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TO: Charlie Leonard

FROM: Jack Campisi 

RE: Oneida Slide Presentation

DATE: June 18, 1986

I suggest that the script dated May 9, 1986 be revised to stress three themes: 1. the Oneidas actively supported the colonial cause; 2. the state and national government guaranteed the Oneidas their land; and 3. the state violated its assurances and defrauded the Oneidas while the national government did little to protect the Oneidas from the state's avarice.

To develop these points I suggest that you consider the following material.

1. During the Revolution the Oneidas acted as scouts and advisors to the colonials (see Attachment # 1). They actively participated in the Battle of Oriskany (see Graymont 1972: 129-146, Gordy has a copy in his office). The price paid by the Oneidas for their loyalty is described on p. 242 of the same work. The Battle of Oriskany, along with Saratoga, were turning points in the war.
2. The Continental Congress recognized the contributions of the Oneidas on numerous occasions. I have included a number of examples for your consideration (see Attachment # 2).
3. Following the war with England the Continental Congress gave

assurances to the Oneidas. They authorized their commissioners to meet with the four hostile tribes at Fort Stanwix to agree on terms for peace. The Oneidas came to the meeting on the side of the victorious, and the U.S. guaranteed them their lands in perpetuity. The resolution of the Continental Congress reads as follows:

Sixthly, And whereas the Oneida and Tuscarora tribes have adhered to the cause of America and Joined her arms in the course of the late war, and Congress have frequently assured them of peculiar marks of favour and friendship, the said commissioners are therefore instructed to reassure the said tribes of the friendship of the United States and that they may rely that the lands which they claim as their inheritance will be reserved for their sole use and benefit until they may think it for their own advantage to dispose of the same (25 JCC: 687).

4. The U.S. commissioners met with the New York tribes in the fall of 1784 and concluded the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. This treaty guaranteed the Oneidas their land. New York also met with the Oneidas in the summer of 1784 for the stated purpose of determining their boundaries. Secretly, New York wanted to convince the Oneidas to exchange their lands for land owned by the Senecas, but the Oneidas had been warned of this by their minister, the Reverend Samuel Kirkland. All that was accomplished was the Oneidas described to the state their boundaries. That description is in Hough's Report, Vol. 1 (Attachment # 3).

5. Despite his statements, New York Governor George Clinton had no intention of honoring any agreement that left the Oneida land intact. Beginning in 1785, he forced the Oneidas to sell to him a large piece of land along the Pennsylvania border. Three years later he cheated them out of most of their 5 million acre estate

by telling them that he would not protect them from white settlers unless they agreed to lease the land to the state. (see Attachment # 4).

6. The national government knew of these attempts, which were challenges to its sovereignty and Indian policy, but it did little to prevent the state from swindling the Oneidas. You may want to quote appropriate passages from Docket #301 of the ICC case).

7. In 1791 Washington assured the New York tribes that they would be protected from the state's greed (see Attachment #4).

8. At Canandaigua (1794) the U.S. again guaranteed the Oneida their land, but when the state forced a land sale the following year the federal government did nothing beyond telling the state and the Oneidas that such sales were illegal (see Attachment # 5).

9. For the next 50 years the state forced the Oneidas to sell all but 32 acres of their reservation, in violation of federal law. the federal government did nothing to prevent this.

There is also a quote from the 1974 Supreme Court Oneida decision that might be useful. It goes something like "Great nations, like great men, keep their word." The law department should have a copy of the decision. If you can't find it let me know.

I realize that this contains more material than you will be able to use, but I did want to make available enough so that you would get the sense of history and have material from which to select. If you need any more let me know. I would like to see a copy of the revised script when you have it ready.