

Website Update: The Records of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs at Albany, with Brief Insights into Kahnawake and its Allies

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Conference on Iroquois Research
October 2019

Recap

- The Commissioners for Indian Affairs at Albany NY
 - represented the British in meetings with the Six Nations and other Indigenous nations in North America
 - until 1755, when William Johnson replaced them.
- Most of their records have never been printed and published.
- Those between 1723 and 1755 are held by Library and Archives Canada.
- Available via Heritage Canada and Cornell as thousands of digital images.
- I have been transcribing them.
- Complete transcriptions now available at www.albanyindiancommissioners.com.
- Previous talks have discussed the Commissioners and their records in more detail.
- The slides from those talks are available on the website.

Today:

- 1. Intro to what the records show about Kahnawake;
- 2. How to use the website to find out more.

Kahnawake and Albany in the 1720s: Challenges and Contradictions

- **Conflict**

- France and England were at peace.
- The Six Nations and England were linked in the Covenant Chain.
- New England and the Abenaki were fighting Dummer's War.
- The French supported the Abenaki.
- Kahnawake was a French ally.
- Encouraged by the French, individuals from Kahnawake were fighting for the Abenaki against New England.
- *But* Kahnawake was also part of the Six Nations.
- New England wanted the Six Nations to attack the Abenaki.
- Albany was afraid the war would spread to New York.

- **Trade**

- In 1720, the British Crown banned trade in "Indian goods" between New York and Canada.
- The Commissioners of Indian Affairs were supposed to enforce the ban.
- *But* most of the Commissioners were Albany merchants who traded Indian goods to Canada.
- Kahnawake was heavily involved in the trade.
- "Trade and Peace are the same thing."
- If the Commissioners ended the trade, would Kahnawake and other Indigenous French allies join the Abenaki against the English?
- Would all of them turn on New York and attack Albany?

Governor Dummer wants war

- May 27, 1723: New England delegates met the Six Nations at Albany and pressured them to sign a contract. The terms:
 - 6 Nations will attack the Abenaki;
 - New England will pay them for captives and scalps.
- Would the peace break down?
- Would the Six Nations risk fighting its own people?

Diplomacy Saves the Day

- May 31 1723: Achjamawat, a delegate from Arsikantegouk (St. Francis) representing several Abenaki “castles” appeared at the meeting with New England and pleaded for negotiations.
- The Six Nations tactfully refused to accept New England’s offer.
- The Six Nations pressured New England to negotiate with the Abenaki.
- The war dragged on for years, but did not engulf the region or destroy the Covenant Chain.
- Regional economies found workarounds for the ban on trade, while merchants pressured the British Crown to get rid of it.

In the meantime – ongoing meetings

- The Commissioners met often with individuals from Kahnawake passing through Albany, sometimes on their way to or from fighting for the Abenaki.
- Delegates from Kahnawake came to Albany on a regular basis at the head of a coalition of nations that included
 - Schawenadie (Skawenati, originally Sault aux Recollets),
 - Rondax,
 - Skightquan (Nippising)
 - Others, some hard to identify.
- Key individuals include Sconondo (John Skenandoa (d. 1816) or his ancestor?), Ondatsichte

Records

- The printed records are mainly those sent to England by New York officials.
- Those officials did not send all of the records about meetings with Kahnawake.
- Peter Wraxall's *Abridgment* omitted, downplayed, or disparaged these meetings.
- Likely reason:
 - To support its claims to empire against France, England wanted a paper trail that depicted the Six Nations as British allies or even dependants.
 - Records of meetings between the Commissioners and "French Indians" did not support this image.

Conclusions

- Diplomacy between the Commissioners of Indian Affairs and Kahnawake was a key component of the politics of the first half of the Eighteenth Century.
- The Commissioners' records are an essential source between 1723 and 1755.

The Website

- www.albanyindiancommissioners.com
- **Home Page** (About This Website) has background on the Commissioners, the records, and how to use the site:
 - Includes downloads of slides from previous presentations about the records.
 - Leave questions or comments in the box at the bottom.
 - Follow using the follow button for notice about updates and blog posts.

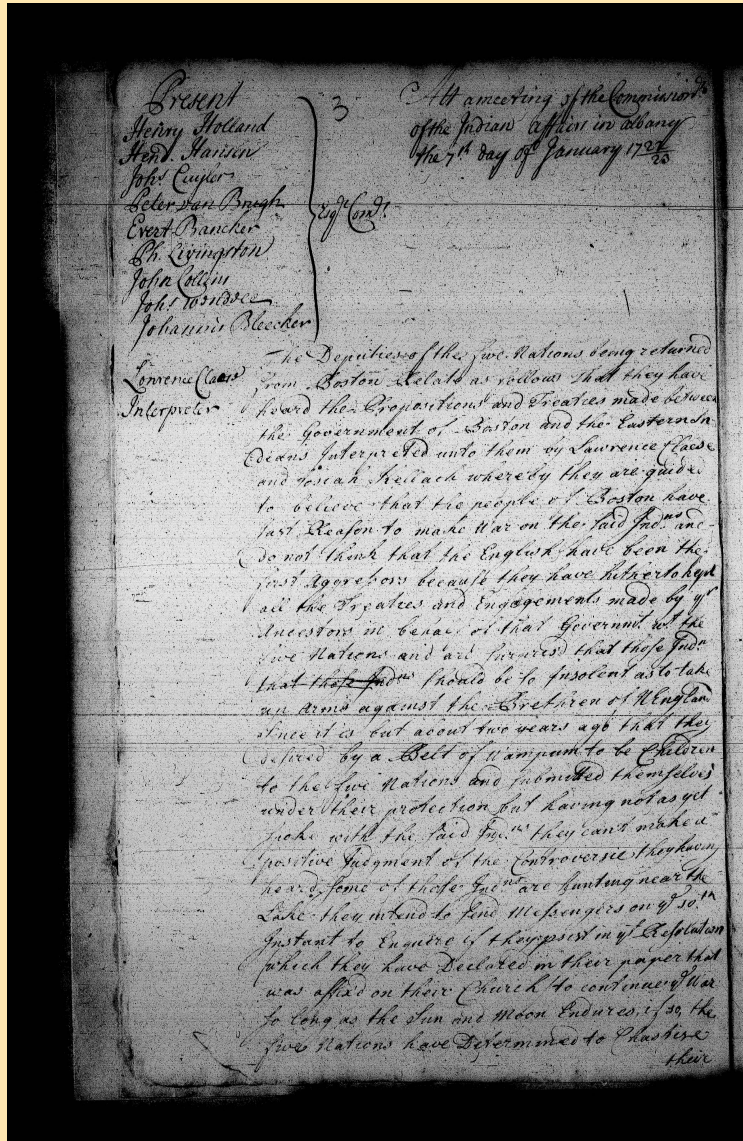
Menu

1. Downloads

- Transcriptions
 - Chronological version can be downloaded as a whole or year by year
 - Original order version corresponds to the 4 reels of the microfilm the digital images.
- Spreadsheet is an Excel workbook with information about the documents contained in the records.

Transcriptions - Maintain blocks of text, line breaks, and language of originals including highly variable spelling and superscript abbreviations.

Include some notes and references to other sources.



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Att a meeting of the Commission^{rs}
of the Indian affairs in albaney
the 7.th day of January 1722/23

[Roughly covered by Wraxall's *Abridgment* p. 143 et seq.]

Present

Henry Holland
Hend. Hansen
Joh^s Cuyler
Peter van Brugh Esq.^{rs} Com.^{rs}
Evert Bancker
Ph. Livingston
John Collins
Johs Wendell
Johannis Bleecker

Lawrence Claese
Interpreter

The Deputies of the five Nations being returned from Boston Relate as follows That they have heard the Propositions and Treaties made between the Government of Boston and the Eastern Indians Interpreted unto them by Lawrence Claese and Josiah Kellach whereby they are guided to believe that the people of Boston have just Reason to make War on the Said Ind.^{ns} and do not think that the English have been the first Aggressors because they have hitherto kept all the Treaties and Engagements made by y^r Ancestors in behalf of that Governm.t w.th the five Nations and are Surpris'd that those Ind.^{ns} Should be so Insolent as to take up arms against the Brethren of N England since it is but about two years ago that they desired by a Belt of Wampum to be Children to the five Nations and Submitted themselves under their protection but having not as yet spoke with the Said Ind.^{ns} they cant make a positive Judgment of the Controversie they having heard Some of those Ind.^{ns} are hunting near the Lake they intend to Send Messengers on y.^e 10.th Instant to Enquire if they psist in y.^r Resolution which they have Declared in their paper that was afix'd on their Church to continue y.^e War So long as the Sun and Moon Endures, if so, the five Nations have Determined to Chastise their

Blog Posts

- Mostly month by month summaries of the events in the records.
- Cover 1723 to the beginning of 1729.
- Ongoing.
- Each post has a link at the beginning or the end that takes you to the page where that month starts in the records, but no additional links when records jump around chronologically.

Blog Posts – cont.

- Blog post categories - can be used to look at all the posts for a particular year.
- Blog post tag cloud Size of tag indicates how often that topic was tagged. Kahnawake is large, indicating that it comes up often in these records. Example **Kahnawake** is large because there are many references to it.
- Click on a tag to get the posts where that topic is mentioned.
- Scroll to the bottom and click on **Older Posts** to get all of them.

Thank You!

- For questions or comments, contact me at ahunter@indra.com or via the website: www.albanyindiancommissioners.com .