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Lost and Found: Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh as an Anchor to Identity and Sovereignty

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Lost and Found:
Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh as an Anchor to Identity and Sovereignty

An abstract of a Thesis in Museum Studies

By

Brittney N. Jimerson

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of:

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SUNY Buffalo State
Department of History and Social Studies Education
Thesis Abstract

Thesis Abstract

This author presents a study of the Onöndowa'ga:'¹ people of Western New York. The Onöndowa'ga:', an Indigenous group located in Western New York, are more commonly known as the Seneca. Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh² to the Onöndowa'ga:', like all Indigenous people, is a form of intangible history, history that is interconnected with who they are and where they have come from. Showing the history of who the Onöndowa'ga:' were and still are, as well as what their language means to their culture, is the groundwork for understanding how devastating US policies became for them. Policy changes throughout American history came to destroy the way the Onöndowa'ga:' lived. While many areas of culture were impacted by those policies, the largest target was on Indigenous languages. It was understood that languages were a complex part of who the Indigenous peoples of this land were and in order to disrupt them and their ways of life, they must be destroyed. Many policies were constructed by the United States government, some obvious and others hidden in bigger legislation, that were aimed at the extermination of Native Americans or their ways of life. That was not always the relationship between them. Colonists and the early American Republic understood the need to work with and recognize Native American sovereignty, but as the country grew, so did the need for new areas to settle. After decades of suppression the Onöndowa'ga:', as well as many other Indigenous people, are finding ways to reconnect with their language as a means to deepen and expand their cultural identity and reaffirm their

¹ Translates to "Seneca"

² Translates to "Seneca Language"

sovereignty. The Onöndowa'ga:' have worked with fluent elder speakers, children, and the community as a whole to revitalize and reconnect with the traditional ways.

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A Thesis
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State University of New York
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Department of History and Social Studies Education

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I. Introduction

The United States is a country like many others, built on the foundation of civilizations and peoples that pre-dated them. Throughout colonization and the later creation of the United States, relationships with Indigenous peoples have always been multi-dimensional, self-serving, and unequal. The “game” was rigged in many ways that would later hurt the relationships Indigenous peoples had to their language, culture, and mode of operations as a community. Looking at the history of the Onöndowa’ga:’ people allows us to see the progression of contact and the influence it played in the deterioration of their language, which directly affected their sovereignty and sense of identity.

Throughout this paper, the term Onöndowa’ga:’ will be in reference to the Seneca people, and Hodinöhsö:ni’ will be referring to the Iroquois confederacy. Generalizations tend to occur when studying the many tribes located throughout the United States, terms like “Native American” and “Indians” are very generic and they assume all the Indigenous societies are the same or can be lumped together. The terms American Indian and Native American are the most commonly used to describe the people who are Indigenous to the Americas.³ Since the mid-1990s, there has been a shift in the use of terminology. First witnessed in 1998 when Indigenous students at Kansas University changed the name of their organization to First Nations Student Association (FNSA)

³ Bird, Michael Yellow. “What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples’ Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1999, pp. 1–21. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1185964.

from Native American Student Association (NASA).⁴ The students wanted to claim their identity and all agreed the original title was a form of racially imposed labels.⁵

A 1995 survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, found that Indigenous peoples preferred a wide array of different racial identities. “Options given to participants were: American Indian, Alaska Native, Native American, Some other term, or no preference.”⁶ It is worth noting that no options were given that would allow each distinct group to be recognized as themselves or what they identify as.

Michael Yellow Bird also makes the point that the two most commonly chosen options, Native American and American Indian, should come as no surprise since they were the most commonly used terms over the last 500 years.⁷ The shift to Indigenous is a way to reinforce sovereignty and to remind the world that they belong to this land and that they were here upon arrival and that they are still here today, fighting to remain sovereign and to take back the narrative.

For the Hodinöhsö:ni’, that is the same feeling when the term Iroquois is used to describe the Six Nation Confederacy. Iroquois is not their term and its origins are still not agreed upon; they could be Algonquin, French, or Basque, but it is still a name given to them by outsiders.⁸ The term is most commonly believed to have French origins that date back to their interactions with the Algonquins, who were known as the “Iroquets.”⁹ The Hodinöhsö:ni’ prefer their given name, which means, “People who build a house.”¹⁰ The

⁴ Bird, Michael Yellow. “What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples’ Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1999, pp. 2. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1185964.

⁵ IMBD. Pg 2.

⁶ Tucker, C., Kojetin, B. & Harrison, R. (1995). A statistical analysis of the CPS supplement on race and ethnic origin. Accessed September 8, 2019, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf>

⁷ Bird, Michael Yellow. “What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples’ Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1999, pp. 3. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1185964.

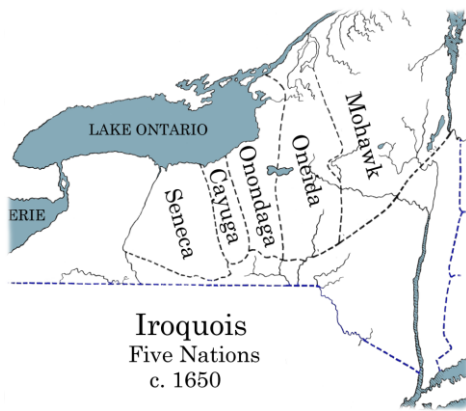
⁸ Parmenter, Jon. *The Edge of the Woods Iroquoia, 1534-1701*. Michigan State University Press, 2010. Pg 12.

⁹ Parmenter, Jon. *The Edge of the Woods Iroquoia, 1534-1701*. Michigan State University Press, 2010. Pg 14.

¹⁰ *Culture*. Seneca Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. 25 June 2016. <https://sni.org/culture/>.

contention with the term Indian again returns to the disregarding of self-classification and the generalization of all Indigenous groups.

The Onöndowa'ga: are a member of the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy from New York, with their current home being in the Western region of the state. The significance of specifying a specific region of people is simple; all Native groups have different traditions, histories, cultures, and languages. This holds true for members of the Hodinöhsö:ni' Nations. The five original groups of Indigenous people are invariably interconnected, but all remain distinctly different. Their histories are shared but



individual; their languages are similar but each group has their own. Even among the Onöndowa'ga: there is sense of individualism among the diversely located members. Some are on the reservations in Oil Spring, Allegany and

Figure 1

Cattaraugus, others are located in Canada,

Tonawanda, and even as far away as Oklahoma.

While historically located in the Finger Lake region of New York, in the mid-16th century a group of Onöndowa'ga: left the New York Confederacy and moved down to Pennsylvania and established settlements on the Upper Ohio River.¹¹ Over time this group moved further down the Ohio River and settled in the area of Steubenville, Ohio before the American Revolution. When they crossed the river and settled by the Scioto and Sandusky Rivers, they became known as the “Sandusky Seneca.”¹² The Sandusky

¹¹ Howard, James H. "Cultural Persistence and Cultural Change as Reflected in Oklahoma Seneca-Cayuga Ceremonialism." *Plains Anthropologist* 6, no. 11 (1961): 21-30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25666290>.

¹² Howard, James H. "Cultural Persistence and Cultural Change as Reflected in Oklahoma Seneca-Cayuga Ceremonialism." *Plains Anthropologist* 6, no. 11 (1961): 21-30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25666290>.

Seneca were a hybrid of Seneca, Cayuga, and other Confederacy members that migrated to Ohio after selling their lands in New York. The group faced a second removal in 1831 when they were forced to sell their lands in Ohio for a 67,000-acre tract of land in Oklahoma.¹³ While this group descends from the Hodinöhsö:ni', they are federally recognized as their own entity, the Seneca-Cayuga tribe of Oklahoma. The first Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 saw the New York Onöndowa'ga: releasing their land rights in what would now be parts of Kentucky, as a means to maintain their autonomy in their New York and Pennsylvania territories.¹⁴ The later amendment in 1784 found delegates further releasing lands held for hunting in Ohio. The Onöndowa'ga:' that lived on these lands disagreed with the decision and stated they had no real claim to the land to be able to relinquish it. These land decisions caused tension among the Hodinöhsö:ni' and New York State. The Treaty of Canandaigua is often seen as the attempt at a resolution.¹⁵

The Onöndowa'ga:' people are the western most group of the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy. Ancestral lands can be traced to the Finger Lake region and into the Genesee Valley. Oral history states that the Onöndowa'ga:' trace their origins to the beginning of time remembered.¹⁶ They share the confederacy with the Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and, as of 1722, the Tuscarora's of North Carolina (under Oneida sponsorship).¹⁷ Spoken is a variation of what western scholars have labeled an Iroquoian dialect. This language base can be found throughout the Confederacy and through other Indigenous groups on the East Coast. They had the largest population of the

¹³ Howard, James H. "Cultural Persistence and Cultural Change as Reflected in Oklahoma Seneca-Cayuga Ceremonialism." *Plains Anthropologist* 6, no. 11 (1961): 21-30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25666290>.

¹⁴ Billington, Ray A. "THE FORT STANWIX TREATY OF 1768." *New York History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1944, pp. 182-194. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23147791.

¹⁵ Billington, Ray A. "THE FORT STANWIX TREATY OF 1768." *New York History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1944, pp. 182-194. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23147791.

¹⁶ *A Basic Call to Consciousness: The Hau de No Sau Nee Address to the Western World*.

Geneva, Switzerland. 1977. Web. 12 Feb. 2016. https://ratical.org/many_worlds/6Nations/6nations1.html.

¹⁷ Abrams, H.J. George. *The Seneca People*. Library of Congress. Print. 1976. Pg 6.

Hodinöhsö:ni'. Each group has its similarities and shared histories, but each is and has always been an autonomous member. This is actually the greatest feature of the Hodinöhsö:ni', that each individual group can live its own separate journey in harmony and that they only become one when there is a threat or need.

The Onöndowa'ga:' have a rich history, both culturally and spiritually. Onöndowa'ga:' history is a compilation of stories, ceremonies, and community celebrations. Onöndowa'ga:' clans were the ways in which members traced lineage and maintained social interactions and social constructs. It acted as the basis for much of the social, political, and religious ways of life for the village.¹⁸ Clan membership is only inherited from one's mother, for the society is matrilineal in its essence. Broken into two groups, clans are either animal or bird, with each group having four subgroups. In the birds are the Hawk, Deer, Snipe, and Heron; animals are made up of the Wolf, Turtle, Bear, and Beaver. The Onöndowa'ga:' believe all clans are special animals that provide aid to them in some way. All members of each clan are said to have descended from one common female ancestor. Female members of society were held in great respect as Clan Mothers and as the balancing force of the people. Clan Mothers were responsible for the nomination, instillation, and removal of Chiefs. They also had the ability to call for a war party to exact revenge or to adopt an outsider as one of them.¹⁹ The way the Longhouse and ceremonies are arranged is based on clanship. Games and dances performed by clan members are traditionally done in Onöndowa'ga:', as a way to connect as a group with their culture.

¹⁸ Ibid. Pg. 5.

¹⁹ *Clans*. Culture. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. 25 June 2016. <https://sni.org/culture/>.

The origins of the Onöndowa'ga:' can be found in different legends or forms of oral history. Onöndowa'ga:' was a spoken language in pre-European contact. Written language was something that can only be traced back to the 1600s with the records of French Jesuit priests. Traditions have told that the Onöndowa'ga:' were formed by the creator and emerged from beneath a great mountain. Onöndowa'ga:' means, "People of the Great Hill."²⁰ Amongst the members of the Confederacy, the origin history is very similar. The mountain that was broken free was a flat top area that was at some point encircled by a great serpent. The serpent starved and killed the Onöndowa'ga:' until all that was left were two young orphans. The Creator spoke to the boys through an oracle and instructed them to make a special bow of willow and poison arrows that could defeat the snake.²¹ When the boys shot the arrows into the giant serpent, he began thrashing and expelling the skulls of the Onöndowa'ga:' down a steep hill. This hill is still a sacred site to the Onöndowa'ga:; it's believed to be located by Canandaigua Lake.²²

Amongst the Hodinöhsö:ni', the Onöndowa'ga:' were considered to be the best orators. Language and speech are directly tied to the Onöndowa'ga:' way of life. It defined who they were and where they came from. It was how they maintained their culture and connections to one another. Ceremonies, condolences, and conversation were all communed through Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh, or the Seneca Language. It provided kinship as well as distinction from the other Indigenous peoples. Clan Mothers would be the elders who bestowed names upon the children, names that carried significance and connections to their people.²³ Naming ceremonies are still practiced today among members of the Longhouse faith. Ceremonies done at Longhouse are all conducted in

²⁰ Merrill, Arch. *Land of the Onöndowa'ga:'s*. American Book-Stratford Press Inc. NY, NY. 1958. Print. Pg 68.

²¹ Abrams, H.J. George. *The Onöndowa'ga:' People*. Library of Congress. Print. 1976. Pg. 6

²² Abrams, H.J. George. *The Onöndowa'ga:' People*. Library of Congress. Print. 1976. Pg. 6

²³ *Clans*. Culture. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. 25 June 2016. <https://sni.org/culture/>.

Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh. This has historically and continues to be today, a place for members of the community to come together and worship the Creator, tell stories of their origins, and to celebrate their history as a people. The entire makeup and organization of the Onöndowa'ga:' is intangible; it is beyond just written histories and western ideals of relevance and importance. Intangible cultural heritage is considered any practice that is passed from generation to generation. Dances, songs, and ceremonies all fall within the parameters of intangible heritage. This is why the policies and legislation passed by both the federal and the state governments were so detrimental to Native communities. It tried to take from them their sense of self, their identity, and their future as a whole. Although there was legislation in place to protect them, it did not stop government agencies from finding loopholes and ways to destroy Indigenous cultures.

Since the contact of Europeans to the Americas, Indigenous people have been given two choices, assimilate or relocate.²⁴ Outcomes of mass genocide occurred pretty quickly after that first contact. When Indigenous people were exposed to smallpox it had dire consequences. A disease that the Native people had no immune system for, it wiped out millions of Native Americans.²⁵ Once it was discovered that Native Americans could not combat the smallpox disease, it was administered to them in the form of gifts. Blankets were given to Native Americans that had previously been covering dead bodies infected with the smallpox disease.

It wasn't just diseases that impacted Indigenous communities. After it was discovered that the "Native problem" was not going to be easily defeated, it was decided

²⁴ PBS. "*Assimilation, Relocation, Genocide.*" Indian Country Diaries. Native American Public Telecommunications. September 2006. Web. 4 June 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/indiancountry/history/assimilation.html>.

²⁵ Snow, R Dean. *The Iroquois*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1994. Print. P. 95.

that they would instead be assimilated into western ways of life. The end of the Indian Wars saw the shifting of United States policy from extermination to assimilation. The rise of the assimilation program saw the onslaught of boarding schools across the United States, some much worse than others, but all intent on wiping the Native out of the man. The most effective means of assimilation were religious missionaries, Native American boarding schools, and conditions of reservation life.

The relationship with colonists began soon after their arrival. At the time, Europeans held onto the notion that with the discovery of new lands was the acquisition of those lands based on the rights of conquest. This was not a new concept to the Hodinöhsö:ni', who had practiced rights of conquest with other Indigenous peoples they had dominated. What was new however, was the way in which the Spanish, French, and British obtained their goals. In 1537 Pope Paul III defended an earlier work by Francisco de Vitoria that granted Native Americans inherent rights based on humanity and granted that:

Desiring to provide ample remedy for these evils, we define and declare by these our letter, or by any translation thereof signed by any notary public and sealed with the seal of any ecclesiastical dignitary, to which the same credit shall be given as to the originals, that, notwithstanding whatever may have been or may be said to the contrary, the said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and possession of their property.²⁶

This was the basis for the Spanish governing of Indigenous peoples, but the sworn officials did not always adhere to it. The French and the Hodinöhsö:ni' had a bitter relationship, resulting from the French alliance with the Algonquians and subsequent

²⁶ Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973. Pg. 21. Print

Beaver Wars that began in 1609.²⁷ This relationship led to the Hodinöhsö:ni' siding with the British, which helped to reduce French influence and allowed Britain to gain momentum in the New World.

In order to travel through most of New York, the settlers would either encounter the Onöndowa'ga:', "Keepers of the Western Door" or the Mohawk, "Keepers of the Eastern Door." By all accounts the Hodinöhsö:ni' were not a group to be challenged physically. There are treaties as early as 1613, with the Tawagonshi Agreement of 1613- a Chain of Friendship in the Dutch Hudson Valley, also known as the Two Row Wampum Belt. The two rows represented the Hodinöhsö:ni' and the Dutch settlers. It contained three links: friendship, good minds, and peace.²⁸ They also agreed that neither had authority over the other and signified the first establishment of sovereignty. Relationships with the Dutch were founded on the need for trade and trade alone. Intermarriage and settlements were almost never seen. The Dutch sought little in the way of land acquisitions and did not attempt to try and assimilate the Hodinöhsö:ni' in New York. The relationship with the Dutch was the model the British used when forming their own connections.

The British and their settlers followed three major rules when it came to dealings with Indigenous peoples, all of which reinforced and supported Indigenous sovereignty. Those "rules" recognized that Native Americans were independent populations and were only to be dealt with by creating treaties, that tribal affairs were not to be interfered with for any reason, and that any dealings were to be handled by the federal government or the

²⁷ Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973.Pg. 26. Print.

²⁸ Hill, Rick. *Talking Points on History and Meaning of the Two Row Wampum Belt*. Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre. Ohsweken Ontario. March 2013. Web. Mar. 2016.

King of England, on a nation-to-nation basis.²⁹ During colonial times, the British recognized sovereignty because they needed help controlling the French, aid that came mainly from the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy.³⁰ The British were not the only forces in the New World, and unfamiliarity with the land forced them to rely upon the Natives for guidance. Population was another concern for colonists. For many years, they were far outnumbered by the Natives of the region.³¹ In order to grow the East Coast, good relationships were needed. At this time colonists weren't allowed to cross the Allegheny Mountains, due to a royal proclamation by the king, let alone develop any substantial relationships with the Hodinöhsö:ni'.³² After the revolution, Indigenous peoples were still granted their sovereignty by the newly formed United States government. This can be seen in early United States documents like the Articles of Confederation, Northwest Ordinance, and the Constitution.

Since the 1970s, the Onöndowa'ga:' have been working on a language revitalization effort. Over the last hundred years, the Onöndowa'ga:' have been losing traditional speakers at rapid rates. The last generation of fluent speakers became increasingly worried that their culture and language would be lost if something wasn't done soon. Each elder that passes increases the urgency. Many elements factor into this loss of language. Boarding schools were one of the most detrimental programs to Native American languages. The main mission of state and federally run boarding schools were to destroy Indigenous cultures. By mixing children from different tribes and stripping them of their communities, it allowed language to be weakened among those that

²⁹ Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973. Print Pg.29.

³⁰ Deloria, Vine Jr. and David Wilkins. *Tribes, Treaties, & Constitutional Tribulations*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1999. Pg.5. Print.

³¹ Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973. Pg.33. Print

³² Deloria, Vine Jr. and David Wilkins. *Tribes, Treaties, & Constitutional Tribulations*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1999. Pg.5. Print.

attended these schools.³³ There was also legislation passed by the federal government that banned traditional aspects of Indigenous cultures. These laws made it illegal to practice traditional ceremonies and song, all of which were performed in their traditional language.³⁴ The significance of language cannot be stressed enough. Each aspect of their culture is intricately connected to their language. It is a common bond that connects people with their ancestors and historical ways of life.

II. Literature review

While conducting my research, I consulted a variety of Indigenous and western sources. It is important to note that while researching Native American history, using

³³ Adams, David Wallace. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. University Press of Kansas, 1995. Pg. 139.

³⁴ Irwin, Lee. *Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: A Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance*. Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader. University of Nebraska Press. 2000. Web. May 2016. <http://www.sacredland.org/PDFs/Irwin.pdf>.

Indigenous sources is vital because of the different methodologies and historical interpretations. American history and Native American history exist on the same plane, but are viewed through two very different lenses. Unlike western cultures, most Native American cultures do not view history as linear. It is viewed as all connected, spatial history, where all elements are interconnected, time is not necessarily chronological, and cause and effect are only a portion of the story. Since oral tradition is so important to Onöndowa'ga:' and all Natives, there are histories that are often overlooked or outright ignored because they do not follow the modernly accepted views of what constitutes history. Also, the victors write the narrative, but in the case of Native Americans, it cannot be said that they lost, because ultimately, they are still here, fighting today for their cultural identity.

When researching the history of Indigenous peoples, specifically the Onöndowa'ga:', one is met with many sources on the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy. Since Onöndowa'ga:' history is inexplicably linked to other nations across New York, the Onöndowa'ga:' are often mentioned in conjunction with the other members of the Confederacy. A pioneer in the documenting and researching of Native Americans across New York State is Dean Snow. Snow has written numerous books as well as journal articles on the Natives of New York, *The Iroquois*, *Mohawk Valley Archaeology: The Collections and The Sites*, *Migration in Prehistory: The Northern Iroquoian Case*, and *Evolution of the Mohawk Iroquois* are some examples. Dr. Snow is an archeologist who specializes in ethnohistoric and demographic problems.³⁵ He is well known for his in-depth studies of the Hodinöhsö:ni' people located in the northeast region of New York, as

³⁵ Archaeology at Penn State. Dean R. Snow. Pennsylvania State University. 18 September 2014. Web. Nov 2016. <http://archaeology.psu.edu/people/drs17>.

well as Indigenous peoples from all over the Americas. His research was important to explain the complex relationships between all members of the Confederacy and the history of their move across New York. Jon Parmenter's work on spatial mobility is key to understanding how important the land was to Indigenous peoples, specifically the Hodinöhsö:ni'.³⁶ Parmenter's book, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701*, challenges the notion that one specific area was of the utmost importance to 17th century Hodinöhsö:ni' culturally, instead arguing that they were spatially free, moving freely amongst the land. This aided in my research of the Onöndowa'ga:' and the distances to which they were able to extend their influence and the lands they used for hunting. Through his work, he has been able to help establish a sense of control and agency for the Hodinöhsö:ni' that is often missing in scholarly work.³⁷ I consulted early treaties signed with the Hodinöhsö:ni' as well as historical documents. I looked at legislation passed by the British and the king, such as the decree that settlers have no contact with the Hodinöhsö:ni' by any means.³⁸ As relationships grew and expanded, so did the treaties that were signed. The Treaty of Canandaigua was extremely important to show how the early United States regarded the Onöndowa'ga:'. It showed that they agreed to allow them to live in harmony and be free to use their lands as they saw fit.

After the Revolutionary War, the North West Ordinance, the United States Constitution, and even the ill-fated Articles of Confederation all continued to lay the groundwork for Indigenous Peoples freedom and autonomy. The Federal government would be the sole negotiator between all disputes or concerns that may arise. These

³⁶ The History Department at Cornell University. Jon Parmenter. Cornell University. 20 October 2019. Web. <https://history.cornell.edu/jon-w-parmenter>

³⁷ The History Department at Cornell University. Jon Parmenter. Cornell University. 20 October 2019. Web. <https://history.cornell.edu/jon-w-parmenter>

³⁸ Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973. Print Pg.29.

primary sources were a way to see into the times and to read between the lines on policies that were passed with certain intentions but that had different outcomes or effects, and it allows us to pinpoint when the changes began to occur and what influenced the changing momentum of the Hodinöhsö:ni' and American relationship. Vine Deloria Jr. was an Indigenous scholar born near the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Deloria crafted a trove of Indigenous literature created from the viewpoint of an Indigenous scholar. His work spans Indigenous law, self-identity, and history. His book (with David Wilson), *Tribes, Treaties, & Constitutional Tribulations*, gives an in-depth look into the relationship between Indigenous communities and the United States Constitution, showing where Indigenous peoples fit in that historic document, and why the history of Indigenous peoples and the law has been confusing and contradictory. His collected work has challenged others to look at the state of the Indigenous world and contextualize this world within the larger society in which they reside.

As the United State grew, the relationships with the Indigenous Peoples began to shift. This can be seen when looking into American documents of the time. Transcripts of the Dawes Act, Board of Commissioner Reports, and landmark court cases all show the mindset and determination of the United States to expand their lands and displace the indigenous communities. Experts in this field of study include Laurence Hauptman. Hauptman has written many books about the Hodinöhsö:ni' and their experiences. His book, *Conspiracy of Interest*, was of particular note for this project. This work examines the efforts taken by both New York State as well as the federal government for land control in regions that were occupied by the Hodinöhsö:ni'. He explores back door deals between land companies, transportation needs, and policies passed by the federal

government, all in an effort to displace the Hodinöhsö:ni' from lands that had been guaranteed to them with the Treaty of Canandaigua. He also gives insight into the drive to move Hodinöhsö:ni' westward, opening the lands needed in the growing metropolises of Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse. His in-depth look at the Buffalo Creek Treaties shows the interest of the state was more important than land claims belonging to the Onöndowa'ga:' at Buffalo Creek. Steven Newcomb is an Indigenous law scholar (Shawnee/Lenape) whose work, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery*, examines the Doctrine of Discovery and its influence on federal policies, in a country that had no established religion. Newcomb looks at the problem through an Indigenous lens that offers insight and shifts the model of research from conqueror model to chosen people to show the influence that Christianity played in policy decisions as well as court rulings. This is evident in the Johnson v. McIntosh court case, which used the Doctrine of Discovery as its basis. The Doctrine of Discovery is a document created, and amended throughout the 1400s by the Pope to remedy the expansion of European powers in the name of the Christian church and the lands they discovered, along with the people inhabiting them. It is also a document that drives the notion that Indigenous Peoples were able to be converted and looked at in subhuman ways, giving Missionaries all the power they needed to invade Native lands.

The Onöndowa'ga:' were visited by a variety of Missionaries since first contact was made. Early attempts at conversion can be seen with documents from French Jesuits. They may have been the first, but they were definitely not the last. The Quaker Mission understood the importance of connecting with those they were converting. Matthew Dennis is a professor emeritus of history and environmental studies. His work, *Seneca*

Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic, was a great look at the influence of missionaries and how they coordinated with other outside influences to succeed at the ultimate goal - civilize the Indians. It was also a look at how the Onöndowa'ga:' used tactics learned from missionaries to convert their people back to traditional ways, showing that the Onöndowa'ga:' took control of situations that they are usually not acknowledged for. Daniel Richter's *Ordeal of the Longhouse* is a work that uses documents from the Dutch, French, and British to explore the life of the Hodinöhsö:ni'. His book was based on historical documents that showed the early efforts and evolution of the missionary work among the Hodinöhsö:ni'. Referencing these sources was key to showing the missionary goal to eradicate the Indigenous languages and cultures, and showing that it was understood why this would be detrimental to their societies.

Attempts at creating a written version of the Onöndowa'ga:' language can be seen as early as 1842, with the creation of Asher Wright's *A Spelling Book in the Seneca Language: With English Definitions*.³⁹ Wright explains in this work how translating the Onöndowa'ga:' language can be difficult because the language is based on sounds and timing.⁴⁰ Wright realized that in order to really gain the interest of the Onöndowa'ga:' and to win them over for conversions, he had to be able to relate and converse in the language they spoke. Wright's work is invaluable when it comes to contemporary primary sources. He was able to capture and preserve language, something that was not intentional but a direct outcome of his missionary work. His work *Seneca Indians* was

³⁹ Wright, Asher. "A Spelling Book in the Seneca Language, with English definitions." Buffalo Creek Reservation. Mission Press. 1842. <http://reader.library.cornell.edu/docviewer/digital?id=hunt:0133#page/1/mode/1up>. July 2019.

⁴⁰ Wright, Asher. "A Spelling Book in the Seneca Language, with English definitions." Buffalo Creek Reservation. Mission Press. 1842. <http://reader.library.cornell.edu/docviewer/digital?id=hunt:0133#page/1/mode/1up>. July 2019.

compiled by another scholar of Hodinöhsö:ni' history, William Fenton. In this work, Wright captured historical language and culture, ironically, while actively working to destroy both. Sources of this nature have to be read with the understanding of the author's intentions. These early efforts to record the language were really efforts to connect and convert, not to preserve. Wright's missionary work would continue into the next phase of the Indigenous problem, the rise of boarding schools and the assimilation program.

Once it was accepted that conversion was not going to efficiently work on the Indigenous Peoples a new plan was conceived. Assimilation would combine both missionary efforts and removal efforts and work to "Kill the Indian and save the man." Keith Burich was a history professor at Canisius College. His work, *The Thomas Indian School and the "Irredeemable" Children of New York*, was also a great look into the rise of missionaries in Onöndowa'ga:' country. He shows the evolution of missionary efforts from conversion to Christianity to full American assimilation. This work allowed me to bridge the gap between missionary influences and the rise of state-run boarding schools, under the supervision of local missionary efforts. Furthering his work on missionaries, Burich shows the significance and purpose of boarding schools like Thomas Indian and Friends mission. The missionaries circumvented land laws by opening missionary schools on Native territory. Using the "deteriorating conditions" term, missionaries like the Wrights were able to get state funding to create boarding schools to help provide for and teach the Indigenous children. Showing how assimilation programs, encouraged by the government, were enforced in missionary schools, resulting in the destruction of the language and culture of the Onöndowa'ga:'. His work shows how punishments were placed on language use, how American ideals of farming and housework were taught,

and also how detrimental this was to Indigenous communities. The ability to consult with documents that were written by Indigenous Peoples who attended various boarding schools was very crucial to my work. Alberta Austin's *That's What It Was Like* is a great look at later generations of boarding school students. This is a work created in 1989 and 1990 to document what life was like on reservations, told by those that lived on them. Allowing me to read first hand accounts of different experiences with boarding schools also allowed me to research on a macro scale, not just looking at the larger destructions caused but also understanding individual experiences. It encompasses territories as far away from New York as Wisconsin and shows a glimpse of the lives elders lost, told in their own words. Showing that while the programs were destructive in nature, some students did have good experiences. It also allows us to see that a lot of the time, the good experiences were because of bad conditions at home. These conditions were direct results of displacement and loss of language and culture. It also reinforces the idea set forth in

Holm's, Pearson, and Chavis' *Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies* is a work on what defines sovereignty and it makes the important point that language ties all aspects of culture together and that without it, it is hard to maintain a sovereign culture.⁴¹ It reinforces why it was so important for the missionaries, the boarding schools, and even federal legislation to destroy language, because when that is gone, Indigenous peoples are weakened. It also expands upon earlier theories of "Peoplehood" that were put forth by people like Edward Spicer. Spicer is known for having established the "Enduring People" model. Holm's and company looked to further this work and created a paradigm that works for all

⁴¹ Holm, Tom, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis. "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies." *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (2003): 7-24. Accessed April 19, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/1409431.

indigenous people. They also explain why Indigenous studies can be a disjointed discipline. It, unlike many others, is a multi-disciplinary approach, using Anthropology, United States History, and Law and Policy, just to name a few. When one understands the significance of language it makes it obvious why preservation and revitalization are so important to Indigenous communities throughout the world.

Looking into primary sources like the *Onöndowa'ga:' Gaga: Sho 'o;h* or *Allegany Onöndowa'ga:' Storybook*. This was a joint effort by the Onöndowa'ga:' of the Allegany Reservation and the State of New York Education Department to preserve and encourage learning the Onöndowa'ga:' language through story telling. Phyllis Bardeau wrote *Definitive Onöndowa'ga:': It's in the Word* in 2011. This book is a comprehensive collection of Onöndowa'ga:' words, phrases, and the historical context from where they stemmed. In 2014, Bardeau also wrote a series of articles for the Onöndowa'ga:' language programs. Included in the series were relevant Onöndowa'ga:' words and phrases for topics like health, occupations and employment, and planting. She is a leading example of a Onöndowa'ga:' elder writing everything and anything that can help further the language and save the culture. In addition to those, I consulted newspaper articles by the Onöndowa'ga:' nation on how the language revitalization is significant to the culture. A YouTube page created for the Faithkeepers School, as well as news articles, were very informative on the creation and importance of the school. The most unexpected place to find source material was Facebook. This platform has allowed Natives from all over the country to become connected and share and spread news as it happens in Indian Country.

As stated above, the rise of social media has given Indigenous people all over the world, some for the first time, the ability to communicate and share experiences. It has

allowed a platform for Native writers and social warriors to get their messages out and to spread awareness. History has not always showed Natives in a strong and powerful manner. This new voice has allowed for communities to tell their histories and to share in the common sorrows and glories. For a researcher, it gives the ability to have a wide range of source material. Normally, it would take extensive travels to reach these sources. Language revitalization is not just a problem that plagues the Onöndowa'ga:' of Western New York. The assimilation programs were enacted and partially successful on all Indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada. This is why their sources aid in my journey, to further prove how important these revitalization efforts are to all Indigenous peoples. Native communities have known the importance of revitalization for generations, but it was in 2003 that UNESCO drafted the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This provided great insight into the concept of Intangible Heritage and the roles museums and other institutions play in safeguarding these forms of culture and history. UNESCO validating what Indigenous peoples already knew has helped to show others this important form of heritage. As a researcher, the UNESCO website has been great for providing statistics on language loss as well as leads to other studies on the subject.

III. Post Revolution

The United States of America

The Articles of Confederation were ratified in 1781 as the first formal document for the newly formed United States. It set the tone for relationships with Indigenous peoples and laid the groundwork for treaty building with differing Indigenous communities.⁴² An element lacking from the Articles was the enforcing of exclusivity of interactions between the federal government and Native groups. While it did state that the federal government was solely responsible for “regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians,” it had a hard time enforcing this policy.⁴³ Problems began to arise when states and individuals were trading with Native Americans without the regulation of the federal government. But the federal government under the Articles was weak, too weak to protect the Natives from being tricked or stolen from. Given the different relationships with the land, ownership was something that wasn’t quite understood by the Natives, so it was common for them to be taken advantage of. This issue is addressed in Article III of The Northwest Ordinance in 1787:

Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged. The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and, in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity, shall from time to time be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them.⁴⁴

⁴² The Library of Congress. The Second Continental Congress: *The Articles of Confederation*. 1776. Pennsylvania. Web. Jan. 2016. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=001/llsl001.db&recNum=130>.

⁴³ The Library of Congress. The Second Continental Congress: *The Articles of Confederation*. 1776. Pennsylvania. Web. Jan. 2016. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=001/llsl001.db&recNum=130>.

⁴⁴ The Northwest Ordinance. Our Documents. 1787. Web. Jan 2016. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=8>.

At the same time the Northwest Ordinance was being ratified, the Constitution was born. Regarding Native Americans, the Constitution seems to reaffirm the sovereign status Natives had been previously granted. This included exclusion from taxes in Article I, Section 2 as well as giving the federal government control over relations with foreign nations and Native American peoples in Article I, Section 8.⁴⁵ Furthering the legislation set for all Native Americans, the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy also signed The Treaty of Canandaigua or Pickering Treaty in 1794. The treaty was a means to build stronger relations and trust with the Hodinöhsö:ni'. It was one of the most important documents declaring the Hodinöhsö:ni', Onöndowa'ga:' included, as a sovereign nation. This treaty was signed with perpetual peace and friendship as the ultimate goal, but it also recognizes the Hodinöhsö:ni's explicit sovereignty, and a gift of \$4,500.00 worth of treaty cloth (now muslin) is still received every year.⁴⁶ This shows the United States still acknowledging the treaty of sovereignty signed over two hundred years ago. This does not mean that actions have not been taken to undermine its authority as a relevant document. Most of the agreement is in regard to land right acknowledgments but Article IV states that,

The United States having thus described and acknowledged what lands belong to the Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Onöndowa'ga:'s, and engaged never to claim the same, nor to disturb them, or any of the Six Nations, or their Indian friends residing thereon and united with them, in the free use and enjoyment thereof: Now the Six Nations, and each of them, hereby engage that they will never claim any other lands within the boundaries of the United States; nor ever disturb the people of the United States in the free use and enjoyment thereof.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *The Constitution of the United States: A Transcript*. Charters of Freedom: A New World is at Hand. Web. 11 Jan. 2016. http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html.

⁴⁶ *Culture*. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. 25 June 2016. <https://sni.org/culture/>.

⁴⁷ The Canandaigua Treaty. Canandaigua. New York. 11 Nov. 1794. Onondaga Nation. 2013. Web. 11 Jan. 2016. <http://www.onondaganation.org/government/the-canandaigua-treaty-of-1794/>.

The most significant detail here is the term “free use and enjoyment”. This meant they were free to practice traditional ceremonies, speak in their Indigenous languages, and hunt and gather in their traditional manner. The significance of early treaties cannot be overlooked. Historically held international rules maintained that treaties could only be made between sovereign states. This is important to note, as future legislation undermined the significance of these Treaties saying they are no longer relevant and deeming them null and void, a change that was felt by only one side of the signees. These good relationships did not last for long. While the Onöndowa’ga:’ and other members of the Hodinöhsö:ni’ confederacy helped the American forces in the War of 1812 against the British, within 100 years, legislation would begin to compromise the Onöndowa’ga:’ way of life.

The War Of 1812

The War of 1812 brought a renewed interest in maintaining friendships and allegiances with the Onöndowa’ga:’. The war was won in part due to the assistance of the Seneca. The War of 1812 began with the young United States declaring war on Great Britain, June 18, 1812.⁴⁸ The United States was outraged at Britain’s interference with American international affairs and trade. The United States looked to declare, once again, their independence from Great Britain. The army was ill prepared for the battles that followed. It was facing the British on the northern Canadian front as well as the southern front. The British had captured Washington, DC by August 1814.⁴⁹ Across the Niagara frontier, the American army, aided by the Hodinöhsö:ni’ after July 1813, fought British

⁴⁸ The History Channel.com Staff. *War of 1812*. A+E Networks. 2009. Web. 25 June 2016. <http://www.history.com/topics/war-of-1812>.

⁴⁹ The History Channel.com Staff. *War of 1812*. A+E Networks. 2009. Web. 25 June 2016. <http://www.history.com/topics/war-of-1812>.

advances. For the first time since the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy had been created, Hodinöhsö:ni' were fighting and killing other Hodinöhsö:ni'.⁵⁰ This marked a turn for the Onöndowa'ga:' and other members of the Confederacy. After the war ended, the Hodinöhsö:ni' on both sides of the border were unable to resolve the losses felt by both sides. This hurt the Hodinöhsö:ni' numbers and caused a chasm in an entire group of people, something that still has not quite healed today. The Onöndowa'ga:' fought alongside the Americans as a means to protect their sovereignty. They did not become involved in the war until the British and Canadian Hodinöhsö:ni' forces seized their land. It was the hopes of the Onöndowa'ga:' that they would help win the war in order to maintain their sovereignty and claims to their land. They had learned first-hand with the Treaty of Fort Stanwix that if you lose a war, the land is ceded to the victor.⁵¹

The War of 1812 was a turning point for all Native Americans, Hodinöhsö:ni' included. The war left Native American populations decimated. It reinforced the notions of the Doctrine of Discovery for the young United States and made it harder for the Onöndowa'ga:' to fight the coming years of assimilation and genocide.⁵² By the 1820s, Onöndowa'ga:' territory was under the jurisdiction of New York State and the United States, which brought about the signing of the Buffalo Creek Treaties and major changes for the Seneca.⁵³

⁵⁰ Parker, C Arthur. "*The Seneca's in the War of 1812.*" Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association, Vol. 15. P. 78-90. 1916.

⁵¹ Snow, R Dean. *The Iroquois*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1994. Print. P.154.

⁵² Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973. P.48. Print

⁵³ Dennis, Matthew. "Early American Studies: Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic." University of Pennsylvania Press. Pg. 20. 2012.

IV. Federal Policies

Doctrine of Discovery

The “inter Caetera” or Papal Bull of 1493 opened the world up for conquest by Christian nations, while serving in the name of God. It allowed lands that had been occupied by indigenous people to be taken, under the command of God,

And we make, appoint, and depute you and your said heirs and successors [to be] lords of them [the located or “discover” lands] with full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind.⁵⁴

Exceptions for these rules were lands that were already influenced by Christian nations. Unbeknownst to the Indigenous peoples of modern America, these were the rules to a game they didn’t know they were playing. It was these deeply held beliefs that the Onöndowa’ga:’ were exposed to when they were first introduced to missionary influences. The Papal Bull also dictated that while the lands were there for the taking, it was also their mission and goal to “civilize” the Indigenous they came across.

These rules were further cemented into American history with the Supreme Court case, *Johnson v M’Intosh* (1823). The court upheld the notion that the lands belonged to the federal government under the doctrine of discovery and that when independence was won, the power shifted to them when it came to Indigenous control. It states:

Not only has the practice of all civilized nations been in conformity with this doctrine, but the whole theory of their titles to lands in America, rests upon the hypothesis, that the Indians had no right of soil as sovereign, independent states. Discovery is the foundation of title, in European nations, and this overlooks all propriety rights in the Natives.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Newcomb, Steven. *Pagans in the Promised Land : Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery*, Fulcrum Publishing, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/buffalostate/detail.action?docID=478758>. Pg. 84

⁵⁵ *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 21 U.S. 543, 567-68, 5L. Ed. 681 (1823)

Starting in the mid-19th century, most of the legislation passed in the United States was attempts to pull not only the Hodinöhsö:ni', but all Native groups, further under federal control and to remove them from the lands that they occupied.⁵⁶ It was during these years that the federal government enacted many policies to take land and kill indigenous culture.

Taking the Land

By 1851, western tribes were being moved to reservations with the passing of the Appropriation Bill for Indian Affairs. A few decades earlier, Natives were being forced from the south to the west. The 1850s saw white settlers now moving west but finding that land was scarce. The passing of the Indian Act of 1851 was a means to secure new lands for westward American expansion, under the guise of helping Natives maintain distance from white settlers, theoretically maintaining culture and sovereignty. In 1865, some groups of Native Americans were extended rights with the Homestead Act of 1862. By accepting a homestead, Natives were required to give up all cultural attachments. This measure was extended to all Indigenous peoples in 1875 with the same strings attached, receive a homestead but in return relinquish all cultural ties and become acculturated into mainstream society.⁵⁷ This was an agreement most Indigenous peoples did not take. Because of their reluctance, new measures had to be taken to secure the land the government was after.

The Indians Appropriation Act of 1871 was no longer skirting the Indigenous issues; instead, they were hitting them head on. The main purpose of this act was to ban

⁵⁶ Snow, R Dean. *The Iroquois*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1994. Pg.187. Print.

⁵⁷ *Explore the Homesteading Timeline*. U.S. Department of the Interior. Bureau of Land Management. Web. 25 June 2016. http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Education_in_BLM/homestead_act/origins.html.

treaty making with Native American peoples.⁵⁸ It also declared that the federal government no longer recognized Native Americans as sovereign entities.⁵⁹ A major outcome of this act was the loss of federally granted sovereignty. Placing traditions and ways of life at risk. This came only 20 years after they were legislating to protect Native American sovereignty and 77 years since they signed the Pickering Treaty with the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy. Where did the shift come from? After the Civil War, Americans were in a period of nationalism. The population was growing and the need for more land was apparent. Westward expansion was the only option. The problem was that Native American tribes had been relocated there over the last 100 years and were given total control of their lands, so they could maintain their identities and cultures. By ending treaty making and no longer recognizing Natives as sovereign, taking lands would be a much easier process. This made the outcome of the Dawes Act (also known as the General Allotment Act, 1887) even more devastating.

In 1883 Congress passed the Religious Crimes Code. It was a means to prevent Native Americans from practicing traditional ceremonies, dances, and medicine.⁶⁰ All of these are directly connected to a Nation's language and way of life. Punishments if these laws were broken were severe. First offenses could mean ten days with no food rations or imprisonment for ten days. If the law was broken again it could mean imprisonment not exceeding six months. This was even more devastating to the Natives that had already been placed on reservations. They were unable to hunt and provide the way they were accustomed, so if they were denied rations, then they may very well not be able to feed

⁵⁸ Prucha, P Francis. *United States Indian Policy: A Critical Bibliography*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington and London. 1977. Print. (add pages)

⁵⁹ Tyler, S Lyman. *A History of Indian Policy*. Washington D.C. 1973. Print. P. 84.

⁶⁰ Irwin, Lee. *Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: A Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance*. Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader. University of Nebraska Press. 2000. Web. May 2016. <http://www.sacredland.org/PDFs/Irwin.pdf>.

themselves or their families. This was a direct violation of the First Amendment granted by the Constitution, in regard to religious freedom. It was the hopes that this law would be the destruction of Native people and their ways of life. This bill would not be reversed until 1978.

February 8, 1887, The Dawes Act or General Allotment Act was passed. This act took reservation lands and divided them into parcels or plots for individual families.⁶¹ By doing this, it freed up miles of reservation lands that the federal government deemed as a surplus. The Dawes Act accomplished something none of the legislation before it could. It removed the Natives from a communal setting and placed them on individual parcels, a process most Natives had turned down when previously offered, but this time it worked. The Dawes Act is the complete opposite of what the founding fathers of the United States agreed upon with Native people. This act disregarded Native American customs and ways of life that were guaranteed to them. The combination of the 1871 Appropriation Act stripping Natives of their autonomy, and the Dawes Act stripping them of their lands, a new era was clearly on the horizon. It was plainly the intentions of the writers to use this act as a means to destroy Native American culture all together, which is all but admitted in 1888 by the Board of Indian Commission:

It is plainly the ultimate purpose of the bill to abrogate the Indian Tribal organization, to abolish the reservation system and to place the Indians on an equal footing with other citizens of the country.⁶²

This legislation had tremendous impacts on Native country all across the United States. While these land laws did not apply to the Onöndowa'ga:', who were protected by previous treaties like the Pickering Treaty, it does show the shifting attitudes towards

⁶¹ *Transcript of Dawes Act*. 49th Congress of the United States of America, 2nd Session. Washington. 1887. Web. 10 April 2016. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=50&page=transcript>.

⁶² Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1887. Web. 10 April 2016. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=2a7RAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA1>.

Native Americans during this time period in United States history. It also calls into question why the Pickering Treaty was not considered nullified by the Appropriations Act of 1871 but it was possible to dismantle other full reservations. Could it be that it was only to take the land that had been given previously because it was now needed? The home of the Onöndowa'ga:' was not new unexplored territory. These lands had already been settled. It was during this time that the problem in New York State had to be solved. How does the federal government obtain lands that were needed to construct the Erie Canal? In the coming years, the Onöndowa'ga:' would lose many ancestral lands, including Buffalo Creek, which was the largest occupied territory.

Treaties of Buffalo Creek

In 1838, the Second Treaty of Buffalo Creek was signed between the US government and the Hodinöhsö:ni'. This removal treaty granted lands to the Confederacy in Kansas while ceding Onöndowa'ga:' territories in Buffalo Creek, Tonawanda, Cattaraugus, and Allegany. It also gave Ogden Land Company control through purchase of these territories.⁶³ Many Onöndowa'ga:' groups disputed this agreement; they stated a minority that had no right to speak for the whole signed the treaty. Besides ceding all their land in New York, the Onöndowa'ga:' gave up land rights gifted in Wisconsin, in exchange for 1,824,000 acres in Kansas.⁶⁴ They were given five years to complete the move or the land would be considered forfeited. The fraudulent treaty was widely contested by Quaker missionaries, who had a mission school on the territory, as well as Onöndowa'ga:' that did not consent to the sale. This push led to the amendment and

⁶³ Hauptman, Laurence M. *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State*. 1st ed., Syracuse University Press, 1999. Pg. 176.

⁶⁴ Hauptman, Laurence M. *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State*. 1st ed., Syracuse University Press, 1999. Pg. 176.

another treaty. The third Treaty of Buffalo Creek was signed in 1842. This treaty stated the Ogden Land Company only purchased two of the five territories, Buffalo Creek and Tonawanda.⁶⁵ It restored the other three to the Seneca. The fourth and final treaty of Buffalo Creek was signed in 1857 and recognized the Tonawanda Band as a separate entity from the newly created Seneca Nation of Indians and their disagreement with any land sales and changes to governance. It allowed the Tonawanda to buy back land with the relocation money set aside for Kansas.⁶⁶

The one parcel of land not returned was the reservation at Buffalo Creek. This land was key to the state of New York and the construction of the Erie Canal,

This instant city, only two decades after its burning by the British, was now seen as having limitless potential if and when Indian land rights to the Buffalo Creek reservation could be extinguished.⁶⁷

The need for access also cost 45 acres at Oil Spring when they flooded territorial lands for the creation of a lake to feed into the Genesee Valley Canal.⁶⁸

V. Missionary Efforts

Handsome Lake was viewed as a prophet among the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy.⁶⁹ He was Onöndowa'ga:', and a half-brother to Chief Cornplanter, who was thought to have died one day. He awoke hours later to reveal what his dream-state had brought him. His Gaiwiio, or code of Handsome Lake, awakened a revival of traditional

⁶⁵ Hauptman, Laurence M. *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State*. 1st ed., Syracuse University Press, 1999. Pg. 177.

⁶⁶ IBID. Pg. 177.

⁶⁷ IBID. Pg. 175.

⁶⁸ IBID. Pg. 172.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Pg. 119.

Onöndowa'ga:' customs. The story he revealed spoke of a heaven-like world for Onöndowa'ga:' people and also a Tormentor's Lodge where evil spirits would go upon death. This revelation of Handsome Lake's would prove useful to the Jesuit and Quaker missionaries. Instead of denouncing this title they allowed the Onöndowa'ga:' to believe that was true and used it in the context of their missionary work.

French Jesuit Missionaries

The first missionaries to make inroads with the Onöndowa'ga:' were the French Jesuits. Early interactions are noted from before the peace treaties of 1665-1667.⁷⁰ Nicknamed "Black Robes", the Hodinöhsö:ni' were mostly ignorant to the missionaries of this time. They were intrigued by gifts given to them, but did not understand what the missionaries' goals were. Adoptees of the Confederacy warned that they were "sorcerers who secretly practice strange ceremonies that sapped the spiritual power of communities, they brought diseases with them wherever they went, and they killed people with their rite of baptism."⁷¹ Despite these warnings, some devotees remained throughout the Hodinöhsö:ni' Confederacy. This could be because the Jesuits were quick and lenient when it came to traditional ceremonies. It wasn't uncommon for substitute Christian traditional ceremonies to take place. While this was the case for some ceremonies, the Jesuits considered others criminal. Some were considered "execrable crimes," like

⁷⁰ Richter, Daniel K. *The Ordeal of the Longhouse : the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* . Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pg. 106.

⁷¹ Richter, Daniel K. *The Ordeal of the Longhouse : the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* . Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pg. 107.

ceremonial feasts, healing rituals, and the practice of divorce.⁷²

Father Julien Garnier noted that the willingness of the Indigenous population to interact with French missionaries were dependent on the state of affairs with France.⁷³ Sent to work with the Hodinöhsö:ni' on September 1, 1668 by order of Father Francois Le Mercier, the superior of the Canadian Mission, Father Garnier's goal was to "extend the indian mission."⁷⁴ He was most commonly referring to the tumultuous relationship between the French and the Hodinöhsö:ni' during the 17th century. Beginning before the Beaver Wars of 1629 and continuing through the larger series of French and Indian Wars (1688-1763), the French Jesuits maintained control and influence with the Onöndowa'ga:' for thirty years before being removed from territories for their influence on politics and culture.⁷⁵

Quaker Missionaries

Religious missionaries were common among Indigenous peoples through the age of exploration and colonization. A Philadelphia yearly meeting in 1795 formed a committee to address the issue of civilizing the Six Nations.⁷⁶ The US Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering, endorsed this motion. The Quakers were quick to come to action for the members of the Six Nations. The Quakers were a group that also experienced religious persecution and mockery. It could be for this reason that the relationship between them and the Onöndowa'ga:' was better than most missionary-Indigenous

⁷² Richter, Daniel K. *The Ordeal of the Longhouse : the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* . Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pg. 109.

⁷³ *IBID*, 109.

⁷⁴ Burrus, Ernest J. "Father Jacques Marquette, S.J. His Priesthood in the Light of the Jesuit Roman Archives." *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1955, pp. 257–271. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25015938. Pg. 263.

⁷⁵ Fenton, W. N., and Asher Wright. "Seneca Indians by Asher Wright (1859)." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1957, pp. 304. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/480807.

⁷⁶ Dennis, Matthew. "Early American Studies: Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic." University of Pennsylvania Press. Pg.125. 2012

relationships. It also happened that at the time the Quakers arrived, 1798, the Onöndowa'ga:' were in the midst of a religious revival of sorts. It was at this time that Handsome Lake arrived and began revealing his visions and calling for a reawakening of traditional values and practices.⁷⁷ This could be what made this relationship work to the degree that it did. The Quakers or Friends were able to integrate themselves into the Onöndowa'ga:' way of life. Instead of forcing their doctrine upon these peoples, as was so often done with other missionary efforts, they worked within the confines of the Onöndowa'ga:'s already established religion.

Instead of a traditional path of missionary work, the Friends held themselves as more of a council or advisor.⁷⁸ When the congregational minister Jacob Cram visited Allegany in September 1805, he was less than thrilled that the Quakers were allowing the Onöndowa'ga:' to continue traditional Onöndowa'ga:' ceremonies.⁷⁹ This altered course does not diminish the real reason the Quakers were with the Onöndowa'ga:'. The Quakers, like so many others, were determined to civilize Indigenous peoples. It was long believed that before you could turn a "savage" into a Christian, you must first civilize him; to not thrust their beliefs upon them with force, but to instead, slowly, over time, convert them to Christianity.

Missionary Schools

⁷⁷ Dennis, Matthew. "Early American Studies: Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic." University of Pennsylvania Press. Pg.117. 2012

⁷⁸ Ibid. Pg. 120.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Pg. 120.

Missionary driven schools were a precursor to the Native American boarding schools.⁸⁰ Missionary schools were subsidized by the Federal government from the years 1810-1917 but can be traced back as far as the 17th Century.⁸¹ From the 1820s through the 1850s, the Presbyterian Church had a major influence on the Buffalo Creek, Allegany, and Cattaraugus territories.⁸² Missions had a hard time infiltrating Onöndowa'ga:' lands, but with patience they were able to make inroads. Over time, organizations like the United Foreign Mission Society (UFMS) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) were able to successfully cause a divide between the "churched" and "unchurched" Onöndowa'ga:' people.

Those that opposed mission schools did so out of concern for land acquisition by non-Indigenous missionary groups. Allowing them to live on territory opened the doors for more to come and the Onöndowa'ga:' to lose land under the pre-tenses of missionary settlements. In Onöndowa'ga:' country there were a number of missionary-run "schools." Quaker Friends Mission School was located in what is now considered Quaker, New York in the entrance of the Allegany State Park and it served as a religious institute as well as teaching "life skills" like farming and housework.

Father Asher Wright lived from 1803- 1875, spending many of those years with the Seneca performing mission work as well as linguistic endeavors.⁸³ In his work *Seneca Indians*, Wright notes that the Jesuit missions:

⁸⁰ Archuleta, Margaret, et al. *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000*. Heard Museum, 2000. Pg. 16.

⁸¹ Archuleta, Margaret, et al. *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000*. Heard Museum, 2000. Pg. 16.

⁸² Nicholas, Mark A. "PRACTICING LOCAL FAITH & LOCAL POLITICS: SENECA, PRESBYTERIANISM, AND A 'NEW INDIAN MISSION HISTORY.'" *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, vol. 73, no. 1, Pennsylvania Historical Association and the Pennsylvania State University Press, Jan. 2006, pg. 71.

⁸³ Fenton, W. N., and Asher Wright. "Seneca Indians by Asher Wright (1859)." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1957, pp. 304. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/480807. Pg. 302.

Left also behind them an intense hatred of the Christian name, resulting from the traitorous acts which occasioned their expulsion; which has perpetuated to this day.

Showing that when his mission arrived, he did see some resistance. Beside a feeling of contempt, Wright also noted in 1859 that when trying to make sense of the Hodinöhsö:ni' religion, he could see the influence of the earlier Jesuit missions in the mixing of their "superstitions".⁸⁴ This comes as little of a surprise, since the Jesuits were known to blend Catholicism with the traditional religion to increase conversions and interest in missionary work. He continues by saying,

Our present pagan population, (who) regard the white man's religion as never intended for the Indians, still not withstanding retain the rosary in their belt of wampum, and the mass for the dead under the name of the funeral feast; the notion of purgatory in the temporary punishment in hell for various sorts of sins, fingering over the strings of Wam-pum and promises amendment.⁸⁵

While the Indigenous population still worshipped natural elements and held superstitious ceremonies, the influence was still apparent to Wright. He even goes on to make the claim that, Handsome Lake, who is credited with the revival of the Gai:wi:yo and return to traditions, used Catholicism against the missionaries. This was done through a series of "visions" with "angels". Wright goes on to explain:

About fifty or sixty years ago, a shrewd and cunning man, a half-brother of the old Chief Cornplanter, set himself up as a religious teacher and shut himself up for two or three years; But he had a vision of angels who directed him to use a certain vegetable, and he should recover and become God's messenger to the people.⁸⁶

It can be argued that Handsome Lake knew that the Jesuit influence was gaining traction so he manipulated its message to regain the attention of those that had been

⁸⁴ Fenton, W. N., and Asher Wright. "Seneca Indians by Asher Wright (1859)." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1957, pp. 304. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/480807. Pg. 304.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Pg. 305.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Pg. 302.

converted or were flirting with conversion. Wright viewed it as a form Jesuit influence, and it could have been, but it also could have been the successful attempts to reframe their culture and traditions in a way that brought those they lost to conversion, back to the community.

Asher Wright understood the need to connect to the Onöndowa'ga:' in their Indigenous tongue. In 1842 he published a book titled *A Spelling-book in the Seneca Language*. In the preface he explains to the non-Indigenous reader how to decipher the sounds and how:

It is absolutely necessary for English readers to divest themselves of all the irregular and erroneous notions of spelling contracted by using the imperfect alphabet of the English language.⁸⁷

He also explains how writing in Onöndowa'ga:' was difficult because it is a language based on sounds. All of these inroads were pivotal to the future of the mission, and the creation of state-funded, mission-run boarding schools.

Buffalo Creek Missionary School

After taking over the mission at Buffalo Creek, Wright married and baptized among the three reserves as a means to extend the familial ties to the missions.⁸⁸ The mission school at Buffalo Creek under Wright was short lived, with both being expelled from the Buffalo Creek territory in 1845. Once he had control, it was also imperative to establish a formal educational program. Wright knew that it was not as effective preaching or teaching in English with non-English speakers and that he could be more

⁸⁷ Wright, Asher. "A Spelling Book in the Seneca Language, with English definitions." Buffalo Creek Reservation. Mission Press. 1842. <http://reader.library.cornell.edu/docviewer/digital?id=hunt:0133#page/1/mode/1up>. July 2019. Pg.3.

⁸⁸ Nicholas, Mark A. "PRACTICING LOCAL FAITH & LOCAL POLITICS: SENECA, PRESBYTERIANISM, AND A 'NEW INDIAN MISSION HISTORY.'" *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, vol. 73, no. 1, Pennsylvania Historical Association and the Pennsylvania State University Press, Jan. 2006, pg. 5.

effective if he learned the Onöndowa'ga:' language.⁸⁹ He created the *Ne Gaiwiyo duk* which was an Onöndowa'ga:' translation of the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. He understood the term "Gaiwiyo" meaning "Good Message" in Onöndowa'ga:' and used that term to connect Handsome Lake's visions with the missionary work he was doing on the territory.⁹⁰ He understood the new goal of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was to connect with the Onöndowa'ga:' in a way they responded to. It could also be said Wright was using the tactics of Handsome Lake, using what they knew to gain their interest. The translation of many gospels and hymns to Onöndowa'ga:' were pivotal to connect his "divine wisdom" with the Onöndowa'ga;'s spirituality.⁹¹ He used the "Indian preaching" style to integrate western concepts of Christian male figureheads, doctrine, and instruction with "a formalized Seneca orthography," but he was never successful in eliminating the matrilineal ties that made up the Onöndowa'ga:' family construct.⁹² The coming years would see some changes, as the Onöndowa'ga:' would sign the Buffalo Creek Treaties, forcing them to move to other territories.

After the signing of the treaties at Buffalo Creek, Arthur Wright relocated to the Cattaraugus territory with the displaced Seneca. It was here in 1856 that he and his wife Laura, under the supervision of the Quakers began what would eventually become known as the Thomas Indian School.⁹³ Upon moving to the Cattaraugus reservation, Laura noted how the conditions for many of the children were horrible due to alcohol and loss

⁸⁹ Nicholas, Mark A. "PRACTICING LOCAL FAITH & LOCAL POLITICS: SENECAS, PRESBYTERIANISM, AND A 'NEW INDIAN MISSION HISTORY.'" *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, vol. 73, no. 1, Pennsylvania Historical Association and the Pennsylvania State University Press, Jan. 2006, pg. 83.

⁹⁰ IBID. PG 85.

⁹¹ IBID. PG 86.

⁹² IBID. PG. 87.

⁹³ BURICH, KEITH R. "Conceived in Hope, Born of Despair." In *The Thomas Indian School and the "Irredeemable" Children of New York*, 39-58. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1j1ns4f.9. Pg. 39.

of family structures. With 35 children being turned away in the first year, it became apparent to the Wrights (and the mission) that something more was needed.⁹⁴ In 1855, Asher Wright petitioned the state for a charter of incorporation and the Thomas Asylum for Orphan and Destitute Indian Children formed as an educational institute under the supervision of the superintendent of public institutes, furthering both the state and the missions' goals of assimilation.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ BURICH, KEITH R. "Conceived in Hope, Born of Despair." In *The Thomas Indian School and the "Irredeemable" Children of New York*, 39-58. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1j1ns4f.9. Pg. 44.

⁹⁵ BURICH, KEITH R. "Conceived in Hope, Born of Despair." In *The Thomas Indian School and the "Irredeemable" Children of New York*, 39-58. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1j1ns4f.9. Pg. 44.

VI. Boarding Schools

Boarding schools rose to widespread popularity with the creation of Carlisle Industrial Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879. Founded by Richard Henry Pratt, it sought to “Kill the Indian, save the man.” Pratt strongly believed Native Americans could be “civilized” and employed a military like regiment for the students at his school. Children were either sent to these boarding schools by welfare workers or illegally ripped from homes; more often than not, it was without the parent’s blessing. The Quaker schools at the Allegany reservation had a harder time taking hold than the Thomas Indian School did. It took the Quakers three tries at opening a school. Once the school was opened, it began to unravel the once civilized relationship between the Onöndowa’ga:’ and the missionaries. It also caused internal conflict that threatened to cause an even larger rift among the Onöndowa’ga:’. The Onöndowa’ga:’ in Tonawanda were strictly against the formation of a school on the Allegany reservation. The Tonawanda band were trying to revive the prophecies of Handsome Lake and believed that to relinquish even a small amount of land to any non-Onöndowa’ga:’ was in direct violation of that code, for the land was sacred.

It was in October 1816, when the Onöndowa’ga:’ allowed twenty-two-year-old Joseph Elkinton to rent one room in Cold Spring.⁹⁶ Elkinton kept a journal that chronicled the turbulent time he spent with the Onöndowa’ga:’ at Allegany. His school caused much division among the people. He targeted men and sought to teach them farming and concepts of land management. The school also looked to displace women and reinforce a more patriarchal society, encouraging women to focus their attentions on

⁹⁶ Nicholas, A Mark. A Little School, A Reservation Divided: Quaker Education and Allegany Onöndowa’ga:’ Leadership in the Early American Republic. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*: 2006, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 1-21. 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.17953/aicr.30.3.b2ht4k20g4231150_

the home exclusively. Eventually a school was formed at Red House, which by all accounts was much more lenient and accommodating to its Onöndowa'ga:' students than most other indigenous missionary schools. There are also accounts that this school did not provide enough education and families chose instead to send their children to Thomas Indian School on the Cattaraugus reservation.

Thomas Asylum for Orphan and Destitute Indian Children

The formation of the Thomas Indian School on the Cattaraugus reservation was vastly different. Founded in 1855 and opened in 1856 by Philip Thomas and the Wright family, it was named the Thomas Asylum for Orphan and Destitute Indian Children. Tribal council allocated fifteen acres of land for the school. Its name was shortened to Thomas Indian School in 1905. The severity of this boarding school is often overlooked because it was not always a state-run boarding school like many others were. Its categorization as an orphanage regulated it differently. This school started earlier and lasted longer than most other Native American boarding schools.⁹⁷ The main focus of the school was self-sufficiency, much like that at Quaker. Thomas followed the assimilation program that was set forth in the 19th century. It looked to Americanize Native children. Speaking in Onöndowa'ga:' was strictly forbidden. If caught, it carried a severe punishment. It also banned any rituals or cultural customs, which are connected very closely to language, and instead forced Christianity upon the children.⁹⁸ The punishment for speaking an Indigenous language could include whipping or other physical

⁹⁷ Burich, K. R. "'No Place to Go': The Thomas Indian School and the 'Forgotten' Indian Children of New York." *Wicazo Sa Review* 22.2 (2007): 93-110. *Project MUSE*. Web. 3 Aug. 2016. <<https://muse.jhu.edu/>>

⁹⁸ John, Randy A. "Thomas Indian School." *Encyclopedia of New York State*. Ed. Peter R. Eisenstadt and Laura-Eve Moss. Syracuse University Press, 2005. 1553+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 25 June. 2016. <http://proxy.buffalostate.edu:2101/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA194198754&sid=summon&v=2.1&u=buffalostate&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=26654005a835ccdb45263b130ecce32f>

punishments. By forcing these children to speak English and convert to Christianity, the boarding schools were looking to erase the culture of their home life. To forbid speaking their own language was to deny these children the ability to connect with the cultures they came from. Over the 102 years it “taught” children, thousands of them were stripped of their Indigenous tongue. This removal from the communal society caused the multigenerational trauma felt today and was devastating for those children when they returned home.

When the children returned home from boarding schools, they were often disconnected from their families and communities.⁹⁹ While they were being taught English and punished for speaking Onöndowa’ga:’, their families were still speaking their Indigenous language. They were learning Christianity, farming, sewing, and how to be a “good” citizen while their communities were still practicing traditional ceremonies, even if they were illegal.¹⁰⁰ These generations of boarding school children serve as the beginning of where the Onöndowa’ga:’ are now. The current state of the Onöndowa’ga:’ language, as determined by Onöndowa’ga:’ scholars and agencies like UNESCO, is severely critical. Depending on which source one uses, there are between 50-100 fluent Onöndowa’ga:’ speakers left.¹⁰¹

The fight to kill the Indian reached further than boarding schools. The boarding schools were born from the deteriorating conditions of life on the reservation. Families were ravaged with poverty and illness. Often time they relinquished control of their

⁹⁹ Bear, Charla. “American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many.” NPR. 12 May 2008. Web. 12 Jan. 2016. Web. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16516865>.

¹⁰⁰ Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. *The Thomas Indian School and the Forgotten’ Indian Children of NYS*. WGRZ. 7 Nov 2011. Web. Jan 2016. <http://southbuffalo.wgrz.com/news/arts-culture/60697-thomas-indian-school-and-forgotten-indian-children-nys>.

¹⁰¹ Moseley, Christopher. *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger*, 3rd edn. Paris, UNESCO Publishing. 2010. Web. 12 Feb. 2016. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas>.

children only for a short time, only to not be able to take them back when they were ready. When the children lost their culture, they lost not only their language and connection to traditional ceremonies, but also to traditional medicine and interactions with elders. Reservations at this time were beginning to crumble. The Onöndowa'ga:' were divided among themselves. There was a separation among religious beliefs, some following Handsome Lake, the Quakers, and others even more traditional beliefs. The systems of forced farming and land management was unknown to the Onöndowa'ga:'. These are all factors that could have impacted the children that lived on territories and have allowed for them to have a more positive memory of their boarding school experiences.

While there is no denial that Boarding schools were detrimental to Indigenous ways of life, culture, and language, there were many Indigenous students that, for a variety of reasons, had positive experiences at these schools. Conditions on the territories had begun to deteriorate since the introduction of colonial and later American ideal. Alcohol, loss of family structures, poverty, and familial encouragement could account for some of those that enjoy the structures of boarding school. Mindsets were varied when it came to western influence and their means of education; some opposed Americanization of any kind; others saw traditional American education as a necessity to surviving the changing times. In the book *Ne'Ho Niyo'De:No', That's What it Was Like*, elders recorded what life was like during these changing times on the reservations. Students like Iva Calendine enjoyed her time at the Quaker school learning how to sew, tend house, and bake bread. She stayed until she was 17 and, "it was nice."¹⁰² Iva was born in

¹⁰² Austin, Alberta, ed., "Ne' Ho Niyo' Dē: Nö', That's What it Was Like." Vol 1. Hamburg, NY. Rebo Enterprises, Inc. 1989-1990. Pg 48.

Gowanda, New York, in 1920. Her father had gone to both Quaker school as well as Carlisle down in Pennsylvania.¹⁰³ For Lambert Griffin, born in Red House territory in 1917, Thomas Indian School was great experience. He was involved in sports, thrived academically and said:

Life at T.I.S. was real pleasant for me...A real bright spot in my life. While at T.I.S. I played second-string quarterback on the football team. I also played lacrosse at T.I.S.¹⁰⁴

For some students, “home” was a place they could not reference when trying to compare boarding schools to home. Harriett Jones, born on the Cattaraugus reservation in 1905, was placed in Thomas Indian School after her mother’s death.¹⁰⁵ Her father was unable to care for her and her siblings so they lived at the boarding school year-round. Some summers her father would take them home but from the grades of kindergarten to eighth, “Salem” was her home. “I learned to sew and crochet down Salem. That was a blessing for me.”¹⁰⁶ A good deal of the population were of the mindset that in order to survive, they had to adapt and education was key to that. “My advice to the younger generation would have to be on education. Maybe the old days were good but why can’t we make it better.”¹⁰⁷ The structure provided was also looked at favorably by some of the children. Fidela Jimerson was born May 7, 1915, on the Tonawanda reservation before moving to the Cattaraugus territory.¹⁰⁸ While her grandmother was alive, she attended Pinewoods district School #8, but after her death she was sent to Thomas Indian

¹⁰³ Austin, Alberta, ed., “Ne’ Ho Niyo’ Dē: Nō’, That’s What it Was Like.” Vol 1. Hamburg, NY. Rebeco Enterprises, Inc. 1989-1990. Pg 50.

¹⁰⁴ Austin, Alberta, ed., “Ne’ Ho Niyo’ Dē: Nō’, That’s What it Was Like.” Vol 1. Hamburg, NY. Rebeco Enterprises, Inc. 1989-1990. Pg 74.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Pg 133.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Pg 133.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Pg 145.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Pg 116.

School.¹⁰⁹ While the transition was hard at first, it was something she grew to appreciate, saying:

Everything was so strange. I liked it once I got used to the routine that they had. Like going to bed at a certain time, get up at a certain time, go eat at a certain time...everything was on a schedule.¹¹⁰

Whether the children had good or bad experiences, the lasting effects were many. It was also not unique to the United States. Across its northern border, Canada was following the United States lead when it came to the Indigenous people.

Canadian Boarding Experience

Canadian boarding schools began in the late 1800s, under the supervision and guidance of Thomas Pratt, the founder of Carlisle Boarding School in Pennsylvania.¹¹¹ While control of mission schools primarily went to the United States government, by 1900, Canadian Schools were subcontracted to Catholic and Protestant mission societies until 1969.¹¹² The last residential school in Canada closed in 1983. While structured similarly to American boarding schools, a major difference is the aftermath and how each country dealt with the residual effects boarding schools had. In Canada in the 1990s, a series of court cases accused religious institutions of sexual, physical, and mental abuse that has left trauma and loss rampant in their communities.¹¹³ The national dialogue was a way to acknowledge what had occurred and to allow for healing. It also came with

¹⁰⁹ IBID. Pg. 116.

¹¹⁰ Austin, Alberta, ed., "Ne' Ho Niyo' Dē: Nō', That's What it Was Like." Vol 1. Hamburg, NY. Rebeco Enterprises, Inc. 1989-1990. Pg 116.

¹¹¹ Dawson, Alexander S. "Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 39, no. 5, 2012, pp. 80–99. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41702285. Pg. 82.

¹¹² Dawson, Alexander S. "Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 39, no. 5, 2012, pp. 80–99. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41702285. Pg. 82.

¹¹³ Archuleta, Margaret, et al. *Away from Home : American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000* . Heard Museum, 2000. Pg. 134.

financial compensation that all prior students were entitled to. In 2012, *The Winnipeg Press* estimated the settlement amount to be over \$5 billion.¹¹⁴

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing today, the Onöndowa'ga:' have fought to restore their language and with it, their identity. The world has begun to record and acknowledge that boarding schools and assimilation programs were catastrophic to the Indigenous people who were exposed to them. Reconstruction of the narrative has allowed for healing among Indigenous communities.

Long-term Effects of Assimilation

Despite programs and mistreatment by the American government, the Onöndowa'ga:' survived. Although numbers have never reached pre-contact heights, there are now over 8,000 enrolled members of the Onöndowa'ga:' nation.¹¹⁵ Tom Holm and other scholars reworked a concept that had been circulating since the 1960s in regard to identity. The notion that a sovereign nation was nothing without people, that “Peoplehood” is the foundation for a sovereign life. Edward Spicer, George Castile, and Robert Thomas worked this notion for years, coming to the concept that “Peoplehood” was defined by a common language, religion, sacred history, and territory.¹¹⁶ Holm, Chavis, and Pearson modified this theory further by proposing that instead of “religion” the classification should be “ceremonial cycles.”¹¹⁷ This was done to “demonstrate how a group’s religion is inseparably linked to language, sacred history, and to a particular

¹¹⁴ Dawson, Alexander S. “Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States.” *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 39, no. 5, 2012, pp. 80–99. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41702285. Pg. 92.

¹¹⁵ *Culture*. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. 25 June 2016. <https://sni.org/culture/>.

¹¹⁶ Holm, Tom. *Sovereignty and Peoplehood*. 2000. Web. 09 March 2016.

https://nnidatabase.org/db/attachments/text/2000_HOLM_REDINK_sovereignty_peoplehood.pdf

¹¹⁷ Holm, Tom, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis. “Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (2003): 7-24. Accessed April 19, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/1409431.

environment.”¹¹⁸ The importance of a nation’s language is that it connects all elements of the “Peoplehood.” No one can exist in full form without the other. If one aspect is lost, it jeopardizes the entire notion of sovereignty. When the government wanted to control and subjugate the indigenous people of this country, one of their most valiant efforts was the war on the indigenous language. In modern times the struggles have been to reacquaint the people with the language that was almost lost.

Multi-Generational Trauma

While the effects of the boarding schools may not be physically felt in future generations, it did however lead to what is known as multigenerational trauma or historical trauma. Compared with other ethnic groups, non-Hispanic Native American adults are at a greater risk of having physical and mental health problems.¹¹⁹ They are currently reported to have the lowest income, highest rates of suicide, least education, and highest levels of poverty of any other ethnicity in the United States, not to mention the lowest life expectancy of any other population.¹²⁰ The concept of historical trauma is based on four parts:

(1) Mass trauma is deliberately and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a subjugating, dominant population; (2) trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event, but continues over an extended period of time; (3) traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, creating a universal experience of trauma; and (4) the magnitude of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, projected

¹¹⁸ Holm, Tom. *Sovereignty and Peoplehood*. 2000. Web. 09 March 2016.

https://nnidatabase.org/db/attachments/text/2000_HOLM_REDINK_sovereignty_peoplehood.pdf.

¹¹⁹ Barnes, P. M., Adams, P. F., & Powell-Griner, E. (2010). *Health characteristics of the American Indian or Alaska Native adult population: United States, 2004–2008*. National Health Statistics Reports, No. 20. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

¹²⁰ Denny, C. H., Holtzman, D., Goins, T., & Croft, J. B. (2005). *Disparities in chronic disease risk factors and health status between American Indian/Alaska Native and White elders: Findings from a telephone survey, 2001 and 2002*. American Journal of Public Health, 95(5), 825–827. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2004.043489

historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persists across generations.¹²¹

Once a group has been subjected, they must experience overwhelming physical and psychological violence, segregation and or displacement, economic deprivation, and cultural dispossession.¹²² The reservation system and boarding schools among many other factors could all be causes of historical trauma. This is trauma to a group that occurred in previous generations, but has left a lasting impact on the people of today.

Boarding schools are blights in American history. The cruelties felt by the children were lasting. Those that went also experienced abuse, both sexually and physically. When abuse is commonplace, especially when connected to a specific incident, it leaves a mark. Many children were disconnected from their homes and communities upon return to them. They spoke and acted American. They no longer connected with elders and ceremonies. Most importantly, many were traumatized from abuse suffered when speaking Onöndowa'ga:'. Lashes, whipping, and other forms of abuse were repeated if school officials heard anyone speaking Onöndowa'ga:'.¹²³ A form of post-traumatic stress disorder, many would not speak their Indigenous language when they arrived home. They had warped views that it was wrong, dirty or bad. This in turn led to generations that would not pass that information along to younger generations. It made it impossible for them to participate in ceremonies or events. It also led to the belief that it was safer and superior to only teach their children English. It would prevent the pain and suffering they went through. It also instilled a sense of disconnect to the culture

¹²¹ Sotero, M. M. (2006). *A conceptual model of historical trauma: implications for public health practice and research*. Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, 1(1), 93–108

¹²² Sotero, M. M. (2006). *A conceptual model of historical trauma: implications for public health practice and research*. Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, 1(1), 93–108

¹²³ Indian Country Today Media Network Staff. *Language is Key to Culture: Onöndowa'ga:' Fight to Save Theirs*. 6 Aug. 2014. Web. 10 March 2016. <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/08/06/language-key-culture-Onöndowa'ga:'-fight-save-theirs-156262>.

and their Native identity.¹²⁴ For a society that is based on oral history, this was the exact outcome that was hoped for by those that started the assimilation programs - destruction from within.

Linguistics is central to the Onöndowa'ga:' identity because they are an oral people. Writing didn't begin to occur until later in their history. When the boarding school generation had children, many were taught to think that "Whiteness" was the only way to be respectable. Language was put on the back burner or forgotten all together. The rise of the American Indian movement reminded Indigenous people to be proud and to work to save their cultures. This upsurge saw the changing of legislation that had been intact for almost 100 years.

American Indian Movement

In 1975 the United States passed the Indian Self-Determination Act. This act was the first time that the government had entered into a contractual agreement with Native nations in decades. It furthered the work of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act and dismantled later actions to try and terminate Native American sovereignty through the 1950s and 1960s.¹²⁵ It also expanded the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act, which guaranteed the application of the Bill of Rights in Indian country. The American Indian Movement and occupation of Alcatraz, as well as the Civil Rights movement, really began to change legislation in regard to Native American sovereignty. Under President Nixon, the United States moved away from a program of assimilation or termination, with him admitting

¹²⁴ Lynch, Karen. Working to Heal the Wounds of Boarding Schools: United Nations Panel Hopes to Undo the Damage Caused by U.S Government's Indian Boarding School Policies. *The Native Press*. 2015. Web. June 2016. <http://www.theindigenouspress.com/education/index.php>.

¹²⁵ Federal Indian Law for Alaska Tribes. Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act: 1975. Web. May 2016. <https://tmi112.community.uaf.edu/unit-3/indian-self-determination/>.

that the policies were wrong.¹²⁶ It was the goal of this legislation that, while still under federal assistance, it would be up to the different nations to allocate the money and assistance given to them by the federal government. A very significant piece of legislation that resulted was the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act. This Act reversed the 1883 Religious Crimes Code. This allowed Native Americans throughout the country the freedom to practice their traditional religions without fear of reprisal.¹²⁷ It granted First Amendment rights back to Native Peoples, allowing them to practice traditional dances, ceremonies, and the use of objects they considered to be sacred. It acknowledged that the banning of traditional ceremonies and practices had an adverse effect on the Indigenous peoples of the United States. While it was a step in the right direction, even this monumental moment couldn't fix what had already occurred.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a huge push to recollect and reconnect with their cultural roots with language being a top priority. This has come in the form of preservation as well as growth. Many new programs and initiatives are underway to help restore the language and establish a new generation of fluent speakers, guaranteeing it survives.

¹²⁶ Movroydis, Jonathan. *The First Native American President*. Richard Nixon Foundation. 2016. Web. July 2016. <http://nixonfoundation.org/news-details.php?id=30>.

¹²⁷ *American Indian Religious Freedom Act*. 11 August 1978. National Park Services. 2006. Web. June 2016. https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/fhpl_indianrelfreact.pdf.

VII. Preservation and Revitalization

Global and Domestic Awareness

The past few decades have seen a dramatic increase in awareness for the loss of Indigenous languages. The Onöndowa'ga:' have been working internally for years to try and combat the rapid language loss felt within their communities. Language programs have ranged from offering Onöndowa'ga:' in local schools to coloring books written in Onöndowa'ga:' and English. In 1990, Senator John McCain introduced the Native American Languages Act. This act promoted "the rights and freedoms of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages."¹²⁸ This was monumental, as it acknowledged that there had been suppression of language in the past. Why else would it need to be proclaimed that a sovereign nation could practice and develop their language? The Act also reaffirms that "special status is accorded Native Americans in the United States a status that recognizes distinct cultural and political rights, including the right to continue separate identities."¹²⁹ In relation to language, the act finds that:

(3) the traditional languages of Native Americans are an integral part of their cultures and identities and form the basic medium for the transmission, and thus survival, of Native American cultures, literatures, histories, religions, political institutions, and values.¹³⁰

This legislation was expanded in 2006 with the incorporation of the Esther Martinez Native American Preservation Act. This act strengthens the 1990 Act by funding language survival schools, language preservation efforts, and language nest programs. It

¹²⁸ S.2167.*Native American Languages Act*. 101st Congress.1989-1990. Web. 19 May 2016. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/senate-bill/2167>.

¹²⁹ S.2167.*Native American Languages Act*. 101st Congress.1989-1990. Web. 19 May 2016. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/senate-bill/2167>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

was reintroduced and passed again in 2015 and extends the funding and programs until 2020.¹³¹

UNESCO's *Atlas of the World Languages in Danger* ranks languages around the world that are in danger of dying. The ranking system starts with vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, and extinct. After generations of trauma and loss, Onöndowa'ga:' Gaweno is ranked as "Severely Endangered." It estimates 100 speakers among all the different Onöndowa'ga:' territories, and that none are under the age of 50.¹³² For a group that relies on language as a part of its society, those numbers are alarming.

Taking Control

Over 100 years of suppression and neglect can take its toll on any people. We see lasting affects in other minorities that have experienced abuses or wrong doings. The Onöndowa'ga:' have been actively working to restore language since it began to disappear. Elders have acknowledged for years that at some point the generation of fluent speakers will be gone and that actions must be taken to preserve the language so it doesn't die with them. To remedy this, programs were begun by the Onöndowa'ga:' to record elders conversing, writing the language down, and the introduction of street signs in both English and Onöndowa'ga:'.

Efforts have been two-fold, including preservation and growth. At this time in history, it is not only vital to preserve the language but also to begin to expand and grow

¹³¹ Native News Online Staff. "Seven US Senators Introduce Bill to Promote Preservation of American Indian Languages." 05 May 2015. Web. 12 Feb. 2016. <http://nativenewsonline.net/currents/seven-us-senators-introduce-bill-to-promote-preservation-of-american-indian-languages/>.

¹³² Golla, Victor, Ives Goddard, Lyle Campbell, Marianne Mithun, and Mauricio Mixco. 2007. North America. *Atlas of the World's Languages* (2nd. edition), ed. by R.E. Asher and C.J. Moseley, 7-44. London: Routledge.

the number of speakers. It is not a stretch to say that the language has suffered through years of suppression, but what still remains are the elders. Elders provide a glimpse into the past and can provide an older version of the Onöndowa'ga:' language, preserving a history that is pre-assimilation. The revitalization of the Onöndowa'ga:' language really took off in the early 1990s. This could be in part to the passing of the Native American Languages Act of 1990. We saw in Albany in 1991, the University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Division of Bilingual Education and Onöndowa'ga:' speakers team up to create a storybook called *Onodowa'ga Gaga: Sho'o'h or Allegany Onöndowa'ga:' Storybook*.¹³³ The book featured stories that are related to Onöndowa'ga:' culture and the Allegany reservation, with titles like "Thunder and the Onöndowa'ga:' Woman." The stories are first told in English and the Onöndowa'ga:' version is later in the book. For fluent English speakers, recognition comes easier when you can relate words to other words you are familiar with. It is important to note that others had been working to preserve the Onöndowa'ga:' language earlier. Wallace Chafe was an American linguist who has been researching the Onöndowa'ga:' culture since the 1960s.¹³⁴ An example of Chafe's preservation efforts can be seen with his work, *Seneca Thanksgiving Rituals*.¹³⁵ This collection includes the three rituals that precede all gatherings or ceremonies with the exception of the Funeral Ceremony and the Dance for the Dead. While it is not favorable for outsiders to know what these ceremonies entail, it is a great resource for a gap generation to have.

Asher Wright can also be credited with helping to preserve the language. While his motives and intentions were not to help preserve the Onöndowa'ga:' language, but to

¹³³ Waterman, Carson. *Allegany Onöndowa'ga:' Storybook*. University of the State of New York. Albany New York. Print. 1991.

¹³⁴ Wallace Chafe. The Department of Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara. The Regents of the University of California. 2016. Web. June 2016. <http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/people/wallace-chafe>.

¹³⁵ Chafe, Wallace. *Onöndowa'ga:' Thanksgiving Rituals*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. 1961.

work to eventually destroy it, by converting hymns and songs into Onöndowa'ga:', we are able to see early variations of the language.

As an oral culture, the Onöndowa'ga:' have been working to preserve their history before the fluent generations are gone. The problem with losing language is that their history is remembered and passed down in Onöndowa'ga:'. Every elder that passes is a piece of history gone. These members of the community have survived and lived through the attempted destruction of their culture. They provide an authentic glimpse of pre-assimilation Onöndowa'ga:' culture, a pre-destruction language that is more than just translations from Onöndowa'ga:' to English. The importance of recording elders cannot be stressed enough. Onöndowa'ga:' is considered critically endangered.¹³⁶ Traditions, ceremonies, and songs are all performed in Onöndowa'ga:'. When they are not done in their Indigenous tongue, the people are unable to fully connect with their ancestors and where they come from. It remains arguable that by not performing in Onöndowa'ga:', parts of the message are lost. Recording elders allows for a more complete collection to pass onto younger generations. The recordings compliment other ongoing efforts to revitalize and save the language and it also allows for an authentic preservation of identity.

To broaden the conservation of the language, Onöndowa'ga:' scholars have worked to create a bounty of written material. The topics go beyond conversation, numbers, and colors. Phyllis Bardeau has been one of many elders working to preserve the language. Ms. Bardeau has written a number of books ranging from storybooks to a Onöndowa'ga:' language dictionary. In 2011 she wrote *Definitive Onöndowa'ga:': It's in*

¹³⁶ Moseley, Christopher. *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, 3rd edn. Paris, UNESCO Publishing. 2010. Web. 12 Feb. 2016. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas>.

the Word, a Onöndowa'ga:' dictionary. This is more than just your average Onöndowa'ga:' to English dictionary; it provides historical context and literal translations. The book serves as a means of explaining how the Onöndowa'ga:' language works, how words are pronounced, what specific symbols mean, and historical context of the words and meanings.¹³⁷ By providing historical context it allows later generations to not only learn the language but to also understand the words' origins and in return their own roots and history. Beyond translations, Ms. Bardeau also collaborated with the Onöndowa'ga:' Language Program in 2011 to write a series of Onöndowa'ga:' language publications. Topics of this series include planting, occupation, employment, and health. Any addition to the written archive is a step towards securing the availability to the future generations. This series looked to further the development of sentence structures, the learners' ability to pronounce Onöndowa'ga:' words, and to encourage the growth of conversations in Onöndowa'ga:'.

While these early efforts to preserve language were vital to the future generations, they weren't without their own failures. Preservation of language is key, but without expanding its base of speakers, it still runs the risk of becoming a "dead language" if no one is able to fluently speak and share it. The creation of immersion schools in the 1980s was key to the future of the language revitalizations around the world. It showed that a full immersion was needed to further the previous work and make it more effective in not only preserving, but also revitalizing.

Seven Generations

¹³⁷ Bardeau, Phyllis. *Definitive Onöndowa'ga:': It's in the Word*. Onöndowa'ga:' Iroquois National Museum. Salamanca NY. Print. 2011. Pg 3.

With new technologies come new inventions. This is true in the growth of the Onöndowa'ga:' Gawë: nö'. Programs have been created that target all age groups on the Allegany and Cattaraugus reservations. Elders, adults, and children all have programs designed for them.

Schools in Salamanca and Gowanda, NY, both offer Onöndowa'ga:' as a "foreign language." This allows Native and non-Native students to learn Onöndowa'ga:' while in school and expands the demographics that may otherwise not be reached. These programs are complete with a New York state regents test that is designed by the Onöndowa'ga:' instructors from the schools in conjunction with the testing's regulations. These programs are also offered to non-native students that would like to learn an Indigenous language.

The Onöndowa'ga:' Nation is home to an Early Childhood Learning Center, the Seneca Allegany Learning Center (SALC). The SALC program serves students from daycare to afterschool, with ages ranging from six weeks old to 13 years. It is broken into three age groups, daycare (6 weeks-pre-K), head start (3-5 years), and afterschool (kindergarten- age 13). The mission statement for SALC is:

To provide equitable, quality early childhood development and care service to our communities based upon a standard of excellence and cultural integrity.¹³⁸

There are four development areas focused on at the school, social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. The language portion of learning "focuses on how children understand and communicate through words, both spoken, and written."¹³⁹ Having two nieces that have gone through SALC's programs, I can say they both have great handles

¹³⁸ Early Childhood Learning Center. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. July 2016. <https://sni.org/departments/early-childhood-learning-center/>.

¹³⁹ Early Childhood Learning Center. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. July 2016. <https://sni.org/departments/early-childhood-learning-center/>.

on the Onöndowa'ga:' language. This is due to the teachers and curriculum that stress the importance of these children learning their cultural language, even if the children are not Onöndowa'ga:'. they learn to communicate in Onöndowa'ga:', because it is important to the community as a whole. The program is not just expanding student's abilities to speak, but the teacher's as well. The generation of teachers today all had to learn the language, to varying degrees, in order to be able to teach it to the students. My nieces have come over reading, singing, and counting in both English and Onöndowa'ga:'. Programs like this are great because they start teaching the students the language at an age where their brains are more receptive to learning multiple languages.¹⁴⁰ Monthly, the staff puts on "socials" for the students. This is a time where they sing songs in Onöndowa'ga:' as well as dance traditional Onöndowa'ga:' dances.

¹⁴⁰ McCarty, Teresa. *Teaching the Whole Child: Language Immersion and Student Achievement*. Indian Country Today Media Network. September 2014. Web. Feb 2016. <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/09/01/teaching-whole-child-language-immersion-and-student-achievement-156685>.

Language Immersion Programs

Language Nests began in the 1980s but have become more and more popular for different tribes to create. Nests are a way to immerse children in their language and culture before they are introduced to western schools. A prominent purveyor of “language nest” schools and the need for full immersion is Dr. Richard E. Littlebear (Ve’ kesohnestoohe). He is the president of Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Littlebear has championed, for all, the ideas that language nest schools are based on. His theory is, that in order for languages to survive they need to be taught to people, to be taught about, to be taught with, and be taught for academic credit.¹⁴¹ The importance of each of these components can be looked at individually, but become stronger and more effective when put together. Littlebear stresses the importance of this as:

Many language strengthening programs do not ask these questions and end up attempting to answer all of these questions in one program, thereby dooming their efforts to failure before they start.¹⁴²

The Maori of New Zealand are credited as being the pioneer of language immersion schools.¹⁴³ The Maori language movement began in 1981 when Maori leaders and the department of Maori Affairs devised a plan to help revitalize the dying languages.¹⁴⁴ The mission of the school was and is still to “reattach the language to the

¹⁴¹ Littlebear, Richard E. “Chief Dull Knife Community Is Strengthening the Northern Cheyenne Language and Culture.” *Journal of American Indian Education*, vol. 42, no. 1, Jan. 2003, pp. 75–84. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=507798963&site=ehost-live. Pg. 77.

¹⁴² Littlebear, Richard E. “Chief Dull Knife Community Is Strengthening the Northern Cheyenne Language and Culture.” *Journal of American Indian Education*, vol. 42, no. 1, Jan. 2003, pp. 75–84. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=507798963&site=ehost-live. Pg 77.

¹⁴³ Johnston, Bill, and Kimberly A. Johnson. “Preschool Immersion Education for Indigenous Languages: A Survey of Resources.” *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2002, pp. 107-123,201. *ProQuest*, <http://proxy.buffalostate.edu:2048/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.buffalostate.edu/docview/230304472?accountid=7259>. Pg 109.

¹⁴⁴ *IBID*. Pg 109.

people at the community level.”¹⁴⁵ The reception has been amazing, with over 14,000 children enrolled in the Kohanga Reo in 1996.¹⁴⁶ The programs created connect community, culture, traditions, and language to provide a whole concept of identity and self-awareness.¹⁴⁷ The success of this program has spawned many others and has provided the foundation for language nests all over, as well as expansion programs that extend to the elementary grades.¹⁴⁸

In 1998, Lehman “Dar” Dowdy started the Faithkeepers School in Steamburg, NY.¹⁴⁹ The school was founded as a way to preserve Onöndowa’ga:’ language and culture. As of 2010, there were 7,600 members of the Onöndowa’ga:’ nation scattered from reservation to reservation. The number of fluent speakers at the same time was 30. Mr. Dowdy was one of the last remaining Onöndowa’ga:’ that was fully informed on all things Onöndowa’ga:’ culture and language.¹⁵⁰ The development and growth of the language is connected to culture and identity in so many ways. In order for the Onöndowa’ga:’ to continue to exist they cannot let their language die. Faithkeepers is an opportunity to restore something that was taken away over a long period of time. It gives Native parents the ability to control their children’s education for the first time since boarding schools. While Indigenous nations are sovereign, children are still required to attend American schools, inadvertently making them Americanized. They must know English, both written and spoken. It is more often than not the first language most Native

¹⁴⁵ Stiles, D.B. (1997). Four successful indigenous language programs. In J. Reyhner (Ed.), *Teaching Indigenous languages* (pp. 248-262). Flagstaff, AZ: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University. Pg. 253.

¹⁴⁶ May, S. (1999). Language and education rights for indigenous peoples. In S. May (Ed.), *Indigenous community-based education* (pp. 42-66). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

¹⁴⁷ Johnston, Bill, and Kimberly A. Johnson. "Preschool Immersion Education for Indigenous Languages: A Survey of Resources." *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2002, pp. 107-123,201. *ProQuest*, <http://proxy.buffalostate.edu:2048/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.buffalostate.edu/docview/230304472?accountid=7259>. Pg 110.

¹⁴⁸ *IBID*. Pg 111.

¹⁴⁹ *FaithKeepers School Part 1 of 3*. Faithkeepers School, YouTube. 10 Jan. 2010. Web. 10 March 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJ07_Fm0h9c.

¹⁵⁰ *FaithKeepers School Part 1 of 3*. Faithkeepers School, YouTube. 10 Jan. 2010. Web. 10 March 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJ07_Fm0h9c.

children learn, but Faithkeepers provides an opportunity to change that. It puts children in an immersive environment where they are surrounded by the Onöndowa'ga:' language and culture. The homework is done completely in Onöndowa'ga:', the signs on the walls are in Onöndowa'ga:', and the teachers all speak Onöndowa'ga:' to the students. Not only does this allow the youngest generations the opportunity to know their culture and heritage, it also gives parents and grandparents a second chance to learn with their children.

The Onöndowa'ga:' nation has also gone to great lengths to grow their language through their language department. This is a department that was solely created to use the preservation materials to help the community to learn the language. The aim is to promote and increase conversational language among Nation members.¹⁵¹ Using fluent speakers, younger generations are being trained as apprentices. There are even paying jobs through the SNI to become a language apprentice. This department works with other departments to increase fluency among all members of the Seneca Nation of Indians including the teachers and staff at the SALC. Beyond standard class settings, they also have a host of web-based material that is created to help teachers at all levels instruct students in the Onöndowa'ga:' language. They do have a website available for all to use and learn from that can be found on their department page at the SNI website.

¹⁵¹ *Onöndowa'ga:' Language*. Onöndowa'ga:' Nation of Indians. 2016. Web. 25 June 2016.
<https://sni.org/departments/Onöndowa'ga:'-language/>.

The “Lost Generation”

Having explained the destruction of the Onöndowa’ga:’ language and the hopes for its future, it is also important to touch base on the generations that were neither the destruction or revitalization phase. There is a gap period, a “Lost Generation” of sorts. These are people like my father, my aunts, and my uncles. My Grandfather went to Thomas Indian School and he was one of those students that enjoyed his experiences there. He liked the structure, later joining the army and serving in World War II, he became a devout Christian, having been known to read the Bible multiple times, but he also never spoke his language. When my father was in his 30’s, he began working with an Elder to learn the language. He would speak to my Grandfather, but the only responses he ever received were corrections in pronunciations. My Grandfather was able to speak fluently, he just chose not to. There was never a reason given but one could attribute it to a number of things. He was determined to make it in the “White-man’s” world, later retiring from the B&O Railroad. He was a student of a residential boarding school, where we know language was forbidden and suppressed. Regardless of the reason, one thing is clear; he did not pass on that knowledge to his family.

The post boarding school generation, like my father, were some of the most deprived when it came to language development. Older generations saw more of the communal settings and use of language and culture, like my Grandfather before boarding school. My aunts, uncles, and father were like many other families, language was not taught for a variety of reasons and it was not something offered anywhere but in the home at this time. For those that did not participate in Longhouse ceremonies, there were very limited options for exposure. This is why my father worked with an Elder to learn the

language and develop his skills. Growing up, my father did use Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh in our home. While it was limited and sometimes only basic commands like “get down” or “stand up” it was still an introduction. Thankfully, as I grew older there were more opportunities and exposure to Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh and culture.

My generation, those born in the mid-late 1980s, saw the shift and benefitted from it. My elementary years provided introduction classes to Onöndowa'ga:' culture and life. It was age appropriate teachings like numbers, colors, animals, and stories that taught valuable lessons about kindness and community, as well as values that are important to the Onöndowa'ga:' people. As I aged and entered into middle school, we were able to take Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh as a language class. It was also offered at the high school level, fulfilling the foreign language requirements needed to graduate. This early exposure created an interest in the community I grew up surrounded by. It became the basis of my education and eventually the inspiration for this research project. I learned how devastating the loss was and continued to be but I was also filled with hope because the older I got, the more opportunities there were to learn Onöndowa'ga:'Gawenoh. The significance of the destruction and the loss of elders cannot be minimized, but the resiliency of the Onöndowa'ga:' and the growth of their language provides hope. Hope that one day, all Onöndowa'ga:' homes will have language to pass to the next seven generations.

VIII. Conclusion

The Onöndowa'ga:' are a unique people with a unique history, but this story is not unique to them. Native cultures all over the world have experienced language loss through a variety of circumstances. Cherokee brothers Micah and Jakeli Swimmer are both working to help revitalize the Eastern Band Cherokee language telling NPR, "I mean, if we're not speaking Cherokee, then what are we?"¹⁵² They both recognize how fundamental the language is to their heritage and identity. To the Cherokee, like the Onöndowa'ga:', language has always played a very central part of their being. It connects them to their history, ancestors, traditions, and customs. It provides a bond for members and a reminder of who they are and where they come from. Having influenced one of the most significant documents in recent history, the United States Constitution, the Onöndowa'ga:' have still suffered greatly at the hands of the dominant culture. While relationships were strong and friendly for many years, it wasn't long after the formation of the young United States that promises made and treaties signed were broken to advance the growth of the Republic.

When the legislation and laws passed no longer favored Native American sovereignty, language was one of the first areas under attack. Taking of the language and land acquisitions were the most harmful programs to Natives all across the country. It is no surprise that these programs were placed together on purpose. Boarding schools are recorded to have had severe punishment when a student spoke Onöndowa'ga:'. Onöndowa'ga:' names were taken and replaced with English names. Taking a people's language affects more than just speech. By weakening the fluency, traditional ceremonies

¹⁵² Schlemmer, Liz. *To Save Their Endangered Language, 2 Cherokee Brothers Learn as they Teach*. NPR. 24 December 2018. Web. January 2019. https://www.npr.org/2018/12/24/674509385/to-save-their-endangered-language-2-cherokee-brothers-learn-as-they-teach?fbclid=IwAR0BR7bUvWmQ20L5xAspBYUzN_ZCXP3DHWdlaJE_Q7uEuMZnXeM9mfGR7bM

became endangered and connections to history and ancestors more distant. Being a traditionally oral society, language is key to maintaining that shared history and connection, which ultimately constitutes sovereignty.

While the status of the Onöndowa'ga:' language has seemed bleak for many decades now, there is a revitalization of language efforts underway. It began in the early 1990s and has only grown since. While not all programs have been deemed successful there have been many that have been proven to work. The growth of the language is of the utmost importance. In order to understand how important that growth is, one must understand where the language went in the first place. It must also be known why the language is so important. The connection of language, culture, shared history, and religious views all combined equal the formula for a sovereign nation. It is not possible to remove the shared history but weakening language takes from all the other areas remaining. This connection is why the revitalization is so important. Leaving no window open for the taking of what is remaining to Native people and giving a sense of pride for what has been withstood, the fight to remain sovereign entities of the United States of America has continued.

There are many programs underway that can do nothing but help the future of the Onöndowa'ga:' language. The growth of the Faithkeepers School is a huge start. It has grown from a small-scale operation in Steamburg, NY, to a much larger presence in local Native life. Many more children are now able to benefit from the traditional teachings as well as immersion in the Onöndowa'ga:' language. Educating the younger generation in traditional language and culture will only help to spread the knowledge. It is not only

traditional methods that are helping to spread awareness to Native issues but also social media platforms like Facebook.

With the advent of social media platforms, older and younger generations can connect on a level that has not been seen before. Pages like “I’m from the Allegany Rez” and “Indian Country Today Media Network” have allowed Natives from all over the world to connect and share programs and initiatives that are being used on their reservations. It also provides a platform to spread awareness about issues that are faced on Native American Reservations. Indigenous writers and activists are able to write and research stories that will not be promoted by mainstream media outlets. As I completed this project, I was pleased to see that the United Nations named 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages. This provides a platform for Indigenous people all over the world to come together and solve the identity crisis that is language loss. It also shows the world is coming to recognize on a broader scale the damage that has been done and the work needed to restore Indigenous languages.

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