized. Claus describes their march as careless as they moved into the trap.<sup>173</sup>

An ambush was set up along a ravine through which the old military road passed (Fig. 4). The area was heavily wooded and the creek at the bottom had to be crossed by means of a corduroy bridge. The location was ideal for a surprise attack and Herkimer, in a less harried condition, would have been aware of the danger inherent in this situation. It seems, however, as if the militia had exchanged its “pusillanimous” spirit for a reckless one. The organization of the ambush has variously been attributed to Brant, Butler, the Seneca chief Old Smoke, and Sir John and it is unlikely that its origin will ever be known. It is not improbable that it emerged from strategic discussions among all of them.

As Visscher’s regiment and the baggage train at the end of the column entered the ravine, the trap was sprung as the Indians rushed down upon them. There is disagreement also as to whether the Indian attack came too soon. St. Leger claims they didn’t follow orders but this is suspect since he attributed every failure to the Indians.<sup>174</sup> Norton’s report concurred that the Indians opened fire but one could read into it the suggestion that the action was somewhat precipitous. Regardless of how it started, there is agreement on the result. The rebel line was broken with many of the leaders of the





Fig. 4. Joseph Robertaccio at the head of the first ravine, Oriskany Battlefield. 1996. Photograph by Joy Bilharz.

militia falling in the first minutes. The troops in the rear were able to flee (which suggests the trap was sprung earlier than intended) but were pursued by British and Indian forces. The fighting which ensued was hand-to-hand, necessitated in part by the locale and in part by the Indians' lack of guns. Shooting from behind trees, the rebels soon realized that as men paused to reload, warriors would move in to tomahawk them; this was solved by placing two men behind each tree. The Indian adjustment to this tactic is unknown. Herkimer himself was shot through the leg and his horse killed, but he had his saddle placed under a tree where he sat smoking his pipe and directing the rebel forces. At some point during the battle, there was a rainstorm which brought about a lull in the fighting. At this time, Herkimer was able to regroup his remaining men on the higher ground and arranged them in circles for improved defense. Some of Sir John's troops attempted to impersonate rebels in order to get closer to the enemy forces but their ruse was discovered at the last minute. Stone refers to these men as "Johnson's Greens", because of the green facing on their uniforms, and although this name is common in later reports, there is no evidence of it having been in use at this time.<sup>175</sup>



The fighting was particularly vicious as it pitted neighbor against neighbor or former neighbor. For example, General Herkimer's brother, Johan Jost, was a captain in the British Indian Department. The arrival of Sir John's forces, many of whom had fled the Mohawk Valley with him, particularly incensed the rebel forces. As previously noted, the battle took on many aspects of a civil war for the non-Indian soldiers. This feature was also present on the Indian side, because along with the rebels was a contingent of between sixty and one hundred Oneida warriors. In general, the Iroquois and other Indians, even when taking different sides in European contests, tried to avoid fighting each other; this did not happen at Oriskany where there was open fighting between Oneidas on one side and (primarily) Senecas and Mohawks on the other. It would be incorrect to see Oriskany only as the confluence of two civil wars or in exclusively racial terms. Many Indians and whites had lived together in harmony prior to the Revolution and those personal friendships and alliances were also shattered or re-enforced by the conflict.

The violence of the struggle, which lasted between five and six hours, was described to Lyman Draper by Governor Blacksnake, one of the war chiefs appointed by the Senecas at Oswego:

- then we have met the Enemy at the Place appointed Near a Small creek, where had the Six thousand men, that they 3 cannon and we have none, But Tomehawks and a few guns amongst us, But agreed to fight with Tomehawk Skulling Knife as we approach to a fighting we had to prepare to make one fire and Run amongst them we So, while we Doing of it, feels no more to Kill the Beast, and killed most all, the americans army, only a few white man Escape from us there I have seen many narrow places and close to hand to be Kill by the Speare in the End of muskett, that I had to Denfended mysilfe By my hand and Exsivitive act, During all the afternoon, But take tomehawk and knifes and Swords to cut Down men with it, there I have Seen the most Dead Bodies all it over that I never Did see, and never will again I thought at that time the Blood Shed a Stream Running Down on the Decending ground During the afternoon, and yet some living crying for help, But have no mercy on to be spared.<sup>176</sup>

Many other writers have agreed with Blacksnake that the battle of Oriskany was one of the bloodiest battles of the American Revolution.<sup>177</sup>

## **The Aftermath**

An important issue on which the archival evidence sheds little light is the ultimate disposition of the bodies of those who fell at Oriskany. We have been unable to locate any

contemporary document which addresses this question. The following is a detailed summary of what little written information is available; oral traditions and interpretations will be dealt with separately in Chapter 4. Blacksnake reported that the soldiers taken prisoner by the Indians were all clubbed to death running the gauntlet and that "...we never undertake to Barrying them, So many of them, we only Covered up with Brushes..."<sup>178</sup> This refers only to prisoners and Blacksnake made no mention of what happened to the slain Senecas, whom he numbered at thirty. Where the prisoners were killed is unknown, though it would logically have been somewhere between Oriskany and the Indian camp at the Lower Landing.

Simms, in his *Frontiersmen of New York*, (1882) mentions bodies seven times. It is clear that they remained strewn on the battlefield for a long period. Because the line of march would have stretched for at least a mile when the trap was sprung, it is likely that the bodies were widely dispersed. Simms stated that the British removed the wounded but could neither collect nor bury the dead and he even named some of those whose bodies were left behind (Captains McDonald, Wilson, and Hare).<sup>179</sup> James Williamson, who had been a soldier with Benedict Arnold's relief column and who later served at Fort Stanwix, told Simms as an old man that it was hoped (by whom he does not say) that Arnold's troops would bury the bodies, but after two weeks of very warm weather the stench was "intolerable" and the soldiers avoided the field.<sup>180</sup> Jones claimed that Arnold buried the remains of the men he found on the field on August 25. If this were true, it is hard to understand why Williamson would not have known since he described the march with Arnold and mentioned the bodies.<sup>181</sup> Forensic anthropologists estimate that bodies exposed in August in this region would be skeletalized in two weeks. Because at least some of the men would have been clothed in wool or leather, the process of decay may have been somewhat delayed.<sup>182</sup>

Nicholas Stoner, a musician in Williamson's company, saw decaying bodies near the mouth of Oriskany Creek as well as nine bodies across the road "...disposed in regular order, as was imagined by the Indians after their death" which seems to indicate ritual treatment of some kind for a few Indian bodies. The road in this case must refer to the old military road along which the militia marched; indications of it were still apparent in aerial photographs from the 1930s. Stoner further maintained that "Not an American killed in that battle was ever buried."<sup>183</sup> Peter S. Deggett, the Chairman of the German Flatts Committee wrote to the Chairman of the Albany Committee three days after the battle that "The Flower of our Militia either killed or wounded except 150 who stood the

Field and forced the enemy to retreat. The wounded are brought off by these brave men; the dead they left on the Field for want of a proper support.”<sup>184</sup> Frederick Sammons, upon returning to Oriskany “some days” after the battle, stated “I beheld the most shocking sight I had ever witnessed. The Indians and white men were mingled with one another, just as they had been left when death first completed his work. Many bodies had also been torn by wild beasts.”<sup>185</sup> Other sources noted the howling of wolves at night and they and other animals would have served to further dismember and scatter the human remains.

Valentine Fralick, a militiaman at the battle, saw his neighbor, William Merckly, mortally wounded and tried to help him but Indians were approaching. As his son John later told Simms, “When the immediate danger was over, he returned to the body of his comrade, who had been tomahawked and scalped, and giving it a temporary burial, he sought the American camp.”<sup>186</sup> It would be interesting to know if Fralick ever returned to re-inter the body as well as how many others behaved in a similar fashion. The survivors did attempt to locate others within a day or two of the battle, but for the most part, it is hard to see how any group could have spared people for burial duties. The British were in the process of opening up Wood Creek, the Indians were dealing with the pillaging of their camps, and the people within the fort were still under siege. The militia, minus most of its leadership, was returning to grieving families in the Mohawk Valley. The threat of Indian attack remained and their fields and farms required attention if their needs for the winter were to be met. If any group was able to treat its dead ritually, it would have been the Indians, and Stoner’s report suggests that at least one attempt was made. The British-allied Indians were camped separately from the bulk of the British forces and their absence if they returned to the field may not have been known and probably wouldn’t have been reported by St. Leger if he had been aware of it. The Oneidas would have been most likely to have retrieved their dead as the village of Oriska was nearby and they could have been given proper burial and mourning. This, too, would have gone unnoted by contemporary scribes.

Jones noted that when the area around the battleground was first settled by whites there were many skeletons lying uncovered on the ground and that a number of people from Rome, Westmoreland, and Whitestown collected the bones in carts and interred them in a common grave.<sup>187</sup> The organizer of this group was a Judge Hathaway but his personal papers contain no information about this.<sup>188</sup> Joseph Robertaccio<sup>189</sup> suggests that, as the judge was a well-known Mason, this may have been a Masonic project, but a history of the local lodge<sup>190</sup> makes no mention of it.

The heaviest losses among British forces and their allies were sustained by the Indians, and in particular the Senecas, who lost five of their chiefs. These were war chiefs appointed at Oswego and not league sachems but they would have been among the very best of the Seneca fighters allied with the British. These men would not only have been outstanding warriors but would have also had responsibility for Indian strategy and tactics. This tragedy was compounded by the effects of Willett's sortie which left them without clothing, camp goods, and weapons. Mary Jemison recounted the great mourning which occurred when the Senecas arrived at her town after the battle.<sup>191</sup>

William Fenton was told by Arthur Parker in 1933 that the Senecas lost their medicine bundles in the battle of Oriskany.<sup>192</sup> Depending on the type of medicine bundle referred to, this loss could have occurred on the battlefield itself, or in the camps. If in the latter, the medicines involved would have been healing medicines, probably in the hands of the women. Their ritual importance would have been less than the individual medicines carried by the warriors which would have had ritual significance for the individual as well as perhaps the larger group of warriors. Because Willett's report dismisses items not readily recognized by him as "Indian trinkets," it is impossible to determine what valued Indian objects he may have taken or destroyed.

With so much carnage on both sides, it is difficult to see a victory for either. Unable to continue the fight without the bulk of their forces because the Indians had gone to protect their camps from Willett's attack, the British withdrew, leaving the rebels alone on the field. For the rebels, this would seem to indicate a tactical victory but a strategic failure, since the reinforcements did not reach Fort Stanwix which remained invested. Nevertheless, the British claimed it as a victory<sup>193</sup> and the first rebel report did the same.<sup>194</sup>

Stone claimed that the first formal report of the clash at Oriskany arrived at Fort Stanwix at 9 p.m. that night under cover of a flag by John Butler and in the form of a letter to Colonel Gansevoort from the rebel prisoners Colonel Bellinger and Major Frey.<sup>195</sup> Colbreth reported that the people in the fort were first apprised of the battle by Singleton and the prisoners brought in by Willett, and Willett himself seemed to confirm this.<sup>196</sup> Willett did bring in prisoners, Singleton among them, but Singleton was wrong about the whereabouts of Sir John; furthermore, the battle was still going on and would not begin to wane until the Indians left in response to Willett's raid. The most Willett could have known at the time was that British forces had left the camp to stop Nicholas Herkimer. Singleton, who had been wounded at Oriskany, reported that the encounter with the

militia began two hours prior to Willett's raid. It is not clear why Singleton was at the Indian camp since it would be logical to assume that the wounded would have returned to St. Leger's encampment. Singleton also reported Stephen Watts, the brother-in-law of Sir John, as dead, yet he was captured and later abandoned on the field, either dead or dying. Colbreth stated that among the enemy prisoners was "a Tory named Harkeman, brother to the General."<sup>197</sup> From St. Leger's reports to Carleton, it is known that Johan Jost Herkimer was a member of the Indian Department and therefore likely to have been in the Indian camps, but he was also in charge of re-opening Wood Creek, where he was more likely to have been since the Indians were with Butler and Brant. Given the romantic interpretation of the battle by later historians, it is surprising that this aspect has not received more attention. The pro-British Herkimer eventually went to Canada with other Mohawk Valley Tories and his grandchildren married descendants of Joseph Brant.

Both Willett and Colbreth stated that Butler's flag with Bellinger's and Frey's letter came on August 8 along with a demand from St. Leger for Gansevoort to surrender Fort Stanwix.<sup>198</sup> A surgeon accompanied Butler in order to examine Singleton's wounds. The prisoners' letter to Gansevoort told of the battle, reported that Herkimer and most of the officers were killed, the British probably already at Albany, and urged that he surrender the fort. Their information was also wrong; Herkimer would live for nearly ten days and Burgoyne would never reach Albany. The accuracy of intelligence reports prior to the battle contrasts strongly with the erroneous accounts which circulated afterwards. This reflected the kind of fighting which occurred, where it was virtually impossible for any individual to know more than what had occurred within his own limited area. Gansevoort may have been suspicious that the letter from the rebel prisoners was written under duress or he may have been determined to maintain the garrison at all costs as he had promised Schuyler. At any rate, he refused to surrender even though he must have realized that no aid would be forthcoming from Herkimer and the militia.

With his usual pomposity, St. Leger demanded the surrender of the fort under threat of turning the Indians loose upon the fort as well as the inhabitants of the Mohawk Valley. This was an audacious move on St. Leger's part because he knew the Indians were angry not only at the losses they suffered, but also at his refusal to let them attack the rebels as they left the battlefield. There was certainly no guarantee that they would follow his orders, though later they would certainly exact vengeance against Oneidas and whites in the Mohawk Valley on their own. In refusing to surrender, Gansevoort warned St.

Leger that if women and children were harmed, the responsibility would be on the heads of the British.

Schuyler waited for word of the fate of Herkimer's march and ordered Wesson to join him whether he had to return to German Flatts or was able to hold his ground at Oriskany.<sup>199</sup> Shortly thereafter he received word from Peter Deygart pleading for help and reporting that the "...Militia are entirely cut to Pieces; the General is killed with most of the Field Officers." If aid was not forthcoming "...this Quarter must of course fall into the Enemy's Hands, as the whole of the Militia was in the Engagement except a few Guards that were stationed in different Places in the County consisting of the old men and those not able to march..."<sup>200</sup> Three days later Deygart reported to the Chairman of the Albany Committee that "By the Death of the most part of our Committee members, the Field Officers, and several being wounded, every thing is out of order, the people Intirely dispirited, our County at Esopus unrepresented, that we cannot hope to stand it any longer without your aid. We will not mention the shocking aspect our Fields do shew."<sup>201</sup> Schuyler immediately sent word to John Hancock asking him for aid since Schuyler himself had no men to spare. The general also reported that Fort Stanwix had been attacked prior to the Oriskany battle, though the source of this erroneous information is unknown.<sup>202</sup>

Despite enemy shellfire, Fort Stanwix was standing firm. Gansevoort sent a flag to St. Leger demanding that he put the message carried by Butler into writing, which he did. Gansevoort replied that he would "...defend in favour of the United States to the Last Extremity." When St. Leger received his reply, the shelling commenced again and continued until dawn the next morning. Gansevoort ordered that provisions be brought to the parade ground in case the barracks were to catch fire and placed money and public papers in the bombproof.<sup>203</sup> At one a.m. on August 9, Willett and Lieut. Stockwell left Fort Stanwix to raise men "to extirpate this miscreant band."<sup>204</sup>

Help was already on the way. Despite the obvious blow of being removed from command and replaced with Gates, who was more acceptable to New Englanders, Schuyler sent word to Gansevoort that troops had left Albany on August 9 and others were following, and he ordered Wesson at Fort Dayton to go to Fort Stanwix. He reported that Burgoyne was at Ft. Edward, the Continental Army at Stillwater, and General Howe apparently planned on taking Philadelphia rather than joining Burgoyne. Schuyler also said he had received intelligence from the Oneidas that the whole of the

enemy force totaled 550 whites and 600 Indians, including women and children. This, he assured Wesson, would mean that his force plus the militia would be adequate to end the siege.<sup>205</sup> Henry Dearborn noted in his journal that Learned and Arnold left on August 8.<sup>206</sup> Washington, at his headquarters in Bucks County, subsequently informed General Gates that “General Schuyler’s sending a reinforcement up to Fort Schuyler I think was absolutely necessary; and I am of the opinion, that particular attention should be paid to that quarter, as a successful stroke of the enemy there might be a means of encouraging the whole of the Six Nations to unite against us.”<sup>207</sup>

For several days there was occasional bombardment at Fort Stanwix. The British diverted Wood Creek in an attempt to cut off the fort’s water supply, but the defenders had already dug two wells inside and had an adequate supply.<sup>208</sup> By August 13, Wood Creek had been opened.<sup>209</sup> Both sides experienced some desertion and the siege continued with little change.

In the Mohawk Valley, however, both sides were attempting to intimidate the inhabitants. Sir John Johnson, John Butler and Daniel Claus issued an appeal to the inhabitants of Tryon County similar to St. Leger’s message to Gansevoort, threatening them with Indian attack if they didn’t join the British.<sup>210</sup> The British command had assumed that their sympathizers would willingly rally to the cause once troops were present but this was clearly not to be. Carleton also hoped that the pro-British faction of the Oneidas would join. Similar threats were coming from rebels, who said that rewards would be placed on the heads of Tories taken dead or alive.<sup>211</sup> As he neared Fort Stanwix, Arnold offered pardon to British sympathizers if they surrendered their weapons and swore allegiance to the rebels; otherwise he promised to show them no mercy. Arnold demonstrated that he could be St. Leger’s bombastic equal: “WHEREAS a certain Barry St. Leger, a Brigadier-general in the service of George of Great Britain, at the head of a banditti of robbers, murderers, and traitors, composed of savages of America, and more savage Britons, (among whom is the noted Sir John Johnson, John Butler, and Daniel Claus)...”<sup>212</sup>

During the night of August 18, the British began a trench in the direction of the northwest bastion and were within 150 yards of the ditch by daylight. Men in the fort harassed them with grapeshot, followed by cannon and small arms as they grew nearer. The night of August 21 saw constant bombardment of the fort while rebel marksmen harassed the British who had begun to construct a bomb battery. Several people in the



fort were wounded, including a pregnant woman, the second woman in the fort known to have been shot.<sup>213</sup> By this time the Indians had become disappointed at the ineffectiveness of the siege and begun to leave. According to Claus, the chiefs advised St. Leger to retreat to Oswego to and to get more men and better artillery from Niagara and it was this decision which led him to end the siege.<sup>214</sup>

At German Flatts, Arnold was able to raise barely a hundred militia to join his 1200 Continentals. Intelligence suggested that the British forces were double his own and although he expected Oneidas and Tuscaroras to join him momentarily, he requested a thousand more light troops from Schuyler. He knew Schuyler wanted to meet with the Indians in Albany but suggested that the presents intended for distribution there would have better effect if they were sent to German Flatts immediately. He reported that the rest of the Six Nations had already joined the British. Arnold intended a quick march, as he asked that the troops be sent in small companies with only one change of clothes. Tents could be sent in on wagons and no other baggage would be needed.<sup>215</sup> Clinton would later suggest that exaggerated reports of British strength were contrived to delay Arnold's march in order to give St. Leger time to retreat.<sup>216</sup>

The morning of August 22 saw a strong bombardment of Fort Stanwix but a British deserter reported that 3000 men were coming to reinforce the fort, Burgoyne had been routed, and St. Leger was retreating hastily. Cannon fire from the fort was unanswered and late that afternoon men came in to confirm the report and indicate that St. Leger had left much of his baggage behind. Gansevoort sent thirty men and two wagons to the enemy camp where they killed two Indians and took four prisoners, one of whom was an Indian. They returned to the fort because of darkness with all they could carry from the camp. That night Han Yost Schuyler and another man came to the fort and described what had happened to the British.<sup>217</sup>

Han Yost, a British sympathizer had been captured at German Flatts and confined at Fort Dayton. In response to pleas for his life from his family, Arnold agreed to send him on a ruse to St. Leger. Han Yost is variously reported as retarded, "misty minded," uneducated, etc. It is, however, unlikely that Arnold would have used someone clearly mentally or emotionally ill in his scheme. Arriving at the British encampment, Han Yost reported that 2000 Continental troops, a large number of militia, and two field pieces were on their way to Fort Stanwix. Oneidas whom Han Yost had met along the way and informed of the plan, subsequently arrived with similar reports which provided further

evidence of the wisdom of retreat to the Indians still besieging the fort. Han Yost also said there were nearly sixty drunken Indians at Fort Newport, but Major Cochran, sent by Gansevoort to verify this, found no Indians but did find eight batteaux on Wood Creek which St. Leger had abandoned. At midnight Gansevoort sent word to Arnold that the siege was ended. The birth of a daughter to the woman previously wounded provided more good news.<sup>218</sup>

With the arrival of daylight, Gansevoort again sent Cochran out to collect what he had been unable to retrieve the previous evening from the main camp; this included trenching tools, ammunition, and camp equipment. A group sent to the south camp at the Lower Landing returned with fifteen wagons and a three pound field piece. Scouts were also sent out who brought in a German prisoner who stated that when St. Leger's forces were about ten miles from the fort, they were attacked by the Indians who accompanied them. The prisoner said eight other Germans had also escaped into the woods but feared to come to the fort because Butler had told them that they would be hanged by the rebels. When Arnold arrived that afternoon (August 23), he was greeted by a mortar discharge from the artillery taken from the British and the fire of thirteen cannons from the bastions of Fort Stanwix.<sup>219</sup> Arnold had received Gansevoort's express and sent 900 men on a forced march to the fort in hope of attacking St. Leger's rear.<sup>220</sup> He reported to Gates from Fort Stanwix that he was unable to find the retreating enemy but that he sent out an Oneida scouting party and ordered five hundred men to Lake Oneida. He noted that the Oneidas and Tuscaroras were very friendly, but that the other Six Nations Indians were "villains" who should be treated as such.<sup>221</sup>

The first meeting of the Tryon County Committee of Safety after the battle of Oriskany was held at the house of Mr. Fox. Disheartened by the deaths of five committee members and the wounding of several others, the committee wrote to Governor Clinton, noting that there were British sympathizers among them, especially women (perhaps alluding here to Molly Brant), and asked for orders which "restore harmony to this County."<sup>222</sup> At the same time, Clinton wrote to the Albany Council of Safety, forwarding letters from Gansevoort and Arnold describing the end of the siege and claiming that Burgoyne would soon retreat. As for the traumatic conditions in Tryon County, he stated "The enemy are in our power, could the militia only be prevailed on to believe it."<sup>223</sup> Grieving for their dead still unburied on the field of battle, their crops in need of harvest, known and unknown enemy among them, optimism would have been an irrational response by the citizens of Tryon County.

When St. Leger and his remaining forces arrived at Oswego on August 26, he received a letter from Burgoyne requesting that he join him, either by marching through the woods or by batteaux via the St. Lawrence River. Claus claimed to have taken responsibility for clothing the Indians by purchasing goods for them at Oswego and they returned home contented, promising to return when Butler returned from Montreal with supplies.<sup>224</sup>

Recriminations had also begun by this time. Burgoyne complained to Lord Germain that Sir John was wrong in predicting the rising of the Mohawk Valley residents to the British cause and his own disillusion with professed “Loyalists.” Burgoyne’s complaints are reminiscent of Schuyler’s about the militia. Furthermore, Burgoyne had realized that Howe was to be of no help. This he attributed to the failure of his messages to get through to Howe and his receipt of a message from Sir William announcing his intention to go to Pennsylvania.<sup>225</sup>

St. Leger complained to Carleton that the intelligence received in Canada about the condition of Fort Stanwix was incredibly wrong, conveniently forgetting his own dismissal of contrary information provided by Claus’s prisoners. He reported that the rebel militia was in high spirits because they never believed that British regulars would be given to an inexperienced commander and expected Sir John to be leading 500-600 Tories. In order to give more status to the expedition and awe the Indians, he assumed the title of Brigadier General until his junction with Burgoyne. Even though his mission was unsuccessful, he wanted Carleton to confirm this rank.<sup>226</sup>

## THE “WESTERN INDIANS” AND THE MISSISSAUGAS

### “The Western Indians”

The primary documents dealing with the siege and battle do not treat the non-Iroquois warriors separately from the Iroquois except for several mentions of the Mississaugas, who accompanied St. Leger from Canada. The Indians who came from the Ohio country and western Great Lakes are glossed as “western Indians.” It is likely that these warriors fought in concert with other non-native forces. The participation of native warriors from as far away as Detroit demonstrates the impact that the Revolution had on indigenous populations far distant from the eastern seaboard and further illustrates the international dimension of the Oriskany battle.

The “Western Indians” who joined the British forces at the siege of Fort Stanwix and the Battle of Oriskany set out from Detroit, traveling on the Gage to Fort Niagara and then on to Oswego or Irondequoit to join other members of the expedition. Involvement of Indians residing along the western Great Lakes in Revolutionary battles and policies had its origin long before 1777. The British government directed Sir Guy Carleton, Governor of Canada, to establish subsidiary governments at the western sites of Detroit, Kaskaskia, Michilimackinac, Vincennes, and Gaspe. A Lieutenant Governor and Superintendent were appointed to handle all administrative duties, including Indian affairs and trade, which had previously been handled by the military. Stevens interprets this as a return to Sir William Johnson’s ideas for centralized regulation but it was placed under Carleton rather than the Indian Department.<sup>227</sup> Of the major interior posts, only Niagara did not have civilian officials who answered to Carleton.

In June of 1775, Guy Johnson, who had succeeded his uncle, Sir William Johnson, as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department following the latter’s death during treaty negotiations at Johnson Hall in 1774, met at Oswego with Seneca, Onondaga, Delaware, Caughnawaga, and Wyandot (Huron) representatives. The Hurons had originally come from Detroit and it was their responsibility to take news of the meeting to Detroit and the Lakes Tribes.<sup>228</sup> In May of 1776 John Butler recruited Ottawa and Chippewa warriors from Detroit who apparently fought with Carleton through the Lake Champlain campaign in October.<sup>229</sup> From Michilimackinac, Captain Arent Schuyler DePeyster sent five hundred western Indians (including Sioux, Chippewas, Menominees, Fox, and probably Sauks and Winnebagoes) across Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, down the Ottawa River to Lake of Two Mountains. However, Carleton’s orders to stop the Indian march were received too late and the Indians eventually returned home, promising to hold themselves in readiness for a campaign in the spring.<sup>230</sup>

By the fall, Carleton determined that a limited number of Indians would be used in the 1777 campaign and he instructed the officials at Niagara (Caldwell), Detroit (Hamilton), and Michilimackinac (de Peyster) to prepare them. Charles de Langlade, a Metis on the British payroll at Michilimackinac, was told to bring two hundred warriors dependent on Michilimackinac to Montreal.<sup>231</sup> British officials in Quebec and London had difficulty in deciding whether or not to use Indian warriors, and if so, how their contributions could best be utilized. Requests for warriors from the west were often delayed because of the exigencies of travel, including getting orders from England to

America as well as from Quebec to the western posts. As will be seen, Indians were sometimes needed for multiple campaigns and it was left to the post commanders, both civil and military, to allocate the available warriors among competing campaigns, and, at the same time to maintain peace among the Indians and adequate reserve forces to protect the forts.

The relationship between Guy Johnson and Guy Carleton was difficult at best. Although the British government at Whitehall had agreed that Guy Johnson should assume the duties of Sir William, he still lacked a royal commission formally appointing him to the position and he was dependent on Carleton for supplies and money. Technically, Guy Johnson's only superior in America was Gage who had authorized him in May of 1775 to mobilize the northern warriors and implied that he retained charge of all the tribes in the Northern Department.<sup>232</sup> At the same time, the appointment of officials at the western posts who reported to Carleton made the chain of command unclear. Carleton's appointment of Henry Hamilton at Detroit essentially gave the latter control over Indian affairs at that post outside the oversight of Johnson and the Department of Indian Affairs. The coordination of Indian recruitment was therefore more complex. The situation was further exacerbated because, as previously noted, Carleton disliked the Johnson family; as a result, he supported Butler in his conflict with Claus, whom he saw as closely associated with the Johnsons (Claus had married one of Sir William's daughters). The sniping and intrigue between the two factions would continue for years and deeply color reports on activities issued by all of the principals.

There were four major Indian nations in the region of Detroit that could raise twelve hundred warriors from a total population of four thousand. The Wyandots, Ottawas, Potawatomis and Chippewas had formed an alliance among themselves and the British collectively referred to them as the Lakes Tribes. These groups maintained alliances with the Delawares, Shawnees and Miamis as well as a wary friendship with the Six Nations. The Wyandots acted as fire keepers for the Lakes Tribes although the Chippewas (known also as Ojibwas in Canada) were most numerous and could muster between 625 and 650 warriors at Detroit within a short period of time.<sup>233</sup> Each of the nations also had settlements in other locations.

The Mississaugas were a branch of the Algonquian-speaking Ojibwas and had migrated from the Upper Great Lakes between 1690 and 1710. Within a decade they were established in what is now southern Ontario from Detroit to the end of Lake

Ontario. Although nominal friends of the French, they allied themselves with the Six Nations and British in 1746 and had particularly close ties with the Senecas.<sup>234</sup>

Indians from the western Great Lakes were engaged in Revolutionary War campaigns in New England as well as central New York but their participation rarely receives attention. Of the more than forty Indian groups included within the Northern Department, the primary concern of the British was with the Iroquois as they were able to field a far greater number of warriors.<sup>235</sup> In addition, the Johnsons had close personal ties with the Mohawks, especially the Brant family. Records from the western posts indicate that hundreds of warriors from many western tribes were involved in raids and battles throughout the length of the frontier, especially in the Ohio Valley, and that the negotiations between the chiefs and warriors and delegates from Britain, the colonies and the Continental Congress were as complex as those between the Iroquois and the same entities. Many of the groups in the upper Great Lakes were emigrants from the east whose presence in the region was resented by groups long resident there. What are called tribes, nations, or confederacies are actually loose leagues of villages.<sup>236</sup> Unlike Iroquoia where there were clearly identified villages (castles) associated with particular tribes and/or leaders, many of the western Great Lakes settlements were what White calls “republican villages” whose residents were refugees from many different nations and settlements, and the villages often had deep internal divisions.<sup>237</sup> Although the tribal or national affiliation of leaders can often be ascertained, it is far less certain that their followers all had the same affiliation. In fact, tribal affiliation is an unreliable predictor of social or political action in the land White calls the *pays d'en haut* as there were many other potential loyalties that could be called upon.<sup>238</sup> Divisions within villages not only reflected ethnic differences but also political differences on the proper course(s) of action in the war between Britain and her North American colonies. As the fortunes of Britain and the colonies shifted, Indian individuals and groups re-evaluated their position vis-à-vis the major combatants. All knew that regardless of the outcome, there would be significant effects in the west. As with the Iroquois, the western Indians were primarily fighting to protect their own lands from intrusions by all outsiders as well as to maintain their access to trade goods. Shifting alliances, rather than indicating duplicity, represented Indian strategy to achieve these goals.

This section examines those groups living in the area of Detroit and specifically the forty-seven Chippewa, Ottawa, Huron, and Potawatomi warriors who joined the St.

Leger expedition. It is possible to narrow the focus because the available documents are very precise as to names and numbers of individuals. As a result, other groups have been excluded although it is certainly possible that Shawnees, Delawares, etc. are among the unnamed warriors who accompanied the chiefs.

What is striking about the record from Detroit is its completeness. Officials at Vincennes, Michilimackinac, Kaskaskia, and Gaspé did not document their interactions with Indians nor did they see fit to describe and justify their own policies and activities as did Henry Hamilton, the Lieutenant Governor at Detroit. There would appear to be two motivations for Hamilton's lengthy reports. First, more than the others, Hamilton was interested in the intricacies of policies and their long-term effects and he was able to put events into a broader context than his own post. He was particularly concerned, one might even argue paranoid, about the Spanish presence in New Orleans and potential collusion that might develop between the Spanish and French traders in the area. Access to European goods was important to the Indians not only for practical reasons, but also as a demonstration of alliance. Hamilton was well aware that the distribution of goods by Spanish, French, or rebel traders would ease the way for political influence. Although others were aware of these threats, Hamilton, more than any other official, faced them on a daily basis. The fact that he kept his superiors in both Canada and London informed of his concerns and activities suggests that he foresaw a future career for himself (as would be the case) but it would be erroneous to think that he was motivated only by self-promotion. Second, it is obvious from his letters that Hamilton was lonely and isolated and saw his letters as a way of maintaining contacts with a world that must have seemed increasingly distant to him. In sum, the letters and reports of Henry Hamilton represent the writings of a caring and competent official trying to determine the best course of action in a frontier post with little or no guidance from his superiors. It is also clear that he respected the Indian warriors and maintained close relationships with many for a long time. This is apparent not only in his descriptions of them but also in the records which show their continued personal loyalty to him.

### **The St. Leger Campaign**

The three-pronged attack strategy to isolate New England began to take shape in the fall of 1777 and plans for the Mohawk Valley campaign as a component of Burgoyne's push south to Albany became formal by the late winter. On 17 February, Lord George Germain informed Sir Guy Carleton that Native warriors would be necessary for the



campaign and that he was sending Daniel Claus to Canada for the secondary expedition (*i.e.* St. Leger's campaign) because of his influence and experience with both the Six Nations and the Lakes Indians.<sup>239</sup> Carleton assumed that he would be chosen to lead the expedition from Canada and was angered that General John "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne had been selected in his stead. The addition of Claus added insult to injury, as Claus was a member of the Johnson inner circle that Carleton perceived as acting against his interests. Carleton favored John Butler, who, not surprisingly, was an opponent of Claus. Germain's orders strongly suggest that Whitehall policymakers intended to supplement the Iroquois warriors who were always the primary Indian allies of the British.

By the end of March, Germain ordered Carleton to provide as many Indians and Canadians as he thought necessary and at the same time instructed Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton at Detroit to assemble Indians around that post for a diversion and alarm on the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania.<sup>240</sup> No mention was made of support for St. Leger by Lakes Indians at this time. In a letter dated 11 May, Hamilton noted that Indians had recently arrived at Detroit for a council which he estimated would begin around the 25th and that he would keep them there until letters with instructions arrived from Canada.<sup>241</sup>

Despite his pique at Germain, Carleton began arrangements for assembling Indians for both the Burgoyne and St. Leger expeditions. He instructed John Butler in a letter dated 18 May to "collect as large a body as possible of the Indians of the six nations and any others you might communicate with."<sup>242</sup> Although he knew that Claus was en route to Canada, Carleton appointed John Butler to be in charge of the Indians joining St. Leger, stating "...I know no person so capable of the conducting and management of the Indians." Similar instructions were sent to Bolton at Niagara and Carleton noted that the leaders of the Indians would be appointed by Butler and that Bolton should consult with St. Leger in regard to the location of the rendezvous of Indians and British troops.<sup>243</sup>

On 21 May, Carleton sent Hamilton a copy of the orders he had received from Germain and requested that Hamilton not draw off any Indians that were destined for the St. Leger campaign for frontier raids. Hamilton responded in a letter dated 15 June that Ottawas, Potawatomis, Hurons and Miamis as well as some Shawnees, Delawares, and Oushtanons (Ottawas) were at Detroit and he would keep them there as long as possible in expectation of orders from Carleton.<sup>244</sup> He believed that he would be able to assemble

a thousand warriors within a span of three weeks if their services were required by Carleton. Whether he was aware of the animosity that Carleton felt for Germain is unknown, but two days later Hamilton also wrote Germain (thereby covering himself on both sides of the dispute) stating that representatives from the Chippewas, Ottawas, Wyandots, Potawatomis and Delawares were present for the council. He noted that there were also Shawnees present although they had not sent chiefs of note, but that some were expected shortly.<sup>245</sup> Hamilton stated that there were 350 chiefs and warriors being provisioned by the fort and many more women and children but that these were being fed by the Indians rather than the post.

Reports of the Council held at Detroit are found in a June 16th letter from Hamilton to Carleton,<sup>246</sup> a June 17th letter from Hamilton to Germain,<sup>247</sup> and Hamilton's daily record of the meeting.<sup>248</sup> The latter is somewhat confused as to chronology as Hamilton does not use the pages of his notebook consecutively, recording the end of the council on page 148 but continuing the speeches on pages 149 through 151. The following description is derived from these sources (see Appendix 4 for transcripts).

Ten Indian Nations (Hamilton's terminology) were represented by village and/or war chiefs. These included the Ottawas (Attanas) with two village and five war chiefs, the Chippewas with one village and four war chiefs, the Washtanon Ottawas with three village and two war chiefs, the Hurons (Wyandots) with six village and three war chiefs, the Potawatomis of Detroit with seven village and four war chiefs, the Potawatomis of St. Joseph with three village and one war chief, the Miamis (Tawittamies) with two village and two war chiefs, the Shawnees with three war chiefs, the Delawares with one village and two war chiefs, and the Caghnanagae with one war chief. Also present were the Commander of the garrison, Captain Mompesson (who was engaged in a power struggle with Hamilton), Lieutenants Yonge, Mercer and Caldwell of the 8th Regiment, Jehu Hay, the Deputy Indian Agent, and seven interpreters for the Indians.

Hamilton opened the council by announcing a recent alliance between the Ottawas and the nations on the Wabash, noting the King's approval of their behavior, and promising clothing for the women and children present. Although there would be no rum available for the duration of the meeting, each nation would be given an axe and liquor at its conclusion. Black wampum was given to each nation.

Tourdating, a Wyandot village chief, explained the meaning of a large wampum belt sent by the Six Nations which was to be shown to the Hurons and the nations as far

west as the Wabash to “encourage them to a firm alliance in Support of His Majesty and his Government and to be seen as a whetstone for the axes of all the young men when called upon.” It is not clear if this is the belt that Hamilton then describes as “six feet long and thirty grains wide White with a Beaver of Black Wampum worked at one end” or another belt which he says has nine rows. The latter belt (if different) “was then delivered to the Wyandotts addressed to them and the Western Nations by the Six Nations desiring them to remember the engagements entered into last year to assure them to their intentions to fulfill their part and their resolution to act as they should be directed by the Father.”

Hamilton then told the assembly “His Majesty finding that the rebellious subjects will not give ear to the mercyfull terms he has thought proper for them, has ordered his Children in the Neighborhood of Michilimackinac and the Six Nations to take up the War Hatchet and strike the rebels till they come to a sense of their duty and ask forgiveness - Your Brothers have taken the hatchet as your Father the Great King ordered.”

This sequence indicates Hamilton’s priorities: the maintenance of peace among the western nations, a demonstration that the western Indians would not be operating in isolation but were following ties of friendship and alliance with other Indian nations and the King, and finally, a request that the assembled nations take up the hatchet in favor of the King as their Six Nations brothers had.

At noon of the following day, Hamilton presented the Indians with a red belt symbolizing the war axe and announced that he expected them to take it up in the name of the King and to use it in defense of his crown and their lands, wives, and children. The war song was sung and the belt taken up by Hamilton, Hay, the officers of the garrison, a Caughnawaga, the garrison’s officers, the interpreters and the chiefs. Several chiefs sang their war songs and stated they would encourage their young men to take up the hatchet. The Huron (Wyandot) Tsecudattong noted that he was a village chief but if the warriors of his village were to be hard pressed, he would rise to assist them. A chief from Caughnawaga<sup>249</sup> who was the father of John Montour,<sup>250</sup> a Delaware village chief, noted that his son had previously carried belts and intelligence from place to place but had never taken up arms. Now, however, “’tis time to untye his hands that he may take hold of it, I do accordingly loose them, that he may lay hold of, and use your Axe –” The Caughnawaga chief continued “I came here expressly to know your sentiments, and I

think I now know them, nothing could give me more pleasure as I have already lifted the Axe against the Great King's undutyfull children – You have always recommended to us to defend our possessions, the fear of losing them obliged me to act as I have, seeing what has passed, and knowing your words, I have been induced to untye the hands of John Montour, and this string [six strings of black wampum] is a witness to my satisfaction in what you have done.” As the axe was passed from chief to chief, each made a brief statement.

At the conclusion, the war axe was given to Duyentite, the Wyandot war chief, for safe keeping and Tsiondattong, a Wyandot village chief, addressed the group: “Father! You see this Axe, it has gone round to all our Brothers and is returned to us – You see the two War Chiefs who are to be the Guardians of it. I thank our brothers for their Union on this occasion. We shall keep it . . . use it when you shall order us . . . We pray the Master of life to favor our undertakings and we hope he will approve of this step as he does whatever is good and right, and hitherto we have had cause to approve of your prudence and good advice.” Hamilton complimented the Wyandots on being chosen guardians of the axe and the group adjourned to an open field where oxen were killed for them. The provision of food for Indian delegations was an important part of diplomacy and the feasting that followed added a social dimension as well.

The following morning was taken up by private meetings between Hamilton and several chiefs from each nation. Hamilton's report of statements made on the 19th of June does not indicate whether they were made in the context of those meetings or a general assembly of the chiefs. Much attention was given to an altercation the previous evening between the Oushatenon Ottawas and the Chippewas relating to a murder the previous winter of an Ottawa by a Chippewa. Hamilton presented the Ottawas with six strings of black wampum and a belt of seven rows of white wampum to “dry up your tears, and clear your hearts.” The former phrase is part of the Iroquois condolence ceremony and probably reflects the extent to which Indian diplomatic protocols had been adopted by British (and colonial) officials. The latter phrase is reminiscent of the condolence ceremony but has no precise parallel although it may have had a particular meaning for the Ottawas.

The unsettled nature of events along the frontier is clear from this report. Both whites and Indians sought to ascertain what was occurring along the frontier from the many reports coming in from all sources. Hamilton was especially wary of traders

moving among the many settlements whose loyalties were unclear and he refused to permit any to leave Detroit at this time in order to prevent knowledge of the council from spreading to the rebels and their allies. At the same time, he was also aware that many Indian nations were deeply divided and that their emissaries were sent to rebel strongholds such as Fort Pitt in order to learn what the other side was proposing. More than many others, Hamilton seems to have understood that the Indians' primary motivation in fighting would be to protect their own interests, not loyalty to the King or even to other Native groups. He expressed sympathy with the plight of the Shawnees and Delawares whose location (and exile from their homelands) made their position precarious because of threats of attack from frontier families and rebel forces. Both groups had serious internal divisions about the proper course to take in the conflict between Britain and her colonies.<sup>251</sup>

It is logical to assume that the chiefs and warriors believed most of their military undertakings would be in the Ohio Valley and along the Wabash but the only specifics mentioned by Hamilton relate to the recruitment of warriors to go to Niagara. "Children! As I have told you the Six Nations and the Mississagais are ready to act the same part at Niagara, as you have done here, if you chuse to send some fine Chiefs and Warriors there I shall send down one of my Chiefs (Ens Caldwell of the King's 8th Regt) who shall be their friend and should they go to War by that way will go along with them." Subsequently he placed this within a broader military context. "The King says to his Indian Children, rise up as one Man and repel these invaders of your properties, defend your lands, Your Old Men Your Women and Children – An Army from Canada shall press on them by way of the Lakes, another joined by the six nations and Mississagais shall fall upon them from Oswego, another aided by my Ships of War shall straighten them by the Way of N. England, and another by Philadelphia shall call their attention to the Southward while the Cherokees shall take advantage of their distraction. . ."

According to Hamilton, the days between 26 June and 13 July were "taken up principally in preparing and sending out parties to War which have been added to by the several Nations instead of falling off in their numbers." Unfortunately, he gives no specifics as to the objectives of these forays, how they were chosen or by whom, or how the participants were selected.

On the 26th of June, Carleton wrote to Germain from Quebec that "By accounts from Michilimackinac I learn that all the western nations are desirous of coming down,

and that the difficulty is to prevent the number of them from being so great as to cause distress to His Majestys service, one body consisting to a hundred and twenty are just arrived part of those I ordered last year they will follow General Burgoyne as fast as possible.”<sup>252</sup> Arent Schuyler DePeyster at Michilimackinac was as terse as Hamilton was verbose and there are no comparable records to indicate how the recruitment of Indian warriors was accomplished at that post. It appears, however, that the bulk of the warriors defined by Carleton as “western” were part of the Burgoyne rather than St. Leger forces.

As to St. Leger, Carleton stated “Lieutenant Colonel St Leger has likewise begun his movements, taking with him the detachment of the 34th and the Royal Regiment of New York which is increased to about 300 men, and a company of Canadians; He will be joined by the detachment of the 8th and the Indians of the six nations with the Missesagas as he proceeds...”

On the same date, John Butler wrote to Carleton from Niagara that he had provided clothing for a “great number of Indians” and expected more to arrive from Detroit within a few days.<sup>253</sup> By the beginning of July, the Indians who planned to join St. Leger were waiting to sail from Detroit to meet Butler at Niagara. On the 3rd of July Hamilton wrote to Carleton

...expect the Gage to Sail this day with the Savages an interpreter for the Hurons, and one for the 3 Nations – Ottawas, Chippewas, Poutewouattamies.

Ensign Caldwell has permission from Captain Lieutenant Mompesson to go to Niagara, and I venture to recommend him to Colonel St. Leger, he is an active young man who has acquired some knowledge of the Savage tongues and is acquainted with Fatigue and their manner of life. If I could have done it I should have accepted the spirited offers of several of the soldiers, as an example much wanted in this Settlement where the Rebels find means to undermine what little loyalty I might otherwise build upon...<sup>254</sup>

John Caldwell was the nephew of the late commander of the King’s Regiment and should not be confused with William Caldwell of the Indian Department at Niagara.<sup>255</sup>

From the Return we know that the group of Indians escorted by Ensign Caldwell was comprised of twenty-four Chippewas, including the chiefs Mettusawgay and Nassiggiath; seven Ottawas, including the war chief Egoushawey; nine Hurons, including the chiefs Dawattong and Orendiacky, and seven Potawatomis, including the chiefs Okia and Windigo. Two interpreters, William Tucker and Pierre Drouillard, accompanied

them.<sup>256</sup> Hamilton's record of the Detroit council shows that all of these warriors except for the Chippewa chief Nassaggiath and the Potawatomi chief Windigo were present at the council. There are two chiefs listed as Okia in Hamilton's report, one from Detroit and one from St. Joseph, and both are listed as village rather than war chiefs. It is impossible to determine which one is mentioned in the return, although it would be logical to assume it is the chief from Detroit as this makes sense from a geographic perspective. Additionally there were eleven representatives from the Potawatomis of Detroit and only four from the Potawatomis of St. Joseph. It is important to note that two of the men (Mettusawgay and Okia) who went with Caldwell were listed by Hamilton as village rather than war chiefs. This is a strong indication of their commitment to the British, hostility toward the rebels, and/or personal loyalty to Hamilton. As village chiefs they would not be expected to go to war, and the motivations of adventure, material gain, and increased status might pertain less to those who already had positions of authority. Therefore, their reasons for attending this expedition must lie in personal areas which cannot be ascertained over two centuries later.

Hamilton's concerns about French and Spanish intrigues and the lack of support for the Crown among the white inhabitants near the western posts suggest that he wanted to retain as many loyal Indians in the vicinity as possible and use them against incursions from the Ohio Valley. This is indicated by the fact that nearly one thousand warriors were involved in actions in this area and only forty-seven sent to the Mohawk Valley, nearly all of whom returned within two months. In his letter to Germain, Hamilton alludes to problems that existed between the Six Nations and the Lakes Tribes and shows that his dispatch of the Western Indians had more to do with British and Indian politics than military support for St. Leger.<sup>257</sup> "I have prevailed on each nation to send some chiefs and a few Warriors in the Vessel to Niagara to shew the Six Nations and their Allies that the Hatchet has been taken up by the Nations on the Lakes. – a rooted Jealousy exists between those two confederacies which required and always will a strict Attention from the Agents." There might have been more warriors enlisting at the council had it not been that most of the young men were out hunting. Hamilton also implies that the men sent from Detroit had not intended to go to war ("This the Council assembled had no thought of being called on for war. . .") but if that were the case, it is hard to understand why they took up the hatchet as the St. Leger campaign was described to them as a military operation and there is no indication that they were asked to go simply as political ambassadors.



In the meantime, Carleton learned that Germain had appointed Claus to lead the Indians accompanying St. Leger. For Carleton, this was another example of how Germain and the Johnsons continued to undermine his authority. It was also a matter of personal embarrassment as Carleton had appointed John Butler to the same position and would now have to admit his orders had been superseded. As Carleton wrote Germain on 9 July: "...I have already informed you [of the orders] I had sent for assembling the Indians of that Neighborhood to be put under the conduct of Lieutenant Colonel St. Leger, and a corp of Rangers which Colonel Butler has of himself formed for the purpose of serving the Indians. Colonel Butler is a gentleman of extream good character, and some fortune on the Mohawk River, as also long service among the Savages, and undoubtedly very much attached to His Majesty's Interest, he has done all the business of that department since Mr. Guy Johnson left it and I had, for these reasons, made the choice of him for the command of these Indians before your Lordships letter, No. 8 mentioning Colonel Claus was received; but I have agreeable to that letter sent this gentleman likewise up there." Carleton further protested that "no arrangement for the Indian department has been communicated to me" and that he hoped that his successor ("as I do not now expect it will be me") in Canada will be kept more fully informed of proposed actions.

Butler, too, was upset. From Ontario he wrote to Carleton on July 28th recounting his services to the Crown, especially in fixing the loyalty of the Iroquois to the British, and stating his "mortification to find the success of all my labors conferred on another."<sup>258</sup> In the same letter, he reports that the Senecas and forty of the Western Indians had arrived on July 11th at Niagara. Because the *Gage* sailed directly from Detroit to Niagara, it is unlikely that seven warriors disappeared en route. Hamilton specifically states the number to be forty-seven; it could be that Butler was excluding the chiefs, although there is no obvious reason why he might do so, or, more likely, he simply got the number wrong. In order to spare provisions, Butler sent "a number of the Seneca Warriors together with many of their Women & Children to meet me at Irondequoit..." There is no mention of whether the warriors from Detroit were also sent to Irondequoit. A letter from Hamilton to Germain indicates that this was not the case.<sup>259</sup> Hamilton reported that "The chiefs who went from this in the Vessel to Niagara have proceeded with the six nations to Oswego." It may be that Hamilton was assuming this as it was part of the original plan or perhaps he had received word from Niagara. At any rate, Butler's report from Oswego is

the last mention of the Western Indians until they are listed in the Return and a letter from Hamilton to Germain dated Detroit September 5th in which he states "...some of those who went from this Settlement and were present at the action near Fort Stanwix are returned, one party of eighteen Chippawas have brought off nine scalps and five prisoners one a Major of Militia, they have behaved with uncommon humanity to the Prisoners, and have given them all up either to Colo. Butler or myself."<sup>260</sup> The Return indicates that on the 31st of August, the Huron chiefs Dawattong and Orendiacky arrived at Detroit with one scalp from Fort Stanwix and that two Potawatomis also returned with two scalps. Twenty-two Chippewas and their chiefs Mettusawgay and Nassigiath returned to Detroit from Fort Stanwix with five prisoners and nine scalps on 2 September 2, 1777. Egortshawey, the Ottawa chief, returned the same day with six warriors (see Appendix 4).<sup>261</sup> What happened to the remaining five Potawatomis is unknown but there is no record of them having been lost. Perhaps they returned directly to their villages rather than reporting to the post at Detroit. The Return list includes all the Indian parties that left Detroit through 31 August, a total of 992 warriors. Five possibly "missing" Potawatomis were unlikely to be recorded by Hamilton or his deputy, Jehu Hay. There is no record of how the Western Indians returned to Detroit. If they came by foot, it is improbable that they remained on the Mohawk for the duration of the siege, perhaps leaving after the Battle of Oriskany. Neither Claus nor Butler makes any mention of them during the campaign. In his "Narrative of Col Butler's Services in America," Butler notes that he was ordered by Carleton to command the Six Nations Indians in the St. Leger expedition (he does not indicate that this was countermanded by Germain) and that he gave them the war belt.<sup>262</sup> He does not mention any other Indians.

John Montour whose father "untied his hands" at the Detroit council was also present on St. Leger's expedition. In a letter to Germain, Hamilton reported that on June 22nd he sent Montour, described as "half Delaware," with a notice to Howe that the Lakes Indians had taken up the hatchet and would send it down the Wabash.<sup>263</sup> Montour spoke English and several Indian languages and Hamilton gave him a commission as Indian Captain, the rank his father held in English service during the last war (presumably the French and Indian War). Hamilton estimated that Montour's trip to York and Philadelphia would take approximately twenty-eight days. Daniel Claus's account of expenses as Superintendent of Indians on the St. Leger expedition contains the following entry for 21 August: "To Redeem two Prisoners £5.12.6 & to John Montour for Services

£4.”<sup>264</sup> Whether the prisoners were captured during the battle, or even if they were redeemed from Montour is unknown. Where and when Montour encountered the St. Leger forces is also unknown.

### **The Mississaugas**

The most surprising aspect of the archival research is the absence of any documentation relating to the recruitment and activities of the Mississaugas in the St. Leger campaign. Consultation with archivists, historians, and community members provided some insight as to why this might be but did not lead to the discovery of any documents beyond those already examined. It is clear that the Mississaugas were on the St. Leger expedition because they are mentioned by St. Leger and in Lieutenant Bird’s diary as with him when he attempted to invest Fort Stanwix and they also took a prisoner.<sup>265</sup> They remained until the end of the siege because St. Leger notes that they turned on his retreating forces. In his letter dated 27 August to Carleton, St. Leger tried to justify his failed mission by blaming the Indian forces.<sup>266</sup> Although they comprised a minority of the Indians on the campaign, it was the Mississaugas that he singled out for particular blame; first for failing to prevent the landing and unloading of the rebel boats filled with provisions for Fort Stanwix and second, for stealing goods from the British boats as they retreated down Wood Creek en route to Oswego. Like the other Native warriors, the Mississaugas seem to have had little respect for his leadership abilities.

A report from Captain Lernoult at Fort Niagara dated 11 April 1777 stated that the Mississaugas were with him at Niagara and willing to act with the King’s troops.<sup>267</sup> He said “I cannot help being a little prejudiced in their favor, as they have never varied nor required holding any Councils to deliberate, or would give ear to anyone among the number sent at different time to draw them from their allegiance but remain firm to their first allegiance.” Unlike the Iroquois, the Mississaugas did not require bribes, threats, cajoling, and constant attention, perhaps an explanation as to why they received little mention.

With settled farming communities able to field hundreds of warriors if necessary, the British emphasis on maintaining ties with the Iroquois was logical. The Mississaugas were less centrally organized and their communities less permanent. They would have been less of a threat to the British and the effort to maintain strong alliances such as existed with the Iroquois would not have been worth the effort. As a result of these

factors and their loyalty, the Mississaugas are relatively invisible in the British records. The Mississaugas were a part of the Six Nations' network of alliances that predated the Revolution<sup>268</sup> and had also been loyal to the British.<sup>269</sup> In 1777, the British wanted groups allied with the Six Nations to join them in taking up the hatchet and they may have simply subsumed Mississaugas into a larger entity of Iroquois and their allies. It may also be relevant that when the Mississaugas are singled out for comment in the St. Leger expedition, it is in a negative context that may reflect British reluctance to criticize the Iroquois for diplomatic reasons.<sup>270</sup>

It is possible, even likely, that documents relating to Mississauga participation in the American Revolution exist somewhere but they are not in any obvious collections. Oral histories of the Mississaugas recorded in the nineteenth century are concerned primarily with religious conversion and contain nothing related to the Revolutionary period. Some pension petitions mention military actions but contain few specifics as to battles and locations. Histories of Mississauga settlements in Ontario also contain no information. The nearest Mississauga communities to Buck Island would have been in the Fort Frontenac (Kingston) and Bay of Quinte area. The contemporary community for these areas is the Alderville First Nation and there are no extant written or oral records there. Wabakinine came from the Toronto/Credit River area; the contemporary community for this area is Mississaugas of New Credit and they, too, have no oral histories relating to the expedition.

The available data give the following description of Mississauga contributions to the St. Leger campaign. Daniel Claus reported that he collected 150 Mississaugas and Six Nations Indians between Lachine and Buck (aka Carleton) Island on 23 June.<sup>271</sup> Whether this means a total of 150 Indians or 150 Mississaugas and an untold number of Iroquois is unclear. In July 1777 the Oneida Sachem Thomas Sawejis reported that Sir John Johnson and Claus were in Oswego with their families and approximately seven hundred Indians. If the total with Claus was 150 then Sir John had 550 with him. On July 23rd, Brant was at Oswego with three hundred Indians (presumably mostly Iroquois but possibly with some from the Susquehanna area or the village of Oquaga). Butler estimated the total number of Natives at Oswego on the 25th of July as one thousand. Adding those forces assigned to Sir John, Claus, and Brant gives a total of 950, certainly close to Butler's estimate. If one assumes Butler is accurate, then there may have been fifty Iroquois accompanying Claus and Sir John. On the same day, St. Leger left Oswego for Salmon Creek with

companies of the 8th and 34th Regiments and 250 Indians, many of whom were probably those who came with him en route from Lachine.<sup>272</sup> If these are the same Indians that Claus refers to, then the Mississaugas totaled 150 and they were joined by one hundred Iroquois warriors. Another intriguing possibility is that some of the Mississaugas whom Lernout reported as present at Niagara in April joined Caldwell and the Western Indians on the journey to Oswego. In January 1778 Butler was at Niagara and Brant and Aaron Hill were also there preparing to go to the frontier villages in the Wyoming Valley if reports of attacks there were true. Butler stated he would join them with his Rangers and as many Mississaugas as he could get.<sup>273</sup> It is obvious that there were Mississaugas at a number of locations from whence they could have joined St. Leger.

The next reports of the Mississaugas in the campaign come from excerpts from the diary of Lieutenant Bird contained in Stone's *Life of Joseph Brant*. According to Stone the manuscript was captured from St. Leger by Gansevoort.<sup>274</sup> As the entire diary is not available, the context of the chosen entries is unknown and the selection represents Stone's interpretation. Bird was sent ahead of the main army with a detachment from the 8th Regiment and "a few Indians."<sup>275</sup> According to Bird, on July 28th he waited two hours for the Indians and eventually sixteen Senecas arrived and they proceeded to Three Rivers (the junction of the Oneida, Seneca, and Oswego Rivers) and waited there another two hours until "seventy or eighty Messesaugues coming up, I proposed moving forward. They had stolen two oxen from the drove of the army, and would not advance, but stayed to feast. I advanced without Indians seven miles farther – in all nineteen miles." Bird left the next morning at six, having again waited for the Indians although none arrived. At this point it seems as though all the men with Bird were in boats as he stated that they rowed all night and then encamped at Nine Mile Point. He makes no mention of whether the Indians were meant to accompany them on foot or in the boats. On the 30th, Bird, along with twenty-seven Senecas and nine Mississaugas, joined Lieutenant Hare's party. He stated that "Many savages being with us, proceeded to Wood Creek, a march of fifteen miles." The following day, the Indians announced that they intended to send parties to Fort Stanwix, but would advance as a body no farther. At a council of chiefs that he called, Bird stated his intention of approaching the fort with or without Indian warriors and the Mississaugas agreed to go with him. The Senecas, however, reminded Bird that he had agreed to be advised by their chiefs. Bird's interpretation was that Indian advice was limited only to fighting in the bush and that he had told them his orders were to

prevent the rebels from stopping up Wood Creek and to invest Fort Stanwix. However, he agreed to wait until the next morning and the Indians sent out eighteen or twenty scouts in preparation for Bird's march.

On the 2nd of August Bird wrote to Gansevoort that of the Indians, only Henriques, a Mohawk and one other Iroquois would accompany him. The failure of others to join was blamed on one "Commodore Bradley." Two or three hours after he left, Bird reported that twelve Mississaugas came and that those and the scout of fifteen [?] would be adequate to invest Fort Stanwix unless he was ordered not to by St. Leger. St. Leger's reply was to send Brant and a corps of Indians to reinforce Bird and to caution the latter not to accept a capitulation from Fort Stanwix until such time as St. Leger himself arrived as the bulk of Bird's force was comprised of Indians and white troops were needed "to prevent the barbarity and carnage which will ever obtain where Indians make so superior a part of a detachment."<sup>276</sup>

The next day, St. Leger invested Fort Stanwix, having earlier sent Bird with thirty troops and two hundred Indians under Captains Hare and Wilson and the chiefs Joseph (Brant) and Bull to seize the lower landing in order to sever the fort's communication with the surrounding country. They arrived too late and the boats with provisions and ammunition for the fort were successfully unloaded. In a letter to Carleton, St. Leger blamed the failure of this mission on "the slackness of the Missasagoes."<sup>277</sup> Hare and Wilson were killed three days later at the Battle of Oriskany. Whether or not they were leading Mississaugas at the battle is unknown.

The final record of Mississauga participation is dated August 27th, after St. Leger's forces had abandoned the siege and fled to Oswego. St. Leger stated "...at this place [Oneida Castle], the whole of the little Army arrived by twelve O'clock at night, and took post in such a manner, as to have no fear of anything the Enemy could do; here we remained 'till three O'Clock next morning, when the boats which could come up the Creek arrived, or rather that the rascally part of all Nations of the Indians, would suffer to come up, and proceeded across Lake Oneyda to the ruined Fort Brereton; where I learnt that some boats were still labouring down the Creek, after being lightened of the best part of their freight by the Missasagoes...."

Unlike the record for the Lakes Tribes, there are no names associated with the Mississauga participants. Watt and Morrison estimate that there were eight Mississauga war captains and principal warriors and 120 men with St. Leger's forces.<sup>278</sup> They name

Wabakine, Pokquan, Neace, and Wabanip as having been present.<sup>279</sup> According to Watt these are names contained in *Canada – Indian Treaties and Surrenders, Vol. 1, Treaties 1-138*, and he believes it is very likely they were involved in the siege and/or battle.<sup>280</sup> The petition by the sons of Wabakeyne (Wabakinine) for a pension based on their father's service as "principle Chife and Chife Captain of the Massesagoes for and in behalf of Britain..." stated that "he served in when called for by the superintendent, and the commanding Officer in the late war, eather to go to and from Kingston, Mushekemacknack, or Detroit with Expeditions & war parteys, as well as from Niagara..."<sup>281</sup> It is likely that Wabakinine was with St. Leger but there are no confirming data.





## CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEMPORARY INDIANS AND THE ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD

### ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The ethnographic research was designed to elicit peoples' perceptions and understandings of the events that took place in the Mohawk Valley in the mid-eighteenth century as well as their concerns about the interpretation of those events by government agencies and the management of Oriskany Battlefield. These data provide the support for the recommendations made in this chapter.

#### Introduction & Methodology

This ethnographic research study was based on the assumption made by the NPS (and confirmed by both field and archival research) that all Iroquois have some connection to the Mohawk Valley region. As a result no distinctions are made among current factions, reserves, or reservations of Iroquois nations in this report. As noted in Chapter 2, there were no significant differences among members of a nation, regardless of where they currently reside, and differences within groups were neither greater nor less than those among groups. From an ethical perspective, Iroquois consultants emphasized a need for healing within and between nations so that reporting by reserves would be unnecessarily divisive, especially in the absence of any differences. To the extent that there were any differences, Iroquois north of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River tended to have slightly more knowledge about traditional practices derived from oral tradition relating to medicines and burial practices than those to the south. That this would be the case was predicted by a Mohawk man from Canada and a Seneca man from New York.

All ethnographic data are reported on the basis of field interviews with knowledgeable community consultants, conversations in person, by telephone, e-mail, or letter. Because individuals usually chose not to sign release forms, there are no attributions by name, although national or gender identification is used for direct quotes or paraphrases. Generalizations about Iroquois attitudes are based upon compilation of field data, discussions between the ethnographers, and verifications with key Iroquois individuals identified by the ethnographers from their field data.

## **Historical Summary**

From a historical standpoint, Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Battlefield are inextricably linked. The location of Fort Stanwix at the critical Oneida Carry indicates its importance for the control of the Mohawk Valley. Access to the north and west via Oneida Lake, Wood Creek, and the St. Lawrence River and to the east via the Mohawk River meant that whichever side controlled this site would be a potent force in the entire region. Oneidas and rebels strongly urged its reinforcement as the colonies began their march to an open rupture with Great Britain.

The British plan to isolate rebel forces in New England involved a three pronged attack in which Howe would move north from New York City, Burgoyne south from Canada, and St. Leger up the St. Lawrence to Oswego, down to the Oneida Carry, and east along the Mohawk. The three forces would meet in Albany. Rebel-controlled Fort Stanwix was the most important impediment to St. Leger's progress. The siege which began on 3 August was critical to the control of the Mohawk Valley. Although supplies did arrive at the fort shortly before it began, reinforcements of men and materiel were necessary if the garrison was to remain in rebel control. The Tryon County militia and a party of Oneidas, possibly including Tuscaroras, set off under the nominal command of General Nicholas Herkimer to break the siege.

The British, Senecas, Mohawks, Mississaugas and western Indians surrounding the fort learned of the militia's advance from Molly Brant, the common-law widow of the late Sir William Johnson and sister of the Mohawk leader Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant). A force consisting primarily of Senecas and Mohawks under Brant and Gyantwahia (Cornplanter) went out to intercept the militia. Although there is no substantial evidence to date, Cayugas and Onondagas may also have been present. It was accompanied by a small contingent of white troops under Sir John Johnson and a party of rangers under John Butler. The location chosen for the ambush was near the Oneida village of Oriska. Here the military road descended through the woods into a deep ravine whose swampy bottom could be crossed only by means of a series of logs. With Senecas and Mohawks deployed on either side of the ravine, the unorganized militia stretched out for nearly a mile along the narrow military road. The trap was sprung somewhat precipitously before the wagons in the rear had fully entered the ravine. The rear guard fled with many being cut down as they ran.

Herkimer had sent messengers to Fort Stanwix to alert the garrison under Peter Gansevoort of the relief column moving toward it. In the meantime the fighting at Oriskany had become brutal hand-to-hand combat taking on many aspects of a civil war. Rebels from Tryon County whose ancestry lay in the German Palatinate were enraged to encounter German troops from Hesse-Hanau fighting with the British; other rebels of Irish, Scottish, or English heritage encountered their former neighbors fighting on the opposite side, while Senecas and Mohawks were infuriated to discover Oneidas on the side of the rebels.

A thunderstorm allowed the rebels to regroup on higher ground. Neither side seems to have had a clear advantage until a sortie from the fort under Marinus Willet attacked the mostly deserted Indian camps and carried away a significant amount of goods. Hearing the attack on their camps, the Senecas and Mohawks went to their defense. Because Indians comprised the greater portion of the British detachment, the remaining British forces were compelled to retreat. The first reports to trickle down the Mohawk Valley clearly described the encounter at Oriskany as a rebel defeat as the mangled militia had to leave its dead on the field of battle. However, the battle cannot be interpreted as a British victory; there were no winners at Oriskany.

The siege at the fort continued despite the increasing dissatisfaction of the Indians who were angered that their intelligence about the strength of the fort had been ignored, their camps plundered, and their desire to pursue the fleeing rebels denied by St. Leger. As they began to return to their homes, an elaborate ruse concocted by the rebels reporting (incorrectly) the advance of 10,000 troops under Benedict Arnold convinced St. Leger to abandon the siege of Fort Stanwix on 21 August. Neither side had achieved its goal by military force.

## **BACKGROUND FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***1. Consultation***

Approximately half of the forces which fought at Oriskany were Indian and the willingness of the NPS to initiate contact with the descendants of those participants as well as other Iroquois is greatly appreciated by all Indian communities and individuals. The fact that most Iroquois and other Indians fought with the British has served to diminish the importance of their role in this battle. With the possible exception of some battles in the southern colonies and Ohio country, the battle of Oriskany probably had

more Indian participants than any other contest in the Revolution. This aspect necessitates the need for active consultation with native groups which will be important for cultural resource management and interpretive strategies.

## *2. Value of the Ethnohistory of the Battle and the Lack of Oral Tradition*

Indian consultants wanted a historically accurate description of the battle which recognized the important roles played by Iroquois and other Indian groups and individuals both for their own information but also to inform governmental interpretive programs. At this time there is a lack of significant oral tradition about Oriskany and Fort Stanwix. This is the result of two factors, the length of time which has elapsed and the tragic nature of the battle. Three people told us flatly that there would be no oral tradition because the events occurred in the too-distant past. They suggested that some elders could remember stories of the U. S. Civil War (one recalled the burial of the last survivor of that conflict on the Allegany Reservation) but that beyond that there was a void. This research confirms their opinion. Others suggested that the lack was due to the horrific nature of the battle and what it symbolized for Iroquois people. It was at Oriskany that Iroquois warriors fought each other in direct violation of the Great Law as given by the Peacemaker. It is the breaking of the Great Law that provides the greatest significance of this site for Iroquois people. While the United States has always glorified military leaders and emphasized the heroism of the warrior, it is crucial to note that for Iroquois people, the role of peacemaker is accorded far more importance and respect. Violation of the Great Law is both a political and religious tragedy. Both Mohawk and Seneca people referred to recent upheavals among their nations which are not discussed even among themselves because of the extreme sadness which this would evoke. If projected into the past, this can help explain why Draper in the mid-nineteenth century found so many people who knew little or nothing about the battle. In a non-literate society things which are not discussed cannot become oral traditions.

An emphasis on the importance of peace does not in any way negate the importance of actual or threatened Iroquois military participation in the struggle for hegemony in North America throughout the eighteenth century. The evidence of their strategic skill and heroism is clear; the critical difference is that prior to August 1777, it was directed primarily against non-Iroquois. The battle of Oriskany unleashed a vicious intra-Iroquois round of attacks that exacerbated divisions within and among nations.

What oral traditions do exist are found primarily among Oneidas. These traditions have taken on symbolic and political importance in demonstrating the allegiance between the founders of the American republic and Oneida warriors, both male and female. The alliance between the rebels and many of the Oneidas is a critical part of Oneida cultural identity in the U.S. This is obviously not true of Oneidas on reserves in Canada. In some cases these traditions have been passed down within families, in others they result from reading the recollections recorded by Lyman Draper among Oneida residents in Green Bay in the nineteenth century. Prominent among these is Two Kettles Together, the wife of Honyery Doxtator, who fought at his side, loading his gun when he was shot through the wrist. Even in Draper's time, it is clear that memories were fading and many had no knowledge of the events which had transpired in New York.

Senecas who were familiar with the battle tended to derive their information from the accounts of Governor Blacksnake as given by Thomas Abler in *Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake*. Schoolcraft<sup>282</sup> reported that Allegany Senecas were still able to describe the battle in the mid-19th century. Although this project's research design was biased to the extent that individuals with historical interests were actively sought, the level of knowledge based on written sources was higher than expected. The only source reflecting a Mohawk perspective is the not well known journal of John Norton who was not present but whose report probably reflects Brant's memories. As a close friend and confidante of Brant, Norton's detailed description of a battle at which he himself was not present most likely portrays the events as they were relayed to him by Brant.

It is important to note that a lack of oral tradition does not indicate a lack of knowledge or interest. Akwesasne Mohawks and others have traveled to the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa to seek out original documents about their ancestors in the Mohawk Valley. People contacted for this study were eager to learn of the battle and its context and a brief description often served to stimulate discussions about their concerns for the site. The ethnohistory of the battle included in this report as Chapter Three represents a starting point for groups and individuals wishing to pursue further research.

### 3. Familiarity with/Interest in the Historical Sites

Among the Iroquois, Mohawks and Oneidas are most familiar with both Fort Stanwix and Oriskany and are far more likely to have visited either or both sites. For the

New York Oneidas, this is due in part to their geographic proximity to the historic sites and, for the Oneidas living in Wisconsin and Ontario, to a multi-bus excursion to the sites in the 1990s. Mohawks also view the Mohawk Valley as part of their original area which necessarily has significance for them. People are far more likely to have visited Fort Stanwix than Oriskany because it is more readily accessible and more widely known as part of the National Park system. As a result of this project, many Indian people are planning to visit both sites and it is likely that they will make their feelings known to park personnel on an individual basis.

#### **4. *The Fort Stanwix National Monument Orientation Film***

All of our discussants who had visited Fort Stanwix National Monument expressed their intense dissatisfaction with the film currently shown in the Visitor's Center at Fort Stanwix which is uniformly described as offensive and inaccurate, especially in its constant reference to Indians as "savages." While "savage" was used freely in the eighteenth century, it was primarily directed toward Indian opponents. Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* provides an excellent introduction to the evolution of this term in reference to native peoples in the Americas. It is currently offensive to both Indians and non-Indians in its evocation of racial and ethnic stereotypes. It has, however, been used recently by Fintan O'Toole in his 2005 biography entitled *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America*. When asked about his choice of title at the 2007 Western Frontier Symposium he stated only that it came about as the result of a compromise between him and the publisher.

Another issue is that the film does not present the role of the Oneidas as rebel allies. It would seem that they have been lumped with their opponents under the collective term, "savage." Other concerns about the film and descriptions of the Revolution center on what many feel is an extreme nationalistic bias which lacks cultural sensitivity. Several people expressed apprehension that Oriskany might be treated in the same manner, with the contributions of Native peoples ignored or downplayed. Descriptions of historical events should include Iroquois names for people rather than English translations, and Iroquois need to be treated as separate groups or individuals rather than glossed over as "Indian" or even "Iroquois." As the ethnohistory of the battle (Chapter Three) shows, it is often possible to distinguish the parts played by different Iroquois individuals and groups and, because the Confederacy did not take sides, the use



of the term “Iroquois” suggests a unity that simply did not exist. It is also important to note that all the Indians were not Iroquois as shown by the participation of the Mississauga, Ottawa, Huron, Pottawatomi, and Chippewa warriors. The bulk of the British forces at Oriskany were Native people who fought as individuals and chose to do so because they believed it was in their own interest; they were neither mercenaries nor dupes. The same point needs to be made for the Oneida warriors marching with Herkimer’s forces. There is no information suggesting that they were recruited by the rebels; how they came to join the forces of the militia is not recorded but it clearly reflects their own choice.

### *5. Documenting the Historical and Cultural Importance of the Sites to American Indians*

The battle ethnohistory in Chapter Three provides the historical basis for the association of the Iroquois with the Oriskany battlefield and Fort Stanwix. This cultural affiliation has important implications for planning and management at both locations.

Oriskany is an important site for contemporary Iroquois individuals and governments but there is some disagreement as to whether it should be considered “sacred.” A number of people said that because there were bodies remaining (regardless of their ethnic, national, or racial identification), the battlefield was sacred. Others countered that because it was the location of the breaking of the Great Law, it could not be considered “sacred” in a contemporary religious sense. Regardless of which interpretation is held, the Oriskany battlefield has deep emotional significance for both reasons, either of which may be included in a definition of “sacred.” The term which was used with surprising consistency to describe Oriskany was “sadness.” There was widespread recognition of all the lives which were lost here. Many Iroquois pointedly referred to the rebels, British, and Canadians who fought and died for their beliefs at Oriskany. When they voiced concern about appropriate treatment for the dead, many specifically noted that this included non-Iroquois as well; their primary concern was, however, with Indian dead because only Indian people would be able to provide the proper ritual.

### *6. Future Preservation and Treatment of the Battlefield*

There was widespread surprise and universal appreciation for the NPS’s desire to consult with Native people and groups, especially traditionalist chiefs of the Confederacy.

At the same time, four individuals expressed some concern with the motivation for the study. If one of the goals is to increase appreciation of Oriskany by all people, then the success of such an enterprise could be measured by increased visitation at the site. This in turn could result in pressure for “development” of the battlefield which might have negative impacts. For those who see this as a sacred site, an increase in the number of visitors is not necessarily seen as good. One individual reported that busloads of tourists would be inappropriate at the site. Another drew an analogy with Flanders Field, noting that the men and women buried there represented warriors of many nations. Oriskany is, in his opinion, an international memorial and should be treated as such. Remembrance, not recreation, should be the goal of the site’s stewards.

At the same time, several people felt that the NPS should make a greater effort to encourage people to visit the battlefield. Because it is better known, more people have visited Fort Stanwix, but a number of the people have visited Oriskany, often for private religious reasons.

Concern about the dead who may be buried on the battlefield is strong and unanimous. The most frequently and forcefully expressed concern was with treatment of human remains. Most people felt very strongly that no attempts should be made to recover bodies. This was usually voiced in the context of Indian bodies always being fair game for excavation and removal by archaeologists. It was recognized, however, that human remains might be uncovered inadvertently or by natural processes such as erosion. In such cases, there was unanimous agreement that ritual treatment was necessary and most felt that appropriate ceremonies were the responsibility of the Confederacy and that the NPS should contact the Tadodaho, who, as the spokesman for the Haudenosaunee, represents the Confederacy in its dealings with non-Iroquois. Several people referred to a need to contact the Haudenosaunee Standing Committee on Burial Rules and Regulations recently formed by the Confederacy, whose role is to deal with this issue. Some New York Oneidas feel strongly that because the site lies within traditional Oneida territory, the NPS should first approach them and they, in turn, will take the issue to the Haudenosaunee. Because neither the Oneidas in Wisconsin and New York nor the Seneca Nation of Indians participate in the modern Confederacy, this would present a problem. The NPS will be restricted by the NAGPRA agreements it has with individual tribes which will legally take precedence though it should be recognized that not all Iroquois people will concur in these procedures. It is important to note that at least 150

non-Iroquois Mississauga warriors were with the British force and while there is no documentation that any were killed, it would be appropriate for the NPS or the relevant State agency to also contact members of those contemporary communities if human remains are discovered. The portions of the battlefield which are publicly owned are controlled by New York State which will be guided by its own agreements with Indian nations.

The issue of remote sensing provoked far more varied responses and opinions broke down into three major categories. One group argued that no remote sensing should be permitted because, regardless of how sincere intentions might be to restrict the information recovered, it would be impossible to keep locations of human bodies or cultural items confidential. They expressed the belief that if such locations were mapped, future removal (either authorized or not) would be inevitable. While these people did not, in general, disagree with the proposition that remote sensing could lead to a greater understanding of the events of 6 August 1777, they strongly felt that the potential rewards were not worth the risk of theft of any remains so discovered. Those who did not object to the use of remote sensing, accepted it as contributing to a better understanding of the battle. They also felt that if such techniques could be used to identify the locations of bodies, it would prevent the accidental disturbance of those remains by human activities. Another group saw worth in both approaches and was unsure as to whether such activities should be undertaken. All agreed that if remote sensing were to be used, its focus should be on preventing the disturbance of burials.

Iroquois individuals have come to the Oriskany battlefield for private religious ceremonies to honor family members and other Iroquois who fought there. These observances have been without the knowledge of park personnel, are not destructive, and have served to maintain cultural traditions and religious obligations. These rituals have included the burning of sacred tobacco and do not endanger the site or its surroundings. One man reported that tobacco burnings are ideally carried out near, but not on, the site. If this is so, the NPS and New York's OPRHP currently have no ability to ensure access, although if the park boundaries are enlarged, access would need to be guaranteed. Other rituals have taken place within the current boundaries. Beginning in 1995, the New York Oneidas have called upon Iroquois elders from various groups to conduct ceremonies for the dead on the anniversary of the battle. These have been private ceremonies which have included Iroquois from different nations.

Some people felt that increased visitation might result in the development of the battlefield in ways at variance with the Iroquois cultural orientation to the site. The construction of a visitors center, enlarged parking lot, or other activities resulting from an influx of visitors is likely to disturb burials which is to be avoided. There is a strong feeling that there should be greater understanding by the public of what transpired at Oriskany and, in particular, the roles of Indian peoples. However, some believed that public education efforts might best be undertaken at Fort Stanwix National Monument which could serve as an introduction to the battlefield as well as the region. In this way, visitors would already be informed about the battle, and the need for greater explication at the battlefield site be reduced. This perspective was, however, based on the assumption that the introductory presentations, regardless of the media utilized, would be culturally sensitive and that Iroquois people would be consulted and participate in the new educational efforts.

There was very strong feeling that activities of a purely recreational nature should not be permitted. These would include such things as pow-wows, ball games, picnics and other activities not directly related to the meaning of the site. There was disagreement as to the appropriateness of re-enactments of the battle. Some believed that if such activities related to greater understanding, they would be acceptable, but there was no great enthusiasm for them. Those opposed to re-enactments of the battle were far more forceful in their feelings. They felt that a re-enactment would only serve to exacerbate divisions among Iroquois people by reminding them of the source of some of those differences. Others noted that the re-creation of the breaking of the Great Law was not something which should be commemorated in a way that non-Indians might interpret as a celebration. If Oriskany can serve as a site for healing (which is universally desired), then re-opening old wounds could only be counter-productive.

There is unanimous opposition to excavation anywhere on the battlefield. Should osteological or cultural materials be uncovered inadvertently, contact should be initiated with the Haudenosaunee, Oneidas of Wisconsin and New York and the Seneca Nation of Indians.

Arthur C. Parker told William Fenton in 1933 that the Senecas lost their medicine bundles at the battle of Oriskany.<sup>283</sup> Although Seneca consultants had no independent knowledge of this and the reports of the items taken from their camps during Willett's sortie are not specific enough to identify medicines, the discovery of Iroquois cultural

remains will require consultation between the appropriate government agency and the Senecas if items are identified as possible components of medicine bundles. The Little Water Medicine used in the 1930s at the Seneca Allegany Reservation came from bundles carried by Seneca warriors in the eighteenth century. Fenton reported that of the minimum of four bundles then extant, three were held by women. Although it is individuals who hold bundles, the medicine is regarded as community property.<sup>284</sup> Other Iroquois and non-Iroquois may also have lost medicines but there is no currently available oral or written tradition of this.

These items need to be properly identified and treated if uncovered. A traditional person stated that bundles might contain tobacco, animal bones and antlers, pipes, wampum, pine needles, roots, or elm bark. Containers of deerskin or cloth might be as long as two feet. Because most of the materials are organic, their survival is unlikely. Although the contents might vary slightly from person to person or nation to nation, the presence of tobacco would have been a constant. Some medicines might have been carried into battle by individual warriors for their own protection but there could also have been a medicine carrier who might lead the men into battle and who need not have been a renowned warrior. Healing medicines would have remained in the Indian camps and Oneida village with the women. Graymont reported that the loss of the medicine bundles was seen as a bad omen, but medicine is more than just the material items. Contemporary Iroquois reported that the knowledge and sources of the medicines would still remain as would the medicine societies. While its loss in battle might be unfortunate, the long-term effects would be minimal. Nevertheless, the Seneca loss was such that it was remembered in the twentieth century. Were wampum to be discovered, it would likely represent the remains of a medicine bundle and should be considered as traditional cultural property.

There is no current use of the state park for the collection of plant or craft materials nor did anyone report past use for these purposes. However, plants of medicinal value known to have been used by Iroquois people grow in the area and it is reasonable to assume their use in the 18th and early 19th century. To ensure the continued survival and well-being of medicines which may exist on the battlefield, Iroquois people knowledgeable in the identification, preparation, and use of medicines emphasized the importance of ensuring the environmental quality of the battlefield in terms of land, water, and air. In particular, reference was made to protecting the site from

farm and industrial runoff. No chemicals should be used as weed-killers or fertilizers. This was also reported by those who lack this traditional knowledge but who identify the land as sacred because of the burials which are present. Iroquois people have a strong interest in ensuring that NEPA standards are maintained at this site. A Mohawk woman felt very strongly that medicines which may exist within the park should be protected for future use by Iroquois peoples.

The long term future of the battlefield was of concern, especially since archival research indicated that the battle occurred in a larger area than that encompassed by the park's current boundaries. During this time period military roads were 4'10" wide<sup>285</sup> and would not have permitted the formations shown in the Stone (1838) map. If a force of approximately 800 rebel militiamen and 60 Oneidas is assumed along with a baggage train, the line could easily have stretched for nearly a mile. Reconstruction of the battle was aided by local re-enactors and amateur historians who have made the study of the battle their primary avocation. A map in the Rome Historical Society dated January 1786 shows the old military road. An aerial photograph dating from the 1930s shows the scar which seems to follow the line of trees to the right of the Daughters of the American Revolution monument to Herkimer and then proceed across the ravine, re-emerging to the left of the current monument and crossing Rte. 69 approximately where the gates to the battlefield now stand. It continues across the field to the next ravine. If this reconstruction is accurate, the initial confrontation would have occurred on land currently in private hands. This would be where Cox and many of the Senecas fell. After the rainstorm, when Herkimer regrouped his forces on higher ground, he probably retreated to the area where the battle monument now stands, forming his men into circular formations and maximizing the protection provided by the trees felled by a windstorm. The location of the monument where Herkimer is reported to have sat on his saddle directing his troops is probably accurate.

As previously noted, the primary Iroquois concern is with preventing the disturbance of burials. This is becoming more critical as reports of unauthorized use of metal detectors on both the park and private land have received widespread media attention. Calls for passersby to alert authorities to the presence of trespassers may discourage some treasure-hunters but could also serve to draw the attention of others to the area. Consultants are unanimous in their feelings that the battlefield needs protection from people seeking battlefield relics. They are far less concerned over which agency

provides this service. Most suggested that the NPS probably has greater financial and human resources and would be able to incorporate the interpretation with the story of the Fort Stanwix. No one voiced any negative opinion of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, although some worried over the impact of State budget cuts in 1996. There was concern, as previously noted, that if the NPS plays a stronger role in the management of the site, it might result in an interpretation as biased as that demonstrated by the current film at Fort Stanwix. It is difficult to understate the impact this film has had on Iroquois visitors; even people who have not been there are aware of it.

### *7. Cultural Values Associated with the Battlefield*

The attitude of the Iroquois to Oriskany is significantly different from that of other groups. A number of community consultants stated that a process for healing the divisions which originated at Oriskany needs to begin here. Several pointed to the fact that religious observances on the anniversary of the battle have begun to draw people from different Iroquois groups and may represent the early stages of reconciliation. The temporal importance of Oriskany is dynamic and reaches from the 18th to the 21st century. This needs to be considered in planning and programming. There is strong ethnographic support to update the documentation for Oriskany Battlefield on the National Register of Historic Places to include its recognition as a Traditional Cultural Property.

The cultural orientation of the Iroquois today, however, is not exclusively to the fort and the battlefield but encompasses the entire Mohawk Valley with the most intense ties felt by Mohawks and Oneidas. An unexpected and frequently voiced opinion was that both Oriskany and Fort Stanwix need to be placed into a larger regional and temporal context. Many people spoke of other locations within the Mohawk Valley which involved Iroquois people and should also be included in a regional history. Ft. Hunter was most often mentioned in this vein. Iroquois people feel that the entire Mohawk and Hudson Valleys should be treated as a unit. As federal, State, and local governments discuss ways to develop interest in this region, Iroquois peoples who first lived there need to be included in the planning process and the area conceptualized as an integrated unit. Links between the NPS, New York State, and planning efforts in the Northern Frontier and Hudson Valleys can provide a context for a more unified approach



to the region. Iroquois groups which currently reside in the area should be represented as should those, such as the Mohawks, who no longer live there because of the events of the 18th century.

Mohawks and Oneidas have the most intense interest in the Mohawk Valley region. They are more aware of the events which transpired there and have a more direct emotional attachment to the battlefield. Even though among the Iroquois, Senecas suffered the greatest losses, contemporary Senecas, while interested and concerned that Oriskany be protected, do not have a similar attachment. This reflects the ultimate effects of the Revolution on the Iroquois. The Senecas were able to return to their homes, remembering Oriskany only as a battleground on which many of their chiefs fell. For Oneidas and Mohawks, Oriskany is a site within a region they consider their homeland. At the war's conclusion, the vast majority of the Mohawks followed Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) and Captain John Deserontyon to Canada, settling along the Grand River and the Bay of Quinte on reserves provided in recognition of their military contributions to the British war effort. For the Mohawks then, this region is the homeland that was lost to them because of the American Revolution. Although they fought with the British as allies and not as subjects, they were abandoned by Britain in the peace negotiations and their homelands ceded to the newly independent republic.

Despite guarantees of non-interference and protection for their lands, the Oneidas allied with the rebels fared no better than their opponents; one might even argue the opposite. By the mid-nineteenth century, some remained in New York with the Onondagas, many had relocated to Wisconsin; others subsequently left for Canada. These moves reflected not only attacks by New York State on Oneida lands but also religious and factional divisions dating from the Revolution and earlier. Oneidas frequently stated that the primary importance of the area to them was that it was their homeland. The battle of Oriskany not only broke the Great Law, but set in motion a chain of events which resulted in the loss of Mohawk and Oneida homelands. For this reason, the site as well as the entire region has far more emotional resonance for them than for other Iroquois. Some reported that this was the primary reason for their first visits to the area; connection with the homelands then moved to an interest in the reasons why they no longer lived there. This brought them to Fort Stanwix and Oriskany. This visceral response to the area goes far beyond issues of land claims and political divisions and should not be understood as motivated primarily by political or economic concerns.

The connections are deep and ongoing and will probably intensify, especially among the Mohawks north of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence.

The treaties signed at Fort Stanwix in 1768 and 1784 also have importance for Iroquois people although these events do not have the emotional significance of the battlefield. The Fort Stanwix Boundary Treaty of 1768 set the limits of colonial expansion. Violation of this treaty has been the basis for land claims cases in Canada among western Indians such as the Nishga'a. For Oneidas, this treaty is important because the published line placed the Oneida Carry within colonial boundaries, a location to which they had not consented. The 1784 treaty limited the lands of the Six Nations although it contained special wording for the Oneidas who had been allies of the rebels.

### **8. Archival Center**

Many Iroquois would make use of archival facilities which could be housed at Fort Stanwix. Because of the increased interest in the area, Fort Stanwix, the Oriskany battlefield, and the events of the 18th and 19th century, collections of documents which could be examined by visitors would be of great interest. Attempts to acquire historical materials relating to the experiences of the Iroquois and other Indians would be greatly appreciated as they are often difficult to access from some reservations. All copies of documents acquired by the researchers were given to the personnel at Fort Stanwix National Monument.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations in this section are presented here largely as they appeared in the previous reports. They are designed to provide site managers with more accurate and culturally appropriate interpretations for public presentations and to inform management decisions. Another goal is to open lines of communication between park managers and Indian nations and individuals in order to create an ongoing collaborative process.

### **Phase I: Introduction**

The issues described below relate to the management of Fort Stanwix, a National Monument administered by the National Park Service, and Oriskany Battlefield, owned

and [at the time this report was written] managed by the State of New York Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Should the NPS become involved jointly or individually in the management of Oriskany Battlefield, these issues will need to be addressed. Issues which involve future needs are included in the sub-division entitled "Planning" at the end of this section although there is some obvious overlap.

The recommendations included here have, in some cases, been stated openly and strongly by Iroquois community consultants; in other cases they are an obvious response to Iroquois concerns described in the previous section.

## **Phase I: Management Issues**

### ***1. Outreach to Indian peoples, Iroquois and non-Iroquois, should be on-going.***

The decision by the current [1999] superintendent of Fort Stanwix, Gary Warshefski, to visit each Iroquois group and discuss the outcome of this report and related issues is strongly supported by this research. While people were quite surprised by the willingness of the NPS to seek their input, outreach by a NPS official would solidify the good feelings created by the current project and allow a first-hand understanding of the feelings and issues on both sides. It will be important that this contact include those who may not be part of formal governments. To facilitate such exchanges, the primary location should be a politically neutral but relevant site such as a museum, cultural center, or meeting place of a historical society where people of different religious or political factions would feel comfortable. Many of the recommendations made in this report suggest ways in which consultation and cooperation can continue as well as increase.

### ***2. The protection of burials must be a high priority. Proper treatment of any bones which are uncovered accidentally or through natural processes needs to be ensured.***

Protection of burials is everyone's primary concern and has been described in its various aspects in the previous section. This has become a pressing issue as the local newspaper has carried stories about illegal activities reportedly taking place at Oriskany battlefield and local amateur historians with strong interests in the site have been outspoken in their criticism of current strategies for site protection. Visits by the superintendent to Iroquois groups should reassure them that the NPS, should it become jointly or individually involved in the management of Oriskany battlefield, has no intention of actively seeking to identify burial locations and will avoid areas in which burials may be suspected.

A significant issue which the NPS will have to confront if bodies are encountered is the determination of the racial or ethnic identity of the remains. Rebel battle reports are adamant in stating that rebel bodies were left on the field, although some individuals did return to look for survivors or friends. There is no currently available information as to what happened to the bodies of non-Indians fighting with the British. Blacksnake reported that rebel prisoners held by the Senecas were killed running the gauntlet. These graves, if the remains were buried, are probably near the site of the Seneca camps outside Fort Stanwix and are not likely to be in areas under federal ownership. British military records and newly available documents in the Library and Archives Canada may shed some light on the ultimate location of non-Indian victims of the battle and siege. It is important to note that not all rebel prisoners were executed. Five prisoners were brought back to Detroit by Chippewa chiefs and warriors returning from the battle. Oneidas who fell at Oriskany are the most likely to have been returned to their villages for appropriate burial. This would not have been an option for Mohawks, Senecas, Mississaugas, and the “western Indians.”

Most primary sources indicate that the heaviest losses were borne by the Senecas, who lost approximately thirty of their chiefs and warriors. Mary Jemison describes the great lamentations which arose as the remaining Senecas returned to the Genesee. Neither she nor the Seneca chief Blacksnake commented upon the fate of the bodies. The Iroquois place great importance on appropriate ritual treatment of the dead, and if this had not occurred it is likely that Blacksnake would have noted it in the same way that the rebels noted the need to abandon their dead on the battleground. Stoner’s observation of nine Indian bodies laid out along the road does suggest that some Indians had returned. It may have been that Stoner’s approach interrupted a ritual interment which may have subsequently been completed; a Mohawk community consultant reported that interment of battlefield dead should properly occur at night. Another man reported that bodies ideally should have been taken home, but as this was not possible, they should have been ritually treated quickly, either buried close by or taken away and buried facing “in the direction of home.” This may explain the location of the bodies seen by Stoner. On the other hand, if one were to bury in an area which was heavily wooded, the easiest access would be the road which was cleared. Iroquois, regardless of national affiliation, were unanimous in stating that the Senecas would *not* have abandoned their dead without appropriate ritual, though there was some disagreement as to what that ritual might have

been. Two Iroquois people told us that the burial site would not be at the battleground but somewhere nearby. Since conditions at Oriskany were far less than ideal, it is possible that bodies were buried on the field. Tobacco burning would most likely have been undertaken whether the bodies were removed or buried where found. A Mohawk man stated that this would retrieve the spirit and take it home, from whence it would then be released. There is no reason to believe that other Iroquois, as well as the Mississaugas, would have behaved differently toward their dead. All of the “western Indians” returned home safely with the exception of a single Potawatomi whose fate could not be determined.

It will be important for the NPS to adequately identify the ethnic affiliation of skeletal materials which might be accidentally uncovered or brought to Fort Stanwix by local residents. If the mass grave used by Judge Hathaway is discovered, it is likely to contain Indian and non-Indian remains, though the latter would probably be more numerous. It is unlikely that any cultural materials will be recovered which might aid in identifying bodies as Indian because the Seneca and Mohawk warriors wore little clothing. This may also true of the Oneidas. The services of a physical or forensic anthropologist will be necessary to identify genetic traits such as shovel-shaped incisors (which distinguish Indian from non-Indian dental remains), but it will be impossible to assign racial/ethnic identification to disarticulated long bones and other post-cranial materials. A physical anthropologist experienced in identifying 19th century battlefield remains has stated that no useful information could be derived from a mass grave such as this. There is, therefore, no valid scientific reason for disturbance of the remains. If individual graves are encountered, affiliation will be more likely as bodies will be intact and the likelihood of grave goods increased. Forensic data will not be able to distinguish among Native populations. Furthermore, assumptions that racial and cultural identity are the same may well prove erroneous. In the absence of definitive proof to the contrary, Iroquois will believe that any body recovered is likely to be that of an Indian participant, due in part to the large number of Indians present.

The inadvertent discovery of human remains should be relayed to the Confederacy by the appropriate agency. The Confederacy already has a committee devoted to this issue and initial contact could be made with Peter Jemison, a committee member and traditionalist Seneca who is the manager of Ganondagan State Historic Site.

Mississauga community consultants were also concerned that no burials be disturbed and if any are uncovered would like to be informed as they have developed a

reburial protocol to ensure that appropriate people are contacted and the necessary rituals performed. There is no legal obligation for the NPS to consult with any of the Canadian communities but it is important to note that the NPS has chosen to include Canadian aboriginals in the project from its inception. Both the agency and the park itself have had a strong commitment to understanding the events in the Mohawk Valley from a perspective that was not limited by boundaries imposed after the American Revolution. Having reached out to these communities for input, common courtesy and respect require that they be informed of events in which they may have an interest. Consultation and collaboration with Iroquois communities by Mississaugas would be ideal and could be facilitated by the NPS but the groups themselves would have to take the ultimate responsibility.

### *3. Protection of Oriskany Battlefield is of critical importance.*

The primary concern is to prevent the uncovering of bodies. However, the use of metal detectors and other devices and activities not in accord with the solemn nature of the battlefield is also worrisome to many Iroquois. Walls, fences, and armed guards are clearly neither desirable nor possible so that illegal activities will probably continue. Strong statements by federal and state officials that they will prosecute offenders may be only symbolic if the perpetrators are not apprehended. However, contacts with local law enforcement agencies to emphasize the strong stand taken by officials may increase the possibility of catching people involved in illegal activities or deter people from treasure hunting. It might also be possible to initiate contact with local historical societies, Indian nations, and others in order to provide a “community watch” service.

### *4. The current film shown at the Fort Stanwix Visitors' Center should be withdrawn and replaced by one or more presentations which are more historically accurate and culturally sensitive. Ideally such presentations should serve as an introduction to the history of the Mohawk Valley and, in particular, the battle of Oriskany.*

[Author's note: The following recommendation is included as initially submitted in order to represent the original work as accurately as possible. As noted in the Acknowledgements section, this recommendation was acted upon quickly and the offensive and inaccurate film withdrawn. The Marinus Willett Center at Ft. Stanwix now presents a substantive introduction to Ft. Stanwix and the battlefield as recommended.

The Center also provides greatly expanded office space and research facilities. A new film presents the battle and siege from the perspectives of four different residents of the Mohawk Valley in the eighteenth century and provides the kind of multicultural approach strongly supported by this research. In 2006 the Willett Center received a second place award for exhibits by the National Association of Interpretation.]

A new media presentation, whether by film, multiple slide projections, CD-ROM, etc. is a necessity. This is defined as an immediate management issue rather than a future planning issue because of the uniformly negative impact this film has had on Iroquois visitors to Fort Stanwix. Because it serves as an introduction not only to the fort, but also to the attitudes of the NPS, the current film is counter to contemporary NPS initiatives and should be withdrawn immediately. The current film, roughly two decades old, is simplistic and offensive to both Indian and non-Indian viewers in its indiscriminate use of the term “savages.” While this term appears frequently in 18th century documents, it is most often applied to those natives and native groups about whom the writer has strongly negative feelings. Friendly Indians are not described in this way. Therefore, the use of the term savages in the film accurately states the feelings held by the garrison in Fort Stanwix about the Mohawks, Senecas, and other Indians maintaining the siege, but totally ignores the very close and friendly relations between the people in the garrison and many of the nearby Oneidas, some of whom were in the fort at this time. If the new presentation is to serve as an educational device, it could explore the use of this term and indicate that “savage” was a synonym for “Indian enemy” and was not applied to Indian friends. Furthermore, it should make the distinction between savage as a noun and savage as an adjective. The fighting at Oriskany was savage, but as Sosin points out “There were white as well as red savages.”<sup>286</sup>

A new media presentation (or presentations) must be tied in with the Interpretive Plan for Fort Stanwix which should recognize the differences among Indian groups and nations, rather than glossing them under a single term (“Indian” or even “Iroquois”). Such a presentation might have multiple components. For educational purposes, the plan itself should make use of a 1995 publication from the New York State Archives and Records Administration entitled *Consider the Source: Historical Records in the Classroom*. This publication, which is limited to consideration of written and photographic records, has numerous suggestions about exercises for students at all grade levels, many of which could be adapted for an interactive exhibit at the Visitors’ Center at Fort Stanwix or provided to teachers for classroom and fieldtrip use.



The current film ignores the battle of Oriskany. This report clearly identifies the historic and cultural importance of the connection between these two sites and their relationship to contemporary Indian and non-Indian peoples. A new presentation could serve as an introduction to the history of the Mohawk Valley in general but with a strong focus on Fort Stanwix and Oriskany. Because many Iroquois community consultants strongly feel that massive onslaughts of tourist buses would be inappropriate at Oriskany, yet at the same time believe that there needs to be a greater understanding of the meaning of the site, the use of Fort Stanwix as the primary introduction to the site would solve several potential problems. It would provide an informed, culturally sensitive introduction, set the appropriate mood for a visit to Oriskany, and negate the need for an expanded visitors' center at the battlefield with its attendant risks of disturbance of human remains.

The development of new educational materials would also serve as a focal point for increased cooperation between the NPS and Iroquois and other Indian groups. The insight and abilities of Indian historians, film makers, story-tellers, and actors would result in a vastly better product than that currently on view and would create important community ties for the NPS. It is important, however, that all groups be invited to participate. A new presentation which reflects the biases of one particular group would not be an improvement over the current film.

Cooperative agreements between the NPS, local colleges and universities, and Indian nations/tribes could be used to provide training for native and non-native future film-makers, writers, etc. The talents of native artisans in making the kinds of artifacts needed for the film could serve as a kind of "living history" exhibit at the fort and incorporate elders as well as young people. The Seneca-Iroquois National Museum had a Living Artists series a number of years ago in which visitors could watch basketmakers, bead workers, painters, and sculptors at their crafts and discuss the works with the artists themselves. Many of these artifacts were incorporated into museum displays or offered for sale in the gift shop. A similar program would be a useful tourist attraction, would increase the visibility and importance of native peoples and crafts, highlight the work of native artists, and provide employment for native people. *Iroquois Arts: A Directory of A People and Their Work* could serve as a base to identify people with needed or desired skills.

***5. The nomination of Oriskany Battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places needs to be updated to include recognition as a Traditional Cultural Property.***

Although currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, its placement should be updated to include it as a Traditional Cultural Property (see National Register Bulletin 38, Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties). This is critical because of the very different meaning this site has for Iroquois people. Adequate ethnographic and historic support for this revision is contained within the current report.

***6. Access of Iroquois and other Indians to Oriskany Battlefield for religious purposes must be guaranteed.***

Traditional religious usage including the burning of sacred tobacco at this site has not impacted park use although some rituals may have taken place outside the boundaries of the current park. One man reported that such burning is ideally carried out near, but not on, the site. If this is so, the NPS and New York's OPRHP have no ability to ensure access, although if the park boundaries were to change, access might be guaranteed. Privacy for religious ceremonies is also important, even if it means briefly restricting visitation by non-Indians. Traditional religious and political leaders should be assured of this by the park superintendent or other responsible official.

***7. Appropriate activities for Oriskany Battlefield need to be defined.***

This is a difficult issue as there are some disagreements among Iroquois. One of the most significant findings of this project is the close association between the fort and the battlefield and the need for a unified approach to these as well as all the sites in the Mohawk Valley. The NPS will need to share the conclusions of this study with the New York OPRHP early in the planning for any anniversary celebration of the battle in order to ascertain how the interests of all parties involved can be accommodated.

There was very strong feeling that activities of a purely recreational nature should not be permitted. These would include such things as ball games, picnics, pow-wows, and other activities not directly related to the meaning of the site. There was disagreement as to whether re-enactments fall into this category. There was general agreement that Oriskany battlefield represented "a place of great sadness" where the Great Peace was broken and many people died fighting for what they believed in. The

issue that confronts the manager of the park is how such places and events can best be remembered and/or commemorated.

Kevin Foote suggests that what is important is how people in the long term wish to remember a particular event which provides the key in understanding how they retrospectively interpret events.<sup>287</sup> He identifies four ways that sites associated with violence or tragedy can be dealt with: sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration. The last two are not options. Obliteration leads to the scouring of a site as people desire to forget the event. That is clearly not the case for Oriskany. Rectification restores the site to its previous use without comment on the events that occurred.

Designation and sanctification are closely related. A sanctified site is “sacred space...set apart from its surroundings and dedicated to the memory of an event, person, or group.” Usually there is a permanent marker in the form of a monument, garden, or park. To be sanctified, however, requires the formal, ritual dedication to the memory of an event or a group of martyrs or victims and the site becomes transformed into a reminder or warning for future generations. Often there are annual pilgrimages to the site with continued ritual commemoration. Battlefields that mark “the traumas of nationhood” or “events that have given shape to national identity” are often sanctified.<sup>288</sup>

For Iroquois people, Oriskany seems to represent a site that is or should be sanctified (using Foote’s definition). As one of our consultants pointed out, this does not necessarily imply that it is sacred in a traditional religious sense. For example, no supernatural visitations, miracles, or religious martyrdoms took place and no holy person is buried there. However, the site has religious significance because of the violation of the Great Law which occurred there. The presence the monument and the flying of flags in addition to the private rituals that individual Iroquois have been carrying out at the site for decades clearly indicate a sanctified site. It reminds Iroquois people of what happened when the Great Law was broken and is seen by many as a call for Iroquois unity in the present. The annual commemorations that bring together Iroquois from different nations are perceived as important rituals for healing the social and political divisions that occurred as a result of the Battle of Oriskany.

Tiro argues that although Iroquois warriors fought against each other at Oriskany, overall the “civil war” that has been described as existing within the Confederacy was, in fact, quite civil in another sense. Although groups and individuals sincerely and effectively supported one side or the other, at a deeper level, they maintained a common

Iroquois identity.<sup>289</sup> He maintains that it was the subsequent peace, rather than the Revolutionary War, that divided the Confederacy. “In this way, a humiliating peace splintered the confederacy. It created new sources of resentment and cultivated older ones. It ultimately obscured the cooperation and cohesion the Indians had exhibited throughout the war, even to themselves.”<sup>290</sup>

This is best demonstrated by the Oneidas. As Foote pointed out, sanctified sites are those that “have given shape to national identity.” Oneidas in New York and Wisconsin (not, however, those in Canada), despite their often acrimonious divisions, are united in focusing on the support of the Oneidas for the revolutionary cause and foreground this as part of their national identity. T-shirts distributed by the New York Oneidas show an Oneida warrior and a colonial soldier and bear the slogan “Allies in War, Partners in Peace.” Letterhead stationery of the Wisconsin Oneidas shows Oneidas bringing corn to colonial soldiers. In the negotiations that ended the Revolution, Britain abandoned her native allies and the new United States claimed Indian land by right of conquest. Tiro points out that those Iroquois groups who supported the rebels had only the gratitude of the United States to rely upon to secure their remaining lands and therefore emphasized the differences between themselves and the pro-British Iroquois. As a result, they came to downplay the “mutually protective behavior” that he claims was more typical of the military encounters among them.<sup>291</sup> Whether it was the war or the peace that created the divisions seen today among Iroquois peoples may be irrelevant in terms of site management since the sanctification occurred regardless of the interpretation.

Dedicated sites are similar to sanctified sites except that they lack the rituals of consecration. The events that occurred at dedicated sites are without heroic or sacrificial qualities. Although there may be the erection of a sign or some other outward manifestation of the events, there is little long term attention to the site and regular commemorative rituals are rare.<sup>292</sup> Several consultants decried the lack of attention paid to Oriskany Battlefield and seemed to see New York’s treatment of the site in terms of it being “dedicated” rather than “sanctified.” It may be that Iroquois people are more likely to interpret the site as sanctified but only a similar study of the descendants of the non-Iroquois whose ancestors fought at the battle and lived in the region can test this proposition. However, a number of those individuals with whom we have interacted clearly share the perspective of the Iroquois.

The National Park Service has responsibility for federally owned American battlegrounds and the problems of interpretation and management at Oriskany and Ft. Stanwix are not uncommon. NPS Chief Historian Edwin Bearss reported that the interpretive film at Pearl Harbor needed to be redone to “eliminate the elements of racism and inappropriate rhetoric that distorts or makes history too simplistic.”<sup>293</sup> An identical statement could be made for the original film at Ft. Stanwix.

As Linenthal points out, oral traditions surrounding battlefields often are factually incorrect but have become so much a part of “invented tradition” or patriotic canon that to question them is at best bad manners and at worst unpatriotic.<sup>294</sup> We encountered several instances of this among both Iroquois and non-Indian consultants. Indeed, the ethnohistory presented in this report was developed to provide the available data for site managers desirous of portraying the events as accurately as possible.

Problems relating to re-enactment are apparent from the ethnographic data as there is obvious disagreement as to whether re-enactment is appropriate at Oriskany. Linenthal suggests that re-enactment can be another form of veneration, and presumably, therefore, appropriate at a sanctified site. Additionally it may be considered educational in emphasizing events and their meanings for contemporary people. A number of Iroquois men and women are themselves re-enactors. Others, however, believe this kind of activity is totally inappropriate. Although Linenthal points out the “dangerous illusion” associated with re-enactment that “war is glamorous”, the events at Oriskany are far from glamorous and are not recognized as such by the Indian participants.<sup>295</sup>

## Phase I: Planning Issues

### *1. There is a need for consultation with Indian groups during the development of the General Management Plan and the Environmental Impact Statement.*

There is a close association between Iroquois and other Indians and the Mohawk Valley which pre-dates European arrival on North American shores. The events which transpired during the late 18th century, specifically during the American Revolution, and its immediate aftermath, are directly related to the diaspora of Iroquois peoples. Therefore there is a strong emotional resonance for many whose original homeland was in the Mohawk Valley.

The tribal concerns documented in this report need to be addressed in both the General Management Plan and the Environmental Impact Statement. The socio-

economic impact of management alternatives on Indian people and groups needs to be considered. Iroquois interests generated by the current project can be maintained by this consultation process. The integration of Iroquois and other Indians' concerns must occur at the beginning of the planning process before modifications become too difficult. Processes for this consultation are outlined in a later recommendation.

## *2. The ethnographic data in this report need to inform the development of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.*

The need for a new media presentation at Fort Stanwix has been described under the management issues portion of this section. Many people visit Fort Stanwix for a variety of reasons and their levels of knowledge about the site and the region differ significantly. As a result, brochures, media presentation, and oral interpretations need to address a wide variety of interests, perspectives, and backgrounds. By demonstrating the roles played by different Indian groups and the results of treaties, battles, and cooperative endeavors, the NPS will enhance the attraction of not only Fort Stanwix and Oriskany but related sites in the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys. The current film reduces the siege to a “good guys” vs. “bad guys” play and misses the complexity of the engagement which would have far greater appeal if creatively presented.

Data from ethnographic and archival sources contained in this report can serve as a starting point and consultation with native groups in both the development and implementation phases is crucial.

## *3. A Special History Study is needed.*

Some of the weaknesses of the ethnohistorical study of the Oriskany battle are identified in Chapter 2. These include reliance on archival fair copy, typescripts and other printed copies of 18th century manuscripts, and lack of time and funding to undertake a full examination of British military records. The latter may elucidate the fate of Indian and non-Indian captives taken by British forces and the site(s) where the British and their allies buried their dead. It is possible, though unlikely, that there are also maps which may aid in understanding both the siege of the fort and the battle of Oriskany. Newly acquired documents in the Library and Archives Canada which relate directly to the Department of Indian Affairs and the Johnson family also need to be researched. Preliminary review of the sale catalogue indicates there are records of the 1768 Ft. Stanwix Boundary Treaty

as well as the siege of the fort in 1777. Most of these documents have never before been available to scholars.

Additional archival work needs to be done on the identity of the “Canadians” who were with St. Leger. Because there are strong suggestions that St. Leger held fairly negative attitudes towards Indians, especially the Mississaugas, more information on him and his experiences with native peoples would be useful in understanding his refusal to allow the Senecas and Mohawks under his command to pursue the rebels and his decision to end the siege. A further search of German records may provide the first-hand accounts which served as the basis for 19th century German descriptions of the battle.

An ethnographic study, similar to the current one, is needed for non-Iroquois people such as the Mississaugas and others who should be identifiable following further archival research directed toward the “western Indians.” Because the descendants of some of the “western Indians” are probably among the Senecas and Cayugas in Oklahoma, this group should be included in the proposed study. [This recommendation was accepted and resulted in Phase II of the project.]

A review of the Visitor's Logs at Oriskany and Fort Stanwix indicates that Indians and non-Indians have visited the site, often coming from great distances, because they know or believe their ancestors participated in events in this region. A similar ethnographic study of the non-Indian descendants of participants would also be useful to the NPS. Recent contacts between the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution and the Oneidas indicate that there is a great deal of common ground among descendants who were military allies. Since many of the non-Indians on the British side also moved to Canada during and after the Revolution, there should be points of common interest among contemporary Canadians and Iroquois on both sides of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence. There were intermarriages among Indians and non-Indians following the Revolution which also served to diminish racial and national differences.

By emphasizing these similarities, the NPS could put Fort Stanwix and Oriskany in a more international context which would increase tourism, especially by Canadians. The demonstration of multicultural contributions will aid in moving away from the U.S. tendency to see all battles and contests as zero sum games. The utilization of these data should result in a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan whose implementation will lead to the greater appreciation of the sites by people who find a way to personally identify with



them. This should be of particular interest to teachers who are required to integrate an appreciation and understanding of multiculturalism into their classroom exercises.

*4. Additional lands contiguous to the Oriskany Battlefield should be acquired by the NPS or another public agency.*

Archival research has demonstrated that significant parts of the battle occurred on land not within the boundaries of the current state park. Iroquois people strongly call for protection of the entire battlefield. The only way this can be accomplished is for the NPS or the state of New York to purchase the relevant property and expand the boundaries of the current park.

Protection of the site, as well as potential burials, requires that the land across Route 69 as well as additional parcels contiguous to the site be acquired. Rapid acquisition of this property by a public agency is important as collectors are reported to have been actively surveying this land. Iroquois were adamant that additional land must be held by a *public agency* which would be accountable for its protection. Public ownership will guarantee access to everyone and ensure that religious activities important to the Iroquois can be undertaken at appropriate times and places without fear of trespass. Historic accuracy also demands that the battlefield in its entirety be protected.

Aerial photographs and old maps can be used to trace the route of the old military road and the extent of the battle can be defined by the ravines. Additional surveys are required to identify the total extent of the battlefield. Unfortunately, surveys will draw attention to NPS interest in the property and might serve to intensify collecting as those involved realize that federal acquisition will likely put an end to their activities. There is no easy answer to this dilemma. It is possible that increased interest in collecting on adjacent land was an unintended result of the current project.

*5. A regional archive for the Mohawk Valley which includes primary materials in a readily retrievable format such as CD-ROM or microfilm should be created by the NPS.*

Fort Stanwix is an ideal location for the establishment of a regional archive for materials from this area. This should include books and monographs in history, ethnohistory, archaeology, and anthropology. While documentary evidence tends to emphasize political events and processes, this archive should ensure that the lives of the Iroquois-speaking peoples who first lived in the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys are fully

documented and recognized. The starting point for this collection should be the microfilmed Iroquois Indians: *A Documentary History of the Six Nations and Their League* edited by Francis Jennings, William Fenton, and Mary Druke. This massive undertaking includes copies of originals of nearly all the documents necessary for understanding the Indian role in the history of the Mohawk Valley. It would give researchers, whether scholars or avocational readers, access to primary sources otherwise unavailable or difficult to find.

The New York State French & Indian War 250th Anniversary Commemoration Commission has created a CD that contains the entire collection of the papers of Sir William Johnson as well as the related documents found in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York* as a permanent record of its work. This magnificent undertaking was revealed at the Western Frontier Symposium held at Johnstown, NY in October 2007. It contains an index to facilitate research through all the documents and should be the cornerstone of any collection dealing with the history of Ft. Stanwix and especially the 1768 treaty.

At this time typescripts of many original sources are available at the Fort, but their organization is incomprehensible and the quality of the transcription varies considerably. Secondary sources are more readily available, thus the emphasis on primary sources. Local histories dating from the 19th century should also be included. These are often rare and expensive and even if acquisition of copies is possible, unrestricted access would be unacceptable. These records would be most accessible if they could be placed on microfilm, or ideally, in CD-ROM format. Local libraries or historical societies could be contacted to ascertain their willingness to loan copies for this purpose. This could be a cooperative project between the NPS, Iroquois communities, local historical societies, state and local archivists, and grassroots organizations such as the Friends of Oriskany and the Northern Frontier Project.

**6. The NPS should take the initiative in creating a website which will eventually link numerous local, state, and federal government groups as well as local interest groups.**

This site could be utilized to attract and inform potential visitors, for public education in the schools and community at large, and as a model for a regional approach to promotion and development of tourism. The website could open with a map of the

region which contains names, locations, and a small icon for each historic site. The site can also include contemporary recreational or cultural locations. The following represents an abbreviated list of potential inclusions: Fort Stanwix, Oriskany, the Herkimer House, the Schuyler House, Erie Canal Village, Fort Hunter, Canajoharie, Ganondagan, Crown Point, Fort Edward, Fort Ann, Fort Ticonderoga, Saratoga.

Groups such as the Friends of Oriskany, the Rome Historical Society, the Oneida Indian Nation, local chambers of commerce, etc. could also have clickable icons which would allow them to briefly describe their activities and could contain links to other sites. Within each location identified by an icon would ideally be a detailed map, directions on how to get there, places to stay and eat, a brief history, photographs, lists and brief descriptions of festivals and special events and their dates, as well as links to other sites and places of interest.

The entry for Fort Stanwix should open with the appropriate tourist information. It should also include a more detailed history of the fort, texts of treaties, archaeological evidence, etc. As archives are placing their documents on-line in order to increase use, the archives suggested in the previous item could also eventually go on-line thereby greatly increasing access to documents.

Fort Stanwix was a focal point for two major treaties with the Six Nations held by the British and the Americans as well as providing the locale for discussions and treaties between Iroquois groups and the states and provinces. It would be appropriate for each group (including non-Iroquois such as the Mississaugas) to have its own icon with the Fort Stanwix "page" in which Iroquois nations/governments/individuals could describe in their own words what the history of the fort, region, American Revolution meant to their people then and now. This has the advantage of portraying Native Americans as they exist today, rather than relics of a distant past while at the same time highlighting their contributions to the history and development of North America. The NPS would have to clear entries to ensure they were appropriate and were not used as a forum for political posturing or attacks on other groups. It is expected that each group would use this opportunity to provide a link to its own homepage over which the NPS would have no control. In this manner the NPS could not be accused of censorship and could provide a major educational service.

This approach would be relatively inexpensive, flexible, easily expanded and updated and would enhance regional communication and planning. It would increase

tourism by illustrating different activities within the region such as re-enactments, Indian cultural festivals, casinos, antique festivals, and pioneer days. Fort Stanwix National Monument would assume a leadership role and although it could function alone, it gives native groups the option of involvement and thereby fosters partnerships under NPS auspices.

**7. A Fort Stanwix Newsgroup or Bulletin Board should be created.**

Much has been presented in this report which requires ongoing consultation with Indian groups. Despite the best intentions of all people and governments involved, creating committees of any nature (standing or *ad hoc*) creates important difficulties in scheduling and travel costs. A Newsgroup whose membership would include all Indian governments, Indian cultural centers, museums, libraries, historical societies and possibly schools and individuals would present the most rapid, comprehensive, affordable, and efficient means of distributing and collecting input from a variety of sources.

Again this would require the NPS (or Fort Stanwix National Monument) to act as moderator. Groups which do not currently have e-mail access would be at a disadvantage, yet we believe that each group will be able to designate an individual who could act as a point person for distribution of information received by this medium. The relevant government or board could designate a volunteer to post listings in public places such as libraries, council chambers, museums, or office and community bulletin boards.

This avoids difficulties mentioned above. Furthermore, it provides institutional connections which prevent discontinuity due to leadership and staff changes. It will provide information in a timely manner which will facilitate the meeting of deadlines within the NPS. This will also have positive functions for the groups involved in facilitating communication between elders who have traditional knowledge and children who have computer skills. It will allow those with a strong interest to play a significant role and ensure that there is a forum for Indian concerns. It protects the interests of the NPS because the fundamental core of the newsgroup is a call for cooperation with native groups, who, should they choose not to participate, cannot say their opinions were not solicited.

A newsgroup should not, however, be used as an excuse to reduce interactions on a more personal level. The intention of the present superintendent of Fort Stanwix to visit Iroquois groups should become an annual activity which establishes and maintains personal ties between Fort Stanwix National Monument, the NPS and Iroquois communities.

*8. The NPS should hire a Native Liaison person for Fort Stanwix whose primary responsibility will be ongoing program oriented consultations with native groups. This individual might also have the responsibility for development of a website or newsgroup.*

The maintenance of the kinds of consultation desired by Fort Stanwix National Monument cannot be done properly by the current staff because of time constraints. This position is necessary because of the multiplicity of groups whose history intersects with both Fort Stanwix and Oriskany battlefield, the complexity of the relationships among them, and the time depth involved.

Although electronic means will be best in facilitating rapid dissemination of ideas and provoking discussion and debate, it will work best when there is an underlying personal relationship. Developing this relationship will be time-intensive and it cannot realistically be added to the existing duties of people currently employed at Fort Stanwix. The appropriate individual should have experience in dealing with Native American individuals and governments and hold a Master's degree in anthropology (ethnography, applied anthropology), history, or American/Native studies. This person should play an important role in the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. Part of this person's duties should also include the recruitment and hiring of an Iroquois person(s) for the summer interpretive program.

Additional duties should include the development of a cultural competency training program for park staff to enhance sensitivity to broad issues of language use, native history and culture, and contemporary Indian societies. It is important that Iroquois and other Indian groups be recognized as contemporary, vibrant societies and not as historical anomalies. It is particularly important that the variation within and between Indian communities be portrayed to visitors. Working as a tribal liaison will allow this individual to bring personal experience to training programs and will increase the visibility of the NPS in Indian communities. Visits to native groups on an annual basis will be important for maintaining open lines of communication.

## Phase II

*1. Historical presentations in all media should reflect the wide geographical area from which participants came and their varied motives for participation.*

What makes this area and the sites of Fort Stanwix and Oriskany so interesting is

that the events that took place here during the Revolution involved many different ethnic and national groups fighting for a variety of reasons. Simplistic interpretations of the American Revolution as a fight for freedom by over-taxed colonists are clearly erroneous when seen in light of the battles and struggles that took place within the Mohawk Valley, involving people from at least two continents, fighting voluntarily and involuntarily, reflecting different religions, ethnic groups, tribes, and confederacies. However, characteristics such as religion, ethnicity, tribe, country of origin, and class are not alone sufficient to indicate the side any particular individual took in this struggle. Indeed issues such as personal loyalty, friendship, and family might well predict the stance a person would take, but families as well as larger entities often found themselves irreversibly divided by the Revolution. This war was not merely between a country and one of its colonies, it was also a world war and a confluence of civil wars.

*2. Because visitors to National Park Service administered sites in this region come from both the U.S. and Canada, terminology that reflects appropriate use in each country must be utilized. In print media this should be "Indian/Native" and the reasons for such use stated. This has the added advantage of demonstrating how events of long ago affect people and communities today.*

The problems of terminology have been addressed in the Methodology section of this report. The location of the Mohawk Valley and its proximity to Canada and the First Nations that reside within its boundaries dictates that the concerns of these individuals and groups need to be taken into consideration.

*3. The data base of primary and secondary sources should be maintained and updated to include references to groups identified in this report.*

Primary and secondary sources utilized in this report should be added to the master bibliography included in the first phase of this report. This data base should be regularly updated as new sources are discovered.

*4. The National Park Service should acquire the microfilm records of the Minutes of Indian Affairs, 1755-1790 from the National Archives of Canada. These are contained on reels C-1221, C-1222, and C-1223 which each cost \$40.00 (Canadian).*

These microfilms are of high quality and reasonably priced and are an asset to any scholar or interested lay person interested in the native peoples of this area. These

records are an invaluable source of information on the development and execution of Indian policies by the British government, as interesting for what they deal with as for what they omit. There is a strong Iroquois bias in these data, reflecting the primary importance the British placed on maintaining Iroquois cooperation and support. There is virtually no information on the Mississaugas as is true of nearly all British records from this time period.

*5. In order to continue the examination of participation by different groups in the events in the Mohawk Valley during the time of the American Revolution, archival research focusing on the colonial militia and Continental units should be undertaken and should be followed by field research among descendants of those individuals in the same manner and for the same purpose as the first two phases of this project.*

The first two phases of this project have dealt exclusively with Indian/Native participation in Mohawk Valley battles and this has addressed a clear need within the National Park Service for including the interpretations and concerns of groups that have heretofore received little recognition. At the same time it is important to give equal recognition to other groups whose ancestors were also vitally involved in these events and many of whose descendants live within this region today. This is particularly true because local interpretations of events are often at variance with both colonial and British sources. Information collected during the initial phases of this project suggests that many descendants are involved in re-enactor groups which have a special interest in both Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Battlefield. While re-enactors have no special position vis-à-vis the National Park Service, descendants of participants in the siege and battle do. This could present some difficulties for park managers in the future as these individuals have been outspoken in what they see as priorities for the park and some of the proposals they have put forth as individuals are directly counter to the wishes of Indian peoples. In order to ensure that they also have formal input to the National Park Service on these issues, it is critical that they too are involved as participants in the ongoing program to identify critical issues in park interpretation and management.

*6. To complete the recognition of groups not traditionally associated with the Revolution in the Mohawk Valley, archival and field research as outlined in #5 above should be undertaken to document the participation by Canadians, Scots-Irish, Hessians and other German mercenaries fighting with the British as well as by*



*blacks and women, whose activities on both sides have been discovered during research for the initial project phases.*

The commentary in the previous section is also relevant here. British forces included German mercenaries whose interest in the Revolutionary ideals of the colonists and the British desire to maintain its American colonies was probably little to non-existent, yet many of them seem to have decided to remain in America once the war was ended. Scots-Irish loyalists to Britain and/or the Johnson family were also a major component of British forces and supporters. Previous research has indicated that blacks were present and involved in the fighting on both sides. Indian women may also have played a military role although only that of Oneida women has been documented. It is known that women were present in Fort Stanwix and that one gave birth during the siege and another was killed. The role of the Mohawk Molly Brant in alerting the Indians at the fort of the militia's advance was described in Chapter 3. Contributions of members of these often unreported groups require documentation. A focus on these groups continues the attempt to place the siege and battle within a larger geographic, cultural, and political arena.

*7. Issues of language and history should be integrated into the story of this area as a way of demonstrating the relevance of history to current conditions.*

The fact that many Iroquois people live in Canada today is a direct result of the American Revolution. Those whose aboriginal homeland was in the Mohawk Valley have a particular interest in the region. The Mississaugas have also been affected by the Revolution in that parts of their homeland were taken to provide land for displaced Iroquois.

*8. Having initiated contacts with Native communities in Canada, the National Park Service and the administration at Ft. Stanwix National Monument have an ethical responsibility to inform them of events in which they have expressed an interest and a desire to be kept informed. This research has established an affiliation between these groups and the events memorialized at the battlefield and the park.*

The border that separates the U.S. and Canada came about as a result of the American Revolution as did the diaspora of many Indian groups. Because many of the descendants of battle and siege participants no longer live in the Mohawk Valley does not mean that they have no interest in Oriskany Battlefield and Ft. Stanwix National

Monument – a fact that the National Park Service clearly recognized when it initiated this project. For many the fact that the Mohawk Valley was their ancestral homeland gives the region a greater significance.

Field research in both phases of this project found great surprise, pleasure, and gratitude for the inclusion of non-U.S. Native communities among Iroquois, Mississauga, Huron, Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi community consultants in *both* countries. The willingness of the NPS to reach out to these communities stands as a welcome antidote to stereotypes of inflexible and unfeeling government bureaucracies. It is important that the bridges created by the NPS remain open. This in no way ties the hands of park administrators and the kinds of communication envisioned in this recommendation can be accomplished by simple phone calls although more formal procedures may be developed if both parties feel the necessity.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Stone 1877, 186; Roberts 1899, 416; Cookinham (citing Trevelyan) 1915, 337

<sup>2</sup> Sturtevant 1978, 537-538

<sup>3</sup> Benn 2008, personal communication, 12 October.

<sup>4</sup> CO 42/37, fol. 70-77, pp. 139-153

<sup>5</sup> WO28/10, fol. 396

<sup>6</sup> Merrell 1991, 125

<sup>7</sup> Abler 2007, 24; Faux 1987, 28

<sup>8</sup> Taylor 2006, 84

<sup>9</sup> Merrell 1991, 147

<sup>10</sup> Taylor 2006, 21

<sup>11</sup> O'Toole 2005, 21

<sup>12</sup> O'Toole 2005, 29

<sup>13</sup> Shannon 2007

<sup>14</sup> Kelsay 1984, 68, 206

<sup>15</sup> O'Toole 2005, 170-171; Preston 2002, 56

<sup>16</sup> O'Toole 2005, 68-69

<sup>17</sup> Campbell 2007

<sup>18</sup> Parmenter 2001, 109

<sup>19</sup> Allan Taylor argues the opposite interpretation (2006, 70), that neither side recognized how limited their power was.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor 2006, 70

<sup>21</sup> Shannon 2007

<sup>22</sup> Taylor 2006, 86

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Lustig 1995, 11

<sup>24</sup> Lustig 1995, xi

<sup>25</sup> Lustig 1995, 27

<sup>26</sup> Lustig 1995, 61-62

<sup>27</sup> Lustig 1995, 119

<sup>28</sup> Lustig 1995, 58, 60

<sup>29</sup> Preston 2002, 277

<sup>30</sup> Shy 1976, 27

- <sup>31</sup> Guldenzopf 1984, 83
- <sup>32</sup> Preston 2002, 132
- <sup>33</sup> Calloway 2007
- <sup>34</sup> Preston 2002, 55
- <sup>35</sup> Kirkland to Schuyler, 3 January 1777; Penrose 1981, 63
- <sup>36</sup> Kirkland Papers, Jennings *et al.*, reel 33
- <sup>37</sup> Kirkland to Schuyler, 14 January 1777, Penrose 1981, 65-68
- <sup>38</sup> Washington to Hancock, 29 March 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, M-247, reel 167, v4, 35-38; Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>39</sup> Kirkland to Schuyler, 14 January 1777, Penrose 1981, 65-68; Kirkland Papers, Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>40</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, M-247, i153, v3, 55-57
- <sup>41</sup> Oneida Chiefs to Elmore, 19 January 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, M-247, r173, i153, v3, 59-60; CC, Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>42</sup> Fenn 2001, 108
- <sup>43</sup> Kirkland to Schuyler, 19 January 1777, Penrose 1981, 70-71
- <sup>44</sup> Kirkland to Schuyler, 25 January 1777, Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 71-73
- <sup>45</sup> Schuyler Court Martial, FOST typescript
- <sup>46</sup> Elmore to Schuyler, 20 March 1777, Penrose 1981, 74-75
- <sup>47</sup> NAC, MG 21, Add Mss vol 21697, file B-37, reel H-1433, pp 158-165
- <sup>48</sup> Nickerson 1928, 97-98
- <sup>49</sup> Schuyler Papers, NYPL, Box 14; Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>50</sup> CO 42/36, p 117; Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>51</sup> NAC, MG 21, Add Mss 21697, transcript H1433, reel B-37, pp 410-412
- <sup>52</sup> Calloway 1995, 108-128; Hinman 1985
- <sup>53</sup> Schuyler to Hancock, 8 June 1777, M247, r173, i153, v 3, pp 144-150
- <sup>54</sup> Richter and Merrell 1987, 5
- <sup>55</sup> Oneida to Elmore, 19 March 1777, Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789, vol 7, p 308; Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>56</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, i78, vol 8, pp 259-260; Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>57</sup> Graymont 1972, 115
- <sup>58</sup> Schuyler Court Martial, NYHS 1879, FOST typescript

- <sup>59</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, i78, v 15, pp 175-189 (in French); Jennings *et al.* reel 33; FOST typescript XOO629 (in English)
- <sup>60</sup> NYHS 1879, Schuyler Court Martial, p 100, FOST typescript
- <sup>61</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD, VIII, p 718
- <sup>62</sup> Carleton to Germain, 7 July 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/ 36, file Quebec 1776-1777
- <sup>63</sup> Burt 1930
- <sup>64</sup> Butler to Carleton, 28 July 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, reel B-34, pp 192-194
- <sup>65</sup> Schuyler to Hancock, 8 June 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, r173, i153, v 3, p 148
- <sup>66</sup> Stone 1838, 209; Wager 1896, 30; Scott 1927, 103, 204; Clarke 1941, 211; Thomas 1954, 58; Graymont 1988, 35
- <sup>67</sup> Jones 1851, 334fn
- <sup>68</sup> Campbell 1849, 92, 93
- <sup>69</sup> Campbell 1849, 86, 88
- <sup>70</sup> Stone 1877, fn151
- <sup>71</sup> Stone 1877, 140
- <sup>72</sup> Personal communication, 1996
- <sup>73</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII, p 719
- <sup>74</sup> Draper 4S22
- <sup>75</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 16
- <sup>76</sup> Harper to Schoharie Committee, 10 June 1777, Draper 3F169
- <sup>77</sup> Harper to Committee at Schoharie, 12 June 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, i153, v 3, pp 162-165; Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Draper 3F169
- <sup>78</sup> Schuyler to Hancock, 8 June 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, r173, i153, v 3, p 152.
- <sup>79</sup> Thomas Spencer to Schuyler, 26 June 1777, Penrose 1981:79-80
- <sup>80</sup> Kelsay 1984, 194-195
- <sup>81</sup> Herkimer to Schuyler, 2 July 1777, Penrose 1981, 81; Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 58-61, Jennings *et al.* reel 33
- <sup>82</sup> Draper 3F40-41
- <sup>83</sup> NAC, Claus Papers, vol 14, pt 1, p 29; Claus Papers "Anecdotes of Brant", vol 2, p 49
- <sup>84</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD, VIII, p 720

- <sup>85</sup> Herkimer to Schuyler, 2 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 81
- <sup>86</sup> Schuyler to Council of Safety of New York, 21 July 1777, FOST typescript, p 176
- <sup>87</sup> Kelsay 1984, 195
- <sup>88</sup> Stone 1838 I, 184-185
- <sup>89</sup> Draper 3F81-8
- <sup>90</sup> Herkimer to Schuyler, 2 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 58-61, Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 81)
- <sup>91</sup> Dean to Schuyler, 25 June 1777, Penrose 1981, 78-79
- <sup>92</sup> Spencer to Schuyler, 26 July 1777, Penrose 1981, 79-80
- <sup>93</sup> NYHS 1879, Schuyler Court Martial, FOST typescript, p 139-140
- <sup>94</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 16
- <sup>95</sup> Gansevoort to Schuyler, 3 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 66-68, Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 82-83; Gansevoort to Schuyler, 4 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 63-66, Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 83-85.
- <sup>96</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII, p 179
- <sup>97</sup> Edward Spencer to Gansevoort, 6 July 1777, Penrose 1981, 86; Gansevoort to Schuyler, 6 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 68-69, Jennings *et al.* 33; Penrose 1981, 86-87
- <sup>98</sup> The original Caughnawaga was a Mohawk village built in the mid 1660s and destroyed by the French in 1693. Catholic Mohawks established a mission village of the same name in the vicinity of Montreal in 1676 (Guldenzopf 1984, 80-81).
- <sup>99</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 88-89, Jennings *et al.* 33; Penrose 1981, 88-89
- <sup>100</sup> Graymont 1972, 66
- <sup>101</sup> Schuyler to Gansevoort, 10 July 1777, American Antiquarian Society Letter #1821; Lansing to Badlam, 10 July 1777, American Antiquarian Society Letter # 1824; Lansing to Cuyler, 10 July 1777, American Antiquarian Society Letter #1834; all FOST typescripts
- <sup>102</sup> Herkimer to Schuyler, 15 July 1777, Penrose 1981, 88-89
- <sup>103</sup> NYHS Coll for 1879, Schuyler Court Martial, FOST p 174
- <sup>104</sup> NAC, MG 19 F1, vol 14, reel C-1481, p 251
- <sup>105</sup> NAC, Claus Papers
- <sup>106</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII, p719

- <sup>107</sup> NAC, Haldimand Papers, Add Mss 21699, reel H-1434, p 572
- <sup>108</sup> Meeting of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Penrose 1981, 122-123
- <sup>109</sup> NYHS 1879, Schuyler Court Martial, FOST p 175
- <sup>110</sup> John Jay to Gouverneur Morris, 21 July 1777, quoted in Stone 1877, 142
- <sup>111</sup> Gerlach 1964, 233-311
- <sup>112</sup> Shy 1976, 183
- <sup>113</sup> Draper 4S17-19
- <sup>114</sup> Spencer to Committee, 29 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, M237, reel 167, i2, v 4, pp 449-450; Jennings reel 33
- <sup>115</sup> Graymont 1972, 120-122
- <sup>116</sup> Graymont 1972, 122
- <sup>117</sup> Butler to Carleton, 28 July 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, reel B-34, pp 192-194
- <sup>118</sup> NAC, Claus Papers, vol 2, Anecdotes of Brant
- <sup>109</sup> NAC, MG11, CO 42/37, reel B-34, pp 192-194
- <sup>120</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD, VIII, p 719; Sir John's Orderly Book, p 294
- <sup>121</sup> Graymont 1972, 124
- <sup>122</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII, p 719-720; NAC, Claus Papers 14, pt. 1, p 30
- <sup>123</sup> Seaver 1990, 52
- <sup>124</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII, p 720
- <sup>125</sup> NAC, MG 11, CO42/37, reel B-34, pp 192-194
- <sup>126</sup> Documents of the American Revolution 14:219-224
- <sup>127</sup> Gansevoort to Schuyler, 26 July 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress, i63, pp 62-63, Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 91-92
- <sup>128</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 18; Bronck Family Papers, Beecher, ed. 1973, 18-19
- <sup>129</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 18
- <sup>130</sup> Stone 1838 II, 411fn
- <sup>131</sup> Draper 4S22
- <sup>132</sup> Washington to Gates, 30 July 1777, Sparks vol 5, p 8
- <sup>133</sup> Washington to Council of Safety, 4 August 1777, Sparks vol 5, pp 17-20
- <sup>134</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 24
- <sup>135</sup> Bird's Diary, in Stone 1838, 221
- <sup>136</sup> Bird's Diary, in Stone 1838, 221-222
- <sup>137</sup> Claus to Knox, Documents of the American Revolution, p 222



- <sup>138</sup> Willet, in Willet 1831, 130; Lowenthal 1983, 24
- <sup>139</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO42/37, reel B-34, p 181
- <sup>140</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 26
- <sup>141</sup> in Willett 1831, 130
- <sup>142</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 26
- <sup>143</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 29
- <sup>144</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 28
- <sup>145</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, Reel B-34, p 182
- <sup>146</sup> Van Schaik to Schuyler, 4 August 1777, Clinton Papers, # 672, pp 169-170
- <sup>147</sup> Clinton to Herkimer, 2 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no. 668, pp 164-165; Clinton to Wynkoop, 2 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no. 669, pp 165-166
- <sup>148</sup> Claus to Knox, Documents of the American Revolution, p 222; St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, Reel B-34, pp 182
- <sup>149</sup> Claus to Knox, Documents of the American Revolution, p 222
- <sup>150</sup> Draper 4S
- <sup>151</sup> Klinck and Talman 1970
- <sup>152</sup> NAC, CO 42/37, reel B-34, pp 181-189
- <sup>153</sup> NYCD VIII
- <sup>154</sup> Lowenthal 1983
- <sup>155</sup> in Willett 1838
- <sup>156</sup> Haberle 1909, 225
- <sup>157</sup> Haberle 1909, 228
- <sup>158</sup> This was suggested by Fort Plank historian Ken Johnson, based upon his twenty-five years' experience as an Emergency Medical Technician. Personal communication, 2007.
- <sup>159</sup> Clinton Papers, no 698, pp 212-213
- <sup>160</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 29
- <sup>161</sup> Willett, in Willett 1831, 131
- <sup>162</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 31
- <sup>163</sup> Willett, in Willett 1838, 131-133
- <sup>164</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, Reel B-34, pp 181-189
- <sup>165</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, Reel B-34, pp 183
- <sup>166</sup> Abler 1997, personal communication
- <sup>167</sup> Klinck & Talman 1970, 273-274

- <sup>168</sup> Thacher 1994, 68
- <sup>169</sup> Campbell 1849; Greene 1925; Jones 1851; Lossing 1859; Neilson 1844; Roberts 1899; Simms 1845, 1883; Stone 1838; Stone 1887
- <sup>170</sup> Draper 11U
- <sup>171</sup> Falk 2007
- <sup>172</sup> Quoted in pension application of Johann Jost Scholl, RWPA #W16396, transcript provided by Ken D. Johnson.
- <sup>173</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII
- <sup>174</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, Reel B-34, pp 183
- <sup>175</sup> Stone 1838
- <sup>176</sup> in Abler 1989, 128,130
- <sup>177</sup> Abler 2007, 44
- <sup>178</sup> Abler 1989, 130
- <sup>179</sup> Simms 1882 II, 76, 81
- <sup>180</sup> Simms 1882 II, 110
- <sup>181</sup> Jones 1851, 361
- <sup>182</sup> Ubelaker and Scammel 1992, 111
- <sup>183</sup> in Simms 1882 II, 111
- <sup>184</sup> Dygert to Chairman of Albany Committee, 9 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 692, p 203
- <sup>185</sup> in Stone 1877, 191
- <sup>186</sup> Simms 1845, 264
- <sup>187</sup> Jones 1851, 361-362
- <sup>188</sup> Hathaway Collection
- <sup>189</sup> personal communication 1996
- <sup>190</sup> Eades 1994
- <sup>191</sup> Seaver 1990, 53
- <sup>192</sup> Graymont 1972, 339; personal communication 1996; Fenton 2002 XXXX
- <sup>193</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 42/37, Reel B-34, p 183; Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII; Klinck and Talman 1970, 273
- <sup>194</sup> Dygert to Schuyler, 6 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 685, pp 191-192
- <sup>195</sup> Stone 1877:xxxv
- <sup>196</sup> Willett, in Willett 1831, 132-133

- <sup>197</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 31
- <sup>198</sup> Willett 1838, 135; Lowenthal 1983, 33
- <sup>199</sup> Schuyler to Wesson, 8 August 1777, AAS 1833, FOST
- <sup>200</sup> Deygart to Schuyler, 6 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 685, pp 191-192
- <sup>201</sup> Deggert to Chairman of Albany Committee, 9 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 692, p 204
- <sup>202</sup> Schuyler to Hancock, 8 August 1777, CC, i153, v3, pp234-239; Jennings *et al.* reel 33; Penrose 1981, 92-93
- <sup>203</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 37
- <sup>204</sup> Willett, in Willett, 1838, 134; Lowenthal 1983, 34
- <sup>205</sup> Schuyler to Hancock, 10 August 1777, Penrose 1981, 94-95; AAS 1828, FOST; Schuyler to Wesson, 11 August 1777, AAS 1905, FOST
- <sup>206</sup> Dearborn 1939, 101
- <sup>207</sup> Washington to Gates, 20 August 1777, Sparks, vol 5, p 38
- <sup>208</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 39
- <sup>209</sup> St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO 2/37, Reel B-34, p 182
- <sup>210</sup> *The Remembrancer* for 1777, reprinted in Stone 1838, 253
- <sup>211</sup> Gros to Tygert, 12 August 1777, Penrose 1978, 125-126
- <sup>212</sup> In Stone 1838:xxxviii
- <sup>213</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 46-48
- <sup>214</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII
- <sup>215</sup> Arnold to Schuyler, 21 August 1777, Gates Papers, reel 3, FOST X00685; Arnold to Gates, 21 August 1777, Gates Papers (?), FOST X00687
- <sup>216</sup> Clinton to Council of Safety, 25 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 721, pp 252-253
- <sup>217</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 49
- <sup>218</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 50; Clinton Papers, no 721, p 254
- <sup>219</sup> Lowenthal 1983, 52
- <sup>220</sup> Arnold to Clinton, 23 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 721, p 255-256; Arnold to Gates, 23 August 1777, Gates Papers, reel 3, FOST X00686 (edited copy), FOST X00620 (in original spelling but without citation)
- <sup>221</sup> Arnold to Gates, 24 August 1777, Gates Papers, reel 3, FOST X00688
- <sup>222</sup> Committee to Clinton, 25 August 1777, Penrose 1978, 129-130
- <sup>223</sup> Clinton to Council of Safety, 25 August 1777, Clinton Papers, no 721, p 253-254

<sup>224</sup> Claus to Knox, DAR, p 223

<sup>225</sup> Burgoyne to Germain, NAC, Colonial Office, Original Correspondence, Secretary of State, Number 37, Quebec

<sup>226</sup> St Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, NAC, MG 11, CO42/37, Reel B-34, pp. 181-189

<sup>227</sup> Stevens 1984, 363, 365

<sup>228</sup> Stevens 1984: 335-336, 340

<sup>229</sup> Stevens 1984, 662

<sup>230</sup> Stevens 1984, 679-683

<sup>231</sup> Stevens 1984, 799-801

<sup>232</sup> Stevens 1984, 393-394

<sup>233</sup> Stevens 1984, 120, 122

<sup>234</sup> Stevens 1984, 117

<sup>235</sup> Stevens 1984, 15

<sup>236</sup> White 1991, 16

<sup>237</sup> White 1991, 188

<sup>238</sup> White 1991, 20

<sup>239</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 41-42

<sup>240</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 51-57, extract in CO 42/36, ff. 227-229

<sup>241</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 273-274

<sup>242</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 197-198, pp. 393-394

<sup>243</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 193-194, pp. 385-386

<sup>244</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 339, p. 677

<sup>245</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 57-66, pp. 113-131

<sup>246</sup> CO 42/37, fol 24-, p. 47-,

<sup>247</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 57-66, pp. 113-131

<sup>248</sup> CO 42-37, ff. 70-77, pp. 139-153

<sup>249</sup> Caughnawaga, known today as Kahnawake, was a Catholic community attached to the local mission and comprised primarily of Mohawks. It was connected to the Six Nations Confederacy through diplomacy but was usually referred to separately. It was one of the Seven Nations of Canada that remained in contact with the Five, later Six, Nations after moving north and communicated with them during the American Revolution. A detailed description can be found in Ostola (1989). It is not be confused with the seventeenth century village of the same name in the Mohawk Valley.

- <sup>250</sup> Iroquois nations trace descent matrilineally, so that a child assumes the tribal affiliation of its mother.
- <sup>251</sup> White 1991, 356, 384
- <sup>252</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 172-177, pp. 343-346
- <sup>253</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 341
- <sup>254</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 31-32, pp. 61-63
- <sup>255</sup> Stevens 1984, 1055
- <sup>256</sup> WO 28/10, ff. 396
- <sup>257</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 57-66, pp. 113-131
- <sup>258</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 97-98, pp. 192-194
- <sup>259</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 55-56, pp. 109-111
- <sup>260</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 172, pp. 339-340
- <sup>261</sup> WO 28/10, ff. 396
- <sup>262</sup> HP/BM, Add Mss 21875, ff. 191-193
- <sup>263</sup> CO 42/37, ff. 57-66, pp. 113-131
- <sup>264</sup> HP/BM, Add Mss 21774, ff. 365-366
- <sup>265</sup> Stevens 1984, 1257
- <sup>266</sup> CO 42/37, pp. 181-189
- <sup>267</sup> CO 42/36, ff. 132-135
- <sup>268</sup> Jennings 1985, 53, 58
- <sup>269</sup> Burnham 1905, 7; Indian Claims Commission (Canada) 1999, 152
- <sup>270</sup> see St. Leger to Carleton, 27 August 1777, CO 42/37, pp. 181-189
- <sup>271</sup> Claus to Knox, NYCD VIII, 719
- <sup>272</sup> NYCD VIII, 720
- <sup>273</sup> HP/BM, MG 21, Add Mss 2176-1, pp. 114-117
- <sup>274</sup> Stone 1838 I, 220
- <sup>275</sup> Stone 1838 I, 220
- <sup>276</sup> Stone 1838 I, 220-222
- <sup>277</sup> CO 42/37, p. 181
- <sup>278</sup> Watt and Morrison 2001, 18
- <sup>279</sup> Watt and Morrison 2001, 100
- <sup>280</sup> Watt 2001, personal communication
- <sup>281</sup> Cruikshank 1930, 359

<sup>282</sup> Schoolcraft 1846b, 17

<sup>283</sup> Fenton 2002, 22

<sup>284</sup> Fenton 2002, xiii, xiv, 5

<sup>285</sup> The Colonial Laws of New York from 1664 to the Revolution, Report of the Commissioners of Statutory Revision, 1894; cited in Hagerty 1971, 82

<sup>286</sup> Sosin 1965, 101

<sup>287</sup> Foote 2003, 5

<sup>288</sup> Foote 2003, 8-10

<sup>289</sup> Tiro 2000, 149

<sup>290</sup> Tiro 2000, 165

<sup>291</sup> Tiro 2000, 165

<sup>292</sup> Foote 2003, 16, 18

<sup>293</sup> Quoted in Linenthal 1993, 199

<sup>294</sup> Linenthal 1993, 37

<sup>295</sup> Linenthal 1993, 5





# APPENDIX 1

## BRIEF STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

### Phase I: Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography Project

We are conducting a research project to learn more about people's relations to Fort Stanwix and the Oriskany Battlefield in New York State and, in particular, are trying to learn what is important to people today about these historic locations. We hope the research will benefit Native Americans by documenting what they think is important about these sites and by increasing historical and current awareness. We hope the research will help the National Park Service (NPS) make informed decisions in their approach to the locations and in their public interpretations.

While NPS has hired SJS Archaeological Services, Inc. to conduct the research, we are not employees of NPS or the federal government and we have no control over NPS policies or actions. Although we are conducting the research for the NPS, we cannot guarantee that NPS can or will act on any findings. It may be that no benefits will result from our research other than making available to the general public and increased understanding of all people's ideas and attitudes about the study area. If you have questions about government policies or procedures, here are the people you should call:

Gary Warshefski  
Superintendent  
Ft. Stanwix National Monument  
National Park Service  
tel: 315/336-2090

Nancy Demyttenaere  
Regional Historic Preservation Supervisor  
Oriskany Battlefield  
New York State  
tel: 315/492-1756

Many people today have ancestors who were directly and vitally involved in historic events. By consulting with as many descendants as possible, we hope to invite their involvement in decisions about how to present history to the general public and about specific land management issues. Similarly, NPS is reaching out to nearby landowners, interested historians, and others.

Information you may provide will be presented in reports to NPS and in informal meetings to the NPS staff. Copies will be forwarded to concerned tribal councils and

other institutions. Public presentations will be made in late 1996 to let people know informally what we have found and to answer questions.

There are certain things that you might want to keep in mind, or that you might discuss with others. NPS knows that some particular locations are important to people (for religious reasons, for historic reasons, because they are beautiful, because they are traditional areas for recreation and collecting, etc.). But you are the eyes and ears for these issues. Please call or write us if you know of places needing protection. All data that you specify as confidential will remain so, including map locations, and will have restricted access.

Please feel free to add to your comments or ask questions by contacting the SJS ethnographers by telephone or letter:

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## **Phase II: Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography Project**

We are conducting a research project to learn more about people's relations to Fort Stanwix and the Oriskany Battlefield in New York State and, in particular, are trying to learn what is important to people today about these historic locations. We hope the research will benefit Native peoples by documenting what they think is important about these sites and by increasing historical and current awareness. We hope the research will help the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) make informed decisions in their approach to the locations and the public interpretations.

We are independent researchers hired by the NPS; we have no control over NPS policies or actions and we cannot guarantee that the NPS can or will act on any findings. The first phase of this project collected information and suggestions by Iroquois people in the U.S. and Canada and the Superintendent of Fort Stanwix National Monument responded quickly to the recommendations in our final report, thus we are confident that concerns raised in this phase will receive a prompt, empathetic, and fair hearing.

Your information will help in a variety of ways: by better informing NPS managers, they will be able to make more culturally sensitive decisions about the uses to

which specific parts of the land are put; by supplying accurate data to NPS outreach staff, they will be better informed in their discussions with visitors, so that visitors to the fort and battlefield will learn more.

Many people today have ancestors who were directly and vitally involved in historic events in the Mohawk Valley. By consulting with as many descendants as possible, we hope to invite their involvement in decisions about how to present history to the general public and about specific land management issues. Similarly, the NPS is reaching out to nearby landowners, interested historians, and others.

Information you may provide will be presented in reports to the NPS and in informal meetings to the NPS staff. Copies will be forwarded to concerned tribal councils and other institutions. If requested, we will make every attempt to give public presentation of our findings.

There are certain things that you might want to keep in mind, or that you might discuss with others. The NPS sometimes must engage in construction projects. The NPS knows that some particular locations are important to people for religious or historic reasons, because they are beautiful, because they are traditional areas for recreation and collecting, etc. If you can help us identify these areas, the NPS can avoid projects in these areas or can minimize any impacts. You are the eyes and ears of these issues. Please call or write us if you know of places needing protection. All data that you specify as confidential will remain so, including map locations, and will have restricted access.

Please feel free to add to your comments or ask questions by contacting us or the park superintendent by telephone, fax, e-mail, or letter.

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## APPENDIX 2

### LIST OF COMMUNITIES CONSULTED

Alderville First Nation (Mississauga)  
Bkwejwanong Territory, Walpole Island (Council of the Three Fires: Ojibwa, Ottawa, Potawatomie)  
Cayuga Nation of New York  
Chippewas of the Thames  
Hotinonshonni (Six Nations Confederacy)  
Kahnawake Mohawks  
Mississaugas of New Credit  
Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte  
Mohawk Council of Chiefs  
Moose Deer Point First Nation (Ojibwas, Odawa/Ottawa & Potawatomie)  
Munsee-Delaware First Nation  
Oneida Nation of New York  
Oneida of the Thames  
Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin  
Onondaga Nation of New York  
Seneca Nation of New York  
Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma  
Six Nations of Grand River  
St. Regis Bands of Mohawk Indians of New York  
Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians of New York  
Tuscarora Nation of New York



## APPENDIX 3

### TRANSCRIPTS OF SELECTED DOCUMENTS ON THE “WESTERN INDIANS”

*Copy of a letter from R. B. Lernoult [to Sir Guy Carleton] dated Niagara 16th June 1777 [CO 42/36 folio 315-316]*

Sir,

I had the honor of your Excellencys commands of the 29th May by Mr. Caldwell, who arrived at this post the 9th of June, and communicated them to the Officer commanding at the Detroit, and shall be carefull no vessels but those employed and armed by His Majesty are suffered to navigate the lake.

Your Excellencys orders relative to Traders shall be strictly complied with.

I beg to report the detachment being ready to March and obey such orders as shall be given by Lieut Colo St. Leger. Colonel Bolton acquaints me he intends joining the corps speedily. I therefore propose going with this detachment on the expedition.

I shall cheerfully every assistance in collecting and persuading the savages to put themselves under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel St. Leger, and make no doubt but the greater part of them will act heartily in the ? and either go with us, or meet at the place of rendezvous whenever they are called on. Colonel Butler writes on this subject to your Excellency and exerts his utmost to forward this service, sensible of the confidence you honor him with on this occasion. I sent down Prisoners Whright a Negro brought in yesterday by some Delaware Indians for disturbing their village, and discovering everything he could learn to the Rebels also Radolph Fox who came to this post about a month ago, for protection; but on the arrival of the Delawares, he tried to bribe a savage here to favor his escape, conscious of having bore arms against his Sovereign and to avoid being discovered by them, they knowing him to be a rebel for which reasons I send him down to Montreal.

I am very happy your Excellency is satisfied with my conduct here, and shall strive on every occasion to preserve the protecti[on] your honored me with since my first arrival in this country.

I have the honor to be with respect Your Excellencys most obedient and most humble Servant

/Signed/ R B Lernoult

Commandant of Niagara

NB Some Savages report five Companies of Rebels are fortifying themselves at a place called Fort Bull four miles this side of fort Stanwix



*Copy of a letter from Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton dated Detroit July 3 1777*

[to Carleton] CO 42/37, folio 31-

Sir,

As far as I can judge, the Bearer Monsieur Viviat is the person most capable of giving your Excellency information with regard to the views and intrigues of the Spaniards on the River Mississippi. The opinion of Monsieur Rocheblave appears fully in the letter I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency, and is confirmed daily by the accounts I receive from different quarters.

The 30th of June I received a letter from Capt De Peyster in which is the following paragraph "There is a belt gone from Detroit, forwarded by the Ottawa chief, Ottawakujeeek (?), requesting assistance for the Rebels, this Belt with one from the Spanish Commandant, some of my Traders stoped"

Your Excellency may be assured I shall use my endeavours to procure authentic proofs of this intercourse and send the earliest notice. In order to procure information and to set people on their guard with respect to the Cabals of the Savages with the Spaniards I have communicated several intelligences relating to those matters, to Mons. de Celeron, Monsr Viviat, and the Sieur Baubin circumstanced as I am, obliged to wait so long for an answer to my letters I am obliged to act as appears most expedient for His Majesty service tho very desirous of having instructions and order from your Excellency.

A Letter dated Jul 3 1777 on the Cover from Lieutenant Governor Abbot, would have been delivered to your Excellency by Mr. Babi a Merchant of this place who was on the point of going to Canada to prosecute his own affair, but I have thought proper to detain him here as Interpreter for the Shawanes and Delawares, such a one having been much wanting. Monsieur de Celeron a gentleman of Character formerly in the French service I have appointed to act at Ouiattonass, to keep up the intelligence between this place and the Illinois, The Sieur Charles Baubin to be interpreter at the Miamies to communicate intelligence and to attend to the conduct of those people who formerly acted as interpreters, and who I believe have kept alive a party very prejudicial to the peace and quiet of the Indians, and to the interest and honor of the Crown --- I have named some of the properest people here to act as Officers for the Militia, and in the Indian Department a list of them with their ? at appointments, I shall transmit as soon as possible --- The Council shall be sent if possible by this opportunity but as I am obliged to write so much and have no place as yet but where the Savages come almost hourly to importune me, and where I am obliged to keep council sometimes. I hope your Excellency will accept my excuse for not being to particular as I would wish. I enclose the Commissary of provisions Return with observations also a sketch of the Upper Country to accompany the plan I have construed to expose to your Excellency ---The Timber rafts are come down and the repairs are going on --- Belonging to His Majesty in the

Powder Magazine twenty one Barrells of good powder, three damaged, to the Merchants in the said Magazine forty six Barrells  $\frac{1}{2}$  good powder ---since the appointing persons to different employs, who must reside for some time in the Fort, I have kept a Table for them at a Public house, which I shall retrench as soon as possible --- I have ordered an advice boat to be built to be about 15 Tonns burthen taking the advice of Captains Grant and Andrews for the expediency of it, for the conveyance of intelligence and of small quantities of Provisions and ammunition to the supply of ranging parties and the Savages --- the Council which began on the 17th closed on the 26th of June --- all possible testimonies of good will and unanimity shown on the occation and at the particular War feasts of the several nations, so that if their performance keeps pace with their professions, they will answer fully what is expected from them. ---Tho there was no notion of War when the council assembled and that most of the Young People are out at thir hunt 47 Chiefs and Warriors have given in their names to go to Niagara and 81 to go in small parties on the Frontiers.

Mr. Hay Deputy agent is of opinion with me that in a few weeks there will be one thousand Warriors scattered upon the Frontiers in small bands.

2nd July a Poutaouattamie War chief was stabbed by another Poutewouattamie this may retard their scout for a little while.

3 July expect the Gage to Sail for Niagara this day with the Savages an interpreter for the Hurons, and one for the 3 Nations - Ottawas, Chippewas, and Pouteouattamies.

Ensign Caldwell has permission from Captain Lieutenant Mompessons to go to Niagata, and I venture to recommend him to Colonel St. Leger, he is an active young man who has acquired some knowledge of the Savage tongues and is acquainted with Fatigue and their manner of life If I could have done it I should have accepted the spirited offers of several of the soldiers, as an example much wanted in this Settlement where the Rebels find means to undermine what little loyalty I might otherwise build upon I shall not lose time, and I hope to find some resource in patience tho I dare not boast of being sufficiently freighted, for the present occation.

Sir, many things which I have mentioned to your Excellency I have also mentioned in my Letter to Lord George Germain, not from any doubt except of omission on my own part - I am too sensible of the reliance I have, and ought to have on your Excellency, in every point, and am obliged to repeat, that the vast distance of this place, and the necessity of acting for the best must plead my excuse in a variety of Substances.

I have the honor to be most intirely  
Your Excellencys most devoted Servant  
/Signed/ Henry Hamilton

*Copy of a letter from Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton dated Detroit 16th of June 1777 [CO 42/37, folio 24-, p 47 -]*

Sir,

This day I had the honor of receiving the following letters and papers from your Excellency – A Letter dated May 16th one dated May 21st enclosing a copy of one from Lord George Germain to your Excellency one for Lieutenant Governor Abbot, another for Monsieur de Rocheblave – The ordinances passed the last session in the legislative council of Quebec – a list of persons said to be attached to Government given by Lord Dunmore, and which I take the Liberty of remarking upon in a list I send herewith.

My last letter to your Excellency was dated May 10th since which time I will proceed in a sort of Journal as the shortest and most distinct method.

4th of June — some Delaware Indians reported that the Virginians had formed a scheme against this place, to be executed partly by water partly by land - treated with indifference

16th – arrived the paquet from Montreal

17th – Opened the council with the following Nations & see the council had designed not to deliver the Hatchet till the 18th in full council but having some intimation of certain persons being likely to throw cold water on the motion, I seized the moment while the Indians shewed impatience and produced a red belt (or War Ax) and let them out on the parade where the War dance was begun, and had the proper effect.

18 –Published the proclamation encouraging the Royalists etc.

That the nations as mentioned in the council with the Officers of the Garrison Militia etc for which the council – I gave the hatchet which was received as I could wish.

22 – Sent of John Montour a half Delaware, with notice to General How & that the Hatchet was taken up by the Lake Indians and would be sent down the Ouabash, with other particulars which he is very capable to deliver verbatim, for he had no token by which an enemy could possibly discover anything of moment. He was to cross from the Delaware Toens, by the heads of the river which fall into the Ohio, and passing by Buffaloe swamp, cross the endless mountains, thro the great swamp and to York, Philadelphia etc he computed his journey at 28 days.

This day being Sunday I caused to be published at the Church His Majestys bountifull grant to such as would engage in the Service etc and on this day the Priests had exhorted their parishioners to shew their spirit and Loyalty – The Indians had shewed the greatest unanimity and alacrity on the occation, that has been ever known This was a

most opportune time for an ill designing person to create distrust and uneasiness among the inhabitants & Savages — Mr. James Stirling a principal Trader at this place, made the use of it which has induced me to confine him and if his guilt should be as apparent to others as it is to me, he will be rewarded as a Traytor to His King deserves -As I send down the Affidavit etc I shall only observe in this place that my suspicions arose long since and that the precautions I had taken relative to his Correspondent Bentley are proofs that I considered him capable of holding a correspondence with Rebels, and of the most interested as well as deceitfull conduct – As he has issued paper money, and has considerable dealings here, I have allowed him to appoint an attorney and to settle his affairs I shall take the earliest opportunity of sending him down.

23rd — Sent of an express to Michillimakinac with your Excellency packets and the account of the hatchet being taken up by all the Nations present in Council, also reminding him C D of Mr. Bentley who has left the Illinois country, gone up the Ouisconsin, and was to go to Michillimakinac to dispose of his effects –Mr. J Stirling has shewed me a letter from Bentley mentioning his design of sending his Peltry to this place by the way of the Miamis, but my jealousy of Mr. S's candor made me immediately apprize Capt. De Peyster and I hope to see Mr. Bentley here shortly.

24th – Closed the Council, which I shall transmit to your Excellency

25th – Assisted at the war feast of the Ottawas

26th – with the Chippawas, and Ottawas of Ouashtenen

27th – with the Hurons, Delawares, Shawanise, and Miamis

28th – with the Pouteouattamis, of the Huron River of St. Josephs etc at all these meetings there was observed an uncommon order and decency at the same time the greatest alacrity imaginable – I took the opportunity of shewing them the English and French Volunteers, most of whom can speak the Indian Tongues, and are to go on the scouts with them, as well to encourage them to act vigorously as to restrain their Barbarity to defenceless persons — Several of the Soldiers have applied to me for Liberty to go volunteering with the Savages, I have approved their spirit and could have wished Captain Montessor had joined me in the opinion that a few soldiers going on this occasion would have been of great service, but I am obliged to acquiesce in his opinion, and I have acquainted Lord George Germain that having laid my complaint of Captain Montessor before your Excellency, with a perfect assurance of being redressed, it might seem unnecessary as well as improper to mention it to him, but that it would not be doing justice to the zeal and loyal disposition of the Officers and men in this place, if I did not give the reasons for their not joining the Savages – Captain M however has attended at the Council, at the War feasts etc and I endeavor on all occasions to shew a satisfaction which I by no means feel.

29th – Reviewed the Company of Militia of the Fort, and those who have arms have them in good order, they fired Ball at a mark and acquitted themselves well.

The Ottawas this day delivered me the strings and a Belt presented to them by the Ouabash Indians, when Lieut Governor Abbot went to St Vincennes, The speak very satisfactory and appear pleased at his arrival amongst them.

30th – Two Vessels arrived here from Michillimakinac, and by a letter from Captain Depeyster I find the Spaniards are tampering with some of our Savages – this day the Recollect priest brought me letters dated St. Louis, from a french Settler gone to reside on the Spanish side of the Mississippi – your Excellency desires an account of an attempt by the Shawanese Delawares etc in the Fort called Kentucke, but cannot get any information to be depended on.

Lieutenant Governor Abbott did not communicate to me you Excellencys instructions nor had I an idea of the amount of the sums I find he has drawn for, I knew nothing of the restrictions your Excellency was pleased to lay upon him. I humbly conceive that in proportion to the remoteness of situation expences rise, of which Captain Lord perhaps has given your Excellency some accounts.

As Governor Abbott took the method of proceeding to his Government which he must have acquainted your Excellency with, it is apparent his expences must have been very great, the Indians are rapacious, and the French traders taught Captina Lord that they are not less so.

Mr. Edgar a Trader from this place who accompanied Lieutenant Governor Abbott to St. Vincennes acquaints me that the great number of Indians who met him on the way, have consumed large quantities of provisions and goods to a considerable amount have been delivered, but he is proceeding to Canada with the vouchers amounting to Seven thousand four hundred Pounds NYC

Mr. Edgar is an intelligent person, and has the character of a very honest man, he is greatly alarmed at the account I have given him, and with reason, as I apprehend he has advanced the greatest part if not all for Mr. Abbott – I have written to Mr. Abbott without reserve and have set before him the Paragraph in your Excellencys letter which I thought would be the most instructive lesson.

3rd July – The Vessels are under sail and I must make a hasty conclusion, and pray you Excellencys indulgence for a hea? not used to business.

I am ever with the greatest respect Sir Your Excellencys most devoted  
& Very Humble Servant

(Signed) Henry Hamilton

*Council held at Detroit June 17th 1777 By Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton Esq  
–Superintend etc etc with His Majesty’s Western Indian Allies [CO 42/37, fol 70-77, pp  
139-153]*

Present		
Lieutenant Governor Hamilton		
Captn Mompesson		Jehu Hay Deputy Agent
Lieut Yonge	8th or	Most of the Officers of
Lieut Mercer	King’s Reg	Militia of the Settlement
Lieut Caldwell		
Village Chiefs	Indian Nations	War Chiefs
Chamindawa	Attanas	Egoushaway
Pendiguhawa		Michimandai
		Nianego
		Maicateymake
		Shibiwessey
Mettusawgay	Chippawas	Meiatlenassong
		Webegoney
		Shaboquoie
		Wabinossay
Ogishkiminissey	Washtanon Attanas	Meehissineenee
Coocoosh		Accundecan
Meegickquoie		
Cughquanderong	Hurons of Wiandotts	Deeyontete the Elder
Tuindatton		Deeyentete the Younger
Dawatlong		Sandusquoia
Sondishetty		
Arininedosetong		
Yahshynancy		
CheiCaise	Puttawattamis of	Pomompkatak
Wariatten	Detroit	Winedigo
Okea		Wysuwanaqua
Wabisheegou		Heewytenane
Eshkibee		
Nomattotoo		
Peemusich		

Quoikeepenana Okea Kitnywissey Neicaquanga Cheipongdoskia	Puttawattamies of St. Joseph	Heeamiskee
	Miamees or Tawittamies	Misshikinaiqua Kupeecuttawa
	Shawanese	Tatesa Negotawayteeman Liapittegoshingua
John Montour	Delawares	Masseenina Machiwynosso
	Caghnanagai	Anonghshoata or Cap

William Tucker, Piere Drouillard, Joseph St. Marten, Isidore Chosac, Elespole Chesne, Charles Beaubin, Duperon Baby, Interpreters for the above Nations

The Lieut Governor addressed them as follows

Children! Ottawas, Chippawas, Wyandotts, Poutewattamis, Miamis, Delawares & Shawanese

I salute and welcome you to this Council fire – I beg you attention. I am reminded by your presence of the strict alliance and friendship concluded here last year and do not doubt its continuance.

Children! You are assembled here that the Alliance your Brothers the Ottawa have lately made with the Nations on the Ouabash may be confirmed publicly.

That I may inform you of such things as concern your common Wellness: To know your Sentiments which have hitherto agreed so perfectly with my own, lastly to do you what Service lays in my Power

Children: The Great King ours ordered father has been pleased to signify his approbation of your conduct hitherto, and has ordered me to distribute some cloathing to your women & children, at this time of scarcity occasioned by the rebellious and obstinate behaviour of some of his undutyfull Subjects.

Eight branches of Black Wampum, to each Nation one, and one for the Pouteouattamis of St. Joseph

∴ the Kings health was Bank and the Indians were told the sale of Rum would be stopp'd during the time of their assembly and that each Nation should have an Ax and some liquor when the Council should be dismissed.

Then Tourdatting a Wyandott Chief explained the meaning of a large belt sent by the Six Nations, to be shown to the Huron confederacy and to the Nations so far as the

Ouabash to encourage them to a firm alliance in Support of His Majesty and his Government and to be seen as a whetstone for the axes of all the young men when called upon

A large Belt of six feet long and thirty grains wide White with a Beaver of Black Wampum worked at one end

A Belt of nine rows was then delivered to the Wyandotts addressed to them and the Western Nations by the Six Nations desiring them to remember the engagements entered into last year to assure them to their intentions to fulfill their part and their resolution to act as they should be directed by the Father.

Lieut Governor Hamilton – Children! You have ? with much attention. I ? you to continue  
Lieut Governor Hamilton – Children! You have ? with much attention. I ? you to continue  
? You have been and to hear from one whatever concern your interest whether ? ? I ?  
now give you an account of the present situation of ?

His Majesty finding that the rebellious subjects will not give ear to the merciful ?  
he has ? ? ? ? ? has ordered his Children in the Neighborhood of Michilimakinac and the  
Six Nations to take up the War hatchet and to strike the rebels ? they come to a ? of ? and  
with forgiveness – Your Brothers have taken the hatchet as your Father the Great King  
ordered

This is the state of things at present. Tomorrow I shall open my mind to you all my  
? In the meantime I thank my children for their orderly behavior and recommend them a  
continuance of it

Tsinistting – Wyandotte chief – Father! All your children now present have listened  
attentively and clearly comprehend what you have told them – When you have declared  
your sentiments we shall communicate ours to you – you know Father we have always  
joined in opinion with you your children are well pleased with what you have said do not  
believe what I say is from myself, I speak in the name of my Nation.

— The Council ended for this day —

18th June 12 o’Clock 1777

The above names Chiefs of the different Nations, with about two hundred and  
fifty Warriors being assembled at the Council house, Lieut Gov Hamilton with the Officers  
in Garrison most of the Officers of the Militia, and the Interpreters, went out to them  
Lieutt Gov: Children! I am glad to find you all met agreeable to our adjournment of  
yesterday, and hope you will listen to the voice of your Father.



I told you yesterday you should hear my Sentiments without disguise. From the day I first saw you at this place, you have been guided by my Opinion. My heart is strong for the King your Father, and I hope yours is of the same temper.

To the English present – Gentlemen! I am now going to express the Will of His Majesty and I expect an implicit obedience thereto

The French present were addressed to the same effect.

Children! Yesterday I showed you a whetstone for your War Axes, but this day I produce in its room an Axe ready sharpened, in the name of the Great King, which I expect you to make use of in Defence of his Crown, and of your own Lands, your Wives and Children, against the Traytors and Rebels.

Produced the red Belt –

Then the War Song was sung and the Hachet /a large red Belt/ taken up By the Lt Gov, Mr. Hay his dep Agent, the Officers of the Garrison, a Caghnawaga, a Delaware, a Shawanese, Lieutt Reaume of the Militia, a Wyandott, An Ottawa, a Chippawa, another Chippewa, a Pouteouattamie of the Huron(?) River, a Pouteouattamie of St. Joseph's ~ A Miamis Chief took up the Belt, and said he had but a few of his People present, he was glad to see the disposition of the Nations, that he should report it on his return to his own Town, That he and his Warriors were always ready, and that above twenty of them were already out against the common Enemy.

N.B. it is not customary in the Miamis Nation to sing the War Song

Then a War Chief of the Wyandotts took up the belt and sung the War Song, next Mr. James Horting, Captn pf Militia desired of the Lieutt Governor that the Interpreter might be allowed to explain for him which being granted, he said that his duty to God required his obedience to his Superiors, that he could not dance, but that he should obey the orders of the King or his Officers

Mr. Chapeton, a Captain of the French Militia of the ?ment desired the like permission and said that he was old and should always be ready to march, or obey any orders he might receive.

Then Elespole Chesne an Interpreter for the Pouteouattamis took up the Beslt, then Shassigaiauk a Chippewa chief took it up saying Father I never dance but I ? all your Children ? the strength and numbers of the Chippewa Nation.

Then the Lt Governor took his small Sword from his side and made it a present to Egusha? An Ottawa chief, who was lately returned from the Ouabash as a proof of his appreciation of his conduct.

Shasnanone an old Ottawa chief then took the Axe, and sang his War Song saying he acted for his son (not present) who was better able to go to War than himself – Next Chaminatowa an Ottawa Chief – after him Dawattong, a Huron Chief who said, Father we take up the Axe to fulfill the Will of our Father The Great King. We Village Chiefs sing to encourage our young men, wishing they may be as dutyfull in laying it down when ordered.

Tsecudattong took it up saying my singing is a matter of form being a Village Chief, but if our young men be hard pressed, I shall be ready to assist them – after him Mickimundack an Ottawa Chief, then a War chief of Tiguomam – then Cassouchet or the Little Chief, a Chippawa – Duyentitie War Chief of the Wyandotte then took the Axe, said it pleased him that he would sing it in his Village, and that he would pull out his hair, being too long for a Warrior, that he was young but would do the Duty of a Man.

The Lt Gov then expressed his satisfaction at their ready compliance and said he would apeak the day after with the Chiefs at the ? for the Council's assembling.

The Lieutenant Governor then sung the War Song,, and delivered the War Axe to Duyeatite The War Chief of the Wyandotte to be guardian of it.

Duyoutit then sung and told the Lt Gov he might depend on him for keeping it.

John Montour then mentioned the Nations to whom he was allied, took up the Hatchet sung the War Song, declaring he would act his part with the War Chiefs with a firm heart.

Then the whole Assembly rose and went into the open field where some Oxen were killed for them, and the next morning, nine o'Clock was appointed for a private meeting of three or 4 Chiefs of each Nation to confer with the Lt. Gov.

—- End of the second days meeting —-

19th June

The Chiefs abovementioned being assembled the Lieutt Governor addressed them as follows –

Children! As we are now of one heart and mind, and are to act in concert, I shall not leave any thing undone to wipe out and bury any ill will or Jealousy that may subsist among the different Nations, let it have proceeded from what cause soever.

You Ottawas of Ouashtenon my Children! attend to what I am going to say – Early this morning I was informed that an accident had nearly turned the Axe yesterday put into your hands, to another use than to destroy rebels, owing to the recollection of some of your blood having been spilt last Winter by a Chippawa

## 6 Strings of black Wampum

Children! This best will I hope dry up your tears, and clear your hearts, that this accident shall not be remembered again, this I request of you, to pay due attention to when you shall look upon this belt.

## A White belt of Wampum 7 Rows

The Oushtenons then thanked their father for his care in preventing any bad consequences from what had happened last Winter (the murder of an Ottawa of Ouashtenon by a Chippewa) assured him they harbored no bad design and that they would give their young men a Caution ~ They added, Father we Thank you again and are convinced Our Father the Great King sent you here to take care of us and give us good advice, and to have compassion on his young Children

Egushaway a War Chief of the Ottawa then addressed the Lt Gov. and thanked him for his care in preventing the bad effects of the foolish behaviour of some of their young people and desired his brethren (all the Nations present) to forget this folly

Fathers and Brothers – You know that we are not guilty of these follies but in our liquor, therefore we beg all may be forgotten, We have no more to say

## A Belt of White Wampum to the Ouashtenons

The Lieutt Gov said he spoke like a man of sense, and hoped his brethren would pay attention to what he said – He then communicated to them some News brought from the Miamis town and desired the Chiefs of that Nation to declare if the intelligence was genuine, they declared it to be so – It was to the following purport ~ That four Delaware Chiefs who had gone to Fort Pitt, had been detained There for some time, and that their heads had been struck off, with some other particulars in addition, as that the Virginians had sent the Delawares a red Belt and a letter smeared with Vermillion, signifying that they did not want peace with any nation of Indians, and that in one Months time they might expect to be attacked – The reply of the Delawares was that they would expect them and that they should not want for opponents among the Delawares while there was a man left in the nation.

Egushaway said he had heard an account of that matter, but he did not believe the four Chiefs had been killed.

The Miami Chiefs being questioned by the Lieutt Gov replied that many false reports were raised in their Villages, but that this might be depended on for Truth

Theendatong a Village Chief of the Hurons then spoke as follows –  
Father! We thank you for having covered the bones of the dead and reconciled those

Children! The method I advise you to pursue in this War is to send out many small parties to different quarters to divide the force of the Rebels and distract their attention while the Armies of the great King press upon them in large bodies. In three days I expect you shall have consulted together and I desire you to name to me the Chiefs you pitch upon for this Service, with the number of Warriors and at the same time the present proposed shall be paid before you

Children! I shall not suffer any traders or others to quit this settlement for some time, that our designs may not be communicated to our Enemies – You call me your Father, and I consider you as my Children, attend to what I am going to say – some unthinking people of your colour, have gone toward the rebels to know what they are about, I advise you to send to them without loss of time to withdraw that we may all act as one man.  
Children! Think on your Brothers the Shawanese and Delawares they are near the Enemy, take courage and do not forget their Situation

Children! As I have told you the Six Nations and Mississagais are ready to act the same part at Niagara, as you have done here, if you chuse to send some fine Chiefs and Warriors there I shall send down one of my Chiefs (Ens Caldwell of the King's 8th Regt) who will be their friend and should they go to War by that way will go along with them — I shall expect your Answer Tomorrow morning ~ Isidore Chesne shall be your Interpreter.

Children! Should it be thought necessary for you to act in a large body, I shall send you friend The Snipe (Mr. Hay the Depy Agent) to assist you with his advice, and to inform me from time to time of your proceedings and acquaint me with your Wants – If you determine for sending small parties I shall send some few whites with each to serve as Interpreters, other Measures will be necessary to take after proper deliberation, I am now to thank you for your patient attention, and shall meet you tomorrow Morning.

~ Council broke up for this day ~

The succeeding days till the dismissing the Indinas, and closing the Council were employed in concerting proper measures, giving presents etc a detail of which would be tedious and unnecessary – Minutes of such transactions are kept for the guidance of the Agents on future occasions.

From the 26th June to the 13th July taken up principally in preparing and sending out parties to War which have been added to by the several Nations instead of falling off in their numbers

Henry Hamilton  
Lieutt Gov and Superintend.

Right Honorable Lord George Germaine  
His Majesty's principal Secretary of State for America

Whitehall  
London

Father attend! This Axe you put into our hands yesterday, I look round to see who is the bravest War Chief – You have thought we Wyandotts, tho the youngest (meaning least numerous) of the Nations, the properest to keep possession of it, I think as all our brethren do, that sometimes the youngest children have as much sense as the eldest, yet not to show too great a confidence, we will yield the guardianship of it to our elder Brothers the Chippewas, therefore in the sight of all the Nations we committed to them Charge ~ nevertheless Father be assured, tho we are young, we shall use it with all our force.

The Lieutt Gov told him he was well pleased with the confidence they expressed for their Brothers the Chippewas, and requested they might come to a determination what Nation should be the Guardian of the War Axe.

Then delivered it to the Hurons (?)

Massigariash Chief of the Chippewas – addressed the Lt Gov: Father listen to me! I speak in the name of the Chiefs of the nation – then turning to the Nation present he said, Brothers! You see our support, and what we have all to depend on, shuring(?) the Lt. Gov: ~ Father! Your axe has been received by all your children present, ? ? Father and brethren we are the strongest and the most numerous Nation, we swarm on the borders of the Great Lakes – Father! When you presented us this Axe we did not seize it in a hurry, but deliberately, and held it fast, as do all your Children, and we deliver it now to the Poutaouattamies.

Mettusaagay – Father! I hold fast your Axe and will attend you wherever you go.

Thaoricanong – an Ottawa Chief – Brethren I thank you for Your steadyness to support your Father and you  
Father I salute

A Chief from Cagnawaaga then spokes as follows –

Father! My son John Montour here present has been a Village chief hitherto, for which reason we have believed(?) to him, he has been employed to get intelligence, and to carry Belts and messages from place to place, he has acted as a peaceable man \_ Now we have

found our Father's Axe, 'tis time to untye his hands that he may take hold of it, I do accordingly loose them, that he may lay hold of, and use your Axe –

Father! It may not be long before the King's rebellious children are brought to reason. I shall listen to you and be as obedient in laying down, as I have been ready to take up the Axe ~ Three strings of black Wampum

Tsocuidatong speaks. Father you see one of your Children a Caghnawaaga, all your Children here know you love him, he has something more to say to you

The Cagnawaaga Chief then continued – Father you see your child, I am born(?) the Salt spring, I came here expressly to know your sentiments, and I think I now know them, nothing could give me more pleasure as I have already lifted the Axe against the Great King's undutiful children – You have always recommended to us, to defend our possessions, the fear of losing them obliged me to act as I have, seeing what has passed, and knowing your words, I have been induced to untye the hands of John Montour, and this string is a witness to my satisfaction in what you have done

—six strings of black Wampum

Wawiaghien Chief of the Pouteouattamis – Father I thank you for listening to your Children here present, you see we hold your Axe in our hands, as well as your other Children, as far as to the Sachees(?) think not we shall let it go – He then returned it to the Hurons

The Lt. Gov: I thank Methusaagay for his professions, as I do all my Children in general, for the readiness they have shown to fulfill the Will of the great King their father, and I approve of Caghnawaaga Roonak(?) having loosed the hands of John Montour

Children! I have kept you a long time this morning, The news we left last night took up a considerable part of it. I shall meet you tomorrow at the usual hour, and the great Guns which will presently salute you, are in testimony of my satisfaction in your conduct Tscondatong – Father! You see this Axe, it has gone round to all our Brothers and is returned to us – You see the two War Chiefs who are to be the Guardians of it. I thank our brothers for their Union on this occasion. We shall keep it & use it when you shall order us – 'tis true we are named to keep it but we are of Opinion if you took it in your own hand, all your children would follow your footsteps – We pray the Master of life to favor our undertakings and we hope he will approve of this step as he does of whatever is good and right, and hitherto we have had cause to approve of your prudence, and good advice

Egushaway – Father! I thank you and all my Brothers here present for the unanimity shown on this occasion – Our Brothers the Chippawas are more numerous 'tis true than

we but we shall not be behind them in zeal to second the will of our Father – I am just returned from counting(?) you Brothers. Lt Gov Abbott to the Ouabash, I can answer for the disposition of all your Children in that part of the Country, but you are too much hu(a)rried against to attend to the particulars I have to relate to you

The Lieut Gov then complimented the Wyandotts in particular on being chosen guardians of the War Axe, and the other Nations for their unanimity, said he doubted not they would act by his direction, and that he would prescribe the manner at length the day following

—The Council closed for this day –

June 20th 11 o'Clock

The Chiefs met according to adjournment. The Lt Gov saluted them adding Children! let us give thanks to the Master of life who has brought us together with one heart and mind – Children we will exert our common strength in grasping the Axe the Great King has put into our hands, nor will we part our hold till he orders us to lay it down

Children! Your Father the great King is better informed of passes in this great Council than we can be, he sees the risque his Indian Subjects run of losing their land. He knows the perverse disposition of his rebellious subjects, and how they have sh? Their ears to the voice of Money(?). He is now using the only means by which they to be brought to due obedience, by their Obstinacy they have brought ruin on themselves –The King has ordered his Troops to take their large Towns on the shores of the Great Lake – tis done – He has ordered his own Warriors to strike the Rebels assembled in Arms. They have obey'd the King and have struck the Rebels in many different places along the Coast – The Rebels [page edge, missing word] said we are ? to this contact, let us retire towards our Frontiers and [page edge] us remove out of the reach of the King's Warriors, and settle on the lands of his Indian subjects – The King says to his Indian Children, rise up as one Man and repel these invaders of your properties, defend your lands, Your Old Men Your Women and Children — An Army from Canada shall press on them by the way of the — another joined by the six nations and Mississagais shall fall upon them from Oswego, another aided by my Ships of ? shall straighten them by the Way of N. England, and another by Philadelphia shall call their attention to the Southward while the Cherokees shall take advantage of their distraction —? These rebellious children who have disposed themselves to avoid the King's Troops on the Coast shall be surrounded and driven into the [page edge] like a band of Buffaloes, and fall prey either to the King's Troops who [page edge] to ? bodies, or to his Indian Subjects who chase them like hunters

Children! listen to me – I have never told you a falsehood since I have been among you, nor have I concealed any thing from you — In the name of the great King, I shall present some things necessary for you tis not all he intends for you, in the mean times, I am strengthening this place to serve as a refuge for your Families during this War, and those who go out to strike the Rebels shall be supplied with every thing necessary which can be procured for them here.

*Return of Parties of Indians sent from Detroit* [WO 28/10, f 396]

When Sent Off	Names of Chiefs etc	Nations	Numbers	When Returned
1777 July 3rd	Mettusawgay	Chippawas	22	Septem 2 from Fort Stanwix five Prisoners & 9 Scalps
	Nassiggiath			
	Egortshawey	Ottawa	6	Do (?)
	Dawatong Orendiacky	Hurons	7	31 August one scalp from Do
	Okia & Windigo	Poutawattamies	5	Do Two of them Returned from Do With two Scalps
	Tucker & Drouettear,	Interpreters		

Signed by Jehu Hay, Deputy Agent of Ind Affairs & Governor Hamilton

[list goes through parties departing 31 August 1777; total number who left = 992 and it is noted that this excludes those who left from the Wasbash]





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