

FROM INDIAN WOMEN TO ENGLISH
CHILDREN: THE LENNI-LENAPE AND
THE ATTEMPT TO CREATE A NEW
DIPLOMATIC IDENTITY

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While meeting with Pennsylvania representatives in 1757, the Lenni-Lenape sachem Teedyusung bitterly complained that he did not receive the same respect accorded Six Nations' diplomats. Employing the kinship terms that had long been a staple of native diplomacy, Teedyusung noted that his "Uncles"—the Iroquois—"were always stiled Men and had Tomahawks," while he had to carry "a pestle or hominy pounder," the tool of a woman.¹ Teedyusung's negative reaction to this bit of gendered symbolism is telling, in that it illustrated the feelings of many Lenni-Lenape (also known as Delaware) concerning their treatment as metaphorical "women" by the Iroquois. Employed in diplomatic dialogue between the two peoples from the late seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, the meaning of the term "woman" underwent a series of changes, sometimes being used as a mark of respect, and at other times being used in a derogatory manner. The Lenni-Lenape's status as "women" took on a new twist when English representatives, who frequently mimicked,

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but just as frequently misunderstood, native use of gender and kinship terms brought their own interpretations of these expressions to the council fire.

But as the meaning of the term “woman” shifted over the course of the eighteenth century, the Delawares began to resent their status as a prop—and in their view, as a frequently misused one at that—of the Iroquois’ metaphorical longhouse. In the 1750s, with the beginning of yet another Anglo-Franco conflict in North America, the Lenni-Lenape found a way to change their diplomatic identity. Cleverly exploiting French overtures and English desperation, the Delawares attempted to shed their status as metaphorical “women,” and hoped to assume a new diplomatic identity as English male children. In short, the Delawares were willing to exchange one diminutive diplomatic status for another, but by becoming English children, they hoped to throw off Iroquois domination.

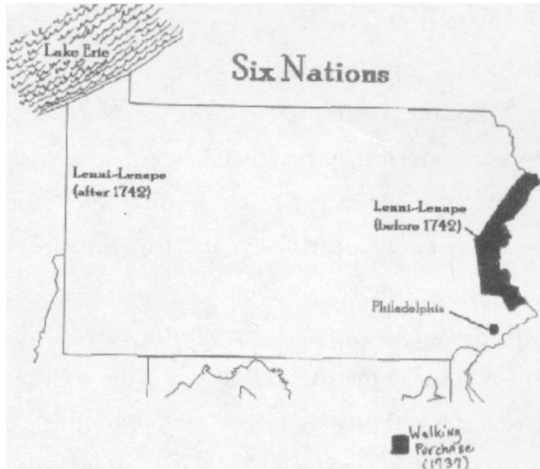


FIGURE 1: Lenni-Lenape in Pennsylvania. The map gives the general locations of the Lenni-Lenape peoples at the time of contact and after the Walking Purchase. Map drawn by Kimberly Y. Carpenter, Mount Holyoke College.

The notion of the Lenni-Lenape (meaning “Original People”) being metaphorical women, began in the late 1670s and lasted to the eve of the American Revolution. An examination of the idea of the metaphorical woman of diplomacy, and its various interpretations, could be central, rather than peripheral, to our understanding not only of Iroquois and Lenni-Lenape relations, but also of Anglo-Amerindian relations in the colonial northeast.²

In diplomatic exchanges between native peoples, kinship terms, usually male and on rare occasions, gender neutral, delineated the connections between the participants. But the differences between cultures and their constructs of gender and kinship often resulted in confusion.

The meanings of these kinship terms were seemingly familiar to all sides, yet they invited misunderstandings, particularly when Europeans participated in diplomacy. Indians often employed kinship terms such as "Uncle" and "Nephew," because they felt they best described the figurative relationships between the different native communities. English emissaries viewed the use of kinship terms as a handy method of verbally asserting what they saw as their superiority, frequently using the term "Father" for themselves and "Children" for native peoples.

European diplomats had a particular affinity for the term "Father" because it metaphorically imposed the hierarchal structure of their concept of family into the diplomatic sphere, with themselves at top of the hierarchy. The English were not the only Europeans to find "Father" a convenient term. Like the English, the French frequently used the term, and like the English, they often misunderstood its import (or lack thereof) to native peoples. Algonquin allies of the French regarded them as fathers, but their notion of a father's influence differed greatly. A father was expected to provide protection and mediate disputes between his children. However, as far as the natives were concerned, this did not obligate them to be obedient to the French.³

The notable exception to this practice occurred in diplomatic discourse between the English and the Iroquois League. The Iroquois had carefully cultivated—for English consumption—the illusion that they could control other peoples of the eastern woodlands. Believing that they needed the Iroquois to influence other native peoples of the Northeast, the English often used the more egalitarian "brother" or "brethren" when dealing with Six Nations' diplomats.

English diplomats regarded the native use of kinship terms as a convenient diplomatic tool, but failed to realize that different cultural interpretations muddled their meanings. At first, speakers used kinship terms in ways specific to their own society. When they believed that it would work to their advantage, native and English spokesmen seized upon their often-limited knowledge of the other culture's constructs and definitions of kinship and gender. At its best, this tactic could be seen as a way to foster understanding by employing the cultural norms of the listener, but it frequently had the effect interfering with the primary objective of diplomatic communication, clarity. Frequently, the listeners used their knowledge (however limited it

may have been) of the speaker's culture, and attempted to interpret the speech in that context. This created a situation ripe for misunderstanding, and many times the participants in Anglo-Amerindian diplomacy must have spoken past—while believing they were speaking to each other.

An examination of the kinship terms used in Anglo-Amerindian conferences illustrates the difficulties diplomats faced. Both sides worked on the erroneous assumption that the meanings of kinship terms would be self-evident. While the kinship terms used in intertribal diplomacy seemed familiar to Europeans, they often held very different meanings to the Iroquois and other native peoples. Fathers in Iroquois society lacked the direct parental control of a European parent. Iroquois uncles held considerable sway over their nephews, but this influence did not come close to approximating the direct authority of an English father. Brother or brethren usually indicated equality, but some brothers possessed more equality than others. Brother could be modified with the terms "older" or "younger," but this device appeared almost exclusively in diplomatic dialogue between the Six Nations themselves. "Brother" becomes a trickier term when one realizes that the terms "brother" and "sister" included more than one's biological siblings. An Iroquois person also referred to the offspring of a mother's sister and a father's brother as "brother" and "sister." Hence in diplomacy, "brother" may have denoted equality, but depending on what the speaker meant, the term could signify two very different relationships. The term "cousin" referred to the offspring of a mother's brother or a father's sister. The term "cousin" indicated equality, but also distance. Cousins lacked the closeness one had with "brothers." "Grandfather," a term some Algonquian peoples used when addressing the Lenni-Lenape, indicated respect, and alluded to their status as "Original People." The terms "uncle" and "nephew" delineated a special relationship in Iroquois kinship and diplomacy. Uncle carried with it the implication of responsibility for one's nephews and the expectation of obedience in return. A nephew knew that he should heed his uncle's advice and counsel.⁴ Note that most of these terms express kinship, and sometimes gender. But the only terms used in diplomacy, with the possible exception of "cousin," are male. "Women" in Iroquois external diplomacy, lacked standing. Indeed, prior to the Iroquois-Delaware agreement, they did not exist.

The use of kinship terms becomes even more convoluted when one realizes that Lenni-Lenape notions of reckoning familial attachments differed significantly from both the Iroquois and the English. One Northeastern Algonquin attempted to explain native kinship structure to nineteenth-century ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan, "The son of my aunt is my son, the

daughter of my aunt is my daughter. My brother's son is my nephew, the son of my nephew is my grandson."⁵

In eighteenth-century eastern North America, being a metaphorical woman could be a blessing and a curse, but it often meant what those engaged in diplomatic dialogue wished for it to mean at a given moment. Precisely when or how the Delaware became "women" is rather difficult to pin down, because there are two differing accounts. Some sources claim that the Iroquois Confederation and the Delaware entered into an agreement that defined the Lenni-Lenape as women in the late 1670s. However, another interpretation states that the Six Nations did not apply the term to the Delaware, in a derogatory sense, until 1726, when they (and other native peoples) rejected an Iroquois call for war against all Europeans.⁶

Beyond the rather sparse historical record, nineteenth century ethnographers recorded Iroquois and Delaware traditions that offer conflicting accounts as to how the Lenni-Lenape became metaphorical "women." The Delawares claimed that the Iroquois somehow tricked them into accepting this status. After a series of wars, which the Delaware claimed to have won, the two sides reached a peace agreement in which the Iroquois implored the Lenni-Lenape to become "women," or peacemakers to all the tribes. The role the Delaware would assume under this plan closely paralleled that of women in Iroquois society. However, while Iroquois women had a political voice, it rarely took the public form the Delaware would supposedly exercise under this plan. Under the proposed agreement, the Iroquois agreed to protect the Delaware from harm and when the Lenni-Lenape spoke as metaphorical women, the Iroquois League would heed her. However, two other details within this agreement clouded future Iroquois-Delaware relations. As "women," the Delaware could not—in theory—bear arms or conduct diplomacy.⁷ The Five Nations would do that for them. For their part, the Iroquois regularly asserted during the eighteenth century that they had made the Lenni-Lenape into "women" through a past military conquest.⁸ However, it may be that the status of being "women" simply conferred upon the Lenni-Lenape diplomatic obligations of providing Five Nations' diplomats with food and lodging.⁹ Since the Delaware's description of the metaphorical woman status somewhat resembles the role of females in Iroquois society, there may be some truth to their account. But there is also evidence for the Iroquois version of events, which comes from no less a source than the Delaware themselves.

The Delaware sachem Sassoonan told Pennsylvania officials in a 1728 meeting that the Iroquois viewed the Delaware "as Women only, & desired

them to plant Corn & mind their own private Business, for that they [the Iroquois] would take Care of what related to Peace and War.”¹⁰ Later, in 1755, another Delaware leader, the Beaver, while addressing Six Nation’s representatives stated: “Uncle: I still remember the Time when You first conquered Us, and made Woman of Us, and told Us that You took Us under your Protection, and that We must not meddle with Wars, but stay in the House and mind Council Affairs.”¹¹ Nor over the years, did the Iroquois hesitate to remind the Delaware of their diminished status. A Mohawk chief in 1756 boasted to Pennsylvania officials, in the presence of Lenni-Lenape representatives, that “We, the Mohocks are Men; we are made so from above, but the Delawares are Women and under our Protection, and [are] of too low a kind to be men.”¹² The notion of the Six Nations as the protectors of the Lenni-Lenape resonates through these remarks.

The role of women in Iroquois society and the role of the metaphorical woman in Iroquois diplomacy comprised two very different matters. Within Iroquois society, women exercised considerable influence in their roles as the heads of the matrilineal kinship structure, through the control of agricultural production, and their ability to veto wars or diplomatic missions by withholding foodstuffs and other provisions.¹³ They also exercised a great deal of power in the political realm. Caucusing behind the scenes, Iroquois women frequently had their way in the selection of new chiefs, and also had the power to “dehorn,” or remove leaders they deemed wanting.¹⁴ An Iroquois male aspiring to become a chief knew that he had to gain the support of his community’s women. Lenni-Lenape women also lived in a matrilineal society, and like Iroquois women, they had a hand in the choosing of chiefs.¹⁵

Iroquois society imposed a sexual division on the natural world. Because of this, Iroquois women had a geographical space that could be described as “theirs.” The world of women radiated out from the center of the village, past the palisades, through the cornfields, and stopped at the tree line. Within this space, they produced the bulk of their community’s food through their agricultural activities, raised their clan’s children, encouraged their male kin to go to war, and influenced internal Iroquois politics. The tree line itself served as the boundary line—indeed, it was perhaps the only non-gendered space in Iroquoian thought—between the worlds of men and women. Here, visitors stopped, and shouted to announce their presence to the village. Here, after a death, the clearminded—those who offered comfort to the grieving—halted, and awaited the bereaved so that they could begin the condolence, the most fundamental of all Iroquois ceremonies. Stepping beyond the tree line, and

into the forest, one entered the domain of men, where they hunted, warred, conducted diplomacy, and sought out encounters with the supernatural.¹⁶

The Six Nations regarded the Delaware's status as metaphorical "women" as an anomaly since it occurred within the diplomatic sphere, outside the Iroquoian conception of the gendered natural landscape. With no guidelines or established traditions to follow, a "woman," in the diplomatic sense, became a term whose definition changed frequently—and oft times for the Iroquois, conveniently—over the course of the eighteenth century. The Delaware, in their version of events, claimed that their position of "women" was supposed to be one of honor, that they would be protected and heeded by the Iroquois and other nations. The change as to what the term "woman" meant occurred in the late 1720s, when the Iroquois League issued "orders" to other native peoples for a war that would have pitted them against both the French and the British. The Six Nation's dictums were ignored by virtually every other tribe, but some peoples, particularly the Lenni-Lenape and the Shawnees, became the principal objects of derision for League diplomats.¹⁷ By the beginning of the 1730s, the transformation of the metaphorical woman of diplomacy into an object of scorn and derision was in full swing.

In the earliest incarnation of the term, the Lenni-Lenape invoked their status as women to resist Iroquois demands for tribute, and manipulated Iroquois expectations of gender to their own advantage. Upon meeting the Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania in 1694, the Delaware sachem Hitquoquean displayed a war belt sent by the Confederacy, and explained that the Iroquois attempted to shame him into providing warriors for an expedition against the French in Canada, saying "you delaware Indians doe nothing but stay att home & boill yor potts, and are like women, while wee Onondages & Senekaes Goe abroad & fight agt theemie." Hitquoquan remarked that "we (the Delawares) having been a peaceable people . . . being but week and verie few in number, cannot assist ym: & having resolved among orselves not to goe, doe intend to send back this their belt of wampum."¹⁸ Unlike other Algonquin tributaries to the Six Nations, the Delaware could invoke their non-combatant status as women, and avoid sending their young men to fight on the behalf of the Confederacy. As European weaponry made the battlegrounds of North America more lethal, tribes that could place only a small number of warriors in the field found it advantageous to avoid combat, if at all possible.

Other tribes that fell into the Six Nation's orbit paid tribute in the form of wampum and in the lives of their young men who joined Iroquois war parties.

In 1745, the Iroquois and the English called upon the Mahicans to furnish fighting men for a campaign against the French. During the council with the Mahicans, kinship terms dominated the discourse. The English and the Six Nations addressed each other as "Brethren," indicating that they saw each other as equals. However, both the Iroquois and the English referred to the Mahicans as "children," who in turn, referred to them as "father."¹⁹ While "father" did not, in native terms, indicate direct control, the presence of the English may have altered the diplomatic language, since both the Mahicans and Iroquois by this time well understood the status of the father in English society. At no point in this conference did English delegates directly address the Mahicans. All communication between the two passed through the Iroquois, who in turn spoke to their "dependents." Perhaps the Iroquois were seeking to control the diplomatic discourse in this exchange, and in the process, minimize any potential confusion.

Almost from the time that they became cognizant of native use of gender and kinship terms in diplomacy, the English attempted to ascribe a diminished status to the Delawares and other native peoples that were designated "women" by the Iroquois. Like the "Mohickons" of New England, the Lenni-Lenape, according to a pamphlet published in London, had been "conquer'd by the Five Nations, their Breech-Cloth taken from them, and a Petticoat put upon them."²⁰

The Iroquois carefully cultivated, for English consumption, an image of themselves as the conquerors of other native peoples. British diplomatic theory held that under the Covenant Chain alliance, their allies, the Six Nations ruled other native peoples and their lands, linking the English to all the Indian nations that they supposedly dominated. Much of this was fiction, and had little to do with the realities of inter-tribal politics, but it was a very rich piece of fiction, one which the English were very willing to believe. With this theory in mind, the British relied on the Iroquois claims to suzerainty over other peoples to further their own territorial claims far into the North American continent, in lieu of their physical ability to occupy that space. But a new phase soon opened in Iroquois-English relations. Most of Britain's North American colonies had little trouble managing their Indian affairs, usually through a combination of negotiation and the judicious (and at times, not so judicious) application of violence. Pennsylvania however, approached Indian relations quite differently. The colony's Quaker dominated government—as well as a good portion of the population—abhorred bloodshed. As a result, when more forceful methods were needed to bend

recalcitrant Indians to the colony's will, they had to look elsewhere for peoples willing to act as enforcers on their behalf. The Iroquois, offered the proper incentive, turned out to be more than willing to forsake their role as the protectors of the Delaware and to act on the behalf of the colony.²¹

The first occasion for the Iroquois to assist Pennsylvania came about as a result of the fraudulent Walking Purchase of 1737. From the earliest settlement of the colony in the 1680s, the Delaware and other native peoples enjoyed generally good relations with Pennsylvania's government. However, as the colony expanded, English settlers began encroaching on more of the Delaware's land. In 1735, James Logan, the colony's chief justice and *de facto* head of Indian affairs, presented Lenni-Lenape chiefs with a purported copy of a 1686 deed that granted Pennsylvania most of the Lehigh Valley. The deed also granted the colony as much land west of present day Wrightstown, Pennsylvania, as a man could traverse on foot in a day and a half. The Delaware chiefs protested that they knew of no such document, and in any case, the colony's founder, William Penn, guaranteed them their lands.

Despite the Lenni-Lenape protests, Logan persuaded them to have the boundaries paced off in accordance with the deed in 1737. To insure that they would acquire as much land as possible, Pennsylvania officials arranged for men to cut trees and brush and clear a path through the woods. They also designated three men who had trained for the walk to carry out the task, who would be followed by mounted men carrying food and provisions for them. The walkers ran, rather than walked, most of the course, traversing an area of approximately sixty miles. The Delaware bitterly complained that the walk was not conducted in accordance with the deed, pointing out that the wording on the document said "walk" and the men who paced off the land ran. Despite Logan's best efforts, the Delawares thwarted him by simply refusing to leave their lands.²²

The Delaware's intransigence presented a problem for Logan and the Penn heirs, who wanted to begin selling the land acquired in the Walking Purchase. Realizing they could not pressure the Quaker dominated assembly to use force against the Delaware, they sent feelers to the Iroquois League to see if they would assist in removing the Delaware.

The Delaware also turned to their Iroquois "uncles" for help in fending off Pennsylvania's claim to their lands. They did not know however, that the colonial government had already plied the Six Nations' leaders with gifts, and gained their support. Moreover, the diplomatic situation had changed greatly since the end of the seventeenth century. Whereas the Six Nations once

regarded the Delaware as a useful buffer between Iroquoia and Pennsylvania, they now deemed the Lenni-Lenape as politically expendable. Realizing that they had more to gain by playing off Pennsylvania against the New York colony, Onondaga—the seat of the Iroquois Confederacy—sought closer diplomatic ties between themselves and Philadelphia. The Lenni-Lenape had now become inconvenient to both the Iroquois and Pennsylvania, but the old men in Onondaga recognized that the Delaware could perform—albeit, unknowingly and unwillingly—one last, important service for the Iroquois.²³ The Delaware now became useful to the Iroquois in that by dispossessing them, the Six Nations would signal their loyalty to Brother Onas, the governor of Pennsylvania.

In a 1742 conference at Philadelphia, an Onondaga spokesman, Canasatego, invoked the gendered language of diplomacy, and used it to undiplomatically chastise the Lenni-Lenape representatives:

. . . You ought to be taken by the hair of the head and shak'd severely
 . . . We have seen with our Eyes a Deed signed by nine of your
 Ancestors above fifty years ago for this very land . . . But how came you
 to sell land at all? We conquer'd you, we made Women of you, you
 know you are women, and can no more sell land than Women . . . we
 charge you to remove instantly. we don't give you liberty to think
 about it. You are Women; take the Advice of a Wise Man and remove
 immediately.

Canasatego then gave the Delawares a string of wampum to help them remember his words—as if they would want to—and curtly ordered them out of the meeting: “We have . . . other Business to transact . . . therefore depart the Council and consider what has been said to you.”²⁴ The denigrating tone, the notion of women as foolish and lacking political power, represented European ideas, rather than Iroquoian ones. It also emphasizes the gulf between the reality of women in Iroquois society and the metaphorical woman in diplomacy. While Iroquois women did not own nor sell land in the European sense, they considered it to be under their control, since they worked it and harvested its produce. Doubtless, Canasatego intended to satisfy his English benefactors with this speech, and possibly, for good measure, he threw in what he perceived to be English conceptions of women. It has been suggested that perhaps Canasatego's female kin could have taken him to task for his description of women.²⁵ It seems unlikely however, that Iroquois

females would have been offended, primarily because they would have not recognized themselves in Canasatego's new definitions of women.

The Iroquois decision to help Pennsylvania divest the Delaware of their lands had two unintended consequences. Some Delawares remained in eastern Pennsylvania, but most of them moved to the western reaches of the colony and to the Ohio River Valley, where they found themselves out of the effective reach of the Iroquois. But they also found themselves far from English traders. In order to acquire the trade goods they had become increasingly dependent upon, many Delawares began trading with the French who established trading posts in the Ohio country in the 1750s.²⁶

The building of these posts contributed to the tensions that led to the outbreak of hostilities in 1754 between England and France in the Ohio country. Sent to capture the French post at Fort Duquesne, British commander General Edward Braddock instead suffered a spectacular defeat in July, 1755. In the wake of this surprising victory, French representatives treated with the Lenni-Lenape, arguing ". . . that if ye Delawares would join [the French] they would restore them to their ancient lands independent of ye Five Nations."²⁷ The Western Delaware, whether because they needed French trade goods, or because they believed they could reacquire their lands, responded to the French overtures and began attacking English settlements.²⁸ At least some western Delawares felt they had a realistic prospect of regaining their lands, believing that they and their allies could "subdue all America, except New England."²⁹

At his estate on the Mohawk River, Sir William Johnson, the Crown's agent to the Six Nations and Superintendent of Indian affairs, watched these developments with concern. Seeking to halt the attacks on the Pennsylvania frontier, Johnson called upon the Six Nations to exert control over the Lenni-Lenape. The Iroquois expressed "the greatest concern, to hear of the barbarities of our cousins the Delawares, to our brethren the English," and vaguely hinted that they would bring them under control as soon as possible.³⁰ While in conference with Iroquois representatives, Johnson received a letter from Gideon Hawley, a missionary among the Delawares who had been instructed by them to pen the missive. The Lenni-Lenape expressed contrition for their actions, by falling back on their status as Iroquois dependents, stating that they were "under the direction of the Six nations; we are women, our uncle must say what we must do; he has the hatchet, and we must do as he says. 'Tis true, brother, we have not the hatchet, we are poor women, and out of temper."³¹ Hawley ended the missive with a postscript that apparently escaped the notice of his (in all probability) illiterate hosts. Not believing

that "the Delawares design to be peaceable," Hawley advised Johnson to "build a fort and keep a garrison."³²

Johnson's anxiety reflected his realization that the center of Indian power in the northeast had shifted. Forcing the Delawares and other native peoples westward had an effect that neither the Iroquois nor the English had foreseen: it shifted the center of Indian power westward, and Johnson knew it. Onondaga knew that the Lenni-Lenape and other nations of the Ohio country could field between fifteen hundred and two thousand warriors.³³

In their attempts to bring the western Delaware under control in late 1755, the Six Nations altered the gendered dialogue of diplomacy somewhat, and began employing male kinship terms such as "Nephews" and "Couzens" when addressing the Delawares.³⁴ Seven months later, in July, 1756, gendered metaphors dominated much of the diplomatic discourse, but now the Six Nations reminded the Delaware that "you are our women; our forefathers . . . put a petticoat on you, and charged you to be true to us & lie with no other man." They went on to admonish the Delaware for allowing the French to cut "the string that tied your petticoat . . . and you lay with them, & so became a common Bawd." But after this admonishment, the Six Nations offered the Delaware a chance to redeem themselves and become men. "We now give you a little Prick and put it into your private Parts, and so let it grow there until you become a compleat man." If the Delaware heeded their uncle's instructions, they would one day "become a noted man." The Iroquois also employed, not for the first or the only time, a bit of revisionist history, telling the Delaware that "The English & French fight for *our* lands," conveniently forgetting for the moment, their role in evicting the Delaware from Pennsylvania.³⁵ The modification of the diplomatic discourse had two purposes. First, it assuaged the Delaware's pride by assigning them diplomatic maleness. Second, now that they were men again, the Iroquois wanted to remind the Delaware of their responsibilities as "nephews."

Addressing the Delaware in male terms signaled Iroquois recognition of the shifting geopolitical realities of the Northeast in the 1750s, but they needed to maintain the fiction, for British consumption, that they still ruled the Delaware and other native peoples. The Lenni-Lenapes in the Ohio Country were, for all practical purposes, independent of the Six Nations.³⁶ Another factor in the Iroquois approach may have been that they doubted their ability, given the Delaware's distance from them, and particularly if they had access to French arms, as to how quickly—or if—they could bring them under control. While the Six Nations took pains to give their British

allies the impression that they could forcibly control other Indian nations, their influence—particularly in the eighteenth century—rested on their ability to persuade other native peoples to go along with them.³⁷

Realizing that they no longer had direct control over the western Delawares, the Iroquois now employed the term “nephew” in the English sense—as uncles having influence, but not direct parental control—rather than in the Iroquoian sense. When William Johnson, an old hand in dealing with the Six Nations, spoke to them of the need to bring their “nephews” under control, he used the term in the traditional Iroquoian manner, because in his view, the situation required them to command, not ask, their nephews to cease their hostilities on the Pennsylvania frontier. The lack of action on the part of the League, and their misunderstanding of his usage—which may have been intentional—explains Johnson’s irritation when he met with Iroquois representatives two months later:

. . . desiring that you would, without loss of time, put a stop to your nephews spilling any more of your brethrens blood; . . . unless you, the six nations, who have always maintained a superiority over the Indians, will now exert yourselves . . . you will . . . lose that authority which they hitherto acknowledged, but will have them your enemies.³⁸

The next day, the Onondaga spokesman Red Head responded to Sir William by using one of the oldest excuses in diplomacy: he blamed someone else. The Iroquois denied responsibility for the actions of the Lenni-Lenape, arguing that the fault lay not with them, but with Brother Onas (the governor of Pennsylvania). Red Head argued that the Six Nations “look’d upon the Delawares as the more immediate care of Onas . . . we are . . . of [the] opinion that he has not taken that friendly care of them as he ought to do, and therefore our common enemy hath taken advantage of his neglect.” Red Head based his argument on geography, pointing out Onas had the Delawares “within the circle of his arms”—that is, closer to Pennsylvania than Iroquoia—and beyond the reach of the League.³⁹

Nor was this the only instance in which the Six Nations shifted responsibility for the Lenni-Lenape’s actions to the English. A little over a year later, in May 1757, the Mohawk diplomat Little Abraham bluntly told Johnson and Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor William Denny that the English had themselves to blame for the Delaware’s actions. Little Abraham repeated the assertion that the Six Nations had, in the past, “conquer’d the Delawares, and put Petticoats on them.” However, Little Abraham engaged in a bit of histori-

cal revisionism, and cast the supposed conquest of the Lenni-Lenape in a far more favorable light. Harkening back to Canasatego's speech of fifteen years earlier, Little Abraham now claimed that the League's motivations toward the Delaware had been benign. The League merely sought to protect the Lenni-Lenape from the English, by moving them to lands on the Susquehanna River. But, he explained, relocating the Delawares had failed, since the English:

covetous of Land, made Plantations there and spoiled their Hunting Grounds . . . we . . . found their complaints to be true . . . the French became acquainted with all the Causes of complaint they had against you; . . . you drove them . . . into the arms of the French . . .⁴⁰

In effect, Six Nations' diplomats now claimed that the earlier duty they had performed for Pennsylvania, the eviction of the Delaware from the eastern and central part of the colony, had removed the Lenni-Lenape from their sphere of influence.

For their part, Delaware peoples were not of one mind concerning their relationship with the English or the Six Nations. Because of their dispersal and separation from their kinsmen in the east, and the polyglot native communities that they became part of in the Ohio country, the views of the western Delaware varied greatly from one native community to the next.⁴¹ They also differed greatly from the views of the Delaware who had remained in the east. Unlike their kin in the west, the eastern Delaware lived among English colonists. They had nothing to gain—and everything to lose—if they engaged in hostilities.⁴²

Some western Lenni-Lenape communities believed that the Six Nations could not retaliate against them with military force, and joined the French. Others, however, even while they allied themselves with the French, were not so sure. James Smith, who spent most of the French and Indian war as a captive in one of the polyglot communities in the Ohio Country, recounted how a woman, imagining that she saw two of "Johnston's Mohawks" one night, threw the camp into a panic.⁴³

Many of these Delaware communities in the Ohio country concocted what they regarded as plausible rationales for their actions against the English. Some chose defiance, claiming that they had "been too Long treated by the Six Nations . . . as Women, but will now show them that they are Men."⁴⁴ Other Delaware communities however, chose to employ their status as

women, and shifted the blame for their behavior from themselves, to the Iroquois and the French:

... since we have lost our anicent counsellors we are Ignorant of and our Uncles the Six Nations have not taken due care to refresh our Memories nor to remind us properly of our several engagements. We are looked upon as Women, and therefore When the French come amongst us, is it to be wondered that they were able to seduce us.⁴⁵

In effect, these Delaware continued the diplomatic game of shifting blame elsewhere by arguing that they did not know how to conduct themselves once they had been deprived of their “uncles” guidance.

During the early phases of the French and Indian War, the English had two diplomatic goals regarding the Lenni-Lenape. They wanted the Delaware to cease their hostilities against English settlers on the Pennsylvania frontier, and they wanted their allegiance in the war against the French. However there was one matter that had to be addressed before the Delaware could become effective allies: they had to be transformed from women into men.

Strangely, three different British diplomatic entities began working independently (and sometimes unwittingly) toward this goal, each in their own fashion. All three, in the early years of the war had one immediate goal: to end Delaware hostilities on the frontiers. On the one hand was the British Indian superintendent, Sir William Johnson, who, because of his own close personal alliances with the Six Nations, wanted the Iroquois to maintain their supposed domination of the Lenni-Lenape. Pennsylvania governor William Denny wanted the Delaware attacks on the province’s frontiers to end. There was also a third, non-governmental party that had to be considered: the Pennsylvania Quakers. Following their philosophy of non-violence, some would say, almost to a fault, the Quakers petitioned the colonial government even after the first attacks on the colony, not to respond forcefully against the Delaware.⁴⁶

However, all three hit upon the same solution, some intentionally, and others accidentally. Whereas the Delaware expressed dissatisfaction with the prospect of being “women” to the Iroquois, perhaps they might accept a diminutive, yet more palatable status in regards to the English: that of “children.” Becoming English “children” may have had some appeal to the Lenni-Lenape. For one thing, they could employ the English kinship structure and argue that the English—not the Iroquois—had a closer relationship to them. But they would also be male children, which would allow them to

become military allies of the English. The first to make such a move was the British Northern Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson.

Sir William set about this task in 1756 while concluded a treaty with the Delaware in the presence of Iroquois delegates at his Johnson Hall estate. In his closing remarks, Johnson metaphorically transformed the Delawares from women into men by “taking off the Petticoat, or that invidious name of Women . . . which hath been imposed on them by the 6 Nations.”⁴⁷ Johnson went on to tell the Delaware that he would use his “influence and best endeavors to prevail with the Six Nations to follow my example.” The Iroquois representatives hedged, stating that while they approved of Sir William’s actions, they lacked the authority to remove the name of women from the Delaware on the spot.

But Sir William Johnson then went on to inject an English kinship term into the diplomatic discourse, by telling the Delaware that he was ending the treaty session in the name of “the Great King of England their father.” A year later, Pennsylvania governor William Denny concluded a conference with the Lenni-Lenape by telling them:

“We now rise and take you into our Arms, and embrace you with the greatest Pleasure as our Friends and Brethren, and having desire we ever hereafter look on one another as Brethern & Children of the same Parents.”⁴⁸

While Johnson’s and Denny’s motives for making the Delawares into English male children were transparent, other, unexpected parties became involved in the efforts to grant the Lenni-Lenape diplomatic maleness, and transform them into males who could fight on the behalf of the English. The two most surprising parties in this regard were the Quakers—those renowned pacifists, but now, probably worried about their own skins rather than their principles, and the Iroquois, who, for the moment at least, saw some advantage in making the Lenni-Lenape into males.

Israel Pemberton, Philadelphia merchant, leader of Pennsylvania’s Quakers, and political opponent of both Johnson and Denny, met with the Iroquois diplomat Scarroyaday and spoke of the Delaware as children. Like other Six Nation’s representatives, Scarroyaday reiterated the Iroquois position that Delaware depredations resulted from English mistreatment of the Lenni-Lenape, noting that “if you had kept them constantly under your Eyes, they would still have been your Children.”⁴⁹

Inadvertently, Johnson and Denny may have offered the Delaware a chance to escape Iroquois domination. By accepting another diminutive role in the diplomatic dialogue, this time as English “children,” the Delaware could use it as a way to refute their Iroquois “uncles” assertion that they were women. By becoming English children—and male children at that, since they were expected to become military allies, the Delaware could, they hoped, erase Iroquois authority over them. The Delaware, in this case, chose to follow English kinship structure. For if the Delawares could reconfigure themselves as the male children of an English father, the authority of their Iroquois uncles would be greatly diminished. However, they would become English children and subjects, but in all likelihood, they viewed this as a good trade. There were few Englishmen in the Ohio country, and they would have been unable (and probably not interested in) exerting control over the Lenni-Lenape.

Seizing on these terms, and their now altered status, many Delaware now rejected the idea that they were women, and did so in violent language. Nearly a year after Sir William Johnson removed the “invidious name of Women” from them, The Lenni-Lenape forcefully told Mohawk emissaries at Otsaningo:

That they looked upon themselves as Men, and wou'd acknowledge no Superiority that any other Nation had over them. 'We are Men, and are determined not to be ruled any longer by you as Women; . . . say no more to us on that Head, lest we cut off your private parts and make Women of you, as you have done of us.'⁵⁰

In the long term, the Delaware's new status as English male children did not change the way they were viewed by the British or the Six Nations. When the Seven Year's War ended, the Delaware were still regarded, not only with suspicion by the English, but once again as subordinates of the Iroquois. Nearly two decades after he verbally removed the Delaware's “petticoats,” Sir William Johnson wrote that the Lenni-Lenape had “been long endeavoring to shake of their dependency on the Six Nations.”⁵¹

In the history of Anglo-Amerindian diplomacy, the Iroquois-Delaware relationship represents a unique case. While other nations found themselves compelled to cooperate with the Six Nations, the Delaware, while they resented their position as “women,” used their unique—albeit constantly changing—status to resist Iroquois demands. As time went on and the Six Nations altered the definitions of the term “women” to suit their needs, the Delaware also altered the term and invented definitions to protect themselves

from retaliation from the league. The shifting definitions of what it meant to be a metaphorical woman, illustrates the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, at least in the diplomatic, if not the everyday sphere. With the entrance of the English into the diplomatic sphere, the Delaware—and the Iroquois—seized upon foreign constructs of gender and kinship in an effort to manipulate the diplomatic dialogue to their own advantage. The Delaware would not escape Iroquois domination entirely until the influence of the Six Nations waned during the American Revolution. The Lenni-Lenape would use that conflict to declare their own independence of a sort, by entering into diplomatic relations negotiating with the nascent United States, and signing the first treaty with the new nation.⁵²

NOTES

1. "Journal of Captain George Croghan, and the Treaty at Easton & c., 1757", in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 15 vols. Trans. E. B. O'Callaghan. Ed. John Romeyn Broadhead (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1855–1883) 7:318. Hereafter cited as NYCD.
2. The historiography of the Delaware, or Lenni-Lenape, as women is extensive. Nineteenth-century scholars such as Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or, Iroquois* (Rochester, N.Y., Sage & Brother, 1851), 338, and Daniel G. Brinton, *The Lenâpé and their legends: with the complete text and symbols of the Walum Olum, a new translation, and an inquiry into its authenticity* (Philadelphia, 1885), 109–12, mentioned it in their works. For twentieth-century scholarship on the topic, see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung, 1700–1763* (1949; reprinted, Syracuse University Press, 1990), 195–97. See Jay Miller, "The Iroquois as Women: A Symbolic Solution," *American Ethnologist* (1974): 507–14. See also Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary Druke, and David R. Miller, eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), and 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: Norton, 1984), 301–02.
3. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 36.
4. Jennings, Fenton, Druke & Miller, *History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 119–20.
5. Lewis Henry Morgan, *The Indian Journals, 1859–1862* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 45. C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 65.
6. See Francis Jennings, " "Pennsylvania Indians" and the Iroquois", in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800*. Ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 79–80, 86–90.
7. John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1876).

- Reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 58–60. See also Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee*, 338, and Brinton, *The Lenâpé and their legends*, 109–12. See also Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 109.
8. See the speech of the Onondaga diplomat Canasatego, "At a COUNCIL held at the Proprietor's, July 12th, 1742" in Sir Thomas George, *The Treaty held with the Indians of the Six Nations at Philadelphia, in July 1742: to which is prefix'd an account of the first confederacy of the Six Nations, their present tributaries, dependents and allies* (London, 1743?), 29.
 9. Wallace, *King of the Delawares*, 195–96.
 10. *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, 7 vols. (Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn & CO., 1851; reprinted New York: AMS, 1968), 3:332. Hereafter cited as *Minutes*. See also *Minutes* 2:546.
 11. *Minutes* 6:155–56. In all likelihood, Beaver did not mean that he actually remembered the conquest. He may have been referring to what had been transmitted to him orally.
 12. Mohawk sachem Canyase speaking in "At a Council held at Philadelphia, the 24th of October, 1756", in *Minutes* 7:297.
 13. A. F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Knopf, 1970). See also William N. Fenton, "The Iroquois in History" in *North American Indians in Historical Perspective*. Ed. Eleanor Leacock and Nancy Lurie (New York: Random House, 1971) 138–39. See also Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 20–21.
 14. William N. Fenton, "The Iroquois in History", in *North American Indians in Historical Perspective*, ed. Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie (New York: Random House, 1971), 138–39.
 15. Wallace, *King of the Delawares*, 13.
 16. Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 23, and Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating A Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 28.
 17. Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 301–2.
 18. "Att a Councill held att philadelphia, the Sixt day of July, 1694", in *Minutes* 1:447. Shoemaker, *Strange Likeness*, 109–10.
 19. *Minutes* 5:7–26.
 20. *Treaty Held with the Indians of the Six Nations At Philadelphia in July 1742* (London, 1743?), 5.
 21. Francis Jennings, "Iroquois Alliances in American History", in *History and Culture*, 47. See also Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724–1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 56.
 22. Wallace, *King of the Delawares*, 18–30.
 23. McConnell, *A Country Between*, 57. See also James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: Norton, 1999), 174–75.
 24. Canasatego, in George, *The Treaty Held with the Indians of the Six Nations At Philadelphia*, 29.
 25. Nancy Shoemaker, "An Alliance between Men: Gender Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi" *Ethnohistory* vol. 46, no. 2 (1999): 246.
 26. Wallace, *King of the Delaware*, 59.

27. "From Thomas Pownall to Major General Johnson, Decr. 21, 55", in Sir William Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: State University of New York, 1922-62) 14 vols. 2:369 13:77. Hereafter cited as *SWJP*.
28. C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 227-28.
29. James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, during his Captivity with the Indians in the Years 1755, '56, '57, '58, & '59* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1870), 47.
30. *An Account of Conferences Held, and Treaties Made, between Major-General Sir William Johnson, Bart, and the Chief Sachems and Warriors . . .* (London, 1760), 4.
31. "Copy of a letter of the Rev. Mr. Hawley at Onebugbquagey to the honourable William Johnson, dated Onebugbquagey, December 27. 1755" *An Account of Conferences Held*, 13.
32. *An Account of Conferences Held*, 14.
33. White, *The Middle Ground*, 226.
34. NYCD 7:49 7: 218.
35. "At a Council held at Easton, Saturday, 31st Day of July, 1756" in *Minutes* 7:218. The speaker was the Seneca war chief Newcastle. Italics added for emphasis. See also Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 219.
36. White, *The Middle Ground*, 245.
37. Jennings, "Iroquois Alliances" in *Culture and History*, 41. See also "Instructions to M. Duquesne" in NYCD, 10:242.
38. NYCD, 7:59. See also "An Indian Conference, February 20. 1756" in *SWJP* 9:366.
39. "The Answer of the Six Nations 21 Febr. 1756", in *An Account of Conferences Held* . . . 37. See also Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 219.
40. "At a Conference held with the Indians in the Court House at Lancaster, on Thursday the 19th May, 1757", in *Minutes* 7: 540-541. The speaker was Little Abraham.
41. See "Robert Hunter Morris to William Shirley, 3 Decembr. 1755" in *SWJP* 2:369.
42. For examples of these polyglot communities, see White, *The Middle Ground*, 187-188. In *a Contry Between*, McConnell refers to these communities as "Republican Towns."
43. Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences*, 69-70.
44. *SWJP* 2:369.
45. "Sir William Johnsons Reply to the Delaware Kings answer as yesterday" in NYCD 7:157.
46. *Several Conferences between some of the Principal People Amongst the Quakers in Pennsylvania and the Deputies of the Six Indian Nations in Alliance with Britain . . .* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1756), 10-12.
47. "Sir William Johnson to the Lords of Trade, Albany 17th July 1756" in NYCD 7:119.
48. "At a Meeting with the Indians in Easton, on Wednesday, August the 3d, 1757, A.M." in *Minutes* 7:701.
49. *Several Conferences between some . . .*, 18.
50. "At a Conference held at Lancaster, On Friday the 13th of May, 1757" in *Minutes* 7:521-522. These remarks were reported by Mohawk diplomat Little Abraham. Otsiningo was a mixed population Indian village, near the site of present day Binghamton, N.Y. See Jennings et. al., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 222-23.
51. "To Frederick Haldimand, Johnson Hall June 30th 1773", in *SWJP* 8:837.
52. "Treaty with the Delawares, 1778" in Charles J. Kappler, ed. and comp., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. 7 vols. (Washington: GPO, 1903-1972), 2:3-5.