



Peacemakers: The Iroquois, the United States, and the Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794 (Critical Historical Encounters Series)

Michael Leroy Oberg

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Peacemakers: The Iroquois, the United States, and the Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794 offers a glimpse into how native peoples participated in the intercultural diplomacy of the New Nation and how they worked to protect their communities against enormous odds. The book introduces students, in detail, to the Treaty of Canandaigua, which is little known outside of Central New York. It examines how the Six Nations of the Iroquois secured from the United States a recognition of their sovereign status as separate polities with the right to the "free use and enjoyment" of their lands.

In the fall of 1794 leaders from the Six Nations of the Iroquois met with officials from the U.S. in Canandaigua, New York. Iroquois leaders sought the restoration of lands they had lost a decade before at the coercive treaty of Fort Stanwix, which was negotiated with delegates sent from the American Congress under the Articles of Confederation. They felt cheated and aggrieved. The Iroquois delegates also sought the "brightening" of the Covenant Chain alliance which historically had linked the Six Nations to their non-Indian friends and allies. President George Washington sent Timothy Pickering to represent the U.S. at Canandaigua. Washington instructed Pickering to secure from the Six Nations a pledge to take no part in the powerful Indian uprising then occurring in the Northwest Territory. Washington, Pickering, and others in the national government feared that hostile Indians could set the young republic's frontiers ablaze from New York through the Carolinas. Land-hungry New Yorkers, who saw in the acquisition and sale of Iroquois lands a means to finance state government without resorting to a politically inexpedient program of taxation, watched closely and with great suspicion Pickering's actions. The British, meanwhile, still clung to a number of their posts on American soil in the early-1790s. Quietly, they hoped connections to Indian communities on American territory might restrain the territorial aggressiveness of the young republic.

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