

They returned in 1674 and Edmund Andros was appointed Governor of New York and New Jersey by the Duke of York, later King James II. Andros was committed to consolidating English control over both the English and Indian inhabitants of the northern colonies.

Southern New England Indians recognized the shift in the center of power and Algonquian emigrants from that region founded a new community at Schaghticoke on the Hoosic River, a tributary of the Hudson north of Albany. Still others moved directly to the Mohawk Valley and took up residence with the Mohawks, undertaking a cultural conversion that had been made by many others in earlier years.¹⁶

Many Iroquois had by now converted to Catholicism under the influence of French Jesuit missionaries. Mohawk converts broke with tradition and found themselves in the shadow of rising English influence and scorned in turn by traditionalists. Catholic Mohawks moved to Canada, joining Oneidas already settled at La Prairie. By 1673 there were more Mohawk warriors at La Prairie than in the Mohawk Valley. Onondagas, Hurons, and others came as well, but the Mohawks dominated culturally, and the settlement came to be known as Caughnawaga after the old Mohawk village in New York. On the other hand, the Mahicans were by now virtually powerless, and it was clear to all that the Iroquois (especially the Mohawks) were pre-eminent in New York.¹⁷

Among the Mohawks at Caughnawaga was a young woman named Kateri Tekakwitha, who had moved there from the Mohawk Valley in 1677 (Figure 7.4). Her mother had been an adopted Christian Algonquian who had married a Mohawk chief. Kateri's parents and siblings had all died in a smallpox epidemic when she was a small child. She grew up in her uncle's household, and came under the influence of Jesuit missionaries, who returned to the Mohawk Valley in 1667. She was baptized in 1676, and became a particularly devout Catholic. Kateri and other Christian Mohawks were harassed by traditional Mohawks, and many were persuaded to move to the village of Caughnawaga on the St Lawrence. She moved there in 1677, but died only three years later in 1680. She was beatified by the Catholic Church on the 300th anniversary of her death, and may yet be the first American Indian to become a saint.¹⁸

King Philip's War

The Mahicans were neutralized, but the southern New England Algonquians remained a threat to the English. King Philip's War



Figure 7.4 Kateri Tekakwitha

Source: image courtesy of the Friars Minor Conventual.

broke out between them in June 1675. The Iroquois stayed out of the conflict, even though the Mohawks had every reason to side with the English. Early in 1676 Metacom (King Philip) came to the upper Hudson in an attempt to recruit the aid of the Indians north of Albany at Schaghticoke and the neutral Mahicans. An epidemic swept through his party, and he was set upon by a force of Mohawks that had been goaded into action by Governor Andros. The survivors returned home dispirited to face certain defeat at the hands of revitalized English colonists. From this point on New England was English and its Indian inhabitants were refugees in their own land.¹⁹

Many more southern New England Algonquians fled to Schaghticoke, north of Albany, where some feared they might form a new center to threaten English interests. The Mohawks, however, continued to attack the Mohegans and exert their dominance over all non-Iroquois Indian communities. Andros saw an opportunity to consolidate his power over both New York and New England while

at the same time enlisting the Iroquois to do the same with the Indians of the region. Andros sent Wentworth Greenhalgh to visit all the villages of the Iroquois in 1677, as a means to assess the strength of the confederacy. The Jesuits saw the inevitability of English control of Iroquois affairs and began to pull out of their Iroquois missions, taking the remaining converts with them to Canada.

Greenhalgh observed the social consequences that absorption of refugees and captives was having for the Senecas, although he probably did not fully comprehend what he was seeing. The Senecas maintained their population at around 4,000 throughout the latter part of the seventeenth century, but so much of it was made up of immigrants that even the standardized longhouse had been abandoned for small extended-family cabins. For the Senecas the longhouse was already just a metaphor.²⁰

Governor Andros called a meeting in Albany in April 1677, the purpose of which was to get the Mohawks and Mahicans to pledge not to raid Indian allies of the English in New England. In return, the New England colonies agreed not to treat separately with the Iroquois. New York became supreme, with New England and the Iroquois receiving secondary but equal importance. All other Indian nations were deemed children of the Iroquois. This agreement was the founding of the Covenant Chain, which bound the English and the Iroquois from this point forward, and provided the English with their claim of hegemony over all of the Indian nations construed as subordinate to the Iroquois.²¹

The Green Bean Ceremony

The seventh moon of the annual cycle brings the Green Bean Ceremony. Our Life Supporters dances form the major rites of the Green Bean Ceremony, just as they do the Planting Ceremony. As is customary in all Iroquois ceremonies, this one begins and ends with the Thanksgiving Speech. Tobacco would be burned in an invocation near the beginning were the life supporters not so close by, but their proximity makes this unnecessary. Our Life Supporters dances include the Women's Dance, the Corn Dance, the Stomp Dance, the Hand-in-hand Dance, the Striking-the-Pole Dance, and the War Dance.

The arrangement did not work immediately. The Mohawks continued to attack New England Indians. But by 1679 the last Jesuits and Catholic Mohawks left for Canada. In 1681, Andros was recalled to England at the insistence of the New England colonies, but

the Covenant Chain remained unbroken. By 1684 the Mohawks agreed to treat the Massachusetts and Mohegans as clients of the English colonies, a renewal of the Covenant Chain that ended the political significance of the southern New England Indians.

Iroquois diplomacy put great value in the linking of arms, and the Covenant Chain was an extension of that metaphor. Alliances were forged by leaders who attracted followers by their personal traits and reputations. Kin ties were important. Clan brothers were easily linked, but links with one's father's clan could be important too, even in this strongly matrilineal society. Men traveled in parties often composed of clan brothers. In the larger engagements of the colonial wars, such units sometimes included men from two or more Iroquois nations that happened to share common clan names. In one later case a fighting unit of Mohawk clan brothers joined a particular English army unit because one of its recruiters was adopted into their clan.²²

Thus, while the Covenant Chain was to the English a hierarchical structure, to the Iroquois it was a nearly flat network of linked arms. The links all strengthened each other, but they needed constant nurturing. Gift exchange, most importantly the transfer of wampum in the seventeenth century, maintained the network and prevented it from dissolving into the normal human condition of constant warfare.

Subtle differences in relative standing were signaled by terms of address. Equals called each other "brother," but the Mohawks, Onondagas, and Senecas were "elder brothers" to their Oneida, Cayuga, and (later) Tuscarora "younger brothers." Dependent tribes were more often called "nephews," and they reciprocated by calling the Iroquois "uncles." No one spoke from authority, for all speakers merely spoke for their constituents. Reciprocity was a matter of constant attention, as it had been in the League of the Iroquois for many years. Thus decisions came slowly, only through the gradual development of consensus, always with an air of ritual, and preferably in private.

The English later noticed that the Iroquois were most comfortable when the Condolence Ceremony of the League preceded treaty negotiations. But while the English were usually interested in the details of an agreement, and often wanted to settle matters once and for all, the Iroquois usually focused on the need for clear and open communication, and the renewal of the alliance itself. Treaty conferences went on for days, as spokesmen rested, conferred, deliberated, and considered all things at length, even then sometimes avoiding any clear conclusion.

The Iroquois expeditions reached as far west as the Illinois Valley in 1680. The Iroquois maintained their Covenant Chain with the

English, but were increasingly disturbed by the growth of French trade to the west. The Senecas attacked the Illinois in 1680 in order to forestall French expansion. The French planned an expedition against the Senecas in 1684, but it faltered after sickness struck the French troops. However, the French strengthened their forts in the west and Iroquois attacks on Fort St Louis and Chicago later in the decade were their last probes westward.

Charles II died in 1685 and was replaced as King of England by James II, a Roman Catholic with little political support. Edmund Andros returned to head the new Dominion of New England the next year. This included all of New England, New York, and New Jersey. The Iroquois now began attacking French outposts regularly. They attacked both Fort Chambly and Fort Frontenac in 1687. The French finally were able to launch an attack against the Senecas with the Denonville expedition of the same year. The Senecas fell back before the attack, and the French destroyed their villages and fields before moving on to build a fort at Niagara. But the attack only tormented the Senecas into stepping up their raiding.

By 1687 there were Mohawks living at the Sulpician mission at the Lake of Two Mountains, along with Nipissings and Algonquians. Like the Mohawks at the new Caughnawaga near Montreal, these people were all firmly in the French camp.

King William's War

James II was deposed in 1688. Governor Andros was seized and sent home when word of the coup reached New England. William and Mary then assumed the English throne as joint sovereigns, and declared war on France. The new conflict was called King William's War in North America. William and Mary restored some but not all autonomy to the colonies, and both sides began to contend for Indian allies.

The French abandoned their forts at Niagara and Frontenac, and in 1689 the New York Iroquois attacked and razed the French settlement at Lachine Rapids. The massacre at Lachine led the Caughnawaga Indians, now largely regarded as Catholic Mohawks, to flee to Montreal. They returned to the south bank a year later, but built a new village a few miles upstream. The French and their Indian allies retaliated by attacking and burning Schenectady, New York, in 1690.

The French attacked Mohawk villages in 1693, aided by Caughnawaga Mohawks. In 1696 Frontenac attacked the Onondagas

and the Oneidas as well. Amid all this the Caughnawaga Mohawks moved their village farther upstream once again. King William's War ended in 1697 with the Peace of Ryswick, but the Iroquois and the French kept on fighting. Thus in effect the English and French continued the war through the end of the century by proxy.

The Grounds for Torture

These were times of widespread and pervasive violence. Warriors killed one another for revenge, prestige, and power, not for nationalistic or economic reasons. Iroquois warriors apparently never committed rape, and European commentators attributed this to weak sex drives, making even this virtue seem a weakness. The real reason was that Iroquois men believed that sex could sap them of fighting strength, a belief that clearly separated sex from violence in their minds.

Iroquois warfare throughout the seventeenth century was fueled by desires for revenge and for captives to replace lost relatives. Many captives were adopted and became full members of their adoptive nations. Others were allowed to live, but only as slaves. Those that were not incorporated in these ways were often subjected to protracted torture and painful death. In these cases cannibalism was sometimes practiced, at least in ritual form, as the torturers attempted to invest themselves with the bravery and prestige of their victims.²³

Torture took many forms, beginning with the removal of fingernails so that the captive could not easily untie his bindings. Prisoners who survived the journey back to an Iroquois village were forced to run a gauntlet in which everyone, even small children, was allowed to strike or stab at the prisoner. If the prisoner was marked for death, (s)he would often be placed on a scaffold and tortured by a variety of means. Red-hot iron axes were hung as a necklace on the prisoner; fingers were burned or cut off. A prisoner might be forced to eat his own flesh. Resolute prisoners clung to their dignity, singing their death songs in the face of excruciating pain until they lost consciousness. Occasionally they would be revived so that the torture could continue, but once their condition became grave they were killed. Children were anointed with the blood of brave victims, and warriors consumed their hearts, all so that they might acquire a portion of the victims' courage. More extensive cannibalism sometimes followed.

The three-year captivity of Pierre Radisson provides us with a detailed description of these practices. Radisson was marked for adoption soon after he was captured by Mohawks in 1651 on the St