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Petite Politique: The British, French, Iroquois, and Everyday Power in the Lake Ontario Borderlands, 1724-1760

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PETITE POLITIQUE: THE BRITISH, FRENCH, IROQUOIS, AND EVERYDAY
POWER IN THE LAKE ONTARIO BORDERLANDS,

1724-1760

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT

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Advisor: Dr. Jacques Ferland

An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
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This dissertation examines the exercise and limitation of power at the interpersonal and intercultural level in the contested borderlands region around Lake Ontario in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Beginning in the 1720s, the region underwent an intensification of geopolitical competition among the British and French empires and the Iroquois Six Nations. During this time that Iroquois Confederacy granted competing trading posts to the British at Oswego and the French at Niagara in an effort to secure goods, balance neighboring rivals, and maintain their own sovereignty. Despite these cessions, the social and diplomatic interests of the Iroquois remained the foundation of the regions politics until the end of the Seven Years' War. However, a variety of political officials, military officers, soldiers, and traders working for the British in New York and the French in Canada recognized the largely native dynamics and adjusted their tactics and goals accordingly. The resulting new culture of power, dubbed "*petite politique*," sought to exploit mobility, control the flow of resources and information, conduct intercultural on-the-ground diplomacy, and exert sovereignty, often by symbolic means.

By detailing daily operations at the micro-historical level this study illuminates a distinctive borderland region, which was characterized by function and mentality. It was largely a synthesis of Iroquois tactics and interests, and colonial agendas, antagonism, and warfare. Borderland fluidity, rather than aiding the Iroquois alone, could also serve to further the aims of imperialists. This marked a departure from the "middle ground" diplomacy of the west and the much more militarized and colonized areas to the east. Around Lake Ontario the politics of relatively cohesive native homeland collided and combined with the inter-imperial struggle to produce new geopolitical opportunities. The resulting *petite politique* proved to be a durable and flexible New World creation, existing in times of both peace and war. By the latter part of the Seven Years' War these talks, meetings, travels, connections, and confrontations ultimately undid the very borderland conditions that had brought about its existence.

DEDICATION

For my grandfather,

Eugene Rogers,

who instilled an enduring enthusiasm for history.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.
AIA	<i>An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs Contained in Four Folio Volumes Transcribed in the Colony of New York, from the Year 1678 to the Year 1751</i> , by Peter Wraxall, ed. Charles H. McIlwain.
CWS	<i>Correspondence of William Shirley: Governor of Massachusetts and Military Commander in America, 1731-1760</i> , 2 vols., ed. Charles H. Lincoln.
DCB	<i>Dictionary of Canadian Biography</i> , 22 vols. University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/index.php
DHNY	<i>The Documentary History of the State of New-York</i> , 4 vols., ed. E.B. O’Callaghan.
GCP	George Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
JJK	<i>The Journal of Captain John Knox</i> , 3 vols., ed. Arthur G. Doughty
MPCPA	<i>Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania</i> , 10 vols., ed. Samuel Hazard.
NYCD	<i>Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York</i> , 15 vols., trans. and eds. E.B. O’Callaghan and B. Fernow.
NYCM	New York (Colony) Council Minutes, New York State Archives, Albany
NYCP	New York (Colony) Council Papers (also known as “Colonial Manuscripts”), New York State Archives, Albany.
NYSA	New York State Archives, Albany.
PAA	<i>Pennsylvania Archives</i> , 1 st ser., 12 vols., ed. Samuel Hazard.
TGP	Thomas Gage Papers, 4 series, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
WCL	William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

WJP

The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols., eds. James Sullivan,
Alexander C. Flick, and Milton Hamilton.

INTRODUCTION

On July 12, 1751, a convoy of canoes led by François Picquet was encamped at Irondequoit Bay, the outlet of the Genesee River into Lake Ontario. The Sulpician missionary was in the midst of circumnavigating the lake in order to enlist converts for his recently established mission to the Iroquois on the upper Saint Lawrence River, La Présentation or Oswegatchie. He was accompanied by his black servant, five Oswegatchie escorts, three Indians from the “lake country,” and over fifty Seneca recruits who had joined his party at Niagara. Among the Seneca were twelve children who had been handed over to the priest by sachems in order to ensure the future migration of their parents to the new mission. Once at Irondequoit, which Picquet described as being a sort of no man’s land demarcating the unofficial border between the French and British empires, the priest and the Iroquois visited Genesee Falls. The excursion to the scenic waterfall involved an encounter with a multitude of rattlesnakes, forty-two of which were killed by the Indians, who remained unscathed.

Upon returning from their hike, Picquet was faced with a dilemma more pressing than reptiles; the British at the nearby post of Oswego had dispatched a canoe manned by Iroquois that was laden with rum in an effort to sabotage his mission. Irondequoit it seemed was not a no man’s land after all. Although the missionary successfully interposed himself between the Seneca and the liquor, claiming that the rum was poisoned, three of his would be converts left with their aunt and uncle, who they recognized aboard the canoe from Oswego. Picquet remained at the bay until the fourteenth as he worked to regain the remaining Senecas’ confidence and tried in vain to recoup the three who had left with their kin. His confidence was checked further when

two of the child hostages warned him that their parents would have their revenge for their removal from Niagara. Despite these setbacks, Picquet managed to keep the rest of his party intact. The flotilla arrived back at Fort Frontenac on July 19, a month and nine days after it had left La Présentation. The canoes received a hero's welcome as the fort fired its guns and Nipissing and Algonquin allies cheered and shot their muskets in salute to the priest, who had rumored to have been killed, his escorts, and the new converts.¹

The confrontation between the British, French, and Iroquois that occurred at Irondequoit is representative of the frequent, politically charged, face-to-face encounters that took place between not only rival empires but also native groups in the Lake Ontario borderlands. This tense and seemingly fleeting incident showcases the ways that native, colonial, and European actors exercised power on an everyday basis. Their intercultural encounters often resulted in interactions characterized by the layered exercise of power, where different groups simultaneously sought to advance their political agendas. Central to their machinations were the interrelated elements of mobility, intelligence, daily diplomacy, and symbolic displays of sovereignty.

Picquet, in his cruise around the Ontario in 1751, was utilizing the range and mobility afforded to him by the lake to promote migrations in such a way to benefit his mission and the imperial goals of New France. The British officers at Oswego, with their well-timed dispatch of a potentially damaging gift of large quantities of rum countered the missionary by trying to enact a sort of border that would stop the movement of the Seneca. The arrival of the canoe also signaled to the French and Indian party that they

¹ "A 1751 Journal of Abbé Francois Picquet," ed. and trans. John V. Jerzierski, *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (Oct., 1970): 361-81. Francis Parkman recounts Picquet's journey to highlight the tensions and competition between the British and French empires, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1910), 1:72-79. His retelling makes no mention of the Iroquois who left with their kin at Irondequoit.

were nearing Oswego, an outpost of not only British trade and diplomacy, but also the furthest extension of New York's pretensions to rule in the west. Perhaps most importantly, the incident subtly indicates how native peoples, particularly the Iroquois, were the foundation of the exercise of borderland power in the region. Picquet's undertaking was only made possible by his Indian escorts. These warriors were not only useful in terms of killing snakes but also served as guides, bodyguards, diplomats, and interpreters. Furthermore, Iroquois kinship bonds between the Seneca and those from Oswego undermined Picquet by drawing off potential converts, a small hint at the myriad of ways that Iroquois interests often transcended and shaped the imperial contest.

This dissertation analyzes such intercultural encounters along with a variety of other politically charged interactions and incidents to argue for the existence of a distinctive culture of borderland power in the Lake Ontario region in the middle part of the eighteenth century. Borderland encounters in the spaces and places contested and traversed by the British, French, Six Nations Iroquois, and other native groups such as the Mississauga, were used as a means to further conflicting, intersecting, and parallel geopolitical agendas. This study identifies, details, and describes a shared way of practicing borderland geopolitics, *petite politique*, which emphasized mobility, information, daily diplomacy, and sovereignty. These related factors were fostered by a fluid region where boundaries remained unclear and ephemeral, one where the lived and socially constructed politics on the ground were at least as significant as the designs of distant capitals and councils. This is not say that the goals and visions of elites located in places like New York, Quebec, London, Paris and Onondaga mattered little. On the contrary, it was the aims of such polities that entered the region and were carried out by

local actors using local practices. French and British agents of empire learned and adapted their techniques to lands and waterways that had been dominated by Iroquois politics for centuries before the French, British, or Dutch had set foot in the region.

Perhaps the most important way that the Iroquois in both Canada and in the Six Nations homeland, Iroquoia, shaped the geopolitical culture of the region was in terms of their mobility. Due to their neutral stances, kinship networks, and value as potential allies, they were able to cross between the rival empires with relative ease. Some European officials learned to view these trans-imperial networks as an asset rather than as a liability. Mobility was also aided by geography as Lake Ontario, the Mohawk and Saint Lawrence rivers, Oneida Lake, and the roads and trails between them proved well-suited for scouting parties, raiders, emissaries, missionaries, and watercraft. The movement of people was tied to native and imperial politics as it facilitated trade, which in turn was used to promote diplomacy and influence, spread information, and defied or reinforced claims to sovereignty. Mobility can also be understood negatively. The creation of borders, which were not so much lines on maps but hindrances to movement, were often employed defensively to reroute trade, stall scouts and spies, and sabotage diplomacy.

Information was another contested aspect of the Lake Ontario borderlands. It took many forms, the most useful of which included military intelligence, such as the strength of a fort, the movement of forces, or the intentions of leaders. Non-military information was also prized. Geographic knowledge, diplomatic news, the movements of traders, the dispositions of Indian villages or nations were just some of the types of information that was sought, carried, and disseminated. Indeed, information served as a sort of borderland currency. People who sought to cross from one polity to another often volunteered news

and intelligence as a way to secure refuge or safe passage. Those who were engaged in the gathering and movement of information and their methods were as diverse as the types of material carried. Indian hunting parties, deserting soldiers, ship captains, traders, and prisoners were just some of the many people who gossiped, were interrogated, wrote reports, engaged in conversations, and outright spied. Their news and intelligence were intertwined in far-flung information networks that were connected to locales far beyond the region. Reports gathered in the area were regularly dispatched to provincial and European capitals and spread to more distant native villages. Information coming from afar also made its way to the region, where it was collected and further relayed. News from Quebec, Detroit, the Ohio country, and even the Atlantic sometimes reached recipients first via Lake Ontario rather than directly from its point of origin.

Borderland mobility and the pursuit of knowledge were closely linked to opportunities to conduct daily diplomacy, a vital component of *petite politique*. Relatively fluid movement enabled face-to-face encounters while the meetings that ensued were the sites of information exchanges. They also were opportunities to spread or diminish influence, improve relations, advance agendas, and secure allies. The procedures and traditions of councils held between colonists, officers, and groups like the Six Nations were highly ritualized and regimented. In contrast, the diplomacy that occurred at borderland sites such as forts, trading posts, lake shores, or in forests could be much more spontaneous, informal, and inventive. Meetings that took on diplomatic functions often started out ostensibly as commerce, social calls, family visits, or travel stops. However, proactive officers, Indian agents, sachems, and traders used these interactions to dispense gifts, hand out political regalia such as flags or medals, provide

food, clothing or shelter, encourage or discourage migrations and diplomatic trips, and affirm or deny their personal or national allegiances. Those engaged in this ad hoc diplomacy varied greatly from those engaged in negotiations at higher levels. Traders, hunters, commissaries, and others brought not only different tactics but also different experiences, visions, relationships, and attitudes to the proceedings.

Political power was also exerted in terms of sovereignty, the attempt to exert authority over places and spaces. As will be discussed below, power in the borderlands was often regularly contested, layered, and multifaceted. This multivocality persisted even as the British, French, and Iroquois attempted to monopolize their control in places such as Oswego, Oswegatchie, Niagara, and the Oneida Carrying Place. This study approaches sovereignty at these specific sites by first examining how authority was exerted internally, such as by maintaining discipline and order, and then looking at how it was represented and exercised outwardly. This latter process often involved attempts to control the movement of materials and people, efforts to monitor trade, and the construction or prevention of fortifications and other dwellings. Frequent and close encounters throughout the borderlands provided an ideal stage on which to perform authority and influence. As with daily diplomacy, items with politically charged meanings, such as flags, were used to denote power. Even the simple marking of a tree or planting of a garden could be used to express land claims. These symbols and their meanings were often appropriated by different cultural and ethnic groups and refashioned for their own purposes. For instance, the raising of a Union Jack on an island in the upper Saint Lawrence by a band of Iroquois was not done to signal British control over the land but made a bold expression of neutrality from a nearby French fortress.

Methodologically, this study utilizes a micro-historical approach to focus on people, places, and events in a single region. It traces the careers of a variety of historical actors, ranging from officers and governors to traders, missionaries, and warriors. It looks at how specific places changed over time and follows connections and conflicts as they played out over a span of nearly half a century. Despite this concentration on Lake Ontario, this study does not view the region in isolation. On the contrary, the personnel and politics of this particular borderland were inextricably tied to French and Indian settlements in the west, towns and cities in New York, Canada, New England, Pennsylvania and beyond, Iroquois and Mississauga villages away from the great lake, and centers of metropolitan power in London and Paris, across the Atlantic. These continental and global connections created a dynamic where the borderland influenced distant thoughts, policies, and events while visions, actions, and people from outside the region shaped power on the ground.

In order to examine the relationship between the Lake Ontario borderland and its ties to other places, the thoughts, visions, policies, and goals of outside decision makers are often used to contrast the realities as they actually played out locally. Those practicing *petite politique* also left behind numerous documents that offer detailed glimpses into their world. Officers, soldiers, and merchants stationed at posts generated letters, reports, maps, and diaries that relate their experiences. Colonial newspapers, council minutes, and memoirs produced over greater distances of time and space also prove useful in documenting events, attitudes, strategies, and tactics. Native agency has also been gleaned from these sources. They have been read in an effort to transcend ethnic biases, trace individuals who were often unnamed or confused with others, and

cross between Canadian, New York, French, and British documents. Colonial and European sources, when pieced together and examined critically, have yielded much about the actions of individuals, communities, and nations who considered the borderland to be a homeland or who found themselves in the region as allies, migrants, or converts. As older nation-bound studies have often overlooked sources beyond their borders or the borders of their former imperial masters, research was conducted using archival materials from around the northeast and Canada. Published and unpublished collections from libraries and archives reflect the diversity of participants in everyday geopolitics and include the writings of figures such as French missionaries, the journals of British officers, the testimonies of Indian spies, reports of New York Indian agents, and speeches of Iroquois sachems.

This dissertation is connected to aspects of a number of different bodies of historical literature. It is concerned with not only borderland history, but also military history, the study of early American intercultural relations and politics, and Native American history.

Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron's 1999 article, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," remains the most influential conceptualization of early modern imperial borderlands. Their piece attempts to disentangle the definitions of "frontiers" and "borderlands" through a series of case studies including the Great Lake, Missouri country, and Rio Grande. They argue that previous studies had tended to ignore "power politics" by downplaying inter-imperial struggles and homogenizing Europeans and Indians. They see frontiers as being meeting places of peoples where geographic and cultural boundaries were not clearly defined

while borderlands were characterized by contested boundaries between colonial domains, “intercultural penetration,” and extended European-Indian “cohabitation” on the edges of empires. While the authors do not explicitly address Lake Ontario, they do examine the larger Great Lakes region. In their assessment they argue that Indians were able to set the parameters of conflict early on and European inroads were made at “nodal points” that were not sites of contested sovereignty. Conflict was driven mostly by trade as the European material advantage benefitted Indian groups that allied with imperial powers, who were in turn able to get a leg up in an area ravaged by disease and peopled by refugees from the east. For Adelman and Aron the Seven Years’ War ultimately disrupted the borderland balance as conquest trumped intercultural diplomacy.²

Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett’s piece “On Borderlands” provides a much more recent assessment of borderlands historiography. It identifies a number of trends, synthesizes recent studies, and points to possible directions and questions for future studies. Several of these points are especially germane to this work. Their essay touches on the issue of scale; specifically the importance of face-to-face relations and the ways that less obvious, daily personal interactions could subvert centralized powers such as states or empires and their “orthodoxies.”³ It is also interested in the role of violence as much of the historiography has concerned itself with accommodation. The authors argue that violence could also forge connections between different groups. The role of Indians

² Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999): 814-41. For a critique of their conceptualizations, see Evan Haefali, “A Note on the use of North American Borderlands,” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (1999): 1222-25. Haefali asserts that borderlands also served to restrict Indian options and that the concepts of frontier and borderlands require further differentiation. For example, he classifies Richard White’s “Middle Ground” as being firmly in the frontier category rather than as a borderland, see White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³ Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands,” *Journal of American History* 98 (Sept. 2011): 346, 348.

has also been somewhat neglected. The authors urge researchers to “ask how Indians created the conditions for borderlands history rather than simply looking at how they acted within it.” In the same vein, they hope that future studies will work to not see borderlands as merely being located at the fringes of empires but also as forming “around indigenous cores.” Lastly, Hämäläinen and Truett advocate histories that explore the ways borderlands have changed over time. They are critical of works that have assumed borderlands were “waiting to be destabilized” by the advent of nation-states.⁴ The Lake Ontario borderlands and other borderland regions are best understood as not merely precursors to settler colonialism. Instead, they are defined by collaboration, competition, and hybridity.⁵ European-American settlements, characterized by the appropriation of land and the displacement of indigenous people, would not occur in the area until after the American Revolution, a quarter of a century after the Seven Years’ War

This study also draws on more focused works that are conceptual but offer distinct methodologies that at times prove to be especially useful. Elizabeth Mancke’s model of “spaces of power” re-orientates an Anglo-colonial perspective by seeing the Thirteen Colonies as an aberration. Before the 1760s, social, economic, political, and cultural systems of power can be seen as spatially and functionally incongruent. They were not always integrated and often overlapped within single empires and often did not maintain well-defined colonial boundaries. For Mancke, borderlands were not merely the abutting peripheries of empires but were terrestrial or marine regions where different

⁴ Ibid., 351-52, 358.

⁵ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Walter L. Hixson suggests that “the Iroquois facilitated English settler colonialism” since the latter benefitted from being shielded by a “powerful indigenous ally,” *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 29. It is an argument that certainly warrants future attention. For a postcolonial theoretical discussion of “colonial ambivalence” and hybridity, which Hixson sees as characterizing North American borderlands, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

spaces of power overlapped and competed.⁶ Geoffrey Plank's 2005 work, "New England Soldiers in the Saint John River Valley, 1758-1760," looks at the ways in which soldiers dispatched to a region adjacent to their own viewed their surroundings on a personal level. Although they were not too far from their homes in terms of geography, Plank concludes that danger, the extraordinary experience of war, providential thinking, and reliance of maritime links resulted in a differentiation of borderland places.⁷ His use of mental mapping and individual perceptions is particularly useful in determining who, when, and where borderlands existed and depicting how they were often a state of mind.

The re-emergence of borderland history in recent studies is closely linked to contemporary reassessments of frontier history. Gregory H. Nobles defines the frontier as "a region in which no culture, group, or government can claim effective control or hegemony over others," and as a result "contact often involves conflict, a sometimes multisided struggle with an undetermined outcome," a view that clearly influences borderlands concepts into the present.⁸ It also informs some of the historical literature on European-Indian contact and cohabitation, which although is not explicitly in the borderlands category, does pertain to a region like colonial Lake Ontario and its environs where the Six Nations homeland came into frequent contact with both the British and French. Most recently, Kathleen DuVal's *Native Ground* highlights several factors in the Arkansas Valley that are similar or relevant to the region in question. For one, the Spanish and French agents of empire that entered the region encountered native polities

⁶ Elizabeth Mancke, "Spaces of Power in the Early Modern Northeast," in *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons*, eds. Stephen Hornsby and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005): 32-49.

⁷ Geoffrey Plank, "New England Soldiers in the Saint John River Valley, 1758-1760," in *Ibid.*, 59-73.

⁸ Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), xii.

that were cohesive, demographically superior, and powerful. As a result, these peoples were more able to set the terms of contact and their relationships with successive empires. They maintained their own non-European borders, shaped imperial understandings of the land and its politics, and incorporated colonialism rather than accommodating or resisting it.⁹

David Preston's 2009 *The Texture of Contact* is especially useful in both its subject matter and methodology. His work examines the daily encounters between the Iroquois and their colonial neighbors in New France, New York, and Pennsylvania. His findings, grounded in micro-history, assert that frequent interactions between non-elites significantly shaped colonial-Indian relations, which were generally more harmonious, complex, and stable than previously thought. Like DuVal, Preston adapts a perspective that sees borderlands not just at the edges of empire but also being located at the edges of Iroquoia. Similarly, Daniel Ingram's monograph, *Indians and British Outposts in Eighteenth-Century America*, details the micro-history of encounter in militarized settings at forts Loudon, Allen, Chartres, Michilimackinac, and Niagara. He concludes that the forts' native neighbors incorporated the local British and their outposts into their cultural and political worlds as their interests were more influential than imperial culture.¹⁰ In contrast, Wayne E. Lee asserts that local native people were often "essential determinants of imperial success or failure." Rather than the existence of native grounds or local worlds, he is interested in the ways indigenous people used their own resources toward

⁹ Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). For an earlier but still valuable work on the native underpinnings of empire in New France, see Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Revisited* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

¹⁰ David Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Daniel Ingram, *Indians and British Outposts in Eighteenth-Century America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

imperial interests as both they and their European neighbors underwent processes of mutual adaptation.¹¹ Likewise, Robert Michael Morrissey's recent study of colonial Illinois argues for the importance of colonialism via conscious collaboration. Local Indians and colonists partnered with imperial governments "to create a mutually acceptable order,"¹² strengthening the case for the important cooperative and negotiated elements of empire.

This dissertation expands and challenges the borderlands and frontier historiography discussed above by detailing the history of a specific borderland region that is both representative and unique. The application of the borderland concept to mid-eighteenth-century Lake Ontario addresses features of the current field touched on by Hämäläinen and Truett. It includes many instances of violence and grounds them in a borderland context where connections between empires and the Iroquois Confederacy inform their meaning. It also portrays the borderland as being dynamic and open-ended, one that changes over time and across different spaces and places. It expands upon the role of native actors, whose homelands were an integral part of the region and whose actions and politics laid the foundation of a durable culture of power for many decades.

The recent scholarship on Iroquoia and Iroquois diplomacy by Jon Parmenter is essential in understanding the native underpinnings of the Lake Ontario borderland. His study of the post-contact confederacy's homeland highlights the ways in which native mobility enabled the Iroquois to adapt, survive, and even thrive amidst their European neighbors. Mobility strengthened kinship ties, increased knowledge, improved

¹¹ Wayne E. Lee, "Projecting Power in the Early Modern World: The Spanish Model?" in *Empires and Indigenes: Intercultural Alliance, Imperial Expansion, and Warfare in the Early Modern World*, ed. Lee (New York: New York University Press, 2011): 1-13.

¹² Robert Michael Morrissey, *Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 7.

diplomacy, maximized agriculture, and produced a homeland that was both flexible and secure. The Iroquois also maintained control of important peripheral nodes such as the Niagara portage and the Champlain Valley, which enabled surveillance of others while limiting the amount of penetration into their territory.¹³ These policies culminated in the 1701 declaration of league neutrality that ended decades of armed conflicts with French Canada as well as a host of native enemies throughout eastern North America.¹⁴

Parmenter has also reassessed Iroquois diplomacy in the middle part of the eighteenth century. As in earlier periods, the Iroquois continued to run a “communications empire” that resulted in well-informed diplomacy. Factionalism, usually taken as a sign of the league’s decline, is instead seen as furthering information gathering and offering varied political options. Likewise, migrations to places such as the Ohio Valley or Canada also served to preserve neutrality as they provided an outlet for disaffection and created new linkages with other Indian nations and empires.¹⁵

Given this research, the Lake Ontario borderlands during the period in question must be fundamentally understood as built upon the Iroquois homeland. Intra-Iroquois mobility, which transcended imperial and native boundaries with relative ease, continued to mold daily politics in the 1720s, over the course of two wars, and during the period in between. The Canadian and confederacy Iroquois whose territory either bordered or were within the region remained intact throughout the period. Their networks not only

¹³ Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), ix-xii, xliii-xlix.

¹⁴ For a detailed look at these conflicts and the ensuing diplomacy to resolve them, see Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Parmenter, “At the Woods’ Edge: Iroquois Foreign Relations, 1727-68” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 4-15. Parmenter’s arguments are a major revision to Daniel Richter’s work on the detriments of factionalism, see Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

underlay *petite politique* but their interests were just as salient as those of the British and French. They did not simply play one empire off against the other in order to buy time and breathing room but instead were a politically essential part of the region that was almost always characterized by a weak and distant European military presence that was limited by Iroquois sovereignty. Even when the British and French and their respective colonies sought to engage in borderland politics, usually on Iroquois terms, the personnel they relied upon were overwhelmingly native hunters, guides, informants, warriors, and travelers up until the end of the Seven Years' War.

However, though the tactics and connections of the Iroquois shaped the region, the confederacy, its constituent nations and villages, and Canadian missions could at times be as remote from the borderland as places like Montreal or Albany. This study seeks to disentangle Iroquoian homelands from borderlands when and where appropriate. The Iroquoia of this period was not always a “perpetual and open-ended borderland,” as defined by Alan Taylor’s study of the American Revolution and Early Republic period,¹⁶ but instead the Iroquois were often just as interested in creating and maintaining boundaries as their imperial neighbors. Furthermore, the location of borderlands often shifted in, around, and away from native communities. For instance, for much of the time of this study, the territory of the far western nations of the Cayuga and Seneca was not immediately linked to borderland politics. Similarly, Mohawk villages, which had historically been at odds with the French, were often considerably more “bordered” than the Oneida or Onondaga who were located closer to Oswego and Oswegatchie. Onondaga, the seat the of the Six Nations’ council and the primary advocate of a

¹⁶ Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 8-11.

neutrality policy, simultaneously acted as a political core, from which policy emanated, and a territory that was traversed by competing factions and their agents.

The Iroquois foundation, though similar to the Arkansas Valley in DuVal's *Native Ground*, departs from that model in that inter-imperial rivalry was an equally important component from the 1660s forward. As Adelman and Aron point out, imperial "power politics" cannot be ignored.¹⁷ Rather than being a wholly native or imperial creation, the Lake Ontario borderlands and their ensuing *petite politique* are best understood as a synthesis of Iroquois tactics, space, and interests with colonial agendas, antagonism, and warfare, as well as imperial objectives that could be at odds with colonial ones. The borderland concept being used here is dynamic and shifts geographically and temporally. The borderland in question, far from being parochial, is defined by connections to Onondaga, New York, Quebec, and beyond. It is also elastic in that it was not totally a question of geography but also a mode of thinking and a set of practices that was exercised by different people, at different places, at different times. As a result, *petite politique* bridges the gap between space and geopolitical tactics; the two were not always one and the same but instead involved a combination of specific operations in particular places. As detailed throughout this work, some Europeans adapted to Iroquois fluidity and shaped their political activities to conform to new possibilities on the ground. Others, such as vulnerable settlers at places like German Flatts or garrisons at harassed outposts like Oswego did not see or experience borderlands but understood themselves to be in an extremely dangerous military frontier.

In addition to clarifying the borderland concept, this study seeks to answer the call put forth by Adelman and Aron to distinguish between different types of borderlands and

¹⁷ Adelman and Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders," 815.

frontiers. Geographically and politically, the Lake Ontario region can be situated among several different regional paradigms. In contrast to Richard White's "middle ground" of the Ohio country to the west, it was a borderland characterized much more by inter-imperial competition, native strength, and mutual understanding. While upper country diplomacy resulted from misunderstandings in the "search for accommodation and common meaning,"¹⁸ the French, British, and Iroquois were quite familiar with each others' agendas, diplomatic norms, and political tactics. Although the middle ground, like *petite politique*, was the product of cultural adaptation, it was a communication and diplomatic phenomenon, one that broke down when empires tried to assert their power rather than a way to practice competitive geopolitics.

The Lake Ontario borderland also differed from the one located between New England and New France in the eighteenth century. There the spaces between the two empires were largely seen by the colonies as a strange and dangerous "wilderness." Massachusetts constructed a line of defensive forts and blockhouses between the Connecticut River and New York border in an effort to prevent incursions from French and Indian enemies in the 1740s and 1750s. Although a no-man's land for colonials, the region between was inhabited by a mosaic of different native groups who used the land as a refuge and hunting ground.¹⁹ Farther west, the Lake Champlain corridor was much more militarized by the Seven Years' War. The French had strong forts such as Saint-Frédéric, Carillon (Ticonderoga), and Chambly while the British built a series of conventional military installations such as forts William Henry and Edward. Although the

¹⁸ White, *The Middle Ground*, xxv.

¹⁹ John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 25-27. For the line of forts, see Michael D. Coe, *The Line of Forts: Historical Archaeology on the Colonial Frontier of Massachusetts* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006).

corridor was largely a peaceful diplomatic and economic route between New York and New France for decades, it lacked significant Iroquois villages and transformed into a zone of “European war” much more completely and readily than the area around Lake Ontario.²⁰

The *petite politique* of the Lake Ontario borderlands is best understood not only as micro-historical encounters but also as part of larger geopolitical conflicts. As Ontario is the easternmost of the Great Lakes, the political maneuverings between the 1720s and 1760 were the opening rounds of the so-called “Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes.” This framework, put forward by David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson, seeks to link together the various conflicts in the region, from the Seven Years’ War to the War of 1812.²¹ This long conflict began decades earlier with the establishment of competing imperial outposts and the Six Nations’ effort to mediate between them. Geographically, it extends the range of the concept by including the upper Saint Lawrence and Mohawk valleys, which were politically, economically, and socially tied to Lake Ontario. The history of competition for the Great Lakes and the trans-Appalachian west has recently been urged to be more closely tied with the Atlantic World and the interests of European empires.²² This dissertation, with its interest in the geopolitical agendas of the British and French and the ways that they contributed to a culture of power, sees the borderland not as a wholly New World creation but one that is inextricably tied to Old World rivalries.

²⁰ For the transformation of the Champlain Valley, see Michael Gunther, “‘The Deed of Gift’: Borderland Encounters, Landscape Change, and the ‘Many Deeds of War’ in the Hudson-Champlain Corridor, 1690-1791” (PhD diss., Lehigh University, 2010), chaps. 2-3.

²¹ David Curtis Skaggs, “The Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814: An Overview,” in *The Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814*, eds. Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001): 1-20.

²² François Furstenberg, “The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June, 2008): 647-77; Warren R. Hofstra, “‘The Extension of His Majesties Dominions’: The Virginia Backcountry and the Reconfiguration of Imperial Frontiers,” *Journal of American History* 84, no. 4 (1998): 1281-1312.

Much of the historiography on the relationship between New York and New France has focused on the ways imperial interests were subverted in favor of more local ones, especially in the form of the illicit fur trade that existed between Albany, Montreal, and the Iroquois from the late seventeenth into the middle of the eighteenth century.²³ In contrast, the findings of this study are more in line with the thesis put forth by Thomas E. Norton's study of colonial New York's fur trade, which argues that the economic and diplomatic activities of Albany's Dutch traders actually served to protect the colony and later aid British expansion.²⁴ By shifting the focus to New York's west, away from the Champlain corridor, a different sort of borderland emerges, one with more imperial presence in the form of Oswego, much closer to the chain of forts linking Canada to the Upper Country, and one dominated by the nations of Iroquoia. Given sparse European settlement, numerous military installations, and the dominance of a regulated fur trade, the region had much more in common with metropolitan Atlantic spaces than the settler frontiers in places to the south like Pennsylvania and Virginia.²⁵

The presence of forts, their garrisons, armies, naval forces, Indian war parties, and the events of both King George's War or the War of the Austrian Succession (1744-48) and the Seven Years' War (1756-1760) connects this work to the military history of the colonial Northeast. *Petite politique*, with its intense cooperation between European and

²³ For an overview, see Jean Lunn, "The Illegal Fur Trade out of New France, 1713-1760," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association* 18, no. 1 (1939): 61-76. A more recent work argues for the primacy of accommodation, equilibrium, and local self-interests in the Champlain Valley, Theodore Corbett, *A Clash of Cultures on the Warpath of Nations: The Colonial Wars in the Hudson-Champlain Valley* (Fleischmanns: Purple Mountain Press, 2002). For the Indian role from a Canadian perspective, see Jan Grabowski, "Les Amérindiens domiciliés et la 'contrebande' de fourrures en Nouvelle France," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 24, no. 5 (1994): 45-52.

²⁴ Thomas E. Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 8.

²⁵ For the dichotomy between frontier and Atlantic spaces, see Stephen J. Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British America* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2004).

Indian personnel, extends the work of Fred Anderson and Ian K. Steele, which asserts the importance of intercultural interactions in warfare.²⁶ The organization of scouting parties, the gathering and relay of intelligence, mobility through rivers and streams, and wartime spying all depended upon relationships that transcended cultural differences. Globally, these instances of cooperation can be seen as one of the many coalitions that shaped the Seven Years' War as articulated by Mark H. Danley. His call for studies on individual communities and their role in the larger conflict coincides with D. Peter MacLeod's concept of "parallel warfare," which depicts the Canadian Iroquois as conducting a separate war from New France though waged against a common enemy.²⁷

The study of European-Indian coalitions in the Lake Ontario borderland shifts the focus away from *petite guerre*, the use of small-scale raids and ambushes against soft targets by irregular forces for political leverage, and more regular warfare, such as sieges and logistics. Instead, it highlights the often neglected struggles for information and influence that took place on the everyday level. If, as Guy Chet argues, European warfare, with its superior resources, expertise in siege warfare, organization, and administration, conquered the "wilderness,"²⁸ it was certainly aided by important auxiliaries in the form of neutral Iroquois scouts, borderland traders, opportunistic sachems, deserters, prisoners, and spies. By focusing on historical actors such as these, this study uses a bottom-up approach to military history that follows often neglected groups and individuals, accounts for their agendas and agency, and by doing so reveals different possibilities and

²⁶ Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

²⁷ Mark H. Danley, introduction to *The Seven Years' War: Global Views*, eds. Danley and Patrick J. Speelman (Boston: Brill, 2012), xliii-xlvi; D. Peter MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years War* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1996).

²⁸ Guy Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

causations. The complication of the irregular-regular warfare dichotomy through the use of borderland resources for metropolitan goals also contributes to the understanding of the military culture of New France. If *petite politique* was an important tool in eventually expanding the British Empire, it also served as a rare tactical point of agreement between provincial Canadian and European French leaders. The Seven Years' War exposed differences between colonial administrators and officers, who sought to defend their colony at any cost, and their European counterparts who were interested in a culture of monarchical duty and personal honor.²⁹ However, in both war and peace, colonial and metropolitan officials alike embraced the possibilities and procedures of borderland politics.

This dissertation is organized into five chronological chapters that highlight different features, places, and peoples of the Lake Ontario borderlands. Each chapter depicts changing borderland dynamics, covering periods of war and peace, where goals and tactics adjusted accordingly. Although the *petite politique* of the region changed over time, its fundamental structure remained intact.

The study begins in the 1720s with the creation of competing posts at Niagara and Oswego. Chapter 1 explores the creation of a new borderland model where the rival empires were now closer than ever before on Lake Ontario. This intensified proximity created countless new opportunities in terms of trade, information gathering, diplomacy, and symbolic displays of power. Inter-imperial geopolitics were chiefly driven by provincial officials while the Six Nations Iroquois maintained both balance and peace.

²⁹ Christian Ayne Crouch, *Nobility Lost : French and Canadian Martial Cultures, Indians, and the End of New France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 6-9; Julia Osman, "Pride, Prejudice, and Prestige: French Officers in North America during the Seven Years' War," in *The Seven Years' War: Global Views*, 191-93.

Granting posts at Niagara and Oswego as a calculated risk by the confederacy to increase access to trade while preventing any one power from gaining hegemony over the lake. As the French and British created and maintained their new footholds, the Iroquois successfully warded off further expansion that sought to control the strategic harbor at Irondequoit.

Chapter 2 covers King George's War in the mid-1740s. Although neither the French nor British were able to undertake large-scale campaigns in the region, the practice of geopolitics at the everyday level intensified as military personnel adapted to borderland politics, superimposing their agendas onto the contours of migrations and encounters. *Petite politique* became an important auxiliary to war efforts as mobility and daily diplomacy were harnessed to produce intelligence, spread influence, and attempt to control and direct the movements of people. The war saw increased interest and involvement of both provincial and imperial actors as agents of empire like the missionary Picquet and the officer and diplomat William Johnson gained invaluable political experience. At the same time, the Six Nations Iroquois and their Canadian kin preserved both their territorial integrity and neutrality. Like their European neighbors, many Iroquois adapted, simultaneously pursuing their own interests, ranging from neutrality to imperial alliances.

As war gave way to peace in 1748, the essentially non-violent culture of power reached its heyday. The interwar period, which lasted until 1754, is the subject of the third chapter. It was a time of both increased competition and interaction. The fur trade that had been seriously hampered by the previous war rebounded. Commerce brought about intensified face-to-face interactions loaded with geopolitical meanings. The French

created two new posts in the region: a small fort and trading site at Toronto and Picquet's Iroquois mission at Oswegatchie. While Lake Ontario was certainly an important part of the westward competition being waged by the British, French, and Six Nations Iroquois for trade, power, land, and influence, the area also proved to be an important north-south axis. Not only did New York and New France compete for vital resources here, the Iroquois and increasingly the Mississauga tried to use the postwar political landscape to their advantage.

The last two chapters delve into the Seven Years' War. Although the war's outcome would bring the New York-New France-Iroquoia borderlands to a close by 1760, connections fostered by violence and their resulting local geopolitics aided Iroquois neutrality, helped defend exposed frontiers, and enabled offensive operations throughout the war. Chapter 4 looks at "places of power" and the ways that they changed over a period of six years. For instance, forts like Stanwix and Williams that were ostensibly bases from which to project military power usually were more valuable as places of intercultural contact and cooperation. The lake itself would finally witness sailing fleets of both imperial powers in 1755 and 1756 as European militaries sought to increase their range and bypass their dependence on native people. The maritime arms race that militarized the lake in new ways, however, would soon give way to earlier forms of power when the British were ejected from Oswego.

The final chapter follows the wartime careers of a variety of borderlanders, paying attention to the ways they conceived and practiced politics on a daily basis during the war. Its subjects range from relatively well-studied officials, such as William Shirley and Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnial, to subjects who receive much

less attention, like the Cayuga sachem Arawana, and a variety of Indians, prisoners, and deserters who largely remain nameless in the sources. Like the previous chapter, it analyzes the ways individuals who were confronted with new environments and their challenges responded and worked with those who considered the borderland a homeland to perpetuate new and creative ways of asserting power. The European officer Pierre Pouchot, who arrived in Canada in 1755, developed into a skilled borderland agent at Fort Lévis by the end of the war. Likewise, traders who had often found themselves at odds of colonial officials were able to apply their skills and ability to move between colonial and native worlds to become valuable political assets. By examining the war through the lens of *petite politique* and borderland history, new potentials and possibilities are revealed. For example, French defeat in the Seven Years' War can be seen as a forgone conclusion given their material weaknesses, however, these chapters reveal an empire that was still well connected and well informed.

History was essential to borderland *petite politique*. In times of peace and war, people drew upon their past experiences and relationships. Earlier instances of cooperation between nations were often referenced to promote future harmony. The French, British, and Iroquois all approached the Ontario region in the 1720s they all did so with a thorough knowledge of one another's pasts. This study now turns to a beginning rooted in the past as familiar rivals and partners collaborated and competed to bring about something new.

CHAPTER ONE

**THE BIRTH OF A BORDERLAND: IMPERIAL VISIONS, SIX NATIONS’
DOMINANCE, AND THE ORIGINS OF A NEW CULTURE OF POWER,
1724-1744**

The era of direct and regular British and French rivalry in the Lake Ontario region was the direct consequence of Six Nations’ diplomatic policy that sought to balance the influence of its imperial neighbors. The Iroquois Confederacy, which had emerged from Queen Anne’s War (War of Spanish Succession) with its territory and neutrality intact, sought to maintain its important political and economic ties to French Canada and British New York without sacrificing sovereignty on its frontiers.¹ While European diplomats and colonial officials debated their claims to the region using the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, local Iroquois actions spoke louder than distant words. Though both empires formulated arguments for their claims to Lake Ontario, Iroquoia, and beyond, the diplomacy of the Six Nations reigned supreme. The most visible result of their balancing act is seen in their re-establishment of a French post at Niagara in 1720 and the establishment of a permanent New York presence at Oswego seven years later.

Historians of the Six Nations and European empires in the region have often depicted the maintenance of posts at Niagara and later Oswego as being detrimental to the Iroquois League in almost every way.² Certainly no one can deny the terrible toll that the increased availability of alcohol had on the Six Nations and other native peoples. Furthermore, the restructuring of trade relationships that began to cut out Iroquois

¹ For Iroquoian frontiers, see Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 13-15.

² For an overview of this argument, see Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 250-52, 262-64. For Niagara as a French triumph, see W.J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 142-43.

middlemen had significant economic impacts and diminished Iroquois clout. However, in terms of the exercise of power, at both the diplomatic and everyday levels, the Six Nations maintained their regional dominance.

This chapter explores the collision of French and British imperialist goals, particularly as envisioned and put forth by provincial actors, and their modification in the face of Iroquois hegemony. Energetic governors such as New France's Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil and his successor, the Marquis de Beauharnois, and New York's William Burnet and George Clarke, and their respective agents of empire were made to play by Iroquois rules. The new borderland was not only created by the interests of the Six Nations. The ways that power was exercised on a daily basis, the actual implementation of policy at the face-to-face level, were also the product of Iroquois influence. As a result, Lake Ontario and its environs were differentiated both geographically and politically from the Ohio Valley to the west and Champlain corridor to the east. Unlike the middle grounds of the west, which were defined by negotiated frontiers and mutual weakness, a three-way competition intensified between the British, French, and Iroquois, which was characterized by intrigue, influence, and infiltration. In contrast to the east, where militarization was more thorough and the space to maneuver more limited, the nearness of Iroquois homelands largely kept native interests and tactics intact, synthesizing them with provincial and imperial agendas.

The period in question, from 1724 to 1744, the eve of King George's War (War of Austrian Succession) was part of the longest period of official peace between New

France and Britain's North American colonies on the eastern seaboard.³ During this time the new Lake Ontario borderland paradigm would develop. Interaction and linkages among the French, British, and Six Nations had existed in the region since the seventeenth century. However, the new proximity around Lake Ontario brought about new personnel, ambitions, and possibilities. As outright war was avoided due to a combination of Iroquois neutrality and metropolitan European reluctance, a culture of *petite politique* began to take hold as both colonial and Indian actors traded, exercised and limited mobility, sought and shared valuable information, and asserted sovereignty.

Visions of Empire: Provincial Imperialists and European Constraints

Interest and ideas about imperial expansion toward and around Lake Ontario overwhelmingly came from provincial actors during the period in question. At least for a time, the Anglo-French rivalry in northeastern North America received low priority by metropolitan ministers and monarchs across the Atlantic. Britain and France even maintained an uneasy alliance that lasted from 1716 up until 1731. Furthermore, in regard to the British, the years after the War of Spanish Succession were ones of so-called "salutary neglect." Other than the episodic use of regular troops during times of turmoil such as a slave rebellion, ministers in London were reluctant to commit themselves to the defense of the colonies.⁴

³ The exception would be Dummer's War or Father Rale's War, which was characterized by outbreaks of violence between northern New Englanders, Nova Scotians, and their French-backed native enemies, principally the Wabanaki, from 1722 to 1725.

⁴ Both the maintenance of a long alliance with France and policies of salutary neglect were the products of the Whig government in power under Sir Robert Walpole from 1721 to 1742. For the alliance, see Jeremy Black, *Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of George I, 1714-1727* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 243-44. For British ambivalence toward military action in the colonies, see James A. Henretta, '*Salutary Neglect*': *Colonial Administration under the Duke of Newcastle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 65-69.

Early British interest in the region was sparked by war. Although Queen Anne's War was characterized by "de facto neutrality"⁵ between New York and New France due to the interests of the fur trade, a re-conceptualization of the geography of New York's western frontier began to distress at least some officials. In April 1700, Robert Livingston, the nephew of the powerful Albany merchant and politician by the same name, traveled to Onondaga. His observations and suggestions, collected in a report to the Earl of Bellomont, governor of New York, called for a bold forward policy. He saw the Mohawk as useful warriors that could ally with the colony against the French and serve as its buffer. Further west, he argued for the construction of a fort with a garrison at the so-called "Three Rivers," where the Oneida and Seneca Rivers intersected to form the Oswego River, which then flowed north into Ontario. Furthermore, the somewhat difficult portage at the Oneida Carrying Place could be modified by using dams and clearing Wood Creek. Agricultural settlements could then be established along the Oswego River, which was full of fish and flanked by favorable soil, and was protected from the French and other enemies by its falls. The whole region would be linked to Albany by the presence of one-hundred "bushlopers," young men stationed at the proposed settlement with canoes who would maintain a chain of magazines and portages.

Both Bellomont and Livingston lamented that Fort Frontenac had not been taken in the previous Anglo-French conflict, King William's War. Livingston observed that the Iroquois in the region were "nab'd" by the French from the post with trade goods and liquor. He also observed, much to the dismay of Bellomont, that travel from Lake Ontario to the Mohawk Valley and Albany was significantly easier than previously thought. The

⁵ Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 183.

distance that had been assumed to be about 400 miles was now calculated (at a much more accurate) 260 miles, potentially more easily traversed than the route to Montreal via Lake Champlain. Just as distressing for New York was that it was now (erroneously) estimated that the Six Nations principal village at Onondaga was only sixty miles from Frontenac.⁶ Bellomont went so far as to raise funds from the colonial assembly to build a fort in Onondaga country, a project that was ultimately deftly deflected by that nation.⁷

Later on, the case for westward expansion from New York was espoused most energetically by the duo of Cadwallader Colden and William Burnet. Both men were particularly interested in extinguishing the decades-old smuggling practices of Albany traders who obtained furs from the Canadian Iroquois at Kahnawake who acted as intermediaries between Montreal and New York. Not only did the trade hurt the colony economically, but in terms of geopolitics it served to sustain a sort of de facto neutrality between New York and New France. For imperial-minded officials like Burnet and Colden, who also sought greater profits, the contraband trade could be strangled by dealing directly with western Indians.⁸

However, it should be noted that the early New York presence on Lake Ontario was not solely the result of the visions and policies of expansionist Anglo-American officials. Before Burnet had even taken office a small number of Dutch Albany traders sought commercial opportunities at Irondequoit. Six such merchants under Haime Van

⁶ Robert Livingston's Report on his Journey to Onondaga, April 1700, NYCD 4: 648-52; Bellomont to Lords of Trade, 10 May 1700, Ibid.: 644.

⁷ Eric Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks: Unraveling a Mohawk Mystery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 61-62; Parmenter, *Edge of the Woods*, 263-64.

⁸ Much research has been done on the Albany-Montreal trade. For the British/New York perspective and an argument for the positive role smuggling in terms of defense, see Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 56, 72-73, 129-33. For a less partisan overview of New York's "virtual tradition of inaction" against the French, see Michel Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 144, 193-94, 198.

Slyck applied for and were granted a license to legally trade there from the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs in the spring of 1716. They erected a small trading house that they returned to the following year. Moreover, these traders were not alone, encountering some Frenchmen and a blacksmith at the bay. Although they were not officially in the service of the Indian commissioners or the governor and did not challenge the French presence, they worked to improve diplomatic ties with the local Iroquois and encouraged western Indians to trade with Albany.⁹

Colden, a noted physician, botanist, farmer, and politician, was appointed to Governor Burnet's council in the first year of his administration, 1720. Four years later, as Surveyor General, he authored a detailed report that urged Burnet to take advantage of the peace between empires by tapping into the fur trade from the southern shore of Lake Ontario. Using detailed knowledge of the geography west of Albany he argued that the route between that town and the great lake made fiscal as well as political sense. Furs could be brought up the Oswego River, portaged onto Oneida Lake, and then brought east on the Mohawk River. According to Colden, the use of these waterways was at least as long as the voyage to Montreal and could be done less expensively. His vision extended beyond the profits and taxes of the fur trade; by establishing a presence to the west, New York could undo the "popish" policies of Charles II and his sympathizers, put an end to a neutrality policy that harmed the colony's neighbors in the last two wars, and restore prestige with the Six Nations. In addition, colonists could follow the fur trade, establishing farms and exploiting other resources such as naval stores.¹⁰

⁹ David A. Armour, *The Merchants of Albany, 1689-1760* (New York: Garland, 1986), 109-10.

¹⁰ "Colden's Memoir on the Fur Trade," 10 November 1724, NYCD 5: 728-33.

While Colden provided a blueprint for New York's western policy, Burnet worked to put likeminded policies it into action. Some of the first acts of the new governor in 1720 and 1721 involved the passage of legislation to curtail the Montreal trade while attempting to enforce a new tax on the fur trade in 1726. This legislative activity was a step toward increased provincial control but still failed to significantly curtail the north-south trade.¹¹ His efforts extended beyond colonial politics and involved an active interest in Six Nations diplomacy and efforts to improve the route linking Albany to Iroquoia and Lake Ontario. In 1724 the governor initiated substantial improvements to both the Oneida Carrying Place, the portage between the headwaters of the Mohawk River and Wood Creek, and Wood Creek itself, which flowed west into Oneida Lake. The portage and waterway were marked and cleared of debris, an effort that not only enabled Iroquois elders to attend councils in Albany but also foreshadowed Burnet's future plans.¹²

As early as 1721 he had written to the Board of Trade outlining his plans for a New York presence at Irondequoit Bay on Lake Ontario in Seneca Country. Abraham Schuyler had been dispatched with ten men, supplies, and Indian gifts in order to lay the groundwork for a more permanent presence to counter the French trading post at Niagara. Although the small expedition failed to finalize the sale of land "indisputably in the Indian possession" and only maintained a temporary post like Van Slyck before them, it was yet another step toward Burnet's long term goal of a foothold on the Great Lakes.¹³ Three years later he remained insistent, spurning a Six Nations proposal to place a British post on Oneida Lake rather than Ontario, suspecting the counteroffer to be the product of

¹¹ Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 186; Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 137-39.

¹² Conference between Governor Burnet and the Indians, 17 September, 1724, NYCD 5: 717.

¹³ Burnet to the Board of Trade, 16 October 1721, DHNY 1: 443-44.

the Albany smugglers he sought to bypass and control.¹⁴ Although the governor would eventually gain access to Lake Ontario at Oswego, as will be discussed below, his machinations for the region were cut short when he was transferred to the governorship of Massachusetts in 1728, having been replaced by the less aggressive John Montgomerie, “an old associate to the new king,” George II.¹⁵

As with the British in New York, the impetus for French expansion in the region came from colonial governors but was also articulated by veteran operatives who were experienced with the situation on the ground. Also like the British, French officials sought to enhance their claims in order to diminish and divert the illicit Albany-Montreal trade. Whereas New York had only begun cracking down on the smuggling under Burnet in the 1720s, the French had been actively policing the Champlain corridor by utilizing Fort Chambly on the Richelieu River to patrol Lake Champlain.¹⁶ French opposition to smuggling also included an extension of sovereignty. During the years following the ratification of the Treaty of Utrecht, governors of New France rejected British claims to control over the south shore of Lake Ontario that were based upon an interpretation of the treaty that claimed suzerainty over the Six Nations and their lands. Instead, the French provincial position argued for the right to all the lands in the Lake Ontario basin.¹⁷

While the British in New York sought to enter the Great Lakes region, the French were eager to consolidate their presence and check their rival’s advance. In 1720 a small blockhouse was built at Niagara in order to maintain the route between Detroit and Fort

¹⁴ Conference between Governor Burnet and the Indians, 17 September, 1724, NYCD 5: 719.

¹⁵ Henretta, *Salutary Neglect*, 70-71.

¹⁶ For French efforts, instances of official corruption, and “organic” policy, see Lunn, “The Illegal Fur Trade out of New France, 1713-1760,” 69-73. The role and autonomy of the *domicilié* Indians in this trade is detailed in Grabowski, “Les amérindiens domiciliés et la «contrebande,»”45-52.

¹⁷ For example, this position is posited by acting governor Claude de Ramezay to the Marine ministry, see Extracts of dispatches, 28 April 1716, NYCD 9: 960.

Frontenac and trade with the Seneca. Furthermore, it countered any possible New York foothold on southern Lake Ontario at the Niagara River.¹⁸ When plans were made some five years later to fortify the post into a full blown fortress it was again in reaction to rumors of British plans in the area. This time those rumors proved to be true, as they forecasted the construction of a permanent British trade house at Oswego.¹⁹

This forward-thinking French policy envisioned hegemony over the diplomacy and trade of the entire Ontario region. Like their provincial counterparts in New York, the governors, intendants, and lesser officials of New France were the primary forces behind expansionist proposals. While most of the New York agents of empire on the ground were men experienced with the fur trade, the French were able to draw upon a cadre of veteran military officers who in many cases had spent years at remote posts and among various Indian groups. Perhaps the most energetic and visionary among them was Charles Le Moyne, Baron de Longueuil. Longueuil, who was a veteran of King William's War and conflicts with the Six Nations Iroquois, rose through the ranks of the colonial forces, proving to be an able commander and later diplomat among his former Indian enemies. His standing with the confederacy was so good that he was adopted as a son of the Onondaga in 1694.²⁰

Longueuil remained active in Indian affairs as governor of Montreal, the sixty-nine year old even going so far as to spy on British actions around Oswego in 1725. He also served as acting governor after the death of Vaudreuil that year, briefly becoming the chief provincial official during a critical phase of the New York-New France rivalry. His

¹⁸ Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 142.

¹⁹ Abstract of dispatches, 25 May 1725, NYCD 9: 949-51.

²⁰ Céline Dupré, "Le Moyne de Longueuil, Charles," in DCB, vol. 2, accessed February 23, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le_moyne_de_longueuil_charles_1729_2E.html.

frontier experiences shaped several specific policy recommendations to the Ministry of Marine. He urged the metropolitan government to preempt the British at Oswego, a move he believed would result in the domination of the entire Ontario basin, making claims to the region a reality. For the acting-governor, as it was for others, Lake Ontario was the linchpin of North America. In addition, he urged trade reforms, specifically the issuing of twenty-five new trade licenses and an end to the prohibition on brandy in the fur trade. In terms of geopolitics, he argued that the Six Nations, or at least sympathetic portions of the confederacy, could be induced to raid New York's western frontier in order to prevent further intercourse between them and their British and Dutch neighbors.²¹

Provincial plans to control Lake Ontario and its shores as articulated by Longueuil and others extended beyond the maintenance of posts at Niagara and Oswego. It was during the era of heightened imperial rivalry in the late 1720s that Canadian officials first eyed other potential sites from which to exercise power. For instance, Captain Pierre-Jacques Payen de Noyan, another experienced officer of the French upper country and fur convoys, urged New France to prevent a second round of British infiltration on Lake Ontario by constructing posts at Toronto and Irondequoit. Others looked to Oswegatchie, the head of navigation on the Saint Lawrence River from Ontario, for its defensive geography against further trade and diplomatic encroachment. Perhaps the most ambitious project was advocated by governor Beauharnois and the intendant François Clairambault d'Aigremont, which would have resulted in a French fortification at Sodus Bay, less than twenty-five miles west of Oswego.²²

²¹ Longueuil to Marine, 31 October 1725, NYCD 9: 952-54.

²² Mémoire signé Noyan, 15 October 1729, AC, C11a, vol. 51, 465-70. For the Oswegatchie scheme and an estimation of the cost for the project, see AC, DFC, vol. 9, 19-22. For Sodus Bay, see Abstract Beauharnois and Aigremont's dispatches, 1 October 1728, NYCD 9: 1011.

These colonially inspired projects met with some initial enthusiasm by officials across the Atlantic at Versailles. In 1726 King Louis XV reinstated twenty-five annual fur trade licenses in order to counter the growing British presence at Oswego with an eye toward neutralizing them as a threat. A year later, he stated his satisfaction with the two French vessels that had been launched on Lake Ontario and approved a colonial plan to expand the presence at the Niagara portage.²³ This early royal support was tempered with a careful use of resources and later restrictions on projects in the region.²⁴ For instance, the crown refused to deploy additional regular troops to New France despite the pleas of provincial officials during the showdown over Oswego in 1726. By 1728, Louis XV was urging New France to remain calm in the face of British activity. He also formally denied any additional French posts at Sodus Bay and Oswegatchie. Such projects were seen as vulnerable and would also be expensive to maintain. With a view to cutting costs, the king suggested that the fort at Detroit might be leased to a private merchant and the same could be applied to the French ships on Ontario. While officials and officers expressed dismay and predicted disaster, the sovereign pointed out that the Canadian fur trade had actually grown between 1726 and 1728 despite the New York intrusion.²⁵

Pax Iroquoia? Six Nations' Diplomacy and the New Geopolitics

The eventual establishment of a permanent New York post at Oswego in 1727 and the expansion of the 1720 French trading house at Niagara into a fort in 1726 have been usually viewed by historians of the Iroquois Confederacy as the beginning of the

²³ Louis XV to Beauharnois and Claude-Thomas Dupuy, 14 May 1726, NYCD 9: 957-58; Louis XV to Beauharnois and Dupuy, 29 April 1727, Ibid.: 964-65.

²⁴ For the costs of New France in a French imperial context, see Catherine M. Desbarats, "France in North America: The Net Burden of Empire During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century," *French History* 11, no. 1 (March, 1997): 1-28.

²⁵ Abstract of Dispatches, 7 May 1726, Ibid.: 952; Abstract of Beauharnois and Aigremont's Dispatches, 1 October 1728; Ibid.: 1010-13; Louis XV to Beauharnois and Dupuy, 14 May 1728, Ibid.: 1003-04.

end of league power. The argument generally goes that the Six Nations, by allowing the French and British greater access to Iroquoia and the Great Lakes fur trade, secured a short term peace at the steep price of reduced sovereignty and increased dependence on their European neighbors on the southern shore of Lake Ontario.²⁶ While social ills and an eventual decline of the league's power did occur, the Iroquois Confederacy maintained a virtually unaltered borderland geography until the final phase of the Seven Years' War.

Furthermore, in addition to the lukewarm support colonial visionaries of imperial expansion were given by their respective European metropolises, Iroquois counter-visions of the places and spaces around Lake Ontario significantly shaped the geopolitical landscape. By simultaneously allowing limited French and British presences at Niagara and Oswego, the confederacy enabled both its Francophile and Anglophile factions to deal with their preferred trading partners while ensuring lower prices for coveted European goods. The French were forced to lower the prices of trade goods at Niagara early on in the regional rivalry, a degree of control made possible by the king's retention of the key post.²⁷ Also beneficial was the constant flow of gifts from French and British officers and other go-betweens that further ensured the availability of goods such as clothing, jewelry, and arms. Geographically, Niagara and Oswego were relatively peripheral locations to the Six Nations' homeland. Niagara, perched at the outflow of the Niagara River into Lake Ontario, was some distance from the strategic Seneca controlled portage to the south and that nation's major villages. Likewise, Oswego was on the edge of the Onondaga territory. It also did not threaten to cut off the Iroquois maritime ties to

²⁶ Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 264-68.

²⁷ For French prices, see Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 145. For the political benefits of Iroquois factional politics, see Parmenter, "At the Woods' Edge," 4-10.

the west as the bays at Irondequoit and Sodus to the west remained firmly under native control.

Despite the cajoling of both New York and New France diplomats, the Six Nations worked to maintain a region of peace, free trade, and limited imperial expansion for almost thirty years. This goal was voiced time and time again. For example, Six Nations sachems meeting with the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs on the eve of the establishment of the New York post at Oswego reiterated their desire for a peaceful and quiet Lake Ontario where both British and French trade and other movements would be unrestricted and merchants would cater to Iroquois demands.²⁸

The Six Nations' two post solution, by which the French were permitted to renew their presence at Niagara while the British via the colony of New York were granted a permanent trading post at Oswego, was arrived at through a series of negotiations within the confederacy and with its colonial neighbors. Seneca sachems visiting Albany in the spring of 1724 informed the Indian Commissioners that a French proposal to establish posts at both Niagara and Oswego had been rejected by the Onondaga, who were later backed by both the Mohawk and Oneida nations. By September, Governor Burnet and the Six Nations emissaries who had traveled to Albany to renew the Covenant Chain alliance tentatively approved the establishment of a "beaver trap." However the details remained unsettled as the governor insisted the post be located on Lake Ontario while the Iroquois preferred it to be on Oneida Lake.²⁹ The Six Nations realized such a position would diminish their middleman status, hence their insistence for the post to be located in the heart of Iroquoia. Although the project had been agreed upon in principle, the

²⁸ AIA, 26 September 1725, 160-61.

²⁹ Ibid., 4 May 1724, 150-51; Ibid., 15 September 1724, 152-54.

construction of trading houses would not be completed until 1726; until then the New York presence would consist of short-lived trading visits around Oswego Falls.³⁰

The evolving Six Nations' policy concerning Niagara took place more or less simultaneously with the series of decisions and negotiations surrounding Oswego. Rebuffed from building at the southeastern shore of Lake Ontario, the French continued their efforts to secure league permission for a post at Niagara. Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire, who had maintained a long relationship with the Seneca and constructed a minuscule personal trade house at Niagara in 1720, obtained permission for an expanded French presence there. The approval was not without dissent and stipulations. The Seneca who Joncaire had consulted insisted that the outpost be limited to trade, forbidding the erection of any stone fortifications. Around the same time, the ever-active imperial agent, Longueuil, successfully entreated sachems at Onondaga for a more expansive fortification. This time the Seneca, who had insisted upon their sovereignty over the Niagara region throughout the 1720s were bypassed. The decision made at Onondaga was solely by that nation without consulting their western confederates.³¹ More local interests, such as those of the Seneca, were sacrificed as the Six Nations sought to achieve a regional balance of power between competing imperial interlopers. In addition, the league's success was also imperfect in that both Niagara and Oswego would soon include garrisons and fortifications, despite their clearly stated initial limitations.

³⁰ The Six Nations assured the French that they had limited New York traders to "Gastonchiague," or Oswego Falls, several miles to the south of the future site of Oswego, Extracts of dispatches, 1716-1726, 31 October 1725, NYCD 9: 962.

³¹ For Joncaire's diplomacy, see Michel Bégon to Marine, 10 June 1725, NYCD 9: 951. For Longueuil, Extracts from French letters, DHNY 1: 446. The makeup of the Onondaga council is in Parmenter, "At the Woods' Edge," 48-49 and Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 250. Like the Six Nations in general, the Seneca attempted a careful balancing act. For instance, in 1720 they concurrently sought the presence of a New York blacksmith in their country and complained to the Albany Commissioners of the French presence while maintaining a steady trade relationship with New France, AIA, 130-31.

However, the military presence at each fort would remain relatively paltry until the Seven Years' War.

Despite failing to bar the modest militarization of Niagara and Oswego, the league Iroquois successfully prevented themselves from being drawn into the various New York and New France schemes to entice the Six Nations into serving as European proxies who would destroy or deport their rivals from the region. As the French fortified Niagara in 1726, the British pressed the Six Nations to come to their aid in destroying the installation or at the very least to allow the British to build their own trading post at the location. In one instance, New York diplomats argued that the two French ships that had been recently constructed on the lake would be used to kidnap Iroquois into slavery. Sachems listened to these arguments at Albany and elsewhere but continued to dismiss the protests and reiterated their neutrality.³² The French, for their part, were also greatly alarmed at the Iroquois balancing act that brought the British into the strategically important Lake Ontario region and in striking distance of the upper Saint Lawrence Valley. Oswego represented the first major British thrust toward New France since the secession of Acadia in 1713. Kahnawake visitors to Albany reported in July 1726 that the French governor had been desperately trying to rally their Indian allies and the Six Nations to eject their rivals from Oswego and carry out raids on the New York frontier. Once again the Six Nations rejected an effort that would pull them directly into the imperial rivalry as auxiliary forces.³³

The Six Nations' position is perhaps best summed up in a 1727 council held with Longueuil at Montreal. Once again Governor Beauharnois had sought Iroquois

³² Longueuil to Marine, 25 July 1726, NYCD 9: 962; Abstract of dispatches, 22 September 1726, Ibid.: 978; Governor Beauharnois to Marine, 25 September 1726, Ibid.: 962.

³³ AIA, 26 July 1726, 170.

cooperation in an effort to launch an expedition against Oswego in order to dislodge the New York presence. He explicitly stated to his superiors in France that any venture across the lake would rely on the support of the league. Despite hearing Longueuil's opinions and advice on the matter, the assembled sachems retorted that the French were not to "spill any blood on their lands at [Oswego]." Any violence between the two powers would be confined to the waters of Lake Ontario.³⁴ The confederacy continued to assert its sovereignty over the land at Oswego and further insisted that European violence be limited to naval engagements. This latter caveat was yet another way for the Iroquois to preserve the peace as they knew the New Yorkers at Oswego were nowhere near capable of launching a sailing vessel on the lake.

Portages, Posts, and Iroquois Power on the Ground

Iroquois power and influence continued to make itself felt in the new diplomatically created borderland in the form of everyday presences at strategic places. In addition to their diplomatic maneuverings, the Six Nations also established themselves at the vital transportation links between outer posts and their respective colonies and as the arbiters of sovereignty. In many ways this role represents continuity with the past where, as historian Jon Parmenter argues, they skillfully controlled European access to places in and around their homeland. In addition to the prevention of the establishment of a New York post in Onondaga in 1700, the Six Nations had also been vital to that expedition's ability to traverse the region beyond the Mohawk Valley. The party that ventured into Iroquoia from Albany, which included the engineer Colonel Wolfgang Romer, merchant Hendrick Hansen, and Albany mayor Pieter Van Brugh, was dependent

³⁴ Beauharnois to Minister Maurepas, 25 September 1727, NYCD 9: 968-69.

upon Indian assistance throughout its trek. In the Mohawk country it needed to recruit porters to continue and at the Oneida Carrying Place it was beholden to that nation while it struggled to secure canoes and paddlers that were high-priced and scarce. For the New Yorkers, the “miserable path” described in the expedition’s journal was apt.³⁵

A generation later the situation remained quite similar as the Iroquois still positioned themselves at key portages that colonial traders and governments relied upon. These situations were not static as the nations at each of these places were adapting to a wage economy and other outside forces, although they still afforded the groups involved with a degree of “political leverage.” At the portage of the Niagara River, south of the French fort, the Seneca controlled the fur traffic that crossed the river and continued east into Lake Ontario and beyond. This presence at the portage, which predated the eighteenth-century fort, would last until the years after the Seven Years’ War. Further east, the Oneida conducted the movement of watercraft and trade goods at the portage between Wood Creek and Oneida Lake. Unlike the Seneca, their monopoly would be challenged by the late 1730s with the arrival of Palatine German settlers in the Mohawk Valley. The friction between the two competing parties led the Oneida to increase their migration to the portage, while at the same time they were able to obtain gifts from the Albany Commissioners meant to improve relations.³⁶

Besides these older settlements, by the early 1740s some Six Nations Iroquois also moved to the treacherous high falls on the Oswego River south of fort. The portage

³⁵ Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, 263-64; Journal of Hansen and Van Brugh’s visit to Onondaga, 13 September 1700, NYCD 4: 802-07. Despite the failure of their mission, Romer created one of the earliest maps depicting the complex river and lake geography of the region, see *A mappe of Colonel Römers voyage to ye 5 Indian Nations* [map] (London: The British Museum, 1700) Stony Brook University Libraries, accessed 1 September 2015, <http://www.stonybrook.edu/libmap/img001b.jpg>.

³⁶ Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, 73-75.

camp included several cabins that housed Indians who subsisted off of moving canoes and supplies down the falls and the river's ample fish and eels. Without their presence the movement of people and material between Albany and the post on Lake Ontario would have proven even more difficult.³⁷

Six Nations power and influence would also continue to be felt at the new posts. At Oswego, questions of sovereignty were tied to the issues of defense responsibility and land use. In the fall of 1728 governor Montgomerie presented the Iroquois with a pair of requests: he asked that the Iroquois be responsible for the defense of the post and sought to use some land around the fort for farming in order to better support the garrison. Especially in this early period, New York was conscious of its vulnerability, a situation that served to bolster the Six Nations control of the outpost. The Iroquois consented to planting and pasturing in an area that would be clearly marked and limited. However, as for the security of the post, they refused to take responsibility for it.³⁸ On the surface the latter move may seem to jeopardize their claims to sovereignty but any agreement that put the responsibility in the Six Nations' hands would seriously jeopardize their prized neutrality in the event of a French attack in a future war. In February 1741, as tensions were increasing with French, the Albany Commissioners proposed a joint defense scheme where the colony and confederacy would share the burden of guarding Oswego with new fortifications and Indian warriors. Six months later the commissioners were informed by some visiting sachems that a recent council at Onondaga stated it would protect the post

³⁷ John Bartram, *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals and Other Matters of Notice...*(London: J. Whiston and B. White, 1751), 47.

³⁸ AIA 173-75.

but in terms of their interest in preserving their neutrality between the empires, the arrangement that also explicitly reported to Canada as well.³⁹

Despite these successes, the social costs of increased trade have been well documented by historians of the eighteenth-century Iroquois. Increased political clout and the ills brought about by dramatically increased amounts of alcohol went hand in hand. They not only affected those directly involved in the fur trade but impacted communities far beyond Oswego. For example, the Mohawk community at Canajoharie, which was along the route between Albany and Oswego, was plagued by “drunkenness and poverty” by the mid-1700s, while politically traders and colonial officials were keenly aware of the necessity of maintaining good diplomatic relations with its leaders.⁴⁰ The effects of alcohol went beyond villages and also damaged relations between the league Iroquois and their Kahnawake kin to the north. The Kahnawake, meeting with the Onondaga in 1742, lamented the murder of eight of their nation by drunken Onondagas at Oswego. They went on to argue that the establishment of the post, which had been approved by the Onondaga, was now severely damaging intra-Iroquois relations and they called for its removal.⁴¹

Irondequoit: Iroquois Neutrality and the Diplomatic Maintenance of a Borderland

Iroquois diplomats and French and British officials would eventually turn their attention to the strategic bay of Irondequoit after the establishment of Oswego and Niagara. The deep-water bay, a relatively rare geographic occurrence on Lake Ontario,

³⁹ Ibid., 220-21.

⁴⁰ Timothy J. Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 116.

⁴¹ Conference between Beauharnois and Onondaga and Seneca, 31 July 1742, NYCD 9: 1093. Ever the opportunist, governor Beauharnois seized upon these complaints and shared these Kahnawake grievances with the Seneca as well, applying pressure to have the New Yorkers removed.

was located in the Seneca country on the south shore of the lake, roughly halfway between Oswego and Niagara. Despite competing schemes to acquire Irondequoit by New York and New France, the Six Nations successfully held the bay and the lands around it. Not only did the maintenance of sovereignty over the area confirm the confederacy's autonomy, but it would shape the Lake Ontario borderlands for a generation to come.⁴² The demilitarized buffer would create a sort of "corridor landscape," characterized by individual agency and the diplomacy of peace, and foster an environment well-suited for geopolitical intrigue and the culture of *petite politique*.⁴³ The extension of the Iroquois' diplomacy of balance put significant limits on French and British territory and action, meaning that the pursuit of power between the posts would be almost exclusively confined to daily contacts and interactions well away from Quebec, New York, and other sites of high diplomacy and politics.

The usefulness of Irondequoit in terms of power projection had been well known to the French and their at the time enemies, the Iroquois Confederacy, since the latter part of the previous century. The Marquis de Denonville used the bay as an entry point during his 1687 invasion of Iroquoia. The French would maintain a small trade house near the site of Denonville's temporary fort in the early years of the eighteenth century. The ephemeral post, referred to as Fort des Sables, was welcomed by the Iroquois and protested by the colony of New York.⁴⁴ By the 1720s the French presence appears to

⁴² Parmenter, "At the Woods' Edge," 71-72.

⁴³ Gunther, "'The Deed of Gift,'" 20.

⁴⁴ For early references to Fort des Sables, see Frank Hayward Severance, *An Old Frontier of France: The Niagara Region and Adjacent Lakes under French Control* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1917), 1: 200; Paroles des Tsonnontouans à Vaudreuil, 10 September 1712, AC, C11a, vol. 33, 95-100; Extracts of dispatches, 1717, NYCD 9: 961; Délibération du Conseil de Marine sur une lettre de Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, 5 January 1718, AC, C11a, vol. 125, 36-40. Albany traders had eyed Irondequoit as a potential trading post since at least 1716, AIA, 112.

have waned once again. Aside from some brief interest in the bay from Burnet and de Noyan, competition over Irondequoit would not heat up again until the late 1730s.

The chief actor in the scramble for the coveted locale would be George Clarke, New York's acting governor from 1736 to 1743. The well-connected politician, who had emigrated from Britain to Long Island, had amassed a fortune through land speculation.⁴⁵ Therefore his interest in acquiring Irondequoit was two-fold: as a source of personal wealth and as a way to tip the balance against the French on Lake Ontario. He envisioned not only another fur trade post, but also an agricultural settlement where colonists could grow food for Oswego. The governor's ambitions ran contrary not only to the Six Nations and their neutrality policy, but also to the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs. The latter group composed of men who had a vested interest in both preserving Iroquois goodwill and their own personal trade through the Lake Champlain corridor, sabotaged Clarke's first effort for a sale in 1737. The group's interpreter who was dispatched to Seneca country, Laurence Claase, intentionally misrepresented Clarke's aims as encompassing the entire southern shore of Lake Ontario. The charade was maintained by Nicholas Bleecker who met with Iroquois sachems in Albany without Clarke. The acting governor had traveled up to Albany armed with an assembly resolution approving of a more conservative sale and even offered to place Irondequoit under the control of the commission in order to reassure them of his intentions. The exorbitant proposal put forth by Bleecker and Claase was quickly rebuffed.⁴⁶ Claase continued to further the commissioners' goals while among the Seneca by reporting and

⁴⁵ Stanley N. Katz, *Newcastle's New York: Anglo-American Politics, 1732-1753* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 143-44.

⁴⁶ Parmenter, "At the Woods' Edge," 71-72; AIA, 206. In 1734, the Albany commissioners reaffirmed their neutral stance toward Canada. Beauharnois transmitted details of the shadowy agreement to France in an encrypted document to the Marine ministry, 10 October 1734, AC, C11a, vol. 61, 303-13.

working to counter the activities of three Frenchmen seeking to purchase Irondequoit. He also persisted in his efforts to botch any sale of the parcel to New York, insisting that he did not want to “lay out his own money” when he defended his inaction to the commission.⁴⁷

Unperturbed, Clarke continued his efforts in the years to come. In 1738 he informed the Board of Trade of his efforts to secure Irondequoit. For their part, the British officials encouraged the transaction, seeing it as a way to block French expansion in the region. By November Clarke reported he had been stymied once again but took some solace in the fact that Iroquois neutrality at least barred the efforts of his rivals to the north as well.⁴⁸ His efforts would last until the end of his governorship in 1743. The closest he came to fulfilling his pursuit would come in 1741 with the acquisition of a questionable deed to lands around Irondequoit. Three Albany traders who had been trading with the Seneca returned to New York bearing a deed dated January 10, 1741, effectively bypassing the league council at Onondaga and the regular commission meetings held at Albany. In exchange for goods and presents valued at one-hundred pounds, three Seneca sachems ceded a plot of land beginning 6 miles east of Irondequoit that included the 20 miles of Lake Ontario coastline stretching to the east and extended inland 30 miles southeast of that point to King George II. That summer Clarke ordered the three traders to return west to mark trees with the Seneca in order to delineate the boundaries of the shaky acquisition. Months later, he wrote to the Board of Trade of the

⁴⁷ For Clarke’s vision and the chicanery surrounding the sale, see Albany Commission of Indian Affairs, 1 July 1737, NYCD 6: 107-08. See Claase’s report, 2 January 1738, AIA, 207. Upon his return to Albany, he mentions working to stall Joncaire’s continuous efforts, 26 July 1738, *Ibid.*, 210-11.

⁴⁸ Clarke to Board to Lords of Trade, 17 February 1738, NYCD 6: 112-13; Clarke to Board to Lords of Trade, 2 June 1738, *Ibid.*: 120; Lords of Trade to Clarke, 9 August 1738, *Ibid.*: 129; Clarke to Lords of Trade, 21 November 1738, *Ibid.*: 135-36.

purchase, envisioning a settlement that would be promoted by free land grants and a temporary suspension of rent. The Board was optimistic and praised the acting governor, continuing their vocal albeit lax support for his endeavors.⁴⁹

Despite Clarke's apparent success, he struggled for the remainder of his time in office to find settlers willing to travel to the far western frontier. His efforts were specifically hampered by the gathering war clouds with France; any settlement perched on Lake Ontario near Irondequoit would be some fifty miles away from Oswego, which itself was a weak garrison and fort. Furthermore, the Seneca deed did not actually include the deepwater bay, leaving any potential new colony at the mercy of the French while precluding any shipbuilding. Clarke vented his frustrations to the Board of Trade in 1742, writing that nothing less than the "fate" of the empire was in the balance at Irondequoit. He went on to argue that Indian treaties were much less meaningful than an actual New York presence on Lake Ontario, citing the unmatched French naval presence with the construction and operation of two barques, a nod to the developing culture of *petite politique*. He was soon forced to change his vision for the would-be settlement. Since his search for settlers had been "in vain," he began to urge the construction of a fort on the land that would house eighty soldiers and artillery. Such a position would increase the Six Nations' trade dependence on New York, be able to police French-Seneca interactions, and ensure the eventual migration of farmers. By June 1743, he was reduced to arguing for a fort with a garrison of twenty soldiers, confiding to the Duke of

⁴⁹ Deed to His Majesty of the Land around Irondequoit, 10 January 1741, NYCD 6: 204-05. The deed was obtained in January but not presented to Philip Livingston, a member of the Governor's Council until that October. Clarke to Board of Trade, 24 August 1741, Ibid.: 202; Clarke to Board of Trade, 15 December 1741, Ibid.: 207-09; Board of Trade to Clarke, 3 August 1742, Ibid.: 213.

Newcastle that any building near Irondequoit would be highly advantageous.⁵⁰ In addition to the looming war with France, plans to occupy the area suffered from an increasingly more hostile colonial assembly. Whereas the legislature had put up funding to purchase Irondequoit years earlier, by the early 1740s the body was asserting its control over the colony's finances and growing increasingly hostile to backing imperial projects such as Oswego.⁵¹

While New York's efforts to obtain Irondequoit (or at least land close by) were led by the acting governor with initial assembly support and opposed by the Albany Indian commissioners, the situation in New France was essentially the reverse. The attempt to procure the bay was suggested by provincial officers, like de Noyan, and actually carried out on the ground by the Indian officer Joncaire. Unlike Clarke, Governor Charles de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, was wary of expanding east of Niagara. Joncaire tried to obtain a deed to the area a year before Clarke had via Claase and the Albany Commissioners. In the summer of 1736 he got three Seneca sachems, perhaps the very same who concluded the 1741 sale with New York, to travel with him to Canada in order to finalize a deal. The Albany interpreter who happened to be in the Seneca country at the same time tipped off some other sachems who pursued the party north and brought back the would-be sellers. As mentioned above, the French agent was active the next year, working against Claase. In 1739 he was still at it, with the Albany commissioners' Seneca resident, the Schenectady trader and blacksmith Johannes Myndertse, reporting that Joncaire "is laboring and using every artifice in his power to get leave and build himself a house at Irondequoit." A Seneca sachem made it known to

⁵⁰ Clarke to Board of Trade, 29 November 1742, *Ibid.*: 220-21; Clarke to Board of Trade and Clarke to Newcastle, 19 June 1743, *Ibid.*: 225, 245-46.

⁵¹ Katz, *Newcastle's New York*, 156-57.

the competing agents that he himself would be occupying Irondequoit over the winter in order to prevent any European presence.⁵² Beauharnois effectively ended the Indian officer's efforts two years later when he communicated to the Seneca that he would not allow Joncaire to establish a trading post at Irondequoit, fearing that the British would counter it with one of their own. Joncaire's role in the competition was thus relegated to a purely defensive one. He worked with the Seneca to discourage the presence of Albany traders after the procurement of the 1741 deed.⁵³

By the eve of King George's War it was apparent to both sides that the Six Nations were not going to budge. By entertaining but never accepting competing offers for Irondequoit, the confederacy extended and maintained the balance of power in the region. In a 1740 speech to Clarke at Albany a Six Nations speaker scolded the New York leader, stating a French or British settlement would "breed mischief," and "that Oswego and Niagara are near enough and that trading houses too near generally quarrel about trade."⁵⁴ Irondequoit would persist as an Iroquois buffer to both Oswego and Niagara well into the Seven Years' War and beyond. Visiting the site during his circumnavigation of Ontario in 1751, the missionary and imperial agent Francois Picquet stated that the bay demarcated a sort of no-man's land where the garrisons of both Oswego and Niagara were ordered not to set foot. At the height of the Seven Years' War, in 1759, William Johnson eyed the bay as a potential site for a British post, hoping for "some right building there and trading." The plan never came to fruition. When that war was over and Pontiac's Rebellion threatened British control over the eastern Great Lakes,

⁵² 30 July 1736, AIA, 197; 11 August 1737, *Ibid.*, 213-14.

⁵³ Beauharnois to the Seneca, September 1743, NYCD 9: 1085; Josué Dubois Berthelot de Beaujours, "Petit mémoire de Canada," 20 September 1742, AC, C11a, vol. 78, 147-48.

⁵⁴ 19 August 1740, AIA, 219.

the Geneseo Seneca used Irondequoit as a protected cove from which to harass British shipping, a testament to the survival of the strategic harbor as a native asset in the borderland.⁵⁵

Colliding Notions of Sovereignty: Treaty, History, and *Petite Politique*

By the mid-1720s a combination of Iroquois diplomacy, provincial expansionism, and limitations on European intervention had more or less set the parameters of the new borderland. The Six Nations' quest for balance and neutrality allowed the construction of posts at Niagara and Oswego by 1726, Louis XV's increasingly cautious North American policy prevented overt French military intervention, and the projects and actions of actors such as Burnet, Joncaire, and Beauharnois brought about a new round of daily geopolitics. Although the Six Nations had lent their consent to the competing New York and New France posts, Governor Beauharnois, recently arrived from France, was by no means content to let the British challenge what he perceived to be the rightful half-century long French monopoly over the Lake Ontario Indian trade.

After being in Canada for less than a year, the new governor initiated a policy to remove the British from Oswego. His initial reaction to the construction of the post had been to hastily muster the militias of Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal. The latter town's elites, who were situated closest to the new economic and military threat, implored the new governor "to send troops...to expel the English from that post and raze the works they had begun."⁵⁶ However, upon further, more cautious reflection, his tools of choice

⁵⁵ "A 1751 Journal of Abbé Francois Picquet," 376; "Private Diary kept by Sir William Johnson at Niagara and Oswego, 1759," 25 September, JJK 3: 223; Johnson to Amherst, 11 July 1763, NYCD 7: 533.

⁵⁶ Beauharnois to Maurepas, 25 September 1727, NYCD 9: 968-69. Fourteen years later, Beauharnois would again consider military action against Oswego at the behest of Montreal but decided against the move due to Iroquois neutrality, see Abstract of dispatches, 1741, Ibid.: 1085-86.

were the use of European treaty law combined with arguments based upon the history of French colonialism in the region stretching back into the previous century. These combined tactics were evident in his correspondence on the dispute with Burnet in New York and in the formulation of formal summonses. In July 1727 he dispatched two parties of French officers. The first, led by Claude-Michel Bégon of the *Troupes de la marine*, departed New France for Oswego, navigating via canoe along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. The second group, under the elderly governor of Trois-Rivières, Jean Bouillet de la Chassaigne, along with three other officers, was dispatched directly to New York. Both emissaries carried the same summons, which declared that the stone house at Oswego violated the French Lake Ontario trade and disrupted decades of access to the Oswego River as it had “always been free to the French.” Added to these historical precedents was an invocation of the Treaty of Utrecht that Beauharnois pointed out specifically forbade new imperial encroachments until a joint boundary commission ruled on the borders of their respective North American empires. He also gave the New Yorkers fifteen days to destroy the outpost and evacuate any and all armaments. For good measure, he suggested that the New Yorkers resume their trade in the Oneida country to the east, as they had in years past.⁵⁷

Beauharnois’ summonses set off a war of words between himself and Governor Burnet in New York. The Canadian official penned a letter to his opposite to the south that was delivered by Chassaigne’s party. The letter, which reached Burnet after he had learned of the summons that had reached Oswego, outlined the French case for sovereignty over the entirety of Lake Ontario. The tactics of utilizing past occupation and trade combined with a selective reading of the Treaty of Utrecht were used once more.

⁵⁷ French Summons of Fort Oswego, 14 July 1727, *Ibid.*: 973-74.

For Beauharnois, Oswego not only alarmed New France and imperiled the current alliance between Great Britain and France, but the fortifications and small garrison were contrary to decades of French occupation at Niagara, Frontenac, and Fort des Sables. His arguments conspicuously lacked any mention of the Six Nations, erasing both their own sovereignty claims and instances of their consent to the colonial posts.⁵⁸ Burnet's rebuttal, sent in August of that year, recognized the Iroquois but only in so far as they had protested the French militarization of Niagara and should be recognized as "subjects of Great Britain." He argued that the Treaty of Utrecht not only granted Indians the "liberty" to trade with whomever they wished, but it also recognized the confederacy as being under the British crown. For Burnet, this translated to a sort of proxy sovereignty where the British had the rights to all Six Nations' lands. His case raised native claims only when convenient and elevated treaty over history, pointing out that the French presence served to control Indian mobility and in any case was superseded by the 1713 treaty.⁵⁹

The controversy surrounding Oswego and Niagara went beyond provincial legal stunts and letter writing and soon involved a formal complaint lodged by the British crown to Louis XV. Interestingly, the French reply to that complaint was the closest to capturing the reality as it existed on the ground. The royal reply put the expansions at Oswego and Niagara into a wider North American context, one that included British and New England actions in the closing acts of Dummer's War (or the Fourth Anglo-Abenaki War) in which Anglo-Americans seized French ships and laid waste to French missions

⁵⁸ Beauharnois to Burnet, 20 July 1727, *Ibid.*: 969-72.

⁵⁹ Burnet to Beauharnois, 8 August 1727, *Ibid.*: 970-73. The original letter can be found in NYCM, vol. 15, 149. The British interpretation of the Utrecht treaty regarding the Six Nations is echoed in London, see Lords of Trade to Newcastle, 21 December 1727, NYCD 9: 988. Burnet assured London that the fort's walls, cannons, and Iroquois intervention would be enough to keep it safe from the French, Burnet to Board of Trade, 24 August 1727, DHNY 1: 458-89.

in Maine. The author of the piece charged that the British “were the first to commence hostilities,” and Niagara could be seen as a modest retaliation to the recent events. The French went on to dismiss claims of British control of the Iroquois as preposterous; pointing out that New York had an alliance at best with the confederacy. It was pointed out that the Iroquois “pretend to be their own masters and so they are,” as all Indian nations in North America were. However this generous assessment had its limits as the Six Nations only had a sort of de facto sovereignty over their villages and fields. In the end, actual presence was what counted most and, so the author concluded, no one would challenge that the Saint Lawrence and therefore by extension its entire river basin were part of New France.⁶⁰

In addition to the provincial political and metropolitan diplomatic layers of the conflict, the drama also played out at Oswego itself, where French officials came face to face with Onondaga sachems and New York officers. When Bégon and his party canoed south toward Oswego from the mouth of the upper Saint Lawrence they were stopped by a group of Onondaga at Galloo Island, an example of the new emerging borderland geography brought about by new proximities and intensified rivalries. Ironically, it was now the Six Nations who were working to intercept emissaries and shape the flow of the inter-imperial mobility.

Once on the island, an Onondaga sachem implored Bégon to allow him to speak to the commander of Oswego first. His proposed speech, which would emphasize the Iroquois desire for peace to prevent violence “on soil, which we are the masters,” also highlighted the league’s own firm case for sovereignty. The *marine* seemed unimpressed with the offer for intercession and continued south with the Onondaga following. Once at

⁶⁰ Answer to the Memoir of his Britannic Majesty, 1727, NYCD 9: 980-85.

Oswego the French were politely welcomed ashore by Evert Bancker, the quartermaster and chief officer of the fort. Captain Bancker, a successful Albany fur trader, farmer, and Indian commissioner, was no stranger to frontier intrigues, having spent much time among the Six Nations. It was now his turn to assert power. Referring to Oswego as “his house,” he only mentioned the Six Nations when it suited him. He coyly told Bégon that he, like his visitors, was merely an officer beholden to the orders of his superiors, who in this case was Burnet. When the French pressed him to put his refusal to Beauharnois’ summons in writing he met with some other New York officers for forty-five minutes, only offering that he would forward the ultimatum to Burnet in New York. The Onondaga then took the opportunity to meet with Bancker, voicing their approval that peace had prevailed and reminding the captain of their ultimate authority over the land in question.⁶¹

These borderland encounters gave each actor the opportunity to voice, challenge, and ultimately perform geopolitical actions. While the French were stymied in their attempt to apply European-style legal tactics to evict the British from Oswego, Bancker and Burnet were able to hold ground they were increasingly emboldened to claim as under the British crown due to their relationship with the Six Nations and their own interpretation of New York’s land claims. For the Iroquois League, the episode’s outcomes were more complex. Although the Onondaga had been bypassed and ignored at Galloo Island, their continued presence at Oswego and insistence on peace were at least somewhat congruent to New York’s practical interests of retaining the post. In the end,

⁶¹ Speech of some Iroquois to Chevalier Bégon, July 1727, *Ibid.*: 975; Bégon, Minutes of the delivery of said summons, 1 August 1727, *Ibid.*: 974. For Bancker’s biography, see Stefan Bielinski, “Evert Bancker,” *People of Colonial Albany*, New York State Museum, 10 October 2003, accessed 22 May 2015, <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/b/ebancker6454.html>.

the standoff continued as the status quo for almost the next three decades. In Europe, the monarchs persisted in their alliance as British officials struggled to formulate a clear Lake Ontario policy.⁶²

New France's Agents and Activity to the Eve of King George's War

Despite the inability to dislodge the rival post from Oswego in 1727, New France was able to successfully draw upon the cadre of veteran frontier officers and agents discussed above. Their usefulness went beyond visions of future forts and trade policies to carry out everyday geopolitics on the ground. They engaged in daily diplomacy, worked to gather intelligence, attempted to manipulate trade flows, and continued to challenge British pretensions to power at Oswego. Because of experience they drew upon superior geographic knowledge of the borderland and their forward post at Fort Frontenac. By 1727 they possessed reports outlining the geography of the entire lake, detailing travel times, the location of coves and harbors, and the distances between specific places. This geographical edge over British New York was due in part to the efforts of Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, an engineer who was responsible for the initial fort at Niagara as well as the fortifications at Chambly, Fort Saint-Frédéric, and Kahnawake.⁶³ Fort Frontenac further gave the French an advantage in terms of logistics. The small fort located at mouth of the Saint Lawrence on Lake Ontario would eventually harbor two sailing vessels, serve as a base of operations for agents in the region, act as a minor center in the fur trade, be a site used in ship construction, and a harbor for the

⁶² Almost a full year after the summonses, British officials were still sounding out George II for a policy regarding Niagara and Oswego, Walpole to the Keeper of the Seals, 22 June 1728, NYCD 9: 1006-07.

⁶³ F. J. Thorpe, "Chaussegros de Léry, Gaspard-Jospeh (1682-1756)," in DCB, vol. 3, accessed May 27, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/chaussegros_de_lery_gaspard_joseph_1682_1756; Abstract of dispatches relating to Oswego and Niagara, 1725-27, NYCD 9: 976-78; de Léry, [1727?], *Memoire touchant de Lac Ontario*, AC, C11e, vol. 13, 159-160.

transshipment of supplies to Niagara and beyond. In contrast, New York's next closest outpost to Oswego was Fort Hunter, located over one-hundred and thirty miles away in the Mohawk Valley. The series of portages, trails, and waterways between these two posts were virtually controlled by the Six Nations and were a great deal more difficult than the lake crossing between Frontenac and Ontario's south shore, which was less than half as long.⁶⁴

Charles Le Moyne, Baron de Longueuil, and his 1725 mission to Iroquoia was one of the most illustrative of these agents and their tactics and goals. He was dispatched to scout around Oswego and conduct diplomacy at Onondaga that spring. An earlier effort to sway the Six Nations council against the machinations of New York had failed; some Kahnawake Iroquois who had been enlisted to speak at Albany returned to Montreal frustrated and dispirited. His instructions from Governor Vaudreuil and Intendant Michel Bégon were to turn away any interlopers at Oswego before they could build a fort or trading post and to obtain consent for a fort at Niagara while encouraging Six Nations resistance to any New York schemes. By early May he was active around Oswego, later reporting from Frontenac to his superiors that there was no sign of any construction there. In June, as Joncaire tried to get permission from the Seneca to build a fort at Niagara and ship on the lake, Longueuil once again crossed to the south shore to meet with some Iroquois at Sodus Bay. From there he moved farther south and east, encountering 100 Indian canoes laden with British goods and rum. This led him to a camp at Oswego Falls inhabited by a party of some 100 Albany traders, 60 canoes, and their Iroquois escorts.

⁶⁴ For the a detailed look at travel times between the various posts and New York and New France, see the appendix in Malcolm Macleod, "French and British Strategy in the Lake Ontario Theatre of Operations, 1754-1760" (PhD dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1973), 568-71.

In the tense encounter that ensued, the traders told the Canadian that they were ordered by Governor Burnet to bar the movements of anyone without a passport. Longueuil deflected the legal challenge by producing documents from his own colonial officials. He also took the opportunity of the meeting to scold league Iroquois accompanying the traders, arguing that they had recklessly ceded their control of the region to New York. The Iroquois retorted that the New Yorkers were only there to trade and reasserted their neutral stance in the imperial competition. His mobility assured by his proper documents and the assurances of Iroquois neutrality, Longueuil continued on to Onondaga, where, as discussed above, permission was obtained from a council devoid of any Seneca for the construction of a fort at Niagara and ships. The wily imperial agent was active in the region the following summer in 1726 when he ordered his son at Niagara to be on the look out for and to “plunder” any British ships on the lake while he continued his reconnaissance of Oswego.⁶⁵

When it became evident that the New York post at Oswego would be permanent, French officials and their agents on the ground adjusted their goals and tactics. Encounters at Oswego could now be used as chances to uphold French honor, frustrate British sovereignty, and demonstrate that France was still a regional power to be reckoned with. One such meeting occurred in 1728 when the Canadian officer and interpreter *Sieur de la Chauvignerie* was dispatched to Onondaga on a diplomatic mission. Despite the fort at Oswego, fittingly dubbed Fort Burnet at the time, the best route by far from the Saint Lawrence Valley to the heart of Iroquoia remained the eastern

⁶⁵ Extracts from French letters, 1725-26, DHNY 1: 444-46; Abstracts of dispatches respecting Oswego, 25 May and 10 June 1725, NYCD 9: 949-51; Report on the affairs of Canada, 31 October 1725, *Ibid.*: 952-54, 962.

shore of Lake Ontario into the Oswego River.⁶⁶ When Chauvignerie was about seven miles from the fort he dispatched his Indian messengers with wampum belts to notify the Onondaga sachems at Oswego that he was in the area. When the sachems arrived at his camp they initiated the proxy battle between the French agent and the New York commander of the fort.⁶⁷ They relayed the message that the commander ordered Chauvignerie to lower his flag and fire a salute to the fort as he passed aboard his canoe. Keenly aware that his every move was being observed by the Iroquois sachems, Chauvignerie refused the gesture of deference multiple times via Indian messengers. He then reminded the Onondaga sachems in his camp of the Six Nations' sovereignty over the land that the new fort had been built upon, yet another selective invocation of native control by an imperial officer.

After declaring to his camp that "I shall not fire a salute until others have saluted me," Chauvignerie set off toward the fort and landed on the east bank of the Oswego River, opposite the British post. The New York officer again initiated passive aggression as he sent word that he wished to meet with the newly arrived Frenchman and six of his accompanying sachems. Chauvignerie replied that he "had no business at that house" and refused to leave his tent. Nevertheless, he did not miss an opportunity to gather intelligence on the meeting and sent Tekarihoken, a Kahnawake Iroquois allied with the French, to be his eyes and ears. Within the fort the commander reminded the Iroquois of his good working relationship with them and treated them to three pots of rum, as well as

⁶⁶ It is unclear if the Sieur de la Chauvignerie mentioned in the account of the 1728 voyage is Louis Maray or his son, Michel Maray. Louis was born in 1671 and Michel in 1701. Severance includes the French documentation of the voyage narrative, *An Old Frontier of France*, 2:155. He remarks, "...perhaps the reader can decide, from the tone, whether the writer was a veteran officer of 57, or a cadet of 24."

⁶⁷ In all likelihood, the commander at Oswego was still Bancker. French and British records do not specifically name a different officer until the 1730s.

some pork and peas. The members of the delegation, except for Tekarihoken, returned to Chauvignerie's camp in a state of "great drunkenness." Chauvignerie begged them not to continue the festivities but the drinking continued for three days, a testament to the power and influence of alcohol on the borderland.

The commander of the fort's harassment continued as he kept ordering Chauvignerie to lower the French flag he flew above his tent. Chauvignerie refused, and to show his resolve he kept the flag flying even after sundown. His stubborn breach of protocol and lack of salute as he began his ascent of the Oswego River caused the commander to attempt a last ditch effort to humble his rival. He dispatched an Onondaga with a British flag to the front of Chauvignerie's party to lead the way. Upon seeing the banner Chauvignerie halted the convoy, stating he would not proceed until the offending flag was put away. He assured the Onondagas that they had nothing to fear "under their [French] Father's flag." His persistence paid off as the party passed the fort on the river flying the fleur-de-lis instead of the Union Jack.⁶⁸

The incident demonstrates the importance of symbols and protocol at the fringes of empire. Usually lacking funding and personnel, agents of empire resorted to salutes, flag-flying, and other performances of power to reassure themselves while demonstrating to others the vitality of their respective empires. The use of symbols, particularly flags, could also be a way for Six Nations actors to proclaim their allegiances or lack thereof. The Seneca related in a 1742 council with Beauharnois how the Onondaga would hide their French flag when passing Oswego, replacing it with a British one instead. The Francophile Seneca speaker on the other hand assured the governor that he "always borne

⁶⁸ Extract of voyage of Chauvignerie, 1728, DHNY 1: 460-62; Bruce G. Trigger, "Tekarihoken," in DCB, vol. 2, accessed September 30, 2013, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tekarihoken_2E.html.

your flag among the English, in spite of all that could be said to me.” Beauharnois seized the opportunity to show the flag before Oswego by replacing the Seneca’s worn banner with a new one, remarking “[I] believe your heart to be as pure as this flag is white.”⁶⁹ Sometimes even a garrison itself could serve as a symbol of power rather than as any sort of effective fighting force. In the same year as Beauharnois’ council with the Seneca, the intendant of New France, Gilles Hocquart, wrote to Paris proposing that the number of soldiers at Frontenac be reduced to fifteen. Their presence would still be enough to win the “respect” of the local Indians.⁷⁰

The 1728 encounter was also an example of the intensified friction between the Iroquois, French, and British, a product of the new posts combined with the continued mobility fostered by Six Nations neutrality. As officials in New France sought to subvert Fort Burnet’s role as a border-enforcer they also worked to regulate the flow of fur trade traffic on Lake Ontario. In 1725 Intendant Bégon publicly banned the sale of any canoes to New Yorkers. Three years later, Governor Beauharnois issued orders that all *voyageurs* traveling between the Saint Lawrence and the Upper Country were to only paddle along the north shore of Lake Ontario. The regulation, which sought to prevent smuggling and strangle Oswego’s trade, would continuously be renewed, staying in effect until at least 1735.⁷¹ In addition to these provincial edicts, the attempt to control the flow of trade also occurred at borderland outposts. For instance, by 1736 Niagara was the site of confrontations between the French and western Indian groups seeking to travel

⁶⁹ Conference between Beauharnois and the Senecas and Onondagas, 6 July 1742, NYCD 9: 1086-1092.

⁷⁰ Gilles Hocquart to Marine, 15 October 1742, *Royal Fort Frontenac*, Richard A. Preston and Leopold Lamontagne, eds. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1958), 228-29.

⁷¹ Dispatch to Marine, 25 May 1725, *Ibid.*: 950; Beauharnois and Aigremont to Marine, 1 October 1728; *Ibid.*: 1010; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 25 October 1729, *Ibid.*: 1015. The 1732 regulation permitted officers at Frontenac and Niagara to seize the goods of traders found on the lake’s south shore, Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 1 October 1732, AC, C11a, vol. 57, 5-42; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 13 October 1735, *Ibid.*, vol. 63, 73-103.

further east to trade at Oswego. Diplomats and officers utilized a combination of heavy-handed diplomacy and the seizure of trade goods in a bid to intimidate groups such as the Miami, Mississauga, and Ottawa.⁷² More subtly, a clerk supplied with goods was stationed at the outlet of the Toronto River and Lake Ontario during the trading season of 1744 in an effort to slow travel to Oswego.⁷³ Despite these efforts western Indians continued to visit the British post regularly to the eve of King George's War, which broke out in 1745.

French efforts to engage the assistance of Indian allies in the *petite politique* of this period, beyond the showing of flags, met with mixed results. While trying to stem the flow of groups seen as allies to Oswego, they also tried to take advantage of native agency and mobility for their own geopolitical ends. In October 1730 a band of Abenaki hunters who had been around Albany traveled west and north to Canada, informing New France not only of a New York-Six Nations council but also of the vulnerability of Oswego, observing only a sole trader at the post. Similarly they relied on the Ottawa to inform them of trade conditions at Oswego, tracking their rival's fortunes as informers reported changes in prices and the amount of furs being sold.⁷⁴ The French also relied upon the good will and their shared interests with some of the Six Nations. In the summer of 1742 a blacksmith was given safe passage through Oswego to Onondaga thanks to a meeting between the post's commissary, Andris Bradt, and the artisan's hosts.⁷⁵ The Onondaga used the opportunity as a reminder to the British of their power over Oswego

⁷² AIA, 197.

⁷³ Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 25 October 1744, AC, C11a, vol. 81, 72-76.

⁷⁴ Beauharnois to Minister Maurepas, 10 October 1730, NYCD 9: 1019; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 15 October 1732, Ibid.: 1036.

⁷⁵ AIA, 228.

and to keep someone on hand to mend tools and weapons while the French were able to improve relations with that nation and maintain a source of intelligence deep in Iroquoia.

Despite these reliable intelligence sources, other spies and more casual informers proved to be less valuable. In the fall of 1742 a Seneca reported to the commanding officer at Niagara that Oswego had been busy building new fortifications as well as two sailing vessels. While it was true that a new wall was in the works, no such naval building program had ever been underway. Besides faulty information, Indian allies could also leak intelligence. For instance, Governor Beauharnois ordered his brother, the naval officer Claude, who was to travel to Detroit in 1741 in order to raise Huron allies, to be sure to keep his mission secret from all of the Indians at Niagara, fearing the potential spread of news.⁷⁶

New York's Internal Power Struggles at Oswego

New York officials envisioned Oswego as exerting power and influence through its role in the fur trade, as a frontier garrison, and as a direct counter to the French presence on Lake Ontario. In order for these aims to be realized it was important for the colony to maintain a healthy, well-manned, well-constructed, and effective outpost. Governor Burnet explicitly subordinated the interests of Albany traders to his own geopolitical goals from the very beginning of the Oswego endeavor. In terms of funding, his project was partially funded by the Assembly with the governor personally furnishing eight river bateaux and ample supplies.

His instructions to the expedition, ordering it to speedily head west and erect the post in the spring of 1727, were a meticulous exertion of provincial authority. The

⁷⁶ Beauharnois to Marine, 24 October 1742, AC, C11a, vol. 77, 133-34; Governor Beauharnois' instructions to Claude Beauharnois, *Ibid.*, vol. 75, 316.

governor emphasized speed, in order to preempt any French designs on Oswego, discipline, as to prevent any violence between his party and the French or Iroquois, and vigilance, in the case of any attack. The expedition was put under the veteran officer Bancker, who would go on to be the fort's first commandant and included workers, 60 soldiers, and some 200 traders and their men transporting three months' worth of supplies and gifts. The traders who accompanied the party were explicitly put under his command and armed as militia. Burnet ordered lookouts and sentries to be posted nightly and that the forest around the initial building be cut down in order to deny the French or their allies any shelter from which they could ambush the post. In the case of any more casual encounters, he urged restraint, even if they used "vile language." Powder and provisions, which included peas, corn, bread, and a modest amount of rum, were to be carefully rationed. Burnet's instructions even detailed guidelines for daily camp tasks, such as the boiling of water and a reminder to sleep under shelter.⁷⁷

The first challenge to the project came not from New France but from a group of Iroquois who had appeared at Albany around the time the expedition west had just gotten under way. In an audience with the Commissioners of Indian Affairs they "objected strongly" to the construction of any trade house or fort at Oswego. The late objection, whose authority and consensus were uncertain, was relayed to the governor's council in New York. The council, eager to match the French presence at Niagara and forestall any Canadian works at Oswego, recommended that the expedition proceed as planned. Despite these objections, Burnet reported to both his council and the Board of Trade that construction had proceeded smoothly as planned; neither the French nor local Iroquois

⁷⁷ Burnet to Board of Trade, 9 May 1727, DHNY 1: 447-48; 16 March 1727, NYCM, vol. 15, 137; 27 April 1727, *Ibid.*, 141-43.

interfered and the first garrison, consisting of twenty soldiers, was in place by early June.⁷⁸

Although the 1727 Oswego expedition initially succeeded, the remote outpost would continuously be plagued by a variety of interrelated internal weaknesses that hindered the grandiose goals envisioned by imperial-minded provincials such as Burnet and later Clarke. Disease, inadequate supply, poor leadership, and low morale were all characteristics of the outpost's first decade or so. Sickness became common, beginning with Bancker himself. The ill officer was back in Albany by August 1, prohibiting him from carrying out a mission to the Seneca country where he was to monitor and report on French activity. Sickness and even death were sometimes linked to low quality provisions. These vulnerabilities were compounded by harsh winter weather that effectively sealed off Oswego from the rest of New York during the winter months. Governor Clarke, writing to Britain in April 1737, noted that winter had "shut up all intercourse" with the post, a common occurrence over the years that dictated the size of garrisons and the frequency of their rotation.⁷⁹

Human factors combined with these material issues, exacerbating the post's woes. Although Captain Bancker's stewardship of Oswego seems to have gone smoothly, multiple problems arose concerning the leadership of his successors. In 1731, then acting governor, Rip Van Dam, shared the grievances of Joseph Clement, a Mohawk Valley farmer and sometimes trader, with his council in New York. Clement reported that the

⁷⁸For the Iroquois objections see the council meeting of 6 May 1727, *Ibid.*, 141. Construction updates are mentioned in Burnet to Board of Trade, 9 May 1727, DHNY 1: 447-48; 15 June 1727, NYCM, vol. 15, 147.

⁷⁹For Bancker, see AIA, 171; Poor provisions are mentioned by deserters, extract of journal of events at Montreal in 1734, AC, C11a, vol. 61, 338-43; Clarke to Newcastle, 9 April 1737, NYCD 6: 91. Similarly, the French experience at Niagara was also characterized by poor provisions, low morale, and even mutiny, Severance, *An Old Frontier of France*, 1: 284, 288-89.

fort's head officer, a Captain Smith, was wasting provisions that were intended for his garrison. Furthermore, Smith was allowing French visitors to freely access areas in and around the fort. The council rebuked the officer and issued new orders that strictly forbade any Frenchmen from coming near the fort and urged more care with food supplies.⁸⁰ Five years later, in 1736, the issue of irresponsible rationing would continue, this time under a different commander, Captain Congreve. As with the council's scolding of Smith, Governor Clarke responded to complaints from the garrison by writing to the officer, imploring him to be more economical with rations in order to prevent deaths or desertions.⁸¹

Social conflicts were not limited to the poor judgment of the fort's commanders. Traders, who were a seasonal presence at the fort from the late spring to the fall, could also be a source of discord. The most uncooperative of these during this early period was George Swan, whose bitter rivalry with the officer John Lindsay in the early 1740s would continue to challenge provincial authority into King George's War. Lindsay and the Albany commissioners charged Swan with "abusive behavior" not only toward Lindsay but also toward local Indians. Swan even went as far as proclaiming that he would "go over to the French" and assist in their capture of the post. The governor's council, hundreds of miles away from Oswego, had to rely on the judgment and resources of the Albany Commission of Indian Affairs in order to maintain order. The commissioners balked at arresting a fellow trader but pledged to monitor the troublesome Swan via their commissary.⁸²

⁸⁰ 15 November 1731, NYCM, vol. 16, 168-69.

⁸¹ Clarke to Congreve, 1 November 1736, NYCD 6: 93-94.

⁸² 27 May 1741, NYCM, vol. 19, 239.

Although Swan's threat was never carried out, it was a reminder of the ways imperial proximity could be leveraged by individuals to defy colonial assertions of authority and sovereignty. This phenomenon is best seen in the cases of desertion that sapped Oswego's power throughout its existence. Members of the garrison, often facing the isolation, poor supplies, questionable leadership, and poor living conditions discussed above, sometimes chose to slip away from the fort and head north to Fort Frontenac and New France. Instances of desertion involved small groups of soldiers but in the context of a force that never exceeded twenty permanent sentries before King George's War they could represent a significant decrease in personnel. As early as the spring of 1729 soldiers had grown "mutinous" because of not being relieved in "due time" and three of them elected to go to the French. In 1734 at least four more men found their way to New France, informing their hosts of the poor state of provisions to the south. Desertions would continue two years later with a pair of soldiers who fled to Canada and provided governor Beauharnois with intelligence about events at Oswego.⁸³

Internal weaknesses were not limited to the mismanagement and corruption of certain officers but extended to the contentious state provincial politics in New York, specifically the rivalry between the colonial governors and the assembly. Although Clarke proved to be much more adept at working with the assembly and neutralizing the colony's complex political factions than his predecessors, he clashed with the lower house of the legislature over the funding for Oswego, which would become politicized

⁸³ AIA, 177; Extract of journal of events at Montreal in 1734, AC, C11a, vol. 61, 338-43; Beauharnois to Clarke, 15 November 1736, NYCD 6: 93.

and erratic.⁸⁴ The best example of these contests and the ways that they weakened the post can be seen in Governor Clarke's two-year attempt to enhance fortifications on the eve of King George's War. In May 1741 the governor had successfully secured funding from the Assembly for the construction of a stone wall, complete with bastions and curtains. That December he wrote to the Board of Trade in London, expressing his hopes that the project could be carried out as soon as possible; the French naval presence on the lake made Oswego an easy target and in its current state the post was little more than an "eyesore."⁸⁵ Although work did occur by August of the following year, he was infuriated upon discovering that the wall was made of weak clay rather than the prescribed stone and that the construction had not been planned or carried by engineers. The contractor, suspected of being in league with some assemblymen, had pocketed the difference in cost. When confronted by the fort's commander and charged with ignoring the specifications of the assembly, the builder simply replied that there was no available lime with which to make mortar and left. By 1743 funding had become so irregular that Lieutenant Lindsay was personally paying for repairs to the fortifications and the garrison's food.⁸⁶

Oswego: Survival and Geopolitical Potential

As a result of these vulnerabilities, New York's power in the Lake Ontario borderlands was slow to develop. The execution of provincial authority across a far

⁸⁴ Patricia Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 133-34; Johnson G. Cooper, "Oswego in the French-English Struggle in North America," (Ph.D. dissertation Syracuse University, 1961), 62-69, 71-76.

⁸⁵ Journal of General Assembly, 23 May 1741, DHNY 1: 463; Clarke to Lords of Trade, 15 December 1741, NYCD 6: 207-09.

⁸⁶ Clarke to Lords of Trade, 24 August 1742, Ibid.: 215; Clarke to Lords of Trade, 29 November 1742, Ibid.: 220-21; Clarke to Lords of Trade, 19 June 1743, 225. For Lindsay's expenses, see NYCM, vol. 19, 251.

distance over a dynamic space allowed for what Elizabeth Mancke has called “intersecting and competing spaces of power.”⁸⁷ The political, social, and economic goals of the Six Nations, British, and French coexisted and overlapped as different groups at different times laid claim to and utilized the waters of Lake Ontario, its shore, Oswego, and beyond. The tactics and goals of New York’s *petite politique* at Oswego were shaped as a result. Since provincial officials were unable to gain a naval presence on Lake Ontario, erect a large fortress, or maintain a large garrison, they began to realize that the post’s power derived from its Indian trade, a trade that connected officers, the governor, and his council to dynamic networks of native information.

New York sought to assert its presence at Oswego on a daily basis. Indians arriving at the post from the lake were spotted by the garrison and routinely greeted by the commanding officer of the post by a canoe he dispatched to intercept incoming visitors. They were then escorted to the fort in order to minimize robberies and other abuses. The landscape was dominated by trade; in addition to the stone house and twenty foot wall around it, which served as the fort, there were some seventy log houses that sheltered both Indian and colonial traders and their wares. In addition to trade, the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs maintained a blacksmith who could repair Indian muskets and metal tools.⁸⁸ While the sale and exchange of rum often hurt diplomatic relations with the Six Nations, trade and increased contact could yield new imperial geopolitical benefits. The volume of trade fluctuated between the mid-1720s and the mid-1740s. Enthusiasm for the new market waned in the early 1730s but began to recover by the middle of the decade as the French, under the direction of the bishop of Quebec, were

⁸⁷ Mancke, “Spaces of Power in the Early Modern Northeast,” 32.

⁸⁸ Bartram, *Observations...*, 48-50; NYCM, 10 August 1727, vol. 15, 155.

still prohibited from selling brandy at Niagara and Frontenac. New York officials estimated that one-hundred and sixty non-Iroquois canoes had visited their traders by the halfway point of the summer of 1736 alone.⁸⁹ Despite the increased centralization of the fur trade under the colony's supervision, some traders in this early period continued to pursue their self-interests across weak imperial boundaries. Although the Lake Ontario trade endeavored to stamp out smuggling from Albany, enterprising traders in the west found new ways to trade with the French. Liquor sales to Canadian agents operating in Iroquoia did occur and the New York rum was resold to Seneca and other groups.⁹⁰

As early as 1729 the French realized the political power of Oswego as French agents became aware of clandestine diplomacy with groups they considered to be in their sphere of influence and wampum belts that were being dispatched from the post appeared across the region. By the early 1740s native groups generally considered close allies to the French, such as the Ottawa at Michilimackinac, were visiting Oswego to trade.⁹¹ Furthermore, the British presence enabled the post to be a site of symbolic confrontations between the two empires. As discussed in the cases above, flag protocol, face-to-face showdowns between officers, and the challenging of movements were all part of a new regional borderland political culture. New York faced many difficulties involving supplies and manpower, but officials and officers such as Burnet and Bancker proved their resolve, in front of Indian audiences, and in the face of French challenges. In the years to follow these opportunities to gather intelligence, exploit and control mobility,

⁸⁹ Beauharnois to Maurepas, 15 October 1732, NYCD 9: 1036; AIA, 30 July 1736; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 12 October 1736, AC, C11a, vol. 65, 28-53. Detailed discussions of the posts trade are found in Armour, *Merchants of Albany*, 194-98 and Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, ch. 9

⁹⁰ AIA, 1 July 1736, 197.

⁹¹ French fears of British expansion are detailed in Captain de Noyan's memo, 15 October 1729, AC, C11a, vol. 51, 465-470. For an instance of strained relations, see Clarke's August 1740 council with the Six Nations at Albany, NYCD 6: 174-77. Ottawa visits to Oswego are mentioned in Address of Beauharnois to the Ottawa of Michilimackinac, 8 July 1741, NYCD 9: 1073.

and exert sovereignty would be realized by agents of the British empire maintained at Oswego.

“Masters by Water:” French Naval Power on Lake Ontario

As New York struggled to maintain a political presence on the southeast shore of Lake Ontario, the French worked to reestablish a naval presence that had been absent from the Great Lakes since the exploits of the Sieur de La Salle almost a half century earlier.⁹² New France was well positioned to exert naval power on Ontario. Not only did the Saint Lawrence permit relatively easy travel from Quebec and Montreal but Fort Frontenac was positioned at one of the few deep harbors on the lake. Early in 1725 the governor and intendant formulated a plan for two sailing ships. Usually referred to as “barques,” these ships would probably have had multiple masts and were, at least initially, unarmed. As early as February, carpenters, smiths, and other workmen were dispatched to Frontenac to begin construction. Canadian officials intended the ships to serve numerous roles, including ferrying men and supplies to and from Niagara, serving as a link between the upper Saint Lawrence and the upper country, assisting in the movement of furs and other supplies, and as a means to check the British at Oswego. Efforts to obtain permission for the vessels from the Iroquois, sought after their construction had begun, indicate the complex and competing claims to sovereignty over the lake. Although the Six Nations sachems gathered in the Seneca country initially

⁹² For the first of these exploits, see Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (New York: Random House, 1999), 89-97. By the late 1680s the French had 3 barques on Lake Ontario but they were in serious disrepair, Memoir of Denonville on the State of Canada, 12 November 1685, NYCD 9: 282. In addition to Lake Ontario, Louis Denys de La Ronde, an officer involved in the fur trade and copper mining, constructed and operated a forty-ton barque on Lake Superior in the mid-1730s.

refused their blessing in May 1725, it was obtained by the diplomat Longueuil during his visit to Onondaga that same year.⁹³

The use of French ships, which became a reality by 1726, brought about a material presence that strengthened French pretensions to the Lake Ontario basin. That spring, both vessels sailed within sight of Oswego on their way west to Niagara, a show of force that was not lost upon the Albany commissioners. Besides these symbolic displays, the increased mobility made possible by sailing ships was also used for exploration. French officers became acquainted with creeks, rivers, and other landmarks and record the distances and travel times between them.⁹⁴

As with Oswego, the full potential of the naval presence in terms of *petite politique* would not be fully realized for decades. This is because, like Oswego, efforts at exerting borderland power and influence were limited by meager resources and a harsh environment. As early as 1728, King Louis XV wrote his administrators in New France suggesting that the Niagara, the post at Detroit, and the two lake ships should be leased to a private merchant in order to cut costs. Also early, it was ordered that the barques should only operate one at a time. Only in a “desperate” situation should both ships be crewed and sailing. By 1734 one of the vessels had fallen into such a state of disrepair that it was completely scrapped, with its iron being salvaged to be used to construct a third vessel. Despite the completion of this ship, the French continued to only employ one of the barques at any time in 1736, with one crew rotating between the two ships.⁹⁵ Within a

⁹³ Bégon to Marine, 10 June 1725, AC, C11a, vol. 47, 2016-17; Abstract of dispatches regarding Oswego, 25 May 1725, NYCD 9: 951.

⁹⁴ AIA, 162-63; Mémoire touchant de le Lac Ontario, AC, C11e, vol. 13, 159-160.

⁹⁵ Louis XV to Dupuy and Beauharnois, 14 May 1728, NYCD 9: 1003-04; A Memorial about the Indians, 1726 in *Royal Fort Frontenac*, 222; Louis XV to Beauharnois and Hocquart, 27 April 1734, *Ibid.*, 223; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 12 October 1736, AC, C11a, vol. 65, 28-53.

period of two years the two-ship squadron experienced shipwrecks. Whether these early mishaps were the result of the lake's infamous and unpredictable weather or simple user error was unreported. The first, which occurred in October 1738, happened when one of the barques was wrecked on a return trip from Niagara to Fort Frontenac. Despite the mishap, the ship's crew was saved and its supplies were salvaged. The second incident, in 1740, involved the wreck of one of the ships and a bateaux.⁹⁶

Despite these prohibitions and setbacks, French provincial officials were enthusiastic advocates of Great Lakes ships. Not only did the governor and intendant push back against their monarch's efforts to privatize the two vessels on Ontario but they also argued that two sailing ships should be built for use on Lake Erie, where they could move resources in their efforts against the Fox (Meskwaki) to the west. By constructing two "sloops," the colonials argued that the need for large canoe fleets and those skilled in their handling could be avoided.⁹⁷ These schemes never came to fruition as Louis XV favored a more economical North American policy.

Although New France was expanding its power on Lake Ontario, the scope of its control was still limited. Just as New York was learning at Oswego, French officials still had to deal with borderland smugglers. For instance, in the spring of 1736 the officer at Frontenac was informed that two *voyageurs* were headed south to Oswego to trade. A canoe was dispatched in pursuit that managed to apprehend the smugglers and their cargo of 300 pounds of beaver skins eight miles from Frontenac. Upon their capture, the two

⁹⁶ Beauharnois to Marine, 6 November 1738, *Royal Fort Frontenac*, 225-25; Beaujours to Marine, 3 October 1740, AC, C11a, vol. 74, 154-57.

⁹⁷ Abstracts of Beauharnois and Hocquart's dispatches, 25 October 1729, NYCD 9: 1015-16.

men were fined and imprisoned in hopes that their case would serve as an example to “those who might be inclined to drive a fraudulent trade.”⁹⁸

In 1742, French operations on Lake Ontario were finally partially privatized. Colonial resistance to earlier metropolitan attempts at privatization failed as key assets were finally put under the stewardship of François Chalet. Unlike the proprietors of other western posts who were independent merchants, Chalet was a trader “hand-picked” because of his ties to the Indies Company. In exchange for a monopoly over the lake trade and the right to store furs at Quebec he was required to support the non-military personnel at the two forts and to purchase and maintain the two barques. The ships were to continue to support garrisons at Frontenac and Niagara under the explicit terms of the lease.⁹⁹

While the French dealt with tight funding, shipwrecks, and smugglers, the British had failed to make any substantial progress in their effort to secure the lake. Governor Clarke of New York, writing to London on the eve of war with France, reported how his rivals to the north used their ships to further trade and transport military supplies. He also advocated the construction of ships in order to cut New France’s link to Niagara and the Upper Country and to improve British influence among the regional Indian nations. The naturalist John Bartram, who visited Oswego in late July 1743, was another advocate of shipbuilding. He hoped that Ontario would one day be under “English navigation.” While

⁹⁸ Severance, *An Old Frontier of France*, 1:266; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 12 October 1736, AC, C11a, vol. 65, 17-44.

⁹⁹ S. Dale Standen, “François Chalet and the French Trade at the Posts of Niagara and Frontenac, 1742-1747,” *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 22 (1998): 227-231. Chalet would continue under the terms of the lease until 1747 when the ships were returned to the colony.

at the post he noted that any New Yorkers wishing to venture out on the water past the fort were reliant upon Indian canoes.¹⁰⁰

The 1736 Encounter : An Episode of *Petite Politique* in the New Borderland

In July 1736 the more mobile French collided with the relatively stationary British at Oswego in an incident that renewed regional tensions. If the summonses dispatched by Beauharnois nearly a decade earlier illustrated the beginnings of a new borderland paradigm, the 1736 incident shows a maturing culture of power. That summer a Canadian officer, the major of the town of Quebec, forwent the prescribed canoe route along the north shore of Lake Ontario and instead traveled within sight of Oswego, boldly flying a French flag.¹⁰¹ As during earlier incidents, the display of political symbols could have very real diplomatic ramifications. Initially, a boat carrying two men from the fort met the officer in order to exchange pleasantries. However the commanding officer on the shore, Captain Congreve, soon ordered a second boat to be dispatched to intercept the major and force his flag to the shore. This boat, which carried seven soldiers and two Dutch Albany traders, obeyed Congreve's orders when the Canadian canoe refused to yield and opened fire with muskets. The major and his party were unscathed and managed to return to New France to report the confrontation.

Governor Beauharnois wrote his counterpart in New York, Clarke, of the incident a month later. He defended the actions of the major, arguing that any officer who surrendered his flag would be “despised by his nations.” He went on to suggest that Clarke discipline Congreve as his actions were a serious threat to the peace that existed,

¹⁰⁰ Bartram, *Observations...*, 40.

¹⁰¹ Although unnamed in the correspondence, the officer was mostly likely Jacques-Hugues Péan de Livaudière, who had been made major of Quebec in 1733 and, as mentioned by Beauharnois below, was also a knight of the order of Saint Louis.

at least in Europe, between their respective nations. Clarke's reply, the delivery of which was delayed until the following year, promised to reprimand the overzealous commander. The New York governor, never missing an opportunity, also used his reply to warn the French about their diplomatic efforts to sway the Six Nations. It was during this time that the contest for Irondequoit was in full swing. The hostility of the two colonial officials was never far under the formal surface in their correspondence. By mid-November 1736 Beauharnois had informed Paris of the episode and wrote to Clarke once more, this time using the testimony of two soldiers who had recently defected across Ontario from Oswego to confirm and detail the original narrative. The following spring Clarke had also alerted his superiors in London.¹⁰²

The encounter is illustrative for what it demonstrates about the methods and ramifications of everyday politics on the Lake Ontario borderland. The new imperial flashpoint arose from the new and intensified proximity between rival geopolitical actors. Furthermore, unlike the earlier showdown in 1727, the Six Nations were conspicuously absent as the two European powers now found themselves in a region that could be potentially less influenced and mediated by native power. French freshwater maritime mobility, conflicting claims of sovereignty, and symbolic displays of power combined and conflicted to produce an incident that was not isolated. Local actors alerted provincial officials who in turn informed their superiors across the Atlantic. The Canadian governor was able to use the agency and mobility of the two British deserters to confirm the

¹⁰² Beauharnois to Clarke, 20 August 1736, NYCD 6: 92; Clarke to Beauharnois, 26 October 1736, *Ibid.*: 92-93; Beauharnois to Clarke, 15 November 1736, *Ibid.*: 93; Clarke to Newcastle, 9 April 1737, *Ibid.*: 91. For Clarke's reprimand to Congreve for the incident (as well as for other infractions), see Clarke to Congreve, 1 November 1736, *Ibid.*: 93-94.

intelligence he had received from his own officer, information that was later used as a diplomatic tool to bolster his grievance against Clarke.

Conclusion

The establishment of British and French posts at Oswego and Niagara, respectively, ushered in an era of borderland geopolitical competition in the Lake Ontario region that would continue until the end of the Seven Years' War in northeastern North America in 1760. Although the area had been contested in the past, the new borderland differed significantly in quality, as well as in terms of new proximity. The semi-militarized frontiers of New York and New France were tempered by the Six Nations' diplomacy of neutrality as well as relative European weakness and disinterest. As a result, the biggest proponents of empire were provincial actors. Their diplomatic and economic goals sought to refashion the region's mobility to serve increasingly assertive geopolitical goals. Despite the stated aims of officials like New York's George Clarke, these provincial imperialists did not usually seek the land for settlement, but instead sought to wield the essentially non-violent tools of a borderland *petite politique* to win allies, direct flows of trade, gain intelligence and geographic knowledge, and perform basic displays of sovereignty. These tools were not conventional arms or armies but instead consisted of vulnerable barques, face-to-face conversations, flags, and canoes.

The adaptation of goals and tactics to borderland realities testifies to the acumen of the Six Nations Iroquois; not just at numerous diplomatic councils but also on the ground at portages, forts, and other key locations. Their maintenance of control over the strategic port of Irondequoit in the face of repeated British and French overtures during this early period highlights their tenacity. As a result, European expansion was stalled, reducing the

imperial contest to efforts to maintain the modest posts they had been granted, their continued material existence was crucial to a meaningful assertion of and sovereignty in the region.

Although the basic parameters of this borderland remained relatively intact until the massive military campaigns of the latter years of the Seven Years' War, its characteristics were also fluid. For instance, the arrival of William Johnson to the Mohawk Valley and his early trade engagements with the diverse Iroquois community at Aquaga in the late 1730s hinted at the changing nature of the personnel who would be involved with Lake Ontario's daily geopolitics in the years to come. Despite these changes, the Iroquois' diplomatic goal of neutrality would maintain borderland stasis into the next outright war between France and Britain that began in 1744. The provincial imperialists, as they had before, would respond by adjusting their goals and tactics.

CHAPTER TWO

KING GEORGE'S WAR IN THE LAKE ONTARIO BORDERLANDS:

AN EDUCATION IN *PETITE POLITIQUE*

In 1744, the rumors of war that had been emanating from across the Atlantic finally gave way to another conflict between Great Britain and France. The War of the Austrian Succession, or King George's War, ended the over two-decade long uneasy peace between the two empires.¹ France, which had been on the sidelines of the larger conflict that pitted Britain against Spain since 1739, slowly entered the fray via a treaty between Louis XV and his Bourbon kin, Philip V, in the fall of 1743. An official declaration of war against Britain would follow the next spring.² Despite the rumblings from Europe in the years leading up to the war, the French at Frontenac and Niagara and the British at Oswego and in the Mohawk Valley were relatively unprepared in terms of fortifications and forces. As in the preceding period, the Six Nations Iroquois were best situated; neither the Canadians or New Yorkers would be able to make a substantial push in the Lake Ontario region without the tacit approval of the powerful confederacy. As a result, the scale of the war in the eastern Ontario borderland was nothing like the battles that raged in Europe, the dramatic siege of Louisbourg on the Atlantic or even the large-scale raids in places just to the east like Saratoga and Fort Massachusetts.

¹ A standalone history of the conflict in North America remains to be written. For overviews, see Matthew Smith Anderson, *The War of Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (New York: Routledge, 1995), ch. 8; John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 2; Howard H. Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689-1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), ch. 5. Politically, Parmenter, "Neutralité active des Iroquois durant la guerre de la Succession d'Autriche, 1744-1748," trans. Michel Lavoie, *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 32 (2002): 29-37, revises our understanding of the war in the Northeast. The New York frontier perspective is best detailed in, Robert E. Ziebarth, "The Role of New York in King George's War, 1739-1748" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1972).

² For France's decision to enter the war, see Reed Browning, *The War of the Austrian Succession* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 149-61.

However, this did not mean that there was inaction in terms of the pursuit of power. On the contrary, *petite politique* intensified. This chapter will argue that King George's War served to exacerbate the urgency of the British, French, and Six Nations. Further militarization ushered in new actors and new possibilities, serving as a sort of borderland laboratory where the tactics of everyday geopolitics were increasingly tested and refined. The new personnel learned by trial and error how to make the most of the region's native foundations, which included migrations, kinship ties, and a staunch neutrality. Whereas the preceding period of official peace had seen a desperate and creative three-way contest to assert sovereignty on and around Lake Ontario, the focus shifted during the war years. Beginning in 1744, indigenous and imperial actors sought ways to exploit the region's mobility and fluidity toward two ends. The first was the pursuit of valuable military intelligence, diplomatic news, and other information. Spies, scouts, deserters, and less formal informants were used by all sides to improve knowledge that related to defense and politics. Secondly, borderland mobility was utilized to carry out low-intensity raids. The violence used against colonial communities in the upper Saint Lawrence and Mohawk valleys held multiple meanings, ranging from efforts to distract opponents and defend frontiers to signaling diplomatic goals.

King George's War in the Northeast and Beyond

The successful balancing act of the Iroquois before the war that was characterized by the monitoring and limitation of the competing posts at Niagara and Oswego continued into the latter part of the 1740s. Jon Parmenter has described their wartime diplomatic triumph as being a policy of "active neutrality," one in which the Six Nations did not experience a "sustained decline," as previously argued in the historiography, but

rather took a proactive approach. They maintained open channels with both the French and British throughout the conflict, using the Champlain-Hudson corridor as a valuable road of intelligence, illegal trade, and diplomacy. In 1744 and 1745 they refused the overtures of New York's governor, George Clinton. Similarly, they assured New France's governor Beauharnois of their neutrality at a 1744 conference. As in the past, they explicitly referred to both Niagara and Oswego as "their beaver traps," making it clear that any major military expedition against either would not be tolerated. As one Six Nations speaker put it during a council at Albany, the French and British "ought to fight on the salt water," as "all the world knew...the lakes were ours." Although a small number of warriors did partake in scouting parties and raids for both sides, this participation is better understood in the context of individual agency and a lack of Six Nations centralized political authority rather than as a successful exertion of British or French influence. Very limited Iroquois involvement was not only balanced between the British and French, it was exclusively directed at European targets. By 1748 New France formally recognized Iroquois neutrality. During the previous year Clinton had finally managed to secure lukewarm league support for an invasion of Canada from New York, but the operation was called off and that colony's assembly accepted Iroquois inaction. By war's end in 1748, the Iroquois communities in both Canada and Iroquoia remained intact and secure.³

New York's role in the war has been described as being one of "limited participation." The assembly's eventual acceptance of Iroquois neutrality flew in the face of the efforts of the imperial-minded Clinton and was representative of the factional

³ Parmenter, "Neutralité active des Iroquois durant la guerre de la Succession d'Austriche." For the quotation differentiating Iroquois freshwater from European saltwater, see *An Account of the Treaty held at the City of Albany...*, October 1745, MPCPA 5: 23.

politics of the colony. Clinton's frustrations with the state of Indian affairs led to the eventual suspension of the Albany commissioners in favor of a single agent, an office granted to William Johnson as the "Colonel of the Iroquois." The governor's frustrated efforts to wage war against the French contributed to and were caused by he and his colony's increasing isolation. Internally, Clinton became increasingly estranged from the assembly, which controlled the purse strings for any military endeavors. While the administration of his predecessor, George Clarke, had been relatively peaceful politically, Clinton's tenure was wracked factionalism and sectionalism. His principal rival, James De Lancey, engaged him in a bitter struggle beginning in 1746 over the governor's salary and his own commission as Lieutenant Governor. In regard to the war, the southern part of the colony was skeptical of any costly effort to invade Canada and was not very sympathetic to the threats faced by the northern frontier. Those engaged in the illegal Montreal trade, had their own reasons for maintaining the status quo. Externally, not only was New York coolly received by the Six Nations, but it was also alienated by the war's most enthusiastic supporter in the region, Massachusetts governor William Shirley. Shirley, who had been the originator of the plan to take Louisbourg, was incensed by New York's inaction as his own frontiers were attacked. His relationship with Clinton was further harmed when the planned invasion of Canada was delayed and eventually scrapped due to an uncooperative Assembly, New York Council, and Albany commissioners.⁴

When imperial-minded provincials such as Clinton and Johnson were stymied in the Champlain corridor, the Lake Ontario borderland became an increasingly attractive

⁴ Cooper, "Oswego in the French-English Struggle in North America," 112, 118; For "limited participation," see Ziebarth, "The Role of New York in King George's War," 194-98.

theatre of operations. Both Clinton and the Albany commissioners resurrected the plan to make a fort at Irondequoit, a deep-water bay west of Oswego on the lake's south shore. Like Clinton's other ambitious wartime scheme, this too was made impossible by the hostile assembly.⁵ However, Oswego's proximity to both New France and the western Indian nations made it an ideal sight of an intensified *petite politique*.

The war proved to be a serious burden to the leaders of New France as well. Although it experienced none of the internal political wrangling that New York did, the French position in Canada was vulnerable on both its eastern and western flanks. The French effort to liberate Nova Scotia in the opening days of the war ended in failure and turned New England's attention to the north. Shirley's siege of Louisbourg, which combined New England troops under William Pepperrell and Royal Navy vessels under Admiral Peter Warren, represented a successful combination of provincial energy and metropolitan power. The loss of the fortress in June 1745 led to widespread alarm. Fortifications were improved at Quebec and Fort Saint-Frédéric on Lake Champlain. Defenses were also bolstered by preemptive raids against New England and New York, a revival of the tactics that had been carried out in earlier North American wars. As New York eyed Irondequoit and Niagara in the Ontario region, governors Beauharnois, and later Roland-Michel Barrin de La Galissonnière, were also unable to execute any major moves against the nuisance post at Oswego. Not only did the Six Nations' active neutrality protect the site, but a dearth of supplies and materials made any effort unfeasible.⁶

⁵ Cooper, *Oswego in the French-English Struggle in North America*, 112.

⁶ Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness*, 102-03; Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 151; Cooper, *Oswego in the French-English Struggle in North America*, 114-15.

New France's material woes were linked to the loss of the naval base at Louisbourg and its other failures in the Atlantic. These defeats reverberated westward in the *pays d'en haut* or upper country. The scarcity of trade goods and their increased wartime shipping costs drove prices higher and higher at places such as Niagara and Detroit. To make matters worse, officials in France cut back the amount allocated to Indian gifts at the same time traders from Pennsylvania were moving west with cheaper goods and encouraging their clients to defy their French allies and trading partners. By 1747 many western Indian communities openly defied the French with widespread acts of violence against traders and outposts stretching from Lake Superior to the Illinois country to the Ohio Valley. To many, the French had "ceased to act as fathers," the so-called "middle ground" of Native-French interaction had been clearly breached. The sporadic, uncoordinated revolt would eventually dissipate with the end of the war, a bolstered French garrison at Detroit, and the revival of the fur trade.⁷ Lying at the eastern edge of the upper country, the posts on Lake Ontario would be linked to these struggles as sites of daily geopolitics, places where on-the-spot diplomacy, the gathering of intelligence, and the exercise of mobility could occur.

The Incremental and Limited Militarization of the Lake Ontario Borderland

At the eve and outbreak of King George's War, the region around Oswego, Fort Frontenac, and Niagara was increasingly subject to rumors of military action, significantly boosting the anxious atmosphere that had pervaded over the past two decades. Although these rumors would never materialize into the relatively large-scale invasions and expeditions they claimed to foretell, they did shape imperial policies. As

⁷ Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 150-51; White, *The Middle Ground*, 199-201.

often in politics perceptions heavily influenced realities. In the opening year of the war Governor General Beauharnois was said to have been overheard boasting to Indian allies that he was prepared to take Oswego and that he would even invite thirty Indian observers to witness the capture or destruction of the post. Such rumors filtered from one empire to another; a young Indian reported the incident to the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs who in turn reported the perceived threat to Governor Clinton in New York. Such gossip would continue to circulate throughout the war. For instance, in 1746, the Schenectady trader John Van Eps wrote to William Johnson about a popular rumor at Oswego that claimed the French were still planning to move on the British post.⁸ This unease also spread to the Mohawk nation after they had become aligned with the British against New France. As late as 1748 they openly feared a French invasion of their valley, much to the consternation of Johnson who worked to maintain the relationship.⁹

In addition to the British being on edge, the French were also feeling vulnerable. Niagara, like much of the rest of the upper country to its west, was feeling the pinch of decreased trade traffic. For that post, the shortages brought about by a decline in transatlantic shipping and decreased Indian gifts were augmented by a local factor; a lake sloop, which had been operated under lease by the merchant François Chalet since 1742, ran aground in 1743, seriously damaging Niagara's participation in the 1744 trade season. This drop in trade was not just experienced by the French but also extended to the British to the south as the official declaration of war saw a withdrawal of nearly every trader

⁸ ACIA to Clinton, 13 August 1744, NYCP, vol. 74, 176a; John Van Eps to Johnson, 6 May 1746, WJP 1: 50.

⁹ Johnson to Clinton, 1748, *Ibid.*: 199-200.

from Oswego.¹⁰ Perhaps New France's biggest effort to assert dominance over Lake Ontario was the building of two new sailing ships, the *St. Francis* and *St. Charles* that were completed by September 1747. These vessels were funded directly by the colony and built by Chalet.¹¹

Most rumors likely sprung from the ambitious and unrealistic plans voiced by provincial imperialists such as Beauharnois and Clinton. The rumored Canadian expedition against Oswego mentioned above likely originated from a pre-war plan proposed by Beauharnois that would have involved Algonquin and Nipissing allies.¹² Gossip surrounding the supposed French expedition was so intense that the neutral Oneida nation was fully prepared to meet a massive attack. Their fears were finally allayed in the fall of 1744 when a group of sachems stopped some Kahnawake returning from Albany on Oneida Lake to share news and question what they had heard.¹³ Clinton, who assumed office in New York in 1743, matched the bravado of his rival to the north. Outgoing governor George Clarke outlined the importance of Oswego and the Lake Ontario region to his successor in a report that argued for increased fortification, more vigorous trade, and a settlement of colonists who would thrive from working fertile soil and abundant timber. Strategically, he called for a rival naval force that could "take, sink or otherwise destroy the French vessels and then easily take their forts on the lake." In the upcoming war, Ontario would be the key to taking Canada. One of Clinton's first acts upon arriving in the colony was to call upon the Albany commissioners to outfit

¹⁰ Hocquart to Marine, 29 September 1743, *Royal Fort Frontenac*, 231; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 25 October 1744, AC, C11a, vol. 81, 72-76.

¹¹ Galissonière and Hocquart to Marine, 26 September 1747, *Royal Fort Frontenac*, 234-45. One of the ships was at least partially wrecked the following year and lost some furs, see Francois Bigot to Marine, 7 November 1748, AC, C11a, vol. 92, 191-92.

¹² Beauharnois to Maurepas, 4 March 1744, NYCD 9: 1100.

¹³ Intelligence communicated to Beaucours by Neraguindiac, 21 October 1744, *Ibid.*: 1110-11.

interpreters, scouts, boatmen in order to reinforce and resupply Oswego. His enthusiasm, as it would continue to be time and time again, was met with a tepid response. The commissioners agreed to send nine additional soldiers to the fort, one interpreter, Abraham Wendell, less than ten Iroquois scouts, and one boat to carry them. They also asked the governor for funds to provide some sort of gifts for the Indians.¹⁴

The modest militarization of Oswego continued during the war years. By June 1744 the small garrison had been reinforced yet again with fifty militia, and Clinton informed the Six Nations that the first pieces of artillery were being moved to the fort. These changes were at times offset by a combative assembly that actually reduced the garrison in 1745. Near the end of the war, by early 1748, the fort's contingent of colonial regulars, who usually numbered twenty soldiers, had been doubled. Structurally, no major expansion had been made to the walls since the time of Clarke.¹⁵ As in its earlier days, Oswego was still quite precarious not only in terms of its military strength but also in regard to New York's sovereignty and internal authority. During the war Clinton and New York paid a "considerable" gift to the Seneca in order to extinguish their claim to the land at Oswego. According to the governor, the payment had been promised by his predecessors.¹⁶

Internally, the discipline and allegiances of the garrison were still questionable. In April 1745 a soldier by the name of Kelley was removed from the post and escorted back to Albany for insubordination to his superior officers. Not only was his lack of discipline

¹⁴ "Governor Clarke's Report on the State of the British Provinces with Respect to the French who Surround them," 19 June 1743, DHNY 1: 464-69; Lords of Trade to Clarke, 27 July 1743, NYCD 6: 246; Clinton to ACIA, 19 October 1743, Ibid.: 249-50; ACIA to Clinton, 29 October 1746, Ibid.: 250-51.

¹⁵ Clinton and Six Nations Council 18 June 1744, Ibid.: 364-66; Legislative Abstracts, Ibid.: 643, 683; Cooper, "Oswego in the French-English Struggle in North America," 112.

¹⁶ Clinton to the Assembly, 13 October 1747, NYCD 6: 633

an issue but his commanding officer, Walter Butler, suspected the man to be a Catholic. Once back at Albany Kelley “professed” his membership in the Church of England, which was “enough” for his superiors at that town “so long as his conversations or actions [did not] show the contrary.” However, tensions between some of the Irish at Oswego and their British officers eventually led to desertions across Lake Ontario to New France by August 1747.¹⁷

Added to these ethnic and sectarian divisions were lingering personal disputes, particularly between the trader George Swan and the officer John Lindsay. As discussed in the previous chapter, Swan was accused of poisoning relations with his Indian customers while at the same time threatening to go over to the French and aid their capture of the post. At the outbreak of war the troublesome trader found himself in the midst of controversy once again. This time it involved accusations and counteraccusations about the panicked evacuation of traders from Oswego in July 1744. Swan traveled to New York to testify before the governor’s council, asserting that he had not been a part of the initial withdrawal from the post but had stayed with six other traders to sell the remaining British goods to the Cayuga and Seneca. When twenty-two canoes of “far Indians” arrived they had to be turned away as there were “no goods for them.” The episode became a microcosm of the struggles between Governor Clinton and the New York legislature; the assembly backed Swan and demanded Lindsay’s removal for his questionable character and “extravagant” habits. Fittingly, perhaps it was the Six Nations’ opinion that mattered most as they voiced support for Lindsay to the Albany commissioners, urging that he be kept at Oswego. In the end, Clinton kept Lindsay on

¹⁷ John Rutherford to Walter Butler, Sr., 25 April 1725, WJP 1: 29; Occurrences in Canada, 1747-1748, NYCD 10: 122, 146.

while praising the bravery of the merchants who did not immediately vacate Oswego, such as Swan. However, as Clinton pointed out to the Assembly, the damage of the hasty withdrawal had already been done. Not only did it hurt the Indian trade but it made New York and Britain appear cowardly before the Six Nations and other potential allies.¹⁸ In addition to prestige, it also served to damage pretensions to local sovereignty.

Like their rivals to the south, the French also worked to strengthen their conventional military forces in the region. Although their resources were relatively more plentiful, their efforts can also be classified as limited and incremental. The most intense militarization took place around Montreal since the town was perceived as being vulnerable to a British attack from either the Champlain or upper Saint Lawrence valleys. Garrisons composed of colonial regulars and militia, who actively scouted the area to prevent raiding parties from Lake Ontario, were positioned at the western edges of Montreal at Île Perrot, Senneville, the seigneurie at Soulanges, and the Iroquois mission village at Lac des Deux Montagnes, Kanasatake. Closer to Oswego, Fort Frontenac was manned by a modest garrison of some forty soldiers and officers. Governor Beauharnois assured officials in France that the post, among others, would “be reinforced when necessary on the first movement of the enemy.” Farther west, Niagara was even less prepared in the (unlikely) case of an invasion. During the summer of 1744 the fort’s walls were rebuilt and improved during the following year. Throughout the period the fortifications required constant attention due to erosion at the water’s edge. In the fall of 1744 the meager garrison had been augmented to twenty-two soldiers and still lacked sufficient artillery. Two years later the garrison was doubled with no further increases by

¹⁸ Clinton and Six Nations Council, 18 June 1744, NYCD 6: 264-66; 26 July 1744, NYCM, vol. 19, 266; George Swan testimony, 11 August 1744, *Ibid.*, 273-76; Clinton address to the Assembly, 20 August 1744, DHNY 1: 469-70.

the end of the war. The only major movement of guns and supplies took place at Frontenac in the spring and summer of 1748 in the final months of the conflict. Mortars, cannons, small arms and supplies were moved up the Saint Lawrence for a proposed attack on Oswego that failed to materialize.¹⁹

Fortification was not limited to the European imperial powers and also spread to the edges of Iroquoia. The most visible symbol of Anglo-Mohawk cooperation, the only one of the Six Nations to ally with New York during the war, was the creation of a fort at the settlement of Canajoharie. Canajoharie was the site of a dispersed Mohawk village that unlike many other Iroquois castles lacked a palisade. Beginning in the 1720s the area on the Mohawk River also became home to “Palatine” settlers, a group consisting of German and Swiss colonists. By King George’s War the resulting community was the product of Palatines and Mohawks that were socially and economically intertwined.²⁰ The fort that was ordered to be built under the supervision of Johnson by Clinton in the summer of 1747 was explicitly meant for the use of colonists and Mohawks alike. It included two blockhouses, a stockade, and a little over an acre of enclosed grounds, enough to garrison a company of militia.²¹ The construction of such a fort represents a greater British political and military presence in the Mohawk country, and the defensive structure also benefitted the vulnerable Mohawk village, a nation that became much more

¹⁹ For Frontenac and Montreal, see Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October 1746, NYCD 10: 36; Occurrences in Canada, 1747-1748, Ibid.: 143, 163, 169. For Niagara, Beauharnois to Maurepas, 8 October 1744, NYCD 9: 1104-06; Severance, *An Old Frontier of France*, 1: 397; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October 1746, NYCD 10: 36.

²⁰ Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 100-07.

²¹ Clinton to Johnson, 2 July 1747, WJP 1: 103-04; The ambitious plan for the fort as proposed by Clinton seems to have lacked the blockhouses, at least initially, An Account of Expenses with Receipt, 7 November 1747, WJP 9: 30. The garrison of colonial troops was requested and granted to the Mohawk in 1746 in order to protect their settlement while their warriors were away, Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies in Colonial North American Campaigns, 1676- 1760,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, vol. 64, no. 1 (January, 2007): 60-61.

endangered after it openly opposed the French and defied the neutrality advocated at Onondaga. Militarization in the form of improved defenses was not limited to the Mohawk and also involved neutral nations. As the fort at Canajoharie began to take shape, the Oneida to the west were busy “fortifying themselves” in case their stated neutrality were to be breached.²² To the north, the Kahnawake requested and received a “stone enclosure” for their village that was built by the French and manned by an unobtrusive garrison composed of four soldiers and an officer.²³

Militarized Mobility: *Petite Guerre* during King George’s War

Provincial imperialists in both New York and New France adapted to the limitations of war making in the region by putting the tools of *petite politique* to work during King George’s War. The low intensity conflict between the empires that occurred there resulted from a combination of a porous borderland, where small groups and individuals could move relatively easily, a desire to exercise geopolitics, and the restrictions that resulted from meager resources as well as the Six Nations neutral diplomacy. Iroquois neutrality especially impacted manpower as neither the British or French were able to draw on large local populations. While the French kept the majority of their regular and militia forces around Montreal, the British concentrated New York militia in and around Albany for the planned invasion of Canada or at Saratoga, which had been decimated by a raid in 1745. Hundreds of Six Nations warriors, which would have been a boon to New York, were largely withheld, with the exception of the Mohawk. Likewise, the French were unable to make use of Iroquois warriors from places such as Kahnawake against Oswego or the upper Mohawk Valley as they sought to avoid

²² “An Account of Expenses with Receipt,” 7 November 1747, WJP 9: 30.

²³ Journal of occurrences in Canada, 1746-47, 11 May 1747, NYCD 10: 96.

a conflict with their kin to the south. As one observer noted, there existed a pact between the mission Indians and Britain's Mohawk allies in which they agreed to "not destroy each other and let the white skin against one another"²⁴

In order to make up for these shortages both New France and New York attempted to make use of more peripheral allies. For instance, William Johnson drew upon his ties to the mixed Iroquois community at Oquaga on the upper Susquehanna River, a village he had traded with soon after his arrival in North America on the eve of the war. New York managed to secure at least fourteen of their warriors in a meeting with Governor Clinton at Albany in the summer of 1746. They made a separate treaty with New York, pledged to secure additional warriors, and promised to fight the French until Canada was conquered. The Oquaga were active until at least June 1747, when their warriors at Fort Johnson numbered forty-three.²⁵ The French, who experienced tensions and outright violence with the tribes of the upper country, were even harder-pressed for Indian support in the region. As mentioned above, the plan put forth by Beauharnois to capture or destroy Oswego would have had to rely upon Nipissing and Algonquin allies far to the north of Lake Ontario. The only violent raid carried out by French allies against colonists in the region, at Burnet's Field (Herkimer) on July 21, 1747, was conducted by non-Iroquois warriors, who were later admonished by Governor Galissonière for violating the neutrality of the nearby Six Nations Iroquois.²⁶

²⁴ Parmenter, "Neutralité active des Iroquois," 33; Quotation in Josué Dubois Berthelot de Beaujours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747," 26 September 1747, AC, C11a, vol. 87, 16.

²⁵ For Johnson's trade at Oquaga, see Johnson to Peter Warren, 10 May 1739, WJP 1: 7. For diplomacy and service under the British, see Clinton to Johnson, 16 September 1746, *Ibid.*: 63-65; "An Account of Expenses with Receipt," 22 June 1747, WJP 9: 27.

²⁶ Lindesay, "Account of Incidents at Oswego from December 10," 17 February 1748, WJP 1: 135.

The use of *petite guerre* as a military strategy and tactic met with mixed results in King George's War. For the British, the only success in the Lake Ontario borderlands came with raids by their Mohawk allies. The use of scalp bounties and rangers farther east was much more disappointing. Most British irregulars were confined to defensive roles in which they rarely ventured far from forts or blockhouses. The French, on the other hand, who were no mere novices when it came to waging war with small parties aimed at soft targets such as isolated frontier towns and farms, boasted of scalping 150 colonists and taking 112 prisoners by January 1748.²⁷ Ironically, the French were least successful in the Ontario/Mohawk region while the British, hapless most everywhere else, were most successful there.

William Johnson became the architect and booster of New York's small-scale raids against Canada beginning in 1746, when it became clear that his earlier vision of using Oswego as a base to capture Niagara was unworkable.²⁸ Parties of raiders usually consisted of small groups of Mohawks, either operating autonomously or alongside an equally small number of New Yorkers. An average party would usually consist of less than twelve men. Although the overwhelming majority of the Indians involved were from the Mohawk tribe, there were a small number of others representing all of the other Six Nations who were officially neutral. Johnson boasted that these raiding parties often returned to Albany or his estate at Mount (later Fort) Johnson with numbers of scalps and prisoners "beyond expectation."²⁹ The focus of the attacks was usually around the vulnerable town of Montreal. Raiders would utilize both the Champlain corridor to attack

²⁷ Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 63-65.

²⁸ Cooper, "Oswego in the French-English Struggle in North America," 126.

²⁹ Johnson to Clinton, 30 May 1747, WJP 1: 93-97. A glimpse at the size and makeup of some of the raiding parties can be gleaned from Johnson's account book during the war, "An Account of Expenses with Receipt," 22 June 1747, WJP 9: 16-30.

points south of the town and the route from Lake Ontario to the upper Saint Lawrence to strike at the more isolated settlements to the town's west. For instance, one of the first Mohawk successes came via Lake Ontario at the seigneurie at Soulanges in early November 1746. Eight Frenchmen were killed and another seven or eight were taken captive back to New York. Another typical raid occurred the next May when a party captured a farmer, his wife, and six children at their isolated homestead on Île Perrot, an island between Soulanges and the island of Montreal. Such attacks caused the French to divert much needed resources to the defense of Montreal, as mentioned above. In addition, they also served to strain the link between that town and the upper country as the raids endangered the supply link to the west and many of the *voyageurs* used to man the canoes full of supplies were occupied in the militia.³⁰

However, the Mohawks and their New York allies faced occasional setbacks. In June 1747, Louis La Corne, an officer in the colonial regulars and veteran of the battles in Acadia, was dispatched with one-hundred soldiers to Soulanges to respond to reports of enemy war parties. After capturing and interrogating a canoe carrying some Senecas, an Onedia, and a Dutchman, his men were able to locate and stop several other parties in the area. One of these was under the sachem Hendrick (Theyanoguin), leading a group of thirty Mohawks and ten colonists, which was ambushed by French allies on an island above Montreal resulting in the death of thirteen of his party.³¹ Added to these military defeats was the ever-present scarcity in funding. Johnson bemoaned to Clinton that his efforts by the spring of 1747 were only continuing due to his personal funds and supplies.

³⁰ Samuel G. Drake, *A Particular History of the Five Years French and Indian War in New England and Parts Adjacent...* (Albany: Munsell, 1870), 135; Journal of occurrences in Canada, 1746-47, NYCD 10: 89, 93, 102.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 108; Drake, *A Particular History of the Five Years French and Indian War*, 148.

since the colony had sent him “but a mere trifle.” Writing to his governor in August 1747, Johnson connected his shortages with the fate of British diplomacy across North America, saying that “without due encouragement for these Indians it may move a resentment in them at their disappointment that may effect the whole continent.”³²

While the New Yorkers and Mohawks attempted to terrorize the upper Saint Lawrence Valley, the bulk of the French small war occurred to the east against New England. This was due largely to the availability of native allies. While the neutral Iroquois mission villages and the distressed nations of the western Great Lakes and Ohio Valley largely sat out of the war, the Wabanaki worked with the French to strike at settlements in Nova Scotia and Northern New England.³³ Since the French were on the defensive, lacking enthusiastic local allies, and wary of violating the Six Nations neutrality, very few attacks seem to have been carried out against the upper Mohawk Valley. One, in May 1746, resulted in the taking of two slaves at the Palatine community of Stone Arabia. Another, over a year later at Herkimer, which was disavowed by the governor of New France, was the capture of a woman and six children.³⁴ Although this latter raid was relatively small, it and the news of scalping parties in the region stirred significant alarm on the Mohawk Valley frontier. Johnson informed Clinton that it drove up the cost of sending colonists and Indian escorts to Oswego as both groups now refused to travel west. These complications delayed the departure of one of his lieutenants in resupplying the post on Lake Ontario, and required the merchants who were vacating it

³² Johnson to Clinton, 30 May 1747, WJP 1: 94; Johnson to Clinton, 4 August 1747, *Ibid.*: 106.

³³ For a narrative of these attacks, see Peckham, *The Colonial Wars*, 106-16.

³⁴ Drake, *A Particular History of the Five Years French and Indian War*, 98, 148.

en masse to travel under Iroquois escorts back east.³⁵ This incident in the summer of 1747 provides a glimpse of the possible major disruptions if further attacks on New York's western flank could have been launched.

Reconnaissance and Daily Diplomacy

In addition to the military aims inherent in *petite guerre*, raiding parties and scouting missions also afforded an opportunity to practice the *petite politique* of the Lake Ontario borderlands. The political tactics and goals of small groups of soldiers, Indians, and colonists at times overlapped and diverged with military goals. One area where these goals and tactics overlapped was the collection of intelligence by reconnaissance parties. While information about the size and position of enemy forces were essential to planning military operations, it also shaped the practice of daily geopolitics. Intelligence could transcend conventional military purposes when it pertained to trade, diplomacy, and other means of political influence. The region was well-suited for these types of operations. Unlike the spaces between the two empires at Acadia, northern New England, and the Champlain Valley, the borderland of eastern Lake Ontario experienced significantly less defensive buildup in the form of forts and blockhouses. Furthermore, its geography facilitated travel on and around a network of lakes and rivers stretching from the Mohawk Valley, along Ontario to Niagara, and up into the upper reaches of the Saint Lawrence.

While the Six Nations and Saint Lawrence Iroquois largely rejected calls to partake in war parties in the region, they were more willing to join reconnaissance parties. In March and April 1748 alone, three separate scouting parties set off toward Oswego in search of intelligence. The first, which set out from Fort Frontenac on March

³⁵ Johnson to Clinton, 14 August 1747, NYCD 6: 388; Journal of occurrences in Canada, 1746-47, NYCD 10: 129.

5, included three colonists and thirteen Kahnawake under a French cadet. Days later, an Iroquois sachem, Nanangoussi, departed for the south with nine warriors. In late April, an officer named Levreau left Montreal with ten Kanesatake Iroquois. These scouts did not attack or capture any of the British around Oswego or the Mohawk Valley, but instead reported back to New France with information about trade and the lack of troop movements. For example, Nanangoussi detailed the trade at Oswego and observed a good number of Dutch and Palatine traders near Oneida Lake headed west.³⁶ The British were also able to engage Iroquois scouts, even before their success with the Mohawk. At the outbreak of the war in 1744 a New York officer and some Indian scouts successfully reconnoitered around Fort Frontenac, reporting on the arrival of French ships to Quebec. Later that same year the Albany commissioners engaged one or two scouts from each of the Six Nations, save for the Seneca, who preferred to keep working the portage on the Niagara River. The interests of the British and Six Nations overlapped in this instance. For the Six Nations, a presence at Oswego could serve as a sort of human shield against French attacks, while for the British the Iroquois warriors were much-needed scouts who kept up a surveillance of Frontenac.³⁷

In addition to providing information, the interactions created by militarized mobility provided the French, British, and Six Nations with new opportunities to conduct daily diplomacy. It was during this war that the Indian agent William Johnson increased both the frequency and quality of connections between New York and the Mohawk.

³⁶ Occurrences in Canada, 1747-1748, NYCD 10: 153, 155, 158, 160. French officials were skeptical of Nanangoussi and verified his reports by corroborating them with intelligence gathered by one of the Joncaire brothers at Niagara and Captain Cabanac at Frontenac, *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁷ NYCM, vol. 19, 263; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 20 April 1744, NYCD 10: 1102-03; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November 1744, NYCD 9: 1112. Another use of the “human shield” tactic occurred when an embassy of Onondaga sachems and their families went to Montreal in an effort to prevent further Mohawk raids, Parmenter, “Neutralité active des Iroquois,” 34-35.

These interactions took place outside the halls of formal councils and served to provide materially for Mohawk communities while at the same time providing much needed manpower for the colony. While he may have been exaggerating that the funding of his scouting and raiding parties was directly tied to the fate of the entire continent, Johnson was right to point out the link between his *petite guerre* efforts and the colony's Indian diplomacy. An examination of his expenditures during 1746 and 1747 reveals that he was not only spending heavily on supplies, ransoms, and cash payments to war parties but he was also supporting the Mohawk communities at Canajoharie and Tiononderoge. For example, in March 1747 he provided provisions to the wives of warriors who were part of war parties in Canada. In July of the same year he gave food and clothing to eight widows whose husbands had been lost against the French. Besides supplies and payments to widows, wives, and children, he also hired overseers to maintain Mohawk fences and dwellings. Much money was also spent to compensate warriors who were unable to hunt for their communities while away on scouts and raids. In one such case on May 29, 1747, Johnson paid the significant sum of fifty-two pounds to a group to forgo hunting.³⁸ These payments and supplies further entangled the Mohawks and New York in terms of material wellbeing and military manpower, a process that would accelerate during the next war.

The dispatch of scouts and raiders also provided an opportunity, albeit a small one, to display symbols of alliances and sovereignty in the borderland. In September 1746 Governor Clinton ordered all Indian allies of New York out on war parties to wear pieces of red gimp, a type of fabric cord, in their hair. Also, Johnson provided parties

³⁸ "An Account of Expenses with Receipt," WJP 9: 19, 22-24, 26, 28. The Iroquois also withheld hunters in anticipation of the planned invasion of Canada, which became a point of tension between the confederacy and New York, see Six Nations to Clinton, 25 July 1748, WJP 1: 175.

embarking from his estate with red flags.³⁹ Such symbols, while having an obvious practical application of avoiding friendly fire, also signified both a British presence and alliance far from the confines of Oswego and the lower Mohawk Valley. During the war the Six Nations used and understood these types of symbols differently than the provincial imperialists in New York and New France. An Onondaga delegation traveling to and meeting with Governor Beauharnois in Montreal in the summer of 1746 flew a French flag to and from that town, even while passing through Oswego.⁴⁰ For the vocally neutral Onondaga the banner was certainly not a symbol of alliance or French sovereignty but instead was probably a way to avoid harassment and display their goodwill. Such mutual misunderstandings that arose from intercultural interactions were a common component of “middle ground” diplomacy.⁴¹

While provincial imperialists such as Johnson and Beauharnois attempted to bend the methods of *petite guerre* to the geopolitical aims of *petite politique*, the Iroquois in both the Saint Lawrence Valley and among the Six Nations utilized war parties for their own political ends. Their principle concern was the maintenance of neutrality, which was carried out by not only preventing intra-Iroquois bloodshed but also by punishing the Mohawks who openly allied with the British. A gruesome case of punishment came in March 1747. A party of Mohawk and colonial scouts operating in the woods near Mount Johnson were ambushed by about thirty snowshoe-clad Kahnawake in the middle of the night. After killing several of the scouts and the sachem Gingego, the Kahnawake sent a violent message by mutilating, burning, and beheading the bodies of the dead.⁴² In May

³⁹ WJP 9: 18; Clinton to Johnson, 16 September 1746, WJP 1: 64-65.

⁴⁰ Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October 1746, NYCD 10: 19-20.

⁴¹ White, *The Middle Ground*, xxvi.

⁴² Johnson to Clinton, 16 March 1747, NYCD 6: 422-24; Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars,” 62.

of the following year the French officer Simblin and a party of twenty-four Kahnawake were dispatched from Montreal toward Oswego with the mission to capture the Mohawk sachem Theyanoguin, who had been an active anglophile who personally led numerous raids against Canada. Theyanoguin evaded capture and would continue to serve alongside the British until his death in the Seven Years' War. Messages or warnings to the Mohawk could also take much less overt forms. In the fall of 1747, the Mohawk had been lurking around Niagara for several weeks. The fort's commander had finally persuaded the local Seneca to fire upon their compatriots, or so he thought. Their volley was made "too soon," a clear warning to vacate the area, and was followed by a reprimand "for coming to create disturbances in their country." The message was received as the Mohawk were absent from the western end of Lake Ontario for the remainder of the conflict.⁴³

Despite the state of warfare in the region that lasted for some five years, on-the-spot daily diplomacy continued as it had during peacetime, although to a much lesser extent. The British trade at Oswego, which had been seriously hindered by the dangers of war, still continued to a degree. The trader Teady McGinnis, at Oswego in the spring of 1747, was active in speaking with Onondagas and other Iroquois who were en route to Canada. The Irishman used his contacts with these visitors to gather news, which was passed on to Johnson, and attempted to divert canoes from continuing on to engage the French. Another Johnson proxy, the blacksmith Ryar Bowen, spent the winter of 1746-47 at Onondaga. The practice of maintaining a smith at Onondaga had also occurred in the years before the war.⁴⁴ Such efforts were important in that they kept British diplomacy

⁴³ Occurrences in Canada 1747-1748, 9 May 1748, NYCD 10: 159; Occurrences in Canada 1746-1747, 9 October 1747.

⁴⁴ Teady Magin [McGinnis] to Johnson, 2 June 1747, WJP 1: 97; "An Account of Expenses with Receipt," 7 November 1747, WJP 9: 30.

active on the ground during a period Johnson felt any trips to Onondaga or Oswego would place him in grave danger.⁴⁵ He would not undertake a journey west until June 1748, during the final months of the war.

Across Lake Ontario the French were also attempting to engage the Iroquois at their posts and do their best to shore up their influence. At Fort Frontenac, the missionary Francois Picquet was learning the tactics and possibilities of borderland diplomacy. Earlier in the war the priest had taken part in the devastating attack on Saratoga. By 1748 he was busy dispatching wampum belts to the Six Nations in an attempt to bring them to a conference with the governor of New France. Frontenac also engaged in its own peripheral diplomacy two years earlier with its handling of a captured Onondaga scout who was working for the British. The leadership at the fort dispatched the prisoner back to Iroquoia under the escort of some Kahnawake who were heading south. The move was done in order to “have a very good effect” on the Six Nations. Farther to the west, Niagara operated in an even more strained environment as it was near the disturbances in the upper country. Despite the unrest reported by the fort’s commander, Captain de Raymond, he worked to encourage the Seneca to travel to Montreal for the same 1748 council that Picquet was promoting in the east. Raymond also used his meetings with his Seneca neighbors to scold them for their ties with the British, which he felt had delayed a New France-Six Nations council for the past two years. His immediate predecessor, the Sieur de Contrecoeur, seems to have enjoyed a less prickly working relationship with the Seneca. Just before his relief by Raymond in early 1748 he informed the governor that he had met with the sachem of the Little Rapid Seneca. The sachem reported he had received and put an end to anti-French wampum belts originating from Oswego, which

⁴⁵ Johnson to John Catherwood, 16 March 1748, WJP 1: 149-50

had been passed on by anglophiles of their nation who sought to spread them among the far western nations.⁴⁶

Wartime Intelligence: Emerging *Petite Politique* Professionals

As alluded to above, intelligence gathering could take one of two forms: scouting parties could be assembled for the explicit purpose of gathering information or well-placed agents on the ground could position themselves as nodes. This latter tactic proved especially useful to provincial imperialists who lacked the resources to conduct long-ranging operations far away from vulnerable outposts. Officers in these positions were connected to the fluid movements of borderlanders who stopped for supplies or to idly share news and rumors. While William Johnson was paying Indians not to hunt in order to focus their time and effort against the French, officers at Oswego utilized the mobility of hunters and others. For instance, in 1744 a hunting party of “trustworthy Indians” between Oswego and the upper Saint Lawrence informed the British of the movements of a French blacksmith headed to the Seneca country.⁴⁷ If war parties and scouts were at least nominally supervised by colonials, agents at outposts learned to adapt and make use of native agency. Intercultural contacts and social relationships could yield a plethora of important intelligence, which was then passed on to provincial administrative centers like Montreal, Albany, and New York. The potential dangers of King George’s War accelerated this process that had been taking shape in the 1720s and 1730s.

⁴⁶Ibid.; Abstract of military and other operations in Canada during the years 1745-1746, 24 September 1746, NYCD 10: 67; Speech of the Seneca at Niagara, 1748, AC, C11a, vol. 97, 398-99; Raymond to Marine, 8 September 1748, Ibid., vol. 92, 338-39; Occurrences in Canada 1747-1748, 1 March 1748, NYCD 10: 152. After replacing Contrecoeur, Raymond was highly critical of influence and success of the principal Indian agent among the Seneca, Daniel-Marie Chabert de Joncaire, Raymond to Galissonière, Ibid., vol. 97, 394-97.

⁴⁷ Information from Oswego respecting Indian Affairs, December 1744, PAA 1: 665.

Despite being chronically plagued by underfunding, manpower shortages, and morale problems, the post at Oswego emerged during King George's War as an important hub of intelligence gathering. While transient traders often served to be sources of information, albeit sporadic ones, the stationing of more permanent personnel guaranteed a steadier flow of material. During the war the New York officer John Lindesay came to the forefront of the colony's intelligence gathering efforts in the region. The Scottish pioneer who had helped found the settlement at Cherry Valley in 1739 went into military service after a stint as the sheriff of Albany County. He had been at Oswego since at least 1743 and during the opening months of the war had served under the veteran Indian officer Walter Butler, Sr. As discussed in relation to the trouble with the trader George Swan, Lindesay enjoyed the vocal support of the Six Nations, whose opinion proved pivotal in keeping the officer on Lake Ontario despite controversy. By 1744 his reports were reaching Governor Clinton's council in New York. One of the first contacts made by the officer was Michel Houdon, a Canadian who had deserted across Lake Ontario with his wife, offering intelligence about French plans to take Oswego in exchange for amnesty.⁴⁸

By December 1747 he had been named commander of the fort and became immersed in intelligence affairs. Reports passed on to Johnson during the winter of 1747-48 offer a glimpse into the continuing experiences and education of a borderland operative. Captain Lindesay spoke with a variety of Indians, ranging from an unnamed woman who offered information after visiting Frontenac to high-ranking Six Nations sachems. He often plied his visitors with rum, provisions, and clothing in exchange for the latest gossip and news. Such gifts were even offered to openly Francophile Indians in

⁴⁸ Intelligence report, 1744, NYCM, vol. 19, 263.

an effort to sway their personal allegiances. Besides informal meetings with people from a variety of nations, which included Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas, he even arranged and oversaw the burial of a noted speaker with fifty visiting Indians participating in the event. The types of information gleaned from these encounters included the size and composition of war parties, French diplomatic efforts, unrest in the west, and the state of relations between New France and their various allies.⁴⁹

Like Oswego, the garrison and officers at Frontenac were no strangers to the Iroquois as they too experienced daily interactions. Captain Cabanac and his men saw Indians of several nations on a daily basis. In particular, a band of Onondaga encamped beside the fort, a group who traded venison they had hunted for “small wares” with the garrison.⁵⁰ The fort also served as an entry point for Irish deserters fleeing the tensions and conditions at Oswego across the lake. In the summer of 1747 Ensign Dubuisson, who was in command of a canoe convoy headed to Detroit, encountered a canoe full of Irish asylum seekers from Oswego, which included a man named Colin, women and children of his family, and a deserting soldier. The group, which claimed to be leaving the outpost in order to avoid punishment for having “infringed on certain prohibitions,” was a wellspring of intelligence upon their interrogation. Like the Canadian deserter Michel Houdon and his wife, they traded insider knowledge to secure their refuge. The Irish claimed that the expedition being formed at Albany against Canada lacked British regulars due to the Jacobite uprising, reported on the high desertion rate of planned expedition forces, and informed about the lack of traders at Oswego, its small, undersupplied garrison, and the value of goods being held there. They detailed the British

⁴⁹ Lindsay, “Account of Incidents at Oswego from December 10 [1747],” WJP 1: 133-38; Van Eps to Johnson, 15 December 1747, *Ibid.*,: 124.

⁵⁰ Report of Boishebert on Indian Affairs, November 1747, NYCD 10: 86.

practice of displaying seized French goods to the Indians at Oswego in an effort to “persuade them that they are masters of the French.” The deserting soldier even boasted he could take the fort with a mere sixty men if given the opportunity.⁵¹

Efforts to gather intelligence on the enemy during King George’s War in the region went beyond the collection of information at hubs like Frontenac and Oswego and the formation of scouting parties. In the opening months of the war the French undertook less passive measures by employing Kahnawake sachems to spy on New York. One of them, Tecanancoassin, returned to Montreal in October 1744 and reported on the state of defenses at Albany, Saratoga, and Oswego. His report confirmed that the colony was taking a purely defensive posture, information which was transmitted to France.⁵² The missionary Picquet, who would go on to play a central role in the *petite politique* of the region after the war, was less successful in his efforts to engage spies of his own. In early 1748 he had dispatched a party of Kanesatake under the guise of diplomats headed to Iroquoia. Their real mission was to “sound the dispositions” of the Six Nations to the south “and to discover what was going on among them.” The would-be spies only made it as far as Frontenac before they handed over their wampum belts to Captain Cabanac and quit their assignment. Those involved in borderland intelligence also utilized counter-intelligence tactics. In December 1746 William Johnson used a Mohawk named Moses to meet with Kahnawake when he was in Canada and “stop their mouths.”⁵³

Both the French and British on Lake Ontario increasingly relied upon Iroquois sources, whether from the Six Nations or Canada, as they became more and more

⁵¹ Occurrences in Canada 1746-1747, 23 August 1747, *Ibid.*: 122-23.

⁵² Report of Tecanancoassin, 19 October, 1744, AC, C11a, vol. 81, 208-09; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 29 October 1744, NYCD 9: 1109-10.

⁵³ Occurrences in Canada 1747-1748, 19 March 1748, NYCD 10: 154; An Account of Expenses with Receipt, 13 December 1746, WJP 1: 16.

connected to borderland information flows. As a result, some Iroquois individuals began to carve niches for themselves as informants, a position that often heightened their importance with one or the other imperial powers. In addition, trusted informants often received gifts that could enhance their standing among their respective villages, clans, and nations. The role could have been especially appealing to ambitious Iroquois leaders seeking to minimize the dangers and losses associated with war parties.⁵⁴ The Cayuga sachem Arawana⁵⁵ was one such source that rose to prominence during this period. The anglophile's documented intelligence career would span nearly two decades into the Seven Years' War. One of his first appearances in the New York sources occurs in 1746 when he made a trip at least as far east as Schenectady. He attended a conference at Albany with Governor Clinton the following year and met privately with Johnson during his return trip. The sachem, who appears to have maintained regular contact with western nations throughout his career, informed New York's Indian agent that some Huron (Wyandot) on Lake Erie and others were interested in attacking the French at Niagara since they were proving to be an impediment to trading at Oswego. Their dissatisfaction with Niagara, according to Arawana, was due to French price gouging. Such tantalizing possibilities were passed on to Clinton and informed New York's muddled efforts to assist the potential new allies against the French, which will be discussed below. Arawana continued to work with the British when he and other Cayugas visited Lindsay at Oswego on January 20, 1748. He was compensated for sharing a variety of

⁵⁴ Gaining material goods and influence by working as an informant can be understood in the context of the internal Iroquois competition between hereditary sachems and war chiefs, for an overview of this contest, see Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 35-46.

⁵⁵ Alternate spellings of the sachem's name throughout New York documents include: "Ottrowana," "Ottrowanee," "Attrawany," "Attrawaney," "Atrawanna," among others.

news with the captain, such as how the French were hoarding supplies and the recent Iroquois attacks against the Choctaw.⁵⁶

“We look upon them with suspicion”: The Limits of Wartime Borderland Mobility

As useful as the fluidity of the Lake Ontario borderland could be for provincial imperialists and their informers, the relatively free movement of people and information also proved to be a vulnerability for those interested in colonial security. Furthermore, attempts at on the ground diplomacy and expanding regional political influence could also fall short, displaying the limits of engaging in *petite politique*. During King George’s War both New York and New France engaged in “border making.” Although these efforts were not really concerned with making and enforcing precise geopolitical boundaries as understood today, they did try to control the flow of trade and monitor the movements of people in terms of wartime defense.

New York’s Governor Clinton experienced such anxiety on several occasions. In July 1746, he was confronted by the arrival of two Kahnawake Iroquois from Canada at Schenectady who were considered to be spies with “bad designs.” He also sought out the sachem Aaron who had left Albany without notifying the governor as he had pledged to do earlier. Clinton ordered an officer at Schenectady to induce the Indians in question to meet with him at Albany and to use the militia if they refused. The governor took the opportunity to instate a broader policy by which all “French Indians” were to check in with him at Albany upon arriving in the colony, mirroring the policy of the French in

⁵⁶ Arent Stevens to Johnson, 1746, WJP 1: 81; Johnson to Clinton, 4 August 1747, Ibid.: 106-07; Lindsay, “Account of Incidents at Oswego from December 10 [1747],” WJP 1: 135-.3.

Canada. By monitoring and controlling movements he hoped to prevent the Kahnawake, Aaron, and others from “deluding [the Mohawk] with false alarms.”⁵⁷

Over a year later he was confronted by another instance of spying, this time involving a Seneca at Albany. In October 1747 a sentry at that town challenged an unknown Indian who claimed to have come to New York from Seneca country to join a scouting party led by the frontiersman John Abeel some three months earlier. He went on to explain that he had been taken prisoner by the French. The officers at Albany tried to use other Senecas to verify or refute his story. A Seneca who had been confirmed to have served with Abeel got a different story from the suspected spy and another Seneca, who had worked with Johnson, did not recognize him. In addition to his verbal “prevarications,” the case that the Seneca was a spy was strengthened by his material belongings, which included a French blanket, French musket, and French clothes. After being interrogated by William Johnson, who was “at a loss,” the warrior was imprisoned but “well used.” Warning shots were fired from Albany to alert local farmers to head indoors from the fields and alarms were raised as far as Kinderhook and Schenectady of a possible French incursion. As with the suspect Kahnawake above, the officers of the colony walked a fine line between security and maintaining Indian relations. Johnson was to inquire at Canajoharie about the Indian in order to determine “what he really was,” a testament to the colonial efforts to seek out clearer political classifications for those around them.⁵⁸

Even the movements of less suspicious Indians could be met with distrust. For instance, in February 1748, three Cayuga messengers from Oswego were greeted with a

⁵⁷ Clinton to Jacob Glen, 30 July 1746, *Ibid.*: 55-56.

⁵⁸ John Roberts to Clinton, 20 October 1747, GCP, series 1, box 2. Johannes Abeel’s name was sometimes anglicized to “O’Beal.”

less than enthusiastic response when they entered Albany with intelligence. Officials, including the mayor, wanted little to do with the visitors and proved ignorant of the etiquette usually practiced in receiving such informers. Arent Stevens, a Schenectady-based operative of Johnson, was outraged by their denial of an audience, compensation, and boarding. The three messengers were finally accommodated by a merchant and Stevens fumed to his superior about the breach in borderland protocol.⁵⁹ Such indifference contrasts greatly with the routine payments and gifts Johnson paid to informers and messengers. A similar instance of skeptical treatment of informers occurred with the party of Irish deserters from Oswego that Ensign Dubuisson had encountered on Lake Ontario around Tonti Island in 1747. After being thoroughly questioned at Fort Frontenac, they were sent down the Saint Lawrence to Quebec as soon as possible for further questioning. As stated in a letter to the governor upon the party's discovery: "we look upon them with suspicion."⁶⁰ After arriving in September, the Irish from Oswego were deemed to be harmless. They settled in the town and "profess[ed] the Catholic religion,"⁶¹ using an expression of faith to assure their hosts, much the same way the troublesome Irish soldier Kelley at Oswego had claimed to be a member of the Anglican Church. Similarly, the deserter Michel Houdon, who had defected to the British at Oswego, was ordered to New York City where he and his wife were confined to their lodgings for over a month until he was fully questioned and cleared of suspicions. Finally, in August 1744 the pair were set free and administered an oath of loyalty.⁶²

⁵⁹ Stevens to Johnson, 12 February 1748, WJP 1: 131-32. For a discussion of the differences between Indian and colonial expectations of hospitality toward travelers, see James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: Norton, 1999), 141-43.

⁶⁰ Occurrences in Canada 1746-1747, 23 August 1747, *Ibid.*: 123.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶² 29 June 1744, NYCM, vol. 19, 262; *Ibid.*, 273-76.

For New France, the movement of Indian traders from the west and north to Oswego continued to be a concern despite that post's sharp decline in trade during the war. Governor General Beauharnois addressed this concern both proactively and reactively. In order to try to preempt visits to Oswego, a clerk was dispatched to buy furs at the outlet of the Humber River at Lake Ontario (Toronto). This temporary presence, which had occurred in the years before the war, continued into the 1740s.⁶³ The French also declared an outright prohibition on all trade and diplomacy between the Mississauga at the northwestern end of Lake Ontario and the New Yorkers at Oswego. The ban proved unpopular as the Mississauga stated they felt like "prisoners" and reaffirmed their interest in trading with the British. They even threatened war with the "foolish" French who continued to voice their displeasure at seeing Oswego goods along the north shore of the lake.⁶⁴ Such efforts to curb autonomy worsened relations and proved largely ineffective as Mississauga traders and diplomats defied the ban.

The Mississauga, as well as the Sandusky Wyandot, Ottawa, and other western nations, were in a state of open rebellion against the French by the summer of 1747. For New York, this defiance offered tantalizing possibilities to significantly weaken their rival's presence on Lake Ontario. As Arawana informed Johnson in the summer of 1747, many nations were interested in attacking Niagara and sought British support. About a year later, Ottawa at Oswego were still asking for aid against the French.⁶⁵ Governor Clinton attempted to answer these calls by trying to use Oswego as a supply point for these potential allies. Johnson, who was more acquainted with the steep costs of sending

⁶³ Beauharnois and Hocquart to Marine, 25 October 1744, AC, C11a, vol. 81, 72-76.

⁶⁴ Conrad Weiser, Memorandum of the message delivered to the Indians of Shamokin at Paxton, 17 June 1747, MPCPA 5: 85.

⁶⁵ Raymond to Galissonière, AC, C11a, vol. 97, 394-97

arms and other goods to the west, struggled to obtain willing colonial and Indian manpower after the French raid at Herkimer. He even suggested that Pennsylvania might prove a more efficient provider. After several weeks of delay, he was finally able to dispatch one of his lieutenants to Oswego with arms, ammunition and other supplies earmarked for the rebels.⁶⁶ Other than this belated effort, little other aid flowed from Oswego for the remainder of the war.

Efforts at *petite politique* were limited in large part by a serious lack of funding. The supplies and interpreter sent west in the summer of 1747 were personally financed by Clinton and Johnson as the New York Assembly showed little enthusiasm for such schemes or the war in general.⁶⁷ In addition to high costs brought about by wartime fears, Six Nations diplomacy also played a part in curtailing the plot to take down Niagara. Although sachems like Arawana claimed there was widespread support within the league to support an attack on a post that was considered Six Nations territory, no official consensus or approval ever seems to have been granted. On the ground around Niagara, the Seneca of the Little Rapid, despite their at times frosty relations with the French, were not in the same state of open aggression as the Mississauga to the north. In fact, as discussed above, they served as a barrier to British diplomatic efforts emanating from Oswego, as they blocked wampum belts destined for more receptive nations further to the west. New York had missed a small window of opportunity. After early 1748 the war was officially over, and the French had begun to rebuild their relationships in the upper country. Towards the end of the war and during the interwar period of the early 1750s,

⁶⁶ Clinton to Lords of Trade, 24 July 1747, NYCD 6: 364; Johnson to Clinton, 4 August 1747, WJP 1: 106; Johnson to Clinton, 14 August 1747, NYCD 6: 388

⁶⁷ Johnson to Clinton, 13 August 1747, WJP 1: 108; Abstract of the Evidence in the Books of the Lords of Trade Relating to New York, 3 June 1749, NYCD 6: 693.

some Mississauga renewed their alliance with the French, even partaking in war parties. Others, who continued to be dissatisfied, relocated nine villages closer to the Iroquois in an effort to assert their protest and distance themselves from their former French ally.⁶⁸

Conclusion

The events of King George's War served as a blueprint for the future *petite politique* of the region. The supremacy of Iroquois diplomacy, which limited and shaped the ways war could be carried out remained intact under the strain of five years of conflict. Along with them, the posts where daily geopolitics played out, Oswego, Niagara, and Frontenac, all survived unscathed. However, the intensified rivalry between Britain and France for the easternmost Great Lake carried over into the 1750s and provided a spark for the Seven Years' War. In terms of personnel, historical actors such as the Indian agent William Johnson, the missionary Francois Picquet, and the Cayuga sachem turned informant, Arawana, all tried their hand at daily geopolitics during this conflict. Their goals and tactics, inherited from the establishment of Niagara and Oswego in the mid-1720s would survive and develop over the next two decades. Although the goal of displaying and enforcing sovereignty was somewhat downplayed from earlier years, provincial imperialists and their Indian colleagues learned the value of and methods to gather intelligence, making the most of borderland mobility, and conducting diplomacy on the ground at peripheral locations away from the usual centers of power at Quebec, Montreal, Albany, New York City, and Onondaga.

Petite Politique during King George's War was by no means decisive in the outcome events around Lake Ontario or beyond. Yes it was an important auxiliary to

⁶⁸ Occurrences in Canada, 1747-1748, 14 June 1748, NYCD 10: 166; White, *The Middle Ground*, 208, 211.

more conventional tactics and strategies of war and diplomacy in the Northeast. Elements of warfare, such as raiding parties, scouts, and garrisons all took on additional political meanings and uses. The incorporation of these military features into borderland politics enhanced the region's distinctiveness as an arena for the practice of geopolitics. The region still remained contested between two empires and a confederacy, albeit with modest military buildup and relatively less outright violence in contrast to the ruptured middle ground to the west and increasingly militarized Champlain corridor to the east. If anything, the presence of new personnel and tactics invigorated the pre-existing practices and norms. Information of interest was gathered and powerful rumors were able to be dispelled. Furthermore, cross-cultural relationships, at the personal, everyday levels, were created and maintained. The geopolitical value of these experiences would become more evident in the years to come.

CHAPTER THREE

“UNDER THE COLOUR OF TRADING”: A COLD WAR ON LAKE ONTARIO AND THE HEIGHT OF IMPERIAL *PETITE POLITIQUE*, 1748-1754

King George’s War was a non-event for the French, British, and Six Nations in many ways. The most dramatic operation in North America, the successful joint Anglo-American siege of the French fortress at Louisbourg in 1745, proved fleeting as the stronghold was ceded back to France in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle a mere three years later. Closer to the Lake Ontario region, another Anglo-American venture, a plan to invade New France simultaneously through the Champlain corridor with provincial forces while the British Royal Navy ascended the Saint Lawrence River, was scrapped when London withheld support for the scheme. If anyone could be declared a “winner” of the conflict it would be the Six Nations Iroquois; the confederation managed to maintain its neutrality amidst the potential threats of European incursions, entangling alliances, and intra-Iroquois violence.¹

Despite the apparent geopolitical status quo negotiated at Aix-La-Chapelle, the legacy of King George’s War would significantly shape the culture of power on the Lake Ontario borderland for the next six years before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. This chapter argues that unresolved inter-imperial tensions ushered in a new, revitalized era of *petite politique*. Unable and largely unwilling to utilize direct military force, France, Britain, and the Six Nations made use of new and invigorated tools of geopolitical power. The very characteristics of this borderland that at first appeared to be liabilities, such as proximity, mobility, and the relative free flow of information, became

¹ Parmenter, "Neutralité active des Iroquois durant la guerre de la Succession d'Autriche," 35-36.

geopolitical opportunities to assert sovereignty, bolster intelligence, and harness the dynamic flow of people between New France, New York, Iroquoia, and beyond. The fur trade, which had been hampered by the previous war, began to recover and led to the creation of a new Lake Ontario geography as the French and British restored old posts and sought new forts. While the fur trade remained an integral part of New France's economy, its financial importance in New York continued to fade. However, the latter colony was acutely aware of its geopolitical significance.²

Agents of empire, provincials, and Indians alike used these places and the new networks between them, which included Fort Toronto (Rouillé), Oswego, Frontenac, and La Présentation, for far more than trade. They also became sites of intrigue, espionage, daily diplomacy, border-making, and political infiltration. Geographically, they highlight the existence of an important north-south axis of political competition. While most studies of the period in question tend to focus on the east-west linkages involved in the struggle for the Ohio Valley, this chapter is interested in the existence of an interwar Lake Ontario borderland between New York, New France, and the Six Nations. By examining these places and their associated historical actors, the reconciliation between what was desirable and possible is brought to light, highlighting how both empires and native groups adapted to the new landscape and pursued their interests in a wide range of quotidian contacts.

The period in question not only illustrates the legacies of the previous war but was a time in which a particular way of exercising geopolitical power came into its own.

Although the techniques of everyday geopolitics would be occasionally overshadowed by

² Shannon, "Avenue of Empire: The Hudson Valley in an Atlantic Context," in *The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley*, eds. Jaap Jacobs and L.H. Roper (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 79-80.

more overt uses of military power in the Seven Years' War, the period of cold war on Lake Ontario defined and refined a power culture that aided and coexisted with more conventional military operations in the next war.

The Post-King George's War Context

While the closing years of King George's War were marked by relative peace and stability for the Six Nations, they found both the British and French empires in a state of heightened alarm. For good reason much of the historiography of the interwar period in colonial North America has focused on the crises and tensions of the Ohio Valley as this was the region where British and French imperial aspirations collided most dramatically in the years leading up to the outbreak of outright war.

The French faced increasingly strident acts of rebellion from their Algonquian neighbors from the upper Great Lakes into the Ohio and Miami valleys. Beginning in 1747 with Huron attacks around Detroit, a variety of native peoples began an "armed and angry protest against French violations of the principles of the alliance," the middle ground that had been upended by rising prices for trade goods and increased demands by the French on their northern and western Indian allies.³ This tumult was exacerbated by the presence of traders from Pennsylvania and Virginia who the French saw as direct challenges to their pretenses of sovereignty in the region. For the next five years, a series of New France governors would attempt to cope with the violence and encroachments with increasingly forceful policies. These culminated in the attack of Anglo-American traders and their Indian clients at the village and trading post of Pickawillany in 1752 and the establishment of a chain of military posts the following year, which stretched from

³ White, *The Middle Ground*, 200.

Presque Isle on Lake Erie to Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio and Alleghany rivers.⁴

Farther east, the British in New York also experienced a decline in Indian diplomacy, albeit in a much less dramatic fashion. Like the French, the British also raised the prices of their goods as a result of the shortages and dangers of the recent war. In April 1748 Governor George Clinton's Indian agent, William Johnson, ventured to a council with the Six Nations at Onondaga. The principal Iroquois speaker, an Onondaga sachem, declared "goods are so dear at Oswego that we can have nothing without paying three times as much as we used to do."⁵ The high prices persisted over the next three years, and at an Albany council in July 1751 the Six Nations registered yet another complaint to the British.⁶ In addition to trade squabbles, New York experienced institutional upheaval in the interwar years. Johnson, frustrated with the colony's factional politics and the delayed compensation owed to him by the provincial assembly, resigned his post in April 1751.⁷ His replacements, the reappointed Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs, were initially stalled by funding issues and found themselves in the unenviable spot of being between the outgoing Johnson and the Six Nations. The commissioners were finally officially appointed in the summer of 1753.⁸

⁴ Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 157-62.

⁵ WJP 1: 156.

⁶ NYCD 6: 725-26.

⁷ For a discussion of the politics surrounding his resignation and Mohawk calls for his return, see Finton O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Macmillan, 2005), 90-97. O'Toole argues that Johnson's resignation was a ploy to strengthen his position.

⁸ Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 193-94. For the actions of the reconstituted Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs, see Parmenter, "At the Wood's Edge: Iroquois Foreign Relations, 1727-1768," 274-80. The commissioners made use of their illicit trade contacts among the Kahnawke while Johnson favored the Mohawk. To confuse matters further, Clinton gave Johnson a private commission to treat with the Iroquois in 1753.

Added to these concerns were the Six Nations' frustrations with the provincial fiasco surrounding the proposed invasion of Canada that had failed to materialize by the end of the previous war. At least some of the Six Nations had complied with the requests of colonial officials that long-range hunting be suspended in anticipation of the need for warriors to accompany the provincial army north. Their almost two-year long abstention, which had been in vain, was a grievance aired in multiple councils. More broadly, the Iroquois memory of British ineptitude, failure, and vulnerability continued to inform the Six Nations' skepticism about an outright British alliance on the eve of the Seven Years' War.⁹

Given these regional instabilities, it is hardly surprising that both the French and British feared for the safety of their tenuous posts on Lake Ontario. The French fort at Niagara felt this unease the most as it was the closest to the contested Ohio Valley and a critical link in the communication and trade with the upper country. Furthermore, it shared an uneasy proximity to the Mississauga, an Algonquin people on the eastern end of Lake Ontario, who had allied openly with the British in the late 1740s. The reports of the Chevalier de Raymond, commandant of Niagara in the summer of 1748, depict a post surrounded by hostile Anglophile Iroquois and western Indians. He reminded his superiors in France that the loss of the strategic post, which was the French key to the Great Lakes, would be catastrophic.¹⁰

This same situation, of an outpost heavily valued for its strategic importance but desperately at risk, was shared by New York's fort and trading houses at Oswego on the southeast shore of Lake Ontario. Not only had the fort's regular garrison been

⁹For frustrations with withholding hunts, see WJP 1: 156, 174-77. For Iroquois doubts of British military prowess, see the sachem Hendrick's address to the 1754 Albany Congress, NYCD 6: 870.

¹⁰Raymond to Minister, 9 September 1748, vol. 92, 191-92v, C11a, AC.

significantly reduced since the end of the war but the provincial assembly usually refused to grant Governor Clinton the funds necessary for much-needed repairs. A survey found Oswego's various buildings in a state of serious disrepair, so much so that rain was damaging supplies.¹¹ What funding there was for the ramshackle post came from the personal pockets of Clinton and William Johnson, a practice that had continued since King George's War. Funding for Oswego was inextricably intertwined with the factional provincial politics of the era. When the governor finally secured some funding for a regular garrison in 1750 it was at the steep price of sacrificing some royal prerogatives to the legislature, which was controlled by the partisans of James De Lancey.¹²

Renewed Imperial Visions: Fort Fever on Lake Ontario

The end of King George's War gave rise to a new round of imperial scheming concerning the Lake Ontario borderlands. With the danger of raids and invasions put to rest at Aix-la-Chapelle for the time being, French and British advocates of forward policies cast their gaze to the Lake Ontario corridor with hopes of trade, defensive expansionism, new diplomatic opportunities, and enhanced sovereignty.

In the six years between 1748 and the outbreak of overt hostilities with the British colonies in 1754, New France had three different Governor Generals. Despite the somewhat different priorities and concerns of each, Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, a military engineer and officer in the colonial *Troupes de marine*, exemplifies the French energy and ambition that characterized the period. Appointed an assistant engineer under his father, the chief engineer of the colony, de Léry was trained in surveying, mapping,

¹¹ Clinton to Lords of Trade, NYCD 6: 750.

¹² Legislative Abstracts, NYCD 6: 703; Johnson to Bedford, *Ibid.*, 432. For Oswego funding in a provincial political context, see Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 191-94.

and construction and had been a military cadet since age twelve. A veteran of fighting against the Chickasaws as well as being part of two different raids against New England during King George's War, he was put to work by the governors of New France during the peace to bolster defenses on the Richelieu River.¹³

He was also active on Lake Ontario, reviewing and reporting on fortifications and posts as well as providing opinions and advice for future projects. The chief target for the engineer was the troublesome post at Oswego. In a series of memorandums forwarded to Europe in late 1749, de Léry outlined the ways in which the French could not only cut off the post's trade but bring about its abandonment and eventual takeover. By securing Indian alliances around Lake Ontario, the French could use loyal warriors to attack Oswego as their proxies. In addition to economic relationships, de Léry recognized the important link between the fur trade and geopolitical information. In a report that was forwarded to Paris by Governor General Jonquière, he argued that the taking of Oswego "would deprive the English of the knowledge they possess of what occurs in Canada, and we, on the contrary, would be able to be advised of all their movements."¹⁴

For de Léry and other French colonial officials the best way to promote these aims was the maintenance of strategically located counter-posts. He especially eyed the outlet of the Humber River, known as Toronto, in his assessment of Lake Ontario in 1749. This outlet was the terminus of a shortcut to fur-rich Lake Huron and Georgian Bay that bypassed Lake Erie and Detroit. By building a post that traded at prices fixed to be competitive with Oswego, the French would not only strengthen and create alliances but

¹³ F. J. Thorpe, "Chaussegros de Léry, Gaspard-Joseph (1721-97)," in DCB, vol. 4, accessed November 7, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/chaussegros_de_lery_gaspard_joseph_1721_97_4.

¹⁴ Governor Jonquière and Intendant Francois Bigot's arguments for the taking of Oswego are in Dispatches from Canada, NYCD 10: 200-02. For De Léry's original report, see "Établissements sur le Lac Ontario - Fort de Choueguen," 15 October 1749, AC, DFC, vol. 9, 23-24.

also defeat the rival British post without firing a shot.¹⁵ His vision would become a reality when Jonquière approved the construction of the proposed post in 1750.

While the French were busy constructing and maintaining new forts in the Lake Ontario borderland, the British in New York failed to execute a single new project. However, it was not for a lack of planning. Like their French rivals to the north and west the provincial imperialists in New York advanced multiple schemes in the interwar period. In November 1749, a month after de Léry had compiled his various reports to France, William Johnson was outlining his own ideas for an increased British presence in the frontier. Other than Johnson's recently completed stone house and the small wooden stockade at Fort Hunter a few miles up the Mohawk River, the British lacked any sort of post or settlement among the Oneida and Onondaga that would secure the route to Oswego. Citing Oswego and Fort Saint-Frédéric, Johnson urged for the establishment of new posts in Iroquoia, arguing that "those that fortify first in the Indian country are not molested unless in war time." Of particular interest was the bay of Irondequoit in the Seneca country on the south shore of Lake Ontario, which was one of the rare deep-water harbors on the lake. New York already held a claim to the site, albeit a quite shaky one thanks to the efforts of Governor George Clarke, Clinton's predecessor.¹⁶

Johnson's resignation in 1751 and the resumption of the Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs prompted a second round of calls for a strengthened New York border. Two members of Clinton's council and staunch political supporters of the governor, Archibald Kennedy and Cadwallader Colden, penned a pair of reports urging not only the re-centralization of Indian affairs but also for reforms to the fur trade that would bolster

¹⁵ Mémoire de Chaussegros de Léry fils, 24 October 1749, AC, C11a, vol. 118, 171-72. Governor Galissonnière echoes de Léry's geopolitical outlook in a 1750 memorandum, NYCD 10:228-29.

¹⁶ Johnson to George Clinton, 22 November 1749, NYCD 6: 541.

their colony's defenses. Viewing the Albany commissioners as dangerously neutral smugglers, both of their reports emphasized trade as a diplomatic tool to serve imperial goals.¹⁷ Kennedy envisioned British forts in each of the Iroquois Six Nations, with "something more than common" at Onondaga in order to protect Indian families so that allied "excursions will be more free and frequent" in the next war.¹⁸ Colden on the other hand shared Johnson's desire for a fort at Irondequoit to counter Picquet at La Présentation and the presence of French blacksmiths, priests, and traders among the Iroquois. The lynchpin of his plan was the construction of armed trading ships on Lake Ontario, something that the French had possessed since the late 1600s. For Colden, the assembly's thrift could be bypassed to achieve his recommendations by enacting new taxes on domestic and imported alcohol that would ensure a steady stream of funds.¹⁹

French Expansion

The French constructed three different posts in the Lake Ontario borderland in the two years immediately following the end of King George's War. They were built at strategic hubs of the fur trade that aimed to stymie a particular Indian route to Oswego and each a battleground of the everyday cold war waged by *petite politique*.

De Léry and the various Canadian colonial governors would find an enthusiastic adventurer to assist in their ambitious projects in the person of François Picquet, a Sulpician missionary who had come to New France in 1734. During King George's War he was stationed at the mission village of Kanesatake on the eastern shore of the Lac des Deux Montagnes, west of Montreal, where he was active in both diplomacy and intrigues

¹⁷ Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754*, 73-74.

¹⁸ Archibald Kennedy, *The Importance of Gaining and Preserving the Friendship of the Indians to the British Interest Considered* (London: E.Cave, 1752), 10-11.

¹⁹ Colden to Clinton, 8 August 1751, NYCD 6: 738-47.

that aimed to extend French influence among the Six Nations south of Lake Ontario. His geopolitical career began inauspiciously as he failed to foster ties between the Six Nations, Mohawk, and New France and simultaneously organized an unsuccessful espionage mission in which two Kanesatake sachems would travel to Iroquoia under the pretense of diplomacy while gathering all the intelligence they could.²⁰

These setbacks left Picquet unperturbed as he went about his next project, the establishment of a mission settlement on the upper Saint Lawrence River in the months preceding the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. His motivations, as he stated them, mixed religious zeal and geopolitical strategy. Not only did the Sulpician wish to attract converts from Iroquoia and other regional tribes but he also saw his outpost, which he dubbed La Présentation, as a French alternative to Oswego where would-be allies could be persuaded to destroy the New York fort and trading houses. Defensively, La Présentation would serve as a barrier to Montreal, controlling the Saint Lawrence at a narrow point below the Thousand Islands, blocking a route used by Mohawk raiders earlier in King George's War.

In May 1748, the priest, twenty-five Frenchmen, and four Iroquois converts scouted a location for a post at the outlet of the Oswegatchie River on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence that Picquet dubbed "the finest in Canada." Despite successfully clearing the land, constructing a fort and some houses (surveyed by de Léry), and securing a pledge for the establishment of an Iroquois village, Picquet would once again face adversity. A Mohawk raiding party visited his nascent settlement in late October 1749. Much like the shoestring empire of New York, New France was unable to post an

²⁰ William Johnson to John Catherwood, WJP 1: 149-50; Occurrences in Canada, 1747-1748, NYCD 10: 153-54.

officer and garrison until the spring of 1750. Ever resolute, the mission, fort, and its proprietor persisted, with La Présentation being maintained throughout the interwar period. The associated Iroquois village that sprung up beside the post, Oswegatchie, would go on to be even more important than these structures, becoming a vital source of intelligence and allied manpower.²¹

A year later, another veteran of the intrigues of King George's War, Daniel-Marie Chabert de Joncaire, son of the famed Indian agent and diplomat Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire, was commissioned to erect a trading post at the portage of the Niagara River a mile and a half below the falls. French officials hoped that the presence of the experienced officer would deter those Indians headed to Oswego by circumventing Fort Niagara to the north. The post, usually referred to as "Little Niagara," generally lacked the explicit consent of the Six Nations with both the Seneca and Onondaga withholding their approval. Joncaire obtained something resembling permission only after bypassing more formal modes of diplomacy. When the dispersion of wampum strings and speeches failed, he held a "small feast" for the Seneca, complete with "several pots of wine." The on-the-spot diplomacy, paired with generous gifts, finally yielded the desired result.²² Despite these diplomatic difficulties the French seemed to have maintained a relatively harmonious relationship with the local Seneca residing at the village of Little Rapid located at the inlet of the Niagara on Lake Erie, whose labor at the portage was essential to any trade. Governor General Jonquière could report to his superiors across the Atlantic

²¹ French Correspondence concerning the creation of La Présentation is condensed in "Establishment of a Mission in the Neighborhood of Fort Frontenac," DHNY 1: 423-27.

²² Severance, *An Old Frontier of France*, 1:375-76.

that the post had successfully begun trading in May 1751 with improvements made to the portage and a road blazed to Fort Niagara.²³

Planning for Fort Toronto, which would round out the trio of new French installations, commenced in 1749 and a year later officials in Paris approved its construction. By the end of August 1750 the colonial officer Pierre Robineau de Portneuf had completed a stockade and storehouse. French sailing ships aided construction by relaying lumber across the width of Lake Ontario from Fort Frontenac. In its first season of trading Toronto exhausted its supply of trade goods, bringing in seventy-nine packets of fur. Encouraged by the result, Governor General Jonquière appointed a clerk to overwinter there with two or three *engages*.²⁴ It should be noted that the French were no strangers to the location, having maintained a small trading post there in the late 1720s, which was abandoned in 1730, and had engaged the local Indians in trade by dispatching *voyageurs* from Niagara at least once in the 1740s.²⁵ Like Little Niagara, the Indian consent to the establishment was ambiguous. While some of the Mississauga that inhabited the area around Toronto cooperated with the French and pledged their loyalty to Quebec, other Mississauga continued to openly defy them as they had during the previous war.²⁶

The Interwar Imperial Culture of Power on Lake Ontario

The military capabilities of the abovementioned forts were modest to say the least. Clearly these constructions favored trade over traditional military capability. The

²³ Jonquière to Ministry, 6 October 1751, AC, C11a, vol. 97, 113-15.

²⁴ Abstract of Dispatches from Canada, NYCD 10: 202; Jonquière to Ministry, 20 August 1750, AC, C11a, vol. 95, 205-10; Jonquière and Bigot to Ministry, 24 October 1750, Ibid., 104-05.

²⁵ Intendant Dupuy to Sieur de la Saussaye, 20 July, 1727, AC, C11a, vol. 49, 448-49; Governor Beauharnois and Intendant Hocquart to Ministry, 29 September 1743, AC, C11a, vol. 79, 32-25v.

²⁶ Peter S. Schmalz, *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 46-47.

situation at Little Niagara was typical. Visiting in 1751, Picquet was unimpressed. “I examined this post,” he remarked, “which appeared to me to be the most important for trade but which had been poorly fortified.” The quarters of the commandant and trader were “too small” and the stockade was in “the form of an ill-made triangle,” with two of its bastions along the road to Niagara having “the third angle on the highest side...contrary to the rules of fortification.”²⁷ Furthermore, the French posts were seriously lacking in any real firepower. Although they were armed a little better than the posts in the upper country to the west, the forts at Niagara, Frontenac, Little Niagara, La Présentation, and Toronto were hardly rich in artillery. De Léry’s survey of the Lake Ontario posts in 1749 found eight small guns at Niagara, six guns at Frontenac, and five small artillery pieces at La Présentation. In contrast, Fort Saint-Frédéric, which guarded the approach to New France from Lake Champlain, had seventeen canons.²⁸

The British were similarly vulnerable. On top of the poor armament, scarce funding, unstable Indian diplomacy, and questionable Indian consent, weak authority and poor discipline in this Lake Ontario borderland proved to be major liabilities. Not only was Oswego literally rotting, but the post was almost entirely abandoned in January 1751. Governor Clinton only learned of a “remarkable mutiny” almost a month after it had occurred due to Oswego’s isolation in the dead of winter. According to the leader of the mutineers, a portion of the garrison under the leadership of their corporal wrested control of the post from its commanding officer, Lieutenant John Mills, because of his supposed routine and undeserved floggings and beatings. The mutineers turned deserters after they

²⁷ Picquet, “A 1751 Journal,” 371-72.

²⁸ Return of Artillery in Canada, 20 October 1749, NYCD 10: 196-97.

had attacked and bound Mills, released him by the lake after ten days of captivity, and then fled across Lake Ontario toward Frontenac.

Before their attempt to “go like men” rather than be “hung like dogs,” the ringleaders of the plot swore the remainder of the garrison to an oath of secrecy. It was not until March that Clinton received accounts from the post’s surgeon and others contrary to the message of the mutineers, which in his opinion, cleared Mills of any wrongdoing.²⁹ Not only had the extreme isolation of the post allowed for the erosion of authority but its proximity to the French at Frontenac gave the deserting mutineers a viable plan of escape. It would take another month for Captain Benjamin Stoddert to locate the grisly remains of most of the deserters within a few miles of Frontenac. In addition to bodies, clothes, and weapons, roasted flesh and severed limbs indicated that the desperate men had resorted to cannibalism. The New York officer declared it “the most horrid scene ever transacted by men.”³⁰

The geopolitical value of these posts appears highly dubious given these dramatic and multiple weaknesses. They were just able to maintain the fur trade and were hardly in any position to bring about the demise of enemy positions as officials in Quebec and New York had hoped and administrators in Europe had been led to believe. However, their significance and potential is realized when they are considered as social places where everyday borderland encounters were utilized to advance and resist geopolitical agendas. For instance, while Oswego was only home to one poorly defended fort that was little more than a glorified blockhouse, it also had some seventy log trade houses where

²⁹ For correspondence surrounding the incident, see Clinton to Captain Marshall, 15 February 1752, Clinton to William Johnson, 26 February 1752, and Clinton to Bayard [?][illegible], 17 March 1752, GCP, Letter Book Series.

³⁰ Stoddert to William Johnson, 24 March 1752, WJP 1: 366-67.

merchants would visit with Indian hunters and traders bearing furs.³¹ Agents of empire used these sites of the fur trade in a multifaceted borderland politics, which relied on the interconnections among mobility, sovereignty, intelligence, and diplomacy.

The Challenges of Mobility: Border-Making, Diplomacy, and Sovereignty

The Lake Ontario fur trade, spurred by the construction of new posts and the end of King George's War, enabled the movements of Indian and European traders at an extraordinary rate. In 1749, a mere year after the signing of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the Oswego trade boomed, bringing over 1,000 Indians, almost 150 different canoes, and well over 1,000 packs of fur in a single season. Mississaugas from western Lake Ontario, Potawatomis from the Michigan peninsula, Miamis from the Ohio country, as well as Algonquians from above Montreal were just some of the peoples who made their way to Oswego.³² Although only engaging in a fraction of the trade that Oswego did, transactions at Toronto in 1750, as mentioned above, exceeded expectations as the French store of goods was completely depleted in its first season. Traffic at the Niagara portage was similarly prosperous. One observer, visiting in August 1751, counted about 200 Iroquois ferrying bear and deerskins east in a single day.³³

These revitalized connections were often far from fleeting and created new proximities between agents of empire and a variety of Indian groups. In addition to Picquet's efforts at La Présentation, which explicitly sought to establish a new Indian community in the orbit of New France, other posts spurred or maintained associated

³¹ Bartram, *Observations*, 48-49.

³² Norton, *Fur Trade in Colonial New York*, 191; Lindsay to Clinton, 23 September 1749 and "Return of Western Tribes who traded at Oswego, 1749," 20 August 1749, NYCD 6: 537-38.

³³ Peter Kalm, "A Letter...Containing a Particular Account of the Great Fall," in Bartram and Kalm, *Observations*, 82.

camps or villages, or were created near already existing communities. Toronto was created in the vicinity of a pre-existing Mississauga village, Little Niagara pushed the French frontier with the Little Rapid Seneca over ten miles closer, and Fort Frontenac regularly hosted Iroquois in transit between the country of the Six Nations and the mission communities around Montreal. Indians were so ubiquitous at Oswego that it led New York's commandant of the post to dub it "this Indian place."³⁴ These proximities, which enabled increased contact, provided opportunities and challenges for British and French officials in terms of promoting and controlling mobility.

Among the most difficult tasks was the near impossible one of border-making. Imperialists often sought less porous boundaries and inhibited movement as ways to bar trade at rival posts, control flows of information, and obtain or maintain valuable Indian allies and manpower. The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle left the boundary between the French and British empires, stretching from Nova Scotia in the east to the Ohio Valley in the west, thoroughly unsettled. A joint Anglo-French commission that began meeting in Paris in August 1750 contained stubborn imperialists on both sides. The British and the French viewed the commission's meetings and correspondence as a way to buy time before the impending war. The British delegation included the arch-colonialist William Shirley, who had served as Governor of Massachusetts, while the French delegation included former New France governor Galissonière, who had also recently arrived from North America and had been behind the expedition of Céleron de Blainville to the upper country. Galissonière advocated the creation of a neutral buffer zone between the two empires in order to prevent friction, a suggestion that was immediately discarded by Shirley as it would spell the end of British westward expansion. The makeup of the delegations

³⁴ Lindesay to William Johnson, 20 September 1750, WJP 1: 599.

ensured its failure, preventing it from producing any agreements.³⁵ As a result, the enforcement of sovereignty lacked any real diplomatic recourse and was conducted at the everyday level, involving face to face encounters.

French efforts to regulate the flow of Indian traders were often stymied by geography and a lack of coercive force. Although Toronto, Frontenac, Little Niagara, Fort Niagara, and La Présentation would all eventually contain small garrisons, the use of overt force was precluded by both official peace between France and Britain and fear of spreading Indian rebellions. The high hopes of de Léry and others for Fort Toronto to serve as a barrier to the Mississauga and upper Great Lakes tribes headed to Oswego were quickly tempered when the realities of the expansive regional geography were reconciled. Reports by the Governor General and Intendant to Paris after the first season of trading at Toronto hedged earlier bold promises by cautioning their superiors that the post would not immediately lead to the destruction of Oswego because there were other routes to Lake Ontario from the northwest. Two years later, an additional post was constructed at Sault Sainte Marie, at the passage between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, a testament to the reach and lure of Oswego.³⁶ Controlling trade traffic on the upper Saint Lawrence would seem to have been a much more manageable task given the lack of alternate water routes to Oswego from below La Présentation. Despite the stationing of an experienced officer with a canoe on the river in the spring of 1750,³⁷ French and Indian smugglers continued to make their way up the Saint Lawrence and down to Oswego on the eve of the Seven Years War.

³⁵ William M. Fowler, Jr., *Empires at War: The French and Indian War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 15-17.

³⁶ Jonquière to Ministry, 24 August 1750, AC, C11a, vol. 95, 211-212v; Bigot and Jonquière to Ministry, 20 October 1750, vol. 95, 89-91v, Ibid.; Duquesne to Ministry, 13 October 1754, NYCD 10: 263.

³⁷ Jonquière to Ministry, 31 October 1749, AC, C11a, vol. 93, 51-53.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, the French enjoyed some successes, particularly when they were aided by local Indians. While French efforts to prohibit the Mississauga from dealing with the British on Lake Ontario were one of the complaints that led to their alliance with the British toward the latter part of King George's War,³⁸ the Mississauga would be instrumental in aiding the French effort to shape trade in the interwar period. Socially, they were active among their neighbors around Toronto, promoting trade at the new post while discouraging trips across Lake Ontario. Their efforts contained a material component as well. Their position at the outlet of the Humber River was an important transit point on the road between lakes Huron and Ontario where traders from the upper Great Lakes could obtain provisions and fresh canoes for the final leg of their journey. In order to prevent travel beyond Toronto the Mississauga denied the sale of canoes needed to cross the lake.³⁹

The efforts to control mobility at the Lake Ontario forts extended beyond trade and often included diplomacy. Imperial agents hoped that by preventing delegations from visiting their rivals they could prevent, or at least forestall, reconciliations, or worse, alliances. The experiences of William Johnson in the interwar period are illustrative. In addition to the unresolved issue of boundaries, the aftermath of King George's War also involved the lingering question of prisoners being held in both New France and the British colonies. The issue would remain well into 1750 with the status of Mohawk prisoners of war in Canada being especially contentious. Johnson and others feared that by engaging in separate diplomacy with the French it would erode British claims of

³⁸ Conrad Weiser, "Memorandum of the Message Delivered to the Indians of Shamokin at Paxton," 17 June 1747, MPCPA 5: 85.

³⁹ Jonquière to Ministry, 6 October 1751, AC, C11a, vol. 97, 110-12. The efforts of these Mississaugas suggest the presence of Francophile and Anglophile factions within their nation, which was even more decentralized than the Iroquois Confederacy.

suzerainty.⁴⁰ As a result, British outposts, just like those of their French rivals, became sites where imperial pretensions collided with Indian autonomy. Johnson was able to extract a pledge from the Mohawks not to go to Canada to secure the release of prisoners by doling out “considerable rewards” at his estate, while his agent at Oswego, Arent Stevens, successfully held up a Cayuga delegation that was to head to Canada with the Mohawks by imploring them not to go any further without Johnson’s “consent.”⁴¹

However, similar to the French, British efforts to parlay their tenuous forts into border checkpoints achieved mixed results. While Johnson somewhat influenced the movements of Six Nations ambassadors, the British at Oswego were unable to curtail visits and reconnaissance by French officers. These French travelers, unlike the Canadian smugglers who sometimes frequented Oswego, were agents of empire and included notable figures such as Daniel-Marie Chabert de Joncaire, his brother, Philippe-Thomas, who was also a soldier and diplomat, and La Présentation’s Picquet. French familiarity and knowledge of the post was so thorough that de Léry was able to draft accurate schematics of the trade houses, fort, harbor, and surrounding topography in 1749. Governor Clinton, perhaps because he was already facing complaints from the French regarding British efforts to poison French Indian relations with Oswego, chose not to increase tensions further, reluctantly declaring that “the French be civilly treated whenever they may happen to come upon the English.”⁴²

The inability to satisfactorily control mobility also extended to the flow of material items related to both trade and diplomacy. For the British, the chief cause of

⁴⁰ Clinton to Johnson, 7 June 1749, WJP 1: 213-32.

⁴¹ Johnson to Clinton, 25 June 1749, NYCD 6: 520; Stevens to Johnson, 2 July 1749, WJP 9: 41-42.

⁴² “Entrée de la Riviere Choueguen...,” 16 September 1749, AC, Maps, Plans and Charts, 1250; Clinton to Johnson, 29 June 1750, WJP 1: 284.

anxiety was their lack of control over gifts and trade goods once they had been swapped for furs with their various Indian customers. While the competitively priced stores at Oswego were essential in creating new diplomatic and economic opportunities, they were also regularly falling into French hands and used to trade with the very native groups that the British sought to sway. By 1754 Johnson lamented, “a great part of the Indian trade as it now stands is little more than our goods sold to the French at a moderate profit and they on resale to the Indians have a considerable advantage.” The Mohawk sachem Hendrick repeated these concerns when addressing the colonial officials of the Albany Congress that same year, pointing out that “the goods which go from hence to Oswego go from thence to Ohio, which further enables the French to carry on their designs at the Ohio.”⁴³

Native networks also carried items of a more overt diplomatic nature to the chagrin of European imperialists. The British at Oswego were able to utilize Indian go-betweens who could take advantage of the region’s porosity in order to disseminate a variety of regalia such as calumets, medals, flags, wampum belts and strings to potential allies. Bewildered French Governor Generals lodged at least two official complaints, with Massachusetts in 1750 and New York in 1754.⁴⁴ An instructive 1751 report to France brings to light Indian agency and the geography of one such shadowy diplomatic network. The French officer at Toronto, Portneuf, learned that Anglophile Iroquois had transported British messages, wampum, and flags across Lake Ontario to Fort Frontenac. Once there, they were handed off to an Indian who resided by the fort who then went among the various Indian nations in the region, urging them to trade at Oswego. The whole operation was revealed when a francophile Mississauga at Toronto brought a flag and

⁴³ Johnson to Clinton, 12 March 1754, WJP 9: 127; Council at Albany, 2 July 1754, NYCD 6: 869.

⁴⁴ Jonquière to Spencer Phips, 7 March 1750, NYCD 6: 565; Duquesne to De Lancey, 26 October 1754, *Ibid.*: 936.

wampum to Portneuf's attention.⁴⁵ Once again, the episode emphasizes the ways in which Indian allies were crucial in navigating the daily geopolitics of the borderlands.

The Possibilities of New Connections: Refuges, Travel, and Intelligence

If interwar mobility, aided by the expansion and revitalization of fur trading posts and forts, proved to be a challenge, it also paradoxically served as a new tool for British and French empires. Imperial officials learned and adapted this new fluid and permeable cold war landscape for their own purposes, using their positions on Lake Ontario to enable the projection of power, procure new allies, gather valuable intelligence, and weaken their rival's manpower.

In August 1750, the famed Swedish naturalist, Pehr Kalm, embarked upon a journey between empires to scientifically observe and report on Niagara Falls. Kalm, who had been in North America since 1748, had already crossed between New York and New France on a previous occasion, making him no stranger to the imperial borderlands. For his Niagara Falls expedition he would utilize both Oswego and Fort Niagara as stopping points, illustrating the ways the two relatively close posts enabled borderland travel. Kalm was well received by the Indian agent at Oswego, Lieutenant John Lindesay, and his wife, Penelope. The Lieutenant had even helped procure and transport plant samples for the Swede. Kalm left behind his New York guide and continued west via canoe to Niagara where that fort's officers were at first skeptical of his appearance, fearing him to be a British spy. However, after revealing his passport, Kalm was wined and dined by Daniel-Hyacinthe-Marie Liénard de Beaujeu and other French officers who regaled him with anecdotes of the falls he was to visit the next day.

⁴⁵ Jonquière to Ministry, 6 October 1751, vol. 97, 110-12, c11a, AC.

In addition to making the first report on Niagara Falls by a natural historian, Kalm also took the time to peek at French documents at Fort Niagara that had been dispatched from Quebec. Upon his return to New York via Fort Johnson he relayed the information he had spied, which included an order to trade at the portage for a loss as well as the resumption of brandy sales.⁴⁶ Kalm's journey not only illustrates the proximity and ease of travel between rival imperial places in the interwar Lake Ontario borderlands but also highlights the chief way in which this mobility could serve as a boon rather than a burden: the dissemination of otherwise inaccessible knowledge about one's enemy.

The posts in the region also provided refuge for escapees and deserters, travelers whose conditions contrasted greatly with the feted Kalm. The most high-profile prisoner to traverse the borderlands in the years after King George's War was the Mohawk sachem Karaghtadie, or Nickus, as he was known to the British. He had been a staunch ally of the British during the last war but had been captured by a French ambush near Montreal, becoming a prisoner in Canada with fourteen other warriors. Karaghtadie stewed angrily in captivity for three years during the messy diplomacy that eventually led to his release. His calls to his fellow-Mohawks urging them to come north and secure his release had been quashed by the British. He was understandably irate when he finally arrived at Fort Johnson in August 1750, refusing to shake Johnson's hand and claiming that the British were secretly plotting with the French to "fall upon all the Indians on both sides and destroy them." After taking three days "to restore his good humor," the sachem proved to be a wellspring of intelligence. His years in Canada had put him in contact with Indian informers who provided details about the new post at La Présentation and the

⁴⁶ Kalm to Johnson, 7 August 1750, WJP 9: 295-96; Lindsay to Johnson, 7 September 1750, WJP 1: 296-97; Johnson to Clinton, 14 September 1750, WJP 9: 67-68; Kalm, "A Letter...Containing a Particular Account of the Great Fall," 80-81.

mission of one of the Joncaire brothers to the upper country to dispense gifts and secure new alliances.⁴⁷

Also of value in the same year was the intelligence brought to Oswego by Morris Turner and Ralph Kilgore, two Pennsylvania servants working in the fur trade who had been taken captive by some Miami outside of Pickawillany. They were soon brought to the French commandant at Detroit where they were ransomed and put to work on a nearby farm. After a few months they were moved yet again to Niagara where they were to be transported across Lake Ontario to New France. At Sodus Bay, between Niagara and Oswego, they slipped away from a sleeping guard, stealing a gun and some supplies, and made their way to the latter friendly post. The resourceful pair had accumulated much precious intelligence. They provided the officers at Oswego with drafts of the rivers and roads in the Miami country and around Detroit and had also observed batteaux full of supplies at Niagara that were headed west. Their knowledge extended beyond what they were able to see and included what they had heard. They befriended an English-speaking French soldier at Detroit who had himself been a prisoner at New York and Philadelphia and confided in Turner and Kilgore about French plans to send a force of five-hundred soldiers to the Ohio country. Another conversation, with some Frenchmen at Niagara, also revealed that the French had put a bounty on the troublesome Pennsylvania traders George Croghan and James Lowry.⁴⁸

The ordeal of Stephen Coffen demonstrates the interplay between mobility, intelligence, and intercultural experience. Coffen was a soldier taken prisoner in Nova

⁴⁷ For plot quote and intelligence, see Johnson to Clinton, 18 August 1750, WJP 9: 63. For “good humor” and background of Karaghtadie, see Isabel T. Kelsay, “Karaghtadie,” in DCB, vol. 3, accessed November 18, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/karaghtadie_3E.html.

⁴⁸ The Examinations of Morris Turner and Ralph Kilgore, September 1750, MPCPA 5: 482-84; Lindesay to Johnson, 7 September 1750, WJP 1: 297; Johnson to Clinton, 25 September 1750, NYCD 6: 599.

Scotia in 1747 by the French who was moved from various Indian and French settlements on the lower Saint Lawrence and Nova Scotia peninsula. He was eventually arrested in 1752 for trying to arrange an escape to New England after serving two years aboard a ship responsible for moving goods between Quebec and Rimouski on the lower Saint Lawrence River. After serving a few months in a Quebec prison he was allowed to join an expedition to the Ohio Valley as a soldier. Once there he was active in constructing the new forts and roads that would become the chain of posts between Lake Erie and Fort Duquesne. In November 1753 he was part of a convoy returning to New France via Niagara and Lake Ontario when he escaped during a stop for breakfast along the shore, one mile from Oswego. After spending some time among the Mohawk he was found by William Johnson. Johnson interviewed Coffen at length, resulting in rich intelligence that included detailed information concerning the dimensions and armaments of French forts to the west, depths and navigational hazards in the Saint Lawrence River approach to Quebec, and the movements and dispositions of French forces traveling between Canada and the Ohio country.⁴⁹

The case of Stephen Coffen was far from exceptional in terms of inter-imperial desertions. Throughout the interwar period soldiers on both sides took advantage of the proximity of rival empires across Lake Ontario to seek asylum. French expeditions to the upper country, which often passed right in front of Oswego, were used as opportunities to escape military service. For instance, some Six Nations Iroquois who were hired to fight the Miami rebellion in 1753 left the convoy for Oswego where they sold their guns and other supplies. The Indians were shocked at the defenseless state of the post, claiming the

⁴⁹ Deposition of Stephen Coffen, 10 January 1754, NYCD 6: 835-37.

French could easily take all of Virginia and Pennsylvania if they wanted.⁵⁰ The next spring, five soldiers fled Niagara to Oswego and made their way to Albany. At first reluctant to provide any intelligence, the five natives of France provided an Albany doctor with details concerning the forts, roads, garrisons, and guns at the new French posts southwest of Niagara. The “most intelligent” of them drew the doctor a set of maps showing the locations of forts Presque Isle and La Boeuf.⁵¹ The movement of such deserters was not one-way, as British soldiers also absconded to north across the lake. In addition to the Oswego mutineers of 1752, some soldiers sent to reinforce the precarious post on the eve of the Seven Years War in 1754 slipped out through one of the fort’s portholes, stole a birch bark canoe, and headed toward Frontenac. A sergeant and his search party spent three days searching for the men without finding any trace of the deserters.⁵²

The agency of individual and small groups of French and British soldiers is a testament to the fluid loyalties of the borderland, one where allegiance could be self-fashioned by one’s own mobility. Not only did deserters provide valuable intelligence and deny the enemy much needed manpower at threadbare posts, but they could also provide valuable skills and social connections. Jean Baptiste de Couagne, the son of a prominent Canadian merchant, worked as an indentured servant in the western fur trade and had been a prisoner of the Cherokee, by whom he was adopted. The experienced trader and traveler defected to the British at Oswego in March 1751, requesting the

⁵⁰ Dr. Richard Shuckburgh to Thomas Pownall, 30 October 1753, *Ibid.*, 805-06.

⁵¹ Hitchen Holland to De Lancey, 27 March 1754, *MPCPA* 6: 33-34; Dr. Alexander Calhoun to De Lancey, 12 April 1754, *NYCD* 6: 832-34.

⁵² Holland to De Lancey, 17 August 1754, *NYCP*, vol. 78, 8.

protection of New York and asking permission to work as a trader. He would go on to serve as an important informer and interpreter for the British during the next war.⁵³

The intelligence provided by Turner, Kilgore, Coffen, and others not only shows the various ways that information was gathered, but it also highlights the ways it was disseminated. The Lake Ontario posts served as informational nodes connected to the administrative centers of the colonies. In the case of Kilgore and Turner the intelligence that was of particular interest to the colony of Pennsylvania was sent from Lindesay at Oswego to Johnson at Fort Johnson and then on to New York City where Governor Clinton dispatched it to his counterpart in Philadelphia, James Hamilton. Similarly, Coffen's intelligence was gathered by Johnson, forwarded to acting Governor De Lancey in New York, and then dispatched to the governors of Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, as well as to the Lords of Trade in Britain.⁵⁴

The circulation of intelligence did more than alert interested parties as it also had political ramifications. In the summer of 1749 William Johnson received a letter that had been obtained from Niagara. Before reaching Johnson, the correspondence had been taken by an Indian woman who in turn delivered it to a trader at Oswego. The letter, written by the engineer de Léry, outlined his plans to cut off the Oswego trade and its communication with the various Indian nations of the region. Johnson soon sent the document to Governor Clinton who in turn presented it to his council, using it as evidence against his rivals with which to secure much needed funding.⁵⁵ Coffen's affidavit was similarly used. Acting governor De Lancey presented the report to the

⁵³ William Johnson to Clinton, 29 March 1754, WJP 9: 79; Jane E. Graham, "Couagne, Jean-Baptiste de (fl. 1720-96)," in DCB, vol. 4, accessed November 19, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/couagne_jean_baptiste_de_1720_96_4E.html.

⁵⁴ De Lancey to Lords of Trade, 22 April 1754, NYCD 6: 834-35.

⁵⁵ Johnson to Clinton, 19 August 1749, NYCD 6: 526; Clinton to Johnson, 7 September 1749, WJP 1: 248.

provincial assembly in the spring of 1754, a move that secured additional funding for a larger garrison, Indian presents, interpreter and Indian officer at Oswego.⁵⁶

The imperial presence on Lake Ontario also enabled both empires to tap into native communication networks. The recent work of the historian Alejandra Dubcovsky reminds us that these networks “connected and shaped the colonial world.”⁵⁷ For instance, the dissemination of diplomatic regalia and messages by Anglophile Iroquois via Oswego, Fort Frontenac, and Toronto, which was an irritation to French officials, serves as just one example of a British adaptation. Information relayed to officials at places such as Oswego, Fort Johnson, and Frontenac was not the sole product of enterprising colonial deserters and escapees but often just one stop in vast Indian networks that stretched across Lake Ontario, the northeast, and beyond.

The Pinnacle of *Petite Politique*: Picquet and Lindesay on Lake Ontario

The best illustrations of both the potentials and pitfalls of practicing everyday geopolitics on the Lake Ontario borderlands are represented in the experiences of the missionary Picquet and the Indian officer Lindesay in the interwar period.

Picquet’s 1751 expedition around the circumference of Lake Ontario is particularly instructive and serves as an excellent case study that touches on the themes of mobility, border-making, daily diplomacy, intercultural contact, and Indian agency. On June 10 he set out from La Présentation toward Lake Ontario with five “trusted Indians” and a black servant in order to recruit converts and settlers for his new post. The sedentary village he envisioned would be sustained by an enhanced mobility. After

⁵⁶ De Lancey to Lords of Trade, 22 April 1754, NYCD 6: 834.

⁵⁷ Alejandra Dubcovsky, “One Hundred Sixty- One Knots, Two Plates, and One Emperor: Creek Information Networks in the Era of the Yamasee War,” *Ethnohistory* 59, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 507.

stopping at Fort Frontenac he made his way to an archipelago of islands south of the fort where he encountered Mississauga traders returning from Oswego as well as several families of Iroquois migrants who called the islands home, a testament to the fluid nature of the freshwater frontier. Also present were the Frontenac storekeeper, his wife, and three young women who had come to the islands on a sort of holiday. Picquet seized upon the encounter to make his first recruitment attempt, holding an ad hoc feast of game hunted by his escorts on June 14, during which symbol and ceremony were put to use.

Picquet recorded:

We drank most heartily to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the colony to the noise of musket fire, which succeeded perfectly and which was greatly enjoyed by the islanders, whom I assembled after our meal for a little going-away feast. I then preached to them, but they dismissed me until the next day so that they could reflect on what I had said and give me their decision.

The next day, the island Iroquois pledged to send twelve of their band to La Présentation.⁵⁸

Picquet, pleased with his success, continued on to Tonti (Amherst) Island where a runaway slave from Virginia was discovered and entrusted to some Mississaugas. The missionary then continued west, reaching Fort Toronto on 24 June, and taking advantage of the new post's role as a replenishment point. The importance given to the post by imperial officials is made apparent as the Governor General and Intendant both censored details about the fort from his official journal in order to maintain secrecy. This authority extended to the Mississauga neighboring the fort. Despite their receptiveness and requests for a missionary at Toronto in order to make it into more than a "brandy shop," Picquet's

⁵⁸ Picquet, "A 1751 Journal," 361-81.

order explicitly forbade him from bringing any Mississaugas to his post.⁵⁹ Controls on movement could be intra-imperial as well as inter-imperial.

His next stop was at Fort Niagara where he found the fort to be well-situated but in need of repair due to ongoing erosion, another sign of the basic weaknesses of the Lake Ontario forts. Much to his dismay he also discovered widespread intoxication among the Seneca at Little Niagara, which even extended to children and lasted for three days. Also of concern was the movement of some fifty Seneca from the portage to Oswego in open defiance of French interests. However, the missionary did manage to secure twelve Seneca children as hostages to ensure their parents future migration. On July 1, three of Picquet's entourage traveled to the village Little Rapid with an interpreter and officer in an effort to raise more potential recruits. Once back at Little Niagara, the officer reported to the priest that his escorts had spoken to the Seneca sachem at Little Rapid "like apostles," securing a pledge that the sachem and some families would come visit Picquet directly. Although the sachem was a no-show, thirty-nine Seneca arrived and attended their first mass at the chapel at Fort Niagara. On July 3, the missionary set out with his escorts and new converts, headed back east along the south shore of Lake Ontario.

Despite being strongly urged by Joncaire, the Seneca, and his guides to bypass Oswego and seek an alternate route, Picquet stubbornly refused. On July 11, while encamped still to the west of Oswego, the party encountered twenty-three large canoes returning from the British post. One of the Seneca converts, a young woman, happened to meet with her uncle who was among them and managed to secure a promise that he would migrate to La Présentation next spring along with the seven longhouses under his

⁵⁹ Ibid.

influence. While Iroquois kinship could promote migration, it also proved to be a liability. The next day, after visiting the falls on the Genesee River, a canoe full of rum appeared from Oswego in an effort to deter the progress of the missionary and his party. Attempts to instill borders could come in many forms. Although Picquet managed to prevent the Seneca from partaking in the indulgence, three of the Seneca in his convoy joined their kin who were among anglophile Iroquois manning the rum-laden canoe. Undeterred by these losses and the growing discontent of the hostage children, he moved on to Sodus Bay and sounded its depths, envisioning it as a valuable potential fort site for the French. Also present were twenty-eight Ottawa canoes that had been recently at Oswego, yet another reminder of that post's reach and Indian autonomy in the fluid borderland.

Picquet and his converts passed within sight of Oswego on July 16. The ever-observant priest used the opportunity to note the position of the fort, trade houses, and the hills around the settlement that could be used during a future siege. Once past the fort he turned north toward Frontenac. After being reunited with the island Iroquois who had pledged to migrate to the upper Saint Lawrence, Picquet and his flotilla arrived at Frontenac to a hero's welcome, defying rumors the priest had been captured. The fort fired its guns while Nipissing and Algonquin warriors returning from the Ohio country fired musket salutes. Picquet's escorts and the accompanying Seneca replied with their own shouts and salutes, marking the end to a successful journey.⁶⁰ It was one that had been enabled by new French posts, exhibited the potentials and pitfalls of social interactions, and illustrated the adaption and use of interwar geopolitical tactics on the everyday level.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Unlike Picquet, Lieutenant John Lindesay's experiences in the borderland were rather sedentary. Even so, his tenure sheds light on the capabilities and limitations of the interwar *petite politique* from the perspective of a single agent at a specific post. The veteran provincial officer was stationed at Oswego throughout the interwar period until his death by illness in 1753. Although he was not the only Anglo-American officer stationed at the post, his experiences are representative. Like many of his French rivals, he was no stranger to the region and was quite comfortable with intrigue and unofficial diplomacy, having been at Oswego for most of King George's War.⁶¹ Armed with modest gifts and a knack for conversation, his duties there as an Indian officer and commissary involved essentially three tasks in terms of daily geopolitics: border-making, intelligence gathering, and on the spot diplomacy.

He generally shared the frustrations of his French counterparts at Toronto and Niagara when it came to controlling Indian mobility, particularly that of the Six Nations. For instance, on May 24, 1751, a delegation of Onondaga sachems led by the sachem Cachointioni, also known as Red Head, refused to be swayed by Lindesay's pleas for them not to continue on to Canada to conduct diplomacy.⁶² It was one of many instances where the Six Nations maintained their own, autonomous political course in the period. Only three days later the officer would be challenged and overruled once more. This time, Cachointioni's son, Ononwarogo (often referred to by the British as young Red Head), visited the post from the budding French-allied Iroquois village at Oswegatchie. He soon discarded his pretense of having come to trade and went about his task seeking to "carry" Indians back to Oswegatchie. Once again Lindesay's words failed him; Ononwarogo left

⁶¹ For Lindesay's biographical sketch, see the footnote in NYCD 6: 707.

⁶² Report of John Lindesay, May 24 - June 25, 1751, WJP 9: 80.

with four Indian women who had been at Oswego. Some three weeks later a canoe arrived from Frontenac carrying a French interpreter and two Indians. Despite claims by the interpreter that he was merely on his way to visit his brother among the Seneca, local Indians informed Lindsay that they were on a mission to recruit Iroquois throughout the Six Nations to go to Canada. The Lieutenant lamented in his report, "I shall do all I can stop them but as matters are, it's little I can do." A rare success, if it can even be called that, came that same spring when the pro-British Oneida sachem Kindarundie agreed not to join Cachoitioni's mission to Canada, only after asking for and receiving sufficient gifts.⁶³

These failures were tempered by myriad of opportunities. Lindsay was able to turn his everyday social encounters into occasions to gather intelligence. In addition to deserters and escapees, the various and numerous Indian visitors, whether passing through or stopping to trade, were rich sources of knowledge. While the intelligence procured by Lindsay is too voluminous to list, a few examples illustrate the types of information procured and the locales where transient Indians were able to serve as imperial eyes and ears. Among the most prolific Iroquois informers for the British was the Cayuga sachem Atrawana. His personal alliance with the British stretched from the opening days of King George's War to the end of the Seven Years War. During the interwar period his relationship with the British and the colony of New York was maintained via his dealing with Lindsay at Oswego. In the summer of 1751 the sachem returned from a visit to Frontenac and provided Lindsay with a detailed account of the new ship he witnessed being built, counting six large bore cannon and three masts.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid., 80-82.

⁶⁴ Lindsay to William Johnson, 10 July 1751, NYCD 6: 729-30.

Canadian Iroquois were also sources. An Indian from the village of Kahnawake visited in September of the previous year, reporting that they had been at a council with the governor of Trois-Rivières where the French had actively encouraged attacks on Nova Scotia, a call that was quickly taken up by twenty allied warriors.⁶⁵ Oswego continued to be a source of intelligence on the French machinations aimed at Nova Scotia during the series of raids and ambushes known as Father Le Loutre's War. In May 1751 a canoe of Ottawas informed Lindsay of a successful Micmac raid that captured several traders who were being brought to Canada.⁶⁶

In addition to Indian informers, Lindsay also engaged the frequent French visitors. The nature of their stopovers were diverse and included (relatively) friendly social interactions, short visits to camp and resupply, and outright boasting about French superiority and strategy. Although the presence of rival officers and traders proved to be a liability in the war for information, it could also yield valuable intelligence. An example of one such revealing visit occurred when Philippe-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire arrived in September 1750 laden with gifts for diplomacy in the Seneca country, a tipoff to the British of ongoing French efforts.⁶⁷ Three forthcoming French emissaries sent among the Six Nations used Oswego as a stopping point on their trip to Canada from Onondaga in early February 1751, describing their visits to the various Iroquois villages and revealing plans for the building of another fort on the Ohio River.⁶⁸

The most dramatic encounter with the French at Oswego in the interwar period occurred the year after Lindsay's death, in the summer of 1754. His replacement,

⁶⁵ Lieutenant Thomas Butler to William Johnson, 3 September 1750, NYCD 6: 591.

⁶⁶ Report of John Lindsay, May 24 - June 25, 1751, WJP 9: 80. The incident is most likely the March 1751 raid on Dartmouth.

⁶⁷ Lindsay to William Johnson, 20 September 1750, WJP 1: 300.

⁶⁸ Lieutenant Lindsay's Report on Indian News, etc. at Oswego, 5 February 1751, NYCD 6: 706.

Hitchen Holland, was alarmed to see a flotilla of 17 French and Indian canoes passing the fort flying seven French flags and showing off two captured British banners. The Indians aboard the canoes, which were headed to Canada, were “yelping the death hollow” as they passed close to shore and fired celebratory muskets into the air. Three anglophile Iroquois who were undeterred by the demonstration accosted some Kahnawake in the returning war party and learned of the French and Indian victory at Fort Necessity against George Washington and his Virginians. As unnerving as French proximity could be for the British, it once again proved to be an opportunity to collect valuable intelligence, as the details of the engagement and other news were passed on to Holland who then relayed them to De Lancey and his council.⁶⁹

Improvised diplomacy consisted of equal parts conversation and gift giving. His flair for rhetoric was employed on many occasions, especially when it came to scolding Indians for treating with the French. One of his most common themes was the popular British metaphor of slavery, a concept that was used in political discourse stretching from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution.⁷⁰ In 1749, the first post-war trading season, the officer knew that the booming trade at Oswego could be even more lucrative were it not for the French holding up fur convoys at Niagara. He focused his irritation on some Six Nations Iroquois, urging them to use their claims to sovereignty over the Niagara portage to allow free trade and arguing that their trips to New France made them “their slaves.” A couple of years later he took the opportunity of a conversation with Arawana about the French encroachments in the Ohio Country to reiterate how the

⁶⁹ Holland to De Lancey, 9 August 1754, NYCP 79: 7.

⁷⁰ On the metaphor of “slavery,” see John Phillip Reid, *The Concept of Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 39-41.

governor of Canada now looked upon the Six Nations as his “slaves and tributaries and did what he pleased without their leave or consent.”⁷¹

While Lindesay’s admonishments probably did little to further Anglo-Indian relations, well-timed gifts could be quite effective. In July 1751 the Onondaga sachem Hotsinonhyahta, known to the British as “The Bunt,” returned from an unsuccessful campaign with his warriors via Oswego. He and his party told Lindesay that they were both “hungry and poor.” He had visited the new French post at Little Niagara and shared an account of the place with the New York officer. He also expressed anxiety about the lure of La Présentation, a destination for “a great many Indians from his castle,” and others of the Six Nations. In addition to sharing the sachem’s concerns, Lindesay took the opportunity to deliver a timely gift of provisions and clothing to the party. He was enthusiastic in his report to William Johnson, saying that “while the Bunt was here I had him always with me.” Hotsinonhyahta’s relationship with the British would continue into the Seven Years’ War, despite his generally neutral politics.⁷² As stated above, Oswego served as a site from which diplomatic regalia were distributed into Indian country. Lindesay was an eager participant in the process. A few weeks before his encounter with the down-and-out Hotsinonhyahta, he met with a party of Miamis that arrived to purchase rum. After assuring Lindesay of their pro-British sentiments and touting their trade ties to New York and Pennsylvania, they asked for and received a flag to fly to demonstrate their loyalty, as well as some additional tobacco and rum the officer threw in for good

⁷¹ Lindesay to Clinton, 23 September 1749, NYCD 6: 537-38; For the talk with Atrawana and a similar rebuke with similar language to the Seneca and other visiting Indians, see Lieutenant Lindesay’s Report on Indian News, Etc., at Oswego, 5 February 1751, *Ibid.*, 706.

⁷² Lindesay to Johnson, 15 July 1751, NYCD 2: 623-24. The Onondaga war party may have been returning from the upper country where the Iroquois were often in fighting the Chickasaw during this period.

measure.⁷³ Such gifts and symbols were vital in sustaining diplomatic relationships, they enhanced flows of news and military intelligence to imperial agents unable or unwilling to venture into the territories beyond their posts.

The View from Iroquoia: The Six Nations and Interwar Empire-Building

While this chapter has generally focused on French and British efforts to jockey for position in the Lake Ontario borderlands in the years between King George's War and the Seven Years' War, the interests, concerns, and actions of the Six Nations remained paramount. Renewed peacetime imperial expansion could jeopardize the goals of the confederacy, namely the neutrality consensus that had weathered the threats of the last war. One of the clearest expressions of the Six Nations' vision for the Lake Ontario region comes from the Onondaga sachem Canasatego's council speech at Albany in October 1745. He declared that Oswego was considered by the Iroquois to be "a place of peace and trade," a status that would be defended by the Six Nations who had consented to the post some two decades earlier. Furthermore, he described Lake Ontario as "ours," admonishing the Europeans to keep their wars off the Great Lakes as they "ought to fight on the salt water." As for the French, they should be content with their two posts on the lake, Frontenac and Niagara, with any expansion seen as an overreach.⁷⁴

Although the construction of Little Niagara, Toronto, and La Présentation contradicted the Six Nations' desire to limit the number of posts on Lake Ontario, the neutrality consensus prevailed in prohibiting French and British posts closer to home. In the aftermath of war rumors abounded of French attempts to establish a fort and trading

⁷³ Report of John Lindesay, May 24 - June 25, 1751, WJP 9: 82.

⁷⁴ An Account of the Treaty Held at the City of Albany, October 1745, MPCPA 5: 11, 23.

post at either Oneida Lake or on Onondaga Lake, in the heart of Iroquoia.⁷⁵ Rumors verged on reality when the Francophile Onondaga sachem Cachointioni entered into talks with the French in Canada to sell a plot of land for a trade house. The British learned of the plan in late 1751 from another Onondaga sachem who pleaded to remain anonymous. In one of the few British diplomatic successes of the period, William Johnson met with Onondaga leaders and urged them to unanimously reject the transaction. Neutralist and anglophile interests overlapped and interceded with Cachointioni and his supporters upon their return from Canada to prohibit the sale. In the end, even Cachointioni was made to approve of a deed of gift for the land in question, which was signed over to Johnson.⁷⁶ Unsatisfied to merely prevent a French post, Johnson pressed for a British post at Onondaga and renewed their efforts to fortify at Irondequoit. These attempts came to nothing as Johnson resigned from his post as New York's Indian commissioner that same year, and the Six Nations entertained no further imperial projects.

The Six Nations were able to shape the Lake Ontario landscape besides preventing additional European forts. By keeping the area east of Niagara and west of Oswego under their uncontested sovereignty, they enabled native spaces of trade and other interactions. Despite the ambitions of both New York and New France, Irondequoit was usually kept clear from European interlopers throughout the interwar period. Picquet had described the area around the deep bay formed by the outlet of the Genesee River as being a sort of no-man's land for Europeans in 1751. The French would not pursue deserters past the bay, while the British ordered their men not to proceed any further west

⁷⁵ For Oneida Lake rumors, see George Clinton to the Oneida Indians, 1748, WJP 1: 199; Jame Gimmel to Johnson, 21 December 1751, *Ibid.*, 356-57. For Onondaga, see A Proceeding in Council, 19 November 1751, *Ibid.*, 925-27.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* The informer was most likely the sachem Corn Milk, who would continue to serve as a British informer and spy into the Seven Years' War.

past it. However, Sodus Bay, less than twenty miles along the shore to the east, was an active rendezvous site for the Iroquois and other nations from farther afield. Picquet describes it as a place of trade away from European agents, and it certainly must have been a site of *petit politique*, where information exchange and diplomacy occurred as well as enterprise.⁷⁷

The Six Nations worked to maintain a non-violent region. While Le Loutre's War simmered in Atlantic Canada and multiple forces actively contested the Ohio Country, the New York-New France-Iroquoia borderlands remained free of armed conflict. Although a cold war was certainly occurring, one characterized by the subtleties of *petite politique*, the confederacy was able to successfully maintain the relative calm that had prevailed over the last few decades. In retrospect, we now know that this uneasy interwar peace marked the twilight of Iroquois diplomatic hegemony, but this, of course, was only a future possibility at the time. The 1701 Treaty of Montreal continued to preclude any major French military incursion into or through Six Nations territory,⁷⁸ while Oswego continued to fall under the protection of the Six Nations, who had warded off British and French attacks since King George's War on posts that they considered "their beaver traps."⁷⁹ The only overt military action in the Lake Ontario region during this period is the exception that proves the rule. The Mohawk raid on La Présentation in late October 1749 was an Iroquois initiative, even if congruent with British interests. Although the attack resulted in the burning of two French vessels on the Saint Lawrence and the

⁷⁷ Picquet, "A 1751 Journal," 375-77.

⁷⁸ Havard, *Great Peace of Montreal*, 180.

⁷⁹ Parmenter, "Neutralité active des Iroquois," 31.

destruction of the fort's palisade, the nascent French outpost was preserved by the defensive action of French-allied Abenaki.⁸⁰

The establishment and revival of imperial positions in the borderland was far from a zero-sum game for the Iroquois Confederacy. As the historian Jon Parmenter reminds us, neutrality was an “active dialectical process” where migration played an important role. It gave the various factions “freedom to explore their political options” by moving to various communities in the Ohio Valley, Canada, and Susquehanna watershed. Migrant communities, which served as sources of information as well as a release valve for rivalries, could strengthen the Six Nations’ geopolitical position. Anglophile and Francophile factions, although an obstacle to consensus, also enabled the maintenance of ties to the French and British simultaneously.⁸¹

Fort La Présentation and Oswegatchie

La Présentation and its associated Iroquois village of Oswegatchie serve as the most demonstrative case for the period and place in question. It highlights the theme of a post as a refuge, opinions about outmigration, and the formation of new borderland identities based on political and religious allegiances and new places.

The dangers of French and British expansion were expounded upon at the 1753 council at Onondaga. In his address to the Six Nations and a British delegation represented by William Johnson, Cachointion lamented that “we hardly have a hunting place left.” Furthermore, the ease with which rum and other spirits permeated Iroquoia threatened community well-being, with pleas for a prohibition of alcohol sales at Oswego

⁸⁰ “Establishment of a Mission in the Neighborhood of Fort Frontenac,” DHNY 1: 426-27.

⁸¹ Parmenter, “At the Wood’s Edge,” 232, 280.

firmly rejected.⁸² The new migrant village at Oswegatchie was a response and alleviation to both issues. Picquet's strong prohibition against Indian drinking extended beyond his Lake Ontario journey as his mission post aimed to "remove the Indians from the disorders which the proximity of forts and towns ordinarily engenders among them." If the Lake Ontario posts offered refuge for travelers, escapees, and deserters, the mission town was a unique location that welcomed Iroquois seeking to evade the social problems associated with the rum and brandy trade. Those who migrated to the mission at La Présentation and its village of Oswegatchie could benefit from the special status of the Catholic community.⁸³

Picquet's post had the unintended consequence of extending de facto Iroquois sovereignty over hunting territories into the triangle of territory between Oswegatchie, Oneida Lake and Onondaga from Lake Ontario to the Adirondack mountains. Those who were not interested in settling at the new community hunted a borderland devoid of colonial settlements and forts. The area became especially attractive as a hunting ground in light of the colonial expansion occurring in the Mohawk Valley and Pennsylvania.⁸⁴ The movement of both hunters and more long-term refugees to the upper Saint Lawrence certainly aided Six Nations diplomacy. As discussed above, mobility increased available information and news, while expanding the political choices for Iroquois individuals and bands.

⁸² General Meeting of the Six Nations Held at Onondaga, 10 September 1753, NYCD 6: 812-15.

⁸³ Quotation is Picquet's in "Establishment of a Mission in the Neighborhood of Fort Frontenac," DHNY 1: 425; Parmenter, "At the Wood's Edge," 252, 270-71.

⁸⁴ For an example of Mohawk hunting in the region, see Johnson to Clinton, 20 April 1753, NYCD 6: 778-79. The Six Nations continued to hunt the area during the Seven Years' War, for some examples see William Williams to Johnson, 14 March 1756, WJP 9: 405-06; William Williams to Johnson, 26 March 1756, *Ibid.*, 409-10.

Despite its potential diplomatic and political benefits, Iroquois Confederation sachems were often wary of La Présentation and Oswegatchie. This anxiety extended beyond anglophiles such as Hendrick and other Mohawks and included neutralists and even francophiles. The neutralist Onondaga, Hotsinonhyahta, vocalized his fears about the new post to Lieutenant Lindesay during his visit to Oswego in the summer of 1751. In a more official capacity, the usually pro-French sachem Cachointioni, lamented the “false fire” at Oswegatchie, pledging that the Six Nations would do all that they could to “recall their brothers too often seduced that way.” This mistrust was shared by the mission Iroquois of the much older settlements at Kahnawake and Kanesatake, who viewed their kin up the Saint Lawrence as being spies for the Six Nations.⁸⁵

These anxieties may have been fueled by the unique nature of the community in question. Unlike the Mingo Iroquois of the Ohio Valley, the diverse community of Oquaga on the Susquehanna River, or the mission towns outside Montreal, the identity of the village at Oswegatchie was explicitly linked to its loyalty to the French. They began to meet independently with the governor of New France at least as early as 1751. By labeling themselves as being from the “head of the islands” at a council in Quebec with Jonquière, a new political identity was born. Although the governor urged subservience to Picquet and by extension the French crown, the oath sworn to his successor, Duquesne, illustrates the more complex, reciprocal nature of the community. Because they had acknowledged their attachment to the crown and church, Duquesne promised to protect the mission and its form of government. They were guaranteed twelve village sachems,

⁸⁵ General Meeting of the Six Nations Held at Onondaga, 10 September 1753, NYCD 6: 813. For the *domicile* view, see Duquesne to Minister Machault, 13 October 1754, NYCD 10: 263. My characterization of the confederacy’s misgivings about the new community is at odds with Parmenter, who asserts that it was only opposed by anglophile Mohawks, “At the Wood’s Edge,” 250.

six war chiefs, and twelve councilwomen. Furthermore, the local Oswegatchie made all of the appointments to these leadership positions. The oath given during Duquesne's administration was the only given by Indians on their knees, as the Oswegatchie would proudly point out some years later, but it in no way sacrificed their privileges.⁸⁶ Their loyalty to the French transcended oaths and other rhetoric and took the form of action on the ground. In lieu of warfare, political purging took place. In 1754 British medals that were obtained from Albany were handed over to Picquet and a known Anglophile Iroquois was expelled.⁸⁷ Besides their attachment to the French, the new borderland identity was also characterized by sustained ties with the Iroquois communities to both the south and north. Oswegatchie warriors fought alongside their Canadian Kahnawake kin against the Cherokee in 1751, while frequent social and diplomatic visits occurred between the village and Iroquoia throughout the Seven Years' War.

Despite continued ties, the rapid rate of migration to the new community was a serious concern. Oswegatchie boasted almost 400 families a mere three years after its founding, and over 500 on the eve of the Seven Years' War. William Johnson's claim that about half of the Onondaga had left their country for the mission may not be an exaggeration.⁸⁸ To put his number into context one can look at the population of another migrant community, Onaquaga, which was by no means in decline. That town had roughly 250 *individuals* at its peak in the early years of the American Revolution. While migration and migrant communities undoubtedly aided the Six Nations, it could also

⁸⁶ For the 1751 council, see Propositions of the Five Nations settled at La Présentation, 20 September 1751, NYCD 10: 237-39. Details of the Oswegatchie oath are found in Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, 1756-1760*, trans. and ed. Edward P. Hamilton (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 101-03.

⁸⁷ Duquesne to Minister Machault, 13 October 1754, NYCD 10: 263.

⁸⁸ Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 15, Northeast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 495.

cause overextension and worrisome diversification. This would explain the attitudes of Hotsinonhyahta and Cachointion, both Onondaga sachems from the village that was the primary source of Oswegatchie's demographic boom. However, it is worth noting that at least some outmigration from the new settlement occurred as early as 1753. Iroquois who were frustrated with the aggressive French policy in the Ohio country began to return south via Oswego, bringing their anti-French sentiments with them.⁸⁹

Conclusion

Agents of both British and French empire made the most of the limits imposed on the pursuit of geopolitical power by engaging in a *petite politique* that occurred at the everyday, individual level. Faced with meager resources and a diplomatic peace that was fostered by both European and Iroquois treaties and interests, individuals such as Picquet and Lindsay, and a host of other actors adjusted their goals and adapted their methods. The interwar period was more than just a mere prelude to the Seven Years' War. It was also a time to refine and develop the tools of geopolitical power. If peace precluded outright fighting, it also enabled a renewed fur trade, which brought about new mobility options, opportunities to restrict and control movements of goods and people, and daily sovereignty contests. Trading posts and forts played a pivotal role in fostering daily contacts and extending the range of geopolitical actors. These nodes, both old and new, connected French and British decision makers with already established Indian networks and the multitude of useful information they carried.

The Six Nations also made use of the cold war in the Lake Ontario borderlands. Like their European neighbors, they adapted to a culture of power that was in part a

⁸⁹ Stoddert to Johnson, 15 May 1753, NYCD 6: 779.

product of their interests. Despite the dangers presented by new posts, they were able to maintain diplomatic relations, exercise their trade options, gather news and information, and preserve their fragile sovereignty. These instances of mutual adaptation point to borderland politics as a thorough amalgamation of native and colonial places, tactics, and interests.

Although French and British officers were unable to destroy their rival's forts and settlements they were well-informed about the disposition of these places, knowledge that was critical in planning and executing the war to come. Social relationships, fostered by borderland movements, provided the underpinnings of diplomatic and intelligence networks. Officers, traders, spies, and missionaries who had honed political skills would go on to operate in the next war, where their actions aided and enabled the largest military operations North America had ever seen.

CHAPTER FOUR

“PETTY VICTORIES” AND PLACES OF POWER IN LAKE ONTARIO’S BORDERLANDS DURING THE SEVEN YEARS’ WAR, 1754-1759

The years between King George’s War and the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War in North America witnessed the zenith of *petite politique* in the Lake Ontario borderlands. Since no state of war existed between New France and New York, the contest for power and influence played out at the everyday level. Agents of their respective empires sought to manipulate mobility, gather intelligence, and assert sovereignty without the burden of overt military violence. For the Six Nations Iroquois and their Canadian kin to the north, the period discussed in the previous chapter furthered their neutrality while maintaining choices in terms of trade and diplomacy. This chapter argues that during the war years between 1754 and 1760, this culture of power bended but did not break. Borderland actors responded to the war by adapting their daily politicking. Tried and true methods that had been used in the region over the past generation survived while new tools were adopted, tested, and at times, discarded. As standing military forces came and went, both imperial and Indian actors practiced politics as important auxiliaries to more conventional campaigns. The war did not marginalize or disrupt earlier practices, but instead served to heighten their importance.

In their assessment of the Seven Years’ War in the Great Lakes region, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron argue that the conflict, like wars in general, was a catalyst that made and unmade borderland regions. They see this particular conflict as at odds with and destroying the borderland balance that characterized the region.¹ While the

¹ Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” 821.

eventual British victory and conquest of New France certainly removed imperial competition in 1760, fluid borderland conditions still existed on and around Lake Ontario throughout the war. Ironically, the practices of *petite politique* contributed to the end of the borderland.

This chapter follows the shifting wartime borderlands of the region. As posts were destroyed, created, and rebuilt, the places where everyday power, influence, and geopolitics were practiced adapted and changed. As in peacetime, the places and spaces between rivals were full of pitfalls and possibilities. The places examined in this chapter will include not only seemingly more conventional posts such as Fort Stanwix, Oswego, Fort Frontenac, and Niagara, but will also look at Indian and settler communities such as the mission settlement at Oswegatchie and the vulnerable colonial community at German Flatts in the upper Mohawk Valley. Like their colonial counterparts, the Iroquois enacted their political goals at a variety of shifting locales. In addition to these specific establishments, the spaces between armies and forts were peopled by highly mobile and usually well-informed deserters, prisoners, and scouts. As Ewa Anklam has shown, these spaces were utilized in a distinct culture of military reconnaissance where both sides fought for the “value of the visible.”² Similarly, spaces between forces were often sites of daily geopolitics where operations were carried out with aims that went beyond immediate military concerns. This chapter seeks to use the war as a lens to examine the exercise of power in the borderlands by looking at how both prewar personnel and new arrivals used cultural contacts to further their aims. Furthermore, it also uses a focus on

² Ewa Anklam, “*Battre l’estrade: Military Reconnaissance in the German Theatre of War,*” in *The Seven Years’ War: Global Views*, eds. Mark H. Danley and Patrick J. Speelman (Boston: Brill, 2012), 213-42.

the borderlands as a way to further understand the Seven Years' War.³ Although the British, with their superior European-style forces were finally able to triumph over the French, it was not without the aid of a uniquely New World culture of power.

Perspectives on the Coming of the Seven Years' War to the Lake Ontario Region

Although the Anglo-French rivalry had shaped the region since the early years of the eighteenth century, the strategic importance of the lake and its various geopolitical connections entered into the minds and plans of new historical actors in both North America and in Europe. Those who had been involved in the machinations of King George's War and the cold war that prevailed after 1748 revitalized their visions for the region as the reality of war loomed after the confrontation between George Washington and Louis Coulon de Villiers at Fort Necessity.

In the same month that Washington and his Virginians were defeated in the Alleghenies, delegates from nine of Britain's colonies were converging in Albany. As Timothy Shannon has shown, the congress at Albany can be understood in both an imperial and Indian context in which the colonies and Six Nations, particularly the

³ There has been much recent interest in the Seven Years' War, which has generated numerous overviews, thematic studies, and regional histories. For overviews of the North American conflict, Anderson's *The Crucible of War*, remains the standard. In addition, see Fowler, *Empires at War*; William R. Nester, *The French and Indian War and the Conquest of New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014). For global perspectives, Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years' War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Danley and Speelman, eds., *The Seven Years' War: Global Views*; Nester, *The First Global War: Britain, France, and the Fate of North America, 1756-1775* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000). For the northeast in particular, Douglas R. Cubbison, *All Canada in the Hands of the British: General Jeffrey Amherst and the 1760 Campaign to Conquer New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), provides a detailed history of the war's final phase; Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Len Travers, *Hodges' Scout: A Lost Patrol of the French and Indian War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), offer immersive histories of the soldiers' experience in the Northeast; Frans de Bruyn and Shaun Regan, *The Culture of the Seven Years' War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), is a diverse collection that touches on the conflict's impact on areas well beyond more traditional military and political histories.

Mohawk, were coming to terms with expansion and centralization of British imperial power. The lead Mohawk voice at the proceedings, the sachem Hendrick, declared that the Covenant Chain alliance between Iroquois and the colonies was virtually broken due to the strain of trade grievances and “land fraud.” Furthermore, they urged the reinstatement of William Johnson as their Indian agent. The Mohawk were particularly vulnerable as the easternmost of the Six Nations; the settlement frontier by this time already extended west past their principal settlements, and the Oswego trade had significantly reduced their middle role in the northeastern fur trade.⁴ Councils between the Mohawk and colonial representatives were held in parallel to talks regarding plans for a colonial union put forth by Pennsylvania’s Benjamin Franklin and other delegates. It was imperative for the colonists to repair their primary Indian alliance as war became imminent. New York’s acting governor and noted merchant, James De Lancey, jealousy guarded his colony’s linchpin role in the Covenant Chain during the congress. He worked with the re-established Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs to bolster security and trade by advocating the creation of two new forts, at Onondaga and Irondequoit Bay on Lake Ontario, urging the end of migrations to the French-fostered community at Oswegatchie, promoting more compact Mohawk settlements, and pleading that traders traveling to Oswego no longer be harassed and robbed.⁵

De Lancey was not the only figure interested in the place of Lake Ontario in British plans versus the French. Thomas Pownall, a Briton who had recently arrived in the colonies and a brother of a member of the Board of Trade, penned a paper as an observer at the Albany Congress. He displayed a keen understanding of the region’s

⁴ Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 11-13, 17-20, 27, 30-37. 139-40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 145-148.

history, recalling the rise of the French presence in the seventeenth century. He argued the British should work to destroy the “yoke of forts” in order to become “masters of the lakes” and split New France from Louisiana. The key to his continental vision lay with Oswego. Although the British lacked a proper fortress in mainland North America, they did possess “a fort, a garrison, a port” on Lake Ontario in the heart of the Indian country. Ontario, once controlled by a proper British fleet and with Cayuga and Seneca aid, would then become the stepping stone to Lake Erie and beyond. The ensuing conquest of the Great Lakes could then be split equitably between New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Connecticut (with the other New England colonies sharing Lake Champlain).⁶ Whereas Pownall was a newcomer, William Johnson was at work revitalizing his interest in the area. His much less grandiose and more pragmatic thoughts, outlined during the Albany Congress, included a variety of everyday geopolitical maneuvers and a more realistic assessment of Six Nations sovereignty. Johnson called for the French-style dispersion of Indian gifts at British posts, a strict lookout to hinder enemy access to the Oswego River, resident agents throughout Iroquoia, a fort among the Seneca fostering a “shared frontier,” Oswego trade reforms, joint colonial funding of that post, British Lake Ontario shipbuilding, and increased colonial habitation among the Iroquois in order to promote the learning of their languages.⁷

The Albany delegates echoed and integrated the thoughts of Pownall and Johnson during their sessions that July. Although the plan for union failed to materialize, the focus on the Lake Ontario borderlands and the strategies and tactics put forth by the pair would

⁶ Thomas Pownall, “Considerations towards a General Plan,” 11 July 1754, NYCD 6: 893-97.

⁷ Johnson, “Measures necessary to be taken with the Six Nations...toward defeating the French,” July 1754, *Ibid.*, 897-99.

reverberate across the Atlantic in London and on the ground during the war. In late 1754 the ambitious Duke of Cumberland, son of King George II, developed a four-pronged plan for the following year. General Edward Braddock was put in overall command of four armies: the first, under Johnson, would advance on Canada via Lake Champlain; the second, led by Massachusetts governor William Shirley, would be stationed at Oswego and strike Niagara; a third, under Braddock himself would attack the Ohio Valley; while the fourth would be active in Nova Scotia. The plan, which was more in line with the thinking of Pownall rather than Johnson, was “approved by men studying maps in London unaware that their ignorance of American geography, politics, and military capacities had foredoomed it to failure.”⁸

While the British discussed colonial union, mutual defense, sought to repair the Covenant Chain, and plotted their 1755 campaign, the French found themselves on relatively firm ground. The victory over Washington somewhat improved Indian alliances in the west, which were certainly in a much better state than they had been in the last years of King George’s War. However, trade still remained tenuous as New France struggled to maintain a steady flow of supplies between Niagara and the Ohio country. Only 1500 troops occupied the string of forts that stretched from Fort Presqu’île on Lake Erie south to Fort Duquesne on the forks of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. These material restraints combined with a desire to not appear as the aggressor, since an official state of war did not yet exist between the two empires, to produce an explicit defensive policy from the Marine ministry. The French worked to discourage their native allies from attacking the British, but a raid conducted by the Abenaki of the Saint Lawrence community of Bécancour on Hoosick, New York, served to escalate

⁸ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 86-88.

tensions. The French were able to almost entirely evade the Royal Navy and land over a few thousand regulars in Canada and Louisbourg in June 1755.⁹ This defensive posture marked something of a shift from the aggressive fort building and schemes to strangle the Oswego trade of the late 1740s and early 1750s. The immediate goal now was merely to survive. It would not be until the defeat of Braddock in 1755 and the failure of Shirley to move from Oswego that the French would go on any sort of significant offensive on or around Lake Ontario.

The Six Nations Iroquois, like their British and French neighbors to the east and north, also had a vested interest in the increasingly contested Ohio west. By 1748 it is estimated that some 1,500 Iroquois had relocated to the Ohio Valley. Although these “Mingo” Iroquois were largely autonomous from the council at Onondaga, the Six Nations still sought to maintain contacts with their western kin.¹⁰ This desire extended to the Canadian communities of Kahnawake and Kanasatake and the newer mission villages at Oswegatchie and Akwesasne (Saint Regis). The latter communities, founded in 1749 and 1754, respectively, were located on the far reaches of the upper Saint Lawrence and closely entwined with Lake Ontario borderlands. In addition, the Six Nations still viewed Oswego as being under their protection. Sachems returning from a conference in Montreal in the fall of 1754 informed an officer at the post of their efforts to extend their neutrality over it.¹¹ As the Champlain Valley became increasingly militarized, the Lake Ontario corridor proved to be a viable channel between Iroquois peoples. The effort to

⁹ Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 165-68; Colin G. Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600-1800: War, Migration, and Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 167.

¹⁰ Parmenter, "The Iroquois and the Native American Struggle for the Ohio Valley, 1754-1794," in Skaggs and Nelson, eds., 109.

¹¹ Hitchen Holland to De Lancey, 1 January 1755, NYCD 6: 938.

prevent intra-Iroquois violence began as early as the opening shots at Fort Necessity. The Mingo sachem and his warriors who had accompanied the Virginian expedition withdrew before the battle in order to prevent a confrontation with their Kahnawake kin who were accompanying Villiers. More formally, the Albany commissioners fostered a neutrality agreement between the Six Nations and Laurentian Iroquois in October 1754, an agreement that was supported by De Lancey's council at the dismay of his colonial allies. This policy of active neutrality, an extension of the Iroquois goals and tactics from the previous war, was reiterated early the following year when the Mohawks, meeting with Johnson, who had been appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs after the arrival of Braddock, negotiated "promises of protection for their Laurentian kinfolk."¹²

The Frontenac-Oswego Borderland, 1754-1756: Continuity and Change

It is within this context of Iroquois neutrality, French defensiveness, Anglo-American ambition, and increased militarization that the first wartime Lake Ontario borderland developed. Beginning with the outbreak of hostilities in the summer of 1754, the posts of Frontenac and Oswego, which had sat opposite each other on the lake for the past three decades, entered a final phase of competition that culminated in the siege and destruction of Oswego in 1756. In some ways the actions at and around the two forts were unprecedented; both empires transported and garrisoned the largest forces of regulars and provincials the region had ever seen as naval competition and shipbuilding flourished. Despite this new concentration of conventional military forces, daily geopolitics often still played out on a very small scale between individuals and small groups. Significant numbers of outside forces did not arrive in the region until mid-1755

¹² Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars," 63-65.

and even after they did their movements and effectiveness were hampered by strategic and logistical limitations.

Oswego was one of the very first British posts to witness the outbreak of the Seven Years' War on the North American continent. As discussed in the previous chapter, the garrison, Indian agents, traders, and Indian visitors witnessed the return of French forces soon after their victory at Fort Necessity. Even before that defeat acting governor De Lancey expressed a concern that the French would target Oswego as early as the spring of 1754. Months later, De Lancey wrote to London once again urging the creation of a British fort at Irondequoit and a strengthening of the one at Oswego as a way to bar the French from taking advantage of the rivers that allowed access to the Six Nations. By December 1754 the garrison was raised to fifty soldiers.¹³ The acting governor and other New York officials were well aware of the ease with which their cross-lake rivals navigated Lake Ontario and other area bodies of water. As with the French convoy after the debacle at Fort Necessity, those at Oswego witnessed subsequent movements that proved both intimidating and informative. In the spring of 1755, the provincial officer Hitchen Holland reported a procession of thirty-four large bateaux passing the post on their way to the upper country. The British also used these encounters as an opportunity to vent frustrations with French mobility and proximity and exert a modicum of sovereignty. As in the past, the flying of a French flag provided a target; Oswego opened fire on a bateaux headed west with Bourbon banner on at least one occasion.¹⁴

¹³ De Lancey to James Hamilton, 1 April 1754, MPCPA 6: 13; De Lancey to Thomas Robinson, 15 December 1754, NYCD 6: 923. De Lancey to Lords of Trade, 15 December 1754, *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Holland to De Lancey in De Lancey to Hamilton, 14 May 1755, MPCPA 6: 411; Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnial to Marine, 24 July 1755, DHNY 1: 473-75.

This convoy of men, artillery, and supplies had been revealed before it got underway by an Onondaga informer working with Holland at Oswego.¹⁵ An active group of Iroquois informers worked with the British at Oswego in the early stages of the war before relations soured in late 1755 and 1756. As William Shirley amassed his forces at Oswego in May 1755, a group of Onondaga spies traveled from Fort Johnson to Frontenac to gather intelligence on the French buildup taking place there. Small-scale Iroquois-British cooperation could also take more subtle forms. A group of sachems who had passed through Oswego to meet with the governor of New France in the fall of 1754 returned via that post the following winter where some Anglophiles among them provided “private intelligence” to Holland about the details of their diplomatic mission, French pressures to sway the Six Nations against the British, and future French movements to the Ohio Valley.¹⁶ These types of encounters could prove mutually beneficial to the Iroquois and colonials alike; the Onondaga informers were able to demonstrate their loyalty to their preferred European power without engaging in violence, while the colonies were notified of developments beyond their borders. Such Indian intelligence was widely circulated beyond Oswego and New York; De Lancey often shared information with his counterpart in Pennsylvania and intelligence garnered at Oswego was passed along to General Braddock and officials in London. By 1755, Pennsylvania officials were praising intelligence from Oswego and weighing it more heavily than news collected from their own frontier.¹⁷

¹⁵ Holland to Colonel Marshall, 20 March 1755, NYCP, vol. 80, 51.

¹⁶ Indian proceedings, 15 May 1755, WJP 1: 634; Holland to De Lancey, 1 January 1756, NYCD 6: 937-38.

¹⁷ Robert Hunter Morris to Braddock, 3 January 1755, MPCPA 6: 428-29; Council proceedings, 3 January 1755, Ibid.: 233-34.

In addition to forming and maintaining working relationships with Iroquois spies and informers, Oswego and Fort Johnson also continued to serve as diplomatic bases from which British influence could be spread to the north and west. This function relied upon both face-to-face daily diplomacy as well as the dissemination of wampum belts. In this way, the practice of borderland *petite politique* continued much as it had since the late 1740s. In 1754 belts were being dispatched to various nations at least nominally allied with the French. Governor Duquesne received samples of the British handiwork at Quebec and wrote a letter of protest to De Lancey in New York.¹⁸ Oswego also hosted a variety of Indians in the spring of 1755 as the British planned and organized a proposed expedition against Niagara. The British officer John Bradstreet saw these visitors and traders as potential allies and encouraged the timely dispersal of gifts and provisions among them to secure their aid in the campaign. He even persuaded a leading Mississauga sachem to partake in a conference at Fort Johnson that summer. The conference between William Johnson and the Six Nations in July was attended by the Cayuga sachem Arawana, who facilitated a meeting between Johnson and an envoy from the Mississauga. The representative, who had traveled a great distance to the Mohawk Valley, assured the British of his nation's friendship with them as they plotted their campaign against Niagara that summer.¹⁹

Like their rivals to the south, the French were also busy fortifying their posts while at the same time partaking in the daily geopolitics of the borderland. A glimpse at the daily life at Frontenac in the summer of 1755 reveals the existence of parallel worlds, that of the encamped French regular soldiers and their officers and the fort's local officers

¹⁸ Duquesne to De Lancey, 26 October 1754, NYCD 6: 936.

¹⁹ Bradstreet to the colonial governors, 29 May 1755, WJP 1: 547-48; Johnson council with Six Nations, 4 July 1755, Ibid.: 981.

and their Indian visitors, which at times overlapped and clashed. That August, as regular troops drilled under their officers, constructed new trenches and guard posts, and carpenters began laying down the frame of a new twelve-gun ship, Indians of a variety of nations came and went in canoes, hunted and fished for the garrison, and brought in scalps. Despite such cooperation, frictions arose, usually involving alcohol. For instance, on August 31, a group of drunk allied warriors attacked a French sentinel, leading one officer, recently arrived from France, to compare the inebriated to "devils."²⁰ Although recent research has adeptly shown how these two very different cultures of warfare conflicted and ultimately proved irreconcilable, particularly at the leadership level, everyday cooperation and convergence certainly did occur.²¹ At Frontenac regulars became acquainted with the use of bateaux, the lake, and its environs by serving on small-scale scouting missions that traveled to the outflow of Ontario to the Saint Lawrence River and around the myriad islands in the northeast of the lake.²² Later on, regulars were also often involved with scouting missions and raids against Oswego and its tenuous supply chain. By the late summer of 1755, about 1,200 French soldiers were stationed at Frontenac, with another 1,200 at Niagara, their presence used to counter the roughly equal British forces at Oswego in order to create a stalemate on the Ontario front. British inaction was brought about by the defeat of Braddock at Monongahela early that July.²³

²⁰ Anne-Joseph-Hyppolite de Maurès, comte de Malartic, *Journal des campagnes au Canada de 1755 à 1760*, ed. Paul Gaffarel (Dijon: L. Damidot, 1890), 19-22.

²¹ See Julia Osman, "Pride, Prejudice and Prestige: French Officers in North America during the Seven Years' War" in Danley and Speelman, eds., 191-212; Crouch, *Nobility Lost*.

²² Malartic, *Journal*, 19, 22-23.

²³ Jean Erdman, Baron Dieskau to André Jean-Baptiste Doreil, 16 August 1755, NYCD 10: 311-12; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 110-11; Nester, *The French and Indian War*, 166.

The War for Borderland Mobility and Intelligence: Naval Forces, Observation Camps, and Oswego

As neither army was prepared to make a major move during the summer and fall of 1755, a war for mobility and intelligence was waged that involved control over the waters and islands of Lake Ontario and the supply routes to Niagara and Oswego. By controlling Lake Ontario and knowing the scope and movements of enemy forces, both sides hoped to secure the way for future operations that would rely on the large-scale transportation of men and supplies. Unlike years past, the French undertook much larger naval operations that went beyond showing the flag and supplying Niagara. In addition, the British finally were able to mass the men and material needed to build ships at Oswego's second-rate harbor. The imperial powers hoped that proper sailing ships outfitted with cannons would successfully apply European-style power to a peripheral region. One thorough assessment of military strategy on Lake Ontario during the war concluded that "the naval strength that was developed had almost no influence upon the actual military situation." Visions of "lakepower" were "dreamer's dreams," which were stymied by the small number of ships built, difficult logistics, and the avoidance of conclusive battles.²⁴ Although the number of ships built by each side was small, six British and four French by 1756,²⁵ naval operations involving these ships and smaller unarmed bateaux and whaleboats were important parts of *petite politique* in terms of scouting, spying, mobility, and displays of symbolic power. In short, more metropolitan forms of power, which remained relatively weak, were adapted to the militarized maritime borderlands.

²⁴ MacLeod, "French and British Strategy in the Lake Ontario Theatre," 250.

²⁵ For details on the ships and their construction, see Severance, *An Old Frontier of France*, 2: 144-45, 160-62, 434.

The war of mobility on the lake, which ultimately ended in a French victory at the siege of Oswego in 1756, started well enough for the British. In addition to launching their first sailing ships on the lake in 1755, they also made use of smaller craft, particularly whaleboats, which were much more maneuverable than the flat-bottomed bateaux. The whaleboats, introduced to Lake Ontario by William Shirley and his Bostonians, were usually manned by Albany scouts who were esteemed by at least one Massachusetts officer to be “the best company we have.”²⁶ The belated arrival of boats, ships, and galleys extended British presence throughout the lake to an unprecedented degree. Whereas British officers and soldiers had been limited to the immediate environs on Oswego for the past three decades, operations flourished, albeit for a brief period. This increased mobility worried Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnial, who had become Governor General of New France in 1755 and would lead the war effort until the Canadian surrender in 1760. Not only was Oswego fortifying to become something resembling a series of European-style forts, but British ships and men had been spotted as far as the Bay of Quinte to the west of Frontenac on Ontario’s northern shore.²⁷

In July 1755, a party consisting of some Iroquois and Albany scouts landed undetected on an island within a quarter of a mile of Frontenac. The scouts reported back to Oswego valuable and detailed intelligence that included the size and number of French vessels and the geography of the deepwater channel that led to the enemy fort. Similarly, in late September, an enterprising officer got within less than a half mile of Frontenac, at which point he climbed a tree to get a bird’s eye view of the entire French encampment. Less fleetingly, the British maintained a post on Goats’ Island, a mere ten miles from

²⁶ Captain John Shirley to Morris, 8 September 1755, PAA 2: 403.

²⁷ Vaudreuil to Marine, 24 July 1754, DHNY 1: 473-75.

Frontenac. The post was home to some thirty soldiers who monitored French and Indian movements and were resupplied on a daily basis from Oswego via schooners. Whaleboat scouting missions continued into the summer of 1756, even as provincial forces on land became more and more hemmed in around Oswego.²⁸ In addition to scouting, Britain's nascent fleet was also used to gather intelligence by working with Indian informers. In July 1755, a schooner was used to drop off a "fine Cayuga Indian with a good trader or two" near Niagara to gather intelligence. The ship then picked up another anglophile Cayuga and his wife and family who had been at Niagara since the previous winter. William Shirley not only gathered information about the fort, its garrison, and the defeat of Braddock from the spy, but he also used the opportunity to practice *petite politique* by pledging to the Cayuga that "he was going to endeavor to recover their land for them." More conventionally, Bradstreet made early use of one of the ships to sink several enemy canoes.²⁹

Despite these modest British inroads, the French continued to make fuller use of the opportunities afforded by the maritime borderlands. Although they had enjoyed dominance over Ontario's waters for a generation, the entry of British boats and ships challenged their hegemony over the lake. The French faced a potentially disastrous logistical dilemma in that Oswego and its naval forces could possibly split the posts at Niagara and Toronto from the nearest Canadian harbor at Frontenac. Luckily for the French, the British naval threat was unable to fully materialize. However, as in the past,

²⁸ Council of War at Oswego, 18 September 1755, CWS 2: 265; John Shirley to Morris, 25 September 1755, PAA 2: 425; John Shirley to Morris, 20 July 1755, Ibid.: 381; *New York Mercury*, 28 June 1756 in DHNY 1: 478-79. Goats' Island is currently called Carleton Island. It was known to the French as Isle aux Chevreux. This post was vacated some time before the French move on Oswego as it was visited by the French as part of their reconnaissance ahead of the French expedition, Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 23.

²⁹ John Shirley to Morris, 20 July 1755, PAA 2: 381-82; "American Intelligence from Mr. Pownall," 1 October 1755, CWS 2: 304.

the hostile Great Lake environment still needed to be tamed by a sufficient naval effort that could meet new wartime demands. In October 1755 they were able to tackle the unprecedented task of moving a body of French regulars, their artillery, and their supplies across the lake from Frontenac to Niagara by way of the north shore and Toronto. A journal kept by Jean-Guillaume de Plantavit, chevalier de La Pause, a captain of the Guyenne regiment, details hardships of the regulars' journey that was undertaken by two sailing ships, forty-eight bateaux, as well as some Indians and Canadians. The three-week trip was plagued by contrary winds, capsized boats, and inadequate provisions. The allied Indians played an important role by providing the soldiers with ducks, turkeys, and wild corn, yet another example of the native underpinnings of European power in the region.³⁰ The French continued to move regulars to and from Niagara via Lake Ontario despite these and other risks. For instance, the Béarn regiment made the crossing west in eight days but faced adverse weather as well as hidden sandbars and wrecks. As with the Guyenne regiment a year earlier, the expedition relied on hunting and foraging on the lake's islands. Just before the convoy set out from Frontenac in 1756 to lay siege to Oswego, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, a regular French officer, contemplated the lake, with its lack of viable harbors and frequent storms, deciding that it was worse than a sea.³¹

French naval efforts moved and sustained regular troops and also enabled Niagara to be a viable base of raids against vulnerable backcountry positions such as Fort Cumberland in western Maryland. Throughout 1756 and 1757, the French worked in concert with their Indian allies, including the Mississauga, Francophile Iroquois, and a

³⁰ Jean-Guillaume-Charles de Pantavit de Margon, chevalier de La Pause, "Mémoire et observations sur mon voyage en Canada," *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec* 12 (1931-32), 13-18.

³¹ Malartic, *Journal*, 60-61; Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 22.

variety of tribes from the Illinois country and Great Lakes. In the months preceding the French siege of Oswego, Mississauga and Iroquois scouts and raiders harassed the fragile British supply lines along the Oswego River and targeted troops outside the forts. Niagara also served as a node of information as a steady flow of Indian hunters, scouts, and diplomats provided the French with specific intelligence and news of engagements elsewhere.³² If Niagara's support was tenuous, Toronto, located to the north of that post, was even less able to support European forces given its small size and at times hostile Mississauga neighbors. In fact, the post remained a single fort with a wooden stockade, which was judged completely useless by European standards. Nevertheless, as it was before the war, Toronto was a valuable site of borderland *petite politique* that was kept alive by its maritime connections to the east. In addition to serving as a stopping and replenishing point for convoys headed to and from Niagara, it continued to foster a modest fur trade and served as base for several raids.³³

Although the French sailing ships were out numbered six to four by their British enemies, they enjoyed both a logistical and tactical edge over their opponent's small fleet. In the fall of 1755 the French were well aware of the delayed launches of British vessels that remained behind schedule and were assured of the superiority of their ships. During the early spring of the following year, French ships were a regular sight to those at Oswego as the British ships languished for want of crews and naval stores until at least

³² Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 48; Pierre Pouchot, *Memoir upon the Late War in North America between the English and French, 1755-1760*, ed. and trans. Franklin B. Hough (Roxbury, MA: W. Elliot Woodward, 1866) 1: 60-61, 77-78, 92; Malartic, *Journal des campagnes*, 62-66.

³³ *Ibid.*, 58-59, 67; Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 11-14; Vaudreuil to Marine, 1 August 1756, AC, C11a, vol. 101, 72-73.

mid-May.³⁴ Only two direct confrontations occurred on the waters of Lake Ontario in the opening years of the war as ships and boats on both sides engaged in a seemingly unending game of cat and mouse. The first action, in June 1756, involved an inconclusive ambush laid by the Canadian officer Villiers. Villiers spied one of the British ships near Frontenac that was accompanied by eight “shallops” (most likely whaleboats) with twenty men in each boat. His men drew their right bateaux into the woods on a nearby coastline to await the flotilla. The subsequent surprise attack only managed to net one of the boats, with thirteen of its crew killed and seven taken prisoners.³⁵

The second battle, which proved more decisive for the French, occurred later that same year in the early morning hours of June 27. During the fourth day of a cruise to “look for monsieur” on the lake, British commodore Bradley and his three vessels encountered all four French ships. Outnumbered, the British turned toward Oswego and were cautiously pursued until the French managed to isolate and capture the schooner *Farmer* along with fourteen prisoners and six light guns.³⁶ French ships again checked the British fleet and kept it in Oswego’s harbor during an encounter on July 2. For the remainder of the month and into August, British effectiveness suffered from leaky ships, navigational hazards, and French artillery fire, all of which led to the siege of Oswego in mid-August.³⁷ Three British ships successfully sallied forth from their harbor on the opening day of the siege of Oswego and opened fire on the French camp. However, the maritime reach proved fleeting as battery fire from the shore drove the ships away.³⁸

³⁴ Journal of Occurrences, October 1755, NYCD 10: 403; Colonel James Mercer to Johnson, 7 April 1756, WJP 9: 422-23; Captain Thomas Butler to Johnson, 26 April 1756, Ibid.: 444-45; William Shirley to Henry Fox, 7 May 1756, CWS 2: 442-43.

³⁵ “State of our Naval Forces on Lake Ontario,” *Royal Fort Frontenac*, 255.

³⁶ *New York Mercury*, 2 July 1756 in DHNY 1: 479-80; Vaudreuil to Marine, 5 July 1756, Ibid.: 481-82.

³⁷ MacLeod, “French and British Strategy in the Lake Ontario Theatre,” 281-84.

³⁸ Journal of the Siege of Oswego, NYCD 10: 459.

The survival of the French lake fleet not only enabled mobility but it also served as a persistent symbol of French power to native observers. In a council with William Johnson mere weeks before the siege in August 1756, the Mingo leader Tanaghrisson, known as the Seneca Half-King, complained that Shirley's "large canoes" were supposed to stop French shipping and isolate and destroy Niagara. On the contrary, Tanaghrisson still saw the French ships and witnessed their work on a daily basis. Johnson could only respond that the British still did not know the lake as well as their enemies and were only able to maintain one harbor.³⁹

While the war for mobility and intelligence on Lake Ontario can be judged somewhat in favor of the French, the parallel conflict on land in the environs around Oswego was a complete British failure. So total was French control around Oswego and its supply route that the siege was essentially already won before Montcalm and his forces even landed. While the British were able to establish a small observation camp on Goats' Island, the French undertook a much larger and longer lasting fortified encampment at Nioure (Henderson) Bay, roughly halfway between Frontenac and Oswego on Ontario's eastern shore. Operations at Nioure Bay were in full swing by the spring of 1756. Some five to eight-hundred Canadians and Indians, including a francophile Oneida guide, were operating under Villiers in the militarized yet porous borderland. Their mission, to "harass and agitate," was most effective in terms of harassing Oswego, attacking small supply convoys, taking scalps, and capturing prisoners. The latter were essential sources of human intelligence as the line between prisoners and deserters became blurred; many of those facing imminent capture opted to label themselves as deserters to seek better treatment. Villiers forces, which themselves

³⁹ Journal of Sir William Johnson's Proceedings with the Indians, 5 August 1756, NYCD 7: 180-81, 183.

were susceptible to Indian desertions and disease, were bolstered by the arrival of Louis de la Corne and more allied warriors in July. In addition to these two provincial officers, the expertise of François-Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, governor of Trois-Rivières and brother of Governor General Vaudreuil, was essential in maintaining autonomous Indian allies. Rigaud also deftly handled a Six Nations diplomatic delegation that had been invited to Canada by denying them access to the camp at Nioure and redirecting and dividing them in such a way as to conceal preparations underway against Oswego.⁴⁰ In the days leading up to the siege, the post was transformed into a staging area where troops and material were regularly transported from Frontenac, providing a safe and convenient base from which to extend the French reach south.⁴¹

The successes of raids from Nioure Bay, Niagara, Toronto, and Frontenac wreaked havoc on British morale, supplies, and mobility. At Oswego, sentinels, carpenters, and woodcutters faced daily harassment. Beginning in the winter of 1755-56, the French were active in harassing the isolated garrison at Oswego. One such winter raid spent several days around Oswego and sabotaged scores of bateaux. Later small-scale attacks, which would take small numbers of prisoners and inflict occasional casualties, put the garrison in a prolonged siege-like state throughout the spring and summer of 1756.⁴² The British hardly fared better on the long, difficult route between Oswego and Albany. Besides environmental obstacles such as the treacherous falls on the Oswego River and the numerous portages around Oneida Lake, French and Indian raids were a

⁴⁰ Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 62-67; Mercer to Johnson, 6 April 1756, WJP 9: 418-19; Malartic, *Journal*, 55-57; La Pause, "Mémoire," 24-25; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 6-8; Vaudreuil to Marc-Pierre de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson, 20 August 1756, NYCD 10: 471-73.

⁴¹ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 24.

⁴² Vaudreuil to Marine, 2 February 1756, DHNY 1: 475. For a daily and detailed chronicle of attacks around Oswego in the spring of 1756, see Stephen Cross Journal, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, 11-14.

fairly regular occurrence. The most successful of these raids occurred on March 27, 1756, when a party of French and Indians led by Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry made a daring surprise attack on Fort Bull. The fort, which was an important supply base on the east end of Oneida Lake on Wood Creek, was completely destroyed by an explosion and its garrison was slaughtered.⁴³ The biggest confrontation would come on July 3 when Bradstreet and a convoy of three-hundred men were ambushed by a French force over double their size on the Oswego River. Although the British were able to hold their ground and disperse the enemy force, Oswego's supply woes and poorly constructed and situated trio of forts were doomed a little over a month later.⁴⁴

Besides mobility, the British were also at a major disadvantage in terms of another related component of *petite politique*: intelligence. In terms of geographic knowledge, the British had been almost entirely ignorant of the shape, size, hazards, and harbors of Lake Ontario. It was only with the launch of naval vessels in 1755 that the knowledge gap began to be filled. In the summer of 1756, Commodore Bradley was reporting that his twelve-day cruise aboard the sloop *Oswego* was still contributing to the exploration of the lake.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Iroquois lost much of their faith in the British and therefore the Six Nations curtailed their support. Multiple parties of Iroquois had been at Oswego in 1755 and an invaluable party of mostly Onondaga scouts worked around the fort and the Oneida Carry during the spring of the following year. These

⁴³ For narratives of the Fort Bull attack from the French perspective, see Journal of Occurrences, 1755-56, 27 March 1756, NYCD 10: 403-05; La Pause, "Mémoire," 22-23; Malartic, *Journal*, 49-51. For the British reaction, see Johnson to Shirley, 3 April 1756, WJP 9: 414-16.

⁴⁴ Nester, *The First Global War*, 8-9.

⁴⁵ *New York Mercury*, 2 July 1756 in DHY 1: 479.

scouts, although they served as eyes and ears, were judged to be decidedly neutral in the event of any fighting by Indian officers such as Thomas Butler.⁴⁶

Some argue Six Nations neutrality also caused a total intelligence blackout that enabled Montcalm's swift siege of Oswego.⁴⁷ While there were certainly factions that chose not to inform of the upcoming attack, it is doubtful the decentralized and non-coercive structure of the league could result in such a total withholding of information. Other key factors were also at play. Vaudreuil was effectively disguised his plans, as will be discussed in the following chapter, and the Oswego's commander, Colonel James Mercer, refused to heed the warning of an Oswegatchie Oneida scout in his employ days before the siege.⁴⁸ Furthermore, by Mercer's own admission, daily diplomatic relations with the Iroquois at Oswego had deteriorated to the point where any sort of cooperation had become impossible.⁴⁹ Any decision made at Onondaga to withhold information was a single factor among many. *Petite politique* could secure cooperation as well as contribute to its undoing, a testament to the importance of local politics in terms of alliances. From the perspective of Iroquois scouts and warriors there would be little reason to remain at Oswego given its poor provisions, daily dangers, disease, and long-abandoned trade.

Back to Basics: The Lake Ontario Borderland Post-Oswego, 1756-1758

The siege and subsequent destruction of Oswego pushed back and reset the British exercise of power in the region for roughly the next two years. For the British, the loss of the position instilled confusion, paranoia, and a rollback of their forward military

⁴⁶ Bradstreet to Johnson, 17 April 1756, WJP 9: 433; Johnson to Shirley, 22 April 1756, Ibid.: 437-41; Butler to Johnson, 26 April 1756, Ibid.: 444-45

⁴⁷ Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars," 69.

⁴⁸ Journal of Sir William Johnson's Proceedings with the Indians, 30 August 1756, NYCD 7: 191-93.

⁴⁹ Mercer to Johnson, 20 May 1756, WJP 9: 454.

positions. As the siege rapidly progressed, the nearest British reinforcements were a regiment of regulars under Daniel Webb. He was informed of the siege at German Flatts, a town in the upper Mohawk Valley, by a Cayuga known as Negroe. Webb and his officers reportedly “laughed” at the warning and later only advanced as far as the Great Carrying Place to the east of Oneida Lake.⁵⁰ New York newspapers published conflicting accounts in the aftermath of the loss. Various informers reported on the death of Mercer, a pitiful resistance, and a mass execution of officers.⁵¹ On August 20, Webb and his forces began a hasty scorched earth retreat in which the newly rebuilt Fort Bull, Fort Williams, and the incomplete Fort Newport were all razed, the channel at Wood Creek was clogged, and the regulars were pulled back east to German Flatts to fortify that town with Johnson’s local militia.⁵² Back in New York, Governor Charles Hardy issued a proclamation about the handling of “strangers”; all present and future French prisoners unable to give “a satisfactory account of themselves” throughout the colony were to be arrested and secured. Furthermore, New York civil officers were ordered to enquire into the affairs of all other “strangers.” The following spring, British commander Lord Loudon ordered William Marshall of Albany to be hanged “for carrying correspondence with the enemy.”⁵³

The Six Nations’ reaction to the siege varied by faction. In several instances, Iroquois worked to restrict the British from returning to Oswego. In the days immediately following the siege, two white scouts were discouraged from continuing on their mission

⁵⁰ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 16 August 1756, WJP 2: 543-44.

⁵¹ *New York Mercury*, 30 August 1756 in DHNY 1: 499-501. These claims decreased in validity from the former to the latter. Mercer was killed by friendly fire on the last day of the siege. The siege lasted a mere four days. The massacre that did occur spared officers and resulted in Montcalm’s allies killing 30-100 soldiers and civilians after Oswego’s surrender. For a complete narrative, see Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 150-55.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 157; John Campbell, Earl of Loudon to Johnson, 2 September 1756, WJP 2: 554-55.

⁵³ 1 October 1756, NYCP, vol. 83, 126; Loudon to Thomas Gage, 10 April 1757, TGP, series 2, vol. 1.

west by a sachem as well as by a party of Onondaga who were returning from the siege site. Attempts to limit travelers friendly to the British also extended to those within the league itself; during or soon after, the siege, an Oneida messenger carrying a wampum belt was among the Six Nations, warning the Iroquois to avoid Oswego or risk being hurt.⁵⁴ Even overtly anglophile warriors and scouts who had recently agreed to work with the British in the upper Mohawk Valley were soon distancing themselves. Johnson informed his superiors in London that the loss of Oswego diminished his Indian raiders as they no longer felt comfortable working with their allies. Farther west, at German Flatts and Herkimer, Iroquois who had been engaged to escort Webb's troops west objected to the mission and attempted to delay it, despite the efforts of Thomas Butler.

Diplomatically, the senior Oneida sachem Akonyoda scolded Johnson and the British for Webb's desperate retreat and their low morale. He also tactfully suggested they pursue the war in the Lake George region to the east, farther from Iroquoia. At a conference held in December 1756 in New France, the neutralist Onondaga Hotsinonhyahta ("The Bunt") praised the French for the destruction of the British post, while two formerly self-confessed anglophile Oneida sachems turned over their British medals to Vaudreuil and renounced their former allies. The Oneida went on to pledge to prevent the British from traversing their territory, stating they did "not know how to travel in the woods" alone.⁵⁵ These responses offer a glimpse at the ways various Indians used *petite politique* as they sought to balance complex and often conflicting political relationships that included their alliances, villages, nations, and confederacy. For many

⁵⁴ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 29 August 1756, WJP 2: 552; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 18 August 1756, Ibid.: 546.

⁵⁵ Johnson to Lords to Trade, 10 September 1756, NYCD 7: 127-30; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 29 August 1756, WJP 2: 553; ⁵⁵ Journal of Sir William Johnson's Proceedings with the Indians, 3 September 1756, NYCD 7: 193; Conference between Vaudreuil and the Indians, 13 December 1756; NYCD 10: 503, 513.

scouts, warriors, and sachems who were labeled as being “anglophiles,” the security of the league was often prioritized over obligations to their British allies, which could prove to be serious diplomatic and military liabilities. Furthermore, the examples above indicate that porous borderlands were not always desirable to native polities. Limitations on movement, whether in the case of small Indian scouting parties or entire armies, were often desired in order to maintain territorial integrity or control information.

The situation on the ground at Oswego reverted virtually overnight to its status in the late-seventeenth century: a place devoid of European posts or even traders that was fully in the hands of the Iroquois League. Governor Vaudreuil, meeting with Oneida and Onondaga delegates soon after the siege, declared Oswego to be conquered by the French, but that he would allow the place to be used as it had in the pre-British past. In addition, he also forbade any future British posts on Lake Ontario under Six Nations’ auspices.⁵⁶ Despite these pretensions to sovereignty via conquest, Vaudreuil and the French were in no position to occupy Oswego given their limited resources. Instead, a state of de facto league sovereignty ensued. As in the pre-war period, French efforts to assert sovereignty in the region regressed to symbolic means. All British structures, whaleboats, uncompleted ships, and bateaux were burned. The only feature the French were unable to erase was geographic; the military engineer Michel Chartier de Lotbinière lamented that he was unable to fill in Oswego’s harbor, worrying they could return to make use of it or Sodus Bay or Irondequoit to the west. The only thing they left behind was a large cross, erected by the missionary Picquet, and a post with the French coat of

⁵⁶ Vaudreuil Council with Onondagas and Oneidas, 20 August 1756, *Ibid.*: 452-53.

arms on them. French ships from Frontenac and Niagara were also occasional visitors that fired their guns before heading back to their respective forts.⁵⁷

Despite Vaudreuil's rhetoric soon after the siege, the French now explicitly recognized the neutral stance of the Six Nations and their Canadian kin. The Six Nations delegates who met with the French in the fall of 1756 pledged to maintain relations with both empires while refusing to take up the war hatchet for either side. The removal of Oswego also increased the Six Nations' expectations from their French neighbors as they lobbied for a resumption of the Frontenac trade and desired an open sharing of news and intelligence.⁵⁸ However, the French were largely unable to re-establish a viable Indian trade on Lake Ontario, damaging their viability as partners with the Iroquois. By 1757 the British significantly reduced French Atlantic shipping. As Canadian harvests failed, the presence of regulars drained supplies, and corruption drove up the price of provisions and military goods. For instance, in March 1757, supplies that had been captured from Oswego had to be sent across Lake Ontario to the post at Presque Isle on Lake Erie in order to keep the fort fed.⁵⁹ As for Frontenac, the fort had been vacated of its large encampment of colonial and regular troops and their artillery. These soldiers were either moved to Niagara or further east back to Montreal or the Lake Champlain region. In 1757, the artillery officer Captain La Mercier surveyed the states of Niagara and Frontenac, concluding that while Niagara was well armed and well supplied, Frontenac, though extremely important, was "very bad" with naval guns as its only defenses.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Hardy to Lords of Trade, 5 September 1756, NYCD 7: 125; Lotbinière to Marine, 2 November 1756, NYCD 10: 494-95; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 27-28; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 28 April 1757, WJP 9: 701-03.

⁵⁸ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, WJP 2: 704-06; Conference between Vaudreuil and the Indians, 13 December 1756; NYCD 10: 503, 515.

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 237; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 92-93.

⁶⁰ La Mercier to Vaudreuil, 30 October 1757, NYCD 10: 656.

However, Frontenac continued to be an occasional source of Indian intelligence despite its decline in trade and reduced garrison. Francophile Iroquois relayed the details of Johnson's diplomatic efforts to the fort's officer in the spring of 1758, and news from as far away as the Atlantic was sometimes received there before it reached Quebec.⁶¹

As the French shifted the bulk of their forces back toward Montreal and to Niagara, the British military frontier had been rolled all the way back to German Flatts and Herkimer in the upper Mohawk Valley. The borderland between this area, Iroquoia, and the French posts on Lake Ontario was generally defined by the tactics and goals of *petite politique* from the fall of Oswego up until the British siege of Frontenac in late August 1758. More traditional military campaigns during this time were focused around the Champlain Valley corridor due to limited resources and the triumph of Iroquois neutrality that helped to divert larger actions to the east. The British at German Flatts and Herkimer in the latter half of 1756 faced a relatively porous border region characterized by questionable local loyalties and a lack of provincial and imperial authority. The mostly German colonists engaged in an active correspondence and diplomacy with New France via their Oneida neighbors and the French mission village at Oswegatchie. In the fall of 1756 they sent a message to Vaudreuil seeking French protection, explicitly stating they wished to tie their fates to the Oneida and Six Nations rather than with the rest of New York.⁶² Economically, some settlers and Oneida also engaged in an illegal rum trade.

⁶¹ Vaudreuil to François Marie Peyrenc de Moras, 21 April 1758, NYCD 10: 700-01; Journal of Occurrences, 18 April 1758, Ibid.: 839.

⁶² Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 185-87.

Francophile and neutral Oneidas obtained rum and other goods from settlers and transported them northwest to Oswegatchie.⁶³

In order to secure their western flank, the British engaged in parallel efforts to defend a vulnerable area militarily and politically. Militarily, blockhouses were built at German Flatts and a stockade fort was established using a private home and church across the Mohawk River at Herkimer. In the spring of 1757, detachments of the Forty-Second Regiment, fifty New Jersey colonials, and New York provincials were posted there. Although alliances with the Oneida and even the Mohawk were flagging, Johnson at least secured pledges of aid from the mixed Iroquois community of Oquaga on the upper Susquehanna River, a group he had enjoyed a strong personal and trading relationship with since the 1740s. In addition, some Mohawk scouts were active in early 1757, providing a much needed screen for the European and Anglo-American troops.⁶⁴

Politically, William Johnson obtained an Indian agent commission for the veteran Pennsylvania fur trader and diplomat George Croghan. In March 1757, Croghan was dispatched to German Flatts in order to trade cheap goods with the Iroquois; a post any further west was ruled out of the question due to safety concerns. His mission was envisioned as serving the same sorts of functions that Oswego had in its heyday, namely the use of trade to foster better Indian relations and as a means to gather valuable intelligence. For many Iroquois trading at the town proved alluring given the scarcity at Frontenac. His daily reports, which survive from March and April 1758, depict a center of *petite politique* reminiscent of Oswego before the war. Croghan's activities include

⁶³ Johnson to Thomas Butler, 12 May 1757, WJP 9: 721; Johnson to Loudon, 3 September 1757, Ibid.: 825-27.

⁶⁴ Johnson to General James Abercrombie, 6 April 1757, Ibid.: 671-72; Journal of Indian Proceedings, Ibid.: 620, 626, 683.

meetings with a friendly Oneida, Gawèhe (Gawickie), procuring intelligence from a former soldier living among the Oneida, Jemmy Campbell, trading with parties of Cayugas and Senecas, obtaining news from Onondaga informants, hosting some Tuscaroras at Fort Herkimer, and sending a spy to Fort Frontenac. He also supplied eager scouting parties composed of whites and Mohawks with snowshoes and other supplies, offering them bounties for useful prisoners. By late March he reported that seventy-four Indians had already encamped around German Flatts. By the end of May, his scouts had gone as far west as Oswego and had even broken Picquet's cross, bringing back a piece for Johnson.⁶⁵ In addition to provisioning scouting parties, German Flatts also proved instrumental in providing food aid for the Oneida. Johnson's agent Thomas Butler arranged for corn from the settlement to be sent to the nation in need on several occasions during the spring of 1757. All of these efforts slowly but steadily improved relations between the British and Six Nations, which had hit a new low in the dark days after the Oswego siege. For example, by early 1757 an Onondaga informer, known as Corn Milk, met with Johnson. Asking to remain anonymous, he exposed the machinations of the neutralist Germans to Johnson, detailing their messages to Vaudreuil.⁶⁶

Fort Johnson, some fifty miles to the east, also proved pivotal in the maintenance of daily politics. Johnson, like Croghan, was forced to rely on the services of friendly Iroquois, making use of longtime allies, new partners, and neutralists alike. Despite strained relations, Johnson was able to obtain news and intelligence from an Onondaga

⁶⁵ For Johnson's orders for Croghan, see Johnson to Loudon, 20 September 1756, *Ibid.*: 537-38; Indian Conference, March 11-14, 1757, *Ibid.*: 882-83; Johnson to Croghan, 30 January 1758, WJP 2: 778. For Croghan's activities, see Croghan to Johnson, 12 March 1758, *Ibid.*: 779-80; Croghan to Johnson, 18 March, *Ibid.*: 791-93; Croghan to Johnson, 10 April 1758, *Ibid.*: 816-17; Croghan to Johnson, 31 May 1758, WJP 9: 914-15.

⁶⁶ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 28 April 1757, *Ibid.*: 701-03; Indian Intelligence, 4 March 1757, WJP 2: 679-80.

who had been in Canada during and after the Oswego siege. Tuyaguande informed him about the number and identity of prisoners taken north, the capture of supplies, the evacuation of forward French posts on Ontario, and the shift of troops to Lake George. Early in 1757 Johnson made use of other Onondaga. A group visiting in February provided intelligence about French troops at Oswegatchie and Frontenac, the neutral disposition of the Kahnawake, and Vaudreuil's plans to raid German Flatts that winter that had been stopped by Iroquois diplomacy.⁶⁷ Although generally neutral, borderland Onondaga travelling back and forth between Canada, Iroquoia, and New York were a boon to British intelligence efforts. Johnson also relied upon old friends in the form of anglophile Mohawks who had worked with him since King George's War. Karaghtadie (Nickus) a "great friend," who had been a raider and prisoner of the French during the last war, met with Johnson in January 1757. The Mohawk sachem was given clothing, money, ammunition, and food for his winter hunt and he pledged to join up with the British army in the spring. That summer and during the preceding year, Mohawk scouts and raiders were active out of Fort Johnson and German Flatts as they had been in years past.⁶⁸

Provincial imperialists such as Johnson and Vaudreuil were not content to conduct daily diplomacy and intelligence gathering strictly from relatively safe locales such as Fort Johnson and Montreal. Throughout this period imperial agents also ventured deep into Iroquoia in efforts to maintain alliances, gather information, and sabotage the efforts of enemy proxies. Johnson dispatched a team of agents that included the officers

⁶⁷ Johnson to Loudon, 26 September 1756, WJP 2: 563-65; Intelligence from Canada, 14 February 1757, WJP 2: 675-77.

⁶⁸ Journal of Indian Proceedings, 15 January 1757, WJP 9: 585; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 3 May 1756, Ibid.: 446; Journal of Indian Affairs, 29 June 1757, Ibid.: 792.

Jelles Fonda and Thomas Butler in the winter of 1756-57. Their mission was to monitor trade at Onondaga, gather news at the Six Nations' councils, prevent French visits by withholding blacksmiths and traders, and to "prepare warriors' minds" for the spring campaign.⁶⁹ Similarly, the French were also able to draw upon a cadre of officers and agents who were veteran borderland operatives. These included one of the Joincaire brothers, who was active among the Seneca in the fall of 1756, Picquet's messengers and proxies throughout Iroquoia, and French agents and allies who appeared as far as the Iroquois village at Otsiningo, at the junction of the Chenango and Susquehanna rivers.⁷⁰

The British in the upper Mohawk Valley faced only one major setback as they worked to repair their diplomatic relations and fortify the northwestern flank of their empire. On November 12, 1757, some 300 Canadian militia, provincial troops, and Indians carried out a large raid on German Flatts, resulting in the deaths of about 50 civilians and troops and the taking of 150 prisoners. However, unlike the failure at Oswego during the previous year, the raid on German Flatts was not due to a breakdown in intelligence or daily diplomacy. Onondaga and Oneida scouts and informers had accurately alerted the garrison and colonists about the raid. Captain Townsend, commander at Fort Herkimer, also warned local inhabitants of the attack and failed to persuade them to seek shelter in his fort.⁷¹ The Germans for their part felt falsely secure in their efforts to court the French and had also experienced a series of false alarms earlier in the year. The attack was a deliberate shift in Vaudreuil's policy towards those claiming neutral status. Whereas the French had accepted Six Nations neutrality earlier in

⁶⁹ Orders to Thomas Butler and Jelles Fonda, 20 December 1756, *Ibid.*: 582-83. The exploits of these agents and others are detailed in the following chapter.

⁷⁰ Information from Alexander McCluer, 6 March 1757, WJP 2: 680-82; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 85; Journal of Indian Proceedings, 20 January 1757, WJP 9: 592.

⁷¹ Croghan to Johnson, 20 November 1757, *Ibid.*: 856-58.

the war, the French, coming off of a series of victories that included Oswego and Fort William Henry on Lake George, sought to press their advantage. Vaudreuil demonstrated to the Six Nations and German settlers that they could not hope to remain safe without openly allying with the French. The attack took place just months after the Oneida had pleaded to spare the settlement in a series of overtures that were rejected.⁷² While it may be tempting to see the raid as the end of neutrality in the upper Mohawk Valley, the shift was more subtle and took place over a period of nearly two years as the British returned to the basic tactics of *petite politique*.

Oswegatchie: The Convergence of Interests, 1755-1758

As the British struggled to establish new bases of *petite politique*, the French consistently relied upon the mission post at Oswegatchie and its fort, La Présentation, located on the south shore of the upper Saint Lawrence, some sixty miles downriver from Lake Ontario. During the Seven Years' War the outpost was used by the French, Six Nations, and British alike as a diplomatic hub, source of intelligence, a refugee destination, and target for outmigration. Added to the mix were the village's local mission Indians who pursued their own interests and allegiances. The community, made up principally of migrants from the Onondaga and Oneida, remained largely pro-French throughout the first two-thirds of the war. When hostilities broke out in 1754 they eagerly demonstrated their commitment to the French by handing over British medals and expelling a known anglophile. They enjoyed a degree of autonomy not only from the French, as guaranteed to them by former governor Duquesne and recounted in the previous chapter, but also from the Six Nations. In 1756, when Vaudreuil tried to install

⁷² Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars," 70-71; Oneida Council with William Johnson, 15 September 1757, WJP 9: 832.

an ally as a sachem at Oswegatchie, men and women of the village traveled to Montreal to defend their prerogatives.⁷³ A year later, the Six Nations scolded the Oswegatchie for their growing diplomatic confidence, chiding them for inviting league diplomats north when they felt it should be the confederacy inviting the Oswegatchie to travel south.⁷⁴

In terms of military goals, warriors eagerly took part in raids and campaigns at Oswego, throughout the Mohawk Valley, and Lake George. While the Six Nations generally sat out the action at Oswego in 1755 and 1756, the Oswegatchie were busy attacking soldiers and taking prisoners around the beleaguered fort.⁷⁵ They were angry with their French allies for being initially excluded from operations around Fort William Henry on Lake George in early 1757 and by that spring had pledged to partake in the campaign to the east.⁷⁶ Oswegatchie raids were especially numerous during the spring of 1758. Parties often targeting the area between Herkimer and Schenectady involved eighty or more warriors and routinely returned with over forty scalps and several prisoners. One French observer noted that unlike the Francophile allies working with Joncaire, these warriors were much less concerned in preserving any sort of neutrality between the Iroquois and New York.⁷⁷ The Oswegatchie utilized their connections with their kin within the Six Nations for their material wellbeing; as French supplies became scarcer, they used their contacts with the Oneida to trade for European goods originating at German Flatts.⁷⁸ Such smuggling was possible because of the relatively light French

⁷³ Duquesne to Machault, 13 October 1754, NYCD 10: 263; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 101-04, 107, 109-10.

⁷⁴ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, WJP 2: 704-06.

⁷⁵ Vaudreuil to Machault, 25 September 1755, NYCD 10: 323; John Van Seice to Johnson, 6 March 1756, NYCD 7: 74.

⁷⁶ Malartic, *Journal*, 100, 103, 109.

⁷⁷ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 196-97, 201-09; Malartic, *Journal*, 170.

⁷⁸ Johnson to Loudon, 3 September 1757, WJP 9: 825-27; Johnson to Lords of Trade, 28 September 1757, NYCD 7: 278.

presence at La Présentation and their meager fur trade. In 1755 the fort had four bastions and hosted a modest garrison of thirty soldiers, with local warriors accounting for about one-hundred men. The fort was also home to Picquet's mission and chapel, which caused constant friction due to rival authority between the missionary and the fort's commander, Claude Nicolas de Lorimier.⁷⁹

Despite its divided and modest French presence, Oswegatchie proved to be an invaluable base of *petite politique*. The French viewed the outpost as being at the southeastern edge of their empire. At a conference between Vaudreuil and the Onondaga and Oneida soon after the fall of Oswego, the governor outlined his claim to sovereignty by declaring that the Six Nations' territory ended at Oswegatchie but that the road between his colony and confederacy was "always good."⁸⁰ In addition to the abovementioned raids, New France was also able to use the post as a source of supplies and base of military operations. The forests around the mission proved valuable for timber, which was sent upriver to be used at Frontenac and later used locally for shipbuilding at nearby Pointe au Baril. It was also a convenient rendezvous point for the forces that raided on Fort Bull in 1756 and German Flatts a year and a half later. Oswegatchie was at the terminus of difficult but known Indian trails that linked the upper Saint Lawrence to the Oneida country.⁸¹

French and Oswegatchie interests converged in regard to the community's role in recruiting warriors, allies, and new migrants. While the Oswegatchie wished to grow

⁷⁹ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 16-17; Bougainville, *Écrits sur le Canada: memoires, journal, letters* (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 2003), 71; Malcolm MacLeod, "Lorimier de la Rivière, Claude-Nicolas de," in DCB, vol. 3, accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lorimier_de_la_riviere_claude_nicolas_de_3E.htr.

⁸⁰ Vaudreuil Council with Onondagas and Oneidas, 20 August 1756, NYCD 10: 452-53.

⁸¹ For timber and construction, see Malartic, *Journal*, 34-35, 209-15. Pointe au Barile is located at the site of present-day Maitland, Ontario As a base of operations, see La Pause, "Mémoire," 22-23; Croghan to Loudon, 20 November 1757, WJP 9: 856-58.

their new village and improve ties with their kin to the south, the French saw the mission as a way to gain fighters while at the same time depleting the population of more hostile and autonomous Iroquois nations. Attempts to lure would be migrants and allies occurred at both formal diplomatic councils and through clandestine means. In 1754, Oswegatchie emissaries traveled to Onondaga in an effort to secure that nation's loyalty with the French, an effort that was rebuffed as the council reaffirmed their firm neutral stance. A comparable effort took place in a May 1757 meeting in New France with the Oneida nation. This time, Vaudreuil, Picquet, and Kahnawake representatives worked to pressure the Oneida into allying with New France, adopting Catholicism, and moving to Oswegatchie. Vaudreuil personally offered a wampum belt of 6,000 beads, warning "nothing could stop the hatchet" save for seeking refuge in Canada.⁸²

Less publicly, Picquet dispatched Oswegatchie recruiters into Iroquoia in the winter and spring of 1757. On February 5, seven Oswegatchie arrived among the Oneida in an effort to recruit warriors to raid German Flatts, issuing a call among the Six Nations by word of mouth among their friends. They also promoted Oswegatchie and the French alliance by promising copious powder, sleighs of liquor, a lack of disease, and hunting grounds so rich with deer that Oneida already hunting in the region were unable to bring some kills back until spring. On April 25, some Oneida Oswegatchie returned to their former nation with shot, lead, and one-hundred pounds of powder, urging their kin to come to Canada and embrace Christianity.⁸³ These efforts, later in the war, proved less successful than those in the early 1750s. The Oneida by this time were at least somewhat

⁸² Mercer to William Alexander, 11 December 1755, CWS 2: 340-41; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 110-12.

⁸³ John Butler to Johnson, 7 February 1757, WJP 9: 598-99; Report of John Butler and Stephen Schuyler from Oneida, 3 March 1757, *Ibid.*: 627-28; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 26 April 1757, *Ibid.*: 691-93.

aware of the material shortages of New France, and at Oswegatchie in particular, as they were middlemen in the smuggling efforts that desperately sought goods from New York.

Nonetheless, these persistent recruitment efforts remained a nuisance to the British who sought to sway the Six Nations to their own side or at the very least preserve their neutrality. William Johnson was acutely aware of migrations north during the war, even if they were less than in previous years. He declared that visits to Oswegatchie, as well as Niagara, “poisoned minds” as the French boasted about military victories to would-be allies and mission Indians. In another instance, he fumed that Picquet was able to “debauch many of the upper nations from us...inspiring them with Popish superstition and religious venom against us.”⁸⁴ Such efforts serve as a testament that borderland politics were a war of minds and ideas as well as material and military factors. However, the British learned to use Oswegatchie and its people for their own geopolitical purposes. In June 1756, Johnson personally traveled to Onondaga and worked with Iroquois delegates to send a belt of invitation to Oswegatchie, urging people to return to Iroquoia. On a smaller scale, on July 3 of the previous year, he paid an Oneida sachem money in order to purchase a bateaux at Oswego so that he could use it to transport his family out of Oswegatchie.

These attempts were not always in vain. For example, two Oneida sachems publicly renounced the mission community at a council at Fort Johnson in 1757 and moved their families back south.⁸⁵ Migrants leaving the community provided intelligence for the British. Early in the war, two Onondaga spies working for Johnson who intended

⁸⁴ Johnson to Lords of Trade, 28 May 1756, NYCD 7: 87-90; Johnson to Governor Thomas Pownall, 8 September 1757, WJP 2: 736.

⁸⁵ Journal of Sir William Johnson’s Proceedings with the Indians, 26 June 1756, NYCD 7: 141-44; Johnson’s Account of Indian Expenses, 3 July 1755, WJP 2: 578; Indian Proceedings, 15 September 1757, WJP 9: 832.

on going to Frontenac encountered a former Oswegatchie at Oswego Falls. The returnee provided information to the spies about migrations due to lack of food in 1755 and Frontenac's small garrison. Other Onondaga working with Johnson were able to accompany the Six Nations' diplomatic mission to Canada in November 1756. When they returned, they reported on the decreased morale at Oswegatchie, French plans for winter raids upon the first snow, the troop strength at Frontenac and La Présentation, and unenthusiastic German and Dutch soldiers among the French regulars. Captain Thomas Butler also made use of such Iroquois encounters, sending three Oneida spies toward Oswegatchie in the spring of 1756. In general, Oswegatchie proved to be an important link in gathering information as news and rumors originating in Canada often filtered through the community before reaching the Oneida and Onondaga, moving east to the Mohawk, and eventually to British officers and agents.⁸⁶

Lastly, the Six Nations Confederacy was also able to utilize and benefit from its ties to Oswegatchie. As Jon Parmenter has argued, peripheral communities were valuable sources of information to the Iroquois League as well as places that served to relieve factional tensions.⁸⁷ The mission village did pose problems for the league as well. League Iroquois feared French reprisals for refusing to migrate north. For instance, in August 1756, the Tuscarora requested that a British garrison be stationed in their village to ward off or prevent any such attack. The Mohawk went a step further in actively urging Oswegatchie settlers to forsake their new home and return to the confederacy. For many, the governor of New France was "a wicked deluding spirit" who made Mohawk efforts

⁸⁶ Johnson's Examination of Two Onondaga Spies, 25 June 1755, NYCD 6: 968-69; Intelligence from Canada, 14 February 1757, WJP 2: 675-77; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 3 May 1756, WJP 9: 446. For an example of the intelligence "game of telephone," see Mohawks to Arent Stevens, 12 November 1755, WJP 2: 293.

⁸⁷ Parmenter, "At the Woods' Edge," 4-10.

“in vain.” The sachem Hendrick believed the power of the post could have been prevented had New York heeded his nation’s warnings years before and took action.⁸⁸ The Six Nations also attempted, at least at the level of high diplomacy, to assert their sovereignty. Counter to French claims, league emissaries at a 1756 council in Canada claimed Oswegatchie to be in their territory.⁸⁹ In reality, the community is better understood as being dominated by the interests of the Iroquois who inhabited it, who more often than not were enthusiastic allies of the French until the last couple years or so of the war.

Given these limitations and frustrations, the Six Nations, like the British and French, sought to make use of the community as a largely independent resource. Besides the benefits of intelligence and being a destination for disaffected migrants, it also served as a new site of intra-Iroquois diplomacy and a relatively safe wartime hunting ground. In March 1756, an Onondaga Oswegatchie visiting the Oneida warned that nation to be on guard against the French and their allies as they planned revenge for Oneida participation with the British at Lake George the previous year. Two months later, a delegation of Oneida traveled to Oswegatchie, working to protect their villages and the area around Oneida Lake. Even the most anti-French of the Six Nations, the Mohawk, went to Oswegatchie soon after the fall of Oswego. They met with Picquet, Joncaire, and Vaudreuil and successfully secured a pledge, albeit a temporary one, from the French not to attack their country to the east.⁹⁰ Ties to the mission village also secured relief in the form of much needed food. Throughout the war some of the Six Nations faced shortages

⁸⁸ Journal of Sir William Johnson’s Proceedings with the Indians, 5 August 1756, NYCD 7: 180-81; Albany Council with Six Nations, 28 June 1754, NYCD 6: 867, 869.

⁸⁹ Account of Embassy of the Five Nations, November 1756, NYCD 10: 557-63

⁹⁰ William Williams to Johnson, 13 March 1756, WJP 9: 403-04; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 4 May 1756, Ibid.: 448; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 28-30.

due to warriors taking part in campaigns, poor harvests, and foreign armies. As Michael Gunther has argued, borderlands constructed by intercultural accommodation could produce peaceful areas characterized by “shared hunting grounds.”⁹¹ Since Oswegatchie was relatively shielded from violence and disruption, with Frontenac to its southwest and the Adirondack mountains to the southeast, Six Nations hunters often traveled north. These movements, in addition to yielding much needed game, were yet another social opportunity to gather intelligence and share news for all sides.⁹²

Oswegatchie finally experienced increased militarization after the fall of Fort Frontenac in late August 1758. Now the community became an important essential to the upper Saint Lawrence, an important choke point on the river controlling access to Montreal. As will be discussed below, the creation of new posts, such as Fort Levis and Pointe au Baril, and the resurrection of the British at Oswego, significantly altered the geopolitical landscape of the region in the final two years of the Seven Years’ War.

Fort Stanwix: *Petite Politique* in Advance and Decline

The British were on the offensive throughout northeastern North America in the latter half of 1758. In November the French fort at the forks of the Ohio River, Duquesne, fell to the advancing forces under General John Forbes. On the Atlantic, the fortress at Louisbourg surrendered after a nearly two-month siege, opening the lower Saint Lawrence for a move on Quebec the next year. However, in New York, the British advance proved more modest. An army under James Abercrombie was soundly defeated by Montcalm in July at Ticonderoga. In the Lake Ontario region, Bradstreet led a

⁹¹ Gunther, “Deed of the Gift,” 20.

⁹² For examples of hunting around Oswegatchie and its geopolitical utility, see Journal of Sir William Johnson’s Proceedings with the Indians, 23 February 1757, WJP 9: 619; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 26 April 1757, Ibid.: 691-93.

successful surprise attack on Fort Frontenac that resulted in the surrender of the garrison and the destruction of the fort and its ships. Despite this victory, the British quickly vacated the site. Their more lasting advance would come during the late summer with the creation of Fort Stanwix, built at the eastern terminus of the portage road at the Oneida Carrying Place, which linked the upper Mohawk and Wood Creek. The fort supplanted German Flatts as the western edge of the British militarized frontier. Although it was initially created under the auspices of conventional officers and forces, Stanwix soon operated under the borderland conditions of *petite politique*, where European, provincial, and Iroquois actors met and interacted to negotiate power in a multi-polar setting. For the French, Stanwix would become a principal target of their waning military fortunes, displaying their very real but limited borderland capabilities.

Fort Stanwix was the product of intercultural cooperation from its inception. The post enjoyed the consent of the Six Nations (save for the Onondaga) as a means to return trade to Iroquoia. In June 1758, Johnson ordered the suspension of the Indian trade at German Flatts. In a conference with the Cayuga, he scolded them for being under the French influence, making it clear that trade was now to be only conducted with true allies.⁹³ The Iroquois provided not only consent but also protection for the construction of the new fort. As General John Stanwix moved west from Albany the Iroquois met a French force of one-hundred men under Paul-Joseph Le Moyne de Longueuil sent to scout and raid from Lake Ontario. At Oswego, representatives from the upper nations (Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga) warned Longueuil and the French to go no further into their territory.⁹⁴ Stanwix's force included over 3,000 soldiers and workers, and some 70

⁹³ An Indian Congress, 16 June 1758, *Ibid.*: 927-29.

⁹⁴ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 263-65; Vaudreuil to Marine, 20 August 1758, NYCD 10:

Iroquois, including 22 Mohawks. It also included Bradstreet, considered a “brother” to the Six Nations. When it reached the Oneida Carrying Place, or Oneida Station, it was revealed that a majority of the force would break off under Bradstreet to attack Frontenac.⁹⁵

This conventional military mission persisted during the construction of the fort, which occurred through the summer and into the early fall. The daily clearing and building occurred under the watchful eyes of posted sentries. The movement of soldiers and workers outside of the camp was regulated and required permission. Routines included regimented parades, dining times, evening roll calls, arms cleaning, and rum rations. By December the fort had amassed a respectable artillery arsenal, including several twelve-pound guns and howitzers. It was also a place connected to empire. Two noteworthy celebrations took place during the building of the fort. The first on 23 August included a twenty gun salute and three “huzzahs” to mark the capture of Louisbourg. The second, exactly a month later, included a twenty-one gun salute but the same number of “huzzahs” to commemorate the victory of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick over the French at the Rhine.⁹⁶ However, as fall turned to winter and large numbers of troops began to be discharged, Stanwix went from being a place largely defined by Anglo-American military order to a much more vulnerable place of daily geopolitical borderland encounters.

⁹⁵ When the secret plan to take Frontenac was revealed, the Onondaga left in protest, which made up about half of the Iroquois contingent, Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 261; Abercrombie to Johnson, 21 June 1758, WJP 2: 849-50; An Indian Council, 22 July 1758, WJP 9: 952-53; Journal of Indian Affairs, 2 August 1758, Ibid.: 963-65; Johnson to Abercrombie, 12 August 1758, Ibid.: 968.

⁹⁶ State of Ordinance at Fort Stanwix, December 1758, TGP, series 2, vol. 2; Fort Stanwix Orderly Book, 13 August to 6 October 1758, New York Public Library.

The troops left to overwinter at the post were a detachment of Fraser's Highlanders under Major James Clephane and a company of Rogers' Rangers under Captain Henry Wendell. Both groups contributed only modestly in terms of borderland mobility and intelligence gathering. Wendell's rangers, though distinguished during the attack on Frontenac, proved to be a liability at Stanwix. The company was ravaged by disease throughout the winter. An outbreak of the "bloody flux" (dysentery) limited their effectiveness and some of the twenty-five men brought in as replacements in February were judged to be too young and inexperienced.⁹⁷ Administratively, the rangers' one-year enlistment period ended in February 1759, and there were issues with obtaining their pay. Two officers continuously expressed their desire to resign while others simply deserted. Wendell's efforts to re-enlist his men met with little success and by April eleven had deserted, roughly a quarter of the company.⁹⁸ Socially, Wendell clashed with the fort's Highlander garrison on multiple occasions. In April he wrote to Thomas Gage asking to resign due to his health and the "unjust reflections of other officers behind [his] back." Later that same month, Major Eyre Massey, a regular officer, accused the ranger captain of alerting a suspicious Oneida village of a scouting party looking for a French officer and seven allied Indians.⁹⁹

Both rangers and regulars were also plagued by an inability to master the region's harsh environment. Harsh winter snows gave way to flooding. A party of Highlanders tried scouting to Lake Oneida in February but ended up breaking their snowshoes. After a small raid on March 1, Wendell reported that his men were unable to catch the

⁹⁷ Wendell to Gage, 24 March 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 2; Clephane to Gage, 10 February 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 1. Outbreaks of scurvy and "distemper" were also reported among the regulars, see Clephane to Gage, *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Wendell to Gage, 12 April 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 2; Wendell to Gage, 28 April 1759, *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Wendell to Gage, 11 April 1759, *Ibid.*; Wendell to Gage, 19 April 1759, *Ibid.*

perpetrators since they lacked snowshoes. Swollen rivers impeded the arrival of reinforcements, limited the number of sick that could be transported out, and drowned horses. As a result, the rangers were only able to scout some thirty to forty miles north on the route toward Oswegatchie throughout the winter and spring.¹⁰⁰ By March, these failures and limitations resulted in an increasingly hostile environment around the fort where small raiding parties could strike with relative ease in close proximity to the fort. The first of these attacks involved the ambush of four privates and a corporal guarding some cattle a mere 300 paces from the fort. An Indian raiding party killed the privates in a well-aimed opening salvo and was able to retreat unscathed before Wendell's rangers could apprehend them.¹⁰¹

Fort Stanwix's utility came as a site for *petite politique*, an effort coordinated by Indian officers like Jelles Fonda and Thomas Butler. Although Indian scouts and informers were not stationed at the fort, their reach far exceeded those of the rangers and Highlanders. Major Clephane bitterly complained during the winter that his garrison was isolated from the outside world as it had rarely received any correspondence from Albany.¹⁰² However, this assessment does not account for the Indian networks that the above mentioned agents utilized. On September 1, 1758, as the fort was still being constructed, Fonda was dispatched to the camp in order to foster and regulate trade. Johnson urged the officer in his orders that "justice be done." Only licensed traders were to deal with the Indians, skins were to be weighed fairly, and all swindlers were to be reported to General Stanwix. In the same order, Johnson linked trade with intelligence as

¹⁰⁰ Clephane to Gage, 10 February 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 1; Clephane to Gage, 1 March 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 2; Clephane to Gage, 17 March 1759, Ibid; Wendell to Gage, 26 February 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 1.

¹⁰¹ Brumwell, *Redcoats*, 191-92.

¹⁰² Clephane to Gage, 2 February 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 1.

he urged Fonda to gather all the information he could from those coming to trade and pass it on to Stanwix and himself. Fonda's mission soon proved fruitful. In late September the Cayuga anglophile informer Arawana came bearing wampum and news of Longueuil's force at Oswego and their recent meeting with the Six Nations there.¹⁰³ While Fonda stayed put at Stanwix that fall, another Indian officer, Captain John Lottridge, embarked upon a ten-day scout with Indian guides. His travels took him around and across Oneida Lake, to Oswego, ten miles up the eastern shore of Lake Ontario, back through the woods around the old forts and camp sites at Oswego, five miles west along the lake's southern shore, and back via Onondaga and Oneida. The officer reported he was "remarkably well treated" at the Iroquois villages. His mission was not only a testament to the improved working relationship between the British and Six Nations but also the increased mobility and geographic knowledge such improved relations could yield.¹⁰⁴

Thomas Butler, the veteran operative in the Oneida country, took over Fonda's role in the winter. Butler maintained a network of spies, scouts, and other informers among the nearby Oneida and Tuscarora. In January he dispatched Tuscarora spies to Oswegatchie. He also received more casual reports from the Oneida who reported news from Oswegatchie from returning travelers, including renewed French shipbuilding at Pointe au Baril and increased fortifications on the upper Saint Lawrence. The five Tuscarora who were sent to Oswegatchie finally returned in April. Their tardiness was overshadowed by the fact that they had been able to travel all the way to Montreal. The spies had been sent to the town by Picquet and the French commander at Oswegatchie as

¹⁰³ Johnson to Fonda, 1 September 1758, WJP 2: 892-93; Fonda to Johnson, 30 September 1758, WJP 10: 19-20.

¹⁰⁴ Journal of Indian Affairs, 2 November 1758, Ibid.: 51-52.

they were rightfully believed to be enemy agents. On their way to Montreal they were able to make contact with colonists being held captive at Kahnawake from German Flatts. The Tuscarora collected written intelligence from these prisoners before being detained in Montreal for ten days. They reported to Butler on the desperate state of the town, shipbuilding, artillery stores, hidden supplies at Oswegatchie, and a message from some Oswegatchie warriors interested in migrating south to aid the British.¹⁰⁵

These successes came despite a relatively sluggish trade at Fort Stanwix. The Oneida and Tuscarora complained to Johnson of high prices and many elected to trade further south in Pennsylvania instead. New York traders also tended to avoid the post after the murder of a trader there in 1758. Those that did come did little business and tended to pay in cash rather than goods for furs. While the trade was nothing like that at Oswego or even German Flatts, it did manage to bring in Iroquois from as far west as the Seneca and faced little French competition.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, communications with the Oneida and Tuscarora were frequent enough to keep the post reasonably informed. Incorrect rumors about advancing French armies were dispelled on multiple occasions as enough Iroquois informers could be counted on to correct bad news and crosscheck incoming information. In a particularly illustrative example, a rumored French force assembling at Oswego Falls, which was thought to be a large army by the sachem Seonando, was cut down to its actual size of fourteen by reports from the Tuscarora spies returning from Oswegatchie, an Oneida woman visiting the fort, and Oneida scouts.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Butler to Gage, 30 January 1759, TGP, series 2, vol. 1; Journal of Sir William Johnson's Proceedings with the Indians, 14 April 1759, NYCD 7: 382-84.

¹⁰⁶ Journal of Indian Proceedings, 10 December 1758, WJP 10: 67-75; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 30 January 1758, Ibid.: 92-94.

¹⁰⁷ Clephane to Gage, 2 February 1758, TGP, series 2, vol. 1; Thomas Butler to Clephane, 9 April 1759, WJP 3: 25-26.

The events in and around Fort Stanwix are also illustrative of the state of French borderland power in this transitional period. While able to maintain Indian contacts and carry out small raids and scouting parties, their *petite politique* was not backed up by any substantial trade nor corresponding military power. For instance, when Longueuil and his forces were traveling to Oswego in the summer of 1758, he met with a group of eight Oneida informers at the outlet of the Salmon River on Lake Ontario. They accurately reported the British building and activity at the Oneida Carrying Place, but stopping the project was out of the officer's reach. Instead, a party of thirty allied warriors, including some Kanesatake "dressed as Englishmen," killed the sachem Kendarunte and took one prisoner at the sight of the future fort.¹⁰⁸

In December, a party of thirty Oswegatchie skulked around Stanwix, resulting in the robbing, scalping, and murder of a lone trader. Similar incidents continued into 1759. In early February an Indian allied with the French managed to infiltrate the fort before being arrested as a spy and escorted by rangers east to Herkimer and eventually Albany. The following month, a Kahnawake raid was reported at Herkimer and in May rangers scouting out of Stanwix were attacked, resulting in five dead and one being taken prisoner. An incident in mid-April highlights the reach and weakness of the French as well as the differences between Anglo-American forces and Butler's Oneida colleagues. On April 16 a Dutch courier alerted the fort about a party of Frenchmen and Indians hiding nearby. Although 20 men under 2 ranger officers pursued the enemy party on the Oneida Lake road, finding their abandoned camp in a swamp, 2 Oneida working with Butler were actually able to encounter and speak with some of them. A French engineer

¹⁰⁸ Vaudreuil to Marine, 20 August 1758, AC, C11a, vol. 103, 73-75; Journal of Indian Affairs, 12 October 1758, WJP 10: 37-39; Vaudreuil to Marine, 30 October 1758, AC, C11a, vol. 103, 250-51.

and his two Indian companions confessed they had been trying to get an accurate sketch of the fort. The peaceful but useful meeting was wasted on Major Massey who suspected the Oneida in question were “villains.” Attacks persisted into June when a raiding party near Fort Stanwix that included *troupes de la marine* attacked a group of boatmen moving heavy artillery, killing seven, wounding one, with another man missing.¹⁰⁹

These actions foreshadowed the coming frustrations experienced by French officers in the Lake Ontario borderlands in the closing two years of the war. Armed with ample information, Indian scouts and informants, and mobile parties that could reach as far as the lower Mohawk River, French officers were often kept well-informed of enemy movements and plans but lacked the conventional forces to permanently halt the British advance to the west. The British were able to survive their winter of weakness at Stanwix while maintaining and honing their *petite politique*. Officers like Thomas Butler utilized their Iroquois contacts to stay well informed and lay the groundwork for the campaigns against Niagara, Fort Levis, and eventually Montreal. Stanwix became more thoroughly integrated with the forts and forces to the east with the surveying and building of a more reliable road to Herkimer, which began in May 1759.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Throughout the Seven Years’ War the daily exercise of geopolitics, a culture of power that had been honed over the past three decades, occurred at a variety of places in the Lake Ontario borderland ostensibly defined by conventional military might and in the

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 29 December 1758, WJP 10: 82-84; Clephane to Johnson, 26 February 1759, WJP 3: 22; Captain Crawford to Gage, 13 March 1759; TGP, series 2, vol. 2; *The Journal of Jeffrey Amherst: Recording the Military Career of General Amherst in America from 1758 to 1763*, ed. John Clarence Webster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 108; Massey to Gage, 21 April 1759, TGP, series2, vol. 2; General John Prideaux to Massey in Amherst, *Journal*, 116.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 110-11, 113-14.

lesser-studied spaces between them. While decisive military operations, such as the siege of Oswego or the destruction of Frontenac, proved fleeting and rare, borderland actors practiced daily diplomacy, exercised their mobility, and gathered intelligence regardless of the season. While French and British forces at Oswego and Frontenac engaged in a stalemate until August 1756, ships, whaleboats, hunters, scouts, and spies operated from these posts and plied the waters and roamed the forests between them. Amidst the hasty defenses thrown up at German Flatts, George Croghan worked to create and maintain a network of Iroquois informers that stretched well beyond the Mohawk Valley. At Oswegatchie, the French, Six Nations, and British learned to use the fluid community as a source of information and a site of diplomacy. Hunters, traveling diplomats, migrants, warriors, and spies all traversed borders in the service of not only themselves but also the Iroquois Confederacy. Its individual nations, European empires, and/or provincial colonies. Lastly, Fort Stanwix, though vulnerable and isolated in a variety of ways, depicts a British post tied to important native networks. All of these imperial operations occurred in the context of a mostly successful Six Nations policy that sought to minimize fratricidal violence while deflecting as much of the war from Iroquoia as possible. Both the British and the French came to recognize this framework, adjusted their expectations and goals, and applied their political tactics accordingly.

The importance of the practice of *petite politique* in the region to the course of the war varied. In some instances it proved vital, such as when the French won the war of mobility on Lake Ontario in 1755 and 1756, contributing to the landing of a well-informed army against an undersupplied and isolated enemy. Other times it could prove rather secondary but yet important. For instance Croghan's presence at German Flatts

failed to defend that town from a major French raid but served to dispel rumors and bring new and former allies back into the fold. Other times the practice could prove frustrating; the French were able to harass, infiltrate, and spy on Fort Stanwix and its environs but these actions proved to be in vain as the information gathered could do nothing to stop the British advance west in 1759. Other times, possibilities were presented that went untaken. In the spring of 1756 multiple reports reached Fort Williams about the impending attack on Fort Bull from native informers, all of which went unheeded.¹¹¹

Petite politique persisted in the Lake Ontario borderlands in the closing months of the war. The British victory at Fort Niagara in July 1759 was due in no small part to on-the-spot intra-Iroquois diplomacy carried out between Johnson's Six Nations allies and the local Seneca who had previously worked with the French and Pierre Pouchot.¹¹² The next chapter will focus more closely on such people and their interactions, analyzing the types of actors involved and the tactics they used to help bring about the end of the imperial Lake Ontario borderland.

¹¹¹ Williams to Johnson, 13 March 1756, WJP 9: 403-04; Williams to Johnson, 14 March 1756, Ibid.: 405-06.

¹¹² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 333-36.

CHAPTER FIVE
BORDERLANDERS AT WAR: AGENTS, BORDER-MAKERS,
SACHEMS, AND SPIES, 1754-1760

The Seven Years' War was an inescapable facet of everyday life for thousands of soldiers, settlers, and native communities in the Lake Ontario borderland region. The previous chapter examined the ways various places, such as forts, villages, and waterways were used in the pursuit of power; some radically changed as they were destroyed or created, others persisted in their political roles. This chapter will focus on the wide variety of historical actors who inhabited and traveled between these places. By looking at the actions of individuals and small groups, this study analyzes the ways small-scale agency could impact broader geopolitics, the diverse roles carried out by borderlanders, and the degree to which certain people and groups were involved in a multifaceted struggle. The Lake Ontario region of the mid-eighteenth century had a small-scale population and geography. In addition, though seemingly a minor backwater from a European perspective, the region maintained important connections to the Ohio Country to the west, New France to the north, New York to the East, and Iroquoia to the south. Furthermore, both European and Indian communication networks tied the Lake Ontario borderlands to imperial centers across the Atlantic, and native communities deep into North America. As a result, a global conflict not only shaped local events, but the actions of a relatively few borderland actors, outside the confines of conventional battles and sieges, reverberated on a much larger historical stage.

This chapter explores the range of *petite politique* experiences during the war by focusing on several different groups and individuals. Perhaps the most visible, in terms of

the historiography of the war, have been the provincial imperialists, such as William Shirley and Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnial. While both have been well-studied in terms of their colonial politics and military leadership, much less has been done on their borderland geopolitical intrigues. Similarly, this chapter looks at military officers, such as Pierre Pouchot, William Williams, and John Bradstreet, and their involvement with strengthening and subverting military frontiers between empires. It also sheds light on the work of lesser known operatives, including the cadre of agents who operated among the Six Nations throughout the war, a group that ranged from professional Indian officers to more elusive traders. Moreover, in and around Iroquoia were several sachems and warriors who exploited borderland politics for a variety of reasons. While some worked between empires to preserve their people's neutrality and sovereignty, others worked in the service of their respective allies, finding opportunities in the work of political intrigue itself. Attention to these individuals reveals Iroquois loyalties that can be obscured by a focus on high diplomacy. Lastly, the chapter traces the more fleeting but yet still important geopolitical accomplices such as prisoners, deserters, and spies. Although little can be gleaned from the historical record about these individuals, their ability to cross borders made them valuable political assets.

Shirley and Vaudreuil: Administration of *Petite Politique* in the Early War

A juxtaposition and assessment of the borderland strategies, tactics, and visions of Massachusetts Governor William Shirley and New France's Governor General Vaudreuil provide several insights into the understanding of possibilities and limitations of exerting power in the region in terms of intelligence, mobility, and personnel. Shirley was no stranger to the geopolitical importance to the region. As discussed in the third chapter, he

was part of the failed 1750 commission tasked with settling the imperial boundary between Britain and France's North American colonies. In addition to his hawkish experiences as part of the commission and in King George's War, the governor also maintained an antipathy with the colony of New York. Shirley's troubles with the colony would persist during his tenure as the commander-in-chief of Britain's North American forces, a post he assumed upon the death and defeat of General Braddock in the summer of 1755. Despite his frosty relations with New York, the New Englander was kept abreast of developments around Lake Ontario. New York's governor used him as a link between that colony and London. More cordially, Shirley and his sons maintained a relationship and correspondence with Pennsylvania's governor Robert Hunter Morris, a connection that was based not only on social ties but also patronage between their families.¹

Even before assuming command, Shirley saw Lake Ontario as the key to forcing the French into submission. By capturing Niagara in 1755, he hoped to split New France from the Upper Country, damage Indian alliances, and divert troops away from the Champlain Valley.² Braddock instead favored a move against Fort Duquesne, leaving the governor to coordinate a secondary move on the great lake from Oswego. Under Shirley the British were finally able to exercise any sort of naval mobility. In addition to the introduction of whaleboats, he also ordered the construction of larger vessels at Oswego in June, hoping to lay the foundations of an expedition against Niagara later that summer.³ Although successful in launching vessels and greatly increasing the British range on the lake, his plans for the 1755 campaign never went beyond the amassing of

¹ For an example of this linkage, see Hitchen Holland to James De Lancey, 8 November 1753, NYCD 6: 825; John A. Schutz, *William Shirley: King's Governor of Massachusetts* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 190.

² *Ibid.*, 193; Shirley to William Johnson, 31 May 1755, CWS 2: 180-82.

³ Shirley to Thomas Robinson, 20 June 1755, NYCD 6: 953-56.

men and supplies. Even though he became the acting commander of all British forces two months earlier, Shirley reluctantly scrapped his plans in September. He cited poor weather, supply issues, a shortage of suitable watercraft, the lateness of the season, and the departure of allied Iroquois warriors among the reasons at a council of war held at Oswego. This opinion was informed by people with much more knowledge about local conditions than the Massachusetts governor, including New York's Lieutenant Hitchen Holland, who had lived at Oswego over the past four years, and the various Indians and Albany traders who had worked as scouts and boatmen.⁴

Shirley's enthusiasm and focus for operations on Lake Ontario continued through the winter of 1755-56. His plans for the upcoming campaign season once again made the lake central to his strategy. This time the capture of Frontenac would be his first priority, but he intended to achieve "mastery of Lake Ontario" by deploying forces large enough to seize Niagara and Oswegatchie. His energies exceeded purely military matters as he became embroiled in the geographic debates surrounding Lewis Evans' recently published map entitled "Middle British Colonies in North America," which labeled the upper Saint Lawrence and the north shore of Ontario as being rightfully parts of New France.⁵ The linchpin in his schemes was the Six Nations, whose fidelity he saw as central to any British military presence and future expeditions. In January 1756, he informed William Johnson, now begrudgingly under his command, of his grandiose plans for the confederacy. He pledged to build new forts in the country of the Seneca and

⁴ Council of War at Oswego, 27 September 1756, PAA 2: 427-31.

⁵ Shirley to Robinson, 19 December 1755, CWS 2: 344-50; for the map controversy, see Henry Newton Stevens, *Lewis Evans, His Map of the Middle British Colonies in America: A Comparative Account of Ten Different Editions Published between 1755 and 1807* (London: Stevens, Son, and Stiles, 1905), 5-8. Shirley's arguments about the British claims are argued in the tract, "Claim of the English and French to the Possession of Fort Frontenac, Stated and Explained," which was forwarded to London with his December letter to Robinson.

Cayuga while completing those that had either already been started or planned among the Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Tuscarora. He hoped to infiltrate the Six Nations not only with garrisons, but also with well-supplied traders, missionaries, and blacksmiths. Furthermore, Iroquois scouts would be paid for their intelligence.⁶

These plans reveal an energetic provincial imperialist who was not fully aware of the limitations he faced in terms of the complexities of Iroquois diplomacy. An early indication of his unrealistic thinking came during the previous spring of 1755. At that time there were a number of Kahnawake traders present in Albany. While Shirley was right to identify them as potential security threats to British operations despite their self-proclaimed neutrality, his exhortations to New York governor De Lancey to keep them in Albany and prevent all mission Iroquois from entering the colony were not only unworkable but would also have proved diplomatically disastrous. De Lancey soon contacted Johnson for advice. Johnson urged caution in the delicate issue against the “zeal” of the outsider Shirley. Johnson knew any hostile moves against the Kahnawake could endanger the wider diplomatic effort, pragmatically labeling them as a “necessary inconvenience to avoid another one.”⁷ Despite the insistence on less porous borders, Shirley remained adept in exploiting borderland fluidity for his purposes. Like Johnson had done in the past, he was able to maintain his own blacksmith at Onondaga, John Van Seice, who held daily meetings with that nation and dispersed gifts. He also employed a total of sixteen interpreters and Indian agents during 1755 alone.⁸ In August of that year

⁶ Shirley to Johnson, 13 January 1756, WJP 2: 409-15.

⁷ Shirley to De Lancey, 25 May 1755, WJP 1: 543-44, De Lancey to Johnson, 7 June 1755, *Ibid.*: 568; Johnson to De Lancey, 15 June 1755, *Ibid.*: 595-96; Johnson to William Eyre, 23 June 1755, *Ibid.*: 646.

⁸ Memorandum concerning Shirley’s Agents, December 1755, WJP 2: 400-01.

he successfully dispatched a party of Indian spies and Albany traders disguised as Indians to Fort Niagara from the Oneida Carrying Place.

Shirley worked to supplant Johnson as the architect of British policy toward the Six Nations throughout 1755 and early 1756. In addition to his goal of building and maintaining a string of forts through Iroquoia, he also hoped to secure a number of Six Nations warriors on his own terms. He thought Indian auxiliaries would serve as “cheap soldiers” in the campaigns on Lake Ontario, placing much more emphasis on their role as fighters than as informers or spies.⁹ He dispatched unscrupulous recruiting parties among the Six Nations during the summer of 1755. The controversial trader and interpreter John Hendricks Lydius was among Shirley’s agents. Lydius, who had spent years in New France as a smuggler and later ran a trading post at the portage between Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, was described by one Iroquois as “a Devil . . . [who] stole our lands.” In addition to his activities in the fur trade, Lydius had also been involved in a contested land deal in the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania.¹⁰

Lydius directly competed with Johnson’s agents. In July 1755 he crossed paths with Arent Stevens and other Johnson agents as the two parties recruited among the Mohawk for their respective expeditions to Lake Ontario and Lake George. Canajoharie warriors used competing offers from Shirley to extort money for sheep and hogs for a “frolic” from Johnson’s agents while Lydius and his recruiters worked to prevent them from joining their rivals. A month later, Lydius’ men encountered the Cayuga anglophile sachem Atrawana and a Mississauga representative near Schenectady. They “laid hold” of the Mississauga, “ready to pull him to pieces,” as they coerced the Indians into a house

⁹ Shirley to Johnson, 10 April 1756, WJP 9: 426-28.

¹⁰ Peter N. Moogk, “Lydius, John Hendricks,” in DCB, vol. 4, accessed February 15, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lydius_john_hendricks_4E.html.

for an impromptu council where they tried to force them to join the forces headed west. The two sachems only escaped with “much ado to get out of their hands.” Soon after the incident, Johnson wrote to Governor De Lancey, saying that Shirley’s men had “attacked” the elderly Stevens and engaged in inept recruiting that harmed relations with the Six Nations and also sullied his authority “by a lavish bribery, a constant licentious festivity, by falsehoods, by flattery, [and] by threats.”¹¹ Complaints were not confined to Johnson, his agents, and longtime allies; the Tuscarora sachem Carighwage decried the confusion in Iroquoia as many wondered whether it was Johnson or Shirley who was the more senior British representative. He went on to admonish Shirley’s preferred method of compensation, direct generous cash payments to warriors, as serving to “delude all the Indians as they went along.”¹²

Shirley’s contested role in Iroquois diplomacy ended in January 1756 when Johnson was named Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department by the government in London. As a result, he turned his full attention to more conventional military matters in preparation for his planned effort to move against Frontenac from Oswego. In March he ordered a massive to mobilize a system of boatmen and “cleaning and mending” the various carrying places, rapids, shoals, and falls along the route between the Mohawk Valley and Oswego. He also largely abandoned hopes of a substantial allied Six Nations force and instead planned to raise three companies of rangers that would not only safeguard the tenuous road to Oswego but also conduct raids

¹¹ Arent Stevens to Johnson, 27 July 1755, WJP 1: 784; William Ferrell to Johnson, 28 July 1755, Ibid.: 785-86; Arawana address to Johnson, 4 August 1755, WJP 2: 374-76; Johnson to De Lancey, 8 August 1755, WJP 1: 841-42.

¹² Indian Proceedings, 29 July 1755, WJP 2: 373. Shirley urged Johnson to offer “rewards” to fighters through “private applications,” see Shirley to Johnson, 24 December 1755, CWS 2: 368-67.

into Canada.¹³ In the end, these schemes either failed to materialize or were too little too late to save Oswego, never mind the launching of an offensive. Supplies headed to Oswego continued to be irregular and vulnerable, rangers would not appear on the western frontier until years later, and the fortifications that were eventually completed among the Six Nations were little more than small blockhouses that never hosted garrisons or long-term traders during the war.

The wartime *petit politique* practiced by Vaudreuil was much more extensive, nuanced, and successful. Unlike Shirley, the governor general of New France possessed personal knowledge of the intricacies of the Lake Ontario borderland. As a young officer in the *troupes de marine* he took part in a 1721 circumnavigation of the lake that sought out future fort sites and held a council with Seneca and Onondaga sachems. The trip provided him with “first-hand knowledge of a vital zone in Canada’s extended defense system,” and combined with his decade-long stint as governor of Louisiana to produce an administrator versed in the possibilities and limitations of borderland power.¹⁴

Vaudreuil exploited borderland fluidity to procure vital intelligence, conduct on-the-spot diplomacy, control information flows, and harry his enemies. In 1755, and again in 1756, he prioritized Lake Ontario over the Champlain corridor, arguing that the more eastern theatre served as a diversion. He saw Niagara as vital to preserving the Upper Country and therefore worked to realize the longtime French dream of destroying Oswego. He argued that the British post was the “direct cause of all the troubles that have overtaken the colony,” citing its *petite politique* functions, specifically its interlinked

¹³ Shirley to Bradstreet, 17 March 1756, CWS 2: 419-21; Shirley to Henry Fox, 7 May 1756, Ibid.: 442-43.

¹⁴ W. J. Eccles, “Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial, Pierre de, Marquis de Vaudreuil,” in DCB, vol. 4, accessed February 15, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/rigaud_de_vaudreuil_de_cavagnial_pierre_de_4E.

trade and daily politics. In the month before Montcalm's siege, he could boast to his superiors in France that he had maintained an intelligence network among several different Indian villages that kept New France up to date on troop movements, British naval forces, and the state of Oswego.¹⁵ Vaudreuil's connections to the south were instrumental in the expedition against Fort Bull in March 1756, which proved to be an important blow to British supply efforts and morale. The expedition was initially suggested by an Oneida who detailed large amounts of ammunition and food being stored over the winter at forts Bull and Williams. Vaudreuil, intrigued by the informant, inquired about his trustworthiness. Satisfied that he could be trusted, Vaudreuil then consulted with the spy and Kahnawake and Kanesatake mission Iroquois to devise a route for the raid. The surreptitious route, hitherto unknown to the French and their allies, proved difficult yet effective. The Oneida spy, accompanying the raiding force as a guide, managed to get Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry's French and Indians into the Oneida country before the British could be alerted.¹⁶

In addition to exploiting borderland mobility for intelligence, Vaudreuil also realized that the increased British range on Lake Ontario needed to be curtailed in order to weaken Oswego and protect Niagara and Frontenac from Shirley's ambitions. The governor general was responsible for the creation of "observation camps" that raided around the British supply route and fort. As recounted in the previous chapter, these raids, which were principally out of Nioure Bay, served to not only procure prisoners but also terrorized those at Oswego, seriously hindering their activities outside the

¹⁵ Vaudreuil to Jean-Baptiste de Machault d'Arnouville, 24 July 1755, NYCD 10: 307-08; Vaudreuil to Machault, 10 July 1756, *Ibid.*: 305.

¹⁶ La Pause, "Mémoire," 22-23; Vaudreuil to Marine, 1 June 1756, AC, C11a, vol. 101, 15-18.

stockades.¹⁷ It was also Vaudreuil who was the primary booster of French naval power on Lake Ontario during this period. He realized the potential threat of increased British mobility, and after the defeat of the British lake vessels in July 1756 he wrote enthusiastically to France about the successes of “our little navy.” His interest in maintaining a naval edge persisted throughout the war; after the French lost two ships at the siege of Frontenac in 1758, Vaudreuil clashed with Montcalm over their replacement. His stubbornness paid off as the French were able to launch two new vessels on the upper Saint Lawrence in 1759, serving as important waterborne lifelines and scouts for forts Niagara and Levis.¹⁸

His manipulation of mobility was also extended to native actors. For instance, Vaudreuil persuaded the Menominee, an allied nation from western Lake Michigan that had braved distance and disease to serve with Louis Coulon de Villiers at Nioure Bay, to return to their homeland via Toronto so that they may trade there. Vaudreuil outfitted the warriors, who had returned with scalps and prisoners to Montreal, with provisions, canoes, medals, and other gifts for their pledge to visit the post on the northwest shore of Ontario.¹⁹ However, his most shrewd scheme involved the Six Nations in the days leading up to the siege of Oswego. He realized it would be almost impossible to persuade the league to both sanction his attack and prevent sachems from leaking the news to those interested in alerting the British. Instead, he sought to prevent or at least hinder the spread of his plans by inviting several Six Nations’ delegations to Canada where he would divide and detain them diplomatically until the siege was already underway. Various

¹⁷ Vaudreuil to Machault, 31 October 1755, NYCD 10: 377.

¹⁸ Vaudreuil to Marine, 5 July 1756, DHNY 1: 481; Montcalm to Louis-Hyacinthe Boyer de Crémille, 12 April 1759, NYCD 10: 958; Montcalm to Charles Louis Auguste Fouquet, duc de Belle-Isle, 12 April 1759, *Ibid.*: 961.

¹⁹ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 9-14.

emissaries were invited to Niagara and Montreal. Iroquois who were already at Nioure Bay who sensed an imminent French move to the south were directed to Montreal by François-Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, the governor general's brother, in order to "close that path."²⁰ The tactic worked so well that Vaudreuil used it again in March 1757 in order to cover a scouting party of Oswegatchie under the officer Claude Nicolas de Lorimier that reconnoitered around German Flatts and eastern Iroquoia. The group also sounded out the allegiances and supposed neutrality of the local German settlers.

Aguhughuaru (Lock of a Gun), an Oneida sachem, related to Thomas Butler how he had been detained in Canada with other sachems of his nation to prevent leaked intelligence.²¹

On a larger scale, Vaudreuil's initial understanding of Iroquois borderland diplomacy was much more pragmatic than that of William Shirley. The governor general of New France grudgingly accepted the limits imposed on him by Iroquois neutrality since he had taken office in 1755. In that year he acknowledged statements of neutrality from the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, and Tuscarora. He realized that all though these nations would not aid his campaigns, they could at least serve as barriers to the British. Similarly, following the fall of Oswego a year later, he reached a temporary neutrality agreement with the Mohawk that temporarily halted violence between his colony and their nation, an agreement that was mutually beneficial to both parties. Later in 1756 the Onondaga not only managed to convince Vaudreuil to delay his planned attack on German Flatts, but Vaudreuil once again acknowledged the neutrality of the Six Nations

²⁰ Vaudreuil to Machault, 13 August 1756, NYCD 10: 438-39; Vaudreuil to Marc-Pierre de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson, 28 August 1756, Ibid.: 471-72. Vaudreuil's account is corroborated by the narrative of events around the time of the siege shared with Johnson by Tuyaguande, an Onondaga informer, see Johnson to Loudon, 26 September 1756, WJP 2: 563-65.

²¹ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 10 March 1757, WJP 9: 634-35; Indian Intelligence, 13 March 1757, Ibid.: 637-38; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 94-95. Aguhughuaru was under the false impression that the French were covering a major attack on the Mohawk Valley.

and even the Kahnawake and Kanesatake.²² However, his understanding had its limits. For instance, after the siege of Oswego, he told Iroquois delegates that Oswego was not really returning to Six Nations sovereignty but instead was a sort of no-man's land, part of the ancient pathway between the confederacy and Canada.²³ Furthermore, these accommodations were only useful as long as they did not hinder imperial wartime ambitions. His attack on Fort Bull in 1756, which violated Oneida territory, was foreshadowed to that nation in terms of reciprocal violence for the capture of Baron Dieskau at Lake George the previous summer.²⁴ As the French became more confident against a flagging British war effort in 1756 and 1757, Vaudreuil was less content to accept pledges of neutrality.

Vaudreuil's shift can best be seen in his dealings with the Oneida and so-called "Palatine" colonists of German Flatts. Early in 1757, he was receptive to the pledges of neutrality from both groups as the settlers claimed they were "determined to live and die by [the Six nations]."²⁵ These entreaties seem to have not been enough as months later at a May council Vaudreuil, the Oswegatchie missionary Picquet, and the Kahnawake all pressured the Oneida to embrace the French cause by converting to Catholicism and migrating north. Oneida reluctance was met by a stern warning from Vaudreuil of future retribution. These irreconcilable differences surrounding the meaning of neutrality had been communicated to the governor general, via his brother François-Pierre, then governor of Montreal, when the Six Nations warned that any French attack on New York

²² Vaudreuil to Machault, 31 October 1755, NYCD 10: 377-78; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 28-30; Intelligence from Canada, 14 February 1757, WJP 2: 675-77; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, Ibid.: 704-06.

²³ Vaudreuil Council with Onondagas and Oneidas, 20 August 1756, NYCD 10: 452-53.

²⁴ Mohawks to Arent Stevens, 12 November 1755, WJP 2: 293.

²⁵ Indian Intelligence, 4 March 1757, Ibid.: 679-80; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 21 March 1757, Ibid.: 690-93.

through Oswego and Lake Ontario would be seen as a violation of the promises of peace in the region made the previous year after the fall of Oswego.²⁶ Although New France's November 1757 attack signaled Vaudreuil's disregard for the Six Nations' territorial neutrality, his actions are best understood in his ambitious but aborted plan to invade New York from the west. The 1758 plan, which was canceled after Abercrombie's push toward Ticonderoga, did involve at least one Oswegatchie ambassador seeking permission for the French army to travel through Iroquoia. Despite this initial diplomacy, it is doubtful Vaudreuil would have canceled such a massive campaign if denied passage, especially in light of his unsanctioned raid on German Flatts.²⁷

Despite the waning fortunes of the French after 1757, Vaudreuil continued to be interested in the possibilities of borderland *petite politique*. In the spring of 1758 he dispatched two Onondaga spies who successfully infiltrated Fort Johnson. They were even able to meet with the British superintendant and dissuade him from personally traveling to Onondaga for a council and the dissemination of gifts by claiming they had knowledge of a French party at Salmon River.²⁸ Vaudreuil almost prevented the destruction of Fort Frontenac in 1758 by using Oswegatchie and Mississauga scouts; the Indians captured two men near Lake Ontario who were carrying documents that revealed the impending assault but the vital intelligence reached Montreal a few days too late.²⁹ He continued to be well informed of British war plans as he kept up a steady stream of spies and deserters. In 1759 he was given early warning of both the planned expeditions

²⁶ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 110-12; Indian Intelligence, 23 April 1757, WJP 2: 706-08.

²⁷ Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1:106-07; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 211-12, 239-41.

²⁸ Journal of Occurrences in Canada, 18 April 1758, NYCD 10: 839; Vaudreuil to François Marie Peyrenc de Moras, 21 April 1758, Ibid.: 700-01.

²⁹ Vaudreuil to Claude-Louis d'Espinchal, Marquis de Massiac, 2 September 1758, Ibid.: 822-24. For the captured documents, see Ibid., 826-27.

against Niagara and Ticonderoga.³⁰ His use of *petite politique* would continue unabated into 1760, the final year of the war, as he worked with Pouchot, who was stationed at Fort Levis on the upper Saint Lawrence, in matters concerning conventional military defense as well as spying.

The comparison between Shirley and Vaudreuil reveals several noteworthy facets of wartime borderland geopolitics. New France's structural advantages are highlighted over the newcomer Shirley. Vaudreuil himself had traveled around Lake Ontario decades before the war, experiencing firsthand the fluid nature of the region. Furthermore, his colony could draw upon over a century of experience in Iroquois diplomacy while Shirley forwent the more subtle tactics of Johnson in an effort to procure a force of Indian mercenaries. Vaudreuil, on the other hand, paid much more attention to the value of spies, prisoners, deserters, and scouts throughout the war. As experienced and skilled as Vaudreuil at first appeared, his tolerance and understanding of the Six Nations' neutrality proved ultimately to be limited. Like Shirley, he was tempted by unrealistic plans that caused him to disregard nuanced borderland diplomacy, a move that certainly further weakened New France's position for the remainder of the Seven Years' War.

A Tale of Two Captains: Divergent Borderland Practices

Differences in recognizing and utilizing *petite politique* also existed among officers within the same army operating in the region. An examination of the attitudes, perceptions, and actions of the Massachusetts officer, Captain William Williams, and the British officer, Captain John Bradstreet, highlights the ways that different thinking about

³⁰ Vaudreuil to Marine, 7 June 1759, AC, C11a, vol. 104, 431-32.

the geopolitical threats and potentials of a borderland region could produce very different results.

Williams came into the Lake Ontario borderlands in 1755 as part of the New England forces under the command of Shirley. In early July, he was tasked with constructing two storehouses at the Oneida Carrying Place by William Johnson, who assured the provincial officer of the Oneida's consent to the project. The delicacy of the venture is evident in Johnson's order, which forbade rum sales between the New Englanders and local Indians and urged a "civil" demeanor in dealing with the local inhabitants. Confusion and tension characterized the encounter between Williams' party and the Oneida. As was usually the case, the agreement that had been reached at a distant meeting carried little value on the ground. The Oneida who met with Williams were upset with the British presence and demanded to know whether their nation had permitted his work. The officer erred on the side of caution in his first recorded dealings with his neighbors by delaying breaking ground and improving his camp as he even struggled to get authorization to clear the area and begin road work.³¹ By August, Williams was overseeing the transport of supplies across the Oneida portage. Supplies arrived from Herkimer, were escorted by New York provincial troops, kept under guard at the depots, and refloated on their way west to Oswego. In October, at the end of the campaign season, Shirley ordered him to begin constructing a fort, Fort Williams, at the east end of the carry, in order to house supplies and his one-hundred and fifty soldiers. A second fort, the ill-fated Fort Bull, was built by the German Flatts officer Marcus Petri at the same

³¹ Johnson to Williams, 4 July 1755, WJP 9: 191; Williams to Johnson, 4 July 1755, *Ibid.*: 192. For the project in the wider context of declining Anglo-Oneida relations, see William J. Campbell, *Speculators in Empire: Iroquoia and the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 55-58.

time. Fort Bull abutted Wood Creek at the western terminus of the portage, at the end of a recently improved road.³²

Fort Williams became a hub of Anglo-Iroquois cooperation for intelligence during the winter after its construction. Although relations had initially been tense between the local Oneida and Williams' men, they improved to the point where a working relationship formed. By March he was working with an Oneida guide, Ileas, and some Onondaga warriors, who were responsible for escorting soldiers and workers to Oswego. These connections to Oswego were not only material, in the form of logistics, but also involved the communication of intelligence. For instance, Ileas and one of Williams' sergeants got news at Oswego from an Onondaga who had recently been at Oswegatchie that included garrison dispositions, a scalping party headed to the upper Mohawk valley, and an outbreak of small pox among French Indian allies in Canada. Williams dutifully forwarded the information east to Fort Johnson, adding that he was skeptical of the supposed epidemic as reports of sickness had been used to hide "mischief at the door." The Massachusetts captain also worked with regular Onondaga and Oneida scouting parties that operated toward Oswegatchie and eastern Lake Ontario. These Six Nations scouts, who avoided violence with their kin to the north, reported naval movements and warned the Oswegatchie not to venture too close to the British posts.³³ On the eve of the French attack on Fort Bull, relations between Williams and the Oneida sachem Goweahhe were cordial enough that the officer invited the sachem and his village to seek refuge at his fort in light of news and rumors of the impending assault.³⁴

³² Shirley to Williams, 12 August 1755, CWS 2: 235; Shirley to Williams, 29 August 1755, *Ibid.*: 314-15.

³³ Williams to Johnson, March 1756, WJP 9: 412-14; Williams to Johnson, 7 March 1756, *Ibid.*: 395-99.

³⁴ Williams to Johnson, 13 March 1756, *Ibid.*: 403-04. Three Onondaga on the west side of Oneida Lake alerted Williams of the French force, see Williams to Johnson, 26 March 1756, *Ibid.*: 409-10.

As winter turned to spring, Williams' attitude toward borderland mobility and the value of Iroquois intelligence turned more hostile. In late April 1756, Johnson wrote to Shirley and shared the grievances of the Oneida concerning the increasingly cantankerous Williams. Williams' skepticism toward native intelligence magnified to the point where he publicly doubted Oneida warnings. Johnson began to concur with the assessment of both his colonial and native contacts, doubting that Williams had the right "temper and skill" to deal with the Iroquois. However he resisted Oneida calls to remove the officer. When at Fort Williams with militia after the Fort Bull raid, Johnson believed he had fixed the situation.³⁵ Williams' transgressions would more directly affect Johnson's diplomacy in May. Henry Wendell, the future ranger officer at Fort Stanwix, but then an Indian officer, discovered that Williams was selling rum to the nearby Oneida for personal gain sabotaged Wendell's efforts to meet with them. Williams had one of Wendell's men thrown out of his fort and beaten and tried his to prevent Wendell from visiting the Oneida sachems, perhaps in an effort to hide his illicit trade. When Wendell finally accepted the Oneida's invitation, thanks to the intervention of Bradstreet, he discovered that the men he intended to meet with were all drunk. Wendell fumed to Johnson that Williams was "capable of doing any low lifed [sic] New England tricks."³⁶

Johnson continued to receive complaints in June when he traveled to a conference at Onondaga. Williams was characterized as "a very disagreeable person" who actively harmed relations with the Oneida, Onondaga, and Tuscarora he interacted with at his fort. The Six Nations pressured Johnson to remove him, or they would refuse to aid the British at the portage, an indication of the importance of daily intercultural social interactions for

³⁵ Johnson to Shirley, 22 April 1756, *Ibid.*: 437-41.

³⁶ Wendell to Johnson, 3 May 1756, *Ibid.*: 447-48.

the war effort.³⁷ The incident that finally led to Williams' removal and imprisonment came in July. His past ability to deal with the fluid world of Iroquois scouts, informants, and hunters was seemingly completely gone in an encounter that occurred with a party of Seneca led by the sachem Tageghsadde ("The Drunkard") and escorted by the New York trader John Abeel. Tageghsadde was a friend of Johnson's and one of the few Seneca sympathetic to the British. Abeel, whose trading was at times at odds with New York law, frequently worked with Johnson. Williams attempted to enforce a border at his post by disarming the travelers and threatening them with imprisonment for being French agents. The Seneca were outraged by the incident and the accusations and lodged an official complaint. Williams, for his part, claimed he only acted under Johnson's orders. This slander proved to be the final straw as Johnson compensated the Seneca with pipes, tobacco, tents, rum, food, arms and clothing and had the New Englander arrested and jailed at Albany.³⁸

The career of John Bradstreet in the Lake Ontario borderlands could not have been more different than Williams. His was marked by military success, fame, and acclaim, rather than disgrace and imprisonment. Unlike Williams and Shirley, Bradstreet was a British officer free of the inter-colonial politics and squabbles that tainted the careers of the two Massachusetts officers. After serving in Nova Scotia, Bradstreet arrived in the region in 1755, working under Shirley as the commanding officer at Oswego in the year before the siege. Also unlike Williams, Bradstreet learned to use the possibilities of the porous wartime borderland and continued to employ them throughout

³⁷ Johnson to Shirley, 27 June 1756, WJP 2: 494-95; Journal of Sir William Johnson's Proceedings with the Indians, 5 July 1756, NYCD 7: 152.

³⁸ Stevens to Johnson, 26 July 1756, WJP 2: 517; Journal of Sir William Johnson's Proceedings with the Indians, 27 July 1756, NYCD 7: 172-73;

his time there. Early on, he was involved in the interrogation of French deserters who crossed Lake Ontario to Oswego. He also maintained contacts with native visitors at Oswego. Writing to Pennsylvania governor Hunter Morris, he noted the “Indians who are constantly coming here from all quarters.” Like his predecessors at Oswego such as John Lindesay and Hitchen Holland, he understood the value of gifts in securing aid and kept a keen watch on the waters of Ontario, dutifully noting the dates, content, and numbers of passing French boats headed to Niagara and beyond.³⁹ Among his contacts was a high-ranking Mississauga who visited the British to trade. The sachem also had good relations with the Six Nations and was invited by Bradstreet to Fort Johnson for further, more formal talks. He was also on good terms with the Onondaga sachem Cachointioni (Red Head) and his son Ononwarogo (Young Red Head). Cachointioni and Ononwarogo were frequent and friendly visitors to Frontenac and the latter was a former resident of Oswegatchie. Both father and son provided intelligence to Bradstreet, and Ononwarogo’s friendship would prove valuable in the years to come.⁴⁰

Bradstreet was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the spring of 1756 and put in charge of the tenuous supply line between Albany and Oswego. As he had at Oswego, Bradstreet continued to work on a daily basis with the Iroquois and kept up an interest in *petite politique* in parallel to his more conventional military duties. A group of Onondaga asked for his assistance by name, asking Williams for Bradstreet's assistance in building them fortifications days before the impending French attack on Fort Bull.

Bradstreet asked for Iroquois scouts, especially Mohawks, to keep him informed in order

³⁹ Bradstreet to Morris, 29 May 1755, MPCPA 6: 412.

⁴⁰ Bradstreet to the colonial governors, 29 May 1755, WJP 1: 547-48; Bradstreet to Shirley, 17 August 1755, CWS 2: 240. Bradstreet’s intelligence was dispatched not only the various governors but also forwarded to London by Shirley, for example see Shirley to Robinson, 19 September 1755, CWS 2: 261-69.

to better protect the line of supply to Oswego. In a letter to Johnson, he quipped, “there are not any kind of people so fit to give that information.” His Onondaga contacts proved useful that April in dispelling a widespread rumor that purported the French had begun to siege Oswego.⁴¹ He would gain a good deal of distinction in July 1756, the month before the fall of Oswego, for his leadership in a battle eight miles from Oswego. Bradstreet, traveling with 300 men who made up the lead elements of a large convoy headed west, was ambushed by a force of over 700 regulars, Canadians, and allied Indians under Villiers. Despite taking heavy losses, he managed to hold off piecemeal attacks on the Oswego River until the French forces finally retreated. The tactical victory was lauded on both side of the Atlantic, inflated as a major victory at a time the British were desperate for something to celebrate.⁴²

In 1758, the rising officer was chosen to lead a quick and covert assault on Fort Frontenac. Besides his success in 1756, he was also chosen because he was regarded as a “brother” to the Six Nations. At a July council, Johnson encouraged the Six Nations to meet with Bradstreet and General Stanwix at the Oneida Carrying Place, ostensibly to assist the British with the establishment of Fort Stanwix.⁴³ The ensuing meeting involved about 150 Iroquois, most of which proved to be against the expedition once it was revealed. However, the presence of Bradstreet’s friend since his Oswego days, Ononwarogo, proved pivotal. The sachem successfully argued for the plan and got a number of warriors to go along. The army included over 200 whaleboats and bateaux, as well as a number of experienced Indian officers, such as a Thomas Butler, and John

⁴¹ Williams to Johnson, 26 March 1756, WJP 9: 409-10; Bradstreet to Johnson, 9 April 1756, Ibid.: 423-24; Bradstreet to Johnson, 17 April 1756, Ibid.: 433.

⁴² William G. Godfrey, *Pursuit of Profit and Preferment in Colonial America: John Bradstreet’s Quest* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1982), 79-81.

⁴³ An Indian Congress, 22 July 1758, WJP 9: 952-53.

Lottridge, who was “known and liked by many of the Indians,” and traders-turned-Indian-agents, such as Jean-Baptiste de Couagne. The army went undetected until August 23 when canoes manned by Indians friendly to the French spotted them north of Oswego on Lake Ontario. By then it was too late for the French to alert Montreal to send reinforcements, and the small weak garrison was easily overwhelmed, with six of the eight French lake vessels being captured or destroyed.⁴⁴

Although most of the Iroquois who accompanied Bradstreet refrained from fighting the French in order to preserve a degree of neutrality, their presence was valuable in terms of intelligence. He also understood the pitfalls of the borderland and made sure to maintain the utmost secrecy of the mission not only among his own officers but by successfully managing sensitive information and potential leaks among the Six Nations. Like some of his French counterparts serving in New France, Bradstreet maintained two conflicting visions of the Lake Ontario borderlands at the same time. On one hand, he was adept at recognizing and exploiting local conditions such as Iroquois mobility and intelligence gathering, but, on the other, he seemed to look forward to the day the region’s fertile land and abundant game could be fully incorporated into British North America. Informed by fur traders, he believed that the lands around Irondequoit, the Genesee valley, and the Seneca and Cayuga country were “as fertile, rich, and luxuriant” as “perhaps any in the universe.”⁴⁵ The careers of Bradstreet and Williams and their respective visions demonstrate that one person’s borderland could be another’s frontier. The actions of both officers were tied to perceptions and a certain *petite*

⁴⁴ Instructions to Thomas Butler, 6 August 1758, *Ibid.*: 966-67; Johnson to Abercrombie, 12 August 1758, *Ibid.*: 968; Johnson to Abercrombie, 30 September 1758, WJP 10: 18; Bradstreet, *An Impartial Account of Lieutenant-Colonel Bradstreet’s Expedition to Fort Frontenac* (London: T. Wilcox, 1759), 8, 25, 28.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38, 50.

politique state of mind. While Bradstreet worked to use borderland conditions to further British war aims, Williams' grasp of region, at first somewhat utilitarian, changed over time to be more rigid and bordered.

British Agents in Iroquoia: Blacksmiths, Indian Officers, Traders, and Traitors

British and French military officers were hampered by their relatively limited mobility and sporadic native contacts. The access to Iroquois and other Indian informers of those who accompanied armies or were stationed at forts was at the mercy of native peoples who decided if and when they would initiate contact. In order to maximize their presence, influence, and ability to gather news and intelligence in borderland communities that maintained connections to New France, the British, principally under William Johnson, sought to sustain a variety of wartime personnel in Iroquoia, ranging from professional officers to disreputable traders and deserters. In many ways this practice was nothing new; as Daniel K. Richter notes, both New York and New France had invaded Iroquoia with a “small army of missionaries, interpreters, messengers, traders, and blacksmiths” for over half a century.⁴⁶ However, the Seven Years' War increased the need for such agents even as it put them in more danger. The war also produced a professional class of Indian officers, such as the Butler brothers and Jelles Fonda, whose stays among the Iroquois were longer and more explicitly geopolitical.

The first such agents of empire employed among the Six Nations were blacksmiths. Blacksmiths had been dispatched among the confederacy by New York since the seventeenth century and more recently had been used to improve relations and gather information during King George's War and the interwar period. Myndert Wemple,

⁴⁶ Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 219.

a Dutch New Yorker, who had been sent to work among the Seneca in 1750 and 1753 was again dispatched west during the war. In the summer of 1755, Johnson ordered Wemple back to the Seneca country to mend guns, hatchets, and other tools for the Cayuga and Seneca while communicating news back to Fort Johnson. He was also to serve as a barrier to the French by doing everything in his power to prevent visits by Canadian agents and allied Indians. In November he reported the visit of Daniel-Marie Chabert de Joncaire, who was unsuccessful in trying to fully sway the Seneca and Cayuga to the French cause. The blacksmith was frustrated, however, with his insufficient gifts and the damaging affects of illicit rum traders. Wemple remained among the Seneca into April 1756, where he continued to report on that nation's skepticism about British military prowess and reluctance to send warriors to aid Oswego. He would soon be dispatched back to the Seneca in May to distribute two boatloads of corn and escort the carpenter Claas de Graef, who was put in charge of constructing two blockhouses.⁴⁷

Ryar Bowen was another such veteran blacksmith to be drawn upon for wartime service. Over the winter of 1746-47, he had been station by Johnson at Onondaga. In the spring of 1757 he was ordered to work among the Cayuga per their request for a smith. The Cayuga escorted Bowen west where in addition to metal work he was to promote the British cause, disseminate intelligence, and “to put them in mind of the Covenant Chain, which they and their forefathers have so long and so often to hold fast with their brethren the English.”⁴⁸ Despite the utility of these and other blacksmiths, their use during the war

⁴⁷ Johnson to Wemple, 22 July 1755, WJP 1: 765; Wemple to Johnson, 22 November 1755, WJP 2: 325-26; Wemple to Johnson, 29 April 1756, NYCD 7: 100; Instructions to Claas de Graef, 20 May 1756, WJP 9: 457.

⁴⁸ Instructions for Ryar Bowen, 2 May 1757, *Ibid.*: 713.

was infrequent, likely due to the high demand for their services among colonists, which was certainly more profitable and less dangerous than solo assignments in Iroquoia.

The British sought to improve their intelligence and presence in Iroquoia after the Oswego debacle in 1756. In order to do so, Johnson drew upon a small cadre of experienced Indian officers who would be stationed in different confederacy villages. The most conspicuous of these were Thomas and John Butler. The brothers were the sons of Walter Butler, a Connecticut colonist who had immigrated to the Mohawk Valley in 1742 with his family. Walter had also served as the commanding officer of Oswego during the previous war. Both Thomas and John were active from the start of the Seven Years' War, working at and between Oswego and Albany. In late December 1756, Johnson ordered Thomas Butler, Jelles Fonda, Wemple, and the novice Stephen Schuyler on a mission to the principle village of the Six Nations at Onondaga in order to ascertain the "disposition" of the league. They were also to monitor trade there in order to ensure that merchants operating outside of New York were not damaging relations. Politically, they were ordered to limit the amount of goods acquired by individuals and block them from going to the French. Johnson also wanted the agents to "prepare warriors' minds" for the spring campaigns with the British. Attempts at border-making also included the prevention of French visitors to the Six Nations by threatening to withhold blacksmiths and traders. In terms of intelligence, they were to send the informant and Cayuga sachem Kaghradodo ("The Englishman") to Fort Johnson and dispatch trustworthy spies to Frontenac, Niagara, and Oswegatchie. From Onondaga, Fonda was to continue west to the Seneca country and work with the trader John Abeel to carry out the same mission,

and Thomas Butler was to move west to the Cayuga. Meanwhile, John Butler was sent to carry out similar duties, traveling between the villages of the Oneida and Tuscarora.⁴⁹

Thomas Butler's party was inundated with warnings for their safety from the onset. On New Year's Eve, Butler was warned by Mohawks at Schoharie that it was "not safe to go among the Six Nations" and that "he would stand a chance to lose his scalp among them." Despite similar warnings at Canajoharie, the Butlers and their entourage pushed west, picking up two Oneida porters. They reached the principle Oneida village on 5 January 1757, where they were able to deliver Johnson's message to that nation and leave behind John Butler to work among them. After a short stay at the Tuscarora village, Ganaghsaraga, halfway between the Oneida and Onondaga, the party encountered John Abeel, who was fleeing from the Seneca. Cayuga and Seneca travelling with him laughed at the vulnerability of the small party. As Abeel related his tale of woe, Wemple spoke with one of the Seneca, "a great friend of his," who reiterated earlier warnings not to proceed west. Thomas Butler and Fonda parted ways with Abeel, who continued to Albany, and arrived at Onondaga on January 10. Once there they were coolly received; Schuyler was prevented from accompanying the Onondaga on a hunt, and the merchant Albert Ryckman advised against leaving the young lieutenant at the village due to its increasingly pro-French politics. Johnson's men departed a mere three days later and sent two friendly Seneca west with their messages for Kaghradodo and the western nations. On the fourteenth they returned to the Oneida where Schuyler was welcomed to stay

⁴⁹ Orders to Thomas Butler and Jelles Fonda, 20 December 1756, *Ibid.*: 582-83; Additional Instructions to Thomas Butler, 28 December 1756, *Ibid.*: 584.

among them by significantly more receptive sachems who requested a blacksmith and a trader, pledging to only keep diplomatic ties to Johnson and not the French.⁵⁰

Johnson's efforts to politically infiltrate Iroquoia continued in early 1757 despite their inauspicious start. John Butler provided regular reports and correspondence throughout February and March from the Oneida country. In early February he encountered seven Oswegatchie who were carrying a message from Vaudreuil and offering liquor, powder, and other gifts to those willing to migrate to their village on the Saint Lawrence. He spoke with the enemy emissaries on several occasions but felt they were holding back, only providing him with limited news. Johnson, though quite angry at their presence, saw an opportunity in the Oswegatchie visitors. Not only could they be plied for intelligence, they could also be persuaded to leave Canada as Johnson offered the Oswegatchie and Kahnawake an opportunity to "repent." In late March, the operative was able to procure an accurate account of the recent Oneida council in Canada with the French and confirm communications between the German settlers of the upper Mohawk and New France.⁵¹ Also around this time, Thomas Butler, Fonda, and Schuyler were ordered to return to Onondaga in another bid to gather intelligence and bolster relations. Once there in March, Butler met with Adcondonga, an Iroquois who had recently visited Oswegatchie and New France. The two men prodded each other for information. While Adcondonga asked about the British disposition at Lake George, Butler was able to procure some information about Vaudreuil's eventually doomed plan to attack New York's western frontier. In addition, he cultivated new informers among an Onondaga

⁵⁰ Thomas Butler and Jelles Fonda to Johnson, January 1757, WJP 2: 667-73; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 6 January 1757, *Ibid.*: 664.

⁵¹ John Butler to Johnson, 7 February 1757, WJP 9: 598-99; Johnson to John Butler, 12 February 1757, *Ibid.*: 602-03; John Butler to Johnson, 21 March 1757, WJP 2: 690-93.

and Oneida party headed out to hunt along the shores of Lake Ontario and within a party of Seneca traveling east to trade at Fort Johnson. He was also able to maintain a friendship with the avowed neutralist Onondaga sachem Hotsinonhyahta (“The Bunt”).⁵²

Thomas Butler returned to the Oneida in April and continued to provide useful reports to Johnson. While in Iroquoia, agents like Butler obtained news and intelligence from a variety of sources including sachems, travelers, and even children. Butler visited the home of an Oneida woman whose son had recently been in Canada shared military news he had overheard. Butler also kept tabs on the movements of sachems, shared news about French ships sighted off Oswego, and organized Oneida warriors into scouting parties. On April 23 his scouts returned, having seen no signs of enemy raiding parties or armies. Despite high springtime waters, they had traveled near Oswegatchie and went as far as Oswego, where they met a Kanesatake who reported scarce provisions in New France. The captain was well aware that the plethora of information he received varied in quality and pledged to Johnson to sort out the “trifling news.”⁵³

While the veteran Thomas Butler worked with the Oneida, the neophyte Stephen Schuyler gained invaluable experience while serving at Onondaga and later with Oneida scouts in May. At Onondaga, the officer was finally able to befriend some Indians and gained permission to accompany them on their hunts. Later on, he led a party of Oneida and German scouts toward Oneida Lake and the Great Carrying Place from German Flatts. His party came across a French hatchet as well as suspicious tracks around Sauquoit Creek, east of Oneida Lake. The warriors with him refused to follow the tracks

⁵² Orders to Captain Thomas Butler and Captain Jelles Fonda, 19 February 1757, WJP 9: 615-16; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 14 March 1757, WJP 2: 688; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 27 March 1757, *Ibid.*: 693-95.

⁵³ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, *Ibid.*: 704-06; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 11 April 1757, WJP 9: 675; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 17 April 1757, *Ibid.*: 680, 687-88; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 26 April 1757, *Ibid.*: 691-93.

or continue, arguing their party would be too small to engage any enemies. The young officer persisted, arguing he would follow his orders and go on and die alone with or without his escorts. The scouts continued as far as Oneida Lake where they learned of some Mississauga on the lake's north shore. The Oneida once again refused to go any further, and the group returned back to Fort Herkimer.⁵⁴ Schuyler's experience, as well as that of Thomas Butler and Fonda in their abortive January visit to Onondaga, illuminates the limitations faced by Johnson's officers. Although residing in league villages produced new opportunities in the form of more frequent and intense intercultural encounters, the Butlers, Schuyler, Fonda, and others still largely had to adhere to Iroquois rules. Warnings to cease travel may have been for the safety of officers, but they also implicitly set borders against the British. Likewise, the Onondaga were able to limit the access of Schuyler when it came to hunting just as his Oneida scouts could slow and direct scouting missions in order to avoid violent encounters. The spring of 1757 marked the zenith of Johnson's agents in Iroquoia. In the future, their operations would be based largely at new forts, such as Stanwix in 1758 and the re-established presence at Oswego in 1758.

Itinerant traders were another resource utilized by Johnson. At first glance, traders like Abeel and Jeann-Baptiste de Couagne seem like quintessential borderlanders who exploited a porous region for their own personal interests. However, their careers were linked to the geopolitics of the war and their apparent independence was supported by British protection. They often proved less reliable in their correspondence than Indian officers, and were usually deemed suspicious by colonial authorities. Furthermore, their

⁵⁴ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, WJP 2: 699-704; Orders to Stephen Schuyler, 18 May 1757, WJP 9: 725; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 23 May 1757, *Ibid.*: 768-69; Schuyler to Johnson, 25 May 1757, *Ibid.*: 775.

actions could even prove detrimental to the war effort in Iroquoia. Nevertheless, their ability to traverse Six Nations' territory, their trading contacts, and skill in native languages made them a valuable resource, particularly after the fall of Oswego, when the British desperately needed a presence around Lake Ontario. Many of the merchants who worked with the British possessed strong pre-war ties to the Six Nations and New France, which enhanced their value as imperial agents, while at the same time contributing to doubts about their loyalties. Abeel fathered a child with a Seneca woman, Gahonnoneh. Their son, the sachem Cornplanter, was a known ally of the French and had been present at Braddock's defeat in 1756. De Couagne was a member of a prominent Canadian fur trading family who defected to New York in 1751 under the auspices of Johnson with permission of the colonial governor.⁵⁵ The trader known as "La Forge" also came from New France to settle in New York some time after 1750. His father had served as the longtime blacksmith for the Seneca, and he later held the same position per their request. By 1751 the junior La Forge fell out of favor with the French, and the Seneca pledged to deliver him to Canadian officials, probably leading to his defection.⁵⁶

The activities of the traders who at times worked with Johnson at the beginning of the war shows their uneven commitment to the British cause. In December 1755, de Couagne and La Forge were dispatched to the Seneca country to hunt down and capture Daniel-Marie Chabert de Joncaire. Johnson assured his governor that the two Canadians turned New Yorkers were trustworthy, since they had lived in the colony for quite some time. Meanwhile, Abeel was also among the western Six Nations, illicitly selling rum. The blacksmith Wemple complained to Johnson about Abeel and the damage he inflicted

⁵⁵ Johnson to George Clinton, 29 March 1751, *Ibid.*: 79.

⁵⁶ For the Seneca request, see AC, C11a, vol. 77, 204-09. For French unhappiness, see Speech of the Seneca to Joncaire, 18 August 1751, AC, C11a, vol. 97, 153.

upon his mission that November. Abeel was selling goods to Joncaire who in turn used them to entice league Iroquois to visit New France. By the spring of 1756, Johnson had issued an order for the arrest of the troublesome Dutch trader.⁵⁷ However, as was often the case, the trader managed to return to Johnson's good graces. In September, after the fall of Oswego, he was back in the employ of the British when he was paid to deliver a summons to the Six Nations to meet at Fort Johnson. Other merchants proved more ephemeral. Albert Van Slyck, who was headed to trade with the Cayuga in March 1756, was asked by Johnson to informally gather intelligence and promote scouting and spying. It is uncertain if he ever complied with the request and seems to have never been enlisted by Johnson again. However, Abeel, La Forge, and de Couagne teamed up to trade together in Iroquoia that fall. As they bartered with the Iroquois they also monitored Joncaire's activities and movements, which were reported back to New York.⁵⁸

Traders, like Indian officers, were an integral part of Johnson's *petite politique* in the region following the loss of Oswego. As mentioned above, Albert Ryckman greeted Thomas Butler's party when they reached Onondaga in January 1757. He briefed Butler about the state of affairs in Iroquoia and also had traveled to Oswego where he was on the look out for any sort of French presence. Johnson had wanted Jelles Fonda to work with Abeel among the Seneca but Fonda's mission west had been cut short when Abeel was forced to flee east. On November 15, 1756, Abeel's camp outside a Seneca village had been attacked by Indian assassins from Niagara and he was wounded by a pistol shot. A Seneca woman brought him to the British-built blockhouse until another friendly

⁵⁷ Wemple to Johnson, 22 November 1755, WJP 2: 325-26; Johnson to Charles Hardy, 7 December 1755, Ibid.: 388-89; Johnson to Shirley, March 1756, WJP 9: 397-98.

⁵⁸ Johnson to Van Slyck, 23 March 1756, NYCD 7: 94-95; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 18 September 1756, WJP 9: 532-34; Johnson to Loudon, 20 November 1756, Ibid.: 547-48.

Seneca escorted him to Seneca Lake, where he recuperated for a month before being escorted to Fort Johnson.⁵⁹ The incident highlights the dangers faced by the traders who were more vulnerable than Johnson's officers. Nevertheless, they continued to work in Iroquoia throughout 1757. In February, La Forge, who was among the Cayuga, sent intelligence of French activity at Detroit to Johnson via the Oneida. Later that month, La Forge and Abeel met with Johnson, reporting on the disposition of the Cayuga and that Joncaire had become ill at Niagara.

The traders' hardships continued throughout 1757, coming from both their enemies among the Six Nations and at home in New York. In March, Ryckman and Abeel traveled to Onondaga and the Seneca country bearing wampum belts that asked league Iroquois to be on the lookout for the French and to report their movements. Ryckman, who was with some Indian escorts in Schenectady before setting out, was stopped in a "rough manner" by a British regular sentry and "detained for some time." Once at Onondaga, Ryckman had to be sheltered by the sachem Hotsinonhyahta amidst an uneasy atmosphere and was only able to leave under the escort of warriors.⁶⁰

La Forge arrived back from the Cayuga country at Fort Johnson in May. Once there, he handed over letters from New France that had invited him and de Couagne back to Canada. The two traders refused the entreaty because they enjoyed the freedom of working in Iroquoia. Apparently these assurances were not enough, and by September the two traders were jailed on suspicion of carrying out a correspondence with the enemy.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Thomas Butler and Jelles Fonda to Johnson, January 1757, WJP 2: 667-71. The Oswegatchie denied that Vaudreuil had ordered Abeel's assassination, John Butler to Johnson, 8 February 1757, WJP 9: 602. However, Vaudreuil attempted to use a Mohawk, formally of Canajoharie, to kill Johnson later that same year.

⁶⁰ Journal of Indian Proceedings, 17 February 1757, WJP 9: 610-11, 620; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 13 March 1757, WJP 2: 686-87; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, Ibid.: 699-704.

The pair managed to escape in October, causing an alarm that included the raising of the militia at Schoharie and word being sent to the Iroquois village at Oquaga on the Susquehanna River, as Johnson thought it was the “privatest” route west. Like Abeel in 1756, the fugitives were able to come back into the British service, a testament to their value and British desperation. La Forge and de Couagne arrived at Fort Johnson with some Cayuga and Seneca in May 1758 and continued east to Albany where they reported intelligence. At Albany, General Loudon took them up on their offer to work at Onondaga and he pledged them his protection and pay. By August, John Bradstreet requested the two traders by name, and they accompanied him on his expedition against Frontenac.⁶¹

The geopolitical use of private traders significantly declined after the British reestablished a presence at Oswego in 1759. De Couagne would go on to become a fulltime Indian officer under Johnson that summer. He was based out of the recently captured fort at Niagara and carried on diplomacy with the Mississauga. At Oswego, Johnson dispatched two Dutch New York traders to Irondequoit to trade with the Geneseo Seneca. He hoped that they would establish “some right building there and trading,” which would serve as a means to extend British influence among a previously hostile community.⁶²

Deserters and other criminals were another group of wartime informers active in the region that was even more marginal than the traders. These men had sought refuge in

⁶¹ Journal of Indian Affairs, 9 May 1757, WJP 9: 720-21; For their escape, see Announcements of Reward, 16 September 1757, *Ibid.*: 830-31, and various letters in WJP 2: 746-48. For return to service, Johnson to Abercrombie, 28 May 1758, WJP 9: 907; Loudon to Johnson, 31 May 1758, *Ibid.*: 915-16; Johnson to Abercrombie, 12 August 1758, *Ibid.*: 968.

⁶² For de Couagne’s transition to Indian officer, see “Private Diary kept by Sir William Johnson at Niagara and Oswego, 1759” in JJK 3: 191-94; Johnson to Jeffrey Amherst, 4 June 1760, WJP 3: 258-59. For the trade mission to Irondequoit, see “Private Diary kept by Sir William Johnson,” 223-24.

either New France or among Indians in order to escape arrest and prosecution. Their work, understandably, appears much less often in the historical record but like the merchants who sometimes skirted the law, they proved to be sources of intelligence in places the British seldom, if ever, visited. John Hart was a Pennsylvania murderer who killed a colonial official before the war and escaped to live in Canada. In June 1756 he re-crossed the border and appeared in Albany where he was interrogated, providing estimates on the numbers of troop in the Ohio valley, Niagara, and Crown Point. It is likely that by providing military information he was granted some sort of asylum in New York.⁶³

Another criminal from Pennsylvania, Alexander McCluer, was an Indian trader who had sought refuge at the Seneca village at Geneseo in order to avoid his debts. He had already spent about six months there when he provided intelligence to the British. From his vantage point among the Seneca he was able to report on the mostly pro-French inclination of Geneseo and surrounding communities, observe scalps that had been taken from raids on the southern colonies, and spy a party of Delaware warriors who had been fed and clothed at Niagara. He also continued to maintain communications with Delawares at the village at Shamokin. His closest encounter with the French came when he observed Joncaire at Geneseo and Kanadesaga for twenty days in October 1756. Joncaire proclaimed that all British traders and officers were banned from the Seneca country, and he attempted to obtain consent for a French post at Geneseo.⁶⁴

Johnson's Indian officers sometimes collaborated with these types of informers, just as they often worked with traders in Iroquoia. Thomas Butler made contact with

⁶³ Johnson to Braddock, 27 June 1756, WJP 1: 662; Johnson to De Lancey, 27 June 1756, DHNY 2: 388-89.

⁶⁴ Information from Alexander McCluer, 6 March 1757, WJP 2: 680-82.

James Clark while he was among the Oneida in the spring of 1757. Clark was a soldier who had deserted with nine others from the Oneida Carrying Place in 1756. His party made their way to Oquaga where eight of the deserters branched off for Pennsylvania. While that group would be attacked, killed, and scalped, Clark eventually ended up living near Oquaga with Esther Montour, a descendent of settler-Iroquois marriages. After witnessing the abused of British captives, including a young German girl, Clark traveled north to live under the protection of Hotsinonhyahta at Onondaga. When Clark eventually met with Butler he provided him with intelligence that was dispatched to Johnson.⁶⁵ As in the preceding interwar period, self-interest and geopolitics intersected to provide a useful, albeit erratic, form of *petite politique* practiced by traders, deserters, and other marginal actors alike. These informers serve as a reminder that while borderlands could provide refuge in the form of escaping authority, they were also inextricably tied to competitive geopolitics.

The Six Nations and the Daily Geopolitics of War: Wadori, Goweahhe, and Atrawana

Iroquois actors were essential to the practice of *petite politique* well into the 1760s and beyond. Their actions could further the aims of the imperial powers, the confederacy, Canadian mission communities, and overlapping combinations of all. The wartime cases of Wadori, Goweahhe, and Atrawana demonstrate the variety of experiences and motivations that different Iroquois went through and how these experiences were inextricably intertwined with the regions geopolitics. More so than any other of the people discussed in this study, the Iroquois were able to move between

⁶⁵ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 7 April 1757, Ibid.: 699-704.

native, French, and British worlds, resulting in myriad possibilities and pitfalls. While sometimes individuals and entire nations have been superficially labeled as being “anglophile, “francophile, or “neutral,” D. Peter Macleod’s concept of “parallel warfare” helps us see that for many Iroquois the war reconciled alliance obligations with their own interests and tactics where separate battles were often waged against a common enemy. Furthermore, Jon Parmenter’s arguments for “active neutrality” show that seemingly conflicting imperial connections and limited military participation could further the agenda of league and Laurentian neutrality while preventing intra-Iroquois violence.⁶⁶ These concepts are germane not only to diplomatic councils, war parties, or communities but are also useful in understanding individuals as they navigated the wartime borderlands.

Wadori, an Oneida warrior who was the son of Scarouady, the “Half-King” sachem at the village of Logstown on the Ohio River, only enters the historical record briefly in 1755 and 1756.⁶⁷ Sometime before 1755 he had migrated with his wife and family to settle at Oswegatchie. In the summer of 1755, he attended a conference at Fort Johnson with other Oneida and met privately with William Johnson. He professed to Johnson that his “eyes were now opened,” and he pledged to remove himself and his family from the French mission to return to the Oneida country. In addition, he pledged personal loyalty to Johnson, an indication of the ways that personal relationships were closely tied to political allegiances. Sometime after the meeting Wadori engaged in a drunken quarrel that resulted in his murdering an Onondaga. He once again removed

⁶⁶ MacLeod, *Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years’ War*, x; Parmenter and Mark Power Robinson, “The Perils and Possibilities of Wartime Neutrality on the Edges of Empire: Iroquois and Acadians between the French and British in North America, 1744–1760,” *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 2 (April, 2007): 169-71, 187-96.

⁶⁷ Wadori, Wadore, or Waadory, was also known as Thomas and Tanihwanega.

himself to Oswegatchie where he sought refuge. The French were receptive to the returning warrior, showering him with “honors and presents.” In the spring of 1756 he was leading war parties against New York.

Wadori and Johnson crossed paths once again in June that year when Johnson paid a diplomatic visit to the Oneida. Scarouady initiated a private audience between Johnson and his son through some wampum strings. The warrior told Johnson that he was ashamed of both the murder and his refuge at Oswegatchie. He once again promised to quit the “French interest,” return to Iroquoia, and aid the British. Johnson accepted his pleas and took the opportunity to ask for intelligence. The Oneida provided Johnson with information he had gleaned in conversations with Picquet and the commanding officer at Fort La Présentation, including the disposition of the French lake fleet, troop numbers, planned raids and future forts, conditions at Frontenac and Oswegatchie, and a new path south from Oswegatchie used to raid New York. Johnson pressed his newfound spy further, sending Wadori back to Oswegatchie to gather more information and prove his “fidelity.” In return, he would pay him in Spanish silver coins “according to the consequence of his intelligence.” While little is known about his movements for the remainder of the war, his family seems to have returned to the Oneida from Oswegatchie by September 1757.⁶⁸ The trials of Wadori show how one’s personal interests, namely safety, reputation, and familial ties, were closely linked to daily geopolitics. He successfully used ties to both New York and New France to escape punishment for his

⁶⁸ Journal of Sir William Johnson’s Proceedings with the Indians, 15 June 1756, NYCD 7: 134-36; Indian Proceedings, 15 September 1757, WJP 9: 832. Wadori survived the war but no record of further reports has been found. In 1757, he visited an Oneida village from Oswegatchie with his brother, bearing gunpowder, lead, and news, Thomas Butler to Johnson, 22 April 1757, WJP 9: 688. Butler seems unaware that he had pledged to Johnson to gather intelligence for the British. He was murdered in 1769 by another Iroquois, Samuel Kirkland to Johnson, 25 May 1769, WJP 12: 721.

crime, find redemption, and return to his people. Service with the French and intelligence for the British proved to be a sort of currency with which he purchased his wellbeing.

The Oneida sachem Goweahhe is a more prominent individual who lived both literally and figuratively between empires during the war.⁶⁹ His political ties to the French, British, Oswegatchie, and settlers at German Flatts preserved his Oneida community through the sort of active neutrality discussed above. He performed a pragmatic balancing act based on his ability to easily move between places and peoples. In addition, his relationships maximized his own security. In the early days of the war, before the fall of Oswego and the British retreat east, Goweahhe maintained a working relationship with the British. He was on good terms with officers at Fort Williams and pressed for the completion of fortifications at his village that were being constructed by New York carpenters at various other Iroquois communities. In July 1756 he met personally with William Johnson at Onondaga and handed over wampum belts and gifts he had received from the French.⁷⁰ Although his gesture could be interpreted as an act of allegiance, it also reveals his past visits and ties to New France. Later that year he concealed British wampum belts he had been entrusted to deliver to the Cayuga and made two visits to Montreal. At one of these visits, on Christmas 1756, he handed over two of his British medals.⁷¹

Goweahhe hedged his bets as British fortunes declined, and the French seemed to be seizing the momentum of the war. By early 1757 he was involved in running correspondence between the settlers who were seeking a neutral status at German Flatts

⁶⁹ His name was alternately spelled as “Gawicki” and “Goahee.”

⁷⁰ Williams to Johnson, 13 March 1756, WJP 9: 403-04; Williams to Johnson, 14 March 1756, *Ibid.*: 405-06; Journal of Sir William Johnson’s Proceedings with the Indians, 5 July 1756, NYCD 7: 152.

⁷¹ David J. Norton, *Rebellious Younger Brother: Oneida Leadership and Diplomacy, 1750-1800* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 30.

and officials in New France. For the Oneida, closer ties and shared neutrality with the German colonists was not so much a way to aid any French moves on the upper Mohawk but instead a way to affirm deep ties with the community they had enjoyed since its inception over forty years before. In April, the sachem returned from Canada and escorted Oswegatchie visitors, who included Wadori and his brother, to the Oneida country. These emissaries, who were to continue on to German Flatts, were sent by Vaudreuil in order to see if the German settlers there were of “one flesh and one body” with the Six Nations,” so that the French governor general knew “in what light to consider them.” These visits to New France were eventually known by the British and served to place Goweahhe under suspicion.⁷² At the same time, he continued to keep ties with Johnson and his agent among the Oneida, Thomas Butler. He continued to visit Fort Johnson and promised to keep them fully informed of any news from Oswegatchie and the French.⁷³ Butler and Johnson were practical in maintaining their connection to the well-traveled sachem; despite his frequent movements between empires he still provided a much needed source of new and intelligence when the British war effort was at its nadir.

Goweahhe and other Oneida pressed Vaudreuil at least four times not to attack German Flatts by September 1757. The delaying action, which finally failed in November, also served to benefit the beleaguered British. Goweahhe removed some of his kin from Oswegatchie, using the migration as a way to show the British his supposed loyalty. These actions show the ways that Iroquois neutrality was exercised within an

⁷² Thomas Butler to Johnson, 23 May 1757, WJP 9: 768-69; Indian Intelligence from Canajageya (Old Kettle), 23 April 1757, WJP 2: 708-09.

⁷³ Thomas Butler to Johnson, 26 April 1757, WJP 9:691-93; Thomas Butler to Johnson, 28 April 1757, Ibid.: 701-03.

imperial context where such gestures could simultaneously further multiple agendas, ostensibly done to reassure one empire while also in the interests of the Six Nations. By 1758, he seems to have severed or seriously reduced his trips and communications to Canada. In March of that year he was a frequent visitor of George Croghan's at German Flatts, where he and other Oneida held numerous informal talks and provided intelligence to the British agent.

Unfortunately, Goweahhe's presence in the historical record quickly fades as the militarized frontier pushed west to Stanwix and later Oswego as the war progressed. However, in September 1759 evidence of his adaptability is seen once more. He welcomed one of Johnson's officers and twenty-four Mohawk warriors allied to the British to his village. The war party was traveling to Oswego to go against the French, and Goweahhe pledged to aid their effort by sending thirty of his own warriors with them. Ironically, at the end of the 1760 campaign, he was awarded yet another silver medal by General Amherst in Montreal.⁷⁴ The sachem and his community weathered the war relatively unscathed. Although their close friends at German Flatts had finally been targeted by the French in 1757, the Oneida, thanks in part to leaders like Goweahhe, who stayed well-informed of developments far beyond their borders. The sharing of intelligence worked both ways as Iroquois informers who intended to stay neutral were able to visit both New York and France, observe conditions and developments in both places, and make educated decisions based upon their personal knowledge. Goweahhe's

⁷⁴ Oneida Council with Johnson, 15 September 1757, *Ibid.*: 832; Croghan to Johnson, 18 March 1758, WJP 2: 791-93; Johnson, "Private Diary," 5 September 1759, 210-11; Norton, *Rebellious Younger Brother*, 37.

successful use of the borderland is representative of more general Oneida leadership that was characterized by “determination and adaptability” during the war years.⁷⁵

Arawana was much more partisan than Wadori and Goweahhe, as he had worked closely with the British and New York during King George’s War and the interwar period. His career during the Seven Years’ War sheds light on the *petite politique* of a native actor who kept up close personal and political friendships that yielded both hardships and rewards. Like the other Iroquois in this section utilized connections that reached far beyond his home nation, including family members who he enlisted as personal messengers and informers. He was also a valuable set of eyes and ears among the Cayuga, the nation perhaps most skeptical of the British other than the Seneca. His personal alliance with the British took the form of regular communications, diplomatic aid, and numerous visits east. For example, in July 1755 he facilitated a meeting between Johnson and a Mississauga sachem, making use of his pre-war ties with that nation. He also used relationships with his fellow sachems among the Cayuga. In September 1756 he supplied Johnson with a generous report on what the sachems Dyaderowane and Itayendisere had experienced at New France and Fort Duquesne, respectively. The intelligence included Iroquois’ efforts to neutralize French allies, French plans against the Mohawk Valley and Lake George, Duquesne’s weak garrison, and the disposition of the Delaware nation. Months later, he met Johnson again with information from a contact at Fort Frontenac, an Indian who had served under Montcalm at Fort Ticonderoga, and from French allies he knew at Niagara. As before, Arawana eagerly provided news about the French military and Indian opinions, this time about disaffected Kahnawake and Mississauga.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 34.

Unlike Goweahhe, his visits to British posts continued even as the British moved west, with the Cayuga providing intelligence to Fort Stanwix on at least one occasion. When that fort was being constructed he assured the British of its security by telling Johnson he would “send [him] what news they could learn of any moment,” and he would enclose an original letter from the superintendent as proof of its authenticity.⁷⁶ These enduring ties to the British during the war years sometimes brought about dangerous situations. In addition to his confrontation with Shirley’s overzealous recruiters at Schenectady discussed above, he and two other Cayuga were confronted by hostile French allies in the spring of 1756. The party, which was traveling west from Oswego back to the Cayuga country, had one of its members briefly taken prisoner. Fortunately for the Cayuga, he was able to secure his release. One of Arawana’s daughters was murdered by a Seneca in the wartime summer of 1759. The motive of the killer was unclear and could have had nothing to do with his political persuasion. Yet Johnson dutifully dispatched some of his officers from Oswego to console his ally’s loss.⁷⁷ The sachem received some perks linked to his fidelity. While he accompanied the British to Lake George in 1755 his family was safely housed with a New York colonist for the duration of his time there. More materially, he received a red jacket from Johnson during a council the following year, just as he had been paid for intelligence provided before the war.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Council with the Six Nations, 4 July 1756, NYCD 6: 981; Indian Intelligence, 24 September 1756, WJP 9: 539-41; Journal of Sir William Johnson’s Proceedings with the Indians, 22 November 1756, NYCD 7: 239-40; Fonda to Johnson, 30 September 1758, WJP 10: 19-20; Johnson to Stanwix, June 25 1758, WJP 9: 931-32.

⁷⁷ James Mercer to Johnson, 6 April 1756, *Ibid.*: 418-19; Johnson, “Private Diary,” 5 September 1759, 210-11.

⁷⁸ Johnson’s Accounts of Indian Expenses, WJP 2: 598, 604.

For Arawana, pro-British *petite politique* was a family affair. His daughters' husbands were often used as informers and messengers throughout the war. At least one of these sons-in-law was an Onondaga, giving Arawana access to information beyond his own nation. Like Arawana, some of them maintained their own personal ties with New Yorkers. For instance, one son-in-law maintained a friendship with John Fisher (Visgher), a judge at Schenectady. Another son-in-law, a Cayuga, was used as a messenger between the Cayuga country and Fort Johnson in 1757 to report the mobilization of French forces for that spring's campaigns. These kinship ties spanned three generations as one of Arawana's nephews, an Onondaga, also shared information with Johnson about how the Delaware of Tioga prevented a western Delaware raid against New York in accordance with the Treaty of Easton and updated him on the favorable treatment the trader Ryckman received at Onondaga.⁷⁹ These intra-family dynamics testify to the ways daily geopolitics were inseparable from personal, social relations. The motivations of Arawana and his kin may never be fully known, but they were certainly complex as they involved material compensation, frequent meetings, dangerous journeys and encounters, and numerous conversations that spanned nearly two decades.

Lake Ontario's Final Imperial Borderland: *Petite Politique* at and between Oswego, Fort Lévis, and Oswegatchie, 1760

In 1759 the militarized frontiers between New York, New France, and Iroquoia once again shifted dramatically when the British captured Niagara and re-established a presence at Oswego. In response, the French began an unprecedented effort to fortify the

⁷⁹ Stevens to Johnson, 27 July 1755, WJP 1: 784-56; Ferrall Wade to Johnson, 28 March 1757, WJP 9: 659; Journal of Indian Proceedings, 21 February 1758, WJP 9: 618.

upper reaches of the Saint Lawrence as they abandoned Fort La Présentation in favor of the newly construct Fort Lévis, located several miles down river. This consolidation was soon followed by a period of relative calm. Although Wolfe and Montcalm met on the Plains of Abraham at Quebec that year, the Lake Ontario front remained unchanged as General Thomas Gage failed to mount an expedition against Lévis despite the urgings of Amherst, Johnson, and their Six Nations allies. As a result, a militarized borderland dominated by the tactics and goals of *petite politique* held fast until the siege of Fort Lévis in August 1760. The events preceding the siege can be viewed through the intersection and interaction of four borderlanders, the British officer Frederick Haldimand, the French officer Pierre Pouchot, the Oswegatchie Charles and Kouategeté. Although each represents vastly different backgrounds and interests, all four engaged in a shared culture of power that sought to exploit and limit mobility while engaging in intercultural interactions that bore valuable news and intelligence.

Pouchot was assigned the unenviable task of commanding Fort Lévis in March 1760. The fort had been constructed in late 1759, after the fall of Niagara, by Montcalm's second-in-command and the fort's namesake, Francois de Gaston, Chevalier de Lévis. The fort, situated on Oraquinton (Chimney) Island in the Saint Lawrence River, was positioned to block access to Montreal.⁸⁰ By the spring of 1760, the poorly supplied Pouchot was in command of two sailing ships, their crews of 180 sailors, 6 Canadian officers, and about 200 militia.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the commanding officer had been a veteran of the region's borderland politics; he had engaged in diplomacy with the Iroquois at Niagara in 1757, quelled angry Mississauga at Toronto with soldiers and Pottawatomie

⁸⁰ Cubbison, *All Canada in the Hands of the British*, 16-17.

⁸¹ Twenty of the militia soon deserted on bateaux that had been used to carry provisions, Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1:233-36, 238-39.

allies, and presided over the defense and loss of Niagara in 1759.⁸² After the capture of Niagara he had been taken prisoner and brought to New York until his exchange in November 1759. The location of the new fort, which unlike La Présentation was miles from the Iroquois village, represented both a literal and symbolic separation between the French and their Oswegatchie allies. Pouchot's difficulties in terms of native alliances and diplomacy began soon after his arrival at Lévis. At the end of March he held an icy meeting with the Oneida sachem Tacoua Onenda ("Buried Meat"). The sachem, who had been hunting nearby, was also flagrantly delivering wampum from Johnson to the Canadian Iroquois, suggested the French release their British prisoners, and did not share any news or intelligence with the officer. Pouchot was equally standoffish as he scolded the Oneida for their neutral stance and predicted the British would treat them like "dogs and negroes" after the war was over.⁸³

While the Oneida nation had been limiting and cooling their relations with New France since 1758, French relations with the erstwhile enthusiastic and loyal Oswegatchie had also begun to deteriorate. Some Oswegatchie sachems had been in contact with Johnson since the previous year in order to secure the safety of their people in the event of an expedition against the upper Saint Lawrence. When the threat failed to materialize, the Oswegatchie and other Canadian Iroquois reduced their overtures to the British and engaged in a delicate balancing act. Outside the Lake Ontario region many of them continued to fight alongside their French allies, such as at Quebec, Sainte-Foy, and Montreal. However, closer to Iroquoia, they were more likely to work with the British.⁸⁴ This disposition can be seen in Pouchot's meeting with Kouategeté (Ohquandagegte), a

⁸² Ibid., 82-83; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 114.

⁸³ Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1:240-46.

⁸⁴ MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years' War*, 154, 159-59.

leading Oswegatchie sachem and warrior. Although he had been involved in many actions against the British, including raids based out of Niagara when Pouchot was there, the veteran warrior informed Pouchot upon his arrival to Lévis that his recent conversion to Catholicism had made him a pacifist. Kouategeté's conversion would continue to be politicized in the spring of 1760. In late April, the Oswegatchie Charles attended the sachem's baptism, representing governor general Vaudreuil as the godfather. Pouchot for his part presented the recent convert with a fine blanket at a ceremony attended by other Oswegatchie sachems and women. On May 10, at Kouategeté's wedding, the French again tried to curry favor with the influential leader when Pouchot presented gifts in the name of Vaudreuil.⁸⁵

While it has been argued that Fort Lévis was doubly a failure in terms of the French desire to halt any British advances toward Montreal and their efforts "to control the natives of the region," the post proved to be a useful base of borderland *petite politique* under Pouchot in 1760.⁸⁶ The experienced officer realized its limitations but nonetheless worked with his scarce resources to observe and infiltrate Oswego. Despite his geographic distance from the Oswegatchie, Pouchot inserted himself into intra-Iroquois diplomacy on multiple occasions to shore up support for the waning French cause. When an Oneida envoy met with the Oswegatchie in April to invite them to migrate "home" to Iroquoia, the Oswegatchie refused to begin the conference until Pouchot arrived. He then cut the Onedia's speech short and railed against the Six Nations' participation at the siege of Niagara and for their reporting of Oswegatchie emissaries among the Oneida to Johnson and the British. Similarly, in early August, he

⁸⁵ Pouchot, *Memoir*, 240, 247, 252.

⁸⁶ MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years' War*, 136.

injected himself into a meeting between the Oswegatchie and Mohawk and Onieda diplomats who were urging their kin to return south on the eve of Amherst's invasion. Once again he warned the Six Nations' diplomats about their bleak post-war position in a speech that was applauded by the Oswegatchie who refused to be moved, claiming they deferred any such decision to the French and Kahnawake at Montreal.⁸⁷

Pouchot also used his ties to the Oswegatchie to procure valuable intelligence about the British buildup taking place at Oswego. These intelligence gathering efforts were in cooperation with Vaudreuil, who not only encouraged them but also continued to compose reports based on them until communication with France was no longer possible. Pouchot's most valuable resources on the information front were the very Oswegatchie and other Iroquois who were beginning to assert their neutrality. Although they refused to partake in war parties against the British by June 1760, Iroquois trips to the south kept the French well-informed. For instance, on May 7, the French officer met with two Akwesasne from the mission settlement farther down the Saint Lawrence. They had just returned from Oswego where they had spent a week observing the British and also met with an Onondaga contact, Onoroagon, who relayed military activity at Fort Stanwix. The integrity of such spies and informers varied greatly, ranging from the skillful and steadfast service of Charles, discussed below, to more treacherous, anti-French figures, such as the Oswegatchie known to the French as Sans Souci ("Carefree"). Sans Souci met with Pouchot on the evening of May 18. Pouchot scolded him for traveling to Oswego without permission and accused him of speaking poorly of the French there. The Oswegatchie retorted that he was "his own master" and offered false intelligence about an impending British expedition in the coming days. He went on to implore Pouchot to

⁸⁷ John Butler to Johnson, 24 April 1760, WJP 10: 140-41; Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 17-20.

prepare his troops and artillery, a ruse the Captain wisely resisted in order to not publicly display his exact strength until it was truly needed. Less than two weeks later he was informed that Sans Souci was indeed a spy under the pay of the British, and that he had traveled to Oswego once again to report on French actions at Lévis.⁸⁸

Pouchot's Iroquois contacts and connections, though valuable, were of limited use given the prevailing neutralist mood in 1760. As a result, he turned to other sources of mobility and intelligence in order to lessen his reliance on questionable informers. These resources included an influx of Mississauga and Abenaki warriors and the continued use of two sailing ships on Lake Ontario.

The Mississauga, who hailed from the northwest end of the lake, had experienced a tumultuous relationship with the French since the 1740s; while many sachems remained enthusiastic allies, others had been in contact with the British at Oswego, contacts that had resumed toward the end of the war. Mississauga began to arrive at Fort Lévis in late April and continued to migrate throughout the spring. The French pitched their newest fort on the Saint Lawrence as a "new fire" where the nation could conduct diplomacy and attend Picquet's new mission located on a nearby island. The migrants, many of which were fleeing the British occupation at Niagara, desperately sought food and supplies. One sachem confided to Pouchot that his band had even resorted to acts of cannibalism. As with other borderlanders in the region's past, arriving migrants offered intelligence as a sort of currency to secure sanctuary.

Pouchot soon dispatched parties of refugee warriors to both spy and raid around Oswego. On May 16 one such party returned with six soldiers they had ambushed who

⁸⁸ For Vaudreuil's cooperation with Pouchot, see Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 246; Vaudreuil to Nicolas René Berryer, 24 June 1760, NYCD 10: 1089-91. Oswegatchie refusal to partake in war parties, Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 264-66. For Akwesasne and Sans Souci as informants and spies, see *Ibid.*, 250, 253-55.

had been fishing on the Oswego River. Also in May, a spy returned from Oswego who was able to report on the number of troops arriving there. While at Oswego the spy had been approached by Onoroagon, who urged him other Mississauga to migrate away from the fort to settle with the nearby Oswegatchie who would provide ample fish and crops. The encounter highlighted the competition for the Mississauga that was being waged by the French and the Iroquois. On April 28, Pouchot was confronted by Kouategeté who urged him not to dispatch Mississauga parties south. The officer retorted that they were an independent nation, operating on “their own account.” The war party that had brought prisoners to Lévis had been accosted by Oswegatchie Iroquois who offered to trade brandy for their prisoners, an offer which had been declined. By June the competing parties reached a compromise: The Mississauga would be invited to live on the island the Iroquois were at and be supplied by them while the French would provide other supplies. In return, both the Oswegatchie and Mississauga reaffirmed their loyalty to the French cause.⁸⁹

The Abenaki were seen by the French to be somewhat more reliable than the Mississauga. Unlike the latter nation, the former settled closer to New France in villages with missionary presences such as Saint Francis and Bécancour. Like the Mississauga, the Abenaki found themselves fleeing the ravages of war, most notably the October 1759 raid by Rogers’ Rangers on Saint Francis that resulted in the virtual destruction of the town. A group of forty Abenaki refugees were dispatched to Fort Lévis in June 1760 by Vaudreuil from Montreal. They were settled on Galop Island with Picquet.⁹⁰ Although they were not “pliant auxiliaries,” they had served with the French in numerous

⁸⁹ Ibid.,247-50, 252-54, 258-63.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 267.

campaigns, including the Battle of the Monongahela, the siege of Oswego, the capture of Fort William Henry, and the defense of Quebec the previous year.⁹¹ Although not numerous, Abenaki warriors took part in at least one raid on the British to the south. In late June they arrived at Lévis with a captured New York militia captain, his brother, and a scalp.⁹²

The use of sailing ships was yet another way for Pouchot to procure valuable reports on Oswego and Lake Ontario. As in the earlier years of the war, the conventional roles envisioned for vessels failed to materialize but their use as tools of *petite politique* were far more successful. Pouchot was familiar with the idiosyncrasies of using naval power on the lake due to his experiences at Niagara years earlier. By 1760 the French lake fleet consisted of two ships, the *Iroquoise* and *Outaouaise*, which had been constructed at Baril during the previous year. While the *Iroquoise* would run aground in early August and the *Outaouaise* would be swarmed and captured by five British row galleys during the siege of Lévis,⁹³ the two ships were put to use as scouts before their respective demises. In mid-June Pouchot dispatched them with fifty crew members aboard each with a month's worth of provisions under the command of the experienced Captain La Force to sail around Oswego. Weeks later the ships engaged in a brief artillery duel with that fort before returning to the safety of the Saint Lawrence with a sketch of the new fort at Oswego and other intelligence. Later in July the ships were active once more. They encountered two British ships off of Galloo Island, in the northeastern part of the lake, and returned to report them on July 25. As in other cases

⁹¹ Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont*, 171-72.

⁹² Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 4.

⁹³ Robert J. Andrews, "Two Ships-Two Flags: The *Outaouaise/Williamson* and the *Iroquoise/Anson* on Lake Ontario, 1759-1761," *The Northern Mariner* 14, No. 3 (July 2004), 44-45.

during the latter part of the war, the French found themselves very well informed but with little power to fight back. The warning of the approaching ships at least served to give some seventy Indian women, children, and elderly the opportunity to flee the soon-to-be war zone.

As the veteran Pouchot made the best use of the limited tools at his disposal, another European officer, Frederick Haldimand, was getting a trial by error education in the nuances of daily borderlands politics. Like Pouchot, he had been at the siege of Niagara. He also served as the commander at Oswego in 1759 and 1760, where he oversaw the construction of Fort Ontario and led the defense of the post against a surprise attack by the Chevalier de La Corne and 1200 French and Indians in July 1759.⁹⁴ In addition to these more conventional military duties, Haldimand also worked closely with one of Johnson's Indian officers, John Lottridge in gathering intelligence, conducting diplomacy, and coordinating scouting parties.⁹⁵

An example of the steep learning curve occurred in April 1760 when the machinations of Pouchot directly intersected with the Haldimand. Pouchot dispatched the Oswegatchie known as Charles on a mission to spy on Oswego. Charles, who had spent years working closely with Picquet, was a master of intercultural relations; he spoke impeccable French, was a sachem at Oswegatchie, often donned European clothes, was an enthusiastic Catholic, partook in Indian councils, and maintained friendly informers among the Iroquois at Oswego. He and his party disguised themselves as common Iroquois hunters and embarked on April 1 on an eighteen-day mission. Once at Oswego they posed as traders. The British officers at Oswego were immediately suspicious and

⁹⁴ For a narrative of the action, see Haldimand to Amherst, 17 July 1759 in Amherst, *Journal*, 139-40.

⁹⁵ Lottridge to Haldimand, 15 April 1760, WJP 3: 220-21; Johnson to Haldimand, 12 May 1760, *Ibid.*: 236-37; Amherst to Johnson, 6 June 1760, WJP 10: 170.

they refused to allow Charles inside their fort, claiming that their interpreter was sick inside. However, they did agree to allow the band of Indians to camp and trade outside. Despite the qualms of his hosts, Charles was able to gauge the British opinion about Fort Lévis, which they dismissed it as weak “beaver hut,” listen to anxieties about the French lake Ontario ships, notice the lack of reinforcement and shipbuilding, witness the neutrality pledge of some Cayuga sachems, and learn of future plans to attack New France via the upper Saint Lawrence. Haldimand was fooled by the subterfuge and was only informed that he had been dealing with spies upon Charles’ departure. An Indian at Oswego took the opportunity to educate the officer about all of the flaws in the furs the phony traders had brought.⁹⁶

The incident highlighted the delicate situation faced by Haldimand and the British at Oswego in dealing with the Oswegatchie. On one hand they could be valuable sources of intelligence and potential allies (or at least neutrals) in the final push up the Saint Lawrence, while on the other their uncertain loyalties could prove to endanger Oswego and its scouting parties. Haldimand first encountered an Oswegatchie sachem in November 1759. The visitor to Oswego, who traveled there with his family, came in response to Johnson’s urgings and pledged to remain neutral in the coming campaign. More Oswegatchie arrived via the lake throughout the winter and into the spring as they used the re-established British post as a stopping point on their journeys to resettle in Iroquoia. The migrants and their kin were grateful for Haldimand’s hospitality and supplied him with news and intelligence in return. This working relationship continued into the spring when the British brig *Mississauga* ran ashore near the Oswegatchie hunting ground and was left unmolested in accordance with his requests. Up to this point

⁹⁶ Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 246-47; Gage to Johnson, 22 April 1760, WJP 3: 223-24.

the Oswegatchie had been encouraged to trade at Oswego and were invited to meet with Johnson in the coming months. Friendly Oswegatchie and Kanesatake arrived in May bearing intelligence and returning a British prisoner. They disavowed any complicity in raids on Oswego and claimed they had deserted Lévis in protest of Mississauga war parties.⁹⁷

This period of *petite politique* was jeopardized when some of the British leadership began to doubt the value of allowing the Oswegatchie to trade at Oswego. Johnson voiced his concerns in April 1760 when he stated that such trade was a "service to the enemy." At Oswego, Haldimand and four of his subordinates argued trade should continue despite the protests of Lottridge, whose orders favored the dispensation of well-timed gifts. Haldimand used the testimony of the ranger Christian Shamburn, the prisoner who had been returned in May, to make his case. Shamburn detailed how the Mississauga refused to attend a conference called by Vaudreuil, concealed him when passing a party of Mississauga and passing past Fort Lévis, and vouched for their loyalty. Haldimand also consulted with the merchant Albert Ryckman, then serving as an interpreter at Oswego. The veteran trader believed that small Mississauga raiding parties were being used to deliberately hard British-Oswegatchie relations. The Oswegatchie, for their part, were confused by attempts to restrict trade and stated that they were in fact hurting the French by coming to Oswego. The controversial issue soon reached General Amherst. Although he felt it was "necessary to be on guard in [the] intercourse with all those savages, particularly the Oswegatchie" and wished the local Indians would simply decide "on which side they will be," he deferred the issue back to Johnson. Johnson reversed the

⁹⁷ Haldimand, Examinations concerning Trade, 17 May 1760, WJP 3: 239-41.

short-lived ban and decided that Oswegatchie trade was to be handled on a case-by-case basis by Haldimand and Lottridge, yielding to their experience and judgment.⁹⁸

In addition to trade, Haldmiand and Lottridge also worked to control the mobility of other visitors at Oswego. In May they decided to allow a Kanesatake previously allied to the French to pass through the post on his way to Schenectady despite Johnson's wishes that he go no further. The Indian, who had helped return Shamburn and was traveling with his sister, wished to meet up with John Newkirk. Newkirk, who had served as an interpreter at Oswego in 1756, had also been one of his prisoners early in the war and was considered to be a "son" to the Kanesatake woman. The pair made their way to Fort Johnson where they met with Johnson and provided him with a plethora of intelligence concerning the state of New France, its economy, Indian alliances, and strategy for the year. Despite his earlier misgivings, Johnson wrote of the newfound informer that "I hope to be able to make good use of him."⁹⁹ A month later, Haldimand decided to limit native mobility when Kouategeté and a party of Oswegatchie emissaries arrived under a flag of truce to negotiate with Johnson and the British. Perhaps still stung from his earlier encounter with Charles and his spies and knowing of the warrior's fearsome reputation, Haldimand detained the Oswegatchie, forbidding them to cross the Oswego River, until Johnson arrived in order to prevent intelligence leaks about Amherst's impending expedition against Fort Lévis. The detention of the noted sachem also further eroded Oswegatchie willingness to work with Pouchot; sachems notified the French officer that they refused to conduct any raids for prisoners at or around Oswego in order to ensure the safety of their compatriots. Kouategeté was finally released when it

⁹⁸ Ibid.; Johnson to Gage, 25 April 1760, WJP 3: 226-27; Amherst to Johnson, 26 May 1760, Ibid.: 251-52; Johnson to Amherst, 28 May 1760, Ibid.: 255.

⁹⁹ Johnson to Amherst, 31 May 1760, WJP 10: 160-61.

was judged that the expedition was judged powerful enough that any warning to the French would be in vain to stop it.¹⁰⁰

Kouategeté arrived back to his people in early August, accompanied by an Oneida and Mohawk diplomat. His mission to Oswego, far from being a blunder into British confinement, was the final part of an effort to secure Oswegatchie ahead of the coming invasion. The goals of Kouategeté and other Iroquois in the last phase of the Lake Ontario wartime borderland highlight how the mobility, daily diplomacy, social connections, and desire for information of native peoples not only bolstered imperial goals but also served Iroquois interests. Throughout 1760, many of the Oswegatchie who remained around Fort Lévis worked to communicate their neutrality and separate themselves from their now dangerous alliance French. By spring a group moved upriver to settle at Grenadier Island under the advice of their Six Nations kin at Oswego. The new settlement even flew a British flag much to the chagrin of Pouchot. The banner was not so much a proclamation of loyalty to the British but rather an attempt to show their neutrality in the battles to come. Although the small settlement dispersed by mid-May, the Oswegatchie continued their overtures.

Daily diplomacy often took the form of small, unplanned, and informal intra-Iroquois meetings. Kouategeté encountered three Onondaga scouts among the Oswegatchie camp on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence and spoke with them peacefully. One of the warriors had an aunt at Picquet's mission on Galloo Island, while another had been part of an earlier war party that took three prisoners from the area, a testament to the complex bonds and divides that existed between different Iroquois

¹⁰⁰ Johnson to Amherst, 26 June 1760, WJP 3: 261-60; Johnson to Haldimand, 4 July 1760, *Ibid.*: 265; Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 7-8, 16-20; Amherst, *Journal*, 219-220.

communities. In mid-June, Kouategeté encountered a party of Indians allied to the British on the Oswegatchie River. He successfully talked them out of following through with their planned raid and the women with the sachem swapped news with the warriors, which included the location of other British war parties. Such encounters, out of the view of the French, involved others beside Kouategeté. For instance, an Oswegatchie woman was visited by Oneida and Onondaga warriors armed with muskets and tomahawks on the night of July 20. After they interrogated her about the disposition of the French defenses she asked them about the fate of Kouategeté and his band, then being held by Haldimand. Although they left with her canoe, they advised her and other Oswegatchie to remove themselves to either Grenadier Island or the old Fort La Présentation site in order to be safe from the imminent expedition.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The Lake Ontario British-French-Six Nations borderland came to a close at eight o'clock the night of August 25, 1760. Amherst's overwhelming forces, which consisted of over 10,000 British regulars and provincial troops and some 700 Iroquois warriors, surrounded Pouchot at Lévis, besieged the fort for a week, captured his last remaining ship, and reduced the French position to a "smoldering, shattered, cratered wreck."¹⁰² As had happened many times before over the past six years to other borderland locales, Fort Lévis changed hands and was renamed William Augustus. In the *petite politique* that had preceded the siege throughout the final year of the war in North America, the British had been able to make a separate peace with the Oswegatchie while keeping a close eye on

¹⁰¹ For Grenadier Island, see Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 252-54. For encounters, see *Ibid.*, 249-50, 2: 12-14.

¹⁰² Cubbison, *All Canada in the Hands of the British*, 185. For narrative of the siege, see *Ibid.*, 161-87; Anderson *Crucible of War*, 400-02.

the state of the French defenses. The Iroquois were also successful in the daily geopolitical maneuverings as they had been able to avoid violence between the Six Nations and Oswegatchie while ensuring the safety of the native community that had formerly been so enthusiastic in its alliance with the losing side. Even though the French had suffered one of their final defeats of the war, Pouchot remained very well-informed despite lacking the capability to stop his enemies to the south.

Like Pouchot, Haldimand, and Kouategeté, a wide range of historical actors in New York, New France, and Iroquoia recognized the geopolitical potential of the region during the Seven Years' War. Their backgrounds varied widely, including governors, officers, deserters, sachems, traders, and warriors, but their practices all adapted to the borderland's fluidity as they sought to exploit and control movements, utilize intercultural encounters, gather intelligence, display power, and conduct daily diplomacy. For some, the recognition of the borderland's geopolitical potential often involved months and years of experience. Where many provincial and European officers only saw menacing militarized frontiers, others recognized possibilities. For European officers such as Bradstreet and Pouchot, the use of Iroquois agents, traders, and lake ships was learned and perfected. However, for a sachem like Goweahhe, the movement between empires represented an extension of league Iroquois diplomacy that had existed since the previous century.

Movements between and among New York, New France, and the Six Nations could take the form of spying, raiding, and scouting, but it was also curtailed to control migrations and information leaks. Like the people involved in these tasks, the results yielded were mixed in their quality and effectiveness. Intelligence gathered by operatives

such as Johnson's officers and traders was often highly accurate and useful, tracking the movements of enemy agents and reporting the disposition of particular nations and leaders. Other times, information proved muddled, inaccurate, or vague. Similarly, informal diplomacy could build lasting working relationships, such as those between Thomas Butler and the Oneida, veer off course, like Pouchot's efforts with the Oswegatchie in 1760, or prove outright harmful, as in the case of William Williams. Regardless of these setbacks, everyday borderland politics, a regional culture of power that had been developing for almost four decades, played an important, if unsung, role in the undoing of the very borderland dynamic that produced it.

CONCLUSION

The fall of Montreal on September 8, 1760, effectively ended the Seven Years' War in northeastern North America. The 1763 Treaty of Paris officially ceded the lands and claims of New France to the British, permanently removing the inter-imperial dynamic from the Northeast that had shaped the region's history for over a century. Despite the war's end and the termination of imperial rivalry, a stable peace would prove elusive during the decades to come.

The next armed conflict soon came in 1763 with the outbreak of Pontiac's War that was waged between a confederacy of western nations and the British. The removal of the French in 1760 from the upper country and the subsequent attempt by the British to assume their role as ally, arbitrator, and trade partner amidst an expanding settlement frontier proved disastrous.¹ The 1760s witnessed the development of the Lake Ontario borderland into a frontier, one characterized by increased tensions between the British and Six Nations. This was still not a bordered land but instead a zone of uneasy encounter and cohabitation between an empire and a confederacy. The British assumed control of Fort Lévis, now William Augustus, Frontenac remained in ruins, and they continued to garrison Niagara, Fort Ontario at Oswego, as well as a chain of forts, which included Stanwix, between the Mohawk Valley and Ontario.

The relationship between the British and Iroquois declined after the Seven Years' War. Although the Six Nations continued to exercise neutrality, some communities, as in the previous war, acted with autonomy. The Genesee Seneca actively sided with those fighting the British. They dispatched anti-British wampum belts throughout the league in

¹ White, *The Middle Ground*, 248-49, 315.

1763, and in September of that year took part in a devastating attack on troops at the battle of Devil's Hole along the Niagara portage. Six Nations and Kahnawake offers to aid the British militarily early on in the conflict were rebuffed by Amherst and their enthusiasm dwindled thereafter. The recalcitrant Seneca would eventually broker peace at the steep price of ceding the strategic Niagara portage to the British in 1764. Oswego, the site of decades of intercultural and geopolitical cooperation, hosted the icy week-long peace conference between Pontiac and William Johnson in July 1766. In contrast to the synthesis of native and European people, places, and tactics that characterized *petite politique*, the proceedings highlighted vast differences. Johnson paternally reprimanded the assembled sachems while Pontiac reiterated his vast claims over the lands of the trans-Appalachian west.²

Despite these fundamental changes in the region's politics, traces of the old borderland remained. These can be seen in some of the 1763 correspondence of William Johnson. In a letter to Amherst in July, soon after the outbreak of Pontiac's War, he credits the solid working relationship with the Six Nations as ensuring the safety of the always vulnerable route between Oswego and Albany, which was critical to the fur trade. Four months later, writing to the Lords of Trade in London, Johnson mentions the tensions between the Iroquois and the soldiers-turned-farmers who had resorted to tending plots around their forts and posts in Iroquoia in order to survive. While the friction indicates contested land use and unfulfilled pledges to vacate the garrisons, it is also a testament to the relative weakness of the British presence. Johnson goes on to depict the Six Nations and their territory as serving as a buffer from western violence for

² Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 89, 137-38, 149, 153, 250-54.

New York during Pontiac's War.³ As in the earlier borderland dynamic, native sovereignty and intercultural cooperation still reverberated even as a new frontier took root.

This dissertation has sought to position the Lake Ontario borderlands in their full historical context. By doing so, it raises questions of both their particularity and potential broader use as a case study. In terms of distinctiveness, it has differentiated imperial-Iroquois Lake Ontario from the wider Great Lakes region to the west and the more overtly militarized corridors to the east. Native political tactics, migrations, and sovereignty encountered colonial outposts, agendas, and actors to bring about a new way of exercising geopolitical power. As a result, *petite politique* was practiced in a borderland that was distinguished by its hybridity; New World conditions tempered and shaped Old World contests. The most significant influence on borderland politics throughout this study was the persistent power of the Six Nations and their ability to maintain communication and diplomacy with their Canadian kin. Efforts to secure the safety and sovereignty of Iroquois communities were not only conducted parallel to the imperial contest but fundamentally shaped it. Iroquoian diplomacy shaped the region from the 1720s, with the dual negotiated establishments at Oswego and Niagara, warded off potentially destructive violence during King George's War, and secured the safety of Oswegatchie and the Six Nations' homelands.

Lake Ontario and its environs uniquely brought two empires into close proximity but the ensuing daily politics were largely non-violent due to the nearness of the Six Nations homeland. Intercultural cooperation, rather than internecine warfare, was the

³ Johnson to Amherst, 1 July 1763, NYCD 7: 530; Johnson to Lords of Trade, 13 November 1763, Ibid.: 576-78.

norm. This enabled not only the protection of Iroquoia and its people but also furthered imperial agendas, albeit in a new and different way. Even in periods of outright warfare, seemingly conventional military operations, such as the raid on Fort Bull or the expedition against Fort Lévis during the Seven Years' War, were significantly shaped by borderland mobility and intelligence. Colonial and European actors adapted to the Iroquois foundations of the borderland by utilizing their travelers as informants, meeting with their sachems, and attempting co-opt their trans-imperial networks. In turn, they developed their own tools of *petite politique*, such as lake vessels and Indian officers, which were products of the encounter between largely native borderland underpinnings and imperial resources.

These unique features speak to the contemporary literature on borderlands by challenging the primacy of local and decentralized interests over seemingly “outside” forces. The existence of a borderland did not deter geopolitical power, whether it was projected by French or British empires or by an Indian confederacy, but rather modified it. At the very least, their agendas coexisted with more local ones and had to adapt to conditions on the ground. A culture of power built on face-to-face encounters is shown to have been reliable, durable, and long-lasting. On a personal level, individuals recognized and exploited the potential of borderlands politics. Even those who at first glance would seem the most independent historical actors, totally disconnected from empires, such as rogue traders, escaping prisoners and criminals, and deserters played geopolitical roles. This study has also shown borderlands to be closely linked to individual and group perceptions. One person's borderland, recognized by the possibilities of mobility, daily diplomacy, information gathering, and chances to display sovereignty, could just as easily

be another's frontier, a peripheral place defined by danger and fear. Like the people who inhabited and traversed the area, the places that composed the borderland were not always what they seemed. Military installations like Frontenac and Stanwix were not generally barriers or sites of powerful garrisons but instead were usually nodes of diplomacy, trade, communication, and intelligence. Also like borderlanders, their meanings changed over time as war and peace influenced commerce, ushered in new personnel, and shifted areas of conflict.

Regardless of these seemingly exceptional traits, this study of the Lake Ontario borderland can perhaps serve to inform and direct future scholarship. Geographically, other regions could be identified with similar political foundations, principally the existence of multiple competing empires and relatively cohesive native polities. For example, Tecumseh's confederacy, which existed in the early part of the nineteenth century in the Ohio country, occupied a somewhat similar position in regard to its connections with British North America and the United States. Though it differed dramatically from the Iroquois League politically, the region it inhabited is ripe for a borderland study that could potentially identify a different variant of *petite politique*.⁴

More generally, subsequent borderland research should transcend an emphasis on only local worlds. Borderlands were not only created because of larger outside geopolitical rivalries but they continued to be interconnected to continental and global contests. This is not to say that borderland history should be conflated with imperial

⁴ Excellent work has already been done about the daily politics of the competition for "Old Northwest" but little if any uses an explicitly borderlands framework. For examples, see Reginald Horsman, "British Indian Policy in the Northwest, 1807-1812," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (1958): 51-66; Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Britain and the American Frontier, 1783-1815* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1975); White, *The Middle Ground*, chaps. 10-11.

history. On the contrary, the Six Nations Iroquois, as well as groups like the Mississauga and Kahnawake, often approached the region as outsiders who had to toil and adapt just as Europeans did. Outside political connections and affiliations significantly shaped the lives of groups and individuals. The definition of who was a borderlander needs to change to reflect this reality. The ability to move between polities and tap into knowledge and communication networks was not restricted to native people or groups seeking to subvert larger empires and confederacies. By enlarging studies to include historical actors such as military officers and colonial officials who were cognizant of the potentials of borderland politics, we will gain a much fuller understanding of how, when, and where borderlands existed. In addition to widening the pool of potential subjects, studies need to increasingly take into account political tactics. Taking an operational approach similar to this dissertation, surprising connections and conflicts can be revealed. As Alan Taylor's study of a later period reminds us, borderland conflict could be waged at the level of individual "hearts and minds."⁵

Lastly, it is hoped that this study has contributed to the ways borderlands are understood temporally and spatially. Within the period of this study borderland places, tactics, and personnel were constantly shifting. The building of new outposts, the creation of migrant communities, and the fortunes of war all served to continuously move zones of conflict and contact. Although tactically Iroquois foundations remained throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, Europeans introduced new weapons and agents of empire, including sailing ships and spies. The Lake Ontario borderlands discussed in this study represent just one fluid stage of political activity in a tumultuous region. Inter-

⁵ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 5.

imperial rivalry and league Iroquois mediation and survival existed on and around Lake Ontario well before 1726. It was during the period of this study, however, that the imperial competition intensified and ultimately ended, thanks in part to the exercise of power aided by the borderland. As discussed above, the borderland gave way to an uneasy frontier where the British confronted Pontiac's allies in war at Niagara and in peace at Oswego and the neutrality of the Six Nations remained relatively intact.

The American Revolution, occurring less than a decade after that conflict, would usher in major changes once again. New York divided itself between loyalist and patriot camps, imperialists and revolutionaries sought the support of French Canadians, and the Six Nations found itself divided between the pro-British Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Mohawk and their Oneida and Tuscarora kin who usually sided with the rebels. The political landscape of the Lake Ontario region during the Revolution would be incomprehensible to an observer from the 1750s in terms of the coalitions that were created, divided, and reformed. However, as in an earlier era, something of a borderland dynamic emerged that encompassed Iroquois homelands, opposing forts and outposts, and militarized boundaries.⁶ Although a variety of factors beside time set apart the Revolution and earlier imperial contests, as they had before, the combatants knew each other all too well. For instance, the Butler brothers would lead vicious raids on the very Mohawk Valley they had sought to protect some twenty years earlier.

During the 1777 siege of Fort Schuyler (formerly Stanwix) by the British and their Iroquois allies, an episode of *petite politique* occurred that hints at the enduring utility of the *petite politique* concept. In an effort to break the exhausting stalemate, a loyalist party under Walter Butler, son of John Butler, attempted to rally supporters in the

⁶ For the revolutionary borderlands in New York, see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, chap. 3.

Mohawk Valley who would in turn pressure the stubborn rebel garrison to surrender. The party was captured on August 15, and its members were sentenced to death by an Albany court-martial. Among the captured was Han Yost Schuyler, a man considered to be either “witless” or insane, who was “held in awe by Indians who knew him.” In addition, he was also fluent in Iroquois language and culture due to his marriage to an Oneida woman. Benedict Arnold struck a bargain with this prisoner whose clemency was urged by his family; in exchange for his life and the life of his brother, Schuyler would infiltrate the British camp and spread misinformation about a rapidly approaching large rebel army. The plan was augmented by two Oneida allied to the patriots who still maintained a relationship with Seneca warriors serving alongside the besieging British.

On August 22 the three agents “played their parts to perfection.” Schuyler, donning a shirt shot through with pistols to make it seem like he had just escaped Arnold, was able to infiltrate an Indian scouting party near the fort and disseminated a tale of an army approaching from the east with 2,000 men and 10 cannons. Likewise, the two Oneida gained access to the Iroquois camp and feigned distress at having observed the phony approaching force. They also added to the ruse by stating they had witnessed the defeat of an army under John Burgoyne. Schuyler’s story secured him a meeting with General Barry St. Leger, the British commander. While St. Leger and his officers conducted a council of war to discuss the intelligence, 200 Iroquois began to break camp. For Britain’s native allies news of an approaching rebel army was enough to cause them to forsake a long, costly siege. The departure of the Iroquois and the spreading rumor

soon triggered a chaotic retreat that included allied Indian pillaging and the abandonment of valuable supplies.⁷

Subterfuge, intercultural interactions, intra-Iroquois relationships, and the use of (false) information had lifted the siege. Arnold, Schuyler, and the two pro-patriot Oneida made use of native connections, successfully crossed between militarized boundaries, and employed intelligence to significantly alter a major military campaign without firing a single shot. A number of intersecting interests used maneuverings at the face-to-face level to achieve their political goals. Arnold and the rebels saved Fort Schuyler, which served to protect the Mohawk Valley from further major British and loyalist incursions, while the Oneida strengthened their alliance with the patriots and simultaneously removed their hostile kin from the region. Han Yost Schuyler, motivated by the very urgent aim of sparing the life of himself and his brother, became a geopolitical agent, albeit a self-interested one, like so many others before him.

⁷ Max M. Mintz, *Seeds of Empire: The American Revolutionary Conquest of the Iroquois* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 40-42; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 174-75.

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Figure A.1 "Birth of a Borderland," c. 1726



Figure A.2 “Cold War on Lake Ontario,” 1748-1754

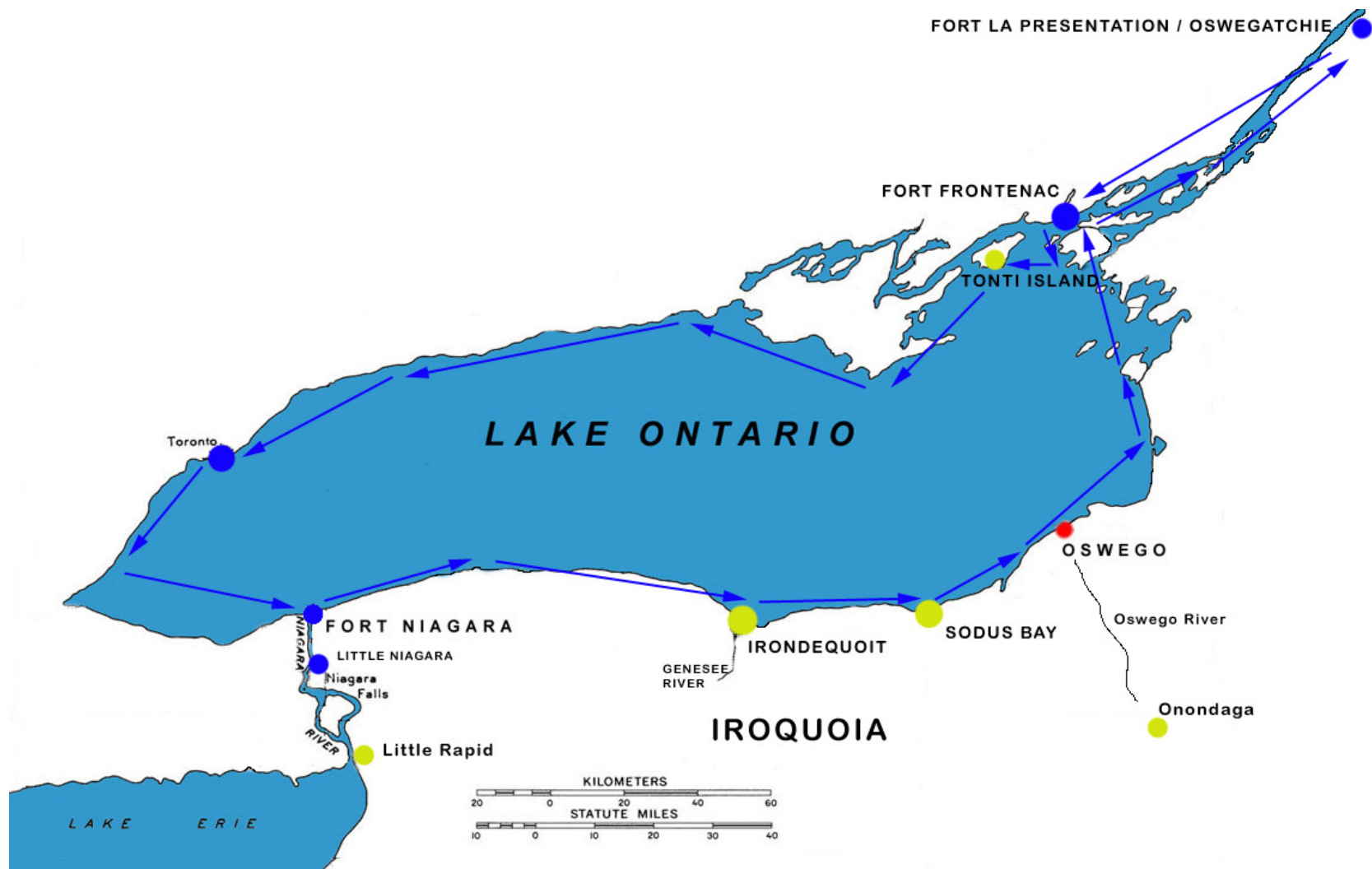


Figure A.3 François Picquet's 1751 Journey around Lake Ontario

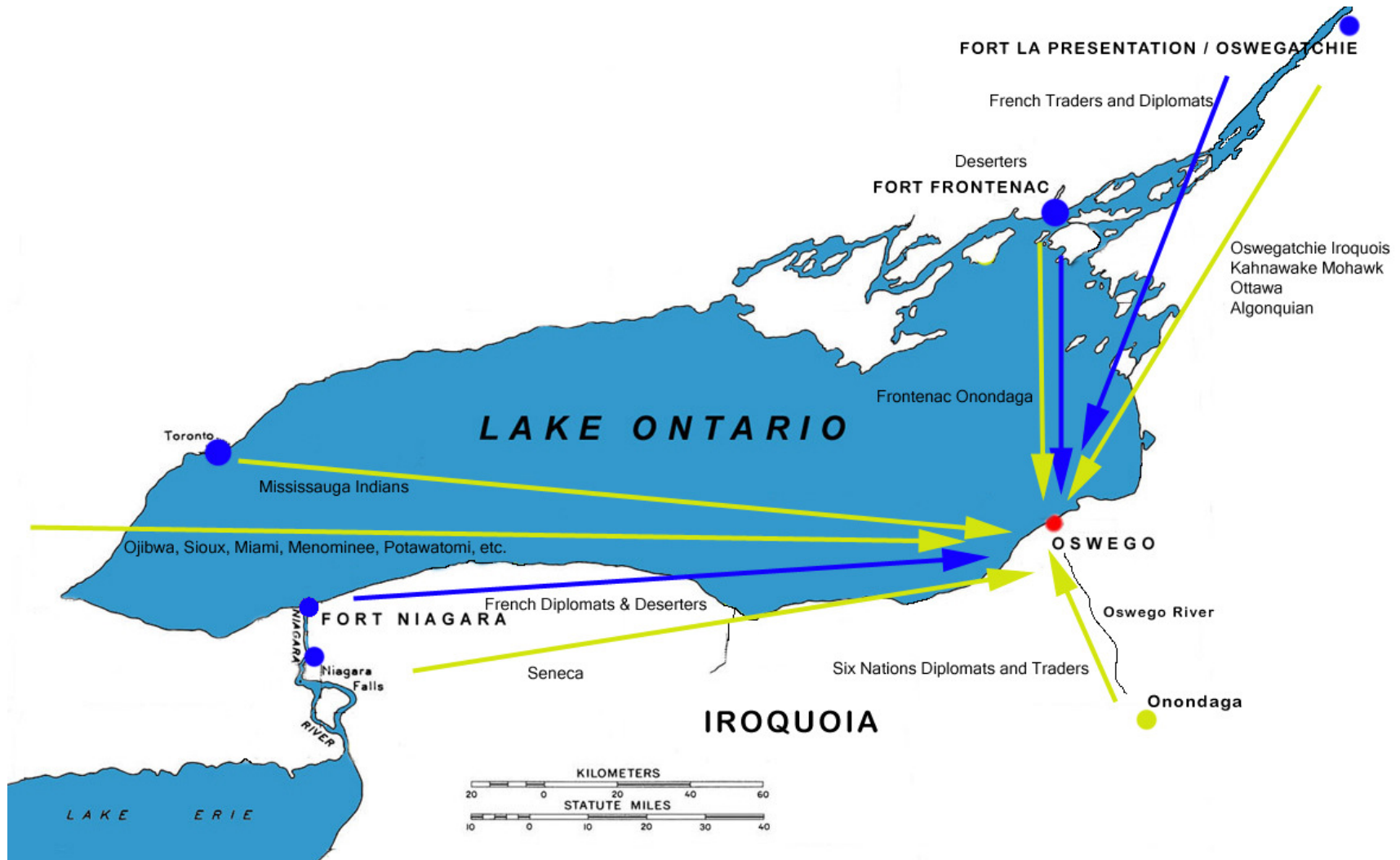


Figure A.4 John Lindesay & Oswego at the Center of the Lake Ontario World



Figure A.5 The Seven Years' War, c. 1756

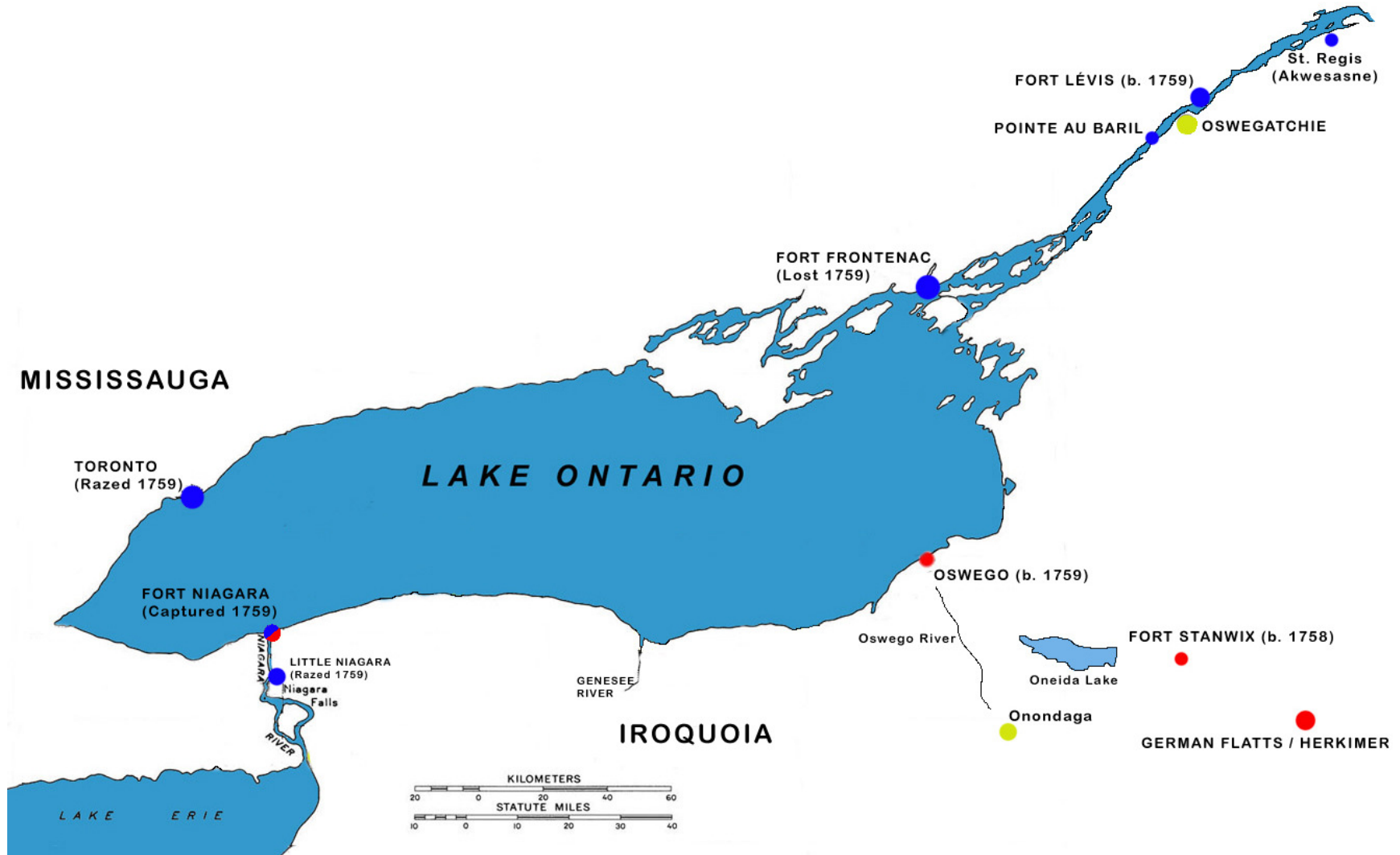


Figure A.6 The Seven Years' War, 1757-1759



Figure A.7 – The Oswego-Lévis Borderland, 1759-1760

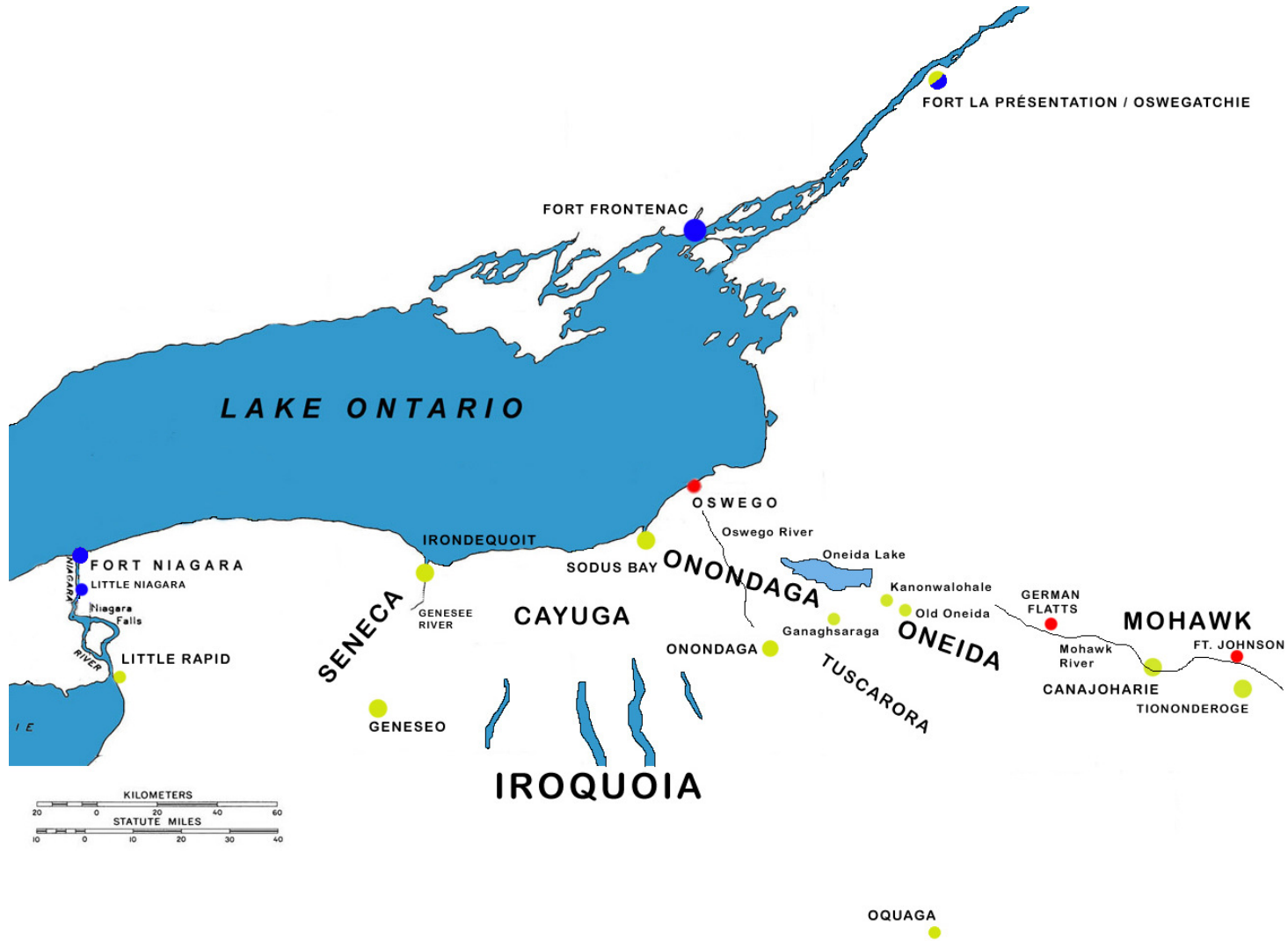


Figure A.8 Iroquoia, c. 1724-1760

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Greg Rogers was born in Niskayuna, New York and grew up in Defreestville outside of Albany and Troy. He graduated from Columbia High School in East Greenbush. He went on to graduate from the State University of New York at Geneseo in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a minor in History. After working for a few years for New York State, the Albany International Airport, and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, he resumed his studies at the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo. He graduated with a Master's in History in 2010. He is the author of an article, "The Curious 1653 Siege of Trois-Rivières: Warfare, Intercultural Alliance, and Historical Memory," which was published in the journal *Quebec Studies* in 2013. He is a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the French Colonial Historical Society, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, and Organization of American Historians. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in History from The University of Maine in August 2016.