Iroquoian and Iroquoianist: Anthropologists and the Haudenosaunee at Grand River

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The reclamation activities and ongoing negotiations involving Six Nations and the Grand River tract lands have reaffirmed educational priorities about Haudenosaunee traditions, languages, history and culture. Anticipating the paramount role of this knowledge in advancing the legitimacy of outstanding grievances and the maintenance of a distinct cultural and political community, many Six Nations traditionalists have long availed themselves of grass-roots educational initiatives designed to ensure the continuity of traditionalism and to offset many facets of colonial disruption. Assertions of Haudenosaunee land rights, nationhood, and sovereignty remain central to these endeavors and continue to enliven the lengthy and often gruelling processes associated with reclamation and negotiations. Today, whether to enable government officials to negotiate competently, to curb the confusion and anger reflected in public and media responses to the reclamation, to impress upon municipalities Six Nations interests in the future development of Grand River tract lands, or to enhance community members’ articulation of their land rights, these complex educational needs remain an urgent and demanding task.

Now that Haudenosaunee traditionalism has assumed a vital role in advancing the agenda, structure, and scope of ongoing land negotiations, comparative consideration of representations of traditionalism as conveyed through local educational processes with established anthropological constructs of Haudenosaunee traditionalism comes into sharper focus. Although anthropology has not created the serious attention now being paid to Haudenosaunee traditionalism at Six Nations, the stakes associated with the interpretive representation of this traditionalism are irrefutably high. Keeping the emergent situation at Six Nations in mind, this paper examines the historic and contemporary relationship between anthropology and the Haudenosaunee of Six Nations at Grand River relative to representing Haudenosaunee traditionalism.
brief history of this participatory relationship attends to colonial contexts of complicity, resistance, dialogue, and advocacy. Six Nations community-based educational praxis provides strong evidence of an intense engagement with anthropological texts and illustrates ethnographically how educators ameliorate the effects of anthropological misinterpretation. Privileging Haudenosaunee language-based interpretations of traditionalism reinforces educators’ emphasis on experiential learning and informs numerous ways in which anthropological contributions are recognized. Political, repatriative, and transformation considerations reveal this “Indian-Scholar” relationship as defying characterization.

This paper explores the role of anthropological discourse in Indigenous representations of Iroquoian traditionalism. Here, scholarly “languages of power” (see Habib 1999) are translated in the relational context of longstanding interactions between members of Six Nations and academic communities of Haudenosaunee research. Across Iroquois literature, publications, practitioners, and disciplinary activities speak to or about the emergent relationship between anthropologists and community residents. The multiple meanings, complex experiences, and “human effects” of Six Nations residents’ encounters with anthropology illuminate this multi-dimensional relationship.

Critiques of Iroquois scholarship reveal “the power of language.” The use of English as the prevailing medium for Haudenosaunee concepts and relationships is often limiting and semantically problematic. Sites of contestation are complex. Historically, several senior Iroquoianist scholars have been passable to proficient speakers of Haudenosaunee languages. Conversely, many Haudenosaunee scholars and community members who criticize “external” scholarly representations are not. The linguistic issue also transcends the Indian/Scholar relationship, and is often debated among Haudenosaunee representors of traditionalism within community-based education contexts. Specific aspects of English interpretation are explored below through fieldwork materials and commentary.

Variations on the Haudenosaunee Co-Production of Scholarly Texts

Anthropology in the largest sense is not simply a disciplinary Anglo discourse—an extension of Western cultural imperialism—but a practice that necessarily crosses and double-crosses the color line. The subaltern voice, collaborative and counter-textual, is lodged at the very sites of invention of various anthropological discourses. (Michaelsen 1996:615)
Although power relations between anthropologists and the Haudenosaunee remain asymmetrical, the latter have never been passive in relationship to scholars. Reciprocal exchange and intellectual interaction have extended well beyond the production of scholarly texts. Moreover, as the Haudenosaunee assumed roles as co-producers and counter-narrators of anthropological works, anthropologists whose works and research activities are often subjects of intense criticism, have often participated in Haudenosaunee-based advocacy and activism.

Since the inception of anthropological studies of Iroquois people, Haudenosaunee dialogue with anthropology has paradoxically evoked both complicity and resistance (Michaelson 1996; Simpson 2000). Anthropology often situates advocacy as peripheral to scholarly representation—self-conscious or hidden, unwitting, or even coincidental. Prevailing, though mutable, power dynamics contribute to this oppositional relationship which shifts from collaboration to conflict, from alliance to crisis (Biolski and Zimmerman 1997).

The interactions Lewis Henry Morgan, lawyer anthropologist, cultivated with Ely S. Parker, Tonawanda Seneca and future Confederacy chief, in the mid-nineteenth century establish a premise of exchange of information for alliance. Morgan solicits information from Parker on “authentic” “pre-contact” Iroquois customs and practices for an Iroquois-inspired fraternity of his non-Indian colleagues. In return Morgan offers Parker legal support in challenging the 1838 Buffalo Creek Treaty, testifying as an expert witness for the Tonawanda Seneca (Deloria 1998:85).

For Phillip Deloria (1998:84) the Morgan-Parker relationship foreshadows an anthropological tradition of “political activism on the behalf of Native people who serve as objects of study.” Morgan’s use of Parker’s information eventually surpasses authenticating the New Confederacy fraternity to become the ethnographic foundation of The League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee (1862[1851]), the work that galvanized Morgan’s anthropological career. Morgan, in return, continues to assist Parker and the Tonawanda Seneca in legal protests of a revamped “compromise” treaty in 1842 (Tooker 1978:23; Deloria 1998:85; Simpson 2000:16). Morgan also sponsors Parker’s education at the Cayuga Lake Academy and his later positions as civil engineer, military officer, and political appointee (Deloria 1998:83; Armstrong 1978; Tooker 1978; Parker 1919).

Morgan’s infamous “fruit of our joint researches” dedication in The League, alongside his use of “collaborator,” instead of the more conventional “informant” suggest that Parker was more to Morgan than an “object of study” (Deloria 1998:84; Darnell 1992:42). Morgan’s perspective, not Parker’s, however, is usually privileged in later assessments.

Parker consistently emphasizes the distinctiveness of his interpretive position. He “understands his own voice to be cross-cultural, yet he denies Morgan that same mobility” (Michaelson 1996:621). Parker recognizes

an irreconcilable schism between the two’s texts. Morgan’s work, while undoubtedly ethnocentric, is primarily dedicated to preserving the idea of the inherent connectedness of different cultures, while Parker’s texts consistently insist, through various rhetorical strategies, that there are absolute gulfs between Anglo and Amerindian. (Michaelson 1996:619)

The encounters of Morgan and Parker establish a relational dialogue, reflecting the consistency of anthropological engagement and the continuity of Haudenosaunee awareness of fundamental asymmetries at the heart of these relations.

This Haudenosaunee dialogue and engagement continues to incorporate anthropological attention to Haudenosaunee needs.

As anthropology grew to maturity around figures like Morgan, it gradually institutionalized this subject-object dichotomy, representing Indian people as “exterior Others,” integral and yet largely peripheral to the discipline. Anthropologists reinforced their intellectual authority by insisting on the objective character of their ethnographic methods. (Deloria 1998:93)

Often there is no simple correlation between assistance and Haudenosaunee appreciation of anthropological advocacy efforts.

A Six Nations woman involved in cultural education resource development explains the later influence of William Fenton:

[Fenton] has had such a long career, beginning in the ’30s and the Depression era, probably doing some good stuff when he worked for the government, with redeveloping their skills in
basket making or mask making or whatever they were doing back in those dirty ’30s in the States. He helped those people access dollars so they could keep skills up and get paid for it and make a livelihood and then [he] went on to be a researcher and write about it and did probably have good relationships with the people of those days. But unfortunately he’s had such a long career and the important other scholars in those fields look up to him; he is their elder and rightly so because they do look up to his work, because it is a body of work. But what it’s done, it’s closed off only a certain area and said this is the only legitimate area that you study, therefore, there’s nothing about women, nothing about the day-to-day life. It’s done important work on those MEDICINE societies and the Great Law in a certain area but it has left out so many other things; it has really narrowed the field then it was so positive when somebody like Sally Weaver came along and a new generation of thinkers who knew about his work but didn’t study under him. So many of those ethnohistorians studied under Fenton and he was their advisor and, therefore, even when somebody like Annemarie Shimony, she’d appreciate him but she had her own way of doing things and certainly carved out a different way and a different kind of relationship with the people at Six Nations. So she remains that respected person and the same with Sally Weaver, and taken together those two women cover sort of a recent contemporary time period at Six Nations which nobody was looking at. We were always placed somewhere in the past, we don’t know what year or where and they weren’t really looking at what was happening, especially from that time period since the ’30s, the ’50s, and ’60s—especially what changes had come, what things were maintained or whatever. So it was important that those two women did that work because one did the traditional side, doing the Longhouse, and the other did the non-conservative side and looked at everybody else, but she knew what was going on with the other political side to it and had a very interesting perspective on the whole situation. So those are interesting role models from that non-Native society. (personal interview, March 17, 2000; emphasis added)

The interviewee characterizes anthropological advocacy work as non-reciprocal because of the somewhat fixed representational tendencies in Iroquois scholarship. These representations fail to challenge colonial realities, despite scholarly advocacy. Undoubtedly the length of careers

The “applied” activities of practitioners such as Fenton were not explicitly featured in ethnological representations, leaving Haudenosaunee readers aware only of their historical focus and authoritative tone of external expertise. Beyond the example of Fenton lies a larger history of Six Nations’ strategic engagement with and participation in anthropological research. A sort of political or politicized alliance emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when anthropologists were commissioned by various Confederacy Council representatives at Six Nations to document Haudenosaunee traditionalism so as to reinforce the value of maintaining Confederacy governance.

Contemporary conferences on Iroquois studies and culture illustrate the interpretive dynamics of relational dialogue and advocacy in the twentieth century and constitute important sites for illuminating the co-production of Indigenous texts between scholars, Six Nations community members, and Native scholars. Citing her own experience of ethnography on these emergent processes, Landsman notes that ethical academic protocol protects the prevailing power structure and inhibits interrogation of these contexts (1997:171–175). Nevertheless, these sites gauge the production of relational knowledge, particularly as the presence and contribution of Indigenous scholars accelerate. In such settings dialogue and advocacy intersect and sometimes collide with the authoritative and exclusionary aspects of scholarly discourse. The Annual Conference on Iroquoian Research at Rensselaerville, New York, for example, for many years was open by invitation only to a handful of scholars. A Six Nations community member and educator reflects,

the reason that we always wanted to go to Rensselaerville before they opened it was because it was some secret society and we didn’t know what they were saying and our whole experience with the “ologists” has been that whatever we say, they say it in their own way from their own perspective and then our perspective gets lost. So there’s an element of wrong in there, however well intentioned. So when [name] wanted to start going to Rensselaerville or whoever went in the beginning it was hard to get them to open the doors because of that whole mystery . . . between our people and the anthropologist, they just didn’t want [us] . . . [and] in that too also there’s an arrogance because . . . they’re basically saying well we are the experts,
those people down on the reserve they don’t know what they’re talking about. We’re the experts so we can have a little closed-off session and we can talk about our own things because we are the experts. But, you know, for us when we went on so long battling that, all those years on the reserve and finally we were let in there for ten-minute papers and that kind of thing. (personal interview, March 18, 1998)

These comments substantiate how the longstanding Haudenosaunee engagement with anthropology has produced exclusion. Numerous interviewees, Haudenosaunee traditionalist educators, and even current Indigenous participants at this annual conference emphasized the history of these “closed meetings.” This history further reinforces resentment and resistance to anthropological expertise. Over the last decade, however, conference organizers have made concerted efforts to invite interested Haudenosaunee community members to participate.

A second example comes from my fieldnotes (March 20, 1998) on questions following plenary presentations (by Robert Venables, William Fenton, Oren Lyons, Laurence Hauptman, and Mary Druke) at a conference on Iroquois Law, Governance and Sovereignty held at SUNY at Buffalo (see also Hill 1998:7). Two young women, identifying themselves as Haudenosaunee students in Native studies, approached the microphone and remarked that they never thought the day would come when they could finally confront the infamous William Fenton. They offered two harsh criticisms. First they admonished his interference in repatriating wampum belts belonging to their community (see also Barrerio 1990; Wallace 1984:10). Secondly, and more poignantly, they spoke of how offended they were over Fenton’s suggestion (in the preface to the 1991 edition of The Iroquois Eagle Dance) that his monograph be used as a how-to manual for performing the Eagle Dance (Ostowahgo’wah) in communities where the ceremony has lapsed (Fenton 1991[1953]:xiii).

“Who do you think you are, believing that YOU can teach US our ceremonies?” they challenged.

Fenton responded, almost tearfully, that he had devoted the better part of his life to studying the Iroquois and that if he’d offended anyone along the way he was deeply sorry. He referred to his age and intention to spend his remaining years continuing his studies. When he sat down a colleague leaped to his defence, with a litany of examples of Fenton’s work on behalf of Iroquois people. “You people have to know your enemies!” he shouted to the audience. “We are NOT your enemies!”(Videotapes of this conference are held in the Koren Law Library, SUNY at Buffalo.)
Multiple factors converge in this incident. That scholars would claim the authority to teach ceremonies provokes a gut response. The idea of learning culture from a book dismisses experiential learning and undermines the authority of knowledgeable individuals within communities or across Haudenosaunee territories. It is both arrogant and patronizing to imply that the “essence of ceremony” or its “truth” can be encapsulated in any text (Fenton 1991:iv). The implied scholarly privilege reinforces the frustration of community residents.

The responses of both Fenton and his colleague demonstrate how Indigenous critiques of anthropological works are silenced by accusations about Aboriginal people engaging in polemics that superficially generalize anthropological endeavours. Academics seem to expect recognition of indebtedness for their good intentions, in what scholars, rather than community members, construe as advocacy. Good intentions cannot compensate fully for massive societal inequities in communication, privilege, and access to representation. These realities cannot be altered by further condescension. Moreover, the legitimacy of Indigenous criticism is often assessed by evidence of a detractor’s detailed knowledge of the body of work and the biographies of the researchers they admonish. Anything less is dismissed as an anti-intellectual rejection of anthropological contributions (cf. Scheffel 2000).

A “recording for posterity” attitude still validates cultural historicism or salvage ethnography in Iroquois research. Increasingly, this orientation passes for “advocacy,” especially when practitioners neutralize community-based criticism. While such scholarship can be useful to Haudenosaunee peoples, potential contributions are often overstated, especially when academic paternalism or dependence is implied. This almost reverses Scheffel’s claim that advocacy compromises anthropological “objectivity” (2000:18§). In the Iroquois context, advocacy risks becoming merely another means for reinforcing external textual authority.

Academic research on the Iroquois Condolence Ceremony crystallizes the multi-dimensionality of the Six Nations’ relationship to anthropology. For example, Haudenosaunee educator Tom Deer occasionally assists community residents in understanding the teachings associated with the Haudenosaunee Condolence Cane. Deer acknowledges anthropological texts that reference the Cane in his teaching, although he distinguishes Haudenosaunee interpretations and concerns from anthropological ones. Deer’s approach thus transcends potentially simplistic assumptions about representational rivalry and interpretive ownership (Deer 1997, 1999). Conversely, such thinking dominated in Fenton’s account of his Condolence Cane research:
The Cranbrook Institute of Science asked me to authenticate a mnemonic cane of pegs and pictographs that had originated at Six Nations Reserve. Hewitt’s notes had hinted at its existence. Obviously it was a device for recalling the roll of the league’s founders, and at once it was a native organization chart of the league. The digital arrangement of pegs for the titles appeared older than the corresponding pictographs, several of which illustrated items dating from the nineteenth century. To arouse the interest of the chiefs, I distributed blueprints of the two sides of the stick. To my surprise on returning to Six Nations the following year, replicas of the cane appeared, some of which were finer examples than the original. The study had contributed to a restoration and revival. After my monograph appeared (Fenton 1950), condolence canes proliferated. It is even claimed that one reproduction is the original and the Cranbrook specimen a copy. (1998:xv)

Deer elected not to comment on such points of anthropological conjecture. The logic in this quote is troubling, however, given the scholarly weight placed on issues of authenticity. Although working with community-based materials, Fenton transgresses by claiming that he is doing the authenticating. Upon raising discussion of the cane with the Chiefs, they quickly produce finer and more detailed canes, which he considers replicas. This raises the question of how the Haudenosaunee originators of the cane and possessors of its knowledge can produce a reproduction, whereas Fenton is responsible for the authentic “original.” Obviously knowledge of the cane remained in the community, as evidenced by the speed of its elaboration. At most Fenton’s interest may have reminded community members of the cane’s potential values. However, his equation of his scholarly interest with indigenous revival is couched in arrogant and paternalistic assumptions of authenticity. These problems are amplified by Fenton’s claims that Haudenosaunee use of the Condolence Cane is a recent phenomenon (Fenton 1950; 1998).

Another example of how the relationship between anthropologists and the Haudenosaunee emerges though representations of the Condolence involves current community-based repatriative interests in Fenton’s recordings of a ceremony at Six Nations in 1945 (Fenton 1998:xv; Fenton 1946a). In a recent synthesis of anthropological representations of the Condolence ceremony and their implications for Haudenosaunee communities, anthropologist Denis Foley describes a “no holds barred” meeting between Fenton and a delegation of Haudenosaunee chiefs at Fenton’s home in Cooperstown, New York:
On December 5, 2001, Onondaga Chief Peter Sky, Chief Oliver Jacobs, Six Nations Chiefs Secretary and Faithkeeper Jock Hill, Faithkeeper Archie Bomburg, and Oliver Jacobs’ grandson visited William Fenton in Cooperstown as part of a cultural repatriation project. The parts of the tapes were played for the chiefs. Fenton became “informant.” Pete Sky knew the ceremony in Onondaga and Cayuga. He questioned Fenton in Cayuga while Fenton replied in Seneca. Sky’s delegation wanted to know if current performers of the Condolence left out materials their grandfathers knew. Sky and Fenton agreed that each ritualist has his own “style” including cadence and intonation. Jock Hill asked, “Was this my grandfather’s voice?” “Yes, it was Chief Joe Logan himself,” Fenton replied. Lengthy discussions arose concerning David Thomas’ version, which was played. How that compared to his son Jacob Thomas’ performances. A general consensus arose that the Fenton recordings contained an ideal or preferred version that current performers could strive to emulate. The then ninety-three year old anthropologist appeared exhilarated but exhausted after a four hour session with the delegation. (Foley 2003:13)

According to Foley, the delegation questioned Fenton’s motives and sources of research support and his perceived role as “gatekeeper” of Haudenosaunee resources. They asked how to locate and access collected materials. In Foley’s view, Fenton tried to assuage their concerns. Much of the meeting involved dialogue about the particularities of the Condolence recordings. Fenton concluded euphorically that “his work on the Condolence had come full circle” (Foley 2003:13). When Fenton first recorded the audio tapes at Ohsweken in 1945, especially after the Confederacy chiefs were deposed in 1924, he feared the ceremonies might eventually be lost. Such installation ceremonies, however, continue to be held at various Six Nations communities. Traditionalist educators are creating wider awareness of the ceremony and “large” Condolences occur with increasing frequency. The delegation’s meeting with Fenton conveys consensus that Condolence recordings supplement the existing ritual, both as an “ideal” and a resource for the use of future performers (see Foley 2003:10–13).

From the time of Morgan and Parker to Fenton and beyond, complexities in the relationship between anthropology on the Iroquois and Haudenosaunee people are evidenced by asymmetries in power, irreconcilable schisms, a tenuous crossing of researcher/researched boundar-
ies, exclusion, and variable responses to anthropological advocacy and authority.

Six Nations’ Multi-Dimensional Affiliations with Scholarly Research

Throughout my fieldwork, the moment I revealed my project as “anthropological,” participants shared their perspectives on anthropological research at or about Six Nations. I now turn to how anthropology is situated in the Six Nations community based on residents’ engagement with anthropological texts and relationships with various anthropologists. Much of this material is highly critical. Nevertheless, most critiques approach issues of authority in scholarly representation through Haudenosaunee language-based translation. Anthropological contributions are acknowledged, elaborating how changing needs within the community have been met by anthropology at different historical moments. Alongside and embedded in these assessments of Iroquois research are recollections of personal experiences as research participants. Selected excerpts provide a glimpse of the rich narratives of the Six Nations–anthropology relationship that have been passed on over time and across generations.

For those involved in educational initiatives promoting Haudenosaunee traditionalism at Six Nations, misrepresentations of concepts, roles, protocol, and teachings are a huge concern. One of the most poignant and recurring realities traditional knowledge educators face is dealing with over 150 years of anthropological authority and expertise. Disentangling misrepresentations of Haudenosaunee traditionalism circulated through anthropological discourse is often a prominent feature of community-based educational praxis.

The following examples of misrepresentation raised by traditional knowledge educators pertain to issues of mistranslation. Regarding Six Nations communities’ early relations with anthropological researchers, an elder from the Ogwehó:weh Teaching Circle initiative notes,¹

way back in that time when those ethnologists came and they talked and did their research and everything and the people that they interviewed the English language was very rare. At that point in time a lot of times they would say things just to get them off their backs, when all of these ethnologists were coming and interviewing people. . . . I have seen some papers that were written where they have been talking to them. They have it written down in the language if you understand what the ethnologist

¹McCarthy
was trying to write and his interpretation might be somewhat different than what it was. But the thing that lives is this interpretation because it is the English language because it is what is stronger than you and I. So that is how a lot of things are lost in that translation and the scary part of this is we fall into that ourselves because of the glorified language. I could be standing up here and trying to really glorify and paint my picture too and I am probably using all the wrong words and pretty soon you go back and say the same thing and you glorify your words, too. (Reading Circle transcripts, March 3, 1998)

English-language interference introduces mistranslations in the form of “glorified language.” Such “glorified language” often describe traditional Haudenousaunee concepts, processes, roles, and responsibilities. These “glorified” constructs preclude more appropriate understandings, which may be imbued with more humility than an Anglicized interpretation and can be difficult to challenge. Haudenosaunee educators are acutely aware that some members of their learning audience take for granted the authority and accuracy of representations by academically credentialed scholars.

Another Ogwehó:weh Teaching Circle panelist illustrates misinterpretation and mistranslation of specific traditionalist roles resulting from “glorified” Anglo constructs thus:

The word for clan mother [in our language] is a lady that knows of the knowledge that is in the system and how everything works. That is all of the ceremonies and the way the clan works; if this lady knows that then she is in line for the title. She can be chosen by her clan. It is the same way for a chief. The chief has to be a noted knowledgeable person to translate or relay the Confederacy system for that clan. You see a lot of things have gone wrong, though, because you see people say, “the mightiest thing is the clan mother. The clan mother has the power,” and there is no such thing. There is no such thing as a clan mother having power. It is just not there. It is just a new thing that is what we are doing now because we are seeing that happening all over on television. All the things there it is all that interference and that is where your knowledge has come from to know what is interference and what is not. What is real? What is something that you follow? (Teaching Circle transcripts, March 10, 1998)

In this excerpt, Anglo understandings of power are inextricably tied to configurations of leadership, emphasizing direct authority with
stratification and hierarchy. In traditionalist Haudenosaunee teachings, power is associated with a state of mind, a “good mind,” qualifying leadership through a non-stratified, humility-based responsibility to the people. Unfortunately Anglo constructs of power and leadership have infiltrated interpretive contexts of traditional knowledge. Some individuals now actively seek out titles of “chief” and “clan mother” for their perceived authority and prestige.

Jake Thomas speaks about the origins and significance of Condolence during his 1996 recitation of the Great Law. He refers to inaccuracies in Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson (1992), a translation of Confederacy Royaner Gibson’s 1912 version of the Great Law as compiled by linguist Hanni Woodbury. Disputing the appropriate term and interpretation of the material used to “cover the grave of a loved one” may seem like a minute detail to those who do not understand the significance of Condolence to the formation of the League. Nevertheless, seemingly small mistranslations attributed to Anglo-based interpretations affect the overall integrity of this central teaching. Thomas is worried about how words and meanings signifying “older Haudenosaunee language” have fallen into disuse and are no longer widely recognized even among fluent speakers. Thomas’s nine-day recitation of the Great Law addresses many similar issues of misrepresentation, mistranslation and misinterpretation.

Translating the oral traditions of Six Nations people, academics have emphasized their seemingly most exotic characteristics like the prominence of women in politics and the structuring of a Confederacy government (Doxtator 1996:13). Ethnographers produced written recordings of ceremonial moments. For example, the obvious curiosity generated by Hado:ih and Gajishaj Longhouse ceremonies is reflected in the proliferation of anthropological descriptions. An elder Teaching Circle panelist comments,

That’s all it is. There is nothing written down. The only thing written down is what the white man has done and right away that has become the authority because it was written on paper. So right away that way is right and it is not. A lot of research has been done. You read about some of these professors talk about the False Face Society, the Broken Nose, the Spoon Mouth, the Laughing Beggar, and the Door Keeper. These are the names that they have given these False Faces. There is no such thing as that. . . . But all these guys they look at stuff and they sort of guess at what they see or what you tell them and
then they will write on and on. I did this experiment. Somebody will ask me something and I will say this is it. I try to make it as short a sentence as possible. I say it to myself in my native language. I translate it and then let them write it and they are forever writing. Pretty soon they have a page and I ask them what they wrote. They say only what you have said and what I have researched in other books by other people. You go either by that other person or you go by someone you want to listen to. I am not very well schooled but I always check things out to satisfy my own peace of mind.2 (Teaching Circle transcripts, February 10, 1998)

Another panelist elaborates on the inaccuracy of the referents for Hado:ih and Gajish® perpetuated in anthropological literature, particularly in Fenton’s The False Faces of the Iroquois (1987):

Same as like Hado:ih or Gajish®. I have heard people call them False Faces and that is one of the things that I am very much against. I never say False Face. To me it is not “false.” It is Hado:ih, Gajishaj, or Medicine Mask. If it has to be English, well then it is a “Medicine Mask.” However, it is not false to me. (personal interview, March 3, 1998)

The panelist whose initial comments on anthropological representations of Hado:ih and Gajish® ceremonies are presented above, elaborates:

This is what I have against some of the anthropologists. I do not like how they explain things because they don’t really know. That is how come now a days you open a book up and they will tell you about the Spoon Mouth, the Broken Nose, Door Keeper, Laughing Beggar, they have names for all those Hado:ih. There is no such thing like that. The only name is Hado:ih and that is it. Like [name omitted] said if someone dreams of one or sees one that is where that image comes from so he makes one to look like that. That is why there are so many now and they all look different. I asked this one anthropologist why he said that. They even call some of them Door Keepers. This guy used to go into the Longhouse, this anthropologist, they let him in there and he learned from there I guess. I asked him how they got the name Door Keeper? Because in these speeches that go with all of the Hado:ih ceremonies there is never one that says this is a Spoon Mouth, this is Broken Nose, we do not say it like that. I asked him how he got the name Door Keeper. He said, he
is always at the door, this one Hado:ih is always at the door and sometimes there is a Gajish?, too, with him. And any of you go to a ceremony and you will see there is always one or two that’s dancing by the door and they are not Door Keepers. They dance there because that is where there is space for them and they just dance there. (Teaching Circle transcripts, March 3, 1998)

A Six Nations woman comments on developing an awareness of the implications of anthropological research participation:

Once we realized the importance of the written word, or realized the impact of it, I mean the impact of English words, I think that’s when we started to think well they can’t do that to us and we started reading those books. Cause when I was growing up I heard about anthropologists all the time and they all came to my house to talk to my grandfather, to talk to my dad, all the big ones. . . . I met them all. . . . So I’ve known them and I can remember my grandfather trying to explain something to somebody in limited English, my grandfather taught himself how to read and write English. . . . I can remember him trying to explain things to them and they act like they understand but they don’t really. But I think we were aware of that later on, we were aware that they didn’t understand but yet I don’t think we were totally aware of the impact that their books would have. (personal interview, March 18, 1998)

This interviewee was exposed to academic research initially because some of the most prominent practitioners of cultural and linguistic anthropology sought out her father and grandfather as “informants.” Thus, she recognizes from experience discrepancies between information actually relayed to anthropologists and how this information eventually was represented in texts.

Personal involvement as participants in anthropological research is an experience that draws people to the resulting scholarly texts. Conversely, participant assessments of inaccuracies in these texts emphasize the paradoxical nature of anthropological research and representation. The authority which initially resides with those who are sought out to impart knowledge is seemingly reversed in the finished texts. Concerns reside in how the apparent association with, or complicity in, the perpetuation of misinformation, forsakes personal responsibilities to the community.

An elder panelist from the Teaching Circle initiative indicates yet another dimension of scholarly misrepresentation and misinterpretation:
I’ve known some anthropologists now for forty years, and when they write something they formulate an opinion and they want that opinion to be right because they’ve written about it. So the result of that [is] they refuse to accept that they’ve made a mistake. . . . One of the biggest things I guess is . . . not really giving Native Americans credit for having come up with certain things on their own, without having to think, well, this had to be a European influence for just about everything. (Teaching Circle transcripts, March 24, 1998)

These interviewees note that academic representations of Haudenosaunee traditionalism accrue significant scholarly authority despite misapprehension and inaccuracy. Perceptions that anthropologists have not been forthright in conceding errors in their representations are seen as attempts to preserve and maintain this authority at all costs. Moreover, misinterpretations of Haudenosaunee contributions as European in origin undermine or diminish Haudenosaunee ingenuity.

My own research investigates Haudenosaunee traditionalism but reiterates that “tradition” or “traditional” are Western-derived concepts. Apparently no word in any Six Nations language directly conveys the same meaning as “tradition” does in English. The Cayuga word which best approximates my research focus is jihwihdago, roughly translated as “Longhouse way.” Relatedly, Royaner Jake Thomas addresses associated confusion over the concept of culture:

We don’t even understand what the ceremonies are about. But we go to them. A lot of young people go to ceremonies and they don’t know why they’re there. They come and ask me, they say “What was this ceremony about?” So I explain what I know and then they begin to understand. . . . What they call a culture, we call it . . . we don’t have a word. . . . But we call it “jiniwadehoda,” that’s what are our Native ways. That’s what covers culture and culture is a way of life. (Indigenous Knowledge Conference, May 2, 1998; emphasis added)

Thomas considers the Haudenosaunee languages action oriented, incorporating movement, motion, and therefore a processional consciousness. Cayuga verbs incorporate nouns, producing considerable difficulty in aligning syntactic properties with European categories of subject, verb and object (Dyck 1999:103–105; 2001). When the action orientation of Cayuga is considered in light of the concept of tradition, jihwihdago or jiniwadehoda as approximate referents suggest orientations emphasizing the future, rather than solely the past.
Regarding Cherokee texts, Alan Kilpatrick writes, “I want to focus my attention on translation not as a final product but as the activity itself” (1999:25). In the excerpts above, this process of translation articulates the contributions of Ogwehó:weh paradigms and intellectual traditions which can be best accomplished through Haudenosaunee languages. Issues of translation are not unique to the relationships between the Haudenosaunee and non-Haudenosaunee scholars; they also form a substantial part of internal controversy within communities and among “traditional” peoples themselves. Given the low and declining rates of Haudenosaunee language fluency at Six Nations, only a small portion of the community is in a position to make the critiques presented above. Thus English is used to translate specific concepts and processes of traditionalism to a wider Six Nations audience and to correct mistranslations in anthropological representations.

Educational initiatives promoting traditionalism at Six Nations emphasize the need to counter anthropological misrepresentation and to reclaim authority in a discourse from which Six Nations people have felt substantively excluded. Historically, the Haudenosaunee have not been passive in their contributions to, uses for and evaluations of the discipline (see Michaelson 1996; Weaver 1994a). I do not promote a generalized polemic about the negative and exploitative views of anthropology held within the community. There are positive contributions of this discipline and interactions with some of its practitioners. Nevertheless, anthropological discourse continues to resonate with power relationships that subordinate Haudenosaunee language-based interpretations. As the discipline encounters more and more Ogwehó:weh students and scholars’ attention, these issues will inevitably advance.

Published anthropological materials about the Iroquois circulate widely within the community. The ethnographic insights below emphasize the form of scholarly texts, with some assessments of textual contents. At another level of Six Nations engagement with anthropology, these publications affect Haudenosaunee traditionalist learning processes. Attitudes and opinions vary widely, from claims that scholarly texts and textual authority potentially devalue language-based translation, experiential knowledge, and the integrity of oral traditions to acknowledgments of scholarly contributions expressed overtly through recommendation, action, or practice. These opinions resonate with varying viewpoints on the appropriate contexts for teaching and learning about Haudenosaunee traditionalism.

In the 1996 recitation of the Great Law of Peace at the Six Nations Tourism Building, Jake Thomas’s explanation of the origins of the
Condolence is diverted into a discussion of mistranslations in the recent edition of Gibson’s Great Law text:

So that’s what I mean. You have to watch how you present these things. And that is why I always explain because going back to books, people say, “oh I believe in the Great Law, I read the book.” I don’t believe in books. Maybe some, but not all. I don’t want to get carried away either in the books, cause I know it’s not true. Cause it is only one man that wrote that. So this is what I am talking about, trying to explain what they mean, so people will understand. (Great Law recitation, September 8, 1996)

Thomas again emphasizes the replacement of older Haudenosaunee language-based interpretations with Anglo explanations. The translation of John Arthur Gibson’s version of the Great Law provides a basis for considering his own involvement in the research and writing process, as well as his working relationship with a particular anthropologist. Thomas articulates how interpretive difficulties and misunderstandings are intensified because of the proliferation of written and published versions of the Great Law. To Thomas, codifying information in this form is constraining because it reifies a single perspective, along with potential errors and inaccuracies. Since the authority of these published versions is often taken for granted, traditional knowledge teachers like Thomas must offset, fill in, and correct written interpretations. Such dilemmas are further intensified since the selection of interpretations to be represented in writing resides with anthropological authors. These decisions can amplify interpretive discrepancies among traditionalists.

Thomas further elaborates his concerns about the impact of a variety of published versions of the Great Law:

What spoils everything today is that there are so many what they call the Great Law. . . . But most of the time I hear people say “I know the Great Law because that’s what the book says that I read.” Now we’re geared into books! Our people never went by books years ago. And I don’t go by books either. I don’t say, hey, I could be standing here telling you what that books says right there. It’s not by the way I know it. . . . But what you buy today is only a little thickness [gesture] of the Great Law. And I think that’s what ruining our culture, our way of the Confederacy, because we never can come together. It’s getting worse and worse all over. We don’t believe in the old traditions any more. (Great Law recitation, September 7, 1996)
On issues of credibility, Thomas is concerned about being called “a liar” when his rendition of the Great Law does not correspond to published representations. While Haudenosaunee acquaintance with written materials about their traditional ideologies and practices is not new, being “geared into books” as a basis for traditional learning processes has increased. Responding to the history of displacement from Haudenosaunee traditionalism experienced by Six Nations people, Thomas steadfastly maintains that remedies could not come from the forms of education that created these problems in the first place. His commitment is for the people to hear, as opposed to read, the Great Law, as a vital part of traditional process. As the relationship between hearing and knowing is supplanted by reading and knowing, displacement will increase: “the way it’s written reflects the white man’s culture,” and “our people don’t believe in oral tradition anymore, people don’t have that kind of knowledge anymore.” (Great Law recitation, September 10, 1996)

Thomas contends that even the five-hundred-plus-page written translation of the Gibson version only captures a minuscule sense of enormous expanse of the Great Law teaching. An embedded problem involves how information is represented in these published texts, for example, the enumerated and unintegrated presentation of “one wampum, two wampum, three wampum” as in the Seth Newhouse and other written versions (i.e., Parker 1916; Wallace 1946. In the oral form, segments of the Great Law “constitution” are not numerically itemized by wampum numbers.

The preceding three excerpts from Thomas’s recitation of the Great Law illustrate his views on how written representations of traditionalism encourage divisiveness. Thomas’s larger critique of mainstream education surfaced frequently over the nine-day recitation, as well as in other public presentations, personal meetings, and recorded interviews. Although mainstream views of oral tradition question its stability, consistency, and reliability, Thomas contends that “the more something gets written down, the more it changes it and in one way it divides the people” (Great Law recitation, September 7, 1996). Scholarly texts are characteristic of mainstream education, influencing both what people know, and how they come to know it. Such approaches, therefore, have detrimental consequences for how people behave in relation to knowledge. Since mainstream education has historically encouraged displacement from Haudenosaunee languages, declining levels of fluency increase discrepancies in interpretation. Discrepancies reified in writing can constitute tangible sites of conflict. Moreover, this format continues to influence how people encounter knowledge as well as how they behave in
acquiring it. With oral tradition, “knowledge is always in your mind, [it] takes a lifetime to learn” (Great Law recitation, September 7, 1996). Information gleaned from written materials infuses a more Westernized view of authority as “people now fight amongst each other over interpretations, roles, procedures, protocols, [etc.]” (personal interview with Thomas, July 29, 1997).

There is, however, some leeway in Thomas’s position on books about Haudenosaunee traditionalism; he “believes in some [books], but not all.” A young Mohawk woman also expresses concerns over the consequences of privileging information about traditionalism from books over knowledge acquisition through experience:

[there are] people that are coming out of the woodwork who were so Christian, well religious, in the churches. They’re coming into the Longhouse, like [community resident’s name], she thinks, I mean, I was raised with it. I’m not the perfect Longhouse person. I don’t know all my religion and everything, but I’m pretty smart on it and I know a lot. She comes in and if you saw us, you’d take her as more [Longhouse] than me. She goes around and tries to talk the language to people, like she knows everything, because she read it in a book or learned it like that. Those kind of people, they’re coming in and they’re like gung-ho; they’re diving in and pushing us aside, you know. (personal interview, January 13, 1998)

Here written textual form is criticized relative to its behavior-based consequences. Strident critiques are aimed at those who posture as knowledgeable but whose understandings of traditionalism do not come from experience and exposure. Charges of such transgressions of academic authority are not aimed exclusively at scholars; community members also can perpetuate this sense of expertise based on scholarly forms of authority.

Outward displays of traditional knowledge-based expertise often leave more experientially traditionalist people incensed when learning has come largely from externally produced resources. The authority of these scholarly representations is reinforced when individuals use them to accrue traditional knowledge-based authority for themselves. Ongoing experiential commitment to community-based sources and processes remains unacknowledged in this learning approach.

Many Six Nations “traditionalists” understand that there is no fast track to expertise or need to draw attention to it, even if considerable traditional knowledge has been acquired. The authority and prestige
associated with Western approaches to educational achievement do not transpose onto Haudenosaunee views of learning processes. When it comes to traditionalism it is not enough to simply read some books, take a class, or to even obtain a degree, regardless of apparent relevance. These symbolic markers of educational progress do not map seamlessly onto more experiential community-based approaches.

Nevertheless, these criticisms can be more or less yielding depending upon who levels them and toward whom they are aimed. For some it matters less if an individual wishing to learn has explored a book or two on Haudenosaunee traditionalism before seeking more community-based means, as long as they do not claim expertise and remain respectful of the time and levels of commitment that traditional knowledge acquisition entails. Others maintain very narrow prescriptions about experiential acquisition of this knowledge, making it difficult for individuals who demonstrate appropriate behaviors and dispositions to avoid reproach.

The contributions of scholarly texts are not irreconcilable with community-based educational praxis. The interviewee below qualifies her perspective: “I’m looking at it from a non-Longhouse person, a non-Confederacy person.” She says:

And when I was doing this project back in the early ’70s I went to talk to . . . my aunt and uncle and I knew that [aunt]’s parents were these [family name] who had been informants for a lot of people and they spoke the language and she still spoke the language and so I was asking her things, so she said to me [interviewee’s name] you can take this book . . . “everything you want to know is in that so we just read that.” So I said, “Oh okay,” and it was Annemarie’s book *Conservatism*. So I looked at it and thought this is really interesting, especially about ceremonies and what happens at a feast and I thought “oh I know what happens here,” but you don’t know what’s being said in the language, you don’t know what’s really going on when you’re a kid you’re not really that interested. And I thought, “Gee this is really good.” (personal interview, March 15, 2000)

Interested community members not so experientially familiar with Haudenosaunee traditionalism more often consult scholarly resources. The excerpt above, however, complicates this correlation. The interviewee admits to a limited understanding and initially seeks out a relative for this information. This relative, a participant in Shimony’s research, directs the interviewee to Shimony’s work, already having assessed its comprehensiveness.
Clan mothers, Faithkeepers, and other traditional teachers periodically affirm the value of information contained in certain scholarly monographs and recommend them to other community members. In my experience, endorsements for Shimony’s *Conservatism*, particularly the 1994 edition with its updated introduction, were most frequent. Scholarly sources by Charles Johnston (1964, 1994), Sally Weaver (1981, 1994a, 1994b) and Brian Titley (1986) were recommended to me by research participants for historical context.

Invariably qualifications accompany recommendations of scholarly publications. Materials suggested are never intended to replace or delegitimize community-based experiential learning processes. Their role is supplemental. Moreover, shortcomings, inaccuracies and omissions are often noted prior to approval for educational recommendation.

The use of scholarly texts in traditionalist teaching and learning processes is clear in the catalogue of materials available from The Jake Thomas Learning Centre. Through its Sandpiper Press, the Centre offers reprints of numerous anthropological works including Horatio Hale (1883[1883]), J. N. B. Hewitt (1900, 1903), A. A. Goldenweiser (1912b, 1916), Parker (1916), and Fenton (1945). Significantly, however, these reprints all incorporate Thomas’s own revisions and commentary.

Levels of criticism within the community demonstrate that anthropological studies are widely read and discussed among many traditional teachers and interested residents. Gratitude is frequently expressed for archival recordings of songs, stories, teachings, and lists of names and titles produced by researchers. These are important resources for Six Nations people, especially the whereabouts of artifacts and recordings in government museums and archives for repatriation and recovery of knowledge.

Nevertheless, participants link concerns about artifice of form and context to mainstream education’s legitimating of book-based knowledge and expertise. Such learning can contribute to artifice in authoritative representations of traditionalism. Traditionalist educators hope their students will “unlearn” these associations.

In the Six Nations context, expressions of anthropological contributions are assessed by practitioners based on their abilities to meet specific community needs at particular historic moments. Such needs shape Six Nations residents’ forms of acknowledgment to the discipline. Variables include diversity in community, political turmoil, cultural displacement, and traditional knowledge and language maintenance priorities. Positive anthropological contributions find ultimate expression in long-term relationships with certain scholars based on trust, commitment, and reciprocity.
Six Nations residents’ own approaches to Haudenosaunee traditionalism clarify anthropology’s changing relationship to the community. The community’s historic response to its “traditionalist” residents has changed over time. Jake Thomas speaks of his childhood experiences prior to the current wider acceptance of reclaiming traditional knowledge and identity:

I used to often wonder, a lot of kids that we went to school with were from Christian families, and they used to call us traditional Longhouse people “pagans.” And whatever is going on in the Longhouse, they’d say, “That’s a pagan practice. That’s the work of the devil.” I used to hear [that from] some relatives who are Christians in our family. . . . That’s because they think that Native people, Longhouse people, traditional people, were uncivilized. (Proceedings of the Indigenous Knowledge Conference, May 2, 1998)

Traditionalist individuals suffered from discriminatory attitudes, not just from outsiders or from mainstream institutions, but from members of their own community.

Interest in, and attitudes toward, Haudenosaunee traditionalism fell into rapid decline at a particular time. Only a small minority maintained dedication to traditionalist processes. Sagowesatah, a proponent of the Onondaga Beaver clan research initiative, explained,

Many people didn’t see the value of it [traditionalism] in your mom’s time and even when I was growing up, I think till probably I was around maybe twenty in the seventies. . . . And people started being radical again and you never seen that, like for us in 1924 it was the last time it was done as a collective where people really got into it. But you know in the late 1800s, early 1900s is when that sort of died because with the policy against us, everybody that stood up for that kind of stuff, that was bad, you just didn’t do that . . . you got black balled and there were so many people in the community who said, “that Longhouse stuff, that’s part of the past you don’t do that anymore” and that really did a number on anybody who was a traditionalist back then. But there was always the diehards, the people who kept the ceremonies going that, they always felt that it was relevant and they always hoped that there would be a day when it would come back and they could feel free to practice those ways again. . . . So it went way down there at one point but it start-
ed changing, I would say it would have been around the sixties when it started swinging back around . . . now the pendulum’s swinging the other way. People hear a little bit and they want to know more (personal interview, June 23, 1999).

The “policy against us” to which the intervieweeattributes the decline of traditionalism is probably the Indian Advancement Act of 1884, whose sole purpose was to impose elected councils on reserves (Weaver 1994a). A barrage of enfranchisement policies and legislation in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century aimed at negating the sovereignty of Six Nations and other Native nations in Canada. These policies, coupled with drastic erosion of the Six Nations reserve land base, amplified discrepant community views on how to best maintain sovereignty. Furthermore, by 1902 “pagan” children were explicitly targeted for enrollment at the Mohawk Institute residential school (Graham 1997:16). Distinctions between Longhouse and Christian peoples, once bridged by the Confederacy Council, widened with this Council’s ousting in 1924. The convergence of these factors accounts for decline in Haudenosaunee traditionalism between 1924 and 1965.

Negative attitudes in the community also historically influenced traditionalists’ receptivity to researchers’ interests in Haudenosaunee traditionalism. Scholars could help to offset derogation and decline. Anthropologist Sergei Kan notes: “For better or worse, anthropologists have sometimes been the only interested listeners with whom Indian elders could share their knowledge” (2001:8). Of necessity affirmation, reinforcement, and urgency became historic features of the community, especially in the era of coercive colonial interference and imposition. Many traditionalists strategically engaged anthropological research to address highly politicized needs. A Six Nations woman involved in cultural education resource development addresses the significance of Six Nations traditionalists’ relationships to anthropology after the 1924 deposition of the Confederacy Council:

[Some people] knew exactly what they were doing and would use those relationships, too, for political purposes and they did. So I think they were very astute about doing that and I have respect for them. People, the Chiefs at that time, especially after 1924 were working very strongly to get reinstated and were trying to get their point across. . . .

[There] were people that really used the press as effectively as possible to get their point across. But in so doing they left us with some more information of that time period, then we can go
back and look at how they worked with anthropologists, especially Frank Speck, and when they talked to the popular press.

(personal interview, March 17, 2000)

These strategic processes began in earnest in the late nineteenth century. Since the eventual removal of the Confederacy Council was anticipated, by the 1890s, “a small core of Longhouse [Confederacy] Chiefs” began enlisting the help of anthropologists, historical societies, and media to promote and defend the legitimacy of the Confederacy Council (Weaver 1994a:234). These representations, combined with others generated from within the community (i.e., versions of the League’s origins by Seth Newhouse and John Arthur Gibson) supported the Chiefs’ petitions for government recognition of Six Nations sovereignty (Weaver 1994a:234).

Community-based strategies facilitated the pre-1924 research work of such practitioners as Goldenweiser (1913, 1914, 1916), Hewitt (1903, 1916), and Parker (1910, 1913, 1916), and Speck’s post-1924 research (1945, 1949). These representations, however, reflect disciplinary theoretical approaches of the day more than community circumstances or support for maintaining Confederacy governance.

Some of these early representations from these eras remain relevant. Generations of displacement combined with re-emergence of Haudenosaunee traditionalism. Anthropological representations can provide a means to these ends. The interviewee quoted above discusses negotiating even the most maligned of anthropological representations for repatriative purposes:

Because you have to know what they’ve said about us, because there are little gems of information. My prime example is using Fenton’s book on the masks. Everybody is really upset and uptight about that and it’s really problematic for me too, but one, we had to get it in the Woodland Centre library. It had to be a resource book in there, because one of the only main importance of that book is then people will know exactly where each of those masks went and where they’re housed today. . . . But back to Fenton’s book, that really is the only use I can see of it because nobody classifies stuff like that, only anthropologists and then what is the point of doing that? (personal interview, March 17, 2000)

To several research participants, these writings provide direction to access cultural materials, recorded information and other primary resources from which community members have become displaced. Ongoing
engagement with, and intellectual management of, anthropological sources thus facilitates repatriative processes.

Nevertheless, community use of anthropological representations for repatriation does not necessarily validate historic disciplinary approaches or absolve community-based criticism. Museum and archival access to Haudenosaunee materials has often trumped providing the community with repatriation assistance (Barreiro 1990; Deloria 1998; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). Fenton’s works on Condolence (1950) and the Eagle Dance (1953) both claim usefulness of their recordings of primary resources in the wake of future culture loss and displacement. In many ways they are. But telling communities about their own imminent needs is offensive and irresponsible if these resources are used only to advance disciplinary authority.

Interestingly, negotiating anthropological contributions to repatriation seems less complex for language maintenance priorities. To many Haudenosaunee people, linguistic research has consistently supported language continuity, what anthropologists today label “applied” research. Such research requires certain levels of language proficiency, which builds capacity to advance interpretive discourse.

The following interviewee recalls Floyd Lounsbury’s example of the type of relationship between researcher and community resident that linguistic research requires:

He passed away a couple of years ago. Because he did research on Oneida and this was back in the ’30s, some where around there and he worked with people still knowledgeable at Oneida and knew some of the Great Law and that kind of stuff, so he translated this one piece, or recorded it actually and now a friend of mine is translating it, but he was one of these amazing linguists. . . . I guess because they had this long-term intimate relationship with people and you work together to understand words and I think probably people then had respect for if you really made an effort and you had this ear that you could really grip some of the language and then they could talk to these older people. I don’t know, maybe there’s just something about these individuals that can maintain this relationship and that they give back to the people in a way that’s respectful and in a way that it’s heartfelt and they do have this really personal relationship with people that goes beyond just working, gathering of knowledge. (personal interview, March 17, 2000)

A fluent speaker of Oneida and proficient in other Iroquoian languages, Lounsbury’s contributions (1953, 1964, 1978) are acknowledged by both
the academy and by Haudenosaunee language maintenance advocates in several Six Nations communities. In a community like Six Nations, where the number of fluent speakers are so few and accessibility to language teaching resources is so limited, a linguist’s skills are acquired through long-term engagement and ongoing dialogue with community speakers which necessitate reciprocal relationship. Practitioners must interact intensively with language speakers in the community to advance their own competence; thus they become involved in community-based language preservation initiatives (e.g., Froman et al. 2002).

Attention to linguistic research will not completely resolve discrepancies in translation, as indicated by Thomas’s critique of Woodbury (cited above). Nonetheless, when traditionalists argue for the inextricable linkage between the interpretation of traditional knowledge and Haudenosaunee languages, linguists, of all anthropologists, perhaps best understand this connection.

Repatriation issues are especially sensitive and require researchers to demonstrate trustworthy long-term relationships with community members. Displacement from and decline in traditionalism is especially contentious. An interviewee describes sorting out hereditary Confederacy titles by the adaptive processes of “borrowing” individuals to fill vacant roles and positions:

and that’s what Annemarie [Shimony] was doing when she died was trying to sort out the titles which was no easy job and something that some people didn’t want to hear either. They didn’t want to know what happened back in the ’30s and ’40s. . . . They didn’t want to know when people were borrowed. But to me that doesn’t change anything, it’s good to know, but some people get very upset because it’s so personal that they don’t want to hear that. Well what can you do? That is your history. To me it doesn’t diminish anything. It speaks volumes to how the Confederacy maintains itself, its resiliency is incredible how it can deal with those changes. . . . I’ve tried to maintain contact with her husband on that one just to know so that I know where that research is and where its going, and try to tell him that there are people at Six Nations that if he ever wanted to get it published when people get things sorted out, there’s people in the community who are doing that and maybe would be interested. You know she had a very positive relationship with the people she worked with and they really want the information too. . . . There were only certain people who really had all that and knew a certain family and they are going and they can’t re-
member or it’s going to get lost or we have to take a systematic approach to somehow keeping it, gathering as much as we can to understanding it and I think it fell in nicely with people in the community who know there is that need too. (personal interview, March 17, 2000)

Shimony’s unfinished project on Confederacy titles was based on a need identified within the community. It was approved by some Six Nations traditionalists, many of whom are engaged in similar research. Other groups of traditionalists may resent such a project if it infringes upon those who hold “borrowed” titles. Those holding “borrowed” titles might see themselves as maintaining responsibilities to Confederacy participation, when others abandoned them.

The interviewee above saw Shimony as a plausible candidate because she did not need this research for career advantage. An “impressive” list of traditionalists participated in her research for Conservatism. Respect for these participants draws many community residents to participate in further research. Some information in Conservatism is no longer accessible since contributors have passed on.

Both Annemarie Shimony’s and Sally Weaver’s ethnographies diverged from Fenton’s approach of cultural historicism. Weaver and Shimony dealt more with contemporary realities and the impacts of colonialism on the Six Nations community. Persistence under colonialism evidences resilient continuity rather than restrictions to authenticity. Weaver’s study of “non-conservatives” emphasized their maintenance of cultural distinctiveness (1972:98).

A Six Nations cultural education resource developer recalls her encounters with Sally Weaver:

Our family was one of the families that were studied because we were one of the non-conservatives and at that time my dad was on Band Council, she came and she did all the right things. She came to Band Council and told them what she was doing and she got in to being real friends with everybody at the Indian office and the agent and the Band Council chief at the time and all the Band Councillors. And she was this very sparkly, interesting person who was very friendly and very outgoing. I always remember people would sometimes say “oh that’s our gal Sal,” that’s how she signed her name was “Sal,” you know, and they were very familiar with her and people thought of [her] as . . . friends, even though she was a young student doing that. (Personal interview, March 17, 2000)
Recollections from her childhood allow the interviewee to comment on Weaver’s personality, disposition, and respectful approach to research. Her relationship with Weaver developed over time:

and then when I started working at Woodland we had this sort of semi-professional relationship where if we needed stuff or we needed a speaker or something she was always one of the people we thought of or called upon and usually she would generally help us out when we were looking for something or doing some research. . . . [B]ecause it had been more than ten years, she wanted to update her references and see where stuff had gone and see who had been writing about what. So she called me and I thought I was very honoured that she would call me, so I gave her some names and things that had been published and what the Cultural Centre had produced, you know so I was just verifying stuff for her so she could update that stuff so she could put a couple little footnotes on where the research was going now that it is starting to be community-based and who were some of the people writing about it. (Personal interview, March 17, 2000)

Like Shimony, Weaver assembled a list of royaner titles.

Thus, anthropological endeavors are not seen by community members as wholly objectionable or exploitative. There is an accelerated effort to manage community-based research through critique and correction, ongoing engagement, cataloging, and archiving, and to maintaining the continuity of Haudenosaunee traditionalist resources. New protocols for community ethics and research project review boards increase the likelihood of positive research and respected research relationships.

IroquoianISTS: Hybrids and Iconoclasts

In *The Post-Anthropological Indian: Canada’s New Images of Aboriginality in the Age of Repossession*, anthropologist David Scheffel emphasizes the absence of space for “iconoclastic and hybrid figures” in contemporary relationships between anthropology and Indigenous peoples (2000:185). To Scheffel, current trends diminishing anthropological authority and contributions are a product of a new Aboriginal public imagery that dichotomizes “good Natives/insiders” and “bad Whites/outsiders.” Scheffel counters, “Unlike the real world, inhabited by hybrids, tricksters, cross-dressers, and chameleons, the fabricated world created by [Indigenous and pro-Indigenous] nationalist ‘awak-
Iroquoian and Iroquoianist

eners’ doesn’t tolerate ambiguity or paradox” (Scheffel 2000:185). These assumptions, however, do not apply to the complex processes that have made the overall relationship between anthropology and Haudenousaunee what it is today.

The Morgan-Parker relationship is marked, from its beginning, by chameleon-like processes of “complex cross-ethnic identity gaming” (Michaelson 1996:618). Morgan, having founded the New Confederacy or Grand Order of the Iroquois, was already a self-styled or “cross-dressing” Indian when he met Parker in 1844 (1996:618). Fraternity members wanted to adopt authenticating Iroquois names. For example, Morgan initially took the name Tekarihoga, believing it to be the head leadership title of the Confederacy. Upon learning that Tekarihoga was simply the first name on a Roll Call listing of chiefs, Morgan adopts the royaner title Thadadahoh (Deloria 1998:82). By 1846, with Parker’s endorsement, Morgan’s solicitations for “official” adoption by the Senecas were successful, as were those of three colleagues. He was adopted into the Hawk clan, and given the name “Tayadaowuhkuh,” meaning “One Lying Across” during a Green Corn ceremony that year (see Michaelson 1996:619; Deloria 1998; Tooker 2001:43). Parker or “Ha-sa-no-anda,” of the Seneca Hawk clan, undergoes self-transformation during his relationship with Morgan, writing about the Iroquois from a “white” subject position for Morgan’s purposes. Parker is initiated into Morgan’s New Confederacy as the embodiment of a deceased Cayuga warrior (Michaelson 1996:619).

These “transformative” processes of cross-cutting identities, cross-dressing, imitation, imagination and adoptive incorporation might seem idiosyncratic to a particular time and place (Michaelson 1996:221) but they have continued to resonate thematically throughout the history of the Haudenosaunee-anthropology relationship. Particular anthropologists whose contributions continued to be appreciated by community residents exemplify “hybrid figures,” which Scheffel claims do not exist in current Indian-anthropologist relationships. Hybridity can also be associated with the adoption and naming of various anthropologists. Fenton was adopted by the Seneca Hawk clan. His name “Howanjneyao,” meaning “He lost a bet,” was announced during Midwinter ceremonies in 1934 at the Allegany Coldspring Longhouse. According to Fenton Frank Speck was given the name “Gahejdago:wa:” meaning Great Porcupine by the Seneca Turtle clan (Fenton 2001:81). Shimony also received an Indian name at Soursprings Longhouse, though interestingly her name was never published.

Community assessments of adoptees’ conduct, particularly whether
naming and adoption have been used to gain professional advantage, and their fulfilment of the responsibilities of citizenship after receiving a name, are inevitable. Vine Deloria argues that such adoptive experiences reflect acceptance of a practitioner as a person and not necessarily for their scholarship or research (1997:218).

The Annual Conference on Iroquoian Research, which began in 1945, has retained characteristics reminiscent of Morgan’s New Confederacy fraternity. Mid-point in the New Confederacy’s existence, Morgan is said to have wrestled with issues of maintaining its ritualized activities and secretive identity, as its orientation shifted to more systematic, scientific engagement with “real” Indians (Deloria 1998:86). For many years proceedings of this conference were considered closed. Six Nations people felt excluded from discussion of their histories, culture and traditionalism, and languages. Many exclusionary aspects of this conference which fuel perceptions of secrecy have been remedied in the past decade.

Ritual-like activities influenced by Haudenosaunee ceremonialism have embellished conference proceedings. “Fenton’s annual lighting of the council fire” gives “spirit to Iroquoian researchers” (Wallace 1984:9). Opening remarks, “welcoming at the Wood’s Edge,” are an obvious extraction from the Condolence ceremony.

Parker’s ethnographic accounts of the “adventures” of Morgan and his colleagues’ Seneca initiations into the New Confederacy exhibit “humiliating, trickster qualities” (Michaelson 1996:621). Michaelson depicts these writings, expressing both humor and reserve in recounting Morgan’s activities, as reflecting a Seneca perspective. In contrast, Parker’s ethnographic writings to Morgan about the Seneca, demonstrate his ease with his subject position as “white” or at least somewhat removed from his Indian identity (Michaelson 1996:621). Two of Parker’s biographers, Armstrong and A. C. Parker, note that some of his writings appear almost verbatim in The League (Michaelson 1996:633; cf. Armstrong 1978; Parker 1919). Perhaps this level of contribution encouraged Morgan to negotiate his evolutionary view of the Iroquois (as lower-status barbarians) in acknowledging Parker as a “collaborator.” Morgan’s apparent transcendence of this established paradigm distinguishes him from his evolutionist contemporaries.

The antiquity of Haudenosaunee engagement in intellectual dialogue with anthropology is evidenced further by the contributions of Six Nations people as anthropologists. J. N. B. Hewitt and A. C. Parker were responsible for the majority of Iroquois studies during the first quarter of the twentieth century (Voget 1984:345; Snow 1994:187). Hewitt, Tuscarora Nation, worked for the Bureau of American Ethnology and wrote on Iroquois “mythology,” cosmology and religion (1903, 1928).
Parker, a Seneca, was dubbed “the most distinguished American Indian savant of his generation” (Fenton 1968:2; Parker 1910, 1913, 1916).

To Scheffel, Indigenous people do not pay appropriate homage to anthropological contributions within their current nation-building efforts. Nothing in his arguments requires scholars to acknowledge Indigenous contributors. In ways largely uncharacteristic of anthropology in general, Iroquoianists have advanced the genres of obituary and biographical sketch, signifying both personal and professional admiration and indebtedness in their relationships with Haudenosaunee peoples. They acknowledge “Iroquois intellectuals” with invaluable “gifts of knowledge” (Armstrong 1978; Fenton 1944, 1946b, 1972, 1978; Shimony 1978; Hertzberg 1978; Tooker 1978; Foster 2005).

Many obituaries clarify how at times, and in the context of particular relationships, “the rivers did [in fact] flow both ways” (Wallace 1984:12). Given the value Haudenosaunee people place on practices involving the passing of loved ones and condolence of the bereaved, this form of acknowledgment is immensely meaningful. Haudenosaunee individuals at Six Nations have likewise responded with “kind words” when scholars whom they have grown to respect, appreciate and care for have passed on. An interviewee recalls,

> Then we knew she [Annemarie Shimony] was very sick and just before she died she made a visit out here and she looked really frail but she came and she drove all the way out here by herself and then we found out she died. . . . I think they had a memorial service for her, they read Germaine’s letter. Germaine was Alex General’s daughter, Deskaheh’s daughter and she maintained that connection with Annemarie because of the previous connection, you know, she wrote a very moving sort of letter, poem, [and her husband] read it at Annemarie’s memorial. (personal interview, March 17, 2000)

Arguably “Iroquoianist” as a designation is not the same as more literal referents used by anthropologists working in other cultural spaces. The term emerged in the unique historical context of North American nation-building. Indices of imitation and transformation are as encoded in the meaning of “Iroquoianist” as they are in the overall relationship between practitioners and people. Thematically, these processes are too pervasive to be dismissed as idiosyncratic (Deloria 1998; Michaelson 1996). These uniquely crystallize Iroquoianists’ historic relationship to Haudenosaunee people as a relationship in which all of the hybrids, the iconoclasts, the tricksters, the chameleons, and cross-dressers are well accounted for.
Notes

1. The Ogwehó:weh Teaching Circle was held on the Six Nations reserve from February to March 1998, sponsored by Six Nations Health Services, Six Nations Social Development and Onagrahsta’, the Birthing Centre. Excerpts convey the interpretations of the facilitators and panelists, a small group of clan mothers, Faithkeepers, Confederacy roynere, traditional healers and community elders. The majority are fluent in at least one of the Six Nations languages. Transcripts for these workshops were prepared by the Ogwehó:weh Teaching Circle organizers. Panelists remain anonymous in these transcripts.

2. Designations for Hado:ih masks such as Door Keeper, Spoon Mouth, and Broken Nose also appear in Jesse J. Cornplanter’s *Legends of the Longhouse*.


References


Iroquoian and Iroquoianist


McCarthy


