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“No useless Mouth”: Iroquoian Food Diplomacy in the American Revolution

After 1660, writes historian Michael LaCombe, Englishmen depicted Native Americans as “tragic, hungry, and helpless victims.”¹ A century later, Anglo-Irishman William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, did otherwise. In describing the increased expense of Indian alliances in 1765 he complained, “All the Bull feasts ever given at Albany would not now draw down *Ten* Indians.”² LaCombe’s English writers portrayed powerless, starving Indians, while Johnson worried about powerful ones uninterested in feasting. Historians must reconcile these contrasting portrayals. This article examines several ideas about Native hunger—that of the starving, useless mouth, that of the supplicant using hunger as a metaphor, and that of the warrior capable of doing without European provisions—which emerged over more than a century of Native and non-Native diplomacy. It contends that British misunderstandings of Iroquois (otherwise known as Six Nations, or Haudenosaunee) hunger during the American Revolution enabled Indians to use food diplomacy to retain power during a period that historians have characterized as disastrous for Natives.³ Indians accepted provisions and then refused to do what their allies wished, they explicitly ignored their hunger, and most significantly, they destroyed their allies’ food.

¹ Michael A. LaCombe, *Political Gastronomy: Food and Authority in the English Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA, 2012), 169.

² William Johnson to Cadwallader Colden, Johnson Hall, May 29, 1765, in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander C. Flick (Albany, NY, 1925), 748 (hereafter *PSWJ*).

³ Although Haudenosaunee peoples today call themselves by this term, I use “Iroquois” and “Six Nations” interchangeably as the most commonly utilized titles of the time.

Food diplomacy—the distribution of or abstention from grain, meat, and alcohol to forge or maintain connections—was not unique to the Revolution. Scholars employ various terms to describe it: “food diplomacy,” “food aid,” “culinary diplomacy,” “political gastronomy,” and “gastrodiplomacy.”⁴ As food writer Mark Bittman observes about the term “foodie,” “proposing new words” can be “a fool’s game,” but the need to make extant phrases “more meaningful” remains because hunger has changed over time.⁵ “Food diplomacy” is an umbrella term that best fits the American Revolution. Food aid is distributed to ordinary people in reaction to a crisis. Gastrodiplomacy conjures images of statesmen negotiating over grand meals. Gastronomy is about “delicate eating,” while the word “culinary” invokes kitchens.⁶ Food diplomacy encompasses the reactive nature of food aid as well as preemptive distributions. It includes the alliance-making of government officials and maneuvering of traders and ordinary soldiers. Finally, the term emphasizes the non-gastronomic nature of eighteenth-century salt pork and boiled beef.

One might question whether Iroquois actions qualify as food diplomacy if Indian intentions are unclear; drawing on the idea of unintended consequences I contend that they count. Colonial documents produced by non-Natives recorded what Indians *did*—or rather, what

⁴ For definitions see Paul Rockower, “The State of Gastrodiplomacy,” *Public Diplomacy Magazine*, 11 (2014): 14.

For later periods see Kristin L. Ahlberg, “‘Machiavelli with a Heart’: The Johnson Administration’s Food for Peace Program in India, 1965-1966,” *Diplomatic History*, 31, no. 4 (2007): 665-701; Ahlberg, *Transplanting the Great Society: Lyndon Johnson and Food for Peace* (Columbia, MO, 2008); Alexander Poster, “The Gentle War: Famine Relief, Politics, and Privatization in Ethiopia, 1983-1986,” *Diplomatic History*, 36, no. 2 (2012): 399-425.

⁵ Mark Bittman, “Rethinking the Word ‘Foodie,’” *The New York Times*, June 24, 2014.

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, search under “gastronomy, *n.*,” and “culinary, *adj.*,” <http://oed.com>.

Europeans *said* they did—with varying biases, but they rarely said what Indians thought.⁷ Native American history describes Europeans unknowingly participating in Indian protocols; John Smith brokering an alliance with Powhatans during an adoption ceremony that he understood as a cancelled execution is just one example.⁸ Scholarship on security governance—a new type of policy that differs from conventional national and international approaches in its focus on multiple groups and individuals (as well as states), and its preference for horizontal rather than top-down policy-making and informal rather than formal governance structures—has explored the idea of unintended consequences. My analysis of food diplomacy draws on this idea of unintended consequences because the concept helpfully suggests the “fuzziness” of proving intention.⁹ Iroquois Indians managed to change British perceptions of Indian hunger; their actions were diplomatic, regardless of their intentions.

⁷ Daniel K. Richter, *Trade, Land, Power: The Struggle for Eastern North America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013), 42-43.

⁸ Frederic W. Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln, NE, 1997), 109-22.

⁹ Christopher Daase and Cornelius Friesendorf, eds., *Rethinking Security Governance: The Problem of Unintended Consequences* (Oxon, UK, 2010), 1, 3, 10-11.

Historians have interpreted the American Revolution as a disaster for Indians.¹⁰ Barbara Graymont and Colin Calloway both refer to the “shattered” Iroquois Confederacy.¹¹ Calloway has argued that during the Revolution starving Six Nations “became increasingly dependent” on British allies after 1779.¹² Alan Taylor has described how “the hungry year” of 1789 prompted Indian compromises with the United States in exchange for food aid.¹³ Work on other time

¹⁰ For standard works see Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY, 1972); Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815* (Norman, OK, 1987); Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815* (Toronto, ON, 1992); Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in North American Communities* (Cambridge, UK, 1995). For recent Iroquois history see Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York, NY, 2006); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Upper Canada, New York, and the Iroquois Six Nations, 1783-1815* (New York, NY, 2006); Kurt A. Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration, 1715-1754: An Iroquois Local Political Economy* (Gainesville, FL, 2008); David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (Lincoln, NE, 2009); Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701* (East Lansing, MI, 2010); Karim M. Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone: The Oneida Nation from the Revolution through the Era of Removal* (Amherst, MA, 2011). For an overview of current work see Edward Countryman, “Toward a Different Iroquois History,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69, no. 2 (2012): 347-60.

¹¹ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, viii; Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 108.

¹² Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 129.

¹³ Alan Taylor, “‘The Hungry Year’: 1789 on the Northern Border of Revolutionary America,” in *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Alessa Johns (New York, NY, 1999), 145-81.

periods has uncovered moments of Iroquois resilience.¹⁴ José Brandão and W. A. Starna state that the Iroquois, while embroiled in wars that placed them on either side of a conflict, established a policy of neutrality from 1701 onward, which allowed them to play the French and English against each other while maintaining a policy of nonaggression toward other Iroquois.¹⁵ Gilles Havard, taking a less optimistic but still positive approach, suggests that the 1701 treaties with the English at Albany and French at Montreal represented a “reorientation” of Iroquois diplomacy.¹⁶ Jon Parmenter argues that between 1676 and 1760 the Iroquois limited Iroquois-on-Iroquois violence, refusing to fight against their brethren when France and England warred.¹⁷ In contrast to this optimistic turn in scholarship that focuses on other periods of Iroquois history,

¹⁴ For declension narratives, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, NY, 2011), 96, 256; Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge, UK, 1997), 226, 267; Timothy J. Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York, NY, 2008), 192-93. For anti-declension narratives see Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 18, 318; Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 13; Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, xxix, xxxii-xxxiii.

¹⁵ J. A. Brandão and William A. Starna, “The Treaties of 1701: A Triumph of Iroquois Diplomacy,” *Ethnohistory*, 43, no. 2 (1996): 209-44.

¹⁶ Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott (Montreal and Kingston, QC, 2001), 180.

¹⁷ Jon Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies in Colonial North American Campaigns, 1676-1760,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 64, no. 1 (2007): 39-76, esp. 40.

most current work on the Revolution, in its focus on Indian land losses, continues to portray Iroquois experiences negatively.¹⁸

Scholarship on food, war, and hunger has resulted in various conclusions about power. Richard White's seminal concept of the "middle ground," or the process of creating mutually recognizable practices that were creatively misunderstood, has been used by Michael LaCombe to describe misunderstandings over foodstuffs that deteriorated into hunger and violence by 1660. Wayne Lee and John Grenier have observed that although by the seventeenth century deliberate starvation of noncombatants became uncommon in Western Europe, Europeans targeted Native American crops throughout the eighteenth century. Work by James Vernon suggests that people remained powerless to prevent hunger until the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Though historians should not overlook Iroquois deaths from starvation, it is necessary to reexamine their hunger after the destruction of their food caches in 1779.²⁰

A closer look at perceptions of Iroquois hunger after 1779 suggests Indians' continuing independence, and continuity as well as change. People had destroyed enemy foodstuffs since the colonial period, but they rarely targeted crops of *military allies*. War had always been a time for people to share the experience of hunger, but it is unusual for food diplomacy to include this

¹⁸ Karim Tiro's uncovering of wartime cooperation between British- and American-allied Iroquois is an exception Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*. For negative portrayals see Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*; Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 16, 267, 288-89.

¹⁹ White, *The Middle Ground*, xii-xiii; LaCombe, *Political Gastronomy*; Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (New York, NY, 2008), 188, 223; John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York, NY, 2005), 1; James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 2, 11.

²⁰ On deaths see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 108.

understanding of deprivation. Non-Native misunderstandings of Indian hunger were crucial to British Indian policy, Iroquois reactions to it (epitomized by their food destruction), and the articulation of U.S. Indian policy after the Revolution. Food diplomacy allowed for creative changes in Indians' interactions with Anglo-American officials. Natives used food to fight back. They were not passive receivers of food; they demanded it, supplied it, and destroyed it.

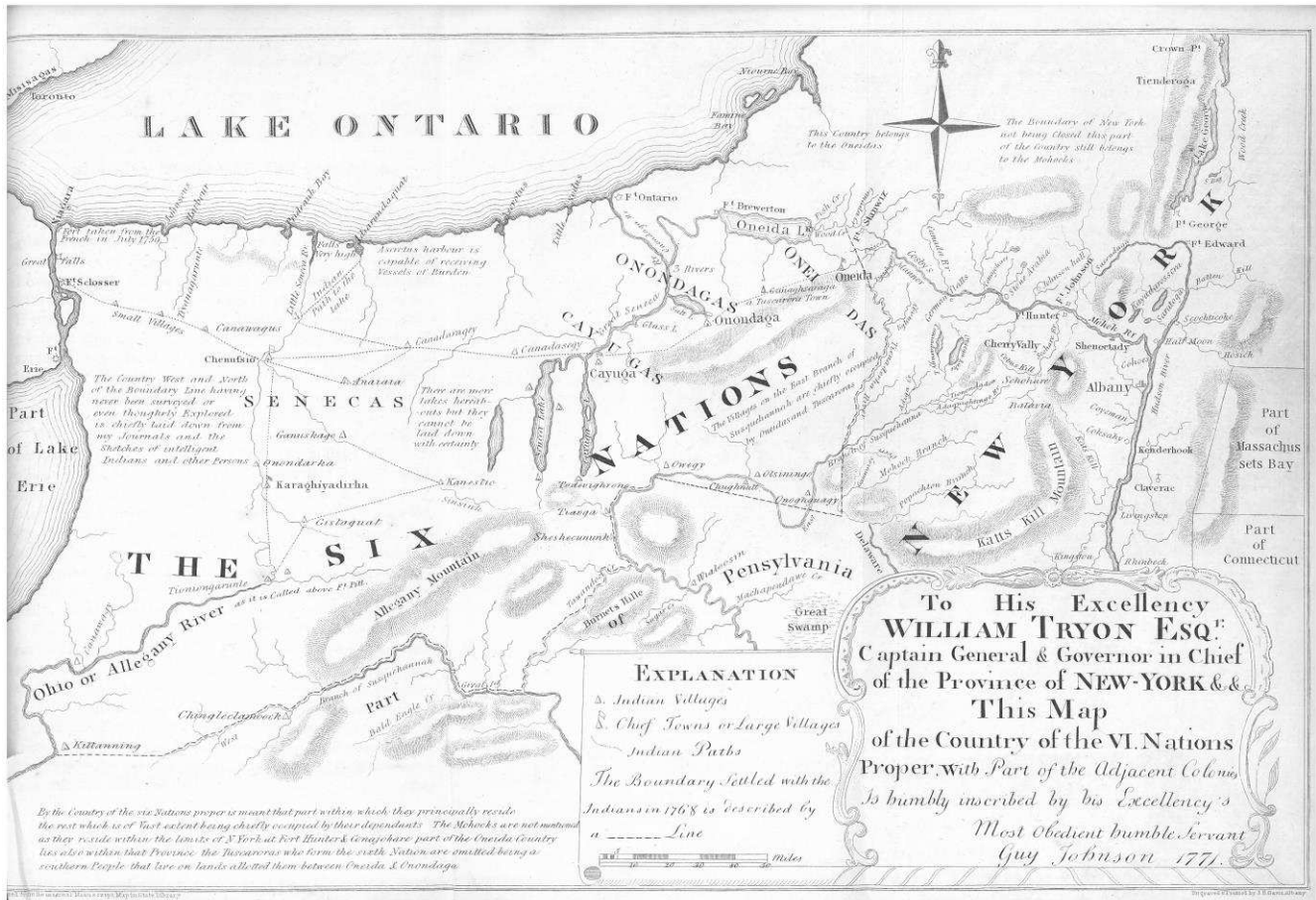


Figure 1. Guy Johnson, Map of the Six Nations, 1771, *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*, ed. E. B. O'Callaghan (Albany, NY, 1851), vol. 4, 1090. Courtesy of the Institute of Historical Research, London. The Mohawks and Tuscaroras are not pictured; the Tuscaroras lived between and below the Onondagas and Oneidas, and the Mohawks east of the Oneidas.

It is difficult to estimate Native population because officials sometimes omitted women and children in surveys, but by the 1760s between 6,400 and 10,000 Iroquois lived south of Lake

Ontario.²¹ The Mohawks occupied Canajoharie and Tiononderoge in the Mohawk Valley, and the Oneidas and Tuscaroras shared the Susquehanna Valley region and the area around Oneida Lake. The Cayugas and Onondagas dwelled west by the Finger Lakes, while the Senecas, the most numerous, inhabited the Genesee and Allegheny River valleys and the Seneca and Canandaigua lakes.²²

By this time Europeans and Iroquois observed several overlapping practices driven by the ideas of Gayaneshagowa, on which the Iroquois League was founded, and by Guswentá, which emerged after contact with Europeans. It is unclear when the League was founded (sometime before European conquest), whether it initially promoted war or defense, or whether early Iroquois distinguished between the League and Iroquois Confederacy. By the eighteenth century most people referred to the Iroquois Confederacy.²³ Deganawidah, the Iroquois prophet whose

²¹ For 6,400 see Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers*, 322n26. For 9,000 see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 108. For 10,000 see Report of Governor William Tryon, of the State of the Province of New-York, 1775, *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*, ed. E. B. O'Callaghan (Albany, NY, 1950), vol. 1, 518.

²² Colonel Guy Johnson, "A General Review of the Northern Confederacy and the Department for Indian Affairs," October 3, 1776, photostat 280, box 2, British Headquarters Papers (hereafter BHP), New York Public Library (hereafter NYPL); Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 5-6, 14, 55; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 10; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 4; Francis Jennings, "The Indians' Revolution," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (Dekalb, IL, 1976), 324.

²³ On the League versus the Confederacy see José Antonio Brandão, "'Your fyre shall burn no more': Iroquois Policy Towards New France and Her Native Allies to 1701," (PhD diss., York University, 1994), 130n116; José António Brandão, *"Your fyre shall burn no more": Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701* (Lincoln, NE, 1997), 29. On the shift to references to the Confederacy see William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman, OK, 1998), 4.

history is chronicled in several conflicting myths, created the Iroquois League on six principles expressed in three terms: peace, righteousness, and civil authority. Together, these comprise Gayaneshagowa, or the Great Law of Peace.²⁴ Gayaneshagowa provided the framework for the policies of nonaggression and neutrality, forest diplomacy, and mourning rituals that shaped everyday life. Gayaneshagowa allowed Indians to present a neutral face to the French and English while cultivating non-Native relationships, serving on military campaigns in ways that advanced Indian interests, limiting Iroquois deaths, and replacing dead kin with captives. Even when allied to competing European empires, Iroquois warriors agreed to “an ethic of mutual nonaggression” against other Iroquois.²⁵

Guswenta became an extension of Gayaneshagowa that applied to Europeans with whom the Iroquois wished to deal.²⁶ Guswenta acknowledged that Natives and non-Natives could maintain friendship and peace by not interfering in each other’s government, religion, or lives.²⁷ It enabled Iroquois and Europeans to create recognizable but differently interpreted practices—mourning ceremonies, treaty protocols including the smoking of peace pipes, the exchange of wampum, the use of metaphors, and the dispensation of alcohol, trade goods, and food goods—through forest and trade diplomacy. This process, which Richard White has called “the middle ground,” occurred when a power balance existed.²⁸ The majority of European-Iroquois

²⁴ Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 86n3, 95; Brandão, ““Your fyre shall burn no more,”” 130n116.

²⁵ See Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars,” 40 (quotation), 51, 46.

²⁶ Mt. Pleasant, “Independence for Whom?” 120.

²⁷ Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, “Guiding Principles: *Guswenta* and the Debate over Formal Schooling at Buffalo Creek, 1800-1811” in *Indian Subjects: Hemispheric Perspectives on the History of Indigenous Education*, ed. Brenda J. Child and Brian Klopotek (Santa Fe, NM, 2014), 115.

²⁸ White, *The Middle Ground*, xii-xiii.

negotiations adhered to forest diplomacy, which established Iroquois forms to which all parties adhered.²⁹ When Europeans met Indians they began with the condolence, or mourning ceremony, the metaphorical brightening of the chain of friendship, and a rehashing of past agreements. Only then did participants begin new business.³⁰ William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, made extensive preparations for each meeting, which lasted weeks, cost thousands of pounds, and demanded his concentration: “I have scarcely a Moment to myself,” he complained, during negotiations with the Iroquois at the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix.³¹ Although non-Natives expressed frustration at forest diplomacy’s slow pace, they practiced it anyway.³²

Once the mourning ceremony was completed and older agreements verified, officials and Iroquois could discuss new issues. In addition to meeting privately, people gave public speeches accompanied by wampum strings made from seashells, using larger belts for important

²⁹ Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 7.

³⁰ On meetings see Nancy L. Hagedorn, “‘With the Air and Gesture of an Orator’: Council Oratory, Translation and Cultural Mediation during Anglo-Iroquois Treaty Conference, 1690-1774,” in *New Trends in Translation and Cultural Identity*, ed. Micaela Muñoz-Calvo, Carmen Bueso-Gómez, and M. Ángeles Ruiz-Moneva (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2008), 35; Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 78-102. On the mourning ceremony see Daniel K. Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 40, no. 4 (1983): 528-59; Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992); Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), 79; Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars,” 39-76.

³¹ Sir William Johnson to General Thomas Gage, Johnson Hall, November 13, 1768, *PSWJ*, vol. 12, ed. Milton W. Hamilton (Albany, NY, 1957), 635.

³² Nancy L. Hagedorn, “‘A Friend to go between Them’: The Interpreter as Cultural Broker during Anglo-Iroquois Councils, 1740-70,” *Ethnohistory*, 35, no. 1 (1988): 68.

points.³³ Metaphors made speeches even more effective.³⁴ “We are all unanimously determined forever hereafter to hold fast the Covenant Chain, & live in peace & friendship with the English,” said wampum-holding Cayugas at a 1770 meeting.³⁵ During previous centuries the Iroquois described their socio-political bonds with the Dutch as an iron chain, which became a silver chain known as the Covenant Chain in their dealings with the British.³⁶ Regular exchanges of trade goods “polished” the Covenant Chain; they maintained alliances—but only because those goods were dispensed at meetings that also symbolically covered graves and unfolded at the pace that the Iroquois expected.

Trade diplomacy—transferring material goods from Europeans to Indians to cultivate and maintain alliances—also operated according to Indian customs. It allowed power to flow through the goods bestowed, but more importantly through the kin networks and personal relationships

³³ Michael K. Foster, “Another Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller (Syracuse, NY, 1985), 99-114; Hagedorn, “A Friend to go between Them,” 66-67; Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York, NY, 2004), 65, 74; Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 210.

³⁴ Jane T. Merritt, “Metaphor, Meaning, and Misunderstanding: Language and Power on the Pennsylvania Frontier,” in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 60-87.

³⁵ Conference with Cayugas, Johnson Hall, February 18, 1770, *PSWJ*, vol. 12, 778.

³⁶ For the Covenant Chain see Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, esp. 136-38. For Iroquois relationships with the Dutch see Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace*.

gift exchange created.³⁷ At the same time, however, trade goods created confusion because they could function in a gift-exchange economy or a commodity-exchange economy, which at times blurred together.³⁸ In a gift-exchange economy participants are repeatedly allied, interdependent, and of similar rank. Gifts are passed down, and participants cannot reject a gift. Although something is expected in return, the exchange *symbolizes* “something for nothing.” In a commodity-exchange economy people are temporarily allied, independent, and of different rank. Goods are individually owned and kept. The giving of goods precedes the acquisition of material wealth: it is a “something-for-something” trade.³⁹ Indians participated in a commodity-exchange economy by exchanging their furs for cash or trade goods. The Dutch took part in a gift-exchange economy by grudgingly giving trade goods as material necessities to maintain commerce; the French did so generously because their regulated fur trade meant Indians received lower prices for their furs, and needed encouragement to sell to them.⁴⁰ The English gave gifts to compete with the French. In 1755, one man wrote to William Johnson and said that because “the frenchman had given a great gift to the Indians,” he found himself “ashamed” and asked Johnson

³⁷ Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 3, 6.

³⁸ Seth Mallios, *The Deadly Politics of Giving: Exchange and Violence at Ajacan, Roanoke, and Jamestown* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2006), 25.

³⁹ Mallios, *The Deadly Politics of Giving*, 26-27, 29, 30 (“something-for-nothing”), 32 (“something-for-something”). See also Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (London, UK, 1990 [1950]), ix; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford, UK, 2000); Joseph M. Hall, Jr., *Zamumo’s Gifts: Indian-European Exchange in the Colonial Southeast* (Philadelphia, PA, 2009), 7; Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogeese’s Struggle for a New World* (Boston, MA, 1991), 28.

⁴⁰ Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace*, 125, 168, 178, 193; White, *The Middle Ground*, xxvii; Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 6

for “somewhat more presents.”⁴¹ The overlap between these two economies permitted the creative misunderstandings of the middle ground.

Food practices were part of this middle ground, but discussions of hunger must be read skeptically. Indians told Europeans they were hungry even when they were not because guests were supposed to exaggerate need so that hosts did not feel or appear proud.⁴² Although Seth Mallios, citing Marcel Mauss, suggests that food created a particularly important intercultural link in the seventeenth century, eighteenth-century Britons conflated trade and food goods.⁴³ When Mohawks “complained much of the want of provisions” Johnson recorded providing them with powder, not foodstuffs.⁴⁴ Another observer assumed that Onondagas viewed “Rum, pipes and Tobacco as provisions and must have them also.”⁴⁵ British records of Indian presents included food—pork and flour, corn and peas, rice and biscake, rum, Madeira, sugar, tea, butter, cattle, hams, and sheep—but they also included inedible blankets, gartering, knives, thread, and needles.⁴⁶ Britons may have used the word “presents” rather than payment to avoid having to pay Indians regularly.

Analyzing food goods and gifts is also difficult because it is hard to say which items were prestige items. Corn was central to Iroquois diets and symbolic practices, but sometimes Indians

⁴¹ Myndert Wempel to William Johnson, November 22, 1755, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, ed. James Sullivan (Albany, NY, 1922), 326.

⁴² Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia, PA, 2011), 90.

⁴³ Mallios, *The Deadly Politics of Giving*, 48.

⁴⁴ Johnson’s Account of Indian Expenses, March 1755 to October 1756, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, 567.

⁴⁵ From Normand Mac Leod to Sir William Johnson, Ontario, October 13, 1766, *PSWJ*, vol. 12, 208.

⁴⁶ Memorandum of Indian Presents, March 29, 1759, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, ed. James Sullivan (Albany, NY, 1921), 23.

valued commodities they could not produce themselves—such as alcohol. Alcohol has an extensive, separate historiography; it destroyed Indian communities, but also fit into Indian practices, such as dreaming.⁴⁷ Other prestige foods included the dog meat consumed in ceremonial feasts, and the flesh of Iroquois enemies.⁴⁸ Game animals conferred prestige, but so too did the nuts and berries women gathered.⁴⁹ Attitudes toward domesticated animals, and thus toward beef, pork, and mutton, varied. By the mid-eighteenth century, some Oneidas and Mohawks began raising cattle.⁵⁰ To a smaller extent Senecas also raised cattle, chickens, hogs, and horses.⁵¹ Non-Native attempts to change Indian husbandry yielded mixed reactions.⁵² Indians conceived of animals differently. Sometimes animals preceded colonists' imperial expansion (so Indians maimed them), sometimes they were status symbols for Indians interested in new forms of property (so they accumulated them for redistribution), and only sometimes

⁴⁷ Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca, NY, 1995); Maia Conrad, "Disorderly Drinking: Reconsidering Seventeenth-Century Iroquois Alcohol Abuse," *American Indian Quarterly*, 23, no. 3/4 (1999): 6; Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 310, 315-16, 345; Ann M. Carlos and Frank D. Lewis, *Commerce by a Frozen Sea: Native Americans and the European Fur Trade* (Philadelphia, PA, 2010), 12; Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 105, 130, 159, 162, 200.

⁴⁸ Elisabeth Tooker, "The Iroquois White Dog Sacrifice in the Latter Part of the Eighteenth Century," *Ethnohistory*, 12, no. 2 (1965): 129-40; Thomas S. Abler, "Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact Not Fiction," *Ethnohistory* 27, no. 4 (1980): 309-16.

⁴⁹ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 35.

⁵⁰ For the Oneidas, see Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 150. For the Mohawks see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 52.

⁵¹ MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 197-98; Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 278-79, 292.

⁵² Rebecca Kugel, *To Be the Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898* (East Lansing, MI, 1998), 4.

were they meat—and even then the animals went unfenced.⁵³ Although there is not much evidence that eighteenth-century Iroquois raised cattle to produce leather, it is clear that some Indians raised domesticated animals without intending to eat them.

In colonial America food diplomacy remained part of other practices. Food was connected to neutrality because of how Europeans competed for Iroquois allegiance. The English obsessed over what the French offered Indian allies. In 1757 a captured marine revealed that the French provided “as much feasting as the Indians please at going out, & on their Return” guns, clothing, and “as much provisions as they please, or can Eat.” This generosity was significant because according to the Frenchman, their provisions were “Scarce in general,” bordering on the “very Scarce.”⁵⁴ When the French possessed “neither Provisions nor presents” the English had an easier time convincing the Indians to ally with them.⁵⁵ French abilities to provide for Native allies even when they themselves went hungry was essential to colonial food diplomacy.

Six Nations, in addition to accepting European provisions, stored food as a precaution against total war, which allowed them to maintain their stance of nonaggression toward other Iroquois.⁵⁶ Indians grew maize, beans, and squash on commonly-owned land—individuals

⁵³ Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York, NY, 2004), esp. 6, 39, 185; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge, UK, 1999), 67-135; MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 198.

⁵⁴ Deposition of Jean Nerban, June 27, 1757, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, 718.

⁵⁵ John Appy to Robert Wood, Albany, July 2, 1758, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, 870.

⁵⁶ For Iroquois foodways see Robert W. Venables, “‘Faithful Allies of the King’: The Crown’s Haudenosaunee Allies in the Revolutionary Struggle for New York,” in *The Other Loyalists: Ordinary People, Royalism, and the Revolution in the Middle Colonies, 1763-1787*, ed. Joseph S. Tiedemann, Eugene R. Fingerhut, and Robert W. Venables (Albany, NY, 2009), 136; Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 11, 203; Nancy

claimed ownership of crops, but the land itself belonged to matrilineal clans. Women produced most foodstuffs. Some Iroquois settlement—especially among Senecas—was dispersed, creating multiple “edge areas” that fostered healthy habitats for deer and turkeys, and growing conditions for berries.⁵⁷ During times of famine Indians consumed bark from elm and basswood trees, birds, boiled bones, dogs, eels, mussels, muskrats, and rotten meat.⁵⁸ After Jacques-René de Brisay, Marquis de Denonville’s 1687 attack against the Iroquois, in which the French burned Seneca villages and claimed to have destroyed 1,200,000 bushels of stored and standing corn, the Senecas dispersed. Warriors moved into the woods while sending the “homeless and starving” to protected Indian villages: Mohawks went to live with Oneidas, and Senecas with Cayugas and Onondagas. Scholar William Fenton suggested that this decision meant that “everyone shared the hardships,” but this sharing took place among Indians and not Europeans.⁵⁹

Shoemaker, “Kateri Tekakwitha’s Tortuous Path to Sainthood,” in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York, NY, 1995), 65; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 178, 180; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, MD, 1992), 39; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 16-17; Jane Mt. Pleasant and Robert F. Burt, “Estimating Productivity of Traditional Iroquoian Cropping Systems from Field Experiments and Historical Literature,” *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 30, no. 1 (2010): 52-79.

⁵⁷ Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 44-45 (for gender divisions), 211 (for edge areas), 221-22 (for communal agriculture). For crop yields see Jane Mt. Pleasant, “The Paradox of Plows and Productivity: An Agronomic Comparison of Cereal Grain Production under Iroquois Hoe Culture and European Plow Culture in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Agricultural History*, 85, no. 4 (2011): 462.

⁵⁸ Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 45, 293.

⁵⁹ For the amount of corn destroyed see Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace*, 27. For Indian dispersal see Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 259.

Indians remained self-sufficient during eighteenth-century times of scarcity. During famine in 1741-42 Senecas skipped European meetings at Montreal and Pennsylvania, where food supplies would have been plentiful.⁶⁰ In 1758 an Oneida explained that even though French soldiers experienced “Greatt want of provisions,” Indian women and children were eating stored corn, which male warriors would carry on war expeditions.⁶¹ “Women of the Six Nations . . . provide our Warriors with Provisions when they go abroad,” even when warriors fought alongside Europeans, explained the Iroquois.⁶² When Europeans gave rations to warriors, it was not because Indians needed them.

Eighteenth-century food diplomacy’s connection to forest and trade diplomacy was evident in distributions of edible goods to visitors, treaty participants, and needy villagers. Food proved essential before, during, and after meetings. Indians expected food and alcohol, which they referred to as “kettles” and “staffs” respectively, along the route to a treaty.⁶³ As soon as a meeting was scheduled, Johnson received inquiries about “the Quantity of Provisions [he] would require.”⁶⁴ After the greeting ceremonies and condolence speeches, treaty attendees consumed a “nourishing meal” and went to bed, rather than beginning discussions. Sometime Indians provided important Anglo-American newcomers with Indian names, expecting reciprocity in a donation of alcohol, provisions, and tobacco.⁶⁵ Food consumption helped slow the pace to a

⁶⁰ Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 82.

⁶¹ George Croghan to Sir William Johnson, Fort Herkimer, March 18-25, 1758, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, 791-92.

⁶² Proceedings at a Meeting & Treaty held with the Six Nations at Johnson Hall, April 25, 1762, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 707-8.

⁶³ Laurier Turgeon, “The Tale of the Kettle: Odyssey of an Intercultural Object,” *Ethnohistory*, 44 (1997): 1-29.

⁶⁴ Thomas Gage to William Johnson, New York, February 10, 1766, *PSWJ*, vol. 12, 15.

⁶⁵ Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 86-87.

speed that Indians approved. After meetings Iroquois expected food for the homeward journey, along with generous dispensations of trade goods.⁶⁶ After meeting Tuscaroras in September 1767, for instance, Johnson gave them some money and “Provisions to carry them home.”⁶⁷

In the 1750s Johnson provisioned people before, during, and after treaties, and also gave food to visitors at his New York home (Johnson Hall), to warriors for military expeditions, and to villages in need of corn when war disrupted hunting and planting.⁶⁸ These distributions dovetailed with Indians’ “one dish and one spoon” (sometimes, “eating out of one dish,” or “the same dish”) metaphor, which changed over time. Before 1701, the phrase signified war: enemies boiled each other in kettles. Afterward, the metaphor shifted to a peacetime one of eating together during joint hunts and war and became a symbolic way to describe commonly-held hunting territory. When the common dish was empty, everyone went hungry. The one dish became an objective of peace as well as a foundation of it.⁶⁹ As part of forest diplomacy this trope made its way into the speeches Europeans made as well as into the actions they took to cultivate alliances.

Food goods, like trade goods, were sometimes part of a gift-exchange economy, and at other times part of a commodity-exchange economy. On the commodity-exchange front, Onondagas in the 1750s received provisions for providing Johnson with intelligence about the

⁶⁶ Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, xliii, 145, 155, 168.

⁶⁷ Journal of Indian Affairs, Johnson Hall, September 6-26, 1767, *PSWJ*, vol. 12, 362.

⁶⁸ MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 67.

⁶⁹ Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal*, 147, 149; Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis, 2008), xl, xli, 3-4.

French. Spies received provisions, powder, and shot for their services.⁷⁰ Johnson gave Mohawks “cash for a feast” because those Indians were “going to War” against the French.⁷¹ For the most part the English treated food as part of a gift-exchange commodity by abiding by Indian notions of distribution. “Indians will not be content” with provisions “according to any certain allowance but will require it as often as hungry,” wrote Johnson in 1764.⁷² The state of British supplies had to be of secondary importance. In March 1760 although Johnson worried about his dwindling stores, he fed Indians anyway and wrote to Jeffery Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in North America, requesting more provisions.⁷³ That winter Mohawks had been “supplied with Provisions from Fort Herkheimer,” and Oneidas “fed the whole Winter at Fort Stanwix.”⁷⁴ Indians were not to be denied food.

Pre-Revolutionary food diplomacy, bound up in the policy of neutrality and in forest and trade diplomacy, reveals two kinds of Indians in the colonial records: hungry Indians and self-sufficient ones. These conflicting ideas stretched back at least to descriptions of Indians in the 1590s.⁷⁵ Self-sufficient mid-eighteenth-century Iroquois provisioned warriors and women with their own stored corn. Hungry Indians accepted food aid from Britons, but in keeping with their own diplomacy required it in unfixed quantities. Rather than offering a definitive assessment of

⁷⁰ Johnson’s Account of Indian Expenses, March 1755 to October 1756, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, 567.

⁷¹ Johnson’s Account of Indian Expenses, November 1758 to December 1759, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 170.

⁷² William Johnson to Henry Bouquet, German Flatts, June 18, 1764,” *PSWJ*, vol. 4, 451.

⁷³ [William Johnson] to Jeffery Amherst, Fort Johnson, March 24, 1760, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 201.

⁷⁴ Thomas Gage to William Johnson, Albany, April 13, 1760, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 219.

⁷⁵ Rachel B. Herrmann, “The ‘tragicall historie’: Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 68, no. 1 (2011): 69.

pre-Revolutionary Indian eating habits, it is more productive to conclude that these ideas suggest two strands of European perceptions. On the one hand, British officials including Johnson feared Indians' enormous appetites. In 1765 he could complain that all the previous decades' feasts at Albany would be insufficient to convince the Iroquois to fight for the British.⁷⁶ On the other hand, Britons found Indians not as hungry as they seemed. Thus in 1758 when Oneidas and Tuscaroras came to see Johnson "in a Starving Condition" because their crops had failed, Johnson gave them cash to purchase provisions rather than feed them immediately.⁷⁷ When he fed Mohawks in 1760 he justified the decision by citing the destruction of their corn, but he also critiqued their "Habit of Idleness," which he said prevented farming.⁷⁸

By the 1760s a combination of competing empires, imperial agents fighting with politicians, and land hunger undermined forest and trade diplomacy and the Iroquois policy of neutrality, allowing food to rise in importance. The Seven Years' War (1754-1763) and the conflict known as Pontiac's War (1763-1766) changed Indian affairs because of declining French influence and shifting British policies regarding trade.⁷⁹ By the Seven Years' War's end the British claimed land around the Great Lakes, the Ohio Valley, and present-day Canada. French

⁷⁶ William Johnson to Cadwallader Colden, Johnson Hall, May 29, 1765, *PSWJ*, vol. 4, 748.

⁷⁷ Johnson's Account of Indian Expenses, November 1758 to December 1759, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 152.

⁷⁸ William Johnson to Thomas Gage, Fort Johnson, April 8, 1760, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 218.

⁷⁹ For the Seven Years' War see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, 2001); Matt Schumann and Karl Schweizer, *The Seven Years War: A Transatlantic History* (New York, 2008); William Earl Weeks, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, vol. 1 (New York, 2013), esp. 4-7. For the conflict called Pontiac's War, see Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire* (Baltimore, MD, 2002), esp. 5.

and British presents had ensured Iroquois neutrality.⁸⁰ During the war British gifts increased in quantity and frequency while French officials' inabilities to cooperate with each other, combined with austerity measures from Versailles, impeded French trade diplomacy.⁸¹ By 1757 most Natives refused to assist the French, and at the same time the French had become more cautious about employing them.⁸²

Changes in fur availability led to less effective British trade diplomacy. Scholars do not agree on which furs were in decline; some suggest that beaver, deer, and otter populations dropped as early as 1670.⁸³ José Brandão and Gilles Havard concur that it is difficult to estimate seventeenth-century beaver numbers because of Indian tendencies to exaggerate their poverty.⁸⁴ Skins of smaller animals—"raccoons," "otter[s]," "Musquashes" (muskrats), and "Cats"—do appear for sale in the Johnson papers, but Johnson also continued to record sales of beaver and deerskins.⁸⁵ What *is* clear, even if precise numbers for animals remain elusive, is that the *trade*

⁸⁰ Jon Parmenter and Mark Power Robison, "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 (2007): esp. 169-70.

⁸¹ MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 67; Christian Ayne Crouch, *Nobility Lost: French and Canadian Martial Cultures, Indians, and the End of New France* (Ithaca, NY, 2014), 19.

⁸² Taylor, *American Colonies*, 430; Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 87-91.

⁸³ Conrad, "Disorderly Drinking," 8; Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal*, 50.

⁸⁴ Brandão, "Your fyre shall burn no more," 69, 72, 78, 85-88, 120; Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal*, 50, 146.

⁸⁵ D. S., Articles of Agreement, April 26, 1765, *PSWJ*, vol. 12, 726. See also Sir William Johnson, Indian Trade Regulations at Fort Pitt, [c. September 1761], *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 530-2.

changed, as did Indian hunting habits.⁸⁶ Seneca hunting transitioned from beaver to white-tailed deer before 1750.⁸⁷ In 1762 Mohawks further east reported that deer were scarce.⁸⁸ Transforming access to deerskins disrupted gender divisions in Native communities, shifting power from the sachems in charge of hunting and the women who had once prepared skins to younger warriors.⁸⁹ The Iroquois overhunted, and Natives struggled to control the value of the furs they exchanged.⁹⁰ Strategically, Britons should have increased their gift-giving practices during this time period, in keeping with the tenets of the gift-exchange economy, but one system of exchange usually prevailed.⁹¹

Mid-eighteenth-century diplomacy became difficult to practice because some English officials began to insist that trade and food goods constituted part of a commodity-exchange economy. Those who wished to continue distributions in keeping with a gift-exchange economy could not do so once goods became elusive. Johnson received complaints about the Indians who drew “from us their Constant Maintenance with Presents and arms, and amunition, without doing any Service for them.”⁹² In 1761 he described Indians’ grievances about “the dearness of

⁸⁶ MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 195; Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York, NY, 1994), 179; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 68, 181.

⁸⁷ Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 278, 299.

⁸⁸ John Lottridge to [William Johnson], Montreal, December 12, 1762, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 970.

⁸⁹ Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 11; Claudio Saunt, “‘Domestick . . . Quiet being broke’: Gender Conflict among Creek Indians in the Eighteenth Century,” in Cayton and Teute, *Contact Points*, 151-74, esp. 157.

⁹⁰ Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 7.

⁹¹ Mallios, *The Deadly Politics of Giving*, 25.

⁹² Lord Loudoun to Sir William Johnson, Halifax, July 1, 1757, *PSWJ*, vol. 2, 725-26.

goods” and traders’ corruption.⁹³ There are also indications that food diplomacy was in flux. In 1762 Oneida speaker Conoghquieson complained, “if we were Starving with Hunger . . . they will not give Us a Morsel of Any thing; a Usage very different from What we had Reason to Expect.” This point was so important that he concluded with a long belt of wampum, rather than a smaller string.⁹⁴ Something had to be done. With the approval of Jeffery Amherst, who was by then Governor-General of British North America, Johnson issued a number of reforms. Like the French before him, he limited commerce to British posts, appointed commissaries, and fixed fur prices from Pennsylvania to present-day Ohio.⁹⁵ Word of his changes spread to Detroit, Niagara, and Oswego. To a point, the atmosphere improved.

In the main, however, British trade good diplomacy deteriorated because Amherst not only approved Johnson’s trade regulations, but also cut distributions of gunpowder, and the practice of gift-giving and hosting Indians—thus provoking the conflict that came to be known as Pontiac’s War.⁹⁶ In August 1761 Amherst wrote to Johnson and instructed him “to avoid all presents in future.”⁹⁷ Although Johnson agreed with the idea of restricting gift-giving, he worried

⁹³ William Johnson to Henry Bouquet, Detroit, September 18, 1761, f. 170, Add. MS 21655, British Library (hereafter BL).

⁹⁴ Proceedings at a Meeting & Treaty held with the Six Nations at Johnson Hall, April 25, 1762, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 707.

⁹⁵ Sir William Johnson, Regulations for the trade at Fort Pitt, [N.D.], ff. 283-84; Sir William Johnson, Regulations for the trade at Sandusky, [N.D.], f. 285; Sir William Johnson, Regulations for the trade at Miamies, [N.D.], f. 288, Add. MS 21655, BL.

⁹⁶ Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 3.

⁹⁷ Jeffery Amherst to Sir William Johnson, Albany, April 9, 1761, *PSWJ*, vol. 3, 515.

about changes to Indian diplomacy. When he objected, Amherst overruled him.⁹⁸ Historically, failure to reciprocate during an exchange usually led to violence.⁹⁹ True to form, Delawares, Hurons, Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Miamis, Mingos, Ojibwas, Ottawas, Piankashaws, Potawatomis, Senecas, Shawnees, Weas, and Wyandots seized every British post west of the Appalachians, three forts excepted. War ended in 1764, when most Indians made peace.¹⁰⁰

Afterwards, the future of trade diplomacy was uncertain. On the one hand, signs appeared that the customs of trade diplomacy could recover. Officials in North America, led by Johnson, tried to enforce land boundaries, regulate trade, resolve disputes, and assign Indian agents who could speak on behalf of the British Empire.¹⁰¹ Johnson resumed gift distributions.¹⁰² By 1764 the London Board of Trade accepted many of Johnson's reforms, and imperial agents implemented them following Pontiac's War.¹⁰³ In the early 1770s, Amherst's hated policies even drifted into disuse.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, concomitant events made the practice of trade diplomacy challenging. By 1768 Whitehall rejected Johnson's recommendations for trade; debt from the Seven Years' War made ministers cautious about allocating funds for Indian affairs. Johnson retained his position as Superintendent, and thus official management of Indian diplomacy, but the ministry allowed each individual colony to become responsible for regulating

⁹⁸ MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 189; Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 3, 174, 183; Colin G. Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (New York, 2007), 32; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 181.

⁹⁹ Mallios, *The Deadly Politics of Giving*, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America*, 34.

¹⁰¹ Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 177-78.

¹⁰² Taylor, *American Colonies*, 436.

¹⁰³ MacLeitch, "Sir William Johnson (1715-1774)," 95.

¹⁰⁴ Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 181.

trade.¹⁰⁵ Colonial governors proved more interested in acquiring Indian land than in prosecuting land grabbers.¹⁰⁶ At a council at Johnson Hall in July 1774, in the midst of trying to convince Iroquois leaders to limit violence against land-hungry colonists, William Johnson died. Although Guy Johnson, William Johnson's cousin and son-in-law, smoothed things over by agreeing to take over Sir William's job, Sir William's diplomacy was irreplaceable.¹⁰⁷

Pre-Revolutionary food practices blended with forest diplomacy, trade diplomacy, neutrality, and Iroquois nonaggression, from the condolence ceremony to the distribution of trade goods to the gifting of symbolic consumable commodities. By the 1760s the idea of self-sufficient Indians existed alongside the idea of dependent, hungry Indians. Food could be a special commodity, as evidenced by the huge quantities that officials distributed as part of forest diplomacy. Yet so too could officials claim that Indians did not depend on Europeans for food, and that for military expeditions especially, clan matrons remained responsible for growing and distributing the provisions that Indian warriors would consume while fighting with European allies.

In the decade before the Revolution each of these diplomatic practices and policies were thrown into question by changing hunting practices, land battles, and conflicts over trade goods. Once the Revolution began, British ships sank or fell into the hands of the colonists, making importation of goods difficult. Americans, obviously, obtained fewer trade goods from Britain,

¹⁰⁵ MacLeitch, "Sir William Johnson (1715-1774)," 98; Steele, *Warpaths*, 225.

¹⁰⁶ Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville, VA, 2009), 55-56; Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 21; Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 72.

and the Continental Congress's shortage of funds inhibited gift-giving.¹⁰⁸ Historians acknowledge that diplomacy was in flux by the 1770s. They also argue that once hostilities commenced, Britons and Americans rushed to secure Indian allegiances.¹⁰⁹ But because trade diplomacy was becoming less effective, they needed an additional way to do so. During the American Revolution the protocols of food diplomacy became crucial.

Early in the war Americans and Britons practiced the food diplomacy that Natives and non-Natives created together during the colonial period by providing food aid to Indian villages and hosting meetings with mourning ceremonies, feasts, and provisions before and after. Iroquois supplied their own warriors with food, refused to attack other Iroquois while helping their allies to burn crops and steal animals, and ensured the food security of Native noncombatants. During the later war years American campaigns forced the Iroquois from their homes, resulting in increased Indian demands for food. Some British officials wished to accommodate these requests, while others proved unwilling to feed what they characterized as “useless mouths.” These conflicting policies, which stemmed from confusion over Indian hunger, allowed Indians to create a food diplomacy that deviated from its colonial counterpart. Although aspects remained the same, Iroquoian food diplomacy began to change after 1779 in two ways: Natives challenged British perceptions of Indian hunger by refusing to eat, and they deprived allied soldiers of food by destroying plundered foodstuffs. These practices resulted in the unintended consequence of pushing Britons to provision Indians more generously than ever before.

¹⁰⁸ Venables, “Faithful Allies of the King,” 138.

¹⁰⁹ Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 44.

The British made the first move to partner with Indians. In 1774 they considered asking for Natives' assistance; they implemented that strategy in 1777 under the direction of new imperial secretary of state Lord George Germain.¹¹⁰ In 1775 the American Continental Congress created the Southern, Middle, and Northern Departments, the last of which took charge of Iroquois liaisons.¹¹¹ Most Oneida and half of the Tuscarora members sided with the Americans, and most Cayugas, Mohawks, Onondagas, and Senecas supported the British.

Americans and Britons both struggled to obtain provisions. Disagreements between the Continental Army, state troops, and militia made it difficult for Americans to regulate supply and distribution.¹¹² "Impassable" roads blocked provisions convoys.¹¹³ In 1778 storms destroyed Virginian mills, and the Hessian fly devoured Virginia and Maryland wheat before buzzing north to New York.¹¹⁴ Adulterated foodstuffs became common.¹¹⁵ During the Seven Years' War the

¹¹⁰ Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 44; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 87.

¹¹¹ James H. O'Donnell III, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville, TN, 1973), 22; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York, NY, 2007), 132.

¹¹² Martin, "A 'Most Undisciplined, Profligate Crew': Protest and Defiance in the Continental Ranks, 1776-1783," in *Arms and Independence: The Military Character of the American Revolution*, ed. R. Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, VA, 1984), 122-25; E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990).

¹¹³ Jeremiah Wadsworth to Henry Laurens, Philadelphia, September 29, 1778, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, vol. 14, ed. David R. Chestnutt and C. James Taylor (Columbia, SC, 1994), 369.

¹¹⁴ Brooke Hunter, "Creative Destruction: The Forgotten Legacy of the Hessian Fly," in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park, PA, 2006), 242-43.

¹¹⁵ *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin*, ed. James Kirby Martin, Second Edition (St. James, NY, 1999), 95; Thomas Wileman, deposition to John Potts, Philadelphia, February 18, 1778, photostat 948, box 4, BHP, NYPL.

British military had procured grain and animals from colonists, who now refused to supply their enemies.¹¹⁶ The British hesitated to plant crops near Indians' towns for fear of violating the 1768 Treaty of Stanwix.¹¹⁷ Northern food caches were "devoured by Caterpillars" in 1781.¹¹⁸ Whereas Americans complained of roads, British suppliers disagreed about the frequency and quantity of provisions to ship from England.¹¹⁹ Bread spoiled even when shipped through Cork, Ireland, arriving "bad, unfit for Use, mouldy & shipped in bags short of weight."¹²⁰

Although General Burgoyne had curtailed his use of Indians on the battlefield after his defeat at Saratoga, the autumn of 1777 and spring of 1778 witnessed an increase in British-allied Iroquois raids and guerilla warfare.¹²¹ These Indians consumed poorer provisions compared to British troops. Letters from the likes of Major John Butler, who worked with the Six Nations, revealed that the Indians tasted "very little" fresh meat, except "the heads, Offals, & feet" of beef "too poor to be issued to the Garrison." Fresh meat marked for the Indian Department went to the

¹¹⁶ Thomas Nixon to John Robinson, March 1, 1776, photostat 131, box 1, Extract of a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Dickson to Brigadier-General John Campbell, Manchack Fort, March 12, 1779, photostat 1820, box 8, BHP, NYPL.

¹¹⁷ Mason Bolton to Frederick Haldimand, Niagara, March 4, 1779, f. 96, Add. MS 21760, BL. In this instance Britons probably misunderstood Iroquois ideas about hospitality, which allowed allies and tenants to grow food on Indian lands. Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 107.

¹¹⁸ Frederick Haldimand to Guy Johnson, Quebec, July 22, 1781, f. 203, Add. MS 21767, BL.

¹¹⁹ John Robinson to General William Howe, Whitehall Treasury Chambers, June 24, 1776, photostat 220, box 2, John Robinson to General Sir William Howe, Whitehall, Treasury Chambers, September 25, 1777, photostat 678, box 3, BHP, NYPL.

¹²⁰ Mr. Gordon, Commissary at Corke, to John Robinson, August 20, 1776, photostat 249, BHP, box 2, NYPL.

¹²¹ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 156-57, 167-68.

garrison at Niagara instead.¹²² Mohawk Joseph Brant, who operated a group of Indians and Loyalists known as “Brant’s Volunteers,” had to scavenge at Niagara for rations for his unwaged warriors.¹²³ This fact is not surprising given the extent to which soldiers disliked and distrusted Indians: Butlers’ men requested that the phrase “*To Serve with the Indians*” be struck from the terms of their commissions.¹²⁴ Initially such inequalities did not cause problems because Gayaneshagowa privileged the preservation of Iroquois health and lives: Natives stored enough food in their villages to sustain other Indians, and clan matrons supplied warriors.

In keeping with the gift-exchange economy of pre-Revolutionary food diplomacy and the strand of British thought that feared hungry Indians, British officials continued to provide food because they assumed Indians needed it, but they also purchased provisions from Indians to cultivate alliances. In January 1778, 2,700 Native women and children came to Detroit, where they ate “all the Beef . . . in six or seven days.”¹²⁵ In one lieutenant’s return of provisions issued at Niagara, he voiced his astonishment “at the number of rations issued to the Indians.” Out of a total of 75,200, Indians and Rangers received the most, or 57,341 rations; the King’s (or 8th) Regiment was a distant second at 10,746.¹²⁶ Some of the beef came from the Indians; the same lieutenant had felt “obliged to buy up all the cattle the Indians had to spare,” to “keep the

¹²² John Butler to [Francis Le Maistre], Niagara, May 1, 1778, f. 27, Add. MS 21765, BL.

¹²³ John Butler to Frederick Haldimand, Niagara, December 1, 1778, f. 75, Add. MS 21765, BL; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 91.

¹²⁴ John Butler, memorial to Brigadier General Powell, Niagara, October 1, 1781, f. 224, Add. MS 21874, BL.

¹²⁵ Mason Bolton to [Sir Guy Carleton], Niagara, January 31, 1778, f. 5, Add. MS 21760, BL.

¹²⁶ Return of Provisions Issued at Niagara, February 8, 1779, f. 87, Add. MS 21760, BL.

Savages in good Temper.”¹²⁷ His use of the word “obliged” likely indicated that he purchased cattle from Indians to broker good relations by overpaying *and* overfeeding them. Later he reflected that had he refused, the Indians might have become “offended,” and “cou’d have joined the Rebels.”¹²⁸

Americans, meanwhile, made less nuanced overtures by describing their relationship with the British in terms of forest diplomacy, and asking the Iroquois to remain neutral. When colony representatives met the Iroquois in 1775 they explained that the British were “slip[ping] their hand into our pocket without asking,” taking “our charters or written civil constitutions . . . our plantations, our houses and goods,” as well as restricting American trade. In addition to listing complaints about taxation and restrictive acts, they described their relationship with the British as a disintegrating common dish: “If our people labour in the fields, they will not know who shall enjoy the crop. If they hunt in the Woods, it will be uncertain who shall taste the meat.” Britons refused to share, and colonists, they concluded, “cannot be sure whether they shall be permitted to eat drink and wear the fruits of their own labour.” The “old covenant chain which united our fathers and theirs” was rusted. Americans attempted to invoke Iroquois sympathy by portraying themselves as Indians did to the British. Although they had not yet declared independence, they nevertheless felt “necessitated to *rise*, and *forced* to fight.” They asked the Indians to maintain neutrality and “not join on either side.”¹²⁹ Later Indian speeches around 1776 indicate that these

¹²⁷ Mason Bolton to [Sir Guy Carleton], Niagara, January 31, 1778, f. 5, Add. MS 21760, BL.

¹²⁸ Mason Bolton to Sir Guy Carleton, Niagara, May 12, 1778, f. 18, Add. MS 21760, BL.

¹²⁹ A Speech To the Six Confederate nations Mohawks, Oneidas, Tuscarora’s, Onondage’s, Cayugae’s, Seneka’s. From the twelve United Colonies convened in Council at Philadelphia, July 18, 1775, ff. 3-4, 6, 7, folder 26, box 22, Philip Schuyler Papers (hereafter PSP), NYPL.

efforts remained subsidiary to Indian complaints about Americans' inadequate trade diplomacy.¹³⁰ Without sufficient financial backing, trade, or food goods, American diplomacy was less persuasive.¹³¹

By January 1776 the Americans distributed actual foodstuffs, and by August General Philip Schuyler noted the "incredible" costs of the rum and provisions.¹³² One American Indian commissioner recorded providing Mohawks with victuals enough for 30 people, "11 Cayugoes and 1 Onondaga" with three meals each, and 120 unnamed Indians with 36 pounds of bacon, "2 Fat Swine," and "70 Loaves of Bread." These allocations are difficult to interpret because they appear in an accounts list, without additional commentary. By March 1778, 300 to 400 Iroquois warriors joined the Continental service, and Albany commissioners resolved "to furnish" them with "provisions from Time to Time."¹³³ Contemporary provisions lists indicate that Indians received rum, beef, and bread after returning from Washington's camp.¹³⁴ This decision, like Britons' decision to provision Iroquois women and children, was likely a symbolic gesture rather than a full supply of food on which Indians depended.

¹³⁰ [Speech by Abraham of the Lower Mohawk Castle], May 2, 1776, in unlabeled bound journal, box 22, PSP, NYPL.

¹³¹ Calloway, *Crown and Calumet*, 6; Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 46.

¹³² Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 47.

¹³³ [Volkert Douw] to Jellis Fonda, Caughnawaga, January 6, 1776, folder 63, box 22, PSP, NYPL; At a Board of Commissioners of Indian Affairs of the Northern Department held at Albany, April 13, 1778, folder 57, box 23, PSP, NYPL.

¹³⁴ General Schuyler Volkert P. Douw and the other Commissioners of Indian Affairs to Jelles Fonda, June 1778 to March 1780, folder 27, box 23, PSP, NYPL.

The Iroquois maintained neutrality, requested edible goods, and supplied British and American troops with provisions. American-allied Iroquois provided food to British-allied Iroquois, despite American protests—suggesting the continuing importance of Gayaneshagowa and nonaggression. At a 1778 meeting American-allied Oneidas told Americans that although “It is probable that there are some . . . who are inimical to us and who would wish to give Information” to British Major John Butler, they would “cause them to be supplied with provisions” and rum for “the Journey to Niagara.”¹³⁵ Six Nations also appealed to officials who believed that they needed to purchase Indians’ allegiance as part of a commodity-exchange economy by accepting food as payment, and reciprocating payments with their own distributions of provisions. In September 1778, a group of British-allied Onondagas desired “provision to carry on the Service.” Onondagas wanted food and ammunition sent to Lake Ontario because it was “nearest to the Seneca & 6 Nations Country.”¹³⁶ They stated their willingness to fight, and then asked for the sustenance to do so.

Although Iroquois women’s control of provisions had decreased before the Revolution (in part because of William Johnson’s efforts to become the main distributor), they remained key suppliers.¹³⁷ American-allied Oneida villages were well-stocked enough in 1777 that those Indians provisioned American soldiers at Valley Forge, and could likely continue to provide for

¹³⁵ At a Meeting of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department with a Number of Sachems and Warriors of the Six Nations for the purpose of holding a conference pursuant to the orders of Congress, held at John’s-Town, March 7, 1778, folder 57, box 23, PSP, NYPL.

¹³⁶ Daniel Claus to Frederick Haldimand, Montreal, September 15, 1778, f. 1, Add. MS 21774, BL.

¹³⁷ MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 22, 39, 96, 143.

their own warriors.¹³⁸ Iroquois oral histories today tell the story of Oneida Polly Cooper, who went with other Iroquois to feed the Continental Army at Valley Forge in 1777-78. Cooper supposedly showed the Americans how to prepare corn for soup, and eventually received a bonnet, hat, and shawl from Martha Washington as thanks.¹³⁹

At other times, Indians made it difficult for non-Natives to obtain food from them. One man's journal lamented that while on the march with 300 Senecas and Delawares, he "many a time had very hungry times." He complained about having to pay "a hard dollar for 4 small Indian cakes, and sometimes could not get it at all." Repeatedly, he went "into a wigwam and waited for a Hommany Kettle with the greatest impatience to get a trifle and was often disappointed."¹⁴⁰ Though Americans and Britons provided food to Indians, Indians did not always reciprocate. Sometimes Natives charged what the British considered high prices for their food. In the case of the kettle it appears that there was hominy, given that the white soldier waited for it, so it is curious that the food was not divided evenly. Perhaps this incident was exceptional, or perhaps Native women considered it strange that soldiers did not receive provisions from their own wives.

One other aspect of food-related events before 1779 is unusual. Heretofore Iroquois Indians avoided attacking indigenous food stores.¹⁴¹ During the Revolution the British

¹³⁸ Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 205.

¹³⁹ Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 39; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 205. Tiro's book contains a good discussion about the reliability of the Cooper story.

¹⁴⁰ May 2, [1778], Extract from the Journal of Richard McGinnis, vol. IV, William A. Smy Collection, the Butler Papers, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (hereafter LAC).

¹⁴¹ Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 47-53.

encouraged Native allies to pilfer cattle, horses, and grain from American farms and supply wagons.¹⁴² In 1777, however, New Yorkers and Oneida Indians attacked Mohawk crops at Canajoharie, marking a departure from Iroquois nonaggression.¹⁴³ As historians have suggested, this moment was exceptional.¹⁴⁴ Even in this instance Oneidas waited until Mohawks left Canajoharie; they attacked crops but not people.

The use of food to wage war and form alliances set significant precedents by 1779. Until that time British food diplomacy involved giving Indians symbolic food gifts that did not comprise the majority of their diets—even when offered frequently to reaffirm fidelity. Indians used food to talk to each other: British-allied Iroquois, by providing it to Indians allied with the revolutionary forces, and American-allied Iroquois by breaking nonaggression agreements and attacking the crops and animals of Britain's Iroquois allies. Indians had proved capable of controlling supply, demanding food when they felt justified, and stealing it, when necessary. More important was that by 1779 everyone knew that the destruction of crops and thefts of domesticated animals caused chaos.

In 1779 Americans invaded Iroquoia, ushering in crop and animal scarcities, Indian hunger, and an unexpected change in food diplomacy. British officials responded by sending aid into individual villages and hosting Indians at forts, as they had previously. In contrast to earlier

¹⁴² See John Butler to Captain William Caldwell, Tioga, July 12, 1778, f. 9, Add. MS 21771, BL.

¹⁴³ Depositions against persons stealing from the Canajohary Indian Castle, taken at Palatine, New York, Tryon County, before Jelles Fonda, Justice of the Peace, April 20, 1778 [enclosed in Jelles Fonda to the Honorable Board of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Palatine, April 21, 1778], folder 57, box 23, PSP, NYPL.

¹⁴⁴ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 142-47; Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 49.

decades military leaders increased the rations they provided to warriors in response to Indian demands, but at the same time Indians professed themselves uninterested in addressing their hunger. Indians also curtailed their allies' access to food. These changes underscore the need to question non-Native portrayals of Indian hunger, dependency, and powerlessness during and after the American Revolution.

Britons described Indians as food insecure even before the attack. John Butler observed that opportunities to raid for cattle had decreased while Indian consumption of their own cattle had increased. To add to these issues, the Indians had not planted “the usual quantity” of “corn, pulse, and things of that kind” because a combination of military service and colonial attacks had depleted their crops.¹⁴⁵ Scattered settlement patterns yielded large quantities of stored corn, but an American attack could still prove problematic because of the challenge of transporting corn to those who needed it. The combination of depleted corn and cattle set the stage for the summer campaign.

The 1779 expedition was a systematic campaign of devastation against British-allied Iroquois. Its “immediate objects,” wrote George Washington, were “the total destruction” of Six Nations' villages.¹⁴⁶ In April Colonel Goose Van Schaick began the intrusion, striking the main Onondaga village, killing a dozen people and taking another 33 noncombatants prisoner—whom American soldiers may have raped and killed.¹⁴⁷ During the summer, three armies led by Major General John Sullivan, Brigadier General James Clinton, and Colonel Daniel Brodhead raced

¹⁴⁵ John Butler to Frederick Haldimand, Canadasango, July 21, 1779, ff. 115-16, Add. MS 21765, BL.

¹⁴⁶ [George Washington] to John Sullivan, Head Quarters, Middle Brook, May 31, 1779, HM 1590, the Huntington Library.

¹⁴⁷ Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 98.

across New York.¹⁴⁸ They spent the summer attacking Seneca and Cayuga towns. Sullivan destroyed at least seventeen Seneca settlements between Chemung and Genesee Castle, and Brodhead's men razed eleven settlements on the Allegheny River.¹⁴⁹

Americans set the "very fine and extensive" cornfields of Iroquoia on fire.¹⁵⁰ Soldiers wrote letters and diary entries about making "large fires with parts of houses and other woods," and "piling the corn on," to ensure total destruction. On August 13 at Chemung they lit "a glorious bonfire of upwards of 30 buildings at once" to burn "about 40 acres" of fields. In another town "called Kanegsae or Yucksea" they burned corn for four hours. The next day they spent eight hours burning 20,000 bushels at the Genesee Flats.¹⁵¹ At Oswego they "destroyed all their crops," and near Canadasago they "girdled the fruit trees and destroyed the corn."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 192-223; Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 166; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 98.

¹⁴⁹ Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 187.

¹⁵⁰ F. Barber to Governor Clinton, Praoga, August 15, 1779, f. 79, folder entitled "John Sullivan Letters in the Rolls Office, Washington, 1775-1791. John L. Sullivan/T.C. Amory, 1856-. Extracts from N.H. Materials re John Sullivan, 1772-. Journal of West Expedition 18 June 1779-. General Orders, Campaign on RI, 1778," box 4, John Sullivan Transcripts (hereafter JST), Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS).

¹⁵¹ [Lieutenant John Jenkins], *A Journal of the West Expedition Commanded by the Honble Major General Sullivan* began at Easton, June 18 1779, August 13 ("a glorious" and "about 40"), September 13 ("called Kanegsae"), September 14 (for Genesee Flats), September 15 ("large fires" and "piling"), 1779, ff. 169, 184, 187, folder entitled "John Sullivan Letters . . ." box 4, JST, MHS.

¹⁵² August 20 and September 8, 1779, Andrew Hunter Revolutionary War Diary, M-2097, John D. Rockefeller Library.

Finally, after burning “the Genesee Village,” the Americans retreated.¹⁵³ By September the expedition had achieved Washington’s aim of exiling Indians and throwing them “wholly on the British Enemy.”¹⁵⁴

Sullivan claimed his men destroyed at least 160,000 bushels of corn, other vegetables, and animals.¹⁵⁵ Soldiers did not distinguish between reports of stored and standing corn, so the campaign possibly destroyed even more than Sullivan estimated.¹⁵⁶ Historians know that each Indian ate approximately six bushels of corn per year.¹⁵⁷ Even if one takes the lower prewar population estimate of 6,400 people, the Iroquois required 38,400 bushels of corn per year—and Sullivan may have destroyed four times that quantity. John Butler sent word that “all the Indians with their Families are moving in [to Niagara], as their Villages & Corn are Destroyed.”¹⁵⁸ More than 5,000 Iroquois Indians arrived at Niagara alone, alongside Delawares, Chugnuts, Oquagas, Shawnees, Oswegos, Nanticokes, Toderighoes, and Mahicans; hundreds died of disease.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ John Butler to Frederick Haldimand, Niagara, September 20, 1779, f. 140, Add. MS 21765, BL.

¹⁵⁴ George Washington to John Sullivan, Head Quarters, West Point, 15 September 1779, f. 23, vol. 5, box 2, John Sullivan Transcripts, MHS.

¹⁵⁵ Venables, “Faithful Allies of the King,” 149.

¹⁵⁶ Mt. Pleasant and Burt, “Estimating Productivity of Traditional Iroquoian Cropping Systems from Field Experiments and Historical Literature,” 60-61.

¹⁵⁷ Taylor, “The Hungry Year,” 167.

¹⁵⁸ Extract of a Letter from Major Butler to Colonel Bolton, Camp, Buffaloe Creek, September 14, 1779, in Lieut. Col. Mason Bolton and Major John Butler, September 14, 16, and 20, 1779, photostat 2308, box 10, BHP, NYPL.

¹⁵⁹ Venables, “Faithful Allies of the King,” 149; Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, ch. 5, esp. 136-37.

British defense of Indian towns was lackluster during the 1779 expedition, and during the fall they questioned their relationship with the Iroquois at an inopportune moment. During the campaign, General Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Quebec, worried about the costs of feeding Indians, began to voice his desire to cut provisions.¹⁶⁰ The “quantity consumed by the Savages is enormous,” he complained.¹⁶¹ He asked John Butler to remind the Indians “that all our distress . . . proceeds from the amazing quantity of provisions they consume” at the same time that he refused to supply Butler with rations.¹⁶² In the fall of 1780 Haldimand, seeking to avoid a repeat of the 1779 winter, sought to decrease the number of Indians he would need to feed. “The number of Indians victualled at Niagara is prodigious, and if not by some means reduced, must terminate very disagreeably,” he wrote. “No useless Mouth, which can possibly be sent away” could be allowed to “remain for the Winter.”¹⁶³ In the 1760s William Johnson had increased provisions to Indians and had these efforts curtailed by Amherst and the British ministry; after 1779 Haldimand tried to decrease provisions, and failed.

It is instructive to compare the aftermath of the 1779 campaign to other instances of European devastation—particularly seventeenth-century French campaigns against the Iroquois. Absent from the historiography is *European* food diplomacy. Gilles Havard says that French

¹⁶⁰ General Haldimand to General Sir Henry Clinton, Quebec, September 28, 1779, photostat 2334, box 10, BHP, NYPL.

¹⁶¹ General Haldimand to General Sir Henry Clinton, Quebec, July 19, 1779, photostat 2129, box 9, BHP, NYPL.

¹⁶² General Frederick Haldimand to Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton, Quebec, July 23, 1779, vol. 5, William A. Smy Collection, LAC.

¹⁶³ Frederick Haldimand to Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton, Quebec, September 29, 1780, ff. 146-47, Add. MS 21764, BL.

expeditions against Senecas in 1687, Mohawks in 1693, and Onondagas and Oneidas in 1696 destroyed food stocks and corn fields.¹⁶⁴ The scholars who have commented on Iroquois recovery after Denonville’s notorious 1687 invasion have focused on intra-Iroquois behavior rather than interactions between Native and non-Natives. Jon Parmenter notes that although French-allied Iroquois could not prevent the destruction of English-allied Iroquois corn in 1696, they sheltered English-allied Iroquois refugees.¹⁶⁵ Little evidence exists of Indians engaging in crop destruction, or moving to European forts. Brandão’s extensive research does not discuss provisions during or after the campaign. W. J. Eccles described Frenchmen provisioning themselves by portaging supplies, feeding French-allied Indians a feast of dogs, and luring a party of neutral Iroquois into Fort Frontenac Champigny with promises of a feast.¹⁶⁶ Havard states the Iroquois critiqued English inability to provide troops, military action, arms, and ammunition.¹⁶⁷ New York supplied the Iroquois with some arms, enough to enable them to carry out revenge raids that forced the French to abandon Forts Niagara and Frontenac.¹⁶⁸ But food rations are not mentioned. During later, eighteenth-century instances of famine—as in the 1740s—Senecas dealt with hunger by resettling closer to Cayugas.¹⁶⁹ During earlier instances, as

¹⁶⁴ Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701*, 64.

¹⁶⁵ Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars,” 49.

¹⁶⁶ Brandão and Starna, “The Treaties of 1701,” 214; Brandão, ““Your fyre shall burn no more,”” 484-88; W. J. Eccles, *Frontenac: The Frontier Governor* (Lincoln, NE, 2003), 173-85, esp. 181-82.

¹⁶⁷ Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701*, 66.

¹⁶⁸ Brandão and Starna, “The Treaties of 1701,” 214.

¹⁶⁹ Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 84.

in seventeenth-century Virginia, Powhatans gave surplus food to starving Englishman, rather than the other way around.¹⁷⁰

Previous examples of Indian hunger, particularly the Denonville expedition, suggest that the 1779 campaign's effects were different for three reasons: first, because of the increase in British provisions to Indian warriors, in addition to noncombatants' provisions during previous decades; second, because the British officials who tried to curtail Indian hunger failed; and third, because Indian attitudes toward hunger appeared to change. To be sure, continuity existed. Natives reminded Britons of the one pot metaphor and that allies needed to share hunger as well as provisions, and they accepted food without reciprocating with military service. By September 1779 one official related that John Butler had encountered "difficulties" obtaining food and thus in "assembling the Indians."¹⁷¹ Indians accused the British of hoarding extra food at Quebec, but even when the British supplied 200 warriors with "every thing they wanted in Clothing, Provisions &c." they could "only prevail on 44 to set off."¹⁷² Haldimand was shocked to find that some married couples had received provisions twice—once, as Indians belonging to the Seven Nations of Canada, and again, as Iroquois Indians.¹⁷³ Indians continued to eat in ways that deviated from British expectations—but British perceptions also changed. Whereas in previous years Britons assumed that they would feed Iroquois women and children symbolic gifts while

¹⁷⁰ Mallios, *The Deadly Politics of Giving*, 21.

¹⁷¹ Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton to General Haldimand, Niagara, September 7, 8, and 10, 1779, photostat 2260, box 10, BHP, NYPL.

¹⁷² Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton to General Haldimand, Niagara, August 16, 1779, photostat 2202, box 10, BHP, NYPL.

¹⁷³ Frederick Haldimand to Daniel Claus, Quebec, September 6, 1779, f. 61, Add. MS 21774, BL.

men hunted game and women grew crops and managed war provisions, during and after the winter of 1779-80 the British expected to feed nearly all Indians. In February 1781, Indians around Niagara would arrive “upon us sooner than could be wished” because of their lack of success “on their hunting grounds” and “the severity of the last winter.”¹⁷⁴ Natives now arrived at military forts in time for winter, and Britons planned to host them for the duration of the season.

At the same time that Britons drastically increased provisions to Indians, the Iroquois worked to eradicate the British perception of Indians as useless mouths. Because food diplomacy had become more important, the Iroquois made an impression by implying that they cared less about eating than their English allies. They critiqued British appetites, expressed annoyance that the British “talked of nothing but Provisions,” and implied that hungry warriors remained capable of fighting.¹⁷⁵ Officials’ attempts to remove Indians from their forts to save money prompted Indians’ declarations that they could withstand starvation. In October 1779 Guy Johnson and John Butler tried to convince the Iroquois to leave Fort Niagara because they anticipated trouble shipping provisions there.¹⁷⁶ In November Guy Johnson finally “prevailed on” several hundred Indians to depart.¹⁷⁷ Those remaining stated their lack of interest in provisioning problems. The Cayuga Twethorechte told British officials, “We of the Six Nations have been much cast down by the great Loss we have sustained in the Destruction of several of

¹⁷⁴ H. Watson Powell to Frederick Haldimand, Niagara, February 18, 1781, f. 7, Add. MS 21761, BL.

¹⁷⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton to General Haldimand, Niagara, August 16, 1779, photostat 2202, box 10, BHP, NYPL.

¹⁷⁶ Proceedings with the Indians at Niagara, October 31, 1779, f. 60, Add. MS 21779, BL.

¹⁷⁷ Guy Johnson to Frederick Haldimand, Niagara, November 12, 1779, f. 51, Add. MS 21767, BL.

our Villages and Corn-Fields.” He appreciated “what has been said on the Score of Provisions,” but said that the Indians “cannot think of separating.” If the Indians had “to suffer for Provisions we cannot help it.” They felt “determined to persevere in the Cause,” and would “endeavour in some Measure to help [them]selves by Hunting.”¹⁷⁸ Crucially, the Iroquois stopped exaggerating their hunger and poverty and made it impossible for the British to feed them at the precise moment when starvation became a reality. Twethorechte’s words indicated that Indians may have been motivated by concerns other than food. Sharing a common dish had always meant going hungry when the dish was empty, but examples from the 1610s, 1680s, 1690s, and 1740s suggest that Indians handled starvation better than non-Natives.

The idea of unintended consequences becomes useful here. An unintended consequence is the “effect of purposive social action which is different from what was wanted at the moment of carrying out the act, and the want of which was a reason for carrying it out.”¹⁷⁹ Haldimand wanted to cut costs, so he tried to curtail Indian eating; the unintended consequences consisted of altered British perceptions of Indian hunger and a change in Indian diplomacy that increased British provisioning to Indians. Presumably, Indians wanted to remain gathered together in one group to maintain community ties. It is unclear whether the Iroquois ever described their intentions, but changes in British practices suggests that British perceptions of Indian hunger had conformed to the idea of self-sufficient, non-hungry Indians who nevertheless required food for diplomatic purposes. An additional unintended consequence becomes apparent in Indians’ obliteration of British food supplies.

¹⁷⁸ Proceedings with the Indians at Niagara, November 3, 1779, f. 61, Add. MS 21779, BL.

¹⁷⁹ P. Baert, “Unintended Consequences: A Typology and Examples,” *International Sociology*, 6, no. 2 (1991), 201.

By 1781, Indians were destroying allies' foodstuffs. In August a party of Indians and rangers met at Oswego, where the Senecas "held a council . . . without advising" the British of their plans. They informed British officers they would go to Monbackers (in present-day Rochester) and "to no other place" because they were "in a starving condition," and it was "a verry rich country." One officer remembered feeling compelled to go with them, "altho contrary to my Instructions." The Indians were skittish because the region was "an advantageous place to the Enemy," and they wanted to avoid another Continental attack. For a time the Indians helped the British destroy mills, "thirty large storehouses," grain, and animals, but as the expedition progressed the Iroquois began ruining food supplies. At an American-defended fort, the Indians burned the men with the "large quantities of grain" inside it, rather than giving quarter to the troops. The officer, hoping to save face, reported that *he* suggested the destruction of grain houses because he did not have enough men to take the forts. In reality he lost control of the situation. He related that "the Indians were So gluttred with plunder &c. that few of them would proceed with me." Those who stayed helped drive off cattle, but they also procured several wounds—which meant that temporarily well-fed Indians did not feel safe returning with the British. The officers were horrified "to see the Indians kill and take the greatest part of the cattle that were captured by the Rangers," leaving the rank and file in "a starving situation."¹⁸⁰ The men in charge could not stop them.

Over time this conduct manifested among non-Iroquois Indians. In June 1780 a group of Shawnees and Great Lakes Indians arrived at the American-held Fort Liberty with Britons Henry

¹⁸⁰ [Captain William Caldwell] to [Brigadier General Henry Watson Powell], Ochquago, August 19, 1781, ff. 148-149, 152, Add. MS 21762, BL.

Bird and Alexander McKee.¹⁸¹ Although the Indians agreed to let the British take “the Cattle for Food for our People, and the Prisoners,” the Indians instead killed civilians, and “every one of the Cattle, leaving the whole to stink.” Again at the next fort, “not one pound of Meat” survived.¹⁸² Although historians have described food scarcities in the wake of the 1779 campaign, Indians in the archival record destroyed domesticated animals, even though the Johnson papers suggest that by this time they had been eating beef for years. It is impossible to say what Natives were thinking during these moments, but it is evident that British attitudes toward Indians changed.

By the 1780s Britons made efforts to increase food distribution. Each month the superintendent of Indian affairs assessed how much food villages required by sending men to obtain a headcount; Indians then received tickets from the commissary, which they could redeem for provisions.¹⁸³ Haldimand’s correspondence reveals a summary of Indian preferences: corn was best, then bread, and finally flour.¹⁸⁴ Natives’ wishes for fresh or salted provisions altered depending on the season. They sometimes complained that salty food threatened their health.¹⁸⁵ By 1780, Indians around Montreal were requesting five days of fresh provisions out of each

¹⁸¹ For the fort see John Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln, NE, 2000), 60-62. For the Indians see White, *The Middle Ground*, 407.

¹⁸² Henry Bird to Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster, Ohio, opposite Licking Creek, July 1, 1780, f. 316, Add. MS 21760, BL.

¹⁸³ See H. Watson Powell to Frederick Haldimand, Quebec, December 5, 1782, f. 589, Add. MS 21734, BL.

¹⁸⁴ For corn see H. Watson Powell to Frederick Haldimand, Niagara, May 17, 1782, f. 46, Add. MS 21762, BL. For bread see Extract of a letter from Captain Fraser, Carleton Island, February 21, 1780, enclosed in Frederick Haldimand to Mason Bolton, Quebec, April 16, 1780, f. 96, Add. MS 21764, BL.

¹⁸⁵ Daniel Claus to Frederick Haldimand, Montreal, October 26, 1778, f. 7, Add. MS 21774, BL.

week—more than twice what they received in previous years. Haldimand granted their request less than a week later, indicating the extent of British accommodation.¹⁸⁶ British expenditures on supplies to Fort Niagara alone increased from £500 New York currency at the start of the war to £100,000 in 1781.¹⁸⁷

During the colonial era, food diplomacy was bound up in the forest and trade diplomacy that Americans, Britons, and Indians used to maintain allegiances. Britons offered Indians edible goods before, during, and after meetings and treaties, and supplied aid to villages, while Native Americans supported each other. In the 1760s, colonial diplomacy transformed. Trade good scarcities, land problems, and shipping issues made trade and forest diplomacy less tenable. During the early years of the American Revolution, little about food diplomacy changed. After Americans' devastating expedition of 1779, the Iroquois altered their food diplomacy to challenge perceptions of Indian hunger and to ruin Britons' food. Britons in turn went out of the way to accommodate Indian preferences. The idea of the "useless mouth" thus takes on two meanings: that of non-contributing, hungry Indians, and the meaning, implied by this article, of hungry Indians who ignored their hunger and destroyed food to strengthen alliances.

Scholars have portrayed postwar Indian country as a place of simultaneous resilience and desolation.¹⁸⁸ Food diplomacy confirms this resiliency, but also makes clear that in addition to

¹⁸⁶ Daniel Claus to Robert Mathews, Montreal, March 23, 1780, f. 98, Robert Mathews to Daniel Claus, Quebec, March 27, 1780, f. 99, Add. MS 21774, BL.

¹⁸⁷ Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 133.

¹⁸⁸ For less positive portrayals, see Jordan, *The Seneca Restoration*, 197; Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, xxix; Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 16, 267, 288-89. For a focus on Indian resistance in the Early Republic see James

assessing affairs by looking at land cessions, historians should consider exchanges of foodstuffs produced on that land. They should also reassess claims about what hunger forced Indians to do. According to Alan Taylor, Iroquois communities hard-hit by food shortages accommodated U.S. officials because they needed food aid.¹⁸⁹ William Fenton observed that Americans after the Revolution tried “to eliminate or cut down” the expenses of treaty councils, including the feasting involved.¹⁹⁰ Yet U.S. Indian commissioners in the 1790s practiced generous food diplomacy according to Indian standards, rather than American ones.

U.S. Indian commissioner and future Secretary of War Timothy Pickering began his education in Indian affairs at a 1790 meeting to condole over the murder of two Seneca men.¹⁹¹ As part of his initiation into Indian diplomacy, Pickering “studied to please them in every thing,” condoling with, speaking to, gifting, and provisioning 220 people.¹⁹² In 1791, when Pickering

H. Merrell, “Declarations of Independence: Indian-White Relations in the New Nation,” in *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York, NY, 1987), 200-5; Mt. Pleasant, “Independence for Whom, 121.

¹⁸⁹ Taylor, ““The Hungry Year,”” 145-47.

¹⁹⁰ William N. Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 25.

¹⁹¹ Mt. Pleasant, “Independence for Whom?,” 120-1.

¹⁹² Timothy Pickering to George Washington, Wilkes barre, [Pennsylvania], December 4, 1790, in *Founders Online*. Available <<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-07-02-0014>>; Timothy Pickering to George Washington, Philadelphia, December 23, 1790, in *Founders Online*. Available <<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-07-02-0065>>; Enclosure: Estimate of the expense of necessaries for the meeting of the Seneca Indians at Tioga, October 25, 1790, in *Founders Online*. Available <<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0191-0002>> [accessed April 5, 2015]

prepared to meet the Iroquois on the Tioga River, Indians asked him to supply them with alcohol and provisions beforehand. In what he thought was a compromise Pickering responded that he could send provisions only part of the way. Upon arrival, an Oneida named Good Peter chided him, supposing, “that the business of holding treaties with Indians was novel to me.” Good Peter complained that the Indians had been “obliged to ask for provisions” while traveling, and a chastised Pickering reimbursed them.¹⁹³

Indians were not useless mouths; they portrayed their hunger strategically and took steps to avoid it. Conflicting non-Native perceptions of Iroquois hunger underscore the point that hunger is not universal. Iroquoian food diplomacy suggests hunger was less relevant to Indians than non-Natives thought, and on a broader level should encourage historians working in other time periods to examine hunger more critically. Extant work has started to undertake this project. Twentieth-century United States food aid after PL 480 functioned on the assumption that Americans produced a surplus.¹⁹⁴ Colonial nationalists in Ireland and India resisted colonizers by portraying hunger as a symbol of British failures.¹⁹⁵ The twentieth century Mexican bureaucracy was able to ensure food security by encouraging the development of agribusinesses, which destroyed small farming and spurred migration to cities.¹⁹⁶ Subaltern critics in India challenged the implementation of calorie-counting to evaluate diet by elevating rice and lentils over wheat and meat, and urging others to eschew imperial coffee, sugar, and tea.¹⁹⁷ Understandings of food

¹⁹³ [Journal of Timothy Pickering], June 21 and 25, 1791, ff. 73-74a, reel 60, Timothy Pickering Papers, MHS.

¹⁹⁴ B. J. B. Krupadanam, *Food Diplomacy: A Case Study, Indo-US Relations* (New Delhi, 1985), 16.

¹⁹⁵ Vernon, *Hunger*, 273-74.

¹⁹⁶ Enrique C. Ochoa, *Feeding Mexico: The Political Uses of Food since 1910* (Wilmington, DE, 2000).

¹⁹⁷ Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *American Historical Review*, 112, no. 2 (April 2007): 360.

and its absence are different across time and space, and historians cannot assume that hunger is equivalent to powerlessness; if scholars are used to thinking about Americans as an increasingly powerful group and Natives as an increasingly powerless one, then hunger sheds light on moments when uncertainty about power remained the only constant.