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Non-Native Discourse about the Goals of the Onondaga Nation's Land Rights Action

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Introduction

On March 11, 2005, residents of Syracuse, New York awoke to find an enormous headline stretched across the front page of *The Post-Standard*: “Onondaga File Huge Land Claim: Nation wants lake, other sites cleaned up” (McAndrew 2005). It was accompanied by a large color photograph of Chief Oren Lyons and Tadodaho Sidney Hill of the Onondaga Nation crouching on the snow-covered bank of Hemlock Creek, a body of water that they claimed had been polluted by a dump located outside the Nation’s territory. In the next section of the paper, a smaller and less conspicuous opinion piece by the local columnist Sean Kirst carried the title, “For Tadodaho, Sorrow Accompanies Claim.” The nature of this “sorrow,” though, was discussed in very different terms than were the grievances of environmental degradation and stolen land that dominated the front-page story. Kirst recounted for his readers an interview he conducted with Tadodaho Hill, in which the Nation’s spiritual leader discussed the oppression experienced by his people, their longstanding desire to have “fair negotiations” on a variety of issues including the environment, and their fear of trusting their fate to the American court system (Kirst 2005b). He quoted Hill: “We’re going into your courts for what’s supposed to be best and right. ... Can you see our side? Is it possible for you to see our emotion and how it feels with what we’ve lost? Our health? The treatment of our people? Does that mean anything to a judge? To homeowners? To anybody?” (Kirst 2005b)

The tensions between these various non-Native and Native portrayals of the Onondagas’ land rights action raise numerous questions about the inter-

cultural dialogue that has been initiated by the filing of the long-awaited suit. How have Onondagas and their non-Native neighbors discussed this case? How have they dealt with issues that have proved controversial in Indian land claims elsewhere in New York State? How effectively have they communicated across political and cultural boundaries? In this paper, I focus on only a portion of the complex discourse pertaining to the land rights action, investigating the perceptions of the Nation's legal case among non-Natives in Syracuse and the surrounding areas. More specifically, I ask what they understand the short and the long-term goals of the Nation to be, and the ways in which cultural differences between the Nation and the surrounding communities may impact that understanding.

I contend that there have been significant gaps in cross-cultural communication about the Nation's objectives in filing the land rights action, which have led some non-Natives to place greater emphasis on environmental cleanup and the improvement of Native/non-Native relationships, than on the many other goals that the Onondagas have identified as being extremely important to them. These non-Natives' misconceptions about the goals of the suit may derive in part from their dependence on Western stereotypes of Native Americans. In order to make this argument, I begin by presenting some information about the legal and cultural context for the case. To focus my discussion of the latter, I use six major themes from the preamble of the land rights action as a lens through which to explore certain aspects of Onondaga culture, which I then attempt to articulate with contemporary Onondaga

statements about the Nation's goals. In so doing, I am able to present only a partial vision of the depth and sheer complexity of the lawsuit's connections to the Nation's traditional beliefs and practices; it is sufficient, however, to demonstrate the cultural specificity of much of the Onondagas' discourse about the suit, an important factor to consider when analyzing non-Native responses.

Chapter V presents a detailed analysis of my research findings concerning non-Native discourse about the land rights action. I examine data drawn from local newspaper coverage, a public educational lecture series entitled "Onondaga Land Rights and Our Common Future," a written survey I conducted at a public festival celebrating Onondaga culture, as well as individual interviews and a focus group discussion that I conducted with non-Native members of the Syracuse community. In discussing how these non-Native voices have emphasized certain goals of the land rights action, particularly environmental cleanup and improving Native/non-Native relations, to the neglect of other objectives that have been identified by the Nation, I call for the qualification of the claim made by Natives and non-Natives that Syracuse and the surrounding municipalities have responded positively to the Onondagas' suit (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:13; The Post-Standard 2005; Eiholzer 2007).

To further explore the misconceptions non-Natives harbor about the lawsuit, I next focus more deeply on the overwhelming emphasis many have placed on the environmental goals of the Nation. Much of this discourse not only reveals ignorance of the Onondagas' cultural reasons for being concerned about the environment, but also makes assumptions about "the" Onondaga identity that

are strongly reminiscent of the Ecological Indian stereotype. I offer some reflections on the conflict that the stereotype has a tendency to produce, and the potential for such misunderstandings to flare up in the context of the Onondagas' land rights action.

I. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Onondaga Nation

The region of North America today called central New York is the aboriginal territory of several Native nations who identify themselves as *Haudenosaunee*, a name commonly translated into English as “People of the Longhouse” (Onondaga Nation 2007). Many Euro-Americans also refer to them as the “Iroquois,” a name that is thought to have originated as a French adaptation of the Algonquins’ derogatory name for their southern neighbors (Venables 1995:viii; Fenton 1998:2). The Haudenosaunee are members of an alliance founded at least one thousand years ago when five warring nations met on the shores of Onondaga Lake and agreed to live according to the mandates of their Creator as expressed in the Great Law of Peace (Onondaga Nation 2008). Today, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy¹ continues to function under this traditional system of government, with representatives from each nation meeting in a Grand Council that deliberates matters of joint concern. A notable example of the latter would be the disposition of any nation’s land, which is held in common by the Confederacy and thus cannot be sold or transferred without the consent of the Council (Mohawk 2005:35). The Council also negotiates with foreign powers.

¹ The Great Law of Peace allows any people who agree to abide by its tenets to become members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Many groups took up this offer over the course of the league’s history, most notably the Tuscaroras, who were forced to flee their homelands in North Carolina to avoid being taken captive as slaves by Euro-American colonists. When they joined the Confederacy around 1712, the Haudenosaunee became known as the Six Nations, a name they carry to this day (Venables 1995:vii; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:3).

The aboriginal territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy center on the region that is presently called central New York State (Fenton 1998:2). They are viewed metaphorically as a single great longhouse that is subdivided, from east to west, into the lands of the Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Mohawks. The Haudenosaunee were originally in control of about eighty percent of what is now New York State, as well as surrounding lands in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Ontario and Québec. However, expansionist pressure from Euro-American colonists and the dislocation of many Haudenosaunee following the American Revolutionary War created an opportunity for the illegal seizure of most of this territory (George-Kanentiio and Johansen 2000:191-194; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss [2006]:17). Between 1784 and 1850, the state of New York succeeded in illegally appropriating massive areas of Native land, violating U.S. federal Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts (to be described in more detail below) and Haudenosaunee law (George-Kanentiio and Johansen 2000:193; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:8-9). The state legislature colluded with numerous land speculators to bribe unauthorized Indian "chiefs" to sign treaties ceding land, without approval by the Grand Council. In other cases, Indians unwittingly sold their land to dishonest individuals who led them to believe that they were signing lease contracts. Several thousand additional acres were seized by the U.S. government in the 1950s through eminent domain. The result of this painful history was the crowding of Haudenosaunee people onto very small reservations (with the

exception of the Cayuga, who were left with no land at all) and the displacement of many to Canada, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Oklahoma Indian Territory. In 1998, it was calculated that the Confederacy was in possession of only 0.034 percent of its original 25,000,000 acres (George-Kanentiio and Johansen 2000:191-194).

The Onondagas (“People of the Hills”) are based on a reservation that is located a short distance south of the city of Syracuse, NY, and encompasses 7,300 acres (McAndrew 2005). They are considered keepers of the metaphorical Haudenosaunee longhouse’s central fire, and they host and chair meetings of the Grand Council (Wallace 1994:77). In accordance with their status as a sovereign nation, the Onondagas accept no federal or state funding apart from that which was promised them in their original treaties, namely for education, health care, and road maintenance. Moreover, they pay no New York state taxes on the cigarettes they vend in their smoke shop, or on their property holdings. The profits from cigarette sales, which totaled \$33 million in 2002, have supported such national projects as the construction of a state-of-the-art sports arena, improvements to water distribution infrastructure, and the purchase of additional land holdings (McAndrew 2005).

II. The Onondaga Nation's Land Rights Action

After many decades of internal deliberation and fifteen years of publicly intimating that a land claim was forthcoming (Kirst 2005a), Onondaga leaders at last reached consensus and filed in federal court on March 11, 2005. The Nation's historic suit asks for a declaratory judgment that New York's acquisition of Onondaga lands between 1788 and 1822 was illegal, and that the Nation therefore still holds title to some 4,000 square miles stretching from the St. Lawrence River and the eastern shore of Lake Ontario south to the Pennsylvania border². The region is inhabited by approximately 875,000 people, and it encompasses Syracuse, the largest city ever to have been included in a Native American land claim (McAndrew 2005).

Although the precise boundaries of the claim area have not yet been laid out, the Onondagas assert that the land in question was guaranteed to them by their agreements with Britain and the United States in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of 1784 and the Treaty of Canandaigua of 1794, respectively (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:7). Their argument for the illegality of all pursuant "treaties" proceeds as follows. In 1788, New York and unauthorized representatives of the Onondaga Nation negotiated a treaty whereby the Onondaga would cede about ninety percent of their land to the state (McAndrew 2005), retaining only a small tract of land south of Onondaga Lake. They were also guaranteed access to Onondaga Lake and a one mile-wide ring of land surrounding it, as the area was valuable for salt production and was to

² Please refer to Appendix A for a map of this area.

be held in common by New York and the Nation (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:7-8; McAndrew 2005). An angry outcry by Onondaga leaders delayed the signing of the treaty, but New York succeeded in overriding these complaints by obtaining signatures of several unauthorized Onondaga representatives in June of 1790. The Nation claims that this agreement, in addition to not having been approved by the Haudenosaunee Grand Council, violated both federal and state law (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:8-9). By the 1790 Indian Trade and Intercourse Act, the U.S. Congress reserved the exclusive right to ratify any treaties involving the transfer of Indian lands (McAndrew 2005). The 1790 “treaty” did not come into legal effect until 1791, and was therefore in violation of federal law. Moreover, the said treaty was void because it was not approved by the state legislature, as required by both a 1788 state statute and the state constitution, until 1813, nearly two decades after the passage of the 1790 Indian Trade and Intercourse Act (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:8-9).

In clear contravention of both U.S. federal and Haudenosaunee law, New York State brokered four additional fraudulent treaties with the Onondaga in 1793, 1795, 1817, and 1822. The first of these provided for the cession of 79 square miles of land on which the modern city of Syracuse would later be built. The Onondaga representatives were told they would only be leasing their land and were deceived into signing a sales contract. New York employed the same mendacious strategy in 1795, when the Nation lost its rights to Onondaga Lake

and its shoreline, as well to as a portion of Onondaga Creek it had formerly controlled. In supporting this particular “treaty,” New York State’s governor blatantly ignored a direct warning from the U.S. Attorney General reminding him of the provisions of the 1790 Indian Trade and Intercourse Act (McAndrew 2005; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:11; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff’s Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants’ Motions to Dismiss [2006]:18). Two subsequent “treaties” in 1817 and 1822 resulted in the loss of some 4,800 additional acres. As was the case in 1790, neither the Haudenosaunee Council nor the U.S. Congress approved any of these four agreements (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:11-13).

The Onondaga claim that because these land transfers were illegal, they never voluntarily ceded title to their ancestral homelands. The defendants named in their 2005 filing therefore are charged with “unlawfully claiming an interest in the subject lands” (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:4). These parties include: the state of New York; New York’s former governor George Pataki; Onondaga County; the City of Syracuse; Honeywell International, Inc., a corporation that contributed greatly to the industrial pollution of Onondaga Lake; Trigen Syracuse Energy Corporation, which operates a heavily polluting energy plant in the town of Geddes; Clark Concrete Company, Inc. and Valley Realty Development Company, Inc., two mining corporations that have polluted the headwaters of Onondaga Creek and

have disturbed important Onondaga archaeological and cultural sites; and lastly, Hanson Aggregates North America, a Texas-based mining company that has damaged the environment through its operations in the towns of DeWitt and LaFayette (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:3-6). The identification of individual corporate defendants who have “degraded the land to which the Onondaga Nation holds title under federal law” (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:6) reflects the Nation’s stated interest in using their lawsuit to pressure the American federal and state governments to better enforce extant environmental laws and to be more receptive to Onondaga input concerning environmental responsibility and other issues. Such a settlement, however, is not explicitly requested by the 2005 legal filing (McAndrew 2005). Onondaga descriptions of the nation’s goals in filing the land rights action and its vision for a possible settlement will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In the summer of 2005, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals handed down a decision that boded ill for the Onondaga case. The Cayuga Nation’s land claim, after undergoing extensive litigation, was dismissed on the basis of “laches,” or the argument that an inexcusable length of time had passed between the offense in question and the filing of a complaint, and that the passage of that time unfairly disadvantages the defendant (Indian Law Resource Center 2008; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff’s Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants’ Motions to Dismiss [2006]:4-5). After the Supreme Court refused to hear the Cayuga’s appeal in May of 2006, the State of New York accordingly

filed to dismiss the Onondaga case on the basis of laches, citing the Cayuga case as precedent. In November 2006, the Onondaga Nation's lawyers responded to this motion by submitting an extensive brief that marshaled historical and legal evidence against the applicability of laches to their case (Indian Law Resource Center 2008).

In this document, they argue that the Onondagas have repeatedly protested the illegal treaties through direct appeal to state and federal government authorities. Their complaints received no redress, even though the United States condemned, multiple times, New York State's actions (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss [2006]:17-18). Like all American Indian nations, the Onondagas were excluded from the U.S. court system until 1974, when the Oneida Nation won its landmark Supreme Court case. In the intervening years between the 1970s and 2005, the Onondagas were reluctant to file due to the many remaining uncertainties facing land claims in the U.S. courts, their lack of financial and legal resources, and the United States government's failure to respond to their request, first filed in 1989, that it support them in a suit against New York State³ (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's

³ According to the Eleventh Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, a state is immune from being prosecuted by a foreign state. New York has cited this law as grounds for the dismissal of the Nation's case. The United States has not yet agreed to join the Onondagas' suit against New York State, though the Bureau of Indian Affairs has recommended that it do so (McAndrew 2007c). Preparing for the possibility that the American government might not acquiesce, Onondaga Nation lawyers argued in their November 2006 brief that the non-disruptive nature of the land rights action disqualifies New York State from claiming a need for protection under the 11th Amendment (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York*

Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss [2006]:10,20-21). For these reasons, the brief argues, the Onondagas did not wait an "unreasonable" amount of time to file their lawsuit. The document also argues that laches cannot be used against the Nation because the passage of time has not harmed New York State (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Response to Defendants' Statement of Material Facts [2006]:2); to the contrary, the state has benefited from the use of Onondaga aboriginal lands (Heath and Hauptman).

Furthermore, the brief asserts that the Cayuga decision only applies to claims that are "possessory and disruptive." The Onondaga suit, by contrast, is not disruptive because it only seeks a declaratory judgment, which carries no power to force or prohibit action. A distinction exists in U.S. law between possession and title, such that it would be possible to recognize the Nation's title without the disruption that would result from transferring physical possession of its territories (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss [2006]:6-7). Nation lawyers have argued that there is a precedent for such a legal arrangement: recognition of the Seneca Nation's title to the land underlying the City of Salamanca has not disrupted the city government or the Salamanca real estate market (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Response to Defendants' Statement of Material Facts [2006]:20).

et al., Plaintiff's Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss [2006]:26-27).

The Nation has long worked to improve relations with its non-Native neighbors, and has accordingly crafted its suit to be non-disruptive by not seeking to sue or evict individual private citizens. Onondaga leaders have expressed their preference to negotiate a settlement with American local and state governments, and they view recognition of their title as a peaceable way to catalyze those discussions (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss [2006]:7-8; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Response to Defendants' Statement of Material Facts [2006]:19-21). According to Nation lawyers, the success of this strategy to avoid disruption is evidenced by the "positive responses and support" evinced by the public since the filing of the land rights action in March of 2005 (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Plaintiff's Response to Defendants' Statement of Material Facts [2006]:20).

The arguments put forth in the Nation's 2006 brief and those advanced by the state of New York were heard by Judge Lawrence Kahn of the U.S. District Court in Albany, NY on October 11, 2007. There is no indication when a judgment will be handed down regarding whether or not the Onondagas' will be dismissed (McAndrew 2007c). Meanwhile, the Nation has continued its public relations efforts in the surrounding non-Native community (Indian Law Resource Center 2008).

III. Onondaga Cultural Concepts Informing the Land Rights Action

The Onondaga people wish to bring about a healing between themselves and all others who live in this region that has been the homeland of the Onondaga Nation since the dawn of time. The Nation and its people have a unique spiritual, cultural, and historic relationship with the land, which is embodied in Gayanashagowa, the Great Law of Peace. This relationship goes far beyond federal and state legal concepts of ownership, possession, or other legal rights. The people are one with the land and consider themselves stewards of it. It is the duty of the Nation's leaders to work for a healing of this land, to protect it, and to pass it on to future generations. The Onondaga Nation brings this action on behalf of its people in the hope that it may hasten the process of reconciliation and bring lasting justice, peace, and respect among all who inhabit this area. (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:1-2)

As an expression of their longstanding desire for a non-disruptive resolution to the conflict between the Onondagas and their non-Native neighbors, the Nation's leaders instructed their lawyers to include the above passage as a preamble to their 2005 legal filing (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:7-8). It purposefully underscores the cultural differences that exist between the Onondaga Nation and the United States, in whose courts they have been pressured to seek redress of their grievances. Clan Mother Audrey Shenandoah has repeatedly emphasized that her people's "traditional ways and spiritual connections have all been utilized in creating the land rights action" (Berry and Nave 2007: part1). In communicating their desire for their non-Native neighbors to see "where they are coming from" (A. Shenandoah, qtd in Onondaga Nation 2005), the Onondagas are both reasserting their political sovereignty and constructing a discursive space for future negotiations that demands respect for their cultural identity.

To this end, the preamble relates the Onondagas' lawsuit to a number of concepts that have since become prominent in Native and non-Native discourse surrounding the case, namely healing, relationship to land, peace, justice, reconciliation, and respect. In order to better understand the Onondaga Nation's statements about their land rights action and the responses of the non-Native public to which they are directed, it is vital to explore some of the cultural foundations of these central ideas. This thesis does not pretend to offer a comprehensive discussion of Onondaga cosmology or cultural practice, either past or present, for a people's life ways cannot be reduced to any single, easily identifiable, or monolithic "worldview." There is a diverse array of beliefs and practices represented today at Onondaga. Thus, the goal of this chapter is to attempt to sketch those cultural boundaries that have been publicly professed by the leaders who have spearheaded the pending land rights action, boundaries which the Syracuse community has had to negotiate in discussing this lawsuit.

It is exceedingly difficult to isolate and individually analyze any of the concepts previously enumerated because they are integral components of a complex cultural system. The best way to grasp their import is therefore to understand their relationships to the larger whole. To do so, a discussion of Haudenosaunee history is warranted, with a special emphasis on the three primary messages delivered to them by the Creator, around which many Onondagas⁴

⁴ Clan mother Audrey Shenandoah has estimated that over half of the approximately 1200 individuals living on the nation's territory "adhere still to our traditional Longhouse way". She has also asserted that her nation "is one of only three traditional governments in the United States that follows our ancient connection with the Creator and nature" (Berry and Nave 2007: part 1). Chief Oren Lyons has identified the other two remaining fully sovereign governments

continue to organize their understanding of time and their people's place in the world. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the First Epoch in Haudenosaunee history, in which the world was created and the Creator delivered his Original Instructions, the Peacemaker's message in the Second Epoch, and the teachings of Handsome Lake in the Third Epoch, or the present time period. In the interest of shedding further light on the concept of healing, which is extremely important both in Haudenosaunee cosmology and in the Onondagas' lawsuit, a brief discussion of traditional etiology will follow. Special attention will be devoted to how these cultural ideas and practices may have helped to shape many Onondagas' contemporary understandings of the general concepts cited in the preamble of their legal filing (Mann 2000b:265). This analysis will then be expanded to relate these cultural concepts to public statements that leaders and members of the Onondaga Nation have made concerning the land rights action itself.

III a. The Creation Story

Like all oral literature, the Haudenosaunee Creation story is continually evolving, and there exist numerous recorded versions from the various nations of the Confederacy. Yet because these various tellings are linked by significant structural and thematic continuities, they can provide valuable insights into Haudenosaunee culture, and more specifically, into the system of beliefs and traditions that informs the Onondagas' present day land rights action (Taylor

as those of the Tuscarora Nation and the Tonawanda Seneca Nation (Lyons 2006).

2007). The version of the Creation Story that will be presented here (in part) was originally told by Chief John A. Gibson at the Six Nations Reserve on Grand River in 1900. Chief Gibson was a brilliant Seneca leader who was tutored as a young man by an Onondaga firekeeper in Onondaga traditions and eventually became the leader of ceremonies at the Onondaga Longhouse. The Onondaga Creation story he recounted in 1900 was recorded, in the original language, by John Napoleon Brinton Hewitt, a Tuscarora who grew up on a reservation near Niagara and later became a celebrated ethnologist at the Smithsonian Institution (Fenton 1998:36-37). The impact of its central themes on Haudenosaunee culture may be traced through the years to the present day; its ideas are evident in both the comments of contemporary Natives and in modern day adherence to the 18th century religious teachings of Handsome Lake, a Seneca prophet who was familiar with a very similar version of the Creation story (Herrick 1995:6; Moyers and Lyons 1991).

Chief Gibson's discussion of human history begins after the Creator has assigned duties to various entities in the natural world. Earth Surface People are also given a number of directives concerning their interaction with one another and with the world, and thereafter the Creator departs from the earth. Humans' failure to fulfill their responsibilities, however, forces the Creator to return and provide a cultural system that will help them to do so. They accordingly receive four sacred ceremonies and the Thanksgiving Address (Saraydar 1990:21). The latter is a speech to be delivered by a designated individual at the beginning and end of every Haudenosaunee gathering; it identifies and expresses collective appreciation for all the gifts humans receive from the natural world (Sid Hill and

Audrey Shenandoah 2006; Fenton 1998:47). The Creator tells the people that these traditions, which continue to be practiced to this day, are ways of attending to one's own and others' minds in order to promote happiness and love. These two states of mind, combined with perpetual thanksgiving, produce a peace of mind that is vital to the survival of mankind (Saraydar 1990:21). The Creator explains that "...a grave thing will actually come to pass if it so be that you will forget peace. You would not continue to live if...it would come to pass that you will forget it, also your children would not continue to live" (Hewitt, qtd in Saraydar 1990:21). Failure to follow their instructions would result in an upset of the balance between creation (a force governed by the Creator) and destruction (governed by the Creator's twin brother, called "Flint" in some versions), with Flint gaining the upper hand⁵.

The Creator departs after having delivered these mandates, and for some time humans successfully complete the ceremonies and achieve a state of consensus and accord known as "one mind." However, this condition gradually deteriorates as disagreements arise and are not resolved, destroying their peace of mind. Ceremonies are discontinued. The people begin to notice that the cycles of

⁵ It is important to note that conceptions of these forces have evolved over time. Many Haudenosaunee believe in the existence of positive (*uki* or *ugi*) and negative (*otgont* or *otkon*) spiritual energies, which oppose and balance one another. Some scholars argue that these forces do not represent a good/evil binary, though; *uki* works for the benefit of humankind while *otkon* is more of a "trickster" power that is dispassionate toward human affairs. However, the Longhouse Religion that developed after the 1799 prophecy of Handsome Lake incorporated a Christianized understanding of good and evil, and therefore imposed a dichotomy on traditional understandings of spiritual energies. The two belief systems now coexist among modern Haudenosaunee. Sidney Hill and Oren Lyons's statements suggest they are of the Longhouse tradition, as was the late Tadodaho Leon Shenandoah (Moyers and Lyons 1991; Wall 2001:39,84; Mann 2000a:147; Mann 2000d:231-233; Hill 2005a).

day and night are disrupted, monsters appear on the earth, and humans begin to die for the first time. The Creator returns and gives them additional ceremonies, but the process of social and natural degeneration eventually begins again. When the Creator returns a third time, he tells the people that Flint will take over the entire earth if given the chance, that is, if they do not carry out their duties. Yet shortly after his departure, problems return to the earth; gossip, disease, murder, and unhappiness reign, and the ceremonies cease to be performed. The Creator therefore returns for the fourth⁶ and final time, imparting new instructions and giving humans medicines and food plants like corn, beans, and squash. He explains that in the future, he will send a person to aid them if they forget their responsibilities, which in fact comes to pass (Saraydar 1990:22; Fenton 1998:47).

The preceding account is only a portion of a lengthy and complex version of the Creation story, yet it does convey some key themes that are requisite to understanding the cultural importance of the three sacred messages given to the Haudenosaunee people, of which these Original Instructions are but the first (Moyers and Lyons 1991; Audrey Shenandoah 2007; Wall 2001:27, 38-39). These Instructions remain a vital part of the living fabric of present-day Onondaga culture; the statements of some of the nation's most eminent traditional leaders illustrate this truth and further elaborate on their beliefs about their people's original directives. For example, the importance of a balance between opposing forces to the proper functioning of the world (Saraydar 1990:22) was powerfully

⁶ Iroquois scholar William N. Fenton maintains that four is a magical number in Haudenosaunee culture (1998:47).

expressed by Faithkeeper Oren Lyons⁷ during the Roots of Peacemaking Festival held in Onondaga Lake Park on September 20, 2007. Referring to the sound of jet planes that had interrupted an earlier speech by Clan Mother Audrey Shenandoah⁸, he explained:

It was interesting to me listening to Audrey when she was speaking that the dark elements that we deal with – you know, spirituality is both good and bad – those forces are the same, they’re spiritual forces. They tried to drown her out as she was speaking, twice. Twice, they tried to cover her voice. Very powerful. And you can always depend on meetings like this, when peace is a subject, and when the essence of the meeting is for peace, that the negative will come. And it has to defend itself, and it will. Just shows up to let you know, it’s still here. You may have this day, but I’ll see you tomorrow. We’re spiritual people ...; we believe in all of these forces, and we have long observation, thousands of years ...

Lyons has asserted elsewhere that individual human beings contain “both good and bad” within themselves, opposites that must always be balanced (Moyers and Lyons 1991).

Also with respect to the natural order of Creation⁹, he has explained that the Onondaga believe the Creation’s diversity constitutes a community that abides by “the law of regeneration, the ability to regenerate endlessly as long as you

⁷ Oren Lyons is a member of the Wolf Clan who is “borrowed” as a Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan. As an elder and a chief, he helps instruct younger leaders in the performance of their duties. He has also represented the Onondaga Nation in international affairs since the 1970s (Barry and Nave 2007, Part 2).

⁸ Audrey Shenandoah is Clan Mother of the Deer Clan. Among the many responsibilities accompanying her title are overseeing ceremonies, helping chiefs to make decisions, and making sure that youth are educated in the traditional manner. She therefore makes important contributions to the perpetuation of Onondaga cultural knowledge and practice (Onondaga Nation website 2008).

⁹ Translation of Onondaga words into English terms all too often entails loss of some of their original meaning. Audrey Shenandoah has stated that the word “Creation” does not convey all the meaning of the native term (Hill and Shenandoah 2006).

maintain the rules of the law, which is variety” (Lyons and Smith 2006:174).

Leon Shenandoah, the late Tadodaho¹⁰ of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy who influenced many, including his nephew Oren Lyons (Hill 1994; Lyons and Smith 2006:169,179-180; Lyons 2007), described humanity’s position in that resilient community:

The Creator made everything equal.
 “Human Beings” are the same to the Creator
 as every other living thing.
 But He gave “Human Beings” the responsibility
 to watch out for the rest of His creation.
 That makes us the guardians.
 Look what we’ve done.
 Instead of being the guardians,
 some people have learned how to destroy
 because of greed. (Wall 2001:40)

Onondaga leaders maintain that the consequences of that destruction are dire for humanity¹¹. Tonya Gonnella Frichner, a lawyer who has worked to defend the human rights of indigenous people through the American Indian Law Alliance and within the UN (Frichner and Smith 2006:131), has explained her people’s position:

For us, it’s just common sense. When you violate the natural

¹⁰ The title of Tadodaho is always held by a member of the Onondaga nation (Wallace 1994:77). As the primary spiritual leader and Firekeeper of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, he is responsible for promoting the Peacemaker’s message of Peace, Power, and Righteousness, which is discussed at a later point in this paper (Gray 2000b:248). In the Grand Council meetings, he has the responsibility of deciding split votes and the power of veto (Wallace 1994:77).

¹¹ Several prominent Onondaga leaders have identified humans as the only members of the cycle of Creation who are failing to follow the Creator’s instructions. They believe that the human species therefore bears responsibility for any disruption of the balance of forces in the natural world (Lyons and Smith 2006:174; Wall 2001:40).

world, you will pay for it in proportion to your violation. The more you pollute, the harder you will suffer. When you can't drink your water anymore, your people will die. They will succumb because the natural world is very balanced. (qtd in Frichner and Smith 2006:137-138)

This idea resonates with the teachings of Handsome Lake, to be discussed at a later point in this chapter, but it is also based in Haudenosaunee fundamental understandings of humans' place in the cosmos as explained to them in their Original Instructions: "We *are* the environment. So is society. When the environment is sick, the people are sick. Everything suffers." (Lyons, qtd in Lyons and Smith 2006:181). Thus, in the Creation story, when people fail to perform their mandated ceremonies, aberrations develop in *both* human society and the rest of the natural world.

This principle has been referred to by several prominent Onondaga chiefs as the "Natural Law." It is seen as an ultimate truth, a reality that neither negotiates nor grants mercy (Lyons and Smith 2006:169; Moyers and Lyons 1991; Powless 2008): "All it demands is that you abide. As long as you do you will survive. But if you challenge natural law and think you are going to change it, then eventually you are going to come to that crisis point where life is *not* regenerating anymore" (Lyons qtd in Lyons and Smith 2006:174). Oren Lyons has cited numerous environmental problems as evidence that humans are indeed on a collision course with the Natural Law (Lyons 2006; Lyons 2007):

I'm talking about making payment now. [Suddenly]...the rain that we celebrate and the rain that we pray for and the rain that we thanksgiving for begins to kill. What is that? What happens when your grandfathers begin to turn on you? And your great brother, the elder brother the sun, when suddenly people begin to

suffer from cancer from the sun? What are people gonna do when these life-giving forces that you've depended on, that you've prayed to, that you've recognized, give thanksgiving to, suddenly turn on you? What happens? (Moyers and Lyons 1991)

The Haudenosaunee nations' belief that humans have failed in their duty to look after the welfare of the rest of Creation as they do their own has encouraged them to become active in environmental advocacy. The Onondaga in particular have played prominent roles in these efforts, carrying their concerns even to international political circles. During the Confederacy's historic trip to take part in the NGO Conference On Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, Switzerland in 1977, Oren Lyons addressed the assembly with the following words: "On behalf of our mother the earth and all the great elements we come here and we say they too have rights. The future generations, our grandchildren and their grandchildren—it is our concern that they too may have clean water to drink, that they may observe our four-footed brothers and they may enjoy the elements that we too are so fortunate to have and that serve us as human beings" (qtd in Muehlebach 2001:29-30). In 1992, the Confederacy sent delegates to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to share their traditional Thanksgiving Address and advocate for the protection of the environment. Shortly thereafter, the Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy established the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) to address environmental problems on Six Nation territories in a manner consonant with traditional teachings (HETF 2006).

In 1995, collaborating with a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions, the HETF presented a plan of action to the UN entitled,

“Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration –An Indigenous Strategy for Sustainability.” In addition to reporting the many cases of degradation and pollution of Haudenosaunee lands, this paper proposed the establishment of an institution dedicated to environmental cleanup, economic development, and cultural preservation (George-Kanentiio 2000:323-324; HETF 2006). Lyons has said of the proposal, “[It] essentially lays out our vision. We think that is important as a responsibility to the future. It works in complete syncretism with our law and our responsibility as chiefs” (qtd in Lyons and Smith 2006:182). In spite of the project’s failure to generate sufficient external support, the HETF continues to work toward its realization (Lyons and Smith 2006: 182; HETF 2006). The aforementioned advocacy efforts represent but a handful of the actions taken by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that illustrate its commitment to environmental protection. It is not the object of this paper to enumerate them in full; rather, it is sufficient to note the profound integration of Haudenosaunee spiritual belief with leaders’ public statements on the environment.

The motivation for this activism on the part of the Onondagas is more complex than simply a sacred charge of stewardship, for the latter is only one facet of their broader cultural understanding of how humans should interact with the rest of Creation. Another vital component of their Original Instructions is the sacred duty of thanksgiving, a mandate that Haudenosaunee delegates shared with the world at UNCED in 1992 (HETF 2006). Audrey Shenandoah has elaborated on thanksgiving and the unique role humans play in the spiritual cycle that the Onondaga believe connects all life:

We're told in our way that in this cycle of the great Creation, every bit of that Creation gives and gives and gives continually, and we are in that cycle, we are one of them. And we are the only component of that great cycle who are taking and taking and taking. So we must give thanks; that is what our mandate is: to be thankful, to acknowledge all the rest of that cycle and to give back, to give back our thanks. To give back our acknowledgment means that we would treat them right, that we would treat them well, that we would treat ourselves as well. (Hill and Shenandoah 2006)

Leon Shenandoah has further explained, “[giving] thanks is to give honor and to honor is to show respect” (qtd in Wall 2001: 40). Respect is important in its own right because it helps foster the growth of peace and a sense of community (Lyons and Smith 2006:179).

The Creator’s first message detailed two methods by which gratitude, honor, and respect was to be shown, namely the performance of the Thanksgiving address and annual ceremonies. The former, which is recited at the beginning and end of all formal meetings except funerals, thanks the Creator, as well as all aspects of the natural world¹² for carrying out their original Instructions and thereby supporting human life (Stokes 1993:1; Johansen and Mann 2000e:304-305; Gray 2000a:52). Different ceremonies of thanksgiving are performed throughout the course of the year, at times determined by faith keepers in accordance with the lunar calendar (Onondaga Nation 2008). They possess several functions, all of which are clearly explained in the Creation Story. Firstly, they remind the people of their proper relationship to the rest of Creation and of

¹² Each speaker may deliver the Thanksgiving Address in his own words, but must follow the same general structure. The following entities are those most commonly singled out in the address: human beings, Mother Earth, the waters, fish, plants, food plants, medicine plants, animals, trees, birds, the Four winds, the Thunderers, the sun, moon, stars, enlightened teachers, and the Creator (Johansen and Mann 2000d:304-305; Stokes 1993).

their divinely mandated responsibilities (Hill and Shenandoah 2006; Saraydar 1990:21). Lyons has described the process by which ceremonies define and shape his people's identity:

Children are not sat down and taught about what's good and what's wrong. What they see is they see their grandfathers or they see their fathers or their mothers, their grandmothers going to ceremonies. They say, "So that must be the right thing to do. The old people do it. Everybody does it. That's good." So they do it. And so they learn in the process, the Thanksgiving, what is it for? Well, this one is for the maple, the chief of the trees, we're giving a thanksgiving for the maple. Good, let's respect the tree. Let's respect all the trees. So respect is learned through ceremony. There's a process. It's an old one. And so Thanksgiving comes as a natural way. It's a being, it's part of life. It's not something that you do occasionally; it's something you do all the time. And that's how the process has been passed down. (Moyers and Lyons 1991)

In addition to generating respect for the rest of Creation, the ceremonies were given by the Creator because they are intrinsically powerful if performed correctly. As previously mentioned, the cosmic balance between creation and destruction can only be preserved if all parts of Creation carry out their sacred instructions. Performance of ceremonies also heals corporal and social illnesses by helping the celebrants come of "one mind" (Saraydar 1990:22,25). In this state, individuals sacrifice some of their autonomy for the benefit of the group, because there is agreement on certain basic beliefs and goals (Saraydar 1990:23,25). According to Lyons, being of one mind "is the greatest power there is" (Moyers and Lyons 1991).

It is evident from the Creation Story, however, that each time the Creator departed from the earth, this sense of unity was short-lived among the people. They also rapidly failed to uphold the other mandates of their Creator, which were

to love others and live in peace (Saraydar 1990:21-22). Such conditions of conflict were hardly conducive to the continued performance of the ceremonies, for as Leon Shenandoah has explained, “[How] can you give thanks when you are filled with anger? You can’t think about the goodness of the Creator if your mind is off in another direction that controls you” (Wall 2001:29). The Creation story describes in detail what happened when people no longer performed ceremonies; people experienced illness and suffering, there was no peace anywhere and all manner of crimes were committed, and dangerous monsters appeared on the surface of the earth (Saraydar 1990:22). Modern Onondaga leaders have expressed the same fear of dire consequences should they neglect their sacred duties. Leon Shenandoah warned of personal suffering, social conflict, natural disasters, the disappearance of food resources, and a refusal by the Four Protectors¹³ to carry out their duties in helping humans (Wall 2001:15, 64, 72, 80).

For the above reasons, performing the annual ceremonies is extremely important to contemporary “traditional”¹⁴ Onondagas. Several prominent Onondagas, in fact, have made public statements suggesting that their ceremonies are necessary for the perpetuation of all life on earth, not merely for the benefit of their own people (Susan Lyons 2006; Wall 2001:39). Chief Irving Powless Jr., for example, has argued that the Onondaga help to protect the eastern coast of America from dangerous weather patterns: “And the Onondagas have ceremonies

¹³ The Four Protectors are four spiritual beings the Creator assigned to help human beings when they are having problems (Wall 2001:80). They also help humans recognize their digressions from their sacred way of life and show them how to follow the Creator’s instructions (Jacobs 1999:152).

¹⁴ For the purposes of this paper, “traditional” identity will be defined by regular attendance at ceremonies of the Longhouse religion and involvement in the various other cultural activities that take place in Onondaga.

to make sure that [the wind] continues going west to east. So it's important for us to be around. So you're job, then, is to make sure that we're around" (2008).

Tadodaho Leon Shenandoah explained that while the Onondaga do not wish non-Natives to practice their traditional ceremonies, they do believe that all human beings were made by the same Creator and that each people were given Original Instructions that included the need to be thankful for and look after Creation, and to live in peace¹⁵. However, many forgot or were led away from these Instructions, and so every people must now listen to the ongoing messages from the Creator to remember or rediscover them (Wall 2001:27-29). He elaborated:

Nobody knows what specific suffering
 someone will have to go through
 that will bring them back to the remembering.
 I'll just live each day in thanksgiving.
 I'll promise you that I'll do my best
 to give thanks and carry on the ceremonies
 for all the people of the world
 for as long as I live.
 As long as one person is doing that,
 maybe the suffering will be postponed
 for a while. But it's coming.
 I hope others will get the message before that time.
 (Wall 2001:39)

It was in hopes of spreading the message that humans must give thanks for and act as responsible guardians of the natural world that the Haudenosaunee sent a delegation to UNCED in 1992. There they shared their Thanksgiving Address, which was then translated into numerous languages and distributed around the world the following year (HETF 2006; Stokes 1993:2).

¹⁵ John Stokes, who helped publish a popular English translation of the Thanksgiving Address, has also stated that this belief is held by many Haudenosaunee (1993:2).

III b. The Peacemaker's Message

The principles and beliefs established in the Creation Story, and in particular by humanity's Original Instructions, were later elaborated upon in another sacred message that was transmitted during the Second Epoch of Haudenosaunee history. The accomplishments and spiritual teachings of the divine messenger, known in English as the Peacemaker¹⁶, were preserved in oral tradition and in the Great Law of Peace, the system of traditional Haudenosaunee government that has endured to this day (Saraydar 1990: 21). The Onondaga have cited the latter in their legal filing as the foundation for their relationship to their territories, and by implication, for their land rights action (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:1-2). Indeed, each of the specific values highlighted in the preamble of that legal document (healing, relationship to land, peace, justice, reconciliation, and respect) are integral components of the Peacemaker's instructions and cannot be understood independently of the cultural institutions he instituted.

Like the Creation story, accounts of the Peacemaker's life and philosophy are lengthy and complex. His work stretched out over a long period of time, and reciting that history can take as long as a week (Shenandoah 2007; Johansen and Mann 2000d). This brief discussion cannot hope to convey the full scope of the story, nor can it offer an adequate sense of the narrative diversity to be found between nations, communities, speakers, and even individual tellings (Fenton

¹⁶ Out of respect, members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy do not speak this divine messenger's personal name except in formal recitations of their oral history; he is otherwise referred to by a title that translates into English as "Peacemaker" (Hauptman 1986:13; Mohawk 2005:41).

1998:92-94). Therefore, greater emphasis will be placed on elucidating modern Haudenosaunee, as well as specifically Onondaga, interpretations of their Creator's second great message.

As previously discussed, the Original Instructions of the Creator failed to prevent the degeneration of society. Chief Gibson recounted that the region became mired in perpetual warfare, and that people had to flee their homes to escape scalp raids (Fenton 1998:85). According to Tadodaho Leon Shenandoah, women and children were abused, people were frequently murdered, and some leaders had even become cannibals (1994:10). Audrey Shenandoah has described the period as a time “when our people were in very, very bad strife [People] were having a hard, hard time just being [able] to live out their lives” (9/20/07). It was into this terrible and chaotic social climate that the Creator sent a messenger, who was born miraculously to a virgin woman of the Wyandot people¹⁷ (Wall 2001:58; Mann 2000b:269). As he was endowed with strong spiritual powers, he grew unusually quickly into a man and began his life's mission by fashioning a stone canoe that would transport him to the territories of the five warring nations (Mann, 2000b:270; Gray 2000b:245). His first goal, as Leon Shenandoah explained it, was to seek out the violent leaders in each nation who were directing the conflicts (Wall 2001:59). To each, he carried instructions that would help them to live as commanded by the Creator: peacefully and in unity with all other humans and the rest of the natural world. He gradually succeeded in reforming these leaders and winning their support in his efforts to unify the five nations

¹⁷ The Wyandots lived to the northwest of the five nations. Oren Lyons has estimated that this divine messenger was born approximately one thousand years ago (Lyons and Smith 2006:167), although Audrey Shenandoah has declined to speculate on a date (2007).

(Saraydar 1990:21,23; Gray 2000b:245-246).

When the Peacemaker passed through an area, the people of that region preserved the story of his visit as part of their own local oral history. For the past decade and a half, members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy have conducted an annual pilgrimage to retrace his route and hear the stories associated with each place. The voyage perpetuates the Peacemaker's message of unity not only by piecing together a larger, shared narrative, but also by providing opportunities for members of different nations to meet, socialize, and affirm their joint commitment to peace and solidarity (Shenandoah 2007). Onondaga, and specifically Onondaga Lake, are an important stop on this journey, for pivotal events in the history of the Confederacy took place there. After gathering supporters among the Mohawks and then the Oneidas, the Peacemaker arrived in Onondaga territory for the first time (Shenandoah 1994:11). Jeanne Shenandoah has described his reaction to the landscape as follows:

He came to a place where the three rivers meet. And he stopped there and spent some time thinking and dreaming, because he recognized that this was such a sacred, sacred, spiritual place, that he could actually feel it. So he thought a long time, he thought long and hard, which way he would go. And then he decided, he went in his canoe, and he came to the lake and he stopped, and again he took a long time thinking and dreaming, and thinking about the sacredness of this area, and which way he would go, which way he would travel. So he traveled very slowly, he went all around the lake – he knew this was a very, very special, powerful, sacred place – bringing the Great Word of Peace to our people.
(Kimmerer et al. 2006)

In Leon Shenandoah's recounting of the epic story, the Peacemaker was able to convert all the Onondaga leaders except one, a spiritually evil and physically deformed man named Tadodaho who was greatly feared by the people. The

Peacemaker continued on his way, and only after he had concluded his mission among the Cayugas and the Senecas did he return to speak with Tadodaho again. Using a special song, the Peacemaker at last succeeded in making Tadodaho listen to him, and the sheer power of his message of peace was able to straighten and heal both the evil mind and the deformed body of this man (Shenandoah 1994:11-13; Gray 2000b:248). He was given the title of Firekeeper (Gray 2000b:248) of the Grand Council, which was officially convened for the first time on the shores of Onondaga Lake (Lyons 1992a:31; Audrey Shenandoah 2007). During this meeting, the Peacemaker instructed the leaders in constructing a new government according to the Great Law of Peace (Lyons 1992a:31).

As illustrated by the story of Tadodaho, the Peacemaker's message was transformative, bringing health and peace to both individuals and their societies (Shenandoah 1994:12). Moreover, it was fundamentally spiritual, for it was intended to help people live according to the Creator's wishes (Shenandoah 2007; Saraydar 1990:26): "They were told about the respect for life, they were told about the respect for living things and the connection between all living things, the connection between ourselves as humans and all the rest of the Creation" (Shenandoah 2007). More specifically, he argued that violence and destruction went against the wishes of the Creator, and that humans had an innate yearning for peace (Lyons 1992b:34). Thus, to a certain degree, the Peacemaker recapitulated the people's Original Instructions (Saraydar 1990: 26). In order to help the people to better follow those mandates, he articulated for them a spiritual law of three main principles,¹⁸ each composed of a pair of related ideas. *Ne'*

¹⁸ The three terms provided here (*Ne'* *Skennon'*, *Ga: i'hwiyoy*, and

*Skennon*² is, on the one hand, a healthy mind and body, a state of physical and spiritual well-being without disease or psychological ailments¹⁹ that impair the mind's natural capacity for reason. The concept of "health" plays a prominent role in Haudenosaunee culture and carries additional significance apart from that which is communicated by the Three Messages; for this reason, it will be discussed in greater detail in a later section of this chapter. At present, it is more important to focus on the Peacemaker's teaching that individual health generates societal peace, the other half of *Ne² Skennon²* (Hewitt, qtd in Fenton 1998:86; Wallace 1994:40; Mohawk 2005:33; Saraydar 1990:26). An individual mind that is unhealthy and incapable of reason not only lacks inner peace but also produces outward destruction, conflict, and killing, as in the aforementioned case of Tadodaho (Saraydar 1990:23-25). Leon Shenandoah argued that the same is also true of the inverse:

If we're always fighting, then
we will be bringing diseases and sicknesses on ourselves.
It is better to live in peace
and that way we will be living with good health.
Peace should be our goal, our way of life.
It is up to us to practice it. (Wall 2001: 86)

There is thus a reciprocal relationship in which peace generates health and health produces peace. Just as the Creator gave the people medicines in the first epoch, so the Peacemaker instituted a method of healing psychological illness, known as the Condolence ceremony. The story speaks of a chief named Hiawatha, who

Ga²shasdenhsen²) are Onondagan transliterations used by J. N. B. Hewitt in his 1899 recording of Chief Gibson's version of the story of the Peacemaker (Fenton 1998:52,86).

¹⁹ Examples of ailments impeding "clear-mindedness" and reason include obsession, possession, and overpowering emotions like rage or grief (Lyons 1992b:38; Saraydar 1990:23-25).

tragically saw his family members murdered and became so distraught with grief that he could no longer be a functioning member of society. The Peacemaker gave him powerful words to heal his mind and restore reason, after which Hiawatha became an invaluable supporter of the great message of peace (Wallace 1994: Mann 2000b: 54-56; 273-278). His advocacy for social change reflects the Haudenosaunee belief that peace is not simply freedom from strife, but is also a commitment to actively root out injustice and to promote compassionate relations between people (Lyons 1992b:38; Mohawk 2005:33; Tonawanda Seneca Nation 2000). This complex definition forges a close link between *Ne' Skennon'* and *Ga: i'hwiyoy*, another of the Peacemaker's three principles.

One of the constituent ideas of *Ga: i'hwiyoy* is righteousness, defined as the desire for justice. Righteousness is a characteristic of what is known as the Good Mind, an unselfish, egalitarian attitude that reflects the Creator's intention that humans should not be privileged or valued higher than the rest of Creation (Mohawk 2005:33). More specifically, an important part of using the Good Mind is employing one's reason to solve social problems in a spirit of righteousness, without resorting to violence (Tonawanda Seneca Nation 2000; Mohawk 2005:33). This belief sheds light on the other component of *Ga: i'hwiyoy*, institutional justice, which can be described as the realization of righteousness through social institutions that promote equity and fairness within and between societies (Hewitt, qtd in Fenton 1998: 86; Wallace 1994:40; Tonawanda Seneca Nation 2000; Lyons and Smith 2006:180). Thus, under the principle of *Ga: i'hwiyoy*, the reasoning faculties of a healthy mind desire and produce justice. It may also be said, however, that the exercise of justice within a society promotes

the health of its citizens' minds (Saraydar 1990:25; Mohawk 2005:33). Healthy (righteous and reasoned) thought and justice are therefore bound together in a self-perpetuating, reciprocal relationship. Chief Oren Lyons has touched on this notion in his critiques of what he believes to be the unjust treatment of Native Americans by the U.S. Court system:

[It's] a very, very uneven, unjust system that is prevailing today in this country. Very uneven for American Indians. It's unfair, unjust, but it's real. I just alert you to the fact that that's what's occurring now, and it's not healthy. It's not good for a democratic nation. (Lyons 2006)

The remaining principle, *Ga'shasdenhsen'*, can be loosely translated into English as "force" or "power." One manifestation of this power is the strength that is born of the consensus of healthy minds that are committed to using the Good Mind (Lyons and Smith 2006). Such unity, according to Lyons, "is the greatest power there is" (Moyers and Lyons 1991). With this kind of power, people can achieve and maintain a true peace, as they did when the five nations first joined to form the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Gray 2000b: 248; Mohawk 2005:34). The other aspect of this principle is the power of civil authority, or as a last resort, warfare, to enforce justice (Wallace 1994:40; Mohawk 2005:34; Fenton 1998:86).

As was previously mentioned, it was on the shores of Onondaga Lake that the three principles of *Ne' Skennon'*, *Ga: i'hwiyoyo*, and *Ga'shasdenhsen'* were finally codified as a system of laws²⁰ that bound together the five nations (Lyons

²⁰ I have neither the expertise nor the space to do justice to the extraordinary complexity of the Haudenosaunee governmental system and its decision-making processes. The following resources may be considered as starting points for additional research: Fenton 1998; Johansen and Mann 2000; Lyons and Mohawk 1992)

1992a:31). The Peacemaker established a Grand Council of representative leaders from the nations, and charged it with promoting peace and arbitrating international affairs. Adherence to the Great Law of Peace required that all territory be held in common by the Confederacy, for the Creator intended it for the use of all (Mohawk 2005: 33-35); that all Haudenosaunee share certain universal rights, including free exercise of religion and right of redress (Johansen and Mann 2000b:135; Lyons 1992a:32-33); and that members of the same clan in different nations were to treat one another as blood relatives (Mohawk 2005:35). The process of governance would proceed by consensus building among male and female leaders, who in turn were subject to the direct input of the people. To these leaders, the Peacemaker delivered the instructions, “When you sit and you council for the welfare of the people, think not of yourself, or of your family, or even your generation. Make your decision on behalf of the seventh generation coming” (Lyons 2007). Doing so, he explained, will not only ensure that those unborn children will enjoy a good life, but will also bring you peace in your own time (Lyons and Smith 2006: 168).

Although they needed to relinquish some of their sovereignty to comply with the aforementioned provisions of the Great Law, individual nations were permitted to retain many of their local customs (Lyons 1992a:32; Lyons 1992b:38-39; Mohawk 2005: 35). The Peacemaker asserted that the Confederacy would be strengthened by this “unity in diversity” (Wallace 1994:70-71). Oren Lyons has explained the principle as follows:

What happens at the end of the day when you have a major problem is that you throw it out to the people and see what will come back. Out there in the community you have all these

individuals, and somebody is going to be thinking of a creative solution somewhere. That's why it's important to have diversity in thought and being. If you carry them to their utmost limit of their individuality, it will strengthen your nation and your people. (qtd in Lyons and Smith 2006:176).

The limit of such individuality, according to Lyons, is the responsibility each person bears to his/her people and to the future (Lyons and Smith 2006:180-181); for when people fulfill their responsibilities, everyone benefits (Lyons 2007).

The Peacemaker provided the Haudenosaunee with several symbols to remind them of this duty to the larger community (Wallace 1994:77-78). One of the most prominent metaphors compared the Great Law of Peace to a white pine tree, sheltering the five nations beneath its branches and extending its white roots of peace into each of the four directions to offer protection to any people agreeing to abide by its principles; indeed, the Peacemaker believed that his message of peace would ultimately bring together all of humanity into one family (Johansen and Mann 2000c:136-137; Johansen and Mann 2000b:134-136; Mohawk 2005:36). Like the great tree, the Haudenosaunee were to draw spiritual strength from the three complementary principles, *Ne² Skennon²*, *Ga: i²hwiyo*, and *Ga²shasdenhsen* (Moyers and Lyons 1991). To affirm their commitment to peace, the Peacemaker instructed the nations to bury their weapons beneath the pine and thereafter to resolve conflicts by seeking consensus in the spirit of the Good Mind (Moyers and Lyons 1991; Wall 2001:65). Atop the tree, he placed an eagle to warn of threats that would one day come to the Confederacy (Moyers and Lyons 1991; Johansen and Mann 2000c:137). It was the work of each generation to protect the Great Law of Peace by guarding assiduously against both personal evil thoughts and community discord; if they failed in this, the Peacemaker warned,

social disruption and war would once again blight their lives (Wallace 1994:79-80; Lyons and Smith 2006:168).

III c. The Code of Handsome Lake

The third message from the Creator came in the Third Epoch of Haudenosaunee history, at a time when the Great White Pine was under full assault (Moyers and Lyons 1991). Strained by European epidemics, conflicting alliances between the different Haudenosaunee nations and Euro-American powers, the cultural losses incurred under the influence of missionaries, and the theft of its land, the Confederacy found itself in a vulnerable state following the Revolutionary War (Mohawk 1994: 120-125). The Creator responded to this troubled social and political climate by sending additional instructions to the Haudenosaunee, this time through the Four Protectors. From 1799 to 1804, these spiritual beings granted visions to a Seneca chief whose Grand Council title was Sganyadaí:yoh, a name that translates roughly into English as “Handsome Lake.”

Handsome Lake was distraught by the strife imposed upon his people; after having fought in the French and Indian War, against other Native peoples as European encroachment forced competition over dwindling lands and resources, and finally on the side of the British when the Americans violated the neutrality agreement in the Revolutionary War, he witnessed the loss of vast swaths of Haudenosaunee homelands. He took to drinking in order to numb the pain, and his addiction rapidly escalated as personal tragedy rocked his life. Incapacitated for several years, he was nearly impeached by the Clan Mothers. Fortunately, he was nursed back to health by his only surviving daughter and soon began receiving visions. In 1799, he fell into a daylong coma, during which he was

visited by the Four Protectors and was given the “Four Words” (also known as the “Four Matters”) to relay to his people. These prohibitions against alcohol, the use of negative spirit power, poison, or love medicine, and abortion became the primary tenets of Handsome Lake’s teachings (Mann 2000a; Mann 2000c)..

Over the course of the rest of his life, he would continue to receive visions showing the Haudenosaunee how to survive the onslaught of Euro-American culture. These instructions, collectively termed the Gaiwí:yo, incorporated numerous Christian concepts (e.g. monotheism, the notion of heaven and hell, the idea of sin, the inferiority of women) as well as typical Western values, such as the rejection of sexual promiscuity and of gambling (originally a sacred activity); for this reason, Handsome Lake encountered strong opposition from many contemporary traditional leaders, most especially Clan Mothers, who rejected his attempts to institute patriarchal social structures. The widespread negative reactions to his teachings made Handsome Lake reluctant to share all of his visions, and toward the end of his life, he regretted not having the courage to do so (Mann 2000a; Mann 2000c).

However, there were a substantial number of Haudenosaunee at the time who recognized the importance of the Gaiwí:yo in preserving much of the traditional Haudenosaunee culture. Handsome Lake’s code, later termed the Longhouse Religion, affirmed most of the traditional ceremonies, the clan system, the Great Law of Peace, and long-held beliefs about the environment. Moreover, its integration of some Euro-American ideas shielded the aforementioned traditional life ways from the cultural assimilation programs of paternalistic white social reformers (Mann 2000a; Mann 2000c). Though acrimonious politics stunted the

growth of the Gaiwí:yo's popularity in the decades immediately following Handsome Lake's death, it gradually came to be seen not merely as a religious affiliation, but also as a mark of Native political identity and defiance of American oppression. The great influence of Handsome Lake upon Onondaga, where he preached and was eventually buried, has been cited as an important factor contributing to the nation's relative success in insulating against attacks on Onondaga land, identity, and culture. The greatest number of adherents to the nascent Longhouse Religion resided there, and many of its chiefs were among them (Hauptman 1986: 7-8).

Nevertheless, even the Onondaga suffered considerable setbacks during the period of intense social upheaval and acculturation between the end of the Civil War and the start of World War I (Gonyea 1986: 21). The loss of traditional knowledge through the influence of boarding schools and the illegal sale of precious original wampum²¹ (Gonyea 1986: 23-27) resulted in a dwindling of the number of elders who could still read the wampum for ceremonies. Handsome Lake, in an effort to promote his teachings as the only legitimate interpretation of the Gaiwí:yo, recorded his ideas in wampum before his death in 1815; however, by the early 20th century there was no one left who could read this record, and the stories had to be passed on entirely from memory, resulting in further diversification of the oral tradition. Consequently, there is no single, authoritative version of Handsome Lake's visions in existence today; rather, there are a fixed number of authorized versions recited by Faithkeepers, as well as early

²¹ Wampum is a form of recorded information composed of shell beads sewn together in mnemonic patterns; it is used to record sacred information such as the Great Law of Peace, as well as historical events like political agreements or treaties (Gonyea 1986:13; Wallace 1994:22; Venables and Powless 2006).

ethnographic records of the text made around the turn of the 20th century (Mann 2000c:310-311).

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the Longhouse Religion regained currency. By the time of the Native American renaissance in the 1970s, many young Haudenosaunee had embraced it as a guide for the revival of traditional life ways (Mann 2000a:151). Today, the statements of a number of prominent Onondaga leaders suggest that they are followers of the Longhouse Religion. Among these individuals, Chief Irving Powless Jr. and Chief Oren Lyons, both of whom are authorized by their nation to speak with the non-Native community about Onondaga culture, have made frequent references to the Gaiwí:yo's prophecies concerning the future (Powless 2008; Lyons 2006). In addition to foretelling the invention of the car and airplane (Powless 2008), Handsome Lake predicted that people would neglect their duties to the Creator and the Creation, and would consequently witness severe disruptions of the social and environmental order (Jacobs 1999:151-153). Chief Irving Powless Jr. has interpreted these prophecies as being directly related to present-day environmental problems. He believes when Handsome Lake said, "the sun will kill," he was predicting skin cancer; "the water will be muddy" was a description of modern water pollution; and the prediction that "a partridge will not have his nest on the ground because Mother Earth [will be] too warm for the eggs to be on the ground" was a warning about the future impact of global warming (Powless 2008).

The late Tadodaho Leon Shenandoah also expressed concern about environmental changes he saw around him; as discussed in the section on the

Creation story, he was extremely concerned by the failure of many of the world's peoples to give thanks to the Creator and to respect the natural world:

It is a must that we do [our ceremonies].
 We've got to show our appreciation.
 There can be no end to them to doing them,
 or He's going to take the food away from us.
 Like with our strawberry ceremony;
 right now there's only a few berries left.
 There'll be a time when we'll have to use a
 substitute.
 (qtd in Wall 2001:64)

The above words resonate not only with the Creator's Original Instructions but also with the prophecies of Handsome Lake, who is believed by some to have said, "The Creator will remove our life sustainers because we fail to give thanks," and that "the strawberries will fail to bear fruit" (Jacobs 1999:152-153). Leon Shenandoah also asserted that he had received a dream from the Creator in which he saw the world destroyed by powerful natural forces like hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes. In this dream, he saw trees "dying from the top down" and the spread of a great "plague" (Wall 2001:72), both predictions made in the Gaiwí:yo (Jacobs 1999:152-153).

Like the late Tadodaho Shenandoah, Chief Oren Lyons and Chief Irving Powless Jr. view these kinds of catastrophic natural disasters as examples of the natural world's retribution for humans' mistreatment of the environment (Lyons 2006; Moyers and Lyons 1991; Powless 2008). These leaders' understanding of prophecy, however, is not fatalistic. Chief Lyons has pointed out that just as the Peacemaker charged each generation with the responsibility of protecting the Great Tree of Peace and preparing the way for the seventh generation, so too did the Four Messengers say of their dark environmental prophecies, "It's certain that

this will happen, ... but that's up to each generation to see that it doesn't happen in your generation" (Moyers and Lyons 1991). Tadodaho Shenandoah likewise said of his vision, "I know the dream was telling me what was coming, but there's still time left. Maybe people will wake up like I did from the dream and do the things needed to bring back the balance" (Wall 2001:72). Society can no longer choose to ignore, Chief Irving Powless Jr. has asserted, what the environment is "saying" through climate change (2008); people must quickly develop a dynamic relationship with the natural world, or face certain destruction.

III d. Health and Illness

Of the numerous themes that cut across the three major spiritual messages delivered to the Haudenosaunee over the course of their history, one of the strongest is the notion that "health" is directly dependent upon following the Creator's instructions, and that the social ramifications of personal health or illness are profound. This idea was introduced in an earlier section treating the Peacemaker's message, but little detail was actually provided about specific cultural understandings of physical, spiritual, and emotional health. Given its prominence in Haudenosaunee belief and, more specifically, Onondaga discourse about their land rights action, it is worthwhile exploring this concept further. James Herrick, in his research on Iroquois medical botany, devotes considerable attention to this topic, and proposes an interesting framework for understanding Haudenosaunee etiology. Though his work is dated, having been completed in 1977 for a doctoral dissertation (1995:ix), and offers little information about structured variation of belief and practice within the Confederacy, it does advance

certain ideas that resonate with statements of contemporary Haudenosaunee authors and speakers; his research, then, can potentially offer a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the cultural context against which Onondaga discussions about health should be considered. Thus, keeping in mind Herrick's shortcomings, his work may reasonably be considered a starting point for thinking about the complexity of health discourse.

According to Herrick, traditional Haudenosaunee beliefs hold that all living organisms, places, events, and things possess an inner life force or spirit (1995:14). This spirit, like the larger cosmos, itself is considered to be properly functioning, or "healthy," when its internal forces are "balanced." As discussed earlier, this principle of balance is a fundamental component of the five nations' cosmology, having been laid down in the Creation story and the Creator's Original Instructions. Imbalance results in damage to health, which may be manifested in various ways, although physical and psychological/spiritual ailments are not traditionally viewed as distinct categories of illness (Herrick 1995: 26, 33-34).

Herrick argues that there are at least four different causal factors that may disrupt the balance of a human being's spirit force, which is believed to be located in the blood. Firstly, a person may contravene the Creator's laws and wishes, thereby endangering the balance and harmonious order of the Creation (1995:35-36). As was illustrated in the preceding examination of the three great spiritual messages sent to the Haudenosaunee, the belief that lack of respect for the environment and/or unmediated social conflict can bring diseases to communities appears to be reflected in the statements of a number of contemporary Onondaga

leaders. Another example of the application of this principle is the belief held by some Haudenosaunee that diseases in children are caused by the misdeeds of their adult relatives (Herrick 1995: 26). In such cases, the original offense to the Creator is compounded by the resultant violation of the sacred instruction to protect the well-being of the younger generations (Wall 2001:41-42).

Many Haudenosaunee people have argued that following the Creator's instructions has become increasingly difficult since the onset of European colonialism, cultural repression, and environmental destruction, and that these changes have had grave consequences for both Native and non-Native people, including ill health. In addition to the European epidemics that caused such massive loss of life in the Native world, other kinds of disease emerged from the meeting of two continents' cultures. F. Henry Lickers, a Mohawk serving as the Scientific Co-Chair of the HETF (HETF 2006), has written:

In 1492, ... Into our homes came a new people. They did not see or understand their place in Creation and believed that the world was theirs. To our people, we saw them as being sick. They needed to be taught and nurtured, so that they would get better and understand their place in Creation. They brought sickness and diseases, which our people never saw before. These were diseases not only of the body but also of the spirit. They had no concept of place, little concept of family, and very little concepts of Nation or Confederacy. They believed that they could buy or sell Mother Earth as if she was a commodity for sale, and they saw the beauty of the land as goods for their use. Among the Haudenosaunee, the sickness of greed and irresponsibility began to affect the ability of our people to work in the Good Mind. Our language, knowledge, and systems of governance were being forgotten. Our concern for community, Nation, and Confederacy was being replaced with a concern only for self. Abuses of all types began to appear in our communities. Spouse, child, chemical, and government abuse, taught our people to fear, not only the newcomers, but ourselves as well. These

sicknesses lead to chaos in our Nations and harmony seemed but a distant memory. (1999: 158-159)

Prominent members of the Onondaga Nation have made similar arguments about the impact of past and present injustices upon the health of their people. Jeanne Shenandoah, another member of the HETF, has charged that there are far too many “poisons” in the environment and people’s relationships to permit the Onondaga to “live off the land” as their ancestors did (2006), and as the Creator mandated (Wall 2001:62). Audrey Shenandoah has expressed concern that the increased reliance upon processed foods created by such estrangement from the land poses serious risks to her people’s health (Hill and Shenandoah 2006). In an interview for *The Post-Standard* concerning the filing of the land rights action, Tadodaho Sidney Hill maintained that the experience of losing traditional homelands and being subjected to other forms of cultural oppression was closely related to the fracturing of families and to the high rates of alcoholism and diabetes on the reservation (Kirst 2005b). A representative of the Onondaga Communications Office, Summer Frazier, described how her people have often been wounded by difficult or non-existent relationships with their American neighbors and their political representatives:

[There] are definitely wounds inflicted on us by just ignoring us and not being able to – not dealing with us. The government heads change so often, we are constantly saying the same thing over and over again, we’re never getting to that next level. I remember going to school and our class would go to like, the Civic Center for like, a play. And there’d be kids all around us from different schools, and they’d say, “Where are you guys from?” And we’d tell them that “We’re from the Onondaga Nation, we’re from the Res.” And they wouldn’t even know there was Indians living where we live. And it was just surprising that -

we were sheltered as well to not understand that they didn't know, but I just don't see how we are being left out so much, out of general education. A lot of healing has gotta go on. (2008)

Such statements convey a very strong sentiment that the past and present experiences of racist oppression have rendered it extremely difficult for the Haudenosaunee to live as their Creator instructed, in peace and harmony with people and with the rest of Creation (Wall 2001:84). The damage to health resulting from that disorder has the potential to compound itself unless it is healed, which the Onondagas maintain has not yet occurred (Hill 2006).

It is important to note that the preceding Onondaga descriptions of physical emotional, and spiritual illnesses accord well with the reported experiences of other Native American nations across North America. The research and clinical work of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra M. DeBruyn suggest that the legacy of colonization plays a significant role in generating the various social ills found in many Native American communities today (1998:56). These authors argue that the former has produced two interrelated forms of grief. The first of these, disenfranchised grief, is felt by those who experience a loss but cannot, for some reason, publicly acknowledge it or mourn it. In such situations, the normal feelings of grief (i.e. anger, sadness, helplessness, guilt) are greatly magnified but are either socially prohibited or internally repressed by a sense of shame; the individual consequently may feel powerless, inferior, and/or uncertain of his or her identity (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998: 62-63).

The other form of grief found to be prevalent among Native American populations is a type of disenfranchised grief called historical unresolved grief. This psychological state results from the transference of disenfranchised (unresolved) grief across generations via the survivor's-child complex, self-destructive behaviors like substance abuse, and abusive behaviors perpetuated in families plagued by domestic violence. These vicious cycles of unresolved trauma are intensified by present-day experiences of racism, exclusion, and lack of opportunity, such that many Native Americans have seen intergenerational grief augmented by fresh tragedies (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998:64-65).

The theories advanced by Brave Heart and DeBruyn should not be uncritically accepted as *the* explanatory framework in which to place Onondaga discourse about the relationship between health and colonialism; they are, after all, etic interpretations of cultural phenomena. However, as will be shown in the following chapter, many of their conclusions do resonate with statements made by members of the nation. Illustrating such parallels between local data and theoretical insights helps to contextualize Onondaga experiences within the wider indigenous community, of which the nation has long been an important leader (Lyons 2005:16; Lyons 2006). Therefore, the concepts of historical unresolved grief and disenfranchised grief will be revisited in the next section's examination of Onondaga statements about effecting "healing" through their land rights action.

The second cause of ill health identified by Herrick is the failure to fulfill desires experienced in the waking or dream state (Herrick 1995: 36, 49). Such desires, which can be directed to a wide variety of things, beings, or actions, are seen as sources of internal imbalance that can damage physical or psychological

health (Herrick 1995:39,42,47). Examples of the latter include grief or anxiety originating from the desire to be somewhere else, or to be with an absent person (Herrick 1995: 47). This phenomenon is in fact related to Herrick's first etiological category, as it is traditionally believed that not realizing one's desire contravenes the Creator's wishes (Herrick 1995:46). It is also linked to a third category of causes of illness, witchcraft²². Certain individuals have the power to manipulate the spirit forces *uki* and *otkon* in such a way as to disrupt the balance of another person's spirit (Hewitt 1995:42-44; Mann 2000d: 231-232). One of the ways this can be accomplished is by causing that person to desire something unattainable, thereby indirectly inducing illness (Hewitt 1995:44). A witch might also create imbalance by inserting a dangerous or poisonous object into a person (Hewitt 1995: 42). This last practice overlaps with the fourth etiological category identified by Herrick: interaction with people, corpses, spirits, things, or places that emit *otkon* (Hewitt 1995:40).

²² Although Herrick uses the word "witchcraft", this term originated as an incorrectly applied Christian label. Evangelizing missionaries were quick to condemn all spirit work with *uki* or *otkon* as "evil." Handsome Lake's condemnation of the use of *otkon* gradually led to the popularization of the "witch" – *otkon* association, but *uki* remained distinct from this amalgamated concept of "witchcraft" (Mann 2000d: 231-232).

IV. Onondaga Discourse about the Land Rights Action

Exploring the cultural significance of some of the key concepts in the preamble of the Onondaga Nation's land rights action helps to shed some light on the various layers of significance embedded in the Onondagas' commentary about their court case. The statements of many Nation representatives support Audrey Shenandoah's assertion that the suit was consciously crafted in accordance with their cultural identity and their Creator's instructions (Berry and Nave 2007, part1). The following analysis of that discourse is structured around Onondagas' explanations of the goals and motivations underlying their legal action. As discussed in Chapter 2, the lawsuit itself asks for a declaration that all transfers of Onondaga land were illegal and therefore void, and that the Nation retains title to its aboriginal homelands (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]). However, the Onondagas have also enumerated a number of long-term goals that they hope to accomplish through negotiations with the United States and New York State governments, following a court decision (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Memo in Opposition [2006]:7-8). These goals are listed on the Nation's website (see Appendix B), and

have been elaborated upon by Onondaga representatives in their public statements.

Articulated in the first sentence of the lawsuit's preamble and listed foremost in the Nation's online description of the suit's "specific goals" is the desire for "healing." A survey of Onondaga discourse about the land rights action reveals that this concept has been applied in a variety of ways, both with respect to what will be healed by the suit and the process by which that healing will take place. Taking the first of these in turn, it is apparent that the Onondagas believe that they are addressing issues of mutual importance to the Native and non-Native communities. The Nation has argued that a long history of oppression and distrust has alienated them from their American neighbors, and that this poor relationship continues to create problems for both sides (Hill 2006). Sidney Hill has written,

When our land was unjustly seized, our people were wounded. Our culture and traditions were damaged.

Our neighbors were also wounded by actions that most of those living nearby today have no knowledge of. You were robbed of the chance to live side-by-side in harmony with a culture that is different from your own; a culture that understood and cared for this land for centuries before your ancestors arrived. And we were all robbed of the opportunity to learn and grow together. (2006)

The concept of being wounded by social conflict accords well with the Peacemaker's teaching about the reciprocal relationship between health and peace (Wall 2001: 86; Saraydar 1990:23-25).

Other wounds resulting from this painful history derive from the severe pollution and degradation of Onondaga lands, which are littered with no less than

ninety-one federally designated Superfund sites (news, Kriss 2005). The Nation is particularly concerned about the state of Onondaga Lake, a site that is extremely sacred to the Haudenosaunee because of its associations with the Peacemaker and the founding of the Confederacy (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:4-5). Subjected to a century of industrial pollution, the lake is now considered one of the most polluted lakes in the country. The lakebed, much of the southern lakeshore, and several areas along the lake's tributaries form a massive complex of Superfund sites (Onondaga Lake Partnership 2008). This environmental destruction has prevented the Onondaga from engaging in culturally-meaningful resource use patterns, rendered the lake water unusable for drinking or recreation, and dramatically altered the regional ecosystem (Kimmerer et al. 2006; Onondaga Lake Partnership 2008).

Onondaga Nation leaders' statements suggest that they believe Onondaga Lake itself has been wounded, and like any living being, has the capacity to "heal herself" if cared for properly (Onondaga Nation 2005). Due to a lack of data concerning this notion of the "health of land," very little can be said here about the unique cultural significance these statements may carry for Onondagas. However, it is worth noting that there are potential parallels between such comments and Herrick's discussion of Onondaga etiological knowledge. For instance, Audrey Shenandoah has equated cleaning out the toxins in the lakebed to cleaning out the "soul" of the lake (2007). This possibly reflects the Haudenosaunee idea that ill health is fundamentally the result of a spiritual imbalance, a principle that Herrick claims applies not simply to people but also to

places, things, and events (1995:33-34). Sidney Hill may have implicitly drawn on this conceptual connection when he explained that his people wish to see the lake “regain its health and ecological balance” (2005b). The last pieces of data suggesting that Herrick’s research may be applicable to the “healing” of Onondaga Lake are Nation leaders’ comparisons of the lake to a living being who is sick. Hill has said of the lake, “At this time she needs quite a bit of help to get that poison out of her system” (O’Brien and Weiner 2005). Chief Irving Powless Jr. has likewise drawn an analogy between the lake and a person suffering from cancer: “Onondaga Lake has ... waste sites around it and in order to clean up the lake you have to come in and ... surgically remove those cancer areas” (2008). It is possible that these two comments’ shared emphasis on the removal of dangerous substances from the body is at least partly informed by the Haudenosaunee belief that people with malevolent intent (namely, witches) can cause illness in a person by inserting into them objects that will disrupt spiritual balance (Herrick 1995:42,46).

In addition to the wounds inflicted on the land, air, and water, and on the organisms that live therein, the Onondagas charge that environmental degradation has threatened the physical health of all Syracuse residents, Native and non-Native alike (Hill 2005b). Several Nation representatives have argued that the burden of pollution falls especially hard on those with low-incomes, some of whom consume fish from the lake out of necessity, in spite of the hazards to their health (Amato et al. 2006; Frazier 2008). In accordance with the Haudenosaunee understanding of *Ne’ Skennon’* as outlined by the Peacemaker, Hill has argued

that pollution's threat to health also prevents people from living in peace (Hill 2006). Jeanne Shenandoah has argued that it has also harmed the regional economy, because the damage to natural resources is preventing the revitalization central New York so desperately needs (Shenandoah 2006). Lastly, on a broader level, it has wounded people's relationships to the land, creating a "rift" between them (Hill 2006) that the Onondagas believe must be healed if the region is to succeed in its environmental cleanup efforts (Amato et al. 2006).

In addition to these issues of mutual concern to Natives and non-Natives, the Onondagas are seeking to heal some of the wounds inflicted uniquely upon them by the taking of their land, environmental damage, and cultural oppression. Hill has expressed concern over the impacts that a damaged relationship with the land are specifically having on his people: "Because our people have been deprived of our access to so much of our former land, water ways and the wildlife, our culture, health and well-being as a people have suffered. The Onondagas see our relationship to the land, the waters and the natural world as mutual, life sustaining and healing" (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:7). These comments reflect the Haudenosaunee belief that Mother Earth actively takes care of human beings, providing them with everything they need to live (Wall 2001:16). Hill's focus on health also resonates with the Creation Story, which teaches that failure of humans to maintain the proper relationship with the natural world will create illness, death, and social unrest in their communities.

Other recent wounds received by the Onondagas range from local non-

Native ignorance of the Nation's existence (Onondaga Nation 2005; Frazier 2008) to infringements on Onondaga sovereignty by various levels of American government (Frazier 2008; Venables and Powless 2006). However, as indicated in the previous section, the Onondagas have also expressed that they are still struggling to come to terms with the legacy of wounds inflicted upon them in the past, wounds that continue to wreak havoc on their health in the present day (Kirst 2005b). These ideas have been incorporated in Onondaga discourse about the lawsuit, as illustrated by Susan Lyons's comments in an editorial to *The Post-Standard* following New York State's court motion to dismiss the Onondagas' case on the basis of laches:

...I did have some hope that this time they would be fair; that this time justice will be done and we could begin the healing of generations of trauma that all Native Americans in this country have endured and are still enduring.

I cried when I read in the papers New York state has filed a motion to dismiss. I cried and I felt a great sadness, not just for our youth and their future, but I felt the weight of years of sadness of my ancestors. (2006)

These statements can be interpreted as examples of the phenomenon known as historical unresolved grief, described in the previous section (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998:64-65). On a more general level, Onondaga calls for healing can be understood in the context of what Brave Heart and DeBruyn term disenfranchised grief, for Nation leaders have made it clear that "[the] first step in healing is to acknowledge the wound. You cannot heal an injury that you refuse to acknowledge" (Hill 2006). In the most immediate sense, the Onondagas wish this acknowledgement to take the form of a court declaration that New York's

acquisition of their lands was illegal. They have insisted, however, that the process of healing also requires that justice be done (Hill 2006). The connection between health and justice, which has played a prominent role in Onondaga discourse about the land rights action, resonates strongly with *Ga: i'hwiyō*, one of the three central principles of the Peacemaker's sacred message.

The first step toward justice and healing, in the context of the land rights action, would be for the U.S. courts to recognize that the Onondagas still bear title to their ancestral homelands. Such a decision would give the Nation a stronger position in subsequent negotiations with New York State,²³ which it hopes in turn will lead to the acknowledgement of other wounds and the righting of many injustices (McAndrew 2005; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Memo in Opposition [2006]:7-8). The Nation's long-term objectives include the reaffirmation of its sovereignty and the protection of its rights as detailed in the Two Row Wampum²⁴ and the three treaties that the Haudenosaunee recognizes as

²³ The Onondaga Nation holds that as a sovereign nation, the proper mode for it to settle a dispute with America is through government-to-government negotiation, not the U.S. court system. Since their land was first lost, Onondaga leaders have appealed to the United States government for relief. In the 1980s, they began pursuing direct talks with New York State. However, these were terminated in the late 1990s when the state insisted that the Nation file suit. (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Memo in Opposition [2006]:11; *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:10-11).

²⁴ The Two Row Wampum is the first treaty to have been negotiated between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans, specifically the Dutch, who arrived in Confederacy territory in the early 1600s. It affirmed the sovereignty of both parties, each agreeing never to attempt to govern or control the other, and committed them to a relationship of peace and friendship that would last forever. (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:9; Powless 2008). Irving Powless maintains that this agreement also required European colonists to live by the "Natural Law," meeting Haudenosaunee standards for how the environment should be treated (2008). The Nation claims that it has ever upheld its side of this agreement, but that the United

lawful, properly ratified agreements between the Six Nations and the United States: the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of 1784, the Treaty of Fort Harmer of 1789, and the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794 (Onondaga Nation 2008). In concrete terms, this would entail the resolution of longstanding conflicts with federal and state governments over such issues as natural resource use and taxation. With regard to the former, the Onondagas claim that they never ceded the right to hunt and fish without restriction in their aboriginal territories, not even in the New York-brokered “treaties” whose validity they are currently contesting in court. New York State law, however, has imposed harvesting regulations upon Nation members under penalty of arrest and fines, in contravention of Onondaga sovereignty (news, Kirst 1991b). The taxation debate is focused primarily on the Onondagas’ refusal, also on account of its sovereign status, to pay New York taxes on the cigarettes it sells (Carr 1994; McAndrew 2002).

The Onondagas’ defense of their sovereignty forms the crux of a larger struggle to preserve their way of life in the face of constant outside pressure to conform to American laws and cultural standards. Summer Frazier has described the challenges faced by her people, and the importance of the land rights action in addressing those issues:

Well first we get acknowledgement that we’re still here, we’re still alive. It lets people know that we still – that we’re different in that way. A lot of people don’t understand that. So when they say, ‘Well, why don’t you just become an American and go with the flow?’ Well, there’s a reason why we are the way we are. There’s

States has continually violated it by passing laws that assault Onondaga rights to self-determination from and by polluting and degrading the natural environment (Venables and Powless 2006; Powless 2008).

nothing wrong with what we're doing. It is our way of life, so, I don't see why we should have to change so much. Governmental policies, they ask people to not be racial, discriminatory and all that – there's reasons for all that. But when it comes to us, they still haven't dealt with us. So, laws we make for our people, they try to fight that because it doesn't go with the United States law, or New York's law, so it creates conflict, and the result is that people think we're getting away with something, we're getting more rights than somebody, we're getting special treatment - when the governments haven't dealt with us, so now this problem is at a high point. So ... it's time to deal with everything. (2008)

It is not only legal pressure that threatens Onondaga culture, however. In order to “provide for the growth and perpetuation of Onondaga culture, language, laws, religion, and way of life” (Onondaga Nation 2008), the Nation hopes that a future settlement will enable them to increase their land holdings and strengthen their economic base. Currently, the Onondagas' territory is not large enough to accommodate their population (Shenandoah and McAndrew 2000), and the Nation is seeking to become economically self-sufficient so as to achieve a better quality of life for its people (Onondaga Nation 2008). Desirous that their land rights action be healing and non-disruptive, Onondaga leaders have pledged not to evict private landowners²⁵. They have also guaranteed that the Nation will not seek monetary compensation by prosecuting private landowners or by building a casino²⁶ (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:8; Onondaga Nation 2008). Several Onondaga leaders have stated that this approach is mandated by their Creator's instructions, most especially the Great Law of Peace (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:7-8; McAndrew 2000h). Onondaga opposition to casinos, though, is drawn not only from religious considerations (namely Handsome Lake's injunction against gambling) but also from concerns about the potential

²⁵ A survey of the Post-Standard database, whose coverage spans from 1986 to the present, shows that Onondaga leaders were quoted as having made this assurance at least as early as 1994 (Carr 1994).

²⁶ New York State has promoted casinos as a key element of its settlements with numerous other Native nations (McAndrew 2005).

threat of such lucrative private business to the people's sovereignty, which is collectively held (Johansen and Mann 2000a:102-104; news, Odat0 2005).

The Nation hopes to avoid conflict over land reacquisition by only seeking public land or purchasing property from willing sellers. Its leaders have said little about specific properties they may be interested in, apart from asserting that they would like some of the shoreline around the lake that is so sacred to them (McAndrew 2005; McAndrew 1999c). With respect to its goal of achieving economic self-sufficiency, the Onondaga Nation hopes to generate enough revenue to fund needed social welfare programs including education, health care, and housing (see Appendix B). A court victory would enable it to charge the New York State government for the use of its land, ensuring a regular source of income. It would also give the Nation a stronger voice in regional economic development planning; Onondagas hope to develop partnerships with local public and private entities in order to work toward a shared goal of economic recovery in central New York (Onondaga Nation 2008; McAndrew 2005). This emphasis on mutual economic benefit from the land rights action is based largely upon an understanding of the interdependence of the Native and non-Native communities:

Anything that happens to New York – if New York goes under, we go under. I mean, we work in New York, our families get the food from New York. I mean, anything happens to NY, happens to us. If we win the land rights case, how smart would it be to say, “Oh, we want millions and millions of dollars” ? Well, if New York goes under, then we go under too. I mean, it doesn't make any sense. We're all connected. Everything's connected. (Frazier 2008)

The Onondagas' vision of the justice required to effect healing also focuses a great deal of attention on environmental restoration and protection. To the Nation, these goals are “every bit as important as recovering ownership of the land” (Onondaga Nation 2008). There are specific locations within the Onondagas' aboriginal lands that are held sacred because they are associated with

the Peacemaker's life and deeds, were long inhabited or used by their ancestors, or witnessed important events in Haudenosaunee history (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:5). As an important cultural center, natural resource, and sacred site relating to the Peacemaker, Onondaga Lake's desecration has been particularly painful for the Nation and has been a major focus of its discourse about the land rights action (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:5; Kimmerer et al. 2006).

On a more ideological level, Onondaga leaders' statements suggest that by using their lawsuit to catalyze environmental protection, they are fulfilling their Creator's Original Instructions to be stewards of the earth and to respect other living things as having equal rights as humans (Hill and Shenandoah 2006; Onondaga Nation 2008):

And what would be right in the eyes of our Creator has been kept in mind as these discussions have been going on through the years. And actually it's justice that we are seeking, justice for the whole Creation, for the animal life, their habitat are being destroyed unmercifully. For the bird life, for plant life, for the woodlands. Everything that we give thanks for in our opening address and our closing address, are very seriously thought of and considered as we talked or discussed these treaties. And we, we don't want to feel that we are going to be depriving any other living thing. (Shenandoah qtd in Hill and Shenandoah 2006)

Another important philosophical motivation for environmental advocacy that has been cited by Nation leaders is the "Natural Law" (Powless 2008; Hill and Shenandoah 2006; Frazier 2008), which they argue is both a mandate of the Two-Row Wampum and a universally applicable environmental philosophy: "[There]

is no environmental border with the winds, with the waters. We're all connected, so we all share in whatever we do with our environment" (Gonyea qtd in González et al. 2006). Several Onondaga leaders have spoken of the land rights action in the context of their concerns over the consequences of failing to abide by the Natural Law (Lyons 2007; Powless 2008); Audrey Shenandoah has explained that the Nation feels it must act "before all of Creation goes into oblivion or extinction" (Hill and Shenandoah 2006). Their warnings about environmental destruction and the resultant disappearance of life resonate with the three spiritual messages' instructions concerning humans' role in the cosmic order. Their alternative vision for the future is likewise drawn from these teachings, most especially from the Peacemaker's admonitions to view the land as a collectively owned resource and to make all decisions by keeping in mind the welfare of the seventh generation to come (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:5-6):

So my message in our land rights, and the message of our people, is that we need to take care of our lands, we need to take care of our environments, our resources; these are gifts that we need to preserve so that we can pass them on to the next generation. That's what we're taught. That's one of our fundamental teachings, is to pass what we have on to the next generation. And they can pass it on to theirs, and so on because that's how we acquired these gifts – because somebody was looking out for the future of us before we were born. (Gonyea qtd in González et al. 2006)

The above statement from Wendy Gonyea hints at one of the most immediate environmental goals of the Nation in filing its land rights action, to educate the non-Native public about local environmental problems (Hill and

Shenandoah 2006) and about the Onondagas' unique cultural understanding of the environment and of health (McAndrew 2005). The Nation hopes that the restitution of their land title will accord them sufficient legal power to influence regional environmental management (Kirst 2005b). Tadodaho Hill has further elaborated on this goal: "We want to use this action to put us at the table and enforce your laws and exert our laws of responsibility for the earth, water, air and animals." This would entail, he has explained, provision for the clean up of polluted areas and the long-term protection of areas "not yet defiled" (ed, Hill 2005a).

Much of the discussion in this vein has centered on current efforts to clean up Onondaga Lake, a project being coordinated by US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The Onondaga Nation believes it has not been sufficiently included in the decision-making processes concerning the future of the lake that carries such significance to their culture (Kirst 2006c). Its leaders have consistently maintained that they would like to see the lake returned to its original, pristine state; more specifically, people should be able to eat fish from the lake, drink its water, and safely swim there (O'Brien and Weiner 2005). In their eyes, the current plan²⁷ is unacceptable because it would fail to meet such goals. Chief

²⁷ The cleanup plan currently being implemented was chosen by the EPA and the NYSDEC on July 1, 2005. It involves extensive dredging along the edges of the lakebed, followed by capping of remaining contaminated sediments with clean sand and gravel. Most of the lake bottom, however, will either be covered with a thin cap or left alone to undergo "monitored natural recovery." There will also be a large barrier built on the southern portion of the lakeshore; contaminated groundwater will be continuously pumped out from behind this wall to prevent it

Irving Powless Jr. has compared the capping of contaminated sediments to putting a band-aid on cancer (2008). Several Nation representatives have criticized the notion of setting financial or time limits that would compromise the sustainability of any clean-up plan (Case 8/5/06; Amato et al. 2006). Instead, Jeanne Shenandoah has called for a more dynamic relationship with the lake that reflects her people's understanding of environmental stewardship and intergenerational responsibility: "I think that there should not be any timeline; there needs to be a constant, constant cleaning, and being aware of what's happened to it" (Amato et al. 2006).

In numerous public statements, representatives from the Nation have strongly advocated for their non-Native neighbors to change how they think about the environment (Hill and Shenandoah 2006). It is evident that they view such changes as pre-requisites to effecting meaningful, and in their opinion, necessary changes in non-Natives' relationship with the natural world (Lyons and Smith 2006:183). The latter has been especially true of Onondaga leaders' discourse about the cleanup of Onondaga Lake. Audrey Shenandoah has asserted that the lake needs "a lot of helpful feeling" (2007); it is a key ingredient in any environmental clean up plan. Moreover, she says, it is necessary for humans to maintain a good relationship with the spirits of all other living things: "Our spirits

from reaching the lake (NYSDEC 2004:75; NYSDEC 2008; Hughes 2007). The Onondagas have rejected this plan because it does not involve complete dredging of all contaminated sediments. They argue that the caps will fail over time, contaminating the lake once more. Moreover, they say that the plan is in violation of the Clean Water Act because it does not require that the water be clean enough to swim in or support fish that are healthy for human consumption (Onondaga Nation 2008).

must feel a connection to all those spirits in order to offer help” (Shenandoah 2007). Chief Bradley Powless has likewise spoken on the need to form a relationship with the landscape as a whole. In a 2006 panel discussion organized for the “Our Common Future” speaker series, he was asked by the moderator, “How would you know that we as a community finally took Onondaga Lake as seriously or as sacred as you know it to be?” He responded by calling for non-Natives to imitate one particular aspect of the Onondagas’ cultural relationship to their lands:

Part of that question is, the identity that you have with this area. We are Onondagas, we will forever be Onondaga, and our children’s children will be Onondaga. And we’re not leaving. That’s how you save the lake. You know that you’re gonna be here and your children’s children’s gonna be here, and that you want the best for them. Your children are coming. And you tell your grandchildren, and you tell your relatives, and you think, ‘Onondaga is our home.’ And that’s what makes it sacred to you. Then you can learn about who we are and what our place in history is. But until you have that within yourself, ... it’s like a sidebar, Onondaga Lake as a sidebar, not as a part of. (Amato et al. 2006)

His comments resonate with other Nation members’ emphasis on meeting the needs of the seventh generation to come, as well as the notion, also advanced by Sidney Hill and Jeanne Shenandoah, that the daily activities of living in and being sustained by a particular area can render that place sacred (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:5; Kimmerer et al. 2006).

In addition to giving them a voice in planning discussions and the opportunity to influence public opinion about the management of their ancestral

homelands, the Onondagas hope that negotiations resulting from the land rights action will grant them sufficient funds to undertake several environmental initiatives on the lands they still own. The latter include, according to the Nation's website, "a program for environmental restoration and protection" and "sound and sustainable agricultural programs" (Onondaga Nation 2008). In a *Post-Standard* interview in 2000, Audrey Shenandoah was quoted as having said, "I could see our people moving into this world of technology, the industrial world, but learning how to do things with the economic development, without destroying life, destroying the land" (Shenandoah and McAndrew 2000).

Another of the Nation's long-term goals for the outcome of reparations negotiations is provision for the protection of ancestral graves and other archaeological sites (Onondaga Nation 2008). In the data collected for this project, there were found comparatively few public statements on this topic made by Nation representatives, in their discussions of the land rights action or otherwise. However, Tadodaho Sidney Hill placed special emphasis on it in the declaration he submitted as part of the 2006 legal brief filed by the Nation's lawyers:

It is the duty of our current Nation leaders to protect these numerous resting places from being disturbed. The Nation has attempted to work with outside governmental agencies to protect these graves. However, this preservation has not always occurred and our concerns over this problem has been another motivating factor in seeking to exercise our rights throughout our original land. (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:14).

Hill's inclusion of this information is interesting, as he articulates few of the other specific goals that the Nation has listed on its website and discussed in other arenas.

The aforementioned objectives of the Nation, namely the recognition of its sovereignty and treaty rights, the achievement of economic self-sufficiency, the return of some of its homelands, environmental clean-up and protection, and the safeguarding of graves and archaeological sites, are all processes of healing that contribute to another of the Nation's long term goals for its land rights action: the healing of its relationship with its non-Native neighbors. Clan Mother Audrey Shenandoah and Chief Irving Powless Jr. have identified the Two-Row Wampum as the ideal model for this future relationship (Hill and Shenandoah 2006; Powless 2008). Powless has stated:

[If] we look at the animals in the woods, we see deer, bear, rabbits, pheasants, partridge, mink, muskrats, beavers – all coexisting together on Mother Earth, each one with their own separate ways and their own territory. These are the animals of the forest. We, the brilliant species of the animal world, in all of these years, have not been able to learn how to live together in peace and harmony, and recognize our differences. We're always trying to change people, change boundary lines. This is not the way we're supposed to be. We're supposed to recognize our differences and respect those differences but live together in peace and harmony. And that's what [the Two-Row Wampum] is about. (Venables and Powless 2006)

Nation leaders maintain, however, that in order for the Native and non-Native communities to attain the goal of a peaceful and harmonious relationship, it is first necessary to redress the many injustices perpetrated against the Onondagas (Lyons and Smith 2006: 182). As reiterated earlier, the filing of their land rights

action was intended to initiate that healing, or what Jeanne Shenandoah calls a “truth and reconciliation,” process (2006). The notion that justice, in this case the search for a resolution that will respect all parties’ rights (Lyons 2005a), will bring peace strongly parallels the Peacemaker’s teachings about *Ga: i’hwiyō* (Mohawk 2005:38). The Onondagas’ insistence that justice and peace have the capacity to heal is also directly related to the tenets of the Great Law of Peace (Saraydar 1990:25; Mohawk 2005:33; Wall 2001: 86).

The Nation believes it has already taken concrete steps toward the healing of its relationship with its neighbors by refraining from prosecuting individual landowners (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:8) and by starting to form partnerships with non-Native organizations to work toward common environmental goals²⁸ (Onondaga Nation 2008). The goal of healing, Tadodaho Hill maintains, is a moral imperative too great to be abandoned in the event of an unfavorable court ruling (2006). He argues that future efforts on this front must involve Natives and non-Natives learning about one another and about their mutual responsibilities (Hill and Shenandoah 2006), because “[no] one is happy when they do not understand those around them” (Hill 2006). The Nation is also seeking to expand its collaborative efforts to

²⁸ In 1999, the Nation worked with residents of Tully, New York to petition the NYS DEC to suspend or rescind the permit of a mining company who activities threatened to pollute Onondaga Creek (Weiner 1999; Onondaga Nation 2008). Within six months after they filed their land claim, the Onondagas were approached by the residents of five different New York towns who requested help in fighting pollution and development projects (Kriss 2005). Most recently, the Nation has supported the Onondaga Creek Partnership in its efforts to stop the construction of a sewage treatment plant in a predominately lower-income, African American neighborhood in the Southside of Syracuse (Onondaga Nation 2008).

empower local communities in addressing “issues that are of regional concern, such as responsible, sustainable economic development and environmental protection” (Onondaga Nation 2008).

It can be argued that these collaborative outreach efforts encapsulate the philosophical approach undergirding the land rights action as a whole. They reflect the Haudenosaunee belief that personal, social, and environmental health are mutually constitutive. Moreover, they articulate healing with the concepts of peace, justice, and respect, as defined by the Peacemaker in the Great Law of Peace. Oren Lyons succinctly and eloquently conveyed this metaphysical connection in an editorial to the *Post-Standard* in which he wrote, “Peace can only come with respect for life and respect for the dignity of others” (2005a).

Analysis of the Onondagas’ discourse concerning the goals of their land rights action, and particularly the relation of the latter to the Nation’s intention that their lawsuit be a “healing,” sheds some light on the complex integration of the Onondagas’ unique cultural perspective with their political agenda. Summer Frazier has described this integration as follows:

We have to make sure that we lay this foundation down, so things are good. So the air you breathe is good, and so that we can continue being here. That’s how you find the path you’re gonna take next. So for the land rights action, what you want to do is tell them that we need to work together to take care of the land around us, the water, the land, and that we have to take care of our relationship with each other. There has been things that have happened, the pollution, the anger between the two sides, and we have to take care of that, because we can’t go on fighting all the time, doing things that aren’t positive. It’s the life style that we have and the way we believe our culture – the way we live our culture, not believe it – but you know, the things we believe in with all our heart. We

have to share that, we have to get rid of the animosity.
(2008)

Frazier's comments resonate with Audrey Shenandoah's assertion that her people's dedication to their traditional beliefs gives them the strength²⁹ they need to face the challenges posed to them by the modern world (Hill and Shenandoah 2006). They also reflect an attitude that Hill has expressed in his affidavit to the federal district court, namely that this land rights action is part of the Confederacy's longstanding tradition of forming alliances with foreign nations under the precepts of the Great Law of Peace (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:7). At the 2007 Roots of Peacemaking festival, Chief Jake Swamp made an interesting comment along these same lines, telling non-Native and Native spectators that the Peacemaker intended the Great Law of Peace to envelop the whole world, and assuring them that day was indeed coming (2007).

It is evident from the numerous intersections between Onondaga culture and the Nation's stated political objectives that the motivations for the land rights action are extraordinarily complex. The limited research conducted for this project cannot hope to provide a thorough exegesis of Onondaga commentary about the lawsuit. However, the preceding discussion does lead to some important conclusions about the Onondagas' discourse that help to explain non-Native responses to it. Firstly, the Nation is advancing a vision for the future that it believes to be superior to the status quo. While this may seem an obvious

²⁹ Audrey Shenandoah has stated that she grew up hearing her elders say that the Creator would help them find justice if they stayed true to their traditional beliefs. (Shenandoah and McAndrew 2000).

observation, its implications for social change are anything but well defined. Frazier has explained, “The ... goals with like, money, and owning land or this or that, that’s all up in the open because we have to work together. Whatever happens to New York State happens to us... [We] want to be able to discuss our options” (2008). It is also important to note that Nation representatives have largely focused their discussion about land rights on values, and that many of the concepts they reference carry specific cultural significance to the Onondagas. Furthermore, while the Nation felt forced to file a lawsuit in order to have its voice heard *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:9), it has clearly communicated a preference for accomplishing most of its social, economic, and political goals through direct negotiation with local, state, and federal governments. Finally, it is evident, even from this cursory exploration of Onondaga discourse, that the various goals of their land rights action are closely interrelated in ways that mirror the interdependence of their philosophical and religious beliefs about healing, humans’ relationship to land (and to the rest of Creation), peace, justice, reconciliation, and respect.

V. Non-Native Discourse about the Onondaga Nation's Land Rights Action

The non-Native public in Syracuse and the surrounding municipalities has received information about the goals of the Onondaga Nation through various channels. In addition to mass media outlets like local television news, the newspapers, radio, and the Internet, the Onondaga Nation itself and various citizens groups have endeavored to shape public discourse about the land rights action (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:13; McAndrew 2000j; McAndrew 2006c). In this chapter, I will examine some of the patterns that emerge from my analysis of non-Native discourse in

four main data sources³⁰ and attempt to put them into dialogue with ideas from Onondaga discourse about the land rights action.

The first data I draw upon are newspaper articles from three local newspapers, the *Post-Standard*, *Syracuse Herald Journal*, and *Syracuse Herald American*³¹. Searching an online database for these journals returned 159 articles pertaining to the Nation's land claim, the earliest dating back to 1991. The next group of data is taken from video recordings of a lecture series entitled "Onondaga Land Rights and Our Common Future," which involved eleven educational events and one public Haudenosaunee social dance between February and December of 2006. The original idea for the series was conceived by Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation³² (NOON), a branch of the Syracuse Peace

³⁰ A more detailed discussion of my research methodology is included in the preface.

³¹ Both the *Syracuse Herald Journal*, and *Syracuse Herald American* were discontinued after 2001, whereas the *Post-Standard* continues today as the primary newspaper of the Syracuse area. The database from which articles were collected contains articles dating from 1986 onward.

³² NOON is one of, if not the most, outspoken non-Native organizations supporting the Onondaga Nation. It defines itself on its website as "grassroots organization of Central New Yorkers which recognizes and supports the sovereignty of the traditional government of the Onondaga Nation. NOON supports the right of native peoples to reclaim land, and advocates for fair settlement of any claims which are filed" (Syracuse Peace Council 2008). NOON's website declares that its goals are to: "Promote understanding of, and respect for, the Onondaga people, history, and culture within the Central New York community. Provide accurate information about the Onondaga Nation's current issues of concern, such as their Land Rights Action. Challenge racism towards the Onondaga people through education, building relationships, and encouraging shared experiences between the people of our Nations. Support, and collaborate with, the Onondaga Nation in their initiatives to promote environmental healing and restore respectful relationships between the governments of our Nations. Advocate for just and fair treatment of the Onondaga people at all levels of our own government" (Syracuse Peace Council 2008).

Council, but was ultimately co-sponsored by Syracuse University, the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF), the Inter-Religious Council of Central New York, the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse, the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, the Syracuse Cultural Workers, and the Onondaga Nation itself (Syracuse Peace Council 2008; McAndrew 2006c; P. Arnold, qtd in Hill and Shenandoah 2006). The goal of this series, according to its organizers, was to foster “intercultural learning and understanding” (P. Arnold, qtd in Hill and Shenandoah 2006) in the hopes that it might encourage the residents of the Syracuse area to respond in a positive way to the land rights action, and thus avert the hostility and tensions surrounding other Native land claims in the state (A. Mager, qtd in Frichner et al. 2006). The lectures in the series, which were free to attend and held at the Syracuse Stage in downtown Syracuse, each drew an audience of on average over one hundred and fifty people (Syracuse Peace Council 2008; McAndrew 2006f).

Another pool of data for this analysis comes from a survey I conducted among those in attendance at the Roots of Peacemaking Festival held on September 20th, 2007. The event was free and open to the public, and was dedicated to celebrating the Haudenosaunee cultural and historical contributions to the philosophy of peacemaking, in honor of the United Nations International Day of Peace. It was co-sponsored by Syracuse University, SUNY-ESF, and the Onondaga Nation, and featured speeches by numerous Onondaga leaders and representatives, including Audrey Shenandoah, Oren Lyons, and Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Syracuse University 2007). I was able to conduct written surveys with

twenty-one attendees, nineteen of whom were non-Natives. A copy of the survey instrument is included in the Appendices of this paper. Finally, my last group of data is drawn from face-to-face interviews with members of the Syracuse community. These include an individual interview with Kathleen Joy, a Syracuse Common Councilor At-Large (2007), an individual interview with Michael Senf, the Secretary of the Syracuse Club #42 of Rotary International (2008), and a focus group interview with four staff members of InterFaith Works of Central New York (2008).

Before turning to an in-depth analysis of non-Native discourse about the land rights action, it is necessary first to set the stage with a rough overview of my research findings concerning opinions about the overall tenor of non-Natives' reactions to the case. In my analysis of editorials submitted to *The Post-Standard* after the filing of the land rights action, I found only five in opposition to the Nation's case, and sixteen in support of it³³. In his affidavit to the court, Tadodaho Sidney Hill offered his perspective on the results of his Nation's public relations campaign: "Our leaders have spoken at hundreds of ... meetings and to the media,

³³ In each of these categories, several authors submitted more than one letter. Eight of the letters supporting the land rights action were authored, at least in part, by individuals who I am certain are affiliated with NOON. Among the five opposing letters, I believe that at least two of the authors, Scott E. Peterman and Tony Burnett, are members of Upstate Citizens for Equality, a citizens group opposed to Indian sovereignty and to the Haudenosaunee land claims (Peterman 2000; Burnett 2006). However, I would argue that the total number of editorials is more relevant to the question at hand because the volume of comments tends to have a greater impact on public opinion than their authorship, and it does reflect different writers' emotional and political investment in the topic. It should also be noted that one of the five opposition letters did not explicitly mention the Onondagas' suit, but rejected First Nations' sovereignty and supported the use of laches against land claims, two issues with direct bearing on the Onondagas' case (Warshaw 2006).

and the results have been very positive, with each side learning from the other. We have observed an almost complete absence of the severe tension that has occurred elsewhere in the state in reaction to the other Nations' suits" (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Declaration of Sidney Hill [2006]:13). This observation was cited in the Post-Standard (McAndrew 2006d), and has been echoed by Sue Eiholzer, a member of NOON who volunteers to give presentations about the land rights action to community groups throughout the Syracuse area (Eiholzer 2007). Councilor Joy likewise insisted that the land rights action was not "adversarial," that "[early] on, people were afraid that they were going to have their houses and their land taken away. When that issue was put to rest, there really isn't a lot of discussion about it. I know that the suit is on-going ... but there really isn't much concern about it. It's sort of the ... matter of course" (2007). A major factor contributing to this lack of concern, she argued, was the real estate industry's decision to insure any losses if the land rights action did in fact result in the Nation taking private property. This policy mitigated fears about the clouding of homeowners' title (Joy 2007).

Others have laid more emphasis on the lack of *discussion* of the land rights action, however, than on the lack of conflict over it. Responding to an editorial written by the staff of *The Post-Standard* that claimed that "The Onondagas' announcement caused little stir in the area, a testament to the nation's handling of the claim" (The Post-Standard 2005), Scott Peterman argued, "The 'little stir' in the area over the Onondagas' announcement, contrary to what you claim, was not the result of the 'nation's handling of the claim,' but the result of

people not paying attention, not caring, or being totally ignorant of the ramifications of such claims” (2005).³⁴ Mary of InterFaith Works, who like the rest of her focus group, knew little about the lawsuit, agreed that there was not much public discussion of the case, and speculated as to why that might be:

It doesn't seem like it's really in the local news. I don't read the newspaper, but I watch the news on the TV and ... I don't hear too much about it. And I listen to the radio all the time. I listen to Public Radio and that also has local news, you know, but I haven't really heard them talking about ... the Onondaga. Yeah, I hear news from time to time about the Oneida. Well, there's a whole lot of money at stake over there with that casino. Right? And the Onondagas — they're pretty poor, really. And they just have that small reservation down there and they don't have any casino or anything really of value. The only thing they have really is that, that gas station where they sell cigarettes tax free, right? I just don't think [the lawsuit] gets much press because well, the Onondaga just don't have very much power. And I just don't think they have much of a chance of winning — to be pessimistic about it, you know. I mean, I'm not saying whether I think they should or shouldn't win. I think they should, at least, be recognized in some way that this was a wrong-doing done to them. But, I think most people just kind of ignore it because they don't think there is any chance that they are going to win. (Viola et al. 2008)

Mary's arguments closely align with those made by Summer Frazier of the Onondaga Nation's Communications Office, who said she was happy not to see a great deal of fear in the public as there had been in other Native land claims, but

³⁴ Ellen Edgerton, a resident of Syracuse, responded to this letter with an editorial in which she argued that she was not “ignorant of the ramifications” of the Onondagas' suit. She argued that the ambiguity with regard to exactly what kind of settlement would be reached was necessary, because the Onondagas needed leverage in negotiations. However, she claimed that this uncertainty should not be cause for distrust; rather, the Native and non-Native communities should seize the opportunity to form a “real relationship” (Edgerton 2005).

she also felt that the case had not been publicized very much. She reflected that there were both negative and positive aspects to this lack of attention:

[We're] a very small percentage of the population, so ... just to look at it that way, I mean, there won't be much said, unless we win. I don't think that if we lose, there will be much done at all. The only thing that'll happen is if we do win, that's when you'll hear something. You never hear anything about people - well, indigenous people all over the world, there's stuff happening to them, monstrosities happening to them, and you don't hear about it. You don't hear anybody trying to stop it. You only hear when something, you know, like a ripple kind of happens. But then, the ripple fades. I don't think there's very much attention, but that might be a good thing, because if there was a lot of attention and it was a lot for us, a lot more people would be afraid. They would be scared for their land and stuff. They would start questioning (...). All that question would come to us negatively. It might be a good thing. (Frazier 2008)

In non-Natives' reactions to other land claims, Frazier argued, fear was born of ignorance, and the American government deliberately worked to cultivate both of those states of mind in the public in order to continue its oppression of Native peoples. (2008)

My research on non-Native discourse about the land rights action can offer little in the way of resolving these debates about the level of support for the Onondagas that currently exists among American residents of Syracuse and the surrounding areas. The only conclusion that I can confidently draw from my data is that those non-Natives who are opposed to the land rights action are not as well organized as those who support it. To date, Upstate Citizens for Equality³⁵

³⁵ UCE describes itself as “a growing, not-for-profit corporation composed of concerned citizens that stand against discrimination, and supports the continuation of free enterprise and equality in our communities” (Upstate Citizens for Equality 2008). It consists of three chapters, the Madison-Oneida chapter (founded 1997),

(UCE), the opposition group that has played such a prominent role in fighting other land claims, has not formed a chapter in the area (Upstate Citizens for Equality 2008), while NOON has reached many hundreds of people through its various presentations and public events.

What my data do shed light on, and what the following sections will endeavor to explore, is non-Native knowledge about the land rights action. To have individuals from such strikingly different political positions as Peterman, Mary, and Frazier all identify lack of information as an important issue relating to the public's reception of the land rights action, calls for greater attention to be paid to the subject. In the following section, I compare non-Natives' understandings of the goals of the land rights action with the objectives enumerated by the Onondagas, especially as they are described on the Nation's website. There are significant discrepancies between the two discourses, even at this most basic level. They are compounded by non-Native ignorance of Onondaga culture, which, as was discussed in the previous chapter, fundamentally informs the Onondagas' approach to seeking justice and healing. As I cannot

Cayuga-Seneca chapter (founded 1999), and Niagara Frontier Chapter (founded 2002). The organization strongly opposes Haudenosaunee Nations' construction of casinos, which they say are illegal under the state constitution, and they believe that non-Native enterprise is harmed when state taxes are not collected from non-Natives who shop on reservations. UCE also rejects Indian sovereignty, claiming that it is based on race discrimination, and not political contract: "Indians were made citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside when Congress passed The Indian Citizenship Act which grants to them the right to vote and be counted in the apportionment of political districts and brings them within the protections of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Therefore the State and Federal governments owe an obligation not to discriminate against them or other citizens based on race, ethnicity or national origin" (Upstate Citizens for Equality 2008).

discuss the full extent of these cultural miscommunications for lack of space, I focus on one of the most significant patterns that has emerged from my data, namely non-Natives' use of the Ecological Indian stereotype to understand the "unique spiritual, cultural, and historic relationship with the land" that the Onondagas have cited as one motivation for their filing of the land rights action (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:1-2).

V a. Discourse Analysis of Non-Native Perceptions of the Goals of the Land Rights Action

In analyzing my newspaper data, I first tried to gain a sense of what a non-Native reader of the *Post-Standard* might have understood the goals of the land rights action to be if she read all the relevant articles, editorials, and columns written by Natives and non-Natives alike on and after March 11, 2005. This analysis showed that in 2005, all of the goals currently listed on the Nation's website were enumerated, except two³⁶: the resolution of conflicts over taxation and jurisdiction, and the perpetuation of Onondaga culture. An additional goal was described in a less than conspicuous caption of a photograph, namely Chief Jake Swamp's explanation that the Nation wished to educate the public about Onondaga environmental philosophy and about current environmental problems (McAndrew 2005). It should also be noted that the idea of working in partnership with the non-Native community on environmental projects was advanced in the articles published in 2005, although it was not as explicitly stated as it currently is

³⁶ These particular objectives had been covered by the *Post-Standard* in previous years (Kirst 1999b; Kirst 1999d)

on the Nation's website³⁷ (Onondaga Nation 2008). Of particular interest among the 2005 data is an article published on September 17th, in which the reporter Erik Kriss claimed that the Onondagas' "objective" in filing their claim was "environmental cleanup, not money," and went on to say that the Nation's "main targets" are the Onondaga Lake cleanup plan and Midland sewage treatment plant (Kriss 2005).

Kriss's reduction of the Onondaga Nation's lawsuit to a single-minded enterprise centered on environmental activism was a foretaste of the kinds of changes in newspaper coverage of the land rights action that took place in 2006. Monetary compensation was not the only topic to fall by the wayside. During that year, only the following five goals were identified: healing the relationship between Natives and non-Natives, obtaining recognition of their title to their aboriginal lands, environmental cleanup and protection, the recognition of the Nation's basic rights and treaty agreements, and intercultural cooperation on environmental restoration and economic revitalization. Although an editorial written by the organizers of the Onondaga Land Rights Speaker Series advocated for the protection of Onondaga archaeological sites and graves, it did not explicitly present this as a political objective related to the Nation's lawsuit (Manno et al. 2006). Similarly, the ongoing conflict over taxation was covered in an article, but was never related to the land rights action (McAndrew 2006g).

³⁷ This objective, while not included on the Nation's list of "Specific Goals of the Onondaga Nation Land Rights Action," is discussed at length in another section of the website, "The Onondaga Nation and Environmental Stewardship" (Onondaga Nation 2008).

Newspaper coverage of the land rights action in 2007 before June 28th (the cut-off date for my sample) was strikingly sparse. This may have been due to the conclusion of the speaker series in December of 2006 and the general anticipation of a ruling being handed down by the federal district court in Albany. At any rate, there were only two goals enumerated in the articles published during this time, recognition of land title and Native/non-Native collaboration on environmental protection. Notably, though, the latter was identified as being “one reason” why the Nation sued for its land rights (The Post-Standard 2007), which helped to mitigate the article’s simplification of the lawsuit.

Obviously, newspaper coverage of the land rights action is a hybrid discursive space, as it incorporates editorials from Native and non-Native community members, Native quotes edited by non-Native reporters, and occasionally non-Native quotes edited by Native reporters. Thus, the presentation of the Nation’s goals as outlined above was in a certain sense co-created. To better understand non-Natives’ perceptions of the goals of the land rights action, it is necessary to focus exclusively on non-Native editorials, columns, and quotes, as well as on how non-Native journalists communicate information in informational articles. A survey of all non-Native columns, editorials and quotes published after the filing of the land rights action shows that only four goals were explicitly attributed to the Nation in filing its legal action: regaining title to

aboriginal land, healing the Nation's relationship with the non-Native community, building an economic base for the Nation³⁸, and protecting the environment.

The last of these, the environmental aspect of the Nation's political agenda, plays a particularly interesting role in this non-Native commentary. After the lawsuit was filed, the newspapers strongly emphasized the environmental goals of the Nation, a focus that may be explained in part by the novelty of the proposal in the context of Native land claims (McAndrew 2005); the prominence at the time of public debates concerning the future of Onondaga Lake³⁹; and the Nation's high-profile networking with environmentalist organizations throughout the state (Kriss 2005). For the most part, the discussion of Onondaga environmental goals was accompanied by at least the implicit recognition that they were only one facet of a larger suit. However, there were a total of eleven statements published in 2005 and 2006 that explicitly identified them as being the exclusive or at least the most important goals of the Nation. I would argue that ten of these comments are particularly significant because of their authorship: three were issued by elected officials, four by the newspaper itself, and three by citizens who were vehemently opposed to the land rights action. Each group warrants a closer analysis.

³⁸ It should be noted that there was only one reference to the Nation's desire to improve its economic situation, and it was brief and nonspecific. In an editorial, Ellen Edgerton argued that "It is ... common sense that the Onondagas would want some kind of settlement to sustain their economic future" (2005).

³⁹ New York State's proposed cleanup plan for Onondaga Lake was made public that past November, and the Nation's claim was filed just a few weeks before the state was scheduled to finalize its decision (O'Brien and Weiner 2005).

Politicians from all administrative levels were quick to respond to the Onondagas' filing of their suit, and they were quoted at length in the *Post-Standard*. In an article published on March 12, 2005, Syracuse Mayor Matthew Driscoll lauded the Onondagas for “[distinguishing] themselves as a peaceful people whose first priority is to the environment” (O’Brien and Weiner 2005). The same piece carried a message from Congressman James Walsh, in which he stated, “The suit's foundation rests upon the nation's concern for the future quality of Onondaga Lake and the Central New York environment...”⁴⁰ (O’Brien and Weiner 2005). The following day, an article carried words from State Assemblyman William Magnarelli, who said that the Onondagas’ suit was “totally different” from other Haudenosaunee claims, which focused on “money, casinos, gambling, and damages” (Breidenbach 2005). Contrary to those Nations, the Onondagas “really did not want to bring the lawsuit, but were almost forced to ... defend what they believe are the important issues to the Indian nation, which are environmental” (Breidenbach 2005). Given that these three individuals represented (and continue to represent) the governments with which the Onondagas eventually hope to negotiate a settlement, their focus on the environment to the exclusion of other dimensions of the suit, whether out of

⁴⁰ It interesting to note that juxtaposed with these comments was a quote of a very different tenor, from a member of the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma: “.... [The Onondagas] have a different view of the world. I think they just probably want to be left alone and live their lives the way they want to, and everyone is entitled to that” (O’Brien and Weiner 2005). These comments resonate with Frazier’s assertion that the Nation has placed a high priority on asserting its sovereignty through its legal action (Frazier 2008).

genuine or strategic ignorance⁴¹, carried the potential to significantly influence public opinion.

Writers for the *The Post-Standard* were also responsible for portraying the land rights action as centering on environmental cleanup. In addition to the September 2005 article by Kriss mentioned earlier, the paper published a piece in its editorial section in which it implied that the restoration of the Onondaga Lake watershed was “the rationale” for the Nation’s lawsuit (editorial, *The Post-Standard* 2006c). Two more articles indirectly cited Joseph Heath, General Council for the Onondaga Nation, as having stated that environmental goals were of primary importance in the land rights action (Clark 2005; O’Brien 2006). Given that Heath has elsewhere argued that the healing called for by the Onondagas required the righting of both social and environmental injustices (Heath and Hauptman 2006), and the tendency of some *Post-Standard* articles to associate discourse about “healing” solely with environmental restoration⁴², the accuracy of this reported speech may be questionable. Whether or not the journalists properly interpreted Heath is not germane to the present argument, however, for regardless of the statements’ accuracy, the newspaper used Heath as an authoritative source to discuss the goals of the land rights action, thereby presenting the centrality of environmental issues as “truth” to its readers.

⁴¹ There were evidently significant misconceptions among lawmakers in the early weeks following the filing of the suit. A quote from State Assemblyman William Magee in *The Post-Standard* on March 13th suggests that he was unaware of the Onondagas’ assertion that they wished to reacquire land: “They don’t want a casino. They don’t want land? What do they want?” (Breidenbach 2005).

⁴² This issue will be discussed in further detail in a later section.

The impact of the previous statements by lawmakers and *The Post-Standard* on public understanding of the Nation's goals is well illustrated by Robert Aiken, one of the first two citizens who wrote to the newspaper in order to protest the land rights action: "Throughout recent newspaper reports concerning the legal action, the Onondagas continually stressed that their concerns were *primarily* environmental and they seek to help Syracuse and its neighbors make the area a healthier place to live" (Aiken 2005, emphasis added). In his letter to the editor, Aiken went on to argue that this claim was not credible, and thus concluded: "[this] action isn't about the environment; it is about power, control and, indeed, money" (2005). According to my research, no newspaper pieces actually identified environmental cleanup as the "primary" or foremost concern in the articles published between March 11, 2005 and March 28, 2005. There was, however, considerably more attention devoted to the environmental aspect of the Nation's stated agenda in four out of the five pieces published by *Post-Standard* staff. Moreover, Tadodaho Sidney Hill submitted an editorial in which he focused solely on how the Nation wished to use its land rights as a "legal and moral force for the environment and the Earth" (2005a). He never claimed this to be the Nation's sole objective, though (Hill 2005a). Nevertheless, discourse about environmental cleanup was apparently prominent enough to have convinced Aiken otherwise.

In the final months of 2006, two editorials were published in which Tony Burnett and Scott Peterman implicitly charged that this emphasis on the environment had actually misrepresented the land rights action to the public.

Burnett accused the Onondagas of being disingenuous by claiming that their “only interest in the land claim was the protection of the lake, land and environment,” when, he argued, “the attorney general's office says the Onondagas' suit is possessory (meaning to have, to own, to seize, to dominate)” (Burnett 2006). Warning that the Onondagas’ suit could cause “serious problems,” he invited readers to attend meetings of Upstate Citizens for Equality in Oneida, New York, a group that he claimed could “help” them (Burnett 2006). Peterman’s criticism of the discursive focus on the environment emerged in the way in which he characterized and refuted Onondaga claims about the lawsuit: “Their land claim isn't, as Sid Hill claims, ‘crafted to be healing and non-disruptive,’ and it isn't about the cleanup of Onondaga Lake; it's about claiming title to lands owned by hundreds of thousands of private citizens” (Peterman 2006). Like Burnett, Peterman was interested in disrupting the dominant positive discourse about the environmental objectives of the Nation in order to awaken concern in readers’ minds about other aspects of the lawsuit.

It is evident from the preceding analysis that Non-Native understandings of the Nation’s goals, at least as they were expressed through June of 2007 in *The Post-Standard*, do not coincide with the declarations the Onondagas have made on their website (Onondaga Nation 2008). In fact, even the combined force of Native and non-Native commentary in this Syracuse newspaper still omitted some of the goals articulated by the Nation. Moreover, those goals that were discussed were not given equal emphasis.

Similar trends emerged from my study of non-Native discourse⁴³ in the recordings from the 2006 “Onondaga Land Rights and Our Common Future” speaker series. I was able to find explicit non-Native references to the following goals of the Onondaga Nation: the healing of relationships between Natives and non-Natives, the promotion of regional economic growth, the restoration and protection of the environment, the recognition of Onondaga sovereignty and treaty rights, the perpetuation of Onondaga culture and life ways, collaboration between Natives and non-Natives on environmental projects, and intercultural sharing and education. NOON spokesperson Andy Mager also briefly touched on the Onondagas’ intention to reacquire land (González et al. 2006), but was the only non-Native speaker to discuss this topic.

Taken as a whole, that is, as a co-created Native and non-Native discourse, the series was similar to the newspaper in that it strongly emphasized the Onondagas’ environmental concerns. Of the ten lectures, seven incorporated at least a significant discussion of environmental issues, with two having been completely devoted to the latter. Although one can only speculate as to how that emphasis might have influenced the perceptions of the goals of the land rights action among those in attendance, two audience members’ statements are noteworthy. The first was made following the lecture given by John Mohawk on April 18th. A gentleman from the audience reflected, “I think the Onondagas have

⁴³ In analyzing non-Native statements from the lecture series, I have excluded those made by Joseph Heath (Heath and Hauptman 2006), on the assumption that his longtime position as General Council for the Onondaga Nation has given him exceptional knowledge of the Nation’s intentions that distinguish him from the broader non-Native community.

provided an amazing model for us. Instead of like, the paranoia of the land claims that we see in other areas of the state. Here, land is not an issue but rather stewardship and responsibility for the land” (Mohawk 2006). It is difficult to discern exactly what he meant by “land is not an issue,” but I suspect, given his reference to other Native land claims, that he was speaking about ownership of land. Whether or not he knew that the Onondagas have declared their intent to reacquire land, it is evident that he believes the Nation’s highest goal to be environmental stewardship.

The second comment came during the question and answer period after the June 13th panel discussion by Andy Mager, Bea Gonzalez, President of the Syracuse Common Council, and Wendy Gonyea, a spokeswoman for the Onondaga Nation. A woman in the audience asked for “clarification”: “I haven’t read a lot about the land rights action suit, but it’s mainly to say that the land is precious and we should preserve it and sustain it, am I right on that?” (González et al. 2006) Gonyea responded, “Well, that’s the environmental piece of it.” The woman, rather than pressing for further explanation, proceeded to ask the original question she had about Onondaga environmental activism (González et al. 2006). Her statement paralleled that of the gentleman who spoke on April 18th, in that both presumed the Nation’s environmental philosophy to be the primary motivation for its filing a lawsuit.

The next pool of data to which I turned in my study of non-Native beliefs about the Nation’s goals consisted of the nineteen surveys I collected from non-Natives in attendance at the 2007 Roots of Peacemaking Festival. As I did not

explicitly ask participants to identify the short and long-term objectives of the land rights action, it is difficult to assess their opinions on this point. However, the responses elicited by the last two questions of my survey instrument do shed some light on the matter. The first, which asked participants to reflect on what the Onondaga meant when they spoke of seeking “healing,” generated data that was directly related to this particular analysis, but it restricted their responses to only those goals that they understood to be somehow related to “healing.” The second question, which asked the respondents to speculate as to what a positive outcome of the lawsuit might entail, elicited a broader range of responses; yet this data is more difficult to interpret because the respondents were offering their personal opinions as to how to best settle the suit, which do not necessarily coincide with the Nation’s goals⁴⁴.

Taking into consideration these limitations, I analyzed the responses to the two questions separately. The Nation’s goal of healing was interpreted in a variety of ways. The participants identified seven of the goals that have also been articulated by the Nation: healing the environment (12 individuals); healing Native/non-Native relationships (8 individuals); promoting the continued growth

⁴⁴ Two Native individuals also participated in this survey. One of them, Joie Hill, was Onondaga. Her responses to these questions provide an interesting point of comparison to those of the non-Native participants. She answered the first query about the goals of “healing” as follows: “Healing means to take care of the lake like it had sustained us for hundreds of years.” To the second question about positive outcomes of the suit, she replied, “To get rid of all the dumping and dump the chemicals on the people’s houses who work in those factories!”

of the Onondaga culture (4 individuals⁴⁵); recognizing the Nation's sovereignty and treaty rights (3 individuals); promoting the collaboration of Natives and non-Natives on mutually beneficial projects (2 individuals); returning some lands to the Onondagas (1 individual); and offering monetary compensation to the Nation (1 individual). Interestingly, only one participant came close to identifying the Nation's goal of regaining title to its lands, but his response was ambiguous⁴⁶ and therefore was not included in the previous tally. Participants also identified some goals that have not been explicitly articulated by the Nation. One individual wrote that the Onondagas wanted "a spiritual healing," while another, Christine Rizzo, wrote: "I think they're trying to heal ... the world – because peace and restoration of rights can spread outward from here."

The responses to the second question were phrased as personal opinions about what would constitute a positive outcome of the lawsuit, but there were nevertheless many overlaps with the goals the Nation has publicized. These included: environmental restoration and protection (8 individuals); Native/non-Native collaborations (7 individuals); the recognition of Onondaga sovereignty and treaty rights (3 individuals); Natives and non-Natives learning about one another (3 individuals); improving relationships between Natives and non-Natives (3 individuals); restitution of some lands to the Onondagas (2 individuals); the

⁴⁵ There was another participant whose response to this question was difficult to interpret, but who may have been commenting on Onondaga culture. She spoke of their desire to heal the damage done to their "being" by the loss of land.

⁴⁶ Case Lettinga stated that the Onondagas were seeking "[healing] of communities through the recognition of their aboriginal land rights." He did not provide a definition of these "rights."

recognition of the Onondagas' title to their aboriginal lands (1 individual⁴⁷); offering the Onondagas monetary compensation (1 individual⁴⁸); and providing for the continued growth of Onondaga culture (1 individual). In addition to these comments, two participants offered solutions that have not been, at least in the sources I consulted for my research, specifically articulated as goals by the Onondagas. Brian called for a "more accurate education system," while Susan Morgan cited a "nature center ... on the Lake that tells their story of their place (once and future)," as an example of one of the specific benefits that should be offered the Nation.

What conclusions can be drawn concerning these two sets of participant responses? It is interesting to note that in terms of the types of goals identified, they line up very closely. Also, for each question, issues surrounding environmental protection received considerably more attention than other goals of the Nation. If one counts up the total number of people who cited specific goals in the last two questions (combined), the next two most popular points were the healing of Native/non-Native relationships and the recognition of Onondaga

⁴⁷ The response of another individual, Christine Rizzo, could be interpreted as falling into this category but was not included in the tally due to its ambiguity. She stated, "The courts will ... honor [the Onondagas'] request for rights to the land and water in their aboriginal territory." She never defined whether these rights would take the form of legal title, or simply usufructuary rights. Case Lettinga's response to this question might also be interpreted as a call for the recognition of the Onondagas' title to their homelands, but it is also too ambiguous to be confidently classified as such; like Rizzo, he fails to define what he means by recognizing the Onondagas' "aboriginal rights to its territory."

⁴⁸ This participant was the same individual who discussed monetary compensation in response to the question about healing.

sovereignty⁴⁹ and treaty rights. On the other hand, issues of land title, monetary compensation, and land reacquisition were the least frequently mentioned, and the Nation's concerns about taxation and jurisdiction disputes, protecting archaeological sites, and procuring a "continuing source of revenue" from their aboriginal lands (Onondaga Nation 2008) were not discussed at all. I cannot claim, due to the nature of the survey, that these responses are an accurate reflection of non-Native understandings of the Nation's political agenda. Yet it is intriguing to note that the aforementioned patterns of which themes are given more emphasis and which are either feebly present or absent altogether, show strong parallels with data I collected from *The Post-Standard* and the land rights speaker series.

One limitation that my survey data shared with that which I gathered from the newspapers and the lecture DVDs was that they could only offer rather terse, poorly elaborated quotes from non-Natives. It is extremely difficult to accurately gauge the attitudes and beliefs of an individual given such limited information. The few live interviews I was able to conduct provided considerably richer data for my analysis of non-Native beliefs about the goals of the Nation in filing its land rights action. Moreover, during these conversations, I was able to directly ask individuals what they believed the Nation's objectives to be. Before considering responses from individuals, it is worthwhile examining them as a

⁴⁹ Interestingly, a review of the data returned from all questions on the surveys showed that only 8 of the 18 total participants made any reference to Onondaga's status as a sovereign nation.

group in order to gain a sense of the ideas they share and how those beliefs compare to my data from other sources.

Both Michael Senf of Rotary and Councilor Joy saw the recognition of title to the land as a goal of the land rights action (Joy 2007; Senf 2008). Joy was the only one of the interviewees to identify monetary compensation and regional economic development as long-term goals of the Nation (Joy 2007). Michael Senf and Mary of InterFaith Works both believed that the Nation desired to improve the relations between Natives and non-Natives⁵⁰, although the former implied that the damage to be healed was due mainly to recent disputes over land claims, while Mary acknowledged that there was a long history of conflict between the two sides (Viola et al. 2008; Senf 2008). Furthermore, Mary argued that because the Onondagas do not have as much political power as the non-Native community, they were probably forced to turn to the court system as the only way that they could make non-Natives listen to their call for reconciliation (Viola et al. 2008). None of the participants named intercultural partnerships for economic development as a goal of the Nation, but Senf and Joy did recognize the Onondagas' desire to partner with the non-Native community in making decisions about environmental management (Joy 2007; Senf 2008). Interestingly, with regard to sovereignty, Senf and Viola and Mary of InterFaith Works all referenced the fact that the Onondagas claim a sovereign nation status (Senf 2008;

⁵⁰ The history of poor relations between the Onondagas and the non-Native community was conspicuously absent from Council Joy's interview; her only admission that there had been difficulties in the past was a recognition that the Nation has been excluded from environmental management decisions (2007).

Viola et al. 2008), but no participants viewed the defense of this sovereignty, or other associated treaty rights, as goals of the land rights action.

The only goal of the Nation that was identified by all the interviewees was that of environmental restoration and protection. Viola and Senf in particular believed that the Nation had presented it to the public as *the* primary goal of the land rights action. While this is admittedly still a weak pattern considering that I was only able to interview a total of six people, I would argue that it takes on greater significance in light of the fact that a similar data trend has emerged from the rest of my research, as described above. It therefore deserves a more detailed examination.

Viola⁵¹, Senf, and Joy have all expressed the view that the idea of environmental cleanup is uncontroversial, an attitude that was echoed by Bea Gonzàlez during the land rights speaker series (Gonzàlez et al. 2006). Joy, in relating this to the land rights action, claimed that the Onondagas' goal of protecting the environment is shared by everyone, or at least by the non-Native community implicated in the lawsuit. She used this point to downplay any conflict surrounding the choice of a cleanup plan for Onondaga Lake:

I think the goal of having a clean Onondaga Lake is the goal of everyone. It's just a matter of how that gets done. The most economically, the most environmentally friendly, and within a normal time frame. You know, we can't have this happen generations and generations from now. It needs to happen now. And so, there are a number of schools of thought on that, and I

⁵¹ It should be noted that all four of the members of the InterFaith focus group agreed with Viola when she stated, "I can't imagine anyone not wanting to be able to have clean drinking water - and be able to swim I mean, it seems like a no-brainer, in other words. How could anyone disagree with that?" (2008)

don't think any one of them is wrong or right. It's just going to be a matter of which one is selected, and which one moves forward. (Joy 2007)

It is highly unlikely, however, that the Onondagas would agree with her on this assessment. By arguing that no plan is either wrong or right, and that all options lead to a "clean Onondaga Lake" is problematic because it fails to engage the Onondagas' different understanding of what a "clean" lake is, namely one that is free of *all* industrial pollution.

Taking a very different approach, Senf pointed out that although the goal of environmental protection was desirable and had rendered the Onondagas' filing "less confrontational than the other land claim lawsuits," it did not preclude the possibility of conflict (2008). He explained that both Natives and non-Natives might "dig in their heels" if the Onondagas used their sovereign status to "interfere" with the operations of business or industry, or if they perhaps forced Syracuse to completely change its sewer system so that it no longer used Onondaga Lake as a sink for treated effluent. Concerns over such interference, he further argued, would make voters and landowners reluctant to relinquish their land title (Senf 2008). Thus, according to Senf's logic, the assertion made on the Nation's website, "the Onondagas would set up standards to ensure our future generations have clean air to breathe, fertile soil to plant, clean waters to drink, and a healthy food chain," might actually be a threatening prospect for some Americans (Onondaga Nation 2008).

Senf also found the Onondagas' discourse about the environment problematic in a more fundamental respect. He explained,

[It] seems to me that it is a different kind of land claim than any of the others that you hear about - where they really want either acreage or money. Now I recognize I may be wrong about their ultimate motivation, but on the surface, at least, it sounds as though it's an attempt to get people to be ... for example, the government, to be more proactive about cleaning up the lake and preserving it. I don't honestly know if there are other parts to this that haven't been publicized. You always wonder about that. Is there an underlying desire for compensation? And I'm sure probably other people wonder about that, too. Because it has been the goal of every other land claim that you hear about. We want back our ancestral lands, or something that's comparable, or we want monetary compensation. (2008)

While he seemed to approve of the Nation's environmental concerns, Senf obviously harbored suspicions about whether or not the Onondagas bore entirely selfless intentions. He went on to argue,

What is it they – beyond the healing – what is it they want to accomplish? If it's just to sit down with the current municipalities and work out a way to improve and preserve the lake, then that's pretty straight forward and easy to digest. And then the other question is, if people dig in their heels, or governments dig in their heels, and don't do anything, then what would be the next course of action that the Onondagas would feel inclined to do? Then would they convert their relatively peaceful sounding suit to something more, you know – “Well, if you are not going to cooperate with this, give us money or give us land, here or elsewhere.” (Senf 2008)

Senf's concerns about the possibility of having to make land or money reparations payments to the Onondagas, and the distrust he seemed to have of Indian land claims in general, illustrate some of the difficulties that can arise from miscommunication about the Nation's goals in filing its land rights action. His critiques are not an isolated case; they resonate strongly with those advanced in the editorials published by Scott Peterman (2006) and Tony Burnett (2006). In my

research, I was not able to find any published surveys that could give an indication of how many others in Syracuse and the surrounding areas might share these views.

Reflecting on my research as a whole, I found that two themes cut across all four data sources: Non-Natives' opinion pieces and quotes in *The Post-Standard*, comments in the land rights speaker series, responses to my survey, and interviews all recognized that the Onondagas hoped to improve relations between Natives and non-Natives and to restore and protect the natural environment. Other notable trends include a tendency among non-Natives to associate intercultural collaboration only with environmental projects, and a very limited understanding that the Nation hopes to receive some form of economic compensation, to reacquire land, and to generate revenue from non-Natives' use of aboriginal lands. Those goals not discussed at all by non-Natives were mainly those directly pertaining to the unique needs of the Nation, namely: housing, education, health care, sustainable agriculture, youth and elder care, a national environmental restoration program, off-reservation resource use rights, and the protection of archaeological and burial sites. Interestingly, however, there was next to no discussion of taxation and jurisdiction on Nation lands, issues that are of mutual concern to the Native and non-Native communities and that have caused significant conflict in the Cayuga land claim case to the West⁵².

⁵² During my participant observation at the Cayuga County Board meeting on June 13, 2007 and at UCE meetings on June 14, 2007 and July 7, 2007, I noted that a great deal of heated discussion revolved around questions of Native sovereignty, taxation, and jurisdiction. The UCE website (<http://www.upstate->

There are undoubtedly many different factors encouraging this tendency to emphasize certain goals over others; several have already been mentioned as potential explanations for the newspapers' focus on the environment. I would like to argue that this uneven emphasis may also be a reflection of non-Natives' failure to understand the cultural significance of the various goals articulated by the Nation, and how interconnected and interdependent they all are. Tadodaho Hill, in an editorial written in 2006, suggested that he was aware of there being considerable confusion on this score: "But many have asked, what is healing? How do you heal people and land? How will a legal action produce healing?" (2006). The last of these questions was even articulated by Mary of InterFaith Works, who reflected on the cultural differences implied by it:

"...[To] me, it's kind of weird in a way to think of a lawsuit as bringing healing because lawsuits are usually considered more contentious by nature. And there's going to be a winner and a loser, right. With a lawsuit, you bring it, and somebody has to win and lose. So to me, to bring the idea of healing into that kind of arena is a little – just a little odd, or something" (Viola et al. 2008).

This topic deserves far more discussion than it can be given here, but it should still be noted that at the most basic level, some non-Natives' tendency to ignore certain potentially contentious goals of the Onondagas, like recognition of sovereignty or achievement of economic self-sufficiency, may well reflect their lack of understanding of the Onondagas' belief that neither intercultural peace nor environmental health can take root without a societal commitment to upholding justice, which involves respecting all living things as equals (Mohawk

citizens.org/) provides good summaries of the organization's positions on these issues.

2005:33,38; Saraydar 1990:25; Wall 2001:40). The following section will explore the possible influence of another factor that may contribute to the overemphasis of the Nation's environmental goals, racist stereotypes.

V b. Non-Native Discourse about Relationship to Land

The emphasis laid on the environment in both Onondaga and non-Native discourse about the land rights action has prompted considerable exchange about various kinds of relationships individuals and societies may have with their natural environments. Not surprisingly, perhaps, most of this discussion is normative in nature, and has centered on debates about the future of Onondaga Lake. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus primarily on one major trend I believe has emerged from that discourse, the presence of non-Native stereotypes about Native relationships to the environment.

The Onondagas have, throughout their discourse about the land rights action, stressed both their claim to a "unique" relationship with their aboriginal homelands (*Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:1-2) and a more universal vision for what they believe would be an improved relationship between the non-Native community and the local environment. One of the best examples of this complex argument, which both defends cultural identity and calls for the recognition of universal ethical principles, was delivered by Jeanne Shenandoah during the 2006 land rights speaker series. After describing how her people have always lived in the region and how the coming of the Peacemaker marked the lake and its

surroundings as an extremely sacred site for the Haudenosaunee, she offered the mixed Native and non-Native audience a vision for the future, of

us all sharing a love for this whole area, and holding it close to our hearts – and that’s how things are spiritual and sacred, you hold it close to your heart, and you acknowledge it, you acknowledge and respect, so that things do not become commonplace – so I guess that’s just kinda what I wanted to tell you about, our connection to the earth and our connection to this area here. I always tell everybody that I live right here; I’ve looked all around different parts of the world, and I’m right here, right here where I just – I truly love where I live. And I hope everybody else does. Everyone has that right to love where you live, acknowledge it and respect it. We’re all living here together, that’s the reality right now. We all live here together. (Kimmerer et al. 2006)

Her argument parallels the one made by Chief Bradley Powless (cited in the previous chapter), in which he argued that the non-Native population needed to follow the Onondagas’ example in cultivating an emotional identification with the regional environment, conceiving of it as their “home” (Amato et al. 2006).

Interested in exploring how non-Natives might be responding to such discourse, I chose to examine what they understood to be the Onondagas’ environmental beliefs and practices, and how they thought the latter compared to their own relationships with the environment. In doing so, I gathered a significant quantity of data suggesting that many non-Natives are not only ignorant of the Onondagas’ complex cultural identity, but may be relying on the age-old stereotype of the “Ecological Indian” to fill the gaps in their knowledge and interpret the motivations behind the Nation’s land rights action. Before engaging with that material, however, it is necessary to address the complexity of the

Ecological Indian stereotype and to examine the difficulties I encountered in attempting to assess its impact upon non-Native attitudes.

V b.1. Analyzing Ecological Indian Discourse

As with all stereotypes, there exists variation in popular notions of the “Ecological Indian,” but the general trope may be described as the belief that indigenous peoples have had a harmonious, reciprocal, profoundly spiritual, and ultimately unchanging relationship with all of the natural world since time immemorial (Bordewich 1996: 210); they are “more *of* nature than in it” (Nadasdy 2005:292, emphasis added). In addition to being the “first environmentalists,” acting always to protect resource balances (Krech 1999:21), indigenous peoples are assumed to view all things as sacred and to universally feel grief in the face of modern assaults on the environment (Bordewich 1996:210; Krech 1999:21). The Ecological Indian has long been cited as the quintessential foil for a “corrupt” white society, but the importance of this role increased exponentially following the Industrial Revolution. Indigenous peoples came to be seen as spiritually superior “messengers” who would lead the modern world back to a “truer,” more fulfilling lifestyle (Niezen 2003:11; Bordewich 1996:211). Among the corollaries commonly drawn from the premises of this stereotype are the notions that to be indigenous is a fundamentally spiritual condition and that one may achieve a kind of transcendence by modeling behaviors associated (or believed to be associated) with that identity (Bordewich 1996:211). To the further neglect of the cultural diversity of indigenous peoples,

it is also largely assumed that they would or should universally support the efforts of environmentalist organizations (Nadasdy 2005:292).⁵³

I believe that there are traces of many of these ideas dispersed throughout the non-Native discourse I analyzed. Confidently identifying the application of the Ecological Indian stereotype is extraordinarily difficult, though, for several reasons. Firstly, there are many overlaps between the stereotype and Onondaga beliefs and practice. Part of the explanation for this lies in the fact that since the early twentieth century, Native peoples have reappropriated these controlling⁵⁴ images in order to politically empower themselves⁵⁵ (Deloria 1998:122-125; Nadasdy 2005:312). The rhetorical construction of a moral “ecological ethnicity” by and for indigenous peoples has proven to be a brilliant strategy, and has become a favored tactic in international indigenous politics (Muehlebach

⁵³ Further information about the historical development of the trope may be found in the Appendices.

⁵⁴ The term “controlling images” is one that I have borrowed from the black feminist scholarship of Patricia Hill Collins (2000:68).

⁵⁵ Indigenous “eco-politics”, as Sonya Pieck terms this rhetorical strategy, experienced an intensive period of growth in the late 1980s and reached its peak in the early to mid-1990s (2006:309,311). The argument is two fold: firstly, that the Western/industrialized world’s vision of modernity has produced relationships between human beings and between society and nature that are exploitative and only take into account the short-term consequences of one’s actions; and secondly, that indigenous life ways embody a different relationship to the environment that is deemed inherently moral because of its supposed nondestructive nature. This superior relationship is based largely on a holistic vision of the world that sees all things, even time, as interconnected and interdependent, a belief that, according to indigenous representatives, is clearly not reflected in the actions of dominant world powers. Those nation-states that have historically and continue today to oppress indigenous peoples, their argument continues, have a moral obligation to grant them self-determination, not simply by virtue of the fact that they have prior claim to the land, but more importantly because of their culturally meaningful and universally ethical relationship to it (Muehlebach 2001:417,424-429).

2001:416, 421, 432). It has a tendency to win the sympathies of those who are in some way disillusioned with modern Western culture, politics, economics, and/or interactions with the natural environment (Muehlebach 2001:417; Pieck 2006:309). In particular, indigenous U.N. representatives' emphasis on temporal holism and the need to protect natural resources for the benefit of future generations has won considerable support because of its consonance with the definition of "sustainable development" made popular by the famous 1987 United Nations *Our Common Future* report: "[meeting] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987:24). International "indigeneity" has also become, especially for residents of postindustrialized societies, a desirable alternative lifestyle incorporating "patience, simple goals, and suspension of temporal imperatives" (Niezen 2003:179).

Ronald Niezen, who has extensively studied international indigenous politics, has termed the process by which the Ecological Indian stereotype is reappropriated, the "politics of shame." He explains that speaking of human rights or environmental abuses at the U.N. is a highly effective way to rapidly spread information to important media outlets. Although such efforts do not always bear fruit, the strategy has succeeded in opening negotiations with and sometimes even halting the actions of governments that bow to international pressure (Niezen 2003:183-184, 191). Aligning themselves with certain stereotypes has also resulted in indigenous peoples winning recognition of their cultural distinctiveness from dominant social groups (Muehlebach 2001:419). Yet these

benefits are also accompanied by the difficult reality that indigenous peoples have few other avenues through which to exert political influence. As minority groups that continue to suffer grievous oppression around the world, one of the best chances they have of being heard is through conservationist politics, a sphere of power originally fashioned and currently dominated by colonial powers (Nadasdy 2005: 315). Niezen has argued that in order to gain and exercise political power, indigenous peoples are forced to undertake “presentations of collective self” to a far greater extent than other subaltern groups, and that “[indigenous] lobbying is inseparable from the cultural and spiritual trends within its audiences, trends that seek some form of perfection or ancestral source of wisdom from the native, aboriginal, or indigenous ‘others’” (2003:191).

As long-time leaders in the international indigenous movement (Muehlebach 2001:435; Lyons 2006; Lyons 2005b:13-14,21-23), the Haudenosaunee are very familiar with and highly skilled in the strategy of publicly shaming oppressive governments as an attempt to force changes in their policies, as evidenced by their submission of the report “Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration –An Indigenous Strategy for Sustainability” in 1995⁵⁶ (George-Kanentiio 2000:323-324; HETF 2006). Moreover, they have actively participated in the rhetorical construction of Native identity in eco-politics. For example, at a 1991 UN conference on environmental issues, Chief Oren Lyons, an internationally recognized statesman (George-Kanentiio 2000:322-324), referred to Chief Seattle as a bona fide source of “ancient ecological wisdom” that needed

⁵⁶ This plan of action was discussed in the section treating the Creation Story in Chapter 3.

to be appreciated and heeded by all peoples (Bordewich 1996:132). There are interesting parallels to be drawn between the tactics of international indigenous “politics of shame” and the strategy employed by the Onondaga in their land rights action, which their lawyer, Joe Heath, said was intended to spark “public scrutiny” of those industries that polluted Onondaga Lake (Weiner 5/7/06).

Although Onondaga discourse is not the focus of this paper, I would like to note that Oren Lyons’s public statements have drawn on themes that are characteristic of the rhetoric commonly associated with indigenous eco-politics, particularly the evocation of a moral, ecological pan-indigenous identity (c.f. Lyons 9/13/07)⁵⁷. It is probable that such discourse has impacted non-Native perceptions both of the Nation and of its legal filing, though not in uniform ways. Each individual filters the Onondagas’ statements through her personal knowledge of Native issues and her own familiarity with and investment in the stereotype.

Paul Nadasdy, in his research on this stereotype, has pointed out that opponents of indigenous peoples frequently cite the reappropriation of the

⁵⁷ While speaking about the dangers of environmental destruction at the 2007 Roots of Peacemaking Festival, Oren Lyons made a characterization of Indians that resonated with both the wise resource use of the Ecological Indian trope and with the longstanding American stereotypes of Indians as being more communally oriented and altruistic than Western culture (Krech 1999:19-20; Deloria 1998:155). Forging a link between global environmental challenges and the opposition he witnessed to the passing of the U.N Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, he said: “We have only one earth. There’s only one earth. If we do things right, and we still have time, and it can be done - we have to work collectively. You know, what they tried to attack out of our declaration. They took the word “collective.” They didn’t like it. Why? ‘Cause that means sharing. That’s what it means, sharing. Not building your private enterprise and your bank accounts against the rest of the world, but sharing what you have. That’s what Indians have given to the world, this principle of sharing everything. That’s what’s going to save us. And your children, your grandchildren” (9/20/07).

Ecological Indian as disingenuous political opportunism (2005:313). The truth of the matter is, however, far more complicated. There are a number of reasons besides self-empowerment why Native peoples choose to engage with this discourse. As Nadasdy has so astutely observed, “Why would the image of ecological nobility resonate with the lives and experiences of Indian people at all if it is – as so many critics have suggested – just a stereotype constructed by Euro-North [Americans] ...?” (2005:314). One of the most important answers to this question is that certain aspects of the Ecological Indian stereotype closely parallel the beliefs of the indigenous groups that use it, both with respect to their cosmology and some people’s convictions that their way of life is more environmentally friendly than the practices of Euro-Americans (Nadasdy 2005:313-314). I would argue that this is true in the case of the Onondagas, judging at least from what they have chosen to share with the outside world about their religious beliefs and their relationship to the environment. The notions of thanksgiving for the various elements of the natural world, seeing human beings as equal to all other living things, viewing land as a common resource created for the benefit of all Creation, and intergenerational responsibility all resonate with the most popularly recognized elements of the Ecological Indian trope. Moreover, Nation representatives’ discourse about the environment in relation to their land rights action is heavily critical of Western resource use practices, and promotes Onondaga environmental philosophies as a more desirable alternative (Hill 2005b).

Nadasdy has also argued that indigenous people's evocation of the Ecological Indian stereotype does not always involve claims about their own identity, but is rather intended to serve as a foil to criticize Euro-American culture. Difficulties arise when non-Native groups seek to draft indigenous peoples to their particular political causes, and then judge them by the Western standards of both the Ecological Indian stereotype and the larger ideological spectrum of Western politics (Nadasdy 2005: 313-315). In particular, non-Native environmental advocates have a tendency to ignore Native peoples' unique political agendas and to try to define them according to the principles of Western environmentalism (Nadasdy 2005:315). There are some indications that this may be taking place within the non-Native discourse surrounding the land rights action, as will be discussed in the next section. Interestingly, several Nation representatives have drawn attention to cultural distinctions between American and Onondaga conceptions of environmental preservation. Tadodaho Sidney Hill was quoted in a news story published the day that the lawsuit was filed: "We want to use this action to put us at the table and enforce *your* laws and exert *our* laws of responsibility for the earth, water, air and animals" (McAndrew 2005, emphasis added).

As the preceding discussion illustrates, the interrelations between the Ecological Indian stereotype and the ways in which the Onondagas present their identity to the public are extremely complex. Non-Natives, in responding to the Nation's discourse about the land rights action, are negotiating their personal preconceptions about Native people; their society's various stereotypes of

Natives; and the Onondagas' use of rhetoric that reflects their relationship to the international indigenous movement; and the Onondagas' attempts to present, in a foreign language, concepts that are unique to their culture and that they are afraid might well be misused or exploited by powerful groups⁵⁸ (Frazier 2008), an indignity that Indians have suffered throughout American history (Deloria 1998:182). These different layers of discourse make it very difficult to assess non-Natives' understandings of Native identity. Such difficulties of interpretation are compounded in my research because I am working with single interviews at best, and single-sentence responses to survey questions at worst. Therefore, I cannot make any strong claims about whether or not some non-Natives in the Syracuse area view the Onondagas as Ecological Indians. Rather, what I hope to accomplish here is to analyze those statements that resonate with the stereotype, and to point out problems that might arise from that discourse.

V b.2. Hints of the Ecological Indian in Non-Native Discourse about the Land Rights Action

As indicated earlier, "spirituality" holds a central place in discourse about the Ecological Indian stereotype. I was able to collect a considerable amount of

⁵⁸ Summer Frazier of the Onondaga Communications Office explained the Nation's reluctance to share certain information with the non-Native community: "The stuff we don't say is just because it gets misused. It's not like we don't really want to share, but there has to be a level of understanding before people can receive information. Some people get a little bit and they think they know everything, and they tell everybody something wrong. And it may hurt somebody. You know, that kind of stuff. And then there's people who get a little bit of information from us, and go make money from it. And when we have stuff that is special to us, and it gets reproduced, it loses its value, or it's sickening just to see misuse like that" (2008).

data in which non-Natives offered their impressions of Onondaga beliefs, and many of those comments reflected the same kind of ignorance of religious and cultural diversity that is typical of the trope. Several attendees of the Roots of Peacemaking Festival, for instance, described Onondaga ideas about the environment as follows: “Native Americans believe that the Earth’s our mother, our protector, and that we have a responsibility to care for her” ; “Onondaga Nation is unique in their commitment to environment. All indigenous peoples have earth centered beliefs. This nation is unique in that this lake represents its spiritual beliefs” (H. Ricks) ; “[Their] spirituality is Earth and Nature centered. I like that and emulate it; I was raised Protestant but I am currently ‘searching’” (Susan Morgan). Such statements are revealing in two respects. Firstly, none of these participants offered more than a stereotypical description of the Onondagas’ beliefs about the environment, and two even conflated the latter with the beliefs of innumerable other indigenous groups. Such generalizations not only dishonor the diversity of indigenous peoples and the uniqueness of Onondaga cosmology, but they also carry the implication that the Onondagas have remained static through time, because they do not recognize the fact that many Onondagas have converted to Christianity, unwillingly and willingly, over the course of the past few hundred years (Bordewich 1996:212; Nadasdy 2005:293; Gonyea 1986:24). Secondly, the fact that Morgan and Ricks immediately assumed that the Onondagas’ relationship to the earth is best described as a “spiritual” one suggests they are familiar with social stereotypes of indigenous identity as being fundamentally spiritual (Bordewich 1996:211). Both of these stereotypical attitudes, so

commonly associated with the Ecological Indian trope, were reflected in Councilor Joy's response to a query about Onondaga references to spirituality in the preamble of their land rights action: "[What] any of the Native Americans do does have a spiritual element to it. So, I'm not surprised that they would have that element to it. I mean that's all they do. It's in...in their religion and their way of life that's all grounded in the earth, and they're one" (2007).

Another aspect of the Ecological Indian stereotype that was present in my analysis of non-Native discussion of the land rights action was the belief that Onondaga culture (frequently characterized as paradigmatic of all Native American or indigenous cultures) is dramatically distinct from and superior to non-Native culture. As numerous scholars have pointed out, such discourse is problematic because it generally uses controlling images of Native Americans, however flattering, to critique certain aspects of modernity (Bordewich 1996:210; Nadasdy 2005:292; Collins 2000:68). For example, several non-Natives who viewed the land rights action in a positive light praised the Onondagas for not being materialistic or domineering like much of Western culture. Viola of InterFaith Works, responding to the Nation's public relations film *Brighten the Chain*, commented on the non-threatening character of the lawsuit:

I think it would be awesome if they won. I mean it's very easy to go about one's daily life as a white person or whatever, and not really remembering that they're here, and this is their land and all this kind of stuff. It would certainly be a wake-up call. I mean, I guess it would show that ... we shouldn't be so cocky or whatever, and take it for granted what we have... That we think we control everything and that we can do whatever we want. And maybe it would make us a little humble. ...I just see the, you know, the whole thing where, "We don't want casinos," that

whole thing – that’s really great, you know. That’s really reassuring. And just the humbleness of the people that were talking ... about the seventh, thinking about not just your children, but seven generations down. Actually, I played with a Native American in a Native American band for a few years. And I always thought ... a lot of the messages are kind of like so simplistic, you know, it’s kind of like, “Oh, this is sort of boring,” you know. But it’s really great, you know, if you can really live it. You know – live that simple kind of life. Not be greedy and appreciate the plants; and use the plants for healing and all that stuff that most of us have forgotten about. (Viola et al. 2008)

This kind of identity construction was echoed by an audience member at one of the lectures of the Our Common Future speaker series:

[What] I think we’re talking about is two different cultures. And one culture that’s looking out seven generations and maybe saying, “Maybe we don’t need to go so fast. Maybe we don’t need the cell phones..., maybe we don’t need...And then another culture that’s saying, “The hell we don’t.” The cost of being responsible to the Earth is gonna involve giving up some material that I don’t think people are ready to give up for themselves, and can nobly say, “No, I’m doing this for my kids.” Even though it means that what you’re passing on to your kids is a worse world. And I think that’s us. And I think we need to look at ourselves for that. (González et al. 2006)

Both of these comments advance an argument that is informed by the Ecological Indian stereotype, namely that non-Natives will find their moral and ecological salvation in the Onondagas’ traditional knowledge and philosophies, which promote “simpler” and less acquisitive ways of living. They imply that all Onondagas are content to be economically disempowered, that they are not interested in modern technology, and that they are essentially less complex human beings than non-Natives. Such claims not only dismiss the Onondagas who live and work in modern Western society and reinforce a legacy of political and

economic oppression, but they are also fundamentally dehumanizing. In more concrete terms, they lay the foundation for potentially grievous misunderstandings to arise should non-Natives with expectations that the Onondagas are Ecological Indians take offense at the Nation leaders' declared intent to become economically self-sufficient and to utilize modern technology to improve quality of life for their people.

My data analysis showed that the most prevalent of the non-Native arguments about the Onondagas' anti-modern superiority concerned the Onondagas' relationship to the environment. An example of this trend may be seen in the words of survey participant Paul Eiholzer: "I believe that the Onondaga consider themselves part of the environment. Our own notions consider that [we're] over the environment and have a right to abuse it" (2007), or InterFaith staff member, Mary:

[It's] just a whole different sort of world view from, you know, the dominant culture – which is like land ownership and power over the land and sort of harnessing, you know, the things that can be produced from the land. That would be the dominant view and the Onondaga view would be more living in harmony and taking care of the land and preserving it for future generations... (Viola et al. 2008)

Mary and Eiholzer's characterization of the Onondagas' relationship to their environment as harmonious, a central element of the Ecological Indian stereotype, was echoed by numerous other non-Natives in my research. When coupled with critical comments about Western relationships to the environment, these ideas not only communicate a sense of disillusionment with modernity, but also carry the

expectation that the Onondagas do not participate in any environmental destruction.

Some non-Natives pushed these arguments about identity even further, presenting the Onondagas as holders of special ecological wisdom, of an understanding of how to live “in harmony” with the environment, that was unavailable to non-Natives except through the Nation’s guidance. For instance, in an editorial submitted to *The Post-Standard*, Candace Wadsworth praised the land rights action as a unique type of lawsuit because it showed “respect for the land and for others on it.” She contrasted this philosophy with the commercialization of nature and concluded, “We have much to learn from our neighbors the Onondagas” (2006a). The perception of Onondagas as “teachers” was also evident in the remarks made by two non-Natives during the speakers series; both asked Onondaga speakers to share their unique ecological knowledge pertaining to medicinal plants and garden pest control, respectively (González et al. 2006; Kimmerer et al. 2006).

Accompanying this avowed reverence for Onondaga knowledge, however, was evidence that some non-Natives are imposing Western categories of environmentalist thought on Onondaga beliefs and practices. An excellent example of this may be found in Councilor Joy’s attempt to relate the Nation’s land rights action to the recent upswell in the American environmental movement:

... I think that we are finding now, with the green – I call it the “green scene” - and I think having things be more environmentally friendly; that’s something that the Onondaga Nation and the Iroquois Confederacy have been – that’s how they live, you know. And so now, it’s like the hip thing to do.

And it's the right thing to do. And so finally, I think with public perception, environmentally friendly design, and things that are more aware of our surroundings, and the relationship that humans have with the earth – it's coming to light a little bit. And so I think, you know, by having this suit out there also kind of keeps it on the front burner. Keeps us all accountable. Us as humans, us as elected officials, us as custodians of the land – which we should be, too. (2007)

Joy's comments could be interpreted as part of a contemporary international discourse that denies indigenous peoples the power to define their own identities and political agendas, and seeks to exploit them as symbols of the Ecological Indian to gain support for Western environmentalist causes (Nadasdy 2005: 314). Such rhetoric has been roundly criticized by anthropologists because it encourages non-Natives to judge indigenous peoples by Western standards of environmental management, and then to attack them when they fail to live up to those foreign ideals. Moreover, such standards are often difficult for powerful societies to meet, let alone subaltern groups struggling under the terrible social and economic legacies of centuries of oppression (Nadasdy 2005:315; Niezen 2003:186).

There is evidence that such attitudes are present within the non-Native discourse about the Onondagas' land rights action. Michael Senf of Rotary, responding to a question about what he thought the Onondagas believed about the environment, said:

Well, I couldn't help thinking as I was watching the video, it's been a long time since I drove through the reservation. I just wondered how they maintain the lands that they have now. And if they don't, then what exactly are they talking about? If they do, I mean, that's a good thing. If they walk the walk, and talk the talk. So, I just don't know how well they maintain their

homes, the lands and so forth that they're the guardians of, and if they're in a good position to criticize what's happened in other places. (2008)⁵⁹

Senf is working with two separate assumptions in this statement. Firstly, he is comparing Onondaga practice with his own culturally specific notions of what practices constitute “good” environmental management. Secondly, he implies that the Onondagas should meet those standards perfectly if they wish to advocate for the restoration of Onondaga Lake and other sites in their aboriginal lands. Sue Eiholzer of NOON has stated that in giving presentations to community groups, she has come across the same attitude several times: “You get challenging questions, like, “if they're so supportive of the environment, why does the Nation look the way it does? You know there are trucks sitting out there ... leaking oil.” (2007). She added that she has also encountered the same question about Onondaga cigarette sales that Robert Aiken posed in his editorial to *The Post Standard*:

Onondagas' health concerns are suspect: Throughout recent newspaper reports concerning the legal action, the Onondagas continually stressed that their concerns were primarily environmental and they seek to help Syracuse and its neighbors make the area a healthier place to live. I say these same pious protectors of the environment are hypocrites. On one hand they promote a face of indignation and outrage at the years of neglect and damage done to the environment within their ancestral homeland.

On the other hand, the Onondagas promote, sell and market a known carcinogen to Syracuse and its neighbors. This action isn't about the environment; it is about power, control and, indeed, money. (2005)

⁵⁹ The “video” to which Senf refers is the film “Brighten the Chain,” which was shown to him prior to conducting the interview.

Aiken, like Senf and the members of the public encountered by Eiholzer, is employing a prototypical Ecological Indian argument by which Indians are not recognized as complex human beings but rather are held to higher standards of consistency of belief and practice than those to which non-Natives hold themselves (Nadasdy 2005:293). Failure to perfectly live up to their own religious beliefs (Aiken calls the Onondagas “pious hypocrites”), here reduced to Western categories of environmentalist thought, condemns them as untrustworthy and unqualified to offer any criticism of the ecological damage that impacts both Natives’ and non-Natives’ lives.

Finally, one of the strongest trends in my data that I would argue is suggestive of the Ecological Indian stereotype is the disproportionate emphasis that many non-Natives have placed on environmental cleanup as a goal of the land rights action. One locus of discourse in which this focus on the environment is particularly evident is non-Native interpretation of the Onondagas’ call for “healing.” For instance, in the newspaper articles I collected that were published after the filing of the land rights action, the concept of healing was frequently coupled with the environment to the exclusion of other possible meanings⁶⁰. Even

⁶⁰ An excellent example of this may be found in the following passage excerpted from an article published March 12, 2005:

“The Onondaga leaders made their focus on the environment clear at a news conference announcing the land claim. The Onondagas said they hope to make their claim - which they refer to as a land rights action - as non-adversarial as possible.

‘The nation is seeking to work with its neighbors for a healing,’ Heath said. In his 30 years as a lawyer, he said he's never written a lawsuit in the kind of language that the Onondagas' starts with. It calls them stewards of the land, and describes the lawsuit's intention of protecting the environment for future generations.” (O'Brien and Weiner 2005)

if there was no authorial intent to diminish the complexity of the Nation's political agenda, such language lends itself well to being read through the lens of the Ecological Indian stereotype. A similar pattern emerged from the survey data I collected; one-third of the non-Native respondents stated that the Onondagas' references to healing related only to environmental restoration. The comparative lack of attention paid to the Nation's demands for the recognition and protection of their sovereignty, or to its hopes for the eventual achievement of economic self-sufficiency, promotes the kind of thinking that accompanies the Ecological Indian stereotype, whereby Native peoples are robbed of their human complexities and are forced into the role of the (passive) moral conscience of Western society, rather than being treated as people with the agency to influence the world around them in ways Westerners might not always appreciate (Krech 1990:216).

VI. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that there are significant discrepancies between the goals that the Onondaga Nation has enumerated for the settlement of its land rights action and those that have been identified in statements I have collected from numerous non-Native individuals in the Syracuse area. By analyzing Native and non-Native discourse about the land rights action, I investigated the role that cultural differences might play in generating these discrepancies, focusing particularly on those aspects of non-Native discourse that suggest the influence of the Ecological Indian stereotype.

I also tried to show that non-Natives' de-emphasis of some of the Nation's goals, particularly those that have proven contentious in other Haudenosaunee nations' land claims, such as recognition of sovereignty, land reacquisition, and monetary or other economic forms of reparation (Upstate Citizens for Equality 2008) is arguably a cause for concern. Not only does this constitute a failure to acknowledge the many different kinds of injustices that have been inflicted upon the Nation over the past few centuries, but it also misinforms the public about the possible results of a future settlement, which can create fear and even hostility. It is possible that there are other non-Native Syracuse residents who share Michael Senf's questions about the goals of the suit and worries about the repercussions of Indian land claims, who might react negatively to the discovery that the Onondagas would, in fact, like money and land as part of a settlement (Onondaga Nation 2008). Would they be moved to form an organized resistance to the lawsuit? Might they be inclined favorably toward the message of UCE members like Tony Burnett (2006) and Scott Peterman (2006), who both accused the Onondagas of using popular ideas like environmental cleanup and healing to hide more "possessory" (read as "dangerous") goals? Other possibilities for conflict arise from those non-Natives who expect the Onondagas to act like Ecological Indians, never leaving a trace on the land, and who might challenge them if they should attempt to assert their independence from this controlling stereotype in order to provide for the future of their people.

These are, of course, merely speculations about the future. Yet I argue that they call for a reexamination of the prevalent belief that the reason the land rights

action has not created conflict in the Syracuse region is because it is by nature non-contentious. Miscommunication about the Nation's goals has the potential to negatively impact intercultural dialogue, and thus the course of the case itself. If it goes unrecognized, unanalyzed, and unquestioned, it can close down opportunities for constructive negotiation. If, however, members of the Onondaga and non-Native communities can approach these difficult conversations in a spirit of exchange and critical self-reflection, then the resultant dialogue may indeed open paths to working toward common goals.

I believe that future research can facilitate that intercultural discussion. The arguments and conclusions that I was able to formulate concerning non-Native discourse about the land rights action were limited by the broad focus of my research and relatively small pool of available data. They are valuable, however, because they point to the necessity of undertaking of in-depth studies of cultural differences manifested in Native and non-Native dialogue about the lawsuit. What do non-Natives mean when they speak about this legal action bringing about healing, and what do the Onondagas mean by that? How does each side think that these ideas are or should be manifested in concrete terms? Is there common ground that can be reached, from which to begin settlement negotiations that would respect everyone's rights and be sensitive to their needs? I would argue that these kinds of questions must also be asked about all of the other major themes present in the preamble of the filing: relationship to land, peace, justice, reconciliation, and respect. In addition to this qualitative work, it would be helpful to conduct quantitative surveys of non-Native opinions about the

land rights action, and so gain a sense of the attitudes of a larger portion of the population.

Obviously, calling for open dialogue is all too easy, but actually bridging the rift created by centuries of conflict, oppression, and mutual distrust as well as language and other communication barriers (Frazier 2008) is a far more difficult task. Yet the many strong bonds that already exist between the Nation and the surrounding non-Native communities can serve as a sound foundation on which to build future compromises, partnerships, and mutually beneficial solutions to shared problems.

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Appendix A: Map of Claim Area

(Source: *Onondaga Nation v. State of New York et al.*, Complaint for Declaratory Judgment [2005]:16)

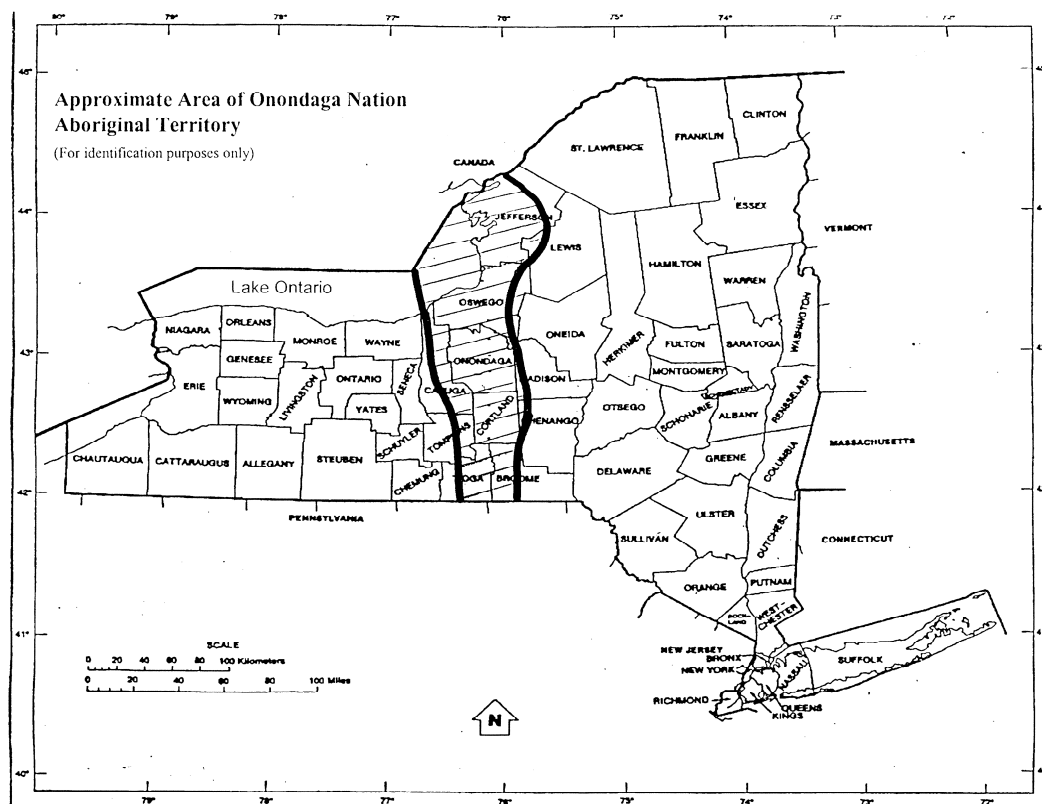


Figure 1. Map of land area to which the Onondaga Nation is claiming title in its land rights action.

Appendix B: List of Goals of the Land Rights Action Published by the
Onondaga Nation

(Source: Onondaga Nation website, <http://www.onondaganation.org>, accessed April 14, 2008)

“SPECIFIC GOALS OF THE ONONDAGA NATION
LAND RIGHTS ACTION”

To achieve a healing with our neighbors of the centuries of difficulties caused by the illegal taking of Onondaga and Haudenosaunee lands.

To restore to the Onondaga Nation recognition of title to its aboriginal territory.

To recover possession of portions of this territory from New York State and willing sellers for the use of the Onondaga people.

To secure a continuing source of revenue from the Nation's lands without displacing persons from the land.

To secure revenues and land sufficient to achieve economic self-sufficiency, including :

An adequate supply of quality housing;

A quality education system;

Affordable, quality health care;

Sound and sustainable agricultural programs;

Programs for the proper care of elders and youth;

A program for environmental restoration and protection;

Employment opportunities for the Nation and its neighbors.

To protect and conserve the natural resources within and affecting the Nation's land, as a means of safeguarding all citizens' rights to a natural, healthy environment.

To obtain recognition of the basic rights of the Onondaga Nation, including those rights agreed upon in treaties with the United States.

To secure Onondaga rights to hunt, fish and gather for subsistence and cultural needs.

To secure adequate protection for the burial sites of our ancestors, as well as other important sacred and archeological sites.

To resolve all ongoing conflicts with the state and federal governments, particularly regarding taxation and jurisdiction.

To provide for the growth and perpetuation of Onondaga culture, language, laws, religion, and way of life.

Appendix C : Survey Instrument for Data Collected at the Roots of Peacekeeping Festival, held in Onondaga Lake Park, Liverpool, NY on September 20, 2007

Name:

Town of residence:

Are you a registered member of a First Nation? If so, which one?

Some consider the Onondaga to have a unique conception of and relationship to the environment. Describe what you know or believe about Onondaga ideas about the environment. How do you think these compare with your own notions of the environment?

What do you believe the relationship should be between the Onondaga Nation and its non-Native neighbors?

What do you think of when you hear the word "Indian"?

What do you think the Onondaga mean when they say that they are seeking a "healing" through their land rights action?

What do you think a successful result of the Onondaga land rights action would be?

Appendix D: Historical Development of the Ecological Indian Stereotype

“Are you hot? Be an Indian and keep cool. Are you tired of work and sick of the city? What’s the answer? Simply be an Indian – cut out the work and take the first trail for the timber. Nobody knows how to enjoy the big outdoors like an uncontaminated redskin and no one better likes a prolonged vacation...It’s nature to be an Indian in this country, so the scientists say, and the sooner imported Americans understand this the sooner the race will improve.”

- Arthur C. Parker, “Lure of the Woods: Joys of Camp Life on an Indian Reservation: Put your troubles in your pipe: Be an Indian, forget Work, Go Back to Nature and True Happiness,” 1910 (qtd in Deloria 1998:124).

Beneath Parker’s blunt words lies a nebulous complex of ideas about racialized identity, modernity, and the social construction of nature, the roots of which stretch back even before the first contacts between Europeans and the First Nations of the Americas (Krech 1999:17). In the above quote, we hear a Native voice evoking the stereotype that would later come to be called the “Ecological Indian” or the “Ecologically Noble Savage” in an effort to reframe his society’s negative images of Native Americans and increase indigenous peoples’ sociopolitical power relative to other subaltern groups (Deloria 1998:124-125; Nadasdy 2005:292). His strategy, mirrored in the social activities of many American Indians of the early twentieth century (Deloria 1998:125), and the Ecological Indian stereotype to which they were reacting, remain powerful organizing principles in international indigenous politics today (Niezen 2003:179-180).

In order to better understand the social and political dimensions of the Onondaga Nation’s Land Rights Action and the social environment by which it has been both produced and received, it is necessary to examine the development

of the Ecological Indian stereotype in North America, where it matured in the mid to late 20th century (Krech 1999:20). Such a historical survey must begin, however, with 16th century Europeans' reactions to reports from expeditions to the "New World." It is hardly surprising, given the prevalence of images in Christian and pre-Christian mythology of natural paradises populated by innocent, wise, and emotionally simple beings, that the earliest European explorers saw Native Americans through the lenses of biblical and classical analogues and their nostalgia for a less complicated, romanticized past (Krech 1999:17-18). No less influential in shaping public opinion, though, were the writings of continental philosophers captivated by the "virtuous primitiveness" depicted in explorers' tales of American Indians (Krech 1999:18). Michel de Montaigne immortalized the image of the Indian, "[whose] original simplicity was governed by the laws of nature" (qtd in Bordewich 1996:211), as the antithesis of French materialism and corruption. His critical refrain was taken up by many writers, with the result that by the end of the 18th century, the Noble Indian, a character inextricably linked with a conception that nature was the gateway to moral salvation, was popularized. One of the authors linked to this vein of thought was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who theorized that "original man" enjoyed a gentle, egalitarian, pure, and natural way of life that was thereafter destroyed by the development of societies (Cranston 2007; Krech 1999:18). The widespread belief that Rousseau heavily influenced the development of the Noble Indian stereotype has been challenged by Ter Ellingson in his recent work, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Hames 2007:178-179). In spite of the ongoing debate concerning the origins of

the trope, it is clear that Rousseau's ideas directly influenced a host of writers on both sides of the Atlantic, and they encouraged the tendency among Euro-Americans to use indigenous societies as foils for their own (Krech 1999:18; Hoxie 2003).

Focusing more specifically on North America, Deloria has argued convincingly that the manipulation of symbolic "Indianness" has served since colonization as a way for Euro-American immigrants to seek and/or shape their own identities (1998:183). During the early years of the colonies, appropriating an imagined Native identity allowed them to tap into a symbolic well-spring of "freedom, naturalness, and individualism" (Deloria 1998:26), and so lay claim to a legitimating antiquity of identity and the social power such cultural capital could procure in its struggles with Great Britain (Deloria 1998:25-26). As Indians and the land were so intimately related, it was argued, they shared the same, supposedly permanent, unchanging qualities. Habitation of the land had also imbued Euro-Americans with this much-coveted fixed identity, and consequently defense of liberty became their inherited duty (Deloria 1998:25-26,183).

Yet the portrayal of American Indians by whites was ultimately determined by the social and political power realities of both groups. In the wake of the Revolution, as skirmishes between squatters and Indian Nations spread along the borders, Americans' perceptions of Indians were increasingly based on fear and hate (Deloria 1998:43). In this social climate, the stereotype of the ignoble savage, present since colonization as the flip side of the European social classificatory paradigm, came to the fore (Krech 1999:16; Deloria 1998:43-45).

For those whites who had previously lauded Indians as “quintessential Americans”, it became politically difficult to perpetuate such rhetoric; instead, this tension was resolved by placing Indians in the past. Some of these individuals found a more amenable legitimating mythical model in the classical republics of Greece and Rome, which were historically and aesthetically compared to “vanishing” Indians and their bucolic environment, thus forging an illusory link between the Old and New Worlds (Deloria 1998:50-51, 94). The historian William Vance has described the role of a socially constructed environment in this “classicization” process: “Indians and fauns and Arcadian shepherds were all essentially of the same breed, sharing the same animal life of nature” (qtd in Deloria 1998:50).

The social and economic changes triggered by the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century were accompanied by the ever-increasing tendency to push Indians into a culturally and historically simplistic, noble past (Deloria 1998:63,90). Moreover, as real Indians throughout the North American continent were subjugated, their imagined identities were once again appropriated for purposes of cultural commentary (Deloria 1998:63,74). James Fenimore Cooper’s novels, firmly grounded in the conception of a highly naturalized “Noble Indian,” experienced phenomenal success from the 1820s to the 1840s. Their impact on the development of the Noble Indian stereotype, which by 1900 laid tremendous emphasis on wilderness skills and knowledge, was undoubtedly considerable (Krech 1999:18-19).

As the 19th century progressed, two additional social influences emerged: disillusionment with trends toward urbanization and mechanization and an associated reactionary quest for the “authentic” (Deloria 1998:74; 101-101). As “Progress” increasingly came to be defined as economic and social incorporation, a chorus of American writers began expressing concern over the fragmentation of identities stemming from the modern objectification of workers and their products. They would find their model for a “better” national identity in an idealized, traditional, and organic past (Deloria 1998:99-101). In a conceptual shift greatly encouraged by Lewis Henry Morgan’s development of salvage ethnography in the mid 19th century, many placed the authentic in a noble and ecological Indian Other (Deloria 1998:93-94). Associating Indians with rurality, naturalness, and “folk rootedness to place” (Deloria 1998:105), writers like Ernest Thompson Seton offered these imagined identities as tools to ultimately better prepare Euro-Americans for integrating into modern society (Deloria 1998:115). For Seton, this meant training young white boys in outdoors skills (“The School of Savagery,” or “the natural way”) to protect them from the enervation and “feminizing” influence of urban life. (Deloria 1998:96; Krech 1999:19-20). His vision of Indianness, which rejected notions of private property and waste of natural resources, would also find expression in his work for the growing conservation movement.

In this regard, Seton was not unique; the stereotype of the “natural” Indian was rapidly becoming a central organizing symbol for environmental advocates of various persuasions. The rise of the Romanticism among American artists like

Thomas Cole and intellectuals like Henry David Thoreau had forever altered popular perceptions of nature, placing the quest for spiritual truth through contact with nature in direct opposition to industrialized society's attempts to conquer the natural world. Later in the 19th century, the conservation movement came to portray nature very differently, as a source of natural resources that needed to be actively managed in the most efficient way possible in order to promote national economic growth (Stoll 2007:5-6,9). Both of these camps drew on personal experiences and popular racial stereotypes to portray Indians as foils to American culture, and to use them as symbols in their political campaigns on the environment. For men like Gifford Pinchot and George Bird Grinnell, the Indian was the original conservationist, while for Romantics like Henry Thoreau and John Muir, Indians were symbolic of a deeply spiritual alternative to the Euro-American industrial lifestyle (Nadasdy 2005:298-299). By the early 20th century, white advocates for Native North Americans also began to draw on this symbolic association; the anthropologist Frank Speck, for instance, sought to defend the Northern Algonquians' natural resource use rights by claiming that their innate conservation instinct was diametrically opposed to the white man's wasteful environmental ethic (Krech 1999:195-196).

The turn of the 19th century also witnessed an unprecedented level of appropriation of the Ecological Indian stereotype by American Indians themselves. Tapping into the social power gained as gatekeepers between the much desired authentic and the modern, they worked to combat negative stereotypes of Native people. The writings of Arthur C. Parker, cited at the

opening of this [chapter?], are but one example of this social phenomenon (Deloria 1998:122-125). Of these Native authors, Charles Eastman contributed the most to the construction of the Ecological Indian stereotype, writing widely popular books that depicted American Indians as skillful in nature, reverent, altruistic, and tragic relics of a lost past. Like Seton and Parker, he also devoted his energies to youth development programs; he believed that by learning how to be “true in thought, free in action and clean in body, mind, and spirit,” children would live harmoniously with nature (Deloria 1998:122-123; Krech 1999:19). Only the Indian could offer such coveted mystical knowledge, he wrote, “for the American Indian is the only man I know who accepts natural things as lessons in themselves, direct from the great Giver of Life” (qtd in Deloria 1998:123). In cultural politics related to disputes over the environment itself, several indigenous nations proved themselves equally adept at turning white conservationist rhetoric to their advantage, drawing on well-known language and imagery to defend their control over natural resources in the first decades of the 20th century (Krech 1999:197).

The next major development in the evolution of the Ecological Indian stereotype came in the years between 1963 and 1973, a period of extensive social unrest and national identity crisis. Disillusioned with what they perceived to be overconsumption, excessive individualism, and government corruption in American society, many non-Native Americans began seeking a model for a better life in Indianness (Deloria 1998:155; Krech 1999:20). Like much of the symbolic capital of the era, however, this Indianness remained rebelliously

detached from social realities; in spite of real Native Americans' increased public visibility through the Red Power movement and their involvement in other political struggles, many white counterculture groups persisted in their preference for the symbolic weight of imaginary/stereotyped Indians (Deloria 1998:163-165). On the environmental front, mounting concerns over industrialism's global ecological impact led to the development of the environmentalist movement, with the first Earth Day celebration on April 22, 1970 becoming the largest public demonstration in the nation's history (Stoll 2007:18). In spite of different goals⁶¹, a common critique of industrial society led mainstream environmentalists and "back-to-nature" radicals to embrace the Ecological Indian stereotype with renewed gusto. Consequently, the trope gained a far more prominent position in popular culture by the mid 1970s (Stoll 2007: 2; Krech 1999:20-21; Nadasdy 2005:299). Two cultural icons in particular, the Crying Indian and Chief Seattle's speech, played a major role in facilitating this transition.

The first of these was a visual advertising campaign that was first aired by Keep America Beautiful, Inc. in 1971. Riding the wave of environmentalist feeling registered in a massive Earth Day turnout the previous year (Krech

⁶¹ The mainstream environmentalist movement originated as and remains to this day primarily a white, middle class movement. As a result, it has proven resistant to radical environmentalists' demands that environmental policy change should be accompanied by dramatic social, political, and economic reform (Stoll 2007:19; Wilson 2007a; Wilson 2007b). This difference in political orientation is also reflected in the version of the Ecological Indian stereotype that mainstream and radical environmentalists commonly evoke. The former tend to emphasize the conservationist skills/knowledge of Native Americans and their "natural" predisposition to environmental activism, while radicals generally portray them as "the antithesis of all that is wrong with Euro-American society" (Nadasdy 2005:299).

1999:15), the television ad features an Italian-American actor named Iron Eyes Cody in braided wig and beaded and fringed leather costume first canoeing down a polluted river, then walking along a highway to see a bag of trash be thrown from a passing car and explode at his feet (Erickson 2008; Mikkelsen 2002). The narrator mournfully says, “Some people have a deep, abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country. And some people don’t. People start pollution, people can stop it,” and the image fades with a picture of a large tear rolling down the cheek of this Ecological Indian (Advertising Educational Foundation 2003). The print version simply contains an enlarged image of Cody’s teary face and the words, “Pollution: it’s a crying shame. People start pollution. People can stop it.” Though less explicit in the print adaptation, the idea of a racialized dichotomy in relationships to the environment is clearly communicated by both advertisements (Krech 1999:15-16). Moreover, the campaign succeeded in making a memorable, powerful impact on billions of viewers; Entertainment Weekly rated it as one of the top fifty greatest commercials of all time (Krech 1999:229).

Chief Seattle’s speech was supposedly given as a response to a US government offer to purchase Susquamish/Duwamish tribal lands in 1854, but the actual text did not appear until 1887, when a white (supposed) witness reproduced it from memory. It was a different version, however, that was adopted by American counterculture environmentalists and eventually distributed around the world as the quintessential expression of the Indian’s relationship to nature. That text was written in 1972 by Ted Perry for the narration of a environmentally-

conscious film produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission (Bordewich 1996: 131-133; Deloira 1998:166-167). Citing environmental sins that would have been unknown to the real Chief Seattle such as mass buffalo slaughters and industrial pollution, the speech reinforces the inherent differences between white and Indian environmental sensibilities, condemns commodification or any disturbance of ecological systems, links Indian identity with a kind of “poetic passivity” deemed to be the most righteous relationship to the land (Bordewich 1996:132-133), and smoothed over an anything-but-picturesque history of land deals by evoking the well-worn tropes of the universal brotherhood and the vanishing Indian (Deloria 1998:166). In spite of its glaring historical anachronisms and openly challenged authenticity, it has remained one of the most significant contributions to the development of the Ecological Indian stereotype, having even been integrated into numerous schools’ curricula. As with the Crying Indian, public reception of Chief Seattle’s speech has illustrated how many Euro-Americans have wished to believe in the Ecological Indian, preferring imaginary Indians over real and infinitely more complex human beings (Bordewich 1996: 131-133, 160; Deloria 1998:166-167).

Eventually, though, an excess of symbolic freedom tends to erode original meanings and their associated social power; Americans of the 1960s and 70s were thrust into a crisis of meaning that generated a compensatory urge for stability and authenticity. Many sought to fulfill these needs through a variety of spiritual paths, and Native American religions proved especially attractive due to the long history of stereotyping Indians so deeply engrained in the national consciousness.

Chief Seattle's speech offered a very mystical vision of the Ecological Indian that would help fuel a rapidly growing white appetite for Native American spirituality (Deloria 1998:167-168). In the 1980s, the New Age movement would channel this demand into self-help texts, projects, and programs, with the Native American ecologically-harmonious lifestyle serving as an integral component of the sought-after "good life" (Deloria 1998:174).

In past few decades, the legacy of the Ecological Indian stereotype has also encouraged numerous environmentalists to seek partnerships with indigenous peoples for informational exchange and support in political struggles (Nadasdy 2005:291-292). Among the many arguments that have been offered by non-indigenous activists in favor of such collaborations, two are especially prevalent: a.) that indigenous peoples hold precious knowledge about our planet's biodiversity and how to preserve it from impending destruction and b.) that indigenous knowledge is sacred and/or wise and therefore intrinsically valuable (Brosius 1997:54-55,64). These claims, both rooted in nostalgia for the authentic, illustrate not only continued disillusionment with modernity but also the international popular appeal of the Ecological Indian stereotype as being instructive of a better, alternative lifestyle (Niezen 2003:11).