

Deconstructing Jesuit Historiography and Reclaiming Haudenosaunee Internationalism

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“The Historiography of New France and the Legacy of Iroquois Internationalism”

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT		INTERVENTION IN HISTORY	
17th and 18th century French Jesuit chroniclers constructed a colonial historiography through The Jesuit Relations that "invented Iroquoia" as a manufactured, aggressive threat to justify French imperial and Christian expansion. - This colonial archive erased the sophisticated reality of Haudenosaunee international diplomacy, wampum treaty protocols, and council fire diplomacy. - Rather than accepting this demonized portrayal, Haudenosaunee communities reappropriate this historical image of "intransigence" into an ongoing legacy of anti-colonial resistance, national sovereignty, and international diplomacy across the Americas.		Interrupting Eurocentric Archives: Stevens challenges colonial records for privileging written European texts over Indigenous oral traditions and exposes European "techno-ethnocentrism". Critiquing Economic Reductionism: Refutes the "Beaver War thesis," which falsely reduced 17th century Haudenosaunee warfare strictly to commercial fur trade competition. Centering Enduring Sovereignty: Shows that wampum protocols and diplomatic mobility are living traditions of Haudenosaunee international diplomacy and governance, not relics of the past.	
KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS		ANGLO-AMERICAN MYTHMAKING & THE "VANISHING INDIAN" MYTH (PARKMAN & JENNINGS)	
Techno-Ethnocentrism - An early modern European prejudice that evaluated "civilization" strictly through written archives and permanent stone architecture, dismissing Indigenous oral traditions and mobile diplomacy as "primitive" or "uncivilized." Inventing "Iroquoia" - The process by which French chroniclers projected European nation-state concepts onto the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to construct a unified, oppositional "enemy" that justified military conquest and Catholic conversion. Haudenosaunee Internationalism - The unbroken assertion of national sovereignty, wampum treaty diplomacy, and political mobility, spanning 17th century council fires to modern international human rights forums. Reappropriated Intransigence - Transforming colonial caricatures of "stubbornness" into an active legacy of anticolonial sovereignty and treaty defense. The Trope Of Autoptic Authority - The colonial tactic of using "eyewitness" claims (like Jesuit chroniclers in The Jesuit Relations) to hide theological and imperial biases behind firsthand observation.		19th century Anglo-American historians co-opted French colonial records to construct nationalist myths of "civilization versus barbarism" and legitimize American expansion: The Anglo-American Historiographical Tradition: As Francis Jennings demonstrates in “<i>The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire</i>”, historians (Colden, Morgan, Parkman) built a mythic image of the Haudenosaunee as a bloodthirsty military empire. Francis Parkman and Whiggish Protestant Bias: Parkman co-opted French Jesuit records for a US nationalist narrative, framing the Indigenous person as a "true child of the forest" destined to vanish before Western progress. Manufacturing a Centralized Empire: When Parkman needed to portray the Haudenosaunee as a centralized, European-style state to justify conquest, he mined the accounts of Lafitau and Charlevoix. Stevens emphasizes that American national history relied on these colonial French archives to construct its own racialized myths of "civilization versus barbarism."	
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY JESUIT HISTORIANS & ETHNOLOGY		DECONSTRUCTING THE 17TH-CENTURY JESUIT ARCHIVE (DU CREUX & HURET)	
In the 18th century, Jesuit chroniclers shifted from 17th century martyrology toward comparative ethnology and formal archival history: Generic Shift In The Colonial Archive - In the 18th century, Jesuit chroniclers shifted from 17th century martyrology toward comparative ethnology and formal archival history, shaping Enlightenment views of North America. Father Joseph-François Lafitau (1724) - In “<i>Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times</i>”, Lafitau drew on 5 years living at Kahnawá:ke to pioneer comparative ethnology. He paralleled Haudenosaunee customs with ancient classical cultures to defend universal monotheology within a Catholic framework. Father Pierre François-Xavier De Charlevoix (1744) - In his 6-volume "<i>History and General Description of New France</i>," Charlevoix combined firsthand travel with rigorous archival research. His work included a 72-entry annotated bibliography evaluating prior writers, creating an authoritative record heavily mined by later Enlightenment scholars.		French Jesuit missionaries created an extensive colonial archive through annual published Relations that served both evangelical goals and French imperial expansion: Father François Du Creux (1664): Published a 10-volume Latin "<i>History of Canada</i>" (Historiae Canadensis) from Bordeaux without setting foot in North America, transforming missionary reports into formal humanist history for European elites. Call to Military Conquest: In a dedicatory addressed directly to King Louis XIV, Du Creux urged the monarch to "crush with the sword the obstinacy and cruelty of the Iroquois," framing the Haudenosaunee as an obstacle to be removed. Rhetorical Demonization: Du Creux relied on classical European imagery to construct caricatures of "barbarism," describing a cannibalistic attack as a "feast of Polyphemos" and comparing the nation to "Sodom." Visual Propaganda (Grégoire Huret Engraving): Features Huret’s 1664 engraving, "<i>The Noble Death of Certain Fathers</i>," which collapsed nine separate martyrdoms (1642–1650) into a single synoptic tableau to concentrate suffering and visually justify French military invasion.	



RECLAIMING HAUDENOSAUNEE INTERNATIONALISM & WAMPUM PROTOCOLS		19TH-CENTURY SELF-AUTHORED HISTORY & INTELLECTUAL RESISTANCE	
Far from being passive subjects of European chroniclers, Haudenosaunee identity is defined by long-ranging physical mobility, oral archives, and sophisticated treaty diplomacy: Freedom of Mobility as Collective Rights: - Stevens emphasizes that long-ranging travel across North America and the Atlantic coast for trade, hunting, fishing, and diplomacy is central to Haudenosaunee identity and inherent collective rights. This mobility is not "wandering" or nomadism, but purposeful international diplomacy. The Covenant Chain & Wampum Protocols: - Haudenosaunee diplomacy relies on sacred wampum belts, such as the 1613 Tawagonshi Treaty (Guswenta / Two Row Wampum), which established binding legal frameworks of parallel sovereignty, mutual respect, and non-interference: "two vessels traveling down the same river." Diplomatic Rigor & Council Fires: - Haudenosaunee diplomats historically required British and French colonial agents to strictly follow Longhouse council fire protocols, condolence ceremonies, and formal oratory, asserting political equality on the international stage.		19th Century Haudenosaunee intellectuals actively wrote their own history to counter Euro-American misrepresentations, challenge colonial archives, and educate a reading public: David Cusick (Tuscarora, 1828-1848): - Published <i>"Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations"</i>, blending oral tradition and written text to create an early, self-authored Indigenous history that asserted Haudenosaunee national origins and sovereignty. Ely Parker (Seneca, 1828/1895): - erved as a primary collaborator and informant for Lewis Henry Morgan’s <i>"League of the Iroquois"</i> (1851). Parker later served as a Union Army officer in the American Civil War and became the first Indigenous Commissioner of Indian Affairs. By documenting their own traditions in English, these authors demonstrated that Haudenosaunee governance was not a relic of the past, but a living intellectual tradition.	
20 th CENTURY SCHOLARS, ACTIVISTS & ANTHROPOLOGY		GLOBAL INTERNATIONALISM: FROM GENEVA TO THE UN (1923-PRESENT)	
20th Century Haudenosaunee figures utilized literature, journalism, and social sciences to defend Indigenous rights and resist state assimilation: Scholarly Contributions (Hewitt & Parker): - Tuscarora ethnologist J.N.B. Hewitt at the Smithsonian Institution and Seneca anthropologist Arthur C. Parker published extensive scholarship on Haudenosaunee culture, capturing complex oral histories from an Indigenous perspective. Political Activism (Kellogg & Jemison): - Activists like Laura Cornelius Kellogg (Oneida) and Alice Lee Jemison (Seneca) used journalism, political lobbying, and legal defense to fight against federal land loss and state jurisdiction. These scholars and activists proved that Indigenous intellectuals were active producers of knowledge who used Western academic disciplines to preserve national sovereignty.		Haudenosaunee internationalism continues to challenge settler-state borders, imperial jurisdiction, and international legal structures on the world stage: Chief Deskaheh at Geneva (1923): - Cayuga Chief Deskaheh (Levi General) traveled to the League of Nations in Geneva on a Haudenosaunee passport to petition against Canadian violations of Six Nations treaty rights and the imposition of the Indian Act. United Nations Delegation (1977): - Six Nations delegates attend a UN conference in Geneva traveling on Haudenosaunee passports issued by the Onondaga Council, establishing a landmark precedent for global Indigenous human rights. Modern Passport Resistance (1984 & 2010): - Haudenosaunee leaders served as international mediators in Nicaragua in 1984. In 2010, Mohawk youth attending an environmental summit in Bolivia challenged Canadian passport mandates, proving that Haudenosaunee nationhood remains an active geopolitical force.	
PEDAGOGICAL UTILITY: WHY THIS SCHOLARSHIP MATTERS			
Deconstructing Colonial Archives: - Stevens provides educators with tools to interrogate 17th and 18th century European primary sources, exposing how French Jesuit chroniclers manufactured narratives of “uncivilized threats” to justify land theft and spiritual conversion. Reframing “Intransigence” as Legal Defence: - Reframing historical stereotypes of Indigenous “stubbornness” or “warfare” into legitimate, heroic defence of inherent land rights, Wampum treaty law, and international governance. Centring “Resistant Knowledges”: - By connecting early modern Wampum diplomacy to modern UN petitions and passport resistance, Stevens demonstrates that Haudenosaunee sovereignty is an unbroken, ongoing legacy rather than a closed chapter of history.			
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
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