

5. Sir William Johnson Confers with Iroquois Leaders, 1762

An Indian Conference

[September 8–10, 1762]

Proceedings with the Sachems, and Great Warriors of the United Six Nations,
at Johnson Hall, Beginning Sept^r. 8th. 1762. . .

Brother;

We cannot help laying our present case before you.—The Officers at the several Posts, when we want to Say anything to them on Business, Trade, &c^a. will not hear Us, or look upon Us, but tell us they have nothing to say, or do with Us, nor with the Trade; So that really we are in a very bad Situation, and wish that there were such Officers as wou'd behave more friendly to Us, and Who, wou'd see we were not Impos'd on in our Trade. We also wish there may be a good man reside there as Interpreter, which will prevent Misunderstandings arising between Us and our Brethren.

A Belt.—

Brother;

One of our People lately, in a vision, was told by the Great Spirit above, that when He first made the World, He gave this large Island to the Indians for their Use; at the same time He gave other Parts of the World beyond the great Waters to the rest of his creating, and gave them different languages: That He now saw the white People squabbling, and fighting for these Lands which He gave the Indians; and that in every Assembly, and Company of Governors, and Great Men, He heard nothing scarce spoke, or talk'd of, but claiming, and wanting, large Possessions in our Country. This He said, was so contrary to his Intention, and what He expected wou'd be the Consequence at the time when the white People first came, like Children, among Us, that He was quite displeas'd, and would, altho their Numbers were ever so great, punish them if They did not desist.

A Belt with five Squares.—

Brother;

This Belt, or Covenant Chain, was given to Us Several years ago by Nine Governments hereon represented, and His Majesty King George at the Top, Assuring Us then that they were, and wou'd remain our Friends; insomuch, that if any

^a"An Indian Conference at Johnson Hall, September 8–10, 1762" in Milton W. Hamilton and Albert B. Corey, eds., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* 10 (Albany: SUNY Press, 1951): 500, 505–511.

Nation, either French, or Indians, or others, shou'd quarrel with Us, they wou'd rise, and Assist Us; at the same time assuring Us, that the Great King wou'd protect Us in the possession of our Lands. — They then also shew'd a Space in said Belt, which They desired We wou'd Fill with as many Nations of Indians, as we cou'd bring into their, and our Alliance. This Belt We only shew you, to let you know that, we constantly look at it, and repeat the purport of it to our old and young, so as never to forget the Promises you then made, as We are determin'd inviolably to abide by those made on our Side.

The Covenant large Belt. — . . .

Brother;

We are asham'd to make so many Complaints, but our unexpected and miserable Situation, obliges Us to lay our Grievances before you, as it concerns our very Existence. Some of our People were lately repairing a Fishing Wear, (where we have fished time out of mind for our Support) near where you have now a Fort at the lower End of the Oneidoe Lake, when an Officer came up and forbid them, telling them, He wou'd order his Men to break down what They had made. — We did not think it hard while our Brothers, and We, shared alike; which was the Case when the former Officer commanded there: but the present Officer acts an unbrotherly part, which We hope will be taken Notice of, and prevented for the time to come. We are told by a Man, (who speaks our Language) at the East End of Oneida Lake, that there were a number of Men, going the next Day, to build three Houses on the north side of the said Lake, about mid-way, by a Creek, which is one of our best Fishing Places: We desire to know of You, Brother, by whose order these Houses are to be built: what can be intended by it, we cannot See, unless to Starve Us, by taking all our Hunting Places from Us.

A Belt. —

Brother;

We have now open'd our Minds to you, and laid before you what We were charged with from our Nations, and We hope you will take the whole into Consideration, and afford Us such Redress as We think we have a right to Expect from Brethren.

Here the Speaker ended.

Then Sir William told them He had closely attended to what They had said; wou'd consider seriously of it, and when ready to answer, wou'd acquaint them of the time. Then the Meeting ended for this Day. . . .

An Indian Conference

[Johnson Hall, September 13–14, 1762]

At a Meeting with the Six Nations, on Monday the 13th day of Septem^r. 1762, at Johnson Hall, . . .

Sir William made the following Answer to what the Onondago Speaker said two days ago.

Brethren of the Six Nations;

I am glad to find you so desirous to remove all evil Thoughts which were occasioned by the late Behaviour of the Oneidoes; and, I cannot but approve of your Sachems conduct in sending you hither, for that purpose.

Gave three Strings.

Brethren;

You were certainly in the right to advise the Oneidoes to come down immediately, to Apologize for their Behaviour; at which time, I own I told them, that I shou'd not continue the Management of their Affairs, if they ever repeated their Crime, which I must certainly do, if I hear more Complaints against them, as I cannot answer it to the Great King, to undertake the conducting of a People's affairs, who will not be govern'd by my advice: but I am in hopes, you will not reduce me to the Necessity of Slighting you, or neglecting your Affairs: And as I am glad to find your promise to correct your Children the Oneidoes, and prevent such Behaviour for the future, you may always expect me to be your Friend, whilst you continue to put your present Resolutions in Execution, and observe all your Engagements with the English. — Such Conduct will be the best means of Securing the General's Esteem, and I shall be always your advocate with him, whilst you in any wise deserve it.

A Belt. —

Sir William Johnson Replies

Brethren;

I am perfectly well acquainted with your Behaviour during the whole course of the War, and very Sensible you might have done more, if you had Engaged in it with Spirit: however, I cannot but approve of the good Conduct of all such faithful Ind^s. as afforded their Assistance to the English, which I hope you will always be ready to do, if there is a necessity for it.

I am glad to hear of your sending down the English prisoners, and I expect you will not let one remain in your Nations, and that you will never give the least Encouragement to Deserters, (but deliver all such up at some of His Majesty's Garrisons) who may endeavour to Screen themselves amongst You. Such people, being void of principle, will always do harm amongst you, and Create Disturbances. By adhering to this my advice, and duly observing all your Treaties with Us, you may be assured of our giving due Attention to all Engagements on our Parts, and that the English will never break their Compacts with any people who do not compel them to it.

A Belt. —

Brethren;

What you tell me of the Commanding Officer at the Detroit, greatly Surprizes me, and I cou'd wish you had not laid such a thing before me, untill you were well assured of the Authenticity of your Intelligence, as I cannot think any Officer wou'd have deliver'd such Sentiments: the several Posts are absolutely necessary, and of Use to both English and Indians. I shou'd be very sorry any differences might arise,

or that you had any reason to think your Selves Slighted by the Officers, who, I hope will always treat such Indians as behave well, in a friendly manner, and prevent any Impositions in Trade: and as an Interpreter may be of some Use at Oswego, I shall take your request into Consideration.

A Belt. —

Brethren;

Your romantic Notions, Custom of Dreaming, and Seeing visions, however usual amongst you, cannot but appear in a very ridiculous Light to White People, who will, Consider it, only as a Scheme set on foot by some designing Persons to answer their Purposes; and I hope you cannot but be convinced that the Divine Being is satisfied with the Justice of our Cause, from the great Successes with which He has crowned the British Arms. — I hope therefore, you will not Suspect Us of defrauding you of your Lands, after what I formerly acquainted you concerning His Majesty's Intentions to protect you in all your just Rights, and observe all his Treaties with You.

A Belt. —

Brethren;

The Belt which you produced from the several Governments, I have formerly seen. — I am glad to find you preserve it in remembrance, and repeat the Purport thereof to your people, So that your Posterity may be acquainted with the Engagements You, and We have enter'd into. — Continue to act in this wise manner, and you may always rely on our Friendship, and Observance thereof. —

A Belt. —