WHERE OUR DEAD LIE BURIED:
ARTICULATING AMERICAN INDIAN SOVEREIGNTY

A Dissertation in
English
by
Mathew RudeWalker

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This dissertation of Mathew RudeWalker was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Garrett Sullivan  
Professor of English  
Director of Graduate Studies

Carla J. Mulford  
Associate Professor of English  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Keith Gilyard  
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English and African American Studies

Toni Jensen  
Assistant Professor of English

Stephen H. Browne  
Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

*Signatures are on file at the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

*Where Our Dead Lie Buried* argues that American Indian writer-activists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries adapted English literacy and a variety of literary genres to their needs in order to strengthen and defend their peoples’ sovereignty. Some prominent critics have recently argued that sovereignty was a concept entirely foreign to Native peoples before the European invasion of the Americas. This project challenges such assertions by articulating a uniquely Native definition of sovereignty that helps uncover the ways in which early American Indian activists spoke about and argued for sovereignty without actually using that term. The writers included in this study, like many other Native speechmakers and political actors of the time, focused on the relationships among peoples, cultures, and the land. In so doing, they established a communal, relationship-oriented notion of sovereignty that interacted with and often opposed Euro-Americans’ more hierarchical approach to sovereignty. Relationships formed the core of eighteenth and nineteenth century Native political arguments and remain at the core of contemporary arguments. Recognizing the importance of land, culture, and people to Native sovereignty helps provide a groundwork from which scholars can reinterpret past political writing and establish new arguments and new forms of activism.
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Where Our Dead Lie Buried argues that American Indian writer-activists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—individuals credited as the first Natives to publish, and perhaps even to write, in English—adapted English literacy and a variety of literary genres to their needs in order to strengthen and defend their peoples. In so doing, they articulated Indian theories of sovereignty that survive to this day. Through their speaking, writing, and persistent attempts to challenge colonization, these figures established Native discourses on Native issues and paved the way for twentieth- and twenty-first-century Native political theorists and advocates like Vine Deloria, Jr., Taiaiake Alfred, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Robert Allen Warrior, Craig Womack, and many others. The history and works of these writer-activists reveal that American Indian political arguments have been the result of proactive, rather than reactive, work. Our predecessors saw themselves as political beings, not just as cultural beings, and sought the political tools that would prove most helpful in their particular contexts. For many of them, this meant learning to speak, read, and write in English. It also meant learning about and engaging the legal and political discourses of their times.

Through their expressions, the individuals and groups included in this study made the concept of sovereignty, a people’s right to self-rule and self-determination, a Native concept. As scholars have pointed out, the idea of sovereignty as it existed in the legal and political discourses of the time might not have directly applied to every Native group’s understanding of its own political cohesion and autonomy.¹ The term does come from the colonizers’ vocabularies and theories, as Taiaiake Alfred has repeatedly emphasized.² But many things
that came from the colonizers have become mainstays of Indian lifeways, because they proved useful. This is not a sign of Indian peoples acquiescing to colonization, but a sign of adaptation—of the natural evolution of peoples in response to changes in their environment. As Jace Weaver and Scott Richard Lyons each have argued, originalist arguments focusing on where the term sovereignty comes from and whether or not it fits perfectly with precolonial Native historical realities distract from the more practical question: was sovereignty (and does it remain) a useful concept?3

I argue that sovereignty and other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglo-U.S. legal and political discourses proved immensely useful for Native peoples. If Indian cultures were to continue, as they surely have, then they also needed to adapt useful non-Native intellectual materials into their own lives and governments. The speakers, activists, writers, and leaders who appear in this study informed both Native and U.S. notions of sovereignty. Their efforts are often painted in both popular and academic culture as failures, or at best as temporary successes that ultimately led to failure. Regardless of their written efforts, the Mohegans still lost most of their lands; the Ojibwe were still pushed onto reservations a fraction of the size of their traditional territory; and the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks and Seminoles were still forcibly removed from their eastern homelands and driven like cattle to Indian Territory. But while some of the visible results of Native intellectual endeavors may not have prevented the despicable acts of the U.S. government, they have certainly been influential. My aim here is to help us see the influence these figures had on Native intellectual traditions. I conceive that my work converses with that of the growing ranks of writers (including Lisa Brooks, Maureen Konkle, Daniel Heath Justice, Jace
Weaver, and others) whose works have expanded Natives’ access to and understanding of our collective and tribally specific philosophical and political histories.⁴

Twentieth- and twenty-first century Native literary criticism, in some ways mirroring U.S. popular culture and legal policies, has often emphasized cultural while deemphasizing or downright ignoring political aspects of Indian lives and literary productions. In the literary world, this has meant a preference for Native-written fiction that focuses on disconnection from and reconnection to Native culture rather than fiction or non-fiction that focuses on politics and land or treaty claims.⁵ Tales of an individual narrator’s relationship to her/his tribe, to her/his conflicted sense of identity, draw interest more readily than stories of tribes seeking to protect their land or treaty rights or to regain their stolen lands. New Agers, hippies, and hipsters appropriate images and aspects of Native culture (or at least claim they are Native) with little awareness of or regard for the implicit imperialism of their actions. So-called celebrities from pop “musician” Ke$h to the Kardashian sisters to Victoria’s Secret runway models don sacred regalia as fashion accessories and care nothing for the legal, political, or socioeconomical struggles of the peoples whose cultures they supposedly admire.⁶ As Craig Womack succinctly states, “America loves Indian culture; America is much less enthusiastic about Indian land title.”⁷ Although culturally focused criticism has been and continues to be important for Native studies, I believe that the intellectual health of our diverse field depends upon exploring less popular topics, like politics, as well.⁸

**What Is at Stake?**

My project participates in maintaining the intellectual health of American Indian studies and various American Indian communities by engaging the works of our predecessors as
foundational texts from which we can learn important lessons and perhaps even draw arguments for current and future issues in Indian Country. By elaborating on the ways different Indian communities employed English and Anglo-American legal and political rhetoric to their own political ends, I hope to create a forum like the ones Robert Warrior calls for in *Tribal Secrets*, “in which complex critical problems of audience, reception, and representation are worked through.”

Like Warrior, I believe that the tradition of American Indian writing, criticism, and activism began well before the heydays of the Red Power and American Indian Movements, and well before N. Scott Momaday earned a Pulitzer Prize and ushered in the so-called Native American Renaissance. American Indian writing in English, in all of its forms, is, as Lisa Brooks asserts, “part of an extensive indigenous intellectual tradition,” a tradition the depths of which have yet to be fully explored.

As Brooks has repeatedly argued, understanding indigenous intellectual traditions requires reevaluating and expanding definitions of literature. Rather than following in the paths of critics whose careers have been devoted to some nostalgically constructed, “authentic” oral tradition or to the “hybrid” category of autobiography, critics of early American Indian writings in English should look to all the Native oral and written works, even and perhaps especially those that cannot be easily categorized.

My choice of and approach to the texts included in this study is intended to build specifically on the works of Lisa Brooks and Maureen Konkle. Like Konkle, I am interested in a variety of peoples’ political actions. Responding to her observation that recent scholarship on nineteenth-century Native writings has been “largely driven by a fixation on determining, describing, and analyzing the cultural difference of Native peoples and Native writing,” Konkle focuses *Writing Indian Nations* on early Native authors’ “struggle to think
through the effects of Eurocentrism” and the texts that participated in this struggle.11 One of Konkle’s primary goals is to challenge the common critical assertion that “Native peoples thought of Indian nations as cultural, not political, entities or that Indian nations are hybrids formed in the wake of colonization and so to be regarded as a diminution of authentic traditional culture.”12 In working toward an understanding of Indian nations as political entities, Konkle moves away from discussions of Indian authenticity and turns instead toward the potential real-world effects of the work of Elias Boudinot, William Apess, Red Jacket, and other Indian authors. *Where Our Dead Lie Buried* expands Konkle’s explorations of the practical effects Native political writings had in the past and continue to have today.

Like Brooks, I believe that Indian peoples sought to adapt European ideas and technologies to their own needs. Rather than assuming that such interactions diminish Indians’ authenticity, I seek to understand how foreign ideas and material were incorporated into Indian cultural and political lives. *Where Our Dead Lie Buried* asks, how did Indian peoples draw on precolonial traditions in order to understand, explain, and engage new sociopolitical realities? In exploring these topics, I hope to add to and further complicate our understanding of Indian history in general and of the specific histories of the Mohegans, Anishinaabeg, and Cherokees.

**Chapter Outline**

My study engages materials ranging from what might be called scholarly endeavors to political activism. Thus, *Where Our Dead Lie Buried* engages historical and political studies as frequently as it does literary studies. The introductory chapter situates the reader in the general historical and theoretical contexts of my study, highlighting my view that sovereignty
has been an important concept underlying Indian writing and activism since we began speaking and writing in English. It also establishes the trope of the Old Indian’s Knife, a way of thinking about Indian identity influenced by Samson Occom that allows us to recognize the ways Indian peoples adapted to extratribal influences from within a national, historic context. The succeeding chapters will focus on a particular Indian nation or set of nations, taking up their particular political history and describing how they actively theorized and defended their own sovereignty in unique but often similar ways. The second chapter focuses on the land claims, petitions, and educational efforts of Samson Occom and the Mohegan peoples in order to demonstrate that they adopted legal discourses to argue for their land and water rights, and thus for their sovereignty. The third chapter engages the Ojibweg peoples. Employing the various writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, among others, I argue that Schoolcraft used her peoples’ history and their own personal narratives to argue for tribal sovereignty against U.S. encroachment. The fourth chapter addresses the situation of the Cherokees in the early nineteenth century. This chapter argues that Elias Boudinot and other Cherokee writers defended their sovereignty by adopting nationalistic rhetoric in their speeches, letters, and journalistic writings. The concluding chapter will explore the implications of this project’s title and the relationship between imperialism and anticolonial resistance the title must call to mind.

Any work in Native Studies, perhaps in any field, must make a difficult decision: to focus in depth on a particular area or historical moment, or to focus on issues and concepts that appear in multiple locations and multiple time periods. Where Our Dead Lies Buried leans toward the latter choice, though it also attempts to provide some of the depth found in the former choice. The project moves from a broad overview of concepts to specific locations
and time periods. The problems that each group and representative author faced mirror similar problems within their regions and time periods. The Mohegans’ struggle for their ancestral lands repeated and would itself be repeated in the experiences of other northeastern Natives who interacted with the British colonies and the fledgling U.S. The Ojibweg experience in the old northwest spoke to the experiences of Indians across the continent; Schoolcraft’s writings succinctly summarized the political and emotional responses many people had to Euro-American invasion of their historic territories. Cherokee journalism from the 1830s captured the struggles of the Five Tribes of the Southwest as they resisted Jacksonian removal policies. None of these cultures or writers can speak for other Indian nations’ experiences. However, each is emblematic of their region and time period, and each can speak to others in their region and across the Americas. Each brings to light symptoms of the colonial disease just as each suggests possible remedies.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

THE OLD INDIAN’S KNIFE: IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND SOVEREIGNTY

What did it mean for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American Indians to write in English? Some have argued that the act transformed them into outsiders, corrupting their Indian identities and making them into would-be Anglos or assimilated and thus colonized pawns. These arguments suggest that English-literate Indians betrayed their people or, at best, served as psychologically damaged go-betweens who could interact with Anglo and Indian cultures but could not belong to either. Few scholars, however, have pondered the political usefulness of English literacy. English fluency has often been viewed as useful in treaty or trade negotiations, and there is ample evidence for the importance of translators in such negotiations. However, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indians who could also write English were valuable to their peoples and performed a variety of important political and cultural work.

The works of writers like Samson Occom, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and Elias Boudinot reveal people working together as individuals gained skills and knowledge to share with their relatives. These individuals did not abandon their identities as Indians in order to become more like Anglo colonizers or struggle with their identities as a result of their educations. This is not to say that identity was never an issue for Natives writing in English. Indeed, there are a number of examples of Native writers grappling with identity quandaries. The supposed truth, espoused by numerous critics, that English literate Natives were trapped between worlds and struggled with rejection from both, however, falls apart under close inspection.¹ Most identity issues can be traced back to the colonizers. Samson Occom’s
famous lamentation that some people he met doubted his ability to “talk Indian,” for example, was clearly drawn from interactions with white Englishfolk and Anglo-Americans, not from interactions with Indians. Occom’s personal diaries and letters reveal that he did indeed “talk Indian”—at least three languages, including Mohegan, Montauk, and at least one Haudenosaunee language (probably Oneida). He gave sermons in these Indian languages, explained difficult English words and concepts in them, and even used the Native languages to help teach his students to read and write in English. Yes, Occom struggled with Anglos who doubted his identity, who said he was no longer an Indian but still treated him as a second or third tier Englishman. And yes, Occom wrote to his mentor Eleazar Wheelock complaining of this. But we need to keep two things in mind: first, Occom made these complaints while on a fundraising trip during which his status as an educated Indian was meant to demonstrate—by displaying his own skills—what Wheelock’s new school would be capable of producing. Thus, the English donors’ (or potential donors’) views on Occom’s Indian identity were important to both Occom and Wheelock. Occom’s mission and the fate of Wheelock’s planned Indian school depended on the Englishmen’s belief that Occom was, indeed, an Indian who had been educated in Wheelock’s school. Second, these were Anglos questioning Occom’s identity. I have yet to encounter any clear indications that Natives questioned his Indianness. Rather, many Natives embraced Occom and asked that he put his knowledge and skills to use in aiding their communities.

Questions of Indian identity—how can an individual be both an Anglo-educated Christian and an Indian?—stem from assumptions of cultural purity and of ahistoricity, of Indians existing outside of and unaffected by the passage of time. Suggesting an individual could not learn useful skills such as English literacy while remaining culturally Native relies
upon a fixed, outsider definition of Indianness. It is the historical equivalent of twentieth- and twenty-first century arguments that Indian treaty rights have expired because Indians use motorized boats and automobiles instead of birchbark canoes and their own feet.  

The fact is, Native societies were, are, and will continue to be living entities that change in response to internal and external circumstances. Cultures are active, growing things. In a particular historical moment, members of a society might resist specific changes, such as white U.S. citizens fighting against integration, U.S. men hoping to keep women out of politics, or the current push against equal rights for same sex couples. In this sense, some Native individuals who sought or were forced into Anglo education may have met resistance or scorn from their tribesfolk. On the whole, however, most Native societies adapted by incorporating that which was useful into their lives or by refashioning that which was not useful into more effective tools or skills. And in interactions with Anglophone societies, reading and writing in English were certainly useful skills.

Unfortunately, Native Studies continues to struggle with identity-focused criticism. David Treuer’s Native American Fiction: A User’s Manual was as much about identity—are these writers Indian? Are their techniques unique to Native literature?—as it was about the mechanics of fiction and a nostalgia for the New Critics and the era of the Canon of Great Works. Elvira Pulitano’s Toward a Native American Critical Theory and Craig Womack’s response in American Indian Literary Nationalism are fundamentally focused on identity: Pulitano expresses a myopic interest in hybridity while Womack’s is ultimately a call for critics to turn from hybridity in favor of culturally specific and political forms of criticism. Although each of these works claims to move outside or beyond identity-focused criticism, none seems able entirely to avoid such a focus.
Treuer and Pulitano present arguments about identity based on problematic premises. Arguments about hybridity necessarily assume some sort of historical purity—some sort of Ur-culture(s) that defined what it means to be X or Y. A hybrid, after all, is the combination of two distinct entities, of “pure” versions of two species that are hybridized into something new and different from its predecessors. Hybridity arguments limit all the cultures involved in so-called hybridization. Indian and Anglo, colonizer and colonized, subaltern and elite—none of them can speak in hybridity arguments. But to argue that Indians stopped being “real” Indians when Europeans showed up is to assert that pre-Invasion cultures were static and unchanging.

“Real” Indians, like any other culture, evolve over time. They evolve in response to changes in their environment, in encounters with their neighbors, or for internal reasons. But this evolution doesn’t necessarily mean the culture ceases to be itself. Rome was still Rome even after Constantine converted to Christianity. Historians do not argue that Christian Romans were not “real” Romans. The Roman culture had changed but it was still Roman culture. And yet, modern hybridity theorists critique Colonial-era Christian Indians as not “really” Indian or not “fully” Indian. Hybridity arguments tend to strip cultures, especially Indian cultures, of the ability to evolve and instead force them into some fixed place in time. Indians are placed in what Kevin Bruyneel calls colonial time, a location that is “out of time” and guarantees that Indians are “unable to be modern, autonomous agents.” Cultures and individuals become the objects of ahistorical arguments rather than the subjects and actors in their own lives.

The assertion that evolving in response to European-colonial presence diminishes a peoples’ or an individual’s Indianness seems to be a modern problem with ancient roots. The
confusion is connected to the philosophical thought-problem “Theseus’s Paradox,” or “the ship of Theseus.” In his Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans, the Greek historian (and Roman citizen) Plutarch tells the story of a ship gifted to the city of Athens by the hero Theseus. The Athenians constantly removed the decayed part of her [the ship’s] timbers, and renewed them with sound wood, so that the ship became an illustration to philosophers of the doctrine of growth and change, as some argued that it remained the same, and others, that it did not remain the same.\(^6\)

Various philosophers have taken up this question in the intervening centuries, dividing as those Plutarch mentions did. For those scholars and politicians who argue that real Indians wear buckskin or live in teepees, the ship has ceased to be Theseus’s ship. There are observable, measurable qualifiers that define a culture, and both individuals and peoples can fail to live up to these measurements. The qualifiers, we must remember, are always defined and evaluated by outsiders, not members of the culture.

Challengers to such arguments needn’t rely upon modern identity theorists or long-dead European philosophers—we can turn, instead, to Samson Occom’s own words. In William Buell Sprague’s Annals of the American Pulpit, Reverend Daniel Waldo recorded an anecdote of Occom’s that stayed with him for years:

An old Indian, he said, had a knife which he kept till he wore the blade out; and then his son took it and put a new blade in the handle, and kept it till he had worn the handle out; and this process went on till the knife had had half a dozen blades, and as many handles; but still it was all the time the same knife.\(^7\)
Waldo reports that Occom was speaking on “what he called a traditionary religion,” which was Occom’s term for what scholars now call a syncretic religion. From this context, we can understand that, for Occom, Theseus’s Paradox was no paradox at all. The ship remained Theseus’s ship, or in this case, the knife remained the same knife. Occom’s metaphor reveals the same argument that Leslie Marmon Silko and Simon Ortiz, among others, have made more recently: that a people such as the Laguna or Acoma remain themselves even as those external markers may change. As long as those who carry the knife remember it was the father’s knife, then it remains the same, even as parts of it are changed. So too with cultures: as long as the people remember themselves as Mohegan, then they remain Mohegan, even as they adapt to changes in the world around them. To be alive is to change; only death stops this process, and even death’s finality is debatable.

The various writers included in this project were not outsiders, nor did they abandon their peoples: they were what Antonio Gramsci would later call organic intellectuals. They arose from and remained connected to their home communities, working to express their peoples’ concerns to the powerful societies around them. Gramsci contends that among societies vying for dominance, organic intellectuals help their home communities “to conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals,” and thus conquer those who regulate and mold the opposing society. The idea of the organic intellectual helps us recognize the ties many Indian writers maintained with their home communities, but Gramsci’s language is perhaps too strong for Indian populations. Although some Indian societies, most famously the Aztecs, sought to conquer other peoples, most have chosen to live in peaceful coexistence with their neighbors. Organic intellectuals among such peoples would be less likely to work toward conquering other traditional intellectuals and more likely to work toward understanding them.
and thus being better able to interact with and negotiate with them. And this is exactly what Occom, Boudinot, and so many other European-educated Indian individuals did. As organic intellectuals working toward peaceful coexistence, Occom, Schoolcraft, and the others did not cease to be Indians because of their educations or faiths. Rather, they continued to be Indians; somewhat differently from their tribespeople, yes, but Indians nonetheless.

Hybridity theory is meant to be positive and egalitarian: we are all hybrid, the argument goes. But in practice, especially when evaluated politically, hybridity arguments still seem to privilege the social elite and the metropole, the very things they claim to combat. For those in power, hybridization means or can be made to mean very little. In the end, hybridized social elite still hold power. But for the colonized and oppressed, and especially for American Indians, hybridization can be synonymous with assimilation. Hybridity can strip away what little power Indians have by providing political critics with ammunition for their attacks. Rather than talk in terms of hybridity, then, scholars would do well to recognize that Indians can remain Indians even as their cultures evolve. Thus, rather than speak in terms of hybridity—of two frozen entities that combine into one new, equally frozen entity—we should focus on the importance of self-identification and self-definition, and recognize that identity is fluid. Like Occom’s knife, the components can change while the essence remains, not unchanged, but still itself nonetheless. And with such an understanding of Indian identity, we can understand that Indian sovereignty is equally fluid across time.

**Native Approaches to Sovereignty**

A transformation of the concept of sovereignty has been taking place for at least two centuries; this transformation in fact began with the earliest English-literate Natives. At the
time, European, or “traditional,” sovereignty was understood (by Europeans) to be the supreme dominion of a governing body over land, inhabitants, and national or imperial institutions. This is perhaps the definition most familiar to twenty-first century citizens of the United States, and it seems to be the definition that theorists like Taiaiake Alfred, who urge Indians away from sovereignty, implicitly employ. European and Euro-American treatises on government and sovereignty have long questioned where exactly the power of the sovereign is held, whether in the hand of a single individual or in the collective hands of the governed, but even the popular sovereignty approaches employed by the Constitution of the United States assume that the sovereign’s power is supreme. In the short but powerful essay, “Sovereignty,” which serves as a sort of second introduction to Joanne Barker’s collection Sovereignty Matters, Taiaiake Alfred traces the history of the term sovereignty as it has been employed on North American soil and articulates the problem he sees with applying this concept to indigenous Americans. Alfred argues that the discourse around sovereignty in colonial-era America—including the treaties made with the original inhabitants of the lands—focused exclusively on European empires. Treaties with Natives, Alfred argues, were meant to signal one European empire’s sovereignty (control) in that people’s land, not to recognize the people’s own sovereignty.

Such an approach runs counter to the more standard understanding, demonstrated by David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, that the treaties are historical representations of Europe’s recognition of Indian sovereignty. In their collective effort, Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law, Wilkins and Lomawaima argue that treaties are the most important tools for international dealings. In this standard line of argument, only sovereign nations can enter into treaties with one another. Thus, entering into a treaty with
another community or people is an implicit recognition of that people’s sovereignty, of that people’s nationhood.  

Alfred’s contention is important, and reflects one aspect of the earliest arguments about the doctrine of discovery. European nations did use treaties to assert their authority over a particular territory and to prevent or weaken other nations’ trade or alliance with particular Indian peoples. Native nations, however, also entered into these treaties, and their understandings of the treaties affected their future dealings with European and Euro-American nations, including their articulations of their own political autonomy. Alfred’s argument that treaties effectively excluded Native peoples puts him on one rather lonely end of the spectrum, farther out than most critics seem willing to venture. Others, such as Howard R. Berman, acknowledge the role treaties played in interactions between European colonial powers, but still argue that treaties were marks of equality and evidence of the international nature of early Native-European interactions. Scott Lyons has even claimed that treaties invent the modern Indian nation by encouraging or forcing Native peoples to begin employing European modes of thinking about nationality and nationhood.  

For Alfred, sovereignty is a purely political concept that connotes only the right to govern a specific area and people and that delineates the extent and the limits of a governing body’s power. This focus on borders and boundaries is what Gerald Vizenor refers to when he writes or speaks of “Western sovereignty.” But for many Native thinkers, the political aspects of sovereignty cannot be divorced from that group’s culture. Lyons, Charles Wilkinson, Clara Sue Kidwell, and Amanda Cobb have each noted that the word sovereignty carries with it cultural and emotional connotations. Sovereignty means not just the inherent rights of a people to govern themselves in their territory, but also that people’s inherent right
to live as they choose to live, to be whomever they choose to be. As Cobbs, Kidwell, Lyons, and Wilkinson each argue, sovereignty is cultural integrity. Behaving as sovereign entities means behaving according to the society’s own customs and not according to customs imposed by another group. In practice, Indian nations that fight hard for their sovereignty also fight for language and cultural revitalization. These nations tend to emphasize improvement of internal political structures and tribal-familial relationships along with protection of their environment. Native sovereignty means the right of the Haudenosaunee to govern themselves as themselves, as they see fit and in line with their belief systems and ways of life; the right of the Chickasaws to live and govern ourselves as Chickasaws, and so on.

The view of sovereignty and culture as inextricable shares a number of similarities with other concepts, including Anthony Smith’s notion of the ethnie and its relationship to the nation, and Tom Holm, Diane J. Pearson, and Ben Chavis’s notion of peoplehood or the peoplehood matrix. In his important exploration of the development of nations, National Identity, Smith establishes his concept of the ethnic community, or ethnie, which he views as the basis for most nations. Smith identifies six main attributes of an ethnie: a collective or national name; foundational myth(s) in common; shared cultural memories; similar cultural traits; ancestral territory they may or may not occupy at the given historical moment; and a general sense of solidarity, though differing factions may exist. A nation, Smith argues, is a population sharing historic territory, myths, and history, a mass culture, an economy and legal rights and responsibilities for each member. In Smith’s understanding, the nation is a move away from the ethnie, a move from a cultural focus to a political one. The ethnie is always connected to the nation in foundational myths and memories, but it is also always
historical. In the change from *ethnie* to nation, law supersedes custom and ritual as the guiding principle of an individual’s life, and the mass public culture—easily disseminated across large territories—supersedes the lived experience of atomized local culture.

Similar to Smith’s notion of the *ethnie* is the concept of peoplehood. In their coauthored essay “Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies,” Holm, Pearson, and Chavis argue that their variation of Robert K. Thomas’s idea of peoplehood could move the field of American Indian Studies away from problematic Eurocentric ideas of cultural/national evolution while still maintaining a focus on tribal peoples’ inherent sovereignty. For Holm, Pearson, and Chavis, Western scholars’ thinking on nationality and sovereignty are too strongly tied to linear notions of social progress wherein societies evolve from more primitive to more civilized on a determined trajectory, moving from band to tribe to chiefdom to nation-state. In this line of thinking, the most civilized of societies—nations-states—possess sovereignty, while the “pre-state,” primitive societies do not. Peoplehood, however, shifts us out of the primitive-civilized continuum and asserts that all distinct peoples inherently possess sovereignty. Whether band or nation or something else altogether, any group that fits the definition of peoplehood is said to be sovereign.

Why not, then, focus on Indian nationhood or peoplehood rather than sovereignty? The primary reason I focus on the notion of sovereignty is similar to Scott Lyons’s argument in *X-Marks*: usefulness. The term has sway in international and legal realms, and it also has practical real-world application. This is not to say that talking of nationhood or peoplehood does not or could not also have an impact. But sovereignty is where the discussion is. Sovereignty means something immediate to the indigenous peoples of the world now, and I
wish to show that the concept, if not the word itself, has been important for our predecessors as well. To borrow from Joanne Barker, sovereignty matters. Sovereignty matters to individual peoples who want control of their political and cultural lives; it matters to peoples seeking international recognition, the right to negotiate in international matters, and aid from other nations. And it certainly matters to indigenous delegations to the United Nations.

Because it matters, it is our responsibility as scholars to debate its meaning, to make it a useful concept and to tell others that we understand it differently from them. Indeed, Lyons has called sovereignty “a modern and universal political concept indissolubly associated with the idea of the nation” and has also argued that a word such as sovereignty must be claimed—must be used by scholars in the various fields of indigenous studies—and argued over because of this (presumed) “universality.”

Although I personally bristle at the assertion that the term is universal, sovereignty is a widely used term in international politics. Redefining sovereignty is thus the most practical move indigenous scholars can make at this time.

I hesitate to assert that the peoples under discussion here were all attempting to use their ethnie to establish a nation or their status as a people to establish peoplehood. Certainly Elias Boudinot’s project was nationalistic, but were the other peoples invested in such a goal? Even Boudinot’s contemporary Cherokees responded ambivalently to the notion. Some writers were what Lyons would label “cultural resisters” rather than “nationalists.” Some desired a return to their historic lifeways, or to retain the lives they currently led: to be left alone and to avoid European culture altogether. These Lyons would call “cultural resisters.” Others wanted to engage the Europeans in both physical and cultural trade, bringing what they found useful into their own cultures. These are more in line with what Lyons defines as
“nationalists.” All of them, however, wanted to highlight and wanted others to recognize their rights to be whomever they chose. Their works demonstrate a desire to emphasize their own sovereignty and to have other nations recognize that sovereignty. These arguments are my focus throughout this project. Natives in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fought for their sovereignty, sometimes in ways we might not agree with today, but always with similar goals in mind: to protect themselves and their land and to serve their people.

**Relational Sovereignty**

For many Indian peoples, sovereignty was not about coercion or force, and it was not purely political; instead, these people argued that politics and culture were inseparable and that government was about relationships with human and nonhuman populations and with the land. Sovereignty, then, was about both kinship and polity: family ties were an important part of the system of government, either through lineage or through marriage. These family ties could lend legitimacy to an Indian leader, but they did not make the leadership unassailable in the way that patrilineal descent often did for European dynasties. While a King in Europe ruled over his people as he pleased with few repercussions (for a while, anyway), Indian leaders were and are much more similar to modern U.S. senatorial and presidential dynasties. The Kennedys, the Bushes, the Clintons: these people have power in part because the population recognizes their names and supports what their families have historically stood for and accomplished. At the same time, the individual family members are expected to maintain the good name of their families, to uphold the legacy their forebears established. In the same way, tribal leaderships could be familial—patrilineal for some, but more often matrilineal—but not guaranteed. In order to gain and retain significant
sociopolitical positions, leaders had to protect their communities, to uphold their cultural values, and to provide for the people in tangible ways such as through gift giving.

Using this altered understanding of sovereignty allowed Native peoples to assert their international political standing while maintaining their own relationships with humans, nonhuman beings, and the land. Rather than emphasizing dominion through force, many Native peoples sought to cultivate relationships based on respect and on responsibility to one’s community (which included the land and local nonhuman beings). The responsibility Indian peoples felt for their territories has been simplified in the American popular imagination, made into the image of the ecological Indian who loved the animals and the land and yet could legally be forced to leave his homeland, with no negative consequences, because he did not “own” it. In popular understanding, Natives’ respect for the nonhuman world is distilled to an abstract, almost naïve love for all of creation, and responsibility disappears from the relationship altogether.

Although Native peoples truly did not tend to think of land in terms of ownership, they still associated themselves with specific territories. Native people have referred to the lands where their ancestors are buried, from which their ancestors emerged, on which they were created, where their creator placed them, and where they have lived since time immemorial. The relationship between a group and their lands creates a sense of responsibility. Indians felt, and continue to feel, that they have to care for the lands as they would a member of their families. In fact, they often behave as though their lands truly are part of their families. Their understanding of obligation to their land informed the approaches many Natives took toward their articulations of their peoples’ sovereignty.
Indian understandings of sovereignty as a relational concept are illustrated by the title of this work, drawn from an assertion (perhaps apocryphal) by famed Oglala Lakota Shirt Wearer, Crazy Horse: “my land is where my dead lie buried.” Whether Crazy Horse ever made such an assertion is difficult to ascertain. The only sources that cite this quotation are related to the controversial Crazy Horse Memorial in the Black Hills, and they provide no corroborating evidence. I have chosen to employ the phrase—and use it as the title of this project—because it is a succinct encapsulation of what so many others have repeated. The quotation has power. It is a familiar phrase both in Indian country and in mainstream Western society that continues to influence the way people view the Anglo colonization of Indian lands. Regardless of its historical accuracy, the quotation reveals an underlying truth about Native peoples’ relationship to the land, a relationship contemporary Natives retain and many contemporary non-Natives seem to envy.

Native sovereignty—multiple sovereignties, really—were and are about peoples’ relationship with and responsibility for each other and for specific territories rather than ownership or dominion. This assertion aligns with and is influenced by the premise upon which Winona LaDuke built her study of Native nations and their relationships with their environments, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life.* LaDuke speaks of the intimate ties between people and the nonhuman world, drawing on the Lakota assertion that all nonhuman things, including those Euro/Western peoples would describe as inanimate, are related to humans. LaDuke borrows the phrase that encapsulates this philosophy—in Lakota, *mitakuye oyasin*, or in English, “all my relations”—for her book’s title. LaDuke’s study focuses on the depth of Native peoples’ relationship with the land and twentieth-century battles against the degradation and outright destruction of their environments. In contrast to
the devastation EuroAmerican practices have caused to the landscape, LaDuke describes the biodiversity of Native lands and its connection to cultural diversity. LaDuke argues that wherever Native people still live and maintain some form of cultural continuity, there one can also find remnants of threatened ecosystems, such as Florida panthers, endangered prairie grasses, and old growth forests. This protection of the environment, LaDuke states, is a result of the *mitakuye oyasin* philosophy: viewing animals, plants, and the land in kinship terms—as *older* relatives in particular—binds humans and nonhumans together. And in LaDuke’s assessment, this connection drives Native culture and politics:

We are nations of people with distinct land areas, and our leadership and direction emerge from the land up. Our commitment and tenacity spring from our deep connection to the land. This relationship to land and water is continuously reaffirmed through prayer, deed, and our way of being—*minobimaatisiwin*, the ‘good life.’ It is perhaps best remembered in phrases like: *This is where my grandmother’s and children’s umbilical cords are buried… This is where the great giant lay down to sleep… These are the four sacred Mountains between which the Creator instructed us to live… This is the last place our people stopped in our migration here to this village.*

Relationships are key, as they have been for most Natives since time immemorial. Native people employ these arguments today as they employed them in the past. The argument is not “this land belongs to us.” Nor is it even “we belong to this land.” Instead, we might imagine Indian leaders asserting, “we and this land are family and we belong together.”

As an example of Native, relationship-focused sovereignty, consider my own people, the Chickasaws. I first learned our stories from my great-grandfather, who gave me his
copies of the first four issues of *The Journal of Chickasaw History* when I was in high school. Living in California, far from our tribal headquarters in Ada, Oklahoma, I knew less than I would have liked about our tribe, and Grampa Hicks thought that the journals would be a good way for me to start learning. The first issue of the *Journal* opened, fittingly, with a recounting of our origin story—a story of migration and hardship. In the distant past, the Chickasaws and Choctaws were one tribe living somewhere in the West (some historians suggest what is now northern Mexico and the southwestern U.S.). Most stories suggest that the people were suffering in this land and were constantly under attack from another, more powerful people (often theorized to be the Aztecs). So the people decided to leave this land and consulted a wise man or medicine man for advice. The medicine man suggested that the people follow the twins Chicasha and Chatah, to whom he gave a sacred pole that was to be planted in the ground each night and that would lean in the direction they should travel each morning.

So the people gathered up the bones (ashes, in some versions) of their ancestors and relatives, placed them in large sacks, and carried them toward their new homeland. The journey was a long and difficult one, and a number of people died along the way. Their bones were added to the sacks, mingling with the bones of their ancestors as the people traveled together to the east. Eventually the people crossed what is now known as the Mississippi River and divided themselves. There are different accounts of how and why this happened, but most focus on a dispute over the direction in which the sacred pole leaned. Chatah and those who stayed with him said that they had found their new homeland and should travel no further. Chicasha and those who went with him said the pole leaned to the north and chose to go on until the pole no longer leaned. Thus the Choctaws remained in the south, burying their
ancestors’ and relatives’ bones in their new homeland, and the Chickasaws migrated further north, burying their ancestors when they reached their own new homeland. For my Chickasaw ancestors and our Choctaw cousins, our homelands were literally where our dead lay buried. This relationship defined our territories and was important enough to survive a several-year-long migration. My ancestors saw themselves as sovereign not because they had supreme authority over this landscape but because their own ancestors lived and died, hunted and farmed, loved and lost, on those same lands, and their bones mingled with the very soil itself.  

**LITERACY**

When most Euro-Western people speak of literacy, they mean something similar to “[the] ability to read and write.” For many of these people, this definition includes an unspoken assumption: the ability to read and write in alphabetic systems of writing. While some might argue that such assumptions are more typically in the purview of non-academics, Elizabeth Hill Boone, Walter D. Mignolo, and a number of other scholars have demonstrated that ethnocentric ideas about the supremacy of alphabetic writing have had a strong influence on critical studies of literacy. In the introduction to Boone and Mignolo’s edited collection *Writing Without Words*, Boone provides a useful history of academic work on literacy and writing. She argues that a large majority of “scholars who have looked seriously at writing systems in their general sense have defined writing as spoken language that is recorded or referenced phonetically by visible marks.” This definition creates a view of writing as a system meant to visually represent speech, and places a valuation on a writing system’s connection to speech. That is, in this understanding of writing, “the most advanced writing
systems convey speech the most exactly and clearly."\textsuperscript{34} This view of writing leads to an understanding of literacy that focuses on an individual’s ability to recognize visual representations of speech; reading is just a slight sensory variation on listening.\textsuperscript{35}

Defining writing as visual representation of speech creates an artificial separation between alphabetic writing and other forms of symbolic marking, such as pictographs. Such a separation seems to have been rare for indigenous peoples. Indeed, as Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss’s collection \textit{Early Native Literacies in New England} asserts, many indigenous peoples’ definitions of writing and literacy included such diverse forms as “tattooing, weaving, carving, [and] dyeing,” in addition to forms that most everyday U.S. citizens today would call writing.\textsuperscript{36} Working with literacy in relation to indigenous peoples requires a more complicated understanding of literacy. Although twentieth century U.S. society often places literacy and illiteracy into clearly defined binary opposition, there are many shades in between the two that need to be recognized and accounted for.

Following Bross and Wyss’s assertion that “an overly strict definition of literacy unnecessarily restricts the full exploration of all early American literature,” I view literacy in relation to the varied forms of meaning conveyance that indigenous people employed.\textsuperscript{37} Drawing from Boone’s definition of writing as “the communication of relatively specific ideas in a conventional manner by means of permanent, visible marks,”\textsuperscript{38} I argue that being literate involves the ability to interpret both the denotative and connotative meanings of many forms of meaning conveyance in addition to or even instead of alphabetic writing. A literate person must be aware of the conventions of his/her writing system and familiar enough with the culture from which the system comes to understand both the obvious and subtle meanings of the “visible marks.” Taking literacy as the ability to interpret symbols
rather than simply to read alphabetic signs means that different literacies require different interpretive apparatuses. For example, for many Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples, literacy would have included the ability to interpret wampum belts. Interpretation, in this context, challenges not only the assumption that literacy refers to alphabetic writing systems but also the assertion that literacy necessarily involves both reading and writing. While knowing how to create wampum would certainly be useful, such knowledge is not necessary for one to be considered literate in these forms of meaning conveyance. Similarly, for many American colonials, “reading school provided the extent of their education.” While these colonials had the ability to read the alphabetic representation of their particular language, they did not have the ability to write it.

English language literacy in colonial era Indian country might usefully be defined as the ability to interpret the alphabetic representation of the English language. Separating the ability to interpret from the ability to reproduce may seem unnecessary and perhaps even counterproductive. They are, however, distinct, though related, political tools. While English writing would be a helpful tool for a tribe to petition the Crown or declare their own political autonomy, the ability to interpret both the denotative and connotative meanings of English alphabetic signs seems to have been the more immediately useful tool.

The effective negotiation techniques brought about through English language literacy and writing can be seen in a 1785 Mohegan petition to the Connecticut Assembly. The petition responded to the Connecticut colonial ruling that the Mohegans would only be allowed “half a sein” of fish annually from the Mohegan/Thames River. In the petition, Samson Occom and other Mohegan and Niantic cultural leaders wrote of their fishing rights as “Natural Priviledges, which the King of Heaven gave to our Fathers and to their Children.
English language literacy gave the Mohegan and Niantic peoples the ability to interpret Connecticut’s decision, and “to conclude, that the meaning must be, that in time to come we must not have only one canoe, one bow, one hook and line, among two tribes, and we must have taxes imposed upon us also.” The ability to write in English helped Occom and his companions to argue their understanding of their status as sovereign nations interacting as “[s]incere friends and brethren.”

The 1785 petition provides some clues to the subordinate status of indigenous peoples in the eyes of British and American law. The Mohegans, according to this petition, were at the mercy of state and federal level bureaucracy: the Connecticut Assembly’s decision reveals that the Assembly conceived it had the power to control not only the legal status of the land that belonged to the Mohegans, but also the means by which the Mohegan and Niantic peoples subsisted. English language literacy and writing skills gave the Mohegan and Niantic people a means to negotiate their legal standing and to assert that they saw themselves not as subsidiaries of the United States but as political and legal friends who stand on equal footing with one another. English literacy, one of the skills that most often subjects historic Indian writers to identity inquiries, made their declarations and redefinitions of sovereignty possible.

**WHAT TO CALL OURSELVES?**

What does it mean to refer to a writer as an *American Indian*, and how is that different from using the terms *Native, Native American, or indigenous American*? Different scholars offer different interpretations of these terms and use them in particular ways. The word *indigenous* has come to signify a legal position within the international community today: indigenous
peoples are groups who are culturally distinct from a nation-state, who have historical ties to a territory that extends to a time before colonization, and who are or have been negatively affected by the process of colonization. For some international organizations, the key attribute of indigenous peoples is their relationship with colonization. The Sami of Scandinavia, the Ainu of northern Japan and Russia, and the Maori of New Zealand are all considered indigenous peoples. To speak or write of indigenous issues is to consider all such peoples. Native American Studies has, from its inception, included hemispheric and international perspectives. Emphasizing that the Native peoples of the Americas are also indigenous peoples has become popular among some scholars. In fact, the word Native has many of the same connotations as indigenous, and the two are often used interchangeably.

The tension between the terms Native and (American) Indian extends back to some of the earliest Indian writers. Before Europeans arrived in the Americas, there was no term that included all peoples of the Americas. The different Indian peoples had names for themselves, names that often literally meant “the people” or a specific kind of people, such as “the people of the flint” or “the real people.” They also had names for the peoples around them, some of which have become the mainstream U.S. names for certain tribes, including the words Sioux and Iroquois (people who called themselves Očhéthi Šakówiŋ and Haudenosaunee, respectively). But as different as peoples of the Americas are from one another, the invading Europeans insisted on lumping them into one large group under the term Indian. Most people fought this title, preferring to be called by their proper names. Occom was first and foremost Mohegan. Elias Boudinot was above all GWY or Tsalagi (Cherokee). And so on. In the face of European invasion, people recognized a growing need to speak of tribes collectively. Occom, Boudinot, Schoolcraft, and many other writers and speakers referred to
the collective peoples of the Americas as Indians. Although an artificial category imposed by colonization, the term Indian served the needs of these writers and was familiar to both Indian and non-Indian audiences.

In contrast, a minority of writers, including William Apess, insisted upon the term Native instead of Indian. For writers of the past, and for their intellectual descendents today, the term Indian was artificial to the point of insult and was to be avoided. In his autobiographical publication *A Son of the Forest*, Apess wrote:

> I thought it disgraceful to be called an Indian; it was considered as a slur upon an oppressed and scattered nation, and I have been led to inquire where the whites received the word, which they so often threw as an opprobrious epithet at the sons of the forest. I could not find it in the Bible and therefore concluded that it was a word imported for the special purpose of degrading us.\(^{46}\)

At a young age, Apess recognized that the term Indian was incorrect. It failed to describe him as a person, and was inappropriate as a description of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas in general. Part of the insult consisted of the associations the term brought along: speakers and auditors both associated the term Indian with “an oppressed and scattered nation.” Although Apess described oppression that he experienced because he was Native, he seems to have suggested that being called Indian would exacerbate the problem. Apess argued, instead, that “the proper term which ought to be applied to our nation, to distinguish it from the rest of the human family, is that of ‘Natives’”—and I humbly conceive that the natives of this country are the only people under heaven who have a just title to the name, inasmuch as we are the only people who retain the original complexion of our father Adam.”

As Barry O’Connell explains in his edited collection of Apess’s work, Apess believed that
the Natives were one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. This would make the Natives Canaanites, and suggest that their complexions were more like that of Adam, the patriarch of the Abrahamic faiths, than Euro-American Christians. Apess’s reasoning may be confusing to modern readers, but his faith- and pseudo-history-based argument went hand-in-hand with an explanation more palatable to modern tastes. Apess described the Natives as “natives of this country,” a designation that also placed them at odds with European settlers. In this sense, the term functioned for Apess much as Native (American) functions for us today, highlighting the peoples’ nativeness, their status as the original inhabitants of the Americas.⁴⁷

Neither Native nor Indian is an entirely appropriate or effective term. While Native highlights the peoples’ indigenousness, it also seems to validate a broad, homogenizing category. Indian, on the other hand, can highlight the problem of lumping all indigenous inhabitants of the Americas into one category, but only to those who are aware of this problem or take the time to learn about it. In addition, some proponents of the term Native find Indian offensive, while few (if any) who prefer the term Indian find Native to be an offensive word.

When possible, it is best to refer to individual people or specific groups by their particular ethnonym. Out of respect, I will attempt to do this throughout my project. There are few, if any, people who prefer to be called Indian rather than a tribal name. At the same time, speaking of peoples of the Americas as a collective group, though problematic, is sometimes necessary. I will thus use the terms Native and Indian somewhat interchangeably, recognizing that both terms are fraught with historically inflected ideological problems and neither satisfactorily articulates the complex relationships between people, nonhuman beings, and the land that is a primary concern of my work.
In the year 1635, the Mohegan tribe separated itself from the Pequots, relocating to the territory of Shantok and establishing a village there. Narratives about life before the schism conflict in details. The twenty-first century Mohegans, as exemplified by tribal historian Melissa Jayne Fawcett, argue that their ancestors were members of the Pequot tribe and enjoyed the same pre-invasion life as other Pequots. The alternative, championed by Uncas biographer Michael Leroy Oberg, states that the Mohegans had always been separate from the Pequots. In this narrative, the Mohegans were a smaller, weaker tribe who paid tribute to the militarily superior Pequots.

In the first version, Mohegan history was of political and military dominance: they asserted and defended their sovereignty by force. This narrative establishes the not-yet-Mohegans as part of a tribe that, according to the *UXL Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, “dominated” the area now known as Connecticut. The Pequots were a powerful tribe who received tribute from a number of neighboring tribes. They also played an important role in pre-invasion wampum trade. At this time, wampum was used primarily for personal decoration and for intertribal politics: tribes created and exchanged wampum belts to record and commemorate treaties and other agreements. Far inland, the Haudenosaunee also used wampum belts as part of condolence and adoption ceremonies. The arrival of Europeans spurred a change in the uses of wampum, and, as a result, a change in the trade system as well. The Dutch and later the English treated wampum as currency and incorporated it into the fur trade. As demand for wampum grew, the Pequots attacked other tribes and sought to
control both the shellfish beds from which quahog was harvested for wampum production and the river ways along which wampum was traded. Until the Mohegan split and the subsequent “Pequot War,” the Pequots maintained hegemony over the wampum trade and over Indian access to Dutch traders.

In the second version of Mohegan history, the Mohegans were themselves one of the tribes the Pequots dominated; they were a small node in a network of peoples interacting as sovereign entities. The Pequots did not demand full subjugation or assimilation as many empires have done, but instead allowed autonomy in exchange for tribute. In this narrative, Oberg has argued, the Mohegans and Pequots were always distinct peoples, though they lived in close proximity and spoke nearly identical languages. The Mohegans, like many of their neighbors, resented the Pequots’ dominance and used the arrival of the English as an opportunity to challenge Pequot hegemony. As Oberg has argued, the Mohegan-Pequot schism involved the English in a conflict that had ancestral origins among the Native tribes in the region. Uncas and the Mohegans were sovereign people seeking to improve their status within the wampum trade and the surrounding Indian political network. In either instance, the Mohegans were autonomous peoples accustomed to controlling their own lives. Whether as Pequots or as a people paying tribute to the Pequots, the Mohegans were sovereign.

This chapter takes up the life and works of prominent Mohegan minister Samson Occom, demonstrating Occom’s dedication to increasing English literacy in various Indian tribes and arguing that Occom’s political work among the Mohegans and Brotherton tribes focused on defending the tribes’ “Natural Priviledges” of sovereignty. Occom drew on his peoples’ pre-invasion experiences as a sovereign people and on the language and argumentation developed following the arrival of Europeans in order to make these defenses.
To borrow from Occom’s own metaphor, of which I wrote in the introduction, Occom sought to show Anglo colonizers that the old Indian’s knife remained unchanged: that the Mohegans, who had for so long been England’s allies, were still Mohegans and still retained their rights to their ancestral lands. Occom emphasized the relational sovereignty, employing metaphors that depicted the Mohegans as a tree rooted in Mohegan lands. He echoed his forebear Appagese’s assertion that the Mohegan people and land “‘grew up together’ and thus should not be parted.”

In the year 1743 Samson Occom, twenty-year-old Mohegan council member, had an important awakening, a “Discovery,” he might have called it. Just a few years after Occom’s “Discovery of the way of Salvation through Jesus,” he witnessed a series of legal proceedings that would have a profound impact on his life. Occom’s desire to help and care for his people inclined him toward his eventual vocation as a Christian preacher. This spiritual stirring was bolstered by the events of 1743. At the hearings of the Mason land case, a near-century-long battle over historically Mohegan territory, Occom was reminded of the power of English language literacy in American international politics. The Mason land case was largely focused around a group of documents and the differences in interpretation of these documents. In addition, the case focused on the legitimacy of these documents; one of the most important, a declaration of one man’s leadership of the tribe, had problematic origins. It was, in fact, built on lies made possible by the lack of English language literacy among the Mohegans.

Occom wrote in his autobiographical narratives of his religious awakening and his desire to learn to read and write and share these skills with his people. Placing these narratives in historical context, we can read another intention just below the surface: a desire
to help his people defend their sovereignty and preserve their relationship with the land and nonhuman beings around then. After learning of the fraudulent behavior of Anglo colonial officials, Occom seems to have determined to prevent such injustices from happening again. But Occom’s desire to help was not limited to his own tribe: he desired to help all of his Indian kindred, and spent his life doing so.

Through his work as a teacher, preacher, and political activist, Samson Occom helped build and strengthen the framework through which the Mohegans and several other Indian tribes have asserted and continue to assert their inherent sovereignty. Occom’s arguments provide a powerful example of the spectrum of Indian sovereignty, including cultural, historical, political, and relational dimensions. Occom refused to give in to colonial pressures to privilege English language and culture over Indian languages and cultures. In doing so, he asserted the rights of Indians (and perhaps all indigenous peoples) to their political and cultural autonomy. Perhaps more than any other historical figure explored herein, Occom stands as a powerful role model for Indian peoples today. His unceasing work to help his communities even in the face of great difficulties; his skill with the English language; and his focus on the importance of Indian cultures, philosophies, and politics are all qualities to admire and emulate. Occom’s actions can teach us both about the way our forebears viewed and argued for tribal sovereignty and about techniques we might fruitfully re-implement today.

**Occom’s Indian Pedagogy**

Occom had a number of opportunities to develop English literacy during the early part of his life, but remained uninterested and even avoided these opportunities until he realized how
useful English literacy might be. Before his discovery of the power of English literacy, Occom actively avoided learning to read. In his 1768 autobiographical narrative, he wrote of a minister from New London who preached to the Mohegans. Occom claimed the majority of Mohegans were, like himself, uninterested in the minister’s teaching and only attended his services because the minister gave them blankets. This minister also kept “a ^Sort of a^ School,” which Occom described as a failure: “I believe there never was one that ever Learnt to read any thing.” Occom continued to avoid English education as he grew. When Occom “was about 10 years of age” a man would come around the people, “and where ever he Coud find the Indian Child^n, he woud make them read — but the Indian Children Usd to take Care to keep out of his way.” Occom declared that when he was sixteen years old, shortly after the 1738 Mohegan declaration in support of John Uncas as sachem, he began to attend the meetings of “Extraordinary Ministers,” and at the age of seventeen, he had “a Discovery of the way of Salvation through Jesus” and began to desire to “Learn to read the Word of god.” Whether or not Occom did experience such a religious “Discovery,” his interest in Christianity coincides somewhat conspicuously with his discovery of the power of English literacy. He had ample opportunity to learn English throughout his childhood and would likely have been familiar with Christian preaching. Of course, Occom’s avoidance of Christianity and English literacy could be attributed to his age, to the fact that these ministers were outsiders, or to any number of things. Likewise, his “Discovery” could be a genuine religious conversion. I do not mean to challenge the validity of Occom’s religious conviction: he was a dedicated minister and lived a good, if sometimes flawed, Christian life. For an Indian like Occom, however, a Christian education was the best, maybe even the only, means of obtaining English literacy. Occom seems to have sought out Wheelock’s tutelage not only
to “Learn to read the Word of god,” but also to gain English literacy for social and political purposes.

Occom approached the dissemination of English language literacy from an Indian perspective: his pedagogy was cross cultural, multilingual, and focused on blending English literacy and Christian teachings with Native lifeways. English language literacy and the cultural literacy that would come along with it had the potential to serve as a communal tool not just for Occom’s particular tribal community, but also for the Indian community writ large. Occom was well aware of the differences even between neighboring tribes, and his efforts to learn to speak the Oneida language reveal his awareness of the importance of recognizing the differences between Indian groups. Occom also used specific tribal names in certain documents—his autobiography specifies that he was brought up in “a Place Calld Mohegan” and tells of his experiences at “Nahantuck,” “Naroganset,” and “Montauk.”

Although these communities were relatively close to one another, and some spoke near-identical languages, Occom knew them as different peoples who needed to be named and treated as such. However, he also frequently wrote of “the Indians, [his] bretheren and kindred according to the flesh.” In addition to highlighting the differences between different communities, Occom also understood that the British and Anglo-American colonizers often failed to recognize these differences. Occom experienced the colonial renaming and cultural erasure inherent in the term Indian firsthand and responded by adapting the idea of the Indian to his own goals. Rather than highlighting tribal differences, Occom often focused on drawing different Native groups together and emphasizing the usefulness of presenting a collective, Indian front to the colonists. Thus Occom put his skills
to work not only as a councilor for the Mohegans, but also as a missionary and a teacher to a variety of peoples.

The cross-cultural approach Occom embraced in teaching English literacy connects well with his conception of Indians as “bretheren and kindred.” Although his impetus to acquire English literacy may have been the Mohegan tribe’s experiences in relation to the Mason land case discussed below, Occom did not limit his work as a teacher to the Mohegans. In fact, Occom’s earliest work as a teacher was with the Mohegans’ neighbors, the Montauk people. In the summer of 1749, Occom took a fishing trip to Montauk, spoke with some tribe members, and was asked to come and teach. Occom feared that the commissioners of the missionary society would deny his request to teach in Montauk, but, coincidentally, Occom was forced to take time off from his studies due to “a pain in his eyes,” and was granted a six-month teaching position at Montauk. In his first year as a teacher at Montauk, Occom had “near 30 Scholars.” In addition to his Montauk students, Occom taught a variety of other Indian children, including some “Indians at Shenecock” a “Young Man … from Mohegan,” and “A Lad from Nahantuck.” Although no existing records indicate whether any potential students were turned away from the school, Occom’s willingness to work with students from a variety of Indian backgrounds, coupled with his later work with the Oneida and the Brotherton peoples, demonstrates his commitment to helping Indian peoples acquire tools that might help them to retain their sovereignty in the presence of British and American colonialism.

If Occom’s work with various Native peoples demonstrates his commitment to Indians as a group, then his multilingual, multifaceted pedagogy demonstrates his commitment to helping his individual Indian students develop the tool that would most help
them articulate their understanding of their own sovereignty: English language literacy.

When working with or preaching to Indian peoples, Occom focused primarily on ensuring that his audiences understood him clearly. In his relatively well known *A Sermon, Preached At The Execution of Moses Paul, An Indian*, Occom declared that the common people “can’t help understanding my talk; it is common, plain, every-day talk.” He claimed children and “poor Negroes may plainly and fully understand my meaning,” a statement that could not be made of the “high and lofty” sermons delivered by non-Native preachers. Most important, Occom hoped his “every-day talk” would “in a particular manner be serviceable to my poor kindred the Indians.” Ultimately, Occom’s purpose was to be helpful specifically to his fellow Indians. Such a decision held political as well as social ramifications: his preaching clearly set Occom apart from the preachers whose styles he ridicules. Occom’s preaching challenges class as well as cultural boundaries, appealing to those who did not have the opportunity to learn the “high and lofty” English used by non-Native preachers. Whether or not Occom’s claim to a simple manner of speaking was apparent in his various sermons, his preface to the *Moses Paul* sermon highlighted his desire to make English cultural values understandable to his Indian kindred, a desire which was displayed in his approach to English language and literacy pedagogy.

Just as Occom spoke “every-day talk” in hopes of making his sermons easy to understand, he also used Indian languages to help his congregations and classes understand English and gain some level of English literacy. In his work as a preacher in Montauk, Occom would read scriptures to his audience and then “expound upon Some perticular Passages in my own Toung.” Although Occom kept no records of what he said to his listeners in his own tongue, his use of the verb “expound” suggests that he used his native
language to help his listeners understand the passages and thus to gain some degree of English cultural literacy. In his work as a teacher, Occom “Catechised 3 or 4 Times a Week according to the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism, and many Times Propos’d Questions of my own, and in my own Tonugue.” Unlike the later boarding schools and other forms of Indian education overseen by colonists, many of which forced the students to hear and speak only English, Occom’s teaching integrated both English and Mohegan. Teaching and preaching in multiple languages helped Occom and his students move more freely between English and Indian words, ideas, and worldviews. In his classrooms, Occom translated ideas from Anglo-American colonial culture and the Bible into his students’ own languages, teaching his students that their own ideas might also be translated and explained in the colonizers’ languages. This ability to translate ideas across languages and cultures would prove important for Occom and his students, especially in the documents examined below.

Engaging the students in physical activities and oral demonstrations of their faculties helped them bridge differences in education styles as much as Occom’s multilingual pedagogy helped them acquire English fluency and literacy. The combination of physical, oral, and visual learning Occom employed encouraged the students to approach literacy from a more open and inclusive viewpoint than they might have in colonist-run classrooms. Occom’s school days began with oral tests of English literacy: “as Soon as the Children got together, and have took their proper Seats, I Praye’d with them, then began to hear them, I generally began (after Some of them Coud Spell and Read,) With those that were yet in their Alphabets, So around, as they were properly Seated, till I got through.” Occom required each student to recount orally the English alphabet before the daily study would begin, obliging the students to recite the letters that they would eventually use to spell words and
come to recognize visually. Those who were able to spell “were obligd to Spell when ever they wanted to go out,” continuing to demonstrate orally their understanding of the English alphabet. Recitation of the alphabet and spelling of words helped the students to engage with alphabetic literacy as simply another form of oral and later visual interpretation.

Occom’s pedagogy bears some resemblance to common settler teaching practices, but deviates in culturally significant ways. E. Jennifer Monaghan has argued that American schooling, like the English schooling from which it developed, followed a fairly specific order, using the “alphabetic method” of literacy education. In colonial American education, reading and writing were separate activities learned at separate times: a student first learned to read, and then, if that student were one of the very small percentage who moved past the “reading school,” he or she went on to writing instruction. As Occom did with his students, many teachers of English alphabetic literacy conducted their lessons orally, requiring no writing. Progress was measured by listening to the student’s recitation and oral spelling. Children learned to read by advancing through a set of alphabetic literacy technologies, beginning with the “hornbook,” a paddle-shaped piece of wood displaying an English alphabet and syllabary, and then moving to a primer, the Psalter, the New Testament, and finally the entire Bible.

This path of literacy pedagogy seems to have been fairly codified and to have relied heavily upon a student’s familiarity with the technologies such a path requires. For students fluent in English and at least aware of the idea of alphabetic literacy, such an expectation of familiarity was unproblematic. For Indian children, who were less likely to have such foreknowledge, the expectation would have made English literacy more difficult to obtain. Even for those fluent in English, hornbooks, Psalters and Bibles were less likely to be part of
their everyday lives. Occom, as Sandra Gustafson has noted, was aware of this difficulty and was willing to change his pedagogical approach in order to help his students overcome this seeming setback. In making these changes, Occom adapted some forms of instruction that many of his Native students would likely have been familiar with, including positive reinforcement and, perhaps most importantly, taking the alphabet off of the hornbook and creating a series of interactive bark-chip letters, similar to the alphabet blocks that can be found in many American homes today.

Occom’s approach to teaching literacy showed signs of positive reinforcement and a meritocratic approach to classroom makeup: he began each day “With those that were yet in their Alphabets” and moved to each student “as they were properly Seated,” indicating that a child’s seating represented his or her accomplishments in developing English literacy skills. Margaret Connell Szasz has argued that praise and positive reinforcement were cornerstones of American Indian childrearing. Szasz gave examples of feasts thrown by the community to celebrate a boy’s first successful hunt or a girl’s “first significant gathering of huckleberries,” and of men who received the privilege of shedding old responsibilities such as boyhood chores. As Indian boys and girls matured into men and women, the community recognized this maturation by bestowing on them the privilege of new responsibilities. In Occom’s classroom, the development of English language literacy and fluency became markers of intellectual and social maturation, marking the rewarded students as community members who possessed communally useful knowledge and skills.

The physical aspect of Occom’s lessons support an understanding of literacy as an act of interpretation similar to the interpretation of a basket or wampum belt. Working with some children whom other teachers might have called “Some What Dull,” because they “Can Soon
learn to Say over their Letters they Distinguish the Sounds by the Ear, but their Eyes can’t Distinguish the Letters,” Occom developed a system to help these children learn to identify visually letters of the alphabet.  

Ocomm made “an Alphabet on Small bits of paper, and Glued them on Small Chips of Cedar.” He then “put these on Letters in order on a Bench, then point to one Letter and bid a Child to take notice of it, and then I order the Child to fetch me the Letter from ye Bench if it Brings the Letter, it is well, if not it must go again and again till it brings ye right L r.” The students repeated this activity with Occom until they could bring all the correct letters even when the letters were jumbled. This combination of physical, oral, and visual activities “is a Pleasure to them; and they soon Learn their Letters this way.” Rather than forcing students to read from hornbooks or primers and thus to conform to restrictive definitions of literacy, Occom taught his students to tap into more inclusive definitions of literacy and learn to interpret English letters through a variety of actions and activities. Occom’s refusal to simply give up on his supposedly “Dull” students demonstrates his dedication to disseminating English literacy amongst the Indians.

The physical and economic hardships that Occom faced help to show just how deep his dedication to Indian peoples ran. Occom’s work with the Montauks was supported by the Montauk people themselves: Occom “left it with them to give me what they Pleasd; and they took turns to Provide Food for me.” By W. DeLoss Love’s account, the Montauks were very poor, meaning that Occom spent his time in Montauk living in poverty. When the missionary society that Wheelock worked for granted Occom a teaching position in Montauk, Occom was under the impression that the society would pay him for his services. The commissioners, however, believed differently. In the first two years Occom spent at Montauk, he received no monetary support from the society, and ultimately was granted only
£180 for his work.\textsuperscript{30} Love asserted that Occom unhappily suffered this lack of support.\textsuperscript{31} Occom himself, however, complained that white missionaries were given larger salaries, and that he “ought to receive at least half as much as his white brother.”\textsuperscript{32} In spite of his impoverished state, Occom worked, in Love’s words, “with zeal and wisdom.”\textsuperscript{33} Helping his Indian brothers and sisters develop English literacy, a powerful political tool, was important enough to Occom that he was willing to live in poverty, relying upon the generosity of his kin.

**THEY WANT TO ROOT US OUT OF OUR LAND**

Exploring the history of the Mason land case can help us understand just how important English literacy could be to Indian politics in general and Mohegan politics in particular. The Mason case stands as one of the more important events in Mohegan history prior to the 1750s. It certainly had a powerful impact on Anglo-Mohegan interaction and helped inform mid- and late-eighteenth century Mohegan politics. Many of the arguments about Mohegan sovereignty that I explore in this chapter relate to or draw on arguments made in the land case. The case, also known as *Mohegan Indians v Connecticut*, was, to borrow from biographer W. DeLoss Love, “bred in the bone of the Indians of Occom’s generation.”\textsuperscript{34} One might claim that the case was bred in the bone of the Mohegans as a whole, as the roots of the so-called controversy date back almost as far as the division of the Pequot nation into the Pequot and Mohegan peoples. Love traced the Connecticut colony’s side of the claim to September 28, 1640, when “the famous Sachem Uncas, in a deed, … had conveyed to the English his rights in all the lands which he had occupied as tributary to the Pequots, excepting those he was accustomed to plant,” and that he “confirmed the same by a
conveyance, dated August 15, 1659, to Major John Mason.”

The Mohegans, Love wrote, argued that the 1640 deed “had only conveyed a right of preemption to the settlers of Connecticut colony made in consequence of protection against the Pequots, and that this ‘jurisdiction power’ was all that had been confirmed to the colony by Mason in 1660 and by Uncas in 1681.”

Lisa Brooks has argued that Uncas’s dealings with the colony, and in particular the language used in the “League of Alliance and Amity” of 1681, establish a relationship between the Mohegans and the colony, conferring to the colony “only the rights of shared inhabitation and preemption.”

Following Uncas’s death, the Mohegans presented several written complaints to the colony, attempting to get the colony and later the Crown to recognize the relationships that Uncas’s documents had established. In 1700, Uncas’s sons, the sachem Owaneco and his brother Ben, sent a petition to Queen Anne, asserting their “Native rights” and calling the English to task for failing to respect Mohegan sovereignty and especially Mohegan land rights.

The commission appointed by Queen Anne in 1705 found the Mohegans had “been very unjustly dispossessed” and ordered the lands restored to the Mohegans. The colony, rather than following the commission’s direction, attempted to force the Mohegans to assimilate to English lifeways by dividing Mohegan common lands into family plots to be passed patrilineally and claiming the unassigned land for itself. Mohegan leaders continued to present to the Crown complaints against the colony and to assert their “Native rights” to the land.

From an early age, Occom witnessed and participated in activities that highlighted the connection between Mohegan tribal politics and Mohegan-English interaction. Beginning with their split from the Pequot peoples, the Mohegans’ intratribal politics had a strong
connection to the peoples’ political interaction with the British, and the tribe made extensive use of English language petitions to respond to both internal and external problems. By the time of Occom’s birth, the Mohegan peoples had been again divided, this time into “Ben’s Town” and “John’s Town,” named after the descendents of Uncas whom each faction supported as rightful sachem. John Uncas, identified as “‘a grandson of Uncas,’” had been chosen by the Mohegans as sachem in 1738, while Ben Uncas II, son of Major Ben Uncas (Owaneco’s brother), was supported by the colony and a smaller faction of Mohegans. In a document drafted in September 1738, the Mohegans declared their disapproval of the colony’s behavior, and their refusal to accept Ben Uncas II as the sachem. A commission appointed by King George II, however, determined that Ben Uncas was the rightful sachem while refusing to hear testimony from the Mohegans themselves. While this petition failed to achieve its ends, it represents a significant moment in the life of young Samson Occom. Among the signers of the Mohegan declaration was fifteen-year-old Samson Occom, whose family had previously been loyal to Ben Uncas II.

At the age of nineteen, Occom participated in a new round of petitions. In 1742 and 1743 John Uncas’s supporters signed petitions declaring again that John was the rightful Mohegan sachem. Ben Uncas II, with the help of his councilors, including the newly appointed Samson Occom, drafted an “‘address and declaration’” claiming that John Uncas was set up by “‘evil-minded white people’” and that Ben and his people had plenty of land. In 1743 a hearing was held before a new commission in Connecticut, where attorney William Bollan presented the Mohegans’ case, and the Mohegans gave their opinions on the sachemship directly. Occom was present when Bollan argued to the Norwich court that Ben Uncas had “‘sold himself to the governor and company and [was] endeavouring to sell the
whole tribe, or, which is the same thing, their ancient and rightful inheritance as fast as he can." He may have also been present when Bollan later stated, "the Moheagans beg leave to observe, that they are a people unskilled in letters," and that the English thus had an advantage in creating the treaties and other agreements between them, including the dubious documents used by the colony as evidence. No records tell us if Occom was present when Bollan made the latter statement. However, that the Mason land case made Occom acutely aware of the threats that the Euro-American colonies represented for Indian peoples is a reasonable claim to make. Further, as a result of the Mason land case, Occom clearly recognized the potential political power inherent in English language literacy and writing: he began to desire, as he states in his autobiography, to "Learn to Read" so that he might be "Capable of Instructing [his] poor Kindred" and other "poor Children in Reading."

OCCOM relied heavily upon two particular arguments for Mohegan and other tribes’ sovereignty: writing of the Native nations of America, and focusing on the natural privileges conveyed upon these peoples by their creator(s). These two approaches span the variety of genres in which Occom worked, but in many cases one approach seems to be the more effective of the two in a specific genre. The most prominent and power example of Occom’s arguments about tribes as nations was in his letter on behalf of the Mohegans to Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian affairs in the north department. In this instance, Occom appealed to his reader’s sympathies toward downtrodden people in general and Indians in particular while also using subtle juxtaposition to encourage the reader to see that Indian tribes could and should be viewed as nations. If Johnson were to accept this comparison as valid, then the implication is that Indian tribes deserve the rights and respect due any other nation. Arguments about a people’s natural privileges were located most often in petitions to
the Connecticut Assembly or to Congress. These arguments drew upon the established petition-writing practices of Mohegans at the time and asserted the importance of history in discussions of Indian sovereignty.

Occom’s use of the word *Nation* as a descriptor of Native peoples implies an argument about Indian sovereignty without presenting any outright claims. In the 1764 letter to his friend Sir William Johnson, Occom asked Johnson whether the Mohegans’ colonial overseers could justly hold power over his people. The Mohegans suggested that the answer was obvious—obviously no—to both themselves and to the superintendent. The letter opens with the kind of obsequious language that was the norm for eighteenth-century letters, especially those to one deemed superior in rank or social standing. But the obsequiousness obscures a subtle, even cunning, diction. Occom praises God, “the Supreme being and Governor of all Worlds,” for sending Johnson, a man of “great Wisdom and understandg,” among “the Natives‘the Miserable Nations of the Land.” Johnson has seen that the Native Nations were “liable to ^be^ imposed upon by all other Nations” and been moved “in a Way of Commiseration.” All these qualities made the Mohegans hopeful because Johnson had been established as “a mideator between the Natives and the other Nations.” We see Occom repeatedly inserting the word nation in the letter, an act that has the effect of subconsciously suggesting Indian peoples’ legal and political equivalence with European nations.

Some might argue that this is an over-reading of the term, and, indeed, *Nation* was used during Occom’s time to describe large political entities, ethnic groups without territories (such as the Jewish nation in Spain), and Native peoples. Occom’s language reflects these varied uses, and an historical reading of the word might suggest that Occom uses *Nation* as a term synonymous with tribe and lacking any political significance. However, such an
argument fails to account for the critique of the colonies’ arbitrary exercises of power and inconsistent execution of Royal orders. The comparison of Native and non-Native nations challenged the colonies’ power over Indians by implying political equality. The switch in terminology from *Nation* to *Tribe* extends this challenge by using the language of the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

Occom established the Native peoples of the Americas as *Nations*, in all the term’s valences, in order to challenge the “arbitrary Power” of the colonies and colonial overseers and to reclaim for the indigenous people power over their internal politics. The Mohegans were historically accustomed to controlling their own government and desired to put an end to colonial interference. Occom wrote of Ben Uncas, “the English intends to Continue him as a Sachem ovr us, but we have a Law and a Custom to make a Sachem over us Without the help of any People or Nation in the World, and When he makes himself ^unworthy^ of his Station we put him down—ourselves.” The English desired to keep Ben Uncas in power and had, in the Mohegans’ view, conspired to keep him there. They had been doing so, in fact, since 1738 when the colony pushed for Ben to become sachem rather than the tribes’ own choice, John Uncas. The colony did so by tricking a majority of the tribe into signing a document that recognized Ben as sachem. Through Ben, the colony was able to obtain land in supposedly legitimate transactions. As Occom argued, the colony “want[ed] to root us out of our land ^root & Branch^” and sought to use Ben’s power as a way to legally root out the Mohegans. Ben, however, was acting primarily under coercion. The Mohegans repeatedly argued that Ben’s actions were not in line with the desires of the people, nor with their established laws and customs. Both Ben and the colony violated the rights of a *Nation*—of a people demanding international political recognition via this letter.
After presenting the argument implied by the term nation, the Mohegans turned to the language of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 in an attempt to protect Mohegan lands from colonial encroachment. The Proclamation focused primarily on Indian lands to the West, and established the Appalachian range as a temporary border between colonial and Indian lands. The Crown had hoped to calm the anger building up among western Indian tribes and to renew more peaceful, friendly interactions. Those tribes were offered protection from encroachment by the British government—tribes including the relatively nearby Iroquois League. Through their letter to Johnson, the Mohegans sought to learn “Whether the kings Instructions Concerning Indian Lands, an’t as much for us as any Tribe.”

We are a Nation, this letter argues, and retain the same rights as other Nations. We are also an Indian Tribe, and deserve the same protections and assurances offered other Tribes. Mohegan lands, then, ought to be doubly safeguarded: by sovereign right and by Royal decree.

Like the earlier petitions, this document shows the Mohegans challenging the power of the colonies and asserting their rights as a sovereign people. It remains difficult to assess the tangible results of the letter, but the psychic and philosophical results must have been important. The letter, written in Occom’s hand, was produced on behalf of the entire tribe. This is only speculation, but it is possible that various members of the tribe took part in the creation of the letter. They may have worked as a committee, suggesting to Occom what should be included in the letter; listened to Occom’s reading of the letter and provided oral feedback; or perhaps met in a group and discussed the problems together before Occom sat down to draft the letter. Most likely, Occom worked with input from his fellow Mohegans. In participating in the drafting of this letter, the Mohegans also participated in a renewal of the tribe’s self-image as a sovereign nation-people. This is not to say that the Mohegans had ever
ceased to see themselves as sovereign. Rather, the creation of the letter preformed a renewal in the same way that a Green Corn Ceremony, another harvest ceremony, or even a morning or evening ritual might act as a renewal. The letter likely served as a ceremony to mark the continuance of the Mohegans as a sovereign nation-people, a reminder and reinvigoration of their sense of themselves.\textsuperscript{51}

One clear result of the letter was an increase in Occom’s influence over the community and his being labeled a troublemaker by various Anglo officials. Occom’s influence over the Mohegans was considered substantial by his enemies and his peers: Robert Clelland, the schoolmaster at Mohegan from 1752–1765, following the letter to Sir William Johnson, declared “All the Indians but 3 ingages to stand by one another agst this Gov’t. If Samson could be gain’d the rest would come easily over.”\textsuperscript{52} Similarly, in a complaint to Connecticut Governor Fitch, Ben Uncas, with the help of Zachary Johnson and Simon Choychoy, reported:

The melancholy condition of the tribe for 15 months, past ever since Samson Occum has moved here [. . . .] Presently upon Occom’s arrival, he differed with our overseers and me for leasing Mr. Ross a piece of land. He first drew of the bulk of the Indians from their allegiance to me that they would not acknowledge me as their sachem; 2ndly He has got the Indians to disregard and despise this kind Government & our good overseers—who protect & defend us against all incroachments [. . . .] He [. . . .] makes the poor Indians believe he will recover for them a vast tract of land [. . . .], he sent Hary Quaquid last summer twice to Sir William Johnston’s & it is said hary is going again very soon, I suppose Mason had never gone to London had not Occum got the Indians to sign several papers for said Mason.\textsuperscript{53}
As Uncas, Johnson, and Choychoy reveal, Occom either deeply influenced the opinions of his Mohegan tribespeople or served as a rally point and a public face for Mohegan concerns. In fact, Uncas’s argument seems to suggest that Occom was less of a rogue rabble-rouser and more of a popularly supported leader and civil servant. It is entirely possible that Occom’s public speaking was powerful enough to sway “the bulk” of the Mohegan people. Several records of Occom’s sermons describe his impassioned and moving way with words. It is likely that Occom’s words resonated so well with the Mohegan people because his expressions reflected what the people already felt. And as the wealth of Occom-penned tribal documents attests, his skills were respected and sought out by the Mohegans and several neighboring tribes. His dedicated defense of Mohegan lands in the letter to Johnson made him a scapegoat, but the defense represented the will of the people, not merely Occom’s troublemaking.

Whereas Occom used *nation* in the letter to Sir William Johnson to imply arguments about sovereignty, his use of the term *natural privileges* brings his ideas about sovereignty to the forefront of the petitions he authored. In May 1785, Occom helped write a petition to the Connecticut Assembly on behalf of their “steady, close and faithful friends,” the Mohegans and Niantics. In a manner similar to the letter to Johnson, Occom opens with a subtle declaration of close relationships between the colony and tribes, perhaps even a declaration of equality. Occom followed the description of the two tribes as close and faithful with an assertion that they are also “sincere friends and brethren.” These descriptions were common among different Indian tribes. Political relationships were frequently put in familial terms: most often that of older and younger siblings. From a colonial perspective, this behavior was viewed as a silly but tolerable quirk and led to the patronizing notion of the white “Great
Father.” From an Indian perspective, however, this language placed the colonists into Native political networks and helped colonial government make sense. And for the Mohegans and Niantics in particular, designating the Assembly as brethren decreased the perceived inequality between the polities. There are some inequalities in sibling relationships—of age, of experience, of size or physical abilities—but (ideally) there is also respect, intimacy, and mutual good will. This relationship means, as Occom asserted, that the groups “may talk freely together without offence” because they recognize they are all acting for each others’ benefit.

With this relationship established, Occom asserts that the groups can thus speak freely about Indian sovereignty, which Occom describes as “our Natural Priviledges.” This term appears in the first sentence of the body of the petition and remains prominent throughout. As we saw above, arguments about natural privileges and Native rights were important aspects of Mohegan legal rhetoric. Occom thus creates a historical connection between the current document and earlier petitions. The term also has an immediate historical link, a “Memorial” sent to the Assembly the previous October, “requesting, not a Priviledge, which we never had before, but a Protection in our Natural Priviledges, which the King of Heaven gave to our Fathers and to their Children forever.” Occom’s petition insists that Mohegan and Niantic sovereignty—their “Natural Priviledges” of cultural and political autonomy—is not new nor something the Assembly could grant or gift. Rather, their sovereignty is inherent, “Natural,” given them by “the King of Heaven” and thus irrevocable. As “brethren” who are both endowed by their creator(s) with these “Natural Priviledges,” these polities are relative equals and are only truly answerable to that/those creator(s). They
ought to be responsible to one another, to consider the others when they act, but they remain distinct and autonomous.

Occom and the tribes underscore their inherent autonomy by explaining their understanding of the Assembly’s response to their previous petition and challenging the Assembly’s authority to make such a response. The tribes described themselves as “amazed and astonished beyond measure” by the Assembly’s response. They were amazed not in the now-common sense of joy and wonderment, but in the then-contemporary sense of bewilderment.56 Their astonishment was that of “sudden fear” and “surprise,” not of “great wonder.”57 They conveyed these negative responses as they explained their interpretation of the Assembly’s message:

What? Only half a sein allowed to Monooyauhegunnewuck, from the best friends to the best friends? We are ready to conclude, that the meaning must be, that in time to come we must not have only one canoe, one bow, one hook and line, among two tribes, and we must have taxes imposed upon us also.58

The tribes argued that this sanction is both unreasonable and unfounded. The State of Connecticut is supposed to be friends of the Mohegans and Nantics, yet the state tried to impose unreasonable fishing limits on the tribes. The tribes present what some might see as a reductio ad absurdum argument when they extrapolate that half a seine will come to mean a severe reduction of all resources for the tribes. But in comparison to the reduction of fish from two seines per tribe to half a seine total—12.5% of their normal amount—the reductio seems less absurd. True, 12.5% would potentially work out to more than “one canoe, one bow,” and so on, between the two tribes, but the effect of such reductions is the same: a
severe limitation of each tribe’s ability to sustain itself, and thus a severe infringement upon their sovereignty.

The mention of “taxes imposed on us” is a clear reference to the American Colonies’ recent war with Britain and in particular the Colonies’ response to British taxation. If the simple mention of taxes were not enough to clue the Assembly in to the comparison, Occom followed by asserting, “Whilst the King of England had authority over here, they ordered no such things upon us.” The States succeeded in their rebellion against Britain and cast off the rule of the King whom they called a tyrant. Yet, Occom argued, the King was never so tyrannical toward the Mohegans and Niantics as the Connecticut Assembly has been. Mentioning taxes implicitly asked the Assembly if they would grow as tyrannical as their former ruler. In fact, the tribes continue in that candor afforded close friends and “brethren” and make the Assembly’s wrongdoing even more clear:

If we were slaves under tyrants, we must submit; if we were captives, we must be silent, and if we were strangers, we must be contented; or if we had forfeited our priviledges at your hands by any of our agreements we should have nothing to say. Whenever we went to war against your and our enemies, one bow, and one hatchet would not do for two tribes—And what will the various tribes of Indians, of this boundless continent say, when they hear of this restraint of fishing upon us? Remember, Occom told the Assembly, we fought alongside you as friends and brethren against the British and their allies—“your and our enemies”—and you were thankful for our help. The Mohegans and Niantics were the Colonies’ allies, not subjects. These tribes were neither conquered by nor did they freely submit to the States; they never lost nor forfeited their “Natural Priviledges.” Furthermore, they were not the only peoples affected by the
Assembly’s actions. How would other allies or potential allies—“the various tribes of Indians, of this boundless continent”—behave when they learned how the States treated their “sincere friends and brethren” the Mohegans and Niantics?

Following this cutting retort, Occom reasserted the two tribes’ sovereignty. He argued that the Assembly “must have mistaken our request.” Occom reminded the Assembly, once again, that the Mohegans and Niantics did not write to ask for something new. The original petition and this follow-up were pleas for recognition, the kind that Scott Lyons has argued is necessary for productive interaction between sovereign polities. The petition closes with a repetition of its opening assertion, a request “that the honorable Assembly would protect us in our Natural Priviledges.” The tribes sought recognition of their inherent sovereignty, of their relationships with their ancestral territories and waterways. This was a plea to let the Mohegans live as Mohegans, the Niantics as Niantics, and not a plea for the Assembly to interfere with their rights as sovereign entities.

**The Brotherton Movement and Occom’s Later Years**

Samson Occom continually expressed his desire to help various Indian peoples in their political battles throughout his lifetime. In March of 1773, Occom attended the first organizational meeting of the pan-tribal Brotherton movement, an Indian-run effort to establish a Christian Indian town in Oneida territory, a space where the people could be both Christian and Indian and could use Christian teachings to support and maintain traditional lifeways. Over the next two years, Occom, his son-in-law Joseph Johnson, and his brothers-in-law David and Jacob Fowler worked with the Oneida tribe on behalf of the Brotherton movement, handling land negotiations and surveying the new territory. Although the
Colonies’ war against Britain disrupted emigration to Brotherton, enthusiasm for the movement was high among southern New England Indian peoples, and emigration quickly resumed in 1784. The Brotherton movement was founded by, directed by, and intended for Indian people; it was, as W. DeLoss Love wrote, “unique in our American history,” for Christian Indian towns founded previous to Brotherton were brought about by colonists like John Eliot. 61 Occom spent much of his time and money over the last twenty years of his life working to support the Brotherton movement and the people who had come to call themselves the Brotherton tribe.

In many ways, Brotherton, “in Indian Eeyawquitoowaconnuck,” seems to have been the culmination of Occom’s work with English language literacy and Indian politics. 62 As a town and as a tribe, Brotherton represented a place of hope for the various Algonquian peoples who gathered together there. Brotherton was a community of, by, and for Indian peoples who sought to balance traditional lifeways with Christian teachings, and Occom’s style of Indian pedagogy provided them with a powerful example of how to do so.

The petitions written by Occom and others at Brotherton show Occom’s continued interest in Indian peoples’ “Natural Priviledges.” In a petition from the Brotherton Tribe to the United States Congress, Occom and the others called up images of their ancestors who “lived upon the Spontaneous Produc’t’ of this Country,” and lamented that these ancestors “knew not the Value of Lands,” and that they “Sold [to the ancestors of the U.S. citizens] Lands for little or nothing.” 63 The Brotherton peoples found themselves “Stript of all our Natural Priviledges” and asked that “this once” the U.S. Congress help them by providing a mills, tools, and “a little Liberary, for we would have our Children have some Learning.” 64 In this petition, the Brotherton peoples embraced the settler’s rhetoric of land “Value,”
demonstrating their literacy in English ideologies while simultaneously pointing out their ancestors’ lack of this same literacy. Occom and his Brotherton allies continued the tradition of arguing for “Natural Privileges” and seeking out education as a means to bridge cultural divides.

For the Brotherton peoples, Occom was a major key to obtaining the kind of “Learning” they desired. In a November 1787 petition addressed “To all Benevolent Gentlemen, to who these following Lines may make their appearance,” the Brotherton and Stockbridge tribes declared their desire to have their “Dear Brother, the Rev’d Samson Occom… Settle amongst us, and be our Minister.” The tribes asked that “the Friends of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Would take notice of us, and help us in encouraging our Dear Minister, in Communicating Such things that may support him and his Family.” The Brotherton and Stockbridge peoples, using skills that they had gained from Occom and other likeminded teachers, declared their desire to provide materially for Occom as he had provided politically and educationally for so many of them. Despite the fact that Occom was long accustomed to living an economically impoverished life, the tribe wished to provide the sixty-three year old Occom with the best possible accommodations and payments in exchange for his work as a preacher and a teacher.

Until his final days, Occom fought for the sovereignty of the Brotherton peoples. In a 1791 petition to the New York State Assembly, Occom wrote, “Flods of Troubles are Overwhelming us [the Brotherton peoples] like Boistrous Seas in a ^great^ Storm.” Like their various tribal ancestors before them, the Brotherton peoples were struggling to hold on to the communities’ lands. Based on the language of the 1789 “Act for the Sale and Disposition of Lands” passed by the General Assembly of New York, some members of the
Brotherton tribe began to lease their lands to new settlers. Love asserted “[h]ad it not been for the mercifully slow progress of white immigration, the greater part of the tract would have been leased out.” Occom seems to have seen the danger in the land leases, perhaps seeing similarities between the problems at Brotherton and the earlier problems the Mohegans experienced in the Mason land case. In his petition, Occom complained that the people leasing out their lands, led by Elijah Wampy, “regard not our proper Committee of our ^the^ Town and our Committee were the oldest Settlers, ^and oldest People^.” Wampy and his “party” ignored both the town Committee and the elders of the community, showing disregard for both contemporary political power and more traditional Indian seats of power. For Occom, the sale of Brotherton lands to non-Indians “has made a Number of your [New York] People, and a number of Indians perfectly Distracted.” Occom wanted “that these People, may Come to their right Sense and therefore, we request, that no Liberty [to sell lands] may be given, for many Years—that our People may go to work as they out to do.”

The influx of settlers into Brotherton disrupted Occom’s plans and interfered with his goal of establishing the Brotherton community as a sovereign space. For Brotherton to work in the way that Occom, Johnson, and the Fowler brothers had first envisioned, the community needed to remain an Indian community, at least until the time that Indian people had “Come to their right Sense” and learned, with Occom’s help, how to effectively interact with Anglo-American cultural and political bodies.

Oc mocking actions at Brotherton reveal his awareness of his own engagement with multiple types of literacy and his refusal to privilege English language literacy and English views of land tenure over Indian literacies and ideas about sovereignty. Some time in the 1780s or 1790s, Occom sent to his sister, Lucy Occom Tantaquidgeon, a box “fashioned
from the bark of an elm tree and entwined with elaborately carved vines, leaves, and dotted lines.”\(^{72}\) These carvings were in the patterns of “the Trail of Life and Path of the Sun,” patterns that bore deep cultural significance for the Mohegan people as a migration narrative.\(^{73}\) Occom, protestant preacher, English-language and English-literacy teacher, and co-founder of the Brotherton movement, used this box to reassert his connectedness to his cultural roots, even as he attempted to move his people into a physical and ideological space where their English language literacy would, he hoped, open up opportunities that would not have been available to other Indians. While Occom’s pedagogy demonstrates his recognition that English language literacy could prove a powerful political tool for Indian peoples, creating a box with traditional Mohegan markings reflects his attempts to retain fluency in Mohegan forms of literacy. Occom does not seem to have been interested in adopting English literacy to the exclusion of other forms of literacy, and does not seem to have been interested in using alphabetic writing as his only means of non-verbal communication.\(^{74}\) Looking at Occom’s alphabetic writings in conjunction with his box-record reveals that Occom did not wish Brotherton to be a community where Indian peoples erased their past lifeways and replaced them with Anglo-American culture. Instead, Occom saw Brotherton as a place where cultures and literacies could coexist and be adapted to help foster a viable political future for the Brotherton tribe.

Although the site of Brotherton was abandoned some forty years after Occom’s death and some might say his experiment thus failed, the Brotherton community has survived the interceding centuries and continues to thrive in what is now called Wisconsin. In an 1832 treaty, the Brotherton tribe was granted a township that “extended four miles north and south on Winnebago Lake and eight miles east and west.”\(^{75}\) The Brotherton movement focused on
bringing together Christian Indians from several Algonquian tribal groups in order to create a space where the people could exist as a culture that used Christian teachings to support and maintain traditional Indian lifeways. While the original site of the movement, the town founded in Oneida territory in New York, fell into the hands of encroaching settlers, the people themselves moved elsewhere and continued to negotiate their sovereign status within U.S. borders.

Occom’s work with his Mohegan relatives and with the Brotherton tribe provides us with some of the earliest Indian-authored examples of tribes employing English language literacy to argue for and defend their sovereignty. As a member of a communal society and a man with a strong commitment to helping others, Occom put the skills he gained at Wheelock’s school to use for a number of people. He made himself a public figure, and leveraged his status in order to win both metaphorical and literal ground in the fight for Indian lands and sovereignty. From this important public example, we turn next to the somewhat less public, but no less dedicated, arguments found in the poetry and prose of Ojibwe author Jane Johnston Schoolcraft.
Several hundred years before the European invasion of the Americas, the Seven Fires Prophecy of the Anishinaabeg (real or original people) warned of a light skinned race who would come from the east, settle Anishinaabe lands and disrupt Anishinaabe lifeways. According to tradition, the various peoples who are now considered Anishinaabeg were once one group and lived along the eastern coast of Turtle Island (North America) along with their other Algonquian relatives. At some point in the past—some estimate around 900 CE—, the Anishinaabeg were visited by seven great spirits, or miigis beings, who helped establish the oldest doodem or clans and who pronounced a number of prophecies, including the Seven Fires Prophecy. As a result of these prophecies, the Anishinaabeg began the long migration that would produce the Anishinaabeg Three Fires Confederacy, which consisted of the Odawak or Ottawa people, the Potawatomis, and the Ojibweg (also called Ojibwa or Chippewa). The migration is said to have taken 500 years, and the westernmost Anishinaabeg reached their homelands in what is now called Minnesota around 1400 CE.

Life for the Ojibweg before the European invasion was much like life for their Algonquian relatives in the east. The Ojibweg lived in small, autonomous groups comprised of villages or “bands” that came together in times of need or celebration. The groups acted independent of each other but recognized their interdependency. Just as the various villages of the Ojibweg might come together for protection or religious rituals, so too did the Three Fires Confederacy work together to defend themselves against their common enemies, the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) and the Lakota and Dakota people of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (or...
Sioux) peoples. Behaving as Ojibweg or as members of the Three Fires Confederacy meant acting in partnership; each individual group remained autonomous, remained sovereign, over their own people and land, but they all worked together toward common goals. And as European fur traders flooded Anishinaabeg lands in the late seventeenth century and established new trade networks, the Ojibweg established themselves as powerful allies, maintaining their sovereignty as they interacted with French, British, and Canadian officials.

This chapter explores the cultural aspects of Indian sovereignty in the writings of Ojibwe/Irish poet Bamewawagezhikaquay, also called Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. Schoolcraft wrote in a variety of genres and styles and on a number of subjects, including her frequent health issues, her depression following her son’s death, and the heartache she experienced at her husband’s long absences. Within and alongside these personal writings, Schoolcraft presented implicit and explicit arguments for the value of Ojibwe culture and language—arguments that focus on cultural autonomy. Her repeated use of the phrase “ain dah nu ki yaun,” or “my land,” reveals an interest in the connection between Ojibwe peoples, Ojibwemowin (that is, the Ojibwe language), and Ojibwe lands that scholars have thus far underappreciated. And despite Schoolcraft’s assertion that she had no interest in politics, her writing was occasionally political. Her more political arguments were far less frequent, but no less important or powerful, than her cultural arguments. Ultimately, her arguments remind us of why both culture and politics play such an important role in Native sovereignty.

In a letter to her husband Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, dated November 1837, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft declared her inability to “enter into the subject of Politics,” saying that such are “the obvious duties of the other sex,” and seemed to align herself with Euro-American gender divisions. In the very same letter, however, she also announced that she
was not uninterested in politics: “Yet I feel interested in the Canadians. I hope they will succeed in their efforts for freedom, perhaps the U. S. will aid them.” While an ostentatious, public engagement with the politics of the day may have been the province of men, Schoolcraft suggested that interest in international and intranational affairs cannot and should not be relegated to one gender alone. Although she was a woman living in nineteenth-century North America, Schoolcraft had neither the inclination nor the luxury to ignore politics. Her father, John Johnston, was a prominent trader in Sault Ste. Marie, but was also a British patriot who believed that the colonies should have remained with Great Britain and who fought with the British during the War of 1812. Having experienced that War firsthand, Schoolcraft seems to have been unable wholly to deny the importance of politics in her daily life. In addition to the qualification she included in her letter to Henry, Schoolcraft’s poetry and prose reflect her interest in politics.

Schoolcraft’s writings, taken as a group, were not merely inward-looking expressions of her personal emotions but an engagement with and critique of U.S. Indian policies and the colonization of the Ojibwe peoples. Schoolcraft practiced what modern readers might recognize as code-switching: she chose to use Ojibwe words and phrases in English-language writings, and even wrote poems entirely in Ojibwemowin. She spoke and wrote in both her mother- and father-tongue, using each as appropriate but privileging neither. In so doing, she asserted the vitality and viability of the Ojibwe language and, by extension, Ojibwe cultural and political sovereignty. In contrast to her husband and her elite white acquaintances, who saw Jane first as an Indian and only rarely as an Ojibwe, Schoolcraft upheld the importance of tribal affiliation and wrote in support of her people and her heritage.
The Mark of the Noble Deer

In the introduction to his collection of Schoolcraft’s writings, Robert Dale Parker has argued that the métis world in which John Johnston and Ozhaguzcodaywayquay raised their children was less bound to the harshly delineated Indian/white binary prevalent in the U.S. at the time. While contemporary Indian writers like Cherokee Elias Boudinot or Pequot William Apess were forced to negotiate the U.S. notion that Indians did not write in English and that anyone who could write and read English must not be a real Indian, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft lived in a society where Indian culture(s) were like the Old Indian’s knife in Occom’s anecdote: dynamic entities consistently in a process of becoming rather than a static state of being. No matter how often the Old Indian or his descendents added new blades or handles to the knife it remained the same knife. English literacy, English writing, Euro-American business strategies, and new approaches to international politics were some of the new blades and handles incorporated into the knife of Ojibwe culture. In the Johnston household, Ozhaguzcodaywayquay could hear and understand English but chose to speak only Ojibwe to her children and husband (who himself could understand Ojibwe but chose to speak English). Jane and her siblings could at one moment listen to traditional stories told in Ojibwemowin and at another read Shakespeare or Pope—all without any sense of contradiction. The blades and the handles might be repaired or replaced, but the Old Indian’s knife remained his knife. The Johnston children could securely be part of an indigenous culture that was alive, that incorporated Europeans and Euro-Americans into Ojibwe clans, and that readily incorporated useful Euro-American behaviors and tools into daily life. Contrary to the assertions of nineteenth-century scholars and later Henry Rowe Schoolcraft biographers, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft was not forced to give up her understanding of herself as an Indian. Rather, her
understanding of what being Ojibwe meant was a more expansive understanding than her ancestors experienced and was immensely more fluid and vibrant a self-perception than the one that U.S. government officials would bring along with them as they invaded Ojibwe lands.

Although academic treatments of Schoolcraft have been scant, those scholars who have written about her have most frequently argued that she be considered white despite her Ojibwe ancestry. Such an argument is perhaps understandable. According to most accounts, Schoolcraft was quite adept at navigating high class Euro-American society. She is reported to have “charmed everyone with her refined manners and intelligent conversation.”8 She seems to have had a predilection for “genteel society,” cultivating “delicate manners” and wearing “the usual fashionable dress of American women complemented by black silk leggings.”9 Unlike her sister Eliza, whose dark complexion and imperfect grasp of English made her seem more like their mother, Jane only “shoed traces of her Indian ancestry in her high cheekbones, dark eyes, and broad jaw.”10 Thanks to her relatively light complexion and keen awareness of social expectations, Jane was able to fit comfortably in upper class white society.

However, as becomes quite clear in the descriptions of the preceding paragraph, an emphasis on Schoolcraft’s supposed assimilation forces scholars to focus on mere appearance and the more superficial aspects of her life, thus creating a false dichotomy of traditional versus modern that negates the possibility of change within indigenous cultures. As I argued in Chapter One, such a dichotomy was, if not entirely foreign, at least uncommon to most Native cultures. In these superficial readings, Schoolcraft becomes the kind of “sensation” that she was to the “curious intelligentsia” of New York, for whom “[h]er
genealogy made her interesting.” Those scholars who assert that Schoolcraft fully assimilated into white American culture and rejected her Indian identity fall into the trap of the traditional/modern dichotomy, ignoring the fluidity of definitions of identity in Sault Ste. Marie, Bamewawagezhikaquay’s upbringing, and her own assertions not merely of Indian identity but of Ojibwe and even Addik (Reindeer or Caribou) clan identity.

By the time of Schoolcraft’s birth, Sault Ste. Marie had been an important hub for European, Euro-American, and Ojibwe trading for at least a century. And like any town or city with an active trade economy, the Sault was home to a mingling of cultures as well as materials. During Schoolcraft’s life, her hometown came to be populated by Ojibwe, English, French-Canadian, and U.S. peoples, as well as the occasional Irish-born immigrant (such as her father, John Johnston). The dynamic mixture of cultures to be found in Sault Ste. Marie at this time has caused late twentieth century historians to label the village “a métis world” and a “middle ground,” that was a both/and world rather than an either/or one. Métis, in this context, referred to the Canadian Métis culture developing at the time while also functioning as the nonspecific French equivalent of the English term “mixed.” For the Ojibwe peoples of this region, Parker has argued that the “métis world” was not a tragic space that was caught between cultures. The indigenous peoples existed in an “evolving and mobile space in the cultural landscape”: theirs was an adaptive, dynamic culture that could change as a result of cross-cultural interactions, that could integrate aspects of other cultures, and that would remain fundamentally and fully indigenous.

Just as her poems would eventually reflect this cultural dynamism, Schoolcraft’s upbringing was such that she could embrace both Euro-American and Ojibwe culture, thus avoiding the supposed fate of the “tragic halfbreed.” The Johnston household might aptly be
called a microcosm of Sault Ste. Marie: Schoolcraft’s father, John Johnston, was an Irish immigrant, a voracious reader with one of the largest libraries west of the Appalachian range, and a relatively skillful trader who understood the Ojibwe language and married into a powerful Ojibwe lineage. Her mother, Ozhaguscodawayquay, was an influential member of Chequamegon and Sault Ste. Marie society, the daughter of the prominent war chief Waubojeeg, and herself a skillful trader and sometime-politician who understood English but spoke only Ojibwe to her children. Ozhaguscodawayquay shared Ojibwe traditions with her children, telling them stories and informing them about Ojibwe spiritual beliefs (although the children were at least nominally Christian). Meanwhile, John Johnston taught the children to read and write in English and employed local French-Canadian traders to teach them French. Combining the Roman alphabet taught them by their father with the spoken language taught them by their mother, several of the children wrote in Ojibwe as well. For Ozhaguscodawayquay and Johnston’s children, the notion of a strict binary separation between white and Indian worlds would have been alien, and quite probably laughable.

Reading Schoolcraft’s works with an eye to her engagement with Ojibwe culture and traditions reveals her understanding of her own indigenous identity and provides a foundation upon which to place her critiques of U.S. Indian policy and the colonization of the Ojibwe peoples. Her Ojibwe stories demonstrate her expectation that readers possess at least a small amount of cultural literacy and multicultural knowledge: Schoolcraft refuses explanation of the various traditions and basic cultural assumptions her stories illustrate, and she provides no glossary of such information (although Henry would later add notes to some of the stories). This is, in part, because of Schoolcraft’s recognition of her own audience. Parker has explained that some of Schoolcraft’s immediate audience were native speakers of
Ojibwemowin, and many of the others knew some Ojibwe.\textsuperscript{15} We can assume those who were native speakers were also familiar with Ojibwe culture and traditions, and it is at the least possible that most of her audience had such familiarity. However, we cannot assume that all her readers had knowledge of Ojibwe traditions: Parker has suggested that some in Schoolcraft’s literary circle spoke no Ojibwe. And though Schoolcraft was reluctant to have her writing published, contemporary descriptions often mention her poetry, indicating she was not shy about sharing her work with friends and visitors whose knowledge of Ojibwe culture could not be easily predicted.\textsuperscript{16}

Schoolcraft’s writings demonstrate the fluidity of her cultural identification. In her stories, which may be either her own retellings of Ojibwe stories or transcriptions of another storyteller’s versions, she assumed a certain degree of shared knowledge with her readers. In “The Origin of the Robin,” Schoolcraft wrote of a young man coming of age and performing a ritual fast in order to “secure through life a guardian spirit, on whom future prosperity or adversity is to depend, and who forms and establishes the character of the faster to great or ignoble deeds.”\textsuperscript{17} By the end of the story, the young man has been turned into a robin by his guardian spirit. Schoolcraft’s story offered no explanation for the transformation, and offered only minimal details of the ceremony itself. Following the story, which would eventually be printed in Henry’s two-volume \textit{Algic Researches} of 1839, Henry appended an explanation for those readers who would not have an extensive knowledge of Ojibwe culture. In this addition, Henry explained that the story illustrates “the Indian custom of fasting to procure a personal spirit” and went on to elaborate on the moral of the story.

As Henry’s notes pointed out, understanding the story requires at least a passing knowledge of the notion of a guardian or personal spirit (and the knowledge that such a spirit
differs from the Christian idea of a guardian angel). In the opening paragraph of the story Schoolcraft informed readers that the story’s subject, an old man’s only son, had “come to that age which is thought by the Chippewas to be most proper to make the long and final fast, that is to secure through life a guardian spirit.” Schoolcraft explained that the boy’s “future prosperity or adversity” would depend upon this spirit, as would his future character. This might be enough information for an uninformed reader to understand the story, but much is left out of the story’s explanation. The implication that the spirit might cause harm would be foreign to non-Ojibwe readers, especially Christians who tended to view spirits as either agents of God or the devil—strictly good or strictly evil—rather than as malleable entities capable of both good and evil. Readers would either already know or would be left wondering how much and how often a spirit interacts with a person, if such interactions are part of daily life or require ritual and sacred ceremony. With few texts dedicated to Ojibwe culture, history, and spirituality in circulation at the time, readers could only guess at the relationship between these guardian spirits and other spirits (manidoog). Perhaps as a result of her upbringing, Schoolcraft seems to have assumed that such knowledge would be common among her readers, while Henry took it upon himself to reinforce the subject-object relationship between Indians and Euro-Americans that would come to define U.S. anthropology for at least the following century.

While Schoolcraft’s stories highlighted her understanding of herself as a member of the fluid Sault Ste. Marie “métis world,” her poem “Invocation: To my Maternal Grandfather on hearing his descent from Chippewa ancestors misrepresented” powerfully asserted both Waubojeeg’s Ojibwe identity and, by extension, her own. In fact, after the subtitle, each version of the poem included in Parker’s collection focuses even more specifically on
Waubojeeg’s lineage: more than merely Chippewa, Schoolcraft identified Waubojeeg as a brave chief “of the mark of the noble deer” (1). Unlike most Euro-Americans from the United States, who would likely be satisfied to call Waubojeeg an Indian, Schoolcraft emphasized both his specific tribe and his particular clan lineage: Waubojeeg was Addik (reindeer/caribou) first and Ojibwe second. Given the long-standing animosity between the Ojibwe people of the Great Lakes and the Dakota people, Schoolcraft naturally desired to defend her grandfather’s lineage against the claim that “when a child, thou wert ta’en from the Sioux” (9). Waubojeeg, whose “name shall be held in my [Jane’s] heart’s warmest core, / And cherish’d till valour and love be no more,” was an important war chief of the Reindeer Clan, and as a descendent, Schoolcraft’s own membership in that clan and in Ojibwe culture are equally challenged when “the foes of thy [Waubojeeg’s] line, / with coward design, / Have dared with black envy to garble the truth” (5-7). With this example, we can see that Bamewawagezhikaquay identified herself with her Ojibwe relatives, and considered this identification important enough to defend against slander.

Although I have argued here that Schoolcraft’s “Invocation” is an assertion of her location within Ojibwe culture, critics might challenge this claim and suggest that her poem is merely a nostalgic idealization of the past. Indeed, Marjorie Cahn Brazer, historian and biographer of the Johnston family, has accused Schoolcraft of sharing “the enlightened white man’s patronizing pity for these demoralized people [Indians in general].” Brazer argued that Schoolcraft’s “own pride in her heritage reached back from the contemporary scene to her illustrious ancestors, of whom her mother and a handful of dignified older chieftains remained the few living examples.” In Brazer’s description, Schoolcraft was something of an opportunist, picking and choosing which aspects of her Ojibwe heritage to highlight and
which to ignore. She need not be “classed with the poor, benighted children of the forest,” for she had the luxury to focus on her noble heritage as granddaughter and great-granddaughter of important Ojibwe leaders, or on her heritage as a white woman and daughter of a relatively successful trader.

Although Brazer’s argument strikes me as overly critical, her point that Schoolcraft might be “classed” differently from other Indians deserves attention. Schoolcraft was, indeed, raised as part of a different class than many Ojibweg in the Sault. John Johnston was part of an upper class Scots-Irish family from Belfast, Ireland, and had established himself as a wealthy and successful fur trader in Sault Ste. Marie. John ensured that his daughter was raised as any upper class European would be raised, including sending her to Ireland for a year (though Jane’s depression brought her trip to an early end). Similar to John, Ozhaguscodaywayquay was born into a prominent Ojibwe family. She inherited her father’s social standing and was an important figure in the Sault. This merging of prominent families was a common practice in Sault Ste. Marie and helped both partners build more solid social relationships. The result, like in Jane’s case, was children who had familial ties to the upper class in both European and Ojibwe society.

Such a class standing occasionally revealed itself in Schoolcraft’s writings. In both “On the Doric Rock, Lake Superior” and “The Contrast,” Schoolcraft wrote of “the simple Indian,” a fairly clear description of lower class Indians and perhaps especially of lower class Indians of the past. Both poems describe “simple” Indians who are content to live in and take enjoyment from nature, hunters and warriors whose only concerns are the most basic necessities: shelter, food, protection from harm. Although Schoolcraft may have been, as Parker has argued, more proud of her upper class Ojibwe past than of the lower class present
of her relatives, she remained both culturally and politically engaged as an Ojibwe in her moment. From a modern vantage point readers might lament Schoolcraft’s class-based biases. Some may want her to speak for all Ojibweg, not just an elite subset. But then, as now, life was not so simple, and Schoolcraft could recognize herself as part of the same group as the “simple Indian” while also holding herself in some ways above them. Rather than negating Schoolcraft’s racial identity, her class identity complicates our understanding of both Jane herself and of Indian peoples of the past, reminding us that the category Indian contains a wide diversity of individuals.

Although it is necessary to recognize Schoolcraft’s complex relationship to her Ojibwe relatives, to argue that Schoolcraft idealizes her heritage through her emphasis on Waubojeeg’s great deeds and status as a member of the Addik clan is to deny Waubojeeg the honor and importance that he had earned himself during his lifetime and to overlook the importance of an individual’s totemic heritage for the Ojibwe people. Schoolcraft’s language is indeed dramatic and perhaps even idealistic, but it is also proper for an important figure such as Waubojeeg. As a member of the Addik clan, Waubojeeg was part of a group that served as hunters and fishers, providers for the sustenance and survival of the Ojibweg.\textsuperscript{22} According to Basil Johnston, “no occupation was more respected than that of hunting or fishing” among the Ojibweg.\textsuperscript{23} The Addik clan and the other clans that B. Johnston includes in the “sustenance” category provided the people not only with food, but also with materials necessary for the creation and maintenance of tools, clothing, and shelter. Because good leaders were those who best provided for the people, the best hunters often served as leaders as well.\textsuperscript{24} Waubojeeg was, by most accounts, a supremely skilled hunter, a brave warrior, and an influential leader of his people. Schoolcraft’s focus on Waubojeeg’s particular heritage,
combined with her desire to defend “his descent from Chippewa ancestors” against claims that he was Sioux, should be considered appropriately aligned with Ojibwe values. Schoolcraft’s poem can thus more fruitfully be read as a historical piece in honor of her grandfather rather than as an idealization of her heritage.

In addition to denying Waubojeeg’s personal honors, a reading of Schoolcraft’s poem as merely idealistic fails to recognize the place of clan identity in Ojibwe culture. The importance of clan identity to the Ojibweg cannot be overstated. Membership in a particular clan was the first marker of an Ojibwe individual’s identity: B. Johnston explains that strangers ask “‘Waenaesh k’dodaem?’ (What is your totem)” even before they ask “‘Waenaesh keen?’ (Who are you?).”25 People who share the same clan are considered brothers and sisters, and this familial bond is so powerful for the Ojibwe that it even transcends tribal borders, such that a member of the Cherokee wolf clan would be considered the brother or sister of an Ojibwe wolf clan member. For Schoolcraft, then, asserting her membership in the Addik clan meant not only reacting to white American tendencies to lump all Indians together, but also actively asserting her own identity to her fellow Ojibweg. Her choice to emphasize that Waubojeeg was “of the mark of the noble deer” may thus be read as a public declaration of her own Addik identity—a poetic answer to the unspoken questions “‘Waenaesh k’dodaem?’” and “‘Waenaesh keen?’”. In answering this question so directly, Schoolcraft built a platform from which she could assert Ojibwe sovereignty. She firmly established herself as an Ojibwe of the Addik clan, arguing for the strength and political value of Ojibwe culture in the métis world of Sault Ste. Marie
Through the use of Ojibwemowin and Ojibwe traditions, Schoolcraft’s writings present a strong argument for Ojibwe cultural sovereignty. Schoolcraft employed her phonetic depiction of Ojibwemowin and her more standard English for different purposes in different texts and sometimes within the same text. Some pieces, such as the poems “To the Pine Tree” and “On leaving my children John and Jane at School, in the Atlantic states, and preparing to return to the interior,” and “A Psalm, or Supplication for mercy, and confession of Sin, addressed to the Author of Life, in the Odjibway-Algonquin tongue,” seem to have been composed in Ojibwemowin and only later translated or re-written in English. Other writings, such as the poem “Absence” and several of the traditional stories or folktales, included untranslated Ojibwe words. Some of the Ojibwe words are proper nouns with no exact English translation (or, at least, none at the time), but as many, if not more, did have English equivalents.

On the surface, Schoolcraft’s use of Ojibwemowin seems to be emotional, but that is a simplification of the complex arguments the texts present. The Ojibwemowin-only poems mentioned above are all about emotional moments in Schoolcraft’s life: “To the Pine Tree” is an emotional lyric celebrating Schoolcraft’s love of the pine trees of her homeland and her excitement to be returning home after a trip abroad; “On leaving my children…” was written after the Schoolcrafts took their children John and Jane east to the boarding schools they would attend for the year. The poem “Absence” finds Schoolcraft in a series of dark moods. The speaker of the poem, most likely Schoolcraft herself, “glides along” the Ste. Marie river feeling “Pensive and sad,” imagining she has seen “him whose worth so rare / Deserves my every thought”—her absent husband, Henry (1, 13–14).26 This section is titled
“Nindahwaymau,” which Parker translates as “my sibling of the opposite sex.” Such a title may seem odd for a poem about her husband, a poem where she implores, “Waft him, ye winds, in safety back, / Dispel my anxious tears” (17–18). However, as Parker has suggested, the use of Nindahwaymau is more metaphorical here; we might understand it to mean something like “the sibling of my mind/heart,” a reflection of the close, friendly, intellectual relationship the Schoolcrafts shared. In their letters to each other, Jane and Henry displayed playful wit and affection for one another, debating about books, teasing each other, and writing flirtatious little couples or short verses. The subtitle, then, speaks to the emotional connection these two shared.

The poem continues with three more sections that express Schoolcraft’s sadness at Henry’s absence, and the subtitles again display these emotions or emotional subjects in Ojibwemowin. The second section, “Neezhicka,” or “alone,” finds Schoolcraft “Anxious” as she “count[s] each coming day, / As time glides on too slow away” (1–2). Schoolcraft set the scene in which these poems take place, writing, “While Henry strays far from my sight, / Stranger I am to all delight, — / Save when I gaze upon my child” (7–9). The poem lingers here a moment, expressing Schoolcraft’s hopes and desires for her child, before returning to the main theme in the third section, “Neenawbame,” or “a husband’s absence.”

In the third section, Schoolcraft again lamented her husband’s absence, but also became somewhat accusatory, asking,

Say, do thy thoughts e’er turn on home?
As mine to thee incessant roam.
And when at eve, in deserts wild,
Dost thou in stillness of the night,
By the planet’s silvery light

Breathe a pray’r—to the Spirit above,

For thy wife, and thy child, my love. (7–14)²⁹

Here we see an example of the complexity of Schoolcraft’s writing. The preceding sections have focused almost exclusively on Schoolcraft’s sadness and longing, but this section adds a layer of criticism to her emotions. Some might say this is a reach, but Schoolcraft seems to be critiquing not only Henry’s absenteeism, but also the broader Euro-American gender expectations that the two inhabit. In his introduction to Schoolcraft’s writings, Parker argued that Jane and Henry had a relatively happy marriage; they had their disagreements and moments of difficulty, as any marriage does, but their letters are intimate and loving. And yet, Henry Schoolcraft was an ambitious politician, writer, and researcher, and his ambitions often took him away from home for extended periods. For Jane to question Henry’s commitment to their relationship and their children as a result is understandable. In doing so, she was, at least indirectly, critiquing the heteropatriarchy that allowed and encouraged such distancing between men and their wives and children. Henry’s absence was partly a result of his personal ambitions but was also an acceptable behavior for U.S. men of the time. At the risk of overstating my case, I would like to suggest that we can read Schoolcraft’s use of Ojibwemowin to label her husband’s absence, Neenawbame, as a linguistic and cultural critique as well.

Emotions certainly played a part in Schoolcraft’s use of Ojibwemowin, but a reading that posits emotion as the only reason is at best incomplete. Aside from the possible critiques in the poem “Absence,” Schoolcraft’s two Ojibwemowin-only poems, “To the Pine Tree” and “On leaving my children…” combined the emotions of their respective moments with a
celebration of Ojibwe cultural sovereignty and land. In particular, the repetition of the phrase “ain dah nu ki yaun” (spelled “ain dak nuk i yaun” in “To the Pine Tree”), “my native land,” asserts the importance of the relationship between the Ojibweg and their homelands. On the surface, the poem “To the Pine Tree” reveals Schoolcraft’s inspiration quite directly: the poem was based on her experiences returning from Europe in 1810. In his notes for a biography (called a “Memoir”) of Jane, Henry wrote the story she supposedly told him about this event: seeing the pine trees of the American interior, Jane told her father “‘after all I have seen abroad, you have nothing equal to the dear pine.’”  

Henry claimed that, after the two were married, he asked her “if she could not recal(l) her feelings at the moment” and Schoolcraft responded with the “Indian language” version of the poem. Regardless of the poem’s genesis, what is most important to us is Schoolcraft’s decision to write of this moment in Ojibwemowin first. To return home was, for Jane, to return to the Ojibwe world, to Ojibwe lands, language, and culture. She was returning to Sault Ste. Marie, a métis world, and the Ojibwe context of her childhood and of her home stood out as most important.

The pines in the poem act as a metonym for Schoolcraft’s Ojibwe homeland and for the Ojibwe culture. The opening lines of the first stanza repeatedly draw the reader’s (and John Johnston’s) attention to the pines:

Shing wauk! Shing wauk! Nin ge ik id,  
Waish kee wau bum ug, shing wauk  
Tuh quish in aun nau aub, ain dak nuk I yaun. (1-3) 

Translation:

The pine! the pine! I eager cried,
The pine, my father! see it stand,
As first that cherished tree I spied,
Returning to my native land. (1-4)\textsuperscript{32}

In Jane’s personal geography, the pines marked the beginning of Ojibwe territory, a land both familiar and familial. The pines represented her “native land,” her “native strand” and her “mother land” (trans., 4, 8, 10). To Jane, the pine “hails me, with a friend’s delight” (9), meeting her at home after a long absence. This greeting from her “mother land” came, aptly, in her mother-tongue. Readers might view the poem and Schoolcraft’s use of Ojibwemowin as nostalgic: the subject of the poem was her return home after a trip to Ireland. Perhaps, we might surmise, she was tired of hearing only English or only European languages, and the fact that the poem is in Ojibwemowin emphasizes this. But in addition to nostalgia, Schoolcraft seems also to have recognized the value of Ojibwe language and culture after having been separated from it for several months. Among the pine trees of her native land, Ojibwemowin was as important and useful a language as any European language. And perhaps more importantly, Ojibwemowin was connected to this land in particular. That is to say, in this poem Schoolcraft asserts: in Ojibwe land, we speak the Ojibwe language. And by speaking and writing in Ojibwemowin, Schoolcraft asserted Ojibwe sovereignty.

This combined nostalgia and cultural pride culminated in Schoolcraft’s seeming rejection of her Irish heritage, or, at the least, a refusal to place Ojibwe-ness and the Ojibwe language in a subordinate position. In the third and final stanza, Schoolcraft declared:

Ka ween ga go, kau wau bun duh e yun
Tib isht co, izz henau gooz ze no an
Shing wauk wah zhau wush co zid
Ween ait ah kwanaudj e we we
Kau ge gay wa zhau soush ko zid (14–18)

Translation:
Not all the trees of England bright,
Not Erin’s lawns of green and light
Are half so sweet to memory’s eye,
As this dear type of northern sky
Oh ’tis to me a heart-sweet scene,
The pine— the pine! that ever green. (13–18)

With the repetition of the metonymic pine creating a “heart-sweet scene” that is “sweet to memory’s eye,” one might understandably read in this final stanza more nostalgia and a further idealizing of home. If, however, the pine is a metonym for Native land, and if we assume that Ozhaguzcodaywayquay taught her children the same familial approach to land that many other Native cultures share (include modern Ojibweg such as Winona LaDuke), then we must read the pine as a metonym for Ojibwe culture, language, and people as well. In this reading, the “trees of England bright” and “Erin’s lawns of green and light” might equally stand for the peoples and cultures of England and Ireland (Erin being the Irish-English name for Ireland). The plants that represent England and Ireland were found wanting in Schoolcraft’s esteem. Neither was “half so sweet” as the pine and all it represents. As Schoolcraft emphasized at the end of each stanza, the pine is “ever green,” a conifer that stands tall even as the harsh winter snows of the American interior surround it. Similarly,
Schoolcraft saw the Ojibwe culture continuing through European invasion, remaining rooted in its past but growing tall and strong.

In her Ojibwemowin poem “To the Pine Tree,” we see Schoolcraft using her mother’s language to argue for Ojibwe sovereignty. The poem touched on a majority of the aspects of Indian sovereignty. Writing the poem in the Ojibwe language, Schoolcraft asserted the cultural sovereignty of her people. She informed her readers that Ojibwe was a language still suited to the needs of Ojibweg at the time and capable of adapting to a form often (probably erroneously) considered “Western.” Presenting the pine trees as a metonym for Ojibwe land in Ojibwemowin, Schoolcraft represented the relationship between her people and their homes. In this way, Schoolcraft’s seemingly inconsequential display of emotion can be seen as a political argument, a document that asserted Ojibwe sovereignty in all its facets.

Schoolcraft’s other Ojibwemowin-only poem, “On leaving my children John and Jane at School, in the Atlantic states, and preparing to return to the interior,” also utilized the “native land” repetition to assert a link between Ojibwe lands, language, culture, and people. This stark, powerful lyric poem contrasts the strange, far-away land of the Atlantic coast, where Jane and Henry have left their children who are entering an eastern boarding school, to the familiar home to which Schoolcraft must return, the oft-repeated “ain dah nu ki yaun.” Schoolcraft created a barren emotional landscape that highlights her own sadness, the fears that any mother must face in sending her children away from home for an extended time period, and the difference between the eastern U.S. lands and her western Ojibwe land. Because the poem is rather short, and its effect best understood when taken as a whole, I present the poem here in its entirety:

Original

Jones, Stark, Vukelich Translation
Nyau nin de nain dum  As I am thinking
May kow e yaun in  When I find you
Ain dah nuk ki yaun  My land
Waus saw a kom eg  Far in the west
Ain dah nuk ki yaun  My land

Ned au nis ainse e  My little daughter
Ne gwis is ainse e  My little son
Ishe nau gun ug wau  I leave them behind
Waus saw a kom eg  Far away land

She gwau go sha ween  [emphatically] But soon
Bas ho waud e we  It is close however
Nin zhe ka we yea  To my home I shall return
Ishe ez hau jau yaun  That is the way that I am, my being
Ain dah nuk ke yaun  My land

Ain dah nuk ke yaun  My land
Nin zhe ke we yea  To my home I shall return
Ishe ke way aun e  I begin to make my way home
Nyau ne gush kain dum (1–18)\textsuperscript{33}  Ahh but I am sad (1–18)\textsuperscript{34}

The comfort of “My land,” of “Ain dah nuk ki yaun,” stands here as consolation for Schoolcraft’s pain at leaving her children, but also as something now separate from her
children, something of which they are deprived. Given the date of the Schoolcraft children’s enrolment, sometime in 1838, and given Henry’s role as a federal Indian Agent, modern readers are likely to see a connection between this poem, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and the subsequent “removal” of various Native tribes from their traditional homelands.

Although the Sault Ste. Marie Ojibwe remained in their lands at this time, other tribes of the Old Northwest were also “removed” to Indian Territory, and it seems at least possible, and maybe even likely, that Schoolcraft would have known about these occurrences. If she did, her distress at leaving her children in the east could also reflect a fear for their future. If the forced emigration of eastern Indians to the west were to continue, the young Schoolcraft children might not have a home to return to when they finished school. Even without the possibility of allusion to the Indian Removal Act, there is a clear dichotomy between “My land”—a phrase Jane had previously translated as “my native land” (emphasis mine)—and the “far away land” in which Schoolcraft must “leave them [her children] behind.”

Schoolcraft’s use of Ojibwemowin for the composition of “On leaving my children…” presents another tall pine, a stable center or “ontological continuity” amid the chaos of her emotions and, more broadly, the chaos of U.S. encroachment upon Ojibwe lands. John Nichols and Margaret Noodin, both of whom are modern-day Anishinaabeg, Anishinaabemowin speakers, and educators, have recently argued that Schoolcraft’s poem was written in the form of a traditional Anishinaabe/Ojibwe song. The poem/song echoes the rhythm and repetition often found in traditional songs, thus placing the mix of emotions Schoolcraft was experiencing within an Ojibwe context. Schoolcraft’s use of Ojibwemowin again conjured arguments for the viability of the language and culture in her historical
setting. Ojibwe sovereignty, the pine that withstood all manner of harsh weather, could serve as a sturdy framework through which Schoolcraft could understand her contemporary world.

Schoolcraft’s identification as Ojibwe and celebration of Ojibwe culture, what I argue was her defense of Ojibwe cultural sovereignty, was powerful enough to come through to her contemporary readers, too. In the unpublished essay “Dawn of Literary Composition by Educated Natives of the Aboriginal Tribes,” Henry Rowe Schoolcraft argued that Jane’s “heart sympathized deeply with her woodland people.” Like his contemporary Euro-Americans, and befitting an Indian Agent of the Jacksonian era, Henry held a bleak view of the status and future of Indian peoples and projected this view onto Schoolcraft:

The fires of truth that flashed upon her own mind had, as it were, burned out the picturesque tapestry that adorned the temple of her native mythology, and left its frame standing as a collapsed wreck at which she gazed, often with pensive and often with melancholy thoughts. She perceived and regretted their fate, and often became pensive and sad in view of the many unsuccessful efforts to win them over to civilization and christianity. However, despite the melancholy Schoolcraft supposedly experienced when she thought of the fate of her people, Henry wrote that she “clung with a strong attachment, to the landscape and history of her mother’s side of the heritage.” Henry described the “feeling of attachment to her native country and her tribe” that Schoolcraft’s poetry revealed to readers. As demonstrated in poems such as “To the Pine Tree” and “On leaving my children…,” Schoolcraft’s “strong attachment” to her people helped her produce poetry that supported Ojibwe cultural sovereignty. Although a focus on cultural sovereignty is much more
prevalent in her writings, Schoolcraft was not nearly as shy about politics as her 1837 letter to Henry suggested.

**DISCOVER A NEW DOMINION NIGHT**

In addition to her arguments for cultural sovereignty, Schoolcraft’s writings displayed the connection between daily life in Sault Ste. Marie and tribal, national, and international politics. The most powerful examples of this come in “Lines Written at Castle Island, Lake Superior,” and the second version of “The Contrast” included in Parker’s collection. In the Castle Island poem, Schoolcraft figured her “native inland sea” as a place where “From pain and sickness would I flee” (1, 2). As in other poems, Schoolcraft used both nature in general, and Ojibwe territory in particular, as a place of comfort and of healing, a place to which she could go in order to escape the troubles of her life in Sault Ste. Marie. However, lest we assume that this is merely a personal escape from personal problems, the poem informs us that these lands can serve as a place of escape for Schoolcraft’s “people” as well:

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Ah, nature! here forever sway
Far from the haunts of men away
For here, there are no sordid fears,
No crimes, no misery, no tears
No pride of wealth; the heart to fill,
No laws to treat my people ill.
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(11-16)

The “Lone island of the saltless sea!” to which she dreamed of escaping was not merely a place where one could escape the pains and disease of everyday life; it was also a place
where the people could escape laws that treated them ill (5). Written after Henry had been named the first Indian Agent at Sault Ste. Marie and Mackinac, the poem seems to imply the colonial imposition of U.S. sovereignty, and thus the U.S. legal system, upon Ojibwe territory. Indeed, as Parker has pointed out, Henry’s work compiling *Algic Researches* took place at the same time that Henry took a leading role in negotiating several treaties that stripped multiple Indian groups of their lands. While the crimes, misery, and “pride of wealth” that Schoolcraft seeks to escape would were all problems even before U.S. encroachment upon the Ojibweg, one finds it difficult to read this poem from a twenty-first century vantage point without reading U.S. colonization into the “laws to treat my people ill.”

Unlike the Castle Island poem, which seeks to escape U.S. colonization, the latter version of “The Contrast” seems rather dejectedly to declare the end of Ojibwe sovereignty over the Great Lakes region. After a stanza describing the relative simplicity of her childhood, Schoolcraft presented the following stanzas, describing the fear and danger developing in Ojibwe lands, and the potentially troublesome ingress of U.S. culture and government into Ojibwe lands:

> But ah! how changed is every scene,
> Our little hamlet, and the green,
> The long rich green, where warriors played,
> And often, breezy elm-wood shade.
> How changed, since full of strife and fear,
> The world hath sent its votaries here.
> The tree cut down—the cot removed,
The cot the simple Indian loved,
The busy strife of young and old
To gain one sordid bit of gold
By trade’s o’ver done plethoric moil,
And lawsuits, meetings, courts and toil.

Adieu, to days of homebred ease,
When many a rural care could please,
We trim our sail anew, to steer
By shoals we never knew were here,
And with the star flag, raised on high
Discover a new dominion nigh,
And half in joy, half in fear,
Welcome the proud Republic here. (35–54)\textsuperscript{42}

Moving past Schoolcraft’s problematic description of the “simple Indian,” a trope I addressed in the first half of this chapter, we can see an Ojibwe woman expressing the thoughts of her people by offering her ambivalent welcome to the “proud Republic.” The “star flag, raised on high” brings with it “shoals we [the Ojibwe peoples] never knew were here” as the “new dominion” draws nigh. Whereas a fully assimilated Christian Indian might see the ingress of U.S. society as benevolent, Schoolcraft has painted a rather ominous scene here. The Ojibwe lands became “full of strife and fear” as the trees were destroyed, Indian possessions “removed,” and the Indians’ pastoral repose overtaken by greed, “lawsuits, meetings, courts and toil.” If “the tree” that has been cut down is another metonym for the
Ojibwe nation, as trees have been in other of Schoolcraft’s poems, an even greater destruction has taken place here: the wholesale destruction of Ojibwe sovereignty. The pastoral recounting of the Indians playing on the “long rich green” aligned with then-contemporary images of indigenous Americans as “natural man.” While this may be a problematic description of Indian history, Schoolcraft’s use of fairly common imagery also heightened the disturbing results of U.S. invasion of Ojibwe lands. Readers predisposed to viewing Indians as simple people might be more easily persuaded by these images than by a more realistic description of Indians capable of interaction with contemporary white society who simply wished to remain independent of U.S. dominion.

Showing her to be more than simply a native informant to her famous husband, Schoolcraft’s writings reveal an Ojibwe woman concerned for her people and attempting to negotiate the dramatic changes brought about by the “new dominion” of the “star flag” and the nation for which it stands. Schoolcraft was a member of a dynamic culture that actively engaged with and adapted to the influx of Europeans to the Great Lakes region. Rather than approaching her as an ethnographic curiosity, or asserting that she is due attention because she was married to one of the founders of American anthropology, I have argued that Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s writings merit attention as the product of one Ojibwe woman’s experiences with U.S. imperialism. As Parker has argued, there were certainly a number of indigenous peoples placed in positions comparable to Schoolcraft’s, and many of them may have produced equally compelling literary works that have been lost to time. In order to understand how Indian peoples responded to U.S. legal and cultural domination, we must look not only to the most vociferous Indians whose works were actively published, but also to those who critiqued, challenged, and rebelled against U.S. culture in less boisterous but no
less vehement ways. As one of the first Indian poets, Schoolcraft is historically significant; but as a powerful proponent of Ojibwe culture and a persuasive critic of U.S. hegemony, she deserves the kind of sustained critical attention that Parker has called for and that has, for the most part, been sorely lacking. Although her work circulated among a much smaller audience than Occom’s or than Cherokee journalist Elias Boudinot, the subject of the next chapter, Schoolcraft’s writings are no less important as examples of arguments for Native sovereignty.
From their earliest encounters with Europeans, the people known as GWV (Tsalagi) or Cherokees have sought to maintain their sovereignty in the most effective manner available to them.¹ To early European settlers first entering Appalachia, the Cherokees must have seemed to live in a state of anarchy. The Cherokees had little by way of codified law and seemed, in the eyes of those accustomed to monarchy, to have no real leadership. As colonial militia captain Raymond Demere observed in 1757, the Cherokees had no Law nor Subjection amongst them, they can’t be compelled to do any Thing nor oblige them to embrace any Party except they please. The very lowest of them thinks himself as great and as high as any of the Rest . . . . what is called great and leading Men amongst them, are commonly old and middle-aged People, who know how to give a Talk in Favour of whom they have a fancy for, and that same may influence the Minds of the young Fellows for a Time, but every one is his own Master.² Linked to force and subjection, English conceptions of law had no place in Cherokee culture. Like many other peoples indigenous to the Americas, the Cherokees lived in an egalitarian society that emphasized reciprocal responsibility rather than unilateral obligation in social behavior. Coercion, force, and blind obedience were foreign concepts for the Cherokees, as for many Native peoples. Leaders were instead expected to be intelligent, eloquent, and effective but were entirely dependant upon the will of the people for their power.

Although the different regions and villages of Cherokee territory shared a language and culture, there was no central government. Until the so-called “Ascendency of Chota” in
the 1750s, Cherokees’ lives were centered in the village and the clan. Each village was autonomous, sovereign over its specific lands and people. But some conceived that dealing with the British settlers required leaders the British would give credence to. So, to improve international dealings between the English colonies and the various Cherokee villages and regions, Old Hop and the other leaders of Chota asserted their dominance in Cherokee politics and began to serve as *de facto* leaders of all the Cherokees. Old Hop and his allies Attakullakulla (Little Carpenter) and Oconostota built up the power and recognition of Chota and created a central leadership for the Cherokee villages, regions, and clans. This movement to consolidated political life was an important precursor to the nation-building that would consume much of early nineteenth-century Cherokee politics.³

This chapter looks at the writings of controversial Cherokee journalist Elias Boudinot, arguing that in his efforts at nation-building Boudinot dedicated himself to the cause of Cherokee sovereignty. Focusing on Boudinot might seem a strange choice to those familiar with his work and with the history of criticism of his work. Many critics have figured Elias Boudinot as an extremely assimilated Indian—perhaps the *quintessential* assimilated Indian—because of his education, his place in the burgeoning Cherokee landed aristocracy, his persistence in describing the Cherokee people as an increasingly “civilized” tribe, and his ultimate support of the Cherokee Removal. His actions as a member of the Treaty Party ultimately earned him the disdain of his people, and because he was instrumental in negotiating the sale of the Cherokees’ lands as part of the removal treaty, Boudinot was eventually executed according to Cherokee law. Critics often figure Boudinot’s membership in the Treaty Party and his active support of removal as the result of his assimilation into
American society; he was so acculturated, many have argued, that he could no longer recognize the inextricability of Cherokee culture, sovereignty, and the Cherokee land base.

To accept the story of Elias Boudinot the traitor, however, is to accept an incomplete and insufficient representation of a complex man, living in a complex time, trying to do what he conceived to be best for his people. The standard narrative forces Boudinot into the oversimplified dichotomy that U.S. popular culture has often employed in order to understand American Indian leaders: the brave, dead hero who stood up for his culture despite overwhelming opposition, and the cowardly (often colonially educated) puppet who espoused assimilation and thus betrayed his culture. The romantic image of the rebellious leader sacrificing himself in battle against the invading whites appeals to an imperialist mindset while reminding U.S. citizens that such powerful, “wild” Indians are safely interred in the ground and live only in heroic stories. By claiming that adversaries were cunning and powerful, armies could construct images of themselves as better and more powerful, feeding an imperialist agenda and essentializing war as a feature of American nationhood.

Meanwhile, the far-less-ideal image of the groveling leader pushing his people toward “civilization” reassures U.S. citizens that those Indians who do persist within the country’s boundaries are somehow inauthentic Indians, divested of their “wild” ways and thus not threatening to settler culture. These images both depend upon and reassert an understanding of Indian cultures as static entities existing outside of time, an understanding that Boudinot himself challenged through his writings, especially his editorials for the Cherokee Phoenix.

Boudinot’s body of work reveals a Cherokee patriot involved in the constantly changing battle over the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. The ideas that have most earned Boudinot the epithet of assimilated Indian—his focus on how “civilized” the
Cherokee were and his vehement support of Removal in particular—were practical, political responses to the U.S. government and were attempts to protect the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot considered himself a Cherokee patriot both during and after his editorship of the *Phoenix*, and his dedication to protecting the Nation never wavered. What did change was his understanding of what would be the best route for the Nation with regard to the likely actions of the U.S. Government.

Placing Elias Boudinot’s writings into the context of Cherokee national debates and within the contemporary conversations of the United States will afford us a more complete understanding of some of his controversial works. As Maureen Konkle has shown, Boudinot, Major and John Ridge, and John Ross (as well as other Cherokee Council members whose names were not recorded) were actively engaged in the process of nation-building. Codifying Cherokee laws, writing a Cherokee National Constitution, and continually defining and redefining Cherokee government, they and their fellow Cherokees sought to consolidate the various Cherokee villages into one Nation that would stand on equal footing with the Union just as they had in their treaties with Britain and the colonies. Boudinot’s writings perform a number of rhetorical maneuvers that, given the conversations taking place in the U.S., were necessary in order to (re)establish and maintain the Cherokee peoples’ sovereignty. In particular, Boudinot attempted to enter into the federal-state power debate that grew more and more heated with each passing year. Entering into this conversation, Boudinot sought primarily to establish the Cherokee Nation as a foreign nation and, failing that, to establish the Cherokees as a state within the Union, arguing for the same state sovereignty sought by the Southern states.
Boudinot presented his nation-building work as an effort to “raise” the Cherokee Nation “to an equal standing with other Nations of the Earth.” His descriptions of Cherokee people employed the language of savagery and civilization in order to establish the Cherokees as a kind of nation familiar to his Euro-American readers. The U.S. government spent a number of years trying to “civilize” neighboring Indian tribes in order to integrate them into the Union. Boudinot tried to use the language of this “civilizing” policy to convince the U.S. that the Cherokees deserved recognition as a civilized, Christianized, but still foreign, nation. His various responses to removal were fueled by social and political circumstances and were always focused on protecting the Cherokees’ sovereignty. Boudinot’s early assertions that the money required to remove the Cherokee people could “be put to a better use” conversed with notions of Christian charity and the U.S. government’s expressed policy of education. Boudinot argued that the changes taking place in the Cherokee Nation proved that the people were capable of civilizing, learning, and thus capable of maintaining self-rule. The people demonstrated that they could survive in proximity to whites, and even maintain a level of conceived as appropriate by their neighbors, and thus did not need to abandon their homelands. After years of battling against removal, however, Boudinot realized that the U.S. government’s actions differed from its expressed ideals, and that despite the Supreme Court ruling of *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the government would not protect Indian sovereignty. As Boudinot witnessed the disjunction between the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of the U.S. government, he sought to protect the Cherokee Nation by advocating the abandonment of their ancestral homelands. In order to preserve the Cherokees’ sovereignty over themselves, their culture and government, Boudinot argued that his people would have to leave their homeland and adopt a notion of
their peoplehood and sovereignty closer to the Euro-American understanding, though still fundamentally Indian.

**RAISING HER TO AN EQUAL STANDING WITH OTHER NATIONS OF THE EARTH:**

**CREATING A CIVILIZED CHEROKEE NATION**

Boudinot’s descriptions of his own people have often elicited negative responses from his readers. On the surface, Boudinot’s language suggests that he had been fully inculcated by his Euro-American education. He wrote about traditionalist Cherokees as uneducated savages, simple people whose dependence upon antiquated lifeways all but guaranteed their eventual extinction. While Boudinot seemingly denigrated his Cherokee ancestors, he also asserted that his fellow tribespeople had abandoned their old ways and adopted Euro-American civilization. Theda Perdue and others have demonstrated that Boudinot’s descriptions, including his assertions that the Cherokees had all become farmers and were overwhelmingly Christian, represented only a small portion of the nation’s population. As a result of this misrepresentation, critics have asserted that Boudinot had, at best, a poorly informed understanding of his people, and, at worst, an intense prejudice toward traditionalist Indians. However, a third possibility exists that has been thus far unexplored: that Boudinot was perfectly aware of the diversity of early nineteenth century Cherokee lifestyles but chose to employ a rhetoric of civilization and savagery in order to create an idea of a Cherokee Nation legible to his own people and to the government of the United States. Boudinot recognized his difference from many of his tribespeople in “An Address to the Whites,” where he stated, “I have had greater advantages than most of my race; and I now stand before you delegated by my native country to seek her interest, to labour for her respectability, and
by my public efforts to assist in raising her to an equal standing with other nations of the
earth.”⁹ In conjunction with other Cherokees of “greater advantage,” including the Ridges,
John Ross, and several members of the Cherokee Council, the editor of the Cherokee
Nation’s official newspaper engaged in the process of nation-building, of declaring and
protecting the Cherokees’ sovereignty. Thus, although the extent of Boudinot’s awareness of
his people and his opinion of them is ultimately unknowable, assuming that his problematic
language was in fact strategically crafted is not unwarranted. Indeed, working from such an
assumption will provide a much richer, more complicated evaluation of Boudinot’s
intellectual and cultural work.

Understanding why Boudinot may have strategically evoked the civilized/savage
dichotomy requires examining then contemporary federal Indian policy. The expressed goal
of the first several Presidents of the United States had been to educate and to civilize the
neighboring Indian tribes. Aside from the somewhat ambivalent Thomas Jefferson, who
suggested but never enacted a kind of removal policy, the six Presidents before Andrew
Jackson sought not to eject Indian peoples altogether but to “civilize” them so that they
would easily integrate with their Euro-American neighbors.¹⁰ The “Indian Problem” in theory
would be solved with the conversion of all the Indian people living in or near the States.
Those Indians who, like Boudinot, had frequently interacted with or been educated by white
Americans would no doubt have seen that to deal with the U.S. government would mean to
deal with racism and the belief in the inferiority of indigenous culture.

Thus, the first step in creating a nation that might be recognized as equal to the U.S.
and the European nations would be to establish the Cherokees as civilized peoples. In an
attempt to achieve this, Elias Boudinot portrayed his ancestors as backward savages and his
contemporary kinsfolk as civilized in order to argue that the Cherokee people were a growing, changing people capable of engaging with Euro-American culture and politics. Boudinot’s descriptions of good Christian Cherokees leading lives identical to white farmers worked to counter images of ahistorical Indians prevalent even in the early nineteenth century. Boudinot asserted another possibility, one in keeping with Occom’s story of the Old Indian’s knife. Boudinot argued that Indians could identify as Indian—even as people of an individual tribe, such as Cherokee—and yet behave in ways considered to be European. In Boudinot’s commentaries, he and his relatives add new blades and handles, including Euro-American dress, language, and life style, to their Cherokee knife. They maintained their Cherokee identity, continued to speak their ancestral language, and even become literate in Cherokee. The proliferation of the Cherokee syllabary, partly made possible by the bilingual Cherokee Phoenix, proved to be another new blade for the Cherokees’ knife. As with the other peoples we have explored, the changing of the Cherokee people was not a cultural death sentence but an evolution.

Boudinot’s assertions of Cherokee civilization challenged the expressed goals of U.S. Indian policy even as they employed its language and engaged its underlying assumptions. For the U.S. government, the goal of the civilization project was assimilation: civilized Indians would, in this theory, cease to see themselves as culturally distinct from settlers, and thus cease to be politically distinct. Civilized Indians would become ethnic citizens of the United States, no different from German- or Dutch-descended U.S. citizens. Boudinot’s goal, however, was to use cultural similarity as a means to validate social conformity while arguing for political distinction. Boudinot seems to have disagreed with the belief that “civilization” and assimilation were necessarily linked. Instead, Boudinot argued that his
readers should look upon Cherokee civilization as they might look at French, Italian, German, or any other European civilization—familiar because of its similarity (especially as regards Christianity) but still sovereign in its own right. In Boudinot’s argument, the Cherokees adopted Euro-American civilization not to integrate into U.S. society but to establish a Cherokee Nation and thus retain the political sovereignty they had always possessed.

Reading Boudinot’s writings alongside twentieth century theories of nation-building such as those put forward by Anthony Smith can help us discern the myriad ways Boudinot participated in the process of establishing a Cherokee Nation. In explaining how he understands the idea of a nation, Smith lists five features that make up a national identity:

1. An historic territory, or homeland.
2. Common myths and historical memories.
3. A common, mass public culture.
4. Common legal rights and duties for all members.
5. A common economy with territorial mobility for members.\(^{13}\)

Along with the other leaders and Council members of the Cherokees, Boudinot worked to establish or illuminate each of these features for the Cherokee people. The Cherokee Phoenix was established as an outlet for many of these aspects of national identity: Boudinot’s editorials reported the myths and histories of the Cherokees, investigated both Cherokee laws and the actions of the U.S. government, described Cherokee culture, and argued about the bounds of Cherokee lands. And because the newspaper was bilingual, the editorials did all of these things in the Cherokee language as well. Indeed, in his October, 1827 prospectus for the Phoenix, sent out to “the friends of Indians” of whom Boudinot requested subscriptions,
he explained that the newspaper would be published in the Cherokee syllabary for “those Cherokees who are unacquainted with the English language.” Boudinot informed his future subscribers that “the great object of the Phoenix will be the benefit of the Cherokees,” and thus it would include:

1. The laws and public documents of the Nation
2. Account of the manners and customs of the Cherokees, and their progress in Education, Religion and the arts of civilized life; with such notices of other Indian tribes as our limited means of information will allow.
3. The principal interesting news of the day.
4. Miscellaneous articles, calculated to promote Literature, Civilization, and Religion among the Cherokees.

Boudinot’s prospectus captured the essence of Smith’s analysis of nation-building. Through the Cherokees’ newspaper, Boudinot intended to describe the Cherokees’ historic territory, relate their common myths, historical memories, and culture, delineate the rights and duties of the citizens, and promote the National economy. Boudinot used the Cherokee Phoenix not only as a means for describing Cherokee culture but also as a means of establishing Cherokee culture, of arguing for a particular, consolidated version of Cherokee culture that would strengthen the notion of a Cherokee Nation.

In this light, Boudinot’s descriptions of his fellow Cherokees were not so much inaccurate as selective and strategic. In order to gain the recognition and respect of the United States—a crucial aspect of sovereignty and nationhood according to Scott Richard Lyons—Boudinot presented and called for a Cherokee Nation with a European flavor. Drawing on Ernest Gellner’s work in Nations and Nationalism, Lyons has argued that in
order for a nation to be a nation its citizens must be able to recognize each other as citizens. Lyons has stated that nations require both the shared culture, history, and other traits Smith outlined, and the recognition Gellner proposed. Furthermore, Lyons has claimed that non-citizens, or citizens of other nations, must recognize the first nation. In other words, Cherokees needed to recognize each other as Cherokees in order to feel the compatriotism that defines a nation. But they also needed non-Cherokees, perhaps U.S. citizens, to recognize them as Cherokees and to recognize that differences, however minute, existed between the two nations and their respective citizens. Boudinot’s editorials in the Phoenix worked toward both goals: the prospectus above showed plans for the newspaper to print materials that would encourage a feeling of camaraderie among Cherokees and an understanding of the Cherokees as similar-yet-different among white subscribers. When Boudinot wrote of the “progress in Education, Religion and the arts of civilized life” of the Cherokees, he sought to spark in his non-Cherokee readers a recognition that the Cherokees behaved as a separate nation on par with any European nation.

In addition to employing the civilized/savage dichotomy in order to argue that the Cherokees should be recognized as a civilized nation equal to European nations, Boudinot also attempted to enter in the growing Federal/State power debates. The so-called Cherokee Court Cases—Supreme Court cases Cherokee Nation v Georgia (1831) and Worcester v Georgia (1832)—were an integral part of the battle between States’ Rights advocates and Federalists. The key question addressed by each of these cases was the question of whether Georgia had the power to extend its State sovereignty over the Cherokee peoples, to enact the “dominion by conquest” ideology espoused by a number of prominent U.S. figures. Although Boudinot was unable to argue directly with the Supreme Court Justices over these rulings, he
did use his newspaper and speaking tours as platforms for his own argument about Cherokee sovereignty.

Boudinot seems to have understood that, in many ways, the fate of the Cherokee Nation stood in the midst of the Federal/State debates. On January 8, 1831, in response to the Georgia execution of George Tassel, whose case was the basis for the suit that would become *Cherokee Nation v Georgia*, Boudinot wrote:

> The conduct of the Georgia Legislature is indeed surprising—one day they discountenance the proceedings of the nullifiers of South Carolina—at another, they even out-do the people of South Carolina, and authorize their Governor to hoist the flag of rebellion against the United States! If such proceedings are sanctioned by the majority of the people of the U. States, the Union is but a tottering fabric, which will soon fall and crumble into atoms.18

The Cherokees who fought for the establishment of a Cherokee Nation had focused their arguments toward the federal government, the supposed supreme power of the Union. But as the State sovereignty argument gained power, the Cherokees borrowed from that argument, asserting that the Cherokee Nation should be recognized at least at the same level as the State of Georgia and afforded the same sovereign power. Boudinot’s attempts to enter the Federal/State sovereignty debate worked in tandem with his push for recognition, building a two-tiered argument for Cherokee sovereignty. Boudinot’s arguments for recognition encouraged his U.S. readers to view the Cherokees as a foreign Nation, as a sovereign people capable of establishing their own, separate government, and ruling themselves. The Federal/State arguments served as a sort of contingency plan for the Cherokees. If they could establish themselves as a foreign Nation, then they might establish themselves as a domestic
Cherokee State. There was always a chance that the U.S. would refuse to recognize the Cherokees as a Nation, but if Boudinot and his compatriots could establish the Cherokees as a modern, “civilized” people, they might be able to join the Union as a Cherokee State. Their sovereignty would have been lesser in this form than as the Cherokee Nation, but State sovereignty would have been a substantial success in protecting Cherokee political power. Were standing equal with the U.S. an unachievable goal, Boudinot’s contingency argument might still result in a standing equal with any individual state.

CANNOT THIS SUM BE PUT TO A BETTER USE?

CHEROKEE CHALLENGES TO REMOVAL

If Boudinot accepted that the foreign Cherokee Nation would likely be demoted to domestic Cherokee State, he continued to assert that the Cherokee people maintained all the constituent features of sovereignty and nationhood that they had historically possessed. Boudinot worked toward maintaining the Cherokees’ sovereignty over both their people and their homeland. Well before he became infamous as a signatory of the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot was a staunch defender of the Cherokee Nation and a vocal opponent of removal. Employing the same rhetoric of civilization that he had used to argue for the validity of a Cherokee Nation, Boudinot argued that the separation of the Cherokees from their white neighbors would be unnecessary: the U.S. government’s civilizing project, Boudinot declared in a variety of venues, had proved successful in spite of the negative influences of neighboring Georgians. Being civilized, Christianized peoples, the Cherokees would suffer greatly if they were forced into the territory of the “wild” Indians to the West.19
Contrary to popular mythologizing, the Removal of the “Five Civilized Tribes” and the resultant Trail of Tears were not spontaneous movements, nor were they entirely surprising to the people effected. Europeans and Euro-Americans had been encroaching upon tribal territories and forcing peoples to migrate from the moment of their arrival to the Americas. Once the colonists rebelled against the Crown and established their “more perfect Union,” the question of whether or not to seize Indian lands and force assimilation or migration became a question of governmental policy. Although many of the early U.S. administrations officially sought to “civilize” Indians rather than to violently force them from their lands, the notion of removal had existed in the colonies as early as 1767, and had been supported by future president Thomas Jefferson as early as 1776. In particular, Jefferson supported “dominion by right of conquest” in relation to the Indians who had sided with the British during the U.S. War of Independence, a substantial group that included the Cherokees. His support of removal would increase with the completion of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, but even as the colonists fought for their Independence from Britain, Jefferson urged the Americans to drive the Cherokees beyond the Mississippi River.

While Jefferson’s Indian policies were not as aggressive as Jackson’s would become, they were quite hostile. The threat of forced removal was a core component of Jeffersonian Indian policy, as were indirect forms of aggression. In 1803 Jefferson instructed territorial governor of Indiana William Henry Harrison to drive influential Indians into debt in order to expedite U.S. acquisition of Indian lands. Jefferson also told Harrison to threaten his neighboring tribes with forced relocation across the Mississippi River if they attacked U.S. settlers. In addition to these threats of removal, the Cherokees also had concrete examples to observe. When President Andrew Jackson initiated the Removal era by signing the Indian
Removal Act in 1830, the Cherokee Nation was the last of the “Five Civilized Tribes” to cede their territory. The Cherokees had the Choctaws’ Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek (1830), the Chickasaws’ Treaty of Pontotoc (1832), the Creek/Muscogees’ Treaty of Cusseta (1832), and the Seminoles’ Treaty of Paynes Landing (1832) from which to learn.

None of these treaties had anything positive to teach the Cherokees, anything hopeful or encouraging. Each of these nations had their own unique struggles with colonization and removal, but one quality the struggles shared was suffering for the Natives. I will focus on the experiences of the Choctaws and Chickasaws, the two earliest removals of the five, to illustrate the kind of information likely coming into Cherokee territory. The Choctaws’ Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek was an example of U.S. underhanded dealings and coercion. As with the other tribes, the majority of the Choctaws opposed removal. Most of the Choctaws present for the treaty negotiations walked away in disgust. The leaders, who felt compelled to remain, were bribed and threatened by the U.S. representatives, and ultimately signed the treaties in order to protect their people from forced assimilation. As part of the deal, the U.S. insisted the Choctaws concentrate political power in a single Choctaw leader. The government continued to dominate Choctaw politics by insisting on dealing only with the leaders who had signed the treaty, not with their newly elected replacements.

U.S. insistence on dictating Indian politics informed its dealings with the Chickasaws and Creeks as well. The Mississippi state government spent the years 1819–1829 enacting laws that eroded the Chickasaw government and eventually brought the Chickasaws under Mississippi state jurisdiction. By the time of the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832, the Chickasaws clearly faced the same options the Choctaws faced: live under local state laws or leave their ancestral lands. If the Chickasaws doubted the danger of living under Mississippi law, the
flood of U.S. spectators into Chickasaw lands following the Treaty of Pontotoc and the treaty’s renegotiation in 1834 convinced them. As part of the renegotiation, Chickasaw land in the east was divided into allotments that were given to individual Chickasaws to sell. The U.S. spectators were insistent and pressured individuals to sell their allotments, leaving many Chickasaws homeless and destitute before their forced emigration.

Elias Boudinot and the other members of the “Treaty Party” did learn from the experiences of their neighbors and fellow “Civilized Tribes.” Although the history of Treaty-enforced physical movement does not begin until 1831, some Cherokees had voluntarily removed to Indian Territory as early as 1815, and American Indian Agents had been attempting to coerce tribes to cede, sell, or exchange lands for territory west of the Mississippi for years. In his May 14, 1828, editorial for the Phoenix, entitled “Indian Emigration,” Boudinot examined a letter from Col. Thomas L. McKenney, “late special Agent to the Southern Indians,” to the Secretary of War—then the head of Indian Affairs—which estimated the expenses of removing the Chickasaws. Using this letter as a guide, Boudinot offered his own estimation of the cost of removing the Cherokees, ultimately asserting that the cost to the U.S. government would be somewhere between $1.8 and $2.3 million. He asked readers,

cannot this sum be put to a better use?—Supposing with this money, the United States begin to establish Schools in every part of this Nation? With this money let their be a college founded, where every advantage of instruction may be enjoyed. Let books, tracts, &c. be published in Cherokee and English, and distributed throughout the Nation and every possible effort made to civilize us, let us at the same time be
Boudinot acknowledged the economic consequences of Cherokee Removal, and used these consequences to bolster his redirecting of the rhetoric of civilization and savagery. Assuming that the United States still followed the policy of “civilizing” Indians, which it officially claimed to do until the end of John Quincy Adams’s administration in 1829, Boudinot continued his unrelenting push for recognition of the Cherokees as civilized peoples. If the government of the U.S. truly desired to help the Cherokees, to raise them up from their uncivilized state and educate them, Boudinot offered a number of ways by which the U.S. might better use its money.

Like his attempts to establish in the minds of his readers a Cherokee Nation, Boudinot’s arguments against Cherokee Removal depended upon invoking the “civilizing” ideals that undergirded early U.S. Indian policy. In what may have been his first response to the possibility of Cherokee Removal, an editorial published March 13, 1828, Boudinot challenged the assertion “that it is impossible to enlighten the Indians, surrounded as they are by the white population, and that they assuredly will become extinct, unless they are removed.” He then asked, perhaps sarcastically, “What proof have they [who support removal] that the system which they are now recommending, will succeed. Where have we an example in the whole history of man, of a Nation or tribe, removing in a body, from a land of civil and religious means, to a perfect wilderness, in order to be civilized.” Clearly incensed by the idea that the Cherokee people would be forced from their land, Boudinot critiqued the justification that the white population provided a negative example for Indian peoples. If civilizing really was the government’s goal, then disrupting the lives of the
Cherokee peoples and sending them into lands more suited to their ancient and ostensibly abandoned lifeways would be a step backward in the process.

Boudinot’s language in this editorial reflected and critiqued a line of argumentation common at the time—a line that Andrew Jackson would espouse in his pro-removal arguments. This line argued removal was necessary in order to protect the Indian tribes’ moral and cultural integrity. Exposed to the negative influences of Georgian frontier settlers, the Cherokees would surely lose their unique culture, assimilate, and thus disappear. To those of this mindset, removal was both the more humane and the more intellectually beneficial move: it would protect individual Cherokees from settlers while also providing a safe space for the Cherokees to preserve their otherwise-doomed culture. Proponents of removal could feel that they had done what was morally right in saving the people and in saving their cultural knowledge for future generations to “discover” and document.

This was, of course, a highly offensive argument, and Boudinot presented it as such. The argument infantilized, even dehumanized, Indian people, turning them into museum pieces in need of preservation. Worse, it forced the Cherokees out of time and into the troubling realm of authenticity. For proponents of removal, Indian identity was like Theseus’s ship rather than the Old Indian’s knife. Cherokee identity was made into a single, knowable, fixed thing, and any changes to this ship, any new sails or planks, made the Cherokee ship less authentic. The Cherokees needed to be preserved; the ship’s rotting could be slowed, in this case by removal to Indian Territory, but repair would be a kind of violation. Boudinot’s editorial, in contrast, offered a counterargument in line with the story of the Old Indian’s knife. Rather than seeking to remain in a mythical pristine condition, Boudinot and his tribespeople wanted to live in their own time, adapting to the changes of
each passing year. And like the Old Indian’s knife, they would stay themselves. In Boudinot’s argument “civilization” and Christianity were simply new blades and handles to add to the Cherokee knife. Boudinot fought for the Cherokees to remain on their homeland and to adapt in response to settler culture and politics, not to move away and be insulated from outside influence. At this point in his career, Boudinot saw Cherokee people, land, and sovereignty as inextricably linked and evolving together. For the Cherokees to be Cherokees, remaining on their traditional land base was of paramount concern.

Boudinot seems to have been well aware of his intellectual and rhetorical debt to the U.S. “civilizing” policy. A little over a year after challenging the notion that removal would facilitate civilizing, Boudinot elaborated upon his relationship with this ideal. In his June 17, 1829, editorial, Boudinot wrote:

It is to be regretted that we were not undeceived long ago, while we were hunters and in our savage state. It appears now form the communication of the Secretary of War to the Cherokee Delegation, that the illustrious Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe were only tantalizing us, when they encouraged us in the pursuit of agriculture and Government, and when they afforded us the protection of the United States, by which we have been preserved to the present time as a nation. In this editorial, Boudinot argued that among the Cherokees, the decision to “civilize” was based on political strategy: the Cherokee Nation made strides to actively change its culture in response to the promises of the U.S. government and in the (perhaps naïve) hope that the government would follow through with its claims and see reason. In Boudinot’s argument, the Cherokee Nation had hoped that the President, the Secretary of War, Congress, and the Supreme Court would respond to their own expressed ideologies and would be swayed by the
Cherokee peoples’ ability to “civilize.” The conclusion that Boudinot reached, however, was that President Jackson represented the true purposes of his “illustrious” predecessors. Boudinot lamented that the Cherokee people “were not undeceived long ago” in part because the Cherokees, in his text, had reached a state in which they could recognize the hypocrisy of the United States’ behavior.

Ultimately, Boudinot came to recognize that the purportedly beneficent “civilizing” policy that had once dominated the U.S. Indian policy conversation had been replaced by a maleficent Removal policy fueled by greed. His editorials became more vitriolic as he realized the hopelessness of his cause. In his November 12, 1831, editorial, after describing the “civilizing” of the Cherokees and the difficulties involved in the process, Boudinot wrote:

The truth is, while a portion of the [white] community have been, in the most laudable manner, engaged in using efforts to civilize and christianize the Indian, another portion of the same community have been busy in counteracting those efforts.

Cupidity and self-interest are at the bottom of all these difficulties—A desire to possess the Indian land is paramount to a desire to see him established on the soil as a civilized man.\(^{31}\)

Boudinot effectively summarized here, some might argue, the entire history of settler/Indian interactions: desire to possess Indian land. More specifically, Boudinot absolutely did summarize the history of interactions between the Cherokees and the United States. In fact, Georgia had been attempting to seize Cherokee land since well before the U.S. War of Independence. Boudinot noted that the settlers employed the language of civilization and savagery in order to justify their land lust: so long as the Indians remained savages, their territories would be seen as available for settling. If the Indians were able to civilize, or, more...
accurately, to convince settlers to view them as civilized, as human, then U.S. seizure of their lands would be undoubtedly immoral. But, Boudinot argued, the settlers’ desire for land so overwhelmed them that they became all but incapable of even recognizing the humanity of their neighbors.

This editorial was a turning point for Boudinot at which he realized that resisting removal would be futile, and that the best course of action would be to make the process as painless as possible. Boudinot urged his tribespeople to recognize that as the desire to possess overcame the desire to educate (or, perhaps more accurately, as the desire to possess became less shameful and thus no longer needed to be hidden behind supposedly benevolent agendas), peaceful migration facilitated by treaty making would be the best option for the Nation as a whole. For Boudinot, the choices were quite clear: relinquish the first fundamental feature of nationhood and one of the main aspects of Indian sovereignty—an ancestral homeland—to maintain the other features, or relinquish all pretense to sovereignty and assimilate or die. The Treaty Party thus became the “lesser of two evils,” as it were.

**OUR PEOPLE CANNOT EXIST AMIDST A WHITE POPULATION:**

**BOUDINOT’S INDIAN PRAGMATISM**

In response to the failing morality of the United States government, Boudinot made the move that has most tarnished his legacy as an activist for the Cherokee people: he took up the mantle for Removal. To many of his Cherokee contemporaries, Boudinot’s actions were treasonous. Indeed, the unsanctioned sale of Cherokee lands had been made illegal in the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation of 1827, and so Boudinot’s acts violated Cherokee law. Many of those who denigrate Boudinot—including modern scholars—have failed to see that,
however distasteful we may find his acts, Boudinot’s arguments were valid and his intentions were good. In his historical moment, Removal may have been the only peaceful way to keep the Cherokee Nation a nation, to keep the people together and to minimize the potential death toll. Whether he and his contemporaries were privy to the stories of the Creeks’ and Choctaws’ “Trails of Tears” is perhaps unknowable, but Boudinot certainly knew about anti-Indian sentiments among the U.S. population, and in these years he frequently predicted extinction as the only alternative to Removal.

Boudinot’s argument for Removal reflects a form of early nineteenth century Indian pragmatism, a philosophy focused on the most practical, most beneficial choices for his fellow Cherokees. Rather than relying on evaluation and logical critiques of the United States’ stated ideals, as he had during most of his editorship of the Phoenix, the Boudinot who argued for removal sought to “judge of things by their effects.” With the advent of the Jackson administration, and particularly with the signing of the Indian Removal Act, the beneficent ideals of early U.S. Indian Policy were revealed to be at best naïve fantasies or at worst deliberate duplicity. Before 1830, the U.S. government had attempted to take the Cherokees’ and other Indians’ land through coercion, through treaty negotiation, or through trade. But Boudinot foresaw a time in the very near future when the government would begin to take Indian lands by force. The good Christian caretakers of Boudinot’s early arguments revealed themselves as “our oppressor and our faithless Guardian.” In President Jackson’s interaction with other tribes, such as the Creeks (against whom “Old Hickory” had fought and gained the reputation that Alexis de Tocqueville claimed earned Jackson the presidency), Boudinot saw bad omens for the Cherokees.
Boudinot’s response to these bad omens was both in line with what I am here calling Indian pragmatism and with his understanding of Cherokee patriotism. Patriotism for Boudinot meant being willing to sacrifice one feature of sovereignty and nationhood for the maintenance of the others. It ultimately meant being willing to forfeit his own life (as he surely must have realized would be done with the signing of the Treaty of New Echota) for the protection of his kinsfolk. Like the Removal arguments, which I address below, Boudinot argued that his “past acts will speak for themselves” to reveal that his “motives certainly were of the most patriotic kind.”^{35} Boudinot expected his assertion of patriotic behavior would be questioned, and offered a definition of patriotism in anticipation of his detractors’ arguments:

> In one word, I may say that my patriotism consists in the *love of the country*, and the *love of the People*. These are intimately connected, yet they are not altogether inseparable. They are inseparable if the people are made the first victim, for in that case the country must go also, and there must be an end of the objects of our patriotism. But if the country is lost, or is likely to be lost to all human appearance, and the people still exist, may I not, with a patriotism true and commendable, make a *question* for the safety of the remaining object of my affection?^{36}

Boudinot harkened back to his earlier arguments against Removal by asserting that his patriotism involved “love of the country” as well as of the people. Countering what his opponents argued at the time and what later detractors, in both popular and scholarly circles, would argue, Boudinot asserted that his support of Removal did not reveal a lack of concern for traditional Cherokee lands. Although, as I have argued in Chapter One, supporters of Indian sovereignty have tended to view people, culture, and land as intimately linked, reading
Boudinot reminds us that such a view was not ubiquitous and not always conducive to the survival of the people. Boudinot put forth a logical, pragmatic argument for separating the land and people. Cherokee land would only be Cherokee land, Boudinot argued, so long as there were Cherokees to live with the land. If the Cherokees themselves ceased to exist, the land would cease to be Cherokee land in any sense but historical. If, on the other hand, the Cherokees were to move to a new land, the people and culture would continue, and the new land might become Cherokee land. Given Boudinot’s devotion to Christianity, one might imagine him comparing the potential Cherokee removal to Jewish diaspora. The people would be forced from their homeland and made to settle in new, unfamiliar lands, but they would remain a people. And unlike the Jewish people, who were most often an ethnic group subject to the laws of nation in which they settled, the Cherokees might be able to maintain their nationhood in Indian Territory. To preserve the people, the culture, and the nation, Boudinot argued, Cherokee patriots must be willing to alter their understanding of sovereignty by separating themselves from the land.

Demonstrating his Indian pragmatism, Boudinot’s writings urged Chief Ross and all the Cherokees to observe President Jackson’s behavior and to recognize that they could no longer place their hope in beneficent Indian policy. In an August 11, 1832, editorial, one of his final publications as editor of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot described what he had witnessed in Jackson’s Washington, D.C., following the Supreme Court’s *Worcester v. Georgia* ruling. In particular, Boudinot admonished the Cherokees to recognize the “fact which our eyes see fully demonstrated every day, that the President of the United States does not take the first step to defend the rights of the Cherokees under the decision of the Supreme Court.” Boudinot suggested the Cherokees delayed removal because they held out hopes the
President would do the right thing and abide by Chief Justice Marshall’s opinion. This, Boudinot argued, was folly, because not only did Jackson fail to abide by the Court’s ruling, but in his veto to an 1832 bill to recharter the Second Bank of the United States “he now officially tells us that he is not bound by that decision, and, by inference, intends to disregard it—according to the doctrine in the veto Message, he will disregard it even when he is called upon by a regular process from the Supreme Court.” Boudinot went on to wonder “What sort of hope have we then from a President who feels himself under no obligation to execute, but has an inclination to disregard the laws and treaties, as interpreted by a proper branch of the Government?” The answer to this rhetorical question was obvious: “We have nothing to expect from such an executive,” nothing except loss of land and destruction of life.38

In addition to judging their most likely fate by Jackson’s declarations and actions, Boudinot argued that the Cherokee people could look to the activities happening in their own lands. Boudinot included the above article in a letter to the Cherokee Phoenix announcing his resignation.39 In this letter, Boudinot urged his fellow Cherokee citizens to recognize that the U.S. had “not only infringed upon our political rights, but has actually, to all intents and purposes, taken possession of one-half of our country.”40 Boudinot referred to the Georgia legislature’s 1830 authorization of a survey of the Cherokees’ territory and a lottery distribution of plots. Theda Perdue points out that the Georgia law prohibited forced eviction of Indians from land they “actually occupied,” but Boudinot was well aware of the differences between a U.S. citizen’s understanding of occupation and a more traditional Cherokee’s definition, and rightfully noted the dangers this difference might inspire.41 Boudinot went on to argue not only would Cherokee land be in jeopardy, but the distribution
of “unoccupied” land would place the moral and physical existence of Cherokee citizens in jeopardy as well. He urged his “countrymen” to consider

the danger to be apprehended from an overwhelming white population—a population not unfrequently overcharged with high notions of color, dignity, and greatness—at once overbearing and impudent to those whom, in their sovereign pleasure, they consider as their inferiors. They should have, our sons and daughters, be slaves indeed. Such a population and the evils and vices it would bring with it, … would create an enemy more pernicious and destructive to the Cherokees than ‘the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.’

Boudinot presented a slightly altered version of his earlier arguments about the moral wellbeing of his fellow Cherokee citizens, tailored now to an audience of tribal insiders. In addition to his warnings about the “evils and vices” of settler society, primarily the danger of alcohol, Boudinot argued that U.S., or more specifically Georgian, laws and customs would threaten Cherokee lives. The white population, Boudinot rightly claimed, considered themselves superior to Indians and would thus treat them little better than slaves. The logical response, then, was to move the Cherokees away from such a threat.

Boudinot offered challenges for each “contingency” the Cherokees might hold, arguing that Removal was the best response to each contingency. After pointing out the dangers presented by President Jackson’s potential reelection and the threat of settler encroachment on Cherokee lands, Boudinot wrote another letter to the Phoenix, addressing the possibility that Jackson would lose the upcoming election and either of his challengers—National Republican candidate Henry Clay or Anti-Masonic candidate William Wirt, both sympathetic to the Cherokees—take his place. Should an individual “whose sentiments on
the Indian question are correct, and is disposed to do us justice” be elected, Boudinot would
“still make it a question whether our rights can be restored to us, for the new President cannot
take his seat until the 4th of March, 1833, and there is, to say the least a great danger of the
enemy having a complete possession of one-half of our country before that time.” As
Boudinot had argued, the settlers were already encroaching on Cherokee territory, surveying
it and preparing for the plot lottery. The extended lame duck period (in place for another
century, until the passage of the 20th Amendment in 1933 which moved the inauguration to
January 20) presented a potential threat to the Nation, because it offered the settlers more
time to establish themselves in Cherokee territory and because President Jackson would
likely continue not to enforce the Supreme Court’s ruling. Further, Boudinot doubted
Jackson’s hypothetical replacement would be able to control or “remove all intruders,”
especially given “the present circumstances of the country,” meaning the rising tensions in
the South (which would lead, just a few months later, to the Nullification Crisis, one of the
major precursors of the Civil War).44

Finally, Boudinot foresaw an even more dangerous potential outcome: false hope
generated by a sympathetic President. If Jackson were replaced with a new, sympathetic
President, Boudinot feared that he would lull the Cherokees into a false security. Boudinot
believed a sympathetic President would convince the Cherokees that the land would be safe
in perpetuity and that this would likely prove false under a subsequent President. Boudinot
wrote:

Suppose the new President succeeds in restoring, to us our rights? What security have
we that the restoration of our rights will be permanent, and that a president similar to
the present one will not succeed the one who does us justice, and thus the game will
not be played over anew? I can hardly consent to trust the peace and happiness of our people to political changes and party triumphs. Unfortunately for us, the Indian question has been made a party and sectional question.\textsuperscript{45}

While the possibility of a new President gave hope to the Cherokees, Boudinot cautioned against this hope, because that hypothetical President would be replaced just as he might replace Jackson. As Jackson’s clear difference from his predecessors in Indian policy demonstrated, the fate of the Cherokee Nation was dependent, in part, on the views and policies of the powerful in Washington, D.C. The Nation’s future was at stake as much as its present, and Boudinot argued that neither should be left in the hands of the inconsistent settler government. In this instance, too, Boudinot argued that Removal would be the best option. In Cherokee territory in the east, surrounded by U.S. settlers, the people would be forced to interact with and depend upon the U.S. government. But in the west, in Indian Territory, the Cherokees would face fewer troubles with settlers (they would, of course, face troubles from western Indians who viewed them as the settlers, but Boudinot seemed less concerned or perhaps unaware of this threat). Although the promises of the U.S. government were still suspect, the distance between the States and Cherokee land in the west should be enough, Boudinot argued, to insulate and protect the Nation.

Perhaps greater than the external threats imposed on the Nation by the U.S. were the internal threats Boudinot identified, especially the absence and even suppression of knowledge of U.S. actions within Cherokee territory. Boudinot attempted to remedy this lack of information by arguing for removal in letters to the (new) editor of the \textit{Phoenix}, presenting removal as pragmatic and politically expedient. In one such letter, which the \textit{Phoenix} declined to publish, Boudinot argued that the Nation was approaching a crisis in response to
which “one of three things must be chosen. 1. Nature’s right of all nations to resist and fight in the defence of our lands. 2. Submit and peaceably come under the dominion of the oppressor, and suffer, which we most assuredly must if we make that choice, a moral death! 3. Avoid the two first by removal.” Boudinot identified these as “three evils” and recognized that none were palatable to the Cherokees. Resistance would likely result in great losses for the Cherokees. Submission would mean the dissolution of the Nation and would most likely result in oppression of individual Cherokees. Removal, Boudinot’s favorite of the three, would mean abandoning the traditional homelands.

Boudinot argued that physical and cultural deaths were all but certain for those Cherokees who refused Removal. In contrast, if they acceded to the U.S. policy, they would be able to retain their culture and their sovereignty in their new homeland. Boudinot’s understanding of patriotism clearly informed this decision: Boudinot did not support the desertion of the ancestral Cherokee homeland because he no longer had an attachment to it, but because his attachment to the lives of his tribespeople was stronger.

TO SEEK A COUNTRY WHERE WE MAY ENJOY OUR OWN LAWS

Boudinot and his Treaty Party allies shared this view of patriotism, and shared the belief that other Cherokees would agree with them if only they had access to the same knowledge the Treaty Party, Chief Ross, and the Council had. In the first of his post-editorship letters to the Phoenix Boudinot argued that the division between those Cherokees who supported Removal and those who fought against it was caused by “A want of proper information among the people.” Boudinot and the Treaty Party “charge Mr. Ross with having deluded them [the Cherokees] with expectations incompatible with, and injurious to, their interest. He has
prevented the discussion of this interesting matter, by systematic measures, at a time when
discussion was of the most vital importance.” According to Boudinot, Ross actively deceived
the Cherokee people and inspired in them a false hope similar to that discussed above.
Boudinot accurately notes that Ross maintained the hope that the Cherokees could negotiate
a treaty that would allow them to remain on Cherokee lands. Such a result was unlikely, even
dangerous in Boudinot’s estimation, but perhaps not as unreasonable as Boudinot believed.
As Theda Perdue and others have noted, Ross’s actions were as much a result of his political
position as his own personal beliefs: as Chief, Ross was tasked with representing and acting
from the will of the people, and the great majority of Cherokees wanted to remain in their
ancestral homelands. As Theda Perdue and others have noted, Ross’s actions were as much a result of his political
position as his own personal beliefs: as Chief, Ross was tasked with representing and acting
from the will of the people, and the great majority of Cherokees wanted to remain in their
ancestral homelands. The Treaty Party was, however, correct in its assertion that the people
lacked information: Perdue argues that Ross was probably “incredibly sanguine about the
eventual outcome” rather than intentionally dishonest, but notes that Ross withheld too much
in his desire to avoid troubling the Cherokees. We cannot know whether more Cherokees
would have sided with the Treaty Party if Ross and the Council had allowed a wider
dissemination of information, but the Cherokees were indeed “kept ignorant of their true
condition.”

Boudinot’s pamphlet, published outside the control of the Cherokee Nation, was his
attempt to remedy the lack-of-information problem and to convince the Cherokees “that our
people cannot exist amidst a white population.” The push to disseminate information about
Cherokee-U.S. relations generated quite a backlash: Boudinot resigned from the editorship of
the Phoenix, while those Council members who supported informing the public and who
urged relocation of the Nation were removed from office. Following their impeachment,
these Council members and the rest of the Treaty Party—all of whom Boudinot identifies as
“friends of free discussion”— drafted a series of Resolutions meant to clarify their political position and simultaneously inform the Cherokee public of the severity of their “crisis.”\(^5\) This document outlined the Indian pragmatism through which the Treaty Party approached the question of Removal and reasserted the notion of patriotism Boudinot had earlier expressed. The Party argued that Cherokees could not exist among whites, “subject to laws which they [the Cherokees] have no hand in making, and which they do not understand; that the suppression of the Cherokee Government, which connected this people in a distinct community, will … ultimately reduce them to poverty, misery, and wretchedness.”\(^5\) This argument repeated many of the points Boudinot had previously made, namely that remaining in Cherokee lands would mean abandoning Cherokee nationhood and submitting to the laws of the white settlers.

The Treaty Party emphasized the political distinctness of Cherokee community, a point they returned to throughout the Resolutions. Repeating previous arguments about Jackson’s response to the Supreme Court, the Party declared: “we have come to the conclusion that this nation cannot be reinstated in its present location, and that the question left to us and to every Cherokee, is, whether it is more desirable to remain here, with all the embarrassments with which we must be surrounded, or to seek a country where we may enjoy our own laws, and live under our own vine and fig-tree.”\(^5\) The Party employed Boudinot’s arguments about patriotism as they argued that preserving the Cherokee Nation was their paramount concern and the Nation, at this time, could only exist outside Cherokee lands. In light of this situation, relocating the Nation was the most pragmatic response to the U.S. government’s actions. The Resolution declares, “although we love the land of our fathers, and should leave the place of our nativity with as much regret as any of our citizens,
we consider the lot of the Exile immeasurably more to be preferred than a submission to the laws of the States, and thus becoming witnesses of the ruin and degradation of the Cherokee people."

Removal was not a popular idea among the Cherokees—would not have been a popular idea for most Indian nations—but was the only real option to Cherokee patriots who valued the lives of the people more than their traditional homelands. For some Cherokees, such a distinction may have been impossible, and some observers might argue that this sense of patriotism, this Indian pragmatism, reveals to us how assimilated Boudinot and the other Party members were. Such an argument, however, supposes a monolithic, hegemonic Cherokee identity. It assumes that all Cherokees thought and behaved the same way, and that traditional beliefs were (and perhaps still are) immutable. As I argued in Chapter One, Indian cultures were and are living, active entities that change in response to both outside and inside forces. Boudinot’s patriotism and pragmatism developed as a result of the turbulent political climate in which he lived. Living both during and after a number of U.S./Indian wars, witnessing the initiation of what we now refer to as the Trail of Tears, and observing the many anti-Indian actions of President Andrew Jackson, Boudinot came to the conclusion that the United States could no longer be trusted to deal justly and earnestly with the Cherokees. Emigrating as far away from the U.S. as possible was the best hope for preserving both individual Cherokee lives and the collective life of the Nation.

In his resignation letter, dated August 1, 1832, Elias Boudinot declared: "I love my country and I love my people, as my own heart bears me witness, and for that very reason I should deem it my duty to tell them the whole truth, or what I believe to be the truth." Boudinot was both an active participant in the creation of the Cherokee Nation and a firm
believer in the importance of preserving that nation. To use his own language, Boudinot was a devoted patriot of the Cherokee Nation. Through both his early idealism and his later pragmatism, Boudinot worked for the good of his tribespeople.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION
WHERE OUR DEAD LIE BURIED

Throughout this work I have argued, following Joanne Barker, that sovereignty matters. One goal has been to assert that sovereignty is a Native notion as much as it is a colonial notion. It is true that sovereignty is a word of European origin. And the narrow view of sovereignty as dominion by force was and is surely foreign to many of the Americas’ indigenous cultures (though not all). However, a broader notion of sovereignty focused on a nation-people’s right to determine its own culture and politics as members of an international community was and is a very Native concept. This is a necessary step, I believe, in order for scholars to move past the argument that sovereignty is incommensurate with traditional Native worldviews and turn instead to questions of efficacy. If we can agree that the concept of sovereignty is in line with various traditional Indian epistemologies, then we can focus more fully on the strategies our people have employed in order to fight for political and cultural autonomy.

Sovereignty as a theoretical concept has informed a great deal of Native literary criticism in recent years. As a political reality, sovereignty has impacted the life of every Indian nation citizen to some degree, and this impact has far too often been negative. Native activists and writers would do well to recover or reassert the ideas about sovereignty that our ancestors and ideological predecessors asserted. In a March 1996 article for the Native American newspaper The Circle entitled “Don’t Cheapen Sovereignty,” Winona LaDuke decried the U.S. government’s “hypocritical” approach to recognizing Native sovereignty. LaDuke charges, “the Feds only recognize Indian sovereignty when a First Nation has a casino or a waste dump, not when a tribal government seeks to preserve ground water from
pesticide contamination, exercise jurisdiction over air quality, or stop clear cutting or say no to a nuclear dump. ‘Sovereignty’ has become a politicized term used for some of the most demeaning purposes.”¹ LaDuke’s assessment reminds us that popular and political understandings of sovereignty affect crucial aspects of our daily lives, including the water we drink and the air we breathe.

Redefining or recalling more traditional Indian definitions of sovereignty is a crucial step in counteracting the “cheapening” of sovereignty LaDuke observed. In the same article LaDuke challenged Native leaders to “change the tide” of Native sovereignty, so that the actions of our leaders can “stack up” well against our traditions and our values. She urges modern-day American Indians to develop ways to “protect and nourish our future generations,” to focus on such tasks as securing child support for tribal citizens and labor laws that combat discrimination against Natives. Ultimately, LaDuke calls for all Natives to “act and live by a standard that denotes sovereignty, not cheapens it,” and urges us to “be people our grandchildren can be proud of—good minds, good hearts, good actions.”² LaDuke calls for a return to the roots of Indian activism, a return I hope to have helped along.

As many Native writers remind us, the politics of Native lives and literature cannot be overlooked; Indian political autonomy has been and continues to be a goal supported by many Native writers. The late Vine Deloria, Jr., cautioned in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, “Abstract theories create abstract action. Lumping together the variety of tribal problems and seeking the demonic principle at work which is destroying Indian people may be intellectually satisfying. But it does not change the real situation.”³ The authors presented in this project never lost sight of the need to fight for the lives and rights of Indian people. They realized that what truly mattered for their communities was “the real situation,” the fact that
Native people were being “systematically cheated out of their water rights” and their “land base.” In order to make these arguments, these writers employed tools and methods new to their people. As I hope to have demonstrated, our forebears in this struggle approached the question of how to help their people with a mindset similar to Elias Boudinot’s, focusing on the effects of their arguments and of their adaptation of European tools rather than on questions about whether such tools diminished their authentic Indianness.

Authenticity is as problematic and dangerous a notion for contemporary Native authors and activists as it was for our predecessors. As the stories of Theseus’s ship and the Old Indian’s Knife demonstrate, Indian cultural stagnation is an idea imposed on communities from the outside, not one expressed by members of the communities. Sociopolitical stasis is not healthy or safe for living cultures. Native intellectuals have fought against the ossification and ahistoricization of our cultures for centuries, and the battle continues to this day. Nearly two hundred years after Occom shared the story of the Old Indian’s Knife, Acqumeh Pueblo poet and scholar Simon J. Ortiz shared with his Indian audience a similar story with a similar message. In “Towards a National Indian Literature,” Ortiz wrote of his uncle Steve, or Dzeerlai, an Acqumeh subsistence farmer and railroad laborer who helped adapt Spanish Catholic ceremonies to Acqumeh culture, in the process “expressing his vitality from within the hold of our Acqumeh Indian world.” As Ortiz explained, this was a Catholic ceremony but was also an Acqumeh ceremony. Ortiz wrote: “This is so because this celebration speaks of the creative ability of Indian people to gather in many forms of the socio-political colonizing force which beset them and to make these forms meaningful in their own terms. In fact, it is a celebration of the human spirit and the Indian struggle for liberation.” Adaptation is the way individuals, groups, and even species survive.
Human history is a history of adaptation—what is often pessimistically labeled *clashing of cultures* but might more fruitfully be described as cultures *interacting*.

I hope that the notion of the Old Indian’s Knife will provide critics with a way of approaching seemingly anti-Indian or assimilationist behaviors through tribally-specific frameworks. Although assuming all individuals acted in a way designed to benefit their relatives is as problematic as assuming they jumped identity ships at the first opportunity, I believe asking, “How might this have fit within an Indian framework?” or, “How might this have been helpful for the tribe?” can lead us toward more complex and more complete understandings of individual Indians. When we look at the works of early Native writers like Occom, Schoolcraft, or Boudinot, we see Indian people using English “on their own terms.” We see what Ortiz calls “the way that Indian people have creatively responded to forced colonization…. resistance.” Each of these writers resisted colonization in his or her own ways. Each of these writers used the tools available to them—missionary schools, pedagogical techniques, petitions, poetry, letters, stories, journalism, treaties, subversive political pamphlets—to challenge Euro-American colonization and to support Native political and social institutions. We see traces of this resistance in much of contemporary American Indian literary criticism. In the tradition of Occom’s Old Indian’s Knife, we can today find Deloria’s focus on the “real situation,” and Ortiz’s *Acquemeh resistance*, N. Scott Momaday’s “memory in the blood,” Leslie Marmon Silko’s growth that “keeps the ceremonies strong,” Gerald Vizenor’s *survivance*, Robert Allen Warrior’s *intellectual sovereignty*, Jace Weaver’s *communitism*, Craig S. Womack’s *Red Stick criticism*, Eva Marie Garroutte’s *radical Indigenism*, Scott Richard Lyon’s *rhetorical sovereignty*, Lisa Brooks’s *dish with one spoon* and many other theories of Indian anticolonial resistance and
continuance. This tree’s roots are deep, and the more contemporary readers, writers, and activists know about its roots, the more intellectual nutrients we can draw from them and the stronger the tree can grow.

In the end, identity, community, sovereignty, and resistance all point toward one ultimate root and one ultimate goal: the land. Each of the writers included herein, each of the critics whose works I have engaged, focus on the relationship between the people and the land more closely than any other relationship or subject. As LaDuke reminds us time and again and as Occom, Schoolcraft, and Boudinot reminded their audiences, some land is necessary for the survival of Indian Nations. Land theft has been the keystone of colonization, and land recovery can serve as a keystone of decolonization. By taking up a relational approach to sovereignty, we recognize that land and people, culture and politics, are interrelated and interdependent, and protecting one can help protect them all. As I hope to have demonstrated, the roots of the Native activism tree are both broad and deep. They spread out across this land called Turtle Island, called the Americas, and reach down to where our dead lie buried.
NOTES

PREFACE


3. Jace Weaver, “Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism,” American Indian Literary Nationalism, Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006): 44–45; 82n106; Scott Richard Lyons, X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 132–146. Weaver asserts “to continue to wrangle over the utility of the term “sovereignty” is to
become unnecessarily stuck, engaging in a kind of navel gazing” (45). Lyons is perhaps even more explicit when he asks in response to his summary of Alfred’s argument: “How can nations make specific claims to anything at all without using the universal language, terminology, and conceptual apparatus of nations in general?” (135). Regardless of the origin of the term, it is useful for engaging the international community and asserting an indigenous community’s nationhood, and is thus the best option for American Indians and for all indigenous peoples.


6. For scholarly treatments of this problem, refer to the work of Philip Deloria. See also Adrienne Keene’s blog, *Native Appropriations*, for a good resource on and critique of the various stereotypical portrayals and misuse of Native peoples/cultures in current U.S. popular culture. http://nativeappropriations.blogspot.com/.

8. I come to the term “intellectual health” through the work of Robert Allen Warrior. In *The People and The Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), Warrior declares that his “overarching concern is working out how doing the work of the critic and intellectual can contribute to improving the intellectual health of Native America, its people, and its communities” (xiv).


**The Old Indian’s Knife**

1. Examples of the “trapped between worlds” argument can be found in the works of Arnold Krupat; in David Murray’s *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994). I don’t mean to demean the good work that these critics have done; Murray’s book has had an important impact on the way the field considers the question of audience in early Indian writings, and Szasz has had a huge impact on studies of Indian
education. These successes should be celebrated, but we must also interrogate problematic notions of Indian identity in order to improve the field of Native Studies as a whole.


3. See the introduction to Kevin Bruyneel’s The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2007), for one example of such claims and one Anishinaabe response.

4. I worry that the term evolution has taken on a teleological bent in popular culture that fails to represent the word’s true definition. I use evolve here as something of a synonym for change, change that is passed down through at least a few generations of a species or culture. Evolution is not permanent, nor is it working toward perfection, except insofar as perfection can be obtained momentarily. That is, a species or culture perfectly adapted to its world at a particular time.

5. Bruyneel, 2.

http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14033/14033-h/14033-h.htm


21 For other arguments about the practical power of sovereignty, see Cobb, 121–124.

22. See Lyons, *X-Marks*, 121–122 for a useful explanation of the difference between these terms.

23. In her Native feminist destabilizing of the notions of the *nation* and the *nation-state*, Andrea Smith has made a similar argument. Smith claimed: “Whereas nation-states are governed through domination and coercion, indigenous sovereignty and nationhood are predicated on interrelatedness and responsibility. In opposition to nation-states, which are based on control over territory, these visions of indigenous nationhood are based on care and responsibility for land that all can share.” Andrea Smith, “American Studies without America: Native Feminisms and the Nation-State” *American Quarterly* 60.2 (June 2008), 312.


25. See, for example, the following speeches collected in W. C. Vanderwerth, ed., *Indian Oratory: Famous Speeches by Noted Indian Chieftains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma


27. LaDuke, All Our Relations, 1.

28. LaDuke, All Our Relations, 2.

29. LaDuke, All Our Relations, 4.


32. Notable exceptions to this statement would include bi-/multilingual people familiar with non-alphabetic systems of writing such as Chinese.


34. Boone, Writing Without Words, 6.

35. While Boone and Mignolo’s work provides the language for this definition of literacy, a number of important works on alternative understandings of literacy in the Americas have been published in recent years. See, for example, Margaret Connell Szasz, Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607–1783 (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1988); E. Jennifer Monaghan, Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2007); Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss, eds, Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2008); and Kathleen Bragdon, Native People of Southern New England, 1650–1775 (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

36. Bross and Wyss, Early Native Literacies, 3.

37. Bross and Wyss, Early Native Literacies, 5.

38. Boone, Writing Without Words, 15, italics in original.


44. Occom, *Collected Writings*, 147.

45. Many scholars have made this point before me, perhaps the most prominent of which is Gerald Vizenor’s complaint that “Indian became the homogenous name for thousands of distinct tribal cultures. The Anishinaabe were named the Chippewa. The Dakota were named the Sioux. Other tribal names are colonial inventions sustained in the literature of dominance.” Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 167.


47. The same idea is achieved by the Canadian term *First Nations*.

**Natural Privileges of Sovereignty**


7. Occom, Collected Writings, 53.


14. Although such evidence would not entirely invalidate this claim, they would further complicate my reading of Occom’s multicultural approach to education, questioning whether Occom’s approach truly was a pan-tribal approach.


16. Occom, *Collected Writings*, 55. The Montauk and Mohegan languages are both Algonquian languages.


42. Although this history has been drawn primarily from L. Brooks’s *The Common Pot*, much of it (though not all of it) can be corroborated in the history offered in J. Brooks’s *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan* and Love’s biography of Occom.


47. This and all subsequent quotations from the Mohegans’ letter to Sir William Johnson come from Occom, *Collected Writings*, 144–5.


49. Occom, *Collected Writings*, 144–5

50. I have been unable, unfortunately, to discern whether Johnson responded to the Mohegan’s letter or not.
51. The Mohegans created other documents that even more explicitly performed such renewals, including the 1773 “Mohegan Tribe Standing Agreement” (Occom, 146) and the 1778 “Mohegan Tribe on Rents” (Occom, 147). The former decrees that the tribe will behave communally, holding “any English Creatures” in common; the latter emphasizes the familial relationships between all Mohegans.

52. Quoted in L. Brooks, 96.


55. As an advocate of equality in all forms—race, gender, sexuality, ethnic polity—and a 21st century feminist, I use “sibling” rather than the more historically appropriate “brother,” outside of direct quotations.


60. Historical information in this section is adapted from J. Brooks’s “Chronology” (J. Brooks, *CW*, xxi-xxv) and Love’s biography.


63. Occom, *Collected Writings*, 149.
64. Occom, *Collected Writings*, 149; 150.
70. Occom, *Collected Writings*, 158.
74. As Joanna Brooks reminds readers in her introduction to Occom’s Collected Writings, “Occom’s elm bark box reminds us that English-language literacy did not cancel out other forms of Native writing,” 4.

**SOVEREIGNTY STORIES**


2. Although Jane Johnston Schoolcraft used a variety of names in her everyday life and in her writing (including several pen names), I will most often refer to her as Schoolcraft, the name she herself signed most frequently. I occasionally refer to her as Bamewawagezhikaquay, particularly in Ojibwe-specific contexts, but will do so sparingly. In passages where it is necessary to speak of Schoolcraft in relation to her family, I use either Jane or Schoolcraft as appropriate. Finally, in order to differentiate him from his wife, I will either use Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s full name or just his first name. Thus any mention of “Schoolcraft” within the text refers to Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, not Henry.

Regarding another question of diction, I have chosen to break with my practice of following an author’s most-used terminology by choosing the more modern spelling, Ojibwe, to refer to Schoolcraft and her kin. Schoolcraft herself was inconsistent with her terminology, calling her people Chippewa, Ojibwa, Ojibway, and even O-jib-way. Because most of her writing was included in the Henry Rowe Schoolcraft Papers, much of it copied in Henry’s own hand, we cannot know to what degree Henry affected or even caused this inconsistency. My decision to use Ojibwe is in line with Parker’s usage, but also draws on twenty-first century conventions and my own desire to use endonyms where possible. Additionally, Ojibweg
seems to be the more common plural pronoun, so using Ojibwe for the singular maintains consistency.


4. I suspect, though I have no evidence to support my belief, that many more women paid attention to American politics in Schoolcraft’s day than we now assume.


6. See Chapter One for a more thorough analysis of this story and its relationship to American Indian identity.

7. Brazer provides the most explicit example of this, but Bremer and others assert Schoolcraft’s “whiteness” as well. See Richard G. Bremer, Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar: The Life of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Mount Pleasant: Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, 1987).

8. Brazer, 143.


12. William W. Warren declares that “as early as the middle of the seventeenth century,” Sault Ste. Marie had “already become an important depot and outlet to the Lake Superior fur trade.” William W. Warren, History of the Ojibway People (1885; reprint, ed. Theresa
Schenck, 1984; reprint, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009), 85. In a note to this claim, Warren explains that French records indicate a trading post was established in Sault Ste. Marie in 1750, but he speculates that traders located temporary posts there even earlier, “since the Sault was a major summer gathering place for man native people in the seventeenth century,” 85n9.


17. Schoolcraft, 163.

18. Schoolcraft, 163.


20. Brazer, 179.


23. B. Johnston, 66.


26. Schoolcraft, 120.


28. Schoolcraft, 120. Parker numbers each section/separate poem individually. He explains in the notes to these poems that he cannot be sure if they were meant to be a series of four separate poems, or four sections of one larger poem.

29. Schoolcraft, 121.

30. Qtd. in Parker, Sound the Stars Make, 90, note.

31. Schoolcraft, 89.

32. Schoolcraft, 89.

33. Schoolcraft, 141.

34. Parker provides this translation, prepared by Dennis Jones, Heidi Stark, and James Vukelich, alongside Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s “Free Translation” (which, really, was its own poem, and very different from the literal translation). John Nichols offers a slightly different translation and a modernized transcription (using modern Anishinaabemowin orthography), on the website Noongwa-e-Anishinaabemjig. This translation is accompanied by a recording of Ojibwe Margaret Noodin singing the poem to a round dance beat by Randy Wood. http://www.umich.edu/~ojibwe/songs/nindinendam.html


36. Anishinaabe scholar Margaret Noori has made this argument many times, both in conference presentations and in writing. See Margaret Noori, “Bicultural Before There Was a Word for It,” review of The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky, edited by


39. Schoolcraft, 92.


41. Parker might accuse me of anachronism or of mistakenly making Schoolcraft into an “anticolonialist exemplar.” I hope that I have provided enough evidence to make my reading at least plausible, but I do recognize that some might say I overreach in my reading here. As Parker has argued, modern readers do need to be wary of projecting our own desires and expectations onto past authors. I hope that I have, as Parker has urged, taken Schoolcraft in her own context and read her own criticisms of colonialism rather than my own. See Robert Dale Parker, “Contemporary Anticolonialist Reading and the Collaborative Writing of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft,” in Before Yesterday: The Long History of Native American Writing, edited by Simone Pellerin (Pessac, France: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2009), 47–52.

42. Schoolcraft, 118.

SOVEREIGNTY AND THE RHETORIC OF NATIONALISM

1. Although GWY or Tsalagi (“principal people”) is the more accurate rendering of the peoples’ autonym, I will employ the more familiar Anglicization Cherokee, in keeping with Elias Boudinot and other GWY writers of the time.


4. Ralph Henry Gabriel painted a very white portrait of Boudinot in his biography. In the prefatory “A Letter,” Gabriel wrote that Boudinot was “at best, a minor figure” in American history, whose biography was most interesting because it presented “the changing Cherokee mind of his day” and a “red man” who had fully assimilated to the mindset of New England Puritans. (ix–x). Gabriel described Boudinot as “an Indian, direct from the wilds,” as an individual with the intelligence of a white man and the emotional impulse of an Indian, and an Indian who “owed almost everything worth-while in life” to “the white race” (3; 143). For more problematic, racist depictions of Boudinot and other settler-educated Cherokees, see Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Elias Boudinot: Cherokee and His America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941).

Michelle Daniel has asserted that Boudinot’s work with the *Phoenix* was to educate and encourage the Cherokees in their move toward an Anglo-American legal system,” and has argued that Boudinot “actively encouraged [his] fellow Cherokees to adopt the laws of

In her chapter on “The Cherokee Resistance,” Maureen Konkle has read both historian Jill Lepore and scholar Theda Perdue’s depictions of Boudinot and other “Cherokee spokesmen” as representative of past criticism’s inability to read Native Nations as political entities. In Konkle’s reading, both Lepore and Perdue have insisted on viewing Native Nations as only cultural entities and have attributed to these entities little, if any, ability to adapt or change over time. See Maureen Konkle, “The Cherokee Resistance,” chap. 1 in *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827–1863* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Although she ultimately produced a far more complex depiction of Boudinot, Bethany Schneider opened her essay with the assertion, “Elias Boudinot is a critical stumbling block. . . . [H]is admiration for the United States as a model for culture and government, his Christianity, his belief that civilization grows from savagery to civility, and his disdain for any definition of Native culture that might include traditional practices or beliefs has caused him to be seen as a tragic figure caught between conflicting cultural values” (151). See Bethany Schneider, “Boudinot’s Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal,” *ELH* 75.1 (2008): 151–177.

5. Popular U.S. culture rarely recognizes Indian women as cultural or political leaders, and thus I use the masculine pronoun here.
These descriptions are influenced by Theda Perdue’s description of the “difficult choice” tribal leaders faced, or believed they faced, in response to American encroachment: “fight to the bitter end or accommodate the intruders and promote the acculturation of their people. Those who choose to struggle against overwhelming odds often posthumously become heroes, even to the enemy, by appealing to the romantic element in Western culture. On the other hand, native leaders who embrace Western ‘civilization’ frequently suffer repudiation in their own time and condemnation by later generations.” See Theda Perdue, Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1983), 3.


7. Boudinot 100.


9. Boudinot 69. The full title of the piece is “An Address to the Whites Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, on the 26th of May, 1826, by Elias Boudinott, a Cherokee Indian.” It was originally printed by William F. Geddes in Philadelphia in the same year.

11. Maureen Konkle makes a similar claim, arguing that Boudinot and other Cherokees “claimed to form a modern Indian nation, one that could not be characterized as representing a timeless prepolitical state of nature, but one that existed in time, as European nations did.” See Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 43–44.

12. I hesitate to use the word “evolution” here, as I feel it has gained a kind of teleological implication that I do not intend here. Instead, I use evolution to mean a change or transformation brought about in response to external stimuli, without judgment as to whether such a change is positive or negative.


14. Boudinot, 90. The full title of the prospectus is “Prospectus: For publishing at New Echota, in the Cherokee Nation, a weekly newspaper to be called the Cherokee Phoenix.”

15. Boudinot, 90.


18. Boudinot, 121.

19. This section looks at Boudinot’s engagement with a variety of U.S. policy and government statements and documents. For an examination of Boudinot’s arguments focused specifically on his use and critique of the language of the U.S. Constitution, see Angela Pulley Hudson, “‘Forked Justice’: Elias Boudinot, the US Constitution, and Cherokee Removal,” in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivace: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, ed. by Ernest Stromberg (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 50–68.
20. Preamble to the Constitution of the United States.


27. Boudinot, 95.


29. See chapter one for a detailed explanation and analysis of these symbols.


31. Boudinot, 143.
32. Boudinot, 188. This statement is strikingly similar to Charles Sanders Pierce’s “pragmatic maxim,” in which Pierce urges readers to “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.” Charles Sanders Pierce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, vol. 5, Pragmatism and Pragmaticism.* Ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934): para. 402.

33. Boudinot, 145.

34. De Tocqueville wrote of Jackson: “General Jackson, whom Americans have twice chosen to be their leader, is a man of violent character and middling ability. Nothing in his career demonstrates that he possesses the qualities required to govern a free people. According, a majority of the enlightened classes of the Union has always voted against him. What, then, put him in the presidency and keeps him there even now? The memory of the victory he won twenty years ago outside the walls of New Orleans.” Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Library of America, 2004), 320.

35. Boudinot, 172.


40. Boudinot, 168.

41. See Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 151n80.

42. Boudinot, 168.

43. Wirt was the lawyer responsible for taking *Worcester v. Georgia* to the Supreme Court. See Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 228n27.

44. Jackson himself recognized that Nullification was a sign of greater trouble to come. In a letter to Andrew J. Crawford, 1 May 1833, Jackson wrote: “the tariff was only a pretext, and disunion and southern confederacy the real object. The next pretext will be the negro, or slavery question.” In *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* Vol. V, ed. John Spencer Bassett (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1926–1935), 72.


46. Boudinot, 172–73.

47. Boudinot, 161.

48. Perdue presents this argument throughout *Cherokee Editor*. See in particular the introduction to the volume and the notes for this particular letter.


50. Boudinot, 176.

51. Boudinot, 175.

52. Boudinot, 176.

53. Boudinot, 176.

54. Boudinot, 175–177.

55. Boudinot, 164.
CONCLUSION


2. LaDuke, Reader, 194.


5. Ortiz, 8.

6. Ortiz, 10.


Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown. “Early Native American Women Authors: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Sarah Winnemucca, S. Alice Callahan, E. Pauline Johnson, and Zitkala-


Mathew RudeWalker

EDUCATION
Ph.D. English, The Pennsylvania State University, December 2013
M.A. English, The Pennsylvania State University, June 2009
B.A. English, with highest honors, University of California at Davis, June 2006

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE
TEACHING EXPERIENCE (TWENTY SECTIONS TOTAL)
LITERATURE (SIX SECTIONS TOTAL)
Comparative Literature 109, Native American Myths, Legends, and Literature, Fa 2013 (1 section)
English 135, Alternative Voices in American Literature, Sp 2011 (1 section)
   “Talking Back to Civilization: Indigenous Critiques of U.S. Culture”
English 201, What Is Literature, Sp 2012, Sp 2013 (2 sections)
English 262, Reading Fiction, Fa 2010 (1 section)
   “Contemporary American Indian Fiction”
English 436, American Fiction from 1945, Su 2013 (1 section)
RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION (FOURTEEN SECTIONS TOTAL)
English 015, Rhetoric and Composition, Fa 2007–Sp 2009 (4 sections)
English 015, Learning Edge Academic Program, Su 2008 & 2009 (2 sections)
   cross-listed with Philosophy 083S, “Bioethics”
   cross-listed with Communication Arts and Sciences 100, “Effective Speech”
English 015A, Rhetoric and Composition/US Cultures, Fa 2011 & 2013 (2 sections)
   “US Political Rhetoric from the Revolution to the Present”
TUTORING EXPERIENCE
English 005, Writing Center Tutor, Fa 2008–Sp 2009 (2 semesters, 17 students total)
RESEARCHING EXPERIENCE
Research Assistant, Professor Keith Gilyard, Spring 2011–Fall 2011

ARTICLES UNDER REVIEW

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS
“‘Married to the Earth’: Rethinking Masculinity in Leslie Marmon Silko’s Almanac of the Dead.” Native American Literature Symposium, March 2011.

HONORS AND AWARDS
Bunton-Waller Graduate Award, PSU, 2007–2013
Golden Key, UC Davis, 2006
Phi Beta Kappa, UC Davis, 2006
Phi Kappa Phi, UC Davis, 2006