



QUAKERS AND THE LANGUAGE OF INDIAN DIPLOMACY

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When whites and Indians came together in political arenas, they brought [210] different assumptions about the form and function of these negotiations, rendering mutual trust or even understanding at times elusive. For eastern Algonquian cultures, as well as the Iroquois, the goal of treaty negotiations was to reach a consensus among parties through extensive discourse. If conflicts arose between individuals or families, those involved spoke their mind in council. Civil leaders would diplomatically arbitrate between differing opinions until they arrived at an appropriate judgment or decision that represented the "collective wisdom" of the community. Everything that unfolded during the conference became part of the agreement, and it was assumed that certain common problems such as land use, economic assistance, and political alliances, all important to community stability, would be renewed or renegotiated at regular intervals. Since native leaders had no formal means to coerce agreement, political power and authority rested on oral traditions, memory, and particular speech forms used for persuasion. Ritual language was a means of appropriating personal power and obtaining spiritual assistance to influence other people and the situation at hand. Indians customarily used strings and belts of wampum to perform and remember these rituals and to send messages between communities. In many ways, wampum, being a record of formal council proceedings, served as written language and as a symbol of authority; similar to a commission, it gave an individual power to speak, and its form—color, size, and design—indicated its function. For instance, Augustus told Teedyuscung at their first meeting that the Delaware leader had to send a specific wampum belt, "at least five or six feet long and twelve Rows broad," to all hostile Indian leaders. Only with these belts [212] and twelve strings of wampum "to confirm the Words he sends" could Teedyuscung seek native consensus to "make all these things good again."¹⁴

Like their Indian neighbors, whites also sought conflict resolution, friendship, and material assistance when negotiating with strangers. Instead of seeking consensus or the fluidity of a continuing dialogue about mutual problems, however, they generally used a treaty conference to negotiate for and to claim absolute legal control over land, resources, labor, or groups of people. In their world, where the emphasis lay on particular legal principles and the formal structures of government, neither resonance of voice, presentation of gifts, nor wampum was a key factor. The written word was all important. Deeds, commissions, receipts, petitions, ordinances, legislation, and court records embodied the power of political language for Europeans. Within the political forum, written documents were meant to capture the presumed permanence of an agreement. Still, Euramericans often had to use their own powers of persuasion to create binding legal documents. [213]

After agreeing to meet with Teedyuscung and the Delawares, Pennsylvania governor Morris drafted the "Proclamation for a Suspension of Hostilities for Thirty Days" to compel both the provincial army and frontier settlers to suspend hostilities until he completed treaty negotiations. The governor, however, had to persuade Assembly members "to pass a Law to the same Effect" and to enforce the cease-fire in their districts. Only then could he send published copies of his proclamation to Indians on the upper Susquehanna to assure them of his sincerity and their safety.¹⁵

Although Indians invested ritual speech, oration, and memory with powers to build consensus and whites invested codified legal systems and written words with powers to enforce behavior, on some level each tried to accommodate the other's political forms. During the mid-1750s, when Indians and whites met in a common political arena to negotiate an end to hostilities, each knew enough about the other's methods and technologies to attempt to dominate the spaces of power in which they both operated. In other words, Indians and whites effectively incorporated the other's language—metaphors, ritual speech, and the written word—to assert their demands. When Teedyuscung agreed to meet with the governor of Pennsylvania during the summer of 1756, he combined old and new methods. So that no one would misunderstand his reply, Teedyuscung prepared a written statement to accompany the string of wampum he sent with Augustus and the Iroquois delegates to Philadelphia.¹⁶

White Pennsylvanians, also concerned with clearly expressing their political needs, often let Indian traditions set the general standards for their meetings. They treated Indians as diplomatic equals and accepted, used, and contribut-

ed to the forms and language of native rituals and ceremonies. They did so not because they admired these forms—in fact, they often complained about the length of native political oration, which was so important to consensus formation. Before the first Easton treaty, Governor Morris wrote William Johnson: "The Indians adhere so closely to their Tedious Ceremonies that I am sensible you must have had a most fatiguing time of it." Instead, Euramericans like Morris accommodated native American ritual forms and language to legitimize their own authority in terms that Indians would recognize. Both Indians and whites needed a mutually acceptable diplomatic process, even language, to help balance the delicate tensions between trust and distrust. Each side wanted their demands met and decided that some accommodation would best accomplish their goals.¹⁷

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During the 1740s and 1750s, metaphors and metaphoric language emerged as a potential point of entry to this common understanding. Since the meaning of a metaphor was relative, signifying both what "is like" and what "is not like," the speaker and the listener could read slightly different meanings into their words yet still recognize the resemblance. Metaphors were an important part of discourse between Indians and whites at treaty conferences precisely because they allowed for different meanings within a commonly used diplomatic language. Native Americans often applied metaphoric kinship terms to their political relations to clarify or to delineate their relative position of power with others. When they appealed to their "brothers," "cousins," "uncles," or "grandfathers" during a treaty conference, each of these symbolic kinship designations specified to Indians the role and responsibility of each party and set a hierarchy of authority for the meeting. Within the Iroquois Confederacy, Onondagas, Senecas, and Mohawks were considered the "elder brothers," and Oneidas, Cayugas, and Tuscaroras were the "younger brothers"—the elders having more authority in council. The relationship between Delawares and Shawnees was one of "grandfather" to "grandchildren," which conveyed ceremonial deference but did not oblige obedience. One of the clearest lines of metaphoric obligation lay between the Six Nations and Delawares. In the mid-eighteenth century, Delawares often addressed Iroquois as "uncles" when in council. They were called "nephews" or "cousins" in return. Uncles in Iroquois and Delaware communities, especially mothers' brothers, had greater power over nephews than other male relatives. Despite this clearly marked symbolic kinship relation between the Six Nations and Delawares, Iroquois uncles had great difficulty controlling their Delaware nephews politically, which added to the tensions between the two.¹⁸

When Indians and whites met in treaty conferences to negotiate alliances during the eighteenth century, the ways that kinship, both actual and metaphoric, defined lines of authority created special problems. "Father" was perhaps the most problematic metaphoric relationship that bound Indian and non-Indian communities. The Iroquois addressed the French governor in North America as Onontio, or father, because the Indians regarded the French as allies, trade partners, and intermediaries. Whereas the French regarded their fatherly role as an extension of patriarchal authority, the Iroquois believed that fathers had no real power over their children. The Pennsylvania government, like the French, wanted to believe that their position as father gave them greater power to make decisions for Indians. In the early eighteenth century, the governor assumed that the Conestogas and Delawares looked upon themselves as "Children, Rather to be Directed by this Governmt," their father. The Conestogas had a different view, perhaps based on a new understanding of Euramerican family relations, "for often Parents would be apt to whip their Children too severely, and Brothers sometimes would differ." Instead, the Conestogas wanted to be considered "as the same Flesh and Blood with the Christians," as William Penn supposedly had insisted, "and the same as if one Man's Body was to be divided in two Parts." In his interactions with the Pennsylvania governor leading up to the first Easton treaty, Teedyuscung deliberately addressed him as "brother." Although brothers may differ, as the Conestogas suggested, to native Americans brothers also were equals. Whether of "one Man's Body" or brothers, Indians, who vied for parity and recognition of their political autonomy, preferred that relationship to being children to a white man's father.¹⁹

Indians and whites struggled to delineate their relative positions of authority through the use of kinship metaphors. They also adapted other kinds of metaphors to make their demands understood at political proceedings. Teedyuscung opened the Easton treaty on July 26, 1756, with ritual ceremonies, setting the tone for the conference and trying to appropriate the role of "host," who traditionally controlled the agenda. Key to this ceremony was the symbolic cleansing of the other participants' bodies. To deal with whites in particular, native Americans needed ritual assurances that they would speak clearly and listen carefully. Cleansing the body was necessary, for fear that "an Evil Spirit of great Power and Cunning" might have "blinded you and throwed Dust in your Eyes." At treaties, Indians metaphorically wielded a "fine Feather . . . dipped in that pure Oil" to wash out "the inside of your Ears, that you may hear" and "the best Medicines" to cleanse "some

Foulness [that] come into your heart through your Throat." Seeing clearly, hearing completely, and speaking candidly were necessary to clear communication and understanding. At Easton, Teedyuscung presented the Pennsylvania governor with four belts of wampum, "one to brush Thorns from the Governors Legs, another to Rub the Dust out of his Eyes, to help him to see clearly, another to open his Ears, to enable him to hear them patiently, and the Fourth to clear his Throat, that he might speak plainly." Teedyuscung symbolically cleansed the governor's eyes, ears, and throat as an act of civility, which promoted honesty and trust, but also demanded that he listen respectfully to the Delawares' concerns.²⁰

Ritual cleansing of the body prepared parties to begin negotiations, but more specific ceremonies helped to build new bridges of communication and to ease tensions. For instance, the native American condolence ceremony mitigated the prolonged mistrust between parties and provided compensation for the unexpected or violent loss of lives during the war. When a family member or important chief died, somebody from outside the family or clan performed the ritual, which included wiping away the blood of the victim and the tears of the mourners and presenting gifts to cover the grave. The observance symbolically resurrected the deceased and restored rationality to grieving survivors' souls, after which they could return to their daily activities. The Pennsylvania government found that the condolence ceremony helped to maintain smooth relations with Indian allies by recognizing particular Indian leaders and their influence and continued friendship. In the fall of 1750, Conrad Weiser, the colonial liaison to the Six Nations, learned of the death of the Iroquois leader Canassatego at Onondaga. The Iroquois council was torn between continuing important business and ceasing all activities for a period of mourning. Weiser informed the Pennsylvania government that condolence had to be performed or it would appear "the dead Person was of no Credit or Esteem, and it is a certain affront to the deceased's Friends." The following spring, Weiser returned to Onondaga at the request of the governor "to give them a Small present to Signify to them that this Government do condole with them for the loose of Canasako [Canassatego] and others."²¹

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During the Seven Years' War, the Pennsylvania government continued to use condolence to placate allies but also to manipulate them. Condolence became standard practice for opening treaty conferences. In early 1757, George Croghan met with 160 Iroquois, Nanticokes, Delawares, and Conestogas at John Harris's on the Susquehanna River to lay the ground-

work for a third meeting with Teedyuscung and to gather intelligence about French movements in the west. Because of "the Death of many... Counsellors and Warriors," Croghan symbolically wiped the blood off the council seats and wiped the tears from their eyes before they would even consider further talk. "I with these Strouds," Croghan intoned, "wrap up the Bodies of your deceased Friends and bury them decently, covering their Graves with those Blanketts and half thicks." Indians appreciated that whites used their rituals and responded in kind at treaty conferences. Scarouady, the Oneida liaison for the Ohio Indians, accepted the presents Croghan offered, thanking him and "our Brother Onas," referring to the proprietor Thomas Penn, who "wisely considered the Antient Custom of our ForeFathers in condoling with us and mixing your Grief with ours." Scarouady then proceeded to wipe away the blood and tears of the English to "heal your Hearts and free your Minds from trouble that we may meet each other in Council." Rather than giving white negotiators a political advantage over their Indian counterparts, however, accommodating native rituals provided Indians with a sense of diplomatic equality with the English. After condoling with the Pennsylvania agents at John Harris's, Scarouady announced that the Indians refused to meet with the governor in Philadelphia because they were "affraid of Sickness" that had settled on the city. Instead, they insisted that the governor meet them at Lancaster as soon as Teedyuscung arrived.²²

Notes:

13. Minutes of Indian conferences at Easton, July 30, 1756, July and November 1756, 20, APS; "Information about the Delaware King Teedyuscung Delivered by Jos Spangenberg Who Reced It from a Delaware Indian 3o July 1756," no. 98, Penn Papers Indian Affairs. II. 17Cd-17C6. HSP.

14. Spangenberg to the Pennsylvania Council, July 3o, 1756, Minutes of Indian Conferences at Easton, July and November 1756, APS; "Information about the Delaware King Teedyuscung," no. 98, Penn Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 1754-1756, HSP; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 45; Robert Steven Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1980), 47-48; John Phillip Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York, 1970), 3o; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, 1992), 3-4; Michael K. Foster, "Another Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils," in Francis Jennings et al., eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1985), 99-114; Nancy L. Hagedorn, " 'A Friend to Go between Them': The Interpreter as Cultural Broker during AngloIroquois Councils, 174o-7o," *Ethnohistory*, XXXV (1988), 6o-80. Consensus politics should not be confused with modern, sometimes idealized, notions of democracy. Native groups were not always egalitarian. The enslaved and other nonpersons did not participate in decision making. Threats of revenge, retaliation by witchcraft, or public ostracism could be used effectively to create consensus. Euramericans were often frustrated with consensus politics, because it did away with visible signs of hierarchy. Conrad Weiser complained to Richard Peters that there was a large group of Indians following Canassatego down to Philadelphia for treaty

negotiations in 1749: "Every one was at liberty to come along or stay at home on such occasions" (Weiser to Peters, Aug. 6, 1749, Pierre Eugene Du Simitiere Papers, Library Company manuscripts housed at HSP).

15. MPCP, VII, 142, 147, 175; Foucault, "Truth and Power," in Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge*, trans. Gordon et al., 125.

16. "King Teedyuscung's Message to Governor," July 18, 1756, Horsfield Papers, I, APS.

17. Sullivan et al., comps., *Papers of Johnson*, II, 442-443.

18. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, S.J. (Toronto, 1977), 7, 80; "Glossary of Figures of Speech in Iroquois Political Rhetoric," in Francis Jennings et al., eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1985), 120; Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York, 1984), 44; MPCP, V, 476; Sullivan et al., comps., *Papers of Johnson*, XI, 724. Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf noted that the relationship between the elder and younger Iroquois tribes was that of "father" and "sons" (Reichel, ed., *Memorials of the Moravian Church*, I, zi-zz). Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, 1991), 36, places "grandfather" on the same metaphoric level as "manitou"; thus, when the French simply became "fathers," "they had taken a step down the generational ladder." Raymond J. DeMaille, "Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnohistorical Perspective," in Frederick C. Luebke; ed., *Ethnicity on the Great Plains* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1980), 50, examines the use of metaphors in Plains Indian treaty councils and finds that, though both whites and Indians manipulated relational metaphors for their own advantages, the Indian use of kinship terms was sometimes too subtle for whites to understand.

19. MPCP, III, 46; [Charles Thomson], *Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians from the British Interest* (Philadelphia, 1867) (originally published as *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians from the British Interest . . .* [London, 1759]), 9; "King Teedyuscung's Message to Governor," July 18, 1756, Horsfield Papers, I, APS; "Reply of Teedyuscung," July 24, 1756, PA, 1st Ser., II, 721; White, *Middle Ground*, 36; Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 44.

20. MPCP, VIII, 746; "Capt. Newcastle's Report," June 1, 1756, Horsfield Papers, I, APS; S. K. Stevens et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Bouquet* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1951-), III, 509; PA, 1st Ser., II, 725; Michael K. Foster, "On Who Spoke First at Iroquois-White Councils: An Exercise in the Method of Upstreaming," in Foster, Campisi, and Mithun, eds., *Extending the Rafters*, 191.

21. MPCP, V, 474, 542; Sullivan et al., comps., *Papers of Johnson*, I, 317; Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), 81, mi. Dennis notes that the Jesuits first witnessed an Iroquois condolence ceremony in 1645 in which the general purpose was to restore order and peace within the community and to prevent the beginning of a blood feud by the deceased's family (79).

22. William Denny to Johnson, Dec. 6, 1756, in Sullivan et al., comps., *Papers of Johnson*, IX, 566 (see also 730, 732-733, 762, 771); MPCP, VI, 68; Friendly Association Minutes, Nov. 4, 1756, Cox-Parrish-Wharton Family Papers, box 18, HSP. Upon the death of Conrad Weiser in 1761, Seneca George, who considered Weiser "a great Man, and one-half a Seven Nation Indian, and one-half an Englishman," performed condolences and lamented: "Since his Death we cannot so well understand one another" (MPCP, VIII, 631). In August 1736, Delawares came to Philadelphia to extend their condolences after the death of Governor Patrick Gordon (MPCP, IV, 53).