

# The Downfall of the Iroquois

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## Abstract

This paper will explore the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy before the arrival of the Europeans and the interactions of the Iroquois and the European peoples after their arrival. By focusing on texts by historians who studied the Iroquois during a period of both war and neutrality, the paper will argue that the combination of cultural predispositions that fell apart during the Revolutionary War along with the introduction of guns and the way it changed the Iroquois way of life resulted in their eventual downfall. The strength that the Iroquois held early on and the unity they had within their Confederation would cause one to think that they would carry this sense of unity throughout the Beaver Wars, neutrality, and the Revolutionary War. Unfortunately, this was not the case. This paper aims to take a chronological look at the narrative that unfolded during the period of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that led to the crumbling of the Confederation during the Revolutionary War, when certain groups allied themselves with the British and others with the American colonists in their fight for independence.

**T**he Iroquois Confederation, starting as Five Nations and becoming Six Nations after 1722, was one of the largest and most powerful groups of combined Native Americans in pre-colonial and colonial North America. Situated in modern-day New York, the Confederacy initially was comprised of five groups: the Seneca, the Onondaga, the Oneida, the Cayuga and the Mohawk nations.<sup>186</sup> The significance of this collaboration was not only to retain power, but also to prevent conflict between their respective groups. Each group had its own area of jurisdiction and its own culture and way of life.

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<sup>186</sup> Paul A. W. Wallace, "The Iroquois: A Brief Outline of their History," *Pennsylvania History* 23, No. 1 (January, 1956): 15.

The phrase “The Longhouse” is most commonly used to describe the Iroquois Confederacy, and is merely a term that describes each group in the Confederacy’s geographical relationship to each other. Initially, the Confederacy spread from across Northern New York beyond Schenectady, which is northwest of modern day Albany, and all the way over to the Genessee River, which is even further west of Schenectady.<sup>187</sup>

It is estimated that the Confederacy was founded within the 15<sup>th</sup> century before the arrival of Europeans, although no record can be found. The belief in “divine origin” of the league is based on the planting of the “Tree of Peace,” a great white pine tree rising upward towards the sun on the edge of the Onondaga Lake. This may simply be a story, but the sense of nationality behind it created a bond that was almost unbreakable; the tale bred patriotism that held all five nations together by means of two common leaders: Deganawidah and Hiawatha.<sup>188</sup>

The strength that arose from within the Confederacy in the early years would cause one to believe that the trend would continue throughout the subsequent centuries. What actually transpired was a painful unraveling of the group in a few short, deliberate alliances and battles during the Revolutionary War. What caused this unraveling? Was it a lack of adequate weaponry and artillery? Or was the fact that the Iroquois had weapons adverse to their well-being? Was their downfall something intangible within the relationships that the Iroquois bred?

I will argue that it is true that guns and war were a large factor in the Iroquois involvement with European powers. The combination of guns and the cultural divide that resulted from the split of the Iroquois between the colonists and the British during the Revolutionary War brought down the Iroquois Confederacy. I will argue that the Beaver Wars solidified the Iroquois need for guns and that the resulting neutrality assisted them in the short run, but when it came time to pick sides during the Revolutionary War, it caused their split. This lack of unity was the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 17.

reason for their destruction—and it all began because of a need for the guns that the Europeans introduced.

Much attention in modern historical text is placed on the culture of neutrality among the Iroquois, French, and British in the 1700s—after guns were introduced to the Iroquois. Foreign weapons were introduced and became a part of the Iroquois way of war around the 1640s, and unlike many other indigenous populations, they had access to Dutch trading posts along the Hudson River. Keener argues that weapons like the iron axe and the musket were easily accessible to the Iroquois in contrast to other Native Americans, who were more remotely located and this gave them an advantage.<sup>189</sup> Keener also argues for the trial and error system of Iroquois warfare against European settlements and posts in the Northeast, and Crawford also argues that Iroquois warfare is based on a cultural system of “blood revenge.” The assertion that warfare was already an innate part of the Iroquois Confederacy before the advent of guns in their society is well documented by many historians. Although it was part of the culture, Lee argues that although Native Americans were willing to “seek and destroy an enemy, including indiscriminate killing,” they also showed levels of restraint to reduce escalation and violence with European powers. It is incredibly important to analyze the way that the Iroquois approached war to understand their approach to the Revolutionary War, and I will briefly outline the role of warfare in Iroquois society. Lee argues that the Native Americans instigated escalation between 1500 and 1800, and argues that the lack of understanding between the British and the Native Americans during the period of the Revolutionary war about simple systems like prisoner exchange and parole caused serious violence between parties.<sup>190</sup>

Graymont argues that understanding the Iroquois during the American

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<sup>189</sup> Craig S. Keener, “An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Iroquois Assault Tactics Used against Fortified Settlements of the Northeast in the Seventeenth Century” *Ethnohistory, Warfare and Violence in Ethnohistorical Perspective* 46, No. 4 (1999): 787.

<sup>190</sup> Wayne E. Lee “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800” *The Journal of Military History* 71, No. 3 (Jul., 2007): 701-741.

Revolution means truly examining the cultural foundations that they built.<sup>191</sup> She focuses on the fact that the way of life and basis of government among the Iroquois were as important as their changing economy: primarily their new need to trade for weapons with the Europeans. She claims that the combination of both of these factors resulted in the eventual breakdown of the Confederacy, and I will agree with her throughout much of this paper. Grinde also echoes Graymont's sentiments, and claims that little research has been done that assess the subtleties of Native American culture when dealing with the white man. He argues that many sources focus on the "white man's burden" and that it is a misrepresentation of the actual events. He says that more emphasis must be placed on how the Iroquois approached these interactions and what cultural foundations predisposed them for responses to these altercations. He also claims that Native Americans had an incredibly positive influence on American history, whereas, he says, previous sources provide a negative connotation.

The presence of the Beaver Wars in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and the reasons behind the conflict and neutrality in the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows that guns were incredibly important to Iroquois warfare once the Europeans had introduced them. It is also necessary to look at how the Iroquois handled the use of guns and military tactics in this period of neutrality to understand why guns were the catalyst that reacted with predisposed Iroquois culture and resulted in their destruction. The point I will aim to prove is that the pursuit of guns caused neutrality, which eventually resulted in a divide within the Iroquois themselves. Some Iroquois wanted to retain a position of "non-aggression", while others saw the need to fight at the side of an ally. Guns caused the cultural break that shattered Iroquois unity by the end of the Revolutionary War.

Crawford argues that archaeological evidence supports the story that the Five Nations were in constant conflict with one another before the advent of the

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<sup>191</sup> Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse UP, 1972).

Confederacy. He goes on to describe that their wars were based primarily on what was known as “blood feuds” or “mourning wars” that were characterized by revenge killings, which left the tribes in a state of constant warfare. Boundary disputes were relatively rare, but the value that the Iroquois placed on taking captives and adopting of their enemies carried over even after the formation of the Confederacy.<sup>192</sup>

While Crawford argues for the constant state of war in pre-Confederacy Iroquois life, Lee argues that war was not initially a part of the Native American code of ethics. He claims that Native Americans in pre-European North America had not “balanced war into harmony with their other cultural values, and thus scaled down warfare into some kind of ritualized, nonlethal nonentity.”<sup>193</sup> But he admits that like any other group of humans given the right conditions and motive, eventually they adopted war as well.

Among all Native Americans, there were a few functions of war in society. The first cause was for political war, and the purpose was to enforce certain lessons about how relationships should be structured within groups.<sup>194</sup> Another cause was for “blood revenge” and personal status gain. Relatives were mandated to take “blood revenge” in the killing of one of their own, and it was one of the biggest statues of Indian war culture.<sup>195</sup> Indian war prior to European arrival was based upon using their range weapons, the bow and arrow, and then when closing in they took to hand to hand combat—where they used war clubs and knives.<sup>196</sup>

Although they had access to guns and powder, the Iroquois were unable to trade their plentiful corn for guns and powder, which they had become reliant upon.

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<sup>192</sup> Neta C. Crawford, “A Security Regime among Democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois” *Nations International Organization* 48, No. 3 (1994): 360.

<sup>193</sup> Lee, “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800,” 702.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 713.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 713-714.

<sup>196</sup> Keener, “An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Iroquois Assault Tactics Used against Fortified Settlements of the Northeast in the Seventeenth Century,” 787.

The Europeans only had one item that the Native Americans could provide them that would satisfy the trade—fur.<sup>197</sup> The Iroquois began to shift more towards hunting to provide hides, forcing them to break into the territories of New France. This was made difficult due to the fact that the government of New France held a monopoly on the northern fur trade. Additionally, competition with other Native American peoples in New France—the Hurons and the Ottawa—made this incredibly difficult. As a result of this conflict, the Iroquois mounted direct assaults on Huron villages and French trading posts.

While some scholars have debated whether the bow and arrow or the musket was more effective, Keener found that muskets actually provided two big advantages over the bow and arrow: shock value and penetrating power.<sup>198</sup> When the Iroquois introduced the musket into their arsenal, the shock value of the noise, smoke, and devastating firepower proved intimidating to their Native American enemies. The penetrating power of muskets was also a huge factor in their success, because although wooden armor could protect someone from an arrow, the lead ball could easily pierce wooden armor, making the target much more vulnerable.

Keener argues that direct attacks were dependent upon the element of surprise as well as the speed of the attacks themselves. The assaults that the Iroquois carried out in the 1640s while they were just learning how to use these weapons involved numerous casualties. But, one of the many reasons that the Iroquois became a dominant power was their resilience and ability to adapt to new conditions. As a result of their high number of casualties, the Iroquois developed new devices for battle, such as movable barriers or walls and protective shields to defend against large numbers of armed men approaching the outer wall of a camp or fort. Though the Iroquois were not the first to use shields, they were the first group of Native Americans to reintroduce hand-held shields made of bigger and thicker pieces of wood, which could withstand musket fire, unlike their older

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<sup>197</sup> Wallace, “The Iroquois: A Brief Outline of their History,” 18.

<sup>198</sup> Keener, “An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Iroquois Assault Tactics,” 790.

counterparts.<sup>199</sup> Keener also argues that indirect assaults were also successful for the Iroquois. Whereas a direct assault may break down walls or penetrate bastions, an indirect assault was more of a “hit and run.”<sup>200</sup> These hit and runs could include sieges, encirclement, raiding of crops and agriculture, settlements, animals and disruption of supply lines to the fort or village they were attacking.

From 1649-1670, the Iroquois attempted to establish themselves as middlemen, but when they were not successful, they turned to piracy of fur fleets coming to Montreal after 1656. The Beaver Wars grew out of this conflict—and out of the conflict the Iroquois became the dominant power. During this time, they ambushed French ships, blockaded rivers and then seized the furs on board. The Huron and Ottawa had successful trading relationships with the French, so they were the primary groups that the Iroquois attacked in their attempt to gain control of the trade. At this point, the English supplied the Iroquois and encouraged their efforts because of their rivalry with the French in colonizing North America. The French, while protecting their Huron-Ottawa trade, attacked the Iroquois.<sup>201</sup>

The French desperately attempted to prevent an Iroquois-Huron-Ottawa alliance, because it would divert most of the fur into the Albany market, which would primarily benefit the English. In 1673, the Iroquois and the Ottawa negotiated a treaty for an exchange of goods between them. However, Frontenac, Governor of New France, undermined the deal. Despite his best efforts the Iroquois and the Huron secretly kept negotiations moving forward, and this put the French into direct confrontation with the Iroquois.<sup>202</sup> A conspiracy formed, led by the newly formed pack of Iroquois, Huron, and Ottawa peoples, meant to annihilate the French from these territories. The French threatened to attack the Huron and Ottawa peoples if they did not fight the Iroquois, and secretly all three groups came

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid. 791.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 796.

<sup>201</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, “Origins of Iroquois Neutrality: The Grand Settlement of 1701,” (1957), 224.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 226-227.

to the agreement that some raids would inevitably take place, but that both parties would spare the lives of the captives that they took.<sup>203</sup> This was a shining example of the qualities of patriotism and nationality that the Iroquois held so deeply within their culture that Wallace highlights.

Despite the best efforts by the Native Americans to work in secret concert, by 1698 the Iroquois were struggling to hunt successfully and were suffering a serious number of casualties. They finally decided that it was in their best interest to make peace with the French.<sup>204</sup> The Montreal settlement of 1701 represented compromises on both the French and the Iroquois side. Not only had the French failed to defeat the Iroquois for over fifty years, but the Iroquois also threatened the welfare and trade relationships of New France. The Iroquois side had suffered so many casualties, and during the negotiations the French relinquished lands west of the Maumee River and Detroit to the Iroquois for hunting grounds. They recognized Iroquois rights to the lands east of this line.<sup>205</sup>

What would have happened if the Iroquois had never acquired muskets? The traditional bow and arrow technique was well known in the Native American realm, and had guns never come to the forefront of the Native American arsenal, the dominance of the Iroquois may not have been so prevalent. They would never have needed to trade to acquire muskets, and therefore would not have needed to engage with the French in the Beaver Wars. Although the Native Americans attempted to conspire against the French in a small makeshift alliance, they were unsuccessful because of their need for furs to acquire guns and they couldn't seem to hold the united front long enough to force the French hand. This caused them to settle with the French and enter a period of "neutrality," foreshadowing the divide of the Iroquois during the Revolutionary War, when they could not seem to stand on united ground. As Graymont argues, this divide led to their defeat.

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 234.



During the entirety of the Beaver Wars, the British had unanimously supported the Iroquois Five Nations, but with the Treaty of 1701, the Iroquois realized that they could not be completely allied with the British while maintaining peace with the French. Therefore, the Iroquois devised a strategic plan to play off both sides in order to protect themselves from intrusion by both the British and the French. By doing this, they secured their freedom from intrusion by the Europeans, and at times of war, could offer their services to the “highest bidder.”<sup>206</sup> In return for neutrality and the openness to ally themselves with either side, the French looked to appease, and gave the Iroquois a large portion of land. “...in regard to beaver country, in 1701, the French agreed to Iroquois possession of it and agreed not to invade Iroquois lands in case of a war with the English, as long as the Iroquois remained neutral; and at the same time the English contracted to protect this country from intrusion by the French.”<sup>207</sup>

Part of this fear from both the British and French had to do with the evolution and success of Iroquois warfare in the late seventeenth century. Iroquois warfare progressed significantly from 1640 until 1700. Keener reports that out of 237 reported attacks made by the Iroquois during these years, 100 were hit-and-run attacks on enemies along water trade routes or unspecified places. The remaining 137 attacks were made on or in villages. Keener continues to say that out of all of these sieges, 86 percent were indirect assaults on people, buildings and livestock outside of village defenses. The 14 percent remainder quantifies the direct assaults that were with the intention of taking over a fort or village.<sup>208</sup> Various indirect assault tactics made the Iroquois incredibly unpredictable and dangerous, and unlike European fortifications, the Iroquois were incredibly mobile. Traditional indigenous village defenses for the Iroquois moved to spread out communities without a single “lodge” or “blockhouse” to attack, allowing the Iroquois to leave

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>208</sup> Keener, “An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Iroquois Assault Tactics,” 799.

behind a village at a moment's notice.<sup>209</sup>

Neutrality served as a way for the Iroquois to operate towards their own best interests; they were able to divert military activity away from Five Nations territory while they offered intelligence gathering to their allies (whether French or British). By being an insider with valuable information, the Iroquois secured themselves a regular supply of arms, money, ammunition, transportation, food, and other supplies.<sup>210</sup> All of these things circled back to actually enhance the military reputation of the Iroquois, even though they were doing minimal fighting during this period. Another facet of the logic behind neutrality was that the Iroquois recognized that the Europeans were superior. The Montreal Treaty of 1701 was forged not only because they had been battling the Beaver Wars, but also came as a direct result of the Iroquois uneasiness about the colonization and expansion of the English. This was part of the reason that they made peace with the French and agreed to trade with them at Detroit.<sup>211</sup> In return for trading privileges, the Five Nations pledged neutrality in the case of a Franco-British war.

Throughout the next sixty years, the Iroquois were involved in the rivalry between the French and the British during the three inter-colonial wars: Queen Anne's War (1754-1763), King George's War (1744-1748), and the French and Indian War (1754-1763).<sup>212</sup> They held their strategic position as middleman to keep the balance of power and to secure their right to their beaver hunting territory. When tensions began to rise between the colonies and England between 1774 and 1775, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Sir William Johnson worked tirelessly to keep the Iroquois loyal to the English.<sup>213</sup> The Iroquois felt conflicted because both the colonists and the English were of the same land and blood. Because the colonists and the Loyalists came from the same point of origin, it was hard for the Iroquois to

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 801.

<sup>210</sup> Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies," 52.

<sup>211</sup> Wallace, "The Iroquois: A Brief Outline of their History," 24.

<sup>212</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 29.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 48.

choose which group to ally themselves with. Johnson's death coincided with the unfortunate movement of white colonists into Native American territory. Graymont argues that white colonists encroaching into Iroquois territory spurred misunderstanding and eventually broke kinship between Iroquois groups.<sup>214</sup>

Because of this encroachment, some Iroquois began to “take up the hatchet,” and talk war after a 1774 incident between the Shawnee Indians and a group of Virginians.<sup>215</sup> After Johnson's death, Guy Johnson assumed his role as Superintendent during a council meeting with the Iroquois. A loyal people—even while being cheated out of their lands and grieving over the murders of their Shawnee brethren by white settlers—the Iroquois were nonetheless trusting in their “father the king.”<sup>216</sup> Iroquois diplomacy changed dramatically after Superintendent Guy Johnson and English educated Iroquois leader Joseph Brant joined forces. By 1776, there was undeclared war between the colonies and England. While the Iroquois were content to sit back and stay neutral, Joseph Brant did not share the same attitude. Brant's highly tenacious and aggressive attachment to the English crown was compounded by his worry about the possibility of American colonists obtaining a victory spurred his next moves.

To most Iroquois, Brant was a hero; he embodied the “revenge killing” attitude of pre-Confederacy and pre-neutrality, and he tried to incite the same fervor in his people. When Brant told his people that they were in danger from the Rebels and that their own liberty was at stake, many of them did not hesitate in raising the hatchet, but some did.

This was where the Iroquois started to split between Joseph Brant's camp and those who were not so intent upon following his ideals and his mission. This split was the beginning of the end for the Iroquois as a united front, even though it had appeared that Brant could have been a unifying leader. This is where war

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 52.

began to cause a divide between the culture of non-aggression and the attitude of “taking up the hatchet” and defending land and sovereignty. This was the beginning of two different camps of Iroquois. The fact that the Iroquois were unable to stick together behind one leader was detrimental, and the system collapsed when they raised guns against one another.

The Oneida and the Tuscaroras Indians were particularly opposed to fighting, claiming their simultaneous friendship for the king and the Americans. Eventually, they would take up arms with the Americans against Brant’s camp. Councils were held during 1777 to persuade the now Six Nations of the Iroquois to join forces with the British crown to bring down the rebels, but initially many claimed that they could not break neutrality and their treaty with the Americans for peace.<sup>217</sup>

But, as the war waged on, the Iroquois split between the Continental Army and the British army. Brant stationed himself at Onoquaga and increased his army and supply arsenal. The entire Mohawk Valley at this point was under Brant’s control. Americans flocked towards Cherry Valley and Schenectady to find safety.<sup>218</sup> General George Washington of the Americans decided that it was time to destroy the capabilities, including villages, food sources, and supplies, of the Cayuga and Seneca Indians. And once this occurred, he then resolved that they would take the Indians hostage as a warning to other Indians not to test the power of the Continental Army, and to subdue them for good. I argue with Graymont here, where she claims that this is the point where Deganawida’s and Hiawatha’s work truly became unraveled: “...The League of the Iroquois, founded by the ancients to preserve the Great Peace among the brethren, had at last succumbed to the persuasions of an intrepid warrior at the Eastern Door and to rum and trinkets at the Western Door.”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>218</sup> Grinde, “The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation,” 104.

<sup>219</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 128.

Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley was home to a death-ridden clash of Loyalists and Patriots on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1778. After a loss at Niagara for Butler and Johnson, they brought their group of Tories down to Pennsylvania, and picked up a group of Seneca Indians along the way to confront the Americans in Wyoming Valley. Both sides assembled themselves in a "skirmish line," but the Iroquois warriors outflanked the American troops. As the Americans were forced to backtrack, the retreat quickly became a massacre. 340 of the 400 Rebels were killed, while the Seneca lost about five men. On July 4, 1778, the Fort surrendered to the Iroquois. As promised by the British at the beginning of the alliance, the Senecas received monetary rewards for their services and went home.<sup>220</sup> This urged Brant forward and he continued to raid the Mohawk Valley, attacking other Indians, specifically the Oneida. The Oneida and Tuscarora knew that they could not persuade the Cayuga and Seneca Indians to remain neutral, so they instead chose to fight Brant's encroachment.<sup>221</sup> Graymont argues that this would not have been permissible under the ideals of the founders of the Confederacy—a group of Iroquois attacking another group of Iroquois for the gain of an ally would have been unheard of.

In retaliation, Brant's men attacked Cherry Valley. Loyalist militiamen, Seneca Indians, and British soldiers, led by Tory Captain Walter Butler and Joseph Brant, surprise ambushed a small fort in Cherry Valley, New York.<sup>222</sup> As a direct assault, this tactic was dependent upon the surprise element that the Iroquois were accustomed to, and as a result, a multitude of women and children were killed along with approximately sixteen soldiers. This was one of the first times that Brant and Butler were truly unable to restrain their men in their raid, and the atrocities caused an atmosphere of hatred for the Iroquois and the Tories.<sup>223</sup> Before this raid, noncombatants previously had not been harmed or attacked, but now the infamous

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<sup>220</sup> Grinde, "The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation," 103-106.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-108.

<sup>222</sup> Ron Soodalter, "Massacre and Retribution," *Military History* (Jul., 2011).

<sup>223</sup> Grinde, "The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation," 107.

Indian warfare that seemed to be more rumor than fact was becoming a reality. I would argue that Cherry Valley was one of the most significant events, as it signified when Iroquois officially began attacking other Iroquois. This is where the true split became noticeable and the ideals of the Confederation slipped between two very divided camps.

Sullivan's campaign was a carefully planned raid and organized attack on the Iroquois.<sup>224</sup> During the spring and summer of 1779, several American invasions into Iroquois heartland convinced still neutral Native Americans to side with the British. Sullivan's campaign was planned for that summer, and following Clinton's invasion of the then neutral Onondagas, Sullivan and Clinton completely annihilated whole Iroquois villages and took several prisoners.<sup>225</sup>

The battle at Newtown was the major battle of the campaign, and since the Iroquois were not expecting such an enormous campaign by the Americans. After the Iroquois' past year of success in the Mohawk Valley, Sullivan had the element of surprise. On the Chemung River in Newtown on August 29, 1779, Brant, Butler and the Johnsons fought Americans from "foxholes and hastily constructed breastworks."<sup>226</sup> Sullivan had superior artillery as well as greater numbers than the Iroquois, the numbers are estimated to have been three to one. In the coming days, Sullivan destroyed all the surviving towns of the Susquehanna River and pillaged Cayuga and Seneca strongholds. Sullivan destroyed entire villages, just as Brant and the Seneca had done to New York and Pennsylvania just that prior year.

Brant answered with the 1780 Schoharie Valley expedition, where Sir John Johnson, Brant, and a group of Senecas raided white settlements up the Mohawk River, and settlements west of Schenectady. Raids along the frontier continued through 1781 and 1782.<sup>227</sup> After a turnover of power in England, new Prime

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<sup>224</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 201-203.

<sup>225</sup> Grinde, "The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation," 111.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-117.

Minister Shelburne ordered a halt of the hostilities. In June of 1782, without receiving word of this order, Brant arrived at Oswego for a raid and found no war supplies, and they were incredibly displeased by the lack of war to fight. Towards 1783, westward expansion grew, and the Iroquois found themselves increasingly displaced by their British allies. At the Peace of Paris between the Americans and the British, there was no talk of Iroquois participation.<sup>228</sup>

The founding of the Confederacy was to promote peace and end the cycle of vengeful killing for vengeful killing, eye for an eye mentality. The split of the Iroquois in the Revolutionary War led back to that mentality, causing them to break from within themselves. I believe that Brant represented the “new Iroquois,” the European man-made, manufactured goods driven type of Iroquois individual that was intent upon serving the European machine. In contrast, the Iroquois who sided with the Americans more closely resembled the “old Iroquois,” who felt that non-aggression was the best way to live, and that co-existing with the Americans in harmony was possible. The ultimate destruction of the Iroquois was not necessarily a matter of American or British superiority, but rather the divide amongst the “old” and “new” Iroquois during the Revolutionary War. Unfortunately for both sides, the British abandoned their Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca allies and the Americans did the same when they abandoned of their Tuscarora and Oneida allies.

The major reason that the Iroquois eventually “lost” in the grand scheme was because they broke from their cultural ideals that the Confederacy was founded to take up arms with two separate allies. More research needs to be placed on questions such as: what would have happened had the Iroquois never acquired guns in the first place? Would their economy have changed without the need to acquire furs for the purpose of bartering with Europeans for guns? They may never have needed to put themselves in a neutral position with the British and the French so that they could capitalize on their fur trading opportunities. Much more can be done to link the cultural beginnings of the Iroquois to the “invasion” of European goods

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 117-119.

into their very stable culture.

The Iroquois' biggest downfall was not retaining their pursuit of non-aggression that their Constitution laid out for them. By succumbing to European goods, letting in Brant and the British, and eventually taking up arms against white colonists, they secured their own downfall. The Iroquois attempted to rebuild their Confederacy after this serious split and loss in the Revolutionary War, but they never reaffirmed their once dominant presence.