

Being Again of One Mind

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Being Again of One Mind
Oneida Women and the Struggle
for Decolonization

Lina Sunseri



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FOREWORD

Patricia A. Monture

Several years ago I came across a quotation that significantly influenced my thinking, and it is appropriate to share it again here. LeAnne Howe (Choctaw) (2002, 29) wrote: "Native stories are power. They create people. They author tribes. America is a tribal creations story, a tribalogy." We each have our own stories, and when we share these stories among the people, we help to restory the land. This is one significant way that we are able to use the academic world to take a stand against colonialism (or the destorying of the land). In her work with twenty women, Lina Sunseri makes a significant contribution to the restorying of the territory of the Oneida nation.

It was more than thirty years ago that I started my university career as an undergraduate student. At that time, few courses were offered outside of anthropology departments on anything Indigenous. And the foundations of that discipline reinforced the idea that we were "primitive" people and belonged to cultures that were certain to vanish over time. The Iroquois were a popular topic for many anthropologists, and I remain quite convinced that if and when our people shared their stories with them, the anthropologists most often did not have the proper skills to listen to them or interpret them. Entrenched in the academic literature of those "experts" is a reflection of my people that does not fit the way I understand who I am or who we are as peoples. A number of academics have taken the findings of these Iroquoianists to task and have thus provided a foundation on which we can place our own understandings of who we are as Haudenosaunee peoples and as women of the Haudenosaunee League (Johansen 1998).

Women such as Lina and myself are often described as "living in two worlds." I dislike this construction of who we are. Every time I go to the

university, or step into a classroom, I have my Mohawk self with me. Perhaps, if you are not familiar with the ways of my people, you will not be able to see how I am grounded by who I am as a citizen of the Haudenosaunee League. Knowing who I am (my name, my clan, my nation, as well as where I come from) not only always grounds who I am but has also made possible the things that I have accomplished (including things like tenure and promotion in the university). It is with celebration that I embrace this work, as it is an acknowledgment that we can now carefully bring our Indigenous selves – selves that are gendered – to the practice of generating academic knowledge.

As you consider this work, please pay particular attention to the methodology in use. The book starts with the author locating herself both in her Oneida community and within academic traditions. In this way, she honours Indigenous ways that teach us how knowledge is shared. Sharing knowledge always commences with a sharing of who we are. When the methodological framework of academia is harmful or counterproductive (such as asking a clan mother to sign a consent form), it is set aside respectfully. In the end, Dr. Sunseri is able to provide a beautifully woven methodological framework that answers first to Oneida traditions and then to sociological or feminist ones. This is an important example for other scholars who wish to move beyond a critique of Western knowledge methodologies and into action.

There is a further reason why I celebrate the publication of this important work on Oneida women, nationalism, and colonialism. Thirty years ago, the university had a very different face than it does today. Not one of my professors was an Indigenous person until I took an Ojibway-language course. And after that course, I never met another Indigenous professor in the universities where I studied. This meant that to get a complete education, I could not rely solely on the university. I had to return home and connect with the teachers in our own communities. As a student, I was not really conscious that I was doing twice as much work and twice as much learning as the other students around me. When I look back from what I understand today, I see this clearly (as should our current Indigenous postsecondary students). Today, the face of the university has begun to change. There is now hope that my children will find among their teachers Indigenous people who hold doctorates and are among the university faculty. In my day as a student, much of what we did each day was about our merely surviving. Today, we have a reasonable belief that at some times, in some places, and with some

professors, the university now offers us the opportunity to understand who we are from within our own knowledge systems. This book is one of those moments.

The women of our many nations have a special role in recovering from the many colonial oppressions we have survived, and this book not only documents those successes but also informs us and is a call to action. Among the Haudenosaunee peoples, women are the first teachers. These Oneida women, who in these pages share their stories with us through the commitment and diligence of Dr. Lina Sunseri, will teach many people of many nations.

Ayewahhandeh, Mohawk Nation, Grand River Territory
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is an Oneida tradition that before any other words are said, we must greet All Our Relations and give thanks to everything that surrounds us so that we can live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. I give thanks to Mother Earth, for she feeds and nurtures us all. I give thanks to all the gifts that she has given us, acknowledging that each of these gifts has a purpose in life: the waters and all the lives that are in them; all the trees, plants, and medicines; all the animal life on Mother Earth, those that are four-legged and those that are two-legged; all the birds that fly above us in the sky, especially Eagle, the most sacred bird, for he is the closest to the Creator. I give thanks to the winds, the thunder beings, the stars, the sun, and Grandmother Moon, who is mother to all women. Thanks, Creator, for giving us all of these gifts, and if I have forgotten to name any, this was not my intent. Now our minds are one. Tah[^]ne'to.

There are so many people I would like to thank; without their support, guidance, love, energy, passion, and hard work, this book would not have been possible. First, I would like to thank the faculty members at York University, in Toronto, who guided me through the first hard steps of this project and provided me with much-needed feedback as well as encouragement to develop this project into a book. This development into a book would not have been possible without the support, effort, and attention to detail of the editorial team at UBC Press, especially Darcy Cullen, Melissa Pitts, and Anna Eberhard Friedlander. This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program. Also, the comments, criticisms, and suggestions made by two anonymous reviewers helped to strengthen the quality and content of the book.

It has taken years to research and write this book, and many people close to my heart have been right by my side, often having to be patient with me when I felt overwhelmed, stressed, or sad because of the topics and histories in which I was immersed. There is my immediate family, especially my sister Elayne, who shared my passion for the topic and also taught me much about our Oneida culture. I love you all, my dear family! There is my partner, Chris, and his boys, who have entered my life and are just as dedicated to the betterment of our Indigenous communities (they are Chippewas) as I am. It is so nice to be able to share our cultures and values with each other. There are the many, many extended family members whom I care about and love. They each inspire me to persist in (re)discovering knowledge and to be proud of our heritages. And of course, there are the many friends and colleagues who have supported me throughout my work on this book.

There are also many people who have shared their knowledge with me, either in person or with their written words of wisdom and courage: elders, clan mothers, faith keepers, community workers, and activists like Darlene Ritchie of AtΛLohsa Native Family Healing Services in London, Ontario, teachers, scholars like Patricia Monture, Taiaiake Alfred, Linda Smith, and Janice Acoose, to name only a few whose ideas inspired, motivated, and moved me to pursue an academic life while reminding me never to distance my work from the communities to which we belong.

And then there are the broader Indigenous peoples with whom I am connected and who have truly made this worthwhile. Our ancestors, I am grateful for all you have done for us, for enduring so much in your lifetimes and resisting the colonial beast. It is because of you that our stories, our teachings, our languages, and our ways of governing are still alive today. All those courageous men and women who are presently working for the wellbeing of our nations, there are no words that can truly do justice to the gifts you are giving to us all. It is true that there is much pain and struggle in our communities, but your relentless work ensures that there is also hope for a better tomorrow; healing and recovery are occurring every day because of you. My thanks to you. And our youth, you are our cherished future, the gifts that the Creator has given to our nations. Through your smiles, your tears, your dances, your words, your songs, and your artworks, each day you remind us of the work that must be done to move forward. Sometimes, we fail you; I fail you. May you forgive us and find the strength to keep reminding us. We

must find our way back to good relations so that the next generations of Indigenous peoples will stay strong and proud.

But mostly, this book was ultimately possible only because of those women who gave their time, their energy, their passion, and their knowledge. They shared their personal experiences, views, emotions, and feelings with me and were willing to tell the whole world about past and current conditions of Oneida women's lives. I could not have written such a needed book without your contribution and knowledge. Yawako.

This book is dedicated to all Indigenous women of Turtle Island: those who have passed to the Spirit World and are watching over us; those who are on Mother Earth and staying strong despite many challenges; those very young ones whose eyes and ears are wide open and thirsty to learn about living in a good way; and those who have yet to come – may we not forget that each act we do on Mother Earth will be our legacy to them. May we act according to the principles of the Great Law of Peace.

Being Again of One Mind

Introduction

We are connected to this land in a special way. Our stories teach us how Turtle Island was started, and we are supposed to say thanks to this land, to Mother Earth, for giving us life ... We are supposed to take care of the land, like our ancestors did hundreds of years ago. (Mary)

There is so much to feel proud to be Oneida. We belong to a very good nation, where women were central to everything, and a very equal society. Also we belong to a tradition of peace, of co-operation. That is because we belong to the Haudenosaunee [League]. We were united by the Peacemaker and we are supposed to love each other, but also respect each other's freedom. (Frances)

With colonialism, you have that others came and started to control us, to tell us how to run our own communities, you know? Wanted to change us into becoming like them. They called us savages, wanted to save us, they said. But we didn't get salvation. If you ask me, we got what? Hell, that's what we got. We got stripped of our rights, our freedom, tried to destroy our culture. (Anne-Marie)

Colonialism has tried to make us forget the teachings of the Long-house, which were ways to make sure we lived in a good way, and that needs to come back. We need the elders to tell us how to do that again, and we need us, the women, to be involved in all of that. We have much to lose if we don't get involved. Our role as mothers of the nation demands that we do, and it is better for us that we do, that way we make sure we help our nation to be good again. We leave a good legacy for the next generation. (Lisa)

These quotations come from conversations I had with four of the twenty women who participated in my research for this book. I have chosen to begin my introduction with their words for two reasons: first, I want to give central space to the voices of the Oneida women who shared important and at times personal and painful stories with me and whose voices need to be central in this academic work. The perspectives of many marginalized groups, like Indigenous women, are often not included in academic theories. Even when these groups are studied, the voices of their members are often given only a small place within the published texts. Mohawk scholar Dawn Martin-Hill agrees that this marginalization/silence is quite prevalent in academic disciplines, her discipline of anthropology included. This does not mean that Indigenous women haven't had much to say; quite the contrary:

They often have a lot to say, yet they are rarely asked. Male researchers often write that they consider it inappropriate to interact with women; that is the rationale they offer for excluding their experiences ... Aboriginal women have a multitude of experiences that men do not ... we Aboriginal women have borne the brunt of colonialism's legacy. (Martin-Hill 2008, 121)

This book indeed discusses this multitude and this brunt. The opinions expressed above by Mary, Frances, Anne-Marie, and Lisa best capture the overall topic – the multitude of Oneida women's experiences in their nation and within Canadian society. This book examines the current processes of decolonization in Canada, particularly of the Oneida nation, and links these to issues of gender, colonialism, and nationalism. It explores the existence of Indigenous nations and nationalisms prior to and outside of European-based characteristics of nation. More specifically, the book deals with the transformations of gender relations within Oneida due to colonialism. Through the narratives of twenty Oneida women, an overview of traditional governance and teachings, and a critical reading of the leading literature, the book shows that a decolonizing nationalist movement has the potential to restore the gender balance that existed in their nation prior to colonialism. The book reveals that women's participation in the decolonizing movement is complex and full of contradictions and challenges; hence, I ultimately argue that for true liberation from colonial oppression to occur for all members of the nation, decolonizing governance practices must be inclusive and

should follow the traditional principles of governance found in the Great Law of Peace: peace, power, and righteousness. When these practices are put into place, women can (re)gain political, social, and economic agency through their active involvement in shaping a nationalist discourse that is based on Indigenous concepts of nationhood.

This book examines some of the traditional roles of Oneida women in their nation and shows that the powerful positions held by Oneida women were transformed by centuries of colonialism, which, together with many other devastating consequences, created both an imbalance in gender relations and many divisions within the Oneida nation. I further discuss how women, together with their male counterparts, have always resisted colonialism and are currently involved in the decolonizing movement taking place in Canada.

As Lisa comments in the fourth of the quotations that open this introduction, many Oneida women point to colonialism as a central cause of the present oppressive conditions faced by Indigenous peoples. Hence they feel that women must take part in the decolonizing movement to ensure that their specific needs are addressed and that a decolonized nation can offer them better experiences.

I define decolonizing nationalist movements as those aimed at forming new relationships that break away from colonialist structures of governance and that are rooted in notions of nationhood and sovereignty. Such movements are committed to re-establishing autonomous and self-determined nations and to looking at Indigenous peoples' unique historical experiences of nation and nationalism (Ladner 2000; Alfred 1995, 1999; Monture-Angus 1999; Simpson 2000, 2007; Turner 2006). As such movements are embedded within an Indigenous notion and history of nation and nationalism, I argue that the Oneida nation, like other Indigenous societies, has a history of nation and nationalism that dates to centuries prior to Europeans' arrival in North America. I therefore offer a theory of nation and nationalism that is an alternative to that offered by modernist theorists who argue that nation and nationalism originate with modernity and are linked to the formation of a state. One can find examples of nations outside of Europe and outside of modernity, although they might be founded upon phenomena different from those that underlie Western nation-states. The Oneida nation was inclusive and based on the values of equality and freedom, on a consensus-based decision-making model, and quite important, on gender balance. It is essential that in the process of decolonizing, we keep in

mind and re-establish those principles that formed the Oneida nation and its nationalism: peace, power, and righteousness.

Many feminist theorists have provided good analyses of the gender dynamics that exist during and after nationalist movements, and their individual reactions to most nationalist movements have been mixed. Some theorists admit that women should not be seen merely as duped subjects who are used by males and other elitist nationalists to further their own, rather than women's, interests; they note that during national liberation struggles, for example, some women can gain a form of empowerment through their active involvement in the movement. Others question the possibility that women's interests are best served through any form of nationalism. Overall, most feminist critiques have argued that most or all nationalisms, particularly those that focus on genealogy and origin as the major organizing principles of the nation, are gendered and oppressive for women (McClintock 1995; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Although all of these theories provide a critical look at nationalisms by unveiling the gendered and unequal power relations that take place within nationalist discourses and practices, I question in this book how or whether these critiques apply within an Indigenous context, specifically an Oneida one. Through my own experience with nationalism within my community, and in talking throughout the years with many women in my community, I have seen and learned that a large number of women, together with their male counterparts, believe that a decolonizing nationalist movement is empowering for them both as women and as Oneida people. They believe that liberation from colonialism is the most important step that can be taken to better their conditions. I also contend that they have an inherent Indigenous right to reclaim their own nation, free from colonial interference. Such a nationalism can be inclusive and liberatory, and is rooted in a rich, woman-centred idea of nation. These women's position vis-à-vis nationalism is not rooted in a mainstream feminist framework. For them, the roots of their vision of liberation are within Indigenous cultural traditions and ways of governing, which are based upon a notion of gender balance. Moreover, gender equality is not the only or the primary concern in their struggle, so it is debatable how relevant mainstream feminist theories are to these women's lives. For them, Indigenous rights, like decolonization, are strongly connected to their rights as women; the two are never separate but are always simultaneously lived in their everyday lives. As well, one of the aims of these women is a reaffirmation

of traditional womanhood and women's roles, with an emphasis on the notion of "mothering the nation."

Some feminists have critiqued the notion of "mothering the nation," revealing how it has often been used to control women's sexuality by constraining them to submissive positions in the private sphere. These theories, however, do not apply well to Oneida women. "Mothering the nation" has a specific cultural meaning and a long history within Oneida and other Haudenosaunee nations, where it was not used to constrain women. However, some feminist critiques of nation and nationalism do offer important insights into the complexity of women's positions and participation in nationalist movements. They show the implications of some discourses within nationalism, like "purity of blood," that have particular gendered applications and have been found to affect negatively the women of nations that abide by such notions. Indeed, the present situation of Oneida women is full of complexities, paradoxes, and challenges because of how – as the example of "mothering the nation" demonstrates – "tradition" can and has been used not to empower them but to perpetuate their marginalization and oppression within their communities.

In sum, then, I argue that there is no single version of either feminism or nationalism. Both can be either progressive or reactionary in the case of Oneida women. Within a decolonizing nationalist movement rooted in a history of nation that has been inclusive and based on gender balance, there is a possibility that nation and nationalism have not been oppressive for women. Oneida women within the movement are (re)gaining political, social, and economic agency by contributing to the formation of a decolonized nation. Their participation can influence and challenge any existing patriarchal and essentialist concepts of nation and may make it possible to establish an Oneida nation in which women's roles and rights are ensured and realized. This would mean putting into place the founding principles of the Great Law of Peace, accommodating differences, and eliminating present divisions that exist in our community.

I begin this book by engaging with theories of nation, beginning with those that link nation to modernity. I do so to show the Eurocentric bias in those theories, which tend to dismiss any other forms of nation, such as that of the Oneida people – and those of other Indigenous peoples – although the Oneida nation and other nations of the Haudenosaunee League have a long history of nation that precedes that of most European

nation-states. It is important to acknowledge this Indigenous history so that fully decolonized future relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be conducted on a nation-to-nation basis. I then turn to postcolonial and Indigenous literature on nation to illustrate how historically in white-settler colonies such as Canada, issues of nation, culture, gender, and colonialism have been interconnected and have shaped the experiences of Oneida people and other Indigenous peoples. Chapter 2 gives a history of Oneida from the time of pre-colonialism to the present, making clear that Oneida and the other nations of the Haudenosaunee League have a rich tradition of governance within each nation, within the league, and with outsiders. I then show how colonialism altered the internal and external relations of the Oneida nation, similar to its effect on the relations of other Indigenous nations. The focus is on the change in gender relations since colonialism, specifically the shift from matrilineal, egalitarian nations to more patriarchal ones. The rest of the book is dedicated to discussing how the participants in my research consider colonialism to have shaped their lives and that of their ancestors and their communities, with an emphasis on how they envision a decolonizing nationalist movement to be able to restore balance, equity, and wellbeing to their own lives and that of their nation.

**Standing, Looking, and Writing on Turtle Island:
Locating Myself and My Work**

How did this book evolve into what it is today? It is actually difficult to specify when and how I selected the particular topic or focus of my research. In some ways, the choice was influenced by my experiential knowledge of issues of Oneida identity, nationalism, gender relations, and colonialism as a member of the Oneida community. My own identity has meant an informal daily inquiry into the current challenges faced by Oneida people and other Indigenous peoples. The need to make sense of those experiences increased during my graduate studies. Two particular events triggered in me a need to rigorously investigate my experiential knowledge of the complex relationship between Oneida nationalism and gender. The first event was a graduate workshop on the topic of diaspora and hybridity, during which I articulated to the group that although I did agree with some of the postcolonial theories we were discussing, I did not think they fully explained the experiences of some colonized groups, such as the nations of the Haudenosaunee League.

However, I did not have enough knowledge of either postcolonial theories or the history of colonialism and the current decolonizing movements to be able to convincingly present an argument. I knew that I needed to better inform myself about the history of the Oneida people's traditions and colonial experiences in order to better connect them with contemporary national liberation struggles.

The second event that motivated me to develop my experiential knowledge into a social-research topic was my experience in a graduate class that dealt specifically with the topic of gender, nationalism, and ethnicity. This course introduced me to many theories of nation and gender and also looked at many feminist theories that critiqued the relationship between nationalist movements and women. Although I agreed with most of the arguments, Oneida women's experiences within nationalist movements were not well reflected in the theories. In particular, I felt that the concept of women as "mothers of the nation," which was critiqued by many feminist theorists, had a different history for Oneida women. Indeed, I had learned through many oral teachings and by participating in many traditional ceremonies that "mothers of the nation" was an enriching and empowering notion for Haudenosaunee women. I wanted to make better sense of my own experiences with nation, nationalism, culture, and tradition in relation to what I was reading and learning within the university walls. Several questions began to preoccupy me: Is nationalism really dangerous for women? Why are Oneida women involved in a nationalist movement? Are our Oneida traditions empowering for women or not? Why don't Oneida women seem to have the same powerful positions they once had? Why are there so many divisions in our community? What is needed to heal our community?

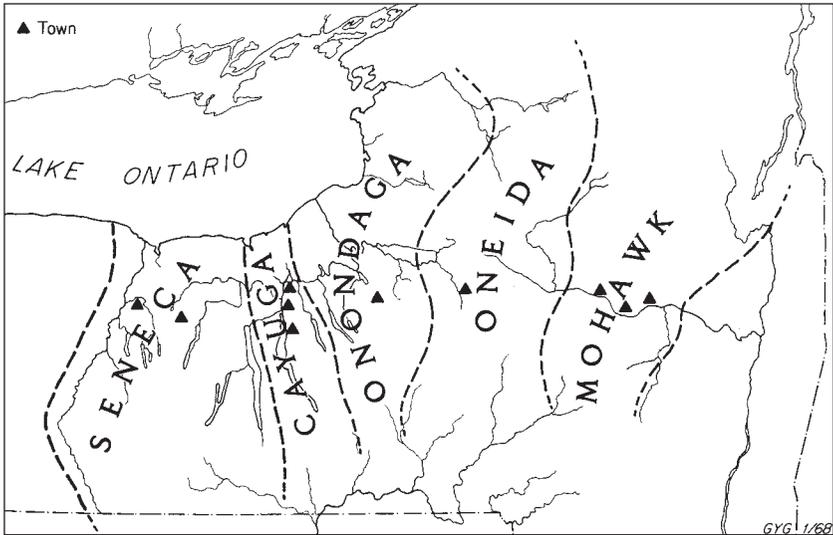
Many years before I started my graduate studies and my current academic profession, I had already acquired a lot of knowledge about these questions by having everyday conversations with Indigenous friends and relatives on issues of colonization, decolonization, culture, tradition, gender, and nation, by listening to stories and teachings from elders, by taking part in ceremonies at the Longhouse, and by participating in workshops that dealt with healing the community. I knew that I needed to incorporate this acquired knowledge into the knowledge that I was gaining in my new academic life. Until recently, Western male theorists have dominated the literature on Indigenous peoples' history and have not always included Indigenous voices, especially those of women,

Indigenous ways of knowing, or oral histories, which has resulted in many biases and gaps in the *historical* accounts. Given this omission, and encouraged by the additional reality that Indigenous scholarship has been growing rapidly, I am committed to including voices and written words of Indigenous people in this work rather than those of non-Indigenous people. Of course, other theories and works that are relevant and can help us to analyze the effects of colonialism on Oneida people and to examine the current struggles of decolonization are also included. But this book, given that it deals with the topic of decolonization and in fact aims to contribute to the overall decolonization project of Indigenous peoples, privileges Indigenous scholars, voices, and knowledges in order to break away from the academy's Westerncentric approach.

I wanted to investigate the topic of gender and nationalism as it pertained to Oneida. I had done research in 1996-97 on the effects of neo-conservative social policies on Indigenous single mothers, and I had sensed that many of the women who participated in that research were interested in talking about women's roles in the Oneida nation, especially about how these had been altered through colonialism. I contacted a couple of the people I thought might want to participate in my research. Also, I spoke with some family members, friends, and acquaintances about my newly developed research topic. My mother and sister suggested that I discuss my topic with my clan mother, or Laothuwis^Λ'tsla[?], and ask her for guidance about cultural protocols and traditional teachings. She and I met a few times, and she became a participant in my research as well as my teacher of Oneida history and traditions. I wanted the research to be collaborative and for the participants to be as involved as they wanted to be throughout the process. I hoped that about twenty-five women would agree to participate.

Interviewing Oneida Women

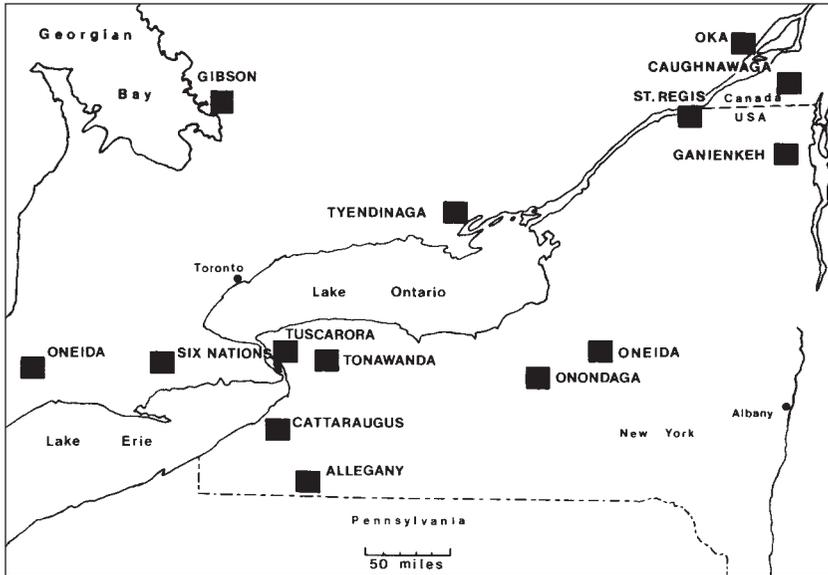
Oneida of the Thames, whose original name is Onyota:aka, or People of the Standing Stone, is one of the three communities that form the Oneida nation.¹ It is located in south-western Ontario, where its first members arrived in 1840 after migrating from the original territory in what is now called New York State. One of the other two Oneida communities is still located in the original territory, which has been reduced in size due to a series of policies of dispossession, and the other is in Wisconsin. Both I and the women who participated in my research belong to the Oneida of the Thames community. The Oneida nation is one of the original five



The five founding nations of the Haudenosaunee League, united as early as the mid-fifteenth century under the Great Law of Peace. Map by Gwynneth Y. Gillette. Courtesy of New York State Museum.

nations of the Haudenosaunee League, whose name means People of the Longhouse. This league is also known as the Iroquois Confederacy because the early French settlers named the Haudenosaunee peoples Iroquois. The other four original nations of the league are Onondaga, Mohawk, Cayuga, and Seneca. In 1722 Tuscarora joined the league through adoption by Oneida. Each nation of the league is structured by a clan system. The Oneida nation is made up of three clans: Turtle, Bear, and Wolf. I am of the Turtle Clan, and in our language, when identifying my clan affiliation, I say a²nowál niwaki²taló•ta.

I met two women from Oneida of the Thames and discussed with them the general topic of interest and the type of research process that seemed most relevant to our own cultural traditions. They felt that my research would be interesting and could be useful to Oneida women and to the overall community. After agreeing to participate, they each signed a consent form. The one person who did not sign a consent form was my clan mother, as this would not have been culturally appropriate. Clan mothers have many roles in our communities, one of which is to impart to younger community members the teachings and ways of being



The eastern Haudenosaunee settlements, showing the location of Oneida of the Thames in south-western Ontario, whose first members arrived from New York State in 1840. Also shown is the location of the Oneida community remaining in New York State. The third Oneida community (not shown) is in Wisconsin. Courtesy of Syracuse University Press.

of the nation. It would have been insensitive to impose such a foreign formality on the relationship that she and I had been building. The first two women said that they would ask other women to participate whom they thought would be interested in the research, and they also provided me with the names of some women who had been involved in many cultural and political activities. After my many initial communications with potential participants, a total of twenty women agreed to work with me on this collaborative research.

I met with each of the participants at least twice. Eighteen of the women agreed to be audio-taped. I did not have preset questions, only general themes, such as what it means to be Indigenous, Oneida, and Haudenosaunee in a contemporary context; what some of the most important challenges are that Indigenous peoples, particularly Oneida, face today; what meaning they give to the terms “nation,” “decolonization,” “self-determination,” and “self-government”; and issues surrounding membership in the Oneida nation (e.g., the Indian Act’s rules on

status, blood-quantum criterion, reserve residency, Bill C-31, and traditional criteria for Longhouse membership). I also had in mind gender-specific themes, such as the traditional roles and responsibilities of Oneida women and how these changed after colonialism; the meaning of concepts such as women as “mothers of the nation”; and the role of women in current decolonizing movements. Together, we decided which themes to focus on.

Some of the women live in the Oneida of the Thames community, and others live in an urban setting in Ontario. Most are in a long-term relationship, either a marriage or a common-law union, and have children, but a few are single and childless. In terms of education, there is also variation: some never finished high school, whereas others commenced and/or completed a postsecondary education, and a few attended a residential school. The majority have held a position of paid employment during their adult lives, and only two have been a “full-time mom.” Most consider themselves “traditionalists of the Longhouse”; although some do not, almost all are quite familiar with the Longhouse teachings. Almost all of the women have Indian status, and about half have some European ancestry in addition to Oneida. Ultimately, the opinions expressed are those of these specific women, shaped by their own experiences and knowledge of issues of identity, land, nation, colonialism, and decolonialism. These opinions cannot be expected to represent the views of all or most Indigenous peoples, or even of all Oneida women, on the various subjects. But these women’s insights and views tell us much about the challenges that Indigenous women have faced in their nations since colonialism and about the potential for regaining gender balance, as well as for removing other oppressive colonial legacies, through a decolonizing nationalist movement.

The format of the interviews was very informal and open-ended, and we agreed that both I and the interviewee would collaboratively participate throughout. This approach ensured that they could ask about my own views on some topics so that we would be able to practise the sharing principle of our cultural traditions.² As well, after I transcribed and made an initial analysis of the interviews, the women were invited to view and go over them with me. I also told them that I would keep a research diary where I would reflect on the whole research process, including the interviews. They did not desire to see the diary, but they did want to see the transcripts of our conversations and the analysis. My second exchange with each woman was a follow-up on our first

conversation. The time between the two meetings gave each of us an opportunity to think more about the topics we had discussed, to clarify some points, or to discuss how we felt about our first meeting. Having an opportunity to discuss our feelings after some time had passed was very important. A lot of the topics discussed in the first meeting caused some degree of discomfort and pain because of memories of racist or sexist experiences. As well, because some of the participants and I had opposing views on some points, meeting again reassured us that our relationship was still good and respectful. Since these women belong to my community, and since some of them are of my clan, we felt that maintaining good relations was an important aspect of our work together. We wanted to be true to ourselves, to be honest with each other, and to present our own stories during the conversations while remembering that we are related to each other. I agreed to share the completed work with them and to provide it to those in the community who might want to see it.

In addition to recording collaborative narratives, my research involved participation in traditional ceremonies, teachings, workshops, and conferences. The ceremonies and teachings helped me to understand better the traditions of the Oneida nation, the responsibilities that members have toward each other, and the roles that women have historically played in Oneida. I have learned the teachings of the Great Law of Peace, *Kayanl̥hslaʔkóin* the Oneida language, the importance of the clan system, and the differences between Haudenosaunee ways of governance and those shaped by the Indian Act and other colonial practices. In the summer of 2002, on the advice of my clan mother, I attended a weekend workshop in the Oneida people's original territory, in New York State, that dealt with the current land-claim dispute between the Oneida nation and New York State. This gathering was informative for me because it provided both an overview of the land claim and an opportunity to visit the original Oneida territory. During the weekend, I had conversations with some women about Oneida history, and I witnessed how Oneida women still play an important political role in their community.

My immersion in the literature on nationalism, gender and nationalism, colonialism, postcolonialism, decolonization, Oneida history, and Haudenosaunee history, the knowledge that I acquired through my collaborative interviews with Oneida women, my previous experiential knowledge, and my participation in various cultural and political activities – all have been influential in shaping this book. In the end, this

book offers an Indigenist, women-centred perspective on decolonizing nationalism. Although the process has been challenging and emotional, I am happy that I have been able to combine all the various sources of knowledge into this final result.

Some Comments on Terminology

Many terms appear throughout the book that might not be familiar to the reader or that are used differently from the way others use them because of their reference here to specific Indigenous contexts. As a descendant of the Ukwehuwé, or Original Peoples, of this land, I must note my preference for the term “Indigenous,” as it acknowledges that the people identified in the book are connected to the Indigenous nations that existed on Turtle Island (Turtle Island is how many Indigenous peoples refer to Canada) prior to the arrival of Europeans on this continent. Therefore, there is a political element in the choice of the term. This term, I must admit, is not commonly used by most of the people in my community during their everyday conversations. The two most frequently used terms are “Native” and “Aboriginal,” whereas “First Nations” is the term more commonly found in academic circles in Canada. I am grateful to Taiaiake Alfred’s latest work, *Wasáse* (2005b), for making me think more critically about the various labels given to Indigenous people. As he explains, “Many Onkwehonwe today embrace the label of ‘aboriginal,’ but this identity is a legal and social construction of the state, and it is disciplined by racialized violence and economic oppression to serve an agenda of silent surrender” (Alfred 2005b, 23). I attempt, therefore, to refer to people by the name of their Indigenous nation (e.g., Oneida) as often as possible, while also retaining the terms used/chosen by the individuals interviewed for my research. I rarely use the term “Indian” unless it is written as such in a particular text or unless I am discussing the Indian Act of Canada, which still uses the term. The term is viewed as offensive by most members of my community and by other Indigenous nations. However, at times, the term is used by some Indigenous people of Canada, especially when talking among ourselves. In such cases, the term is used in a sarcastic way or as an attempt to politically reclaim it by removing its past derogatory meaning. An example of this is its use in the phrase “Indian country.” The implied message in the usage of this phrase is that the land in North America originally belonged to those whom others have labelled as “Indians.” Whenever I use the term “Indian,” I place it in quotation marks in order to problematize it. “Status Indians,” however, is a legal term used to refer to those who are

registered as “Indians” under the Indian Act, to whom the Canadian state has a specific relationship.

I discuss the importance of “tradition” for Oneida women in their attempt to reclaim Indigenous ways of relating with men, children, and all other beings on Mother Earth. “Tradition” is a complicated term for Oneida women, as its current usage is full of contradictions and complexities. I do not use the term in a simplistic, essentialist, or romanticized fashion. I find Anderson’s (2000, 35) definition of the term the closest to my understanding of it: “When we say ‘tradition’ in our communities, we are referring to values, philosophies and lifestyles that pre-date the arrival of the Europeans, as well as ways that are being created *within* a larger framework of Euro-Canadian culture, or *in resistance* to it” (original emphasis). This definition recognizes that “tradition” is a living entity subject to change. Tradition is constructed by communities to suit specific changing needs, while simultaneously focusing on and revitalizing those elements of the teachings, the stories, and the ceremonies that have survived throughout colonization and can still apply to contemporary realities.

Learning of Healthy Relations from the Oneida Creation Story

I shall start by telling you a short version of the Oneida people’s Creation Story, as it has been told to me over the years by my elders and teachers. (Indigenous peoples have some marvellous storytellers, and often the stories are very long, lasting hours depending on the orator, but a shorter version seems more appropriate here.) There is a saying within my Oneida community, and it is probably heard in other communities as well: “You can’t know where you are going unless you know where you came from.” This saying teaches us that we must go to our roots, to the beginning, before we can move forward. This book covers Oneida’s ongoing decolonizing nationalist movement and women’s roles within it. As we dream of a healthy, free Oneida nation in which the balancing of men’s and women’s roles is regained and future generations will be free of destructive colonial legacies, I believe that we first need to go back to a time when Oneida women had a central and sacred role as mothers of the nation. The Oneida people’s Creation Story is a testimony to the rich and powerful roles women held in the nation. Sky Woman, or Otsitsa, created Turtle Island, and Lynx Woman gave birth to the first human species who inhabited it. Because of this, Oneida women were viewed as givers of life and mothers of the nation. They were considered to be the drumbeat of the nation. However, due to many factors covered

throughout this book, many stopped listening to the beat. But women have kept drumming. It is time that we listen carefully to the beat and go back to where we came from, to the teachings given to us by the story of “Sky Woman Falling from the Sky.”

At one time there were no humans in this land, as there was no earth; there were only water animals in the water. In the Sky World lived other species and there was a big tree. In the Sky World there was Sky Woman, the daughter of the chief of the Sky World. Sky Woman had been married to a man. One day the Sky Woman had quarreled with the man, who had been mean to her and was jealous of her, of her beauty, and he doubted that he was the father of the child she was expecting. One day Sky Woman was beside a hole by the big tree, when she fell from the Sky through that hole. Some say that he pushed her. As she came down, she carried with her the three sisters corn, squash, and beans in one hand and tobacco and strawberry seeds in the other. As she was coming down, some of the animals that were living under the Sky World saw this creature coming down. One of the animals cried out “Look, a strange creature is falling down. What is it?”; then they realized it was a human person. They wondered what to do. One of them said: “She won’t survive here, we have to catch her.” They caught her. They thought over about who would carry her. Finally it was decided that the Turtle would, as it was larger and stronger and more flat, so she could sit on top of him. When she arrived, they put her on top of the Turtle. The seeds and the three sisters that she had brought with her grew and spread on top of the Turtle shell, making mud and becoming a large mound of earth. So this is how the earth was made, from the Sky Woman who fell from the Sky World and who brought with her the beginning of life. Later on she gave birth to a woman, Lynx. The two became very close until the Lynx ignored the warnings of the mother and became pregnant from a Sky creature, the Wind, and gave birth to twin boys. She died giving birth. Her mother had warned her that it would be dangerous if a union between someone from the Sky World and Earth was to happen. And that was true: the Lynx woman died, but

she gave life to the first humans made on Turtle Island. The boys grew up and each one became responsible for giving life and taking care of different things on earth. They would tease each other with different tricks to do on earth. So, this is how Turtle Island was made, by the first woman from the Sky World coming down to earth, giving birth to the Lynx Woman, and then the Lynx Woman became the Mother of Nations, having mated here and given life to the Twins.

CHAPTER ONE

Theorizing Nations and Nationalisms: From Modernist to Indigenous Perspectives

What drives some individuals of Indigenous groups in Canada to mobilize and strive to re-establish healthy, self-determining nations? How is it possible that even after centuries of colonialism and attempts by the colonial state to “get rid of the Indian problem,” cultures of Indigenous peoples have survived? Likewise, how is it possible that we can still hear the heartbeat of our Indigenous nations despite efforts from the colonizers to force that heartbeat into silence? What do some people mean when they say, “We are the First Nations of this country”?

In the introduction, I argued that not all nationalisms are necessarily oppressive for women or based on fixed and exclusionary criteria of membership in the collective community. Through the voices of the women who contributed to my research, and drawing on my own participation in cultural and political activities of the Oneida nation, this book articulates the possibility of an “alterNative”¹ discourse of nation and nationalism. Before embarking on this discussion, I need to review some of the prominent literature on nation and nationalism and how it applies in the case of Oneida. This review uncovers the Eurocentric biases of earlier male/mainstream theories and then shows how, in contrast, postcolonial and Indigenous theories, by linking colonialism and decolonialism to nationalism, best fit into the analysis of the Oneida nation’s decolonizing nationalism.

Modernity and Nation

Mainstream theorists of nation treat nations as social constructions that are tied to modernity. The theories may at times give different dates and places of origins of nation and nationalism. However, they all argue that it was Western modernity that ultimately generated the need to imagine national identity and the formation of nations. In agreement with other

Indigenous scholars (Ladner 2000; Simpson 2000; Alfred 1995, 1999), I argue that this conceptualization of nationalism is Eurocentric and dismisses those experiences of nationalism that existed prior to and/or outside of modernity and that in many cases preceded the time of contact with Europeans and colonialism, such as the experiences of Oneida people and of other Indigenous peoples.

Gellner (1983), to begin with, strongly connects nation with the state, seeing the latter as a centralized, hierarchical political organization. We can clearly see this linkage when Gellner (1983, 4) writes that “not all societies are state-endowed. It immediately follows that the problem of nationalism does not arise for stateless societies. If there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations.” So what is one to do with and to call those stateless societies? With regard to “hunting and gathering bands,” which is how he incorrectly describes all Indigenous societies, such as the Oneida and the other Haudenosaunee peoples, Gellner states that these are too small to have a “political division of labour which constitutes a state” (5). Despite this erroneous description, I do concur with some of his argument. Most Indigenous societies did not have what we would now call states. Where I do differ from Gellner is in his linking state with nation to arrive at the conclusion that “the problem of nationalism does not arise when there is no state” (5). The “problem” of nation and nationalism has existed and continues to exist for many Indigenous societies, including Oneida and the other nations of the Haudenosaunee League, who formed a confederacy of nations centuries before the formation of modern states in Europe and who continue to demand that their nationhood be respected by those who have come to share the land on which their confederacy sits.

Gellner (1983, 24) exhibits Euro/Westerncentrism and a positivistic opinion of modernity and industrialization by correlating mobility with egalitarianism, as well as a strong functionalist view of nationalism. Not surprisingly, his linear theory of stages of development of societies leads him to view only the West as modern, progressive, egalitarian, and the birthplace of nations. This is shown in his frequent references to modernity, to economic growth, to the development of states, to centralized authority, and to homogenous culture as the essential and necessary components of a nation. Critics of modernity have pointed out that: (1) the modernity of the West was never egalitarian for/toward all groups, especially given that the construction of the modern “West” went along with the colonization of “the Rest” (Hall 1992, 280); (2) it is debatable

whether homogenization of culture was ever present or possible; and (3) the tendency to equate state with nation is Eurocentric and likely not valid. If one considers other interpretations and definitions of nation, one can hardly credit the origins of nationhood exclusively to Europe, for it can be dated back to perhaps many years prior to European industrialization, the period that Gellner (1983, 55) names the “age of nationalism.” However, since Gellner defines nationalism exclusively within a European framework, he considers those material conditions that brought forward modernity and industrialization to be foundational for the formation of a unified nation. But, as Indigenous scholars like Simpson (2000, 119) argue, Gellner’s definition has at least two shortcomings: first, by treating nationalism as a pure and absolute manipulation of the population by the elites, he dismisses “the collection of meanings (through event, history and present interaction) that distil into the consciousness of nationhood in a people”; second, as a “theory, nationalism should be extended to the aspirations and actions of those collectivities that do not fit the template ... Among other non-western people are the experiences of native peoples in Canada.” Ultimately, although Gellner’s theory stresses that identities such as national identity are social constructs and not to be treated as frozen or static, his theory ignores that Oneida people – and other peoples of the Haudenosaunee – had constructed a national identity outside of modern, Western, and industrial environments.

Like Gellner, Hobsbawm (1992, 10) ties the origin of the nation to a modernist state, one that has clear territorial boundaries and arises from an advanced stage of technological and economic development. Hobsbawm admits that prior to the particular modern states, there were collective formations that resembled nation-states. However, he argues that these were not nations, as they had only a liberal bourgeois origin (24). He outlines what the essential criteria of a nation are: first, its historic association with a state; second, a long-established cultural elite among whom there is linguistic unity; and third, “a proven capacity for conquest” (38). When studying socio-historical events that followed the European Industrial Revolution and led to the more recent and modern type of colonialism, ultimately tied to imperialist projects of the modern nation-states, one sees that Indigenous nations did not prove capable of conquering but were the recipients of colonial conquests; therefore, they do not fit easily within Hobsbawm’s typology. Moreover, as statehood is a crucial and necessary element for a nation, again only “some” societies can be ranked in Hobsbawm’s theory of nation premised on

evolutionary stages. In fact, he himself states, "It is thus essential to bear in mind that 'nation-building', however central to nineteenth-century history, applied only to some nations" (42). Due to such claims, we must critique theories such as his for being based exclusively on European experiences, ideas, and concepts as well as for equating nationalism with statehood and territoriality (Alfred 1995; Ladner 2000; Simpson 2000).

Hobsbawm's Eurocentric bias surfaces in his calling the nation a novelty to be found originally in industrial Europe, a claim that ignores nation-building projects that have occurred outside of Europe and that may have taken place along with or outside of the development of industrialization, such as the Oneida nation and the other nations forming the Haudenosaunee League. As well, Hobsbawm's (1992, 170) Eurocentric view is also evident in his differentiation between "good" nations, which for him obviously means the nineteenth-century European models, and the "separatist and divisive 'ethnic' group, [whose] assertion has no such positive programme or prospect." His denial of any progressive element in models of nations that do not follow the European ones would lead him to disapprove of some new (or renewed) nation-building movements, such as Indigenous decolonizing movements, when these demand national sovereignty, which could cause, according to him, "separatism and divisiveness" in existing nation-states (170). Lastly, Hobsbawm argues that "in spite of its evident prominence, nationalism is historically less important. It is no longer, as it were, a global political programme, as it may be said to have been in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries" (181). This particular aspect of Hobsbawm's theory is both inaccurate and problematic, for he does not take adequate account of the persistent and emergent decolonizing movements that have been happening throughout the world, which are often grounded in a strong sense of nationhood, such as those of many Haudenosaunee nations.

For the sociologist Benedict Anderson (1991), nation and national identity are cultural artefacts, or "imagined communities." But for Anderson, which particular cultural factors can best explain the construction of such imaginations? He traces the birth of modern nationalism to the decline of religiosity in the eighteenth century, which required replacing religiosity with some other secular form that could provide the same sense of continuity, contingency, and meaning. What distinguishes Anderson from other theorists of nation is not that he traces the origins of nations to modern culture but that he locates these origins in the "New World," the Americas (46-47). It is of striking importance to remark

that he, similar to other modernists, ignores for the most part the existence of Indigenous nations holding a long history of oral traditions, nations whose peoples lived on the American continent and possessed strong political systems long before the arrival of Europeans. Hence, it is not surprising to read his claim that the “Creoles” of both North and South America, defined by him as those of European descent born in the Americas, built new nations in the “New World” (191). These individuals named “New Cities” in these nations (i.e., New York, New Jersey, New Orleans, and the list goes on), and in doing so, they imagined new communities that paralleled those in the “Old World” (192). In the process of imagining these new nations, new narratives of “identity” and belonging were imagined and allowed to proliferate, all of which, Anderson reminds us, “was made possible by the ruptures of the late eighteenth century” (205).

For the most part, then, Anderson (1991) overlooks the existence of nations in the “New World” prior to his assumed date of the birth of nationalism in the land called “America.” Additionally, the few times when he does mention the “natives,” he refers to them as the “half-extermiated natives” and strips them of any agency in the construction and imagination of the Americas, both prior to and following the colonization of it by his own imagined European-Creole heroes (58, 193). But Indigenous peoples and cultures have always resisted colonization, have survived it, and are now in the process of rebuilding their nations, contrary to his view that “the indigenous were conquerable by arms and diseases, and controllable by the mysteries of Christianity and complete alien culture (as well as, for those days, an advanced political organization)” (58). From this statement, one can see that Anderson, in fact, dismisses the many ways that Indigenous peoples have resisted this “alien culture”; evidence of this resistance rests in the survival of Indigenous traditions and their revitalization. Oneida people and the other Haudenosaunee peoples *did* have, *for those days*, an advanced political organization, a confederacy of nations that later influenced the formation of the United States of America and was admired by European theorists like Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. And they had a detailed and sophisticated body of laws, the Kayanl̥hslaʔkó, or Great Law of Peace.

Ethno-symbolist approaches to nation, like that of Smith (1993, viii), relate identity and nationalism to “questions of ethnic identity and community.” What would then distinguish a national identity from an ethnic one? Smith reserves the former for European modern societies,

thereby dismissing that formations like Oneida also constitute nations. A characteristic that Smith aligns with the concept of nation is that of *patria*, which he describes as a “community of laws, and institutions with a single political will. Sometimes, indeed the *patria* is expressed through highly centralized and unitary institutions and laws” (10). Some elements of this concept, specifically a community of laws and a political will, can in fact be seen in the Haudenosaunee League, a confederacy of six nations, each its own entity, that have been united through the Great Law of Peace, a guideline on governance, since the mid-fifteenth century. This unity has survived, although it has been transformed due to many internal and external factors. And the Great Law of Peace is being revitalized as a central notion in the decolonizing of Canada by many Haudenosaunee people. Within my nation, the Great Law of Peace is what underlies the structure of our Longhouse, and its teachings are told to us by our elders during ceremonies and taught to our youth in our Tsi Niyukwalihu:t^ (traditional schooling of the Oneida of the Thames community). In June 2007, other nations of the Haudenosaunee came to our Longhouse for a Condolence Ceremony, where new chiefs were appointed in accordance with the teachings given to us by the Peacemaker. A ceremony like this had not happened for a couple of decades, and about one hundred people gathered at the Longhouse for the whole day to witness the appointment of new chiefs. This revitalization is also evident in the fact that a number of teenagers now give public speeches at the Longhouse and sing our traditional songs, all in the Oneida language.

Smith (1993, 11) argues that “nations must have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas that bind the population together in their homeland.” With regard to the Haudenosaunee peoples, particularly Oneidas, these characteristics are present, except for permanent territorial boundaries and a highly centralized and hierarchical political organization. Yet Smith credits these characteristics only to the Western world. According to him, the non-Western model of nation is ethnically conceived, and its “distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture; you belong to these by being born to and cannot ever separate from them” (11). I agree with some of his argument, except that in the case of the Oneida nation and the Haudenosaunee League, one’s membership in the community is through a clan, and although this is most often by birth and through a mother’s line of

descent, it can also be through adoption. This, then, allows for a more flexible definition of national/cultural identity. Some of the Oneida people I have talked with view national and cultural identity as involving much more than just “being born Oneida.” Another criterion repeatedly found is political involvement in the community. As one woman remarked,

It's one thing to be born Oneida, to be born in this community. But you need to have a sense of responsibility for the whole community, to do what you can for the benefit of all, to struggle with the rest so we have a better future, for our children to be proud to live one day in a free Oneida. You have to live in a good way with all relations, no? (MARY)

An ethnic community relies on descent, or presumed descent, rather than on territory (Smith 1993). But in the case of the Oneida nation, land does matter a great deal because it is viewed as the spiritual, social, and political connection that binds the people together. However, Indigenous relationships to and uses of land differ a great deal from those of Western paradigms (Little Bear 2004). Whereas an Indigenous paradigm sees humans as a part of creation, land included, not as the owners of it, and in fact considers land to be the giver of life, Western paradigms treat it as a “subject of use, disposal, or transfer to another for value” (Little Bear 2004, 34). This relationship to the land, like all relations, including how to treat other nations, is codified in the Great Law of Peace, a very sophisticated, large body of laws for the Haudenosaunee League to follow. Although this Law is not written in a form that mainstream theorists of nations are familiar with, wampum belts² are traditional recordings of knowledge that include rules each nation must abide by in order to “live in a good way and be of one mind.”

Admittedly, Smith (1993) does offer a definition of nation and national identity that, although not perfectly in alignment with Indigenous characteristics, in some ways can be used to examine the case of the Oneida nation. He states that “a nation can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (14). As this definition stands, it indeed appears that one could include Oneida and the other Haudenosaunee nations in his category since they share the listed characteristics. However, as Smith insists on fixed boundaries of territory

and on laws based on Western models, Oneida and the other Haudenosaunee nations do not fit his definition. Moreover, he ultimately makes a distinction between ethnic communities and nations, the former referring to cultural phenomena that could give rise to nations and the latter being limited to a Westernized model. Given that Smith remains within a Western framework of nation, he fixes political communities such as the Oneida nation into the category of ethnic community, or “ethnie” (21). As Ladner (2000, 35-36) argues, such “literature dismisses the possibility that nationalism existed outside of Europe ... and it censured, colonised and renamed [Indigenous] experiences. These experiences are nationalisms, contemporary expressions of social, cultural and political identities that have a long history independent of the western Eurocentric experience.”

Ethnic identity is historical, symbolic, and cultural (Smith 1993). This identity is historically bound and can therefore change over time as experiences change. Colonialism, for example, is a specific historical experience that affects colonized nations’ identities: either the members of these nations want to assimilate to the mainstream colonizer’s culture or they strategically reinforce their own cultures as a way to resist colonialism, or both. Since ethnicity contains *both* consistency and fluidity, “we need to reconstitute the notion of collective cultural identity itself in historical, subjective and symbolic terms” (Smith 1993, 25). The cultural and national identities of Oneida and the other Haudenosaunee nations contain both consistency and fluidity. For example, these identities are consistently tied to kinship, with the centrality of clan being its major element. However, due to experiences with colonialism, these identities have had to adapt to new realities: in the case of the Oneida people, the dispossession of land caused some groups to relocate in new territories, which altered their sense of belonging to the “old,” “original” territory and also affected their sense of belonging to the new one.³ Hence a series of historical experiences have changed the construction of such identities, challenging any static notions of identity and belonging to a nation. The symbolic and subjective nature of cultural identity is present within my community: the co-existence of fluidity and durability is what often underlies ethno-national identity, and the discourses of nationalism are to be seen within this parameter. This means that, although transformed by historical experiences and by new elements introduced over time, some core elements persist, such that we see a combination of traditions passed from one generation to the next, with

each new generation selectively changing as its members adapt to new realities.

Overall, then, Smith's (1993, 43) concept of nation leaves some room for recognizing Indigenous forms of nations within and outside North America since he argues that "nation is a multidimensional concept, an ideal type that provides a standard or touchstone which concrete examples imitate in varying degrees." A concrete example is the Oneida nation, whose existence illustrates that fixed territorial boundaries, written laws, hierarchical centralized power, and a homogenous culture are not necessary criteria of nation that must be shared by all types of nations. Postcolonial theories can offer us a way to unmask the biases and gaps of earlier mainstream theories and indeed treat entities like Oneida as nations.

Postcolonialism and Nationalism

There has been much debate about the term "postcolonial" itself and about the potential of postcolonial literature to be an effective tool for resisting and dismantling the various colonial structures. To begin with, much of the debate is centred on the prefix "post." Some question whether the prefix implies a temporal movement beyond the colonial condition; if it does, then this is quite problematic because such an approach discounts that many Indigenous peoples of some "postcolonial nations," such as Canada, have not moved to a stage after colonialism but, indeed, still live under colonial conditions (Loomba 1998; Monture-Angus 1999; Shohat 1993; Dirlik 1994; Smith 1999; McClintock 1995). Also, this approach implies that overall inequities based on colonial rule have been removed in the so-called postcolonial world, again denying the harsh, unequal power relations that do linger in many countries, both in the so-called First World and in the non-First World (Loomba 1998). Indigenous economies continue to be attacked by (neo)colonialism, as our lands continue to be under threat by governments and multinational corporations in their never-ending pursuit of accumulation of wealth. Moreover, postcolonial theorists must be cautious not to universalize and generalize the process of decolonization itself. This process has varied from place to place, such that decolonization by white settlers from Great Britain in places like Canada has not been identical to that experienced by Indigenous peoples still living under colonial conditions (Loomba 1998; Smith 1999; C. Hall 1996). In addition, "hybridity," a concept much referred to in postcolonial literature, is less

evident between descendants of white settlers and descendants of Indigenous peoples in countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. As Loomba (1998, 9-10) argues, "No matter what their differences with the mother country, white populations here were not subjected to the genocide, economic exploitation, cultural decimation, and political exclusion felt by indigenous peoples."

To these criticisms, some postcolonial theorists have responded that postcolonialism is a process of analysis, which emphasizes the discursive and material effects of colonialism (Ashcroft 2001; Quayson 2000; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989; Loomba 1998). Within this type of analysis, "postcolonialism" refers to the contestation of colonial domination, and it incorporates the history of anticolonial resistance. Such an analysis aims to discredit and to dismantle master narratives. This book fits within this type of analysis, entering into a critique of master narratives of the nation and nationalism and arguing that some Indigenous peoples had and may continue to have a different concept of nation. Also, a postcolonial framework can demonstrate how many Indigenous peoples' identities have been transformed by colonial domination, without losing sight of the many forms of resistance expressed by Indigenous peoples. In terms of resistance, some researchers have critiqued postcolonial theorists, especially Edward Said or Homi Bhabha, for decentering the concepts of power and subject to a point where power becomes too pervasive and the subject too fragmented, making it almost impossible to think of a colonized subject as able to act and resist colonialism. The fact that Indigenous peoples in Canada have resisted and continue to resist their colonization – as seen, for example, in events like the Stony Point Nation occupying Ipperwash Park to protest the Government of Ontario's refusal to return their lands as promised as well as the standoff at Caledonia by the Six Nations at Grand River in their dispute with the same government over outstanding land claims – indicates that the colonized are quite able to resist an oppressive agent of power. A second flaw I see in postcolonial literature is its heavy concentration on the literary, on the notion of "text," which often results in a treatment of colonialism merely as a text and perhaps also results in a movement away from the material, everyday experiences of domination.

Overall, postcolonial writing connects colonialism to other patterns, such as nationalism, gender, race, identity, resistance, hybridity, and diaspora. With regard to nation and nationalism, many postcolonial

theorists emphasize that nation is a ground of dispute and debate, a site of competing interests, and they therefore critique most of the modernist theories that tend to view nation as a unifying and homogenous entity and nationalism as a master narrative. Theorists like Bhabha (1989, 1990, 1994), Gilroy (1987, 1993), Young (1990, 1995), C. Hall (1994, 1996, 1999), and S. Hall (1992, 1994, 1996a, 1996b) relate nationalism to colonialism and point out that nationalist colonial discourses are not complete, all-pervasive, or successful in dominating the colonized. Bhabha (1990, 1994) more specifically articulates that such discourses always maintain internal ambiguities and contradictions and that there are thus no neat binaries such as colonizer/colonized, insider/outsider; rather, there always exist slippages in the narratives of nation and of colonialism. Hence colonized subjects can negotiate and find in-between spaces where they can resist and challenge official discourses of nation and colonialism. Identities, such as national ones, are not fixed and static but are fluid and socially constructed. As S. Hall (1994, 392) argues, identity must be thought of as a “production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside of representation.” Bhabha and Hall offer an innovative and creative way to imagine the identities of Indigenous peoples in the process of colonization: one must consider the possibility that these identities are not the same as they were before colonial contact, that in fact they have been shaped by the exclusion, marginalization, dispossession, and loss of control produced by colonial discourses and institutions. Indeed, colonial practices such as the Indian Act have had a tremendous influence on the current discourses of nation and identity that are taking place in different communities.

Hybridity has become a central concept within postcolonial theories because many postcolonial theorists argue that colonialism has never been fully stable or certain and has not always successfully imposed itself on the colonized. The concept of hybridity moves us away from other initial contributors to postcolonial studies, such as Edward Said. Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), presents a critical analysis of the construction of the “Orient” by the “West.” The latter, Said argues, has produced a discourse of the colonized that is always in opposition to that of the colonizer. This discourse has led to a dichotomous binary construction. The colonized is constructed as backward, lazy, wild, nonintellectual, and sexually unrestrained. The Western subject is constructed as having achieved the positive attributes of humanity, a civilized subject capable

of rational thought. Said points out that it is important to remember that this discourse served as a justification for the colonizer (the West) to view itself as morally, economically, and politically superior to the Orient, the colonized. Said can be criticized for homogenizing both the West and the Orient. Colonial identities, both of the colonizer and colonized, are always in flux, displaced. Bhabha argues, for example, that the colonized desire both to attain the attributes of the colonizer and to maintain their own differences. Colonial authority itself, he further argues, is also ambivalent, as it cannot replicate itself completely in the colony; it cannot fully contain the colonizers, and it comes to both desire and reject the Other, the colonized (Bhabha 1985). Ultimately, then, both the colonizer and the colonized, as split subjects, are living in a liminal space. Bhabha (1985, 1990) believes that ambivalence and hybridity open up a space for resistance, but in his view resistance is not always in complete opposition to, a simple negation of, the colonizer; rather, it is a product of the inherent ambivalence existing within the colonial condition.

Overall, then, postcolonial studies have given us the opportunity to rethink the notions of nation, culture, and colonialism, especially by considering nation as a narrative that is quite complex, often contradictory, unstable, and fluid. This narrative contains official and unofficial discourses; yet these discourses do not equally engage in the construction of narratives, due to the many unequal power relations and contesting interests that exist within the nation and due to the external pressures placed upon it. Bhabha's (1994, 2) questions about who speaks and writes about/for the nation, and how the nation is represented in those discourses, are very important ones to reflect upon during any analysis of nation and nationalism. It is true that during colonialism, the colonizer and colonized were engaged and positioned quite differently in the narratives of nation. This differential positioning must not be forgotten; in fact, an overemphasis on hybridity can tend to overlook the tension and unequal relations that do exist between the colonizer and the colonized (Parry 1994). Also, many colonized peoples may not have such an ambivalent sense of identity but might clearly view themselves as different from and in opposition to the colonizer. Perhaps Stuart Hall's (1994) argument that the cultural identities of colonized subjects are composed of a sense of both being and becoming is a well-founded one, meaning that although there cannot be an easy return to a precolonial identity based on pure origins, it is also true that this past