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Creating Borderlands Authorities: The Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs and the Iroquois Nations, 1691-1755

Andrew Thomas Stahlhut
Lehigh University

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by

Andrew T. Stahlhut

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Andrew T. Stahlhut
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Defense Date

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Jean Soderlund
(dissertation director / co-chair)

_____

Approved Date

Committee Members:

_____

Michelle LeMaster
(co-chair)

_____

John Savage
(committee member)

_____

Jamie Paxton
(external committee member)

This dissertation is dedicated to Madison Berg,

the cat's meow

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs and the neighboring Iroquois Nations created and preserved authorities in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands from the 1690s through the early 1750s, and analyzes how the effects of this local relationship rippled outwards to influence the indigenous and colonial world of northeastern North America. Albany's Commissioners, provincial agents at the forefront of much of the British Empire's Indian diplomacy for this time period, maintained a roster of mostly Dutch colonists despite its existence as a colonial office in a British colony. This tight web of intermarried Dutch settlers and traders sustained a continuous conversation with the Iroquois Nations for half a century, relying upon a shared borderlands diplomatic culture to maintain decorum despite regular friction over issues such as imperial expansion and trade. These self-created borderlands authorities established and maintained the New York/Iroquoia borderlands as a primary nexus for Indian diplomacy in northeastern North America and placed Dutch commissioners and Iroquoian leaders in important roles in issues affecting other British colonies, other Indian polities, and even broad imperial processes such as the continuous eighteenth century contest with New France.

Largely ignored or glossed over by historians, Albany's Indian Commissioners and their substantial records provide unique insight into understanding the European-Indian power relationships in northeastern North America during the first half of the eighteenth century. This dissertation provides the first sustained study of the Albany Commissioners as an institution of Indian diplomacy and unlocks new ways of

understanding how the powerful Iroquois Nations interacted with broth provincial and imperial officials in the era between Dutch New Netherland and Indian Superintendent William Johnson in the mid-1750s, and fills out a significant, half-century gap in the colonial history of British North America.

INTRODUCTION

New York City maintains a privileged position in the history of colonial New York during the eighteenth century. It is not hard to understand this port city's popularity and staying power in the historical literature. New York City existed at the forefront of provincial New York's economic and population growth while serving as a model for trends and patterns indicative of a developing British Empire and even the early United States. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the city served as home to a pluralistic social order of Dutch, English, French, African, and other peoples who coexisted in a "tenuous equilibrium" within a "shifting social mosaic," [1] a situation stemming from the recent transformation of Dutch New Netherland to English New York.[2] While New York's provincial population grew more slowly than other colonies, the colony's population almost doubled from 40,564 persons in 1723 to 73,348 in 1749, with New York City existing as the largest settlement.[3] This diverse population participated in the expanding British economic empire and consumer culture like other major port cities, such as Boston and Philadelphia. Two-fifths of the city's men worked in the mercantile and maritime trades at the turn of the century, [4] and as the city's links to the larger Atlantic economy grew stronger the settlement became by midcentury "a city of opportunity."[5] The city's denizens also solidified their relationships with the larger

[1] Joyce D. Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7, 23.
[2] Thomas J. Archdeacon, *New York City, 1664-1710: Conquest and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 43.
[3] Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 179-80.
[4] Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot*, 66.
[5] Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 27.

Atlantic economy as consumers. Items such as silk, snuff, perfume, and tea, previously deemed luxuries, entered the port in ever increasing amounts by the early 1730s, creating an expanding circle of consumers as well as making the city's residents increasingly dependent on London firms.[6] These demographic, economic, and social trends increasingly tied eighteenth century New York City to the larger British Atlantic and set the stage for the city's preeminent role during the early republic period of the United States. Adding New York City's role as provincial capital to the mix makes the settlement almost irresistible to historians seeking to explore provincial New York's relationship with the larger colonial world around it.

While not as populous or cosmopolitan as its counterpart down the Hudson River, Albany maintained its own unique links to the larger imperial world and served in its own ways as an important foundation to the future New York as a colony and a state. Albany existed as the only other settlement incorporated by the colonial government, earning the status of city from Governor Thomas Dongan in 1686.[7] While New York City diversified demographically, Albany remained largely Dutch over the course of the colonial period, and the Dutch settlers inhabiting the area accepted English social and legal norms much more slowly. For example, settlers living in and around Albany declared their wills in English at a much lower rate than those living in Manhattan during the first half of the eighteenth century.[8] Albany's links to the growing Atlantic economy lay with the settlement's trading with the continent's interior Indian populations, most

[6] Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 141.
[7] Donna Merwick, *Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: The Dutch and English Experiences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 204. Interestingly, Albany's charter is the oldest city charter still in existence in what is now the United States.
[8] David E. Narrett, *Inheritance and Family Life in Colonial New York City* (Ithaca and Cooperstown: Cornell University Press and New York State Historical Association, 1992), 21.

notably its role as a nexus for the fur trade that gave the settlement its original Dutch name, Beverwijck. While distant from official institutions of power such as the royal governor, General Assembly, and Council, all residing in New York City, Albany did serve as home to one low profile provincial institution that proved critically influential to local, provincial, and imperial affairs during the first half of the century.

Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs, an inconspicuous gathering of mostly Dutchmen, presided over a decades-long interaction with a diverse set of Indian polities, especially the Iroquois Nations, creating a nexus of conversation and influence that rippled throughout most of northeastern North America for half a century. The Commissioners, whose cultural roots and Indian diplomatic experience stretched back to the Dutch era, gained formal recognition as government officials under the tenure of New York Governor Benjamin Fletcher. In 1696 Fetcher granted Peter Schuyler, Godfrey Dellius, Dirk Wessels, and Evert Bancker formal commissions to "treat confer and consult with the Five Indian Nations … and to hold correspondence with them pursuant to such instructions as you shall from time to time receive from me, so as by your endeavors they may be confirmed in their fidelity and allegiance."[9] While Fletcher's successor, Governor Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, made slight changes to the body's structure, Fletcher's commissions created an institution that persisted for over half a century.[10] Although the institution fluctuated from between five and thirty members at any given time, a core group of seven to twelve members, headed by a Secretary, handled

[9] E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York; Produced in Holland, England and France by John Romeyn Broadhead,* volume 4 (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1854), 177. Hereafter cited as NYCD.
[10] Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 74.

the daily business of the province's Indian diplomacy.[11] The Commissioners stood town during a brief hiatus between 1746 and 1750 as local political rivalries allowed Irish settler William Johnson to serve as sole provincial Indian official.[12] After a brief but weak revival of the institution, the Commissioners ultimately yielded their control of Indian affairs in 1755 to William Johnson and his new role as royally appointed Indian superintendent for the northern colonies.[13] During this half century, Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs left an indelible mark on the histories of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, provincial New York, and the continental British Empire.

The Iroquois Nations, or the Haudenosaunee, served a critical role in the development and functioning of the Albany Commissioners by providing a powerful and sovereign indigenous neighbor that both challenged and supported the borderlands influence of the Indian officials. White Iroquoian peoples predated Dutch settlement in what is now upstate New York by some time, anthropologist William Fenton notes that "ethnic entities ancestral to the historic Five Nations" emerged only after 1400, and the contemporary Confederation as late as the mid sixteenth century.[14] While part of a single, larger confederation, each of the Iroquois Nations – Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca – maintained significant sovereignty at both the nation and village level. The Mohawks, the closest nation to the early seventeenth-century Dutch settlements in the Hudson River Valley, served as the earliest Iroquoian trading and

[11] Timothy J. Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754* (Ithaca and Cooperstown: Cornell University Press and New York State Historical Association, 2002), 29.
[12] David Arthur Armour, *The Merchants of Albany, New York: 1686-1760* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986), 212-4.; Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 46.
[13] Armour, *Merchants of Albany*, 217-8.
[14] William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 129. Fenton stresses that such dates are necessarily approximate, and points out that other researchers believe formation occurred even later.

diplomatic partners with the settlers at Fort Orange and Beverwijck.[15] This relationship, despite many growing pains, persisted into the era of English New York when New Netherland changed hands in 1664 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War. The other, more western, Iroquois nations found themselves increasingly drawn into Albany's orbit at the end of the seventeenth century as England's rising imperial rivalry with France expanded New York's role under new imperial priorities absent during the Dutch period. Generally speaking, however, the far western Senecas tended to ally more closely with French interests given their proximity to Canada. As this dissertation explores, the Commissioners thus tended to deal with the Senecas over issues of French influence, such as missionaries and smiths, while the nearby Mohawks conversed about British trade and expansion. With the arrival and incorporation of the Tuscaroras in 1722, the Iroquois Confederacy grew to six nations, a shape it kept until 1776 when the American Revolutionary crisis split the Confederacy over whether to support the British or the revolutionaries.[16] During the tenure of the Albany Commissioners as a formal institution, the Iroquois nations, often collectively but sometimes singularly, maintained continuous contact with the Commissioners over issues of diplomacy, war, trade, and other matters important to both groups of borderlands denizens.

Albany's Commissioners, as the formally appointed institution for Indian diplomacy in New York from the 1690s to the 1740s, maintained a unique venue of cross-cultural interaction that allowed local voices, both colonial and indigenous, to shape the world around them. Such a study is significant because it incorporates an

[15] Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 115.
[16] Dean R. Snow, *The Iroquois* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 151.

outlying borderlands area into the larger colonial and imperial story without sacrificing the uniqueness and peripheral nature of the borderlands environment. The Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs existed as a hybrid institution, drawing authority and stability from its formal commissions granted by New York's governors and a powerful legitimacy from the nearby Iroquois Nations who chose to deal with them on a regular basis. Their meetings exhibited a mixture of cultures, not just in the ethnicities of those people present but in the diplomacy itself, ink and paper coexisting with wampum and gifts. Straddling this line between European and Indian, Albany's Commissioners and their Iroquois neighbors were perfectly poised to amplify their influence and ideas so they rippled outward from the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. Moreover, these voices originated from non-British peoples in and around a British Empire, a telling indicator of the variety of sources of influence in imperial policies.

The everyday realities of colonial life, be they local trade issues, a governor's provincial defense duties, or interimperial conflicts with French Canada, played out in the borderlands arena and in the lives of its denizens. Both Iroquois leaders and Albany's Commissioners boldly pursued diplomatic, political, and economic matters they deemed critical to protecting objectives they valued. The Iroquois Nations sought to solidify their political, military, and economic sovereignty in a North American world increasingly polarized between French and British powers. Albany's Commissioners pursued peace and security for New York and other British settlements often wracked with violence. In doing so, both sets of actors projected their influence into the immediate borderlands arena and throughout much of northeastern North America, encompassing both European and Indian settlements. The denizens of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands thus

exhibited an influence on the world around them less attainable in other areas that lacked a stable, experienced institution like the Albany Commissioners and their Dutch/Indian diplomatic roots in New Netherland. The conversations between this regional body and its Iroquois neighbors thus maintained a smoothly functioning borderlands arena, far from colonial centers of official power and authority. This was, essentially, a perfect example of how regional voices contributed to the proper functioning of empire by blurring the distinctions between center and periphery.

This dissertation explores the interactions between Albany's Indian Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations, demonstrating that the two formed a continuous and nuanced conversation reflecting both respect and tension over the first half of the eighteenth century. Together, these Iroquoian and Dutch actors formed relationships that served as an important node for Indian diplomacy in northeastern North America that provided a critical context for understanding issues ranging from local trade to imperial borders. In addition, this study explores significant themes of politics, power and influence, intercultural relations, and the process by which the British Empire maintained important connections with indigenous polities in the eighteenth century. In doing so this dissertation engages the existing historical literature at several points.

Most importantly, this dissertation brings the Albany Commissioners for Indian affairs into the historical spotlight, providing a sustained study of the body and how it projected its influence into the colonial world around it. Such an analysis is important because the Commissioners spearheaded not only New York's Indian affairs for half a century but also influenced the Indian affairs of other British colonies over the same time. The literature requires this concentrated study to uncover a full understanding of how

New York's provincial body of mostly-Dutch Indian commissioners, along with the powerful Iroquois Nations to the west, fundamentally shaped Indian diplomacy for half a century by pursuing their own objectives. Only three published works treat the Albany Commissioners as an institution worthy of attention in any detail but all leave most ground open for further exploration. Thomas Norton's 1974 *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* parallels this dissertation by asserting that Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs purposely shaped imperial policy through their relationships with the Iroquois and other Indians. He argues that the Commissioners and other fur traders maintained positive relations with the Iroquois and thus kept New York safely from the worst aspects of several eighteenth-century wars, a protection that certainly would have been absent if "farmers and expansionists" had settled the area.[17] Norton's work provides the important argument that Albany's Dutch Commissioners and traders could affect the larger imperial processes around them, but does so through the single lens of the fur trade. Norton leaves much to be explored and uncovered, and while studies the Commissioners' history significantly, his work as a whole focuses on trade. The present dissertation provides a more expansive understanding than Norton by asserting that Albany's Commissioners exhibited the ability of a regional institution to exert its influence outside of just regional economic circles. Such a study provides a more complete understanding of the Commissioners as local actors that projected their voices into imperial realms.

David Armour's published dissertation from 1986, *The Merchants of Albany, New York: 1686-1760*, likewise provides a useful launching pad for a more sustained

[17] Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 222-3.

exploration of Albany's Commissioners and New York's Indian diplomacy. Armour explores Albany's economic history over much of the colonial period and ultimately concludes that despite political opposition from William Johnson and others, the Commissioners "nevertheless conducted affairs with vision and ability."[18] While Armour allows the Commissioners' story to unfold, especially in the 1740s, he follows Norton in by exploring their actions almost entirely in the context of their positions as traders and merchants. This likewise provides only a partial understanding of the Commissioners, not fully exploring their substantial roles as diplomats, negotiators, and provincial officials. Albany's Commissioners were not merely traders, but also important provincial officials with an imperial scope to their activities.

Lastly, Jon Parmenter's 2007 essay "Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh': Reassessing Haudenosaunee Relations with the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1723-1755" serves as the only recent study of Albany's Commissioners, as Norton's and Armour's work are several decades old. Parmenter recognizes the institution's importance by arguing that the Albany Commissioners "represented a key component of Haudenosaunee foreign relations during the eighteenth century," and proceeds to provide useful statistical data concerning individual Commissioners and their tenures of office.[19] Much like Norton and Armour, however, Parmenter utilizes a study of the Commissioners to further a specific end, in this case the efficacy of eighteenth century Iroquois diplomatic efforts, rather than to understand the

[18] Armour, *Merchants of Albany,* 219.
[19] Jon W. Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh': Reassessing Haudenosaunee Relations with the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1723-1755," in *English Atlantics Revisited: Essays Honouring Professor Ian K. Steele*, ed. Nancy L. Rhoden (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 237, 240-3.

multiple roles of the Commissioners in diplomacy and politics. Additionally, Parmenter focuses on only part of the institution's lifetime due to unique restrictions concerning the primary source records, as will be explored later in this introduction. This dissertation confronts Parmenter's work by extending his ideas to include the Albany Commissioners as important provincial and, in many ways, imperial agents.

Taken together, all three of these works recognize the importance of Albany's Commissioners in eighteenth-century Indian diplomacy, an important parallel to this dissertation and an important common theme. However, all three use their studies to better contextualize their own areas of interest – economics and Iroquois diplomacy – and do not treat the Commissioners as the topic of study itself, with only Parmenter approaching that end. Thus, this leaves important questions unanswered about the Commissioners' activities for half a century, most notably a complete picture of their roles outside those of fur traders and merchants. This dissertation explores these issues and argues for a greater understanding and appreciation for how influential the institution was in shaping not just the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, but also colonial New York, and the larger British Empire in northeastern North America. Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs, despite its role as a regional body, maintained a continuous conversation with their Iroquois neighbors that cut across many areas of borderlands and imperial life.

This dissertation also intersects with the historical literature concerning how the Iroquois Nations conducted and maintained diplomatic relationships in the first half of the eighteenth century. Such a topic is critical to understanding New York's Indian diplomacy because neither side – the Iroquois nations nor the Albany Commissioners –

existed in a vacuum. This dissertation argues that the Iroquois functioned as part of a mutual conversation, and studying just half of that conversation provides an incomplete picture of borderlands diplomacy. Unfortunately, many recent books do just this, exploring the topic of Iroquois diplomacy during this period and with insight, but without providing sufficient context.

Respectful treatments of Iroquoian history and diplomacy are relatively new. As late as the mid-twentieth century some historians still referred to the Iroquois and other Indians as "savages," such as George Hunt in his book *The Wars of the Iroquois*, originally published in 1940.[20] More recent works, too numerous to list completely, have reversed this trend, utilizing ethnohistorical methods to explore the colonial experiences of the Five Nations.[21] Many of these books focus on diplomatic history, such as Timothy Shannon's 2008 *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier*.[22] The book covers the period from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries, half of which witnessed the existence of Albany's Commissioners as New York's official negotiators of Indian diplomacy. Despite this overlap, Shannon's work rarely mentions Albany's Commissioners, not even granting an index entry to the institution heading Indian affairs for the Iroquois' closest colonial ally for such a long period of time. In Shannon's story, the Iroquois interact with indistinct colonial and imperial powers that move in and out of

[20] George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 35. Hunt even seems to subscribe to phrenology, claiming that "Huron mental capacity was undoubtedly great, their cranial capacity exceeding that of all other American aborigines." Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 41.

[21] Notable examples not already cited include, but are certainly not limited to: Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); José António Brandão, *"'Your fyre shall burn no more': Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Francis Jennings, et al., eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995).

[22] Timothy J. Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: Viking, 2008).

the narrative, the Five Nations existing in a spotlight that seems to function as a barrier between them and the colonial Indian officials around them. Without exploring the long term connections between specific institutions Shannon provides only a partial portrait of Iroquois diplomacy. Richard Aquila's *The Iroquois Restoration*, originally published in 1983, likewise downplays the importance of this long-lived institution that provided critical context for Iroquois diplomacy.[23] While Aquila does refer often to the Commissioners at several points, his treatment still relegates the institution to the background, making the Commissioners almost passive members of what was really a lively and vigorous interaction.

In another recent example, Jon Parmenter's 2010 book *At the Edge of the Woods* explores "the capacity of the [Iroquois] League to pursue independent foreign relations in the context of an intensifying Anglo-French contest for empire."[24] This premise is entirely accurate, and while only the tail end of his study covers years when the Commissioners existed as an institution, his diplomatic story utilizes only meetings with New York's governors. Gubernatorial meetings with the Iroquois occurred only occasionally, with the Commissioners serving as the point of continuous contact. By obscuring the latter Parmenter also provides only a partial story of Iroquois diplomacy, perhaps over-emphasizing the role of New York's executive in Indian affairs during the 1690s. The conversation between Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations served as a foundation of the Iroquoian diplomatic experience with New York, and this

[23] Richard Aquila, *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier, 1701-1754* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987). Unlike Shannon, Aquila recognizes the Commissioners as important enough to deserve an index entry.
[24] Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), 210.

dissertation uncovers that interaction. Perhaps more importantly, both the Iroquois and the Commissioners benefited from the unique relationship, using the other to legitimate its own authority and influence to speak and act in borderlands circles. Neither the Iroquois nor the Commissioners existed in a vacuum, and understanding their relationship sheds light onto the diplomatic history of both groups.

This dissertation also addresses questions concerning the sources of authority and influence in the borderlands realms abutting colonial settlements, a topic represented in the existing historical literature. This study's focus on the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois uncovers just how influential both groups were in the realms of Indian diplomacy throughout northeastern North America despite living in a so-called periphery. Such a recognition is important because it highlights how borderlands actors could shape their own lives outside of control from distant sources of authority and in turn could use their local influence to project changes to the colonial and borderlands world around them. While unable to fundamentally reshape imperial matters, the Albany Commissioners and their Iroquois neighbors, often through their own initiatives, facilitated the movement of words, ideas, and even people that allowed the British and French empires to exist and function. By making their own decisions the Commissioners and Iroquois added a borderlands flavor to an imperial conflict. This dissertation blurs the boundaries between center and periphery in northeastern North America, as often influence emanated from the peripheries themselves. Two very recent books address these issues but leave plenty of room open for additional exploration.

David Preston, in his 2009 work *The Texture of Contact*, provides valuable insight into this idea of the borderlands as themselves centers of influence but downplays the

importance of the Commissioners and Iroquois diplomats. Preston explores "cultural interactions between Europeans and Indian settler communities, with a particular geographic focus on the frontiers of the Iroquois Confederacy," ultimately concluding that "frontier inhabitants made sense of their worlds primarily through the face-to-face human relationships they formed." Such an observation is entirely astute, but Preston continues by stating that "mediators and the governments they represented were often peripheral to events taking place on the frontiers." [25] While the study of informal contact between the Iroquois and colonists is important, this dissertation confronts Preston's assertion that formal interactions (such as those with the Albany Commissioners) were geographically or systemically separate from activities on the periphery. The ideas of "government officials" and "borderlands environment" were not mutually exclusive, as Albany's Commissioners were both denizens of the Albany/Iroquoia borderlands and duly commissioned provincial officers. As such, this dissertation tempers Preston's proposed ordering of geography and official power.

Gail MacLeitch also explores topics of borderlands influence and decision making in her 2011 book *Imperial Entanglements*. Like Preston, MacLeitch absolutely understands how peripheral areas can originate influence and agency. She states, "empire was not a rigid structure imposed from above but a series of processes and negotiations shaped by various interest groups," going on to assert that "imperial forms emanating from the core were renegotiated on the frontiers of empire with the Iroquois playing a

[25] David L. Preston *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontier of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 4-5, 10.

deciding role."[26] MacLeitch's work, however, focuses on how Iroquois societies changed over the course of the eighteenth century in terms of cultural and economic indicators, such as Iroquoian peoples becoming increasingly enmeshed in European economies as producers, laborers, and consumers, especially along what she terms a "gender frontier." She makes reference to the Albany Commissioners, but only at the very end of the institution's existence and only in passing. Her book thus provides an excellent opportunity for this dissertation to further explore the established idea of borderlands influence but in new directions that include the important institution of the Commissioners.

Matthew Dennis, in his book *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace*, introduces useful ideas of how the Iroquois Nations viewed their own identity in relation to the seventeenth-century experiences they had with early Dutch and French settlers. By exploring the "new cultural history" of the Iroquois, Dutch, and French, Dennis asks why the Dutch were able to form such a positive and lasting relationship with the Iroquois while French experiences were halting and incomplete. He ultimately claims that "each group experienced a peculiar new world and fashioned its own particular history, at the same time that they all commingled and constructed the complex New World they were forced to share."[27] Such an insight provides a useful background for this dissertation's focus on the Iroquois and their relationships with the Albany Commissioners. While this dissertation stays mostly within the eighteenth century, Dennis' seventeenth-century

[26] Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 2.
[27] Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and Cooperstown: Cornell University Press and New York State Historical Association, 1995), 2-3.

study legitimates the idea that the Iroquois maintained sovereignty over how they chose to interpret the changing world around them, a necessary component to this dissertation's exploration of two independent bodies interacting as equals in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. The Iroquois faced significant demographic, cultural, and social upheavals, but preserved the ability to interpret them.

This dissertation also adds to the historiography's current understanding of the Dutch in the Atlantic world and their ability to shape the British Empire from the periphery. The Netherlands' activities in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Atlantic largely represented "non-territorially based trade," a term historian Jaap Jacobs contrasts with the more traditional "settlement" understanding of colonial activity.[28] Other than brief forays into Brazil and the Hudson River valley, the Dutch Empire's land holdings remained restricted to a handful of small Caribbean colonies. Dutch colonial activity, however, expanded in the Atlantic due to their open trading with the colonies of the French, Spanish, and English empires. Christian Koot, in his 2011 book *Empire at the Periphery*, offers a unique understanding of this concept that opens up additional contributions by this dissertation. Koot contends that the seventeenth-century English colonies of Barbados, New York, and the Leeward Islands can best be understood as participating in "transnational communities," where "fluid, flexible, transnational, and often illicit … trade … provided material benefit to fragile colonies," ultimately providing a stability that English trade could not provide on its own. Essentially, this "earlier culture" of interimperial trade solidified the seventeenth-century English empire

[28] Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 19.

due to the actions of Dutchmen on the periphery of empire.[29] The present dissertation adds to Koot's understanding of Dutch influence on the edges of the British Empire, but does so in terms of Indian diplomacy instead of interimperial trade. Just as the Dutch traders of the seventeenth century provided the necessary expertise in Atlantic trade that solidified the English Empire economically, the Albany's Dutch Commissioner provided the necessary experience in Indian diplomacy that helped protect the British Empire in the eighteenth century. The Albany Commissioners were sanctioned officials, while the Dutch traders in Koot's work remained outlaws to English law, but the larger idea of Dutchmen shaping the British world from the periphery of empire remains central. This dissertation thus adds depth to the non-traditional nature of Dutch involvement in the colonial Atlantic world.

By downplaying the importance, or even basic existence, of the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs, these works leave open many questions for this dissertation to explore. Importantly, recognizing the importance of the mostly-Dutch institution and the conversations it held with indigenous populations highlights the chorus of non-British voices that shaped the British colonial world in the eighteenth century. As this dissertation will show, Albany's Commissioners exerted significant sway on Indian diplomacy around New York and as far away as the Great Lakes, New England, and Virginia. Given its half century existence, and coupled with the importance of Indian diplomacy to larger imperial goals, such an influential body left an indelible mark on the British colonial world. The fact that these men were Dutch, and mostly conversing with Iroquoian peoples, uncovers exactly how much the British colonial realm relied on

[29] Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 3, 5-6, 227.

conversations between non-British peoples. Moreover, this dissertation uncovers a period of New York's colonial Indian diplomacy largely relegated to footnotes and passing references. With the exceptions of Norton, Armour, and Parmenter, historians of New York's Indian diplomacy have either taken an Iroquois-centered approach, or focus on the much more glamorous figure of William Johnson during the later Seven Years' War era due to his involvement in the definitive colonial war of the eighteenth century. A venerable dearth thus exists in the historical literature for how colonial New York pursued Indian diplomacy from the 1690s until 1755. By helping to fill that hole, this dissertation subsequently allows for a greater understanding of Iroquois diplomacy for half a century, as well as provides insight into the larger context surrounding Johnson's tenure as Indian Superintendent. This dissertation answers questions of how Albany's Commissioners interacted with other branches of New York's provincial government. Many authors focus just on the Commissioners' downfall in the late 1740s and early 1750s, highlighting the institution's conflict with Governor George Clinton specifically. However, no works have explored the Commissioners' relationship with the province's governors or the General Assembly on an institutional level. This dissertation explores and answers these questions.

This dissertation explores these and other themes over the course of six substantive chapters. Chapters 2 through 5 explore the conversations between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations in the contexts of an ever expanding series of concentric circles: local borderlands, provincial New York, other British colonies and Indian polities, and finally French Canada. Two additional chapters bookend this central core, tying the era of the Albany Commissioners to the larger colonial chronology.

Chapter 1 provides the critical context of the Commissioners' roots in the Dutch New Netherland era, while chapter 6 links the Commissioners to William Johnson and his rise as the royally-appointed Indian superintendent for the northern colonies. This dissertation purposely follows such a thematic organizational method to better understand the significant role the Iroquois and Commissioners played in the local, regional, and imperial contexts of the British Empire. A simple chronological narrative would obscure the larger patterns of borderlands diplomacy. For example, in any given year, the Albany Commissioners discussed issues ranging from local trading conflicts to spies and troop movements in French Canada. This constant and continuous blending of subjects and contexts serves to prevent a focus on fully understanding any of them unless they are consolidated and presented together in a single analysis. As such, issues concerning the Commissioners' relationship with the provincial General Assembly, for example, become much clearer when explored together, as opposed to peppering them throughout a single narrative that includes meetings about local rum abuse, letters to other colonial governors, and messages to spies and translators sent into Iroquoia. This dissertation admittedly sacrifices immediate context to specific examples as a result, but its goal is to provide a thematic understanding of the Commissioners and their interactions with the Iroquois, not a day-to-day journal.

Readers can treat each of these six chapters as a standalone essay with its own internal argument tied to the unique context of that specific chapter. Taken together, however, these six chapters combine to provide a single, thorough study concerning how actively the Commissioners and Iroquois inserted themselves into the various contextual backgrounds of a borderlands and colonial world. Chapter 1 establishes the Dutch roots

of the settlers and traders that would eventually comprise the formal institution known as the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs. Early Dutch traders formed a tenuous but respectful relationship with the Iroquois, especially the nearby Mohawks. Foretelling the future relationship between the Iroquois and the Commissioners, the early Dutch and Mohawks maintained such a close relationship because it was mutually advantageous to both parties. In doing so, the Dutch settlers developed an understanding of borderlands diplomacy that the early English governors eagerly utilized from 1660s to the 1680s. This chapter employs a group biography and analysis to argue that a relatively small cadre of mostly Dutch men served as a core of to the Albany Commissioners, maintaining professional and familial ties with one another and the Dutch past. Thus, a small, interconnected family of Dutchmen served as New York's formal negotiations of Indian diplomacy for half a century.

Chapter 2 introduces the Albany/Iroquoian borderlands world of the early eighteenth century and the diplomatic and personal relationships that existed between some of its most important actors. A common diplomatic culture of respect, ceremony, and procedure existed between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois that served as a foundation for continuous contact from the 1690s to the 1740s. Despite this shared culture of borderlands affairs, significant local issues served as points of contention between Dutch and Iroquoian actors. Matters of trading, land sales, and differing views of Iroquoian sovereignty all offered arenas for a clash of interests between the provincial officials and visiting diplomats from Iroquois nations, an abrupt and noticeable juxtaposition with the largely quiet and respectful meetings in Albany. The chapter argues that the Albany Commissioners and Iroquoian diplomats, despite these

contentious points, maintained a respectful and common culture of diplomacy because both sides required the presence and interaction of the other to legitimate their own influence and authority in borderlands affairs.

This dissertation's third chapter explores the Iroquois Nations and Albany Commissioners in the context of two of New York's other provincial offices, the royal governor and the General Assembly. The Governor and Assembly both participated in Indian diplomacy and borderlands affairs, but in very different ways, maintaining unique relationships to Albany's Commissioners and visiting Iroquois diplomats. New York's governors, while sometimes visiting Albany to meet with visitors from the Five Nations, still relied heavily on the Albany Commissioners for the proper functioning of the colony's Indian affairs. The Commissioners served as sources of information for a governor, modified and questioned his instructions, and often took the initiative in making important decisions themselves. Iroquois diplomats utilized these occasional executive visits to Albany to access a direct line of communication to the British Crown. The provincial Assembly, on the other hand, often shaped the larger context of Indian diplomacy through its powers of legislation and the purse, molding the world in which the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois Nations interacted. Albany's Commissioners relied on the Assembly for funding and laws relevant to their duties as borderlands diplomats, and the Five Nations often found themselves targets of legislation that would shape important aspects of their lives. This chapter ultimately argues that these two institutions served as vital links between the borderlands world of the Albany Commissioners and the Five Nations and the larger Atlantic world, precluding the former from developing isolated from the larger continental and imperial realms.

Chapter 4 expands the scope of the dissertation from the single colony of New York to other colonies and Indian polities in and around the British continental empire. A close study of the Commissioners' minutes uncovers how far the institution projected its lines of communication and influence. Each individual colony handled its own Indian affairs in the decades before the rise of royally appointed Indian officers for the northern and southern colonies in the 1750s. Despite this decentralized model, Albany's Commissioners participated in other colonies' Indian affairs ranging from New England to Virginia, sometimes as requested by colonial governors and sometimes through the Commissioners' own initiative. Similarly, while the Iroquois Nations existed as the Commissioners' primary indigenous diplomatic partners, the Albany Commissioners maintained close contact with Indians as far west as the Great Lakes and as far south as the Chesapeake and its hinterland. The Iroquois Nations likewise maintained a wide web of communication and diplomacy, incorporating a diverse number of British colonies and Indian polities into its diplomatic orbit. This chapter closes by contending that northeastern North American Indian diplomacy, despite its officially decentralized structure, is best understood as a web with an important nexus at Albany. Albany was not the only node in the borderlands diplomatic web, but its importance suggests an early trend toward centralization of Indian diplomacy in northern New York predating William Johnson's royal appointment as Indian superintendent for the northern colonies in the 1750s.

The fifth chapter explores the relationships between the Albany Commissioners and the Five Nations in the context the continental rivalry between the British and French empires over the course of the eighteenth century and the proximity of French Canada.

While abstract imperial plans and objectives may have originated in colonial or European capitals, they partially played out in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands and thus opened opportunity for local actors to participate in, and even sometimes shape, these larger processes. Albany's Commissioners, as officials at the forefront of Indian diplomacy, often took initiative in matters regarding Britain's conflict with French Canada. While most of these decisions were relatively minor, the Commissioners still acted as independent borderlands agents within the larger maelstrom of imperial rivalry, prioritizing their role as sole arbiters of Indian diplomacy in the face of French encroachments. Moreover, the Iroquois Nations utilized the contentious backdrop of the eighteenth century imperial conflicts to maintain their diplomatic independence and freedom to deal with any colonial power they chose. Ultimately, this chapter highlights how the Dutch Commissioners and Iroquoian Five Nations existed as important and independent actors in the larger context of continental empires, underscoring the agency of non-British peoples in a British Empire. Furthermore, this analysis blurs the lines between centers and peripheries as sources and recipients of authority and influence, once again suggesting a greater centralization of Indian affairs in colonial New York before the rise of William Johnson in the 1750s.

Lastly, Chapter 6 addresses the decline of the Albany Commissioners during the mid-1740s and the rise of William Johnson, first as provincial Indian agent and then as royally-appointed superintendent of the northern colonies. The chapter argues that the Albany Commissioners and William Johnson, despite these institutional differences, actually shared many of the same experiences in their personal and professional lives. All of these men, regardless of whether they earned a commission from a provincial

governor or the British Crown, faced the same advantages and obstacles inherent to the borderlands world of the eighteenth century. For example, they both participated in land speculation, faced the same rigors and requirements to be successful borderlands diplomats, and existed as non-English outsiders on the fringes of a British Empire. In sum, Johnson and the Commissioners were in many ways more similar than different. This chapter contends that Johnson holds a more positive place in historical memory due to his serving during the definitive Seven Years' War while his predecessors served during the more ambiguous wars earlier in the century. The chapter closes by recognizing the Albany Commissioners and their strong connections to both their Dutch trader predecessors and their Irish immigrant successor. Clearly, a common set of experiences faced any Indian officials in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, regardless of where they drew their formal authority.

The Albany Commissioners maintained a detailed manuscript record of their meetings over these several decades, providing the intricate, day-to-day details of Indian diplomacy that serve as the foundation of these six chapters. The minutes originally existed in several quires until 1751 when lawyer James Alexander bound them into four large folio volumes.[30] Three different primary sources provide access to these minutes, but in very different ways. First, only the latter two volumes of the original minutes exist in archives, and have been available by microfiche for decades. Jon Parmenter and Cornell University have recently digitized these volumes, granting researchers high

[30] Michael Kammen, introduction to *The History of the Province of New York, volume 1: From the First Discovery to the Year 1732*, by William Smith, Jr. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972), lxii.

resolution images of the approximately 1,800 original manuscript pages still extant.[31] These two volumes only cover the years following 1723 and despite their truncated chronology provide the most direct source for the conversations between Albany's Commissioners, visiting Iroquois diplomats, and other Indian leaders. Commissioners recorded the resolutions of their meetings, letters to New York's governors and other colonial officials, and words and actions, often verbatim, of visiting Indian delegates. They opened each daily meeting, and sometimes several meetings a day, with a roll call of names at the heading of each page. Such roll calls allow for insight into participation patterns of individual members. While European documents always contained the potential for the twisting of indigenous words and meanings, Parmenter contends that "the nature and volume of the records of Native testimony in the manuscript … indicate that their transcribed utterances cannot be written off as mere ventriloquism on the part of colonial authorities."[32] Given the annoyance, obstinacy, and sometimes outright anger portrayed in some of these transcribed speeches, one cannot expect the Commissioners to purposely shape speeches that made them look bad. In any case, these two volumes serve as the best sources because they are unedited.

Second, Peter Wraxall's *Abridgment of the Indian Affairs* covers the pre-1723 period but only in a heavily modified and edited form, making the source simultaneously necessary for a full history of the Albany Commissioners and also somewhat troublesome due to Wraxall's personal biases. Peter Wraxall was an Indian official under William Johnson's administration of Indian Affairs. He collected and edited the minutes of the

[31] *Minutes of the Commission of Indian Affairs in Albany*. http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/i/indianaffairs/browse.html. Hereafter cited as *MCIA*.
[32] Jon W. Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 237.

Albany Commissioners, often leaving out entire meetings and almost always truncating or summarizing the full text of the Commissioners. In doing so he downplayed the importance of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs in Indian diplomacy to justify the appointment of his patron as an Indian superintendent. Wraxall's general tone emphasized the role of New York's governors in Indian diplomacy and relegated the Commissioners to background characters, a view this dissertation addresses directly in chapter 3. Occasionally Wraxall included his own comments on the Dutch Commissioners in his notes. For example, regarding a meeting in August 1724, Wraxall opines that "[f]or my own part I am of opinion that the Dutch of Albany & the adjacent Country have ever made an immediate temporary interest their only rule," and suggested that a trading house erected in 1715 "would I believe in some measure tend to prevent the frauds committed on the Indians but the Albany people will therefore prevent its taking place."[33] In one 1708 entry Wraxall goes as far as to opine that "the Albany Commissioners who in general have ever been a set of weak, mercenary, mean spirited people every way unfit for the trust reposed in them."[34] As Charles McIlwain, editor of Wraxall's *Abridgement* states, "Wraxall's principal object, the appointment of Colonel Johnson as Indian superintendent, was gained, and it can be shown that the *Abridgement* was a really important factor in gaining it."[35] As such, researchers must be cautious when utilizing Wraxall's abridgement. Nevertheless, he provides the only insight to the

[33] Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., *An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs, Contained in Four Folio Volumes, Transacted in the Colony of New York, From the Year 1678 to the Year 1751*, by Peter Wraxall (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 152, 110. Wraxall's work will hereafter be cited as *AIA*.
[34] Wraxall, *AIA*, 59.
[35] McIlwain, introduction to *AIA*, xcvii.

missing minutes, and one can utilize them to understand who met at Albany, when, and for what reasons, even if the overall tone can be misleading.

Lastly, Lawrence Leder's edited volume, *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666-1723* provides a third but only partial path to the original Commissioner minutes. This slim collection covers only sporadic meetings of the Albany Commissioners, focusing heavily on the earlier years of English Indian diplomacy at Albany. Governor Benjamin Fletcher appointed Livingston as the first Secretary for Indian Affairs in 1696, a position allowing him to transcribe and translate conference minutes and other documents in both English and Dutch, dating back to just after the English takeover of the colony.[36] Given the limited coverage of the *Livingston Indian Records* this dissertation uses it only occasionally to access Commissioner meetings, utilizing it more to explore the pre-Commissioner years. In any case, it still serves as one of three ways to access the Commissioner minutes.

These three different sources - the original minutes, Wraxall's edited text, and Livingston's translations and transcriptions – all utilized different forms of spelling, abbreviation, and sometimes punctuation. This dissertation thus modernizes spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of direct quotations to provide a smoother, less distracting reading experience.[37] Also, the names of Indian polities and villages varied greatly over time and source material, and this dissertation utilizes explanatory footnotes to inform the reader of that group's most common identification.

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[36] Lawrence H. Leder, ed., introduction to *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666-1723* (Gettysburg: The Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1956), 8, 12.

[37] This includes the direct quotations from primary sources utilized from secondary source material.

This dissertation utilizes these sources by combining them to form as complete a history of the conversations between the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois Nations as is possible, but this is only the starting point. Wraxall's abridgement provides a workable insight into the relations between these indigenous and European actors before 1723, and the Commissioners' minutes provide a much more complete account for the period after 1723. Together, they create a single narrative of the multiple intertwined themes, tensions, and topics of conversation that defined the interaction between Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois over several decades. This dissertation carefully disentangles individual threads and groups them with others based on their shared context: local borderlands affairs, relationships with provincial institutions of government, intercolonial issues, or the rivalry with French Canada. These four themes provide the framework for the four core chapters of this dissertation. Having extricated these individual meetings from the larger, tangled borderlands conversation, one can more clearly analyze and understand individual topics, such as how the Iroquois and Commissioners shared a common diplomatic culture, or why Albany became such an important nexus for the Indian diplomacy of other colonies. These questions, and others, rely upon nuances too easily lost if the interaction between the Commissioners and Iroquois is left as a single narrative.

On a final note, this dissertation purposely utilizes the term "borderlands" to describe the nebulous geography within and between Iroquoia and New York where overlapping sources of authority vied to expand their influence and ideas. The term originated with Colonial Latin America historian Herbert Eugene Bolton in 1921 in his influential *The Spanish Borderlands*. Used in reference to the American southwest and

southeast, or perhaps more accurately, the northern reaches of the Spanish Empire, Bolton described these geographies as "outposts of New Spain, maintained chiefly to hold the country against foreign intruders and against the inroads of savage tribes."[38] While Bolton's antiquated views of Indian polities obviously remains problematic, his larger conception of a geography not fully under the sway of either European or Indian societies provides a useful descriptor for the interactions between the Iroquois and New York past the upper English settlements of Albany and Schenectady. Historians of colonial British America have increasingly utilized the term. For example, Alan Taylor uses a borderlands conception in his 2006 book *The Divided Ground* to describe the imprecise borders between British Canada, the American states, and indigenous polities.[39] Regarding the geography featured in the present dissertation, Evan Haefeli, in a short piece in the American Historical Review, asserts that the notion of borderlands "might work well … between New England and New France … where borderlands lasted continuously for nearly a century."[40] This dissertation utilizes the term more confidently than Haefeli would allow. A reliance on the borderlands concept does not interfere with the center/periphery tension that appears throughout the present dissertation. To the contrary, by recognizing the importance of a borderlands geography on a distant periphery (relative to central, official forms of power and authority), this dissertation underscores how local, decentralized decision-making could shape the larger imperial

[38] Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), vii.
[39] Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).
[40] Evan Haefeli, "A Note on the Use of North American Borderlands," *The American Historical Review* 104:4 (Oct., 1999), 1224.

world. A borderlands, or periphery, does not immediately become a center just because colonists and Indians residing therein assert themselves.

In closing, this dissertation seeks to bring Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs into the historical fore to better understand New York's Indian diplomacy from the 1690s through the early 1750s. By studying the Commissioners one realizes the importance of the conversations that institution held with the Iroquois Nations, and how both Dutch officials and Iroquois peoples reacted to and shaped the colonial world around them. Before exploring the Albany Commissioners, however, one must seek out their early seventeenth century roots in Dutch New Netherland. It is to that topic that this dissertation now turns.

CHAPTER 1:

New Netherland History and the Dutch Core of New York's Indian Diplomacy

A minor diplomatic incident between various Indian and European settlements arose in the British North American colonial backcountry in January 1723. According to Captain John Scott at Fort Hunter, a fort situated to the northwest of Albany in the Mohawk River valley, a small party of Iroquois Indians had recently arrived from the Virginia hinterlands with a scalp and a native prisoner. This in itself was nothing notable, as the Iroquois Nations had for generations traveled south to make war upon their southern enemies. Both scalps and prisoners were, as always, two of the primary rewards sought in such actions. What was troublesome, however, was the recent Iroquois-Virginia peace treaty that had been part of a larger plan to quiet Virginia's backcountry and stem the endemic violence tracing back to the mid-seventeenth century. To make matters worse, the Indian prisoner claimed to be the servant of Virginia's Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood.[41]

Captain Scott sent a letter "by an express" to the New York Commissioners of Indian Affairs in Albany, apprising them of the situation. The Commissioners immediately drafted a response on January 17, the same day that the message arrived. In it they thanked the captain for his timely message and informed him that they would send Lawrence Claessen, an interpreter, so that "we may inquire further into this affair." "We command you forthwith," they authoritatively instructed Claessen, "to go up to Fort

[41] *MCIA* vol. 1, 6-7.

Hunter and desire the Indians who have taken this prisoner forthwith to come hither to us and bring him along." Like any wise diplomats dealing with Indians, they included a gift of "seven hands of wampum" to facilitate matters.[42]

The requested Iroquois visitors arrived in Albany and opened discussions with the officials on January 20.[43] The Commissioners berated the Indians, expressing "surprise" that the Iroquois would commit violence near Virginia, given that "a treaty of peace has been so lately concluded between the government of Virginia and the 5 nations and so solemnly confirmed by the Five Nations but this last summer," and admonished them that "the same should be kept inviolable on their side." The Iroquois, or "Canada Indians," claimed innocence, stating they "were gone out a fighting" before the treaty had gone into effect.[44] Regardless of the truth of this excuse, the Commissioners clearly prioritized the safe return of the prisoner and his homecoming to Virginia. Once again, the Commissioners utilized the means of Indian diplomacy – this time, offering a belt of wampum to lend strength to their request to have the prisoner released. The Iroquois refused the request – and, presumably, as decorum required, the wampum belt as well – and announced that the prisoner would instead continue home with them. The Commissioners, they claimed, would have to deal with "our sachems" to pursue the matter. With no other path available, the Commissioners resolved to send a message,

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[42] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 6-7.

[43] There is some confusion as the exact date. The first relevant entry in the MCIA is dated the 20th and notes that the Indians were expected to arrive "tomorrow morning." The following entry that records the actual discussion, however, is dated the 19th. Likely one or both of these dates is slightly off due to simple human error. This was not the only time these handwritten records were slightly marred by the wandering mind and pen of the recorder. On a few occasions a commissioner's name was listed as present twice, only to have the surname of the second scratched out and replaced with the surname of an official who shared the same first name. In one instance, Philip Livingston was present twice at the same meeting – a true feat of borderlands diplomacy!

[44] The Commissioners referred to them as "Canada Indians" because these Mohawks were from Caughnawaga, a "castle" in the St. Lawrence Valley. Although near Montreal, the population maintained its independence from French colonial authority. Preston, *Texture of Contact*, 18.

with a belt of wampum to show their sincerity and respect, in a longer-term effort to secure the release of the prisoner. The Albany Indian Commissioners felt no rush to inform New York's Royal Governor, William Burnet, of this diplomatic imbroglio. Not until three weeks later, in a letter to Burnet sending along a copy of their minutes, did they mention the diplomatic drama in an almost offhand manner. The Commissioners made clear to Burnet that they decided not to press the issue with the Iroquois too far, as such pressure might "disoblidge them" from fighting against enemy Indians in the east, and "make them embrace the governor of Canada's proposal to war against New England."[45] Such an unfortunate turn of events might cause this relatively minor diplomatic incident to spread violence across multiple colonial settlements.

The Albany Indian Commissioners, in this single, short example, illustrated the degree of influence and autonomy they wielded in a borderlands diplomatic world that spanned much of northeastern North America and concerned the issues most fundamental to Britain's continued influence on the continent. Issues of Indian fidelity, the safety of various different British colonies, and the looming threat of French violence all provided the larger context in how this single example played out. Clearly more than just an outpost on the edges of British settlement, Albany served as a focal point for conversations and actions that would define Britain's continental domain over the course of the eighteenth century. In the example above, the Commissioners acted swiftly, and on their own authority, to tackle a conflict that started in another colony far to the south. Through experience built upon foundations stretching back into the seventeenth century, they knew that gifts of wampum were needed to empower and lend permanence their

[45] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 7-8a.

words, and spent the funds necessary to obtain it. On their own authority they hired and instructed a colonial interpreter Lawrence Claessen to act upon a course of action they devised themselves. In fact, they sought to inform the provincial governor only three weeks later, in passing, and casually portrayed themselves as making decisions in the best interests of the empire. In sum, the Albany Commissioners made decisions on an imperial scope, and largely on their own authority.

The events at Albany, however, are best viewed by the historian as a conversation, not a monologue. The actions of the Indians involved in this relatively minor dispute represented a larger pattern of Native interaction with this borderlands institution, the Albany Commissioners, and demonstrated that the Iroquois were equal partners in a shared contest for influence and agency. In the example above, the Iroquois visitors followed the mutual "middle ground" diplomacy of the eighteenth century, politely listening but ultimately following a course of action that most aligned with their own goals. The Commissioners kept the Iroquois's attention by fastidiously following the established procedures of borderlands diplomatic protocol. Regardless, the Albany Commissioners, despite their propensity to act on an imperial scale, could not simply enact their desires by fiat – they played the diplomatic game but did not always win. The Commissioners and their Indian visitors participated in a coequal conversation relying on a shared diplomatic language, and inhabited an environment where decisions whose significance stretched over northeastern North America could originate almost entirely away from traditional and centralized sources of political power. This deep and unique relationship did not appear overnight, however. One must explore the seventeenth-

century history of New Netherland and early New York to understand the eighteenth century existence of this critical diplomatic institution.

This chapter argues that the Commissioners for Indian Affairs, as the arbiters of New York's Indian diplomacy in the eighteenth century, maintained a remarkably strong link to the cultural and diplomatic world of the early Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century. Despite a change in power from Dutch to English administrations, and the related shift in the colony's immediate context from trade outpost to launching pad for expansion and imperial rivalry, Albany's Commissioners reflected the same adherence to borderlands diplomatic culture and economic practices as their predecessors. One must understand this history of the Commissioners as a preface to understanding their relationships and actions in the eighteenth century.[46] This will be accomplished in three sections. First, this chapter will explore the seventeenth-century relationship between the Dutch traders of New Netherland and the Iroquois, especially the nearby Mohawks, contending that the two polities forged a unique association shaped specifically to alleviate the problems generated by a shared "new world." Both the Dutch and the Iroquois experienced varying levels of social and economic upheaval as European and Indian worlds increasingly merged, and they turned to each other for solutions to their respective issues, thereby creating the foundations of a trade-based relationship that lasted well into the next century.

Second, the chapter provides a brief overview of New Netherland's transition into New York, focusing on how English forms of government arrived with new, imperial perceptions of the colony completely alien to previous Dutch priorities. It was during

[46] See chapters 2-5.

these decades, the 1660s through the 1690s, when the denizens of borderlands Albany set down the immediate roots of the Commissioners by maintaining the link between Indian diplomacy and trade, with themselves as the middlemen between this borderlands world and the new English government. Lastly, this chapter explores the newly-formalized Commissioners for Indian Affairs utilizing group biography, brief individual biographies, and a quantitative overview of the institution's minutes to uncover the reality of a stable, largely-Dutch institution composed primarily of traders serving long tenures in Indian affairs. This formal institution, which survived into the middle of the eighteenth century, linked to the previous Dutch and transition eras through family connections, economic practices, and a common diplomatic culture. Although serving a very different set of provincial and imperial ends under the English, the Commissioners remained remarkably stable in form and function to their Dutch roots.

While both the Iroquois Confederacy and the Dutch colonists of New Netherland faced a common "new world" created as people from two continents became increasingly intertwined, the Iroquois Nations faced upheaval that was especially deep.[47] The Five Nations of Iroquois were no strangers to cultural shifting by the time of sustained European contact in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Anthropologist William Fenton notes that the five individual nations joined into a single League of Peace sometime between 1450 and 1600, making the upheaval of the colonial era just one more set of adjustments at the end of an already long list still fresh in the collective memory.[48]

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[47] The concept of a common "new world" for both European colonists and indigenous Americans figures prominently in the work of several historians. See: James H. Merrell, "The Indians' New World: The Catawba Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 41:4 (Oct., 1984); Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[48] Fenton, *Great Law and the Longhouse*, 69.

Previous experiences, however, paled in comparison to the rending differences produced by the arrival of three European empires in nearby lands. The nascent French, English, and Dutch colonies surrounding Iroquoia served as gateways to entirely new political and demographic landscapes shaped by disease and economic markets. Although intimately interrelated, these changes generally fit into the three categories of demographic decline, the worsening of relations with other Indian polities, and troubles relating to the developing Atlantic economy.

The most immediate challenge the Iroquois faced in their early encounters with Europeans was the catastrophic population loss due to imported diseases such as smallpox and measles, for which North American Indians lacked immunity. Geographic isolation initially protected the Iroquois Nations from these newly imported diseases. However, the formation of settlements by the Dutch West India Company, the Company of New France, and the Massachusetts Bay Company on Iroquoian borders in the 1630s and 1640s quickly paved the way for increased contact and thus exposure to disease. By mid-century these illnesses had halved the population of the Five Nations as epidemics hit specific settlements.[49] Anthropologist Dean Snow estimates that the Mohawk population alone dropped from 7,740 to only 2,830 in the first half of the seventeenth century.[50] This was a remarkable drop considering the recent population increase from incorporating their defeated Huron enemies into their villages. Iroquois communities often inadvertently hastened the destructiveness of the diseases through communal healing rituals in crowded longhouses, or through the use of sweating, purging, and fasting. Although historian Jon Parmenter considers seventeenth-century Iroquoian

[49] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 58-9.
[50] Snow, *The Iroquois*, 96.

demography overall "a comparatively striking success story of population recovery and maintenance in the wake of substantial losses sustained during the first 'virgin soil' epidemic of 1634," this good news was certainly not available to contemporary Iroquois and likely would have given little comfort if it had.[51]

Such unprecedented demographic destruction joined economic changes wrought by European contact to aggravate Iroquoian relationships with other Indian groups, fundamentally transforming the culture of violence that Iroquoian culture traditionally restricted to small-scale engagements. While the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas formed the Iroquois League as a vehicle for preventing warfare and establishing peace, archaeological evidence indicates that a constant level of warfare with surrounding Indian polities was normal in the pre-contact period. One needs only to look at the tall palisades that often surrounded Iroquoian villages and prompted European observers to call them "castles." This suggests to historian Daniel Richter that by 1600 "the cultural ideal of peace and the everyday reality of war had long been intertwined."[52] French Father Joseph-François Lafitau provided a contemporary appraisal, stating that "[t]he men … are properly born only for great things especially warfare," which they see as "a necessary exercise." Another Frenchman, Father Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix noted that "Each one is a master of his action," while a French officer claimed that "an individual is capable of making war and of involving his nation in it."[53] These small-scale engagements exploded into large-scale wars due to the presence and

[51] Parmenter, *Edge of the* Woods, 289.
[52] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 31.
[53] Quoted in: Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 46.

influence of Europeans. During the mid- to late-seventeenth century, "[t]he wars in the West and on the St. Lawrence soon merged into a single conflict that pitted the Five Nations against virtually every Indian people in the Northeast."[54]

Steep demographic decline, elicited by the presence of European colonies, contributed to this new scale of constant warfare between the Iroquois and other indigenous polities. The drastic drop in population due to disease prompted the Five Nations to increase the scale and scope of traditional "mourning war" practices, in which Iroquois warriors attacked neighboring Indian polities to secure captives to be assimilated into Iroquoian communities, often to replace specific members who recently died. Historian José António Brandão's meticulous research uncovers the scope of these expanded practices over the seventeenth century. He finds that the Iroquois participated in 465 recorded hostile encounters before 1701, initiating 354, or approximately seventy-six percent. While only thirty-four raids, or 9.6 percent, involved economic gain as the sole motive, Brandão finds that fifty-five percent of all Iroquois-initiated raids were for the sole or partial goal of collecting captives. In this manner the Iroquois captured over 6,000 people between 1600 and 1701. These captives helped offset the precipitous demographic decline of the seventeenth century, and as Brandão notes, "there was no need to be concerned with where to put those who came to replace the dead," as "[i]t was Iroquois cemeteries, not their longhouses, that were crowded."[55]

The increasing participation of North American Indian societies in a growing Atlantic economy also helped push the Iroquois into an era of increased warfare. Iroquois peoples had traded with other indigenous polities in the pre-contact era. The

[54] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 62.
[55] Brandão, *'Your fyre shall burn no more'*, 53, 73-4.

archaeological record demonstrates that "both long distance and local trade of exchange have considerable time depth in Iroquoia and the surrounding region."[56] However, the relative geographic isolation that temporarily protected the Five Nations from European diseases had the added effect of slowing their trading connections to New France, New England, and New Netherland while Indians in closer proximity to those colonies reaped the benefits. European trade goods, especially guns, powder, and metal weapons, exacerbated aggressive relations between traditional Indian enemies and created scenarios in which new violence could erupt in two ways. First, European guns and steel provided a technological advantage in a form of warfare still heavily dependent on wooden shields and armor. Access to these arms could easily determine the fate of an Indian community. Second, through simple geographical chance, the Iroquois sometimes found themselves cut off from European settlements and the trade they fostered when a competing Indian polity blocked their path. Both reasons prompted increased violence on the part of the Iroquois. For example, throughout the early seventeenth century, Iroquois warriors often ambushed Algonquian and Huron traders who were transporting French goods to their home communities. Susquehannocks to the south acquired goods from the Swedes and Dutch of the Delaware Valley and the English colony of Maryland, prompting the Iroquois to constantly check their power through violence during midcentury. Only on the Hudson, where the Mohawks and Mahicans initially maintained friendly relations, were the Iroquois able to pass through another's territory to access European trade. Doing so created a strained situation that eventually devolved into open

[56] William A. Starna, "Seventeenth Century Dutch-Indian Trade: A Perspective from Iroquoia," *de Halve Maen* 59:3 (March, 1986): 5.

war between the two Indian polities in the 1620s.[57] Clearly, by 1650, the Iroquois faced a significantly changed world due to the inextricably intertwined factors of depopulation, limited access to European trade networks, and the resulting increased warfare with neighboring Indian polities that both situations fostered.

The Dutch settlers of New Netherland, while not facing the same social upheaval as the Five Nations, still found themselves in an uncertain world where their economic success remained uncertain throughout most of their colonial tenure. Although a few patroonships dotted New Netherland's landscape, most notably the uniquely resilient manor of Kiliaen van Rensselaer, the primary impulse behind Dutch activity in New Netherland remained trade. Dutch investors formally incorporated the West India Company in 1621, hoping for efficient and profitable extraction of wealth from the land in the form of furs acquired from Indians. The Company built Fort Orange in 1624 in the upper Hudson Valley, which in turn spurred development of a small settlement named Beverwijck. The Dutch pursued some agriculture here, growing food locally that would make the trading post self-reliant and more flexible in pursuing its economic goals, but not as a preface to expansion.[58] Unlike the fur traders of early New England, these Dutch traders sought to keep their distance, both culturally and physically, from local Indians.[59] Ideally, Company traders would utilize this northern outpost to barter peacefully and in a controlled manner with visiting Indians. Historian Donna Merwick encapsulates this Dutch ideal by coining the term "alongshore" to present the idea that the Dutch held an "animus against colonization" to avoid repeating the violent patterns established by the

[57] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 53-56, 98.
[58] Thomas J. Condon, *New York Beginnings The Commercial Origins of New Netherland* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 77.
[59] Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of* Peace, 120.

sixteenth-century Spanish. Instead, the Dutch hoped simply to "lie alongshore," which would grant them the benefits of trade while avoiding the dangers of deeper entanglement.[60] New Netherland's longest-serving governor, Peter Stuyvesant, evaluated war and peace "through a merchant's eyes" according to Merwick, seeking to avoid violence whenever possible simply because it would negatively affect trade.[61] As the title of Merwick's work suggests, the Dutch would be unable to maintain peaceful relationships with Indians in and around Manhattan, leading to several major Indian wars over the course of New Netherland's history.

This peaceful and organized ideal also failed to materialize in the borderlands disorder of the early and mid-seventeenth century, thought Albany's colonists were generally more successful in avoiding large scale violence than their brethren in and around Manhattan. Company regulations asserted that only approved traders could deal in furs, and only within the town walls of Beverwijck. Freelancers and even Company traders ignored these rules, going "walking in the woods" in a contest to meet Indian traders before anyone else and buy their furs. Company officials attempted to regulate this breach of protocol. For example in the summer of 1660, local officials took a "walk in the woods" themselves, ultimately discovering ten interlopers who were quickly tried the next day. Of the defendants captured during this seventeenth-century sting, two of them, Rut Jacoobsz and Andries Herpertsz, were themselves members of the local court!

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[60] Donna Merwick, *The Shame and the Sorrow: Dutch-Amerindian Encounters in New Netherland* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 35-6. Merwick utilizes this metaphor entirely for Dutch Manhattan, but its implications apply naturally to Beverwijck. Although Beverwijck was an inland settlement, the Hudson stayed wide enough to that point to remain a de facto extension of the ocean for the purposes of trade.

[61] Merwick, *Shame and the Sorrow*, 256.

[62] Historian Matthew Dennis suggests that such trading practices expressed an "individualism, aggressiveness, and competitiveness" which struck "the communal, circumspect Iroquois as curious and unfortunate."[63] A "trinity" of "economic plagues" – wampum inflation, shortages of European trade goods, and rising prices for beaver pelts – provided an increasingly hostile context in which the Dutch traders had to operate. Richter remarks that "[a]gainst this background, it is no wonder that the mood turned nasty in the Fort Orange marketplace."[64]

Significant barriers to peaceful trade and coexistence also formed due to the state of almost constant violence between early Dutch settlers and neighboring Indian polities, ranging from isolated incidents to open warfare. Aggressive trading tactics could evolve into open acts of violence. For example, Fort Orange director Hans Jorisz Hontom reportedly once kidnapped a Mohawk headman, prompting Mohawk attacks on Dutch cattle and the burning of a company sloop.[65] In another example from 1626, several Dutchmen joined the Mahicans in an attack on nearby Mohawks, resulting in the death of several of the Dutch party.[66] Regardless, the privileged and interdependent relationship between the Dutch and Mohawks, undergirded by their geographic proximity, precluded open warfare between the two trading partners. This was a protection not afforded to other Indian polities to the south that lacked this special relationship. Cultural friction and even innocent misunderstandings could blossom into open wars, of which the Dutch faced several over the course of the colonial period. Kieft's War, named after the

[62] Merwick, *Possessing Albany,* 93-4. Merwick lists the ridiculous excuses given by some of these defendants. For example, one claimed not to be trading but was instead picking blueberries.
[63] Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace,* 125.
[64] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse,* 96.
[65] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 90.
[66] José António Brandão, "Competing Ambitions: Native-Native and Native-Dutch Relations in the Era of Beverwijck," *de Halve Maen* 76:3 (Fall, 2003): 54.

governor whose actions exacerbated tensions between the Dutch and Munsee Indians, lasted from 1640 to 1645. It resulted in what contemporaries claimed were one to two thousand Indian deaths in the lower Hudson area, wiping out entire lineages along with the ability to maintain land use rights.[67] The Peach War of 1655-57 started when Hendrick van Dijck killed an Indian woman allegedly picking peaches from his garden, leading to a conflict in which Munsees, Susquehannocks and allied Indians burned several settlements, forced the evacuation of other outlying homesteads, and cost the lives of fifty to one hundred colonists.[68] Tensions with the Esopus Indians led to two wars in the 1650s and 1660s sparked by multiple cases of personal violence between Dutch and Esopus Indians.[69] The two sides signed a peace treaty only in the final days of New Netherland's existence. Such a spectrum of violence impeded the peaceful relationships required for efficient and stable trade.

Clearly, this shared new world generated unprecedented challenges that precluded both the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy and the Dutch settlers of New Netherland from readily pursuing their goals. On one hand, the Iroquois faced catastrophic population loss and barriers to accessing the same trade goods that other Indian polities obtained, both problems leading to an exceptional growth in the scope of Iroquoian warfare. On the other hand, New Netherlanders, despite an ideal "alongshore" ideology of trade without cultural or political entanglement, often failed to achieve the peaceful trading relationships that provided for a stable colony, especially in the southern areas in and around Manhattan. Separately these two polities suffered, but as the

[67] Robert S. Grumet, *First Manhattans: A History of the Indians of Greater New York* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 17, 41.
[68] Grumet, *First Manhattans*, 47-8.
[69] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York,* 148.

seventeenth century progressed, Iroquois leaders and Dutch traders realized that the solutions to their respective problems lay in a closer relationship with the other.

Mohawk leaders purposely built a close, respectful relationship with the New Netherlanders around Beverwijck to avoid costly conflict and to alleviate their economic and population problems. As explored above, New Netherland's "messy combination of cooperation and contention" with the Mohawks never blossomed into a full-scale conflict.[70] Instead, Mohawk leaders gained greater access to Fort Orange and its riverine link to the Atlantic economy in the late 1620s after pushing away the Mahican Indians blocking their access. With this clear path to Fort Orange the Five Nations established a trading relationship that held the key to their prospering as important borderlands players later in the century. Dutch traders could not directly supplement Iroquois population levels, but they provided the economic support needed for the Five Nations to pursue mourning wars against neighboring polities, thus allowing them to directly tackle the problems of their new world. Although the West India Company initially banned the sale of firearms to Indians, its officials relaxed this prohibition in the face of New England's open firearm trading and to combat "independent" Dutch traders paying no heed to the proclamation.[71] The Mohawks referred to the nearby Dutch as "Kristoni," which translates as "I am a metal maker," and their general term for Europeans, "asseroni," translates as "ax-maker," suggesting what they saw as the most important benefits of the Hudson Valley newcomers.[72] Additionally, with the expansion of Mohawk territory over land previously held by the Mahicans, other Indian polities could trade with the Dutch

[70] MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 36.
[71] Fenton, *Great Law and the Longhouse*, 271.
[72] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 75-6.

only with Mohawk permission, providing to them a middleman status that granted them power and prestige.[73] Taken together, their growing alliance with Dutch traders very clearly gave the Iroquois the means to combat their military, economic, and population issues in the traditional form of mourning wars.

The Dutch traders in and around Beverwijck also benefited greatly from their growing relationship with the Iroquois, solidifying the shaky economic ground upon which they built their financial empire. Dutch officials signed their first treaty of "friendship and brotherhood" with Mohawk leaders in 1643, and sixteen years later reaffirmed it with a box of wampum wrapped in an iron chain, the first link in what eventually became the silver Covenant Chain under the English.[74] This special relationship facilitated a steady increase in the number of furs traded over the Dutch period, rising to a high of about 46,000 a year in 1656 and 1657.[75] Close relations with the Mohawks also alleviated some of New Netherland's political and military problems with other Indian polities. Company officials often relied upon Mohawk diplomats to mediate disputes with other Indian groups, and sometimes Mohawk warriors enforced Dutch interests in other parts of the borderlands.[76] Iroquois friendship made the economic goals of Dutch traders much easier to pursue.

This mutually-dependent trade relationship existed in a larger context of constant tension and sometimes open aggression but still managed to survive due to the shared prioritizing of trade. The above example of Hontom and the kidnapped Mohawk

[73] McIlwain, introduction to *AIA*, xlii. This status as "geographic middlemen" persisted into the eighteenth century. Richard Aquila, "The Iroquois as 'Geographic' Middlemen: A Research Note," *Indiana Magazine of History* 80:1 (March 1984), 52.
[74] Fenton, *The Great Law of the Longhouse*, 271,
[75] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 131.
[76] Charles T. Gehring and William A Starna, "Dutch and Indians in the Hudson Valley: The Early Period," *The Hudson Valley Regional Review* 9:2 (1992), 18.

headman serves as just one instance of the continuous level of Dutch/Iroquoian conflict around Fort Orange. Aggressive Dutch trading practices often alienated Indian traders, and mysterious thefts and animal deaths around Fort Orange caused settlers to question the trustworthiness of their Iroquoian allies. Despite this simmering mutual suspicion, neither side resorted to open war as they had done with other European and Indian polities.[77] Both sides were too reliant upon the economic benefits of the relationship to risk ending it. This was especially true for the Iroquois who, having assimilated European goods for decades, had become "perilously dependent" on the Dutch traders and their wares. By the 1660s, trade cloth, brass kettles, and iron tools had almost entirely replaced their traditional equivalents, leading to a generation of Iroquois who lacked the knowledge to create their own items and thus needed the Dutch just to survive.[78] Historian Allen Trelease notes that peace reigned because "both sides had everything to lose and nothing to gain by hostilities." They saw each other less as thieves and trespassers and more as sources of economic gain; "what they thought of each other personally was beside the point."[79] Clearly, trade and a grudging respect for the other surpassed all other issues in this relationship.

The English takeover of New Netherland in 1664 prompted and paralleled several significant alterations in the shape and character of the province as a whole and more nuanced changes in Beverwijck specifically. Over the three decades between 1664 and 1691, the provincial government shifted several times, from a ducal proprietary (1664-1685), to a royal colony (1685-1687), to incorporation within the Dominion of New

[77] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 115.
[78] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 76, 86.
[79] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 115.

England (1688-1689), to control by "an alliance of merchants and disaffected politicians" led by Jacob Leisler (1689-1691), and finally to re-establishment as a royal colony (1691).[80] Despite these many shapes, English governors maintained a growing awareness of the importance of Albany and Indians, and trade between the two, in the empire's larger plans for imperial security against the growing Indian and French threats.

Governor Sir Edmund Andros, serving from 1674 to 1681, lay important groundwork in strengthening Albany's position as outpost for imperial England. He realized that a friendly relationship with the Iroquois could help stabilize the often violent borders of English settlement, such as in 1675 when he struck a military alliance with Mohawk leaders to help defeat Metacom's troops in what is known as King Philip's War in New England. Additionally, working with Albany magistrates, Andros imposed strict regulations on Indian trade and commerce, such as confining trade to areas within the town walls. These new laws largely succeeded in halting most of the abuses of earlier decades, and "Iroquois traders could now expect to get something in exchange for their pelts and to return home in one piece." Iroquois leaders approved so heartily of these changes that they dubbed Andros "Corlaer," requickening the governor in the position of Arent van Curler, a beloved Dutch trader who had treated the Iroquois well in previous decades.[81]

Governor Thomas Dongan, governor from 1683 to 1688, was another English administrator who recognized how Indian trade and diplomacy affected larger English imperial goals. He understood how the power and agency of Indian polities in North America, especially the Iroquois, could shift the overall balance between the English and

[80] Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 99.
[81] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 135-40.

French empires. More specifically, he realized the usefulness of trade in maintaining these relationships. If the English mistreated their Indian allies, they would "loose the country, the beaver trade and our Indians" to the competing French. Dongan planned forts at strategic points and pushed trading links westward beyond the western Seneca for the first time.[82] However, Dongan's recognition of Albany's Dutch traders as the key to positive Indian relations proved to have the longest impact. In 1686 he granted Albany a city charter, converting the town, which had followed Dutch governing practices, into an English municipality. This charter granted Albany a monopoly on the fur trade and entrusted regulation to the local magistrates, essentially strengthening their control of Indian affairs as a whole. Both the governor and the local magistrates jealously protected this power, both from private individuals and as other colonies. [83]

Andros, Dongan, and other governors relied upon a cadre of Albany's traders and magistrates to act as unofficial diplomats and facilitators during the three decades between the English takeover in 1664 and the formal establishment of the Commissioners for Indian Affairs in 1696. These men, motivated more by trade than imperial vision, maintained the positive trade-based relationship between Anglo and Iroquoian worlds during this transition period and provided the immediate roots for the institution of the Albany Commissioners. Andros appointed settler Robert Livingston clerk of the court of Albany and *ex officio* secretary of Indian affairs in 1674.[84] Livingston earned wealth and influence through trade, landholding, and by filling multiple offices, and established a

[82] McIlwain, introduction to *AIA*, lxi.
[83] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 208. This jealousy forced representatives from other English colonies to travel to Albany well into the eighteenth century if they wanted to address the Iroquois.
[84] Cynthia A. Kierner, *Traders and Gentlefolk: The Livingstons of New York, 1675-1790* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 15.

family whose name intertwined with New York politics and Indian affairs for generations. His fluency in Dutch served him well in connecting the Dutch tradition of Indian relations with the new English-speaking regimes, and he further incorporated himself into the local Dutch hierarchy by marrying the widow Alida van Rensselaer, originally a Schuyler. The growing importance of Indian affairs in these years, coupled with his own personal interest, prompted Livingston to keep and translate Indian records covering mostly the second half of the seventeenth century, an era otherwise characterized by a dearth of sources.[85]

Peter Schuyler, born into the local Dutch aristocracy, served as an equally prominent leader in borderlands Indian diplomacy during these transitional decades.[86] He served as Albany's first mayor under Dongan's charter from 1686 to 1694 and, due to his trading, military, and diplomatic activities, was at least partially fluent in the Mohawk language.[87] Livingston's *Indian Records* list Schuyler as more active than any other local official, most likely due to his long term as Albany's mayor.[88] Many of the records in Livingston's collection specifically refer to him as mayor or as one of the "magistrates" of Albany, highlighting the close connection between Indian diplomacy and the local magistracy during this period.[89] Livingston and Schuyler were Dutch, or had close ties to the local Dutch, made their fortunes at least partly through Indian trade, and held local office.

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[85] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 208.
[86] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 208.
[87] Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh'", 245n.
[88] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 76, 95, 104, 158, 162, 164, 166, 168, 178, 180, 184, 188, 189, 191, 192, 195, 196, 199, 200, 201, 202, 211, 219, 220, 224, 236.
[89] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 95, 104, 158, 162, 164, 166, 168.

Other, less known Albany leaders facilitated Indian diplomacy during these transition decades, and they, like Livingston and Schuyler, shared the common characteristics of holding local office, earning their livelihood through trade, and being part of the local Dutch culture, a continuation from the earlier Dutch period. Johannes Wendell was a perfect example. He was born in New Netherland in 1649 and entered the fur trade as a young adult. He became justice of the peace in 1684, earned a commission as militia captain in 1685, and became an alderman in 1686.[90] He appears in Livingston's records several times from 1685 to 1687, often recorded as participating in Indian diplomacy specifically due to his position as justice, militia captain, alderman, and "magistrate" of Albany. For example, in June 1685, Wendell was one of the justices of the peace who received four Senecas at the Albany courthouse. In another example from September 1685, Wendell and other "magistrates of Albany" met with representatives of "the [Mohawks], Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas" to hear their response to petitions made by representatives from Virginia.[91] Gerrit Bancker's life follows a similar trend. He was born in Holland, and arrived in New Netherland around 1655. He became a trader and married into the Van Epps family, one of the "pioneer" families of New Netherland.[92] Livingston's incomplete records list him as active in Indian diplomacy during the mid-1680s, but other sources suggest he was part of these borderlands interactions as early as 1672. Livingston's records often listed him as "magistrate" of

[90] Stefan Bielinski, Colonial Albany Project biography 2942, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/w/jowendell2942.html, last modified n/a. Bielinski's People of Colonial Albany project, hosted by the New York State Museum, offers much invaluable biographical information on Albany's colonial denizens, a resource especially helpful for the more obscure individuals. This source will be abbreviated as CAP in future citations.
[91] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 76, 77, 79, 82, 84, 87, 90, 108, 120. The records of these two specific meetings start on 76 and 87 respectively.
[92] Bielinski, CAP biography 6467, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/b/gebancker6467.html, last modified n/a.

Albany as well.[93] These two men were examples of the Dutch traders and officials who, along with Robert Livingston and Peter Schuyler, oversaw Indian relations in Albany during the decades of shifting English government.

Albany's local magistrates met mostly with representatives of the Iroquois Nations during these decades, but other Indian polities made regular appearances as well. For example, in July 1682, "the [Mahicans], Catskills and Esopus Indians" responded to propositions made by agents representing Maryland at the Albany courthouse. The visiting Indians promised "that when their Indians go out a hunting, [they] shall do no harm or prejudice to them of Maryland or Virginia, nor to the Indians in amity with the or under their protection." In July 1685, "north Indians that are come from Canada," along with 100 women and children, met with the local magistracy, and in December of the same year "the River Indians that Live at [Schaghticoke]" aired their concerns to "the magistrates of Albany."[94] These examples serve as useful reminders that Albany's Dutch community interacted with Indians and other colonial Indian officials from all over the northeastern part of the continent, and not just the Iroquois nations.

This economic underpinning of Indian relations remained prominent between 1664 and 1691 for several intertwined reasons, involving issues of governance, geography, and culture. First, English governors were pragmatic enough to understand the close links between trade and diplomacy when dealing with the Iroquois and other Indians, and realized that the Dutch traders of New Netherland had already established this relationship. As mentioned above, Governors Andros and Dongan especially

[93] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 79, 82, 84, 87, 90. For the reference to 1672, see: "Some Old Dutch Families," in *New Amsterdam Gazette: Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of the Dutch Regime of New Amsterdam and the New Netherlands*, vol. 4, ed. Morris Coster (New York: Morris Coster, date n/a), 14.
[94] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 67, 77, 95.

recognized that a strong trading relationship would pay political and military dividends in the English imperial struggle against enemy Indians and the French in Canada. It would have been foolish to ignore the existing Dutch relationships.

Second, Albany's distance of approximately 150 miles from the governing center of Manhattan must have played a role in the cultural autonomy of the Dutch. The colonial capital's distance and lack of a large-scale English settlement near Albany discouraged transfer of English culture up the Hudson. An event in 1693 puts the distance between cities into perspective. Governor Benjamin Fletcher and 150 militia men rushed at top speed to Albany upon hearing of a French attack. They made the distance in just under three days, a feat the Mohawk considered so remarkable they gave Fletcher the title "Cajenquiragoe," translated as "Lord of the Great Swift Arrow," a reference to his speedy arrival and as well as his English surname.[95] The Mohawks' surprise at a three-day trip upstream suggested that normal travel must have taken much longer.

Lastly, Dutch culture remained predominate in Albany at the turn of the eighteenth century because the city's denizens continued to view their settlement as an outpost of Dutch life and history. Donna Merwick rejects the idea that Albany's history was an "evolution," but instead suggests that Albany "was made and remade as a result of successive, socially constructed interpretations." Merwick asserts that the arrival of new English governments was part of a larger and "continual reinterpretation, rediscovery,

[95] Jennings et al., eds., *History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 163. The granted name is also a reference to the governor's surname. One critic of Fletcher's argues that this was designed "as a droll upon the man and his vain glory," a sarcastic pun missed by Fletcher who was "puffed up with … the Indian compliment." *NYCD*, vol. 4, 222.

and reaffirmation (or disaffirmation) of cultural meanings."[96] In effect, according to Merwick, Albany's state of existence depended upon the subjectivity of each observer. As such, over the latter half of the seventeenth century, "the Dutch and English constructions of the landscape coexisted."[97] These conflicting English and Dutch interpretations could easily coexist because of how complementary they were. The Dutch Albanians were little interested in furthering English imperialism, instead focusing on trade and their growing community. However, it was this very focus on trade that fitted English conceptions of Albany as a frontier outpost of empire. The fact that the local culture was Dutch instead of English was beside the point.

Clearly, the three decades between the English takeover in 1664 and the formal establishment of both royal government and the Commissioners for Indian Affairs in the 1690s served as a critical nexus between the history of the seventeenth century and the coming imperial struggles of the eighteenth. The Dutch traders of Albany, having transacted diplomatic and economic relations with the Iroquois and other Indians since the 1620s, continued these activities but in an increasingly different context. The new English governments, while varying in form, introduced and sustained a new imperial outlook in New York and relied on these Dutch traders to achieve those ends. The opening of King William's War in 1689, the first of four major conflicts with the French and other Indian polities, prompted the need for an even stronger, more organized method of dealing with Indian nations, especially the critically important Iroquois. As a result,

[96] Merwick *Possessing Albany*, 1.
[97] Daniel K. Richter, "The Semiotics of Colonial Albany," in *Reviews in American History* 19:2 (June, 1991): 172.

Governor Fletcher formally established the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs in 1696.

Fletcher's initial commission forming the nucleus of the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs, dated August 10, 1696, seemingly granted only limited authority and autonomy to Albany's Dutch traders and as the colony's Indian diplomats. The governor understood the importance of the Iroquois Nations in New York's borderlands political and diplomatic interests, specifying that the newly formed body "treat, confer, and consult with the Five Indian Nations of the [Mohawks], Oneidas, [Cayugas], Onondagas, and Senecas, who have been hitherto been faithful to my master his Majesty of Great Britain." Additionally, the Commissioners were "to hold a correspondence with them pursuant to such instructions as you shall from time to time receive from me."[98] These initial boundaries provided only a simple framework for the influence and initiative the Commissioners developed as de facto leaders of Indian diplomacy. The Albany Commissioners greeted visitors from Indian polities throughout northeastern North America, although their conversations with the Iroquois remained dominant in the larger affairs of the borderlands world. Additionally, as this dissertation shows, the Commissioners often acted on their own initiative, or injected their own ideas into a governor's instructions. They were not mere subordinates to a governor situated in distant New York City.

The institutional structure of the Albany Commissioners persisted largely unchanged over time. While different governors would commission varying numbers of men to be headed by a secretary, the board usually had between nine and twelve

[98] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 177.

members, and sometimes as many as twenty, although not all were necessarily active. Regardless of these size changes, "the majority always consisted of the leading citizens in the Albany area." Historian Thomas Elliot Norton notes that the "difficulty in keeping the board down to a manageable size indicated that it had become a position of prestige," a sensible deduction since the individual commissioners received no financial remuneration for serving.[99] Historian David Armour notes that the trading connections made during Indian diplomacy made service worth their while.[100] The institution retained close ties to both the provincial Assembly and the colony's executive. As chapter 3 explores, the Commissioners remained reliant on the Assembly for its funding and legal support for larger initiatives, and communicated frequently with the governor concerning instructions, intelligence, and information of their own activities. Having received their commissions through a Crown appointed governor, the Commissioners maintained the closest communication with the executive. They thus sometimes asked him to pass along messages to the Assembly, such as in 1743 when they hoped Governor George Clinton would prompt the Assembly into providing more funding for Indian gifts on the eve of King George's War.[101] The Commissioners for Indian Affairs, in sum, grew out of a simple and limited gubernatorial commission to embrace a history of Dutch Indian diplomacy and expand to become an influential member of the colonial, intercolonial, and borderlands communities.

Quantitative evidence from the Commissioners' minutes, coupled with an analysis of the personal data of individual members, demonstrates the strong links between the

[99] Norton, 74-6.
[100] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York*, 193.
[101] Norton, 182.

Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs and the Dutch history of New York.[102] This formally established institution of provincial and British imperial policy continued to reflect the Dutch economic tradition of Indian diplomacy established and sustained in Albany for the better part of a century. The Commissioners for Indian Affairs existed as a tightly knit group of interrelated men closely associated with Albany's Dutch culture and trading concerns, highlighting the persistence of seventeenth-century Dutch Indian diplomacy into the eighteenth-century British Empire. Additionally, the data uncovers a small core of commissioners serving long terms with little turnover. Jon Parmenter laid the foundation for this analysis by gathering raw data concerning the length of service of individual commissioners who served between 1723 and 1746, to which this dissertation adds information gathered from other sources regarding gubernatorial appointments to the Albany Commissioners during this time (see Table 1). [103] In addition, this dissertation adds analysis absent in Parmenter's study – namely, Commissioners who served solely between 1696 and 1723. Taken together, fifty-three individuals served as Commissioners at Albany during all but the tail-end of the institution's lifetime. Forty-four named men served between 1723 and 1746, the period of extant Commissioner minutes, while only nine Commissioners received commissions between 1696 and 1723 within that earlier period. The data suggest a large spectrum in length of tenure, from the

[102] The brief period from 1753 to 1755 will not be included in this chapter. The Albany Commissioners served then between William Johnson's role as provincial Indian commissioner (1746-53) and his appointment as Indian superintendent for the northern colonies as a whole (1756 onward). This brief period will be better handled in this dissertation's last chapter. Generally speaking these were new commissioners, and their necessarily short tenures serve only to confuse the data from the previous period of 1696-1745.

[103] Parmenter also noted several unnamed references, such as "Assembly member for Albany," which have not been included on Table 1. The reader should thus remain aware that a small handful of unnamed commissioners did exist.

single year of Edward Clarke and John Lindsay, to those whose careers spanned more than two decades of service, such as Evert Bancker and Myndert Schuyler.

This distillation of information provides a launching pad to uncover how a relatively small core of commissioners dominated these years. For those commissioners active over the institution's lifetime, fifty-three men served a combined total of 524 years, resulting in an average service of approximately 9.9 years per Commissioner. Such a number is misleading, however, because many of these men served very short tenures. For example, Arent Bradt served only three years. William Dick served for four years, while Edward Clarke served a single year. Removing men who served three or fewer years raises the average tenure to approximately 12.5 years per commissioner. Ultimately, defining "long term service" as ten years or yields twenty-three men whose average length of tenure was 16.6 years. This core of twenty-three men serving ten years or more comprised a group of long-tenured commissioners who provide a starting point for understanding the institution's core membership (Table 2). Specifically, these data start to uncover a fundamental characteristic of the Albany Commissioners: the institution, and by extension New York's Indian diplomacy, remained in the hands of fewer than two dozen men for approximately half a century.

One can easily supplement this conclusion regarding tenure length by counting how many meetings each individual commissioner attended, providing a better understanding of which members constituted a core group of commissioners.[104] Such a

[104] Quantifying the number of meetings that individual commissioners attended requires some interpretation on the part of the researcher. For example, the present dissertation considers every "roll call" a separate meeting, even if they were in the same day. This happened especially during larger conferences, where Indian speakers would often leave to discuss matters before giving a formal answer later that day. Individual commissioners may have arrived or departed between these sessions. Also, in a small number of

step is critical in understanding the true nature of the core, as a long tenure means nothing if a commissioner rarely attended the meetings. As Table 2 shows, most men in the core group were very active in their duties as Albany Commissioners. Hendrick Hansen's low attendance was easily attributable to the period of his tenure. His commissions dated from 1710 to 1720, meaning that Hansen served most of his tenure during a period not covered by the complete minutes and thus his quantifiable participation remains mostly a mystery.[105] The same reasoning can be applied to Peter Schuyler, whose commissions ranged from 1691 to 1720, meaning very few of his attendances made their way into the extant minutes.[106] One cannot easily calculate a ratio of meetings per years of service, however. In some cases an individual commissioner continued to attend meetings long after his commission expired. For example, Philip Schuyler earned commissions in 1728, 1729, 1732, and 1734. However, the minutes list him as present at Commissioner meetings well into the mid-1740s. Regardless, as Table 2 makes clear, this long-tenured core was incredibly active over the first half of the eighteenth century. It should be noted, however, that a handful of commissioners who served less than ten years, and thus not represented in Table 2, were still notably active. John Collins, for example, served for eight years and attended sixty-nine meetings during that time. Essentially, the exact core membership can shift slightly based upon the specific requirements imposed by the researcher.

Recognizing the existence of a long-tenured core of Commissioner members is critical in understanding New York's Indian policy in the first half of the eighteenth

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cases, the minutes are too faded to read some names, meaning that at least some attendances cannot be recorded. As a result, these numbers are close approximations, and cannot be exact.

[105] In this case, although Hansen earned his last commission in 1720 he served until 1724.

[106] Like Hansen he earned his last commission in 1720 but served until 1724.

century. This institution, so critical to imperial safety, was not a weak, shifting body open to easy change or turnover. The Commissioners for Indian Affairs was a solid institution with a core membership maintaining continuity over half a century. Despite its New Netherland roots, it survived and thrived in an era of English government and imperial conflict. An exploration of the lives of these core members indicates that this nexus between the British Empire and the Iroquoian borderlands remained remarkably similar in composition to its seventeenth-century Dutch roots.

Brief biological sketches of the longest-serving core members highlights that most Commissioners were merchants and officeholders in Albany in addition to their role as Indian officials. Myndert Schuyler had an extensive 35-year tenure as Indian Commissioner, and his background epitomized that of the Commissioners as a whole. Born in New Netherland in 1672, Myndert was the fourth son of David Pieterse Schuyler, a prominent fur trader and local official who traveled west from Holland in the mid-1650s. Myndert served the local government as juror, alderman, and militia captain, and the provincial governor appointed him mayor of Albany in 1719, 1720, and 1723. He earned his wealth through trade and real estate, and his marriage into the Cuyler family provided strong links to another prominent Dutch family.[107] He attended at least 332 Commissioner meetings over these decades (Table 3).

Philip Livingston was born in Albany in 1686, son to a figure historian Stefan Bielinki calls "the most important person to live in colonial Albany," Robert Livingston. Robert Livingston's contributions to Albany's early Indian diplomacy have been

[107] Bielinski, CAP biography 101, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/mynschuyler101.html, last modified Oct. 25, 2002.; Bielinski, CAP biography 1262, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/dapschuyler1262.html, last modified Sept. 20, 2003.

explored above. Philip's mother was Alida Schuyler Van Rensselaer Livingston, a woman whose full name indicates a notable pedigree of prominent local families. As a young man, Philip acted as his father's assistant in trade and diplomatic capacities, giving him the necessary background for his twenty-three year tenure as Albany Commissioner. He served as city and county clerk in Albany, and as Secretary to the Commissioners from 1725 onwards. His wife, Catharina Van Brugh, connected him not just to the prominent Van Brugh family but also to the Cuylers through Catharina's mother. Philip attended at least 263 Commissioner meetings over several decades (Table 3).[108]

Peter Van Brugh was born in 1666 to a family already involved in the New Netherland fur trade. He married into the Cuyler family in November 1688, and entered the Albany fur trade after moving there from New York City. Over the decades he served as constable, high constable, assessor, collector, and contractor. The governor appointed him mayor in 1699 and again in 1721. Peter's tenure as Commissioner spread across four decades and included his presence in at least 130 meetings.[109]

A brief collective biography of the other core members further supplements this unique and continuing legacy of Indian diplomacy in the hands of Dutch traders and local officials. As Table 4 shows, the vast majority of these core members made their livings at least partially as merchants and fur traders. Aside from three men whose occupations were unclear, the only exceptions were Edward Collins who practiced law and Henry Holland who commanded the fort at Albany. Even more striking is the comparison

[108] Bielinski, CAP biography 86, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/l/phlivingston86.html, last modified Dec. 21, 2012; Bielinski, CAP biography 94, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/l/rlivingston94.html, last modified Apr. 16, 2009; Bielinski, CAP biography 8628, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/vb/cavbrugh8628.html, last modified n/a.
[109] Bielinski, CAP biography 5300, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/vb/pvbrugh.html, last modified n/a.

between the core membership and local officeholding. All of the core members held positions in local government, ranging from sheriff and constable to alderman and mayor.[110] Eleven of these long-tenured commissioners served as mayor at least once, covering nineteen of the twenty-seven, or approximately seventy percent, of all mayoral administrations from the Dongan charter of 1686 through 1748. Clearly, the same social and economic influence required to earn appointment as mayor also demanded repeated commissions as Albany Commissioner.

Family ties further strengthened connections among this small cadre of commissioners (Table 4). Almost all core members married into a family with at least one member already serving as an Indian Commissioner. For example, Dirck Ten Broek married Margarita Cuyler in 1714. Margarita was the eldest daughter of Ten Broek's fellow Commissioner Abraham Cuyler. Her mother was Catharina Bleeker, making her uncles Albany Commissioners Nicholas and Rutger Bleeker.[111] Thus, Dirck Ten Broek found himself connected by marriage to both the Cuylers and the Bleekers, families with representation in the ranks of the Albany Commissioners. In another example, core Commissioner Hendrick Van Rensselaer married Catharina Van Brugh in 1689. Catharina's brother was Peter Van Brugh, member of the Albany Indian Commissioners for almost three decades.[112] A few core members had mothers who represented those same families (Table 3). This interrelatedness by marriage further defines the tightly-knit character of the core membership. All of the data in Table 3, taken together, clearly

[110] This dissertation will address individual commissioners who held provincial positions in a later chapter.
[111] Bielinski, CAP biography 33, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/t/dtbroeck33, last modified Feb. 25, 2002.; Bielinski, CAP biography 591, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/c/mgtcuyler591.html, last modified Aug. 15, 2006.
[112] Bielinski, CAP biography 5053, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios//vr/hvr5053, last modified May 5, 2006.; Bielinski, CAP biography 8627, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios//vb/cavbrugh8627.html , last modified July, 2003.

shows how a small, intermarried cadre of Dutch men served as Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs, continuing a configuration stretching back through the transition decades of the 1660s-1690s into the New Netherland period. These fewer than two dozen men served at the forefront of Indian diplomacy for New York, and much of the rest of the empire, for half a century. These men remained culturally Dutch, as well. Historian Allen Trelease notes that Albany and its environs "were perhaps less affected by the transition to English rule than any other part of the province," remaining "overwhelmingly Dutch in composition" well into the eighteenth century.[113] These were Dutchmen at the fore of British Indian affairs in and around New York.

Eighteenth-century New York differed greatly from seventeenth-century New Netherland, but the men who oversaw Indian relations remained similar in occupation and culture. Two polities – Dutch and Iroquoian – faced problems introduced by colonial interaction in the early seventeenth century. The Iroquois nations faced debilitating population loss, economic isolation, and an increasingly violent relationship with other Indian polities. Dutch settlers faced an unstable relationship with local Indian groups that hindered the peaceful and efficient trade that early settlers sought. Together, Dutch traders and Iroquois leaders created a relationship, based on trade and mutual respect that allowed both sides to better achieve their goals. England established several different governments in New York between 1664 and 1691, all of which shared a common deference to the established interaction between Indians and Dutch traders. Governors, especially Andros and Dongan, worked with the group of local magistrates and traders, not yet organized like the Commissioners, to further England's new goals of imperial

[113] Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York,* 205.

expansion. The rise of King William in England and the establishment of royal government in New York ushered in the institutionalization of these de facto leaders of Indian affairs. The Commissioners, especially the twenty-three who composed the core, carried forth the diplomatic experiences and cultural heritage of early seventeenth-century Dutch New Netherland.

This institution was critical in defining interaction between New York and the Iroquois, but the Albany Commissioners composed just one side of the conversation. Understanding the history and shape of that institution was the topic of the present chapter. The next four chapters explore how both the Commissioners and the Five Nations utilized the opportunities created by the institution's existence to shape their own experiences in and around the New York/Iroquoian borderlands. Chapter 2 explores how Iroquois diplomats and Albany's Commissioners built, shared, and maintained a common diplomatic culture despite notable conflicts over issues of land, trade, and notions of Iroquois sovereignty.

Table 1: Commissioners for Indian Affairs, 1696-1745[114]

Commissioner	Years of service	Dates of commissions
Abeel, Johannes	6	1706, 1710
Bancker, Evert	20	1696, 1706, 1710, 1724, 1726, 1728, 1729, 1732
Bleecker, Johannes, Jr.	4	1720
Bleecker, Nicholas	14	1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1742, 1745
Bleecker, Rutger	17	1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1739, 1742, 1745
Bradt, Arent	3	1739
Clarke, Edward	1	1738
Collins, Edward	11	1734, 1739, 1742, 1745
Collins, John	8	1720, 1724, 1726
"Cornwell, Capt."	2	1726
Cuyler, Abraham	14	1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1742, 1745
Cuyler, Cornelius	14	1734, 1739, 1742, 1745, (1752), (1754)
Cuyler, John/Johannes	22	1706, 1710, 1715, 1720, 1724, 1726, 1728, 1732
Delius, Godfrey	2	1696
De Peyster, John/Johannes	11	1734, 1739, 1742, 1745
Dick, William	4	1734
Gerritse, Ryer	10	1728, 1729, 1732, 1742, 1745
Glen, Jacob	7	1734, 1739
Groesback, Stephanus	17	1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1739, 1742, 1745
Hansen, Hendrick	14	1710, 1712, 1715, 1720
Holland, Edward	6	1734, 1738, 1739
Holland, Henry	16	1706, 1720, 1724, 1728, 1729, 1732
House, Hendrick	8	1698
Ingoldsby, Richard	3	1712
Lansing, Johannes/John	4	1728, 1729

[114] Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 240-2.; Edgar A. Werner, *Civil List and Constitutional History of the Colony and State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1891), 263.; Edmund B. O'Callaghan, ed, *Calendar of New York Colonial Commissions, 1680-1770* (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1929). While Parmenter utilizes these latter two sources to construct his own similar chart, this dissertation has accessed them independently to create Table 1, along with expanding the date ranges to the pre-1723 era. Parmenter calculated "years of service" as "the sum of all years encompassed by the commissions that each individual received." Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 243n. This dissertation has maintained that method to calculate the years of service for the period not covered by Parmenter's data.

Lansing, Johannes/John, Jr.	14	1734, 1739, 1742, 1745, (1752)
Lindsay, John	1	1738
Livingston, Philip	23	1720, 1724, 1726, 1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1738, 1742, 1745
Livingston, Jr., Robert	5	1715
Matthews, Peter	5	1715
"Norris, Capt."	2	1726
Roseboom, Johannes	8	1710, 1728, 1729, 1732
Rutherford, John	4	1742, 1745
Sanders, Barrent	6	1728, 1729, 1732
Schuyler, Johannes/John	16	1715, 1729, 1734, 1739
Schuyler, Johannes/John, Jr.	8	1734, 1739
Schuyler, Myndert	35	1706, 1710, 1712, 1715, 1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1739, 1742, 1745, (1752), (1754)
Schuyler, Peter	20	1691, 1696, 1706, 1715, 1720
Schuyler, Philip	10	1728, 1729, 1732, 1734
Ten Broeck, Dirck	16	1729, 1732, 1734, 1738, 1739, 1742, 1745
Ten Eyck, Hendrick	7	1739, 1742, 1745
Van Brugh, Peter	28	1706, 1710, 1712, 1715, 1720, 1724, 1726, 1728, 1729, 1732
Van Duyck, David	2	1724
Van Rensselaer, Hendrick	17	1706, 1724, 1726, 1729, 1732, 1734
Van Rensselaer, Jeremiah	13	1728, 1729, 1732, 1734, 1739
Van Rensselaer, Killaen	6	1706, 1710
Van Rensselaer, Stephen	2	1745
"Weems, Capt."	4	1706
Wendell, Evert	8	1724, 1728, 1729, 1732
Wendell, Hermanus	6	1728, 1729, 1732
Wendel, John/Johannes	6	1720, 1724
Wessels, Dirck	10	1696, 1698
Winne, Pieter	4	1739, (1754)

Table 2: Tenure and Meetings per Core Member[115]

Commissioner	Years of service	Meetings attended
Bancker, Evert	20	133
Bleecker, Nicholas	14	225
Bleecker, Rutger	17	273
Collins, Edward	11	92
Cuyler, Abraham	14	142
Cuyler, Cornelius	14	205
Cuyler, John/Johannes	22	88
De Peyster, John/Johannes	11	215
Gerritse, Ryer	10	227
Groesback, Stephanus	17	165
Hansen, Hendrick	14	12
Holland, Henry	16	132
Lansing, Johannes/John, Jr.	14	n/a
Livingston, Philip	23	263
Schuyler, Johannes/John	16	52
Schuyler, Myndert	35	332
Schuyler, Peter	20	13
Schuyler, Philip	10	116
Ten Broeck, Dirck	16	287
Van Brugh, Peter	28	130
Van Rensselaer, Hendrick	17	86
Van Rensselaer, Jeremiah	13	52
Wessels, Dirck	10	unknown

[115] Meetings attended remain approximate – see footnote 59. No information exists regarding Dirck Wessels' meetings attended because his entire tenure existed during an era where no original minutes with the accompanying "roll calls" remain extant. Johannes Lansing, Jr.'s exact number of attended meetings remains obscure due to confusion with the unrelated Commissioner Johannes Lansing.

Table 3: Extended Details on Core Members[116]

Member	Local offices held	Merchant / Trader	Marriage family links	Mother's family links
Bancker, Evert	alderman, mayor	yes	-	-
Bleecker, Nicholas	alderman, contractor	yes	Roseboom	-
Bleecker, Rutger	recorder, mayor	yes	Schuyler	-
Collins, Edward	captain, recorder	no (lawyer)	Bleecker	-
Cuyler, Abraham	alderman	yes	Bleecker	-
Cuyler, Cornelius	mayor	yes	Schuyler	Ten Broeck
Cuyler, John/Johannes	alderman, mayor	yes	Ten Broeck	-
De Peyster, John/Johannes	alderman, mayor	yes	Schuyler	Bancker
Gerritse, Ryer	constable, firmaster, alderman	yes	Lansing	-
Groesback, Stephanus	constable, surveyor, alderman	yes	Lansing	-
Hansen, Hendrick	constable, alderman, mayor	yes	-	-
Holland, Henry	sheriff; command of Albany fort	no (military)	-	-
Lansing, Johannes / John, Jr.	asst. alderman	unknown	Schuyler	Gerritse
Livingston, Philip	clerk	yes	Van Brugh	Schuyler, Van Rensselaer
Schuyler, Johannes/John	captain, colonel, alderman, mayor	yes	Wendell	-

[116] See individual CAP biographies.; Parmenter, 'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,' 243n-246n.

Schuyler, Myndert	constable, alderman, mayor	yes	Cuyler	-
Schuyler, Peter	mayor	yes	Gerritse	-
Schuyler, Philip	unknown	unknown	unknown	Wendell
Ten Broeck, Dirck	tax collector, recorder, mayor	yes	Cuyler	-
Van Brugh, Peter	constable, collector, mayor	yes	Cuyler	-
Van Rensselaer, Hendrick	alderman	yes	Van Brugh	-
Van Rensselaer, Jeremiah	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Wessels, Dirck	constable, alderman, recorder, mayor	yes	-	-

CHAPTER 2:

Conflict, Cooperation, and Authority in the Early Eighteenth Century Borderlands

In April 1732, "eight of the chiefs of the Mohawk Indians" arrived in Albany to meet with New York's Indian Commissioners over an important borderland issue, opening a short interaction that highlighted many of the defining aspects of early eighteenth-century borderlands diplomacy. The visitors first reminded the Commissioners of their ceremonial obligations as hosts, telling them that "They have always been accustomed to treat of and offer whatever they had to say before this board who are bound to keep the old Covenant Chain from being violated by any mismanagement or misunderstanding but preserve the same clean and unspotted." With this necessary prerequisite handled, and using the proper title of "Brethren," the visiting diplomats raised the pressing land issue that was one of the reasons that brought them to Albany. They informed the Commissioners that Philip Livingston, a member of that board, "has obtained a patent that takes in all our land that lies to the north and west along the Mohawks River as far as to a certain [falls] upon the said river." Quickly changing tone, the Iroquois diplomats asserted that "if this is true then Mr. Livingston has murdered us asleep, for our land is our life." They requested that the Commissioners retrieve a copy of the patent so "that our children may not come into dispute after our decease for we have sold no land to Mr. Livingston," adding "And are now fully resolved never to sell him a foot of land." Suggesting that Livingston earned the patent

fraudulently by bribing "some of our young men," the Mohawk visitors asserted "he may account that as thrown in the sea."[117]

More than a simple exchange of dialogue between Indians and colonists in Albany, this meeting represented the larger processes undergirding Indian diplomacy in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands during the first half of the eighteenth century. Discussion of land issues important to both Iroquois and New York settlers often occurred not in an ostentatious, multi-day conference with New York's governor, but in the regular day-to-day conduits managed by Albany's appointed Indian officials. The visiting Iroquois diplomats did not balk at speaking forcefully to their colonial neighbors, reminding the Commissioners of their obligation to maintain good relations. Clearly, the Iroquois saw themselves as actors equal, if not superior, to European settlers and the empires they represented. Still, despite this contentious meeting, the Iroquois and Commissioners followed an accepted diplomatic protocol. The visiting diplomats spoke first, and they used the proper title of "Brethren" despite speaking on an issue angrily enough to declare themselves "murdered." This interaction consisted of disagreement voiced within accepted boundaries of protocol, a pattern inherent to borderlands diplomacy. Moreover, despite the clear anger conveyed in the Commissioners' minutes, diplomatic relations between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations continued unabated until the rise of William Johnson as provincial superintendent in 1744. This resilient system grew out of a borderlands relationship of mutual respect and utilized a shared diplomatic culture, ensuring that messages and even threats did not uproot the open path of communication between two parties often at odds. Iroquois

[117] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 355a-356a.

diplomats and Albany's Commissioners relied upon these shared norms to establish their own influence in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands and into northeastern North America.

This chapter argues that diplomacy between the Albany Indian Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations, despite its often contentious nature, played out in a realm of personal and diplomatic respect that encouraged peaceful interaction and productive dialogue. These influential borderlands entities shared and maintained a common culture of contact based on both Indian and European norms and priorities that facilitated a discourse that benefited both sides. This foundation allowed the conversations and decisions of both sets of actors in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands to reverberate into the larger colonial world. First, the chapter explores the common culture of contact that the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations built and maintained, a critical foundation that smoothed relations and kept dialogue and contact almost unbroken from the early 1690s to the mid-1740s. Chapter 6 will detail how William Johnson's personal machinations drew the Mohawks into his personal orbit in the mid-1740s, at the end of the Commissioners' existence. Iroquois diplomats and Albany's Commissioners, however, maintained an unbroken chain of dialogue during the decades prior. Both colonists and Indians adhered to a common culture of ceremony, respect, and procedure that kept the conversation alive across half a century.

Next, the chapter inspects various local issues of contention that served as obstacles to a completely smooth diplomatic interaction. Despite common diplomatic culture between New York's Commissioners and Iroquois diplomats, several issues at the center of colonial/Native interactions ensured that the borderlands diplomatic

environment during the half century of the Albany Commissioners' tenure from the 1690s to the 1740s was at times sensitive and quarrelsome. Both the Commissioners and the Five Nations existed as strong, highly independent actors at the center of issues of local, provincial, and continental importance. This chapter focuses on three interrelated issues in an exclusively in regards to borderlands context: 1) trade and economic behavior, especially alcohol and blacksmiths; 2) Iroquois anger at encroaching British settlement; and 3) differing concepts of Iroquois sovereignty and the Covenant Chain. Both sides often pursued their own diplomatic and personal ends to the consternation of the other. Taken together, these topics created conversations that always held the potential to derail the long standing relationship between the two sides and provided plenty of kindling for divisive meetings.

Lastly, the chapter argues that the Commissioners and the Iroquois remained committed to an ongoing and open dialogue despite these often contentious issues because both sides required the acceptance and good-will of the other to legitimate their own authority in the diplomatic world of the borderlands. Networks of communication and cooperation proved critical in the face-to-face world of borderlands Indian diplomacy. [118] Without mutual respect and a common diplomatic language neither side could hope to exert any influence in a realm where no single polity achieved dominant authority.[119] This carefully formed and maintained network between Albany and the Iroquois villages, while not perfect, still facilitated a half century-long dialogue in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. Before the Commissioners and Iroquois leaders could

[118] Preston, *Texture of Contact*, 2-6.
[119] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x-xi.

influence the larger colonial world around them they had to come to a common understanding in a more local arena, a relationship that played out most immediately in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. While both groups remained cognizant of the larger Atlantic world around them, borderlands issues of trade, land, and sovereignty hit closest to home and proved to be the base of the relations between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations.

At its most basic level, the day-to-day diplomatic contact between Albany's Commissioners and Iroquois diplomats utilized a shared diplomatic culture invested with meaning by both sides. The cultural basis for these diplomatic meetings lay in Iroquoian concepts of friendship as an important but fragile part of life in need of constant tending. According to anthropologist William Fenton, "Nothing has greater force in woodland society than the sanction of ritual and the compulsion of renewal," with friendships "bonded by ceremony [requiring] renewal during the lifetime of either party." Additionally, Fenton notes that in the Iroquois diplomatic world alliances and treaties "are regarded as a linking of arms that must be renewed by polishing the chain of friendship, which in the minds of native Iroquois is a symbolical umbilical cord joining the two parties."[120] Certain physical items, such a wampum, carried important symbolic meaning more valuable than the beads and sinews that composed them. Ethnologist Michael Foster notes that, aside from its relatively new use as a form of currency, wampum functioned as a "validating" or "ratifying" device for treaties, "serving, as it were, as the Indians' method of signing, sealing and delivering an agreement." Moreover, Foster underscores the importance of wampum in facilitating "the Iroquoian

[120] Fenton, *Great Law and the Longhouse*, 198-9.

emphasis on the process of establishing and maintaining contact," upholding the larger Iroquois emphasis on continuity and renewal.[121] Ceremonies intertwined with Iroquois diplomacy at every step, especially the condolence ceremony. When important borderlands actors died, the friendship between surviving individuals required upkeep. Anthropologist Anthony Wallace emphasizes the importance of this ritual prior to any important diplomatic meeting, suggesting that the origin of condolence rituals in Iroquois societies "was, according to Iroquois mythology, the result of an act of divine intervention in human affairs," going as far as to suggest that "it was the occasion of the founding of the Great League itself."[122] Clearly, the cultural basis of Iroquois diplomacy and its various traditions and ceremonies remained inextricably linked to the most fundamental understandings of the Iroquois about how friends and allies should interact. Any colonists hoping to gain and keep the goodwill of Iroquois sachems must give his or her attention to these fundamental traditions.

Wampum was a ubiquitous symbol of borderlands diplomacy for both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and made regular appearances in the diplomatic dealings between Iroquois leaders and Albany's Commissioners. Iroquois leaders regularly gifted wampum to the Commissioners when meeting with them at Albany and elsewhere, ensuring that wampum's value and necessity in borderlands diplomacy remained constant and universal. In August 1693, soon-to-be Commissioner Dirck

[121] Michael K. Foster, "Another Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 99, 110. Interestingly, early settlers in New Netherland and New England quickly adopted wampum and assigned their own cultural value to the item. Specifically, these early colonists utilized it as currency. Paul Otto, "Henry Hudson, The Munsees, and the Wampum Revolution," in *The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley*, eds. Jaap Jacobs and L.H. Roper (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 94.
[122] Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 97.

Wessel visited Onondaga on a diplomatic mission.[123] His hosts would not let him leave, though, until they were able to cover proper formalities. Wessels reported in his journal that "[h]aving no belt of wampum ready they desired me to tarry till they sent for one so I tarried."[124] The Commissioners met with "3 Oneidas who are sent messengers by the sachems of Onondaga to hear news about domestic Iroquois politics in June 1700, accepting "7 hands of wampum" to mark the occasion.[125] In August 1708 visiting Iroquois diplomats arrived in Albany and met with the Commissioners concerning issues of allowing "the nation called Twich Twicks" to cross through Iroquoia to trade in Albany.[126] The diplomats presented a belt of wampum "thereby proposing that a conference may be held between them & us what answer shall be made to the Twich Twicks."[127] In August 1719 "some Cayuga sachems" visited Albany "with 7 hands of wampum" to discuss a land issue.[128] In June 1732, several Mohawk visitors arrived in Albany and complained to the Commissioners about several grievances regarding land. The conference, however, eventually turned to the topic of a David Schuyler jailed in Albany. As recorded in the minutes, "An Indian girl over whom David Schuyler is godfather, sends a string wampum desiring the Commissioners to intercede with Philip Livingston to let him out of gaol."[129] Clearly, wampum served to grease the wheels of

[123] Wessels was one of the first four Commissioners under Fletcher in 1696.
[124] *NYCD* vol. 4, 60.
[125] Leder, *The Livingston Indian Records*, 176.
[126] "Twich Twicks" was another name for the Twightwees. Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, part 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), 1164.
[127] Wraxall, *AIA*, 59.
[128] Wraxall, *AIA*, 126.
[129] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 9. According to Stefan Bielinski's biography in the Colonial Albany Project database, David Schuyler was probably a respectable local resident. Bielinski, CAP biography 1265, http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/daaschuyler1265.html, last modified 9/10/03. The Commissioners noted that Schuyler was in "gaol" for debt at this time. The minutes later noted that Schuyler had broken out of jail and had taken refuge with nearby Indians, prompting the Commissioners to contact them on the matter. *MCIA*, vol. 2, 17.

diplomacy at many levels, and its common use by Iroquois diplomats ensured it remained part of diplomatic protocol over time and space.[130]

Albany's Commissioners also utilized wampum to legitimate their important diplomatic speeches and facilitate their relations with Iroquois diplomats, both during their meetings at Albany and when sending messengers to Iroquoia. Although these latter meetings were outside of their direct attention in Albany the Commissioners understood that the receiving Iroquois expected the same standards of protocol with their agents and that diplomatic meetings could not proceed without it. In doing so they exhibited a tacit respect for the cultural norms of their borderlands neighbors. In October 1707 the Commissioners desired "to send belts of wampum through the 5 Nations to dissuade them from going out to fight against the Flat Heads."[131] In August of the following year a delegation of Iroquois sachems addressed the Commissioners, referring to how the Commissioners "desired us last winter with several hanks of wampum that we should not go out to fight against the Odadioenes." The visiting diplomats criticized the Commissioners, for "when such a message is sent you [ought] to have sent belts not hanks of wampum."[132] In November 1723 the Commissioners ordered the hard working Lawrence Claessen into the Senecas' country, ensuring that he "have a belt of wampum which you are to show them and to the other Nations as you pass by," with the intention of persuading the Senecas to use their influence over western Indians to keep them loyal to British interests. In this case, they targeted the specific Nation to best handle the

[130] Iroquois diplomats also used wampum with other European powers, such as the French, and also commonly with other indigenous polities. In an early example, in July 1645, Mohawk ambassadors met with French settlers and gave seventeen strands of wampum, one to punctuate each of their major speaking points. Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of* Peace, 77-8.
[131] Wraxall, *AIA*, 52.
[132] Wraxall, *AIA*, 60. McIlwain notes in a footnote that the "Odadioenes" were probably the Cherokees. McIlwain, 60n.

specific problem they had. Interestingly, when Claessen reported back he informed the Commissioners that the Seneca modified the original plan. The Seneca leaders with whom he spoke "added six belts of wampum to the belt delivered them alleging one was not enough there being several nations to speak with to bring the message delivered them."[133] In April 1735, the Commissioners met with Hendrick the Mohawk sachem concerning Iroquois desires to make peace with the "Flat Heads." The Commissioners decided to "approve thereof & give the said Hendrick a large belt of wampum to be sent through the 6 Nations to encourage them to push this matter forward."[134] In these and other cases the Albany Commissioners realized the ability of wampum to legitimate their words and ideas, a fundamental component of adhering to Iroquois diplomatic ritual. Although the Commissioners sometimes erred in not providing enough wampum in specific circumstances, they still showed an obvious understanding that borderlands diplomacy required wampum to as part of the process of productive communication.[135]

While wampum served a critical role in borderlands diplomacy, other kinds of gifts also played an important part in keeping open the communication lines between Commissioners and Iroquois. New York's Indian officials had long been well aware of the intertwined nature of trade and diplomacy in the larger context of Indian affairs. Governor Benjamin Fletcher shared his new understanding in a letter to the Lords of Trade in May 1696. "I am obliged to make large presents to [the Iroquois] least they fall

[133] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 64a, 67a.
[134] Wraxall, *AIA*, 191.
[135] Albany's Commissioners also used wampum in borderlands diplomatic efforts with other Indian polities. For example, in May 1708, the Commissioners "dispatched a River Indian last year with a belt of wampum to the Sawanoe Indians … to invite them with their wives & children to come & live in this government." Wraxall, *AIA*, 53. These Sawanoe Indians were otherwise known as Shawnees. Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, The Indian Nations, & The British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 98.

to the French," he complained, reminding the Lords that he "did humbly address your Lordships for a present from His Majesty which I hear was ordered, though not yet come over."[136] The Lords of Trade wrote back to Fletcher in September of that year, hoping he had "before this time received the presents for the Five Nations of Indians, that were shipped … and parted from England in May last," eager that the gifts "will have been enabled to keep those Indians firm to the English interest."[137] As the Lords stated in a report to the Crown, the weapons "if they are rightly disposed of … may be of great use for the confirming the Indians in their friendship and union."[138] While governors sometimes handed out gifts during their occasional visits to Albany, the Commissioners ensured gifts remained a part of the day-to-day affairs of Indian diplomacy.

Albany's Commissioners and visiting Iroquois diplomats shared gifts in a common endeavor to maintain positive relations and constantly renew their friendship. At a June 1700 meeting, visiting Oneidas not only gave gifts but requested them openly in return. The Oneida speakers "desire the bags with powder may be made," adding that the Commissioners "often told us you would make them larger," ending the meeting by giving "3 beaver skins" to the Commissioners.[139] In December 1715 Governor Robert Hunter responded to the Commissioners' request for funding to buy Indian gifts, ordering the provincial treasurer to earmark £300 for strouds, blankets, and duffels.[140] One October 1725 meeting with visiting Iroquois sachems ended in the gifting of powder,

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[136] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 151. Fletcher hoped to received "400 light Dutch [firearms] for those Indians, though as strong as horses, will not march under heavy arms."
[137] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 226.
[138] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 230. Fletcher reported to the Duke of Shrewsbury in November that he had received the gifts intended for the Five Nations. *NYCD,* vol. 4, 233.
[139] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 176-7. The Commissioners answered a few days later that "As for the powder bags you may tell the sachems they are as large as they can reasonably desire," ending their talk with "a little wampum." Leder, *Livingston Records,* 177. Clearly, gift-giving required some give and take.
[140] Wraxall, *AIA*, 111.

lead, strouds, and kegs of rum.[141] Visiting Iroquois diplomats also made gifts to the Commissioners to punctuate important speeches. In September 1730, three Mohawk sachems arrived to complain about settlers encroaching on their land. This was a unique problem for the Mohawks given their geographic proximity to the forefront of British expansion. After making an impassioned plea, they "lay down 5 beaver skins" to add emphasis to their ideas.[142] In a report to the Lords of Trade in 1696, one colonist noted that "the goods which the Indians put the highest value and esteem upon are slight … guns, powder, lead, [strouds], water cloth … blankets, [and] duffels," explaining the common appearance of these items in the Commissioners' minutes.[143] Just like with wampum, furs and blankets gifted at the right moment granted emphasis and legitimacy to important words and conferences, and their shared use on both sides ensured the maintenance of a common set of protocols and symbols in borderlands diplomacy.[144]

The Commissioners and Iroquois also shared in other common ritual practices at diplomatic meetings. Condolences were an important part of diplomatic ritual, as open discussion remained inaccessible until friends mourned the death of an important leader or diplomat.[145] The Commissioners sometimes participated in condolence rituals when important Iroquois sachems died.[146] For example, in May 1707, several Oneidas arrived

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[141] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 116.
[142] Wraxall, *AIA*, 179.
[143] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 170.
[144] It is important to note that, just as with wampum, gifts underlay much of the diplomatic relationship between French officials and Iroquois diplomats. For example, in May 1708, interpreter Lawrence Claessen reported to the Commissioners upon his arrival back from Onondaga. He explained how "the French Jesuit in Onondaga [has] a considerable store of goods which he daily distributes to the Indians to gain their affection." Wraxall, *AIA*, 55. For more on the ceremonial roots of gift-giving in Iroquois diplomacy, see: Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 39-41.
[145] See Fenton, *Great Law and the Longhouse*, chapter 6 for an in-depth discussion of condolence rituals in historical and modern times among the Iroquois.
[146] Jon Parmenter astutely notes that "The abundant evidence of this practice in the original records contradicts William Johnson's 1749 contention that the condolence ceremony "was always neglected in the

in Albany "who do acquaint the Gentleman that they are sent by their sachems of [the] Oneida castle that the chief sachems of the Five Nations of Indians are coming down to Albany & in their way to condole the death of … the Mohawk sachem late[ly] died."[147] The inclusion of Albany and the Commissioners in the ceremony indicated a seamless inclusion of that town and its diplomats with the culture of condolence ritual. In September 1720, Commissioner Peter Schuyler, acting in his capacity as President of New York's Council, met with visitors from the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga nations, along with Albany's Commissioners. The assembled Albany officials promised to condole "the death of some particular sachems by giving a small present to their nearest relations" at a future meeting.[148] The Commissioners also met with a group of Oneida visitors in July 1729, learning the news that "their nation is in the utmost sorrow & distress upon account of the loss they have sustained by the Virginia Indians." The Commissioners resolved "to send two of their board up to Oneida to perform the usual ceremony of condolence with that Nation on this occasion."[149] As these examples show, the experienced Albany Commissioners clearly understood the need to condole the dead before the living could continue in their diplomatic endeavors.

In some cases, Albany's Commissioners deemed a specific condolence important enough to prod New York's governor into action. Upon receiving a message from the Senecas' country in December 1732, the Commissioners sent news to the newly

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late Commissioners time, which gave the French an opportunity to do it." Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 249. It is also important to note that New York's governors often participated in condolence rituals when they visited Albany to meet with Iroquois leaders. Condoling was part of the borderlands diplomatic culture for everyone, not just the Commissioners.

[147] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 201.

[148] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 567.

[149] Wraxall, *AIA*, 177. This violence between the Iroquois and "Virginia Indians" likely referred to the resumption of hostilities between the Six Nations and the Catawbas when Oneida warriors fell into an ambush. Rhoades, *Long Knives and the Longhouse*, 82.

appointed Governor William Cosby concerning "the loss of the many sachems and Indians who lately died at the Senecas' country," ultimately hoping that "we suppose his Excellency will give proper directions about sending up Laurence Claessen … to condole the death of the deceased sachems."[150] Knowing how important an appropriate condolence response would be, and not willing to leave the matter in the hands of the distant Governor Cosby, the Commissioners hastened to contact him in a letter almost immediately. The Commissioners told Cosby that "we are sensible (as it is a custom among the Indians) that it is highly necessary that Laurence [Claessen] the interpreter together with some of the [Mohawk] sachems should go to the Senecas' country, & other Five Nations, to condole their great loss." Framing this critical political and diplomatic move in the form of a humble suggestion, the Commissioners continued: "if your Excellency thinks it necessary & approve of the same we are humbly of opinion that it will demand a present in goods, at least to the value of £40 which we hope your Excellency will be pleased to see us furnished with early in the spring."[151] Cosby was likely unable to free up the funds given that the provincial Assembly was not sitting at the time.[152] In April 1733, the Commissioners were still reminding Burnet that "not[h]ing relating public business can be done with the Indians in their country before the deaths of the sachems be condoled."[153] This scenario exemplifies how much New York's governors relied upon Albany's Commissioners for borderlands news and advice, and

[150] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 24.
[151] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 26.
[152] According to the *Journal of the Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly*, the twentieth assembly adjourned in October 1732 and did not meet again until October 1733. *Journal of the Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Colony of New York. Began the 9th Day of April, 1691, and Ended the 27th of September, 1743*, vol. 1 (New York: Hugh Gaine, 1764), 649. Hereafter cited as *Journal of the General Assembly*. Patricia Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 304.
[153] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 33.

more so, highlights the Commissioners' deep experience with borderlands diplomacy. Albany's officials knew only the prestige of New York's governor could soothe the aching Iroquois hearts. By condoling each other's dead, the Commissioners and the Iroquois showed a basic respect for a shared diplomatic culture that prioritized healing as a strong foundation for continued friendship.

This constant line of communication between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations, despite a shared diplomatic language involving gifts and ceremonies, often involved delicate topics that led to contention and debate. Fundamental issues of trade, land, and concepts of Iroquois sovereignty created opportunities for conflict to flare when these independent and influential borderlands actors pursued their own objectives. These topics were especially sensitive given the diplomatic history between the Iroquois and the Dutch Commissioners. The early Dutch emphasis on trade at Beverwijck over territorial expansion into Iroquoia facilitated positive relations in the early decades of the seventeenth century changed rapidly as New York officials doled out large land grants of questionable legitimacy and individual land speculators sought to carve out their own parcels of wealth.[154] As New York grew as a colony, both in terms of population and territory, the distances between Iroquoia and large settler populations that initially protected Iroquois land grew smaller. The tensions that led to the seventeenth century Dutch/indigenous wars, such as Kieft's War, the Peach War, and the Esopus Wars, became increasingly salient to Iroquois villages, exacerbating the already tenuous trade

[154] Governor Fletcher especially doled out large land grants not just to generate political patronage but also to increase the settler population on New York's frontiers. Between 1692 and 1698 Fletcher granted "several million acres," and most of the beneficiaries were members of his Council or closely associated with his efforts during King William's War. Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 67.

dealings between settlers and Iroquois.[155] While trade continued between New Yorkers and Iroquois, it grew increasingly distant from the reciprocal medium of the Dutch era and progressively pressed the Iroquois into the uncaring networks of an Atlantic economy.[156] Additionally, the early Dutch settlers and traders of New Netherland built their relationships with the Iroquois Nations upon a foundation based on the recognition of the sovereignty of the Iroquois as a people, an interpretation of the early stages of the Covenant Chain that shifted radically under British control of the colony. While the Iroquois Nations persisted in treating their colonial neighbors as equals in the Covenant Chain, New York increasingly considered the Iroquois as subordinate allies in pursuit of British imperial goals. For example, Governor Fletcher wrote the Duke of Shrewsbury in 1696, mentioning the Iroquois as "a people of some consequence to His Majesty's plantations on this main, and a barrier between the French and us."[157] Despite this recognition of importance, the commissioners of Trade and Plantations the following year released a "Memorial of the Right of the British Crown over the New-York Indians." They recognized the importance of "renew[ing] [the Iroquois] dependence or Covenant Chain (as they are used to express themselves)," an insightful comment given how Iroquois leaders viewed that same Chain.[158] In sum, issues that one bound Dutch New Netherlanders and the Iroquois Nations together increasingly created points of contention for the descendants of both groups after 1664.

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[155] For more information on these wars, see: Paul Otto, *The Dutch-Munsee Encounter in America: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Hudson Valley* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 106, 134.
[156] See: Gail MacLeitch, "'Red' Labor: Iroquois Participation in the Atlantic Economy," *Labor Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 1:4 (2004).
[157] *DCNY*, vol. 4, 232.
[158] *DCNY*, vol. 5, 75-7.

Trade between the Iroquois Nations and provincial New York was contentious and delicate into the middle decades of the eighteenth century. New York's royal governors recognized the strong relationship between political alliance and healthy trading, making it a priority for their relations with the Iroquois and other Indian polities.[159] While colonial economies often partially depended upon indigenous traders and trappers, the Iroquois found themselves increasingly dependent on English goods and markets as well. By the early eighteenth century English goods had replaced most native equivalents as individual Iroquois replaced indigenous items with European ironware, farming implements, and weapons. As historian Gail MacLeitch states, "Their lives and livelihoods were now intimately bound up with commercial trade networks," clarifying that "[w]hile they would not perish without these goods their circumstances would be dramatically impaired without them."[160] Given these circumstances the Iroquois sought every opportunity to shape the trade that so significantly affected their own existence.

Iroquois visitors often complained to the Albany Commissioners about the price of goods they received as prices dictated by impartial Atlantic markets clashed with the inherent reciprocal nature of Indian trade. Wartime shortages, especially in weapons, powder, and lead, often prompted annoyed speeches by Iroquois diplomats. In August 1708, during Queen Anne's War, representatives from the Five Nations addressed the Commissioners, complaining "we so frequently desire to have powder & lead cheaper yet

[159] New York's governors realized that trade served diplomatic dividends even with Indian polities outside the Five Nations. In a letter to the Board of Trade in 1708, Governor Cornbury wrote of "twelve of the far nations of Indians" that recently arrived in Albany to trade, "the nearest of their castles is eight hundreds miles from Albany." Cornbury recognized that these trade relations "will be a very great advantage to this province" now that these indigenous visitors were able to avoid French restrictions on traveling. *NYCD*, vol. 5, 65. According to contemporary Cadwallader Colden, depriving Canada of its Indian trading partners deprived it of political and military alliances. White, *Middle Ground*, 121.
[160] MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 37.

they grow dearer & dearer & the bags of powder are now less than ever." They continued by stating that "if we do not meet with success we shall run mad," and ominously asked the Commissioners to consider that "if by the dearness of powder & shot … we fall prey to the French, your turn will be next." Furthermore, they complained that local traders "are all ready to receive us into their houses & lodge us, but as soon as they have got all our beaver from us then they turn us out."[161] The following year three Onondaga Indians arrived in Albany "with a message from the 5 Nations authenticated with 7 hands of wampum." Aside from other diplomatic matters regarding the French, the speakers desired that visitors from the Great Lakes region "may be well used when they come here & have goods at a reasonable rate & not be cheated as they have been from time to time," so that the far nations' "bretheren may see at their return what good pennysworths they buy here."[162] In this case, Iroquois sachems feared that high prices would harm their role as both economic and geographic middlemen between Albany and far western Indian polities.[163] In another wartime example, various Iroquois sachems addressed a delegation sent by the Commissioners to Onondaga in May 1711. They complained that "we find the price of your merchandise so exceedingly dear especially powder without which we cannot exist & as our beavers get you a great deal of money we desire powder above all things may be cheaper." The delegation shrugged the blame onto market forces, claiming that they were "sorry their furs bear so low a price the war is

[161] Wraxall, *AIA*, 61.
[162] Wraxall, *AIA*, 65. This entry provides no context for which "far nations" the Iroquois diplomats spoke of.
[163] After 1700, Iroquois Nations stopped functioning as "economic middlemen" that transported goods westward and increased their role as "geographic middlemen" who invited western Indians to travel through Iroquoia to Albany. "This strategy was an excellent blend of geopolitics and economic diplomacy, for it enabled the Iroquois to use their geographic location between the Indians of the upper Great Lakes region and the traders of New York as a level to obtain peace with the western tribes" and other benefits. Aquila, "The Iroquois as 'Geographic' Middlemen," 52.

the occasion of the falling of the prices of all such goods." [164] Iroquois leaders understood but did not like prices that fluctuated due to market forces.

Iroquois diplomats also complained directly to the Commissioners in Albany during peacetime. In January 1715/16 a group of Oneida Indians arrived in Albany "complaining of the dearness of goods & earnestly requesting they may be cheaper," both for their sake and that of Indians further west. The Oneidas dramatically asserted that "on the price of goods the Covenant Chain chiefly depends & that unless goods are cheaper it will cause their & our ruin," which in turn hurt their trade with far western Indian polities as "they found themselves so scandalously imposed on & cheated by the traders that it discouraged them from returning."[165] In September 1725 the Commissioners met with twelve Onondaga, Cayuga, and Tuscarora sachems. "We come to make our complaints to you that we are but poor having no powder," the Iroquois said, specifying that "we have bought as much as we were able to purchase but it proves so bad that … when it has been one night charged in a gun we can't fire it." The Commissioners promised to "acquaint our Governor of it and desire him to write to England that better powder may be made for you."[166] In this case, Iroquois hunters and warriors fell prey to shoddy merchandise as trade in cheap goods conflicted with quality trade goods as gifts. These complaints continued through the last years before New York temporarily replaced the Commissioners with William Johnson as provincial Indian official. Several Cayuga, Oneida, and Tuscarora diplomats arrived in Albany in January 1742. Part of their busy agenda was to remind the Commissioners that "We three nations

[164] Wraxall, *AIA*, 86, 89.
[165] Wraxall, *AIA*, 111.
[166] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 147, 150.

desire you that the goods may be sold cheap as [at] Oswego," referring to the British trading post established west of Albany in 1722. Perhaps hoping to flatter the Commissioners into action, the delegates continued by stating that "The Governor told us that he is not master of the trade, we therefore think that you are masters of it and desire that goods may be sold cheap." Once again, the Commissioners cited market forces for the pricey goods, promising that they "will recommend to the traders to sell their goods at Oswego as cheap as they can afford it, but the price of goods is generally regulated according to the price of furs in England."[167] As all of these examples show, trade issues served as persistent points of conflict between the Iroquois Nations and New York. Albany's Commissioners, as the primary point of contact between indigenous polities and New York, bore the brutnt of these complaints. While the Commissioners remained cognizant of the importance of trade in maintaining good relations, they also understood that ceremony could not trump the desire for profit and the energy of market forces.

Iroquois sachems commonly complained about the rum trade specifically, demanding the Commissioners prevent traders from bringing it into Iroquoia. Iroquois leaders bemoaned its pernicious influence on native societies when traders brought it in large quantities to their towns.[168] For example, in December 1698, a Mohawk delegation arrived in Albany and complained that traders from Schenectady had recently brought rum to their villages and traded it for the Indians' corn, putting the Mohawks in the position of potentially starving. The Mohawk nation, as the closest to Albany and other trading settlements, often felt the brunt of these pernicious trading practices. The delegates requested that the Commissioners forbid traders from this harmful practice or

[167] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 223-224a.
[168] For more on the destructive potential of rum, see: Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 263-8.

else "they may have leave to break the kegs when any rum is brought there." The Commissioners agreed to halt any rum traders from traveling into Iroquois towns and suggested that the rum traders should be brought to Albany."[169] The Commissioners' promises led to little change, as alcohol complaints continued in future meetings with Iroquois diplomats. In May 1710 the Commissioners dispatched two observers to a large diplomatic gathering in Onondaga, receiving a report in June. The travelers reported some Indians drinking rum, while others "desired the sachems to order the rum casks to be put away," complaining that they "had so often desired that rum might not be sold to the Indians, that the beavers they had given to enforce that request if they were laid on a heap would almost reach to the clouds."[170] In another example from October 1725, diplomats from the Iroquois Confederacy as a whole visited Albany "to complain to you of our grievance & inform you of the inconvenience of that trading house at the Onondaga River by reason of the strong liquor brought thither." They lamented that "one of our principal sachems called Soqennjowa is stuck dead with a knife and several have their noses and ears bit off," and on top of this, "nine of the far Indians have killed one another." The Iroquois did not simply request change, but instead boldly forbade "the carrying thither of any strong liquor for it may be the occasion of very great divisions between the Christians & Indians & the ruin of the Six Nations."`[171] These and other

[169] Wraxall, *AIA*, 31. Wraxall's text says "They [the Mohawk] were answered that Care should be taken to prevent any Rum being brought to them, and that they should bring the Rum Traders to Albany." This left ambiguity concerning the second "they," suggesting two possible intentions: that the Iroquois should bring the rum traders to Albany, or the Commissioners declared intention to bring the rum traders to Albany themselves. Given Wraxall's paraphrasing of no-longer extant minutes the exact truth remains unknown.
[170] Wraxall, *AIA*, 71.
[171] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 114a.

meetings highlight the destructive tendencies of alcohol in Indian societies and the Iroquois leaders' vehement objections against the liquor trade.[172]

Further communications between the Commissioners, the Iroquois, and interpreter Laurence Claessen indicated how alcohol had become a sore topic in borderlands diplomatic circles. In early February 1725/6, the Commissioners drafted instructions for Claessen in preparation for a trip into Iroquoia. One of Claessen' top priorities, according to his written directives, was to "inform [the] sachems of [the] 5 Nations in name of his [Excellency] Governor Burnet … that he has received their propositions in relation to the rum not to be sold & carried up." Rather than promise direct or timely action, the Commissioners instructed Claessen to announce that Burnett "at his next meeting shall [discuss] that and other affairs with you for [the general] good and welfare of us all." In an attempt to use the alcohol issue as a bargaining chip, the Commissioners ordered Claessen to proclaim that "In [the] meantime its expected that they and their young men will behave themselves peaceable to all his [Majesty's] Subjects and not allow any French to reside in any of their castles."[173] In this attempt at strong-arm politics, the

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[172] New York's General Assembly occasionally passed laws attempting to stem the flow of rum to the Iroquois. For example, in 1709, the Assembly passed "An Act for Reviving an Act entitled an Act to prevent Selling or giving of Rum or other strong Liquors to the Indians in the County of Albany." *The Colonial Laws of New York: From the Year 1664 to the Revolution, Including the Charters to the Duke of York, the Commissioners and Instructions to Colonial Governors, Duke's Laws, the Laws of Dongan and Leisler Assemblies, the Charters of Albany and New York and the Acts of the Colonial Legislatures from 1691 to 1775 Inclusive*, vol. 1 (Albany: James B. Lyon, State Printer, 1894), 685. Hereafter cited as *Colonial Laws of New York*. In another example from 1740, the Assembly mandated that traders "or any other person or persons whatsoever, shall sell to the Six Nations of Indians, in their respective countries, any rum or other distilled liquors, they shall for every such offence forfeit the sum of twenty pounds." *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 257.

[173] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 120a-121. The handwriting in this entry is especially messy and requires many square brackets to be understood. Additionally, the Commissioners refer to the "5 Nations" here though the Tuscaroras had already joined the Confederacy as a sixth nation in 1722. The Commissioners' minutes use the terms Five Nations and Six Nations ambiguously during these early years of Tuscarora incorporation, sometimes in the same conference. For example, in May 1723, the Commissioner minutes refer to "the sachems of the Five Nations (to wit) the Mohawks Oneidas Onondagas Cayugas and Senecas as also to

Commissioners used an issue important to the Iroquois to prohibit Frenchmen from living among the Iroquois. On top of this, the Commissioners' instructions allowed for the continuing trade of liquor to the "Far Indians," a practice the Iroquois wanted stopped. Claessen returned to Albany the next month with his report. The Iroquois planned "to send two deputies of each nation to his Excellency at New York because they suspected that the Commissioners were negligent to acquaint his Excellency with their prohibition of the rum being sold to the Indians in their country." Still not letting go of the issue, the Iroquois gave Claessen a wampum belt to hand the Commissioners, hoping for "a prohibition that no rum may be carried up into their country except for the traders own use."[174] Clearly, alcohol served as a primary point of political and diplomatic conflict between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois and made borderlands diplomacy anything but smooth.

The ubiquitous topic of blacksmiths in the Commissioners' minutes indicated another economic activity that provided points of conflict between the Commissioners and the Iroquois. Iroquois diplomats constantly requested a blacksmith at their settlements in order to create and repair metal goods and firearms, vital services to critical items in their lives that they could not perform themselves. For example, in August 1706, visiting Iroquois diplomats complained "that though they have so often solicited for a smith to [be] fixed at Onondaga whom they will satisfy for his labor, yet they can get none sent to them."[175] Eight months later the Onondaga, Cayuga, and

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those Tuscaroras." However, just two days later, the minutes refer to "Sachems of the Six Nations (viz) the Mohawks Oneidas Onondagas Cayugas Senecas & Tuscaroras." *MCIA*, vol. 1, 17a, 20.

[174] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 122-123a.

[175] Wraxall, *AIA*, 47.

Oneida Indians still requested a smith from the Commissioners.[176] In January 1707/8 visiting Oneida sachems "tell the Commissioners further, that though their nation have in a distinguishing manner complied with the desires & directions of this Government, yet their so earnest & frequent request for a smith is not regarded & they once more beg they may have one."[177] Such requests continued unabated for years until May 1710 when the Commissioners sent interpreter Laurence Claessen into Iroquoia with two smiths "to support our Interest amongst the Indians." Two months later, however, some Onondagas still complained, going as far as to threaten that if the Commissioners would not heed their desire "they would apply where they should not be denied meaning the French." [178]

Iroquois sachems did not fail to remind Albany's Commissioners that their French neighbors were always happy to supply the desired smiths. For example, in September 1716 various Iroquois sachems hoped "the Commissioners will not be jealous that they have a French smith … that they had applied to this government for one & could get none, that the Governor of Canada had sent them a smith & it had never cost them so much as one pair of shoes."[179] Spurred by this renewed French encroachment in December 1716 the Commissioners took a more permanent course of action, noting that "It being highly necessary that some proper persons with a smith should be sent amongst the 5 Nations … five persons are dispatched from Albany on this plan" to reside there until the next October.[180] This issue continued to arise over succeeding years, such as in November 1725, when the Commissioners once again answered Iroquois requests for

[176] Wraxall, *AIA*, 64.
[177] Wraxall, *AIA*, 53.
[178] Wraxall, *AIA,* 70.
[179] Wraxall, *AIA*, 116.
[180] Wraxall *AIA*, 117.

resident smiths. The Commissioners arranged for "a smith to stay in the Senecas' country for a year [for] twenty-five pounds to work for the Indians as occasion shall require and for his assistant ten pound."[181] French smiths were an especially pernicious threat give their geographic proximity of the Senecas to French Canada. A large portion of the Commissioners' budget between 1724 and 1744 was diverted to funding smiths in Iroquois territories, usually to the Senecas given their great distance from British settlements.[182] While only a part of larger trade issues, the matter of resident smiths still created significant disagreement between the Commissioners and Iroquois sachems and resulted in only partial reconciliation.[183]

Land issues served as another critical point of contention between the Commissioners and Iroquois leaders as an expanding New York population and acquisitive land speculators pushed into an increasingly besieged Iroquois geography. Albany's Commissioners held no authority in the granting of land, this being a prerogative of the governor and Council of New York.[184] However, historian Jon Parmenter notes that at least thirty-eight of the fifty-two Commissioners who served after 1723 were involved in the patenting of land on New York's borders at some point in their lives. While, according to Parmenter, this patenting "amounted in reality to little more than speculative claims to be redeemed in the distant future," the Commissioners still bore much of the Iroquois' anger during their diplomatic meetings.[185]

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[181] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 117.
[182] Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 249.
[183] For more on smiths among the Iroquois, see Jordan, *Seneca Restoration*, 81.
[184] Georgiana C. Nammack, *Fraud, Politics, and the Dispossession of the Indians: The Iroquois Land Frontier in the Colonial Period* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 12.
[185] Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 254-5. For details about Commissioners and land speculating, see the comparison between William Johnson and Albany's Commissioners in chapter 6.

Iroquois complaints regarding land concerned matters such as perceived threats to their power to control the sale of their land, illicit additions to existing sales, and disagreements over rights and responsibilities of ownership of a specific tract.[186] During the early eighteenth century, complaints were most prominent among the Mohawks, the closest of the Iroquois nations to New York's expansion. For example, in July 1712 the Commissioners met with "Colonel Schuyler," an agent they had sent to Iroquoia, for a debriefing of his travels. Schuyler reported that while the Mohawks had initially requested the construction of Fort Hunter during Queen Anne's War for their own defense, they were now suspicious of the English controlled settlement.[187] They told the Commissioners' agent "that the Queens arms which had been given them were never intended as a mark of claim to their lands of which her Majesty acknowledges them to be the sole & rightful proprietors."[188] Although the Mohawks enjoyed several benefits from Fort Hunter, including trade, religious instruction, and other social benefits, they sought to maintain title of ownership to the actual land.[189]

Complaints increased during the 1730s as the Mohawk River Valley, once a distant fur-trading hinterland to colonial settlement, became more and more attractive to land speculators and settlers due to its rich soils and the increasing scarcity of vacant lands in eastern New York.[190] Visiting the Albany Commissioners in July 1730, Mohawk delegates dramatically shared their anger over British encroachments. Western nations, such as the Senecas and Cayugas, avoided such troubles. The Mohawk visitors

[186] Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 254.
[187] MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 30.
[188] Wraxall, *AIA*, 94. The "Queen's arms" referred to the gift Queen Anne had given four visiting Mohawks when they visited England in 1710. Lydekker, *Faithful Mohawks*, 31.
[189] MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 30-1.
[190] John William Parmenter, "At the Wood's Edge: Iroquois Foreign Relations 1727-1768," vol. 1 (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1999), 60.

complained that "the most part of our lands on the Mohawk River is sold to the Christians & our hearts grieves us when we consider what small parcel of lands is remaining to us," concluding that if this pattern continues we will be utterly destroyed & scattered." Ultimately, they "therefore humbly entreat ... that for the future all Christians may be strictly forbid to entice any of our Indians to purchase any of our lands & that his Excellency will be pleased to prevent all manner of persons to purchase any more of our lands that remain unsold."[191] The Mohawks returned to Albany in February 1731/32 to once again address land issues with the Commissioners. The Natives announced that "a license has since been granted ... to purchase some of their lands which license they have taken from [the buyer] and have produced to this board." Rightfully annoyed, the Iroquois sought "to be redressed in this grievance and meanwhile desire that the Commissioners may send this their request to the president not to grant for the future licenses to purchase any of their lands upon which this board have promised to comply with their request."[192] While land issues of ownership and encroachment affected the nearby Mohawks during this period more than any other Iroquois nation, Mohawk diplomats did not balk in making their angry voices clear to the Commissioners.

Different concepts of Iroquois sovereignty and the nature of the Covenant Chain between New York and the Iroquois Confederacy constituted a third point of contention throughout the early eighteenth century and often merged with the other borderlands issues of trade and land. The use of wampum, gifts, and condolence ceremonies, as

[191] These records refer to the Mohawks as "Maquas," a Dutch name for the Mohawk Indians. *MCIA*, vol. 1, 327-327a. As a reminder, only New York's provincial governor could make land policies, although his decisions were heavily shaped by Commissioner input, as seen in chapter 3.
[192] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 352a-353. The "President" referred to Rip Van Dam, President of New York's Council and Acting Governor after the recent death of Governor John Montgomerie.

explored above, all served to strengthen the Covenant Chain relationship between New York and the Iroquois Nations, which in turn provided the foundation for any and all relations between the Commissioners and the Iroquois. The exact roots of this great Chain that linked the Iroquois, New York, and other northeastern North American polities remains unclear. Anthropologist William Fenton notes several incarnations of the chain in the era before the formal establishment of the Albany Commissioners. For example, early notions of the Chain described it as being composed of "twisted bark." By 1659 the Mohawks and Dutch established an "iron chain" between them and reaffirmed this relationship with gifts of wampum, and only in 1677 did a "silver chain" link New York, the Iroquois, and other groups.[193] This evolution over time resulted in a firm, shared adherence to the symbol of the Chain by both the Commissioners and the Iroquois. However, despite a shared symbol, the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations disagreed over their relationship through this Chain and thus disclosed very different understandings of Iroquois sovereignty.

Iroquois conceptions of the Covenant Chain viewed the Confederacy and New York as having a relationship of shared respect between equals. "[I]n Iroquois theory," historian Francis Jennings notes, "the Indian tribes of the Covenant Chain composed a confederation with the Five Nations at its head," and New York was seen as a valuable equal within this peaceful relationship.[194] This conception of the Chain "could be extended indefinitely to include any number of other parties, native or European."[195] The

[193] Fenton, *Great Law and the Longhouse*, 323, 271, 301.
[194] Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 8.
[195]Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier,* 53.

Iroquois Nations, from their perspective, maintained their sovereign identities despite their alliance with New York. The Commissioners' records sometimes illuminated annoyance based in these different conceptions when Iroquois diplomats referred to the Covenant Chain during contentious meetings in Albany. These conflicts often overlapped with the borderlands issues of trade and land. For example, a deputation of Oneida Indians arrived to speak with the Commissioners with complaints regarding the price of trade goods in January 1715/6. They protested "the dearness of goods & earnestly requested they may be cheaper," a serious issue considering, as they noted, that "on the price of goods the Covenant Chain chiefly depends."[196] The Oneidas linking cheap trade goods with the Covenant Chain's stability was a bold action that the Commissioners ignored at their peril. In another case, visiting Mohawks addressed the Commissioners in June 1732. After a short recounting of the Chain's history, the Mohawk speaker hoped that "Such a good understanding as our ancestors had, we hope is at present and we are afraid that there may be a break made in that ancient Covenant which has so long subsisted between us." Angry over encroachments onto their land, the Mohawks threatened to "break the compass and chain, and if any settlements be made we shall destroy it, and their cattle." Although the "chain" here referred to the chain on a surveyor's tools, the open threat to the great Chain remained clear when a visiting Mohawk delegate threatened that "if I can get no justice from you I shall not come again but make my complaint to Boston or Pennsylvania governments and hope to get justice

[196] Wraxall, *AIA*, 111.

from either of them."[197] Clearly, Iroquois diplomats bristled when New York ignored Iroquois sovereignty, as indicated in these examples.

New York's Indian Commissioners and other British officials, according to historian Richard Haan, considered the Covenant Chain either "an institution for sharing power with the Iroquois over other indigenous peoples of the eastern woodlands, or as a process by which the English eventually imposed sovereignty upon the Five Nations."[198] Cases from the Commissioners' records show how the Albany officials often treated the Iroquois as subordinates to be ordered about as subjects of British authority. For example, in October 1732, the Commissioners received word through Governor William Cosby that North Carolina required help stemming the violence "between the Indians of South Carolina and those of North Carolina." As a result, the Commissioners actively pursued Cosby's order that the Iroquois "should become mediators between those Indians of South and North Carolina, to use their utmost endeavors to reconcile their present [disagreements] … and to settle a firm and lasting peace between them." Turning once again to the dependable Laurence Claessen, the Commissioners drafted instructions ordering him "to acquaint" the Iroquois that "they should become mediators" between the warring southern Indians. Such direct orders revealed much about how the Commissioners viewed the Iroquois Nations as subordinates. Unsurprisingly, upon Claessen's return two weeks later, the Commissioners learned that the Iroquois leaders "do decline to become mediator," and "if any government" thinks them complicit in the violence as a result they can "come to the city of Albany where they are willing to

[197] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 5-8.
[198] Richard L. Haan, "Covenant and Consensus: Iroquois and English, 1676-1760," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*, ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 41.

vindicate themselves of any fault that can be [laid] to their charge."[199] For New York officials, the Chain represented a subordinate status that the Iroquois owed to that province, the Crown, and the empire as a whole. More so, the Iroquois refusal indicated their own understanding of Chain relationships.

In sum, the Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations shared in a common culture of diplomacy that allowed them to maintain open communication and good relations. Condolences and the gifting of wampum and other goods all played a part in maintaining amicable interactions, and the Covenant Chain served as the primary linkage between the two sides. Due to this common diplomatic culture, the many policy disagreements between the Commissioners and Iroquois over trade, land, and differing conceptions of the Covenant Chain and Iroquois sovereignty stressed but never broke their relationship. Such a relationship required intense amounts of energy and attention to maintain, evidenced by the substantial number of detailed records the Commissioners fastidiously kept. This leads to the question of why both sides worked so hard to gift and condole and renew when so many contentious issues remained between them. The answer lay in the realities of the New York/Iroquoian borderland.

The Commissioners and Iroquois maintained their networks of communication and cooperation because, in a borderlands realm where no single polity could exert dominance, both sides required the other to legitimate their own authority and influence. By definition this borderlands environment, a geography influenced by both New York and Iroquoia, lacked any dominant source of authority or power. While decisions made in New York City and Onondaga influenced the conversations the Commissioners and

[199] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 18-20.

Iroquois diplomats held at Albany, neither side could completely control the dialogue or its outcomes. The result was a process of compromise in which Albany's Commissioners and Iroquoian sachems legitimated their own ability to influence borderlands events and processes by recognizing and respecting the legitimacy of the other. No central authority existed in these borderlands to confer official authority, as one would find in England or New York, and as a result such cross-legitimization allowed actors in the borderlands world to create their own structures of power and influence. In this way these borderlands denizens actively constructed their shared world.

Such an interaction relied on the face-to-face interactions inherent to the New York/Iroquoia borderlands that had shaped relations between colonists and Natives since the New Netherland era. Historian Susana Shaw Romney, in her recent study of the Dutch imperial world in the seventeenth century, explores the personal interactions that drove Dutch/Indian diplomacy through the 1660s. She notes that "[p]eople used social networks to achieve their own goals as competing political influences waxed and waned." By studying these personal networks throughout and around New Netherland, Romney concludes that "webs of relationships gave people access to subtle and flexible forms of authority that conformed to changing realities and sometimes proved more durable than formal politics." Ultimately, in this mid-seventeenth century context, the "formal, hierarchal structure of colonial government simply did not provide the knowledge and interpersonal communication skills" needed to enact change in the borderlands New Netherland shared with various Native polities. This failure of formal authority empowered individuals to employ their personal relationships and networks to shape the

borderlands world around them.[200] While Romney's study focused on the Dutch and Indian polities in the lower New Netherland area, her basic principles still apply to the more northern borderlands of New York and Iroquoia a half century later. In both Romney's study and this current dissertation, borderlands groups utilized face-to-face connections to negotiate and create bases of authority. In the specific case of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, both the Commissioners and the Iroquois needed the networks provided by the other to enable them to pursue their own ends.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Albany's Commissioners required a strong Indian polity to act as partner in exercising their formally-granted authority as New York's Indian officials. While their government-granted positions theoretically enabled them to speak in important Indian matters, their voice would not have mattered without Iroquois support. Real influence in the borderlands diplomatic arena, as well as the ability to justify their position to New York's government, depended upon the Commissioners' experience and proficiency in Indian diplomacy. The Dutch expertise in trade, diplomacy, and ceremony that built up over the decades served as the foundation for their borderlands authority. It was this experience in borderlands diplomacy that allowed the Commissioners to maintain positive relations with the Iroquois despite many contentious disagreements, and it was this positive relationship that allowed New York to be so successful in Indian diplomacy. If the Iroquois were not happy, or at least appeased, the Commissioners would be impotent to act in most matters. Other colonial bodies, such as New York's governors and even governments from other British colonies, often required the actions and cooperation of the Commissioners to pursue Indian affairs.

[200] Susana Shaw Romney, *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 248, 265.

In the case of the Iroquois, the Five Nations required stable and continuous access to imperial power structures to aid in navigating an increasingly hectic borderlands world between the expanding French and British empires. Northeastern North America became progressively more polarized between the two European settlements at the turn of the eighteenth century, providing opportunities for change but also obstacles to survival. The violent and polarized world prompted the Iroquois to maintain positive relations with the Commissioners because that institution, based upon the formal appointment of the individual commissioners, acted as a constant and steady gateway into provincial and imperial channels of communication and policy. While New York's governor visited Albany only occasionally, the Commissioners provided a steady institutional court in which to air Iroquois ideas and grievances. If the Commissioners ever ceased listening to them the Iroquois would have few options as close or as powerfully connected.[201]

This intertwined, joint borderlands authority granted the Commissioners and Iroquois Nations the ability to act authoritatively with other borderlands actors. Three other sets of actors occasionally traveled to Albany to meet with the Commissioners and the Iroquois and discuss borderlands issues: New York's governor, representatives from other colonies, and visitors and diplomats from other Indian polities. One must recognize these other diplomatic actors to avoid placing the Commissioner/Iroquois interaction into an artificial and inaccurate binary relationship. While their relationship formed the core of New York/Iroquoia borderlands diplomacy, other groups did appear in the Commissioners' records. First, New York's royally appointed governor made occasional

[201] For a concise overview of the Iroquois as borderlands actors between growing French and British settlements, see: Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America*, 1754-1766 (New York: Vintage, 2001), chapters 1 and 2.; W.J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), chapter 7.

trips up the Hudson River for important conferences at Albany. For example, in late August 1700, Governor Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, joined the Commissioners in Albany to strengthen the ties between provincial New York and the Iroquois Confederacy. A year later, the Iroquois spoke with Lt. Governor John Nanfan in Albany, condoling him on the recent death of Bellomont. Tasked with protecting the colony from both indigenous and European enemies, New York's governors participated in occasional Indian conferences at Albany. Such duties remained an important part of a New York governor's responsibilities. Second, representatives from other colonial governments recognized the importance of Albany as a diplomatic center and utilized the venue provided by the Commissioners to pursue their own diplomatic agendas. For example, in August 1694, commissioners from Massachusetts and Connecticut travelled to Albany when they wanted to meet with New York's Governor Fletcher, Commissioners, and Iroquois representatives.[202] This pattern proliferated in the early decades of the next century, including one particularly extensive set of meetings in May and June 1723 when Massachusetts commissioners met with Iroquois diplomats in an attempt to have them "take up the hatchet" against Indians attacking the colony's borders.[203]

Lastly, Indian polities from around northeastern North America often traveled to Albany to meet with the Commissioners and the Iroquois. For example, in early May 1723 and immediately before the aforementioned Massachusetts commissioners arrived, "[t]wenty Indians of the far nations" arrived in Albany "to trade with the inhabitants of

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[202] Wraxall, *AIA*, 25.

[203] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 36a-37a. Interestingly, the Iroquois not only declined to enter the war on New England's side, but openly offered their own elaborate plan of peace where the Iroquois would act as mediators. For a more detailed analysis, see: Andrew T. Stahlhut, "Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs, the Iroquois, and New England Indian Politics in a Larger Borderlands Context, 1691-1755" (paper presented at the spring meeting for the New England Historical Association, Worcester, Massachusetts, April 18, 2015).

this place." These traders probably hailed from the Great Lakes region, as evidenced by the journal noting that they "played with a calumet pipe of peace and sung after their custom" before addressing the Commissioners. Two weeks later another group of "far Indians" arrived declaring they "are come to visit their father and are very desirous to have rum cheap as also other goods."[204] More "far Indians" arrived later that month to address both the Commissioners and visiting Iroquois diplomats. The Albany Commissioner minutes fortunately recorded that these "Eighty men of the far Indians (besides Squaws & Children)" hailed from "Six Castles called in our Several Speeches Neghkareage,"an Amikwa people from the shores of Lake Huron.[205] Clearly, the diplomatic conversations between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois did not exist in a vacuum, and any broad understanding of those conversations should recognize this fact. Borderlands diplomacy, while centered on the Commissioners and Iroquois, still hosted the input of other groups. Moreover, the presence of all of these other diplomatic actors in Albany underscores the importance of the town in northeastern North American Indian politics.

In sum, although the diplomacy between the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois often proved to be contentious in the early decades of the eighteenth century, both sides maintained a positive shared diplomatic culture based on the Covenant Chain, wampum, other gifts, and condolence ceremonies. This cross-cultural cooperation allowed both sides to achieve their particular goals in a borderlands environment where personal networks and face-to-face interactions lay at the heart of one's ability to shape

[204] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 12a-13a, 14-14a.
[205] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 19-22.; Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, part 2, 1101. The French name for the Amikwa was Nez-Percés. François-Marc Gagnon, et al., *The Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 18.

the world around them. This relatively stable diplomatic interaction had the added effect of creating a borderlands conversation whose ideas and decisions echoed out into the larger provincial, intercolonial, and continental world.

CHAPTER 3:

Royal Governors, the Provincial Assembly, and the Larger Colonial Context to Indian Diplomacy

In June 1717, two sachems from each of the Five Nations met in Albany to discuss matters of tremendous import to themselves and the larger struggle between French and British settlements on the continent. The primary issue was that of trade, always a powerful force in swaying the allegiance of specific groups of Iroquois toward one imperial contestant or the other. According to one visiting speaker, the French had recently built a trading house near Seneca villages, to "supply the 5 Nations & other Indians with powder & lead to fight against their enemies the [Flatheads]," adding that "they are also furnished with other goods which prevents a great deal of beaver and furs coming … to Albany." Showing an understanding of the intricacies of trans-imperial trade, another Iroquois speaker added that the French were supplied "with all their goods from the people here at Albany which goes first to Canada," ultimately ending up in the Senecas' country. He adroitly added that "if you stop the trade of goods being carried hence to Canada that other trade will fall of course." The Iroquois speakers then moved on to other topics, stating that "[t]hey are apprehensive that the small pox which was brought amongst them and destroyed so many of their people last fall" may have been "designedly sent among them" from Virginia or Maryland. In a similar vein, they passed along a rumor that "the King of England & the Regent of France had agreed to cut off all the Indians of North America & to settle the continent with their respective subjects,"

although they noted that "as this account did not come to them with any present according to the Indian custom, they doubted the truth of it."[206] Regardless, the rumor obviously bothered them enough to share. Clearly, these Iroquois visitors presented their hosts at Albany with a full plate of important issues to discuss.

While these Iroquois diplomats aired their concerns at Albany, as their predecessors had done for much of a century prior, they spoke in this case not with Albany's Indian Commissioners but Governor Robert Hunter. Hunter, like the other royal governors since the establishment of New York out of Dutch New Netherland, occasionally traveled to Albany to meet with Iroquois diplomats directly. In this case he calmly addressed the issues that the Iroquois visitors introduced. He expressed surprise upon hearing about the French fort, stating "that the Commissioners of Indian Affairs had sent him word that the French were building a fort in the [Senecas'] country but that he would not believe it." However, upon hearing confirmation from the visiting Iroquois, he noted that it was "an evil which must be prevented, & I shall forthwith use my endeavor to put a final end to that pernicious trade." As to the rumor about French/British collaboration, Hunter assured the visitors that the "scheme to cut off the Indians … is absurd & ridiculous & is one of those many falsehoods & artifices made use of by the French to disturb our union & friendship." Regarding the recent outbreak of smallpox, Hunter informed the Iroquois diplomats that "it is a disease which arises from natural causes & now rages violently in Pennsylvania & [the] Jerseys whose inhabitants have suffered & do daily suffer greatly by it." Hunter ended his speech by agreeing to renew

[206] Wraxall, *AIA*, 119-20. The source of the Iroquois' fears of extermination was Samuel Mulford, a settler who had advocated for native extermination. Mary Lou Lustig, *Robert Hunter, 1666-1734: New York's Augustan Statesman* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1983), 151.

the Covenant Chain and offering them the usual gifts, always a critical aspect of borderlands diplomacy.[207]

This meeting between Iroquois diplomats and New York's governor represented a critical context to understanding the unique relationship the Iroquois Nations shared with Albany's Indian Commissioners. While the Commissioners and Iroquois leaders met continuously and often over the course of half a century, the resulting conversations always existed in the larger context of provincial New York power structures. In this case, Governor Hunter traveled to Albany himself to meet with Iroquois diplomats directly, as did other New York governors during their tenures in office. In doing so, however, Hunter made nuanced references to his reliance upon the Albany Commissioners in facilitating the nuances required for successful Indian diplomacy despite his direct presence that day. Not only did he openly admit to relying upon the Commissioners for intelligence regarding the French when preparing for that meeting, but he acknowledged to the visiting diplomats "that all of their propositions made to him have constantly been sent over to his Majesty," suggesting that he received a constant stream of information from Albany when he was in New York City.[208] In fact, the Lords of Trade expected regular updates regarding the Iroquois and other Indians, admonishing Hunter in January 1710/1 that he was remiss in sharing the records of his latest meeting at Albany and "will therefore do well to send the same to us by the first conveyance."[209] Earlier this same year Hunter was able to report in a letter to Board Secretary William Popple that "all is quiet on the frontiers," good news established on information gathered

[207] Wraxall, *AIA*, 119-21.
[208] Wraxall, *AIA*, 122. New York's governors relied heavily upon Albany's Commissioners for Indian and borderlands intelligence that comprised many of their reports to officials in London.
[209] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 186.

by the Albany Commissioners and their hard working interpreter, Lawrence Claessen.[210] New York's governors and Albany's Indian Commissioners clearly maintained a close relationship where the actions of one at least partially informed or restrained the behavior of the other. Iroquois leaders also operated within this larger context, equally willing to meet and deal with a direct representative of the Crown as they were with the more local, provincially-appointed Commissioners. Moreover, New York's General Assembly, with its powers of legislation and purse, also provided a larger context to the conversations between Albany's Commissioners and Iroquois diplomats.

This chapter explores the relationship between two branches of New York's provincial government and the diplomatic situation in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands during the tenure of Albany's Commissioners. While both branches served critical roles in supporting New York's geographic and economic expansion, both also played important parts in the single issue of borderlands diplomacy and Indian affairs. Not only did they limit the Dutch Commissioners in dealing with Iroquois diplomats, but the governor and Assembly also provided vital connections between the New York/Iroquoia borderlands world and the larger colonial realm of a growing Atlantic empire. First, this chapter will argue that New York's royal governor, despite his formal position as the colony's chief executive and dispenser of the Commissioners' offices, served an important role in Iroquois diplomacy but ultimately one heavily reliant upon the actions of the Albany Commissioners. While present at many key diplomatic functions with Iroquois and other Indian diplomats, he relied heavily, while in New York or other colonial cities, upon the Commissioners for the day-to-day running of

[210] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 165.; Wraxall, *AIA*, 69-70.

borderlands diplomacy. Albany's Commissioners not only served as a governor's key channel of information critical to understanding the latest developments from the interior of the continent, but often suggested policy options of their own. Even when a governor gave general instructions to achieve a particular diplomatic goal the Commissioners still handled the details with a deftness born from generations of frontier living that could never be replicated by rigidly aristocratic English officials more used to dictating than compromising. Iroquois leaders and delegates openly recognized a governor's formal position as head of the colony and direct line of communication to the British Crown, fostering a close connection with "Brother Corlaer" whenever they met with him at Albany. However, they still turned to the Albany Commissioners for the continuous contact needed to maintain positive diplomatic relations on a day-to-day basis.

Second, this chapter contends that New York's General Assembly also served an important role in borderlands diplomacy and Indian affairs, but with a very different relationship to the Albany Commissioners than held by the provincial governors. Specifically, while New York's governors relied heavily upon the Commissioners for Indian diplomacy and fulfilling his duties as commander in chief, the Commissioners often found themselves requiring the help or attention of the provincial Assembly. While the experienced Commissioners may have been experts in borderlands affairs, funding for the gifts critical to the proper functioning of Indian diplomacy required Assembly approval. Furthermore, the Assembly often passed laws ranging from economic to military matters that facilitated Iroquois and other Indian alliances in a scope and with the legislative organization the Commissioners did not have. Unlike the governor, the province's Assembly lacked a direct relationship with Iroquois sachems. However, the

Assembly showed its continuous interest in borderlands affairs by passing laws concerning Iroquois nations and the Confederacy as a whole, ultimately bringing these Indian denizens at least partially into the Assembly's sphere of influence.

Lastly, this chapter suggests that the governor and Assembly, although (usually) removed from Albany and the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, served as vital connectors between that unique geography and the larger Atlantic world. New York's governors and Assembly served as conduits and anchors, tying the borderlands closer to the larger Atlantic world around it and providing communications links that tied them closely together. This closer connection precluded the borderlands from developing entirely isolated from the larger continental and imperial realms. As far as the borderlands were from European and colonial capitals, New York's governor and Assembly ensured it continued to be part of that larger trans-oceanic system.

Although Albany's Commissioners served as the primary and constant means of Indian diplomacy through the first half of the eighteenth century, Iroquois and other Indian diplomats also met with New York's governors in Albany during that same time period, although in a much less frequent manner. These meetings required special organization and funding for travel up the Hudson River, and occurred much less often than those headed by the Commissioners themselves. Almost all Crown appointed governors during the decades of Commissioner activity visited Albany at least occasionally during their tenures in office and discussed the same issues of diplomacy, trade, war, and condolence that the Commissioners regularly handled, as shown in the following examples. Henry Sloughter died soon after his arrival in the colony in 1691, but his successor, Benjamin Fletcher, met with representatives of the Five Nations first in

May 1694 and then in August. At the second meeting, Fletcher, according to one Indian diplomat, "did chide & rebuke us for sending messengers to Canada to treat of peace," but was kind enough to "receive us again into favor & embrace us."[211] His successor, Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, arrived in Albany in July 1698 not long after his arrival in the colony. He met with well-wishing Iroquois visitors "who felicitated him on his & his lady's safe arrival to this government after a tedious & dangerous voyage." Bellomont thanked them and asked "if they had any grievances or complaints which he could redress, or do anything for their good, to let him know."[212] Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, visited Indian delegates in Albany in September 1706, a meeting which Wraxall noted was "the first meeting there held by a governor or lieutenant governor … that appears in the records from … July 1701," noting "in the intermediate time everything was managed by the Commissioners."[213]

This pattern of occasional meetings between a governor and Iroquois diplomats in Albany continued through the first half of the eighteenth century. John Lovelace died approximately a year after taking office in 1708, but his successor Robert Hunter sometimes visited Albany, as explored in this chapter's vignette. William Burnet met with diplomats in Albany several times, including a series of meetings in September 1724 that included colonial Indian officials from Massachusetts in addition to New York's own Commissioners.[214] John Montgomerie met with representatives from the Six Nations in October 1728, six months after taking office, to renew the Covenant Chain and "to give you fresh assurances of the protection of the Great King of Great Britain ... our common

[211] Wraxall, *AIA*, 25.
[212] Wraxall, *AIA*, 28.
[213] Wraxall, *AIA*, 48.
[214] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 87-94a.

father and sovereign." However, he also admonished the Iroquois visitors, stating that he was "concerned I must tell you that I am informed that many of your nation have of late misbehaved themselves who on frivolous pretenses and wrong notions have left their native country ... and gone to live in Canada a place not so good and fertile."[215] Governor William Cosby thanked Iroquois representatives in September 1735 for understanding that the new "garrison and house at Oswego" was not just for the benefit of New York, "but also for your security and benefit to trade there for such necessaries as you have occasion for." Cosby also stated that he was "pleased to hear that your people have been kind and civil to the traders who supply you and the far Indians," adding that he expected they "will persevere in that brotherly behavior which will strengthen our friendship."[216] Lastly, George Clinton met Iroquois representatives in Albany in June 1744 to sway them to the British side due to the commencement of King George's War.[217]

It is important to recognize these meetings between New York's governors and Iroquois diplomats at Albany so as to avoid falsely portraying New York's Indian affairs as a closed binary between Iroquois leaders and Albany's Commissioners. These conferences followed the same diplomatic protocols as meetings led by the Commissioners, such as condoling the dead, gifting wampum and other trade goods, and taking turns over the course of several days while the two sides spoke their mind. For example, in July 1693, Governor Fletcher met with Iroquois diplomats to express his concern "that some of the [Iroquois] Brethren are wavering, and inclined to peace with

[215] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 273-273a.
[216] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 71-71a.
[217] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 276r-278r. Clinton's successor, Sir Danvers Osborn, died a week into his tenure as governor, and the colony would not have another full governor until Charles Hardy in 1755.

the enemy," blaming the French priests for the disruptive influence. According to Cadwallader Colden, provincial and royal official during the mid-eighteenth century, Fletcher then "condoled their dead, and made them a very considerable present of ninety guns, eight hundred and ten pound of powder, eight hundred bars of lead," and many other trade goods.[218] Fletcher address the same topics as those handled by the Commissioners, such as trade, war, political allegiance, and other issues of borderlands importance. However, gubernatorial visits to Albany to treat with Iroquois leaders served as punctuations to the continuous conversation of New York's Indian affairs, while the steady presence of the Commissioners served as the conversation itself. A governor might travel to Albany for a special planned treaty conference, or to deal with an emergency, for example, but he quickly traveled back to his home in New York City. The Commissioners, however, handled the day-to-day business of borderlands diplomacy that was just as important to maintaining the positive trade, political, and other connections that supported the generally positive relationship between the Iroquois Nations and the colony of New York.

The Albany Commissioners remained in attendance even during the special events that prompted a governor's presence. Historian Jon Parmenter, in his study of the Commissioners in the years after 1723, recognizes that "the Albany Commissioners served in a critical advisory capacity at thirteen governors' conferences held at Albany between 1723 and 1755," ultimately ensuring that "traditional rituals of the Covenant Chain alliance were followed and providing vital assistance with the composition,

[218] Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations Depending on the Province of New-York in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 136. Colden's originally published this work in two parts, in 1727 and 1747. Colden held positions ranging from surveyor general to lieutenant governor.

translation, and interpretation of speeches."[219] For example, when Governor Montgomerie traveled to Albany in May 1731 to make an important proclamation to the assembled Iroquois diplomats he relied heavily on the assistance of the Albany Commissioners. The day before his lengthy speech, Montgomerie "[laid] before this board a draft of a proposition he intends to make to the sachems of the Six Nations for this board to peruse." The Commissioners "after making some amendments thereunto have returned the same to his Excellency." At this same series of meetings the Iroquois visitors requested from Montgomerie a reprieve for a murderer, leading the governor to "desire the opinion of this board whether he should grant it," overall "pleased to ask the opinion of the Commissioners of the Indian Affairs on that subject." Montgomerie "ordered the said Commissioners to attend at his lodgings" to hear their ideas.[220] Clearly, governors relied on these experienced experts for the successful completion of their meetings with the Iroquois and other indigenous polities in Albany. As such, although governors sometimes made the trek northward with broad instructions from the Crown to participate in Indian diplomacy themselves, they required the Commissioners' help for translation, protocol, and advice on more nuanced issues outside the scope of a governor's broad diplomatic goals.

Albany's Indian Commissioners continued their vital service to New York's governors especially when those executive officials stayed far away from the colonial frontier. The Commissioners served as conduits of borderlands intelligence, local experts suggesting policy, empowered officials acting on their own authority, and borderlands specialists handling details of gubernatorial orders. Albany's Commissioners offered an

[219] Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 249.
[220] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 335-337a.

immediate presence and expertise at a key nexus of the borderlands diplomatic world that facilitated a governor's duties as chief executive officer in charge of imperial concerns such as war, trade, and Indian affairs. While technically provincial officials commissioned by a colonial governor, the Commissioners acted with a deftness and independence that belied their supposedly subordinate role and emphasized their influence in borderlands affairs.

One of the Commissioners' primary tasks consisted of keeping New York's governor abreast of important military and diplomatic concerns in and around the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. The Commissioners served as the governor's eyes and ears, allowing him to make informed decisions in his role as governor and commander in chief. Much of this information revolved around the military activities of the French and allied Indians, and their continuous threat to the borders of New York and other colonies. In November 1705, for example, the Commissioners received information that Canada's governor had shifted French troop position, "from hence they suggested he designed some attack upon Albany or the settlements thereabout." They immediately "wrote a letter to the governor desiring he will fall upon proper measures to secure [Albany]."[221] In a similar case in September 1723, the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor William Burnet passing along information they just received from Laurence Claessen, the Commissioners' interpreter. Claessen reported the "surprising news that the greatest number of the French Indians were making themselves ready to join with the eastern Indians to go out fighting against New England." The Commissioners stated to Burnet in a letter that they "thought in duty to forward [this information] to your Excellency

[221] Wraxall, *AIA*, 45.

without loss of time," and enclosed a copy of Claessen's letter with theirs.[222] In another example, from November 1730, the Commissioners wrote to Governor Montgomerie informing him of recent intelligence that the French intended to build a fort at Crown Point. Although the Commissioners believed this fort was a "pretense to intercept and prevent the trade of the Indians hither and to Canada," they also warned Montgomerie that blocked trade "is not the only detriment and mischief we apprehend from it." They elaborated their concerns that "in case of a rupture between the two Crowns it will be a very convenient rendezvous and magazine for their Indians to make easy assaults on this country and New England."[223] As these cases show, New York's governors relied heavily upon Albany's Commissioners for important military intelligence regarding the French and allied Indians. Colonial defense was central to a governor's official duties. For example, in its instructions to Governor Cornbury, the Lords of Trade ordered him to take "care and diligence in providing for the security of New York, upon the alarm of the French," a task requiring a steady stream of information from borderlands officials.[224] By maintaining these critical links to the borderlands communications web, the Commissioners were able to gather information important to other colonial officials and pass it along as needed.[225]

Albany's Commissioners also served as a critical channel of communication to the governor regarding significant issues among the Iroquois Nations, an important endeavor as both the British and French sought to maintain a close alliance with the

[222] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 55a-56.
[223] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 330a-331.
[224] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 2.
[225] Sometimes the lack of bad news concerning the French worried the Commissioners as much as firm intelligence. In a letter to Governor Burnet in September 1727, for example, the Commissioners worried that they "hear no manner of intelligence from Canada which makes us uneasy what is hatching there." *MCIA*, vol. 1, 204.

powerful confederacy. As New York's ranking Crown official, the governor required accurate information about Britain's most important Indian allies in the northeastern part of the continent. For example, the Commissioners met with an Onondaga sachem in July 1719. The visitor informed them of French plans to build a fort at Niagara, "& says that the French are settling all round them so that they are confined." The Onondaga sachem refused a belt of wampum "as he came with this intelligence in a private capacity" but hoped "if his Excellency thinks proper to take such methods in destroying the fort as was done in destroying the block house at Onondaga he does not doubt but it will be effected." The Commissioners immediately dispatched a letter to Governor Hunter containing "a copy of the above intelligence" and added that "they think the management of this affair is of the [greatest] consequence to this government."[226] In another example, from October 1724, the Commissioners informed Governor Burnet by letter of their recent meeting with sachems from the Six Nations. "We take leave to acquaint your Excellency," they stated, "that the sachems of the Six Nations have declined to take up the hatchet in favor of the government of Boston," referring to recent talks among Massachusetts, the Commissioners, and the Iroquois Nations regarding Indian violence on New England's borders. Despite this bad news, the Commissioners were able to add that the sachems agreed that "they would still be their friends & adhere to them desiring & recommending them to make a peace with the eastern Indians."[227] As New York's governors spent most of their time outside the diplomatic nexus of Albany, they relied

[226] Wraxall, *AIA*, 124-5. The original quotation used the term "of the last consequence." Modern English suggests this means "least" consequence, but various eighteenth-century sources utilize this term to mean "greatest."
[227] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 102.

heavily upon the Commissioners to share the latest news about the province's powerful Indian allies to the northwest.

Albany's Commissioners did not simply share information from the larger borderlands communications network, but often included unsolicited advice in their letters to New York's governors on how to resolve issues both provincial and imperial in scope. As experienced officials in Indian diplomacy, the Commissioners offered helpful advice as experts closer to the events in question than a removed governor in New York City. In July 1706, for example, the Commissioners wrote Governor Cornbury "that unless proper men are sent to reside amongst the Five Nations the French by their priests & their presents will probably succeed in debauching them from our alliance." This sudden sharing of policy ideas probably lay in their recent meeting with a messenger from Onondaga, who stated that the Cayugas "have given him assurances that [they] will not receive any French Priest amongst them if the governor will send a man of respect, an interpreter, a smith & a brazier to reside amongst them."[228] Here, the Commissioners suggested a policy based on a situation with which they were intimately familiar as borderlands residents.

In another case in March 1733/4 the Commissioners recommended a specific policy by drafting a lengthy letter to Governor Cosby regarding the continuous French threats to Iroquoian alliances with the British. French incursions into Seneca country offered an especially threatening situation, as the Commissioners noted that French "bribes presents and what arguments they are capable of," already "had such effect that the greatest number of the [Senecas] are very wavering and seem by their behavior and

[228] Wraxall, *AIA*, 46-7.

conduct to be much inclined to the French." The Commissioners "humbly beg your Excellency will be pleased to direct as soon as possible that proper persons be sent to the [Senecas'] country," gathering as they traveled "two or three sachems [of] every nation as they go through the castles of the other [Five Nations]." This party would bring presents in an attempt to win the Senecas back to British allegiance. [229] The Commissioners clearly felt comfortable outlining a detailed and lengthy plan to Cosby, but still played the role of humble servants, always framing their suggestions in the most modest manner. In addition to the examples above, the Commissioners noted, near the end of their letter, that "we do humbly hope your Excellency be pleased … to consider what we in the most humble manner, have offered in order to help the Indians firm to their Majesty's interest."[230] Although the Albany officials were practiced experts in borderlands diplomacy, they purposely framed their suggestions in "humble" terms to offset any possible presumption and ensure the governor seriously considered their ideas.

Albany's Commissioners also boldly utilized their continuous correspondence with the governor to access other areas of New York's provincial government. The Commissioners wrote a letter to Governor Cornbury in such a vein in May 1708, reporting recent intelligence concerning the French "sent from the sachems of Onondaga." The Commissioners told the governor that they "are humbly of opinion that if the French be admitted to settle at the places the enclosed mentions … it will not only delude most of … our Indians to the French but also in time totally ruin the 5 Nations." Hand-wringing aside, the Commissioners continued boldly to suggest that Cornbury "will consider the matter & lay it before the Council that means may be used to prevent any

[229] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 50-50a.
[230] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 51.

such settlement of the French."[231] In this case, the Commissioners requested that a royal governor spur other parts of New York's provincial government into action to address an immediate problem they perceived as critical.[232]

The Commissioners also utilized their connection with the governor many times to spur action from the General Assembly. In March 1725/26, for example, the Commissioners wrote to Governor Burnet about the perpetual threat of French settlers "residing among our Indians." The Commissioners hoped a person "of ability with a number of men [be] sent to dwell continually among them," but recognized that such an endeavor required funds. They thus added to Burnet that "we hope the Assembly will please to consider how to raise a fund to defray the charges without which it appears plain to us that the French get daily more footing & our interest decreases."[233] By framing their request for funds to the governor in the context of larger imperial concerns, the Commissioners clearly hoped to use the threat of immediate French designs to spur Burnet into speaking to the Assembly on their behalf. In a similar case from October 1739, the Commissioners wrote Lieutenant Governor George Clarke that they "had been in expectation that the Assembly would have raised a fund to have enabled us to send four men to take possession in a formal manner of [Irondequoit] in his Majesty's name." Lacking this money, the Commissioners complained about "[using] our endeavors to get people to go on credit of the government but doubt much whether we shall be able to get proper persons to go."[234] In this case, the Commissioners hoped their complaints would

[231] Wraxall, *AIA*, 55.
[232] It is unclear why the Commissioners required this issue laid before the Council. Perhaps they sought the Council's support in helpful legislation.
[233] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 124.
[234] Wraxall, *AIA*, 215.

compel Clarke to spur the Assembly into action and thus pursue a plan the borderlands officials supported. In June 1744, the Commissioners outlined a detailed, eleven-point plan they described as "what is evidently necessary for the security of this country against the enemy."[235] They sent the policy suggestion to Governor Clinton with the hope that it "be laid before the General Assembly."[236] Such a detailed plan involving forts, scouts, and militia required funding, and the Commissioners hoped the Governor would lend his support to extracting the funds from the Assembly. The Assembly shaped these topics through its power of legislation and funding, as this chapter will explore later.

In one case the Commissioners even hoped to utilize New York's governor to gain the attention of other British governors. In September 1723 the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor Burnet, "submit[ting] to your Excellency whether it would not be proper to write with the other governors on the continent to the governor of Canada," a plan meant to add strength to the words and ideas of the Commissioners themselves but harnessing the titles of not just one but several British governors.[237] Clearly, Albany's Commissioners, while always humble in their addresses, often used their unique connection with New York's governor to access other areas of colonial government.

While Albany's Commissioners often communicated with New York's governors to suggest policies regarding the Iroquois and larger borderlands issues such as war and trade, they also pursued actions on their own authority, informing the governor only at a later date of their actions. Such activities suggested the Commissioners maintained a

[235] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 288r-289r.
[236] Wraxall, *AIA*, 236.
[237] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 58-58a.

mindset of at least quasi-independence from official provincial power that belied the subservient language in their missives to New York's governor. In essence, they felt confident enough in their understanding of borderlands diplomatic affairs to handle issues without always involving the governor. In one case, the Commissioners learned in December 1704 "that a French man & an Indian were come to the 5 Nations & desired a meeting with them at Onondaga." The Iroquois messengers to Albany hoped the Commissioners would send representatives to the meeting, and the Commissioners "agreed to dispatch two or three persons thither with proper instructions for their behavior." Included within these instructions was the authority to "apply for the assistance of the 5 Nations" if anything they heard suggested a threat to New York. [238] The Commissioners heard of another important diplomatic meeting at Onondaga just a few months later, taking it on their authority to "accordingly dispatch [Laurence Claessen] the interpreter" to represent them.[239] In these cases, the Commissioners did not wait to request permission from the governor to send delegates to diplomatic meetings. In fact, the Commissioners regularly drafted detailed instructions for Claessen and other messengers who they then sent into Iroquoia on their own authority. In another case, the Commissioners noted in a letter to Governor Cosby in April 1733 that they had "ordered … Abraham Wendell & company at the [Senecas'] country that they observe the motions of the French, and if any thing be contrived by them against his Majesty's interest that they do oppose it to the utmost of their power & acquaint us with it."[240] Albany's Commissioners understood the nuanced nature of New York/Iroquoian borderlands much

[238] Wraxall, *AIA*, 42-3.
[239] Wraxall, *AIA*, 44.
[240] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 33.

better than any governor in New York City, and they utilized that expertise to provide a foundation for their independent action in Indian affairs. As the examples above show, delegated agents held authority to act immediately if circumstances required it.

Despite their quasi-independence in the realm of borderlands Indian diplomacy, Albany's Commissioners still filled a critical role when enacting orders from New York's governors. Specifically, while a governor might provide the Commissioners with a broad goal or task, he often relied upon them to handle the details, ensuring his plans were successful. For example, in October 1720, Governor Burnet wrote a letter to the Commissioners ordering them to post a smith among the Senecas, a task the Commissioners handled, ordering him "to remain there in order to watch & oppose the designs of the French & to secure the fidelity of the [Senecas] to this government."[241] In another case, in September 1726, Governor Burnet ordered Commissioner Evert Bancker into the Senecas' country "to use your utmost endeavors to cultivate a familiar acquaintance with the principle men among the Indians." Burnet left the details completely dependent on Bancker's experience. For example, Bancker could choose his exact location within the Senecas' country "as you shall think most lending to the public service," and could take a journey to visit the Cayugas or Onondagas "when you think the public service requires it."[242] Clearly, Burnet could not micromanage this diplomatic visit so he relied upon the Commissioners' expertise for the successful completion of the mission.

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[241] Wraxall, *AIA*, 132. Wraxall's text says: "to secure the fidelity of the French to this government." This must be a typographical error, most likely omitting the word "Indians" after "French," or perhaps simple transcription error.
[242] *MCIA,* vol. 1, 170a-171.

Even when a governor picked a traveler or messenger to visit Iroquoia, Albany's Commissioners often dictated the specific instructions. The Commissioners drafted instructions for Major Abraham Schuyler in preparation for his visit to Iroquoia in April 1726. The Commissioners openly admitted that "his Excellency William Burnet ... has been pleased to approve that some person of experience be sent among the Five Nations to quiet the minds of the Indians, and has appointed you to undertake that affair." However, they then launched into detailed instructions, prefaced with the statement that "we do therefore hereby require you forthwith to go to Onondaga."[243] After framing Schuyler's duty in terms of their own initiatives, the Commissioners proceeded to draft a letter to Burnet informing him that Schuyler "accepted to go on credit of your Excellency's letter," but added "we thought it necessary to give him instructions … hoping his message may have the desired effect." They also mentioned that "it is very acceptable to us that your Excellency concurs with us that it's necessary to have persons of experience among the Indians," telling language that uncovers the degree to which Albany's Commissioners recognized their own importance in borderlands diplomacy.[244] In another case, in September 1740, a group of men sent by Lieutenant Governor George Clarke arrived at Albany to rest before further pushing into Iroquoia.[245] While appointed by Clarke, the company likely received their detailed orders from the Commissioners.[246] "You are during your stay there [in Iroquoia] to observe the motions of the French," the

[243] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 125a-126.
[244] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 126a.
[245] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 198-198a.
[246] The wording of the minutes entry detailing the travelers' instructions remains ambiguous as to whether they arrived in Albany with these instructions, which the Commissioners then copied into their minutes, or whether the Commissioners themselves disbursed the instructions themselves. However, Wraxall, in his abridgement of this entry, suggested that "the Commissioners give them the proper instructions upon their going thither." Wraxall, *AIA*, 220.

Commissioners told the company, and upon hearing any news to immediately "acquaint the Lieutenant Governor … or the Commissioners of Indian Affairs at Albany from time to time with all such intelligence." Furthermore, the company "are likewise to follow & observe such instructions & directions as you shall from time to time receive from the Lieutenant Governor … or the Commissioners … & diligently discharge the trust reposed in you."[247] As this language shows, the Commissioners placed themselves within an immediate supervisory role to this company of travelers, not just in giving instructions but in receiving intelligence and passing along further orders. The governor might have chosen a man for a specific task, but he often relied on the borderlands expertise of the Commissioners to prepare him.

Iroquois leaders, while lacking the continuous, direct, and official relationship to New York's governor they held with Albany's Commissioners, still maintained a friendly rapport with "Brother Corlaer" due to the influence of the governor in New York and the larger British colonial world. These occasional meetings with New York's governor in Albany granted the Iroquois opportunities to access a royal official who could speak directly to the British government in England.[248] For example, in August 1700, Governor Bellomont met with Onondaga sachems regarding a fort that New York's government

[247] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 198-198a. Regardless of who gave them the instructions, such language is telling in how much faith the Albany Commissioners and the Governor placed in each other to receive intelligence and give instructions.

[248] Very rare were opportunities for Iroquois representatives able to speak directly to the English government. In one notable case, four "Indian Kings" visited London in 1710, meeting government officials, speaking before the Crown, and traveling throughout the city. For more information, see: Eric Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Richmond Pugh Bond, *Queen Anne's American Kings* (Yardley: Westholme, 2010). In 1696 one colonial official complained to the Commissioners for Trade about the French doing just this. He stated in his report that French officials had transported Indians, both friendly and Iroquois prisoners, to France "for no other intent, than to amaze and dazzle them with the greatness & splendor of the French Court and army … at the same time they are not wanting to insinuate to them our weakness." He continued on to suggest that England do the same thing "to give a counter[point] unto the French reputation and greatness." *NYCD*, vol. 4, 208.

sought to build on their land. The Onondaga visitors desired "that our Brother Corlaer … will write to the Great King of England, that the limits & bounds may be established between us & the French of Canada," hoping to "prevent all disputes & controversies, that each may know their bounds."[249] In another case, in September 1726, Iroquoian visitors addressed Governor Burnet in Albany. "We speak in the name of all the Six Nations," they started, "& come to you howling." The reason for their angst lay with the French, who "encroaches on our land & builds thereon." The Iroquoian diplomats hoped Burnet "will be pleased to write to the King your …. Master," and wished "your King will then be pleased to write to the King of France that the Six Nations desire that the fort at Niagara may be demolished."[250] Iroquoian diplomats also utilized "Brother Corlaer" as a way to intimidate rival Indian polities. For example, visitors from the Six Nations met with Lieutenant Governor Clarke and various "[b]retheren Indians that belong to the French," in June 1737. The Iroquois informed visiting French Indians that they "are here to listen to what we shall speak to our Brother Corlaer," continuing on to state their message concerning the political issues of the day.[251] By speaking to New York's top royal official in front of French Indians, the Iroquois showed off their friendly connection and added his prestige to their own words. Overall, while Albany's Commissioners provided an immediate, continuous presence in the borderlands with which the Iroquois could maintain positive diplomatic relations, the occasional visits of New York's governors provided a significant opportunity Iroquois diplomats fully utilized when available.

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[249] Wraxall, *AIA*, 37.
[250] *AIA*, vol. 1, 166a.
[251] Wraxall, *AIA*, 201. Unfortunately, the original minutes for this meeting, and surrounding records, are illegible, requiring the use of Wraxall's abridged version.

In sum, New York's governors, despite their formal roles as the colony's chief executive and dispenser of the Commissioners' offices, relied heavily on the cooperation and experience of the Albany Commissioners when they participated in Indian diplomacy during the first half of the eighteenth century. While governors did travel to Albany to meet with visiting Iroquoian and other Indian diplomats, they did so under the watchful eye and advice of the experienced Commissioners of Indian Affairs. Day-to-day Indian diplomacy still lay in the hands of Albany's Commissioners, who transmitted vital borderlands information to the governor and offered policy advice, often handling the details of the broad diplomatic objectives the governor did order. Sometimes they even acted on their own authority. While always operating in a royal governor's shadow, the Albany Commissioners existed as a quasi-independent institution for Indian diplomacy. Iroquois leaders were happy to recognize the formal authority of New York's governors, as they provided direct avenues to influence in the larger colonial and imperial worlds.

Albany's Commissioners also existed in a larger context partially defined by New York's General Assembly. This elected body, meeting in New York City, exerted an influence on the regular activities and Indian diplomacy in the borderlands through its powers of the purse and legislation. Albany's Commissioners often found their activities at least partially shaped by this body. The Six Nations, while having no formal relationship with the Assembly, still existed at least partially in their sphere of influence through various laws and funding measures that targeted them and larger imperial politics as a whole. Overall, New York's General Assembly, much like the governor, played a partial role in Indian diplomacy and served as a reminder that Albany's Commissioners, while influential, did not exist in a vacuum.

Some overlap between the Commissioners and General Assembly existed due to a handful of men who served in both institutions. For example, Hendrick Hansen, Indian Commissioner from 1710 to 1724, also served as Assembly representative from Albany County intermittently between 1699 and 1726. Despite his fourteen years of service with the Albany Commissioners he only attended twelve of those meetings, perhaps making his dual role easier to bear by travelling less between Albany and New York City. Myndert Schuyler, on the other hand, served as Indian Commissioner for thirty-five years, participating in numerous meetings, but also served as Assembly representative eight times between 1701 and 1727. Evert Bancker, another busy Indian Commissioner, served the provincial Assembly from 1702 to 1704.[252] These and a few other men served in both capacities due to their high social and economic status in Albany, which earned them a governor's appointment as Indian Commissioners. Unfortunately the Assembly's journal is not detailed enough to provide any indication of whether these uniquely experienced men provided any special insight into Indian affairs in the colony's Assembly.

Much of the information the Assembly obtained about the Iroquois or Indian affairs came through the governor's addresses to that body. For example, in September 1701, the Speaker, "according to the order of the day, [finished] the reading of his Honor's negotiation with the Indians," ordering that "the thanks of this House be returned his Honor, for his trouble and care therein."[253] Sometimes New York's governor passed along letters he received from the Commissioners, providing a roundabout way for

[252] Information regarding Assembly representatives: Bonomi, *A Factious* People, 296-310. Information regarding Indian Commissioners: Parmenter, "'Onenwahatirighsi Sa Gentho Skaghnughtudigh,'" 240-3. Also see this dissertation's chapter 1, as well as Table 1 and Table 2 in the appendix.
[253] *Journal of the General Assembly*, 124.

Albany's officials to transmit information to the Assembly. In June 1715, the Speaker presented to the Assembly "a letter from his Excellency … relating to a message from the Commissioners of the Indian Affairs, with an account from the Commissioners of the Indian Affairs."[254] The next month "an express from the Commissioners of the Indian Affairs … was presented to the House, and read." In June of the following year several letters arrived, including one from the governor, "recommending a letter from the Commissioners for managing the Indian Affairs, and the propositions made by the Indians of [Oneida], to the said Commissioners; which were severally read."[255] While the Assembly did not copy these letters verbatim into their records, the fact that they read such communications shows an interest in borderlands affairs and the Iroquois specifically. Such interest sometimes manifested in the Assembly requesting information about Indian affairs from the governor instead of waiting for the executive to share in his own time. In one case, in May 1729, the Assembly ordered that two members visited Governor Montgomerie "to desire that his treaty with the Six Nations of Indians at Albany, last summer, may be laid before this House." They reported back the next day with the good news that Montgomerie "had been pleased to say, he would order the same should be done tomorrow."[256] As these examples show, New York's Assembly eagerly stayed abreast of Indian affairs throughout the tenure of the Commissioners, often utilizing the governor as a conduit for that information.

New York's Assembly exerted partial influence over the Albany Commissioners and Indian affairs generally through its powers of the purse and legislation. Specifically,

[254] *Journal of the General Assembly,* vol. 1, 372.
[255] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 377, 383.
[256] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 591.

the Commissioners required funding from the General Assembly to exercise critical aspects of borderlands diplomacy, such as gift giving and paying interpreters, messengers, smiths, and spies. The Commissioners' funding originated in general spending bills every few years, the Assembly clearly considering the upkeep of that institution a regular part of the colony's necessary functioning. The Assembly allocated general funds to the institution as a whole instead of specific members. For example, in 1739 the Assembly allocated £170 to the Commissioners "for their disbursements & expenses respecting the Six Nations and other Indians and for presents to be made by them, as occasions may require, for the public service of this colony" through 1740.[257] The Assembly continued the £170 level of funding in spending bills from 1741 and in 1742.[258] Such funding did not remain at steady levels over the lifetime of the Commissioners, however. While the Assembly assigned £170 in the Commissioners' later years, the Indian officials received £300 pounds in 1715 and £190 in 1728.[259] Despite these fluctuating levels of funding, Assembly members clearly recognized the need for these funds, expended by the Commissioners, "for confirming [the Iroquois] in the British Interest."[260]

The messengers and interpreters the Commissioners utilized also required Assembly funding. While Albany's officials planned out details and drafted instructions for Laurence Claessen and other agents, the Assembly offered the funds that made such actions possible. Claessen especially appears frequently in the Assembly's records, just

[257] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 46. Hereafter cited as *Colonial Laws of New York*.
[258] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 172, 234.
[259] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 375, 580. David Armour recognizes this decreased funding in the final years of Commissioner activity before the rise of William Johnson as temporary provincial Indian superintendent, hypothesizing that these decreased funds hurt the Commissioners' ability to provide adequate borderlands diplomatic activity. Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York,* 203-205.
[260] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 234.

as he does in the Commissioners' minutes. For example, the Assembly received an account of Laurence Claessen, "for a journey to the Onondaga country [that] was laid before this house, amounting to nineteen pounds," an example of the Assembly addressing funding for a specific journey.[261] This suggests that some journeys into Iroquoia fell outside the Commissioners' budget, possibly due to the large sum involved. Many times, however, the Assembly handled Claessen's funding through general appropriation bills, an act that reflects how much the Assembly valued the translator's service to the Commissioners and colony as a whole. For example, the Assembly recognized in 1701 that "it is very necessary that [Claessen] the sworn Indian interpreter should be encouraged to continue his services to the government," granting Claessen "the sum of twenty five pounds per annum" as a salary, with additional funding when the Commissioners sent him on specific missions.[262] Claessen still appeared in the Assembly's records several decades later, such as in 1740 when one appropriations bill granted £90 to "the Indian interpreter for his salary & for all other services that he has been or may be directed to do, by the Governor, or the Commissioners of Indian affairs."[263] Other agents of the Commissioners also appeared in Assembly records as recipients of funding. For example, in 1701 the Assembly granted Bernardus Freeman £60 per year "for his encouragement, to propagate the gospel among the Five Nations of Indians; and fifteen pounds, per year, for his charge to the Indians."[264] Occasionally the Assembly would draft legislation to this end, such as one act, partially titled, "An Act, for

[261] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 582.
[262] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 1, 470.
[263] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 46.
[264] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 123.

discharging … other Debts due for Services done among the five Nations."[265] Clearly, while Albany's officials might draft instructions for Claessen or other travelers into Iroquoia, New York's Assembly enabled these endeavors through their power of the purse.

The Assembly also supplied funding for New York's governors as they pursued diplomatic objectives in their occasional visits to Albany. While Albany's Commissioners may have handled borderlands diplomacy on a day-to-day level, gubernatorial trips to the frontier settlement often drew large Iroquois audiences and required substantial funds for presents. In 1714, for example, the Assembly passed an act granting Governor Hunter "one thousand ounces of plate … in bills of credit made current in this colony" dedicated to "presents for the Five Nations of Indians and for his expense in going to Albany to treat with them."[266] The Assembly sometimes covered such costs in general appropriations bills as well, such as when it granted New York's executive £700 "for presents to the Six Nations for two years," lasting from 1740 to 1742, "which is to be laid out & employed in proper presents for & to the said Nations, when the Governor or Commander in Chief goes to Albany to renew the treaty with them." The same general appropriations bill added an additional £150 "for his voyage & expenses."[267] As explored previously in this chapter, New York's governors did occasionally participate in the realm of Indian diplomacy, but always within the larger context generated by the experience and translation of the Albany Commissioners. Still,

[265] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 588.
[266] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 1, 814.
[267] *Colonial Laws of New York,* vol. 3, 171-2. The Assembly used the term "Governor or Commander in Chief" due to New York's lack of a governor in 1740. George Clarke acted as lieutenant governor and de facto commander in chief at this time until 1743 when George Clinton arrived with his commission as governor.

gubernatorial visits generated a level of interest and ostentation that required separate funding well outside normal Commissioner budgets.

New York's Assembly also participated in Indian affairs through its power of legislation, organizing and funding initiatives well outside the scope of the regular diplomatic world of Albany's Commissioners. Some projects simply required the presence of an established colonial government. For example, the Assembly read a missive from the provincial Council in 1701, entering the lengthy message into its own records. In part, the Council referenced a fort that New York planned to build amongst the Onondaga, the "money already passed by act of Assembly, and now the time of the year proper to begin it in." The Assembly, however, "are humbly of the opinion, that the building thereof, be suspended" due to the recent death of Governor Bellomont. Instead, the Assembly decided to await "the arrival of the Honorable John Nanfan, esq., Lieutenant Governor … who by the last advance from Barbados, is daily expected," under the rationale that they understood him to be "a martial man, and experienced in warlike affairs and fortifications." The fort's story did not progress smoothly, however. Several months later, at a joint committee composed of members of both the Assembly and the Council, representatives found themselves short of the expected funds, suggesting to the Assembly "that the House do order a bill, to be prepared and laid before them for the effectual enforcing the speedy payment thereof," all for the enforcement of the initial act "for the building the fort at Onondaga."[268] Two years later the Assembly was still trying to collect the raised funds, passing an act titled "An Act to Oblige persons to pay their Arrears of One thousand Pounds … for building a Fort at Onondaga for the Security

[268] *Journal of the General Assembly*, vol. 1, 107, 111, 123.

of the five Nations of Indians."[269] The fort's story continued shakily from that point onward, and served as an excellent example of how some projects related to Indian affairs required the organization, micromanagement, and authority that only a larger government could provide.[270] Such tasks would have been well outside the ability of Albany's Commissioners to effect, and seemed to be barely within the means of the larger government itself.

Albany's Commissioners recognized the importance of the General Assembly in the larger shaping of borderlands affairs, often referencing the body in their own minutes as a context to individual problems they faced. In October 1715, for example, the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor Hunter regarding an important matter of Indian trade. Both Hunter and the Commissioners recognized the need for a "barracks for the Indians upon the hill above Albany," but the Commissioners complained that "the traders will not voluntarily contribute to the building it." The Commissioners asserted that "the best method will be to get an act of Assembly, to levy on the traders sufficient for that purpose."[271] The Assembly apparently agreed, as it passed not a year later "An Act for the building & Erecting two Wooden houses for Sheds for the Accommodation of the Indians Trading at Albany, & for keeping them in good Repair." Aside from raising money, the bill required the Commissioners to allow the officials appointed to raise the funds a cut of the revenue for their work, and "hereby required & empowered [the

[269] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 1, 557.
[270] Interestingly, the home government eventually stepped in and tabled the Onondaga fort project in its official instructions to the newly appointed Governor Robert Hunter, drafted in 1709. Recognizing that the preceding monarch, William III, had thought a fort in Onondaga country would be beneficial to New York's overall safety, Queen Anne noted that "nevertheless these orders were never intended to interfere with the repairing of the forts at Albany and Schenectady at the same time, which we think so absolutely needful." As a result, Anne ordered Hunter to prioritize the two closer forts. *NYCD*, vol. 5, 140.
[271] Wraxall, *AIA*, 110.

Commissioners] to administer an oath to each of the said assessors."[272] In another case five years later, the Commissioners wrote again to Governor Hunter stating that "the money allotted by the Assembly to give the Indians in order to persuade them to demolish the French house at Niagara will not be sufficient … unless we took possession of that pass," and worried that "before the Assembly can make the necessary disposition for such an undertaking … the French will add such security to it, that it will cost a vast sum of money to carry that point."[273] As these examples show, Albany's Commissioners were well aware of the important role the provincial Assembly played in Indian affairs through their powers of purse and legislation. Despite appearing infrequently in the Commissioners' minutes, the Assembly still played a critical role in the New York/Iroquois borderlands.

The Iroquois Nations did not have a direct or official relationship with New York's General Assembly. Borderlands Indian polities were aware of the body's existence, of course. In one unhappy example in March 1708, Laurence Claessen, "who had been amongst the 5 Nations for some months past," returned to the Commissioners for debriefing. He reported hearing a rumor among the Iroquois that "the General Assembly which sat at New York every year were consulting on methods to destroy them." Unfortunately for Claessen, "these insinuations had such effects upon the 5 Nations that the interpreter could not persuade them … to the contrary."[274] However, while the Assembly never visited Albany to deal directly with the Iroquois or other Indian dignitaries, the institution still provided an overarching context to borderlands

[272] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 1, 890-2.
[273] Wraxall, *AIA*, 132-3.
[274] Wraxall, *AIA*, 63.

diplomacy that affected the everyday lives of nearby Indian polities. Most importantly, by providing the funding to Albany's Commissioners and its agents, the Assembly provided the grease that allowed the gears of Indian diplomacy to turn. Iroquois visitors received gifts at treaty meetings and belts of wampum during important conferences because the provincial Assembly provided the funds. Iroquois diplomats could speak with Albany's Commissioners only because the Assembly paid men such as translator and messenger Laurence Claessen. In addition, the Assembly provided a level of organization and compulsion the Albany Commissioners simply could not attain. Through the power of legislation the Assembly could tackle large projects such as a fort in Onondaga country that required the stability and powers of a legislature to plan and complete. In all of these ways, New York's General Assembly brought the Iroquoian denizens of the borderlands into its orbit of influence and earned that body a status as an important, if sometimes indirect, player in borderlands affairs.

In sum, both New York's governor and its General Assembly played important roles in Indian affairs in the first half of the eighteenth century, and held unique relationships with Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations. The province's governors, while sometimes travelling to Albany to conduct Indian diplomacy themselves, relied heavily on the Albany Commissioners as transmitters of information, decision makers, and handlers of details, not to mention as implementers of provincial and imperial policy. The Iroquois Nations utilized New York's governors as a direct link to upper levels of colonial and imperial power, providing a conduit to share their ideas and concerns with the British Crown. The provincial Assembly, however, shaped the larger borderlands environment for both the Commissioners and the Iroquois, utilizing its

powers of the purse and legislation to facilitate the conversations between the two. Taken together, New York's provincial government very clearly provided a larger context to the New York/Iroquoian borderlands world.

More than this, however, New York's governors and General Assembly filled a critical role in connecting the New York/Iroquoia borderlands to the larger colonial Atlantic World. Due to the actions of these formal governmental institutions, the borderlands' connections to the British Empire remained much closer than they would have been otherwise, keeping that environment from developing independently. They served as conduits but also as anchors, firmly linking the borderlands to the imperial world. New York's governors, for example, provided the direct link between policy makers in Britain and borderlands actors. While Albany's residents had served as Indian diplomats since before the English takeover of New Netherland, it was New York's governors who assigned formal commissions and bound them directly to official power structures. While dependent on these same men's experience and decision making, the governors often provided the general instructions and basic diplomatic objectives. The Commissioners were undoubtedly quasi-independent in their actions and understood the intricacies of Indian diplomacy better than other colonial officials, but they always acted within the larger context of gubernatorial intent. The governor, when at Albany, also allowed Iroquois leaders to more directly seek and access imperial power structures and bend the proverbial ear of an official with direct links to the Crown.

New York's provincial assembly also firmly attached the New York/Iroquoian borderlands to the larger colonial world in unique ways. In essence, the Assembly ensured that ideas and policies generated in the borderlands often met the cold reality of

an early modern colonial bureaucracy. Borderlands diplomacy may have taken its shape largely from indigenous diplomatic culture, but that, in turn, required bills of appropriation and acts of disbursement. Money, even in the eighteenth century borderlands, greased the wheels of progress. The Assembly also provided a stability and a legitimacy of formal authority that allowed larger projects, such as fort construction, to advance. Forts, as an example, served as literal outposts of empire and provided the direct conduits for military and economic expansion from the larger colonial Atlantic into the continental interior, and their existence required a colonial bureaucracy. Assembly laws and proclamations also drew indigenous denizens into colonial power structures by partially shaping the borderlands world they inhabited, partly casting colonial power over Indian polities. In sum, New York's Assembly at least partially encompassed the borderlands region into its sphere of influence.

New York was not the only colonial polity to interact with Albany's Indian Commissioners or the Iroquois Nations, of course. British settlements spread across the eastern seaboard of North America, all with their own Indian affairs that often bled into the realm of the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois conversations. Numerous Indian polities, ranging from the western Great Lakes to the southern hinterlands of Virginia, also interacted with New York's Commissioners and the Six Nations, often at Albany. Both sets of borderlands players – Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations – spread their influence much farther than New York's boundaries.

CHAPTER 4:

Borderlands Diplomacy with other Indigenous and Colonial Polities

In mid-May 1709 Albany's Commissioners hosted an Indian delegate to discuss issues of trade, politics, and war. Interestingly, however, this was not a diplomat or messenger from an Iroquois nation, but was instead "a sachem called Kaqucka of the [Mississauga] nation," along with several companions.[275] He addressed the Commissioners as openly as any Iroquois diplomat, asserting his importance by stating that "if we are well treated here we shall always keep the path clean & open." Kaqucka quickly got down to business. He immediately set the political tone of the meeting by promising to "forget the old path to Canada which we have hitherto used" if the Commissioners gave him the appropriate respect. He then moved on to local trade problems, complaining much like Iroquois traders before and after him. "We were yesterday taken into the traders' houses against our inclination," he bemoaned, and "they have taken our furs & we are not masters of our own things." He hoped the Commissioners could help so "we may have our furs to go & trade where we can find the best market." Clearly, this representative from the Mississaugas expected to be treated with respect. The Commissioners replied the following day, stating that the visitors "were heartily welcome & they hoped to see more of their countrymen in a short time."

[275] Mississauga Indians were Ojibwe people living on the north shore of what is now Lake Ontario. Donald B. Smith, *Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), xvi.

The Commissioners quickly addressed the trade issue, assuring them that "care should be taken that they should have goods as cheap as possible though they might perhaps at present find them dearer than usual."[276]

While ironing out these issues "[t]here arrived also at Albany three Indians of a nation called Nequequent," whose sachem spoke the same day the Commissioners responded to Kaqucka.[277] This new speaker likewise trumpeted his importance to Albany's officials. "We were sent hither by our fathers to see this place & to bring them news from hence," he said, and "if we are well treated next year there shall come great numbers of our nation." These Nequequents also fell victim to the questionable trading practice of local fur traders and hoped to have their goods returned. While Wraxall's abridged records do not detail what, if any actions, the Commissioners subsequently took, he did note that these "far Indians" left Albany at the end of the month with a belt of wampum "given them to carry to their sachems to invite them to come to Albany & trade."[278] The Commissioners had little time for rest, however, as just over a week later "six Indians more of the far nations arrive," desiring "trade & civil usage." Of course, "they are answered & encouraged by the Commissioners."[279]

These closely clustered examples demonstrate that the influence and prestige of Albany and its Commissioners for Indian Affairs had by 1709 clearly spread past the

[276] Wraxall, *AIA*, 66.
[277] The identity of these Nequequent Indians is unclear. Contemporary provincial official and historian Cadwallader Colden made a reference to the "Nequequent" meeting with French interpreter Jean Coeur in Cayuga country, suggesting this was a western tribe from the Great Lakes region. Alexander J. Wall, et al., eds, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, volume 9 (New York: New York Historical Society, 1937), 371. This dissertation has found no other reference to this group of people in the usual sources for identifying alternate spellings of Indian names.
[278] Wraxall's open disdain for the Albany Commissioners shines through in these entries. He opined that "a favorable opportunity which well improved might have been of infinite advantage to this colony seems to have been lost by falling under the management of a set of ignorant mercenary peddlers and to such the conduct of Indian affairs has always been submitted." Wraxall, *AIA*, 66-7.
[279] Wraxall, *AIA*, 68.

immediate environs of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. Albany's status as a nexus for trade and diplomacy had extended far past the boundaries imposed by any sort of binary relationship with the Iroquois Nations and has encompassed Indian polities as far west as the Great Lakes. This was an increasingly important role as Britain sought to incorporate Indian groups into its sphere of influence. Initiating political and economic partnerships with these far western tribes would serve to benefit New York and British colonial holdings while denying potential military and trade alliances from the French. While the decades between Queen Anne's War and King William's War remained devoid of large-scale violence between British and French colonial holdings, tensions still simmered between the two imperial rivalries. As such, western Indian nations played increasingly important roles in borderlands politics to the east. These visiting sachems and diplomats held much in common with Iroquois visitors to the settlement, following the same protocols and expressing concern about the same issues. Additionally, Albany's Commissioners treated the visitors as respected diplomats worthy of their time and courtesy. The Commissioners' privileged relationship with the Iroquois empowered them in their overall influence in borderlands affairs, and they successfully utilized that influence to contact and maintain positive relations with Indian groups outside of the Five Nations. In fact, both the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations practiced Indian diplomacy outside of their unique connection with each other. This dissertation's second chapter has explored how that distinctive, almost symbiotic relationship empowered both sides with a significant status and influence in borderlands affairs, but this local connection was just the beginning.

This chapter explores the wider reach of the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois leaders as they pursued their diplomatic conversations in the eighteenth century New York/Iroquoia borderlands. These meetings, far from existing as a "closed system" between two local powers, often framed issues from many other polities, both colonial and native, around northeastern North America. Both Albany's Commissioners and Iroquois leaders exercised their influence in wider-scale borderlands diplomacy by maintaining diplomatic ties to other colonies, such as Massachusetts and Virginia, but also other Indian groups ranging from the far western Great Lakes regions to others closer to New York. In sum, this chapter argues one cannot accurately understand the relationship between Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations without recognizing a broader geographic context to their diplomatic activities.

First, this chapter explores the wider colonial context of the Commissioners' Indian diplomacy, and argues that Albany's role in Indian diplomacy affected more than just the single colony of New York. Albany's Commissioners often projected their ideas and influence into the Indian affairs of other colonial regions and dealt with minor crises that crossed colonial borders into their neighborhood. At many times during the first half of the eighteenth century other colonial governments deferred to the Albany Commissioners to handle a delicate diplomatic situation and even sent their own commissioners to Albany to treat at a place other colonies recognized as central of Indian affairs on the continent. In addition, the Commissioners did not limit their diplomatic activities to just the Five Nations, but instead maintained diplomatic contact with many Indian polities in northeastern North America. They were Indian Commissioners, not Iroquois Commissioners. Second, this chapter traces similar pattern of wide-ranging

diplomacy on the part of the Iroquois Nations. The Iroquois maintained contact with other colonial governments, and utilized these options to pressure the Commissioners and generate leverage on issues important to them. Additionally, the Iroquois maintained diplomatic contact with Indian polities throughout northeastern North America, pursuing their own political, economic, and military objectives, sharing this information with the Albany Commissioners as a way to illustrate their status and influence as equal diplomatic actors in the borderlands.

Lastly, this chapter argues that one cannot understand the relationship between the Iroquois and Albany's Commissioners without placing their conversations in the center of a larger web that encompassed much of northeastern North America in the first half of the eighteenth century. Their unique relationship, as explored in previous chapters, surpassed the local geography of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, or the single province of New York, and rippled out into the larger colonial and indigenous world, incorporating many of these polities into the important issues they discussed at Albany. Recognizing this larger context underscores the fact that the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations were not just local players holding limited discussions that affected only themselves and the colony of New York. Instead, their influence emanated from the New York/Iroquoia borderlands and rippled out to affect colonial and Indian polities throughout the northeastern part of the continent. While appointed by a single colonial governor, the Albany Commissioners drew many other colonies into their orbit of influence regarding Indian diplomacy, and projected that influence into drawing the attention of indigenous groups other than the Iroquois. Similarly, the Five Nations utilized their wide-reaching sway among indigenous polities to insert themselves into the

diplomatic discussions of other colonies in order to spread their influence with these other colonial governments. Ultimately, such an arrangement heavily suggests that a shift toward the concentration of Indian affairs in northeastern North America predated the establishment of William Johnson as Crown appointed Indian Superintendent for the northern colonies in 1755. The Commissioners, while hardly dictating Indian policy indiscriminately and unopposed in the first half of the eighteenth century, still exercised notable influence in Indian affairs well outside the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. By utilizing their connections with the Iroquois and their expertise in Indian affairs generally, the Commissioners ensured that Albany's perspectives often shaped Indian affairs across colonial and indigenous boundaries. In sum, Johnson's office built upon an already existing tendency toward centralization in Indian affairs with northern colonial New York as an important hub that affected other colonies and Indian polities.[280]

Polities throughout northeastern North America, both colonial and indigenous, recognized Albany's eminence in Indian diplomacy through the first half of the eighteenth century. As a primary meeting point for the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois diplomats, the small settlement's importance eclipsed many colonial capitals in terms of Indian diplomacy and drew in Indian affairs from a much wider sphere. Virginia, for example, understood the Dutch settlement's importance even before New York's Governor Benjamin Fletcher formally created the Commissioners for Indian Affairs in 1694. The Chesapeake province maintained diplomatic contact with the Iroquois through Albany as early as the 1670s due to the so-called Carolina Road, or

[280] Johnson did not live in Albany, but established his own homestead, Johnson Hall, to the northwest. James Thomas Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet: A Biography of Sir William Johnson* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 21. The intersection of his home and diplomatic life serves as a central theme for chapter 6.

Virginia Road, a warpath that linked Iroquoia in the north with the Catawbas, Cherokees, and other Indian groups in the south. For example, Seneca warriors renewed their aggression against the Susquehannocks and other natives around Maryland in May 1676, an attack significant enough to prompt Susquehannock leaders to approach Lenapes in what are now eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey for refuge.[281] Iroquoian war parties that had traveled south often clashed with Virginian settlers by appropriating food without permission, leading to violence between the two sides.[282] This conflict required a diplomatic response to the Iroquois from Virginia's colonial government, much to the chagrin of Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood, who bemoaned that officials had to "dance many hundreds of miles to Albany to treat on every Caprice of theirs."[283] Although this chapter will explore more examples shortly, it was clear to other colonies that Albany served an important venue for Indian diplomacy in that part the continent. Indian diplomats likewise recognized the importance of the settlement in the larger web of Indian affairs. Iroquois visitors announced in September 1724 that "[t]his town of Albany has been of old a place of meeting & treaty … not only between this government & us, but with all our neighboring colonies of North America," declaring that Albany was "a fixed and settled place to treat of peace & tranquility." As shown to raise Spotswood's ire, "those who had any occasion to treat with us might come and meet us here."[284]

[281] Parmenter, *Edge of the Woods*, 150.
[282] Paul A.W. Wallace, "The Iroquois: A Brief Outline of their History," in *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666-1732*, ed. Lawrence H. Leder (Gettysburg: The Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1956), 22-3.
[283] Quoted in: Matthew L. Rhoades, *Long Knives and the Longhouse: Anglo-Iroquois Politics and the Expansion of Colonial Virginia* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 36, 67. For more examples of Virginia's travels to Albany to deal with the Iroquois, see: Rhoades, *Long Knives and the Longhouse*, 44, 64-5, 91-2, 96.
[284] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 90-90a.

Clearly, both indigenous and colonial polities recognized Albany as an important nexus for Indian diplomacy.

The settlement's status as home to the unique institution of the Commissioners for Indian Affairs largely explains Albany's status as a key location for Indian diplomacy for the northeastern part of the continent through the first half of the eighteenth century. Not only was Albany close by the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, but as shown in chapter 1, the Commissioners maintained an existence as a formal, stable, and long-lived institution. This often provided a constancy and level of practical experience lacking in how other colonies pursued Indian diplomacy. The unique relationship between Albany and the Iroquois Nations lay in the Covenant Chain alliance and their positions as central members to links that spread throughout the northeastern part of the continent. While chapter 1 has explored how differently both sides interpreted the Chain, it nonetheless allowed for a generally peaceful relationship over a significant amount of time. As historian Francis Jennings notes, "[t]he Covenant Chain was the product of a specific region. It would have been – was, in fact – impossible of invention in New France, New England, or Virginia." This was possible only in New York, because, to utilize Jennings's often refreshing bluntness, they "postponed subjugation of their neighboring Indians and were content with exploitation."[285] The New York emphasis on trade, at least in its earlier years, meshed well with Iroquois notions of society and proper relations between neighbors. Although New York and the Iroquois Nations did not agree concerning the exact meaning of the Chain relationship throughout much of the eighteenth century, the

[285] Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 8.

Covenant Chain was a firm link between Albany and Iroquoia during the tenure of the Albany Commissioners, much to the chagrin of other colonies.

New England colonies pursued various models for Indian diplomacy throughout the colonial period, none of which rivaled the Albany Commissioners in terms of scope or longevity. According to historian Jenny Hale Pulsipher, Indian violence early in New England's history "may have awakened the English colonies [to] the need for a united front against the Indians and a single agency for negotiating and communicating with them." As a result, Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven formed the United Colonies of New England in 1643 as a mutual defense organization against Indians and other perceived threats, such as Rhode Island. The United Colonies Commissioners performed a heavy-handed form of Indian diplomacy, demanding that "the Indians submit all their grievances with other Indians to them and receive their permission before going to war with and Indians," an attempt to frame themselves as "chief sachems."[286] Lacking the finesse required for successful Indian diplomacy, this institution crumbled and finally collapsed during the 1680s when the constituent colonies lost their charters with the coming of the Dominion of New England in 1686. This early attempt at Indian diplomacy lacked many of the characteristics that proved successful with the Albany Commissioners. Its basic function as a defensive compact provided too much of an antagonistic outlook on local Indian politics, compared to the trade and respect that undergirded the successful Albany Commissioners.

Other colonies also participated in Indian affairs but in ways that reflected their specific histories and priorities. For example, South Carolina's settlers constantly feared

[286] Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 27.

the possibility of attack from the large Indian nations to the west of Charleston, such as the Cherokees and the Creeks. As a result, South Carolina established its own institution for Indian affairs in 1707 that quickly evolved, according to historian Jack Greene, into "an almost independent corporation with full powers to perpetuate themselves by filling vacancies in their number." Still, over much of its colonial history, "Indian diplomacy in South Carolina was centered almost entirely around the Indian trade."[287] Historian Michelle LeMaster fleshes out some of the other activities of South Carolina's Indian officials. For example, they handled topics of war and peace, such as in February 1727/28 when the colony's commissioner Colonel John Herbert visited Cherokee leaders to encourage them to attack the neighboring Creeks. Creek warriors had attacked European settlers on South Carolina's borders and Herbert hoped the Cherokees would avenge them.[288] South Carolina's Indian officials, however, never gained the widespread influence of the Albany Commissioners.

In another example, Pennsylvania maintained a relationship with the Iroquois as the Albany Commissioners' influence declined in the 1740s, a topic this dissertation discusses in chapter 6. The colony's government regularly appointed translators and cultural go-betweens, such as Conrad Weiser to spearhead its diplomatic efforts, rather than create a formal institution for Indian relations. Weiser grew up with the Mohawks in the early years of the eighteenth century, learning the language and cultural norms that served him well as Pennsylvania's and sometimes Virginia's ambassador to the Six

[287] Jack P. Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 310-19.
[288] Michelle LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One Mother: British-Native American Relations in the Colonial Southeast* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 53. For further examples of South Carolina's Indian officials, see: LeMaster, *Brothers Born of One* Mother, 66, 91, 97-8, 105, 108, 134, 166.

Nations. Weiser was the official translator at the important Lancaster Treaty in 1744, as well as at countless other official meetings in the colonies. He also made many trips through the colonial borderlands. For example, in Virginia's government instructed to travel to Onondaga to help smooth over the recently ruffled relationship between the Six Nations and that colony. Weiser knew that the colonial diplomatic scene was bigger than he could handle alone, however. At a conference at Onondaga in 1745 he openly asked the Iroquois "how their Brethren, the Governor of New York and the Commissioners of Albany, approved of their going to Canada," indicating Weiser's awareness of not only the importance of New York but the larger diplomatic playing field.[289] Weiser, despite his influence and universal appeal to both the Iroquois and colonial governments, differs from the Albany Commissioners in that he was usually a "contractor," to apply a modern term, and did not maintain an established office. In any case, other British colonies did pursue Indian diplomacy but never in ways that replicated the shape and influence of Albany's Commissioners. They lacked the same organization, clout, and most importantly privileged position in the Iroquoian Covenant Chain alliance.

The Commissioners' distinction in Indian affairs for northeastern North America overshadowed the often ineffective or incomplete methods of Indian diplomacy employed by other provinces, establishing the Albany Commissioners as a central node for Indian affairs for much of northeastern North America during the first half of the eighteenth century. New England's Indian officials visited the settlement to conduct Indian affairs even before the formal creation of the Commissioners as an institution,

[289] William M. Beauchamp, *The Life of Conrad Weiser, as it Relates to his Services as Official Interpreter Between New York and Pennsylvania, and as Envoy Between Philadelphia and the Onondaga Castles* (Syracuse: Onondaga Historical Association, 1925), 42, 33, 51.

such as in September 1689 when Colonel John Pynchon and his companions, "being authorized by the several colonies of New England," arrived at Albany's city hall despite "the difficulties of a hard journey to come to this prefixed place."[290] Clearly, the diplomatic importance of Albany's Dutch traders preceded the formal institution of the Commissioners for Indian Affairs.

Albany's Commissioners regularly hosted both colonial and indigenous diplomats discussing issues of Indian diplomacy in and around New England. New England colonies especially sent Indian officials to Albany over the course of the first half of the eighteenth century. For example, commissioners from Massachusetts arrived in Albany in late May 1723, meeting with the Commissioners and the Iroquois through early June. The Iroquois Nations regularly involved themselves with the affairs of Indians living near New England, necessitating that New England's governments must approach Albany and the Commissioners to deal with the Iroquois. In this case, Eastern Abenakis consistently attacked New England's borders between 1722 and 1727, opposing colonial expansion along the Kennebec River.[291] The Albany Commissioners inserted themselves into New England's Indian affairs by copying the Massachusetts officials' instructions, verbatim, into their minutes, a noteworthy action as it suggested how involved New York's diplomatic infrastructure was when it came to the Indian diplomacy of these other colonies.[292] The seal of a royal lieutenant governor was not authority enough to

[290] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 150. The visitors from New England came to discuss affairs related to the recent Glorious Revolution in England in addition to matters relating to the Iroquois and "Eastern Indians."
[291] Daniel R. Mandell, *Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 85.
[292] Albany's Commissioners were present at each of the meetings, as evidenced by the "roll-call" at the top of each meeting's records. The headings of each meeting also record translators used, another way the Massachusetts commissioners relied on their Albany counterparts. For all of their formal instructions and

empower the New England men to deal in Albany – the recognition of the local Albany Indian Commissioners was clearly a critical prerequisite. The Albany Commissioners gave tacit approval, and thus exercised authority, by recording the instructions in their logs.[293] New England's road to the Iroquois lay open only with the cooperation of Albany's Commissioners. This chapter will explore Massachusetts affairs in more detail later, but at this point the gatekeeping function of the Albany Commissioners remains clear. Commissioners from Massachusetts would visit Albany to meet with the Iroquois, through the Albany Commissioners, as late as June 1744, very near the end of the Commissioners' active tenure and before the rise of William Johnson as provincial Indian commissioner. [294]

Albany's Commissioners also interacted with New England's Indian affairs through their own actions as borderlands diplomats and communicators. Part of this task lay in the Commissioners' utilization of the borderlands communication network, redirecting critical information regarding New England when needed. For example, in August 1708, the Commissioners received intelligence "of a great armament in Canada

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seals, the New England commissioners had no way to actually speak with the Iroquois diplomats. They relied on two Albany-based men. First, interpreter Laurence Claessen would translate Iroquoian words into Dutch. Claessen was a long-standing fixture in early 18th century New York Indian diplomacy and shows up in the records as an important traveler, messenger, and overall cultural go-between. Albany Indian Commissioner Philip Livingston then translated the Dutch into English, necessary for the Anglo-Puritan Massachusetts men.

[293] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 15-15a. It is important to emphasize that the Massachusetts commissioners' instructions empowered them to act only temporarily. The instructions stated that these men were "accordingly authorized and empowered … to be commissioners on the part of this government to treat with the Five Nations or the sachems or principal men of the said nations at Albany as aforesaid in order to the renewing ratifying and confirming the ancient friendship and correspondence hitherto kept inviolate between his majesty's government and the said Five Nations and to engage them to join with us in making war with the eastern Indians." These were not career diplomats like the Albany Commissioners. Two of these men, William Tailer and Spencer Phips, were members of the Massachusetts Council, and the third, John Hoddard, was a member of that same colony's Assembly. They were legislators with a temporary assignment as Indian officials to pursue a specifically defined policy, a very different situation from that of Albany's Commissioners. *MCIA*, vol. 1, 15-15a.

[294] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 279-284.

but whither designed could not be learned." Playing it safe, the Commissioners "[sent] notice thereof to New England to advise them to be on their guard."[295] In another case, in August 1723, the Commissioners received alarming intelligence that could spell disaster for their neighbors in Massachusetts. Meeting "at five a clock at night," they hurriedly drafted a letter to "Colonel Sam [Partridge] or any Justice of peace in New England."[296] They shared that they had "now received the surprising news that fifty Indians from Canada were about 8 days ago in the Lake at the Otter Creek with a design to fall on some of your out settlements." Thinking outside their own locality, they "thought it our duty to acquaint you with this intelligence without any loss of time, hoping you may be on your guard at the frontiers to frustrate the barbarous & bloody designs." Hoping this letter "may be of service to the public," the Commissioners still took the opportunity to gather information from Massachusetts as well, hoping the recipient would "favor us with what hopes you have of concluding a peace with the Eastern Indians."[297]

Two months later the Commissioners hosted "one of the sachems of the [Mohawks] and two young Indians of that castle," and they used this opportunity to once again project their influence into New England Indian affairs, again surrounding Otter Creek in what is now the state of Vermont. These Commissioners told their visitors "that they had received a letter from New England" a few days prior, warning them that "a

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[295] Wraxall, *AIA*, 58.
[296] The intended target was probably Samuel Partridge, Jr., a "colonel of regiment" in Massachusetts. Edith Roberts Ramsburg, "Genealogical Department," *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 55:5 (May, 1921): 283. Partridge's father was also named Samuel and also a colonel, but by 1723, although alive, he would have been almost 80 years old. Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captive Histories: English, French, and Native Narratives of the 1704 Deerfield Raid* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 63.
[297] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 57-57a.

number of 60 or 80 Indians attacked two small forts at Northfield that morning." The letter noted that the assault "wounded two men and it's feared three or four are killed," and its author proposed that "if a number of the Six Nations together with some of the River Indians were dispatched immediately they might probably arrive at the mouth of the Otter Creek before the enemy reach that place and be capable of doing service." The Commissioners thus "now demand your opinion in that affair whether it can probably be effected that is proposed in said letter." Refusing to answer concretely, the visiting Mohawks "say that they can't give a direct answer but they are going to their castles and will acquaint their people with what this board told them."[298] While the Commissioners were unable to effect immediate action in this case, this scenario still served as an excellent example of how the Albany Commissioners involved themselves in New England Indian affairs, especially as important purveyors of information for the New England colonies as well.

Sometimes the Albany Commissioners communicated directly with a New England governor or lieutenant governor. For example, just a year later in June 1724, the Commissioners drafted a letter to New York's Governor William Burnet stating that they had recently received a letter from Massachusetts Governor William Dummer. They forwarded a copy of the letter to Burnet, stating "the main drift of it as we suppose is to draw us in to defray part of the charge" for recent meetings with Massachusetts Indian commissioners, "which we can't resolve to unless we be enabled."[299] In another letter to Burnet the next month they referred to several letters to and from Governor Dummer

[298] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 60a. These River Indians were Algonquians of the Hudson River valley.
[299] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 74.

regarding addressing the Iroquois for help against New England's native enemies.[300] Similarly, the Commissioners sent a letter to the governor of Massachusetts around July 1744. The Commissioners "were of opinion that the influence of the French is so strong over the Indians living in & about Canada that [the Commissioners] are of opinion the French will prevail on those Indians to break the neutrality." The Commissioners also planned to "communicate this their opinion to the governor of Boston that they may be upon their Guard."[301] As gatherers and purveyors of information relevant to New England's Indian diplomacy, Albany's Commissioners established themselves as important players in those colonies' Indian affairs.

In addition to writing letters and sharing information, Albany's Commissioners often inserted themselves more directly into New England Indian affairs by taking purposeful action to sway events in that sphere. At many points the Commissioners initiated action on their own authority that reached past the immediate locality of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands and shaped events in New England's realm of Indian affairs. For example, in or around September 1706, the Commissioners utilized their relationship with the Iroquois in an attempt to alter larger Indian political and military trends in the northeastern part of the continent. At this time a "hot war was carried on by the French against New England," and the Commissioners, always cognizant of the larger colonial world around them, "used their endeavors with the 5 Nations to exert their influence with the Indians in Canada & elsewhere not to make war upon New England."[302] In May

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[300] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 82.

[301] Unfortunately the exact date of this letter is unclear. Wraxall's abridgement stated only that "I find from several informations [sic] the Commissioners have received," without any specific date. The entry in Wraxall's abridgement immediately above this information was July 10, 1744. Wraxall, *AIA*, 237.

[302] The exact date of these actions is unclear. Wraxall noted these actions during what appear to be opening comments of his upon starting his abridgement of a new folio of the original Commissioners' minutes, or

1708, the Commissioners received a delegation of Caughnawaga Indians responding to an invitation in the form of a belt of wampum.[303] The visitors admitted that "they had made war upon New England for 3 years past, yet they now bury the hatchet," promising "never to take it in hand again against the people of New England." The Commissioners, content with this new development, responded that they "are very glad to hear [the two parties could] come to a resolution to lay down the hatchet against the brethren of New England," hoping "neither they nor any other Indians in their interest will take it up again."[304] Unfortunately for many colonists, New England's violent problems with French-allied Indians was not solved so easily.

Albany's Commissioners continued to take direct action in New England's Indian affairs through the 1720s. For example, in early October 1723, the Commissioners convened a meeting to devise a plan to help New England against its Indian enemies. Noting that "for some time past no Indians have been here from Canada as usual," they worried that "there may be an enterprise by the eastern Indians & others against some part of New England which [it] is supposed they intend to keep very private." Thus, they concluded that "it is thought best by this board six Indians be sent to Canada to observe [the] motions of those Indians & persuade the [Caugnawaga] & other French Indians not to join with the eastern Indians," hoping this will prompt French-allied natives "to keep their young Indians at home and not suffer them to assist the [said] Indians against New

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what he called "vol. 2nd of the records." As such, although he listed the date of September 29, 1706 as the heading for this entry, the exact date of the Commissioners' response remains approximate. Wraxall, *AIA*, 48.

[303] Caughnawaga Indians were Iroquois who had traveled from what is now central New York to the environs of Montreal to live at a Catholic mission. Both contemporaries and historians often referred to them as Praying Indians. Aquila, 249-50.

[304] Wraxall, *AIA*, 53.

England."[305] Unfortunately for New England, the Commissioners' intuitions proved correct.

While the Albany Commissioners could not single-handedly solve New England's Indian problems, it could bring interested parties together in a shared space and a common diplomatic culture. New England's officials relied upon Albany's involvement to the point that they sometimes attempted to compel the Commissioners' involvement in New England's Indian affairs. For example, one Boston resident during Queen Anne's War complained that "New York has in no measure joined their assistance against the common enemy, not encouraged the Five Nations … to hostility against the French." He opined that "[it] seems therefore highly reasonable & necessary (if Her Majesty in her great wisdom shall esteem it so) that commands be given to the government of New York to do their duty … against Her Majesty's enemies, and directing & encouraging the Five Nations … to make their descents upon the French at Canada."[306] This unnamed observer clearly recognized that the Crown could not solve the issue. Only New York, through its Commissioners for Indian Affairs, had the requisite connections to possibly sway the Iroquois out of their chosen policy of neutrality with the French and into open warfare.

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[305] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 58a. The Commissioners received word back from their observers in mid November. Unfortunately for the Commissioners' grand plans, the observers "found but three sachems there … who told the said messengers that the other sachems were gone a hunting," and thus they could not give a definitive answer themselves. *MCIA*, vol. 1, 63a-64.

[306] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 42-3. The Board of Trade was well aware of the importance of Iroquois Neutrality to colonial New England. In a message to Queen Anne, the Board noted that the neutrality between the Iroquois, Canada, and French Indians "has been of great prejudice to your Majesty's Government in New England." *NYCD*, vol. 5, 74-5. The "neutrality" refers to the Treaty of Montreal of 1701. Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701,* 160.

Albany's Commissioners also involved themselves in Indian affairs centered on the Chesapeake colony of Virginia in the first half of the eighteenth century.[307] Virginia's Indian affairs bled northward due to the aforementioned Carolina Road linking the Virginia backcountry with Iroquoia. The Commissioners, as the primary link between the British world and the Iroquois war parties that utilized this road, often found themselves making diplomatic decisions that influenced events far to the south. For example, in November 1719, the Commissioners met with sachems of the Five Nations to "renew the Covenant Chain with them in behalf of this government & all His Majesty's governments on the continent," including Virginia. At this meeting, Iroquois diplomats agreed that "they renew the Covenant Chain with this government but as to renewing the Covenant Chain with the governments of the southward they wonder that is mentioned," insisting that "for that 2 years ago the governor of Virginia made complaints of some of their people doing mischief in his country." The Iroquois visitors desired that Virginia's governor "would come himself or depute some body to come to Albany with some sachems of the Indians in his Alliance that they might adjust all matters face to face." Responding to their visitors' views, "the Commissioners reply that they desire they would delay their going out a fighting to the southward till next spring which time they may hear from Virginia"[308] In this case, the Commissioners successfully utilized their influence with the Iroquois to preclude any continuing violence between the Iroquois and Virginia-allied Indians that would bleed over into colonial Virginia itself.

The Albany Commissioners sometimes addressed issues of open warfare in their role as intermediaries between the Iroquois and Virginia's government, such as in July

[307] See the opening vignette for chapter 1 for an excellent example.
[308] Wraxall, *AIA*, 125-6.

1729. They met with "two Indian messengers sent from the sachems of the [Oneidas]" to discuss the often delicate relations between that nation and Virginia and its allied Indian polities. The Commissioners addressed the Oneida visitors, noting the "great misfortune you inform us of that you had in losing so many warring men gives us abundance of concern."[309] According to Wraxall's comments in his abridgement of this meeting, "so many warring men" translated to fifty-five warriors killed and wounded sustained in battle with "Virginia Indians with whom they have had a battle which lasted two days."[310] The visiting Oneidas required help in freeing prisoners captured during the fighting. After agreeing to send two of their number "to condole the death of those warriors you have unhappily lost," the Commissioners "promise you that [at] first opportunity we shall send down your whole proposition to [New York's governor] and we doubt not but he will forthwith perform your request in writing to the governor of Virginia."[311] They did so just a few days later in a letter to Governor John Montgomerie, "strenuously request[ing] of your Excellency that you be pleased to write to the Governor of Virginia to order that he may with all speed deliver up to them such of their men as his Indians in that war have taken prisoner."[312]

The Commissioners remained the driving impulse in this matter eight months later, in February 1730, when they received a letter from Governor Montgomerie, who had heard back from Virginia's Governor William Gooch. Unfortunately for the Oneidas, "it was not the Virginia Indians with whom they had the battle but the

[309] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 292.
[310] Wraxall, *AIA*, 177.
[311] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 292-292a.
[312] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 292a-293. See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of how the Albany Commissioners acted in an advisory capacity for New York's governors regarding Indian affairs.

[Catawbas] who are settled at the back of South Carolina," Gooch reported, but he would still "endeavor to recover their prisoners & make a peace between the [Catawbas] & the 6 Nations if the latter are disposed thereto."[313] The Commissioners found themselves still involved in the issue in April, when they received a letter directly from Governor Gooch proposing "to them that a sachem of each nation should go under the conduct of two Christians to Virginia to treat with the [Catawbas] about the release of said prisoners." After passing this information along to the Oneidas, several sachems arrived in Albany the following month "reject[ing] the above proposal & insisting the governor of Virginia should bring the [Catawbas] to Albany to treat with them." They then handed the Commissioners a belt to transmit to Governor Gooch to support "these their proposals which if he won't comply with they insist may be sent back to them when they will take their own measures." Clearly worried about Virginia's well-being, the Commissioners noted in a letter to Governor Montgomerie that they were "afraid if it is not somehow compromised, it will be fatal to the out settlements of Virginia & all those parts."[314] In this example, Albany's Commissioners served as critical information gatherers and transmitters, as well as mediators and decision makers, regarding Virginia's Indian affairs. The issues between Virginia and its nearby Indians continued through at least the mid-1730s. The Commissioners heard word that "Governor Gooch of Virginia had prevailed upon the Southern Indians to send deputies to Williamsburg ... to treat of peace between them & the Six Nations, & desire they would fix on deputies to go there on their

[313] Wraxall, *AIA*, 178.
[314] Wraxall, *AIA*, 178-9.

behalf," suggesting that a settled peace was still up in the air.[315] In any case, to the Commissioners, this cross-colonial Indian diplomacy was a natural extension of their office.

Albany's Commissioners also inserted themselves into less grandiose aspects of Virginia's Indian issues. For example, in early January 1725/6 the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor William Burnet not about large war parties but about a single child. "We have had the good fortune a few days since to get an English boy who is run away from the [Mohawks] at Fort Hunter," they related, "whom we have clothed & shall maintain and [help] here till your Excellency's pleasure be known." From what the Commissioners could deduce, the boy had been taken by Iroquois from Virginia at the same time they robbed a man named Captain Hicks. The Iroquoian war party also captured his father but set him free. Albany's Commissioners also "have some information that there is another English boy among our Indians taken from Virginia who we shall endeavor to get out of their hands but have great hope to complete it."[316] True to their word, a month later in early February, the Commissioners instructed the dependable translator and messenger Laurence Claessen to "use your best endeavors to release an English boy which we are informed is in some of the Indian castles and taken from Virginia," promising that "which charge shall be paid you."[317] In this case, the Commissioners clearly felt that a child stolen by Indians from Virginia still lay in their purview of action, and Virginia's government obviously depended upon them to assist.

[315] Wraxall, *AIA*, 198. Significantly, upon communicating this message to Iroquois leaders, the sachems responded that "Albany is the ancient & fixed place for all people to treat with them and if Governor Gooch will come himself or send proper deputies with delegates from the Southern Indians to Albany, they will meet there & hear proposals." Wraxall, *AIA*, 199. The records for these meetings are unreadable in the Commissioners' minutes and thus Wraxall's abridgement must serve.
[316] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 118a.
[317] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 121.

Albany's Commissioners also utilized their unique connections with the Iroquois to help the Virginia government in issues tangentially related to Indian affairs. In April 1733 the Commissioners noted in the minutes that a messenger following "an instruction from this board … had been at Fort Hunter and [Schoharie] to demand from the Indians there who have in their possession the run away negroes and slaves belonging unto … John Wall of Virginia." The "pretended Indian owners" were to bring the slaves to Albany "in order to deliver them to their master," although one of them "insisted to be paid for the keeping and clothes given to said slave." Seeking a positive end to the conflict the Commissioners consented that the complaining Indian should be paid six blankets shrouds, a blanket, a shirt & a pair stockings, although they charged the costs of the items to John Wall.[318] The Indians in question arrived two days later, "and brought hither two of the slaves belonging to … John Wall of Virginia run from him in August last." Finally, "with much difficulty," the visiting Indians turned over the slaves, "for whom … John Wall their master has paid them." Not wanting to repeat this difficult process in the future, the Commissioners "told the said Indians that in case they meet with any Indian slave, or negroes for the future on any of the English settlements that they must either pass them by or else bring them to the next Christian settlements in order to be delivered to their proper master." Failing to do so, "they shall not have [one] penny reward."[319] While none of Virginia's allied Indians were involved in this situation, one of the colony's slaveowners still required the help of the Albany Commissioners to solve an Indian-related problem concerning his runaway laborers.

[318] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 1.
[319] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 2.

Clearly, Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs inserted themselves into the Indian diplomacy of the other colonies in the first half of the eighteenth century. Utilizing their experience in borderlands diplomacy and especially their unique connections to the powerful Iroquois Nations, the Commissioners acted as both transmitters of information and intermediaries for the governments of New England and Virginia as they sought to navigate the complicated territory of Indian diplomacy. While technically provincial officials commissioned by New York's governor, the Commissioners facilitated Indian affairs throughout the colonies. Their wide diplomatic contacts did not stay limited to European settlements, however.

The Commissioners maintained formal relations with a diverse number of Indian polities outside of their close relationship with the Iroquois, furthering the idea that they served as an important node in the complex web of American borderlands diplomacy. Many of these contacts centered on trade, a natural method to further positive relations given the close relationship between diplomacy and trade in Indian affairs. For example, in July 1711 "some Tuchsagrondie come down to Albany to trade but desire as they are young men not experienced in business that the Commissioners will not talk to them on public affairs." Having traveled the long distance from Detroit, they hoped "they may have goods as cheap as the 5 Nations," a promise granted by the Commissioners.[320] Six years later, in May 1717, "[s]ome Indians arrive at Albany from a French settlement called Wanajachtenock, to trade & say they would willingly trade with us but the French hinder them." The messengers hoped that the Commissioners "would build a fort near

[320] Wraxall, *AIA*, 90-1. These Tuchsagrondie Indians, also known as the Tiochsaghtondie Indians, hailed from distant Detroit. Jennings, et al., eds, *History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy,* 227. However, historian Jon Parmenter notes that the term Detroit could also have represented the general area of the pays d'en haut. Parmenter, "At the Wood's Edge," 61.

their habitations & put men into it to protect them from the French who oppose their trading hither."[321] The Commissioners met with sixteen Ottawa Indians in May 1722 "come to trade at Albany & say they broke through many obstacles from the French."[322] June 1725 saw the arrival of a sachem from "the Janondadie a nation of Indians living near a French settlement called Detroit." The visitor "tells them he is sent in the name of their nation to thank this government for the invitation sent them & the other upper nations to come & trade at Albany," ultimately "accepting & approving the said invitation" with a belt of wampum.[323] These were just some examples of how the Albany Commissioners' formal relationships transcended the Iroquois and connected them with many Indian polities as far away as Detroit. Despite their focus on trade, many of these interactions maintained a political undercurrent, as several Indian polities explored here came from geographies much closer to French areas of influence.

The Albany Commissioners also maintained formal ties with Indian polities of a more overtly political flavor. For example, in May 1708, the Commissioners received favorable news after dispatching "a River Indian last year with a belt of wampum to the Sawanoe Indians … to invite them with their wives & children to come & live in this government." The messenger returned with their answer, "which was that they were inclined to come."[324] Clearly, the Commissioners felt no hesitation in crossing colonial boundaries to influence the shape of native polities. A meeting in July 1723 served as an

[321] Wraxall, *AIA*, 118.
[322] Wraxall, *AIA*, 140.
[323] Wraxall, *AIA*, 159.
[324] Wraxall, *AIA*, 53. These Sawanoes, who Wraxall noted "live upon some of the branches of the Susquehannah," far to the south of Albany, are now known as the Shawnee Indians. Dowd, *War Under Heaven,* 98. The ethnic identity of the messenger "River Indian" is unclear. As anthropologist Robert Grumet notes, colonists "used the term River Indian to identify Indians living beside regional waterways." Grumet, *Munsee Indians,* 32. As such, due to this generic label, the "River Indian" must remain in obscurity.

opportunity for "Some Indians from "Tughsaghrondie" to speak to the Commissioners. They desired "that the Covenant Chain may always be kept Clean & Bright," and "now come to renew it and hope that the Path from our Country hither may always be kept Clean from all Weeds and Stumbling blocks."[325] Albany's Commissioners saw no problem in utilizing the symbolism of the Covenant Chain to extend political ties to these distant Indians. In another example, the Commissioners met in March 1737/8, recording in the minutes that "deputies are expected at Albany this spring from the Cherokees & [Catawbas] to make a firm peace between them & the 6 Nations." The Commissioners ordered interpreter Laurence Claessen "to publish this news amongst the Senecas & the rest of the 6 Nations & use his best endeavors to prevent any of them from going out a fighting against those nations."[326] In this case, the Commissioners had reached even farther south to initiate and maintain diplomatic contact with Indian polities, as clearly the meetings discussed early had no lasting effect. Understanding better than anyone else the common bad blood between the Iroquois and many southern Indian polities, the Commissioners took this preventative measure to preclude any violence from spoiling peace initiatives. As these three examples show, the Commissioners were comfortable in maintaining positive diplomatic ties with Indian groups outside the Iroquois.

The Commissioners even maintained positive contact with those Iroquois who had left Iroquoia and traveled to Canada to live in French Catholic missions. In June 1705, six of the chief sachems of the Caugnawaga, a group of Iroquois Praying Indians

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[325] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 47a.

[326] Wraxall, *AIA,* 209-10. Interestingly, this record serves as a rare example of a Dutch-language entry in the Commissioners' original minutes. As such, Wraxall's abridgement must serve in its place despite the original record still in existence. It also serves as an important reminder of the persistence of Albany's Dutch heritage in British Indian diplomacy.

living near French settlements, arrived in Albany. In a short speech they noted "that they are come in a friendly & peaceable manner," giving three strings of wampum "to wipe away all blood which hath been shed by them." As explored earlier, the Caugnawagas attacked New England's borders, necessitating Albany's Commissioners to intervene in New England's Indian affairs. The Commissioners subsequently invited them to "come and live amongst their brethren the Mohawks," and asked that they travel with Commissioner Peter Schuyler to New York City to meet the governor.[327] In another example, in March 1724/25, five sachems from the Caugnawaga, arrived in Albany to discuss important matters with the Commissioners. "We hope you do not expect that we shall speak in fine polished words," they started, "since we are but youngsters." They noted that "it seems that our friendship and amity declines as if we were no brethren," prompting them to "now come to renew it, at this place which is the seat fixed to treat about public matters."[328] "Sundry sachems" from the Caugnawaga visited the Commissioners in August 1735, opening their meeting "by offering the calumet or pipe of peace to all the Commissioners." The ceremonial aspects completed, the speakers stated "that they are come in consequence of the belt of wampum sent to them by the Commissioners last May, to renew & strengthen the ancient peace friendship & intercourse." They hoped "they may mutually aid & assist each other, and that all the rights of hospitality may be mutually kept up between the contracting parties." The Commissioners were happy to "[a]ccept ratify & solemnize in behalf of the governor of New York the above offered treaty of peace trade & amity."[329] These three cases served

[327] Wraxall, *AIA*, 44.
[328] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 111a.
[329] Wraxall, *AIA*, 193.

as just a few examples of the open and peaceful diplomatic connections the Commissioners maintained with the Praying Iroquois who had settled near Canada. To the Albany Commissioners, Praying Indians were still important political players in the northeastern part of the continent who required just as much respect as the Iroquois of the Confederacy proper. Their attacks on New England in the early part of the century prompted the Albany Commissioners to intercede between them and New England's colonial governments.

In sum, Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs clearly envisioned their role of Indian officials as projecting much further than the immediate boundaries of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. They utilized their significant experience in Indian diplomacy and their special connection with the powerful Iroquois Nations to insert themselves into the Indian affairs of other British colonies, such as Massachusetts and Virginia.[330] In these cases they communicated directly with government officials and passed along critical Indian intelligence, acted as intermediaries and diplomats to smooth over Indian conflicts both major and minor, and often took action on their own volition to directly affect the course of events in these colonies' Indian affairs. Likewise, the Commissioners maintained regular and open diplomatic contact with a variety of Indian groups outside of the Iroquois Nations over issues of trade and politics, treating visitors from as far west as Detroit or as far south as the South Carolina's backcountry with the same courtesy and ceremony they used with Iroquois visitors. Clearly, Albany's

[330] Albany's Commissioners also involved themselves in the Indian affairs of other British colonies. For example, in June 1714, a group of Iroquois sachems met with the Commissioners, complaining that "the Indians who live at the back of Maryland had sent a belt of wampum to them to let them know that the English of that colony had a design to cut them off," adding that they came to Albany "on purpose to know if there be any truth to this intelligence." The Commissioners promised to contact Governor Hunter, "who would write about it to the governor there & they should have a satisfactory answer." Wraxall, *AIA*, 98.

Commissioners for Indian Affairs were centered in Albany, recognized by leaders in Iroquoia, and officially commissioned by New York, but were not restricted to those geographies. However, a brief tracing of similar patterns among the Iroquois nations is important before one can make larger arguments about the shape of Indian diplomacy in the first half of the eighteenth century.

The Six Nations likewise maintained open contact with the governments of British colonies other than New York despite the special relationship linking the two. For the Iroquois, having multiple diplomatic partners increased their opportunities to maintain an independent existence in a colonial world where populations and borders drew closer every year.[331] Additionally, the Iroquois Nations conceived of the Covenant Chain as linking them not just with New York, or the British Crown, but with many polities, both colonial and indigenous. "[I]n Iroquois theory," according to historian Francis Jennings, "the Indian tribes of the Covenant Chain composed a confederation with the Five Nations at its head."[332] This conception of the Chain "could be extended indefinitely to include any number of other parties, native or European."[333] As such, the Iroquois, while favoring New York due to its empowered Indian commissioners and nearby location, also saw the chain as existing, as one Iroquois diplomat stated in Albany in February 1692/93, "not only between us & this government but also for New England Virginia Maryland & Pennsylvania."[334] The more choices open to them, the more options the Iroquois maintained to pursue policies they deemed best.

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[331] See chapter 5 for a discussion of the Six Nations' relationship with French Canada specifically.
[332] Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 8, 170.
[333] Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier*, 53.
[334] Wraxall, *AIA*, 19.

Much like with the Albany Commissioners, the Iroquois Nations' ties to other British colonies stretched over a vast geographic area. For example, at a meeting in Albany in August 1722, Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia and Governor William Keith of Pennsylvania met with representatives from the Five Nations. New York's Governor Burnet, also in attendance at this important meeting, in his comments, "acquaints the 5 Nations that himself & these gentlemen are come to renew the Covenant Chain with them & to settle several other matters with them." Still meeting in September, the Iroquois responded to one of Keith's speeches, promising to "solemnly renew the Covenant Chain with the Province of Pennsylvania."[335] The Commissioners and Iroquois also accepted Massachusetts and Connecticut into the Covenant Chain. At a meeting in June 1744, commissioners from these New England colonies arrived in Albany and spoke to visiting Iroquois diplomats. "We are desirous of keeping the chain of friendship free from rust," they stated, noting that the rising tensions with the French meant this "is a very proper time to brighten it as well on your account as ours."[336] While these other colonies all accepted a place in the great Chain, they recognized the supremacy of New York and the Iroquois, as shown by their traveling to Albany in the first place.

Iroquois sachems often met with representatives from other colonies at Albany, sometimes surprising the representatives by taking charge of the ensuing discussions. For example, the Massachusetts commissioners discussed earlier in this chapter met with Iroquois diplomats in Albany starting at the end of May 1723. The Albany Indian Commissioners dutifully recorded speeches and actions from both sides in their records,

[335] Wraxall, *AIA*, 141, 143.
[336] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 283r. This was the year that King George's War initiated, lasting until 1748.

but the Iroquois diplomats spoke for themselves. In this example, instead of joining New England militarily against Indians attacking their colonial frontiers, which is what the visiting delegates requested, the Iroquois diplomats boldly rejected the New England plan and offered a new one entirely of their making, placing themselves in the center role. They stated that "[w]e have some days ago heard the propositions you made with us and have rightfully understood and considered the same concerning the war you have with the Eastern Indians how they have from time to time broken their engagements made with you," adding "you have in your last proposition desired us to take up the hatchet against your enemies the Eastern Indians." It was at this point that the Iroquois diplomats unveiled their own plan, already in motion. "We did privately send messengers to the Eastern Indians ... that they should lay down the hatchet of war which they had taken up against you our brethren of New England," they informed the New England men. "They laid down the hatchet of war which they flung down at the feet of us their fathers," and they continued,

> [W]e have had a consultation about that hatchet you tendered us, as also the hatchet they have now laid down before us which they had taken up against New England, we shall now lay them together and we desire you our brethren ... that you appoint a place in your government [colony] where ever you please, where we shall meet you and the chief sachems of the Eastern Indians. As soon as you have appointed such place we shall send for them to be there where we shall be your mediators to conclude and confirm the peace between you and them.[337]

Clearly, the Iroquois viewed themselves as equals to the other colonial parties present at this meeting, and they pursued their independence of thought and action in borderlands politics regarding New England with the same vigor they did with Albany's Commissioners.

[337] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 34a-35a.

Iroquois diplomats also occasionally visited other colonial settlements outside of Albany or New York when pressing issues arose that required their attention. For example, in August 1699, Iroquois visitors to Albany informed the Commissioners only after the fact that a party of Senecas had met with Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor William Markham to discuss an agreement of "free trade & amity with that government," which Markham ultimately "kindly accepted," promising "they shall be protected whenever they have a mind to come peaceably into that government." Predictably, this drew the ire of the Commissioners, who "are surprised to see such a treaty & negotiation made between the 5 Nations & our neighbors of Pennsylvania without the least notice given or obtained" from New York.[338] In another example, Iroquois diplomats stopped by Albany in August 1723, on their way to Boston to follow up on the talks they held with Massachusetts commissioners in Albany earlier in that year.[339] A year later, in July 1724, the Commissioners met with Iroquois leaders and suggested "that they should choose … proper deputies to go once more to Boston to endeavor to settle a peace between that government and the eastern Indians," a proposal the Iroquois diplomats agreed to.[340] The Commissioners did not fear the Iroquois speaking to another colonial government in this instance, as they did with Pennsylvania in 1699, because they were themselves part of the discussions. In any case, as these examples illustrated, the Iroquois sometimes maintained their diplomatic contact with other colonies by meeting with them in settlements other than Albany.

[338] Wraxall, *AIA*, 33.
[339] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 50.
[340] Wraxall, *AIA*, 151.

Furthermore, much like Albany's Commissioners, Iroquois leaders maintained diplomatic links to other Indian polities in northeastern North America, using these links with smaller Indian polities to project their own influence in a larger geographic area. For example, in January 1707/8, four Oneida sachems visited the Commissioners "to acquaint this government that the two chief sachems of a nation of western Indians called Wississachoos were come to the Senecas country."[341] The visitors to the Senecas hoped "they might be in all respects united with the 5 Nations," a request of friendship and amity very similar to those various Indian polities had requested of the Commissioners.[342] Not long after, in April 1709, the Commissioners received a message from Iroquois sachems "that 4 nations … of the far nations called Wagunhaes had desired a meeting with them in order to conclude a peace," to happen at Onondaga. The Commissioners agreed to their request to have delegates present, sending two men to ensure that if the Wagunhaes and Iroquois do establish a peace that "it may be an article of it that the Wagunhaes Indians may have a free & unmolested passage through the 5 Nations to Albany."[343] Later, leaders of the Six Nations extended their diplomatic connections far to the south as well. In April 1735 the Commissioners met with noted Mohawk diplomat Hendrick, who reported progress in diplomatic talks with the Flathead Indians. After resolving issues with prisoners taken during the fighting, Hendrick shared the Iroquois' intent to make peace with the Flatheads, and hoped the Commissioners "may send a large belt" to help along peace proceedings, a sentiment the Commissioners supported

[341] These Wississachoos were likely Mississauga Indians. Frank Hayward Severance, *An Old Frontier of France: The Niagara Region and Adjacent Lakes Under French Control*, vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1917), 162.
[342] Wraxall, *AIA*, 52.
[343] Wraxall, *AIA*, 64. The exact identity of these Wagunhaes Indians is unclear.

wholeheartedly.[344] As these examples showed, the Iroquois maintained their own diplomatic contacts with other Indian polities, although the Commissioners often found themselves involved as hosts or bearers of gifts and belts.

In sum, both the Iroquois Nations and the Albany Commissioners, despite the special connection between the two, maintained open diplomatic relations with the larger colonial and indigenous world around them outside of New York and the New York/Iroquoian borderlands. Albany's Commissioners often inserted themselves into the Indian affairs of other colonies, and found themselves acting as intermediaries in Indian issues from New England and Virginia, both large and small. They also exercised their office as Indian Commissioners to talk trade and politics with Indian polities as far west as Detroit and far south as South Carolina. The Iroquois, similarly, did not restrict their relationship to just New York. Their leaders met with delegates in Albany as well as the capitals of other colonies, projecting themselves as equals into larger colonial issues. They likewise maintained a web of indigenous political contacts, asserting themselves as a strong player in Indian diplomacy in the northeastern part of the continent. This relatively brief overview exploring these many paths and branches of Commissioner and Iroquois diplomacy helps clarify the true reach of the conversations that happened in and around Albany.

The diplomatic relationship between Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs and the Iroquois Nations was more than a simple binary connection, and instead took shape as a web centered in the New York/Iroquoian borderlands and spreading out over much of the northeastern part of the continent. Their shared influence did not exist in a

[344] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 61.

vacuum. As previous chapters have explored, much of the influence held by the Commissioners and the Iroquois in borderlands diplomacy lay with their special connection with each other. As chapter 1 explores, the Commissioners gained a powerful, nearby ally whose central location, unique political structure, and relatively large population made it a major player in colonial affairs. The Iroquois, as the closest Indian polity of significant size and power, gained access to a stable, established provincial institution that granted them direct access to colonial power structures. This mutual reinforcement, however, did not stay constrained to a closed system restricted to the New York/Iroquoian borderlands. Other colonies turned to the Commissioners to help in their own Indian affairs, and the Commissioners were also able to project their actions and words into these larger spheres. The Iroquois Nations, similarly, utilized their connection to the unique institution to add force to their words, requiring colonial officials in other provinces to come to them at the established place of peace, Albany, to treat on their own terms. Taken together, the Commissioners and Iroquois were able to project their influence over vast geographies due to the special relationship they established in the local borderlands.

Recognition of this pattern underscores the larger idea that centralization of Indian affairs in the northeastern British Empire did not start with the royal appointment of William Johnson in 1755. Although the Commissioners and Iroquois spoke with power in the larger colonial and Indian world, they did not dictate terms or successfully demand concessions. Their strength was influence, not fiat. While their conversations in and around Albany were an important node in this web, it was not a defined center. Other nodes did exist, such as the Iroquois central fire in Onondaga, or the rival French

settlements in Canada. Regardless, the politics and interactions of Indian affairs often flowed like a current through Albany to other British colonies and indigenous polities. Sometimes issues flowed into Albany due to a distant crisis, and other times the flow originated there as the Commissioners or Iroquois placed their strength behind a specific message or plan of action. This chapter has shown how that node of influence was indisputably in existence during the first half of the eighteenth century, during the tenure of the Albany Commissioners and before the rise of William Johnson. While the efficacy of Johnson as a single point of authority for Indian affairs is open for debate, his installation as Superintendent for the northern colonies as a whole did not arise as a radical change from previous decades. As this chapter has shown, Indian affairs across a large geography were already flowing in and out of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. Johnson continued an existing trend – he did not originate it.

British and native settlements were not the only powers in the northeastern part of the continent, of course. French Canada served as a continuous, and oftentimes, ominous presence to those settlers and Indians who lived near its borders. Canada would also serve as a node of influence in the web of influence regarding Indian affairs, and it is to that topic this dissertation now shifts.

CHAPTER 5:

Albany's Indian Diplomacy in a Canadian Context

Several Iroquois visitors from the Onondaga, Cayuga, and Tuscarora nations arrived in Albany in early April 1725 bearing an important message for the Commissioners for Indian Affairs, initiating a conversation that tied together local borderlands diplomacy with the most critical issues of imperial importance between the British colonies and French Canada. The message concerned New York's plans to build a fort at the mouth of the Onondaga River and French attempts to halt it. As these were more western nations, issues concerning French Canada were especially topical to them. Governor William Burnet considered this fort, or trading house, critical to the economic prosperity of the colony since it served as a meeting point for the beaver trade with far western Indian polities, and ideally it would remove that trade from the French economic sphere.[345] The Iroquois messengers passed along the words of the French governor, Philippe de Rigaud, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, who warned the English "to build the fort strong … for he designed to build this spring two vessels at Cadarachqua and a fort at Jagara [Niagara], and when those vessels & fort are built he intended to demolish and destroy it."[346]

The visiting messengers continued on to relate the message of peace the Iroquois shared with the French upon hearing about these aggressive plans. The Iroquois "desired the Governor of Canada to prevent all quarrel & controversy between him and their

[345] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 734.
[346] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 130a. Eccles, *Canadian Frontier*, 137.

Brother Corlaer" and "to live in peace with his neighbors & to use his endeavors to get what beaver & peltry he can without making a war on that occasion." The Iroquois, through these messengers at Albany, also wished the British to halt plans on their new fort so as not to aggravate the French in the first place, ultimately hoping that "neither of you may be the first aggressors, that blood will not be shed among us in our country." The messengers closed their comments by presenting a large belt of wampum and informing the Commissioners that a copy of their propositions and another large belt had been sent up to Canada through French messengers. [347] The Iroquois walked a fine line with this policy, as their independence lay largely on the tenuous balance between French and British empires on the continent.[348] The Commissioners' response, while unfortunately truncated in their manuscript minutes, still gave a sense of what they thought of the Iroquois actions. They found the related course of events "surprising" and "could but wonder that the sachems of the Six Nations suffer themselves to be imposed upon by the French."[349] Clearly, in this case as in many others, Albany's Indian officials disapproved of Iroquois actions outside of their direct supervision and framed the issue in terms of their own priorities. This meeting at Albany, despite its imperial topic, relied upon words and actions of borderlands actors.

More than a simple exchange of dialogue between Indians and colonists in Albany, this meeting represented how borderlands actors in the early eighteenth century played critical roles within the larger processes of imperial rivalry in northeastern North America both as transmitters of information and as decision makers themselves.

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[347] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 130a-131.
[348] Eccles, *Canadian Frontier, 143.*
[349] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 130a-131.

Information critical to British imperial plans on the continent exchanged hands not just in ostentatious, multi-day conferences with New York's governor, but also in the regular day-to-day conduits overseen by Albany's appointed Indian officials. Both the Commissioners and their Iroquois visitors utilized these powerful opportunities to act independently while discussing these imperial affairs, often agreeing but both groups keeping their options open. For example, in the case opening this chapter, the Commissioners derided the Iroquois for their unilateral action, and suggested their own interpretation of events – that the Iroquois and French were not equals, but instead the latter imposed itself on the former. Imperial issues aside, Iroquois diplomatic discussions with French officials cut into the authority of the Commissioners to deal exclusively with the influential Iroquoian polities themselves. The Iroquois diplomats, on the other hand, used these imperial rivalries to pursue their own political ends of maintaining a balance of relationships between the feuding French and English, in this case by acting as political mediators. Their political independence in an increasingly crowded northeastern North America relied upon the maintenance of this balance.[350] Both sides pursued their own priorities, and even the most important issues in the imperial rivalry between British America and French Canada played out in a borderlands context with borderlands actors.

This chapter argues that the Iroquois Nations and the Albany Commissioners fulfilled important roles in imperial issues regarding French Canada despite their residence in the colonial periphery of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. While hardly able to dictate imperial policy with impunity, both sets of actors utilized the power struggle between French and British crowns as a framework to pursue their own ends.

[350] Aquila, *Iroquois Restoration*, 59.

The Commissioners often pursued independent action to facilitate communication and Indian diplomacy, critical aspects of the imperial conflict that not only helped British officials but served to consolidate their own diplomatic authority. At the same time, Iroquois Nations maintained open diplomatic contact with both sides while the Albany Commissioners continuously attempted to stop this balancing.[351] Recognizing the actions of these borderlands actors provides larger imperial processes with a more nuanced context. Imperial level processes appear to be only as broad strokes on the historical canvas unless one understands how individuals living in the affected areas acted and reacted to the decisions and policies made in distant capitals.

First, the chapter explores how both the Iroquois and the Commissioners worked within these larger conflicts to pursue their own actions and priorities. Generally speaking, both groups sought to protect their own interests and influence in the larger borderlands diplomatic world, similar ends that took very different shapes based on individual priorities. As provincial officials with a reach that often extended past local matters, the Albany Commissioners balanced their duty to follow a governor's instructions with their own understanding of how best to proceed in a delicate diplomatic situation. As a result the Commissioners often took initiative on matters both small and large regarding their imperial rival to the north. While these services certainly facilitated British Indian diplomacy, above all the Commissioners sought to protect their role as arbiters of Indian diplomacy, especially relative to the persistent pull of French Canadian influence among the Iroquois. On the other hand, the Iroquois Nations sought to preserve

[351] It is important to stress that the Iroquois Nations did not compose a homogenous political or cultural entity. The western Senecas generally identified most closely with the nearby French while the eastern Mohawks usually maintained closest relations with New York.

their independence outside of colonial power structures in an increasingly binary colonial world. The Iroquois found themselves in an increasingly tenuous situation regarding their political and social sovereignty as the imperial rivalry between the British and French increased in fervor over the eighteenth century. Regardless, individual nations and the League as a whole continued to treat as equals with both Albany's Commissioners and French officials instead of accepting a subordinate position, ultimately seeking to maintain independence and to survive the often tenuous political environment between British and French settlements. Taken together, both sets of actors utilized the structure of conflict and dialogue created by imperial competition to interject their own thoughts and priorities into the larger conversation. The end result was a diplomatic situation where the Commissioners sought to centralize diplomatic power in Albany while the Iroquois, although always cognizant of the importance of that settlement in Indian affairs, sought to keep their options open by maintaining relations with Canada's government and inhabitants.

Second, this chapter suggests how a focus on borderlands actors within the larger British/French struggle uncovers a borderlands "spin" on the larger processes of empire in northeastern North America. While the fate of empires may have lay mostly in broad policy decisions made in European capitals, many participants living in the borderlands regions clearly participated, often for their own reasons. As a result, such research draws a focus onto the borderlands as a necessary context for the playing out of imperial conflict. The British Empire's rivalry with French Canada in North America existed as a multifaceted affair that incorporated geographical, military, cultural, and economic

struggles.[352] These larger trends played out in the proverbial backyards of the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations. More than just a disagreement between two kings over the intangible borders laid on a map, the rivalry between France and Britain in North America incorporated both the peoples and the geography of this borderlands environment, inextricably tying abstract imperial policies with the realities of daily life at the local level. In sum, the conflict between France and Britain in early eighteenth-century America was as much a borderlands affair as an imperial one.

The Commissioners' priorities during the tumultuous decades of the early to mid-eighteenth century dovetailed nicely with the requirements of their office. As influential borderlands diplomats in northeastern North America, Albany's Commissioners often served at the fore of Indian affairs for New York and other colonial interests. While three wars punctuated British/French relations during their tenure – King William's War (1690-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), and King George's War (1744-1748) – tensions remained high even during years of official peace as both the British and French sought to expand territory, increase settlement, and especially maintain good relations with the powerful Iroquois Nations. This last goal proved especially important to the Commissioners both during war and between hostilities. While the maintenance of friendly Iroquois relations undoubtedly served British imperial ends, the Commissioners sought to preserve a privileged relationship with the Iroquois Nations to protect the source of their own influence in the borderlands diplomatic world.

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[352] W.J. Eccles recognizes "four types of frontier" in early Canada: "commercial, religious, settlement, and military." Eccles, *Canadian Frontier*, 2. Although he applies this idea solely to early Canada, the same issues arose under the English colonies as they attempted to gain and maintain control of the northeastern part of North America, and thus this dissertation utilizes a slightly modified form of Eccles' ideas to explore the relationship between the two empires.

By actively and aggressively working against French influence among the Iroquois Nations, Albany's Commissioners simultaneously pursued their own goals as well as those of the larger British Empire. The Commissioners wasted no ink in describing the dangers of having French agents, such as priests, interpreters, and smiths, in Iroquois villages. For example, in May 1708, in the midst of Queen Anne's War, the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, complaining that they found the "Five Nations very cool in their fidelity & truly no wonder since the French are daily with them making their brethren here odious & gaining their affection by gifts & presents."[353] In April 1714, immediately after the war, the Commissioners wrote in a letter to Governor Robert Hunter that "they think the 5 Nations are inclined to the French interest who have their emissaries always amongst them & spare neither for cost or trouble to gain them over." The Commissioners "are afraid [this] will in the end be of dangerous consequence to this government."[354] They added in another letter to Hunter a year later "that unless these practices & intrigues of the French are prevented it will probably end in the ruin of this country."[355] As late in their lifetime as 1743, on the cusp of yet another war, the Commissioners still faced what they perceived as French encroachments on the Senecas. According to one description by Peter Wraxall, they "are of late by the intrigues & management of the French become the most wavering," with

[353] Wraxall, *AIA*, 55. Wraxall's entry for this letter includes "[French]" in square brackets before "Five Nations," ostensibly placed there by Wraxall himself. Perhaps this was his attempt to specify the Senecas and Cayugas, the western-most Iroquois nations and that with the closest relations with the French in Canada, in his mind the "French Five Nations."
[354] Wraxall, *AIA*, 98.
[355] Wraxall, *AIA*, 103.

"fatal consequences that would be not only to this but to all the northern colonies."[356] Clearly, Albany's Commissioners dreaded any French influence on the Iroquois Nations. While they used language decrying the imminent danger to New York and other colonies to justify their words, French involvement in Iroquois affairs likewise attacked their own base of influence in borderlands affairs. The Commissioners expressed worry, at least in part, for their own interests.

Royal officials wholeheartedly agreed with the importance of separating Iroquois and French interests, not because it would benefit the Albany Commissioners but for the safety of their North American empire. As early as 1696 the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations received reports that "it is highly our interest to keep [the 5 Nations'] friendship, which must be done by making them present ever and anon." Additionally, "it is necessary to have an appearance of strength upon the place, and to have wooden forts advanced as far as may be on our frontiers." Unfortunately, at this time, "the French do appear to have them stronger than we."[357] Such thoughts carried on into the early eighteenth century. Secretary George Clarke, writing while Governor Hunter was away working with his Palatine settlers, drafted a letter to the Lords of Trade in 1711. He stressed that "[t]he Governor of Canada has lately sent to our Five Nations some officers and soldiers with a large present … to the value of about six hundred pounds," a dangerous course of events considering the gift was "mostly in ammunition."[358] In 1727, during a time of official peace between Britain and France, the Lords of Trade wrote to

[356] Wraxall, *AIA*, 232. New York officials were never able to convince Seneca villages to completely remove French traders and priests. Kurt A. Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration, 1715-1754: An Iroquois Local Political Economy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 83.
[357] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 181.
[358] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 237.

the Duke of Newcastle passing along a letter from New York. The Lords disapproved of Canada's recent erection of Fort Niagara on Iroquois land. Not only was this development "directly contrary to the sense of the Treaty of Utrecht [and] highly detrimental to His Majesty's Rights," they "look[ed] upon this to be a matter of very great consequence to the British Interest in America."[359] Royal officials obviously realized the importance of Iroquois fidelity in the larger British/French continental struggle, and viewed French involvement with the Six Nations as encroachments on Britain's colonial security. Albany's Commissioners furthered these imperial ends when they opposed the French presence among the Iroquois Nations to protect their own borderlands influence.

Albany's Commissioners determinedly pursued several methods to check French influence among the Iroquois Nations, including openly and bluntly dictating terms to visiting Iroquois diplomats about French visitors living among them. For example, Commissioner Peter Schuyler addressed visiting Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga sachems in Albany in August 1720. No sachem from the Senecas arrived due to influence from French officials, a somewhat expected development given their close geographic proximity. Schuyler told the four visitors "he was surprised the Senecas would listen to & be influenced by such lies from the French & that the frequent experience they have had of their falsehood out to arm them with such distrust & disdain." He asserted "that it cannot be suffered that [the French] should make such

[359] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 845-6. French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, initially erected a fort at Niagara in 1679. French forces rebuilt it in the 1720s. Francis Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 174, 299.

encroachments."[360] In June 1723 "many of the sachems of the Six Nations" met with the Commissioners to discuss the recurrent topic of French settlers in Iroquois villages. The Commissioners reminded the delegates that they previously promised they "would not correspond with the French of Canada but adhere & cleave strongly to the English." However, "you have not been sincere in your promises and engagements in this respect," they accused, "since we have received an account that you have harbored Jean Coeur the French interpreter in one of your castles all last winter and have consented that he might build a trading house." Predicting doom if the Iroquois pursued their actions, the Commissioners foretold that "when this house is built the French will soon turn it into a fort," and "make themselves master of all your country." Ultimately, the Commissioners reminded the visiting Iroquois leaders that they "require you not to suffer the French to make any settlement in your country nor let any come among you who only breed division," and "give them positive notice to take that house away and to come no more into your country."[361] Such warnings failed to influence Iroquois sachems. Two years later, in February 1724/25, the Commissioners reported to Governor Burnet that they received a letter from an official "out of the Senecas country" that Jean Coeur and four other men continued to live among the Senecas and would be moving to Niagara shortly.[362] In this example, not only would a French trading house divert the fur trade profitable to many of the Commissioners, but it would have served as a disruptive political influence and reduce the Commissioners' sway in Iroquois circles. In addition,

[360] Wraxall, *AIA*, 129.
[361] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 40-41.
[362] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 111.

it served as an excellent example of how issues of imperial expansion and rivalry depended on local borderlands communications networks.

In other cases, the Commissioners assigned messengers and interpreters to deliver these strongly worded admonitions to Iroquois towns found maintaining diplomatic contact with French officials. In February 1725/26 the Albany Commissioners drafted instructions for messenger and interpreter Laurence Claessen on his upcoming visit into Iroquoia. Among his other instructions, Claessen was to firmly link the issues of import to the Iroquois – in this case, rum traders – with a declaration that "in the meantime it's expected that they and their young men will behave themselves … and not allow any French to reside in any of their castles," assigning a belt of wampum to underscore the importance of this message. Just a month later Claessen returned, reporting that he found "a French smith with his wife and children, an assistant & three French men as residents" among the Senecas, and that he had heard news "by a trusty Indian" that the French had received permission from the Onondagas to build a trading house nearby.[363] This news worried the Commissioners so much that they immediately drafted a letter to the governor, complaining how dangerous it would be if "no care be taken to prevent the French to reside among our Indians," hoping that he would address the provincial Assembly to raise funds for these ends. Otherwise, "it appears plain to us that the French get daily more footing and our interest decreases which at least may end in our destruction."[364] The term "our destruction" clearly referred to the security of the colony as a whole, a danger the Commissioners framed specifically for maximum attention by New York's governor. The French were not just imperial rivals to the British, however,

[363] Wraxall, *AIA*, 162-3.
[364] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 124-124a.

but borderlands rivals to the Albany Commissioners as well, and any influence gained by the French led to decreased influence in Albany. In another example, in November 1730, interpreter Lawrence Claessen returned to Albany after visiting Onondaga. He informed the Commissioners that the Fox Indians sent a message to the Senecas, which they then forwarded to the Governor of Canada. The Commissioners immediately drafted a letter to a small group of Englishmen then living in Seneca country to rebuke the Senecas for not passing the message to New York instead of Canada, calling the Senecas "much wanting in their duty."[365] As these two peacetime examples indicate, the Commissioners worried about French encroachments even during years of peace between the French and British crowns.

Catholic Jesuits dispatched by the French government served as an especially pernicious threat to Iroquois allegiance due to the powerful conversion possibility of Roman Catholicism. The local activities of Jesuits created concern for even government officials across the Atlantic in England. In a letter to Governor Hunter in 1715, the Lords of Trade recognized the need for Protestant missionaries among the Iroquois, "without which it will be impossible to defeat the practice of the French Priests and Jesuits amongst our Indians."[366] The Commissioners likewise feared the black robed missionaries. In January 1704/5 the Commissioners learned from a messenger that "ambassadors from Canada had only been in the Senecas country & left a priest there," a worrying sign.[367] In June 1706 a messenger dispatched to the Senecas reported back that "amongst the Cayuga Nation he found the Majority inclined to receive a French Priest

[365] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 329-330a.
[366] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 421.
[367] Wraxall, *AIA*, 43.

among them," and that "the Senecas and Onondagas each had one, & that unless proper persons were sent to reside amongst the 5 Nations they would all probably receive French Priests."[368] Two years later another messenger informed the Commissioners "that the French Jesuit in Onondaga hath a considerable store of goods which he daily distributes to the Indians to gain their affection."[369] Religious affiliation strengthened existing political and economic ties, making conversion to Catholicism one more threat to the Commissioners' influence in borderlands diplomacy. New York's missionary response to this French Catholic expansion lagged far behind, and usually reached only the nearby Mohawk.[370] In one case in June 1739, the Commissioners wrote to Reverend Henry Barclay, missionary to the Mohawks around Fort Hunter, asking him to dispatch Iroquois messengers to the French at Crown Point and warn them away from British land.[371] In any case, Albany's Commissioners had to worry not just about the invasion of French traders and blacksmiths, but the "invasion within" that came with French missionaries.[372] Clearly, as these examples show, French priests supplied a persistent threat both during wartime and peace. As anthropologist Kurt Jordan notes, Jesuit missionaries provided "a time-tested strategy for obtaining Native allegiance."[373]

French smiths served as another dangerous encroaching force on Iroquois villages, especially the western Senecas already prone to accepting French influence.

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[368] Wraxall, *AIA*, 46.
[369] Wraxall, *AIA*, 55.
[370] See: John Wolfe Lydekker, *The Faithful Mohawks* (Port Washington: Ira J. Friedman, Inc., 1968), especially chapter 2, "The First Decade, 1704-1713."
[371] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 166a-167a. For more information on Barclay, see: Lydekker, *Faithful Mohawks*, 53-61.
[372] "Invasion Within" is a term coined by ethnohistorian James Axtell, referring to the cultural colonization of Indian peoples through religion. For a detailed exploration of the success of French priests among indigenous polities in and around Canada during the colonial period, see: Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Conquest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[373] Jordan, *Seneca Restoration*, 60-1.

Smiths were of major importance to Iroquois villages due to the significance of firearms in indigenous societies, having been part of Iroquoian societies since the earliest Dutch settlers arrived in the area.[374] French smiths lived in Iroquois villages over the course of the first half of the eighteenth century, eliciting the ire of the Commissioners. In June 1715 the Commissioners complained that "it will be certain means to destroy that superior influence which we have so long held over the 5 Nations," if Canada's government continued to "settle smiths among them."[375] Anthropologist Kurt Jordan notes that a "French smith and his family frequently were reported among the Senecas during 1726-1744,"[376] underscoring the concern that Commissioners showed regarding French smiths as a pernicious form of encroachment during most of their lifetime as an institution. As with religion, the maintenance of a positive trade relationship, including supplying necessary blacksmiths, served as a powerful context to positive diplomatic relations between colonial and Iroquois societies.

Albany's Commissioners relied upon a borderlands network of voluntary messengers and paid spies and informants to remain abreast of French machinations among the Iroquois. These messengers were often Indians who had traveled near areas of French activity, and the Commissioners were happy to hear any news that travelers brought them unsolicited. For example, in May 1709 "Three Onondaga Indians" reported that "Montour the Indian in company with 10 sachems of the Far Nations met with the

[374] Historian Roger Carpenter notes that "[f]ar more than any other form of European technology firearms changed Iroquoian warfare … acquir[ing] a degree of skill in handling them that sometimes surpassed that of Europeans." Roger Carpenter, "Making War More Lethal: Iroquois vs. Huron in the Great Lakes Region, 1609-1650," *Michigan Historical Review* 27:3 (Fall, 2001): 40, 44.
[375] Wraxall, *AIA*, 104.
[376] Jordan, *Seneca Restoration*, 81.

French Interpreter called [Jean Coeur] & some French men … opposite Cayuga."[377] In June 1715 two Mohawk sachems arrived in Albany "to acquaint the Commissioners that Monsieur Longeville was at the mouth of the Onondaga River with 9 canoes of people," noting that "we are come to tell you this because you may now prevent it."[378] Such a warning made sense, as the Mohawks always allied more closely to the British than their far western Seneca brethren who remained more firmly in the French orbit. In March 1724/5 the Commissioners met with Mohawk sachems from Caugnawaga and another polity to discuss issues related to Canada.[379] The Commissioners assured the visitors that the governor would "be glad for the intelligence you brought," giving a belt of wampum as thanks.[380] The visitors offered critical knowledge at that meeting, informing the Commissioners that "the governor of Canada has about two months ago sent carpenters … to build two vessels … who are continually to be employed to bring beavers & skins," to French contacts.[381] This alarmed the Commissioners so much that they immediately drafted a letter to the governor a month before the Iroquois brought the message to Albany with their own ultimatums. In another case from May 1734, the Commissioners "this day received a letter from the Mohawk sachems of [Canajoharie] … whereby they set forth the dangerous apprehension they have of being attacked by the French and their

[377] Wraxall, *AIA*, 65. Interestingly, "[Jean Coeur]," otherwise known as Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire, learned the Seneca language as a captive. Jennings, et al., eds., *History and Culture of Iroquois* Diplomacy, 233.
[378] Wraxall, *AIA*, 104.
[379] The second name in the minutes is illegible, but the first, [Caughnawaga], was an "Iroquois village (primarily Mohawk) established as a Jesuit mission in 1676 ... Near Montreal," also known as Kahnawake. Jennings, et al., eds., *History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 217. This suggests the second group was also from a French praying town.
[380] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 129a.
[381] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 130. Iroquois messengers brought the same intelligence approximately a month later, as explored in this chapter's opening vignette.

Indians," prompting the body to once again draft a letter to the governor.[382] The tension between French Canada and the more Anglo-centric Mohawks was a common theme in borderlands diplomacy. The Commissioners tapped into the stories and news of indigenous travelers visiting Albany to gain vital information regarding the French, relying upon sources from both the Iroquois Nations and beyond.

Albany's Commissioners also took the initiative by sending their own feelers into the borderlands world to gather information and report back with this critical knowledge instead of waiting for news to filter down to Albany with indigenous visitors. As early as August 1708 the Commissioners hoped visiting sachems from the Five Nations "would choose out some brisk young men from each Nation to go as spies to Canada."[383] Several months later, Laurence Claessen reported back to the Commissioners in March 1708/9 after having "been amongst the 5 Nations for some months past." Claessen described in part "that there are 5 French Priests … who daily give great presents to the Indians to debauch them from their covenant with us," as well as noting that "there is a French smith in the Senecas country who works for the Indians gratis."[384] The Senecas, as the closest Iroquois neighbors to French Canada, received the lion's share of this French attention. In another example, in June 1709, the Commissioners met with two Indians, sent by Commissioners Kiliaen van Rensselaer and Robert Livingston, as "spies to Canada" under the cover story of coming to "fetch beavers." The two agents held instructions to "view what quantity of great guns there was" near the French governor's

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[382] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 53.
[383] Wraxall, *AIA,* 59. The visiting sachems used the Commissioners' desire for spies as diplomatic leverage to pursue one of their own goals. They responded "that when they had an answer to their proposals about his Excellency's coming up [to Iroquoia] they would answer about their sending spies to Canada." Wraxall, *AIA*, 60.
[384] Wraxall, *AIA*, 64.

house, and also reported back on troop numbers ("no more than at other times, that is, many officers but few soldiers") and forts ("[i]n Chambly Fort were two great guns and three [smaller cannons]"). They also brought warning of "a considerable party are gone out against New England."[385] Governor Hunter utilized this information in a letter to the Lords of Trade in July 1710, crediting "our spies" for information regarding "a stone fort at Chamblis" and "some small parties of [French] Indians toward the frontiers of New England."[386] The Commissioners heard back from Thomas Wildman in January 1716/17, "who was sent to Onondaga as a spy upon the motions of the French" while performing other diplomatic duties.[387] In December 1732 the Commissioners thanked another informant, stating that they were "pleased with the information" received about French forces, desiring "that you will observe their motions and if anything be contrived by them about his Majesty's interest that you will oppose it to the utmost of your power and acquaint us with it."[388] Several years later the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor William Cosby in April 1739 informing him of intelligence recently acquired by their messengers regarding "the designs of the French."[389] Sometimes these informants were Indians. For example, in October 1723, the Commissioners noted in their minutes that "for some time past no Indians had been here from Canada as usual,"

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[385] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 85-6.
[386] *NYCD*, vol. 5, 168.
[387] Wraxall, *AIA,* 117. This Thomas Wildman was possibly the same Wildman described as "of New York in America[,] tallow chandler" in an affidavit in December 1730. *NYCD*, vol. 5, 916-7. He returned with the news that Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire "had introduced a little son of his to the Indians in the Senecas' country & desired their protection & favor for him & that after his death this son might be received amongst them in the same friendly manner as he himself had ever been." Wraxall, *AIA*, 117. His son, Phillipe-Thomas, continued the family tradition of being a thorn in the side of British Indian officials even after the shift from the Albany Commissioners to William Johnson. In a letter to New York Governor George Clinton in 1750, William Johnson referred to this younger "Jean Coeur" as "a French interpreter, a noted man among the Indians." *NYCD*, vol. 6, 589.
[388] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 24.
[389] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 37.

and thus "it is thought best by this board six Indians be sent to Canada to observe the motions" of French allied Indians.[390] Albany's Commissioners did not hesitate to create their own information networks when information did not filter to them through the normal web of borderlands information gathering and transmission. The survival of New York, as well as their own privileged position in Indian affairs, relied upon this up-to-date intelligence. Clearly, Albany's Commissioners knew how to find information on their own initiative.

Albany's Commissioners were not above utilizing informants and spies to gather information regarding their allies, the Iroquois Nations, in their relationship with the French Canadians. For example, in June 1734, the Commissioners instructed Laurence Claessen to travel to Onondaga and observe a general meeting of the Six Nations. In addition to expressing disapproval "that they have not acquainted us their brethren therewith, which surprises us very much," Claessen was to "take all diligent care and inspection what the said Six Nations shall discourse of … and in case anything should be proposed in their meetings or elsewhere prejudicial to the interest of the Crown of Great Britain, you are to use your utmost endeavor to prevent the same from taking effect." Of course, Claessen was to ultimately "give an account to us of whatever you hear or act herein."[391] While the Commissioners did not mention the French specifically it was clear that the Commissioners feared what the Iroquois might decide regarding Canadian influence.[392] Clearly the Commissioners had no reservations about covertly observing

[390] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 58a.
[391] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 54.
[392] In Wraxall's abbreviated entry for this same meeting, he added a note that "such a neglect of the Indians is always a sign of the prevalence of the French interest & the weakness of ours." Wraxall, *AIA*, 190n. Not only was this a jab at the Commissioners as an institution, but supports the idea that it was the "French interest" on the forefront of the Commissioners' minds.

their allies and enemies whenever there was hint of an encroaching sway of French Canada, during both wartime and peace.

These communication lines brought word of French plots, both real and imagined, that irked the Commissioners and provided a continuous threat to their role as primary diplomatic contact for the Iroquois Nations. The Commissioners passed along word of a believable French plot against the governor in October 1723. During a period of increased Indian violence in and around New England in the early 1720s, the Commissioners complained to the governor that "the French now have their aim in our Indians going to war against the Eastern Indians," with the ultimate intention that these "far Indians will not come to trade with the inhabitants of this province during such war."[393] This would harm not just the province's economic health but that of the Commissioners themselves as well. Other plots seem less realistic to modern observers but still piqued Iroquois concern, enough to communicate them to the Commissioners. In March 1708/9 Laurence Claessen reported that a "French captain" had told the Senecas that "the Queen of Great Britain had desired the French King to join with her & to cut off the 5 Nations & settle their land." Additionally, the French official stated that the English would purposely keep powder and lead from Iroquois traders, and "that the General Assembly which sat at New York every year were consulting on methods to destroy them." No such collaboration between French and English crowns existed, of course, but according to Claessen, "these insinuations had such effects upon the 5 Nations that the interpreter could not persuade them … to the contrary."[394]

[393] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 62. See this dissertation's fourth chapter for more information regarding the Commissioners' close relations to New England Indian affairs.
[394] Wraxall*, AIA,* 63.

Understandably, Albany's Commissioners sought to nullify any French intrusions that threatened their political and economic well-being relative to the Iroquois Nations.

In sum, Albany's Indian Commissioners, in their push to protect their interests as primary diplomatic arbiters with the powerful Iroquois Nations, also pursued overall British aims to stymie French strength in Canada during the first half of the eighteenth century. Albany's Commissioners interacted with the Five Nations in the contexts of borderlands, provincial, and intercolonial matters, always seeking to solidify their position relative to French diplomats. Likewise, the Commissioners sent spies into Iroquoia and Canada, decried the influence of Jesuits and French smiths, and openly admonished Iroquois leaders for dealing with French officials. While serving the greater good as protectors of provincial New York as well as larger imperial British interests, the Commissioners also sheltered their own priorities of political and economic clout among the Iroquois. These ends could be achieved only through a reduction of French influence among those same Iroquois polities. All of these actions were designed to centralize Indian diplomacy in Albany by cutting out the potentially counter-balancing effects of Quebec and Montreal. Clearly, these imperial processes played out in the borderlands realm and with the cooperation of borderlands denizens.

The Iroquois Nations likewise pursued their own priorities relative to French Canada that occurred within the larger imperial struggle on the continent. The Iroquois were well aware of the growing tensions between French and British settlements in northeastern North America over the course of the eighteenth century, and they realized that their best chance for a strong future lay in maintaining their sovereignty between the

two growing empires instead of choosing an exclusive alliance with just one.[395] The Iroquois Nations undoubtedly recognized Albany's importance in borderlands diplomacy, especially regarding their usefulness as a portal to New York and British power networks, but their long-term survival would depend on also keeping their options open with the French in Canada. In doing so the Iroquois utilized the larger framework of Britain and France's imperial rivalry as a way to maintain diplomatic and political independence, and as a result, their borderlands influence. Decentralization, not the centralization of the Albany Commissioners, was their priority.

The Iroquois Nations well understood the larger imperial struggle going on around them in northeastern North America as well as their critical role in it. The Commissioners' minutes recorded many examples of Iroquois diplomats and sachems speaking directly to matters relevant to imperial and European developments and recognizing their own important place in these larger issues. This awareness persisted over the course of the first half of the eighteenth century. For example, in August 1700 and during Queen Anne's War, several Onondaga sachems desired that "our Brother Corlaer will write to the Great King of England, that the limits & bounds may be established between us and the French of Canada."[396] In this case the Onondaga sachems shrewdly utilized connections to imperial government to pursue their own ends. Just a year later, in July 1701, a group of Iroquois diplomats continued their complaints about French encroachments, "pray[ing] the Great King of England may be acquainted with it,"

[395] Aquila, *Iroquois Restoration*, 69. Aquila notes that, among other, internal changes to the Five Nations, they "followed a policy of neutrality toward the English and French and tried to use both European powers to further their own interests." Aquila, *Iroquois Restoration*, 16. That being said, individual nations and villages often pursued their own policies leaning one way or the other, such as the Senecas accepting French smiths. Jordan, *Seneca Restoration*, 81.
[396] Wraxall*, AIA,* 37.

going as far as to suggest that Commissioner Robert Livingston be sent to carry the message.[397] In another example, Iroquois delegates met with the Commissioners and visiting Boston Indian commissioners in Albany during the fall of 1723 concerning a recent rise of Indian violence in New England.[398] Addressing the diverse audience, one Iroquois delegate stated that they hoped the British officials would "acquaint the kings of Great Britain and France what flame is kindled by reason of this Indian war." He advised the crowns that it "is not reasonable they should suffer any of their plantations to be in war and they at the same time in peace in Europe," ultimately hoping that "they might [speedily] order that this war should cease."[399] Such an example shows the awareness of Iroquois leaders in borderlands affairs, and the "proxy" role the New England conflict played in the larger French/British framework. Additionally, in these brief statements the Iroquois leaders projected their importance into larger European affairs, venturing to speak almost directly to the heads of two vast and powerful empires. Thus their words showed an understanding of events even outside the immediate borderlands area. More so, they were statements of sovereignty and importance. The Iroquois Nations were able to speak thusly because they potentially held the balance between the two empires.

The Iroquois Nations pursued open diplomatic relations with French Canada in a deliberate plan to keep as many options open as possible regarding long term stability on the continent. In doing so they fostered a relationship with Albany's Commissioners that, while always respectful, jealously guarded Iroquois rights as individual nations and as a

[397] Wraxall, *AIA*, 39-40. Iroquois Nations regularly asked the Commissioners or other officials they encountered about how the British Crown reacted to the persistent French threat. For example, in 1696, one "of the fighting captains of Oneida" spoke with Governor Hunter, and was "desirous to see if the Great King of Britain fights the French as it was reported at Albany." *NYCD*, vol. 4, 233.
[398] See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the links between the Iroquois, the Commissioners, and other British colonies.
[399] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 59-59a.

confederacy to deal openly with French Canada at will. This behavior continued unabated over the course of the Commissioners' lifetime. Iroquois leaders were well aware that their independent diplomatic actions violated the strict rules Albany's Commissioners sought to impose upon them. For example, in August 1694, Iroquois messengers shared their dissatisfaction at how the English colonies treated the war effort against Canada during King William's War. They openly admitted to initiating their own talks with the French against Albany's orders. "We have been disobedient to your commands in going to Canada to treat with the French," they stated, but were unapologetic. They explained that they sought to protect their own interests, "and thought because our brethren of New England had treated with the enemy the French to the eastward, we might go & see whether any peace or treaty was concluded to our prejudice."[400] Such a bold statement underscored how the Iroquois viewed their place in the larger imperial diplomatic environment. They thought, in this case, if New England's colonies could deal diplomatically with the French, why could not they?

Often the Iroquois sent diplomats to the French without telling New Yorkers until after their diplomatic plans were well underway. For example, in early February 1698/99, an Onondaga and an Oneida sachem arrived in Albany and "informed the Commissioners that an Onondaga Indian had been to Canada to see his Father." The two diplomats told the Commissioners that the Iroquois had learned about some Iroquois prisoners detained there and communicated this information back to their sachems, "who resolved to send a deputation to the governor of Canada with belts of wampum in the name of the Seneca, Onondaga, Oneida, and Cayuga Nations." They had deliberately

[400] Wraxall, *AIA*, 25.

withheld their designs from the Mohawks or any "Christians of this government," most likely to preclude any interference by the Commissioners in what the Iroquois saw as a diplomatic concern outside of their purview. This was a wise move on their part, as the Mohawks maintained the closest relationship to the British colonies. Upon hearing of these plans the Commissioners "resolved to send immediately some of their body to Onondaga to stop this embassy … and if the embassy was set out to send after & bring them back."[401] This chapter's opening vignette serves as another example of Iroquois diplomatic independence regarding the French. Clearly, Iroquois leaders jealously guarded their prerogative of open diplomacy and understood the nuanced borderlands diplomatic realm well enough to avoid any potential obstacles when an important issue was at hand. In June 1699 Iroquois delegates addressed the Commissioners, accusing that "you told us yesterday that you had shut up the path to Canada from all the 5 Nations, we are glad of it, but let it be also shut up to the brethren of this Government."[402] While this meeting's record exists only in a much abbreviated entry in Wraxall's journal one can still sense the sarcasm and annoyance of the Iroquois diplomats as they faced the Commissioners' double standards for diplomatic conduct. In their view, if the English could interact with the French diplomatically then they, as equals, should be able to do so as well. Overall, Iroquois diplomats, while always polite and following the norms of borderlands diplomacy, rarely failed to call out failure and hypocrisy when they witnessed it.

[401] Wraxall, *AIA*, 32. The Commissioners would later "severely reproach them for going to Canada last winter contrary to their faith & promise." Wraxall, *AIA*, 32.
[402] Wraxall, *AIA*, 32.

Just because the Iroquois often jealously guarded their right to deal independently with French Canada diplomatically did not mean that they always excluded the Commissioners from their conversations with the French and allied Indians. At many times during the early eighteenth century Iroquois leaders saw fit to request delegates from Albany to provide insight or input into specific situations. For example, in December 1704 the Commissioners received a message from the Iroquois that "a French man & an Indian" arrived in Iroquoia and sought an audience with Iroquois leaders at Onondaga. The Confederacy's leadership "deferred that meeting until they had acquainted their brethren of Albany with it, that they might send up some of their body to be present at it." Predictably, the Commissioners immediately "agreed to dispatch two or three persons thither with proper instructions for their behavior."[403] The exact reason why the Iroquois sought the Commissioners' participation is unclear in this case, as the only record for this meeting exists in Wraxall's abbreviated journal. Perhaps they were trying to maintain diplomatic balance. A clearer example arose six months later when the Commissioners received a message from the Senecas at the end of May. The visitors reported "that 4 nations of the far Indians have taken up the hatchet against the 5 Nations," and after organizing a meeting they "desire the Commissioners to send deputies thither to consult for the preservation of their country & the good of the province."[404] The Senecas traditionally turned to French Canada for missionaries, smiths, and other help. However, they sought input from the Commissioners when faced with the threat of an invading enemy. The Commissioners dispatched Lawrence Claessen to investigate.

[403] Wraxall, *AIA*, 42.
[404] Wraxall, *AIA*, 44.

Iroquois delegates pulled no punches when faced with the Commissioners' disapproval of their actions, defiantly justifying their actions based on their own needs. At a meeting between the two groups in August 1706 representatives from the Iroquois Nations "acquaint[ed] the Commissioners of sundry matters relating to their own wars & alliances," boldly noting that "they have also sent to acquaint the French & to desire their advice as they now do [the Commissioners']." After this de facto assertion of diplomatic independence they reminded the Commissioners of their own shortcomings. Although Iroquois leaders had often requested a blacksmith "to be fixed at Onondaga whom they will satisfy for his labor, yet they can get none sent to them." As a result, "the French are daily offering them their people," and unless the Commissioners "send them an interpreter & such people as they want amongst them" then New York's officials "must not blame them if they take men from the French." The Iroquois delegates thus unabashedly placed the blame for what the Commissioners viewed as improper behavior back on the Commissioners themselves. Predictably the Commissioners responded that the Iroquois Nations "do very ill to consult with the governor of Canada upon their affairs," an impotent reprimand given how well the Iroquois balanced the two imperial powers off one another.[405] Iroquois leaders also did not blanch at calling out the Commissioners for their diplomatic hypocrisy.

One Iroquois diplomatic meeting in May 1714 especially highlighted how jealously the Five Nations guarded their ability to deal with Canada as equals. The Commissioners received news that "there was very speedily to be a general meeting at Onondaga of the 5 Nations & all the Indians bordering upon New Jersey, Pennsylvania,

[405] Wraxall, *AIA*, 47.

Virginia & Maryland." Interestingly, this meeting "was designed to be so secret that if any person divulged it they were to suffer death." The Commissioners utilized Mohawk sachem Hendrick who promised to attend the meeting and report back to Albany with news of what he saw. Upon his return, Hendrick debriefed the Commissioners, that "it had been agreed that some of [the Iroquois] sachems should go to the governor of Canada with 10 belts of wampum" and propose that he could visit the Iroquois when he wanted to speak, and they would visit him when they had a message to pass along. The meeting closed, according to Hendrick, with a message to the French of the "openness & sincerity that may govern [their] mutual correspondence, be [they] persuaded of our friendship & fidelity, let us pass freely to & from each other's country." Predictably, the Commissioners quickly passed this news along to Governor Hunter. [406] This meeting, although explored second hand through Hendrick, indicated the secrecy Iroquois leaders attached to the sensitive balance they maintained between British and French colonies. They knew Albany's Commissioners would seek to intervene if they found out before the meeting took place. French officials clearly took the Iroquois up on this offer, as the Commissioners learned approximately a year later, in June 1715, that "the Governor of Montreal was met in his way to Onondaga with great presents for the Indians, two interpreters, along with him & a smith to be settled in the Seneca's country." This case of open French/Iroquois diplomacy worried the Commissioners enough that "they hope as the [General] Assembly are now sitting they will provide sufficient funds for the

[406] Wraxall, *AIA*, 97-8. Hunter, in a letter to the home government in July 1715, stressed how meetings such as these bode ill for the British colonies. "The French are debauching our Five Nations," he explained, highlighting an example of how tensions between British colonies and French Canada, with the Iroquois between them, remained high even during peacetime. *NYCD*, vol. 5, 415.

support of the Indian Affairs."[407] The French of Canada remained the highest threat to the Seneca nation specifically due to their geographic proximity.

In another example, this time at the end of December 1731, the Iroquois did not even inform the Commissioners of their diplomatic activities. The Commissioners noted on Christmas Eve that they "lately received information that some sachems of the Six Nations have been at Canada last fall when the governor there showed them a large belt … and enjoined them to go home and tell the [other nations] to send him delegates of each nation within two months to treat with him." To the Commissioners' alarm the Onondagas had planned a "general meeting within a few days" and had already sent wampum to the other nations requesting their presence. The Commissioners quickly dispatched Laurence Claessen, as they had done many times in the past, in an attempt to contain these diplomatic goings-on outside of their purview.[408] While the Iroquois Nations certainly respected Albany's Commissioners as important contacts they clearly saw no need to limit their own diplomatic activities as a result. In another case, in September 1739 a deputation of Mohawks arrived in Albany to follow up on some intelligence they had brought down earlier that year about French plans to build an unwanted settlement at Wood Creek. The Mohawks reported that they had yet to receive word from the Canadian governor regarding the issue but expected news in the near future, happily keeping the Commissioners appraised of their diplomatic relations with the French in this case.[409] Once again, Iroquois leaders welcomed Albany's involvement when they required support for their own ends. Regardless of the reasons surrounding

[407] Wraxall, *AIA,* 103-4.
[408] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 351a-352.
[409] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 172a-173a.

any specific example, Iroquois diplomats purposely chose when to include the Commissioners and when to exclude them based on what they required at any given point. As such, the occasions when an Iroquois Nation sought to exclude the Commissioners were not examples of standoffish behavior but instead shrewd diplomatic decision making.

In sum, the actions of the Iroquois Nations regarding their relationship with French Canada stood in stark contrast to those of the Albany Commissioners, and persisted from the 1690s to the early 1740s. The Iroquois Nations sought to maintain the option of treating with Canada at their will, often telling the Commissioners about their meetings and decisions afterwards and sometimes not at all. Iroquois delegates unabashedly informed the Commissioners and other officials that they were independent actors in this borderlands diplomatic scene, and called out the Albany representatives when they witnessed poor diplomatic behavior or hypocrisy. However, the Iroquois were happy to seek the Commissioners' input into their relations with the French when it served their own interests. In any case, the Iroquois Nations purposely utilized the larger conflict between the British and French empires in northeastern North America as a framework to maintain their own political and diplomatic independence. Just like the Commissioners, the Iroquois did not exist as passive mannequins as the imperial struggle on the continent played out around them in their proverbial backyard. Instead, they participated to achieve their own objectives.

Clearly, as this chapter has shown, the imperial rivalry between the French in Canada and the British colonies along the Atlantic seaboard existed as both an imperial and a borderlands affair. The conflict between the British and French empires provided a

larger framework for borderlands denizens, such as the Albany Commissioners and Iroquois Nations, to pursue objectives directly related to their own interests. By seeking to reduce contact between French and Iroquois diplomats, the Commissioners not only served imperial ends but also sought to protect the privileged relationship that granted them such extensive borderlands influence. For the Albany Commissioners, centralization was the goal. Iroquois Nations, on the other hand, both individually and cooperatively, pursued a diplomatic landscape of decentralization. By maintaining friendly or neutral contact with both empires they increased their chances to successfully navigate a turbulent colonial and borderlands environment. Recognizing these borderlands actors underscores the critical idea that the British/French imperial struggle had a borderlands element and played out, at least partially, in the words and activities of borderlands denizens.

While lines on a map may have indicated ideal notions of European ownership and authority, the reality of a massive geographic landscape necessitated differing yet complementary methods of extending imperial influence into the continent's interior. Both the French and the English needed specific policies to pursue and enforce their abstract decrees of geographic ownership, and those policies played out in a borderlands context. For example, as historian W.J. Eccles notes, "missionary activity, commerce, and imperialism inevitably became closely intertwined, as all three depended on the Indians to achieve their aims."[410] To this one can add the vital services of Albany's Commissioners, at least when it came to British imperial policies. Where armies could not conquer, binding an Indian polity to a trade relationship, or attaching it to one's

[410] Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier,* 7.

empire through the cultural connection of religion, could provide alternate routes toward European influence and control. The push for continental control during the early decades of the century thus consisted of many diverse and smaller thrusts rather than any single dominant plan or policy. Many of interactions took place in the local borderlands environment around New York and Iroquoia over the course of the early eighteenth century, and thus an understanding of the fundamental imperial struggle of borders and authority between French Canada and the British colonies necessitates a look at peoples and events of the borderlands world during this time.

Trade relations, for example, critical binding ties between European economies and indigenous polities, played out partially in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. New York's history lay in Dutch trading relationships of seventeenth century New Netherland, special and powerful ties that early English governors such as Edmund Andros and Thomas Dongan utilized to expand England's sphere of influence on the continent. This "early English Empire in New York was a limited empire in which trade, not territorial gain, served as the principal focus."[411] Albany's fur trade, partnered with the Iroquois Nations as procurers and intermediaries, flourished in the later decades of the seventeenth century. Although slowing down at the turn of the eighteenth century, "the amount of furs purchased annually from the Indians or French smugglers cannot be considered insignificant."[412] Between 1700 and 1745, the total value of beaver exported to London from New York usually hovered between approximately £1000 and £2500 annually and normally maintained a rate of between 10 percent and 30 percent value of total exports to

[411] MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 15.
[412] Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 100-1.

London.[413] By maintaining this positive trading relationship, British New York not only maintained friendly relations with the Iroquois Confederacy but also precluded a profitable trade from falling into the hands of French officials at Canada. These imperial sinews of an economic nature relied solely on the positive interactions of borderlands denizens for their strength and resilience. Britain built this part of its imperial power securely on a borderlands foundation.

In another example, the forts and trading houses scattered throughout the New York/Iroquoian borderlands also tied imperial goals closely to daily borderlands realities. More than simple barracks for soldiers or a storehouse for trade goods, forts "became important places of cultural contact and contention." Forts often provided an armed European presence even outside of direct wartime, and by the mid-1750s the British maintained over half a dozen forts throughout the Mohawk Valley. [414] Some forts, such as Fort Oswego, mentioned in this chapter's introductory vignette, served more economic purposes. Trade at Oswego circumvented French control, much to the chagrin of French Governor Vaudreuil, who saw it as a threat to his own fort at Niagara, subsequently replacing that fort's wooden palisade with a stone wall. This sudden strengthening of the French fort at Niagara "alarmed the Iroquois greatly," and by the time they realized the threat "the building had progressed beyond their power to stop it."[415] This push and pull of imperial politics between the British and French took place squarely in the realm of

[413] For a detailed breakdown of these numbers, see: Stephen H. Cutcliffe, "Colonial Indian Policy as a Measure of Rising Imperialism: New York and Pennsylvania, 1700-1755," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 64:3 (July 1981), 240-244.
[414] Preston, *Texture of Contact*, 195.
[415] Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 300.

North America's borderlands and, as this chapter's introduction shows, included the communication and input of both Iroquoian and European settlers.

Geographic expansion of empire through land purchase also played out in the everyday borderlands context of the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations. By purchasing land from Indian polities, through either genuine or fraudulent claims, European empires could expand their authority for the price of the land and a surveyor's services. This emphasis on land ownership in colonial New York grew out of the growing profitability of grain exporting at the turn of the eighteenth century, prompting New York's merchants "to reconsider the value of rural land ownership."[416] Although the Iroquoian nations would lose most of their land only in the later time period between the establishment of the Proclamation Line in 1763 and the Treaty of Buffalo Creek in 1842, the early eighteenth century still bore witness to significant expansion of imperial boundaries through land purchases.[417] Two of New York's governors during the early tenure of the Commissioners, Benjamin Fletcher (1692-97) and Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury (1701-8), acted especially generously in their dispensation of Indian lands, prompting Indians from many polities to complain.[418] These land issues often provided kindling for contentious meetings between various Iroquoian groups and the Albany Commissioners, as explored earlier in this dissertation. In many ways, then, the thoughts and actions of local actors, both Indian and colonial shaped the very expansion of imperial geography. Even the physical geography of empire often played out through the words and deeds of borderlands denizens.

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[416] Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York*, 28.
[417] Christopher Vecsey, "The Issues Underlying Iroquois Land Claims," in *Iroquois Land Claims*, eds. Christopher Vecsey and William A. Starna (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 8.
[418] Nammack, *Fraud, Politics, and the Dispossession of the Indians*, 13, 16.

CHAPTER 6:

Dutch Commissioners, an Irish Superintendent, and Indian Diplomacy in the British Empire

In the summer of 1756 Sir William Johnson, Irish-born settler and royal appointee as Indian Superintendent for the northern British colonies, journeyed from his home on the Mohawk River to Onondaga, the central Iroquois nation and holder of the League's council fire. Pro-French Onondaga sachem Red Head had opposed Johnson's continuous efforts to maintain the positive alliance between the British and the Iroquois, but his recent death required Johnson's condolences at the council fire.[419] Iroquois tradition deemed the death of an important leader, Iroquoian or European, to be worthy of significant ritual attention, including the metaphorical wiping of tears from the grieving party's eyes, as well as the clearing of their throat and ears.[420] Both contemporaries and historians have recognized Johnson's willingness to "cross over" into Iroquoian life as a unique characteristic that facilitated much of his success in Indian affairs. Johnson, however, did not simply follow established protocols as a visiting outsider – he placed himself at their center. Co-opting Iroquoian traditions to further strengthen his own influence among the Six Nations, Johnson led the intricate condolence ceremonies himself, even placing himself at the head of a procession of Iroquoian headmen singing the traditional consolation songs. More than just "lip-service," Johnson's actions

[419] Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet*, 105, 162, 165. Johnson had faced Red Head at diplomatic meetings before that sachem's death, such as in July 1753 at a meeting at Mount Johnson. *NYCD*, vol. 6, 808-9. Johnson's role in Indian diplomacy preceded his official appointment as Superintendent.
[420] Mary A. Druke, "Linking Arms: The Structure of Iroquois Intertribal Diplomacy," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*, eds. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 36.

represented a conscious "reinvention of the old structures with a European at their centre." His aim, according to one biographer, "was nothing less than the establishment of [himself] as the ultimate arbiter of Iroquois traditions," eventually reaching a point "where he could challenge the sachems on the grounds of their own inherited forms and customs."[421] Clearly, the new Superintendent was not hesitant to influence Indian relations by inserting himself into internal indigenous affairs.

Twenty-three years prior to Johnson's notable arrival in Onondaga the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs participated in an Indian meeting with subtle yet important similarities. In November 1723 the Commissioners met with Indians identified as once "living at [Schaghticoke] & places adjacent" to chastise them for some of their recent actions.[422] Addressing them as "Children," the Commissioners expressed their surprise that they "do not shelter yourselves under the tree of peace & friendship long since planted at [Schaghticoke] under whose shadow you promised to live & die." The Commissioners also addressed the recently received news that "ten Indians and eight squaws" from their nation were traveling toward French Canada, troubling news given the continuous tension between British and French settlements during the eighteenth century. This was not the first time the Schaghticokes clashed with the Commissioners over issues of where to live. As early as June 1699 the Commissioners received news regarding Schaghticoke plans to move northward into Canada, troubling news they

[421] Fintan O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 158, 162-3. The State University of New York Press recently republished this excellent biography.
[422] Schaghticoke Indians lived just north of Albany. Historian Colin Calloway refers to Schaghticoke as "a melting pot for various refugee bands." Colin G. Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600-1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 83.

quickly forwarded in a letter to Lieutenant Governor John Nanfan.[423] In 1723 the Commissioners ultimately decided to appoint "five or six" sachems "to keep you together and that you do not straggle from under the shadow of that tree of friendship" again. The following day the Schaghticoke Indians affirmed that "we leave it to you to nominate them," a task the Commissioners undertook that same day, most likely having the list already written.[424]

These two examples of borderlands Indian diplomacy illustrated the significant similarities that existed in how the Albany Commissioners and William Johnson performed Indian diplomacy. To be sure, many dissimilarities existed between the two. For example, the singular, exceedingly charismatic Johnson could place himself at the center of a ritualistic dance quite easily, for example, a task outside the possibility of a dozen Commissioners. Regardless of these notable difference, however, both ultimately used the same methods. In these specific examples both Johnson and the Albany Commissioners boldly used traditional Indian ceremonial or cultural frameworks as pathways into the inner workings of Indian societies, allowing them to exert influence and achieve ends that served both official and personal goals. In Johnson's case, the Superintendent placed himself squarely at the center of a deeply important death ceremony, allowing him to exert a leadership that strengthened the oftentimes tenuous relationship between the Iroquois and the British Empire while simultaneously increasing his personal prestige. In the second example, the Albany Commissioners directly tapped into the Schaghticoke society's inner workings by appointing specific sachems, thereby ensuring that British goals of settled, friendly Indian polities within the framework of a

[423] *NYCD*, vol. 4, 575.
[424] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 65a-67.

widely-accepted "tree of friendship" model remained intact, at least in this instance. Also, such a settled and peaceful environment was conducive to the trade that the Commissioners and other Albany merchants relied upon for their personal wealth and prestige.[425] Both Johnson and the Commissioners worked within Native social structures to act as leaders from within, if only temporarily. The similar methods in these two examples of Indian diplomacy in New York's eighteenth-century borderlands represented only a small example of how the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs and William Johnson, despite some notable differences in organization and authority, often played the same roles and followed the same rules. This concept suggests that certain methods of Indian diplomacy worked well in borderlands diplomacy, regardless of the organizational scheme or source of formal authority of the officials involved. Both Johnson and the Commissioners, despite holding very different offices, pursued the same core methods of Indian diplomacy.

This chapter argues that the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs and William Johnson shared many similarities in their methods, actions, and lives as colonial diplomats and settlers because both adroitly responded to the same obstacles and opportunities of the eighteenth-century New York/Iroquoia borderlands. The nature of European/Indian interaction in this environment molded personal behavior in many ways, often to the point of superseding differences between specific groups, institutions or sources of authority. Indian polities especially shaped this middle ground, ultimately creating a commonly held framework, or paradigm, that any European diplomat, be it a governor's appointee from Albany's Dutch population or a royally-appointed Irish

[425] Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 8.

immigrant, needed to follow in order to achieve any sort of diplomatic influence. Additionally, characteristics of the borderlands world, such as trade opportunities, land patenting, and seclusion from British culture, provided prospects for these men's personal lives that intersected with their official duties, and prompted them to shape their personal lives and professional conduct in very similar ways.

First, this chapter summarizes the story of the decline of the provincial Albany Commissioners and the rise of the William Johnson as a provincial officer and ultimately a royal Indian Superintendent for the northern colonies, briefly introducing the differences between these two institutions. Despite decades of continuous contact between Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations, issues such as provincial politics, funding issues, and the recent establishment of determined and tenacious Irish immigrant William Johnson combined to upend Indian affairs, at least on paper. Next, the chapter proceeds to illuminate how, despite these differences, both Johnson and the Commissioners similarly fashioned their lives and conduct in this shared borderlands world. Both European and Indian matters shaped their borderlands lives. As European settlers, the Dutch traders at Albany and the Irish William Johnson faced the same opportunities, obstacles, and pressures, leading to strikingly similar biographies of the two as colonists and officials. As Indian diplomats, both also confronted powerful Indian groups with established ceremonies and traditions that required, in essence, the same kinds of diplomatic behavior. Taken together, these two facets highlighted prominent similarities between the provincial, corporate Dutch Commissioners and the imperial, singular Irish Johnson. Lastly, and in light of these established similarities, this chapter posits that Johnson's place in the historical memory remains more positive because his

tenure co-existed with the tremendous imperial victory in the Seven Years' War while the Albany Commissioners' Indian relations occurred during an era of ambiguous military stalemates during the century's earlier wars. The disdain for the Albany Commissioners, especially among historians, cannot be explained solely through the political opposition they faced from Johnson, Governor Clinton, and other colonial officials. In essence, much of Johnson's fame lay with circumstances largely outside his control. Overall, understanding the many similarities between the Albany Commissioners and William Johnson provides a better understanding of eighteenth-century Indian diplomacy in the New York/Iroquoian borderlands as well as highlighting some of the defining characteristics of the borderlands themselves.

William Johnson's rise to prominence among the Iroquois, especially the Mohawks, grew steadily over time and predated his serving in any official capacity. He was born in County Meath, Ireland, in 1715 and immigrated to the Mohawk Valley in 1738 to manage the estate of his maternal uncle, Peter Warren. Johnson quickly purchased his own land, naming it Mount Johnson, and established a trading store that grew rich off of the Indians travelling to Albany or Oswego to trade, much to the chagrin of the established Albany traders. Within a few years he was one of the richest traders in the colony.[426] Not only did his trading presence bring influence with local Indians, specifically the nearby Mohawks, but Johnson exhibited a willingness to participate in Indian ceremonies and rituals that earned him additional clout. According to contemporary Cadwallader Colden, Johnson "dressed himself after the Indian manner, made frequent dances, according to their custom when they excite to war, and used all the

[426] Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire,* 31.; Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks,* 157-8, 177.

means he could think of, at a considerable expense … in order to engage them heartily" during war.[427] For example, in a meeting with sachems and warriors from the Six Nations at Mount Johnson in June 1755, Johnson asked for Iroquois help against French troops and their Indian allies, at which point "Johnson then ordered a large tub of punch out, for, to drink the King's health."[428] Several days later "the war kettle was put on and at night the war dance was danced. Colonel Johnson began it."[429] During the mid-1740s, provincial governor George Clinton increasingly relied on his own Indian agents, including Johnson, due to the inability of the Albany Commissioners to bring the Iroquois into King George's War as British allies. Johnson justified his appointment as provincial Indian agent in 1746 by convincing the Mohawks to join the war, announcing this by marching at the head of a group of warriors, dressed and painted in the same way, into Albany where Clinton was staying at the time.[430] Johnson officially replaced the Albany Commissioners as provincial Indian agent until 1750 when he resigned, angry that the provincial government would not reimburse him for the £7,177 he spent on Indian diplomacy during his tenure.[431] Johnson, however, had established himself as a leading figure in the New York/Iroquoian borderlands as a "generous, warm, funny man" who opened his home to colonist and Indian alike.[432]

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[427] Quoted in: Hinderaker, *Two Hendricks*, 176.
[428] *NYCD*, vol. 6, 975.
[429] *NYCD*, vol. 6, 980.
[430] Armour, *Merchants of Albany*, 212-4.
[431] Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 46. Johnson had complained about the costs of Indian diplomacy from the beginning of his tenure. Enclosed with a letter to Governor George Clinton in May 1747, Johnson sent Clinton "an invoice of [necessities] which will be immediately wanted for such numbers as now daily come to go a fighting require an immense quantity of goods, arms, ammunition & provisions, for their families must be maintained in their absence & clothed in some measure." *NYCD*, vol. 6, 360-1.
[432] Hinderaker, *Two Hendricks*, 158.

William Johnson continued to build upon his deep connections with the local Mohawks even while the Albany Commissioners once again served as provincial Indian agents until 1755. In April of that year General Edward Braddock, commander-in-chief during the early years of the Seven Years' War in North America, appointed Johnson as his agent to the Six Nations. The Crown appointed him Superintendent for the Northern Colonies the following year, putting a permanent end to the Albany Commissioner system.[433] Clearly, the political opposition of William Johnson, Governor Clinton, and other officials took their toll on the ability of the Albany Commissioners to function as effective borderlands diplomats. When Johnson's housekeeper and mistress Catharine Weissenberg died in 1759, he began a relationship with a Mohawk woman named Molly Brant. Molly was the step-daughter to Brant, a Turtle Clan sachem. This marriage established even deeper connections that bound the Canajoharie Mohawks to Johnson "with bands of steel."[434] He continued to serve as Indian Superintendent until his death in 1774 during a meeting with 600 Iroquois at his home, Johnson Hall.[435] In August of that year Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden, in a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth, lamented that the "public have met with a very great loss in the Death of Sir William Johnson," adding that his "greatest abilities, and singular disposition, enabled him to acquire and hold a greater influence among the Indians" than any other official.[436] During his tenure Johnson spent immense amounts of money (often out of his own pockets), time, and effort attending conferences, travelling, giving gifts, and taking part

[433] Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 220.
[434] Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 68-9. The Canajoharie Mohawks served as Johnson's biggest supporters in his rise to and exercise of borderlands authority, as will be explained later in this chapter.
[435] Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier,* 173.
[436] *NYCD*, vol. 8, 485. Interestingly, Colden referred to Johnson as an "English man" despite his Irish birth, a true sign of respect given Colden's strong royalist attitudes.

in Indian ceremonies for the dual purposes of protecting British imperial interests while simultaneously maintaining his own prestige among Indian polities, especially the Mohawks.

Johnson's status rose with the declining fortunes of the Albany Commissioners as an institution for Indian diplomacy in New York. By the mid-1740s the Albany Commissioners found themselves facing King George's War, the third Anglo-French imperial war in half a century, with all of the concomitant stresses of defense and diplomacy. Most alarming was the lack of funding from the Assembly for diplomatic purposes leading up to and during the early years of the war. The Albany Commissioners relied upon provincial officials for their operating expenses, and delays or refusals by an Assembly dominated by members from less-concerned members of distant counties upset the tenuous, gift-based diplomacy of the borderlands world.[437] Growing tensions with French Canada during the early 1740s required more funding for gifts than the Assembly granted the Commissioners. In October 1741, the Commissioners drafted a letter to Governor Clinton, begging him to understand "that the allowances of the General Assembly to us as Commissioners of Indian Affairs bring £170," which "falls very short" of what they needed. The Commissioners continued to complain that "we are obliged to have many things undone which we think for the benefit of the province, only for that … we have no money to go through with them." They ended the letter predicting that this shortfall "will in time prove of bad consequence."[438] According to Assembly records, the £170 funding level remained in place from 1739 through 1742.[439] In 1742 the Assembly

[437] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York,* 203-205.
[438] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 218.
[439] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 46, 172, 234.

granted the same £170 for the following year but appended, "for extraordinary incidents at this critical juncture, the sum of thirty pounds more."[440]

The Commissioners continued their complaints in another letter to acting Governor George Clarke later that year. Reminding the Governor of the constant French threat, they warned that the French "had a great quantity of goods to give to the Indians by which he brings them over to them," while their own allowance was too meagre to counteract them. "[W]e are not able to send any thing considerable to answer the end, our allowance to this time being already exhausted so that we sit destitute of money," they decried, announcing that "we would be glad to be enabled to discharge our duty but without a sufficient allowance to answer what is necessary … we shall be at a loss what to do."[441] Unfortunately for the Commissioners, they never received the increase. A year later, in November 1743, the Commissioners drafted a memorial to several officials hoping they would address the Governor and Assembly to finally handle their funding woes. They hoped to raise their allowance to £300, noting that "it always used to be £300 … and it ought rather to be … at present."[442] This request, like the others, failed because, as historian David Armour notes, "[t]o members from the coastal counties the dangers in Albany seemed remote and the cost of the requested defenses distressingly high."[443] These funding issues, coupled with the increasing ambitions of William Johnson, limited their effectiveness during the mid-1740s.

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[440] *Colonial Laws of New York*, vol. 3, 234. As historian David Armour exclaims, "[t]hirty pounds to hold the Iroquois!" Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York*, 204.
[441] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 238-238a. The Commissioners pointed out that the far western Senecas faced the greatest French encroachment, being closest to French settlements. John Wolfe Lydekker, *The Faithful Mohawks* (Port Washington: Ira J. Friedman, 1968), 62.
[442] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 263r-264.
[443] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York*, 205.

Governor Clinton's secret Indian diplomacy also undercut Albany's Commissioners in the early 1740s, limiting their ability to act as New York's official Indian diplomats. Clinton assigned his own agents, including William Johnson, to deal with the Iroquois on his behalf without any input from the Commissioners, who he saw an ineffectual and self-interested. In March 1746, the Commissioners wrote to Governor Clinton, confronting him in a roundabout way. "We heard Arent Stevens went up by your Excellency's order to get [a] belt," they wrote, adding that "[w]e are glad when anything is done for the public good whoever do it but it has always been the custom that the Commissioners were made acquainted with any affairs," related to the Iroquois. They underscored the problems of Clinton's actions, claiming "if private persons be employed to transact public affairs with the Indians unknown to this board … it must necessarily encumber us and disconcert our measures."[444] Receiving no satisfactory answer from Clinton, the Commissioners wrote the Governor again the following month, requesting official release from their official duties. They regretted that their "continued endeavors for the public good give so little satisfaction," and as they "find that notwithstanding all our endeavors to serve the country in the station we are in … we beg your Excellency will be pleased to excuse us from any further trouble."[445] They repeated their request in another letter in May.[446] Only after a third letter, in November 1746, could the Commissioners step down from their positions as New York's provincial Indian

[444] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 349a-350.
[445] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 356a-358. Wraxall commented heavily on this letter in his abridgement, predictably supporting William Johnson "into the chief management of the Indians … a gentleman of more influence & abilities with regard to Indian Affairs & more respected by them than any other person in this province." Wraxall, *AIA*, 246.
[446] *MCIA*, vol. 2, 374a.

officials.[447] For the next several years William Johnson served as New York's provincial Indian official, as well as "Colonel of the warriors of the Six Nations," as Governor Clinton described his role in a letter to the Duke of Newcastle.[448] After their brief reappointment in the early 1750s the Commissioners permanently yielded their position to the then royally appointed Johnson.

Many differences existed between the Albany Commissioners and William Johnson in their respective institutions of Indian diplomacy. The Albany Commissioners, as explored in chapter 1, earned appointment by the provincial governor and were by definition only provincial officials despite their wider areas of actual influence. William Johnson, on the other hand, received his 1755 appointment directly from the Crown, making him the primary point of Indian affairs in the northern colonies in fact and in law, removing many of the parochial obstacles the Commissioners faced from other colonies. The Commissioners served as a corporate entity while Johnson's commission recognized him as a singular agent. Johnson received his salary directly from royal coffers and drew on imperial funds for his diplomatic activity while the Commissioners, as mentioned above, relied on the often politically tumultuous provincial Assembly to fund their activities. Additionally, the Commissioners (other than the Secretary) received no salary, instead relying on the opportunities and contacts for trade inherent in Indian diplomacy to make service worth their while.[449] Lastly, Johnson's methods of Indian diplomacy blurred the lines between his professional duties and his personal life to a much greater degree than the Commissioners. While the Albany Commissioners certainly participated

[447] Wraxall, *AIA*, 248n.
[448] *NYCD*, vol. 6, 314.
[449] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York*, 193.

in condolence ceremonies and provided gifts to visiting dignitaries, Johnson went so far as to host Indians in his private residence, marry into a prominent Mohawk family and clan network, and treat visiting Indian dignitaries as close friends and kin instead of as representatives of a distant polity.[450] For example, on his way home from a meeting at Onondaga, Johnson met with Goweahhe, the "chief warrior" of the Oneidas. Upon hearing that Canada's governor had invited Goweahhe to visit, Johnson "talk[ed] to him a while of the friendship so long subsisting between [them], and the many professions and brotherly love he had made to him, Sir William prevailed on him to reject the invitation of the Governor of Canada, and made him promise to come down as soon as he could to Mount Johnson."[451] This blurring of personal and professional relationships served the charismatic Johnson well, undoubtedly making the newcomer acceptable to Iroquois diplomats.

Taken together, these differences provided a comparison that, on a cursory level, appeared to support the recognition of two distinctly dissimilar institutions of Indian diplomacy: a centralized, royally funded and authorized, and personable go-between on one hand, and a corporate, provincially funded and authorized set of officials on the other. These institutions, and the men who filled them, however, did not exist in a vacuum. Close scrutiny of how both the Commissioners and Johnson functioned in the eighteenth-century borderlands uncovers the many ways in which both, despite these differences, shared the same motivations, actions, and obstacles. These similarities fell into two general but overlapping categories: the opportunities and obstacles created by

[450] Johnson had eight children with Mohawk Mary Brant, considered ethnically Mohawk, not European, due to the matrilineal nature of Iroquois societies. However, Brant herself offered Johnson with important personal and family links, such as Molly's brother, Joseph Brant, a notable Mohawk leader.
[451] *NYCD*, vol. 7, 152.

European settlement in and near the borderlands, and the dominating structures of Indian diplomacy established and maintained by the Iroquois and other Native polities. This unique physical and cultural geography of the borderlands world provided the context for two such dissimilar institutions to exist and grow in such similar ways.

The most fundamental similarity between the Albany Commissioners and William Johnson was their utilization of Indian polities to establish and cement their diplomatic and political prestige in a developing borderlands environment. Both built their own influence from the opportunities inherent in the borderlands and, in a way, as much of their personal and official authority came from the borderlands Indians as it did from any formal colonial commission. New York's borderlands, by definition, existed as a mosaic of Native and European cultures where a European settler's ability to succeed depended on his or her skill in cooperating with Indian societies. Purely European norms and standards could not exist in such an environment. The early Dutch traders of New Netherland built their influence on a close trading relationship with the Iroquois and other Indians, establishing themselves as important members of the borderlands political realm that later empires sought to utilize rather than remove. Albany's Commissioners relied upon this lengthy history and ongoing relationship between Dutch and Indians to ensure that New York and other colonies would rely upon them to handle Indian matters. For example, New York's governors, often unfamiliar with the delicate diplomacy required during larger conferences at Albany, often deferred to the advice of the

Commissioners.[452] Colonial officials would not trust the Commissioners unless Indians did as well, as that relationship was the foundation of borderlands diplomacy.

William Johnson likewise courted Indian favor to bolster his personal and official authority in the middle to late eighteenth century. Johnson, a relative newcomer to the New York/Iroquoian borderlands in 1738, faced a very different world than the early Dutch. Unlike the early New Netherland settlers and traders, he encountered existing relations between colonists and Indian polities that had been in place for over a century. He still managed to utilize local Indian polities to establish himself within the existing system, however, and eventually supplant it. He and Mohawk headman Hendrick served as partners in this endeavor that added to the prestige of both. As one historian eloquently states, their "paths crossed and intertwined as each manipulated the Covenant Chain for his own purposes."[453] Through Hendrick, Johnson found a path around the existing Commissioner-centered system. Hendrick served as Johnson's biggest booster during the 1740s and was instrumental in Johnson's temporary replacement of the Commissioners during that time.[454] Hendrick's dramatic declaration in 1753 announcing the Covenant Chain broken was, according to one historian, "a carefully orchestrated collusion" with Johnson to attack the established power of the Albany Commissioners and push Johnson as their replacement." On the other side of the coin, Hendrick was able to utilize Johnson to pursue his own ends. Hendrick believed that the Albany Commissioners were ignoring the needs of the Mohawks in the mid-1740s, a function of the lower funding granted by the General Assembly for gifts and material support, and

[452] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York*, 191. Of course, governors and the Commissioners could disagree on specific points.
[453] Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 31-2.
[454] Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier*, 121-3.

thus Johnson existed as something useful – an outsider who was likewise hostile to the Albany Commissioner cadre. Hendrick and the Mohawks sidestepped the Commissioners at Albany and used Johnson to directly access New York's provincial governor.[455] As historian David L. Preston notes, the Mohawks "cultivated" Johnson "for their own purposes."[456] In fact, it might have been this established, Albany-centered barrier that explained Johnson's much more personal methods of Indian diplomacy. The Albany Commissioners existed as an engrained obstacle between Johnson and the borderlands influence with the Mohawks that he sought. As a result, Johnson needed to take drastic steps to increase his standing with the Mohawk Nation. For example, he married Molly Brant and often dressed in Native clothes and paint during meetings with indigenous diplomats, all calculated measures intended to circumvent and eventually overcome the influence of the established Dutch Commissioners. Clearly, Johnson utilized opportunities inherent to the borderlands political world as defined by Indian ways of life. In any case, it is clear that both the Albany Commissioners and William Johnson drew on Native sources of influence in the borderlands to help bolster their personal and professional influence, but did so in different ways and to different extents.

In the same vein, both the Commissioners and Johnson utilized trade, often a profitable borderlands opportunity, as a means to bolster their personal wealth and official duties. Trade served as more than just an impartial exchange of goods in the eighteenth-century borderlands. Trade and Indian diplomacy coexisted in an inextricable bond that drew Indian and European societies together in close political and diplomatic

[455] Hinderaker, *Two Hendricks*, 194-5, 176.
[456] Preston, *Texture of Contact,* 93-4.

contact.[457] Trade as a form of Indian diplomacy featured prominently in the Albany Commissioners' minutes and affected Indians ranging from the nearby Iroquois to far western Indian polities from the Great Lakes region. In fact, Albany's Commissioners served without salary with the expectation that their time spent in diplomacy would pay off in trade relations. Some contemporaries of the Commissioners, such as the ubiquitous Cadwallader Colden, criticized the Commissioners for wanting to practice diplomacy only because they "thereby gain a preference in the buying of Furs," while others, like Peter Wraxall, saw this emphasis on trade as "disloyal, pro-French, and financially self-interested."[458] The connection between their personal fortunes and professional conduct was clear regardless of whether one views the Albany Commissioners as greedy opportunists or wise diplomats.

Similarly, Johnson also combined personal profit-seeking with his official duties in trade and diplomacy. As royal Superintendent he pushed for the centralization and heavy regulation of trade as the best way of avoiding "the indiscretion of some, & the Villainy of Others" who would hinder diplomatic relations through abusive trading practices. During the 1760s he advocated the creation of official commissaries with fixed prices and fair treatment, all of which, on a cursory level, appeared to be a positive plan to maintain friendly trade relations. However, he also contended that the Board of Trade defer to him in naming the commissaries, stating that "I think I have spent my time to little purpose unless I am the best judge who to appoint, for any persons sent from England … must certainly be of little use for some years." Certainly, this scope of

[457] Although outside the scope of the present dissertation, trade also elicited immense social and cultural changes in Indian societies. See: MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements.*
[458] Quoted in: O'Toole, *White Savage*, 90.; Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York,* 177.; Wraxall, *AIA*, 135n.

patronage over the Indian trade would profit Johnson handsomely, providing Johnson numerous opportunities to insert himself into lucrative trading schemes.[459] Like the Commissioners, Johnson realized that his personal wealth as a trader depended on a secure borderlands environment, making his continuous push to repel French influence really an extension of his own personal interest.[460] In this light, trade was both a means and an ends to the actions of the men who comprised each institution.

Such a similarity did not go unnoticed at the time. In 1753, provincial official Thomas Pownall astutely recognized this similarity between the Commissioners and Johnson, noting that "The whole Drift of the Party that happened to gett the Transaction of Indian Affairs into their hands … has been constantly to amass a hasty Fortune by every means fair and foul." In Pownall's view, only a truly disinterested Indian commissioner, without ties to local trading or politics, could mix trade and diplomacy in a way that best served the interests of empire.[461] More importantly, this contemporary assessment highlights how similar Johnson and the Commissioners really were with respect to trading, diplomacy, and personal interest.

As in trade, both Johnson and the Albany Commissioners pursued wealth through large land grants in the New York/Iroquoian borderlands despite constant Indian complaints about expansion. The prospect of accumulating land was an opportunity that linked these men together despite their differences in office. The turn of the eighteenth century witnessed the creation of enormous estates in land claimed by New York, including the 160,000 acre manor of the Livingston clan and the shocking 1,000,000 acre

[459] Quoted in: O'Toole, *White Savage*, 270-1.
[460] O'Toole, *White Savage*, 75-6.
[461] Quoted in: Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 74-5.

Rennselaerswyck.[462] These vast manors, however, should not overshadow the many smaller land grants and purchases in which many individual Commissioners participated, a notable departure from the patterns of their seventeenth-century Beverwijck predecessors. In August 1702 Commissioner Secretary Robert Livingston joined another man in purchasing the Kayaderosseras patent from the Mohawk Indians.[463] Three years later Commissioner Peter Schuyler was among a group of men who bought the Oriskany patent, along the Oriskany Creek.[464] This purchase was probably a purely speculative action considering that the grant was distant from any existing settlement and it contained no clause forcing the owners to improve or settle the land. In July 1713 Albany Commissioner Hendrick Hansen received a 2,000 acre grant on the north side of the Mohawk River and fellow Commissioner John Collins received another 2,000 acres in November 1714. In both cases these were gifts from local Indian polities and likely related to the diplomatic contacts they made in their official capacity as Commissioners. That same year several Commissioners, including Myndert Schuyler, John Schuyler, and Peter Van Brugh, received a patent for 10,000 acres of land from Governor Robert Hunter, much to the chagrin of the Palatines already squatting there. In 1741 Commissioner Henry Holland was one of fourteen men to buy the 28,000 acre Sacondaga patent, and in 1742 Commissioner Edward Collins joined Holland in a nearby land grant of 5,000 acres.[465] These examples indicated that Albany's Commissioners purchased and even speculated in land even though expansion increasingly became an point of

[462] Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York*, x.
[463] Thomas F. Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York: Comprehending its Colonial History; General Geography, Geology, and Internal Improvements...* (Philadelphia: T.M. and P.G. Collins, 1836), 674.
[464]Richard L. Williams, *Along Oriskany & Big Creeks: Geology, History and People* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011), 115.
[465] Ruth L Higgins, *Expansion in New York: With Especial Reference to the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976), 52-3, 58, 60, 78.

contention between New York and various Indian polities over the course of the eighteenth century. The opportunity to accumulate land was too good to pass up.

Much like the Albany Commissioners, William Johnson also utilized the opportunities of the borderlands to add landholding as a base for his wealth and influence. Johnson initially settled on the Mohawk River, further into the borderlands geography than to Albany.[466] He arrived in New York originally to watch over his uncle's property but quickly purchased his own land when he recognized the trade opportunities along the Mohawk River. His first home, Mount Johnson, also served as a store, sawmill, and meeting place for Indian diplomats. In 1761 Johnson acquired the 90,000 acre Royal Grant, although whether this was a gift or a purchase from the Canajoharie Mohawks was unclear. Two years later Johnson utilized relative Peter Servis as a front to acquire land north of German Flats. In 1770 Johnson acquired the 54,000 acre Susquehanna and Charlotte River patent, making Johnson one of the largest landowners in the province. Most significantly, at the Stanwix Treaty of 1768, Johnson ignored orders from London and secured a boundary line between Indians and colonists a full 400 miles further inland than instructed. Although claiming that "Private interest governs none of my representations," Johnson profited handsomely through the private arrangement with Philadelphia traders who acquired the land by receiving part of the tract himself. Johnson's most recent biographer refers to his mixing of private and public matters as "flagrantly corrupt" and, added to his other landholdings, allowed him to create "a kind of feudal Irish lordship."[467] Even Johnson's subordinates made use of borderlands opportunities to acquire land. In 1769, Johnson's deputy agent George

[466] Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet*, 32.
[467] Quoted in: O'Toole, *White Savage*, 276-8, 282.

Croghan obtained 100,000 acres west of Lake Otsego, and later two 9,000 acre patents in Cherry Valley. It is important to note that Croghan had no plans to actually live on his Otsego land, but instead planned to parcel it into smaller tracts to sell to incoming settlers at a vast profit.[468] The institutional differences between Johnson as Superintendent and the Albany Commissioners pale in the light of this shared, acquisitive behavior. Men of many backgrounds and offices clearly recognized the opportunities of the New York/Iroquoian borderlands.

Both Johnson and the Albany Commissioners pursued other opportunities inherent to the borderlands, such as establishing and maintaining decidedly non-English cultural worlds in a relatively unsettled borderlands environment. This personal behavior, on a cursory level, may appear completely separate from their official roles as Indian diplomats and traders. To the contrary, this shared behavior highlighted the extent to which British borderlands, Indian, and imperial affairs in the northern colonies relied upon men actively working to maintain their non-British cultures in their personal circles. In essence, British diplomacy with the Indians depended heavily on cultural outsiders.

The Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs retained much of their cultural cohesion throughout the eighteenth century despite Albany's existence in a British colony. Ethnic tensions between Dutch and English defined the earliest years of the town's inclusion in the Duke of York's new colony, necessitating the presence of small garrisons of English troops.[469] Many forms of Albany life slowly shifted to reflect these new realities of a proprietary colony in the English empire. The Dongan Charter of 1686

[468] Higgins, *Expansion in New York*, 92-96.
[469] Robert C. Ritchie, *The Duke's Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664-1691* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 71-2.

transformed the traditional Dutch local government of schepen and schout to that of mayor and alderman. New rules required legal documents to be in the English language and reference the reigns of England's kings.[470] Despite these surface changes the new English regime affected Albany less than any other area in New York.[471] Dutch traders filled the newly-named local government positions through the end of the seventeenth century, maintaining a continuity in authority despite a change in title. For example, in 1687, the "magistrates" listed as meeting with the Cayuga sachems on June 27 all bore Dutch names: Wessells, Cuyler, Rykman, Van S[c]hai[c]k, and Wendel[l].[472] This pattern of Dutch cohesion carried on into the eighteenth century. Every mayor up to 1750 bore a Dutch surname with the single exception of Robert Livingston, Jr., but he had close trade and marriage links to the dominant Dutch culture. Even Albany's Dutch Reformed Church, which had initially accommodated English rule to attain certain privileges, reversed course after 1700 and openly defied the new government. Dutch religious leaders initially sought salaries and legitimization from the English governor. Several factors, however, prompted the Church into "proclaiming their allegiance to the ecclesiastical authorities in Holland and emphasizing the importance of Dutch cultural traditions and institutions." These included the new Ministry Act, advances by the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and English prying into Dutch Church affairs.[473] In sum, Albany maintained a largely Dutch lifestyle despite their place at the center of New York's Indian diplomacy.

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[470] Donna Merwick, *Death of a Notary: Conquest & Change in Colonial New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 133.
[471] Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 41.
[472] Leder, *Livingston Indian Records*, 120.
[473] Randall H. Balmer, *A Perfect Babel of Confusion: Dutch Religion and English Culture in the Middle Colonies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 89, 100-1. It is important to note that Anglicanism

Much as the Commissioners maintained a largely Dutch lifestyle in Albany, William Johnson built an Irish world around him on his lands by the Mohawk River. Johnson surrounded himself with Irish friends and settlers, a job made easier by his prominent social standing in the area. Outside of his own family, his closest acquaintances included many Irishmen, including his doctor, Patrick Daly, his assistant Robert Adams, his farm manager Thomas Flood, his accountant Thomas Shipboy, his "crony" Mick Byrne, and his lawyer Bryan Lefferty. His primary deputy agent, George Croghan, was born in Ireland around 1718. Outside of this close circle, Johnson sought out Irish servants and tenants whenever he could. The gardener he hired in 1769 was from Dublin, and the schoolmaster for the Johnstown free school was Irishman Edward Wall. The overall environment Johnson created "was that of the classic Irish middleman, neither peasant nor aristocrat, but accommodating to both." This Irishness also shaped his view of non-Irish settlers. Johnson regarded the Scotch-Irish backcountry settlers "in much the same way as Gaelic landowners and their bards in Ireland had traditionally seen these incomers … as wild, crude and uneducated." One biographer goes as far as to claim that Johnson's Irish background and identity was engrained enough to elicit a sympathy for Indians forced to accept status as British subjects.[474] In any case, Johnson built an Irish world around him and in the New York/Iroquoian borderlands, just as the Albany Commissioners did in Albany with their own Dutch traditions. In both cases, the borderlands provided a fertile environment for non-British populations to maintain

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did make inroads into Dutch Albany. For example, in 1709 Anglican minister Thomas Barclay noted in a personal letter that "several of the better sort of the Dutch" in Albany and Schenectady joined his services. Quoted in: *Ibid*., 102.

[474]O'Toole, *White Savage*, 269, 282-4, 303.

cultural norms while still serving the ends of the larger British Empire. Johnson and the Commissioners were very similar in this regard.

William Johnson and the Albany Commissioners also faced the same obstacles found in the New York/Iroquoian borderlands, making them just as comparable in their struggles and failures as they were in their opportunities and successes. Specifically, the contentious politics surrounding borderlands and Indian affairs affected both the provincial Commissioners and the royal Superintendent in ways that highlighted their similarities. Regardless of the source of their formal authority, there was always a cadre of opponents and critics to disparage and attack their Indian diplomacy and personal actions for their own diplomatic or political ends.

The Albany Commissioners faced multiple political enemies during their last years in office during the early and mid-1740s. William Johnson loomed large, obviously, as the Commissioners stood between him and the influence with the Iroquois he sought to maintain and expand. He went as far as to call them "grandees whose soul and blood are money," and referred to them as "a set of men who were more concerned in buying and selling than in advising or consulting [the Indians]," an interesting description given his own actions.[475] Provincial governor George Clinton attacked the Commissioners more subtly. Angry that the Commissioners could not force the Iroquois to join British forces during the early period of King George's War, Clinton utilized his own personal agents, including William Johnson, to circumvent the Commissioners. Only after several attempts to resign did Clinton accept the Commissioners' resignation

[475]Quoted in: O'Toole, *White Savage*, 43, 92.

in January 1747.[476] Provincial officials Archibald Kennedy and Cadwallader Colden openly attacked the Commissioners due to their preference for a centralized royal Indian agent. Colden criticized the Commissioners for their preferences for neutrality in imperial conflicts and their personal trade interests, and Kenny published a pamphlet that framed the Commissioners as Dutch mercenaries who colluded with the French traders to line their own pockets.[477] The Commissioners did have some support in the provincial Assembly but it likely came as a side-effect of that body's criticisms of William Johnson.

Despite his more prestigious title and commission William Johnson also faced significant political and diplomatic opposition to his handling of Indian affairs. His royal commission only served to widen the pool of potential critics from a provincial to an intercolonial level. Johnson made an enemy of Massachusetts governor William Shirley during the early years of the Seven Years' War by resisting attempts to recruit and organize Iroquois warriors as if they were European soldiers. Enraged that Johnson had countermanded his orders, Shirley asserted that it was Johnson's "duty to comply with my demand." He even lied to Iroquois leaders, telling them that Johnson had withheld bounty money meant for the warriors. Shirley's bitterness created a situation where Johnson felt he was battling both the French and a British governor at the same time.[478] Enmity festered several years later between Johnson and Jeffery Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America, due to the clashing of European ideals and colonial realities.[479] Amherst considered presents to Indian polities a flawed practice, asserting that "I think it much better to avoid all presents in the future … and keeping

[476] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York,* 211-2, 216.
[477] Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 73-4.
[478] Quoted in: O'Toole, *White Savage*, 126-7.
[479] Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet*, 215-6.

them scarce of ammunition … since nothing can be so impolitic as to furnish them with the means of accomplishing the evil which is so much dreaded." Amherst believed such gifts were a form of ransom and did not understand the intricate mix of trading and gifting inherent to Indian diplomacy. As such, he opposed Johnson at almost every turn.[480] Shirley and Amherst were just two of several highly-placed critics Johnson faced as Indian Superintendent. His centralized authority and royal commission did not save him from critique and censure. Clearly, both Johnson and the Commissioners faced political opposition regarding Indian affairs despite the very different nature and organization of their offices.

There were even significant similarities in the institutional organization and functioning of the Albany Commissioners and Johnson's Superintendency, mitigating conceptions of the two as vastly different systems of Indian Affairs. Neither the singular royal Superintendent nor the corporate provincial Commissioners could speak and travel everywhere in the borderlands, and thus both relied heavily upon an extensive network of messengers, interpreters, and informants to gather information and transmit their desires. Although they made journeys to meet with Indian polities in their own villages for special occasions, both the Commissioners and Johnson remained largely confined to their respective homes, delegating much of the actual legwork of borderlands Indian diplomacy to others. Thus, when the Commissioners sent interpreter Lawrence Claessen to deal with the Senecas in November 1723, they were ultimately performing the same kind of task as Johnson when he sent deputy agent George Croghan to meet with various

[480] Quoted in: O'Toole, *White Savage*, 235.

Indian polities at Harris Ferry, Pennsylvania, in 1757.[481] In both cases the officials appointed to handle Indian affairs often utilized others to carry their messages. In this light the lines between a single Crown official and multiple provincial agents become somewhat more blurred.

Both Johnson and the Commissioners also relied heavily on family connections in their business as Indian agents. The core members of Albany Commissioners comprised an intricate web of kinship through marriage that made early eighteenth-century Indian affairs very much a family matter. While Johnson, being only one man, could not replicate such a web, he still intimately connected his family life with his official duties as Indian Superintendent. His nephew (and son-in-law) Guy Johnson served as Deputy Superintendent starting in 1762 and succeeded him as royal Superintendent for the northern Colonies upon his death in 1774.[482] Additionally, William Johnson's unofficial marriage to Molly Brant opened up kinship-based influence within Mohawk society itself, making her an informal Indian agent. Johnson's latest biographer even makes the claim that Johnson's numerous sexual relations with Mohawk women throughout his tenure "formed some of the ties that bound [him] to the Mohawks and made them think of him as belonging at least in part to them." These many sexual connections were just another way Johnson mixed intimate relationships and his role as Indian Superintendent, as these relations "had a strong political dimension and reflected his power and status."

[481] *MCIA*, vol. 1, 64.; Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 190.
[482] Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet*, 231.

[483] In both cases, the Commissioners and Johnson mixed family with diplomacy, albeit in different ways.

Clearly, the Albany Commissioners and Superintendent William Johnson faced the same opportunities and obstacles in the eighteenth-century borderlands, making them appear substantially similar in their personal and professional lives. Both successfully secured their own wealth and status only because they recognized Iroquois Indians as partners to work with instead of subjects to exploit. Such a recognition underlay any successful navigation of the borderlands political world and served as a lesson that settlers ignored at their own peril. Also, both Johnson and the Commissioners utilized their official positions to secure trade links and participated in New York's eighteenth-century expansion by purchasing large tracts of land, both methods of gaining wealth and prestige in the borderlands world. Johnson and the Commissioners built and maintained non-English communities and faced political enemies seeking their downfall, similar experiences despite their very different sources of formal authority. Lastly, they both navigated the borderlands diplomatic geography by utilizing common organizational methods and relying upon family. In sum, despite seemingly significant contrasts in their official offices, both the Commissioners and Johnson reacted to their shared borderlands world in ways that highlighted their similarities and downplayed their differences. Specifically, official commissions and instructions from governors and kings provided only part of the context for understanding the personal and professional lives of these

[483] O'Toole, *White Savage*, 104. Johnson's sexual exploits became legend even during his lifetime. Governor Clinton wrote Johnson, saying that one of the "things I have been asked about and very often repeated to me which is the Number [of] Indian Concubines you have had and as many Children they had fixed upon you as the late Emperor of Merocco Muli Ishmale which I think was 700." Quoted in: *Ibid*.

borderlands Indian diplomats. The culture of a shared European/Indian borderlands was just as important.

With these overarching similarities in mind one realizes that William Johnson's more positive standing in North American colonial and Indian histories lay, at least in part, due to factors outside of his control. Johnson's name and story is common knowledge amongst historians of colonial British North America, but very few positive works exist regarding the Albany Commissioners if they are recognized at all. Thomas Norton notes that "historians have been misled by the polemics left to posterity by such men as Cadwallader Colden, Archibald Kennedy, and Peter Wraxall," and asserts that the Albany Commissioners, through trade and neutrality, helped maintain imperial boundaries and security during the early wars of the eighteenth century.[484] Similarly, David Armour claims that the Commissioners, "though hampered by inadequate resources, had attempted with a fair measure of success to forge a bond of alliance and trade with the Six Nations," and despite political opposition, "they nevertheless conducted affairs with vision and ability."[485] Given the similarities between the Commissioners and the Superintendency under Johnson explored in this chapter, some outside factor must have played at least a partial role in Johnson's higher historical legacy. Once again the eighteenth-century borderlands provides a context in understanding the affairs of these Indian agents.

William Johnson's role as top Indian diplomat during the Seven Years War helps explain why he rose to prominence in the historical literature while the Albany Commissioners sank into critical obscurity. One cannot overstate the importance of this

[484] Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 222.
[485] Armour, *Merchants of Albany, New York,* 219.

conflict in Britain's eighteenth-century colonial world. Historian Fred Anderson calls it "[t]he most important event to occur in eighteenth-century America," going as far as to frame it as "an event that decisively shaped American history, as well as the histories of Europe and the Atlantic world in general."[486] The war represented a significant shift in continental affairs. After three previous wars the British had finally forced the French Empire from the continent and removed this persistent threat to the security of their own North American empire. Various Indian polities played a critical role in this war for both sides – in fact, it is often called the French and Indian War because the British fought both French and Indians. William Johnson served as singular Indian diplomat for the northern colonies during this time, his actions securing Iroquois fidelity were extremely helpful during this fundamental shift in continental politics. Given the importance that Anderson and others have assigned to the Seven Years' War, it is no wonder Johnson's reputation as an effective Indian diplomat remained secure in future generations.

The Albany Commissioners, however, served during three less successful wars with ambiguous endings, detaching them from any essential colonial event or trend that in any way approached the Seven Years' War in scope or importance. King William's War, from 1688 to 1697, ended in the Treaty of Ryswick and resulted in what one historian calls "[t]he status quo ante bellum in North America."[487] Queen Anne's War, lasting from 1702 to 1713, resulted in the Treaty of Utrecht. This agreement "appeared at first glance to be an initial step in the loss by France of all its positions on the continent," but the French were able to prevent this by contesting British interpretations of some of

[486] Anderson, *Crucible of War*, xvii.
[487] W.J. Eccles, *Canada Under Louis XIV, 1663-1701* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 204.

the treaty's clauses.[488] Lastly, King George's War, from 1744 to 1748, ended in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. This treaty "had been surprisingly favorable to the French position in North America,"[489] an anomaly compared to the grand victory fifteen years later.[490] While the Commissioners were active only during the very beginning of King George's War, their failures to secure Iroquois attention annoyed colonial officials, such as Governor Clinton. While Johnson was provincial Indian agent during much of this same war, his greater office and attachment to the grander victory of the Seven Years' War overshadowed any attachment he had to this smaller, ambiguously ending war.

Taken together, none of these three earlier colonial wars, as shown by their treaties, enacted any significant change in the "status quo" regarding the conflict between French and British empires. The Commissioners, as the official agents of Indian affairs during these three wars, faced a mediocre fate compared to Johnson and his role to the Seven Years' War: historians have relegated the Albany Commissioners to preface status, awaiting the so-called pinnacle of William Johnson, just as they have treated the three earlier wars as preludes to the more definitive and formative Seven Years' War. Given the overwhelming similarities in the personal and official lives of the Commissioners and William Johnson it behooves historians to approach eighteenth-century Indian relations with a more balanced approach. The borderlands served as a context for both the Commissioners and Johnson, as opposed to the Commissioners serving as a context for the rise of the mighty William Johnson.

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[488] Eccles, *Canadian Frontier*, 141-2.
[489] Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 314.
[490] The Iroquois Nations persisted in maintaining their sovereignty (both as a league and as individual nations) regardless of these official treaties, growing and rescinding political, military, and economic ties to British and French colonies as each individual town or nation desired. As in many other times and places in colonial American history, indigenous polities rarely found themselves at the bargaining table when Britain and France hashed out treaties.

In closing, Albany's Commissioners and Johnson as royal Superintendent maintained significant similarities concerning how they pursued Indian diplomacy, the ways they built their professional and personal influence in the borderlands, and the obstacles they faced in the performance of their duties. Despite different offices, the common background of the New York/Iroquoian borderlands ensured that these cultural outsiders pursued common paths through the well established colonial/Indian mosaic. Much as how the Albany Commissioners preserved cultural and diplomatic roots to their Dutch forefathers, that same institution exhibited very similar experiences to their successor. Such a recognition underscores the continuity of European and Indian interactions in the borderlands despite changes in government offices or even empire. Trade and respect undergirded any successful interaction with the Iroquois and other Indian polities, be they early Dutch traders or the charismatic leadership of an Irish immigrant. The Albany Commissioners provided a strong link between those two eras.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has shown how the borderlands voices of Albany's Commissioners for Indian Affairs and the Iroquois Nations reverberated past the immediate environs of the New York/Iroquoia borderlands and into the larger colonial world around them. Their conversations remained decidedly local, taking place mostly in the Anglo-Dutch settlement of Albany and occasionally, through interpreters and messengers, into Iroquoia itself. Regardless, as these borderlands denizens pushed and pulled against each other in pursuance of their own ends they transformed Albany from simple trading town to an important node of Indian diplomacy for northeastern North America from the 1690s through the 1750s. Thus, the everyday realities of colonial life over a much larger geographic area, including both European and indigenous polities, often played out in the lives and actions of Iroquoian leaders and Albany's Commissioners. In sum, by actively engaging their roles as diplomatic figures, these borderlands actors helped shape the larger processes of not just their local environment but also provincial New York, other Indian and colonial settlements, and the larger imperial struggle with France. This incorporates the New York/Iroquoia borderlands more firmly into the larger colonial and imperial story of British North America without sacrificing its unique identity as a peripheral geography.

The legitimacy of the Iroquois Nations and Albany's Commissioners to act an influential borderlands players lay in their unique relationship with each other. Early Dutch settlers and traders in New Netherland created a tenuous, although imperfect, relationship with the Mohawks near Beverwijck to pursue mutually agreeable objectives

of peace and trade. This Dutch experience with Indian diplomacy proved useful for the early English governors serving after the shift to English control during the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1664. Dutch locals remained at the fore of Indian diplomacy when Governor Benjamin Fletcher formally created the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs in 1696, an institution that remained in service almost continuously through the early 1750s. The Albany Commissioners relied mainly a small core of ethnically Dutch individuals serving long tenures, connected to each other through shared professions and family links, to provide a continuity and stability to Indian relations, a unique strength absent in the Indian affairs of other British colonies.

Albany's Commissioners met regularly with Iroquois diplomats for the next half century, maintaining a continuous relationship with one of the most powerful Indian polities in northeastern North America. They shared a common diplomatic culture of ceremony, respect, and procedure that served as a foundation for their regular meetings. Despite this shared culture of borderlands interaction, significant local issues of trading, land sales, and different conceptions of Iroquois sovereignty created points of conflict between the Albany Commissioners and the visiting diplomats. While often using heated words and utilizing warnings of disapproval and annoyance, both the Iroquois diplomats and the Albany Commissioners maintained the common culture of respect and diplomacy because each group needed the other to legitimate and preserve their own influence in borderlands circles. Together, they created their own authorities in an environment without any overarching power structures.

These conversations between Iroquois diplomats and Albany's Commissioners, although occurring within the New York/Iroquoia borderlands, overlapped and interacted

with a larger geographic context. New York's royal governors and provincial Assembly both closely associated with the Indian diplomacy of the borderlands arena. New York's governors sometimes visited Albany to meet with delegates from the Five Nations, but relied heavily on the Albany Commissioners for the proper functioning of New York's Indian affairs. The Commissioners served as sources of intelligence for a governor, modified and detailed his often vague instructions, and took initiative in making important decisions themselves. Iroquois diplomats utilized a governor's visits to access a direct line of communication to the British Crown. New York's General Assembly utilized its powers of legislation and the purse to partially mold the borderlands world. Albany's Commissioners relied on the Assembly for its operating budget, critical for gifts for visiting Indian diplomats, and payments to interpreters and messengers. The Assembly sometimes passed laws that helped the Commissioners pursue diplomatic objectives, often targeting Iroquois Nations in the process. Ultimately, New York's executives and its General Assembly served as vital links between the borderlands world of the Commissioners and the Five Nations and the larger Atlantic geography, providing a framework of instructions, laws, legislation, and funding that intertwined the peripheral borderlands and the continental and imperial worlds.

Both the Albany Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations also regularly interacted with other British colonies and Indian polities, stretching from Indian towns in the western Great Lakes to Virginia in the south. Individual British colonies maintained their own methods of Indian Affairs before the 1755 appointment of general superintendents for the northern and southern colonies. Albany's Commissioners, however, often participated in other colonies' Indian affairs, most notably those of New

England and Virginia. Sometimes other colonial governments requested their attention, and sometimes the Commissioners acted on their own initiative. Moreover, the Albany Commissioners did not restrict their Indian diplomacy to just the Iroquois Nations, but met regularly with Indian diplomats from throughout northeastern North America. The Iroquois Nations likewise maintained a diverse web of colonial and indigenous contacts, often bringing these issues into their meetings with the Albany Commissioners. Such activities by both the Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations highlighted Albany as an important node in the larger borderlands diplomatic web. Such an understanding suggests the trend toward centralization of Indian diplomacy to northern New York predated William Johnson's royal appointment as superintendent in the 1750s.

The imperial rivalry between British North American colonies and French Canada also appeared in the conversations between Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations. Abstract imperial plans and objectives originated in colonial or European capitals but played out, at least in part, in the New York/Iroquoia borderlands. This opened opportunities for local actors to participate in and even shape these larger processes. Albany's Commissioners often spearheaded matters regarding Britain's conflict with French Canada. By acting as independent borderlands agents within a larger imperial maelstrom they, by prioritizing and protecting their role as sole arbiters of Indian diplomacy, took actions that coincided with larger British goals. The Iroquois Nations utilized the continuous imperial conflicts of the eighteenth century to maintain their diplomatic independence, pursuing relations with both the Commissioners and French Canadian officials. In doing so, they subtly molded the balance of power between the two belligerent powers. Albany's Commissioners and the Iroquois Nations, in acting

as independent borderlands actors, thus underscored the agency of non-British peoples in the British Empire. Furthermore, their activities that helped and hindered imperial goals blurred the lines between center and periphery.

Albany's Commissioners shared much in common with their successor, the royally appointed William Johnson, in terms of their personal and official borderlands experiences. All of these men, regardless of the source of their formal authority, faced the same advantages and obstacles inherent to the borderlands world in the eighteenth century. They participated in land speculation, faced the same challenges to successful borderlands diplomacy including political attacks from provincial and imperial officials, and existed as non-English outsiders in a British empire. In many ways, Albany's Commissioners and William Johnson were more similar than different. Fortunately for Johnson, his service during the definitive Seven Years' War granted him a more positive place in the historical memory than the Albany Commissioners, who served during the more ambiguous wars earlier in the century.

This dissertation's conclusions are unique and telling, but they still leave open many additional paths of research to provide an even greater understanding of the eighteenth century New York/Iroquoia borderlands and their relationship to the larger provincial and colonial world. For example, chapter 3 explores the relationship between Albany's Commissioners and the province's governorship on an institutional level. Further work remains to be done to explore how the Commissioners interacted with individual governors. Some historians have provided some detail of the relations between the Commissioners and William Cosby over the illegal trade between Albany and French Canada, and with George Clinton over provincial Indian policy, but most

governors remain relatively obscure in their individual relationships with the Commissioners. Furthermore, by utilizing the Commissioners' mostly untouched minutes as its primary set of documents, this dissertation necessarily provides a more Commissioner-centric view of events. Additional study with a more expansive cache of sources will provide greater nuance and understanding to the Iroquois side of the Albany conversation. In any case, the work presented herein underscores the importance of non-British peoples to the proper functioning of the British Empire and ties that borderland geography more closely to the larger Atlantic world around it, itself a useful contribution to a historical literature increasingly concerned with the blurring of official imperial borders.

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VITA

Andrew Thomas Stahlhut was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He earned his master's in history from Lehigh University in 2005 and his PhD from Lehigh in 2016. He has served as adjunct professor of history for Muhlenberg College, Moravian College, and Lehigh University, teaching classes on colonial American history, colonial Latin America, Atlantic world history, Indian history, black history in the colonial Americas, women's history in the colonial world, and on related topics. He has published in *de Halve Maen*, quarterly journal of the Holland Society of New York, and has had an essay solicited for review by the Van Raalte Institute at Hope College. He has presented papers for the New England Historical Association, the New Netherland Institute, the Association for Advancement of Dutch American Studies, and at numerous smaller conferences.