

**CULTURAL ASPECTS OF WARFARE: THE IROQUOIS INSTITUTION OF
THE MOURNING WAR**
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Native American warfare, before European contact, is characterized as primitive warfare due to their lack of territorial gain or economic advancement. The Iroquois, specifically, based their warfare on social continuity and spiritual growth. Death in Iroquois society is a direct correlation to the level of tribal spirituality and strength. Sustainability of this strength is maintained through adoption and Mourning War. Mourning War (as these were called due to their emphasis on the deceased) assured the spiritual power of the clan would be preserved. The encounter of Europeans and the Iroquois drastically changed the Iroquois society and their methodology of warfare. Europeans brought disease and commerce, which in turn proved disastrous to these tribes. By the early sixteenth century, the definition of the Mourning War had changed. Warfare began as a cultural answer to death and diminishing power within the Iroquois society; however, after contact with Europeans, this tradition evolved into a detrimental cycle of destruction.

Older histories attribute Iroquois warfare to various different rationales. Scholars of the nineteenth century tended to portray the warfare of the northeastern Native Americans as an innate cultural or racial predisposition. They were seen as possessing an "intractable spirit of independence, and pride which...reinforce...that savage lethargy of mind from which it is so hard to rouse him."¹ Tragically, this aided in the ideas of Indian savagery.

Twentieth century historians tended to reject these earlier notions and began to concentrate on the economic factors of warfare. Historians such as George T. Hunt blame the European introduction of economic competition brought on by the fur trade. He concluded that inter-tribal wars began as private and social enterprises that, after the introduction of European trade, created new rivalries and these wars assumed an entirely different aspect. These changes could be first documented in the battle for Fort Orange in 1626.² Recent scholarship has provided a

multi-causal approach to the wars of the Iroquois. Various cultural traits such as mourning, feuding, and revenge also played a key role in this cultural mechanism. Brandao suggests that “any monocausal explanation should be suspect, and this one is no exception. The Beaver Wars interpretation is an economically reductionist and simplistic explanation that downplays both the Iroquois cultural resilience and other important goals of seventeenth-century Iroquois warfare. A closer look at the central tenets of this economic interpretation reveals several reasons for questioning its validity; the most important is that there is little or no evidence to support it.”³

As in many Indian cultures, the Iroquois practice of warfare was not driven by territorial expansion or economic gain; but the need for social continuity. The Iroquois (as they were called by the French denoted their infamous reputation as “snake-like” savages) declared and conducted war as any European country would, but their organized violence served functions in their culture that were unfamiliar to the colonizers.⁴ The Five Nations however, oftentimes engaged in raids which were “oftentimes large-scale efforts organized on village, nation, or confederacy levels...” or battles of revenge that were deeply inlaid with cultural significance.

Relations between the Iroquois and Europeans varied depending on individual interests of the tribes in the League. Because the Iroquois League existed primarily to suppress warfare among its constituent groups rather than “to coordinate interactions with outsiders...”⁵ Sometimes these individual interests led to warfare with Europeans who were allied with fellow tribesmen. This warfare, seen as primitive warfare and created the generalization that the Iroquois peoples were “warlike”.

With the Europeans came disease and technology both unfamiliar and destruction to these tribes. From the mid-sixteenth century, disease ran rampant through the Iroquois tribes and reduced them to half of their population. Maintenance of population levels was only possible through war and adoption of new members. The significance of adoption and maintenance of population is best understood by the role of warfare in Iroquois society. According to Blick, adoptions are divided into preliminary rites, luminal rites, and postliminal rites:

Iroquois adoption forces a captive to move through the preliminary states of separation from his tribe, the capture, removal from his old life, and the recognition of his status

as a stranger. The liminal state, or transition, imposes upon the captive the ordeal of the gauntlet, a ceremonial death (symbolized by beating or whipping), and the status of initiate. Finally the postliminal state concludes the captive's odyssey with his incorporation into Iroquois society through adoption, thereby granting him a new life (or rebirth after his ceremonial death), and the recognition of his status as a member of that society.⁶

Similarly to their European counterparts, the Iroquois engaged in battle for prominence of society. However, according to the Iroquois prominence was gained through maintenance and growth of tribal spiritual power. War captives were used to replace the dead, literally and symbolically. According to Richter, warfare defined Iroquois mourning practices. By the end of the first half of the seventeenth century, warfare practices were further redefined with European trade.

According to the Iroquois, no bad deed could go unpunished. Death that spawned from war was considered traumatic and caused profound grief to loved ones. The deceased's family and village suffered a loss of power as a result of this loss of life. The only way to appease the mourning families was to wage vengeance on their killers. "Mourning wars" (wars that were fought to obtain captive from war) assured that the spiritual power would not leave the community, but remain in the captive of war.

The Haudenosaunee, collectively known as the *People of the Longhouse* were frequently involved in inter-tribal warfare and war between neighboring tribes. To create a solution for tribal antagonisms the Iroquois League or Confederacy was created. The legendary leaders Deganawidah and Hiawatha developed a plan to end (forever) all wars. A system was set up where chiefs from the five nations would hold council before any action was taken. In order to curb the blood-feud, a system of wampum exchange was devised. In turn, "wampum became an Iroquois version of the wergild where by the family of the individual killed by someone from a different clan could be appeased without further bloodshed."⁷ Despite this alliance, the Iroquois continued to pursue their own interests including alliances with Europeans. The Five Nations prospered as a result of their unity; however, negligence of their peace resulted in intermittent warfare.

Most historians view warfare as the progression of weaponry, state-building, and territorial gain in that only hierarchical, centrally controlled states can conduct "true" or "decisive" war. Pre-

states, as many Native American societies are defined, fought “primitive” wars due to their lack of geopolitical concerns or plans of destruction of opponents will to fight.⁸

The traditional wars of the Five Nations centered on the premise of population stability, which in turn provided individual and collective spiritual power. When a person died, according to the Iroquois, “the power of his or her lineage, clan, and nation diminished in proportion to his or her individual strength.” Requickening is a ritual in which the deceased’s name, along with the social role and duties it represented, transfers to a successor. Father Paul le Jeune, a French Jesuit missionary in French Canada, observed this ritual in practice. He noted that the Iroquois gave the potential adoptee presents and in acceptance of such presents would solidify his acceptance into the tribe. He would then assume all social functions of that tribal member as well as organizing a war party to kill his enemies, in place of the deceased who lives again through him.⁹ The Requickening Address in the Ritual of the Condoling and Installation Council of the League (or Confederation) was confined to specific constraints:

The Condoling and Installation Council of the League (or Confederation) of the Iroquois held requickening in the autumn and winter due to their concern with death and the powers that requicken and preserve the living from the power of the Destroyer, and so it was thought to be deadly and destructive to growing seeds and plants and fruits were it held during the spring or summer—the period of growth and rebirth. Its purpose in part is to nullify and overcome the power of Death and to restore to its normal condition the *orenda*, or magic power, of the stricken sisterhood of tribes.¹⁰

Through requickening, any vacancy in Iroquois families and villages are thus filled symbolically and physically. Requickening addresses were accompanied with fourteen strings of wampum¹¹ (sometimes the name of the Requickening Address is called the Fourteen Matters or *Ne’Adondak’sah*) known as the *Wampum Strings of Requickening*.¹²

The Requickening Address is the third of five¹³ essential rituals used in the Condolence Council (which in this case is for a tribal chieftain) that uses redundant phrases to illustrate the evils and the wounds that devastate the mourning. The act of requickening counteracts the effects of these evils by restoring the dying

people to new life in the person of their newly installed member.¹⁴ Some of the key aspects of the address are as follows:

“Now, moreover...it is...the calamity, so direful, that has stricken thy person...I shall speak such words that I will soothe and appease by [caressing] thy guardian spirit....The being that is demonic in itself...the Great Destroyer, that it is, that every day and every night roams about... [where] it exclaims[s] ‘I, ...will destroy the Commonwealth [the League],’...now we have wiped the tears away from our faces...that customarily takes place when a distressful event has befallen a person, that the flesh [and] body...becomes obstructed.... Moreover, the powers of life usually are lessened.... [When] it comes to pass where a direful thing befalls a person, that the Sun becomes lost to that person, customarily.... Now, I have set in order all thy affairs...it shall be possible that they shall again set his face fronting the people, that they shall again raise him up [requicken him], that they shall again name him, and that also he shall again stand in front of the people.”¹⁵

The Requickening Address is the key to understanding the vital importance in understanding the maintenance and integrity of the Iroquois peoples.

The Iroquois perception was aggravated by certain viewpoints such as the idea of natural death. With the exception of drowning, the Iroquois believed that there was no such thing as a natural death. When a loved one died, someone else was to blame and revenge was essential. Iroquois warriors were urged to “take vengeance for the wickedness and treachery committed and to make war upon them as speedily as possible.”¹⁶ On a societal level, warfare helped the Iroquois deal with death, more importantly, on a personal and emotional level, it performed similar functions. They believed that the despair and grief of a loved one’s passing could, if uncontrolled, plunge survivors into depths of anguish and fits of rage potentially harmful to themselves or the community.

Mourning rituals assisted the deceased’s household providing an easy return to normal life. However, if these feelings remain exacerbated the only socially acceptable channel of release was to seek captives to ease the pain. The target of such a mourning war was usually traditional enemies even if they were

neither directly or indirectly responsible for the death.

Members of the dead person's household did not participate in the captive raids personally. Instead, young men, related by marriage, were obliged to form a raiding party or face accusations of cowardice. Martial skills in Indian societies were highly valued because achievement in battle was a sign of prestige and honor. Participation in a war party was both a great honor and a pivotal point in a young man's life. The status of a warrior was dependent on the number of captives he brought home for torture or adoption. In fact success was a determinant in an "advantageous marriage and possibilities of becoming a village leader. Selection to a sachem, or the governing body, was determined on his ability to attract followers in raids and his munificence in giving war feasts." Success in his efforts brought the young man merit in his clan and village. After the raid, mourners either selected a prisoner for adoption or vented their rage through torture and execution. The duty of the prisoners was to make a sincere effort to please their new relatives or meet a sudden death.

During ritual torture, the Iroquois were absorbing the spiritual power of the captives. According to Parkman, sometimes this torture would include, but was not limited to, the tearing away of finger nails with their teeth, the gnawing of the fingers, and piercing of body parts.¹⁷ The final consumption of power lay in the ritualistic feast of the captive's body. According to Barr, this feast, fed to the warriors, literally gave the warriors power. The ceremonial torture and executions of prisoners was beneficial to both mourners as well as other villagers; by participating in the humiliation and torture, "villagers were simultaneously partaking in the defeat of their foes. Additionally, youth learn valuable lessons in the behavior expected of warriors and in the way to die bravely if captured." Therefore, warfare promoted group cohesion and demonstrated to the Iroquois their superiority over their enemies.

Scalping also aided in demonstrating superiority while simultaneously spreading a sense of fear among Europeans. The Jesuits felt threatened by the Iroquois and "...no man could hunt, fish, till the fields, or cut a tree in the forest, without peril to his scalp."¹⁸ Native Americans believed that the "hair was full of magical power and that a person's spirit or soul was supposed to be concentrated at the top of the head."¹⁹ The practice of scalping literally captured the soul and power of a defeated foe. This scalp also served as a trophy for the warrior in that it was worn as a "badge of honor daring enemies to attack him."²⁰ As prominent

as scalping was to an Iroquois, the practice was not well received in reverse. To be scalped in Iroquois society made the warrior dead to society and he was seen (literally) as a lost soul.²¹ Scalping was an important mechanism used to regain lost tribal power, but cannibalism also aided in this salvage.

Cannibalism also played an integral part of the Iroquois warfare methodology. Ritual cannibalism, a trait commonly exhibited in Northeastern Indian warfare, involved the “consumption of a victim’s flesh or organs and was considered a way to acquire the strength and courage of an enemy warrior.”²² Archaeology has provided evidence of ritual cannibalism and is evident at several sites and suggests that the cyclic “mourning warfare” was prominent at this time. According to Keener, some archaeological sites contain refuse pits that contain burned human bone and several arrow-riddled burials at this site.²³ Despite attempts to sanitize Native American History, cannibalism remains a known, yet debated factor.²⁴ According to Parkman, during ceremonial torture, the bravest victims were honored with a ritual feast in which they literally participated; where “their bodies were divided, thrown into kettle, and eaten by the assembly.”²⁵ Native Americans believed that a person’s bravery dwelled in their blood and that it could be transferred to others via consumption or transfusion. According to Marrin, such feasts included boiling of entire bodies, the roasting of the victim’s heart (which was given to the young men to feed their courage), the drinking of blood, or the transfusion of blood through incisions.²⁶ Jesuit documents have also described the frequent practice of cannibalism; they have noted the skinning of human remains, the consumption of hands and ears, as well as feet.²⁷ Not all accounts come from Jesuit documents. One such example is Governor Devonville’s account of the cutting of his dead soldiers into quarters in order to put them in a pot and have their blood drank.²⁸ This inhuman tradition was seen as a necessary and vital part of life despite its present conceptions.

The social demands of mourning wars shaped strategy and tactics in at least two ways. First, the essential measure of a war party’s success was its ability to seize prisoners and bring them home alive. The capture of enemies was preferred to killing and scalping them. This was vastly different from the European style warfare. According to the Iroquois, “...to forget the importance of captive taking or to ignore the rituals associated with it was to invite defeat.” The second tactical reflection of the social functions

of warfare was the idea of survival in battle. For the Iroquois, casualties challenged the intention of warfare as a means of enlarging the population. Slain warriors were barred from the village of the dead and doomed eternally to seek vengeance. Contrary to the notion of admiralty in death in battle, the Iroquois saw death in battle as dishonorable and irrational.

Tactical changes decreased the number of fatalities in battle. Such tactics included ambushes and surprise attacks, never fighting when outnumbered, and avoiding frontal assaults on fortified places. Iroquois defensive tactics developed to include spies posted in enemy villages along with scouts who warned of any impending attack. Strategies were developed so that "if enemies penetrated Iroquoia, the defenders ambushed the war party only if confident in victory. Oftentimes, villages were burned and villagers fled to the forest or neighboring villages to avoid loss of life. The Iroquois were able to maintain spiritual power as long as the invaders failed to attempt a complete surprise attack." Generally, if the Iroquois were at a disadvantage, they chose to flee or arrange a truce.

According to Richter, warfare, to the Iroquois, was a response to the death of specific individuals at specific times, a sporadic affair characterized by seizing from traditional enemies a few captives who would replace the dead, literally and symbolically, and ease the pain of those who mourned. Ultimately, the Iroquois envisioned a world without war—a time of peace and a time of condolence; war ends when grief ends.

The mid-seventeenth century introduced a series of aggressive wars against a mounting group of enemies. The threat of "childhood diseases" from the Europeans such as measles and smallpox was already affecting the Iroquois as well as other neighboring tribes before they ever laid eyes on a European. New diseases spread among the Iroquois "shredding the social fabric and giving rise to desperate attempts to understand and counter the scourge." In 1634 Dutch traders introduced smallpox to the Connecticut and Hudson rivers. William Bradford witnessed the destruction this epidemic caused: "the condition of these people was so lamentable... they die like rotten sheep...very few of them escaped..." Nearly half the Indians in this area died as a result of the illness and many could not bury their dead before they met their own timely demise. These epidemics caused the Iroquois to give in to desperate attempts to understand and remedy the situation.

Epidemics wiped out almost half the Iroquois populations. By the early 1640s, roughly half the Iroquois League was dead, reducing the population to about 10,000. According to Snow a general malady affected the Mohawk in 1647; a great mortality struck the Onondaga in 1656-1657; a smallpox epidemic was seen amongst the Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca in 1661-1663; a kind of contagion among the Seneca in 1668; and a general Influenza among the Seneca in 1676. As these people suffered terrible diseases from the Europeans, only captive adoptees could regenerate the tribe. Because of these afflictions, mourning wars increased on an even grander scale.

No one was able to escape the detrimental effects of the European epidemics. Smallpox was especially hard on infants and mature adults, selecting the very men and women who held the key to the vitality of Iroquois culture. According to Snow, "the survivors found themselves forced to reconstitute society without the wisdom of many of the elders on whom they had depended only a few months earlier, and without the many individuals who had previously made up their kindred constellation." Warfare therefore ceased to be a response to death and mourning and became a necessary yet ineffective warning of a society in crisis. By 1675, the introduction of European diseases, firearms, and trade changed the role of warfare in Iroquois society. This introduction threatened the very function and purpose of mourning warfare.

European colonists changed in the Iroquois' motivation for warfare. Competition for European trade further exacerbated Iroquois warfare on other Indian tribes that contradicted the cultural significance and necessity for warfare. According to Hunt, "so quickly did the hostilities arise after the entry of the European, and so fiercely did they continue, that observers were prone to consider war as the usual intertribal relationship, not knowing how they themselves had transformed these relations when they appeared with the precious tools and weapons." Mourning warfare's principal objective was changed from replacement of the deceased to achievement of an economic advantage. By the early seventeenth century, the French allied with the Algonquian-speaking Indians of the St. Lawrence area. Through warfare with these tribes, the Iroquois acquired French trade goods such as axes and other metal goods. As early as 1609, Iroquois raids began to disrupt the fur trade in the St. Lawrence area.

As trade goods made their way into Iroquoia and surrounding

villages, the geographic position of the Iroquois tribes made it difficult to participate effectively in European trade. This dilemma was particularly felt by the Mohawk tribe. Fort Orange became the center for the Dutch-Indian fur trade. In the early seventeenth century, they were still fighting with antiquated weaponry which affected their war patterns and their victories. Their participation in the trade was enhanced when the Dutch provided firearms. Fort Orange served as a middle ground for the Dutch and the Mohawk in that “to obtain furs, the Dutch needed the Mohawks. To Obtain furs from tribes farther west, the Mohawks needed Dutch weaponry.”²⁹ Although they received firearms from the Dutch, they were not readily available. In order to reap the benefits of European trade, the Mohawk needed to travel through enemy territory—the land of the Mahicans.

The direct access the Mahicans had to the Dutch was seen as a threat to the Mohawks. From 1624 to 1628 the Mohawk-Mahican wars ensued. By the early 1630s, other Iroquois tribes joined the Mohawk in economic (mourning) wars. Victory in these wars gave the Iroquois access to Dutch trade goods, specifically beaver pelts, to aid them in obtaining firearms. According to Graymont, the Dutch pressured the Mohawks and the Mahicans for many years to make peace, for the warfare was disrupting normal trade relations between the Dutch and the Indians. The Five Nations engaged in battle with the Huron, the Neutral, and the Erie Nations and over time these wars developed into a phenomenon that continued the vicious cycle of mourning war.

These resulting wars were soon seen as an evolution from the small-scale raids with the objective to obtain captives for requickening to large-scale battles that proved more deadly and were acted out due to an economic stimulus. The Mourning war would again become the primary purpose of warfare; but social, political, and economic factors escalated this purpose to genocidal levels of hostility. The Fur Trade introduced new goals to the mourning war, but did not completely overshadow the traditional purpose. Raids were noted to “increase in number and intensity in years immediately after an outbreak of disease, demonstrating a definitive link between disease and increased warfare. In addition “...the number of captives taken by the Iroquois during the Beaver Wars was on average two to three times greater than the number of enemies they killed.” This illustrates the necessity and desperate attempt to replace population losses.

Mourning war was a way to assuage the grief and pain that

was felt after the loss of tribal members. Such wars evolved into a more complicated system of warfare that “also motivated raiding, as Iroquois warriors took captives or scalps as well as furs and trade goods.” These wars were driven by the cataclysm created by the Europeans. The French and Iroquois Wars, more commonly known as the Beaver Wars were an intermittent series of conflicts fought in the late seventeenth century in the Northeast. In these wars the Iroquois were able to gain a position as middleman in the French fur trade and simultaneously conquered many other Native American tribes. These wars, led predominately by the Mohawk Tribe (due to their close proximity to the main trading station Fort Orange), secured the Iroquois dominance over the French and her allies. The early 1600s saw the development of an Iroquois- Dutch alliance until 1664 where the English replaced the Dutch.

The origins of the war began with the depletion of beaver in the Iroquois territory in the middle 1600s. Iroquoia, now present day New York, was mainly compromised of Dutch trading posts. These posts soon became a gateway into European-Native American entanglements and eventually led to the redefinition of mourning war. Dutch trade posts introduced the Iroquois to advanced technological weaponry that was far superior to the typical bow and arrow. The acquisition of firearms led to a declination of beaver so that by 1640 it had relatively disappeared. This declination is important in that without the rifles hunting beaver is far less efficient, and concurrently beaver pelts were regularly traded for firearms. Necessity for pelts drove the Iroquois to invade territories of the north along the St. Lawrence River. Alas, this territory, inhabited by the Hurons, was the center of the French trade. Almost immediately the Iroquois found themselves deeply embedded in European affairs. In the late 1600s the Iroquois competed with the Huron and other Indian tribes for domination of the beaver fur trade. The rivalry between the French, Dutch, and the English for control of the fur trade in North America encouraged intertribal warfare among the Indians.

The introduction of firearms proved detrimental to both Europeans as well as the Iroquois. Paired with the introduction of more efficient weapons such as iron, copper, and brass arrowheads, this new artillery increased the chances of fatalities and led to new developments in Iroquois tactics. In the 1640s and 1650s, they defeated the Huron and Neutral nations due to their firepower. Despite the advantages, there were many drawbacks.

According to Richter, firearms were more sluggish than bows and arrows and were slower to reload, their noise lessened the aspect of surprise, and ultimately it made the Indians completely dependent on Europeans for ammunitions, repairs, and replacements. This use of firearms contradicted traditional warfare customs. As early as 1643, notes Barr, the French estimated that nearly three hundred Mohawk were in possession of fire arms and a year later the Dutch signed a deal to send “firearms to the Mohawks for a full 400 men, with powder and lead.” Only temporarily, the Iroquois enjoyed an advantage over other Indian tribes in battle.

Relations between the French and the Iroquois were anything but pleasant in the early seventeenth century. In 1609 Samuel de Champlain introduced the effects of the firearm by killing three Iroquois chiefs. By the 1640s the Iroquois were armed by Dutch supplied firearms and were ready to combat the French and her allies. Attacks against the Huron began later in the 1640s with the intention of disrupting the fur trade. By 1649 the Huron were driven away and provided an entrance for Iroquois involvement in the fur trade. Within a decade the Iroquois began attacking the French themselves. Although two Iroquois tribes (the Oneida and Onondaga) remained friendly with the French these intermittent wars continued. After a failed peace treaty attempt, the Iroquois continued to invade northern parts of New France along Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River. In each raid, the Iroquois captured female prisoners who would then be slated for adoption or males slated for execution.

The Mohawks were seen as the most militant of the Iroquois tribes in that their hunting grounds were the most depleted. In 1628, the Mohawks defeated the Mahicans and the Mohawks gained a monopoly in the fur trade with the Dutch at Fort Orange, New Netherland. The Mohawks would not allow Canadian Indians to trade with the Dutch. In 1649 during the Beaver Wars, the Iroquois attacked and destroyed the Hurons with recently purchased Dutch guns. Also, the westernmost Senecas, who were still amply supplied with beaver pelts and obtained peace with the Huron, were disinclined to war.

In dire need of adoptees the Mohawk tribe in 16 March 1649, over 1,000 Seneca and Mohawk Indians raided a Huron town near present-day Toronto capturing prisoners and burning the village to the ground. As a result, many Huron willingly offered themselves up for adoption and thus aided the Iroquois in replacing the lives lost in battle. Destruction and warfare continued until tribes

in the Ohio Valley were affected. The Ottawa, Illinois, Miami, and Potawatomi soon became victims of the Beaver Wars.

In the autumn of 1650, The Iroquois launched an attack against the Neutral Nation who tried to stay unallied in the bitter battle between the Huron and the Iroquois. The initial attack destroyed a village of about 3000 to 4000 people. A second attack occurred in the spring of 1651 where a second village was also attacked. It is likely that the Senecas, the attacking tribe, adopted most if not all the survivors. A census of the Neutral tribe in 1653 accounted for a mere 800 Indians whereas in the beginning of the seventeenth century there were about 10,000.³⁰

According to Axelrod, war even broke out among the Eries in 1653. Warfare was provoked by an argument between an Erie and a Seneca that resulted in the death of thirty members of the Erie treaty delegation. The Erie in return, captured an Onondaga chief. Following tribal custom, the Eries offered Onondaga to the sister of a member of the slain delegation, expecting adoption as a surrogate for her dead brother. Instead, she had him executed.

Mourning war still prevailed during Iroquois expansion northward and continued with simultaneous expansion westward. Such affected tribes include the Algonquian and Lakota tribes. In the 1660s the French began a counterattack against the Iroquois. During the counterattack, the Iroquois would soon have to face a new foe—the English. This entanglement in European affairs caused the Iroquois to sue for peace amid the destruction that plagued them. This affair led to a mass starvation of Iroquois after a scorched earth policy was instituted by the French.

The English colonists soon prevailed as a new invading force in Iroquoia. Between 1675 and 1676 war with the English, in what is known as King Philip's War or Metacom's War ensued. This war pitted the English against the Algonquians in the summer of 1675. Although the Iroquois were not involved, they were however influenced.³¹ According to Snow, the governor of New York, Andros, wanted to exert his dominance over New York and New England while simultaneously enlisting the Iroquois to do the same over non-Iroquois tribes.³² In April of 1677 Governor Andros proposed that the Mohawks and the Mahicans end raids against Indian allies of the English. This agreement, commonly known as the Covenant Chain, bound the English and the Iroquois and created English dominion over Indian nations subordinate to the Iroquois.

The Covenant Chain, to the English, was a hierarchical system in which they were able to maintain control in New England.

To the Iroquois, however, this chain represented “a flat network of linked arms. The links all need each other, but need constant nurturing. Gift exchange...maintained the network and prevented it from dissolving into the normal human condition of constant warfare.”³³ The Covenant Chain continued until 1753, when disgruntled Mohawks declared that the chain was broken.

Conflicts that arose from the Beaver Wars were hardly triumphant. Instead, they were part of the vicious cycle of the mourning wars: “economic demands led villagers...into battles with their native neighbors; epidemics produced deadlier mourning wars fought with firearms; the need for guns increased the demand for [beaver] pelts to trade for them; the quest for furs demanded expanded raids.”³⁴ In each turn of this never-ending spiral new motives were introduced. The Beaver Wars therefore became an ineffective way to acquire innovative weaponry and captives to replace losses.

Jesuit documents detail the adoptions from the Beaver Wars that estimate that more than two-thirds of the population was adoptees.³⁵ Father Le Jeune missionary of the Jesuit Order, believed that “more foreigners than natives of the country resided in Iroquoia.”³⁶ The influence of the Jesuits also affected the adoptions of captives. The conversion of Native Americans to Catholicism disintegrated the adoptions in that “beginning in the late 1660s, missionaries encouraged increasing numbers of Catholic Iroquois-particularly Mohawks and Oneidas-to desert their homes for the mission villages of Canada; by the mid-1670s well over two hundred had departed...Many-perhaps most- were recently adopted Huron and other prisoners, an indication that the Iroquois were unable to assimilate effectively the mass of newcomers their mid-century wars had brought them.”³⁷ These problems were broadened in 1670 when the mourning war began to crumble.

In the late 1670s the mourning war initiative began to disintegrate in that it failed to stabilize population levels. The Mohawk, for example, the number of warriors declined from seven hundred or eight hundred in the 1640s to approximately 300 in the late 1670s.³⁸ Simply, even with the institution of adoption, the Mohawk population did not achieve stabilization. The mourning war, in its original purpose and function, was no longer serving as a tribal power supply. Despite the weakening of the mourning war, it still maintained some important factors: a steady supply of furs, frequent campaigns that displayed the heroism of the warriors,

and the security of captives for adoption. The functional aspect of mourning war would soon become even more dysfunctional with the Anglo-French struggle for control of the North American continent.

Towards the end of the Beaver Wars (1680s) North America and Britain was enthralled in the War of the League of Augsburg (King William's War 1689–1697). Simultaneously the French, English and the Iroquois are campaigning for lands³⁹ in the west. Unfortunately, the Iroquois would soon be trapped in Anglo-French aspirations. Until King William's War the main foe for the Iroquois was the French. The English, beginning in 1674, used the Iroquois as a tool to devastate neighboring Native American tribes. Sir Edmund Andros, the governor of New Netherland, sought to encourage the Iroquois to fight along the British and their allies in King Philip's War (1675-1676).

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Iroquois warfare and culture had drastically changed. Until 1675 the intention of mourning war still served its original purposes- their benefits outweighed the costs. Afterwards, the Anglo-French expansionist initiatives ended in disaster for the Iroquois. The mounting conflict in the west cut off supplies to the Iroquois and created economic hardships. Physically, they suffered far more devastating effects of the Europeans in that "all of the Iroquois except for the Cayuga had seen their villages and crops destroyed by invading armies, and all five nations were greatly weakened by loss of members to captivity, to death in combat, or to famine and disease."⁴⁰ The function of the mourning war was therefore ineffective symbolically or physically. The heavy death toll robbed the tribes of headmen as well as warriors who were the backbone of the clan. Hope for the Iroquois lay only in peace- a peace that would end all wars and devastation.

4 August 1701 the Grand Settlement or Great Peace of Montreal was negotiated between the Iroquois Confederacy and New France. This treaty ended over one hundred years of warfare between the Iroquois, Hurons, Algonquians, English, and the French. Scholars have analyzed the neutrality of the Iroquois between the English and the French as the main factor.⁴¹ This neutrality allowed for peace in the west and provided a buffer for the Iroquois. The peace had a dual effect on the Iroquois: on one hand it represented defeat while simultaneously provided a sense of security. The peace made it impossible for the Confederacy to prevail militarily over the French and neighboring tribes. Despite

this defeat the Iroquois escaped the devastating effects of the wars of the previous decade; they gained rights to hunting in the west, potential trade with western Indians, as well as the noninvolvement in imperial wars.

Warfare is typically defined as any large scale, violent conflict that serves as a mechanism for economic growth, territorial gain, and the exhibition of superiority. Culturally, warfare is highly ritualized and plays an important function in assisting the formation of a social structure and exhibition of tribal strength. In Iroquois society, before European influence, they dealt with population sustainability and replenished tribal spiritual power through the medium of warfare. War, therefore, was a social tool with a primary focus the acquisition of life—not territories. Through adoptions and requickening ceremonies, the Iroquois gained new members that replaced their deceased tribal members and leaders.

Europeans with their advanced technology, disease, and commerce inducted a new motivation for warfare. Through fortified trading posts, Europeans entered into trade relations with the Iroquois and other Native tribes. Trading gave the Iroquois access to guns, metal tools, and beaver fur pelts. Trade initiated an economic motivation into this already complex state of affairs. Economics endangered tribal warfare and the increased the need for captives to reinstate victims of war.

The mourning war was seen as a “viscous cycle, for almost every war party suffered casualties, who demanded more captives and more torture. And every war party provoked a counter-raid from the enemy, carrying death into an Iroquois village and carrying away captives—which of course demanded a further escalation.” Through torture, cannibalism, and adoption of captives the Iroquois attempted to maintain the spiritual and physical power of their people. European settlement, however, embroiled the Iroquois into unfamiliar commercial activities and their search for dominance. In practice, the Iroquois planted the seeds of their own destruction.

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- ⁵Daniel K.Richter. “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (Oct., 1983): 532.
- ⁶ Galloway, 310.
- ⁷Jeffrey P. Blick. “The Iroquois Practice of Genocidal Warfare (1534-1787).” *Journal of Genocide Research* 3 vol. 3 (2001): 424.
- ⁸Daniel K. Richter. “Iroquois.” in *Colonial Wars of North America, 1512-1763: An Encyclopedia.* 1996, ed 310.
- ⁹*Ibid.*, 529.
- ¹⁰Claudio R. Schiavo and Anthony P. Salvucci *Iroquois Wars 1: Extracts from the Jesuit Relations and Primary Sources from 1535 to 1650.* (Bristol: Evolution Publishing, 2003), 5.
- ¹¹*A Companion to American Indian History*, eds. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 154-155.
- ¹²Richter (*War and Culture*),530.
- ¹³Schiavo, 158.
- ¹⁴*The Requickening Address of the League of the Iroquois*, J. N. Hewitt, vol. 1, *An Iroquois Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), 165. This Requickening Address is used in the requickening of a tribal chieftain and installing a candidate in the vacant chiefship.
- ¹⁵Wampum: Cylindrical beads made from shells, pierced and strung, used by North American Indians as a medium of exchange, for ornaments, and for ceremonial and sometimes spiritual purposes, esp. such beads when white but also including the more valuable black or dark-purple varieties. Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Random House, Inc. 2006.

¹⁶ Hewitt (*Sourcebook*), 166.

¹⁷ J.N.B. Hewitt, "The Requickening Address of the Iroquois Condolence Council," *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 34 (March 1944): 65. The Five Rituals: Journeying on the trail (or the Eulogy or Roll Call of the Founders of the League); Welcome at the Woods' Edge; Requickening; Six Songs of Farewell; and Over the Great Forest.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-179.

²⁰ Samuel de Champlain. *Original Narratives of Early American History: Voyages of Samuel de Champlain 1601-1618*. Edited by W.L. Grant, M.A. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 109.

²¹ Richter (*War and Culture*), 530.

²² Francis Parkman, *Historic Handbook of the Northern Tour: Lakes George and Champlain; Niagara; Montreal; Quebec*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1885), 12.

²³ Daniel P. Barr. *Unconquered: The Iroquois League at War in Colonial America*. (London: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 8.

²⁴ Richter (*War and Culture*), 534.

²⁵ Parkman (*Jesuits*), 335.

²⁶ Marrin, Albert. *Struggle for Continent: The French and Indian Wars 1690-1760*. (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁹ Craig S. Keener. "An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Iroquois Assault Tactics Used Against Settlements of the Northeast in the Seventeenth Century." *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 4 (1999): 782.

³⁰ Keener, 781.

³¹ Thomas S. Abler. "Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact not Fiction." *Ethnohistory* 27, no. 4 (Autumn, 1980): 310. Abler debates the idea that many ethnologists and Native political movements sanitize claims of cannibalism in order to free Native Americans from their aboriginal past. This sanitizing was also seen in claims of scalping.

³² Parkman (*Handbook*), 28.

³³ Marrin, 27.

³⁴ Abler, 312-313.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

³⁶ Richter, 536.

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37 *Ibid*, 536

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50 *Ibid*, 41.

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56 Axelrod, 44.

57 Herbert Milton Sylvester . *Indian Wars of New England*, vol. 2.

(New York: Arno Press, 1979), 197.

58 Snow 123-124.

59 *Ibid.*, 125.

60 Richter, 540.

61 *Ibid.*, 541.

62 *Ibid*

63 *Ibid*, 542.

64 Richter (*War and Culture*), 551.

65 The campaigns of the Iroquois were not of a geopolitical nature. They were, instead, competing with Native American tribes for access to furs.

66 Richter (*War and Culture*), 551.

67 Richard L. Haan. "Covenant and Consensus: Iroquois and English, 1676-1760." *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*. Eds. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 52