

Sample Annotation

Activity: The Albany Congress and Political Identity

Hendrick, a Mohawk Indian leader and diplomat, in a Speech at Albany Congress “You are Like Women, Bare and Open, without any Fortifications”

Then Hendrick, brother to the said Abraham, and a Sachem of the same castle, rose up and spake in behalf of the Six Nations as follows:

“Brethren, just now you told us you were ready to hear us; hearken unto me.” Brother Corlaer, (a name given to the governor of New York by the Indians long ago,) and brothers of the other governments, Saturday last you told us that you came here by order of the great king our common father, and in his name to renew the antient chain of friendship between this and the other governments on the continent, and us the Six United Nations: And you said also, there were then present commissioners from Massachusetts’s Bay, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Maryland; and that Virginia, and Carolina desired to be considered also as present: We rejoice that by the king’s orders, we are all met here this day, and are glad to see each other face to face; we are very thankful for the same, and we look upon the governors of South Carolina and Virginia as also present.

Comment [D1]: Hendrick addresses the Governor of New York and other colonial representatives as a diplomatic leader of the Iroquois Six Nations. He is seeking to continue peaceful relations with the colonists under the supervision of the British monarch with a vision of a familial relationship.

“Brethren, We thank you in the most hearty manner for your condolence to us; we also condole all your relations and friends who have died since our last meeting here. [gave three strings of wampum.]

“Brethren, (holding the chain belt given by his honor and the several governors in his hand,) We return you all our grateful acknowledgements for renewing and brightening the covenant-chain.

“This belt is of very great importance to our united nations and all our allies. We will therefore take it to Onondago, where our council-fire always burns, and keep it so securely, that neither thunder nor lightning shall break it. There we will consult over it, and as we have lately added two links to it, so we will use our endeavors to add as many links more as it lies in our power: And we hope when we shew you this belt again, we shall give you reason to rejoice at it, by your seeing the vacancies in it filled up (referring to his honor’s explanation of it in his general speech). In the mean time we desire that you will strengthen yourselves, and bring as many into this covenant as you possibly can. We do now solemnly renew and brighten the covenant-chain with our brethren here present, and with all our other absent brethren on the continent.

“Brethren, As to the accounts you have heard of our living divided from each other, it is very true, we have several times attempted to draw off those of our brethren who are settled at Oswegatie, but in vain; for the governor of Canada is like a wicked deluding spirit; however, as you desire, we shall persist in our endeavors.

“You have asked us the reason of our living in this divided manner; the reason is, your neglecting us these three years past; (then taking a stick and throwing it behind his back) You have thus thrown us behind your backs, and disregarded us; whereas, the French are subtle and vigilant people, ever using their utmost endeavors to seduce and bring our people over to them.

“Brethren, The encroachments of the French, and what you have said to us on that article on behalf of the king our father; as these matters were laid before us as of great importance, so we have made strict enquiry among all our people, if any of them have either sold or given the French leave to build the forts you mention, and we cannot find that either sale has been made or leave has been given; but the French have gone thither without our consent or approbation, nor ever mentioned it to us.

“Brethren, The governor of Virginia and the governor of Canada are both quarrelling about lands which belong to us, and such a quarrel as this may end in our destruction. They fight who shall have the land; the governors of Virginia and Pennsylvania have made paths through our country to trade, and built houses without acquainting us with it; They should have first asked our consent to build there, as was done when Oswego was built.

“Brethren, It is very true, as you told us, that the clouds hang heavy over us, and it is not very pleasant to look up, but we give you this belt [giving a belt] to clear away all clouds, that we may all live in bright sunshine, and keep together in strict union and friendship; then we shall become strong, and nothing can hurt us.

“Brethren, This is the antient place of treaty where the fire of friendship always used to burn, and it is now three years since we have been called to any public treaty here; 'tis true, there are commissioners here, but they have never invited us to smoke with them (by which they mean, the commissioners had never invited them to any conference), but the Indians of Canada came frequently and smoked with them, which is for the sake of their beaver, but we hate them (meaning the French Indians): We have not as yet confirmed the peace with them: 'tis your fault, brethren, we are not strengthened by conquest, for we should have gone and taken Crown Point, but you hindered us: We had concluded to go and take it; but we were told it was too late, and that the ice would not bear us. Instead of this you burnt your own fort at Saraghtogee and run away from it; which was shame and a scandal to you. Look about your country, and see you have no fortifications about you, no not even to this city. 'Tis but one step from Canada hither, and the French may easily come and turn you out of doors.

“Brethren, You desired us to speak from the bottom of our hearts, and we shall do it. Look about you, and see all these houses full of beaver, and money is all gone to Canada; likewise your powder, lead, and guns, which the French make use of at the Ohio.

“Brethren, You were desirous we should open our minds and our hearts to you; look at the French, they are men; they are fortifying every where; but we are ashamed to say it; you are like women, bare and open, without any fortifications.”

Source: Jephtha Root Simms, *History of Schoharie County, and the Border Wars of New York*. (Albany: Munsell & Tanner, 1845), 126–129