Renewing Homeland and Place:
Algonquians, Christianity, and Community in Southern New England, 1700-1790

by

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Abstract

“Renewing Homeland and Place” explores the complex intertwining of evangelical Christianity and notions of place and homeland in Algonquian communities in southern New England during the eighteenth century. In particular, this dissertation examines the participation of Algonquian men and women in the Protestant evangelical revivals known generally as the “First Great Awakening,” the adoption of New Light beliefs and practices within Algonquian communities, and the ways in which the Christian faith shaped and informed Algonquian understandings of place and community, and the protection of their lands. Mohegan, Pequot, Niantic, Narragansett, and Montaukett people living in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and on Long Island (New York) struggled continually throughout the eighteenth century to protect their land, resources, and livelihoods from colonial encroachment and dispossession. Christianity provided many Algonquians with beliefs, practices, and rituals that renewed, rather than erased, the spiritual and sustaining values they attached to their lands and that strengthened, rather than diminished, the kinship ties and sense of community that linked their settlements together. Equally as significant, the adoption of Christian beliefs and practices brought to the surface the dynamic and contested nature of community and place, and the varying ways in which Algonquians responded to colonization. As a number of Algonquians attended formal schools, assumed roles as ministers and teachers within their own settlements and among the Haudenosaunee in New York, and formed their own churches, they disagreed within their communities over issues of land use and political authority, and between their communities over the best response to the infringements they continued to suffer. By the 1770s a number of Christian leaders began to consider relocation to
Oneida lands in New York as a solution to the land loss and impoverishment they faced in New England. While many Algonquians left their coastal homelands for central New York in the 1780s to form the Christian community of Brotherton, a number of Christians remained behind, highlighting the varying paths of adaptation and survival that Natives tread by the end of the century.
Acknowledgements

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### Abbreviations

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<td>BIR</td>
<td>Brotherton Indian Records, New York State, Superintendent of the Brotherton and Stockbridge Indians, 1774-1804, Hamilton College Archives, Clinton, NY.</td>
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<td>IP</td>
<td>Indian Papers, Connecticut Archives, Connecticut State Library.</td>
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<td>MHS</td>
<td>Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLCC-NA</td>
<td>New London County Court Native Americans Collection, 1698-1855, Judicial Department, RG 003, Connecticut State Library.</td>
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<td>OIA</td>
<td>Office of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Minutes and Journals, 1755-1790, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCRN</td>
<td>Paul Campbell Research Notes, MSS 369, Rhode Island Historical Society.</td>
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<td>RIHS</td>
<td>Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island.</td>
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WHSA  Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

WP  The Papers of Eleazar Wheelock, Dartmouth College Library.

CHAPTER ONE
Thinking about Land and Place in Eighteenth-Century Algonquian New England

You say that I use the land, and I reply, yes, it is true; but it is not the first truth. The first truth is that I love the land; I see that it is beautiful; I delight in it; I am alive in it.

–N. Scott Momaday, *The Man Made of Words*

In early September 1703, a group of Mohegan men convened together at the town of Norwich, Connecticut to meet with and testify before English officials representing the colony. Whether their meeting took place within the confines of one of the town’s public buildings or outside in the late summer sunshine is not known, but the gathering offered the Algonquian men an opportunity to air their grievances against their English neighbours. Only a few months earlier, English inhabitants from the towns of New London and Colchester had begun crowding onto Mohegan hunting and planting grounds and had threatened violence to the Mohegan men and women who stood in the way of their expanding settlements.¹ The meeting with colonial representatives that followed provided Mohegan leaders with an opportunity to articulate their people’s grievances concerning their dispossession from their lands and the colonists’ disregard for former agreements they had made. Four Mohegan councillors and two lesser chiefs to the sachem testified before Connecticut’s representatives in Norwich, and their speeches, or at least fragments of their speeches, were recorded by Samuel Mason and Richard Bushnell. While all spoke varyingly about their past and present alliances with the English, and the destitution and confusion their people suffered after being recently driven from their lands, one councillor’s words evoked the vital relationship the Mohegans shared with their lands and the true significance of their dispossession.

¹ Mohegan Petition to Connecticut Assembly, 1703, IP, Series I, Volume I, 52, CSL.
Following Asnehunt’s account of how the English had “turned them out of their houses in the time of snow” from their planting grounds at Massapeage, which “occasioned their women and children to cry,” the Mohegan councillor Appagese offered a brief statement to his listeners. “From a boy their ground and he grew up together,” he recounted to the officials, “and they have always been friends to the English, and why our ground and we should be parted now, we know not.”

Nearly seventy years after Appagese offered his brief testimony to the small gathering in Norwich, another Mohegan man jotted down a series of statements in his diary that similarly described the relationship and strong attachment he felt towards his homeland. While serving as a schoolmaster in the town of Farmington, Connecticut, twenty-one year old Joseph Johnson took time one December evening in 1772 to record his longing and homesickness for the Mohegan community where he had been born and raised. Johnson had spent much of his young life away from the Algonquian settlement on the banks of the Thames River, as he had attended a colonial boarding school in nearby Lebanon as a child, served as a schoolmaster among the Six Nations in Iroquoia, and worked at sea on whaling and cargo ships. Despite such prolonged absences, however, Johnson remained vitally connected to his kin and the landscape of Mohegan. Finding himself more than fifty miles from home while keeping the schoolhouse at Farmington, Johnson turned to his diary to express the sting of separation that gnawed at his thoughts and feelings. Beginning his entry with “Well I remember home,” Johnson

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2 Governor and Company of Connecticut, and Mohegan Indians, By their Guardians, Certified Copy of Book of Proceedings Before Commissioners of Review, 1743 (London: W. and J. Richardson, 1769), 57-58; see also Amy Den Ouden, Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 103-7. Emphasis in quoted material is in original, unless otherwise noted.
went on to convey his deep, intangible longing for the places and people of Mohegan. “O Mohegan O Mohegan—the time is long before I Shall be walking my wonted places which are on thee—once there I was but perhaps never again, but Still I remember thee—in you is lodged my father & Mother Dear—and my Beloved Sisters—and brothers.” Only days earlier, Johnson had wrestled with a similar bout of homesickness and sense of separation, and had quickly recorded as the daylight faded: “my mind runs all over Mohegan as I used to, when I personally was there—but I end hoping in due time to be there once more.” Perhaps seeking to abate the pain and longing for his village and surrounding lands that continued to plague him in the following days, Johnson abruptly concluded his diary entry several nights later, noting that until he saw Mohegan again, “I must bid you farewell, and Shut the door of my Heart against thee.”

Although nearly seventy years separate the statements made by Appagease and Johnson, they both give voice and expression to the vital ties that the Mohegans and their neighbouring Algonquian-speaking kin shared with their lands. Like the Mohegans, nearby Pequot, Niantic, Narragansett, and Montaukett communities also attached enduring values to their homelands throughout the eighteenth century, and struggled to remain on increasingly threatened ancestral lands. While some scholars have depicted land as an “inert container,” a physical space devoid of meaning, or a bounded

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3 Laura Murray, ed., To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751–1776 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 156, 160-61. Joanna Brooks has noted Johnson’s incorporation of hymn lyrics and Scripture into his diary entry on December 17, 1772, and has pointed out that his longings for Mohegan were expressed by drawing on portions of Psalm 137 as well as Isaac Watts’ funeral hymn “My Soul Come Meditate the Day.” According to Brooks, Johnson drew on Psalm 137 in his diary entry and substituted Mohegan for Jerusalem as “his spiritual and physical homeland.” Joanna Brooks, American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 69.
possession, both Appagease’s and Johnson’s accounts suggest the sense of relationship and interconnectedness that characterized Algonquian understandings of place and landscape. For Algonquian peoples living in eighteenth-century southern New England, homelands were inextricably linked to notions of kin and community, and represented both physical and moral spaces. Homelands served as places of provision and sustenance for their inhabitants, and bore ancestral and spiritual values to those who lived and worshipped there. Men and women drew on the forests, fields, and waterways that surrounded them to sustain their families, and looked to the immaterial forces that presided over their lands for spiritual power and assistance. “Growing up together with the ground” involved more than mere possession or use of the land, but hinted towards an intimate knowledge, reliance, and interaction with particular sites, animals, and other-than-human beings that occupied the physical world. Homelands held and protected the bones of ancestors, and provided an ongoing link to their invisible presence as Algonquians hunted, fished, planted, or prayed in the same places that their kin had tread generations before. “Lodging” the remains of kin and loved ones, land acted as a repository of past knowledge and relationships while affirming the continuance of communities and villages in the present.

While recorded at two distinct moments in Mohegan history, Appagease’s and Johnson’s references to their homeland provide a window into exploring more broadly the meaning of land and place among the Mohegans and neighbouring Algonquians in southern New England. Intimately connected by ties of kinship, shared cultural practices, historical alliances and intervals of warfare and conflict, groups such as the Mohegans, Pequots, Narragansetts, Niantics, and Montauketts shared similar understandings of land,
space, and spiritual power throughout the colonial period, and faced similar constraints in protecting lands, livelihoods, and communal autonomy during the eighteenth century. The span of decades that fell between the recording of Appagease’s and Johnson’s observations constituted a period of significant struggle and land loss for the Mohegans and other Algonquians, as these communities entered into prolonged battles with colonial authorities to recover and protect homelands and resources.


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other Mohegan leaders who testified at the meeting in 1703 already suffered from English encroachments on their homelands, the years that followed would bring a growing Euro-American presence into Algonquian communities. By the 1720s, the arrival of missionaries and teachers at Native settlements reflected renewed colonial imperatives to Christianize and “civilize” the “savage” populations, and Euro-American settlers increasingly crowded onto Algonquian territories seeking land and resources. Some Algonquians initially rebuffed the missionaries and teachers while others attended their sermons and teachings for various reasons. By the early 1740s, when the Protestant evangelical revivals known as the “Great Awakening” swept across southern New England, many Algonquian listeners attended revival meetings and accepted the Gospel message proclaimed by itinerant preachers. In the following years, ministers and colonial officials continued their efforts to formally educate Algonquian children, and by the mid-eighteenth century a growing number of First Peoples had become familiar with, if not literate in, the English language. By the time that Johnson penned his longings for Mohegan while teaching at Farmington in 1772, he and many others had witnessed the vast reduction of their homelands to a few thousand acres, had learned to read and write in English, and perhaps most significantly, had embraced salvation in Jesus Christ and the Protestant Christian faith.

Cultural adaptations and struggles to protect land were not unique to the Mohegan community, but rather reflected the wider challenges facing Algonquian peoples in southern New England during the eighteenth century. For Algonquians living in southeastern Connecticut, Rhode Island, and on eastern Long Island (New York), the ongoing incidence of warfare, disease, servitude, and land loss, coupled with colonial
efforts to missionize and “civilize” their communities, forced them to adapt to many new ways of living on their lands and presented obstacles in maintaining age-old patterns of using and knowing their lands. Particularly in the aftermath of King Philip’s War (1675-76)—a conflict which weakened Native populations in southern New England and diminished their political and cultural autonomy—homelands became increasingly subject to the physical encroachment and cultural monitoring of English neighbours and colonial assemblies. As Euro-American representatives brokered deals and agreements with leaders which reduced hunting and planting grounds to small reserved tracts, Algonquian communities faced harsh limitations on their movements, subsistence activities, and settlement patterns from officials who anticipated their imminent extinction. Land bases dwindled through debt and deceptive agreements, and impoverishment and indentured servitude became stark realities for many adults and children. Algonquian men frequently left villages to fight in colonial wars, or to seek employment in local whaling industries, leaving women and children to survive on declining resources. Groups neighbouring the Mohegans such as the Pequots and Niantics in Connecticut, the Narragansetts in Rhode Island, and the Montauketts on eastern Long Island also faced growing colonial authority over their daily lives, and battled local assemblies to protect their land bases and the resources of their communities. Like the Mohegans, members of these communities participated in the evangelical revivals of the 1740s and many put their faith in the Christian God, and by the mid-eighteenth century had become increasingly enmeshed in wider colonial networks of faith, schooling, and labour.5

5 On King Philip’s War, see Laura Conkey, Ethel Boissevain, and Ives Goddard, “Indians of Southern New
As they became entangled with both the authority and cultural practices of their English neighbours, Algonquian efforts to adapt and survive in eighteenth-century southern New England did not occur on a neutral stage or in a blank geographical space. Struggles over landscape and the definition of place, rather, remained at the centre of the colonization process and underscored relations within and between Algonquian communities, as well as their relations with non-Natives. As the observations of Appagease and Johnson powerfully suggest, relations to land and senses of place remained important to Mohegans and other Algonquians throughout the duration of the eighteenth century as they continued to shape both individual and communal identities. Perhaps more significantly, the observations of Appagease and Johnson hint towards the changing lens through which many Algonquians began to view their lands over the course of the century, and the complex intersection of Christianity and landscape that increasingly underscored Algonquian notions of place.

By the mid-eighteenth century, many Algonquians had begun to envision themselves in relation to their lands through the lens of evangelical Christianity. Most men and women from the Mohegan, Pequot, Niantic, Narragansett, and Montaukett communities had collectively resisted the overtures of Protestant missionaries and

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ministers in the early eighteenth century, and continued to root their faith in the many spiritual powers, or Manitou, which they believed occupied their lands. Connected by kinship, trade, alliance, and warfare, Algonquians in southern New England shared common beliefs concerning the omnipresence of spiritual forces in their homelands and the need to treat other-than-human beings with reciprocity and respect. Growing colonial encroachment through the early eighteenth century not only displaced members of these communities from significant portions of their spiritually-laden homelands, but also confronted Algonquians with the new spiritual teachings and practices of their English neighbours. While some Native leaders expressed an openness and even adherence to Christianity by the 1730s, many more responded to the revival efforts of evangelical preachers the following decade. Not all Algonquians accepted the offers of salvation proclaimed during the Great Awakening era, and not all Algonquian Christians became affiliated with evangelical Protestant teachings or denominations, yet a significant number of men and women received the Gospel message and began to develop their own bodies of worship and rituals that aligned with the evangelical faith.6

The teachings of “New Light” ministers and the tenets of the evangelical Christianity that characterized the Awakening complemented many Algonquian spiritual

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6 Religious scholars such as David Hall have increasingly emphasized the importance of “lived religion” and the notion of “practice” in tapping into the spiritual lifeworlds of lay men and women in colonial New England and beyond. According to Hall, the concept of religious practice encompasses the “tensions, [and] the ongoing struggle of definition, which are constituted within every religious tradition,” while the idea of lived religion indicates the “fluid, mobile, and incompletely structured” nature of everyday spiritual beliefs and practices. Robert Orsi likewise contends that the concept of lived religion breaks down traditional dualisms of sacred and profane and attempts to establish a more “dynamic integration of religion and experience.” See David Hall, “Introduction,” in Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice, ed. David Hall (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997),vii, xi-xii; Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion,” in Lived Religion in America, 8.
beliefs and practices and strengthened, rather than diminished, the value and meaning that
Native Christians attached to their homelands. Rather than erasing the sustaining,
ancestral, and spiritual significance that many Algonquians assigned to the landscape
before the Awakening, Christian beliefs affirmed their sense of belonging on lands
increasingly monitored and controlled by colonial authorities, and fuelled their efforts to
protect and defend their rights to their remaining homelands. Euro-American officials
mapped and demarcated space according to town, reserve, and colonial boundaries, sent
surveyors and committees to Algonquian communities to distinguish between Native and
English lands, and associated particular territories with particular “tribes.” Amidst such
understandings of space, however, Algonquians continued to engage their lands as
spiritual places, and challenged colonial assumptions about their decline and
disappearance.

Rather than following the path of so-called extinction, a growing number of
Algonquian youth and adults attended local schools in the aftermath of the revivals and
put new skills of English literacy to work in defending their rights to their lands. The
petitions and pleas that Algonquian communities, churches, and individuals presented to
non-Native authorities throughout the mid-eighteenth century stressed the importance of
their land to basic survival and often referenced their community’s ancestral heritage and
Christian faith to emphasize their rights to the land. Instead of subscribing to narrow
colonial conceptions of tribal territory, in the decades following the Awakening
Algonquian believers instead strengthened ties with neighbouring kin and friends through
inter-village worship gatherings and even went beyond the boundaries of New England in
sharing their faith and offering instruction. By the 1760s, a number of Algonquian men
and youth had journeyed to Haudenosaunee communities in New York to serve as teachers and ministers, and created new ties with Oneida and Mohawk villages. Such connections would ultimately provide Native believers with a new place for resettlement and Christian community when land loss made life in New England untenable.

Over the past several decades, a growing number of scholars have turned their attention towards the landscapes and places where colonial encounters occurred, and have begun to recognize the importance of land and the environment in understanding the processes and outcomes of colonization in New England. William Cronon’s hallmark study on the ecological changes that colonization produced, for example, described the varying influences of Natives and non-Natives on the environment in New England and the vast transformation of space that occurred following “contact.” Placing the environment and culture at the centre of his analysis, Cronon emphasized the conflicting values and uses of land that pitted Native societies against English colonists which ultimately led to a remaking of space with little room for Native practices or people.⁷

Following Cronon’s lead, other scholars have likewise endeavoured to explore the geographic and environmental dimensions of Native-European interactions in early New England, and have stressed the fundamental opposition that underscored Algonquian and English notions of space. According to Carolyn Merchant, the arrival of Europeans in New England unleashed an “ecological revolution” through which English forms of knowledge and uses of space replaced Algonquian ones by the end of the seventeenth century. English colonists imposed new “spatial patterns” on the land that rendered it an

“inert, geometric surface,” Merchant argues, and that effectively undermined the spiritual power and use-value that Native communities traditionally attached to their homelands. Jean O’Brien’s study of the changing landscape at Natick, Massachusetts similarly contrasts English and Massachusett conceptions of space in order to challenge the “extinction myth” that Natives disappeared from colonial New England. Rather, O’Brien contends, Algonquians living at Natick struggled against a new social order which stressed spatial fixity and the possession of land as a commodity, and ultimately suffered uprooting from their community at the hands of their English neighbours. More recent works exploring colonial conflicts over animals and reservation lands have similarly highlighted the spatial and geographical dimensions of encounters in early New England.8

The growing attention of historians towards land and environment in their writings on colonization reflects a broader theoretical appreciation for the importance and complexity of concepts such as place, space, and landscape that has developed in recent years. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have sought to redress what Wolfgang Natter and John Jones III describe as history’s “relegation of space to an inert horizontality which…‘actively submerges and peripheralizes the geographical or spatial imagination.’”9 Emphasizing the socially-constructed nature of the physical environment,

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scholars have increasingly sought to account for the varying ways in which individuals and societies understand and engage the world, and to provide frameworks for interpreting the spatial dimensions of cultural practice and human action. In his writing on the concept of place, for example, Edward Casey argues that western epistemology has largely suppressed and neglected the idea of place by putting primacy on time and space in the last three centuries. Seeking to challenge modern notions of space as “empty and endless,” Casey insists that place represents geographical space rendered familiar and meaningful to its inhabitants. Arguing that societies live in places, rather than spaces, Casey contends that place provides people with a “concrete situatedness in the common world” and a “sense of self” at both a personal and collective level.10

Perhaps offering a cautionary reply to Casey’s definitive construction of place, other scholars have pointed towards the complexity and contested nature of concepts such as landscape and place. David Harvey, for example, has observed that the idea of place carries a “surfeit of meanings” and represents one of the “most multi-layered and multipurpose keywords in our language.” For Harvey, place formation involves a “process of carving out ‘permanences’ from the flow of processes creating spatio-temporality,” but notes that the places created by such processes remain temporary and contingent, rather than eternal. Places are produced through social struggle, Harvey contends, and remain internally heterogeneous and dynamic in nature.11 Echoing Harvey’s assertions, anthropologist Margaret Rodman argues that while many scholars

treat places as simply locations “where people do things,” they in fact represent spatial constructions bearing politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, and multiple meanings. Drawing on her work on Melanesian cultures, Rodman likens places to the multiple and local nature of voices, and insists that places offer a “unique reality” to their inhabitants which can be shared with other people. Rodman also suggests that places can reflect a “multilocal” character evident in the differing ways in which people experience and perceive a given locale.  

Geographers and other scholars writing on the concept of landscape too have recognized the ambiguities bound up in spatial categories and frameworks. Similar to the concept of place, Alan Baker suggests that landscapes “are always undergoing change,” and comprise a multiplicity of signs and meanings. Bringing together both people and their environment, Baker describes landscapes as physical sites upon which “all forms of social tension,” whether political, economic, ethnic, or gender, are inscribed. Barbara Bender likewise defines landscape as a “concept of high tension” that demands scholarly contextualization. Constructed and re-constructed by people, Bender argues that humans engage their landscapes based on a plethora of variables such as time, place, historical conditions, gender, age, and socio-economic position. Landscapes represent physical places, Bender concludes, that individuals, groups, and nations re-work, appropriate, and contest. 

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Building on the frameworks and definitions that scholars have established to critically study the physical environment, ethnohistorians have attempted to incorporate an analysis of landscape and place into their studies of Native American communities and cultures. Keith Basso’s writing on senses of place among the Western Apache insightfully reveals the importance of landscape in shaping the identity, community, and history of Natives living at the Cibecue settlement in Arizona. In particular, Basso’s work demonstrates the complex ways in which Apache men and women intertwine concepts of selfhood with their understandings of placehood. While Basso insists that place-making constitutes a “universal tool of the historical imagination,” his close exploration of the moral and instructive value that the Apache attach to the places where they live and work reveals the powerful link between history and place for Native Americans, and the ways in which the Apaches have fused the past with the present through their knowledge and uses of the landscape. “Land makes the people live right,” one Apache man informed Basso, and plays an evocative, functional, and active role in shaping the behaviour of men and women in the community.14

Land also acted as a moral space for the Omaha leader White Horse, among others, James Carson points out in his writing on ethnogeography and Native American history. Urging scholars to develop ways to recognize Native North America as a place where “behavior and attitudes impinged directly on the physical environment,” Carson insists that most Native histories continue to lack a sense of the “subjective experience of native people in the land” and their perceptions of the broader world in which they lived.

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Defining landscape as a place of contest as well as contact, Carson’s approach to Native history closely parallels the work of Keith Basso, and of Karen Blu. Blu’s examination of the Lumbee community in North Carolina and their ongoing struggle to define community and place without a reservation emphasizes the multiple, rather than uniform or cohesive, ways in which Natives envision and understand place. Far from a homogeneous cultural group defining place according to “timeless givens,” Blu argues that “Native American cultural constructions of space and place have rarely been accomplished in complete isolation,” but rather have been produced by struggles, negotiations, and interactions within and between Native groups, as well as between Natives and non-Natives.15

Understandings of place and landscape among Algonquians in southern New England in the eighteenth century likewise involved change, negotiation, adaptation, and struggle. Neither uniform nor static, Algonquians responded to the colonial pressures and limitations placed on their communities and homelands in varying ways, and looked to new beliefs and practices to sustain their families, kin networks, and larger settlement areas. While scholars have aptly demonstrated both the physical and cultural struggles over land unleashed by colonization in New England, their accounts often miss the diverse and creative spatial adaptations made by First Peoples, and what the land meant, or no longer meant, to its Algonquian inhabitants. The portrait of colonial collision and

Algonquian decline painted by Cronon and other historians implies a one-way process of involuntary change among Algonquians that fails to account for the continuing importance of place evident in the testimonies of Appagease and Johnson. Scholars of New England have perhaps placed too much weight on contrasting European and Native understandings of land and the environment, and in so doing have created binary categories that assume the cultural homogeneity of both groups and the eventual predominance of European culture. Such a framework, geographer Andrew Sluyter cautions, effectively credits Europeans with determining the transformation of both Natives and their landscapes, while ignoring the reciprocal processes through which First Peoples and their physical environment transformed Europeans.\textsuperscript{16} Such a framework also conceals the varying ways in which Algonquians responded and adjusted to the conditions of colonization, and the new and diverse ways in which they envisioned themselves in relation to their lands.

The adoption of Christianity, and evangelical Protestant Christianity during the Great Awakening, brought to the surface the contested nature of community and place, and the varying ways in which Algonquians responded to colonization. Communal politics and spiritual beliefs became increasingly entangled by the mid-eighteenth century as members of Algonquian communities disagreed over how to use and maintain their land, over the role of colonial authorities in village affairs, and even over issues of Christian practice and worship. Spiritual authority and beliefs began to inform debates over land use and communal governance, particularly at the Mohegan and Narragansett

settlements, as Native ministers and spiritual leaders offered new leadership in preserving lands against the actions and traditional authority of the sachem. Native ministers and teachers also assumed new leadership roles beyond the space of their homelands, and travelled to Haudenosaunee communities in New York to offer instruction in Gospel truths and English literacy. Seeking to spread the spiritual power and practical skills valued in their own communities, Algonquian Christian ambassadors engaged in a process of cultural exchange with their Iroquoian hosts which broadened their own understandings of land and colonial struggles.

As Algonquians debated the use and governance of land within their settlements, those who adopted Christianity looked to kin and friends in neighbouring villages to share in worship, gather for Sabbath services, and to spur each other on in their common faith. Building on the networks of kinship, trade, and alliance that predated the Great Awakening, Native Christians overlaid existing spatial and cultural ties between their villages with a new geography of faith that increasingly linked their settlements together. Collaborating together in worship gatherings and spiritual teaching, by the 1770s Algonquian Christians also began to collectively envision a solution to their suffering and land loss in southern New England and to plan the formation of a new community elsewhere based on their common faith.

The New Light beliefs and practices that many Algonquians adopted during the Awakening formed part of a larger evangelical renewal in the American colonies during which peoples of diverse backgrounds joined together to create new communities of faith. While in the aftermath of the revivals, Algonquian communities at Mohegan and
Narragansett established their own churches and designated ministers and spiritual leaders to direct their services, they and other Natives initially attended Euro-American churches or joined in worship services comprised of ethnically-diverse participants. Particularly during the late 1730s and early 1740s, Natives and non-Natives together turned their ears to the calls of itinerant ministers to seek redemption in Christ, and crowded together into churches or at outdoor worship sites to respond to offers of salvation. In the years that followed, Algonquian ministers called by God to preach his Word itinerated between colonial towns and Native settlements, and perhaps tread the same paths as Euro-American preachers responding to similar spiritual callings. Native men and women who opened their homes for worship and prayer often attracted congregants of African and European descent living on or near their reserves and together they listened to exhortations and edifying words that built up their faith.

Such gatherings and interactions reflected the blurred social and cultural boundaries that the revivals produced, and the new roles and relationships that Algonquians and others pursued stemming from their beliefs and adherence to Christ. Scholars of colonial New England have not only begun to recognize the persistence of Native communities and culture in the eighteenth-century world, but have also recognized the participation of First Peoples in New England’s dynamic religious landscape. In keeping with Colin Calloway’s call to tell new stories that transcend conventional narratives of Native decline and defeat following King Philip’s War, many historians have pointed to the significant participation of First Peoples in the Great Awakening and
wider religious movements of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{17} Challenging long-standing accounts of the Great Awakening that focused solely on Euro-American participants, scholars such as William Simmons, Margaret Connell Szasz, Bernd Peyer, Laura Murray, Joanna Brooks, and Linford Fisher have critically considered the involvement of Algonquians in the Protestant evangelical revivals and varyingly explored the significance of Christianity to Native communities and cultural practices.\textsuperscript{18} While Simmons argues that the Great Awakening provided groups such as the Narragansetts with a “new religious basis” for distinguishing themselves from the broader colonial society, in her study of Mohegan minister Samson Occom Brooks stresses the emergence of Native leaders and churches. According to Brooks, the Awakening “sparked a distinctive culture of Christian Indian separatism” in southern New England which involved the creation of “separate Indian churches” and which allowed Native believers to “exercise their spiritual gifts and powers without white supervision.” While


Christianity strengthened Algonquian communal and inter-village spiritual practices, Brooks goes on to note the new connections that believers such as Occom forged through their extensive travelling, teaching, and preaching in southern New England and abroad. Most recently, Linford Fisher’s study of Christianity and Algonquian communities in southern New England presents the Great Awakening as one of several “points of transition” for Native peoples in the eighteenth century. Examining the dynamic “affiliations” that Algonquian men and women established with Anglo-American churches and the Christian faith, Fisher contends Natives exhibited a “spectrum of responses” to Protestant teachings and the revivals that stemmed from their previous exposure to both religious instruction and Euro-American culture.19

The growing attention to Algonquian participation in the Great Awakening and their adoption of evangelical Protestant Christianity reflects a broader trend among scholars to present more nuanced accounts of colonial religion and missionary history. Rather than depicting Native encounters with Christianity in terms of colonial domination and cultural loss, historians instead have begun to explore the ways in which First Peoples adopted or resisted the Gospel message, and their significant influence in shaping the meaning and practice of Christianity. Building on the work of historians such as James Ronda, who argued that the Christian faith complemented and co-existed with many traditional beliefs among the Wampanoags of Martha’s Vineyard, other scholars have likewise emphasized the complex combining of Native cultures with Christian beliefs and the influence of Native Christians within their own communities and beyond. Exploring the ways in which Native individuals and communities “indigenized” Christianity and made the faith their own, several scholars have suggested that Christian beliefs and practices often provided First Peoples with new means to preserve long-standing and vital aspects of their own cultures.

movement among Native groups in the northeast borderlands during the mid-eighteenth century. While “nativists” who supported the movement were hostile to Euro-American culture and the Christian faith, they often incorporated Christian elements into their visions and calls for unity against colonial encroachment.


Works by Donald Smith, Susan Neylan, and Richard Pointer, for example, have documented the lives of Native ministers and church leaders in various historical contexts, and have highlighted the initiative of Native Christians in shaping mission activities and the non-Natives with whom they served. According to Pointer, the flow of cultural influence and religious change moved in “both directions” in colonial America. “Europeans were not alone in promoting or defining the Christian message,” Pointer contends, noting that “Natives could be key players too” as “their witness in word and deed was simply too compelling for the Euro-American Christians around them to ignore, dismiss, or fully control.” Echoing Pointer’s sentiments, Joel Martin has called for a “postcolonial narrative” in colonial religious history that recognizes the religious change that “contact” induced among both Natives and non-Natives. Examining colonial interactions in the early South, Martin argues that while spiritual encounters largely occurred in the context of uneven power relations, the resulting multi-directional exchange of religious and cultural knowledge “changed everyone” involved.22

Paralleling recent efforts to recognize the dialogic nature of religious interactions in colonial America, scholars have increasingly questioned conventional categories and frameworks for interpreting spiritual and cultural changes among First Peoples. Perhaps most notably, several scholars have questioned the concept of “conversion” as applied to Native Christians and the connotations of colonial domination and cultural abandonment bound up in the term. Seeking to find new ways of thinking about Native adherence to Christian beliefs and practices, historians have suggested that First Peoples often maintained pre-existing worldviews in conjunction with newer beliefs, and often filtered biblical teachings through older frameworks and understandings of the spiritual world. Writing on Algonquian encounters with Jesuit missionaries in New France, for example, Kenneth Morrison contends that Natives made adjustments to Catholicism according to their own changing needs and used Catholic teachings to bolster their own traditions and tribal solidarity. Seeking to dispense with the idea that Algonquians “converted” to the Catholic faith, Morrison argues that such conclusions assume the victimization and cultural decline of the Natives and ignore the processes of negotiation and adaptation that religious change entailed. Joanna Brooks’ exploration of Christianity and writing among Algonquians in New England likewise suggests that conversion represented an “act of self-determination and an expression of sovereignty,” rather than one of cultural loss or submission. According to Brooks, Algonquians such as Samson Occom discovered in Christianity a “venue for strengthening Indian communities and rearticulating tribal identities under siege by colonialism.” David Silverman’s work on the Wampanoag community on Martha’s Vineyard similarly offers new ways of approaching missionary history and the results of cross-cultural encounters. Looking at the efforts of Puritan
missionaries to spread their faith on the island during the seventeenth century, Silverman suggests that Wampanoag adherence to Christianity involved a process of translation, rather than conversion. In order to make their messages of divine truth relevant and meaningful to their Native flock, Silverman recounts, missionaries invested Christianity with “traditional Indian meanings” which enabled the Wampanoags to maintain older practices alongside their newer faith.23

While such critical approaches to colonial missions and Native Christianity have offered new frameworks for considering the complex intersection of faith and culture, scholars have largely neglected to explore the intersection of faith and understandings of place. Historians tend to emphasize, rather, the changes and adaptations that occurred in Native material culture and lifeways with the adoption of Christianity without directly addressing the ways in which Natives perceived the colonial landscape in which they lived or related to their changing homelands. Although scholars such as Silverman have provided fruitful avenues for exploring how Christianity strengthened Native culture and communal life, most studies neglect the significance of the lands upon which professions and practices of faith were acted out, and fail to consider how the spiritual and physical worlds remained intertwined in Native beliefs and practices. In some scholarly accounts, rather, Native adherence to the Christian faith signals a break with such perceptions of the

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physical world, as historians point to the adoption of Euro-based agriculture, English literacy, material goods, or new gender roles among Natives as signposts of their Christian identity and cultural adjustments.  

Source material admittedly poses challenges to tapping into the ways in which Natives thought about and valued their lands throughout the colonial period, but the reluctance of scholars to address the intersection of Christianity and landscape may also signal the oppositional categories they continue to invoke. Perhaps stemming from a tendency to describe “Native” and “Christian” as two separate cultures or entities and to view the Christian faith as essentially external to and distinct from indigenous belief systems, scholars remain reluctant to explore Christianity as a viable and vital component of Native culture that informed their understandings of landscape and place. An article which recently explored the meaning of conversion and Christian practice among Algonquian peoples in colonial New England, for example, demonstrated the scholarly persistence of describing Native and Christian cultures as distinct categories. While recounting the ways in which New England Algonquians incorporated and used

Christianity in their lifeways in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Linford Fisher explained that Native believers drew “from both Native and Christian practices” and took on “both Christian and Native identities.” Such distinct categorizations not only assume the static and homogeneous quality of pre-contact or pre-Christian Native lifeways or “traditions,” but render Christianity an external belief system that acts on, rather than within and through, Native lifeways and understandings of space. While Fisher goes on to insightfully explore how Natives engaged in a process of making Christianity meaningful and “truly indigenous” within their communities, the language and categories that he and other scholars rely upon continues to distinguish Christian beliefs, practices, and ways of being as intrinsically distinct from “Native” or “Indian” ways.\(^{25}\)

For the Algonquians in southern New England who adopted and practised the evangelical Protestant faith, their new beliefs and practices often fused with pre-existing notions of landscape and place. For many men and women, Christianity provided a means for maintaining the moral and spiritual significance of their homelands. Rather than operating as an external or European cultural force, the Christian faith became an integral component in shaping how many men and women used and perceived their villages and broader lands, and overlaid existing notions of space with new spiritual awareness that permeated their lifeways, rituals, and mundane activities. The evangelical, “New Light” brand of Christianity promoted during the Awakening and afterwards resonated with Algonquian notions of spiritual power, place, and ritual, as itinerant ministers often spoke with emotion in outdoor settings, and encouraged their listeners to seek after and individually encounter the sovereign God for salvation and lasting

Paralleling Algonquian vision quests and pursuits of spiritual guardians, many Natives experienced encounters with God in the woods and fields surrounding their settlements, and gathered for worship and prayer in large groups at communal sites or local wigwams. Mundane activities such as shelling corn or crafting brooms became opportunities for reflecting on salvation and redemption or presenting requests to God, and visits from kin and friends from neighbouring communities occasioned lengthy discussions of God’s power and work in their lives. Faithfulness to God intertwined with hopes for good harvests, and dreams presented new visions of sacrificial lambs or the gates of heaven. Pressed on many sides by colonial officials and greedy neighbours, Algonquian ministers and community members protested the loss of lands and the theft of resources by reminding officials that the Great and Good Spirit had originally provided their ancestors with the lands they called home, and insisted that their long-standing rights be upheld and fulfilled. While homelands dwindled, they retained their vital role as sites of provision, worship, and collective ritual, and churches, wigwams, woods, fishing spots, and planting fields served as places for meditation, singing, and spiritual encounters.

Algonquian villages and reserved lands provided the primary places where men and women encountered God and practised their faith and as such, they provide a key analytical window into exploring the intersection of faith and understandings of place among Native Christians. Villages and communal lands functioned as the centres of social and political life and kin interactions throughout the colonial period and by the eighteenth century, had become sites of cultural resilience that visually challenged Euro-American claims of Native conquest and disappearance. Villages also constituted places of gathering and inter-communal solidarity, as Algonquians from neighbouring
settlements frequently visited each other to share news, see family members, trade goods, or attend political and religious ceremonies. Six Algonquian settlements in particular—the Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern (or North Stonington) Pequot, and Niantic in Connecticut, the Narragansett in Rhode Island, and the Montaukett on eastern Long Island—remained closely interconnected by kinship ties, cultural practices, and geographical proximity throughout the eighteenth century, and all participated in the evangelical revivals that surrounded their communities in the early 1740s (see figure 2). These communities offer an opportunity to study the negotiations, struggles, and changes they underwent as many men and women began to practise the new Christian faith.

Village life in all six communities had been significantly altered by warfare, land loss, and encroachments preceding the Awakening, and settlement patterns by the early eighteenth century increasingly reflected English efforts to “settle” and consolidate Native populations. The Mashantucket and Eastern Pequot reserves located within the vicinity of the Euro-American communities of Groton and North Stonington respectively, for example, were established in the mid- to late-seventeenth century by colonial officials, and constituted but a fraction of what had been the Pequots’ homelands upon the arrival of Europeans. Placed under the leadership of Pequot “governors” by colonial officials in the decades following the Pequot War (1636-37), these communities reflected the intrusion and power of Euro-American authorities in Native settlements even as they
symbolized the persistence of Pequot leadership traditions, lifeways, and presence in their homelands. The Mohegans, the largest Algonquian community in Connecticut, also lost land and communal autonomy throughout the early eighteenth century. By the outbreak of the evangelical revivals, the Mohegans occupied two main villages located on the west side of the Thames River between New London and Norwich. On eastern Long Island, the Montaukett community lived under the constraints and monitoring of town officials at nearby East Hampton, and varyingly occupied tracts of land at Montauk Point according to agreements made with the town in the early eighteenth century. The Niantics, closely related to the Mohegans and Pequots, received a three-hundred acre tract of land within the vicinity of Lyme, Connecticut sometime in the 1670s, and endured repeated
encroachments from neighbouring townspeople throughout the subsequent century. The Narragansetts living in neighbouring Rhode Island, although the largest community in the colony, also suffered land loss and infringements in their remaining homelands. By 1709, the Narragansett sachem Ninigret II had deeded to Rhode Island officials his people’s remaining lands in the colony, and reserved a 64-square mile tract of land in Charlestown for the mixed Narragansett-Niantic population that lived under him. In the subsequent years, the Algonquian inhabitants suffered further encroachment by their English neighbours and witnessed the vast decline of their reserve in the decades following the Awakening.26

These communities, despite loss and encroachment, continued to function as homelands and the vital centres of Algonquian life in southern New England. While some historians have referred to Algonquian villages and settlements in the colonial period as “enclaves,” the concept of homeland more accurately reflects the relationships and history that Algonquians shared with their lands, and the continued importance and value they attached to their villages and surrounding territories throughout the eighteenth century.27 As Amy Den Ouden notes, reservation lands “were not simply geographical


27 For example, both Daniel Mandell and John Wood Sweet refer to Native communities in eighteenth-century New England as “enclaves.” Mandell describes enclaves in Massachusetts as comprised of members who share common nativity, religion, or pursuits and who live within a larger “civil community.” Enclaves emerged in colonial Massachusetts, Mandell suggests, when organized “Indian villages” were seized or overrun by English colonists. See Daniel Mandell, Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 5; Sweet, Bodies Politic.
spaces that marked the historical and political reality of conquest,” but remained the “locus of community life for Native peoples” and reflected the conscious decisions and efforts of men and women to continue living on them.\textsuperscript{28} Homelands sustained their inhabitants and represented, according to Lisa Brooks, a “common pot” to First Peoples who lived interdependently and cooperatively with their surrounding physical environment. The common pot “feeds and nourishes,” Brooks writes, whether as the “wigwam that feeds the family, the village that feeds the community, [or] the networks that sustain the village.”\textsuperscript{29} Recognizing Algonquian villages and wider communal territories in New England as homelands and cherished places undermines colonial narratives that describe Natives as “straggling” and dying remnants occupying marginalized physical spaces, and presents Algonquian understandings of space as equally significant historically.

Tapping into Algonquian understandings of place and the Christian faith in eighteenth-century New England involves an exploration of their spiritual practices and their perceptions and beliefs about the environment in which they lived. While the existence of testimonials such as Appagease’s and Johnson’s remain rare in the source material for Native New England, a variety of documents offer insight into the daily lives and struggles of Algonquian men and women living in the eighteenth-century world. Numerous memorials written by or on behalf of Algonquian petitioners and their communities to colonial assemblies and local officials, for example, illuminate the subsistence practices and harsh constraints that marked daily life in villages and reserve

\textsuperscript{28} Den Ouden, \textit{Beyond Conquest}, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{29} Brooks, \textit{Common Pot}, 3-4.
communities, and often articulate the practical and cultural importance of land to Native inhabitants. Correspondence and journals written by Euro-American missionaries and ministers also provide varying descriptions of the faith practices of Algonquian Christians and the communal dynamics of the villages in which they resided. The advent of English literacy among Algonquians by the mid-eighteenth century also resulted in the crafting of letters, journals, and other written documents by men and women which provide rare glimpses into the beliefs, lifeways, and internal spiritual struggles of Algonquian Christians. Congregational minister Eleazar Wheelock’s extensive correspondence relating to Moor’s Indian Charity School contains numerous records produced by Algonquian pupils and colleagues, as well as descriptions of the “awakenings” and “revivals” that occurred at Native settlements and colonial towns. Wheelock, himself an evangelical leader who itinerated during early 1740s, opened a school to educate Algonquian students during the 1750s which equipped Natives with training and skills which many used to defend their homelands and strengthen their faith networks. Along with Wheelock’s correspondence, the diaries and letters written by Mohegans Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson afford invaluable glimpses into Algonquian communities, faith worlds, leadership struggles, and daily life.

Exploring how Christianity shaped and informed Algonquian relations with their lands begins with an examination of Native understandings and uses of space before the adoption of Christianity. Throughout the first two decades of the eighteenth century, Algonquian villages remained largely opposed, if not hostile, to the Christian faith, and rebuffed the sporadic efforts of Protestant missionaries and colonial officials to spread the Gospel message in their communities. In some cases Algonquian leaders criticized
missionary endeavours and linked their opposition to the uncharitable behaviour of their English neighbours and their unabashed efforts to obtain Native lands. Chapter one examines the world in which the Mohegan councillor Appagease claimed he “grew up together with the ground” as it became increasingly threatened by a growing colonial presence. Some Algonquians demonstrated an interest in both Christianity and formal schooling by the 1720s, however, and permitted Anglo-American ministers and teachers to visit and instruct their communities. The eruption of the Great Awakening in southern New England by the early 1740s, the subject of chapter two, attracted the attention of Algonquian villagers increasingly familiar with the language and culture of their colonial neighbours, and introduced many men and women to the beliefs and practices of Protestant evangelical Christianity. Witnessing fellow kin as well as non-Natives “awake” to their need for salvation, several Algonquians spread the news about the new spiritual power working in their communities, and began attending “meetings” and worship services both within and outside of their villages. As villages and surrounding homelands became places for seeking Christ and obtaining salvation, new practices of worship and spiritual communion renewed the sacred quality that Algonquians associated with their lands. The acceptance of the Christian faith not only spurred an interest in schooling among a number of Algonquians, but strengthened their efforts to protect and defend their villages and territory.

In the years following the revivals, formal schooling and the development of English literacy became new realities for many Algonquian children and adults. While some Algonquians held lessons in wigwams and offered informal instruction to fellow community members, several boys and girls attended Moor’s Indian Charity School
located in Lebanon, Connecticut. Opened by the mid-eighteenth century by Congregational minister Eleazar Wheelock, Moor’s built on the zeal of the revivals and earlier colonial efforts to “civilize” Native populations by seeking to transform pupils into godly, literate, and submissive students. Despite the culturally insensitive and often abusive atmosphere of Moor’s, Algonquian students strengthened ties with other Native students who attended from neighbouring villages as well as with students from Iroquoia, and developed new skills of reading and writing that many put to their own uses. Chapter three explores the complex ways in which Algonquians used literacy skills to strengthen ties between kin and communities in southern New England, to encourage fellow Christians in their faith journeys, and to protest before colonial officials the abuses they suffered in their villages and homelands.

As Algonquian villagers developed new skills to communicate and to articulate their grievances about their lands, they participated in new geographical networks that went beyond the boundaries of southern New England. Chapter four traces the efforts of a number of Algonquian teachers and ministers varyingly affiliated with Wheelock’s school to instruct Haudenosaunee communities in the English language and the Christian faith. Undertaking several journeys to Iroquoia throughout the 1760s, several Algonquian men and youth visited and lived among Oneida, Mohawk, and multi-ethnic communities in an effort to spread their Protestant Christian beliefs and new knowledge of literacy. While seeking to shine spiritual light and practical skills among Haudenosaunee children and adults, the Algonquian men who journeyed to New York often found themselves learning from and depending on their Iroquoian hosts both spiritually and physically. The missions and exchanges that took place in Iroquoia not only provided Algonquians with
an opportunity to grapple with ways of living on the land that differed from their own, but also created new relationships with Haudenosaunee communities that fostered an intertribal landscape linking southern New England to New York.

The new spatial networks that developed between Iroquoian villages and Algonquian ones mirrored the strengthening of inter-village ties occurring in southern New England by the 1760s. While kin and cultural ties linked Algonquian villages before the Awakening and the adoption of Christianity, the emergence of Native-led churches and bodies of Christian faith in the decades following the revivals strengthened pre-existing networks between communities and affirmed the sacred values that many Algonquians associated with their lands. Chapter five explores the new geography of faith that flourished between Native villages in the years leading up to the American Revolution, as communities became places of worship, singing, spiritual instruction, and fellowship that drew in Algonquian Christians from neighbouring settlements. Renewed inter-village ties equally reflected the tensions and debates that divided communities internally, however, as Native ministers and Christian leaders increasingly battled sachems and their supporters for authority over communal lands and village governance.

By the eve of the Revolution, a growing number of Algonquian Christians had begun to look beyond their reserves in southern New England and to consider the possibility of forming a new community on Oneida lands. While declining territories and resources did not erase their connections to their homelands, for many Algonquians their impoverished conditions demanded the prospect of finding land elsewhere. Building on diplomatic ties forged during the earlier missions to Iroquoia, a number of Algonquian
leaders envisioned a new homeland apart from colonial encroachments and impoverishment where their families and fellow Christians would seek God and model their faith without impediment. Putting the resettlement plan into action in the years following the Revolution, chapter six examines the efforts of the Algonquian men and women in forming the new community of Brotherton on Oneida lands and their struggles to create a new sense of place on lands far removed from their homelands. A number of Algonquians chose to remain behind in New England, however, and equally significantly continued to struggle to protect their reserve lands and resources for subsistence and spiritual practices. The conflicting decisions of Algonquian Christians to relocate to Brotherton and remain on ancestral lands in New England reveal the divergent paths that Natives tread at the close of the century and the differing survival strategies they followed.

While the relocation of many Algonquian Christians to New York by the close of the eighteenth century seemingly indicates a break, both physically and emotionally, in their attachment to their ancestral homelands in New England, the path of removal perhaps more clearly hints towards the contested and changing nature of landscape and community, and the varying possibilities that Christianity presented to Native adherents. Responding to the harsh realities of life in the new republic and drawing on the common beliefs they shared, many Algonquians ultimately drew on their Christian faith to provide new meaning to the unfamiliar lands where they resettled and to offer a new basis for communal belonging and identity. Although encroachment and dispossession would remain threats to Algonquian Christians in both their old and new homelands, the Natives’ spiritual beliefs and practices would continue to render their homes, villages, and
wider lands spiritually meaningful places, to inspire many to defend their lands and to fight back against such threats.
CHAPTER TWO

‘They Thought their way was good, and that they had no reason to alter it’: Land, Community, and Sacred Power before the Great Awakening

In the spring of 1713, five Pequot men directed a petition to the Connecticut General Assembly on behalf of their people which outlined the encroachment and abuses they suffered at their community of Newayonck (or Noank). Located on a neck of land east of the Thames River in Connecticut along the shoreline of Long Island Sound, the Pequot settlement had recently faced growing intrusion from English settlers living in the nearby town of Groton who had begun fencing and building on the Pequots’ land. According to the Pequot petitioners, two years earlier the inhabitants of Groton had determined at a town meeting to divide the land at Noank into equal shares among themselves, and certain settlers had proceeded to buy up the tracts and to settle the lands—including grounds that the Pequots had “planted last year.” The Pequots and their Groton neighbours had seemingly co-existed on the lands at Noank in the preceding decades; the “English [had] had the use” of what the Pequots “did not plant…for their Creatures to feed on,” while the Pequots had used the coastline for their fishing and fowling. While growing tensions had undermined this arrangement by 1709 and the Connecticut Assembly intervened to protect the Pequots’ rights, by 1712 relations had worsened as a number of Groton settlers, or “contrivers,” had illegally begun to purchase
Pequot lands and “unjustly invade[d]” the planting and gathering sites which the Pequots had “long possessed and enjoyed.”

The Pequot community at Noank, located in the heart of their traditional homelands, represented one of several places where survivors of the Pequot War had settled in the mid-seventeenth century, and served as a vital place for men and women to carry out subsistence activities that required access to the coast. While colonial authorities had granted the Pequots living at Noank another reserve of land further inland at Mashantucket in 1666 to provide them with additional firewood and planting fields, Noank continued to provide many Pequots with a “convenient” place for hunting birds, gathering shellfish, and catching fish—activities which the petitioners claimed were “a Great part of [our] Subsistence and w[hi]ch we know not how to live without.” Not only providing crucial access to coastal areas in a landscape increasingly bounded by English farms and towns, the settlement at Noank equally represented a site of Pequot survival and history (see figure 3). The lands which Groton settlers had begun to eagerly fence and plant on, the Pequot petitioners insisted, had been “possessed and improved by us and o[u]r predecessors more then sixty years” by the consent of colonial authorities, and even longer by their ancestors who had fished and gathered at coastal sites before the onslaught of colonization. Requesting that the Connecticut government come to their aid against “such Designing Men, who w[i]th cunning contrivances are ou[s]ting us of our Just

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1 Pequot Petition to Connecticut Assembly, 14 May 1713, IP I, I: 75, CSL; Den Ouden, Beyond Conquest, 58.
Rights,” the Pequot petitioners hoped that officials would take action to protect their communal lands and their means of subsistence.²

The Pequots’ petition to the Connecticut Assembly was not unique, but rather formed part of a larger body of memorials and complaints sent by Algonquian leaders and villages to colonial officials regarding the infringements they suffered on their lands. As new and expanding English settlements in Connecticut and Rhode Island whittled away at Algonquian territories throughout the early eighteenth century, formal protests and pleas served as a vehicle through which the Pequots and neighbouring communities reminded colonial authorities of their rights to their lands and requested aid in protecting their boundaries and resources. In the case of the Pequots’ petition to the Connecticut Assembly regarding their lands at Noank, their written protest failed to elicit the assistance of colonial officials in rectifying the sale of their lands. Colonial officials instead ruled the following year that the Pequots’ 500-acre reserve at Noank was “no longer necessary” for planting and improving, as their lands at Mashantucket would serve such purposes, and ultimately turned over control of the land to the town of Groton.³ Taking the defence of their lands into their own hands, in 1714 a number of Pequots attempted to halt the Groton trespassers from spreading across their lands by knocking down the fences that English settlers had recently constructed. The Groton settlers responded by suing the Pequot perpetrators for the damages, further embittering the

² IP I, I: 75.
³ IP I, I: 83; Den Ouden, 58; McBride, “The Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots,” 105-6.
Noank community towards their aggressive neighbours and making their life at the settlement increasingly difficult.\footnote{John Ford, ed., \textit{Some Correspondence between the Governors and Treasurers of the New England Company in London and the Commissioners of the United Colonies in America, the Missionaries of the Company and Others, Between the Years 1657 and 1712}, to which were added the Journals of the Rev. Experience Mayhew in 1713 and 1714 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 113-14.}

\textbf{Figure 3}: Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan territories, early eighteenth century (Map created by the Cartography Office, University of Toronto)

The physical encroachment and intrusion that the Pequots and other Algonquians increasingly encountered in their villages and homelands from English neighbours portended the growing cultural invasion they would face as the eighteenth century progressed. Several months after the Pequots unsuccessfully petitioned for the protection of their lands at Noank, an English missionary visited their settlement at Mashantucket
offering to instruct the Pequots and their neighbouring kin in the Gospel message and reading the Bible. Sending messages ahead through a Native interpreter to arrange an opportunity to speak before the Mashantucket community, Puritan missionary Experience Mayhew hoped to find a welcome audience to the divine messages he planned to convey. Mayhew had visited southern New England the previous fall and made entreaties at Pequot and Narragansett villages with little success, encountering outright opposition from some leaders and indifference from other villagers. When the Pequots learned that Mayhew was again hoping to arrange a meeting at their settlement, their response was far from enthusiastic. Still embroiled in their suit with the Groton townspeople, the Pequots politely convened to listen to Mayhew explain the fundamental principles of “true Religion” and benevolently offer them instruction in the “things of God” before countering his speech with objections. Informing Mayhew of their recent struggles at Noank, which had been “a great discouragement to them,” the Pequot villagers emphasized the “injuries” caused by the English “with relation to their Lands” and baulked at the prospect of accepting the religion of the colonists. Not put off, Mayhew persisted in suggesting that by becoming Christians, the Pequots would obtain “Good men” as their friends, who would “plead their cause for them.” Refusing to reiterate their protests again, the Pequot sachem Skuttaub instead suggested that Mayhew return the following year and perhaps his people would be more open to his message then.⁵

The Mashantucket Pequots were not alone in resisting and rejecting Mayhew’s overtures and offers of salvation. Neighbouring kin and villagers who encountered the Puritan missionary during his visits to southern New England in the fall of 1713 and 1714

⁵ Ford, 115-16.
listened politely to Mayhew’s messages but quickly pointed to the disjuncture between the beliefs and actions of the Christian colonists living around them as reason for objection. When a number of Mohegans allowed Mayhew to speak in a “large double wigwam” in one of their villages on a fall afternoon in 1714, they questioned his message about the power of the Christian religion, especially since “they could not see That men were ever the better for being Christians, for the English that were Christians would cheat the Indians of their Land and otherwise wrong them.” While acknowledging that they believed in God and worshipped him, the Mohegan congregants insisted that “as several nations had their distinct way of worship, so they had theirs; and they Thought their way was Good, and that they had no reason to alter it.”6 Seeming to echo the criticisms that the Narragansett sachem Ninicraft (or Ninigret) had launched at Mayhew during his visit the previous year—namely, that the English represented “bad” examples of Christian charity—the Mohegans and other Algonquians responded either with indifference or open resistance to the offers of salvation, grace, and learning held out by the Puritan emissary.7

Mayhew’s frustrated visits to First Peoples in southern New England not only highlight the resistance Algonquians exhibited towards English instruction and the Christian faith in the early eighteenth century, but also the inextricable ties that bound Algonquian spiritual beliefs to the lands in which they lived. While in many cases rejecting Christianity because of the prejudice and dispossession they suffered from their English neighbours, Algonquian communities also demonstrated the enduring strength of

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6 Ibid., 119-20.
7 Ford, 110. For an insightful discussion of Native critiques of Christianity and missionary efforts, see James Ronda, “‘We Are Well As We Are’: An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1977), 66-82.
their own “way of worship” and of living on the land. At the time of Mayhew’s visit, Algonquian homelands had been greatly reduced from the onset of European colonization in the early seventeenth century to smaller tracts of reserved lands situated near English towns and within English colonies. Decades of warfare, disease, and land sales often characterized by manipulation and deceit had diminished Algonquian hunting lands and planting grounds to small parcels surrounded by English “property” and “improvements.” As the Pequots’ struggle to protect their lands at Noank clearly demonstrated, even territories granted and reserved for Algonquians by colonial governments were subject to infringement by colonists which threatened both their occupancy and subsistence.

Despite such threats, Algonquians had not only survived the devastating conditions unleashed by colonization, but they persisted in maintaining their lifeways and senses of place following their supposed “conquest.” Although living within smaller territories that were increasingly subject to encroachment, the efforts of Algonquian villagers to contest the intrusion of Euro-American bodies and beliefs onto their lands suggests the survival of their own worldviews and their opposition to the spiritual and cultural forces that threatened their lands. Amy Den Ouden insightfully notes that when Mayhew arrived in southern New England for his missionary tours, Algonquians “were engaged in heated land disputes with colonists” and responded to his overtures with “strategies of resistance that asserted the power of indigenous knowledge.”8 While historians of New England have traditionally cited King Philip’s War as a turning point in colonial history after which Native people were militarily conquered and became culturally inconsequential players in the colonial landscape, a number of scholars in

8 Den Ouden, Beyond Conquest, 57.
recent years have insisted on the persistence, adaptations, and cultural significance of First Peoples throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. Far from “disappearing Indians,” historians have pointed towards the ongoing agency, cultural struggles, and survival of Algonquians following the Anglo-Native conflicts of the seventeenth century. The opposition that the Pequots, Mohegans, and others exhibited towards Mayhew’s missionizing efforts not only challenged the spiritual and material efficacy of the Christian faith and the immoral behaviour of its so-called adherents, but also affirmed the validity and value of Algonquian “way[s] of worship,” knowledge, and of living on their lands.

The “ways of worship” that Algonquian leaders referenced in their encounters with Mayhew described the spiritual beliefs and practices that underscored their ways of living and being in the world. While decimation by disease and warfare in the preceding decades had certainly shaken the foundations of pre-contact ritual and worship, throughout the colonial period Algonquians continued to ascribe spiritual power and potency to the remaining lands on which they lived. For many villagers, the physical environment which surrounded them represented a landscape where sacred encounters occurred with other-than-human forces and powers. Rather than worshipping a single deity or god as their English neighbours did, Algonquians perceived their homelands as alive with beings that provided aid, power, and communal protection, and that required reverence, reciprocity, and respect. Roger Williams, who lived among the Narragansetts through the mid-seventeenth century, witnessed firsthand the worship and reverence that

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9 See for example, Calloway, “Introduction: Surviving the Dark Ages,” in After King Phillip’s War, 1-28; O’Brien, Dispossession by Degrees, 3-5, 213; Den Ouden, Beyond Conquest, 1-37.
Algonquian men and women held towards the forests, fields, waterways, and animals that comprised their homeland. According to Williams, the Narrangansetts worshipped a plethora of spiritual forces linked to the sun, the moon, the sea, fire, and the four directions, among other things. Several decades later, another observer found that Algonquians living on Long Island continued to revere the other-than-human beings who presided over their fields, wigwams, and crops of beans, corn, and pumpkins.

Such an awareness of spiritual powers led many Algonquians to eagerly watch for and seek the presence of Manitou. As Williams noted among the Narragansett, “there is a generall Custome amongst them, at the apprehension of any Excellency in Men, Women, Birds, Beasts, Fish, &c. to cry out Manittóo, that is, it is a God.” Encounters with spiritual guardians or Manitou could occur in wigwams, planting fields, or other village sites, yet Algonquians also purposefully pursued spiritual revelations through vision quests and rituals. In the seventeenth century, Edward Winslow described the practice among Algonquians living near Plymouth, through which young boys were trained and prepared for encounters with other-than-human beings. Abiding by certain dietary restrictions and eating specific herbs, Winslow observed that boys underwent a series of

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physical trials and purging rituals in anticipation of receiving a vision and spiritual power.\textsuperscript{12}

Among the many spiritual beings that infused their lands and waterways, Algonquian peoples throughout the northeast recognized two principle forces as representative of good and evil. Algonquian people traditionally revered Cautantouwit (or Kiehtan) as the creator who made the first man and woman out of wood, and who sent the first kernel of corn and the first bean to their ancestors in the ear of a crow.\textsuperscript{13} When Algonquians experienced success in their hunting and fishing expeditions, or yielded bountiful crops from the earth, they attributed their material blessings to the provision of Cautantouwit and the spiritual forces which surrounded them.\textsuperscript{14} Following the death of good people, Algonquians believed that their souls travelled to the southwest to reside in the house of Cautantouwit, while the souls of bad people wandered restlessly.\textsuperscript{15} Illnesses or misfortune, in contrast, reflected the presence and actions of mischievous powers. Algonquians often attributed sickness or suffering to a malevolent other-than-human being known variably as Mutcheshesunnetooh, Chepi, or Hobbomok. According to some accounts, Algonquians called on Hobbomok’s power to cure their wounds or illnesses, and linked his presence to the underworld, the sea, the northeast wind, and death.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} Williams, 191; “E. Winslow’s Relation,” \textit{Massachusetts Historical Society Collections}, vol. 9 (series 2) (Boston: Phelps and Farnham, 1822), 94-95.
\textsuperscript{13} Williams, 164, 190; “John Dunton’s Journal in Massachusetts, 1686,” \textit{Massachusetts Historical Society Collections}, vol. 1 (series 2) (Boston: John H. Eastburn, 1838), 111-13; Occom, “Account of the Montauk Indians,” 49.
\textsuperscript{14} Williams, 189.
\textsuperscript{15} Williams, 190; “John Dunton’s Journal,” 113.
\textsuperscript{16} Occom, “Account of the Montauk Indians,” 49; “E. Winslow’s Relation,” 92, John Josselyn, \textit{An Account of Two Voyages to New-England}, second ed. (London: Printed for G. Widdowes, 1675), 133. See also
Individuals who received special visions or revelations from Hobnomok became spiritual leaders, known as *powwows*, within their communities. As anthropologist Kathleen Bragdon has noted, “powwaws were separated from ordinary vision seekers by the extreme power of their visions and the fact that their manitou was unsought.” Acting as healers, teachers, and directors of worship, in some villages *powwows* designated special buildings for conducting their ceremonies and rituals. One colonial observer found that “men and women” could assume the position of *powwow*, and emphasized their role as “physicians” in villages and their use of “herbs and roots, for curing the sick and diseased.”

Living with an awareness of the spiritual beings that surrounded them, Algonquian village sites and settlements in early colonial New England reflected the complex ties between land, subsistence, and spiritual power. According to Lisa Brooks, “Native land tenure was rooted in the interdependent relationship between a community...”

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17 Bragdon, *Native People*, 201.

18 Williams, 192, 248; “E. Winslow’s Relation,” 92-94.

19 Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 14. John Dunton, who visited Algonquian settlements in Massachusetts in the late seventeenth century, also emphasized the teaching and healing role of Native spiritual leaders. Describing Algonquian priests as *Taupowauog*, Dunton recounted that they made “speeches” to villagers regarding “all the occurrences of common life,” and when visiting a sick person, attempted to “threaten” and “conjure” out the spiritual forces that caused the illness in his or her body. Dunton also stressed the role that Algonquian spiritual leaders played in instructing men and women about the spiritual beings living in their lands. Among the Massachusett and other First Peoples, Taupowauog taught villagers about Cautantowwit’s creation of the first man and woman from materials found in their homeland, and instructed them that “good” men and women would ultimately travel to Cautantowwit’s house in the southwest when they died. In Narragansett villages, Taupowauog comprised “wise men and old men” who often served as priests and gave speeches and lectures to villagers. See “John Dunton’s Journal,” 111-13; Williams, 192. For more on the role of Algonquian spiritual leaders, see also Simmons, “Narragansett,” in *Handbook*, 191-92.
and its territory.”20 Attaching “ecological labels” to their homelands which described where plants could be gathered, shellfish collected, and animals hunted, another scholar has emphasized how Algonquians rendered the landscape into a map based on place-names and use values.21 On Long Island, for example, where Algonquians relied on shellfish for both dietary consumption and for the production of wampum beads, place-names such as *Pequaockeon* (or *Pauquacumshuck*), which translates “[the] outlet where we wade for thick shells,” described sites in their homelands according to their meaning and value.22 Algonquians often recognized and inscribed sites of special occurrences in the landscape—perhaps spiritual visions, material provisions, or victories in warfare—with distinct markings that enabled them to remember and celebrate the place many years afterwards. As colonist Edward Winslow observed, Algonquians dug holes in the ground at special sites so that “when others passing by behold, they inquire the cause and occasion of the same, which being once known, they are careful to acquaint all men, as occasion serv[es]…and lest such holes should be filled, or grown up by accident, as men pass by them [they] will oft[en] renew the same.”23

The intertwining spiritual and ecological values of land spilled over into the organization of Algonquian villages and the lifeways of their inhabitants. As closely related groups such as the Mohegans, Pequots, Narragansetts, and Niantics struggled to survive in a post-contact world marked by demographic decline and political defeat, they continued to organize and engage the physical world according to ancestral traditions

20 Brooks, *Common Pot*, 68.
23 “E. Winslow’s Relation,” 99.
while adapting to new colonial constraints. Although colonial officials affixed “tribal”
designations to Algonquian communities in the seventeenth century, village settlements
more accurately represented the substance of daily life and social interactions. Villages,
according to Peter Thomas, constituted the “primary political, social, and economic
unit[s]” among Algonquians in southern New England and in most cases were organized
around one or more lineages and assumed a semi-mobile character.24 Far from fixed
entities, as William Cronon has pointed out, the size and location of Algonquian villages
changed seasonally as villages represented the centres “around which Indian interactions
with the environment revolved.”25 Wood, for example, constituted an elementary
resource for Algonquians, which they used in crafting poles for the frames of their
wigwams and as fuel for their fires, and for which they would relocate when supplies ran
low. John Dunton observed in the late seventeenth century that Algonquians “usually
stay upon one place till they’ve destroy’d all the wood that’s near ‘em and then they
remove their wigwams. They reckon fuel to be one considerable part of their
subsistance.”26 Algonquians moved and relocated their villages seasonally to dwell near
fishing and planting sites in the spring and summer, and to find more sheltered sites or
closer proximity to hunting territories in the fall and winter.27

24 Peter Thomas, “Cultural Change on the Southern New England Frontier, 1630-1665,” in Cultures in
Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions, A.D. 1000-1800, ed.
25 Cronon, 38.
26 “John Dunton’s Journal,” 114.
27 Bragdon, Native People, 126; Salwen, “Indians of Southern New England and Long Island: Early
Moving their settlements seasonally according to these subsistence patterns, Algonquian villagers lived under the leadership of sachems and their counsellors, “wise men” who received unsought visions from spiritual forces. The hereditary position of the sachem largely fell into male hands among groups in southern New England, and men and women belonging to established lineages wielded rights and responsibilities concerning land, diplomacy, justice, tribute, and warfare. As historian Trudie Richmond notes, male sachems, and their female counterparts, described by Europeans as *sunksquaws*, did not wield “dictatorial power,” but rather demonstrated their ability to “resolve disputes” and to “maintain and strengthen alliances,” and based their leadership on principles of reciprocity.28 According to Kathleen Bragdon, “both matrilineal and patrilineal principles contributed to the construction and maintenance of the sachem’s identity,” as authority flowed from kin networks associated with both the control of land and political office.29 Following the Pequot war, for example, the Mohegan sachem Uncas proceeded to marry the widows of Pequot sachems and other Algonquian leaders to forge social and political alliances with neighbouring groups and to secure his claim to Pequot lands.30 Principal sachems too possessed the power to manage, distribute, and give away communal lands. Nathaniel Waterman, who served as an interpreter among the Narragansetts in the late seventeenth century emphasized the varying authority wielded by sachems, and noted that “great” sachems such as Canonicus assumed the

power to control and dispose of land while “petty” sachems lacked such authority.\textsuperscript{31} Among groups such as the Pequots in the early seventeenth century, two sachems often governed larger villages, while smaller communities lived under the leadership of only one.\textsuperscript{32}

The choosing of a new sachem required communal or tribal consensus, and occasioned ceremonies and celebrations within Algonquian villages. Adorned with a crown of wampum, the new sachem received gifts from villagers and hosted festivities marked by singing and dancing, which often drew Algonquians from neighbouring settlements to attend. When Caesar succeeded his father Owaneco as Mohegan sachem in the early eighteenth century, for example, one English colonist testified that the ceremony included “much Pomp [and] Expressions of Joy.” According to the colonist’s account, the new sachem was chosen “by universal Consent of all The Mohegan Indians & other of ye Neighbouring Indians to the Number as near as I can guess of five Hundred or thereabouts,” suggesting the vital role of neighbouring kin and inter-village networks in decisions of political leadership.\textsuperscript{33} Councillors to the sachem, known as \textit{pniesok}, derived their authority and leadership from unsought visions and encounters with spiritual beings in their homeland. Described by one colonial observer as “men of great courage and wisdom,” Algonquian councillors offered direction and leadership in warfare and the governance of the sachem’s territory. In some Algonquian villages, councillors oversaw the exchange of gifts between the sachem and their villagers. While Algonquian men and women bestowed gifts of corn on their sachem in gratitude for the protection and

\textsuperscript{31} Deposition of Nathaniel Waterman, February 1706, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 5, RIHS. \\
\textsuperscript{32} McBride, “Historical Archaeology,” 103. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Deposition of Jonathan Wickwere, IP I, I: 173.
leadership he or she offered their community, the sachem responded by giving gifts to the villagers for their loyalty and acquiescence.  

Villages remained very much interconnected with neighbouring Algonquian settlements, as kinship networks extended beyond the bounds of a single settlement. According to Jean O’Brien, “lineage and kinship networks formed a principal source of identity and a sense of place that included but also transcended [the] natal village.” Noting that Algonquian settlement patterns reflected a balance between fixity and mobility, O’Brien asserts that kinship ties “provided individuals and families with options for relocating their village affiliation as well as a network of places for visiting.”

During his visit to Connecticut and Rhode Island in 1713, Experience Mayhew commented on the kin networks that tied Algonquians and their settlements together. Observing that his Pequot interpreter Joseph, a sachem’s son, “stood related in one way or other to every company of them” and had been chosen to become a leader among the Niantics living near Lyme, Mayhew also pointed out that the Mohegan sachem, Caesar, had married Joseph’s daughter and that the Mohegans “would probably be much influenced by him.”

Equally as significant, village and kin networks undermined the tribal categorizations and reserve boundaries that colonial authorities attempted to impose, as Pequots, Mohegans, Niantics, and others intermarried and moved between their village communities and travelled outside of reserves to hunt and gather. In the

34 “E. Winslow’s Relation,” 95-96.
35 Jean O’Brien, “‘They are so frequently shifting their place of residence’: land and the construction of social place of Indians in colonial Massachusetts,” in Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850, eds. Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 207; O’Brien, Dispossession by Degrees, 17, 21.
36 Ford, 102-3.
decades following King Philip’s War, Amy Den Ouden notes, Algonquian settlements “were not fully contained—geographically or culturally—by colonially imposed boundaries,” and mundane activities “did not readily lend themselves to colonial scrutiny and control.”

The mundane activities that comprised the substance of village life intertwined spatial tasks with gender roles to produce a landscape of masculine and feminine places. Into the early eighteenth century, Algonquian men occupied a landscape that extended beyond the limits of village settlements and planting fields, and included hunting and fishing territories, as well as sites of warfare and diplomacy. Acting as takers of life and providers for their families, men often spent several months of a year away from central villages based on seasonal subsistence strategies as they obtained food for their families and maintained relations with neighbouring villages and the animal spirits they hunted.

According to Roger Williams, Narragansett men possessed extensive knowledge of the lands surrounding their villages stemming from their hunting expeditions and visits to other towns to share news and engage in gaming and trade. Building “hunting houses” set apart from central villages, men often ventured out in large hunting parties in the fall and winter months to obtain their food which included deer, moose, raccoons, and squirrels. The spring and summer months offered opportunities for fishing, during which Algonquian men used canoes, netting, weirs, and other implements to catch fish and shellfish in the rivers, bays, and coastal waters that marked their homelands.

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37 Den Ouden, 63.
38 Bragdon, Native People, 116-23.
explorers made note of the excellent cod fishery that existed off the shores of Long Island in the seventeenth century, and the seasonal rhythms Algonquian men followed to catch the fish.\textsuperscript{41} “Fowling” provided another important aspect of Algonquian subsistence into the early eighteenth century, as the Pequot petitioners at Noank indicated to colonial officials, and men continued to hunt and lay traps for turkeys, cranes, and geese in coastal and wooded areas.\textsuperscript{42}

In some cases Algonquian women accompanied men on their seasonal hunts to assist in food preparation, but women predominantly occupied a landscape more closely centred on the village and planting fields. In contrast to taking life, women’s tasks and roles revolved around producing and creating life. Algonquian women primarily lived and worked in their wigwams and planting fields and focused on crop-raising, child-rearing, and food preparation. According to historian Trudie Richmond, in early colonial New England “women’s power and status were based on their control over land and agricultural production.”\textsuperscript{43} Women’s power equally stemmed from their reproductive abilities and the blood they shed during menstruation. As Mohegan tribal historian Melissa Fawcett notes, women represented “the bleeders” whose blood provided renewal to the larger community.\textsuperscript{44} Algonquian women sequestered themselves in separate wigwams known as \textit{wetuomémese} apart from the rest of the community during their

\textsuperscript{42} Williams, 164-65.  
\textsuperscript{43} Richmond and Den Ouden, 180.  
\textsuperscript{44} Melissa Jayne Fawcett, \textit{The Lasting of the Mohegans, Part 1: The Story of the Wolf People} (Uncasville: The Mohegan Tribe, 1995), 35.
menstruation, to contain any volatile or unpredictable powers they might release.\textsuperscript{45} Working in the planting fields during the spring and summer months, women traditionally used implements comprised of shells and wood to plant their crops of corn, beans, and squash and to keep weeds at bay.\textsuperscript{46} Algonquian groups such as the Pequots attached their planting fields to their villages, and Native women planted and harvested crops in up to two hundred acres of fields surrounding their villages.\textsuperscript{47} Roger Williams noted the care Algonquian women took to “set their corne deep enough that it may have a strong root, not so apt to be pluckt up” by hungry birds.\textsuperscript{48} After planting and tending their fields, Algonquian women harvested, dried, and pounded their corn crops, and used the harvested kernels to prepare dishes such as bread baked in ashes, small boiled cakes, and a dish known as \textit{nokake} or \textit{nokehick}, which was consumed during long journeys or on hunting expeditions. While living in coastal villages during the summer months, women followed the tidal rhythms to dig for and collect shellfish during low tide, and gathered flags and rushes along riverbanks and in bays to weave into mats to cover their wigwams.\textsuperscript{49}

Although Algonquians recognized masculine and feminine places within their villages and lands, they shared common spaces and sites within their communities for


\textsuperscript{47} McBride, “Historical Archaeolgy,” 102.

\textsuperscript{48} Williams, 163.

\textsuperscript{49} Williams, 182, 207.
work, worship, ceremonies, and celebrations. Men and women came together to share in tasks of clearing fields and constructing wigwams, and also engaged in crafting items for household use and trade. While men manufactured dishes, pots, and spoons, women crafted baskets for storing corn and household items and mats to cover their wigwams.\textsuperscript{50}

Wigwams represented sites of kin interaction, hospitality, and soul travel while sleeping. Two or more families often occupied a single wigwam, although visits by kin and neighbouring villagers transformed households into places of generosity and exchange.\textsuperscript{51}

Numerous celebrations, feasts, and dances brought Algonquians together in their lands, whether during times of sickness, drought, warfare or famine, or to celebrate hunting successes, harvests, and prosperity in their lands. Characterized by music, dancing, and the giving of wampum and other gifts, such celebrations renewed ties between community members as well as between Algonquians and the other-than-human beings.

Near the end of the seventeenth century, Samuel Sewall recounted one such feast at which a Narragansett woman, whom he described as a “great woman,” held a dance to celebrate her victory over a string of calamities she had recently suffered. As Sewall related, during the celebration the woman “made several Speeches” in which she recounted her “former Calamity,” and then danced “a considerable time, gave many Gifts, and had a new Name given to herself.”\textsuperscript{52} Around the time of the fall harvest, the Narragansetts celebrated their most important annual festival, which involved building a

\textsuperscript{50} Williams, 117, 121, 128,170; Gookin, 11.
\textsuperscript{51} Williams, 107-8.
\textsuperscript{52} Kittredge, \textit{Letters of Samuel Lee and Samuel Sewall}, 154.
long house “where many thousands, men and women” gathered to dance and exchange gifts.\textsuperscript{53}

Algonquians continued to celebrate such festivals and harvests into the eighteenth century, but faced growing constraints as their lands and lifeways became increasingly circumscribed by colonial settlements and laws. Adjusting to the new signs of English possession, fixity, and power that marked their homelands by the turn of the century—whether houses, fences, barns, or livestock—Native men and women confronted new obstacles that limited their ability to subsist and worship according to ancestral traditions. By the early eighteenth century, the surrounding English population had grown significantly, and colonists seeking new lands for settlement and farming aggressively expanded onto lands east of the Connecticut River to form “new plantations.”\textsuperscript{54}

Algonquian men began to encounter restrictions on their ability to hunt in ancestral territories, and were threatened with physical violence by their new English neighbours when they attempted to do so. In early eighteenth century Connecticut, Amy Den Ouden

\textsuperscript{53} Williams, 231. Among the Montauketts living on eastern Long Island, similar celebrations took place to mark the naming of a child. As Mohegan Samson Occom recounted in the 1760s, “Sometimes two or three families join in naming their children, [and] so make great preparation to make a great dance….they will call their neighbours together, [and] very often send to other towns of Indians.” The celebration involved dancing, exchanges of gifts, and a ceremony during which participants declared names for the child or children. Festivals and ceremonies often drew First Peoples from various villages together to a chosen place to honour and celebrate sacred power. In the spring of 1669, Mashantucket Pequot leader (Robin) Cassassinamon testifed that a “great many other Indians mett together in the place where we dwell,” which included Mohegan and Narragansett leaders, in order to “make a daunce after the Indian fashion.” Although interrupted by suspicious English officials and soldiers who assumed the gathering to be a “plot” against colonial authority, the celebration demonstrated the persistence of the rituals and seasonal rhythms that bound First Peoples to each other and their lands. See Occom, “Account,”48–49; Petition of Robin Cassassinamon, 1669, Robert C. Winthrop Papers, Volume 2, 141, CSL.

\textsuperscript{54} According to Richard Bushman, “nearly twice as many towns” in Connecticut were settled “in the thirty years after 1690 as in the thirty years before” owing primarily to the exhaustion of older lands and population growth. Bushman, \textit{From Puritan to Yankee}, 83.
notes, “Native populations were subjected to stringent laws that were intended to confine them geographically and that cast those who transgressed designated boundaries as ‘enemies.’” In many cases, Algonquians remained unaware of colonial legislation that restricted their mobility and as a result, such laws “made Indian men in pursuit of wild game particularly vulnerable to being classified and killed as ‘skulking Indians.’”

As English towns expanded and new settlements sprang up in the early eighteenth century, woodlands and forests that Natives previously used for hunting became sites of contest with their new neighbours. The Mohegans, who had hunted on lands located between the Thames and Connecticut Rivers throughout the seventeenth century, found that the English settlers who established the town of Colchester in 1699 claimed these lands and threatened any men who attempted to pursue game there (see figure 3). In October 1703, Mohegan leaders complained to the Connecticut Assembly about the townspeople of Colchester who had “setled upon our Land without our consent” and had “burnt our Hunting house that we Dare not goe to hunting upon our own Land for feare of...

55 Den Ouden, 78-79. Colonial laws increasingly infringed on Algonquian mobility and subsistence, as officials restricted hunting territories and seasons, and attempted to maintain surveillance of Native men. In 1717, for example, Mohegan Ben Uncas petitioned the Connecticut Assembly to seek absolution from a fine levied by English officials against his son. As the petition outlined, the Mohegan leader’s son had been caught hunting during the winter season—a time when many Algonquian men traditionally were engaged in hunting—which broke a colonial law unknown to the Natives. A few years later, officials in Connecticut passed an act which aimed at controlling the movement of Natives in the areas surrounding New Milford, Farmington, and Lockfield. Restricting the hunting times and locales available to men, the act also required Algonquian leaders to provide English officials with lists of the male inhabitants living in their villages, and to keep track of their movements and whereabouts. In 1724, Connecticut officials again attempted to limit the mobility and spatial patterns of Algonquian men living in the colony. While graciously permitting Mohegan and Pequot men to hunt on the east side of the Connecticut River, the General Court dictated that men must “wear a white mark on their heads to distinguish them to be friends” and required them to check in at their villages once every ten days. Ben Uncas to Connecticut Assembly, 1717, IP I, I: 85; Act concerning Indians, 1723, IP I, I: 113; Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, vol. 6 (Hartford: Case, Lockwood, and Brainard, 1872), 486.
being killed.” Already hostile relations between Mohegan hunters and English settlers worsened the following winter when Colchester residents seized four Mohegans and transported them to New London, where they were threatened to be hanged. One Mohegan reported that the men “had done nothing worse than that they went into a cellar and warmed themselves by the fire,” presumably after hunting in the cold, which apparently raised the ire and suspicions of their English neighbours.

Planting grounds and fishing sites became equally vulnerable to colonial encroachment, as English settlers ignored reservation boundaries and government officials failed to uphold the laws which protected them. Around the same time that Mohegan men found their hunting grounds threatened by violent settlers, their reserved planting grounds on the west side of the Thames River were subsumed within the expanding boundaries of the town of New London (see figure 3). Although their planting grounds—comprising a thirty-two-square-mile tract of land located between the townships of Norwich and New London, along with a smaller tract located north of the town of Lyme—had been deemed inalienable by a colonial law passed in 1680, settlers had begun to spread onto Mohegan territory with the northward expansion of New London, and in some cases drove the Natives from their settlements.

In the early eighteenth century, a group of thirty or forty Mohegans in a “very poor and naked condition” suffered expulsion from their planting grounds at Massapeage during a “time of snow” by Connecticut governor Fitz-John Winthrop, who claimed a

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56 Mohegan petition to Connecticut Assembly, 1703, IP I, I: 52.
57 Governor and Company of Connecticut, 58; see also Den Ouden, 103-4.
58 Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, vol. 3 (Hartford: Case, Lockwood, and Brainard, 1859), 57.
portion of their lands. The removal not only threatened Mohegan subsistence and ability to plant in the upcoming spring, as “the people of N[ew] London Did take away greate part of [their] planting Land far above theire bounds,” but also caused “their women and children to cry.” As Mohegan leaders shared with colonial officials, “they had enjoyed [their planting ground] ever since the English came into the country, and they were not willing to leave the English, unless they were forced to it.”

Emphasizing their long-standing relationship with both their planting fields and the colonists whom they had served as military allies for decades past, the Mohegans expressed their confusion over the aggressive encroachment and violent threats they now faced. Finding themselves deprived of “Land either to plant or hunt upon,” in 1704 Mohegan sachem Owaneco went above the colonial assembly and petitioned Queen Anne to intervene and restore their rights to their homelands. When the following year the commission appointed by the Crown to investigate Mohegan complaints sided with the Mohegans, Connecticut officials refused to comply with directives to return the hunting and planting grounds to the Natives, which launched a decades-long legal battle between the Mohegans and the colony.


60 Often referred to as the “Mason case” or the Mohegan case, the legal proceedings that pitted the Mohegan community against the colony of Connecticut began in 1704 with Owaneco’s petitioning of the English Crown to affirm the Mohegans’ rights to lands claimed by Connecticut, and lasted nearly seventy years. The case centered on Mohegan rights to hunting and planting grounds in the colony, based on a series of land grants and agreements made between Mohegan leaders and colonial representatives in the seventeenth century. Connecticut officials rooted their claims to Mohegan lands in their “conquest” of the Pequots, the deeds of land they received from the Mohegan sachem Uncas, and the establishment of the colony’s charter in 1662, arguing that the government had “permitted” the Mohegans to reserve land within the colony. Claiming that the colony’s charter vested the Governor and Company with absolute rights to the colony’s lands, which included the Mohegans’ reserved tracts, Connecticut representatives effectively obfuscated
While the Mohegans struggled to protect hunting and planting grounds, other Algonquian communities too struggled against the intrusion of colonists and animals onto their lands which equally jeopardized their survival. English neighbours frequently trespassed onto Algonquian reserves to pilfer timber for building and fencing in nearby towns or for sale as a valuable export item, while their livestock often trampled the Natives’ planting fields or rooted in their clam banks. When Algonquian leaders complained of such intrusions before colonial assemblies, they often received directions from English authorities that required them to adapt to the changing landscape in which they lived. In response to complaints regarding the destruction of Algonquian planting grounds by English livestock, for example, in the late seventeenth century Connecticut officials appointed fence viewers to appraise the damages done to their crops and

their history of alliance with Mohegan leaders and ignored their recognition of Native land rights and ownership evident in the individual sales that occurred after the issuing of the charter. The Mohegans, in contrast, asserted that their rights to their lands stemmed from agreements made with Major John Mason and his heirs which reserved tracts for the Mohegans and their posterity, and which established a trust relationship between the Mohegans and the Masons to protect against the loss or alienation of communal lands. While the commission appointed in 1705 found in favour of the Mohegans and ordered Connecticut to return the lands the government had unjustly appropriated, Connecticut officials refused to comply with the decision or to recognize the commission’s authority. Subsequent commissions were established in 1738 and 1743, and in 1773 the case officially closed after a ruling by the British Privy Council in favour of Connecticut. While some scholars have emphasized the partisan interests and role of colonists in perpetuating and maintaining the struggle over Mohegan lands, others have pointed to the significant resistance of the Mohegans themselves in protesting the infringements they suffered on their lands and their communal autonomy, and the efforts of many Natives to assert their rights to their land and their own authority and leadership in defiance of the government. See Bushman, 93-95; David Conroy, “The Defense of Indian Land Rights: William Bollan and the Mohegan Case in 1743,” American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings, 103 (1994), 395-424; Mark Walters, “Mohegan Indians v. Connecticut (1705-1773) and the Legal Status of Aboriginal Customary Laws and Government in British North America,” Osgoode Hall Law Journal 33 (1995), 785-829; Murray, To Do Good, 33-39; Den Ouden, 91-141; Lisa Brooks, The Common Pot, 67-86; Fisher, ‘Traditionary Religion,’ 89-115.
instructed Native villagers to “make pounds within their own fields to secure and imprison such horses, cattell, [and] swine, as they find trespassing.”

Despite the destructive actions of roaming livestock, some Algonquians began to keep livestock and assumed new roles in building fences and tending the animals in their own villages and in neighbouring English towns. While a number of Mohegans raised hogs by the eighteenth century, Montaukett men and women began to have livestock branded with distinctive marks, and occupied new positions as fence viewers and cattle watchers for English neighbours. In 1697, for example, Hanable Indian contracted to work for Nathaniel Sylvester of East Hampton for six weeks and to scour the woods and fields of “Sachem[‘s] Neck” for “mired cattle,” which he was to pull out to safety. Rather than hunting the woods for deer or other small animals, Hanable’s new employment called him to hunt for, and rescue, English livestock stranded in salt marshes and swamps. While many Algonquians, particularly men, laboured outside of their communities in whaling, warfare, or as indentured servants, those who remained in local villages increasingly incorporated new animals, crops, and tools into their lifeways.

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61 Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, vol. 3, 42-43; see also Oberg, Uncas, 199.
63 Stone, 355.
64 Colonial records indicate the substantial number of Algonquian servants who laboured in English households throughout the early eighteenth century, as poverty and indebtedness drove men and women to put their children out, or to indenture themselves to absolve debts. In February 1729, for example, a Pequot woman named Abigale indentured her seven-year old daughter Sarah to Groton inhabitant William Morgan until Sarah turned eighteen. In addition to outlining Sarah’s duties to serve her master with loyalty and to obey his commands, the contract stated that Morgan “obligeth himself and his heirs to teach [and] instruct ye said Sarah to read English” during the term of the apprenticeship. Indentures and apprenticeships in some cases offered Algonquian children and adults the opportunity to learn new trades and skills as well as English literacy. In June 1721, John Newcomb, a Native man living in Rhode Island indentured his son
Such adaptations, along with their efforts to protect their hunting and planting grounds from encroachment, seemingly generated little response from colonial authorities or English settlers in recognizing Algonquian rights to their lands and livelihoods. By the second decade of the eighteenth century, rather, government officials and religious leaders increasingly turned their attention towards “civilizing” and settling Native populations living within their colonies, and to bringing the Christian message to Algonquian villages and settlements. Instead of providing redress for the infringements, thefts, and encroachments that made daily life next to impossible at places such as Noank or Massapeage, colonial officials passed new laws which aimed to reform and remake the ways in which Algonquians lived on their lands and conceived of space. In so doing, these legislative measures would also open up areas for settlement for land-hungry colonists. Seeking to monitor and contain Algonquian communities within designated boundaries, such legislation dictated a new spatial and cultural foundation for Native villages based explicitly on English ideals. Experience Mayhew’s missionary tours of southern New England and his offers of Christian instruction represented only the beginning of a steady onslaught launched by political and religious authorities that intended to suppress Native “savagery” and idolatry with English laws, lifeways, and

John to Zachariah Road of Warwick to learn the art of shoemaking. In addition to providing John’s food and clothing during the indenture, Road also agreed to provide the Native boy with a “set of shoemakers tools” at the end of the term. In the 1730s, Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas II likewise indentured his son, Ben Uncas III, to cordwainer Thomas Russel of Sherburn for several years. As Connecticut Governor Joseph Talcott boasted in a letter, the “[Mohegan] Sachem is Inclined to Christianity & the English way of Living; therefore he bounde Out his Son to learn that Handy Craft, & to read & to wriht, which he hath obtained.” NLCC-NA, Box 1, Folder 29, CSL; Indenture contract, 10 June 1721, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 6, RIHS; Governor Talcott to Francis Wilks, 1740, TP, Vol. 2, 205. On whaling and male labour patterns outside of reserve communities, see Daniel Vickers, “The First Whalmen of Nantucket,” in After King Philip’s War, 90-113; O’Brien, “‘Divorced from the Land,’” in After King Philip’s War, 153-54; RTEH, vol. 2, 77, 86-87, 97, 119, 152-53.
religion, and to physically contain Algonquian communities using new boundaries and constructions of space.

Mayhew’s preaching efforts in 1713 and 1714 equally signalled the attempt by colonial authorities to remedy their largely miserable missionary record among Algonquians in southern New England. Algonquians living in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and on Long Island had largely fallen outside of the perimeters of the missionary endeavour in the seventeenth century as the efforts of Puritan ministers such as John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew to form “praying towns” and mission villages had focused primarily on the Bay Colony and Martha’s Vineyard. Among the Narragansetts in Rhode Island, apart from the presence of Roger Williams, English missionaries had visited them only sporadically until the 1721 appointment of Anglican minister James McSparran to serve in the area. In seventeenth-century Connecticut, Algonquian leaders had expressed hostility and indifference towards the English ministers who intermittently visited their villages, and had largely refused to accept the instruction they brought. Although a Niantic sachem had accepted Christian teachings and attempted to share his beliefs with his family and village during the 1640s, most groups remained unfriendly towards the new faith. When John Eliot attempted to preach among the Podunks in 1657, for example, the assembled Natives had responded to his message with rejection and opposition. The efforts of Norwich minister James Fitch to preach to the Mohegans in the late seventeenth century met with similar hostility and aversion. Fitch complained in 1678 that Uncas, the Mohegan sachem, remained resistant to the Christian religion and

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65 Love, 189-90.
opposed “any means of soul’s good and concernment to his people and [and is instead] abounding more and more in dancing’s and all maner of Heathenish impieties.” Long Island minister Thomas James had made equally little headway among the Montaukets and other Algonquians with whom he had interacted throughout the seventeenth century. While James had received funding from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New-England, colonial records suggest that his efforts to translate the catechism into the Algonquian language had reaped minimal fruit in transforming the beliefs of the “dark souls” of his Native neighbours. Rather than abandoning the beliefs, rituals, and inter-village dances and celebrations that the missionaries opposed, many Algonquian men and women continued to recognize the spiritual potency of their lands and the non-human beings that lived there, and continued to worship and subsist according to their own "ways."

Mayhew’s visits to Algonquian villages, then, not only portended the renewed colonial efforts to replace persisting indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices with Christian ones, but signalled broader attempts to remake Algonquian village and family life according to a New England colonial model. Along with laws passed to confine Algonquians within village and reserve boundaries and to restrict the hunting patterns of men, colonial legislatures passed acts in the first three decades of the eighteenth century

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68 James Fitch to John Allyn, 5 May 1678, IP I, I: 33, CSL.
70 In the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, for example, inhabitants of the town of Colchester, Connecticut petitioned the colonial assembly to protest a dance attended by Mohegans, Narragansetts, and “Hartford Indians.” Fearing that the Natives had gathered to plot against them, the petitioners claimed that the “ceremony” constituted an attempt to “consult the mind of the maneto concerning any intended expedition.” Petition of town of Colchester, n.d., Robert C. Winthrop Papers, Vol. 2, 140, CSL.
which blatantly attacked communal celebrations, seasonal rhythms, gender roles, and settlement patterns, and recommended various means to encourage the establishment of civility and Christianity. Governing bodies increasingly enacted laws that prohibited “Indians and negroes from walking in unseasonable times in the night,” that empowered town councils to “regulate” Algonquian “dances” and gatherings, and that restricted Native settlement patterns within English town boundaries—all of which reflected colonial efforts to monitor and control Algonquian daily life. Complementing such initiatives, in 1717 Connecticut officials passed an act for “civilizing” the “Indians” living in the colony which included a litany of prescriptions to address their languishing and “savage” condition. According to Connecticut Governor Gurdon Saltonstall’s plan, the regular reading of English laws combined with efforts to encourage sedentary living in the “English manner” would effectively “wean” the colony’s Algonquians from the “Rude and barbarous usages of their Heathenism.” By securing their remaining “reserved lands” to Native inhabitants, the government hoped to diminish the “prejudice” that Algonquians held towards the English and more effectively encourage them to live in villages and hold “property severally.” Connecticut’s “civilizing act” presented male-

71 In 1703, officials in Rhode Island passed an act to “restrict Indians and negroes from walking in unseasonable times in the night.” The enactment required Natives who laboured as servants to carry certificates from their masters if walking in town at night, and stipulated that those who travelled without official approval would suffer fifteen stripes. Several years later, the Rhode Island Assembly passed another law which aimed to control the ceremonies and festivals celebrated by Algonquians living in the colony. Noting how “it is very common in this colony, and especially in Westerly and South Kingstown, for Indians to make dances, which has been found by experience to be very prejudicial to the adjacent inhabitants,” the law empowered town councils to control and “regulate” such occurrences by levying fines where necessary. On Long Island, Algonquians likewise encountered growing efforts from their English neighbours to dictate where and when they could move in their homelands. Inhabitants of East Hampton not only forbade Montauketts suffering from smallpox to enter their town, upon threat of fines or whippings, but they also prohibited Natives from planting crops, setting up wigwams, or setting traps within the town’s boundaries, also upon threat of fines. RCRI, Vol. 3, 492-93; Vol. 4, 425-26; RTEH, Vol. 1, 101, 201.
based husbandry as a “suitable method” to prevent the “drunkenness and idleness which prevail among [the Natives],” and large, sedentary villages as the ideal for encouraging the spread of the Gospel and formal schooling. Seeking to erase the vital connection of Algonquian women to their land, Connecticut’s civilizing act instead emphasized that “the said portions [of land] should descend from the father to his children.” Saltonstall’s directives attempted to undermine both the gender roles and communal ownership that structured relations between Algonquians and their lands with English ideals of nuclear-based families and private property.\(^\text{72}\)

Colonial officials began to assign Euro-American “overseers,” “guardians,” and “trustees” to “manage” Algonquian lands and encourage “industrious” living as the primary instruments through which to achieve such cultural and spatial transformations. Empowered to lease out Algonquian lands as well as to encourage their adoption of farming and Christianity, guardians epitomized colonial efforts towards monitoring and remaking the lifeways of Algonquians by the early eighteenth century. Historian Wendy St. Jean has insightfully pointed out that Algonquians played a key role in initiating and developing forms of guardianship that preceded the initiatives of colonial assemblies in the early eighteenth century. Looking at the relationship between Mohegan sachem Uncas and Major John Mason in the mid-seventeenth century, St. Jean argues that Algonquians had entered guardian relationships as a survival strategy to protect their lands long before the system became a formal tool of colonial dominance. As St. Jean observes, “exploitation was preceded by a period of mutually beneficial interdependence”

during which Native rights co-existed with colonial interests. By the early eighteenth century, however, officials in Connecticut and Rhode Island had begun to appoint Euro-American “overseers” and trustees to act as instruments of order and control, rather than co-equals, within Native communities. While the Narragansetts initially petitioned the Rhode Island Assembly to request English overseers to assist them in renting out their lands and to protect them from fraud, by 1718 the government had increased the power of the guardians assigned to their community by allowing them to lease out Narragansett lands for fourteen year terms at their discretion. Among the Niantic living near Lyme, Connecticut, in 1728 the colonial government similarly assigned two overseers to the community who received “full Power to take Care of their planting Ground and to see [that] the same is well fenced and secured.” Such a pronouncement undermined the traditional role of Algonquian women as producers and caretakers of planting grounds and implicitly indicated the incompetency of Algonquian men in securing and maintaining their own territories.

The appointment of overseers not only revealed the efforts of colonial authorities to manage Algonquian lands, but also their growing attempts to meddle in leadership and village governance. Throughout the late seventeenth century, officials in Connecticut had asserted their right and authority to “advise” and designate leaders in Pequot communities, and to “oversee” the governance of their settlements. Upon the death of Mashantucket Pequot leader Daniel in the 1694, for example, the Connecticut General

74 *RCRI*, vol. 4, 236.
75 IP I, I: 133.
Court had proceeded to “nominate” Scattup as the next sachem, and appointed James Avery and James Morgan “to counsell and advi[s]e those Pequots in the township of New London as occasion may call for.” In the following decades, Connecticut officials increased their efforts to influence and control Algonquian political leaders. When the Mohegans petitioned the Connecticut Assembly in 1727 to request that officials designate some of their own men as overseers within the community, the Assembly ignored their appeal and responded by stating their approval of the already-chosen Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas, and by reaffirming the positions of three Euro-American overseers. Three years later, a colonial enactment outlined the responsibilities of the guardians assigned to the Mohegans and again reaffirmed the power, authority, and surveillance bound up in their positions. Sanctioned to “Inspect the carryage & maners of sd. Indians” and to encourage “Industery amongst them,” overseers also wielded the right to “lease out for a term of yeares, such percells of the Mohegan Lands as they shall thinke proper.”

The power granted to trustees or overseers in some cases extended beyond renting and managing communal lands or influencing Native leadership, but included interfering in the residency and daily lives of village inhabitants. Assuming the right to determine who could claim membership and belonging within Algonquian villages, some trustees

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76 Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, Vol. 4, 122. As Kevin McBride has noted, the appointment of the Pequot sachem Scattup by Connecticut officials created “a bitter controversy within the tribe over leadership and the nature of succession.” When Scattup refused to step down as sachem, and colonial officials neglected to recognize the Pequots’ support of Kutchamaquan instead, factions emerged within the community as leaders varyingly invoked the name and symbols of former sachem Robin Cassacinamon to legitimate their authority. See Kevin McBride, “The Legacy of Robin Cassacimamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period,” in Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816, ed. Robert Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 88-89.

77 Resolves relating to Mohegan affairs, 1726, IP I, I: 129.

78 IP I, I: 154.
and overseers trampled on the kin networks and marriage patterns that sustained communities with their own notions of “tribal” identity, and designated some village inhabitants as “outsiders” or “strange Indians.” Seeking to impose colonial designations of tribal membership and belonging on their charges, Euro-American trustees threatened the vital ties that transcended village and reserve borders and scrutinized the habits and interactions of village residents. Among the Montauketts on eastern Long Island, trustees selected from the town of East Hampton intruded frequently on the Montauk community to issue orders and levy fines, and attempted to regulate marriage patterns among the community’s residents. A series of land sales throughout the seventeenth century had reduced the Montauketts to two tracts of land known as the “Indian Fields” and the “North Neck” by 1703, and restricted their planting patterns and livestock holding according to English regulations.79 English trustees regularly charged the Montauketts with damages caused to the colonists’ pastures by their rooting pigs, and exercised the power to slaughter Montaukett dogs that allegedly attacked the colonists’ sheep.80 Town proprietors also attempted to control and regulate inter-village marriages that occurred at Montauk, and to distinguish “insiders” from “outsiders.” In 1719, the town proprietors drew up an agreement which fourteen Montauketts signed which prohibited any “strange Indians” from using or improving lands at Montauk, and which denied land rights to any “strange Indians” who married Montaukett women. The agreement not only interfered with centuries-long exogamous marriage patterns and kin networks among the Montauketts and other Algonquians, but also signalled colonial efforts to reduce and

ultimately extinguish the Montaukett population by limiting marriage partners and redefining Montaukett ethnicity.\textsuperscript{81}

Such efforts to monitor, control, and limit the size and functioning of Algonquian communities reflected broader colonial attitudes and expectations regarding Native “disappearance.” Even as Euro-American officials outlined measures to “civilize” and Christianize Algonquian settlements through schooling, preaching, and guardianship, their proposals and records often made note of the dwindling size of communities and the degraded nature of their reserves. As overseers, trustees, and committees assigned to Algonquian communities arbitrated and attempted to settle disputes with neighbouring English encroachers, they granted and sold large portions of Native homelands to resolve the conflicts and justified their actions by pointing towards the eventual “extinction” of their Algonquian charges. Overseers and Euro-American committees regularly visited Algonquian communities in order to perform “head counts” of the number of males living there to assess the population size and the land requirements of the inhabitants—a thinly veiled attempt to highlight the “idleness” and “waste” occurring on lands held by the “straggling remnants” of dying tribes. According to Amy Den Ouden, the head counting performed by colonial officials not only objectified Natives’ bodies but also challenged the social viability of Algonquian communities in order to undermine their rights to their land. While efforts to evangelize and instruct First Peoples aimed to bring “civilization” and the Gospel message to Algonquian settlements, Den Ouden contends that

\textsuperscript{81} Indian Bond to Prevent Strange Indians Living at Montauk, 1719, in \textit{Indian Deeds to Montauk}, 35-36.
encroachment, head counting, and discourses of extinction signalled “a grim historical
destiny for…reservation communit[ies].”

The Mohegans encountered colonial articulations of this “grim historical destiny” as they continued to struggle to protect their planting grounds along the Thames River. While the 1705 commission appointed by Queen Anne to investigate Mohegan grievances had decided in favour of the Natives and had ordered Connecticut to return the hunting and planting grounds that settlers claimed or had encroached upon, the colony ignored the decision and declined to restore Mohegan land rights. As non-Native settlers continued to settle on Mohegan planting grounds in the decades that followed, overseers were empowered to arbitrate and resolve the conflicts over land, which ultimately resulted in the “disposal” of nearly three-quarters of the Mohegans’ reserved planting fields. In 1721, two Euro-American overseers, accompanied by their interpreters, met with Mohegan leaders and encroaching colonists to make a “settlement of that whole affair,” and proceeded to strip the Mohegans of all but the eastern portion of their planting grounds, turning the rest over to Euro-American claimants. Ignoring Mohegan assertions that “the Land was not theirs to dispose of, but it was to descend to their Children,” the committee empowered by the Connecticut Assembly instead insisted that the eastern portion of the planting fields would suffice for the “benefit” of the Mohegan community, “so long as there shall be any of the Moheagan Indians found, or known of alive in the world.” The report subsequently filed by their overseers articulated the growing colonial expectations that the Mohegans and other Algonquians would diminish and die out, noting that “when the whole nation, or stock of said Indians are extinct,” their remaining

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82 Den Ouden, 28, 117-18.
eastern territory would become the property of New London. Vesting the control and sale of remaining Mohegan lands in the hands of a select committee, the overseers anticipated that when the Mohegans were “Supposed to be quite Extinct,” English colonists would settle and “improve” the planting grounds of the disappearing tribe. In the meantime, however, officials moved to contain the Mohegans within their shrinking territory and reminded them to “not pass the bounds set them by the governor and council on their fields.”

Colonial beliefs about Algonquian “disappearance,” then, not only justified the efforts of overseers and guardians to monitor and manage Native populations, but fundamentally imperilled the Natives’ possession, use, and relationship with vital territories and places in their homelands. As English laws, authority, and encroachment became growing realities within Algonquian settlements, leaders continued to articulate their rights to their lands and the viability of their communities in order to counter English notions of both “civilization” and extinction. While seventeenth-century colonial

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83 Report of Committee Settling Mohegan Lands, 1721, WSJP, CHS; Governor and Company, 202; Den Ouden, 114-16. Several years after the 1721 “settlement” of Mohegan planting lands, another report on the Mohegan reserve directed to the Connecticut Governor similarly emphasized the declining population and the questionable character of the community. Benajah Bushnell, who visited the Mohegan settlement in 1736, relayed to Governor Joseph Talcott that he could not “make more than 28 of them [Mohegans], & Several of them are non Residents, and seldom Live there.” Bushnell concluded his report by pointing out with evident disproval that “there are several Widdows [at Mohegan] that keepe house, which they Reckoned as families.” William Morgan and Zachariah Maynor, both inhabitants of Grotton, similarly reported to the Connecticut Assembly in 1731 their efforts to “Come to a true understanding of the Exact number of the Pequit Indians in Grotton.” Their report not only limited the population count to “all the males of sixteen years old and upward” and ignored the presence of Algonquian women and children, but also emphasized the inter-tribal character of many of the inhabitants. Pointing to the many villagers whom they described as “compounded” of Mohegans, Pequots, and Narragansetts, the report implicitly suggested that few, if any, “real” Pequots lived on the lands at Mashantucket, and subtly called into question their right to dwell on their homelands. Benajah Bushnell to Governor Talcott, 1736, TP, vol. 1, 351; IP I, I: 151.
records indicate that on numerous occasions First Peoples sold, or gave as gifts, parcels of their homelands to English colonists, by the eighteenth century Algonquians increasingly petitioned courts and assemblies to reaffirm and defend their rights to their homelands, and to challenge the abuse, corruption, and deceit they encountered from their English neighbours. Offering a perspective of their lands that emphasized their survival and continuity rather than degradation and disappearance, Algonquians insisted that their “own ways” of living on their lands persisted amidst repeated infringements and demanded the protection of their territories. Using petitions to assert “their collective rights to their reservation land,” Amy Den Ouden suggests that such pleas “reveal that community life, identity, and collective rights to reserved lands” remained “intertwined.”

Challenging the authority of overseers and committees to manage and dispose of communal lands, Algonquian petitioners instead expressed the value and authority of their own knowledge and relationship to their lands, and emphasized the collective nature through which they continued to view and understand space.

Such assertions of communal knowledge, rights, and the value of their homelands blatantly critiqued colonial policies and their disregard for Algonquian livelihoods. In the decades following their unsuccessful struggle to protect their lands at Noank, the Pequots living at Mashantucket continued to complain to colonial authorities regarding the encroachments they suffered from their neighbours living at Groton who trespassed on their reserve. After losing their rights to plant in the rocky coastal fields at Noank in 1714, the Pequots relied entirely on the Mashantucket reserve, located further inland at the headwaters of the Mystic River, for planting their crops. By the early 1720s,

84 Den Ouden, 168.
however, a number of Groton townspeople—many of whom had only years earlier driven
the Pequots from Noank—had begun to build fences at Mashantucket and to lease out
land. In 1721, Pequot sachem Robin Cassacinamon II sent a complaint to the Connecticut
Assembly regarding the encroachment his people now suffered at Mashantucket. Noting
that his people’s recent dispossession from Noank had been “greatly to our
dissatisfaction,” the Pequot leader went on to protest that several inhabitants of Groton
had proceeded to intrude on their lands at Mashantucket, fencing and building upon their
best lands and their orchards, “which is to our great wrong & Dissatisfaction.” The
Pequot sachem couched his people’s grievances concerning their most recent
encroachment in a description of the ancestral and sustaining value of their homelands at
Mashantucket, insisting that their ancestors had “dwelt, And Improved, [their land] by
Planting both Corn & Orchards.” “Our orchards are of great worth & value to us,” the
Pequot sachem contended, “by Reason our Grandfathers & fathers Planted them & the
Apples are a great Relief to us.” Rather than “unimproved” or marginal, Cassacinamon
characterized the Pequots’ relationship with their lands as one of continuing subsistence
and historical significance.

Cassacinamon’s plea to Connecticut authorities not only emphasized his people’s
sense of the value and the vital subsistence they obtained from their lands, but criticized
colonial officials for the dispossession and abuse they suffered at both Noank and
Mashantucket. Following their defeat in the Pequot War in 1637, many Pequot men and
youth had supported the English in a number of colonial wars and conflicts—notably
King Philip’s War—and had suffered heavy casualties in fighting against their
Algonquian neighbours.\textsuperscript{85} Such past loyalties to the English failed to bring about the protection of their lands, however, as Cassacinamon highlighted the encroachment and dispossession they seemingly earned as their reward. Pointing to Connecticut’s selective loyalty to the Pequots, the sachem attacked the government’s treatment of his people as labouring livestock, charging, “the English in ye time of ye war called us brethren: & esteemed us to be Rational Creatures: but behold now they make us as Goats by moving us from place to place to Clear Rough Land: & make it profitable for ‘em.” Indicting English officials and settlers for repeatedly trampling on their rights to their homelands, despite previous alliances and military support, Cassacinamon concluded his petition by requesting justice on behalf of his people and the confirmation of their lands at Mashantucket. Asking the Assembly to prohibit their Groton neighbours from leasing out their lands and fencing in their orchards, Cassacinamon intertwined his people’s rights with their “ancient possession” of Mashantucket.\textsuperscript{86}

The Mashantucket Pequots were not alone in insisting on their rights and the value of their lands before colonial authorities. A series of petitions sent to the Connecticut Assembly by the Pequots’ kin living at nearby Stonington similarly complained of the encroachment they suffered from non-Native neighbours, while insisting on the persistence and vitality of their community. The Eastern Pequots had received a reserve of land in Stonington in 1683 following their support of the English during King Philip’s War. The descendents of survivors of the Pequot War, in the aftermath of the conflict the Eastern Pequots had lived under the control of the Niantic-Pequot sachem Wequash Cook

\textsuperscript{85} For more on Pequot participation in King Philip’s War, see De Forest, \textit{History}, 282; Oberg, \textit{Uncas}, 180-87.

\textsuperscript{86} IP I, I: 95.
(or Herman Garret) in smaller villages scattered along the Pawcatuck River in the eastern portion of their homelands. By the late seventeenth century, the Pequots had relocated to a 280-acre reserve located in North Stonington, where they continued to subsist on a fraction of their original homelands.87

Paralleling the struggles of the Mohegans and Mashantucket Pequots to protect their territories from land-hungry colonists, by the early eighteenth century the Eastern Pequots too faced threats from English neighbours and their roaming livestock, and disputed colonial assumptions regarding their degradation and disappearance. Petitioning the Connecticut Assembly on behalf of her people, Pequot leader Mary Momoho, who identified herself as “Momoho’s Squaw,” beseeched the government to uphold their rights to their reserved lands, which had recently been trampled on by English colonists who claimed the right to graze their cattle in the Pequots’ planting fields. Reminding colonial officials of the “former unity” shared between “you and our Nation” during the “Nanangansett wars” and the service of the sachem Momoho and his men in support of the English cause, Momoho’s wife went on to request the assembly’s assistance in removing the intruders that threatened their livelihoods and lands. Pointing out that the growing number of English cattle grazing in the Pequots’ fields had been “to our damages,” Momoho’s wife indicated the ongoing centrality of subsistence strategies to her people’s survival, and the struggles the Pequots faced as colonists impeded on their lands. Insightfully recognizing the expectation among colonists who think “that wee are almost all dead,” the Pequot leader instead defiantly informed the Assembly that “yet wee

have thirty-three men yet alive” as well as women and children. The Pequot woman’s complaint not only challenged the attempts of English officials to erase Algonquian women in their population counts, but also reaffirmed the deep ties of Algonquian women to their planting grounds and homelands, and indicated the ongoing roles of both men and women in subsistence activities. Concluding with a request for protection so that “wee and ours posterity may enjoy” their lands “peaceably,” the Pequot leader signed her petition as “the sunk squaw which was the wife of Momoho and her men,” reiterating both the community’s collective interests and physical persistence.

Not satisfied with the Assembly’s response, Mary Momoho and the Stonington Pequots continued to petition colonial authorities to defend both their homelands and lifeways in the following decades. While the Connecticut Assembly appointed a committee of Euro-American men in 1722 to visit the Pequot community and “inspect” their reserve, Pequot leaders petitioned the government several months later to contest the committee’s findings. Responding to the report filed by English officials the previous fall that declared only “three men & four squaws” along with two dozen children remained at the Stonington reservation, in the spring of 1723 the Stonington Pequots informed the colonial assembly that one hundred and thirty men and women “that are of ye Descent of Mo-mo-hoe” continued to live, plant, and labour on the reserve. Further challenging the report’s conclusion that a “small quantity of land would suffice us & our posterity to plant upon,” Momoho’s wife and her councillors insisted that such a “small quantity of Land will starve us” and outlined the struggles and economic hardships their community already faced in planting on limited ground. The committee’s report had failed to consider “what great Disadvantages wee are under for want of Dung,” the petitioners
insisted, noting that “when wee have wore out our Planting Land wee must always be breaking up new Land.” While Algonquian subsistence strategies traditionally allowed agricultural lands to lie fallow to replenish soil nutrients, such practices were “drastically limited by confinement to small parcels of land.” As the Pequots struggled to plant within the limited space of their reservation, Den Ouden has suggested that the committee sent to “inspect” their lifeways most likely ignored local subsistence activities and concluded that unused land had been abandoned by the Natives. Disregarding both the original reservation grant and Connecticut’s reservation law which prohibited the alienation of Native lands, the committee’s report instead emphasized the seeming disappearance of Pequot inhabitants and the availability of land for non-Natives.

Momoho’s wife and her counsellors responded by reminding the government that their reserve had been originally established for the community and their children “forever,” regardless of their population size, and called on the assembly to disregard the committee’s report and attempts to dispossess them of their lands.88

While such petitions articulated Algonquian resistance to the growing encroachment and colonial control they faced in their villages and wider reserves, they equally indicated the brutal constraints and struggle to survive that characterized daily life by the early eighteenth century. Finding themselves increasingly surrounded by English encroachers, overseers, committee members, and ministers, Algonquians confronted their limited ability to maintain their lands, resources, and lifeways apart from English influence or authority. By the 1720s and 1730s, Euro-American ministers and teachers

88 Pequot petition to Connecticut Assembly, 1723, IP II, II: 22; Den Ouden, 72-73.
frequently visited their communities to bring the Gospel message and instruction in reading and writing as well as material goods to offset their poverty. Although in some cases Algonquians requested ministers and teachers, their presence was met with varying degrees of resistance and wary interest, as children eluded roving schoolmasters or adults attended the preaching of local ministers to receive blankets and other materials. Similar to Mayhew’s efforts years earlier, ministers often found villagers willing to listen to their sermons and admonitions, yet reluctant to adopt their faith. Some ministers,

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89 In a 1735 petition outlining the violent threats they received from English intruders on their lands, for example, the Mashantucket Pequots coupled their calls for government protection with a request for instruction. Some of their people, the Pequot petitioners noted, were interested in “learning to read and all our young men, And women that are cappell of Learning of it.” In 1727, the Narragansett sachem Charles Ninigret similarly expressed an interest in English education, and petitioned King George to request a schoolmaster to work among his people. At the Mohegan community, some adults and children likewise began to attend the schoolhouse established on their reserved lands. During the 1720s, Mohegan overseer John Mason gained the approval of the Connecticut Assembly to open a school at Mohegan with the goal of teaching the Natives English literacy and Christian principles. By 1728, local ministers praised Mason for his initial success in instructing Mohegan children in reading and writing, and noted the ability of several children to recite the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments. While some Mohegan pupils apparently expressed interest in the new instruction offered at the schoolhouse, others resisted the lessons and persisted in learning primarily in their homes at the hands of kin. In recalling his childhood growing up in the community, Mohegan Samson Occom described the efforts—often in vain—of the schoolmasters who succeeded Mason in gathering Native children together in the schoolhouse for lessons. As Occom recounted, “when I was about 10 Years of age there was a man who went about among the Indian Wigwams, and where ever he Coud find the Indian Childn, he woud make them read—but the Children Usd to take Care to keep out of his way.” Occom went on to recall that he himself was often “caught” by schoolmaster Jonathan Barber, who made him “say over my Letters, and I believe I learnt Some of them.” After the school was established at Mohegan, Euro-American ministers from neighbouring towns increasingly visited the settlement, particularly during the summer months. Occom recounted one minister who visited from New London to preach “once a Fortnight,” but noted that the Mohegans attended his preaching not because “they regarded the Christian Religion, But they had Blankets given to them every Fall of the Year and for these things they woud attend.” While material considerations certainly drew Mohegans and others to attend such gatherings, some Native congregants expressed a genuine interest in the Gospel message. After suffering a bout of illness in 1728, Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas II allegedly requested religious instruction from New London minister Eliphalet Adams, and began to attend Sabbath services at local meetinghouses. Vowing to abstain from drinking alcohol, the Mohegan sachem perhaps influenced other villagers to give further consideration to the teachings and new salvation available in the Christian faith. Pequot petition to Connecticut Assembly, 1735, IP I, I: 227; Charles Augustus Ninaagrel to King George, 1727, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 6, RIHS; Eliphalet Adams to Joseph Talcott, 1728, TP, Vol. 1, 107-9; Samson Occom, “Autobiographical Narrative, Second Draft,” in The Collected Writings, 52-53.
keenly aware of the conflicts over land and resources in which Algonquian villagers were embroiled during their visits attempted to alleviate the conditions on the reserves by petitioning colonial authorities and intervening on their behalf. Linking Algonquian resistance to Christianity to the mistreatment and prejudice they suffered at the hands of Euro-American officials and neighbours, some ministers called on colonial assemblies to remedy the grievances in reserve communities before expecting Christian emissaries to bear any fruit there.  

Despite their growing exposure to Christian teachings and formal education, many Algonquians continued to look towards older rituals and spiritual forces to allay the conditions caused by colonial expansion and encroachment. During the 1730s, most Narragansetts remained indifferent, if not opposed, to the presence and preaching of Congregational minister Joseph Park, who settled near their reserve under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (or the New England Company). During his early years of service, Park opened a school as well as a Congregational church among the Algonquian and English inhabitants living in the area but experienced growing frustration and disillusionment as his Narragansett charges remained “friendly but uninterested in his preaching.”  

Perhaps the widespread

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90 In 1734, for example, Lyme ministers Jonathan Parsons and George Griswold wrote a memorial on behalf of the Niantic community which linked the Natives’ opposition to Christianity and English instruction to the abuse they suffered from local colonists. According to these ministers, while the Niantics had shown some interest in attending “our Christian assemblies,” most remained opposed to the Gospel and continued in their own spiritual beliefs. The Niantics resisted English instruction, the ministers further informed the Assembly, because they suffered repeated encroachments on their homelands from inhabitants living at Lyme. Parsons and Griswold relayed to the Assembly that the Niantic “Chiefs told us that they would not be concerned with our religion or have a school” until “the English would deal honestly with them respecting their land.” IP I, I: 167.

91 Simmons, “Red Yankees,” 261; Love, 190-94.
indifference stemmed from the ongoing adherence of many Narragansetts to the spiritual beliefs and practices that had sustained their ancestors and connected them to their lands for centuries past. During a period of drought sometime in the 1720s or 1730s, many Narragansetts gathered together and “held a great Powaw for sundry Days.” Led by powwows and attended by many villagers, the Algonquians used the gathering to collectively pray to Chepi and request that he release the rains he withheld from their lands.  

Whether or not the Narragansetts’ gathering produced rain remains unclear, but their efforts to maintain such rituals and their reverence for the spirit beings inhabiting their lands suggests that colonial encroachment and dispossession had failed to undermine long-standing ties between power and place. The Narragansetts’ efforts to alleviate drought and sustain their families by invoking sacred power suggests the ongoing link between subsistence, place, and the spiritual realm in Algonquian communities. Perhaps most notably, the Narragansetts’ reliance on ritual and spiritual power to cope with the constraints produced by colonization highlights the varying ways in which Algonquian communities adapted to the growing intrusion of Euro-American authority and culture by the 1730s. While men and women struggled to uphold their collective rights to their lands and to stave off the efforts of encroachers, their practical responses to such threats included acts of resistance, persistent petitioning, and the maintenance of ritual as well as looking towards new forms of instruction and education. By the late 1730s all Algonquians shared a painful awareness of the abuses and suffering their communities

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had endured at the hands of greedy neighbours and negligent officials, and the increasing
difficulty of daily survival. As Euro-American culture and control became undeniable
realities in Algonquian villages by the eve of the Great Awakening, such factors perhaps
compelled some Natives to recognize their need for new spiritual power and salvation in
order to confront the material and spatial constraints they suffered in their lands, and to
seek new means to maintain the vitality of their villages and territories. Many
Algonquians, alongside their English neighbours, would find such power and spiritual
renewal in Christian salvation and the “new birth” in the coming years, and would draw
on these new beliefs and teachings to reinvigorate the very lifeways and conceptions of
space that colonial officials sought to undermine.
CHAPTER THREE

‘That they be able to Live near together’ and ‘attend the preaching of the Word of God’: Land, Spiritual Power, and the Great Awakening

On a cold day in February 1743, a group of Pequot men and women travelled from their reserve in North Stonington east across the Pawcatuck River to the Narragansett reserve in Charlestown, Rhode Island to visit the people living there. Perhaps arriving in the afternoon, the visiting Pequots most likely gathered in the wigwams and homes of their Narragansett kin to exchange news, converse with family and friends, and to share a meal around the warmth of a fire. As the afternoon shadows lengthened into early evening, the Pequot guests joined their Narragansett hosts in attending an evening service where a visiting Euro-American minister preached words of power, hope, and salvation. Huddling together as the cold evening deepened, the Algonquian congregants sensed the presence of an unseen power as they spoke out prayers for aid and provision, and sang hymns revering the character and actions of the Christian God. While many of the Pequots who attended the service beseeched God for the salvation of their kin, many of the Narragansetts who joined the assembly confronted a spiritual being previously unknown to them. As the Pequot visitors encouraged the Narragansetts to believe in Jesus Christ and find salvation in him, some of the Narragansetts encountered a new source of deliverance, redemption, and hope extended to those who believed in His name.

Stirred by this encounter to call out for safety and life, the Narragansetts joined with their Pequot neighbours in petitioning God for the salvation of their families and
community and in listening to words of healing and power. As the visiting minister spoke from a passage in Second Corinthians chapter six, the Algonquian congregants claimed the deliverance contained in his words—“I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee.” Drowning out the minister as he recited the Apostle Paul’s affirmation that “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,” the assembled Natives together worshipped and revered the unseen One who heard their cries and bestowed favour upon their people.¹

The Native worshippers continued to sing, pray, and rejoice long after minister Joseph Park left the Narragansett reserve later that night to return to his home in the nearby town of Westerly. The celebrations and exhortations persisted throughout the following day and evening as well, as the Pequots and Narragansetts offered praises to the Christian God and entreated Him for salvation and assistance in their daily lives. While Park would go on to report that the Sabbath gathering on the Narragansett reserve had “stirred up” many Natives to “seek after eternal Life” and to attend his church in Westerly in growing numbers, the Narragansett and Pequot congregants might have recounted things differently. Perhaps they would have remembered the renewal and sense of collective strength that flowed from their joint prayers, singing, and exhortation, or the gladness they experienced in worshipping together in the presence of kin and friends. The Narragansetts might have recalled the earnest efforts of the Pequot visitors to share the wisdom, healing, and power available in Christ’s salvation as they exchanged news around their cooking fires or later gathered to attend Park’s sermon. Perhaps the Pequots

rejoiced to witness their Narragansett kin believe in the words spoken to them and to receive new visions of salvation at work in their community and wider lands. For both groups, the gatherings might have signalled that they were not forsaken in an increasingly barren and colonized land, but rather that God would save their people and extend his favour and protection amidst their repeated sufferings and loss.²

The favour and salvation that many Narragansetts claimed in the winter of 1743 represented part of a larger spiritual renewal that occurred in Algonquian communities as well as in neighbouring colonial towns. In the early 1740s, a series of evangelical revivals that historians commonly refer to as the “Great Awakening” erupted in settlements in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and on Long Island, as well as in other communities throughout the American colonies. Stemming from a period of economic and demographic growth in the colonies in the early eighteenth century, combined with a growing estrangement between church leaders and their dwindling flocks, evangelical or “New Light” revivalists ushered in what historian Patricia Bonomi has described as an “age of contentiousness” by emphasizing the need for “spiritual regeneration” and a “new birth” among individual church members.³

Challenging the civility and deference traditionally expected of parish congregants, revivalists relied on emotional preaching and the “spoken word” proclaimed in informal settings to convince their hearers of their need for salvation, and transgressed parish boundaries as they travelled between churches and towns to profess their messages of divine grace. According to scholar Susan Juster, revivalists not only disrupted the

² The Christian History...For the year 1743, 208-10.
³ McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, 58, 70; Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven, 132.
institutional structure in settings such as Puritan New England by worshipping in barns and fields rather than formal meetinghouses, but they also proclaimed a “new morphology of conversion” based on a sublime moment of divine communion rather than lifelong efforts towards godliness. Some scholars have emphasized the “complex and contradictory” nature of the revivals and their limited and localized character, while others point to the “renaissance” of evangelical traditions and the sustained spiritual fervour that followed the initial revivals. Other historians have likewise emphasized the “culture of revivalism” that existed in colonies such as Connecticut and Massachusetts that paved the way for the evangelical renewal of the early 1740s. Spurring the creation of “Separate” churches and new communities of believers, the “awakenings” and their emphasis on individual choice and salvation extended spiritual power and redemption to all members of colonial society and at the same time produced deep divisions over the meaning and practice of Christianity.

For Algonquians such as the Pequots and Narragansetts, participation in the Christian revivals signalled a significant break from their resistance to the Gospel message in the preceding decades. Growing proximity to Euro-American culture and control had certainly produced a growing familiarity with the Christian message by the

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5 While some historians have criticized the scholarly portrayal of the “Great Awakening” as a coherent historical event, others have emphasized the evangelical mentality that was revived and emerged from the revivals and continued to shape the religious landscape beyond the 1740s. See for example, Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (1982), 305-25; Barbara Lacey, “Gender, Piety, and Secularization in Connecticut Religion, 1720-1775,” *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 4 (1991), 801-02; Charles Hambrick-Stowe, “The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Sarah Osborn,” *Church History* 61, no. 4 (1992), 415, 419.
1730s, and children and adults had been exposed to formal education, preaching, and ministerial visits in the years leading up to the revivals. While some Algonquian leaders and villagers expressed an interest and openness towards the teaching and tools brought by Euro-American ministers and schoolmasters during the 1720s and 1730s, many men and women had remained largely uninterested or opposed to the grace and truth their colonial neighbours purported to hold. By the late 1730s, however, a number of Algonquians began to turn their ears towards the emotional cries and calls for salvation of revivalist preachers who spoke at their settlements, and to detect something recognizable in their offers of redemption and their emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit. In communities in southeastern Connecticut and on eastern Long Island, itinerant ministers abandoned their pulpits to preach salvation and the new birth to those who would listen, and exhorted their audiences in the streets, fields, or even local homes. As groups such as the Pequots attended meetings alongside Euro-American congregants in Stonington or listened to itinerant ministers who visited their reserves, many recognized the living and active power of the Christian God to save them from present and eternal suffering, and determined that His salvation and protection extended beyond the meetinghouses of their colonial neighbours to include their villages and lands as well. Compelled to share their salvation and new spiritual wisdom with their kin, Algonquians who believed in the

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messages they heard quickly relayed God’s power to family and friends and entreated them to believe likewise.⁸

The spread and acceptance of evangelical Protestant Christianity within Algonquian communities during the Awakening years, then, stemmed from kin-based, inter-village interactions as much as from the efforts of Euro-American ministers and revivalists. While Algonquian men and women certainly joined non-Natives in attending “revival” gatherings and were “stirred up” to seek eternal life by “New Light” preachers, their adherence to the Christian faith often reflected the influence of Algonquian kin in sharing the new beliefs and practices they had adopted. Since many Natives remained illiterate in English up until the 1740s, hearing words of salvation and life conveyed in their own language by family or acquaintances likely proved more meaningful and palatable than the sermons preached by Euro-American ministers and translated when interpreters were available. The winter gathering at Narragansett in 1743, for example, revealed the vital role of the visiting Pequot Christians in sharing their new hope and life with their Narragansett kin during “revival” gatherings, and their efforts to pray with and exhort their non-believing family and friends. Passing these messages along to neighbouring communities, Algonquians believers built on existing ties of kinship and

⁸ In his study of Algonquian participation in the Great Awakening, Linford Fisher stresses that Native adoption and adherence to Christianity by the 1740s reflected a continuation, rather than a break, with their prior strategies of cultural and religious adaptation. According to Fisher, Algonquian involvement in the Awakening constituted the “logical result” of the preceding three decades of Euro-American efforts to evangelize Native communities and the subsequent interest that some Algonquians expressed towards both Christianity and education. While Fisher seeks to revise historical depictions of the Great Awakening as a “momentous point of disjuncture” among Algonquian communities by emphasizing the ways in which Natives pragmatically “used” Christianity and education prior to the revivals, in doing so he diminishes the significant opposition and resistance that many Algonquians continued to exhibit towards the faith leading up to the emergence of New Light revivalism. See Fisher, ‘Traditionary Religion,’ 7-8, 134-39.
culture as they visited nearby villages to share their faith in Christ, and urged relatives to believe in and worship the Sovereign God. Seeking to spur others to adopt new beliefs and rituals, the efforts of Christian Natives extended beyond reservation boundaries as surrounding villages became sites for collective worship and spiritual renewal.

Such movements between Algonquian settlements underscored the continuing importance and centrality of homelands and communal space during the period of evangelical renewal. While scholars of the Great Awakening have tended to emphasize the theological and cultural struggles within Euro-American society during and after the revivals, as “New Light” ministers and their supporters defended the Awakening against “Old Light” detractors, for Algonquian participants, such debates and divisions held less significance than their struggles for their lands and livelihoods. In his overview of literature on the Great Awakening, Allen Guelzo urges scholars to recognize the mixture of ethnic and religious identities in colonial America that blur the notion of a “single Great Awakening,” and calls them to pursue a “new kind of historical language…to speak about the Great Awakening.” While Guelzo invites historians to convey “a language of awe and terror” in their work that he finds absent in modern and post-modern accounts, his demand for a new way to talk about the devotional rituals and meaning of the Awakening resonates with the experiences of its Algonquian participants.9 Rather than theological debates, church schisms, and conflicts over conversion methods, land remained at the centre of Algonquian spiritual practices and community life during and after the revivals.

For Algonquians such as the Narragansetts, Pequots, and others, evangelical Christianity and its new message of salvation offered spiritual power and rituals that reinvigorated their vital ties to their homelands. As First Peoples continued to wage battles against colonial authorities to protect and defend their reserves throughout the 1740s, Algonquian communities drew on evangelical teachings and new spiritual devotions to reaffirm their rights and spiritual connection to their lands. Joining in evangelical rituals that complemented their own understandings of spiritual worship and power, Algonquians participated in a “revival” that renewed the presence of spiritual power in their homes, villages, and lands, and which tied their Christian salvation to their land rights and belonging in southern New England. Drawing explicitly on new Christian beliefs and a sense of Christian morality in their petitions and pleas, many Algonquians continued to demand justice from colonial authorities and intertwined their new identity as Christian believers with their efforts to live peaceably and to subsist on their lands.

The new Christian beliefs and practices that many Algonquian adopted during the Great Awakening reflected the persisting vitality of kinship ties and a communal conception of space. The Pequots’ effort to witness to and worship with their Narragansett neighbours in 1743 was not a singular event, but rather reflected a pattern of inter-village interactions and cultural adaptations that linked Native communities together during the revivals. As groups such as the Pequots attended the preaching of itinerant ministers on their reserve or in nearby towns, they in turn shared the messages of life and hope they heard when they visited other Algonquian settlements to trade, game, or see family. While many Natives became familiar with the ideas of the “new birth” and salvation through Euro-American preaching, the exhortations and encouragements they
received from fellow villagers or visiting kin also pushed them to accept God’s grace and redemption. The Mohegan men and women who attended the revival services at their villages and nearby meetinghouses, for example, often responded collectively to the sermons and exhortations calling them to faith in Christ. Mohegan Samson Occom, who as a youth in the late 1730s “went to all the meetings, I Coud Come at,” recounted that many in his community underwent “Conviction and Saving Conversion” after listening to New Light ministers and exhorters. At the age of seventeen, Occom too put his “trust” in Christ “alone for Life & Salvation,” and subsequently exerted himself to speak of God’s power among fellow Mohegans. Perhaps owing to his growing knowledge of the English language obtained from local schoolmasters and the primer he possessed, Occom began to relay the messages of grace he and others heard at revival meetings to fellow villagers and kin living nearby. Struggling to teach himself to read in the New Testament, Occom in turn began to “frequently…talk with our Indians Concerning Religion.”

Occom’s efforts to “talk with” and exhort fellow Mohegans and other Algonquians reflected the wider practices of itinerancy, exhorting, and informal preaching that characterized the revivals. While Algonquian men and women attended local revival meetings and travelled between their villages to share the teachings they heard, their actions paralleled the movements of New Light preachers who travelled beyond the boundaries of their own pulpits and parishes to lead spiritual meetings and revivals in towns and rural settings in southern New England. Reflecting a spectrum of

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10 Samson Occom, “Autobiographical Narrative, Second Draft,” in *The Collected Writings*, 53-54. In her transcription of Occom’s writings, Joanna Brooks uses carets (^) to designate interlineations in the text. The author has removed these editorial symbols from the quoted text to prevent any confusion or disruption when reading the material.
evangelical teachings that ranged from moderate to more radical, ministers such as James Davenport, Benjamin Pomeroy, Gilbert Tennent, and Eleazar Wheelock visited and preached at churches and communities in southeastern Connecticut and Rhode Island, and certainly caught the attention of Algonquian peoples living nearby. In the early 1740s, Davenport and others visited the Niantic community living in Lyme, and called upon the Natives to find grace and new life in the death of Christ. A number of Nantics were “hopefully converted” by Davenport’s preaching while “some others [were] awakened,” and many within the community began to consider the new spiritual power they learned of during the meetings. While one minister in Lyme hoped that “there are twenty or upward of this Tribe of Indians that have been hopefully converted,” the new spiritual fervour at work among the Nantics likely flowed from the witness and encouragement they received from kin as well.11 Itinerant ministers transgressed ecclesiastical boundaries and in some cases (notably Davenport’s) fomented divisions within established congregations, and together called their listeners to recognize their sin and to be saved by the grace and power of Jesus Christ.12

As New Light preachers crossed parish boundaries to awaken and exhort their listeners, Algonquians crossed reserve boundaries to visit kin and share stories of revival meetings or their encounters with the Christian God. Such talks fuelled inter-village visits and the spread of evangelical teachings among Algonquian communities. Occom and other Mohegans made frequent visits to the Niantic reserve several miles southwest

of their own, both to visit kin and exhort them in the Christian faith. Meeting with aunts, uncles, and cousins living in the community regularly during the revival years, Occom and others encouraged Niantic believers to join them in worship services and revival meetings at nearby villages. In the summer of 1745, Occom and a number of Mohegans spent several days at the Niantic community during which time they presumably gathered together for singing and prayer. After briefly returning to Mohegan following their visit, Occom and a group of Natives—which most likely included both Nantics and Mohegans—sailed across Long Island Sound to join other Native Christians on Long Island for several days of worship gatherings. Hospitably lodged in one of their hosts’ wigwams, Occom recounted that he and the other visitors “were very kindly Entertained by all of ‘em, [and] We had Several Meetings together, and there was Some Stir among ‘em.” After attending the revival gatherings together, Occom and the other visitors “Return’d home again to Mohegan, and to Several Places where we belong’d.”

The Algonquians on Long Island who graciously hosted the “meetings” of Nantics, Mohegans, and others had similarly spread New Light teachings on sin and redemption within and between their villages in recent years. As revivalist preachers such as James Davenport, Jedidiah Mills, and Azariah Horton visited the Montaukett settlement and other communities on the island to offer salvation to those who would listen, one observer claimed that in 1741 a “general reformation” occurred among the Natives as they “renounced all their heathenish idolatry and superstition, and many of them became true Christians.”

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visiting ministers extol the work and saving power of God, their responses to the new
spiritual presence they detected in their midst reflected the importance of kin and
community in matters of faith. Some Montauketts, perhaps endeavouring to more clearly
convey the messages of divine grace they heard at such meetings, began to preach in their
own language and relay the new spiritual power they had discovered to fellow villagers.
One Montaukett man, after “hopefully receiv[ing] the Lord Jesus himself,” began to
speak with “Earnestness and great Affection” for the “best Good of his Fellow Indians.”
Other Montauketts joined in practising new Christian rites with kin. In March of 1742, a
Montaukett couple proclaimed their belief in Christ’s salvation and received baptism
along with their child, while several months later a Native man “owned the covenant” and
testified to kin and friends gathered in their village concerning the new spiritual power at
work in his life.16

The new beliefs and practices that Algonquians at Montauk and other
communities adopted as they underwent spiritual regeneration in many ways built upon
and strengthened pre-existing ties to their homelands. Rather than abandoning older
perceptions of the surrounding landscape and the places in which they lived, many
Algonquians maintained ideas about the pervasiveness of spiritual power even as they
recognized the authority of Jesus and presence of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives.
Historians of the Great Awakening tend to emphasize the centrality of the “new birth” or
“conversion” in their accounts of religious dissent and evangelical growth in the mid-

15 The Christian Monthly History: Or, An Account of the Revival and Progress of Religion, Abroad, and at
Home, No. 5 (Edinburgh: Printed by R. Fleming and A. Alison, 1744), 56.
16 The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 59; No. 6, 7.
eighteenth century. Many, however, have failed to address the significant cultural assumptions and problems bound up in the notion of conversion, especially in regards to Native American history. The term remains laden with the assumptions and colonizing expectations of the Euro-Americans who intertwined “conversion” with “civilization,” and understood religious beliefs in terms of cultural practices. One excerpt printed in the *Christian History* in 1745, for example, pointed to Native culture and lifeways to explain Algonquian resistance to the Gospel, noting: “*Their extream Love of Hunting, Fishing, Fowling, Merry-Meeting, Singing, Dancing, Drinking, and utter Aversion to Industry, have render’d them extremely averse to the Christian Religion.*” Euro-American missionaries likewise entwined their goals of “converting” First Peoples to Christianity with goals of “civilizing” them according to their own cultural ideals, which often involved English education and male-based farming.

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17 According to religious historians Perry Miller and Alan Heimert, for example, one of the central religious debates in mid-eighteenth century New England centred upon the nature of the “saving knowledge” of God and the “manner of its acquisition.” The “conversion experience,” write these two scholars, represented the “principal hinge” upon which the “evangelical scheme” hung, and became a source of ongoing contention between “Calvinists” and “Liberals” who favoured conflicting definitions of the salvation process. William McLoughlin’s study of awakenings and revivals likewise pays significant attention to the “conversion experience.” In his discussion of the “intensely personal” encounter with God that revivalists promoted, McLoughlin briefly notes that Natives, along with “blacks and women” suffered “more tensions” than the rest of society and therefore experienced the “release of conversion” more deeply. Susan Juster’s writing on gender and the evangelical movement also highlights the changing nature of “conversion” in the Awakening period. Arguing that the revivals in New England ushered in a “new morphology of conversion” which transformed a prolonged and lifelong pursuit of God into a moment of divine fusion, Juster contends that the “new birth” reflected both the “new psychology” and individualistic messages of the Awakening period. See Perry Miller and Alan Heimert, eds., *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967), xxvii, xxviii; Heimert, 5, 38, 43-45, 56; McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakening, and Reform*, 65, 75; Juster, 22, 24, 27. 18 For critiques of the conversion model, see Salisbury, “Embracing Ambiguity,” 247-259; Morrison, *Solidarity*, 160-61. For alternative approaches to interpreting Native spiritual and cultural adaptations, see Ronda, “Generations of Faith,” 389-90, 394; Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries*, 12-13, 33-34. 19 *The Christian History...For the year 1744*, 21.
Rather than wholesale cultural change or “conversion,” however, the evangelical revivals offered Algonquian communities a message of salvation and spiritual power that resonated with older understandings of sacred space and worship. Algonquian notions of spiritual power as all-pervasive and present throughout their settlements and lands, for example, complemented evangelical Christian teachings regarding God’s omnipresence and the mysterious and active working of his Holy Spirit. While Kevin Sweeney has suggested that meetinghouses increasingly demarcated “sacred space” in southern New England by the mid-eighteenth century, revival meetings and evangelical gatherings often transcended the boundaries of designated religious sites and buildings. Many of the “New Light” ministers who led the revivals in the early 1740s flouted traditional preaching practices and decorum by addressing their listeners at informal locations such as homes, barns, and fields. In the spring of 1741, for example, Lyme minister Jonathan Parsons preached at an evening meeting at “a private House” in the town, rather than at the meetinghouse. During the informal service, the Holy Spirit visited those gathered together and as Parsons recounted, the “Word fell with great Power on sundry, who were deeply wounded under a Sense of Sin and divine Wrath.”

During his visits to the American colonies, the infamous English itinerant George Whitefield likewise preached in unconventional locations and recorded in his journals the spiritual convictions that came upon those gathered to listen, regardless of the setting. While visiting Rhode Island in September of 1741, the English itinerant spoke at a friend’s house to “more than a

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21 The Christian History…For the year 1744, 106.
thousand [who] were before the Door, besides those that were within, and filled every Room...[and] the Lord assisted me in speaking."22

The “disorderly” preaching and “unconventional” settings that characterized many of the revival meetings in the early 1740s paralleled Algonquian understandings of sacred power as present in their homes and villages and attracted First Peoples to the Gospel message. As Algonquians attended revival meetings held in their villages or nearby towns, many continued to link spiritual power to the spaces where they lived and worked. Listening to sermons preached outdoors or in the crowded confines of a wigwam, the words of life and hope they received became associated with the very grounds where they gathered, and mundane communal sites became places of spiritual encounter and salvation. Throughout the mid-eighteenth century, many Algonquians continued to construct and dwell in multi-family wigwams which in some communities they moved seasonally according to subsistence needs. Wigwams not only provided shelter for kin, places for food preparation and consumption, and space for socializing with relatives and visitors, but also provided inhabitants with space for spiritual encounters and “soul travel” while sleeping. As one colonial observer noted, when Narragansetts suffered a “bad Dreame, which they conceive to be a threatening from God,” they responded by praying in

22 George Whitefield, A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, From a Few Days after his return to Georgia To his Arrival at Falmouth on the 11th of March 1741...The Seventh Journal (London: W. Strahan, 1741), 21, 26-28, 30-31. Ministers and officials who opposed the “revivals” and the unconventional approach of evangelical itinerants made their displeasure known by lodging complaints and forming resolves against such “unruly” practices. In 1742, the Connecticut Assembly passed an Act for regulating abuses and correcting disorders in Ecclesiastical Affairs which prohibited itinerant ministers from preaching and exhorting in the colony’s towns and churches without the express invitation from their standing ministers, and threatened to expel “foreigners or Strangers” who preached without permission as “vagrants.” EA I, 7: 258, CSL.
their dwelling place “at all times of the night, especially early before day.” Sacred rituals linked to marriage ceremonies and the naming of children traditionally occurred within the frame of the wigwam, and home sites continued to serve as primary gathering sites for mundane and spiritual activities.

Building on ancestral practices which linked sacred power and Manitou to their wigwams and village settlements, such places became sites of spiritual encounter where Algonquians saw visions of Christ, underwent a new birth, or joined in singing and praising God. Rather than limiting these spiritual workings to formal structures or Euro-American churches, many Algonquians recognized the power and presence of the Holy Spirit at work in their homes and villages. When New Light ministers visited the Montauketts on eastern Long Island, the Natives often gathered in large and small groups for worship in their wigwams, rather than at neighbouring churches. One report on the efforts of Euro-American ministers to preach at Montauk noted that “many” Natives attended during the gatherings and “have set up the Worship of God in their Wigwaams.” As visiting ministers traveled from wigwam to wigwam to meet with families and larger groups, they found that some Algonquians initiated services without them, and gathered together at their home sites to call on God for his mercy and aid. In the summer of 1741, more than seventy Natives convened for a Christian worship service held in a wigwam at Montauk, and collectively cried out for provision and assistance.

One Montaukett woman assumed a leading role at the gathering and beseeched God

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23 Williams, 107-8.
loudly on behalf of those gathered by expressing her “Love to the dear blessed Lord Jesus” and her “Pity to Christless Sinners.”

Montauketts not only worshipped the Christian God in their wigwams and village, but extended their pursuit of his presence to the meadows, rolling hills, and forests of eastern Long Island. While many Algonquians abandoned their belief in multiple spiritual beings with the adoption of Christianity, they began in turn to attach the spiritual presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the landscape surrounding them. Before accepting Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, for example, one woman living at the Shinnecock settlement searched relentlessly in the village’s wigwams and fields in order to find the power of the God she sought. Rather than visiting a church, or reading or listening to Scripture or missionary teachings, the woman went to specific places in the landscape where she expected, or hoped, to encounter Christ. Another man, who lived west of Montauk, prayed fervently at a worship meeting held at Moriches and addressed his requests for forgiveness and spiritual power to “that God that made the Sea and the dry Land, that made him and all Things.” While recognizing the Christian God’s sovereignty, the man attached God’s creative and sacred power specifically to the waters and landforms that surrounded and made up his home. After receiving comfort and assurance about her salvation in Christ, another Montaukett woman began to beseech some of her friends to consider the eternal destination of their own souls and to seek the new sacred power that surrounded them. Claiming that she had “lost her old heart,” the woman insisted that “God, who lives up high...took it away” and begged her friends “to

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26 *The Christian Monthly History*, No. 5, 41.
27 Ibid., No. 6, 5.
28 Ibid., No. 5, 55.
come to Christ.” According to one missionary’s account, Natives interested in following Jesus Christ often attached his power to a physical location, and inquired of the minister “where they might find him.”29

Once Algonquians found and encountered Christ in their villages, wigwams, and fields, many expressed their allegiance to him by undergoing Christian rites such as baptism. While baptism represented a divisive practice among Protestant denominations before, during, and after the Great Awakening as churches debated the requirements for and significance of the rite, many Algonquian adults and children underwent baptism to affirm their commitment to Christ and to recognize his spiritual power. Families often received baptism together, indicating the importance of kin in decisions and practices of faith, and in some cases the rituals took place at sites within Algonquian communities. Rather than attending neighbouring churches and participating in formal services, some Algonquians chose to receive baptism during revival meetings or when Euro-American ministers visited their villages. On more than one occasion, for example, the Mohegan community called upon the services of New London minister Eliphalet Adams to baptize Native adults and children during his visits to their settlements. When the minister preached to Mohegan villagers in 1743, Elisabeth Garret underwent sprinkling with water as a part of the service, and in the years that followed the Mohegan sachem and other Native parents baptized their children during ministerial calls.30 The Stonington Pequots too incorporated baptism into their worship activities on their reserve, and in at least one case called upon the services of Stonington minister Joseph Fish to perform the rite. In

29 The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 43-44, 53; No. 6, 5.
30 List of baptisms, New London First Congregational Church Records, 1670-1916, Vol. 1, reel 29, CSL.
the spring of 1747, three Native children—Anna, Temperance, and Mercy—belonging to an “Indian woman” named Judah received baptism at a wigwam on the reserve, presumably their mother’s. The details of the ceremony remain unrecorded, but the occasion reveals the ongoing use of wigwams and the larger space of the village for spiritual devotions and sacred rituals.\(^{31}\)

While Christian rites and worship brought spiritual renewal to Algonquian communities, the emphasis that New Lights placed on the work of the Holy Spirit, revelations, and spoken words provided another bridge between evangelical Christianity and Algonquian understandings of the sacred. As First Peoples recognized the presence of the Holy Spirit in the space of their homes and villages, they continued to look towards visions and dreams as sources of spiritual encounter and revelation. One of the central debates among Euro-American religious leaders and laity during the 1740s centred on the role of the Holy Spirit, visions, and “bodily outcries” in the process of salvation and spiritual worship among those awakened and redeemed. While many supporters of the evangelical upsurge defended the unpredictable workings of the Spirit and the unusual manifestations of His presence, “Old Light” clerics and more moderate evangelicals questioned and criticized the emotionalism and visionary practices that often characterized itinerant preaching and in some cases led to church schisms and separations. In 1742, for example, three Connecticut ministers issued a declaration to fellow clerics and believers which cautioned against “Trances, Visions, immediate Revelations [and] extraordinary Impressions…which may be of dangerous Tendency to the Ruin of Souls.” Recognizing that the conviction of sin and the experience of salvation

\(^{31}\) List of baptisms, 1747, North Stonington Congregational Church Records, 1727-1835, reel 245, CSL.
occasioned cries of distress and joy among their parishioners, the ministers insisted that “strict caution” should nonetheless be applied to such practices so as to prevent “impulses on [the] mind” from dictating religious knowledge rather than the Word of God. The same year, ministers from the Hartford area petitioned the General Assembly to complain of the “illiterate” men preaching and causing a great disturbance in their parish. According to the petitioners, these itinerants had created divisions in the neighbourhood and had terrified women and children so that they lost their “rational faculties and use of their limbs.” In response to such complaints, in 1742 the Connecticut Assembly ordered itinerant James Davenport to leave the colony, claiming the preacher had lost the rational faculties of his mind and fallen under “enthusiastical impressions and impulses.”

Defenders of emotionalism and the working of the Spirit, in contrast, pointed to the role of revelations, visions, and bodily responses in bringing sinners to genuine faith in Jesus Christ. Accounts printed in the Christian History frequently described the fainting, outcries, and powerful visions that marked revival meetings as the Holy Spirit revealed himself to the congregants and “wounded” and “pricked” their hearts with spiritual conviction and belief. One article printed in the serial in the summer of 1743 compiled writings from seventeenth and early eighteenth century ministers and religious leaders who condoned visionary encounters with Christ as necessary for true salvation. One part of the article reprinted an excerpt from Thomas White’s 1658 publication The Power of Godliness which described how an Englishwoman, upon her deathbed, received

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32 Declaration of Daniel Humphry, Samuel Cooke, and Joseph Meacham, 1742, WP 742900.2.
33 Petition to Connecticut Assembly, 13 May 1742, EA I, 7: 253.
34 Order of the Connecticut Assembly, 1742, EA I, 7: 256.
a vision of Christ and his love for her which produced a “Fit of sudden, extream, ravishing, unsupportable Joy” and many outcries and exclamations.\textsuperscript{35}

Outcries, dreams, and visions had formed the bedrock of Algonquian spiritual encounters and ceremonies throughout the early colonial period, and such practices remained central to their new faith as Algonquians dreamed of Christ or exhorted by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis that New Lights placed on the “spoken word” and emotional preaching likewise built upon Algonquian traditions of oral knowledge, storytelling, and speech-making through which First Peoples shared and obtained wisdom. As Algonquians attended revival meetings where ministers beseeched them to recognize their sin and need for God’s grace, congregants often responded to their calls with physical gestures, cries, and even visionary experiences. Hearing God’s word preached with emotion and enthusiasm, the spoken messages became for some listeners powerful images and revelations that brought them into contact with God.

When Euro-American ministers preached among the Montauketts during the early 1740s, men and women touched by their teaching often cried out for help or envisioned their salvation. At a gathering in the summer of 1741, one Montaukett woman exhibited significant spiritual awareness as she awaited an encounter with Christ. The woman “had been under great Distress” before the service started and began to “tremble in Prayer-time” and “seemed to be filled with an agonizing Sense of the Hardness of her Heart, and her utter Insufficiency to help herself.” After the visiting minister finished preaching, she “cryed out… ‘Lord Jesus, take away my stony Heart,’” and proceeded to repeat similar

\textsuperscript{35} The Christian History...For the year 1743, 222-23.
exclamations after the service finished.\textsuperscript{36} Several weeks later, a Montaukett man became “deeply wounded” after listening to the Gospel message and “begged over and over, with great Earnestness, that the Lord would open his blind Eyes.”\textsuperscript{37} Visions of Christ and a sense of the Holy Spirit likewise provided Montaukett men and women suffering from disease and poverty with comfort and knowledge of the life to come. When a Montaukett man suffering from a serious illness claimed “he saw Christ,” he trusted that his body would go “to a good Place” and based his redemptive security on his powerful vision that comforted him as he suffered at his home. Confined to his wigwam during a bout of sickness, another Montaukett called upon and trusted in the power of “a crucified Christ” to save him and ultimately heal him.\textsuperscript{38}

While visionary encounters and other Christian rites reinvigorated their spiritual ties to their villages and lands, Algonquians equally participated in the revival meetings and rituals occurring outside of their reserves. Discovering a new spiritual common ground with “awakened” colonial neighbours who received sacred visions or cried out during services too, a number of men and women began to attend local churches and to join Euro-American congregants at Sabbath services and other meetings. Some scholars have emphasized the social levelling and the diminution of cultural and economic barriers that occurred in colonial society during and after the Great Awakening, and have pointed towards the emergence of new bodies of believers comprised of Euro-American, African American, and Native American adherents as evidence. Highlighting the new forms of power that previously marginalized members of society claimed through salvation and a

\textsuperscript{36} The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{37} The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 35.
\textsuperscript{38} The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 51, 60.
direct relationship with God, some historians have suggested that the revivals enabled non-Euro-American men and women to assume new positions and acceptance within churches and wider communities of faith.\(^{39}\) Although other scholars have indicated the limitations of the egalitarian impulses generated by New Light teachings and the persistence of cultural and ethnic hierarchies within churches and wider society, the growing presence of Algonquian worshippers within Euro-American congregations certainly indicates the blurring or blending of spatial and cultural boundaries that occurred.\(^{40}\) Leaving the defined perimeters of their reservations to attend sermons and services in nearby towns, Native believers entered buildings and spaces previously dominated by Euro-American bodies and culture, and brought their own understandings of Christianity to the services.

Attending alongside family members and friends, by the early 1740s several Algonquian men and women had begun to worship alongside non-Native believers and to lift their voices in unison with their colonial neighbours. After several Pequot Christians visited the Narragansett community and “stirred up” many Natives “to seek after eternal life” in 1743, more than sixty men, women, and children from the reserve began attending Joseph Park’s fledgling church in nearby Westerly.\(^{41}\) Park confessed his admiration and

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\(^{41}\) Simmons, “Red Yankees,” 262.
respect for the new congregants who joined his fold, noting that he had “sometimes been ashamed, and even confounded before GOD at myself” when he witnessed the “zeal” of the Narragansetts who joined the church. Participating in singing, exhortation, and prayer alongside non-Native congregants, the Narragansett church-goers frequently exhibited “a sense of divine Things under the Word preached.”

Hearing the Word preached and attending church services offered Native congregants the opportunity to learn and practise aspects of their Christian faith. While several Algonquians “set up the Worship of God in their Families…[and] have frequent private Meetings among themselves for Prayer and Praise” in the wake of the revivals, churches proved equally attractive in drawing Native attendants eager to receive teaching and baptism, or to learn new hymns. Native families and relatives often attended together, and similar to the communal services in their villages, in many cases received baptism together. Several Natives, presumably from the Mashantucket reserve, joined the First Congregational Church in Groton in the early 1740s and proceeded to receive baptism and even attain full membership there. In the fall of 1741, five adults and five children underwent baptism within the church, and six adults received admission to “full communion” as well. Church membership in many Congregational churches involved a public testimony before the congregation in which potential members related their path to salvation and experience of conversion to fellow believers, which granted them access to participate in the Lord’s Supper. Church records for Groton and other churches provide

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42 The Christian History...For the year 1744, 25-26.
43 The Christian History...For the year 1744, 25-26.
44 Groton Congregational Church Records, 1723-1811: First Congregational Church Admissions and Baptisms, 1727-1811, reel 213, CSL.
minimal details regarding such rites or the testimonies that Algonquian men and women would have shared, but their successful admission to membership suggests that Euro-American ministers and churches considered their relations of faith genuine and acceptable to the community.

As church congregations in New London, Lyme, and Westerly grew with new Native adherents, participation in the church body afforded Algonquians the opportunity to learn knowledge and skills to bolster their faith. Growing contact with non-Native believers not only strengthened Algonquian fluency in the English language, but exposed new Christians to scriptural teachings and texts that many could not read. After attending revival meetings and becoming “troubled” in his “mind” in the late 1730s, Mohegan Samson Occom recounted the new sense of urgency with which he attempted to learn the English language and basic literacy skills. Obtaining a primer and attempting to teach himself to read the New Testament, Occom recalled that he “Used to go to my English Neighbours frequently for Assistance in Reading” and that his “Desire Still to Learn to read the Word of God” grew stronger after committing his life to Christ.45 Other Mohegans sought out English assistance as they became interested in the Christian faith, and perhaps like Occom, hoped to obtain a firmer grasp on the language and letters in which the Gospel truths were primarily conveyed. During the 1740s, several Mohegan men and women began attending David Jewett’s Congregational church in New London’s north parish, located on the outskirts of their reserve, and drew upon non-Native instruction and worship to strengthen their own understanding and practices of the faith.46

46 Montville Congregational Church Records (North Parish), 1722-1909, Vol. 3, reel 78, CSL.
Joining in hymn-singing and attending lectures alongside townspeople, the Mohegan congregants gained increasing knowledge of the Word of God as they listened to Jewett preach and participated in the seasons of renewal that occurred within the church.

While church membership and adherence to New Light teachings created new common ground between Algonquian congregants and their colonial neighbours, participation in ecclesiastical bodies exposed many Natives to the complex divisions and debates that the revivals generated. Struggles over preaching styles, the role of the Holy Spirit, and church decorum were not confined to Euro-American ministers and laity alone, but touched Algonquians who joined churches and gathered for Sabbath services too. While many Native men and women embraced the emotional instruction and visionary experiences proclaimed by some New Light itinerants, they confronted criticism and correction from more moderate ministers who labelled such practices as excessive. Finding themselves at odds with the instruction or practices dictated from the pulpit, some Algonquians entered into struggles over spiritual authority and worship in the churches they attended, and ultimately abandoned congregations when their understandings of faith were suppressed or attacked. In some instances such struggles resulted in schisms and the formation of new and separate congregations in which Algonquian Christians assumed new roles as ministers and deacons. Leading their own communities in worship and instruction, the emergence of Algonquian ministers and bodies of worship demonstrated their resistance to Euro-American authority and the limited unity produced by the “new birth” and revival.
The tensions in Joseph Park’s Westerly congregation became increasingly apparent by the mid-1740s.\footnote{Joseph Park was a Harvard graduate sent to minister to Euro-Americans and Native Americans living in the vicinity of Westerly by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (or New England Company) in 1733. Although he preached the sermon at Charles Ninigret’s funeral in 1735, the Narragansetts largely ignored his overtures until 1743. See Love, 190-93; Simmons, “Red Yankees,” 261.} While Park and others had celebrated the surge of Narragansett congregants who joined the church following their “awakening” in 1743, the Natives’ “zeal” which he initially welcomed soon became a source of contention between the minister and the Narragansett flock. As Narragansetts actively participated in Sabbath services at the church, Park and others found their outcries and exhortations during the meetings disruptive and distracting to the conducting of the service, and “dealt with” the chief exhorter, Samuel Niles. Niles had presumably attended the church, along with the other Narragansetts, since the spiritual stir had erupted in their community, and had been baptized by sprinkling along with other Narragansett Christians under Park’s ministry. As one of the sachem’s counsellors and a spiritual leader among the Narragansetts, Niles wielded significant authority within the community and perhaps influenced other men and women to adopt Christianity and to join the church. Before the spread of New Light teachings on the Narragansett reserve, Niles most likely directed ceremonies and rituals at seasonal gatherings, and perhaps was highly regarded for his knowledge and encounters with spiritual beings. After accepting Christian salvation, however, his efforts to relate his own visions and understandings of spiritual things before the Westerly congregation evidently posed a challenge to Park’s authority and notions of decorum. After the
Congregational minister publicly censured Niles for his exhortations, the Narragansett man left the church, along with nearly one hundred Native adherents.  

Many of the Narragansetts who resisted Park’s efforts to rein in and suppress their exhortations and visionary experiences went on to build their own meetinghouse located in the heart of their reserve. Holding their own Sabbath services and meetings there, the new congregation nominated Niles to serve as their minister in the years that followed, and appointed “three Brethren Indians” to ordain the Narragansett leader. Conducting an ordination ceremony that lasted half a day, the Narragansett elders prayed over Niles and “gave him the charge of that Flock: during which such a Spirit was outpoured and fell upon them…that many others of the Congregation prayed aloud and lift[ed] up their hearts with prayers and Tears to God.” Calling out for the Holy Spirit to work in their midst and to draw them closer to God, Niles and his congregation collectively repudiated the efforts of Park and others to quiet their exhortations and to squash their visions. Weeping and beseeching God in their own language to direct and empower them, the Narragansett believers instead demonstrated their vital connection to Christ’s power through emotion, exclamation, and spontaneous revelation. As minister of the new church, Niles went on to lead the Narragansett believers in preaching, communion services, and the rite of baptism, and later extended his spiritual instructions to Algonquian Christians living in the neighbouring communities he visited.  

The Narragansetts’ separation from the Westerly congregation certainly signalled their adherence to more radical aspects of New Light teachings and situated them within a

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larger history of schisms and separations that followed the revivals. Their defiance of Park’s reprimands, however, signalled a challenge to Euro-American authority as well. Rather than submitting to Park’s notion of church discipline and Christian practice and his assertion of spiritual authority over the members of his flock, Niles and his followers insisted on the equal importance of their own spiritual knowledge and direct relationships with God. The conflict at Westerly highlighted the contests over authority that erupted between Native leaders and Euro-American ministers, as Narragansetts such as Niles attempted to incorporate their own spiritual authority and communal leadership into the functioning of the church. When rebuffed for their actions by non-Native ministers and congregants, Native believers left to form their own churches and assumed new roles as ministers and deacons.  

Although Euro-American congregants also abandoned Park’s fold in the mid-1740s—as did laypersons in many other congregations in southern New England during and after the revivals—the efforts of Narragansett believers to form their own body for worship powerfully asserted their sense of communal and spiritual empowerment apart from colonial authority. Disregarding ecclesiastical standards for

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50 At the Mohegan and Niantic communities, Native men also assumed new roles as ministers and deacons, and formed their own assemblies for worship on their reserves. A number of Mohegans who initially attended David Jewett’s Congregational Church in New London’s North Parish became disaffected with the minister when they learned that he supported Connecticut’s claims to their communal lands. By the mid-eighteenth century, Mohegans such as Samuel Ashpo and Henry Quaquaquid had begun preaching and directing worship services within the community. Ashpo, who in the wake of the revivals came under the influence of “lay exhorters” and “received ordination in their way,” briefly abandoned his more radical affiliations to attend Jewett’s church in the early 1760s, but continued to serve as a spiritual leader at Mohegan in the decades that followed the Awakening. At nearby Niantic, Philip Cuish likewise took on the role of minister and preached among his people following the revivals. Pequot minister James Simon also preached and offered spiritual direction to the Narragansetts in Charlestown after many men and women broke away from Joseph Park’s Westerly church. Meeting in a private house on the reserve, Simon led a small group of believers in baptism and communion during the 1740s and early 1750s. See Brooks, The Collected Writings, 13; James Dow McCallum, ed., The Letters of Eleazar Wheelock’s Indians (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1932), 37; Eleazar Wheelock to Gideon Hawley, 10 June 1761, WP 761360.2; Mohegan Tribe to Sir William Johnson, 1764, OP, CHS; Love, 200; Stiles, Literary Diary, vol. 1, 232.
ordination and ministerial training, the Narragansetts instead drew on their own notions of leadership and spiritual encounter to guide their church and Christian practices.

While such divisions tested, and often broke, the new spiritual ties produced during the Awakening, the schisms and contests for authority that the Narragansetts and other Native believers encountered in Euro-American churches formed a small piece of the larger struggles occurring within their communities. In the years surrounding the revivals, Algonquian communities continued to suffer from the interference of overseers, government committees, and other officials who claimed the right to manage their lands and direct their leadership. Such interference not only threatened the protection and viability of Native communities and their reserved lands, but imported new conditions of governance into the fabric of their villages. The struggles for leadership that emerged in Algonquian communities in the 1730s and 1740s reflected the influence of colonial officials in swaying the interests of Native leaders and creating divisions among their supporters. At the Mohegan and Narragansett settlements in particular, disagreements over the sachem’s rule and authority created splits between community members that demonstrated the varying responses of Algonquians to the colonial pressures and cultural adaptations their settlements faced. As some people defended a particular sachem’s authority against the attacks and challenges of kin and neighbours, the resulting splits in villages reflected the tensions and complex struggles which characterized community life by the 1740s.

Such emerging divisions within Native communities also reflected the varying responses of Algonquians to evangelical Christianity and the complex intersection of
politics and faith during the revival years. While many Native men and women attended the revival gatherings and underwent a new birth during the Awakening, Algonquians responses to Christianity most likely included a spectrum of beliefs and practices. Some Native leaders, such as the Narragansett sachems and their families, had affiliated with the Church of England before the Awakening, and maintained their allegiance to “Old Light” teachings and congregations throughout the period of religious renewal. Other men and women exhibited an interest and general acceptance of Christian teachings and perhaps incorporated new beliefs alongside older ones, but decided to not observe Christian practices such as Sabbath observances, communion, or other rites. Some remained resistant to Christianity, and chose to even oppose the New Light ministers who visited their communities during the Awakening. One Montaukett woman, for example, contested the visits of a Euro-American missionary to the Long Island community and discouraged others from attending his sermons, claiming that he brought sickness and death among the people. Even among the many people who adhered to evangelical teachings of the Christian faith, Algonquian believers varied in the weight they placed on visions, the Word of God, the role of the Holy Spirit, and their decisions to attend Euro-American churches or not. Such varied practices and commitments to Christianity spilled into the realm of village governance and communal interactions, as debates over leadership often pitted Christians against each other. Rather than clearly demarcated sides, internal communal struggles reflected the diverse ways in which Algonquians responded to colonial authority and understood spiritual power.\footnote{Some records indicate that not all Algonquians accepted Christianity or abandoned older forms of spiritual worship. One Euro-American missionary observed the presence of “wooden idols” possessed by a}
When the Narragansett Christians who separated from Joseph Park’s church in the mid-1740s formed their own church located on their reserve, their community had in the preceding years become increasingly divided over issues of governance and colonial authority. Following the death of sachem Charles Ninigret in 1735, the Narragansett community split over their decision of the sachem’s successor. While many Narragansetts, along with some Euro-American officials, favoured the choice of Charles’ brother George, a number of Natives opposed his appointment as sachem and insisted that Charles’ infant son, Charles II, should assume leadership of the community. George and Katherine, the mother of Charles II, initially shared leadership and authority in the community, but by the early 1740s their dual governance broke down and George assumed sole control over communal lands. Katherine and Charles II turned to the colonial courts for redress, and in the years that followed launched several suits against the sachem to determine the rightful heir. The testimonies provided by both colonists and Natives in the ensuing legal battle centred around issues of lineage, marital customs, and “royal blood” in determining a Narragansett leader—as deponents largely insisted that Charles II lacked the “royal blood” necessary to be chosen as sachem—and brought to light the infiltration of Euro-American law and authority in shaping and determining Native leadership. The legal battle for the sachemship “was a major loss of power,” one historian recently noted, as “the ultimate arbiters of tribal tradition…had become not tribe members but English courts and politicians.” As Narragansett “traditions” and “customs”

Montaukett woman in the early 1740s, and also mentioned in his journals occasions where Natives opposed his preaching and refused to attend. See The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 39; No. 6, 13.
came under the scrutiny of Euro-American officials, decisions of communal governance fell increasingly into the hands of non-Native authorities. 52

Colonial efforts to encourage and prolong the Narragansett leadership dispute likewise reflected the ongoing efforts of colonists to dispossess the Narragansetts of their communal lands. As legal fees from the suits mounted, members of the Ninigret family turned to the sale of their reserved lands as a means to pay off their debts and to placate their creditors. Historian John Sweet points to the “vested interest” of many Euro-Americans in maintaining the Narragansett dispute as “the need for patronage and the expense of legal fees would keep both sides of the Ninigret family indebted and prompt them to sell land cheaply.” 53 In 1745, George Ninigret petitioned the Rhode Island Assembly to request permission to sell communal lands to offset the debts accrued from the suits in the previous years, and managed to gain the support of his councillors along with a number of “others of his Indians” in taking such a measure. 54 The sachem’s increasingly luxuriant lifestyle, unmentioned in his petition, contributed to his indebted position as well, as members of the Ninigret family had adopted a lifestyle akin to the colonial gentry throughout the period of dispute. A Euro-American traveler who visited the Narragansett reserve in 1744 remarked on his stop at “King George’s house or palace,” and noted that the sachem “lives after the English mode” and possessed a “good stock of horses and other cattle” and had “many tenants” working his thousands of acres

53 Sweet, 32.
54 George Ninigret to Rhode Island Assembly, 1745, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 7, RIHS.
Perhaps the Ningret family’s growing appetite for European material goods stemmed from their attempts to maintain their ruling status by accruing new prestige goods to bestow upon the Natives whose land they sold to pay their debts. Most Narragansetts, in contrast, struggled to subsist on small plots of land for farming, fished in the salt pond on the reserve, and often remained indebted to their Euro-American neighbours.

Many Narragansetts continued to support the leadership of George Ninigret and his succeeding son Thomas during the 1740s, but cracks began to grow in the community as land and resources fell into non-Native hands, and daily survival became increasingly difficult for many Natives. The leadership dispute highlighted not only the growing role of colonial courts and authority in matters of communal governance, but also the varying ways in which the Narragansetts responded to Euro-American culture and new forms of power. Rather than exhibiting a coherent or unified involvement in the New Light revivals, a number of Narragansetts—the sachem included—most likely maintained affiliations with non-evangelical churches and teachings, or perhaps remained distant or aloof from Christianity in general. While the Narragansetts who attended Park’s church, and later formed their own, turned towards the spiritual power of Jesus Christ and the new revelations they received from the Holy Spirit, other Narragansetts, such as the Ninigret family, drew on material forms of power to strengthen their position and align themselves more closely with their wealthy Euro-American counterparts. Although the sachem might have attended revival meetings on the reserve, he and his family remained tied to

the Church of England during the 1740s and likely neglected to join the new congregation formed by Niles and his supporters. In the coming years a number of Narragansetts—particularly those affiliated with Niles’ church—would begin to challenge the sachem’s authority to sell communal lands, but in the years surrounding the Awakening political authority and spiritual affiliations co-existed, perhaps uneasily, on the reserve in Rhode Island.\textsuperscript{56}

As disagreements over the sachem’s leadership fuelled disputes and lawsuits among the Narragansetts, the Mohegan community underwent similar struggles over political leadership and governance. While many Mohegans had embraced Christ’s power and salvation in their families and settlements, they remained torn over the leadership of their community and the authority of colonial officials over their lands. With the appointment of overseers in the preceding decades, the Connecticut government had attempted to strengthen its influence and control over Mohegan leaders, and to encourage their acquiescence with the colony’s claims to their lands. In 1726 the colony announced its “approval” of Ben Uncas II as Mohegan sachem, and by the 1730s government authorities made increasing efforts to sway the Mohegan leader against any Native attempts to reclaim their hunting and planting grounds claimed by Connecticut.\textsuperscript{57}

In 1736, Connecticut Governor Joseph Talcott boasted in a letter to the Governor of

\textsuperscript{56} Narragansett ties to the Church of England began in the 1720s, when sachem Charles Ninigret requested Christian education for his people and set aside land for the construction of a church and for the support of an Anglican minister. A church was subsequently erected near the sachem’s house, and served as a preaching station for James McSparren, who ministered to the Narragansetts infrequently throughout the 1730s and 1740s. In 1745, sachem George Ninigret formally conveyed the land that the church was built upon, with an additional twenty acres as a glebe. Love, 190-91; George Ninigret, Petition to Rhode Island Assembly, 1745, PCRN, MSS 369, Box 1, Folder 7, RIHS.

\textsuperscript{57} Government resolves concerning Mohegan affairs, 1726, IP I, I: 129.
Massachusetts that his government had obtained the sachem’s cooperation and support of the colony, insisting that Ben Uncas “is now in the full possession of the Government” and asserting that the sachem “has the hearts of his people.” Several months later, in seeming support of Talcott’s claim, the Mohegan sachem directed a statement towards the Connecticut Assembly in which he renounced his people’s rights to their contested hunting and planting grounds in the colony, and insisted on his allegiance to the government. When the Mohegan sachem publicly professed his adherence to the Christian faith in the fall of 1736, the Connecticut Assembly responded by bestowing lavish clothing upon the sachem and his wife and celebrating the colony’s first Native leader to accept the faith.

Other Mohegans disagreed with both the colonial government’s interference and the sachem’s actions regarding their lands and communal governance. Challenging the sachem’s growing compliance with colonial interests, in September 1736 several Mohegans, along with a number of Pequot and Niantic supporters, gathered together to hold a “black dance” during which they denounced Ben Uncas as their sachem and declared their allegiance to Mahomet II instead. Mahomet II, who was the great grandson of the former sachem Uncas, had recently travelled to England to petition the Crown to revive the Mohegan’s languishing legal case against the colony that they had initiated at the beginning of the century, and for which they had yet to obtain redress for their lost

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59 Ben Uncas to the Connecticut Assembly, 14 May 1736, WSJP, CHS.
60 *EA I*, 5: 3, CSL. According to Linford Fisher, Ben Uncas II’s “conversion” in 1736 constituted a political act to strengthen ties with the dominant Anglo-American culture. The Mohegan sachem’s decision, Fisher suggests, reflected his pragmatism as well as the complex context of land controversies in which his profession of faith was made. See Fisher, *Traditionary Religion,* 115-32.
lands. In Mahomet’s absence, the Mohegans and several of their Algonquian neighbours gathered together to “establish Anne the daughter of Caesar [a former sachem]…to be their ruler until Mahomet returned, and for him to be chief when he returned; for they entirely denied Ben Uncas to be their Sachem.”

Mahomet died attempting to revive Mohegan land claims in England, but the Crown responded to his petition by establishing another commission in 1738 to hear the unresolved dispute between the Mohegans and the colony of Connecticut. The conflicts over Mohegan leadership, colonial interference, and the protection of communal lands, however, continued to pit people against one another. Before the outbreak of the Awakening, the Mohegan community had geographically separated into two distinct villages located on the west side of the Thames River, known as Ben’s Town and John’s Town (see figure 4). Separated by only half a mile, members of the former village supported Ben Uncas’ ongoing assertions of leadership over the community while inhabitants of the latter village opposed the sachem and insisted that John Uncas should lead the community instead. As a new commission was established by the Crown in 1743 to review Mohegan grievances concerning their lands, the spatial and political divides pitting the Mohegans against each other coincided with the spiritual revivals taking place on and off of their reserve. Far from bringing unity to the community, however, the many Mohegans who adopted New Light teachings and Christian salvation remained divided in their allegiance to the rival leaders. While attending church services together in Montville or gathering for baptismal and worship services in their villages,

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61 Governor and Company, 236.
62 Governor and Company, 12-13; Stiles, Extracts, 117.
Mohegan Christians disagreed over political leadership within their community and associated varyingly with the vying “towns” located in their homelands. Although a number of Native Christians assumed leading roles as counsellors to John Uncas, other prominent New Light believers, such as Samson Occom and Henry Quaquaquid, continued to serve sachem Ben Uncas, despite previously opposing his leadership.63 Facing struggles much different than their Euro-American Christian neighbours, Algonquian believers too encountered the limitations of their Christian faith in resolving disputes over leadership and in generating consensus regarding the best strategy to live on and protect their remaining lands.64

Despite the complex internal divisions within the Mohegan community, they and other Algonquian communities continued to petition colonial authorities for protection of their lands and livelihoods throughout the period of spiritual renewal. For many Algonquians, struggles pitting their communities against encroachers and trespassers continued to pose serious threats to their livelihoods and survival during the revival years. Even as Euro-American ministers and congregants debated and divided over matters of theological belief and practice and became entangled in schisms and separations, Algonquian communities encountered daily abuses and infringements in their homelands that threatened their basic subsistence and rights. Struggling to farm new crops and to adopt new livelihoods as opportunities and spaces for hunting diminished, even these

64 Laura Murray has insightfully noted that in the years following the Awakening, “conflicts at Mohegan were often played out between Christians” and that “political disputes overlapped with intra-Christian ones.” See Murray, “What Did Christianity Do for Joseph Johnson?,” 166-67.
pursuits were threatened by aggressive Euro-American neighbours who rented Native lands and frequently transgressed their designated bounds. Such encroachments not only limited Algonquian subsistence efforts, but also intimidated their communities with physical violence, as non-Native trespassers threatened to beat or imprison villagers. Algonquian communities continued to highlight their grievances to colonial assemblies throughout the 1740s, and to beseech them for intervention and relief.

While grappling with internal divisions over governance and authority, the Mohegans encountered threats of violence as aggressive renters challenged their efforts to
farm their lands. In 1742, the Mohegan sachem granted leases for twenty-year terms to significant portions of their reserved lands to several members of the Harris family, but had stipulated the Mohegans’ rights to mow hay, collect firewood, and harvest fruit from orchards located there. By 1745, however, Ben Uncas and several of his counsellors complained loudly to the Connecticut Assembly concerning their Euro-American tenants’ utter disregard for the Mohegans’ subsistence activities and rights to the land. According to the Mohegans’ petition, James Harris not only prohibited them from fencing land for wheat, keeping cattle, or ploughing land, but he “threatens to send us to prison or sell us to sea if we Do not Intirly submitt to his Goverment which we think is tiranacle if not Diabolical.” Asa Harris’ lease of one hundred acres of Mohegan land came from an agreement “of which none of ye Indeans know any thing,” and the Mohegans insisted that James Harris had falsely informed their overseers that the Natives approved of the agreement.

The petitioners went on to claim that such abuses rendered them “Exceedingly Distressed [and] impoverished and allmost undone.” “We Cannot Go a Hunting because of ye war,” the Mohegans explained to the Assembly, “unless we Joyn with ye Enemies of this Colony which we Cannot Do and have therefore need to improve our Land.” Invoking their loyalty to the English cause as the Anglo-French conflict of King George’s war raged in colonies further north, the petitioners noted that such alliances threatened basic subsistence and produced difficult living conditions within their community. Years earlier, during the colonial conflict known as “Greylock’s War” in the 1720s, Mohegans

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65 Governor and Company, 133, 135-36.
and other Algonquians had similarly faced restrictions on their hunting patterns, despite their loyal service to the English during the war. Prevented from hunting “further...northward than the path leading from Enfield to Woodstock,” colonial officials had likewise required Algonquian leaders to provide lists of their men and encouraged regular check-ins with military authorities. 20 years later, restrictions enforced during another period of military conflict continued to interfere with subsistence. Limited in their hunting, many Mohegan men increasingly participated in farming in their settlements, and yet faced threats and encroachment from Euro-American tenants such as the Harris family. Coupling their pointed references to their loyalty to the English with appeals for practical aid, the petitioners requested the government to “Consider our Case and Grant us Relief in some way.” By mentioning their attempts to build fences, keep livestock, and plant new crops such as wheat, the Mohegans demonstrated their willingness—and the necessity—to incorporate new survival strategies in order to remain on their homelands.

Struggles to obtain basic subsistence marked life on the nearby Stonington reservation through the 1740s as well. While many Pequots joined in revival meetings and played a vital role in visiting and ministering to their neighbouring Algonquian kin, the grim reality of day-to-day survival remained a central concern as Euro-American neighbours forcefully tried to undermine their rights to their lands. In the late 1740s, a petition sent by a number of Pequot men and women to the Connecticut Assembly revealed the extent of hardship the Natives encountered during the Awakening years.

67 Captain John Mason to Deputy-Governor Talcott, 5 October 1724, TP, Vol. 1, 9-10. For more on Greylock’s War, see Brooks, Common Pot, 36-37.
68 IP I, I: 255.
Reminding the government that they had rightfully received a 280-acre tract of land from the colony in 1683, the Pequots contended that the inhabitants of Stonington continually schemed against the Natives and attempted to remove them from their land. According to the petitioners, “sundry persons” had recently taken “advantage of ye Poverty [and] Ignorance of your Memorialists” and “in a great variety of Ways [and] Measures grievously molested [and] interrupted them in their sd. occupation” of their lands. The colonists’ repeated infractions and molestations rendered the Pequots “greatly Distressed” and in “great Measure Destitute of ye Common necessaries of life.”

Two government-appointed committees who visited the Stonington reserve in the months following the petition attempted to adjudicate the “dispute” between the town and the Pequots. Their findings not only confirmed the injustices and abuses that the Natives daily suffered, but also indicated the Pequots’ persistence in struggling against encroachment and claiming the reserve as their own land. In addition to cutting the Pequots’ firewood, allowing their livestock to trample their planting fields, stealing the Pequots’ corn, and threatening violence upon them, the committee members also reported that the inhabitants of Stonington “disputed” that many of the Pequot residents at the Stonington reserve were the “proper Descendants of [the] sd. Momohor” and sought to undermine their rights to the reserve. Undeterred by the colonists’ violent attempts to remove them from their lands, the Pequots responded by throwing down a fence erected by colonists across their lands and by attempting to fence their own fields of beans and corn against the colonists’ “unruly” livestock. In addition to planting corn and beans, several Pequots also began to keep cattle and hogs, most likely in an effort to challenge the “distressing” circumstances that faced their families and community. Struggling to
protect their crops from English thieves and marauding livestock, and to defend their rights to land and residency before colonists who depicted them as illegitimate community-members, the Pequots contended against growing expectations of their extinction and colonial efforts to speed up the process. And yet, in protesting before colonial authorities, knocking down intrusive fences, and building their own fences, the Pequots demonstrated their unwillingness to concede to Euro-American plans for their demise, and their ongoing efforts to plant on and remain connected to their homelands.69

Facing these harsh realities of daily life and survival, some Algonquian petitioners began to explicitly reference their new Christian beliefs in the complaints they presented to government officials. Invoking their efforts to live peaceably on their lands and to lead godly lives, leaders lamented that their efforts to labour, subsist, and worship on their reserves were regularly thwarted by intruders who disregarded their rights and treated them with disdain. Contrasting their own attempts to farm and attend preaching with the ungodly actions of trespassers and encroachers, Algonquian petitioners insisted on the importance of their homelands in living and worshipping together collectively and in maintaining a Christian community. By emphasizing their new Christian identities and their collective attempts to practise their new faith, Algonquian leaders both exposed the immoral behaviour of their Euro-American neighbours and stressed the ongoing communal relationship they shared with their lands.

In the spring of 1741, for example, the Mashantucket Pequots sent a memorial to the Connecticut Assembly outlining their grievances concerning their lands. Highlighting

69 IP I, II: 40, 41, 44.
the colony’s 1732 decision that allowed Groton inhabitants to divide the western half of
Mashantucket into fifty acre lots for the use of their livestock, the petitioners charged that
their neighbours had abused their rights in using the Pequots’ land by setting up farms,
ploughing land, and destroying the Natives’ firewood. According to the 1732 agreement,
the Pequots insisted, the Groton inhabitants had been directed to leave half of the land for
the Pequots’ planting. Instead, the colonists cut the Pequots’ corn stalks before they were
“hard,” and allowed their livestock to trample their crops. Seeking restitution from
colonial authorities, the petitioners went on to link the abuses and encroachment they
suffered to their struggles to live as a Christian community. In requesting that the colony
restore to them the “Improvement of their Land,” the Pequots explained that they would
then “be able to Live near together that they may be able to attend ye preaching of ye
word of God and to have their Children Schooled which tis impossiable to attain to so
long as their Land is taken away from them and they must be obliged to seek habitation
Somewhere Else.” Perhaps referencing their efforts to attend Sabbath services at the
Congregational church in Groton, the Pequots pointed out that without land and
livelihoods, they would be forced to abandon both the congregation and their settlements
at Mashantucket.

Linking the possession and use of their homelands to their ability to practise the
Christian faith, the Pequots emphasized their ongoing desire to live, work, and worship on
their lands as a community. Insisting that encroachment thwarted their faith, the Pequots
implicitly criticized officials who promoted Christianity and “settled” living among the
Natives, and yet turned a blind eye to the suffering and abuses at Mashantucket and
elsewhere. By insisting on their desire to “Live near together,” moreover, the Pequots
challenged colonial efforts to transform reserve lands into private property held severally, and demonstrated the vital intertwining of communal landholding with their Christian faith. While encroachment persisted throughout the rest of the decade, the Pequots doggedly maintained a communal approach to their lands and their faith in the midst of poverty and want.\(^{70}\)

Members of the Niantic community, like the Pequots, explicitly tied their Christian faith and participation in the “revivals” to the struggles they faced in living on their lands. In the spring of 1743, several men from the Niantic community including Baptist minister Philip Cuish (or Occuish) complained to the Connecticut Assembly of the injustices and encroachments they suffered on their reserve. Out of the three hundred acres set aside for the Niantics, the men contended, two hundred acres had been claimed as herbage by their English neighbours at Lyme for their livestock from the early fall to the late spring, which had damaged the land and rendered it nearly “unprofitable” for the Niantics. Adding to their grievances, the Niantics’ remaining one hundred acres of land had been fenced by three colonists who insisted that the Natives could only work the land contained within the fences, “by which means we cut away all our Timber [and] wood that in a Little time we shall not have one sti[c]k of wood to burn and so must Leave our Land to them.” While the Niantics hoped to offset their poverty by “Keep[ing] Some cattle and Sheep and Swine [and] if ye Land was under our Improvement we Could also raise some English Grain,” their attempts to adopt such subsistence patterns had been “forbidden” by the proprietors of the town.\(^{71}\) Lyme minister George Griswold observed

\(^{70}\) Mashantucket Pequots to Connecticut Assembly, IP II, II: 17.

\(^{71}\) Niantic petition to Connecticut Assembly, 1743, IP I, I: 251.
the strain that these encroachments placed on the Niantics, as “the Indians [could not live]…all of them constantly here (they not having a sufficient Quantity of Land to support themselves and Families, but at Times go from us where they can find Work) [and] some of them have joined to other Churches.” Griswold failed to mention, however, that his Euro-American parishioners were responsible for the Niantics’ insufficient land as they continued to encroach on the reserve.

In laying their plea for justice before the colonial assembly, the Niantics asserted their rightful ownership and governance of their reserved lands and boldly criticized their non-Native neighbours who impeded their efforts to live as Christians. While introducing themselves as “poor Ignorant Indians,” the Niantic men went on to complain that “our Guardians are Grown Old and not well able to Defende us and Take Care of our Affairs” and presented their own requests for a resolution to the conflicts. Claiming that “we beli[e]ve the Land and all that Grows upon it is our[s],” the petitioners demonstrated the community’s ongoing ties and connection to the planting grounds, fishing sites, and village settlements that comprised the landscape of their homelands. Perhaps most significantly, the Niantic representatives pointed out that the townspeople of Lyme impeded their attempts “live more like English Christian people.” By limiting the reserved land available for their use, the Niantics contended that encroachers had “forc’t [them] to Ramble abroad and our Children must loose the benefit of a School [and] meetings which ye Commitioners for Indian Affairs in boston have been so kind and charitable as to Setle among us.” While many Niantics had attended revival meetings and embraced a new eternal security in their families and village, their physical survival and

72 The Christian History…For the year 1744, 114.
material sustenance hung in the balance owing to dispossession and encroachment. Without homelands to provide their own sustenance and that of their children, the petitioners would be cut off from the places of worship, the meetings, and the schooling that nurtured their new faith in God. The petition not only forced colonial officials to address the abusive treatment the Natives endured in their rightful homelands by highlighting their efforts to live more like “Christian English people,” but challenged assumptions of Native “savagery” and English “civility” by revealing the inhumane actions of their Euro-American neighbours. Equally as notable, the Niantic petition exposed the hypocrisy of colonial policies that purported to “civilize” and “settle” Native communities on reserves by pointing to the infringements that drove the Niantics to “ramble abroad.”

Several years later, the Niantics continued to battle for their rights in their homelands, despite the unabated abuses they suffered from the townspeople of Lyme. In the spring of 1749, minister Philip Cuish along with several Niantic men presented a petition before the Colonial Assembly emphasizing the ongoing injustices they suffered as they tried to adapt their lifeways on their limited lands. Pointing out that they had originally received their 300 acres of land at Black Point “on account of their Native Right in Some of the lands in this Colony,” the Niantics set their subsequent plea against a backdrop of long-standing rights and dwelling in their homelands in Connecticut.

Going on to explain that their ancestors had granted their English neighbours the right to graze their livestock in the upper two hundred acres of their land, the Niantics

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complained that as they had now begun to keep cattle and pigs themselves, the colonists
denied them the right to use the herbage and impounded their animals. Owing to their
impoverished circumstances and inability to pay the impounding fines, the Niantics
feared that they would be forced to sell or give away the animals the English had
impounded to the “distress of our Selves & families.” The petitioners requested that the
colony appoint a committee to fix the bounds between their lands and those of the English
“so [that] our interests may be wholly severd from theirs.” Like the petition presented in
1743, the Niantics again emphasized their efforts to adopt new lifeways—such as keeping
livestock—and the obstruction they faced from overbearing and greedy English
neighbours. In stating their “Native right” to the lands at Black Point, the Niantics further
asserted their ancestral ties and rights to their homelands, and reaffirmed their
relationship to the landscape as a source of identity and physical and spiritual sustenance.
Both pleas presented before the assembly revealed the struggles and distress that
communities such as the Niantics continued to endure through the 1740s as they struggled
to survive on reduced lands and provide for their families, and their efforts to include new
subsistence practices—whether keeping livestock or growing new crops—in order to
maintain their vital connection to their lands.74

The petitions that Algonquian villagers laid before colonial assemblies
throughout the 1740s demonstrate the vital importance of communal relations to land and
space in Native settlements and spiritual practices. Despite the emphasis that New Lights
placed on individual salvation and new birth, First Peoples clung to the communal
foundation and kin ties that anchored them to their lands and insisted that they must live

74 Niantic petition to Connecticut Assembly, 1749, IP I, II: 17.
“near together” in order to practise their new Christian faith. Drawing on kin networks to spread the new spiritual power that their families and villages embraced during the Awakening, many Algonquians in turn rooted their worship gatherings and new spiritual practices in the wigwams, fields, and wider lands comprising their homelands. Even as internal divisions in some Native communities threatened to undermine their new spiritual unity and efforts towards collective worship, many Algonquian Christians continued to demonstrate the value of communal ties and kin as they worshipped together or petitioned for the protection of their lands.

While the spiritual renewal offered Algonquians a new moral framework to defend their communities and rights in southern New England, the Awakening likewise sparked a growing desire to obtain formal schooling and English literacy. As living near together became increasingly difficult by mid-century, First Peoples began to explore new avenues and use new tools to connect their villages and defend their lands. The Niantics’ 1743 petition suggested that their efforts to live more like the “Christian English people” not only entailed changes in subsistence patterns, but also new notions of power. As Native communities became increasingly exposed to English instruction through their attendance at neighbouring churches and the efforts of local schoolmasters, the ability to read and write became a valued means for strengthening their faith and protecting their lands. Perhaps seeking the knowledge and language to engage and challenge their colonial peers in the intertwined political and spiritual realms, Algonquians began to request formal education in their communities, and to send their children to schools that sprang up in the wake of the revivals. In the coming decades, a growing number of Algonquian children, youth, and adults would attend and even teach at these schools, and
several would obtain the ability to read and even write in English. Far from a tool of
cultural erasure and subjugation, schooling and literacy would enable Algonquians to
challenge their subordination in southern New England, to further promote their rights
before colonial officials, and to renew their ties with other Native peoples. As the
Pequots stated in a 1742 memorial, “we want to learn to read the Bible and to have our
children learn to read it and thereby learn to know more of the Great God and what he
would have us to do in this world.” To the surprise of many colonial officials, in the
coming years, literacy and learning would provide First Peoples with a new power to
defend their territories and maintain kinship ties across the space of their homelands, and
provide a new sacred authority to assert what God would have them do “in this world.”
CHAPTER FOUR

‘To save their substance that they may live together’: Language, Literacy, and Schooling following the Great Awakening

Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. He then said to me: “Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.”

—Ezekiel 2:9-3:4

Several years after the Stonington Pequots made their winter journey to the Narragansett reserve in Charlestown to worship, pray, and exhort their kin, the lands where many of the Narragansetts had received salvation and new spiritual power had come under threat. Whittled away by sales and agreements orchestrated by the Rhode Island government and the Narragansetts’ trustees, by the 1760s many of the Natives’ vital places for farming, fishing, and wood-cutting had fallen into Euro-American hands. Refusing to idly watch their reserve become the domain of neighbouring colonial towns, in December 1767 Narragansett Tobias Shattock wrote a letter of protest on behalf of his community which outlined the Narragansetts’ grievances and impoverished conditions. Directing his missive to a committee of men appointed by the colony to manage and oversee Narragansett lands, Shattock’s letter boldly informed the committee members of his community’s decision “to send me to England for Redress” for the “Injuries, Violations, & Frauds done to the Indians,” which he assessed as “grievous, inhuman & incredible.” By “having our Land Sold from us” over a “course of Years,” Shattock
wrote, his people now lived on the brink of despair, fearing “we must come into Bondage with our Children,” or worse still, endure their “lamentable Cry for want of Bread.” The deplorable conditions and unabated loss of lands that marked the reserve had eroded the very fabric and substance of the community, Shattock insisted, as Narragansett Christians struggled to maintain the “blessed Pr[i]viledge of worshiping God together as a Ch[urch]” and to attend the newly-established school in their settlement in the midst of such destitution.

Despite the Narragansetts’ repeated efforts to obtain redress from the colonial government, Shattock insisted that their pleas had amounted to “little Purpose.” Launching a stinging criticism against the government’s ineffectual policies towards Native lands, Shattock pointed to “certain Gentlemen” who “endeavoured to advance their Interest by the poor Indians” and wrongfully assumed that the Narragansetts’ “extream Poverty” would “prevent their being called into Question.” Informing the committee otherwise, Shattock reminded the officials that the God he served “takes Cognizance of all their doings” and “hates Oppression,” and insisted that God would lead him to “true Friends” in England who would in turn assist him in laying his people’s grievances before the Crown and Privy Council.¹

Using blunt and forward phrases such as “in my Sincere Opinion” and “I would inform You,” Shattock crafted a complaint using the language of his Euro-American oppressors and the format of an epistle to voice the interests and rights of his community upon which officials had repeatedly trampled. The firm strokes with which Shattock

¹ Tobias Shattock, Petition to the Committee Appointed to the Honorable Assembly, 8 December 1767, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 11, RIHS; RCRI, vol. 6, 533.
addressed the letter, issued his complaint, and signed his name graphically illustrated the
new tool of English literacy that many Algonquians adopted in the years following the
revival of evangelical Christianity in southern New England. While Algonquin
individuals and communities had sent complaints and petitions to colonial governments
and officials for decades past, Euro-American interpreters, allies, or overseers had often
mediated their requests both verbally and in writing. Such petitions and records had most
certainly espoused Algonquian interests and grievances, and yet they had also born the
indelible fingerprints—some more obviously than others—of the colonial officials who
had translated and had crafted the writings and requests with often ambiguous and self-
serve motives.2

Shatock’s plea, then, signalled the intertwined efforts of Natives to protect their
lands and their new faith by adopting the language and script of their colonial adversaries.
As Algonquian men and women attended revival meetings and joined neighbouring Euro-
American churches, they came into increasing contact with the English language and the
written texts upon which the Christian faith rested. While visions, prayers, exhortations,
and songs formed the fabric of their new beliefs and practices, many Algonquian
Christians expressed a growing desire to learn to read and write as they struggled to
decipher words in their Bibles or to study new hymns. Drawing on their cursory
knowledge of English gained from the schoolmasters who visited their reserves, Native
leaders began to request the creation of schools in their villages or arranged to send
children to colonial institutions. Insisting, as the Mashantucket Pequots did in 1742, that

2 See for example, David Murray, “Letter of Instruction from Oanhekoe, Sachem of the Mohegan Indians,
Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 21-22.
the ability to read would allow them to know “more of the Great God” and His plans for them, many Algonquians began to view English literacy as a vital tool in gaining spiritual knowledge and practising their faith.

The growth of English literacy within Algonquian communities by the 1750s reflected a broader process of Anglicization occurring within the American colonies throughout the mid-eighteenth century. As Algonquian reserves became increasingly surrounded by Euro-American culture and material goods—which they both adapted and used—the language of their colonial neighbours too became a vital means by which Natives survived and adjusted to their constrained circumstances. In the wake of the revivals, schools aimed at educating Algonquian pupils began to spring up both on and off of their reserves, and reflected the interests and initiatives of ministers and local officials, as well as Native residents. Some Euro-American revivalists, building on the new affiliation of Algonquians with their churches and ministries, perhaps hoped to redress the minimal educational inroads made by their colonial forbears by providing Native adherents with basic Christian training. Unlike the Puritan missionaries of the previous century, however, these ministers stressed the learning of English rather than reading and writing in Algonquian dialects. While New Lights (as well as Old Lights) established schools to fulfill their Christian mandate of “civilizing” and instructing

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Natives according to biblical principles and their own cultural ideals, Algonquians too began to offer informal teaching in their villages, or assumed teaching posts at neighbouring communities. Seeking to educate their children in the language and letters of their colonial neighbours, Algonquian parents and community leaders encouraged a rising generation of children and youth to attain new skills which many of their ancestors had lacked.

As Native students began to learn strange letters and words and to spell in their English primers, they used their new skills to strengthen and protect their communities. Seeking to increase their knowledge of God and His Word, literacy became a means to strengthen kin ties and Christian networks across the bounded space of southern New England. While Algonquian believers continued to travel between their villages and join together in worship services, writing provided a way to send messages to family and neighbours to encourage them in their faith when visits and gatherings proved difficult. Drawing upon their new knowledge of English to craft letters containing advice, local news, and accounts of their spiritual struggles, Algonquians used their literacy to challenge the geographic isolation and restricted mobility engineered by colonial officials and to convey their own relations to land, kin, and space. These written messages expressed in a new way the vital ties that linked Algonquian settlements across the space of their homelands and fostered the growth of a faith community that transcended colonial boundaries.

Building their faith and inter-village networks through the written word, Algonquians drew on new literacy skills to protest the injustices they suffered in their
lands as well. By the 1740s, many Natives had become painfully aware of the power bound up in English writing, and the deceptive ways in which colonial authorities used writing to control their communities and seize their lands. As they battled against encroachment during the revival years, concerns regarding their lands and resources fuelled the efforts of a growing number of Algonquians to attain English literacy. During the Mohegans’ renewed attempts to reclaim their lands from Connecticut, for example, Native men and women witnessed the pivotal role of written deeds and agreements in squashing their efforts to attain justice, and the ways in which colonial officials manipulated their ignorance of the English language to serve their own ends. When Connecticut authorities moved to re-instate the renounced sachem Ben Uncas II to his leadership position in the late 1730s, they had crafted documents which officials deceptively presented to the Mohegans to sign without explaining the content of the agreement.4 As the Mohegans and others watched their homelands come under repeated attacks by encroachers and officials, they turned to literacy as a means to fight back against such frauds and deceit, and to affirm their boundaries and rights to their lands.

Scholars examining the advent of English literacy among Algonquian communities in eighteenth-century southern New England and their attendance at formal

4 With the reopening of the Mason case in the late 1730s, several Mohegans reported that the Governor of Connecticut had tricked them into acknowledging Ben Uncas II as their sachem by having them sign an agreement written in English, the content of which few Mohegans understood. In a declaration drafted in 1738, several Mohegans stated that after renouncing Ben Uncas as their sachem in 1736, Governor Talcott sent a letter to the community which many signed, which effectively reinstated the sachem and enabled him to oppose Mohegan efforts to reclaim communal lands. According to the disgruntled community members, the letter arrived “in a time when we thought ourselves in danger of losing our lives by means of the eastward Indians coming [upon us, and his honour the governor writing a letter to us, we thought nothing more thereby only to give his honour an account of the number of our soldiers.” Governor and Company, 3-9, 218.
schools have recognized the complex ways in which Native students adapted and used their new skills, as well as the prejudice and ethnocentrism they encountered in such contexts. Tracing the emergence of New Light minister Eleazar Wheelock’s ‘Indian Charity School’ in Lebanon, Connecticut during the 1750s—which many Algonquian children and youth attended—several scholars have emphasized the racism and subservience that characterized Wheelock’s relationships with his Native pupils, and the rituals of domination and resistance evident in Wheelock’s correspondence with his students.\(^5\) Highlighting the conditions and constraints under which Natives lived and learned while at Wheelock’s school and other institutions, many historians have pointed towards the tenuous position of literate Natives in colonial society, and the brutal paths of acculturation and adaptation that many tread in order to survive. Suggesting that educated Algonquians occupied a cultural middle ground or grey area between “Indian” and “English” worlds, some scholars have described these Natives as “brokers” or “go-betweens” who straddled a cultural divide through their agency, resistance, and often painful adaptations.\(^6\) While such depictions have insightfully illuminated the tensions

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\(^6\) Margaret Connell Szasz’s earlier scholarship on indigenous schooling and the life of Mohegan Samson Occom, for example, drew on a model of “cultural brokerage” to emphasize the tenuous position of educated, Christian Natives in colonial society. According to Szasz, individuals such as Occom lived in “two worlds”—one “white” and one “Indian”—and moved across a “cultural divide” through their mission activities in the northern colonies. Tammy Schneider’s writing on Mohegan Joseph Johnson and other Native students who attended Moor’s Indian Charity School in Connecticut echoes the interpretation put forth by Szasz by suggesting that Native students remained stuck between two worlds. Describing the struggles of students such as Johnson to “refashion” Christian beliefs in keeping with their Native identity, Schneider concludes that in the end such individuals “were not quite Indian and not quite white.” Hilary
and power struggles involved in colonial schooling and the attainment of English literacy, they tend to limit educated Natives to an intermediary or liminal position within their own communities and the wider colonial world, and to suggest a fundamentally oppositional nature between Native and European cultures.

In an attempt to move beyond the binary depictions of “European” and “Indian” culture that underscore notions of brokerage, a number of scholars have offered alternative approaches to the advent of schooling and English literacy among Natives which highlight the power and complex uses bound up in new languages and forms of knowledge. Several years ago, literary scholar Simon Ortiz disputed the belief that “Indian people [who] have succumbed or become educated into a different linguistic system . . . have forgotten or have been forced to forsake their native selves.” Rather than signifying the loss of cultural authenticity, Ortiz instead argued that Natives adopted new languages—whether Spanish, English, or French—as tools which they used creatively on

their “own terms” and for their “own purposes.” Following Ortiz’ lead, other scholars have more recently argued that Native communities adopted English literacy and other forms of Euro-American culture as innovative tools to protect lands and livelihoods. According to Maureen Konkle, writing offered nineteenth-century Native leaders the means to “preserve their political autonomy,” while Lisa Brooks contends that writing provided “an instrument to reclaim land and reconstruct communities” among Native groups in the colonial northeast. 

Such critical observations invite historians to consider the ways in which Natives such as Shattock used writing and to think carefully about the meaning of schooling and English literacy within Algonquian society. Algonquians who adopted English literacy in the mid-eighteenth century formed part of a longer history of Native education in the northern colonies and a larger trajectory of Native efforts to use practices of literacy in adapting to and resisting colonization. As scholars over the past several decades have aptly demonstrated, Natives living in the praying towns and mission communities of colonial Massachusetts learned new skills of reading and writing in Massachusetts, and

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8 See for example, Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 160; Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 7, 38; Brooks, *Common Pot*, xxii, xxxi, xxxv. See also Lambert, “‘I Saw the Book Talk,’” 186-87, 191. Lambert’s study of African American participation in the Great Awakening similarly argues that reading and English literacy brought power to the slaves who participated in the revivals. According to Lambert, while the “spoken word” and preaching were central to the salvation of enslaved men and women, the ability to read—which many began to learn by the mid-eighteenth century—also contributed to their spiritual transformation and new faith. As African Americans began to form their own churches and to teach each other to read in the aftermath of the revivals, Lambert contends that reading became a “direct avenue” to emancipation for those who suffered enslavement.
later English, for a variety of purposes—whether for crafting petitions, recording land conveyances, establishing wills, or describing their beliefs and faith journeys as Christians. Building on pre-existing forms of communication, oral knowledge, and writing, the types of Native literacy that developed in early colonial New England often complemented Algonquian concepts of communication and reflected the persistence of older modes of knowledge. As David Silverman has recently noted, among the Wampanoags of Martha’s Vineyard “the supposed division between literacy and orality, between written authority and community memory, was far more permeable than many colonists or their historians have presumed.” According to Silverman, “the Wampanoags melded their ways of speaking and remembering with the colonists’ printed word until they had formed a distinctly Indian literacy.”

Shattock’s petition to the committee of Rhode Island officials in 1767, then, represented one plea in a larger body of Native writings articulating Algonquian grievances and interests and demonstrating their “own uses” of literacy. Although English literacy and education certainly served as a “colonial technology” that aimed to

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“re-configure aboriginal cultures and bodies in ways functional for Euramerican imperialism,” the outcomes of schooling and the adoption of literacy in eighteenth-century New England perhaps deserve further consideration. Schools such as Wheelock’s certainly represented colonial efforts to wrest Natives from their communities and remould them into godly and “civilized” individuals, but his school also represented one site—among others—where Natives interacted with each other and adopted new knowledge and skills to strengthen their own communities. As literary scholar Craig Womack argues, Native Americans were not “mere victims” of colonization, but rather “active agents in history, innovators of new ways, of Indian ways, of thinking and being and speaking and authoring in this world created by colonial contact.”

In his overview of the subject, Barry Powell describes writing as one of the most important technologies in human history which serves as a “lens through which literate peoples see the world, feel the world, . . . defy the world, and imagine change.”

By learning to speak, read, and write using alphabetic signs and words that symbolized the English language, Algonquians effectively added a new “lens” to their repertoire of knowledge through which they could see, understand, and criticize the colonial world in which they lived. Writing offered them an innovative way to articulate

11 Craig Womack, Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 6. Other scholars echo Womack’s arguments for recognizing the innovative (and long-standing) uses of literacy within Native communities and the concerns Natives have articulated through written forms. As Robert Warrior has insightfully noted, Native writings are “part of larger processes of social and political engagement, and they are processes that Native people experience.” See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 28; Warrior, The People and the Word, xxix.
and define their relationships to kin and place that colonial officials sought to erase, and
to graphically criticize and challenge the ongoing efforts of authorities to dispossess them
from their homelands. Adopting English literacy alongside new Christian beliefs and
practices, reading and writing also provided Native believers with a new means to tap into
spiritual power, and new tools to articulate their faith journeys and to question the unjust
and immoral actions of their so-called Christian neighbours. By attending schools and
adopting English literacy, Algonquians engaged in processes that allowed them to tell
their “own stories” for their “own purposes” and to preserve their relationships to both
land and people.

Years before crafting his letter to Rhode Island officials, Shattock’s education,
like that of many Algonquin children, most likely began in the wigwam of his parents on
the Narragansett reserve. Aiding his mother with food preparation and household tasks as
a child, as he grew older Shattock and his brothers would have learned how to fish and
perhaps farm alongside their father, as Native men increasingly took up livestock keeping
and farming as hunting declined. Shattock might also have attended local schools located
on the reserve. In the 1730s and early 1740s, Westerly minister Joseph Park offered
formal education to the Narragansetts, and some Narragansetts themselves attempted to
extend their growing knowledge of English to neighbours and kin. While Park’s school
floundered after his Narragansett congregants abandoned his church, Native men and
women continued their efforts to pass on new instruction until another formal school was
established in the community in 1765. In the years following the spiritual stir on the
reserve, for example, a Narragansett woman began teaching Native children in her
wigwam how to read and spell, and perhaps Shattock was among the children who attained a basic knowledge of English through her efforts.¹³

Algonquians at neighbouring communities too exerted efforts to pass on their knowledge of English to children and kin, after struggling to learn the language themselves. Mohegan Samuel Ashpo, for example, taught at the Mashantucket Pequot community in Connecticut throughout the 1750s and offered instruction in reading to his Native pupils. Ashpo, who himself learned to read during the 1730s through the efforts of local ministers and teachers such as Jonathan Barber, used his knowledge of English to teach as well as to interpret, and served as an interpreter for the colonial government in the late 1750s. Not only a spiritual leader within the Mohegan community, Ashpo’s teaching efforts strengthened the kin and cultural ties that connected Algonquian communities by working with and living among his Pequot students.¹⁴ After Ashpo left the school at Mashantucket in 1757, Pequot Samson Wobi (or Wauby) filled his position as teacher and continued the pattern of Native leadership and authority at the school, and later taught among the Pequots living at Stonington, Connecticut.¹⁵


¹⁴ McCallum, Letters, 33; Love, 75-76.

¹⁵ Jacob Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 3 February 1757, WP 757153; Eleazar Wheelock to Andrew Oliver, 3 December 1760, WP 760653.
Mohegan Samson Occom’s efforts towards self-education and teaching at Montauk similarly reflected the efforts of Algonquians to attain literacy and offer instruction at neighbouring communities. In the years following his community’s failed efforts to regain communal lands claimed by Connecticut, Occom recounted that he began to “Learn the English Letters” and obtained a primer for the purpose. Having witnessed the pivotal role of writing and record-keeping in defeating Mohegan land claims, Occom and other Mohegans set about learning the words and symbols that the colonists used to dispossess them of their homelands. Occom’s desire to learn to read equally stemmed from the spiritual awakening he underwent during the revival years, as his “troubled” spiritual state propelled him to seek the instruction of his “English Neighbours” in reading, which in turn perhaps contributed to his acceptance of salvation several months later. By the early 1740s Occom expressed his intertwined desires to “Learn to read the Word of god” and to instruct his community, recalling, “I usd to wish, I was Capable of Instructing my poor Kindred, I use to think if I Coud once Learn to Read I Woud Instruct poor Children in Reading.”  

After hearing that New Light minister Eleazar Wheelock instructed English students at his home in Lebanon, Occom expressed a “great Inclination” to obtain further learning and his mother, Sarah, arranged for her son to live with and learn under the minister—an arrangement which lasted four years.

While Occom’s failing eye sight hindered his plans to attend Yale College, he remained determined to pass along his literacy skills and training to his kin and neighbouring Algonquian communities. After leaving Wheelock’s house in 1747, Occom

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recounted that he “endeavourd to find Some Employ among the Indians, [and] went to Nahantuck, thinking they may Want a School Master, but they [had] one; then went to Naroganset . . . and went back to Mohegan.” Joining a “number of our Indians” who were travelling to Montauk, Long Island, upon arrival Occom found that members of the Montaukett community “were very desirous to have me keep a School amongst them, and I Consented.” While Occom eventually received meagre funding from missionary societies, his initial support as a schoolmaster flowed from Algonquian notions of hospitality and reciprocity, as the Montauketts “took turns to Provide Food” for him.  

Before Occom took up his teaching post at Montauk in 1749, Native men and women on Long Island had endeavoured to learn English and to obtain instruction from missionaries and Euro-American neighbours. While many continued to converse, worship, and pray in Algonquian, Montaukett adults and children also began to seek out instruction in English, and to teach their family and friends what they learned. Similar to Occom, a number of Montauketts who accepted the Christian faith during the Awakening sought to gain spiritual knowledge by learning how to read. In the revival years missionary Azariah Horton noted the “remarkable Forwardness in old and young to learn to read, especially in the Children,” and recorded the efforts taken by Natives to obtain his instruction when he preached and visited. Algonquians not only sought out Horton’s assistance in learning to read, but also made efforts to pass on their new knowledge to their families and communities. By the winter of 1743, three children living at the village

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17 Occom, “Autobiographical Narrative,” in The Collected Writings, 54-55. Occom became integrated into the Montaukett community through his marriage to Mary Fowler, as well as through the various positions he filled as both a teacher and minister.
18 The Christian Monthly History, No. 5, 37.
of Quaog possessed the ability to repeat part of the catechism, to spell in the psalter, and to recite several Psalms. The children had obtained their learning from their mother, who could “read well, and is painful, after her Capacity, in giving Instructions to her Children.” While this woman instructed her children in new words and forms of communication, she most likely taught them in the setting of the family wigwam and upheld her role in child-rearing as she introduced new survival skills to her children. Several months later, Horton observed that this Algonquian woman had expanded her teaching responsibilities to include all of the children living in the community who were interested in learning to read.19

While initial training in spelling and reading often came at the hands of parents, relatives, or Native teachers, Algonquians turned towards Euro-American schools for further education. After New Light minister Eleazar Wheelock founded Moor’s Indian Charity School in Lebanon, Connecticut in 1754, a growing number of Algonquian boys and girls from neighbouring communities began to board and learn under the roof of the school. Wheelock had been heavily involved in the revivals in the preceding years, and had itinerated at nearby towns where he called his listeners to salvation and a new birth in Christ. While preaching in Wethersfield, Connecticut in January of 1742, for example, Wheelock had led many of his listeners to a “wounding” encounter with God, which caused “groans” and “outcries,” particularly among the African Americans in attendance.20 As one historian of the Great Awakening noted, Wheelock joined the ranks of other New Light ministers who travelled to other parishes to preach and “were often

20 Eleazar Wheelock to Daniel Rogers, January 1742, WP 742118.
charged with neglecting their responsibilities while infringing on those of others.”

Although in subsequent years Wheelock distanced himself from the actions of the more radical proponents of the revivals—notably his brother-in-law, James Davenport—and re-anchored himself to his Lebanon congregation, his efforts to preach on the new birth and regeneration touched many souls in Connecticut and beyond. 21

In the years following the revivals, Wheelock increasingly turned his New Light convictions towards the instruction of Algonquian students. While the establishment of his school by the 1750s reflected the wider efforts of missionaries and ministers to offer training and spiritual instruction to Natives, Wheelock’s initial plan for the school most likely stemmed from his own training of Mohegan Samson Occom. After the Mohegan youth successfully learned under the minister—of his own volition—for four years in the 1740s, Wheelock perhaps envisioned Occom as the first of several Native students who could benefit from training in classical languages, Christian piety, and other aspects of “civilization.” The scholastic regimen that Wheelock subsequently designed for the school reflected the ethnocentric ideals and prejudicial attitudes of the wider society in which he lived. While hoping to offer his students training in Scripture, prayer, and recitation, Wheelock’s plans to remove them from the “pagan” and “savage” influences of their communities stood at odds with the efforts of Algonquian men and women to root their instruction in the wigwams and communal spaces of their villages. Wheelock’s program instead encouraged Native boys to learn farming, in addition to their training in language and religion, while Native girls learned domestic skills in homes that

neighboured the school. Drawing in Native students from Algonquian communities in southern New England and New Jersey, and from Haudenosaunee settlements in New York, Wheelock hoped his educational regimen would not only render his pupils literate in English and classical languages, but eventually prepare some of them to serve as teachers and missionaries among the Six Nations and other “western tribes.”

Expecting his Algonquian students to return to their reserve communities as beacons of cultural and spiritual light, Wheelock’s school signalled the ongoing struggles for authority that pitted Algonquian Christians against Euro-American New Lights, and Natives against the larger colonial society in which they lived. While some of the Algonquian pupils who entered Wheelock’s doors shared his evangelical convictions, or came from communities where parents and kin embraced Christian teachings and salvation, such common practices of faith ran aground on the basic cultural differences that the minister planned to eradicate. In a series of “narratives” he published to solicit funds for the school, Wheelock lauded the laborious spiritual and practical regimen he engineered in order to “cure” his students of their “savage and sordid Practices” and to “form their Minds and Manners to proper Rules of Virtue, Decency and Humanity.”

Instructing his pupils in reading, writing, prayer, as well as farming and the “Arts of good Housewifery,” Wheelock boasted of the Native boys and girls who had “put off the Indian & appear Seriously thoughtful about their Eternal Salvation.”

Rather than appreciating Algonquian understandings of the faith or their cultural practices which

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24 Eleazar Wheelock to Andrew Oliver, 29 May 1760, WP 760329.
complemented evangelical Christianity, Wheelock instead aligned his educational goals with both his Puritan predecessors and evangelical contemporaries who similarly tied the practise of Christianity to the material and immaterial components of Euro-American culture which comprised “civilization.”

Despite the ethnocentrism and cultural abuse that Algonquian pupils encountered in Wheelock’s school, many looked to the training he offered as a means to hone their English literacy. By the 1760s, a number of Mohegan, Narragansett, Montaukett, and Pequot students, among others, entered the doors of Moor’s Indian Charity School in order to build upon the educational foundation provided by parents and peers. While Wheelock envisioned his school as a place to “purge” the “Indian” culture from his pupils, students often renewed and created kin ties and friendships through their attendance at the school and used their newfound English literacy to strengthen their connections to other Algonquians and to their lands. A number of students, for example, attended the school alongside their family members, who perhaps offered support and

25 In the late 1730s, for example, Anglo-American missionary John Sergeant founded the town of Stockbridge in the Housatonic Valley and established a school for the community’s Mohican children with the express goal of changing their “whole Habit of thinking and acting; and rais[ing] them, as far as possible, into the Condition of a civil industrious and polish’d People.” At the heart of his program, Sergeant planned to “introduce the English Language among them instead of their own imperfect and barbarous Dialect,” which would complement his equally arrogant goal of “root[ing] out their vicious Habits” and changing “their whole Way of Living.” John Sergeant, A Letter From the Revd. Mr. Sergeant Of Stockbridge, To Dr. Colman Of Boston (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), 3–5; Kellaway, 270-73. For an insightful comparison of the Mohican mission communities at Stockbridge, Massachusetts and Shekomeko, New York, see Wheeler, To Live Upon Hope. Wheeler emphasizes the varying approaches of English Congregationalists and German Moravians in Christianizing their Mohican adherents, and the importance that Congregational missionaries at Stockbridge placed on education, “civilization,” and literacy that was largely absent at the Moravian missions. For more on the Puritan missionaries and their efforts to intertwine “civilization” with Christianity, see Neal Salisbury, “Red Puritans: The ‘Praying Indians’ of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot,” The William and Mary Quarterly 31, no. 1 (1974), 27-54; Axtell, The Invasion Within, 167-178; Van Lonkhuyzen, 396-428, Richard Cogley, John Eliot’s Mission to the Indians before King Philip’s War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6, 9.

26 Szasz, Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans, 141-42.
encouragement in an environment hostile to their cultural backgrounds. Two of the earliest students at the school, Jacob and Joseph Woolley, were cousins who grew up together in the same Delaware community. Joining the school in 1754 and 1757 respectively, their overlapping experiences at Moor’s perhaps enabled them to converse in their own Algonquian dialect outside of class time, or to reminisce together about their village and family members during bouts of homesickness. After attending the Montauk schoolhouse run by their brother-in-law Samson Occom, Montaukett brothers David and Jacob Fowler too received training together at Wheelock’s school. While David started his educational stint in Lebanon two years earlier than Jacob, the brothers’ shared time at the school most likely provided them with encouragement and camaraderie during their absence from home. Mohegan cousins Aaron Occom and Sarah Wyog (or Wyacks) likewise attended Moor’s together for varying stints, along with Mohegan siblings Joseph and Amy Johnson, while Narragansett brothers John and Tobias Shattock, accompanied by Tobias’ wife and child, travelled together from their Rhode Island community in order to improve their proficiency in English at the school.27

Students not only drew upon kin networks and the presence of relatives to survive their time at Moor’s, but forged new ties with fellow pupils from other communities and kin networks. By the 1760s, Algonquians from settlements in southern New England attended lessons alongside Delaware youths from New Jersey, as well as a number boys and girls from Mohawk and Oneida communities in Iroquoia. Building friendships based on their shared learning, recreation, and trials while at Moor’s, these new relationships fostered a broadening sense of place that went beyond the confines of the school in

27 Eleazar Wheelock, list of charity scholars 1754-1765, WP 765690; McCallum, 295.
Lebanon. As Mohegan and Montaukett students came into contact with the languages and customs of their Delaware and Haudenosaunee peers, they in turn made efforts to incorporate their new classmates into the kin networks of their villages in New England. The resulting friendships created new ties linking Algonquian communities to Haudenosaunee and Delaware ones, and perhaps a shared sense of mistreatment and subjugation, as they together struggled to learn apart from their parents, home sites, and villages.

Living under the strains and tensions that marked life at Wheelock’s school, Native students often travelled to other places—whether home villages, nearby taverns, or other sites—to find relief from the oppressive atmosphere and to visit family and friends. Delaware students Jacob and Joseph Woolley, for example, who grew up in homelands in the Hudson River Valley and present-day New Jersey, established ties with the surrounding Algonquian communities during their tenure at the school. In 1761, Joseph directed a letter to Wheelock in which he requested permission to visit a friend at Mohegan, and from there to travel to Lyme, presumably to visit another friend or acquaintance living at the nearby Niantic settlement. Mohegans Joseph Johnson, Aaron Occom, and Isaiah Uncas all attended Moor’s alongside Woolley, and perhaps befriended the Delaware student and invited him to their community as a break from Wheelock’s instruction. Woolley’s request not only emphasized that his Mohegan and Niantic friends expected him to visit soon, but that his visit would provide consolation and companionship in the midst of his homesickness: “it may be by that means my mind
Despite having spent four years living at the school, Joseph’s letter expressed the poignant homesickness that continued to attach his mind and heart to the kin, lands, and places where he grew up. While his new friendships with fellow students and with members of neighbouring Algonquian communities could not fully ameliorate the pangs he felt for home, Joseph’s visits to the Mohegan and Niantic communities most certainly created a sense of belonging and at least partly drew him into a network of relations that transcended Wheelock’s school.

Joseph’s cousin, Jacob, too forged new friendships and connections with Algonquian students who attended Moor’s, and likewise drew on these relationships to integrate himself into their kin networks in southern New England. After graduating from Moor’s in 1759, Jacob received further training at the College of New Jersey, which he attended for several years before being dismissed in 1762 for allegedly neglecting his studies. While he briefly returned to Wheelock’s school following the dismissal, after a bout of harsh physical discipline from Wheelock’s hand the Delaware youth fled to the Pequot settlement in Stonington where he lived for several months. Like his cousin, Jacob drew on relationships that stretched beyond the confines of Wheelock’s school and enabled him to obtain shelter and communal support apart from Wheelock’s questionable provision and abuse.

The friendships that developed among Native pupils at Moor’s generated opportunities to resist and challenge the minister’s spiritual and spatial authority as well.

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28 Joseph Woolley to Eleazar Wheelock, 2 November 1761, WP 761602.1.
29 Joseph Fish to Eleazar Wheelock, 9 December 1763, WP 763659; Eleazar Wheelock to Joseph Fish, 16 December 1763, WP 763666.2; Joseph Fish to Eleazar Wheelock, 20 January 1764, WP 764120.2.
Instead of “purging” the “Indian” out of the boys and girls who learned in his classroom and severing their ties with Native family and friends, the school became a site which strengthened already existing cross-communal networks through the relationships shared between students. Wheelock’s extensive correspondence contains several “confessions” from Native students, in many cases written by Wheelock himself, which outline the “misbehaviour” and sinful activities in which students participated, often beyond the bounds of the school. In one such incident, Mohegans Hannah Nonesuch and Sarah Weags (Wyacks), along with Narragansett Mary Secutor and several other boys and girls allegedly participated in a “frolick” at a local tavern, which involved drinking and dancing as well as “rude conduct.” As Nonesuch’s “confession” related, she and other “Indian boys & girls” had tarried in a local tavern “to an unseasonable time of night” where there was “much spirituous liquor drank, & much dancing & rude conduct.” Flouting Wheelock’s educational program that stressed order, sobriety, and godliness, the evening out from the school demonstrated the kin networks and friendships that continued to operate both within and outside of the school, and one of several “other spaces” in which Algonquians joined together to dance, celebrate, and converse. Perhaps demonstrating the painful adjustments and cultural belittling which Algonquian students suffered at Wheelock’s school as well, Native youth resisted the minister’s efforts to reorder their lives by moving to other spaces for socialization and turning to activities such as drinking to find relief from oppression or to assert their own choices.30

30 Confession of Hannah Nonsuch, 11 March 1768, WP 768211.1; Confession of Mary Secutor, 11 March 1768, WP 768211.2.
Learning in an atmosphere marked by submission and surveillance, Native pupils struggled against Wheelock’s efforts to remake and reform their beliefs and behaviour, and often acquired their knowledge of the alphabet in a setting characterized by racism and a demoralized sense of identity. As Hilary Wyss has recently noted, “writing was intimately connected to Wheelock’s disciplinary system” as the minister “monitored his students, controlled their actions, and demanded that they reconceptualize their thoughts and deeds in terms of sin and damnation” through signed confessions and other written records.\footnote{Hilary Wyss, “Writing Back to Wheelock: One Young Woman’s Response to Colonial Christianity,” in \textit{Early Native Literacies}, 99.} Despite the attempts of colonial officials to impart particular uses of English literacy to Algonquian students who attended Wheelock’s school or other local institutions, Native men and women invested their own meanings and understanding of power in the tool of literacy. Such meanings largely extended beyond the control and approval of their instructors and benefactors, and often intertwined Algonquian traditions of knowledge and communication with English symbols and forms. Perhaps more than becoming “brokers” or cultural “go-betweens,” Algonquians who became literate in English also renewed ties to both kin and their lands by using new methods and means of writing. By recognizing both the practical purposes and the dynamic cultural layers that their writings reflected, scholars can instead begin to see Native men and women as members of families and communities who struggled to work out their Christian faith and their rights to land by drawing on a new source of power.

Historians have referred to eighteenth-century colonial America as a “republic of letters” owing to the remarkable growth in public and private correspondence during this
period. In the decades following the Great Awakening in New England, itinerant ministers increasingly relied upon letters to communicate news of revivals and salvation, while individual believers corresponded to spur one another on in their faith. According to Joanna Brooks, “reading and writing personal letters assumed new value as a way for even geographically isolated Americans to cultivate a shared sense of social belonging.”

For Algonquian men and women who became literate in English, letter-writing offered a similar means to communicate with family and friends across the largely isolating landscape of colonial New England. Written messages were often delivered by kin and involved face-to-face interactions and oral accounts as well. Letters written by Algonquians alluded to these interactions, as writers made reference to “hearing” or learning about family news by word of mouth. Algonquians wrote letters for a variety of reasons, whether to share news, seek advice, request favours, plan visits, or share their spiritual struggles as Christians. Noticeably absent from the letters exchanged between Natives, however, were matters relating to tribal politics and communal struggles.

Brooks has insightfully suggested that the near absence of political references and discussions from Algonquian correspondence indicates a continued observance of political protocols that involved face-to-face meetings between community members, as

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well as the hesitancy of Algonquians to put into writing information and decisions that they wanted protect from colonial officials.³³

The letters that have survived over the centuries since pen was first put to paper, however, clearly reveal the vital webs that continued to bind Algonquian families and communities together across the landscape of southern New England, and hint towards the ongoing rhythms, knowledge, practices, and relationships that tied Natives to their homelands. Using letters to convey news of harvests, family life, or their spiritual journeys, Algonquian scribes implicitly asserted their rootedness and rights to their lands in New England. A letter sent by Niantic William Sobuck to his cousin Samson Occom in 1757 while Occom was teaching at Montauk, for example, conveyed important information concerning Sobuck’s family and his upcoming travels. At the time that Sobuck crafted his letter, his son Enoch was living with Occom on Long Island and attending the school at Montauk, alongside Montaukett and Shinnecock pupils. Sobuck’s letter not only served to relay information to his cousin regarding the family—“we are all well Through Divine Providence”—but also to request that Occom send Enoch home to Niantic, in southern Connecticut, for a visit at “the first Oppertunity.” Sobuck planned to accompany his son back to the island the following month, which would allow him an occasion to visit Occom, and notified his cousin that he “would not have him [Enoch] bring all his Cloaths with him for I Expect to Come over here my Self.”³⁴

³³ Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 63-64.
³⁴ William Sobuck to Samson Occom, 12 September 1757, WP 757512.
through which Algonquian kin and communities remained interconnected. While Sobuck himself planned to make the journey across Long Island Sound to see Occom and the school, in the interim he crafted a written message to alert his cousin of his plans and to orchestrate his son’s trip home.

Occom likewise wrote extensive letters to family and friends as well as non-Native acquaintances, and sent information conveyed in epistles when face-to-face conversations were not possible. After leaving on a journey to central New York in the summer of 1763, Occom sent a hastily scrawled missive to his wife Mary, living at Montauk, which included brief instructions regarding the upcoming harvest as well as professing his devotion to her as a husband. While several words in the letter are illegible, Occom’s brief message signalled the subsistence patterns that underscored life at Montauk, and the faith that he and others placed in God to sustain them and provide in the midst of growing impoverishment. Reminding his wife that “as soon as grass is fit” she should “hire hands” to cut “5 loads of hay,” Occom informed Mary that he had left money for the family and that they should trust in God during his absence. While living at Montauk, the Occoms owned a horse and cow, and also kept five pigs to sustain their large family, and planted crops of corn, beans, potatoes, and other vegetables. A number of Montauketts had begun to keep livestock earlier in the century, as opportunities for hunting declined with colonial settlement, but authorities at East Hampton restricted the community’s holdings. As Occom, his wife, and other Montauketts adjusted to the constraints of limited lands and livelihoods, men began to

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35 Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 70.
farm alongside their fishing and whaling activities, while men and women together crafted items for sale in local markets.

The hay Samson reminded his wife to have cut would have been crucial to their livestock over the winter months, and needed to be cut before the Montaukett community relocated from their planting fields east of Lake Montauk to the “North Neck.” Alongside other Montauketts, the Occom family seasonally removed their wigwam from their summer planting fields to a more heavily forested area from which the community obtained their wood. Occom concluded his letter by encouraging his wife to “Remember God and trust in him at all times.” Following on the heels of his directions regarding harvest, Occom’s invocation to trust in a greater spiritual force linked the family’s material provision to spiritual power and indicated that, for Christians such as Occom, their faith remained intertwined with the physical places and lands that sustained them.37

While providing kin with news and instructions, Algonquians used letter-writing to explicitly seek advice and work out spiritual struggles as Christians. In the late summer of 1763, Sarah Wyacks wrote a letter to her brother, Samson Occom, in which she shared her spiritual burdens regarding her own Christian faith and that of her mother. Like the letter that Occom sent to Mary earlier in the summer, Sarah’s writing reveals the seasonal rhythms that rooted Mohegans to the fields and forests where she lived, and the subsistence patterns that marked the passing of a year. Welcoming Occom back from his trip to New York, Sarah quickly looked ahead to the possibility that her brother and his family might move from Montauk to Mohegan, writing, “Mother say’s if you intend to

37 Brooks, Collected Writings, 70.
come over and live, to come over in season in sowing time & getting hay.” Informing Samson that their brother, Jonathan, who had been struggling with a prolonged bout of illness but had recently improved and now could walk with less difficulty, Sarah went on to request Samson’s prayers for their family. Desiring her brother to provide her with “some good wholesome councils & advices,” Sarah shared that she had “been much troubled last springe in [my] mind, as to my spiritual state but [it] is a little easier, [but] my Burden is not quit[e] removed” and asked Samson for earnest prayers at the “Throne of Grace.”

Hoping that she would be able to “bear up under my afflictions,” Sarah confessed that she felt “much troubled as to mothers condition” and worried because “she dont goe to meeting as formerly.” Sarah and Samson’s mother, Sarah, had joined the Congregational Church in New London’s north parish near Mohegan sometime after 1739, but likely abandoned the congregation as did several other Mohegans after the church’s minister, David Jewett, expressed his support of Connecticut’s claims to Mohegan lands. Sarah’s letter to her brother provides a window into the faith journey and struggles of Algonquian believers, and her own efforts to seek “councils & advices” through written correspondence to a sibling and a spiritual leader. Far from unwavering, Sarah’s faith as a Mohegan Christian underwent testing through family separations and sickness, communal struggles, and colonial dispossession, among other trials, any of which could have been the source of her “trouble” of mind. While the particular “afflictions” for which Sarah requested prayers remain opaque, her use of letter-writing to gain spiritual advice and prayer from her brother reveals the power bound up in the
process of writing, and the vital ways in which Algonquians used literacy to sustain kin
ties and Christian networks.38

As Algonquians drew upon new literacy skills for communication and spiritual
encouragement, they too employed writing as a tool to request favours or protest
mistreatment by non-Native benefactors. In particular, Algonquian parents and students
affiliated with Wheelock’s school directed letters to the minister in which they requested
education for themselves or their family members, inquired about the progress of
children, or questioned the educational regimen under which the students worked. Using
letters as a vehicle through which they could assert their own voices, opinions, and
knowledge against that of Wheelock, Algonquians in some cases proposed alternative
“designs” for their children’s future or their own future that often stood at odds with
Wheelock’s. In the fall of 1767, for example, Narragansett John Daniel sent a letter to
Wheelock regarding his son’s training at the school. Daniel had enrolled his son, Charles,
at Moor’s in 1765, and as his letter outlined, his “Chief motive” in enlisting Charles had
been to “advance [him] in Christian Knowledge,” and “not to learn . . . [him] how to
Farm.” Questioning the amount of labour his son, along with the other students,
performed for Wheelock, Daniel pointedly stated that he did not “consent” to a program
in which his son had spent most of the past two years farming, especially when “I can as
well learn him that myself and have ye prophet of his Labour, being myself bro’t up with
ye best of Farmers.” Daniel went on to suggest a desirable solution to the problem,
concluding that he was “willing he [Charles] shou’d continue with You two or three years
longer to be kept to School.” While no written response from Wheelock exists in the

38 Sarah Wyacks to Samson Occom, 2 August 1763, OP, CHS.
minister’s extant correspondence and records, by the end of the year Daniel had removed his son from Moor’s, suggesting that Wheelock either disputed or ignored the counsel he received from the Narragansett man.\(^3\)

Such efforts to challenge Wheelock’s wisdom and authority were not singular, as other Algonquians wrote to present their own knowledge and priorities to the minister. While many of the writings of students at the school were to “confess” misbehaviour and request Wheelock’s forgiveness, in some cases Algonquian pupils employed their literacy skills to express their own interests against those of the minister. Sarah Simon, a Narragansett student who attended Wheelock’s school through the late 1760s, used writing to assert the priority of kin ties and community over the school’s isolating regimen. Upon learning that her mother had become seriously ill, Sarah crafted a letter to Wheelock requesting permission to visit her home community in order to minister to her mother in her weakened state. Sarah’s letter contains many humble and self-effacing supplications and seemingly defers to Wheelock’s judgement, noting that she does not intend to “ofand the Doctr in the least” and that she would only leave for the visit if “you think [it] is bast for me.” Despite the letter’s unassuming tone, however, Sarah included several significant declarations that, like John Daniel’s letter, informed Wheelock of an alternative plan and vision for her education.

Confessing that she wanted “very much to See my Mother” and that her mother “wants [to] see me and she is not able to come to See me,” Sarah notified Wheelock that she thought “it [her] gret Duty to go and See hir.” Counting her mother “very near and

\(^3\) John Daniel to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 November 1767, WP 767630.3.
Dear to me,” Sarah subtly conveyed through her letter the unwavering ties and affection 
she held towards her mother, and more broadly her community, and positioned her 
request to “go and see hir as ofen as the Doctor is willing” within a framework of familial 
responsibility and duty. Perhaps hoping to aid her ailing mother in household tasks she 
could no longer perform, Sarah’s letter hints towards the impoverishment and strains 
Algonquian women suffered with the absence and death of husbands and male kin. 
Sarah’s mother had struggled to raise five children as a widow at the Narragansett 
reserve, and perhaps lost her husband as did many other women through colonial warfare. 
Four of Sarah’s brothers also attended Wheelock’s school, and their absence from home 
most likely deprived their mother of help in performing subsistence activities on the 
reserve. Records indicate that Sarah’s mother, along with several other widows living at 
Narragansett, received blankets that local ministers periodically distributed to Native 
households deemed most needy. Living on declining lands and in impoverished 
conditions, Sarah explained to Wheelock that her mother “is very weekly and always 
Sick” and feared “that she is [not] long for this world.” Sarah’s writing signalled the 
inability of Wheelock to sever the kin networks and parental bonds that linked his 
students to their communities, and conveyed her value of family relationships and 
responsibility more than the education and training offered by the minister.40

While Algonquians used letters and messages to maintain kin connections, seek 
advise, and request favours, they also crafted their own formal petitions and pleas to 
colonial authorities to express corporate and communal concerns, particularly in regards 
to their land. Paralleling the efforts of Natives elsewhere in the northeast to use writing

40 Sarah Simon to Eleazar Wheelock, 4 April 1769, WP 769254.1.
as a vehicle of protest, by the mid-eighteenth century Algonquian communities in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and on Long Island had begun to write their own petitions to contend against the encroachment and dispossession they continued to suffer. Directing their memorials to Euro-American allies and colonial assemblies, such writings were often accompanied by oral explanations and accounts by those who delivered the documents, and served as visual records of their face-to-face meetings and requests. Lisa Brooks argues that while English colonists understood petitions as prayers, Natives traditionally understood prayers as the “pitiful application to a being that held Manitou.” As a result, Brooks writes, Native petitions represented an “intriguing form in which a community use[d] a tool that ha[d] power, writing, to make a ‘prayer’ to a political body that ha[d] power in relation to themselves.”

Perhaps more significantly, the petitions that Algonquian communities wrote and delivered to colonial officials and assemblies throughout the mid-eighteenth century commonly made reference to the Christian God in whom many Algonquians believed, and appealed to a Christian moral code in complaining against colonial injustices. Similar to the petitions presented during the years of spiritual revival, Algonquian petitioners frequently framed their requests by noting God’s sovereignty and their own efforts to live in accordance with His will. In some cases more bluntly than others, Algonquian petitioners wrote of the power of God, not only as the Creator of all, but as the One who called into account those who oppressed and mistreated His children. Aligning their rights to their lands with their faith in the God who created them, Algonquian petitioners invoked a Christian morality in their writings and implicitly

41 Brooks, Common Pot, 225.
asserted that supreme judgment and justice lay beyond the power of the colonists. While Native communities certainly sought relief and intervention from colonial powers to alleviate their impoverishment and dispossession, as Brooks has suggested, their references to God’s power and sustenance in their pleas indicates that they perceived God, rather than the colonists, as possessing the ultimate Manitou. As writings representing corporate interests, petitions likewise enabled Algonquians to demonstrate their ongoing ties to their lands, resources, and sacred spaces and to fight for the unity and protection of their villages and settlements. Even as communities such as Mohegan and Narragansett continued to struggle over leadership and governance through the mid-eighteenth century, petitioner from both insisted upon their communal interests and relationships with their lands.

While the Mohegans had been divided in the revival years over the choice of their sachem, during the early 1740s a number of Mohegan leaders agreed to re-instate Ben Uncas II as their sachem after having “Several Meetings,” on the condition that he “consent[ed] to all the Articles which his Father Left in his Last will…concerning [the] sachemship.” Despite the renewed allegiance of many Mohegans to Ben Uncas’ leadership, a number of community members continued to dwell in John’s Town and to withhold their support from the sachem.\textsuperscript{42} The opposition between the two settlements

\textsuperscript{42} Mohegan petition to Connecticut Assembly, 12 June 1741, IP I, II: 34. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Narragansetts and Mohegans were the only communities in Connecticut and Rhode Island that maintained the office of the sachem, or perhaps more accurately, the only communities where colonial officials continued to recognize the traditional authority of the sachem. Unlike smaller communities such as Mashantucket, Montauk, and Niantic, where councilors and leading men and women instead of sachems directed communal affairs by the 1750s and 1760s, sachems at Mohegan and Narragansett continued to possess significant power concerning communal lands and village governance until the Revolutionary period. See De Forest, 385, 430; Strong, 60-61.
grew during the 1750s, as members of John’s Town began to actively oppose the sachem’s successor—his son, Ben Uncas III—and his management of communal lands. When the new Mohegan leader began to arbitrarily make decisions regarding communal lands without the consent of his council, several Mohegans used their literacy in English to seek the assistance and advice of their Euro-American allies.

In the spring of 1759 and 1760, Henry Quaquaquid, a former counsellor to the sachem, journeyed to Sir William Johnson’s residence in central New York carrying “letters” for the superintendent of Indian Affairs to read, and received “encouragement” from Johnson that he would extend his influence and “interest” to the Mohegans’ communal dispute. In May of 1760, Samuel Ashpo also travelled to Johnson Hall to deliver a “fresh packquet” of writings on behalf of the Mohegans who opposed the sachem’s leadership. While the contents of these written pleas remain unknown, they most likely recounted the struggles the Mohegans faced as their sachem and colonial officials trampled on traditional political protocol and colonists continued to encroach on their lands.43

Several years later, Samson Occom drafted another petition for Johnson on behalf of the Mohegans which outlined the community’s grievances and sought to “make our Cries in your Ears.” Occom began his plea to Johnson by describing the God he served as the “Supream being” and “the Governor of all Worlds,” and by noting that God had given Johnson “great Wisdom and understandg and Sent you in these parts of the World.” Claiming that their overseers and by extension, the Connecticut Assembly, wielded

“arbitrary Power” over the Mohegan community and intended to “root us out of our land root & Branch,” Occom insisted that colonial officials “have indeed us’d Ben Uncas as a Tool in their Hands.” Not only had the Mohegan sachem recently “Cast of[f] his Council,” but Occom reported that Euro-American officials continued to interfere in communal politics, noting that “the English intends to Continue him as a Sachem ov[e]r us.” Challenging these efforts towards colonial control, the Mohegan petition asserted the legitimacy of the community’s political protocol, stating “we have a Law and a Custom to make a Sachem over us Without the help of any People or Nation in the World.” Depicting his fellow Mohegans as organically and vitally attached—literally growing from—their lands, Occom requested Johnson’s advice in protecting the Mohegans from being “rooted out” and ripped from the soils and waters that sustained them.44

Seeking to “know from Your Hon. Which seems to be Honest in your View,” and his “advice Where to Stear,” Occom and the Mohegans used their written plea to obtain the support of one upon whom God had bestowed wisdom and honour. Like the previous Mohegan “letters” and “packquets,” the petition that Occom sent Johnson operated alongside oral reports and served as a visual record and reminder of the requests the community laid before him. While Occom endeavoured to explain the Mohegans’ divisions and grievances in his petition, he noted that “Deacon Henry Quaquaquid,” the bearer of the plea, would “Relate the Whole Matter to Your Honor” upon arrival.

Drawing on a tool deemed to be legitimate and powerful by colonists, the Mohegans used

44 Occom’s reference to his community being uprooted from their lands, “root and branch,” by colonial officials paralleled the lament of a Huron man to Jesuit missionaries. Noting the devastation his people had suffered since the missionaries arrived in their lands, and the attacks they suffered from their Iroquoian enemies, the man delineated their suffering to the Jesuits: “they exterminate us, root and branch.” See Ronda, “We Are Well as We Are,” 82.
writing in an effort to resolve the grievances and disunity in their community and to prevent the further loss of communal lands.  

Members of the Montaukett community likewise drew upon their growing English fluency and literacy to complain about the oppressive conditions they endured on Long Island. While their community did not suffer from the same internal disputes as the Mohegans, they continued to endure abuse from Euro-American neighbours. In 1764 Silas (or Cyrus) Charles followed in the footsteps of Mohegan emissaries and travelled to central New York to seek redress from colonial authorities. In a petition he presented before the lieutenant governor of the colony, Charles related the grievous circumstances facing the approximately thirty Montaukett families residing on the eastern end of the island. While the authorship of the petition remains unclear, at the time of its writing the Montauketts had become increasingly familiar with and literate in English through the school and church located in their community. Charles, who was a leading member of the community and referred to as an “Indian teacher” in colonial records, most likely drafted the petition owing to his fluency in English and status at Montauk.  

Emphasizing that in recent years the Montauketts had “discontinued their ancient Barbarian way of living, and are become, not only civilized, but christianized,” Charles invoked the concepts of “savagery” and “civilization” to perhaps appeal to the understanding and prejudices of government officials from who he sought aid. Seeking to align the Montaukett community with the Christian civility of the lieutenant governor, Charles in turn emphasized the ungodly behaviour of their English neighbours at nearby East

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45 Mohegan petition to Sir William Johnson, 1764, OP, CHS; see also Brooks, Collected Writings, 144-45.  
Hampton, “who deny them necessary Fuel, and continually incroach upon their Occupations, by fencing in more and more of the Indian’s Lands.” As a result of such intrusions, Charles warned, the Montaukettts were “in Danger of being crowded out of all their ancient Inheritance, and of being rendered Vagabonds upon the Face of the Earth.” Beseeching the lieutenant governor to “grant and confirm” to the Montaukettts the unsold lands on Montauk Point, and to “give Directions for Prosecutions of Intrusion” against colonists living on lands west of Montauk Point, Charles hoped that the lieutenant governor, and the King he represented, would provide “competent Protection” to the Montaukett community.47

The years leading up to the crafting of the petition had been filled with growing conflict between the Montaukett community and colonists at East Hampton over land rights and the subsistence patterns of the Natives. Not only had colonists continued their efforts to monitor and restrict Montaukett lifeways—whether slaughtering their dogs, counting their pigs, or prohibiting their access to wood—but town officials had also continued to oversee and control the Montaukettts’ use of and movement on their lands at Indian Fields and the North Neck. Such interference undoubtedly led to outright conflict between the communities. In 1753, for example, the English trustees appointed to manage Montaukett lands had noted that “Sirus Indian,” most likely the same person as the petitioner Silas Charles, had agreed to pay them eleven pounds five shillings “for killing ye hors[e] called the Mulford stallon,” an act which perhaps he perpetrated in

resistance and opposition to colonial oppression and interference. As the 1764 petition pointed out, the “contempt” that East Hampton residents repeatedly directed towards the Montaukett community interfered with their efforts to forsake “the Idolatry of their Fathers,” and to live as “civilized Subjects.” Charles’ petition suggests, moreover, the power and authority the Montauketts increasingly accorded to written records in counteracting the dispossession and injustices they suffered. Noting that in the past the “unlettered State of the American Indians, rendered it impossible for them to keep Records,” Charles explained that as a result the Montauketts could not fully “ascertain what Lands have been, or remain still unsold,” which enabled their Euro-American neighbours to encroach on their lands “under Pretence of Sales made by their Ancestors.” Seeking to obtain a “Royal Grant and Confirmation” of their lands “to them and their Heirs” to protect them against trespassers, Charles attached a spatial authority and power to writing that he envisioned would confirm the Montauketts’ rights to their homelands on the island, and would protect them from being rendered landless “vagabonds.”

While the Montauketts continued their struggle against Euro-American encroachers, fears of landless impoverishment spurred members of the Narragansett community to seek the aid of the Rhode Island Assembly and other colonial authorities. The political and communal divisions over the sachemship that had emerged during the 1730s continued for the next decade and a half, as legal battles challenging the legitimacy of George Ninigret, and later his son Thomas, dragged on in colonial courts and burdened Narragansett leaders with growing debts. In 1759, sachem Thomas Ninigret petitioned the Rhode Island Assembly to request permission to sell Narragansett lands in order to

absolve the debts accrued during the lawsuits, as well as other expenses he incurred “during his minority.” The tensions and disputes that had been simmering beneath the surface in the preceding years burst forth following this request, as the Narragansett community became increasingly polarized over the use and sale of communal lands and the authority of the sachem in such matters. By the mid-1760s the Narragansetts were split into two groups—one which supported the leadership of sachem Thomas Ninigret, and another which opposed his policies of selling communal lands to remit his debts and was closely affiliated with the Narragansett church. In the spring of 1766, more than one hundred and fifty Narragansetts signed a document in which they formally deposed Thomas Ninigret as their sachem, citing his unapproved marriage, his “refus[al] to be advised by ye Tribe,” and his extravagant “wasting, spending and making sale of ye lands appropriated to ye use and benefit of ye Indians” as grounds for his removal. While the sachem ignored the decision and continued to sell communal lands, former councillors and leading members of the Narragansett church, including minister Samuel Niles, James Niles, and Ephraim Coheis, formed their own “Council of Indians” to offer leadership and direction on the reserve.

Those who opposed the sachem began to actively petition the Rhode Island Assembly to protest the government’s ongoing allowance of Ninigret’s land sales, and when they obtained no relief, sought the assistance of Sir William Johnson. In 1763, for example, leading members of the Narragansett church presented a petition to the

49 Thomas Ninigret to Rhode Island Assembly, August 1759, PCRN Box 1, Folder 9, RIHS; RCRI, vol. 6, 357.
superintendent of Indian affairs in which they outlined the grievous land loss facing their community. Informing Johnson that the Rhode Island Assembly had yet to intervene and prohibit their sachem’s land sales, the petitioners worried that the legislative inaction and delay would hasten “their Ruin.” Reminding Johnson that in the recently-concluded Seven Years’ War, the Narragansetts had “sent out many of their young men, who cheerfully Joined the King of England’s Cause” and that “most of them have died in that service,” the petitioners implored the superintendent to intercede in their communal dispute and save them from starvation and loss. Invoking their historical alliances with the English—“this Tribe has always been true friends to his Majesty King George, and all his family”—the Narragansetts presented themselves as loyal English supporters in dire need of assistance in their own communal conflicts. Hoping that Johnson would use the “Power conferred on you by his Majesty...to stop all future Grants, or Leases being made by [the]...sachem,” the Narragansett petitioners crafted their written message to emphasize both the severity of their losses and their faithful service to the English.51

While the Narragansetts’ petition brought their communal concerns to the attention of powerful colonial officials, their plea to Johnson represented only one of several petitions that they would craft as English literacy began to spread on their reserve. Despite the sporadic efforts of New Light ministers, most Narragansetts remained unable to read and write in English until the 1760s. Although the Narragansetts had requested

51 Narragansett petition to Sir William Johnson, 15 November 1764, OIA, reel C-1222, vol. 1825, 199-200, LAC. The petition was most likely written by the Narragansetts’ lawyer, Matthew Robinson, who petitioned Johnson on other occasions on their behalf. Tobey Coyheas, Samuel Niles, Ephraim Coyheas, and Joseph Coyheas all signed their marks on the petition, and thirty-six other Narragansetts were listed as endorsing the plea.
the establishment of a school on the reserve following the revivals, the request was not fulfilled until 1765. The sachem had attended a formal school in Newport, and a number of youth boarded at Wheelock’s school in Lebanon, but few Narragansetts possessed more than a cursory level of English literacy by mid-century.\textsuperscript{52} Many of the petitions that the Narrangsetts initially presented before colonial authorities, as a result, relied on the assistance of Euro-American ministers or the lawyer they hired to plead their case.\textsuperscript{53} By the mid-1760s, however, members of the Tribe’s Council began to seek formal education and to use their own knowledge of English to defend their land and autonomy.

Councillors John and Tobias Shattock both enrolled in Wheelock’s school and according to one report, made “great proficiency” in reading and writing.\textsuperscript{54} As vital lands with access to Native fishing sites fell into Euro-American hands, Narragansetts used their new literacy skills to protest the ruinous land sales permitted by Rhode Island authorities.

After studying at Wheelock’s for only a matter of months Tobias returned to Narragansett, informing Wheelock, “Tis owing to the bad conduct of the Sachem” that he

\textsuperscript{52} Joseph Park to Andrew Oliver, 17 September 1757, Miscellaneous Bound Manuscripts Collection, MHS.
\textsuperscript{53} By 1764, members of Niles’ faction had retained the services of Matthew Robinson, a lawyer from Kingston, Rhode Island, to aid them in preparing documents and petitions to present to colonial authorities. On several occasions, Robinson petitioned Sir William Johnson on the Narragansetts’ behalf outlining the injustices they suffered and the vested interest of Rhode Island officials in allowing Ninigret to continue selling communal lands. In a 1765 petition to Johnson, Robinson stated, “Perhaps you may wonder Sir at the conduct of our General Court but it is easily accounted for when it is considered that two of the members of that court were large creditors of Tom the Sachem...and that many others (people of influence) are his creditors.” As a result, Narragansett petitions to the Assembly had been “thrown out and Tom left at liberty to sell and has already sold a fine farm or two.” Arnold, ed., \textit{A Statement of the Case}, 38-43; William Simmons and Cheryl Simmons, eds., \textit{Old Light on Separate Ways: The Narragansett Diary of Joseph Fish, 1765-1776} (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), xxxii.
\textsuperscript{54} Eleazar Wheelock to the Narragansett tribe, 3 March 1767, WP 767203.2.
had left the school prematurely and was determined “to exert myself to do somthing in
their [the Narragansetts’] favour, to save their Substance that they may live together.”

Using his growing proficiency in English, in 1767 Shattock wrote a bold
statement to colonial authorities on behalf of the Narragansetts which placed the greedy
interests of colonial officials at the mercy of the “Supreme God [who] takes Cognizance
of all their doings.” Invoking the Christian faith that he and colonial officials purported
to hold, Shattock’s memorial emphasized that the Narragansetts’ previous petitions to the
Rhode Island Assembly had amounted to “little Purpose.” Turning to the “direction” of
other colonial powers instead, the Narragansetts had consulted with Sir William Johnson
and had decided to send Tobias, along with his brother John, to England to seek redress
for the “Injuries, Violations & Frauds done to the Indians.” Like the Mohegan and
Montaukett petitions, Shattock’s letter not only emphasized the authority of the “Supreme
God” over Native lands, but pointed out that colonial interference and dispossession
“hindred” the Narragansetts’ efforts to worship God and practise their Christian faith.
Perhaps appealing to the Natives’ and colonists’ shared faith in his quest for justice,
Shattock went on to state that the Narragansetts would call upon the authority of the
Crown, and ultimately God, for redress. Insisting to his recipients that “God, who hates
oppression, will raise me true Friends to lay our Miseries before his most Sacred
Majesty,” Shattock’s letter placed divine power over that of the colonists who stole
Native lands, over the acquaintances and allies he would make in England, and even over
that of the King himself. In travelling to England to present his petition, Tobias, like
other Native emissaries, planned to draw on both his oral recollections and accounts of

55 Tobias Shattock to Eleazar Wheelock, 2 October 1767, WP 767552. See also Sweet, 15-57.
his community’s struggles as well as a written record and plea to present his case before the Crown.\textsuperscript{56}

The Narragansett visit to England produced tragic results, as Tobias contracted smallpox and died in Edinburgh in the spring of 1768. Despite the journey’s unfortunate outcome, the Shattock brothers’ efforts powerfully attest to the uses Algonquians made of schooling and literacy to defend communal lands and autonomy, and the complex combination of oral and written knowledge that made such pleas possible. While Tobias did not live to lay the Narragansetts’ grievances before the Crown or to return to the homelands he so passionately defended, his brother John continued on their mission to London and offered a petition to the King. The memorial he laid before George III not only recounted their loyalty to the English and their resilience as a people, but related the “wretched and deplorable situation” the Narragansetts currently faced on account of colonial greed. Lamenting the recent sale of lands connected to crucial fishing sites on their reserve, Shattock condemned the “several opulent People of Rhode Island who pretend that the Assembly” had empowered the sachem to “sell his Lands to pay his Debts.”

Shattock’s missive implored the King to “Issue an Instruction to the Governor and Government of Rhode Island to restore your Petitioners to their Lands and all that they have lost, and to forbid the said Lands [from] being purchased for the future.” While the Crown declined to intervene in the Narragansetts’ struggle against their sachem, the efforts of Algonquians such as the Shattock brothers to experiment and use a new

\textsuperscript{56} Tobias Shattock, Petition to the Committee Appointed to the Honorable Assembly, 8 December 1767, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 11, RIHS.
language and a new form of communication demonstrated the resolve of men and women to remain on their lands and to maintain the integrity and autonomy of their communities. Insisting, as did John Shattock in his petition before the Crown, that the Narragansetts had lived on their lands from “time immemorial,” Algonquians used writing to resist the colonization of both their lands and their minds, and to articulate and assert their “own stories” to those who would listen.  

Waging battles to protect livelihoods and vital places in their homelands, formal schooling and English literacy provided Algonquian communities with new tools for challenging colonial injustices in the years following the Great Awakening. As Algonquian students attended Wheelock’s school or learned at schools on their reserves, they joined with other pupils in gaining new skills with which they could strengthen and defend their communities, and perhaps became increasingly aware of the common struggles they shared with other Natives from New England villages and beyond. Attending schools such as Wheelock’s, too, provided Algonquians with new opportunities to build ties with Haudenosaunee communities in New York, as by the 1760s the minister had launched his plan to send teachers and missionaries to work among the Mohawk and Oneida. As a number of Algonquian youth and men joined in Wheelock’s “grand design” to bring Christianity and Euro-American education to the Six Nations, they found their new literacy skills—as well as their faith—tested by their efforts to teach and preach, and their understandings of place and homeland stretched and broadened as they lived and worked among the Haudenosaunee. Forming new and vital ties with communities and people in Iroquoia that would transcend the duration of Wheelock’s missionary scheme,

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57 John Shattock. Petition to Crown, 1768, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 11, RIHS.
the missions to New York in the 1760s would inspire the Algonquian visitors to continue the defence of their own lands and generate new possibilities for coping with unabated encroachment.
CHAPTER FIVE

To ‘hold their Lands as they would their Lives’: Algonquians among the Haudenosaunee

As the Narragansetts and neighbouring communities began to write petitions and letters protesting encroachment and land loss in New England, other Algonquians took up the pen for very different purposes. In December 1766, Montaukett David Fowler scribbled a brief letter from the cabin he shared with his wife, Hannah, and two other missionaries at the Oneida village of Kanawarohare.\(^1\) Directing his hurried missive to his former schoolmaster Eleazar Wheelock, Fowler’s writing provided the minister with an account of his efforts to spread the Gospel and English literacy within the Six Nations community where he had been living intermittently for more than a year and a half. Outlining the progress of his work as a teacher among the Oneida, Fowler described his school as in a “flourishing condition” and boasted that his “scholars learn very fast.” While only teaching “but a small number at present,” Fowler pointed out that a few of his students had progressed to the eighty-sixth page of their spelling books, and that his Oneida “brethren” had informed him the previous evening that his class would grow to thirty-seven children during the oncoming winter.

Fowler’s optimism and anticipation of extending Christian salvation to his Oneida students and neighbours infused his description of the school as he noted, “My Encouragements are very great at present [and] now I have some Prospects of doing little good among my poor benighted Brethren.” Hoping to provide his pupils with both spiritual and practical training, Fowler informed Wheelock: “I design to exert all my

\(^1\) Alternative spelling includes Canawarohare, Kanoarohare, Kanonwalohale.
Powers within me to instruct my poor Scholars not only to read, and all things that belongs to Christianity… but also to instruct them to cultivate their Land, [as] this is the only thing that will kept them together also it will make them multiply and thrive in the world.” Praying that his heart would “melt with gratitude both to God and Man for his wonderful goodness to me” in setting “me up to be their Instructor,” Fowler hoped that by the following spring he would be able to relay to Wheelock “something that will be worthy of Information about my School.”

Fowler’s letter represents one of many accounts recorded by the Algonquian men and youth who served as teachers and ministers at Haudenosaunee and multi-ethnic communities in the southern and eastern borderlands of Iroquoia. While men such as John and Tobias Shattock defended their homelands in New England and journeyed to England to make their grievances known through the 1760s, a number of Algonquian men travelled the wooded and mountainous corridor linking their homelands to those of the Six Nations, and settled among the Mohawk and Oneida to preach and instruct. In most cases sent by their schoolmaster Eleazar Wheelock and the missionary boards from which he drew support, men and youth representing Mohegan, Montaukett, Delaware, and Narragansett settlements left the school in Lebanon or their own communities and undertook the long and often dangerous journey to the lands of the Six Nations. Setting up schools and attempting to share the Gospel, the Algonquian ambassadors spoke at communal gatherings, participated in village rites and in some cases, lived and ate with their Haudenosaunee hosts as a part of their mission efforts.

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2 David Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 2 December 1766, WP 766652.2.
Fowler’s letter, and the spiritual enterprise of which he was a part, reveals the significant role of Algonquian teachers and preachers in the missionary endeavours that occurred in the northern colonies in the mid-eighteenth century, and the new spatial networks of exchange and alliance that formed between First Peoples from different communities and cultural backgrounds. As Algonquian men assumed roles as spiritual and cultural ambassadors among the Six Nations, they challenged the very image of the ‘missionary’ that had been etched in the minds of most Euro-American colonists, and undermined the often complicit role of missionaries in the process of colonization. While Wheelock and his supporters envisioned the missionary program as a means to reduce and tame the “savage” beliefs and lifeways of the Haudenosaunee as well as the “wilderness” where they lived—what Wheelock referred to in his correspondence and publications as his “grand design”—Algonquians such as Fowler, Samson Occom, Samuel Ashpo, and others instead engaged in a process of mutual exchange, learning, and adaptation at the communities where they served. Seeking to pass on their faith in Jesus Christ and their new literacy skills, Algonquian ambassadors found themselves enmeshed in a broader world of struggles against colonization and dispossession which resonated with their own. While Algonquian teachers and ministers hoped to offer their Haudenosaunee hosts new survival skills to “keep them together” and “make them multiply and thrive in the world,” their experiences in Iroquoia in turn exposed them to varying ways of surviving, resisting, and practising faith which influenced their own understandings of land, place, and colonization. Perhaps most significantly, the missions to Iroquoia connected the Algonquian visitors to new spaces outside of their homelands.
which enlarged their own senses of place and community, and which planted the seeds for the future removal and relocation of many Algonquians to New York.

Scholars of religion and colonial America have largely defined missionaries as Euro-American, and have treated missionary work as a varying subtly or obvious facet of the colonial project. The writings of historians such as Robert Berkhofer Jr., William McLoughlin, and James Axtell, for example, depict Native Americans as primarily the recipients of Christian faith, “conversion,” and the teachings of “civilization” brought to them by the efforts of European and American missionaries and their supporters. While recent studies have painted a more nuanced picture of missions’ history by recognizing the complex responses of First Peoples who both resisted and adopted Christianity, in many cases Euro-American ministers, missionaries, and authorities have remained in the foreground of such accounts and First Peoples have not been accorded full recognition as spiritual leaders and missionaries in their own right. Even scholars who have looked at the lives of Algonquian teachers such as Fowler or Occom tend to focus on their relationship with and subservience to Eleazar Wheelock and his Indian Charity School, rather than their motives and actions as spiritual leaders and instructors.

3 For example, see Robert Berkhofer Jr., Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862 (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1965); William McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Axtell, The Invasion Within.

4 Examples of more nuanced accounts of missions include Carol Devens, Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Dane Morrison, A Praying People: Massachusetts Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600-1690 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995); Peyer, The Tutor’d Mind; Wyss, “‘Things That Do Accompany Salvation’”; Silverman, Faith and Boundaries. On scholarship relating to Wheelock’s school and Algonquians such as Occom and Fowler, see Szasz, Indian Education in the American Colonies, chapters 9 and 10; Elliot, “‘This Indian Bait’: Samson Occom and the Voice of Liminality,” 233-53; Murray, “‘Pray Sir, consider a little,’” 15-41; Schneider, “‘This Once Savage Heart of Mine,’” 232-63.
In the past several years a growing body of scholarship has emerged, however, that acknowledges the centrality of First Peoples in shaping the Christian message and that calls into question the necessary link between missionaries and colonization. Donald Smith’s writing on the life of Ojibwa minister Kahkewaquonaby, or Peter Jones, for example, frames the Native preacher’s Christian ministry in terms of his dual efforts to protect and transform his people’s culture. Smith contends that Jones’ “intercultural skills” made Christianity both familiar and accessible to his Native audiences, and that Jones maintained crucial elements of his Ojibwa culture and identity alongside his acceptance of the Christian faith. In her work on nineteenth-century Protestant missions among the Tsimshian on the northwest coast, Susan Neylan argues that Native missionaries “indigenized” Christianity and used their new faith to serve “their lives and societies in ways unforeseen by mission authorities.” Looking at the lives of Christian workers such as Arthur Wellington Clah, Neylan points out how Tsimshian evangelicals often used their mission activities as an arena to spread and discuss land issues, and appealed to a Christian moral code in defending their rights. Richard Pointer’s exploration of Native American Christianity likewise emphasizes the influential role of indigenous believers in shaping colonial faith and practice. Pointer’s scholarship highlights the spiritual leadership exhibited by Huron, Mohican, and Oneida Christians as he argues that “Europeans were not alone in promoting or defining the Christian message in early America.”

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Such scholarship points historians towards the significant role of Native ministers and teachers in diverse colonial contexts, and demands a more careful consideration of the missionary endeavour and the complex relations that developed between First Peoples of various backgrounds. Rather than a relationship of colonizer-colonized, interactions between Algonquian teachers and ministers and Haudenosaunee communities involved cross-cultural exchanges that revolved around common concerns and grievances regarding land. As both Algonquian and Haudenosaunee communities struggled with dispossession, encroachment, and impoverishment in their homelands, the relationships they forged through the missions enabled them to exchange strategies of defence and protection and to look towards new forms of faith and salvation. Far from simply parroting Wheelock’s civilizing agenda in their missions, Algonquian teachers and ministers struggled to relate the new forms of power—Protestant New Light Christianity and English literacy—that they had adopted in their own communities to their Iroquoian hosts. While in many cases disagreeing over the meaning and use of such beliefs and skills, Algonquian ambassadors found common ground with the Haudenosaunee who claimed that they “loved their lands as their lives.” Working together to adapt to encroachment and loss, the mission communities created new channels of indigenous alliance and exchange and renewed intercultural ties across space.

Between 1761 and 1772, eleven Algonquian men as well as at least five Mohawk and Oneida students trained at Wheelock’s school ventured into Iroquoia to serve as schoolmasters and ministers among the Haudenosaunee. Often accompanied by Euro-

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6 Mohegan Samson Occom and Montaukett David Fowler set forth as the first of Wheelock’s students to venture into Iroquoia, and in three mission journeys undertaken during the early 1760s, the men engaged in
American students who had likewise attended Moor’s Indian Charity School and who were also empowered to preach the Gospel among the Six Nations, these men comprised the flesh and blood of Wheelock’s “grand design” to bring the “western herds” to a place of civilization and submission by way of the Christian message and formal instruction. Wheelock’s efforts to introduce the Gospel to the Haudenosaunee and to nations living further west represented a renewed attempt of an ongoing onslaught that had varyingly been taken up by French, English, and Dutch missionaries for more than a century. Jesuit missionaries had begun visiting and settling in villages throughout Iroquoia as early as the 1660s. Although driven from most Haudenosaunee communities several years later, the Jesuits attracted a significant number of Mohawks and Oneida to relocate to mission villages located along the St. Lawrence River, and continued to influence settlements in New York.

preaching at Oneida communities and recruited Haudenosaunee children for Wheelock’s school. Around the same time Mohegan Samuel Ashpo began ministering at the multi-ethnic communities of Chenango and Onoquaga on the Susquehanna River, and received invitations from their inhabitants to remain as a permanent spiritual leader. In 1764, Delaware student Joseph Woolley began his service as a schoolmaster at Onoquaga, and by the following year, Delaware Hezekiah Calvin and David Fowler also served as schoolmasters at Mohawk and Oneida villages respectively. After attending Wheelock’s school for three years, Mohawk pupils Johannes, Abraham Primus, Abraham Secundus, and Peter returned to their homeland to act as ushers in the fledgling schools set up by their fellow students. Montaukett Jacob Fowler began teaching at the Mohawk village of Canajoharie in 1766, where he stayed for a brief period, while Mohegan Joseph Johnson taught at the Oneida settlements of Kanawarohare and Old Oneida for more than two years, assisted briefly by Nathan Clap (a “Cape Cod Indian”). In 1769, Narragansett John Matthews was sent to Oneida to work with Euro-American missionary Samuel Kirkland. Wheelock continued to send Native teachers and Euro-American missionaries to Iroquoia into the early 1770s, such as Narragansett Abraham Simons, but met with growing resistance from Haudenosaunee communities who opposed the minister’s treatment of their children at his school and the arrogance with which he continued to promote the institution. As late as 1772, Oneida student Mundius was reported as teaching at Oneida villages. See McCallum, *Letters*, 33, 47, 69n1, 85, 115, 121, 263, 294-95; Samson Occom to Eleazar Wheelock, 24 June 1761, WP 761374; Thomas Huntington’s Journal, June 1769, WP 769390.1; Oneida Speeches, 31 May 1772, WP 772331.

By the early eighteenth century, Protestant ambassadors had also taken up the challenge of sharing the Christian message in Iroquoia while contending against the already-present Catholic influences. In 1713, Anglican minister William Andrews began preaching at a newly-constructed chapel at the Mohawk village of Tionderoge, and drew a substantial number of listeners for several years, but had limited influence beyond the community.\(^9\) After the establishment of a mission for Mohican Natives at Stockbridge, Massachusetts in the 1730s, the Congregational New England Company began to extend its efforts northward to the multi-ethnic communities located on the southern borderlands of Iroquoia, as well as to Haudenosaunee communities on the Mohawk River. At villages such as Onoquaga and Chenango located on the upper branches of the Susquehanna River, the mixture of Algonquian and Haudenosaunee inhabitants, and of indigenous and Euro-American cultural practices, perhaps generated interest and even acceptance of Christian teachings. As Euro-American missionaries such as Elihu Spencer and Gideon Hawley began to preach and teach in these villages by the mid-eighteenth century, they attracted adherents to the Gospel message and found some Natives willing to take on new roles as Christian leaders.\(^10\)

Wheelock’s efforts, then, represented one piece of an ongoing if sporadic mission by both Protestants and Catholics to shine the light of Christ on the communities of Iroquoia. Seeking to build on the spiritual inroads that had been made in the southern and eastern borderlands of Iroquoia, Wheelock hoped to eventually expand his missionary

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efforts further west to groups such as the Onondaga and Seneca, who remained largely resistant to the Gospel message. Wheelock and his supporters also hoped the missions would challenge the ongoing influence of French priests among the Haudenosaunee, who continued to visit their villages offering Catholic instruction and baptism. During the Seven Years’ War, Wheelock and his supporters noted the threat such activity posed: “if the French shall go on to prejudice & poison the Minds of the Heathen as they have done by their Jesuit sons, it will certainly have a very dark and threatening aspect upon his Majesties Dominions in North America.”

As a part of a larger struggle for political and cultural control in the northern colonies, Wheelock’s mission would help to strengthen English authority and Protestant teaching on the ‘borderlands’ of colonial settlement—particularly his own brand of evangelical Congregationalism.

In his approach, however, Wheelock boasted that he had found the solution to overcoming the resistance and spiritual obstinacy of the Haudenosaunee. As Wheelock announced in the various “narratives” he published to garner support for his charity school throughout the 1760s, his “grand design” would involve “Indian” teachers and ministers serving as missionaries to the “savages” owing to the “deep rooted Prejudices they [the Haudenosaunee] have generally imbibed against the English.” Native teachers, Wheelock went on, would more easily “conform to their Manner of Living” and “understand the Tempers and Customs of Indians.” Underlying Wheelock’s explanation of his methods lay barely-concealed assumptions that the common “race” of the “Indians” would facilitate the spread of the Gospel message. Native missionaries, Wheelock

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11 Eleazar Wheelock, Samuel Mosley, and Benjamin Pomeroy to George Whitefield, 4 March 1756, WP 756204.1.
insisted, would have “Compassion towards their ‘Brethren according to the Flesh’ [that] will most naturally incline them to, and determine them upon such an Employment as they were fitted and designed for.” Wheelock’s school served as a training ground for both Algonquian and Haudenosaunee students whom he hoped would become missionaries and teachers in the homelands of the Mohawk and Oneida and eventually, beyond, and prepared Native and Euro-American students to teach English literacy and biblical truths.12

As Wheelock began to send the first Algonquian ambassadors—Mohegan Samson Occom and Montaukett David Fowler—to visit Oneida communities in the early 1760s, he hoped that the ventures would also effectively reduce and tame the cultural and

12 Wheelock, A plain and faithful narrative, 15-19, 26-27. In promoting his “design,” Wheelock had informed his sponsors that Native teachers would work alongside English missionaries who would act as their “associates” and “elder Brethren,” and who would offer the Native workers advice, reproof, and counsel in the mission field. This working relationship, Wheelock hoped, would serve as a model of Christian love to the “pagans” in Iroquoia and would effectively remove the prejudices they held towards the English. In practice, however, relations between Euro-American and Algonquian workers often became strained, as Native missionaries disputed the authority of their former classmates to reprove and counsel them. During their time serving as teachers at Oneida, for example, both David Fowler and Joseph Johnson clashed with missionary Samuel Kirkland and his attempts to order and instruct them in their ministry. While Kirkland began his missionary work serving among the Seneca Nation in 1764, by the spring of 1766 hostile conditions forced him to abandon his efforts, and he returned east and began serving at the Oneida village of Kanawarohare by the end of the summer. Sharing a cabin with Fowler, Fowler’s wife, and eventually Joseph Johnson, close quarters seemingly fueled conflicts between the Euro-American missionary and the Algonquian teachers at Oneida. In March of 1767, Fowler wrote to Wheelock to inform him that Kirkland had “resum[ed] ed too much of greatness before Company [and] he appear’d to me, that he wanted to show what a great man he was [and] that he could order us about where and how he pleased.” Requesting that Wheelock would not give Kirkland “so much authority as that he would persuad or take upon himself to given me or order me about,” Fowler warned that if the Anglo-missionary continued such behaviour “he wont be so comfortable here.” “I am an Instructor,” Fowler wrote indignantly, and “I am able to act for myself, without having a master over me.” Johnson voiced similar complaints to Wheelock regarding the authority Kirkland attempted to wield at Kanawarohare, and insinuated his own resistance towards such efforts. In the winter of 1767, Kirkland apparently likened himself to Wheelock in reprimanding Johnson for his disrespectful behaviour and attempting to garner the Mohegan teacher’s assistance in performing household chores. Johnson responded reluctantly in “assisting him for his fire wood,” and later relayed the confusion and misgivings that Kirkland’s demands had generated. Walter Pilkington, ed., The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th-century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College (Clinton: Hamilton College, 1980), 40; David Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 17 March 1767, WP 767217.1; Joseph Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 29 December 1767, WP 767679.2.
spiritual “wilderness” of Iroquoia. Wheelock and his contemporaries frequently invoked the notion of “wilderness” to describe Haudenosaunee homelands and to make reference to the spiritual and cultural state of the Six Nations. For many New England colonists and especially their Puritan forbears, the idea of the “wilderness” constituted a spiritually-loaded term of significance within the Protestant Christian faith. As a place where the Israelites wandered for forty years, punished for their disobedience to God, “wild” regions signalled places of spiritual destitution and sin. In the New Testament, the wilderness of the Judean countryside represented the place of Jesus’ forty-day temptation where the forces of the demonic tried and assailed the Son of God. According to Roderick Nash, Scriptural teachings fuelled Puritan efforts to break the power of evil—both in human nature and wild nature—that surrounded their settlements or lurked on the edge of the “frontier.”¹³

New England colonists too interwove spiritual understandings of wild borderlands as dark and demonic places with Euro-American notions of property and land-holding. As many colonists demonstrated through their transformation of the northeast coast, to properly “tame” and “civilize” the landscape involved the construction of fences, houses, gardens, pastures, and villages, and the removal of any threatening landforms or inhabitants—whether swamps, wolves, or Native Americans.¹⁴ Wheelock’s narratives and correspondence are replete with references to the wilderness as a place of “butchering savagery” inhabited by “lawless herds,” and his writings effectively reduced the

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homelands of the Haudenosaunee and other First Peoples to a “savage country” needing to be tamed.\textsuperscript{15} For the people of the longhouse, such descriptions failed to reflect the sustenance and provision, the spiritual power, and the deep affections that actually linked their communities to their lands.

As Algonquian teachers and ministers ventured into the so-called “wilderness” of Iroquoia, however, their journeys into Mohawk and Oneida homelands revived a much longer history of interconnections between New England Natives and the Haudenosaunee. Ties between Algonquian coastal communities and the villages of Iroquoia stretched back before contact with Europeans, as both groups participated in an exchange network for marine shell.\textsuperscript{16} While such trade ties most likely involved face-to-face meetings and travel between villages, by the early seventeenth century Mohawks frequently visited the settlements of Algonquians in the Connecticut River Valley and in Narragansett territory to trade furs for wampum. According to Neal Salisbury, through the 1640s and 1650s, alliance and trade marked the relations between the Five Nations and the Narragansetts, as “the wampum that flowed from New England through the Mohawks to the other Iroquois tribes was a principal component of this connection.”\textsuperscript{17} While alliance gave way to animosity and conflict during King Philip’s War, and Iroquoian bands launched raids against Massachusett and Mohegan villages, by the eighteenth century new coalitions emerged as members of Algonquin and

\textsuperscript{15} Wheelock, \textit{A plain and faithful narrative}, 11, 24; Wheelock, \textit{A continuation of the narrative of the Indian Charity-School} (London: J. and W. Oliver, 1769), 2, 12-13.
Haudenosaunee communities sided with the English in colonial wars. During the Seven Years’ War—whose ending coincided with the early Native missions to Iroquoia—the Mohegans and other Algonquians pledged allegiance to the English alongside their “uncles,” the Mohawks. According to one account, the “Stockbridge Indians” sent a “Large Belt” of wampum “to the Mohegans, who under their Sachems hand Signified their hearty Agreement” to join the Mohawks’ and Mohicans’ alliance with the English, and who were informed that “Six Mohawks intended them a Visit then they could tell them what Number would joyn.”¹⁸

Building on interwoven histories of trade, conflict, and alliance, the mission ventures to Iroquoia brought Haudenosaunee villagers and Algonquian ambassadors together in a new context of cultural exchange. By the time Algonquian teachers and ministers undertook the long journey to Iroquoia in the 1760s, however, the lands and communities they visited had come under growing threat from aggressive colonial neighbours. During the mid-eighteenth century, members of the Six Nations frequently complained of the fraud and abuse they suffered at the hands of non-Native intruders, and expressed a growing concern to protect their communities and homelands. In the summer of 1754, the Lieutenant-Governor of New York noted that the Mohawks living at Canajoharie claimed that their lands had been secretly surveyed at night and patented by a Mr. Livingston, among others, and insisted that the Lieutenant-Governor intervene and restore their lands to them. Following the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War, Six Nations’ leaders voiced opposition to the abuses they suffered from British garrisons.

occupying Haudenosaunee hunting and fishing territories, and complained to Sir William Johnson that so-called British allies blocked their access to vital fishing sites on Lake Oneida. In 1761 the Oneida speaker Conoghquieson explained to Johnson that “This Land which was given us by the Divine Being we love as our lives” and requested that “you will secure the possession of it to us, which has been ours from the beginning, by preventing anymore of your People from settling higher in the Country.”

During his visits to Iroquoia through the 1760s, missionary Gideon Hawley likewise reported the “oppression” the Six Nations faced from soldiers committing “abuses” and from land-hungry colonists who surrounded their settlements. By the time that thousands of Six Nations members convened to negotiate land boundaries at Fort Stanwix in 1768, many Haudenosaunee leaders feared the total dispossession of their homelands at the hands of Euro-Americans. According to one observer who attended the conference, the Oneida sachem Thomas “feared and trembled” over the land concessions pursued by colonial officials and “laboured very much to attach the Indians to their own Interest and hold their Lands as they would their Lives.”

Perhaps seeking to protect their villages and people from encroachment and dispossession, during the 1750s and 1760s some Haudenosaunee leaders looked to English education, Christian instruction, and other adaptations as a way to resist colonization. The efforts of previous missionaries to the Six Nations had not been entirely fruitless as a general awareness, if not acceptance, of Christian teachings and rites prevailed at Mohawk and Oneida settlements, as well as at the multi-ethnic communities.

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19 OIA, reel C-1221, vol. 1824, 45-47, LAC.
20 Gideon Hawley to Eleazar Wheelock, 26 November 1767, WP 767626.
21 David Avery to Eleazar Wheelock, 10 October 1768, WP 768560.1.
located in southern Iroquoia. Particularly at villages such as Onoquaga and Chenango—located on the upper branches of the Susquehanna River—where Mohawk, Oneida, Tuscarora, Delaware, and Mohican inhabitants had merged together in the wake of colonial warfare and dislocations, sachems and village leaders requested that colonial officials settle ministers and schoolmasters among their people. Lisa Brooks has described the villages of southern Iroquoia as “kettles” where “many traditions mixed,” noting that such settlements combined “Algonquian and Haudenosaunee families, traditional agriculture and European husbandry, longhouses and log cabins, [and] Confederacy councils and Christian meetings.”

Encouraged by visits from missionaries such as Gideon Hawley in the 1750s, the leaders of such “kettles” invited ministers and teachers to settle among them in 1760s to provide spiritual and practical aid. In 1761, interpreter Elisha Gunn wrote to the Boston board of the New England Company on behalf of the chiefs at Onoquaga requesting additional Bibles translated in their own language. Informing the commissioners that “we have not Enough of the Bible Printed in our tongue [and] we want more,” the chiefs also noted that they hoped their former missionary Gideon Hawley would visit them again soon. A few years later, Oneida and Tuscarora chiefs from the upper Susquehanna region sent a letter to the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) which relayed their willingness to accept the Society’s offers of instruction. After holding a general council to determine the matter, the chiefs stated in their letter

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22 Brooks, Common Pot, 89.
23 Letter from the Chiefs at Onoquaga to the Commissioners in Boston, 13 May 1761, WP 761313.2.
that they would first allow the construction of a saw mill, and later a grist mill in their community, along with the instruction in husbandry that the Society had offered.²⁴

Such requests were often tendered with an awareness of the threats that non-Natives could pose to communal lands and livelihoods. While seeking to secure Christian instruction or new farming tools for their villages, leaders at Onoquaga and neighbouring communities also sought to restrict the power of the Euro-American teachers and ministers who might settle in their midst. In the summer of 1765, Onoquaga chiefs Adam and Isaac informed Wheelock that their community was willing to receive instruction in Christianity and husbandry. The chiefs went on to notify the minister that they had “no thoughts of selling our Land to any that come to live among us” and reasoned that “if we should sell a little Land to any, by & by they would want to buy a little more & so our Land would go by Inches till we should have none to live upon.”²⁵

Oneida and Mohawk communities further north similarly extended invitations to Wheelock and other officials for assistance and instruction, or requested that colonial authorities appoint ministers to their villages. While serving at the Stockbridge mission in the early 1750s, Gideon Hawley noted that families of Mohawks, Oneidas, and Tuscaroras from Canajoharie and Onoquaga visited the mission town during the winter months to attend the school located there, and expressed their desire that missionaries would permanently settle in their villages further to the north.²⁶ The principal Mohawk towns of Tionderoge and Canajoharie had become increasingly surrounded by Dutch,

²⁴ Chiefs of the Oneida and Tuscarora on the Susquehanna to the SSPCK Connecticut Board, 30 September 1765, WP 765530.5.
²⁵ Isaac Dakayenensere and Adam Waonwanoron to ?, 31 July 1765, WP 765431.
German, and English settlers during the eighteenth century, and had begun to experiment with the new crops, animals, and religious practices brought by their colonial neighbours. Continuing to depend on hunting, fishing, and planting crops of corn, beans, and squash, many Mohawks as well as Oneidas expressed an interest in settling Protestant missionaries within their settlements. Mohawk men and women frequently gathered at Sir William Johnson’s residence to complain of their need for a minister to teach their children about the “great Spirit above” or to request that the Superintendent of Indian Affairs would grant them a schoolmaster to teach their “young people.” In 1760, several Oneidas expressed to military chaplain William Kirkpatrick their “earnest Desire of having a Minister settled among them” and informed him that they had saved “300 Dollars for erecting an House of Worship.” Such requests reflected the familiarity and interest in Christian teachings that existed in Haudenosaunee communities in the Mohawk River Valley, and perhaps also their efforts to adapt to the growing presence of Euro-American colonists near their villages. As village leaders began to send their children to Wheelock’s school in Lebanon for formal education by the early 1760s, they most likely hoped that such teaching and knowledge would soon be made available within their own communities.

Nations further west, in contrast, remained much more unwelcoming towards Christian emissaries and the instruction they offered. At villages where English authority and the Protestant faith held less sway, some Haudenosaunee leaders expressed hostility towards the Gospel message and pointed to the impoverishment of Algonquian

27 Grumet, 346; Fenton and Tooker, 474-75.
28 OIA, Reel C-1221, Vol. 1824, 2-3, 23-25, 308-12, LAC.
29 William Kirkpatrick to Samson Occom, 25 November 1760, OP, CHS.
communities on the coast as evidence of its inefficacy. Particularly in the wake of the Seven Years’ War, some western Seneca communities along with warriors from the Onondaga and Cayuga nations remained hostile to the British and joined in attacks against English forts as a part of Pontiac’s War.\(^{30}\) When Wheelock sent Euro-American missionary Samuel Kirkland to preach among the Senecas in 1764, the young minister faced outright opposition and hostility from some of the leaders in the village where he lived, and was eventually driven back east when his ministry became endangered. In a speech made during a condolence ceremony shortly after Kirkland’s arrival in the village, the Seneca war chief Onoonghwandekha warned his community that if they “receive[d] this \textit{white man} & attend[ed] to the Book which was made solely for White people,” they would become a “\textit{miserable abject people}.” “How many remnants of tribes to the \textit{East} are so reduced,” he reminded the villagers listening, “that they \textit{pound} sticks to make brooms, to buy a loaf of Bread or it may be a shirt[?]”\(^{31}\) While other Haudenosaunee communities were less opposed to the Gospel and English education, they too seemingly linked the impoverishment of Algonquian peoples living on the coast to the spread of Euro-American culture. As the Mohawks struggled to defend their lands against the fraudulent claims of colonists throughout the mid-eighteenth century, their leaders explained to Sir William Johnson that their women desired to maintain their fields and lands, and not be “reduced” to “making brooms”—a reference most likely to the


livelihoods in which many Algonquians in New England engaged to offset their poverty.\textsuperscript{32}

As some Haudenosaunee communities cautiously invited ministers and teachers into their villages, Algonquian spiritual leaders and instructors arrived with messages of power and wisdom that they hoped to share with their hosts. In most cases sent by Wheelock to set up schools as well as to recruit promising Haudenosaunee students for his own school in Lebanon, the Algonquian ambassadors sought to convey the salvation power of Jesus Christ and the practical skills of English literacy. Visiting the multi-ethnic towns along the Susquehanna or venturing further north to settle at Mohawk and Oneida communities, Algonquian men and youth spoke before village gatherings, baptized Haudenosaunee believers, taught children and adults new words and songs, and in some cases lived with local families (see figure 5). As they struggled to adapt to the lands and lifeways they encountered in Iroquoia, the Algonquian ambassadors struggled too with their missions to evangelize and teach in the communities where they lived and with Wheelock’s goals of “civilizing” and “taming” the people they met. Facing the harsh conditions of impoverishment, hunger, and encroachment, Wheelock’s objectives perhaps appeared both untenable and undesirable to the Algonquians who witnessed and joined in the struggles and trials that marked daily life in Iroquoia. Setting up schools and preaching to those who would listen, the Algonquians perhaps attempted to pass on their

\textsuperscript{32} OIA, reel C-1222, vol. 1824, 372, LAC. Euro-American missionary Phineas Dodge likewise reported the suspicion and opposition many Oneidas and Tuscaroras exhibited towards the work of English missionaries and the messages of salvation they brought. According to Dodge, the Natives increasingly resisted Euro-American efforts out of fear that they would be dispossessed in a similar manner to the Mohicans living at Stockbridge and the “praying peoples to the East.” Phineas Dodge to Eleazar Wheelock, 23 September 1771, WP 771523.
faith and practical skills for different reasons than Wheelock set out—as vital survival skills rather than tools of “civilization.” While often accompanied by Euro-American schoolmates who settled with or near them, Algonquians likely pursued their work among the Haudenosaunee with different goals in mind, and offered their Native hosts wisdom and knowledge that their own communities had drawn upon to contend against colonization.

Figure 5: Algonquin and Haudenosaunee communities (Map created by the Cartography Office, University of Toronto)

Placing the Word of God and practices such as hymn-singing and baptism at the centre of their missions, the Algonquian spiritual leaders who travelled to Iroquoia drew upon their own experiences of salvation and spiritual power to convey the Gospel.
message at the settlements they visited. Preaching words that perhaps years earlier had led them to encounter the living God, Algonquian ministers endeavoured to “stir” and awaken those who gathered to listen to their messages. In some instances visiting Iroquoian towns on their own volition rather than at the behest of Wheelock, these ministers too intertwined their offers of new life and salvation with their own efforts to protect their lands and communities in southern New England.

Mohegan preacher Samuel Ashpo, for example, visited the communities of Chenango and Onoquaga in the early 1760s as he made his way to Sir William Johnson’s residence to deliver petitions on behalf of his community. At the time of these visits, Ashpo had assumed a leading role within the Mohegan community in defending their lands against Connecticut’s claims and their sachem’s control. A preacher and teacher at both Mohegan and nearby Mashantucket, Ashpo increasingly involved himself in the political divisions that had shaped his community by mid-century. In May of 1760, Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas III complained to Connecticut officials that a certain “party of Indians” had withdrawn their support of his leadership and had begun sending representatives bearing “letters” to seek the aid of Sir William Johnson. In his complaint, the Mohegan sachem noted that Ashpo was currently at Johnson’s residence with a “fresh packquet”—perhaps petitions delivered on behalf of the Mohegans—suggesting that the Mohegan minister combined a visit to Fort Johnson with his travels to Chenango that spring.  

While seeking to protect and defend Mohegan lands, Ashpo’s visits to the upper Susquehanna villages also stemmed from his own evangelical convictions and desire to spread his faith. Although Ashpo had received training in English at the schoolhouse at Mohegan, his initial attempts to minister at Onoquaga and Chenango stemmed from his own efforts and convictions, rather than any affiliation with Wheelock’s school or his “grand design” for missions. In the spring and summer of 1760 and 1761, Ashpo journeyed from Mohegan to Chenango, and devoted himself to preaching in the community as well as at the village of Onoquaga located several miles to the east. Acting apart from any missionary societies, Ashpo reported encouraging results, claiming that a “great concern” occurred among “the Indians in those parts especially at Jeningo.” During his visits, observers noted that Ashpo attained the affections of the towns’ inhabitants by his “zealous” preaching and efforts to baptize their infants and children. Following his second foray into the southern borderlands of Iroquoia in 1761, Ashpo noted that “there are about 20 at Jeningo” that he believed were “really converted” while many others exhibited a general “concern.” By the time of his return to New England that summer, the inhabitants at Chenango had requested him to reside there permanently as their minister.34

Ashpo passed this request, as well as one for a schoolmaster, along to Wheelock and the Commissioners of the New England Company, and continued to maintain ties with the lands and people of southern Iroquoia. Briefly attending Wheelock’s school in 1762—most likely to gain provisions and support for his future missions—Ashpo

34 Eleazar Wheelock to Gideon Hawley, 10 June 1761, WP 761360.2; Licence allowing Samuel Ashpo to preach, 12 May 1763, WP 763312.2.
returned to the upper Susquehanna Valley in 1763 and 1766 to build on his previous relations and preaching efforts at local villages. Keeping the message of salvation at the forefront of his interactions with the Algonquian and Haudenosaunee villagers, Ashpo too tried to accommodate the cultural practices of his hosts by altering his own appearance and dress during his visits. According to one report of his brief mission in the summer of 1763, Ashpo planned to minister to the inhabitants of Onoquaga dressed in “Indian Habit.” While no account describes what this “habit” entailed—whether traditional ornaments, beaded jewellery, clothing made from skins, or face paint—his plan suggests the cultural and material differences, whether real or perceived, that existed between Mohegans and the Oneida and Tuscarora inhabitants of southern Iroquoia. Only years earlier, when Ashpo had visited Sir William Johnson to attain his assistance in the Mohegans’ communal disputes, one observer had related that Johnson subsequently planned to send Ashpo and Henry Quaquaquid to London “in Moyhacks dress.”

Several years later, Samson Occom would describe the presence of four Oneida men “drest Compleat in Indian way” while preaching in New York, noting the paint, jewellery, and bells that complemented their garb.

While Ashpo’s own clothing most likely included Euro-American materials and styles adopted by Algonquians, he seemingly hoped to appeal to the inhabitants at Chenango and Onoquaga who likely dressed according to a mixture of Euro-American and indigenous modes. The Mohegan minister apparently found favour with the villagers, and stirred many to seek salvation in Christ in his subsequent visit in 1766.

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35 Ben Uncas to the Connecticut Assembly, 1760, IP I, 2: 103.
36 Brooks, Collected Writings, 339.
Preaching to a crowd gathered at Chenango, Ashpo began one of his messages “with Fear and Trembling, feeling but little Power,” but recounted that “God greatly assisted me, [and] few dry eyes seemed to be in the Assembly for a Considerable Time.” Moved by the presence of the Holy Spirit, Ashpo marvelled that he was “enable[d] to speak” of the “glories of the upper World” and believed that “many” at Chenango were “filled as with new wine, [and] it seemed as if time of Refreshing was Come from the Presence of the Lord.”

Perhaps Ashpo’s efforts towards cultural accommodation contributed to the acceptance and friendships he cultivated at Chenango and Onoquaga, as the Natives continued to inquire about the Mohegan minister and anticipate his return after he had travelled back to New England.

Following the path to Iroquoia that Ashpo cleared, Samson Occom undertook his first missionary journey in the early 1760s and preached salvation and redemption at Mohawk and Oneida communities further north. By the time that he embarked on his trips, Occom had lived at the Montauk community on Long Island for more than a decade and served as the Natives’ spiritual leader as well as teacher. Holding church services, conducting funerals, and teaching children, among other tasks, Occom’s service at Montauk had endeared him to the Algonquian community as well as to local ministers. After being officially ordained by the Long Island Presbytery in 1759, Occom found that Wheelock along with other ministers hoped to use his preaching and teaching skills for missions among Natives where the Gospel held less sway. While plans to send him

37 Samuel Ashpo to Eleazar Wheelock, 22 August 1766, WP 766472.
38 Elisha Gunn to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 July 1761, WP 761430; Elisha Gunn to Eleazar Wheelock, 11 August 1761, WP 761461; Eleazar Wheelock to B. Forfitt, 8 September 1763, WP 763508.1; Joseph Woolley to Eleazar Wheelock, 9 February 1765, WP 765159.2.
among the Cherokees fell through in the late 1750s, by 1760 Wheelock hoped his former pupil would promote Protestant Christianity among the Oneida.\(^39\)

Even as Wheelock and his supporters worked to coordinate Occom’s forays into Oneida territory, the Mohegan minister exhibited his own efforts and decision-making in shaping the character of the missions. Receiving promises of support from the SSPCK for his travels to Oneida, Occom informed Wheelock in the winter of 1761 that he intended “to take the Journey as Soon as I Can in the Spring,” and that he preferred not to travel alone. Rather, Occom wrote, “I intend to take David [Fowler] with me in this Journey” and hoped that Wheelock would permit his brother-in-law to “Brake off from his Study” at the minister’s school for “4 or 5 Months” for the length of the mission.\(^40\)

While Occom’s request was granted, he and Fowler failed to set out for New York until June of 1761, yet Occom continued to influence the direction of the mission and to demonstrate his own commitment to the venture. Upon arriving in New York City in June, Occom learned from his sponsors that they “had Concluded, not to Send me at all, and all the Reason that they Can give is, they are affraind the Indians will kill me.”

Ocomm’s journey coincided with the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War and the efforts of General Jeffrey Amherst to enlarge British garrisons at forts in Iroquoia, which had increased tensions between the Six Nations and the British and most likely led the members of the Scottish Society to fear for Occom’s mission and safety.\(^41\) Refusing to be deterred, however, Occom “told them, they Cou’d not kill me but once, and told them I

\(^{39}\) Samuel Buell to Eleazar Wheelock, 17 October 1758, WP 758567.1; Samuel Buell to Eleazar Wheelock, 7 May 1759, WP 759307.

\(^{40}\) Samson Occom to Eleazar Wheelock, 14 January 1761, WP 761114.

\(^{41}\) Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 67, n 8.
intended to Proceed on my Journey, and if I Perish for want of Support, I Perish.” When his Euro-American supporters “Perceiv’d my Resolution,” Occom recounted, they reversed their decision, took up a collection for his support, and wrote recommendations that “Shou’d be Sent by me to Gen[eral] Amhurst and to Sir William.”

Arriving safely in Oneida that summer, the Haudenosaunee welcomed Occom as an “ambassador of the Gospel” and provided lodging and support for the Mohegan minister and Fowler during their stay in the community.

Ocomm’s preaching among the Oneida and Tuscarora living at Oneida in the early 1760s paralleled Ashpo’s attempts to keep God’s power and Word at the centre of his ministry. While the circumstances of Occom’s second visit to Oneida in 1762 required the Mohegan minister to follow the Natives on their hunting and fishing ventures, when he visited again in 1763 he found more opportunities to speak at communal gatherings and to baptize those who accepted his messages. Before he returned to New England in the fall of that year, Occom preached to large crowds of Haudenosaunee villagers, and encountered a growing receptivity to his messages of grace. Noting in his journal that on the night before his departure, a “great Number of the Indians Came together” from both Oneida and Tuscarora communities “to hear the word of God,” Occom rejoiced that he baptized three Natives while several others “made a Public Confession” of their faith.

Struggling to share messages of life and salvation at fishing sites, hunting camps, or at gathering in local villages, Occom’s efforts to preach and baptize among the Oneida and others sometimes ran aground on issues of cultural difference. Although the Gospel

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42 Samson Occom to Eleazar Wheelock, 24 June 1761, WP 761374.
43 Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 263.
message and Christian instruction were not new to the inhabitants living at communities such as Old Oneida and Kanawarohare, their lifeways and beliefs reflected perhaps less of the fluidity and cultural mixing that characterized the multi-ethnic villages of southern Iroquoia where Samuel Ashpo preached. Continuing to rely on hunting, fishing, and female-based agriculture, Occom most likely encountered a vibrant ceremonial life among the Oneida that perhaps stood in opposition to his own understanding of God.

Demonstrating less tolerance towards Oneida customs and lifeways than Ashpo, Occom appears to have encountered greater opposition to his messages of salvation. While Gideon Hawley reported in 1761 that the Mohegan missionary had been “well-received” during his sojourn among the Oneida in the summer and fall of that year, other accounts suggest that Occom’s preaching strategies included the condemnation of Iroquoian material goods and spiritual practices. In a letter directed to Eleazar Wheelock in 1761, Samuel Hopkins reported that, contrary to Hawley’s earlier letter, Occom had become “unpopular” among the Oneida owing to his insistence that they “must not cut their hair, but let it grow as the English do; that they must not wear their Indian ornaments or wampum… [and] that they must not feast at weddings as at the Birth and Baptism of their Children.” In a later letter, Hawley suggested that Occom should instead “strike at the root of evil, and suggest on heart religion,” and to “say little against their Indian [word illegible] and manner of dress,” indicating the validity of Hopkins’ account. Wheelock attributed Occom’s disrepute among the Oneida to the language barrier between the Mohegan minister and his Native audiences and to the poorly-skilled interpreter with whom he preached. According to Wheelock, “Mr. Occom found great Difficulty last Year in his Mission” and “his own Reputation suffered much by the Unfaithfulness of the
Man he employed.” Whether or not Occom’s interpreter conveyed intolerant and unintended messages concerning Oneida culture remains unclear, but sources suggest that at least to some extent, Occom coupled his message of salvation with a message promoting cultural adaptations and change.44

As spiritual leaders such as Occom and Ashpo endeavoured varyingly to pass on the salvation and New Light teachings that had revived spiritual power in their own communities, Algonquian teachers and school ushers intertwined Christian teaching with their efforts to instruct the Haudenosaunee in English literacy. Building on the power of the spoken word conveyed by Algonquian ministers, the schoolmasters who journeyed to New York hoped to instil a cursory knowledge of the English language in their pupils and to train them to read the Bible and other Christian texts. A number of the Algonquian youth and men who relocated to Iroquoia and ran schools for Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora students had witnessed the pivotal role of writing in dispossessing their families and communities from their own homelands, and formed part of a growing body of Algonquians who had obtained formal training in English. Although sent by Wheelock to Iroquoia to teach the tenets of Euro-American “civilization” and to further the goals of his school, these young instructors most likely viewed their efforts according to a different understanding of the power and uses of reading and writing. Learning of the infringements and land loss against which the Haudenosaunee also struggled, Native teachers perhaps saw their instruction as providing new tools to defend and protect the lands and livelihoods of their “benighted brethren.”

44 Gideon Hawley to Eleazar Wheelock, 19 September 1761, WP 761519; Samuel Hopkins to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 September 1761, WP 761530; Gideon Hawley to Eleazar Wheelock, 26 November 1767, WP 767626; Wheelock, A plain and faithful narrative, 23.
Instructing their Native pupils in English literacy proved difficult, however, owing to the linguistic barriers that existed between the Algonquian schoolmasters and their Iroquoian pupils. Confronting languages much different from their own, the Native teachers found themselves ill-equipped to converse with their pupils and were often forced to rely on interpreters for aid in basic communication. While Wheelock’s “grand design” hinged on the fluency in Iroquoian languages his Native and non-Native teachers were supposed to obtain from learning alongside their Oneida and Mohawk schoolmates at his school in Lebanon, in reality both Algonquian and Euro-American instructors possessed only a rudimentary understanding of the Iroquoian languages upon their arrival in New York. Despite such barriers, the Algonquian youth creatively endeavoured to introduce their Haudenosaunee pupils to new letters and words.

In some cases, Algonquian teachers looked to students and other villagers who possessed an understanding of their own languages to build common ground. At the multi-ethnic villages of southern Iroquoia, where both Iroquoian and Algonquian languages were spoken, Native teachers found opportunities to teach and instruct those with whom they could converse. Delaware Joseph Woolley began teaching at Onoquaga in 1764 and initially made slow progress in learning the language of his pupils. The multi-ethnic composition of the village—which included Delaware inhabitants—provided Woolley with opportunities to use his own native language in teaching reading and writing, however, and he quickly adjusted his goals in order to instruct those with whom he could communicate. In an account of his teaching progress in February 1765, the young schoolmaster noted that he had begun instructing “three young Men of the Dellaware Tribe, the one of which is half a Mohawk” in reading the Bible in English, and
that his pupils “made a good Proficiency.” Undeterred by the linguistic block that limited his interactions at Onoquaga, Woolley informed fellow missionary Samuel Kirkland in a letter that he “now intend[s] to stay here, until I get their language if I tarry two years.”

As Woolley struggled to learn the Iroquoian languages spoken at Onoquaga, he continued to draw on his fluency in his own Algonquian dialect to aid him in the varying circumstances he faced while in New York. During a visit to Johnson Hall in the summer of 1765, Woolley acted as an interpreter for Shawnee and Delaware leaders during their diplomatic meetings with Sir William Johnson, and had “the Honour of Interpreting those Letters & the Parchment in which the Covenant was written.” As his school at Onoquaga grew to twenty students by the fall of that year, Woolley also journeyed to neighbouring communities such as Chenango to visit kin and to strengthen networks with the Algonquian residents with whom he could more easily converse.45

At Haudenosaunee communities further north, however, Algonquian languages remained largely unknown and unspoken. Seeking to bridge the linguistic divide using other means, the Algonquian teachers who worked among the Mohawk and Oneida instead turned to hymn-singing to introduce their pupils to the English language. Singing represented a shared cultural link between Algonquian and Haudenosaunee communities, as music figured prominently in seasonal celebrations and communal rites in both of their homelands. The tradition of hymn-singing had emerged during the Great Awakening years, sparking controversy in New England churches where psalmody had previously dominated worship services, and had provided Algonquian Christians with new “modes

45 Joseph Woolley to Eleazar Wheelock, 9 February 1765, WP 765159.1; Joseph Woolley to Eleazar Wheelock, 6 July 1765, WP 765360.3; Pilkington, *Journals*, 17-18.
of religious expression” to exercise “agency and creativity.” Samson Occom boasted that Algonquian communities were “greatly Delighted and edified with Singing,” and that “in their Religious meetings round about here, Sing more than any Christians.” When Algonquian ministers and teachers settled among the Oneida and Mohawk in the 1760s, they turned to music and hymns as a means of instructing their pupils in both the New Light faith and the English language. Describing the practice of hymn-singing that spread between Algonquian and Iroquoian communities, Joanna Brooks notes that “diverse tribal peoples learned English language hymnody as an intertribal lingua franca.” Particularly at the Oneida towns of Old Oneida and Kanawarohare where English words and letters remained largely unfamiliar to inhabitants, Mohegan and Montaukett instructors employed hymn-singing in their schools to create a common ground for learning.

Teaching at the Oneida town of Kanawarohare in the mid-1760s, Montaukett teacher David Fowler relied heavily on hymn-singing to introduce his students to English. Although Fowler had trained at Wheelock’s school for several years before embarking on his teaching stint at Oneida, his instruction alongside the several Mohawk students who attended the school in Lebanon in the early 1760s apparently failed to equip him with a basic understanding of Iroquoian languages. Initially frustrated by his ignorance of the Oneida language, Fowler complained of the barrier between himself and his students and anticipated gaining an interpreter to solve the linguistic impasse. When the desired interpreter failed to materialize, however, the Montaukett teacher turned to hymn-singing as a strategy to communicate with his students and to instruct them in English. Fowler

47 Samson Occom to Benjamin Forfitt, 4 March 1771, OP, CHS.
readily applied his own experience with hymn-singing to his Oneida classroom, and used music as a tool to breakdown the communication barrier that limited his instruction. In the early reports he sent to New England, Fowler recounted the progress with which his “singing school” met, and the ability of the Oneida children to “carry 3 parts of several tunes.”

Following Fowler’s lead, Mohegan teacher Joseph Johnson, who also taught at the Oneida settlements, as well as Fowler’s younger brother Jacob, who served briefly as a schoolmaster among the Mohawks, similarly relied on singing as a vital tool of instruction and exchange. After Jacob began teaching at Canajoharie in 1766, he found that singing proved crucial in introducing new words and concepts to his Mohawk pupils. Celebrating a number of his students who attended his school and learned “very fast,” Jacob gauged his pupils’ progress according to their ability to sing hymns: “we can sing [a] good many Tunes with all three Parts.” Singing not only provided a tool for introducing the English language to Haudensaunee students, but likewise served as a teaching mechanism and vehicle of cultural exchange and sharing within the wider communities where the Algonquians taught. As Mohegan Joseph Johnson faced similar linguistic and cultural barriers during his teaching tenure in Oneida territory in 1767 and 1768, the young man held singing meetings that drew young and old alike to attend. Paralleling the efforts of Christian leaders who organized hymn-meetings at Mohegan and other Algonquian reserves, Johnson and other teachers began to arrange musical gatherings at the villages where they taught which offered their hosts new linguistic

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49 David Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 15 June 1765, WP 765360.3.
50 Jacob Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 28 November 1766, WP 766628.1
knowledge as well as exposure to Protestant Christian rites. In February of 1768, Johnson noted that his school at Old Oneida had grown to fourteen students and that his nightly singing school had likewise increased to “very full meetings” and attracted both children and adults.\footnote{Joseph Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 10 February 1768, WP 768160.}

Building on the oral recitation and memorization involved in singing, Algonquian teachers then incorporated instruction in spelling and eventually reading into their lessons as Haudenosaunee pupils became familiar with the sound and sight of English letters and words. While their own home communities began to use English literacy to defend and protect their lands against encroachment and abuse, teachers such as Fowler and Johnson struggled to communicate vital skills of reading and writing to their Haudenosaunee students with perhaps similar notions of communal protection and strength in mind. At the same time that Algonquian petitioners began to carry their own written pleas to authorities in New England, New York, and beyond, Algonquian schoolmasters trudged the arduous paths to Iroquoia carrying spelling books, catechisms, and other religious writings to aid their efforts to pass on literacy and Protestant instruction to their Oneida and Mohawk students.\footnote{McCallum, \textit{Letters}, 93.} Such texts perhaps appeared as a new form of power to Haudenosaunee pupils and their relatives, as Algonquian teachers continued to request that Wheelock send additional spelling books and Bibles during their time in Iroquoia.\footnote{David Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 26 February 1767, WP 767176.3.}

Incorporating written texts and English letters into their educational regimen, Algonquian teachers intertwined their instruction in literacy with Christian principles and
knowledge of the Bible. After working among the Oneida for more than a year, David Fowler celebrated the progress several of his students made in reaching the eighty-sixth page of their spelling book, as well as the advancement they made in learning to read from the New Testament. Recounting in a 1767 report that his “Scholars learn very fast,” the Montaukett teacher pointed out that “some of them have got to the twenty fourth Chapter of Matthew” in their reading.\footnote{David Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 26 February 1767, WP 767176.3.} Johnson’s work at Oneida similarly centred on introducing Haudenosaunee villagers to books and English literacy. While Johnson initially reported that only a small number of pupils attended his school at Old Oneida, he was encouraged when he found that they learned “very fast,” and vowed to do “all that Lays in my power to teach them in all thing I am capable of.” In the succeeding months, the school continued to grow and attracted two “married men,” one of whom Johnson claimed was “Old Enough for my father,” and the Mohegan teacher reported that “They all Learn very fast Booth Singing & Reading.”\footnote{Joseph Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 29 December 1767, WP 767679.2; Joseph Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 10 February 1768, WP 768160.} Alongside instruction in literacy, some Algonquians attempted to teach Haudenosaunee villagers male-based farming. While few records explicitly describe the tactics or strategies that Algonquian teachers employed in their agricultural instruction, passing references to livestock-keeping and crop cultivation suggest that Native New Englanders introduced some of the agricultural adaptations they had made in their own communities. During his time at Onoquaga, Joseph Woolley directed much of his energies towards learning the language of the villagers and to teaching his students to read, and yet his correspondence suggests that he also intended to model new subsistence strategies through keeping livestock. In the fall of 1765, the Delaware teacher wrote to Wheelock and informed him that “by next Spring I would be glad to know what Number of Cows I may have whether one or two” and noted his desire for familiar foods to improve his health. At Kanawarohare, David Fowler similarly attempted to incorporate new agricultural techniques and methods into village life, and offered both tools and instruction to his Oneida hosts. Upon arriving in Iroquoia in the fall of 1765, Fowler announced in one of his first reports his hopes of planting corn and a garden the following season—perhaps using the plough irons and “several other Things” he hauled with him to New York—and his desire to “tell my Children how they must manage the Garden in my Absence.” In the same report, however, Fowler noted that his school was “very small at present occasion’d by gathering Corn,” indicating the horticultural knowledge and skills that Oneida children already possessed from their participation in communal harvests. While crop cultivation and harvesting remained largely the role of Haudenosaunee women at Oneida,
Seeking to share the spiritual power and survival strategies their own communities had begun to adopt in New England, Algonquian ministers and teachers found themselves in circumstances and relationships which demanded adaptation, reciprocity, and learning. Far from a one-way venture, the missions to Iroquoia instead created new relations between the Algonquians and their host villages which exposed the teachers and ministers to lifeways that differed from their own, and which integrated the Algonquians into a larger network of faith and indigenous exchange. The records which describe the mission encounters—largely in the form of letters written by Algonquians and non-Native ministers to Wheelock—seemingly convey the efforts, both successful and unsuccessful, of Algonquian ministers and teachers to pass on their faith and education to their “benighted brethren” living in the southern and eastern territories of Iroquoia. Written often in submissive and self-abasing language, the mission accounts appear to defer to both Wheelock’s agenda and authority in the missionary venture, and to parrot Wheelock’s perspective of the “western herds” living in the “wilderness.” Some of the letters and written reports, however, offer glimpses into the complex exchanges upon

Fowler advocated that Haudenosaunee men should assume a larger role in agricultural production, insisting that “they would live better if they cultivate their Lands than they do now by Hunting & fishing.” The following year, Fowler requested Wheelock to send him money to buy a cow and some hogs, and relayed his ongoing efforts to instil new agricultural practices among the Oneida, which most likely emphasized male-oriented crop cultivation using the new implements he brought. While Fowler’s efforts to transform Haudenosaunee gender roles and planting methods seem to parallel the desires and instructions of his Euro-American counterparts, his insistence in promoting male-based husbandry was perhaps fuelled by his own experiences of poverty and encroachment on Long Island. Colonial officials frequently counted the number of male household heads in Algonquian communities throughout the eighteenth century, and used patriarchal notions of land-holding to deduce the amount of land necessary for Native reserves. Remarking that his desire to instruct the Oneida in new cultivation methods stemmed from his belief that “this is the only thing that will kept them togethers also it will make them multiply and thrive in the World,” Fowler perhaps hoped that the adjustment of gender roles and subsistence practices would help to stave off the encroachment and land loss that he and others suffered back home. WP 765530.4; 765523.4; 765360.3; 766652.2; 766652.2.
which the missions rested, and suggest the notable influence that the Haudenosaunee had upon their Algonquian visitors in their mundane daily encounters. As the Native ministers and teachers lived, slept, ate, worked, prayed, and sang alongside Haudenosaunee men, women, and children, they too participated in subsistence to survive, and learned to live off the lands and among the people that surrounded them. Drawn into new places, landscapes, and networks of relations, the Algonquian visitors modified their efforts to evangelize and instruct according to the challenges they often faced, and in many cases became the pupils of the Haudenosaunee leaders and villagers they worked and lived alongside.

Travelling to woods and waterways far from their own homelands, the Algonquian ambassadors joined in subsistence activities not unlike some of their own, and worked with Haudenosaunee villagers to provide food and materials for their communities. Confronting conditions of impoverishment and shortage in Oneida and Mohawk towns not unknown on their own reserves, Algonquian visitors often adapted their goals of preaching and teaching to the dire straits facing their host villages. In many villages Haudenosaunee women continued to plant and tend the “three sisters”—beans, corn, and squash—while men engaged in hunting and fishing in the forests and abundant waterways that flowed through their homelands. Although encroachments by military authorities and colonists had by mid-century infringed upon traditional hunting and fishing grounds, Native men, often accompanied by their families, continued to move around to obtain the protein their families required. While living in Iroquoia, some Algonquians joined in the seasonal journeys and relocations of their Haudenosaunee hosts. During his mission to the Oneida in 1762, for example, Occom participated in the
community’s travels in the early fall to hunt for deer and pigeons, as well as their efforts to fish on Lake Oneida. Following an early frost which damaged the corn crop at Oneida, Native men and women relied all the more heavily upon the meat and fish obtained from their hunting, and perhaps set out earlier and remained longer at their hunting and fishing camps to alleviate the loss of their harvest. Struggling to extend his offers of salvation as the Oneida hunted food for the coming winter, and encountering difficulties in gathering “a number together to preach to,” Occom nonetheless reported a “reformation” in the Natives who listened to him speak as he journeyed alongside them and shared the Gospel.\footnote{Eleazar Wheelock to George Whitefield, 16 September 1762, WP 762516; Wheelock, \textit{A plain and faithful narrative}, 22.}

Following in Occom’s footsteps, several years later Mohegan schoolmaster Joseph Johnson likewise joined in the hunting trips and subsistence activities that marked the seasonal rhythms at Oneida. After taking over David Fowler’s position as schoolmaster at Kanawarohare in 1768, Johnson accompanied the families of his students on their seasonal hunts rather than remaining at the schoolhouse with the few remaining pupils. In the spring of 1768, the Mohegan schoolmaster noted the dwindling number of students attending his lessons, and decided to participate in the hunt the following week, as most of his regular students would be leaving the village.\footnote{WP 768160; 768302.} Johnson described the seasons of “plenty and starving” that marked his time living among the Oneida and how his Haudenosaunee hosts relied on “rotten fish and bear” to season their corn dishes during severe food shortages.
Often struggling to survive together, many Haudenosaunee men and women incorporated the Algonquian visitors into the ceremonies and activities that marked village life. In some cases, Natives from New England lived in Haudenosaunee communities for several years and often relied upon their Mohawk or Oneida hosts for provision and shelter. Living arrangements often involved Haudenosaunee families adopting Algonquian visitors into their households temporarily or permanently, and the daily encounters of waking, eating, singing, learning, observing, and conversing most certainly forged new diplomatic and cross-cultural ties, if not friendships. The villagers at Onoquaga welcomed Joseph Woolley into their community in 1764 and provided him with shelter first at the household of a sachem, where he lived for three months, and later under the roof of another local family. While Woolley missed some of the familiar foods he had consumed while living at Wheelock’s school in New England, he noted that “the Indians behave kindly towards me [and] I am not in want, as to ashe-cakes & Corn & Beens.”

When the Delaware teacher contracted consumption and died at Onoquaga late in 1765, several chiefs in the village conveyed their grief at his passing and the attachment they felt towards him as a part of the community. “What hath befell us is very difficult,” the chiefs wrote to Wheelock, and “a very great loss to us indeed for he was a very Sober Man, [and] a very good Teacher.” Recounting that Woolley “understood ye Book well, which but a few do,” the Onoquaga leaders feared that “there are none will equal his place” and conveyed a profound sense of loss of “a very serious young Man but he is Dead which very much grieves our Hearts.”

58 Joseph Woolley to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 September 1765, WP 765530.4.
59 The Chiefs at Onoquaga to Eleazar Wheelock, 29 December 1765, WP 765679.
Oneida and Mohawk villagers similarly accepted Algonquian teachers into their longhouses, cabins, and communal spaces, and provided material support in recognition of their alliance and friendship. An elderly Mohawk woman opened her home to Jacob Fowler during his brief tenure at Canajoharie as a schoolmaster, and taught the young Montaukett about the principles of reciprocity and exchange. Fowler recounted that he was “well Contented to live here amongst these Indians in this Place, and they are very kind to me,” while another observer noted that at Fowler’s host’s household, “no friendship can long subsist without presents.” 60 Reciprocity formed the bedrock of relations between the Haudenosaunee within and across villages, and according to Daniel Richter, “status and authority went not simply to those who possessed the most but to those able to give away the most.” Exchanges of food and material goods knit kin groups together, and mutual obligations “structured the Iroquois village community.” 61 The reference to the “presents” that the Mohawk matron required of Fowler hints towards the practical exchanges in which he participated as a part of his incorporation into village life.

The neighbouring Oneida community of Kanawarohare accepted Jacob’s older brother David into the fabric of their village and provided him with material assistance and practical aid. Despite Fowler’s sporadic efforts to instruct his students in male-based horticulture in addition to his teaching, in times of shortage and want the Montaukett schoolmaster relied on the Oneidas’ survival skills and knowledge of the land to stay alive. While Fowler shared some of his corn yield with members of the Oneida community in 1766, by the summer of 1767 food shortages and starving conditions had

60 WP 766627, 766628.1.
61 Richter, Ordeal, 22.
struck all living in the area. Samuel Kirkland described the Oneidas as “almost starved to Death,” and worried about his own survival after “hav[ing] eat no Flesh in my own House for nigh eight Weeks.” Both Fowler and Kirkland turned to Oneida subsistence strategies to endure the famine, and travelled alongside their Haudenosaunee friends to Lake Oneida to catch eels for food. Recounting the pilgrimages he and Fowler regularly made to one of the many fishing sites in the Oneida’s homeland, Kirkland related that “from Week to Week I am obliged to go Eeling with the Indians at Onoida Lake for my Subsistence. I have lodged and slept with them till I am as lousy as a Dog—feasted and starved with them, as their Luck depends upon Wind and Weather.” During one such fishing venture at the lake, Fowler’s wife Hannah, who had remained at Kanawarohare during her husband’s absence, went into labour and delivered the couple’s first child. “David Fowler sat out about 12 Days ago…for the sake of Eeling,” Kirkland wrote, and “His Wife’s Hour being somewhat sooner than was expected, called for Womens Help, and is now hearty, with a stately young Boy in her Lap.” Relying on the knowledge, support, and material assistance of the Oneida women in the village, Hannah delivered her son into the firm hands of Haudenosaunee friends and neighbours who aided her in her time of need, and whose supportive actions further knit the Montaukett visitors into the community where they lived.

As daily survival strategies tied Algonquian visitors to Haudenosaunee communities and local sites of provision, Native missionaries participated with their Oneida and Mohawk hosts in the rich ceremonial patterns that shaped the cultural

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landscape of Iroquoia. While some Algonquians joined the Haudenosaunee in hunting and fishing in their homelands, other Native visitors witnessed and joined in the condolence rituals and diplomatic meetings that shaped village life. Since the founding of the Great League of Peace and Power, most likely in the late fifteenth century, Haudenosaunee villagers had practised ceremonies of condolence to remove the grief that came with the death of a relative and to channel emotions in such a way so as to re-establish reason and prevent conflict and warfare. Condolence ceremonies represented “symbolic acts of communal unity and spiritual power” and served to “cleanse sorrowing hearts and to ease the survivors’ return to normal life.”64 While such rituals functioned to strengthen and maintain unity between members of the Five Nations, after the arrival of Europeans Haudenosaunee leaders extended their ceremonial protocol to address the conflicts that arose between themselves and the colonizers and to maintain alliances with European powers.

During his first mission journey into Iroquoia, Occom participated in a condolence ritual convened to make reparations for the murder of a Dutch colonist at the hands of an Oneida man. Attending alongside Sir William Johnson and more than thirty Oneida and Tuscarora sachems, Occom listened as the Oneida speaker Conoghquieson announced to the assembly, “We are come hither to wipe away your tears, clear your Speech, and condole with you for your late loss,” and explained to Johnson that “By taking these measures we keep up the ancient Custom Subsisting between you and the five Nations of immediately condoling with each other…whereby we preserve the Convenant Chain

64 Richter, Ordeal, 31-33.
While Occom would have been familiar with the strings of wampum exchanged by the Oneida speaker and Johnson to symbolize and preserve a record of the words being spoken, the ritualized process of atoning for death and maintaining alliances through such a particular protocol lacked a comparable counterpart in Algonquian ceremonial life. As the Mohegan missionary witnessed, however, such diplomatic proceedings had begun to founder as British authorities increasingly insisted on the execution of their own notions of justice to rectify such conflicts. The two sides “finally Brock up, without being fully Satisfied,” Occom recounted, “for the Indians Insisted upon an old agreement that was Settled between them and the English formerly…But Sir William told them it was the Comand of General Amherst, that the murderer sho[uld] be delivered up to Justice.”

Several years later, Occom again participated in a condolence ritual during a mission to Iroquoia and witnessed the persistent use of Haudenosaunee ceremonies to maintain both kin and cross-cultural unity. In the spring of 1765, following a famine among the Seneca Nation, Samuel Kirkland along with several Senecas journeyed to the Mohawk River to obtain supplies and provisions for their starving communities. Upon arriving in the Mohawk homeland, several members of the party became ill and died, including a Seneca sachem’s wife and two of the sachem’s children. Occom, who was present among the Mohawk, joined in the grieving and ceremonies that followed the loss,

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65 OIA, Reel C-1221, Vol. 1824, 45-52, LAC.
and later noted, “I was at the Burying of the Sachems Wife, and the Nex Day Sir William Condoled the Death of the Queen in a Solemn Manner according to the Indian Custom.”

Spiritual ambassadors like Occom not only witnessed the grieving protocols of their Haudenosaunee hosts, but in some cases joined in the diplomatic networks and communication exchanges of the Six Nations. At the conclusion of his first mission trip among the Oneida in the fall of 1761, Occom recorded in his diary that after preaching to a large assembly, “three heads of ye castle...returned thanks by a Belt of Wampum.” While Joanna Brooks states that Occom himself received one belt of wampum from the Oneidas and Tuscaroras to “affirm and commemorate their relationship,” the Mohegan missionary presented another belt to the SSPCK on behalf of the Oneidas along with an oral message he memorized. Relating to the mission society the gratitude and welcome the Haudenosaunee extended to him as a religious instructor, Occom also informed the SSPCK of several requests on their behalf. Relaying to the mission society that his Oneida and Tuscarora friends desired that their land be protected, the Mohegan minister also related their request that “strong drink may be prohibited, that it may not be brought among us, for we find it kills our Bodies and Souls.” In allowing Occom to act as their diplomatic representative before Euro-American authorities, Oneida and Tuscarora leaders most likely instructed him in the material and oral messages he was to convey to the SSPCK and in so doing, included the Mohegan minister in the customs and exchange networks that shaped their daily lives.

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67 Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 74-75.
68 Ibid., 263.
69 Ibid., 263, n 39.
70 Eleazar Wheelock to George Whitefield, 25 November 1761, WP 761625.1. See also Love, 92-94.
As ministers such as Occom attended condolence rituals, or teachers such as David Fowler and Joseph Johnson fished and hunted in company with students and their relatives, they became part of a larger exchange of spiritual practices and faith. While seeking to convey their own knowledge of God through sermons and songs, Algonquian visitors encountered a vibrant faith world in Iroquoia that included Christian beliefs and practices that paralleled their own. Algonquian missionaries quickly discovered that their offers of Christian salvation fell on ears already familiar with messages of sin and sacrifice, and contributed to the diverse and dynamic mix of spiritual beliefs and practices to which Mohawk, Oneida, and other villagers adhered. For Algonquian ministers and teachers who had been trained in the tenets of evangelical Protestant Christianity, encounters with Catholic Christian practices in Iroquoia presented differing notions of ritual and faith that sometimes clashed with their own. Sir William Johnson described the Haudenosaunee in the 1760s as “fond of pomp & ceremonies,” and noted that French missionary efforts enjoyed considerable success in Iroquoian communities owing to the tolerance the French demonstrated towards the ways of the “Warrior” and “Hunter.”

Finding “French influences” and Catholic teachings at work in the villages where they ministered, Algonquian teachers and preachers confronted understandings of the Christian faith that diverged from their own New Light conceptions of sin, salvation, and divine grace. In his early visits to the Oneida, Occom received specific instructions from the SSPCK encouraging the Mohegan missionary to prevent any “French or Roman Catholick Emissary’s to come amongst them” and to instruct the Natives in the

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“Principles of the Christian Religion” according to Protestant understandings. While Occom neglected to report any encounters with Catholic practices during his initial journeys to Oneida, he recounted meeting with a “Preast” in Schenectady, New York, who treated him “very Kindly [and] gave me a Mohaque Book” to aid him in his linguistic training.

The hopes of Anglo-American mission societies to squelch the French influence in Iroquoia in most cases met with frustration, as Catholic ambassadors continued to visit and minister in Haudenosaunee communities and to receive favourable responses to their teaching. Euro-American missionary Theophilus Chamberlain, who had attended Wheelock’s school and worked among the Mohawks, complained in 1766 of the French priests who visited the Mohawks twice a year to give “them the sacrament of the Lords supper [and]…assures them their sins are pardoned, and leave[s] them to practice wickedness in Perfect Security.” Mohegan Joseph Johnson likewise witnessed the ongoing influence of “french principles” at Kanawarohare and bemoaned the negative spiritual examples the Oneida received from their Dutch and German neighbours. “They can get drunk and practise all manner of Evil and at last Expect to Enter the long house which the[y] call heaven, Some where towards the south,” Johnson observed, as “this is the Heaven which the French friers have promised them.” Perhaps in keeping with persistent French influences and the growing suspicion many Haudenosaunee communities held towards English settlers and their land schemes, in some cases villagers

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72 Instructions from the SSPCK to Occom, 1762?, OP, CHS.
73 Brooks, Collected Writings, 263.
74 Theophilus Chamberlain to Eleazar Wheelock, 3 October 1766, WP 766553.
75 Joseph Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 2 May 1768, WP 768302.
resisted the efforts of Algonquians to instruct them in English. When Joseph Woolley arrived at Onoquaga in the mid-1760s, he encountered reticence from some community members towards his efforts to teach English literacy. As one of the village sachems explained to the Delaware teacher, many of his people “knew how to read and write in their own Language already” and he was “not willing they should be taught any other Tongue besides their own.”

French accommodations to Haudenosaunee culture perhaps fostered the continuance of older ceremonial and spiritual practices alongside newer Christian beliefs. At the villages where Algonquians ministered, dreams and an awareness of spiritual powers continued to shape the beliefs of Haudenosaunee Christians and non-Christians alike. In 1762 an Onondaga chief explained to Sir William Johnson that “One of our People lately in a vision was told by the Great Spirit above, that when He first made the World, He gave this large Island to the Indians for their Use.” The Onondaga leader went on to warn Johnson that, according to this vision, the “white people” who tried to claim “large possessions” of “our country” would be punished “if They did not desist.” Belief in the power of dreams, visions, and spiritual beings mingled easily with Christian beliefs at Haudenosaunee communities, and Algonquian visitors found that Native Christians often positioned long-standing cultural beliefs beside Gospel teachings. At Oneida villages through the 1760s, an awareness of other-than-human beings and messages conveyed in dreams informed the practices of Native Christians. The Oneida sachem and Christian leader Thomas recounted to visiting missionaries the dreams and visions he

76 Joseph Woolley to Eleazar Wheelock, 9 February 1765, WP 765159.1.
77 OIA, Reel C-1222, Vol. 1824, 299-300, LAC.
experienced regarding the spread of the Gospel among other Haudenosaunee communities, particularly the Onondaga. In one such dream, the Oneida Christian saw “that a Candle was lighted up at Onondaga, that it was Raised up high, and the Brightness of it [was] great.” While the Onondagas in Thomas’ dream “tried to beat it down, by shooting at it, [and] casting stones &c.,” the Oneida sachem recounted that “all their Endeavours were in vain,” and “the Brightness of it Increased.”

As Algonquian visitors encountered a diverse mix of spiritual practices among the Haudenosaunee that combined Catholic, Protestant, and indigenous teachings, they also discovered Native leaders who shared their own Protestant evangelical convictions and who directed their villages in worship and the teaching of the Christian faith. Rather than acting alone, Algonquian visitors instead likely collaborated with Christian ministers and leaders living at the Oneida and multi-ethnic communities they visited, and assisted them in their preaching, teaching, and worship efforts in the villages where they ministered.

Owing to several years of exposure to missionary teachings as well as their own efforts to

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78 Journal of Ralph Wheelock, April 1768, WP 768290. The Algonquian ministers and teachers who visited and worked among the Haudenosaunee continued to revere and attribute significance to dreams and visions as well, and perhaps found a more accepting and tolerant outlet among Iroquoian Christians than churchgoers in New England. Joseph Johnson recorded being “much troubled in dreams” about Wheelock while at Kanawarohare, which he attributed to his “Indian principles,” and Occom likewise noted in his journal on at least one occasion that a “remarkable dream” had put him “much upon thinking of the End of my Journey.” As visions and dreams punctuated their own spiritual exercises in Iroquoia, the Algonquian ambassadors perhaps encountered other spiritual beings feared and revered by their students and neighbours. At the Oneida community, village leaders maintained an awareness of witches and evil powers present in their villages, which they most likely saw as a threat to Christian believers and visiting ministers. In 1768, Christian leader Isaac along with several others witnessed a turkey, an eagle, and an owl “whom they believed to be witches” land in a tree outside of a house at Kanawarohare during a hymn-gathering and later, in a tree outside of missionary Samuel Kirkland’s residence, where the birds remained a “considerable time” and “made a considerable noise.” Isaac believed that the witches came from “Onondaga or Some Other Tribe which had been alarmed” by the recent preaching efforts of Euro-American missionaries, but the Christian sachem “blessed God that witches had never been permitted to hurt English men, or Christians.” See Joseph Johnson to Eleazar Wheelock, 2 May 1768, WP 768302; Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 334; WP, 768290.
obtain English education, by the 1760s a small cadre of Native Christian leaders had emerged in these villages who taught new spiritual principles to kin and neighbours by preaching, exhorting, and directing communal gatherings.

When Joseph Woolley and missionary Samuel Kirkland arrived at Onoquaga in 1764, for example, they were welcomed by Gwedelhes Agwelondongwas, an Oneida war chief and member of the Eel Clan, and a professing Christian. Known in English as “Good Peter,” Kirkland remarked that his name derived from his “religious character,” and recorded in his journal that the Oneida leader “made some remarks upon my mission to the Senekas” and “from his very heart he wished God the Father & his son Jesus Christ to be with me and protect me.”

According to one observer, Good Peter adopted Christianity in the mid-1750s after the death of his father, and began to preach at Onoquaga shortly thereafter. During the visits of Protestant missionaries in the early 1760s, Good Peter assumed a leading role in organizing a church in the village, and also recruited children to attend Wheelock’s school in Connecticut. In the spring of 1764, Good Peter planned to join Ashpo on a mission to the Onondagas to recruit more students for Wheelock’s school, but no records indicate whether the men executed their intended journey to the central fire of the longhouse or not.

Chiefs Adam Waonwanoron and Isaac Dakayenensere assisted Good Peter in his spiritual direction at Onoquaga and other nearby settlements through their efforts at prayer, exhorting, and requesting ministers to visit their community. During his visit to

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79 Pilkington, Journals, 3; see also Pointer, 145-46.
80 Gideon Hawley to Andrew Oliver, 20 May 1761, Ms N-1379, Box 1, Folder 4, MHS.
81 Eleazar Wheelock to George Whitefield, 24 February 1764, WP 764174.
the Susquehanna settlement in the summer of 1762, Euro-American missionary Eli Forbes noted occasions during which both men preached and spoke, and Forbes assisted Isaac in “gathering” a church and drawing up a covenant for the eleven members who joined during his stay. Gideon Hawley likewise remarked on the vibrant indigenous Christian leadership among the communities of southern Iroquoia, describing the “divine service” led by Isaac and the regular preaching efforts of Peter. When a delegation from Onoquaga gathered at Johnson Hall in 1764, Isaac and Adam spoke before Sir William Johnson regarding the growing political unrest and divisions that marked their community and others, and went on to reaffirm the new power and spiritual practices that underlined their leadership as chiefs. Isaac recounted to the superintendent of Indian Affairs that he had “made it my Business, as soon as I had an Opportunity, to learn Letters, and as much of the Christian Religion as I possibly could, and have endeavored all in my power to spread it amongst our People.” The Oneida chief confessed the difficulty of such a task, as “many who are Babtized, and profess themselves Christians, still follow Evil [and]…they do not regard the Ten Commandments,” but he remained “determined to follow the Words of Jesus Christ as near as I can.”

Christian leaders such as Peter, Adam, and Isaac preached and visited kin at Oneida communities further north, alongside local leaders who had embraced Christianity there too. Algonquian visitors such as Occom, Fowler, and Johnson found their presence and teaching efforts welcomed by some Mohawk and Oneida villagers who had already adopted the tenets of Protestant Christianity and had begun leading church services.

82 Eli Forbes, Diary in Ames Almanac (1762), Microfilm P-363, reel 4.3, MHS.
83 Gideon Hawley to Andrew Oliver, 20 May 1761, Ms N-1379, Box 1, Folder 4, MHS.
84 OIA, reel c-1222, vol. 1825, 65-66, LAC.
among their people. Perhaps most notable, the Oneida chief known as King Domus, or Deacon Thomas, directed Christian worship and teaching at Oneida and Mohawk settlements and visited and preached at the multi-ethnic towns of southern Iroquoia too. Thomas assisted Wheelock in recruiting Haudenosaunee children to attend Moor’s, including his own nephew and daughter, and visited New England on several occasions. While Wheelock attributed Thomas’ adoption of Christianity to Samuel Kirkland’s work among the Oneida, the Oneida leader had been baptized by the early 1760s, suggesting that his acceptance of Christian teachings occurred earlier. In the summer of 1767, during a gathering of Oneida and Mohawk chiefs at Johnson Hall, Thomas led a Sabbath service in “Indian,” and among those who attended “all behaved with much decency.”

Preaching in his own language, overseeing condolence ceremonies, and seeking to extend the Christian faith to his Onondaga neighbours, Thomas, like Isaac, Adam, and Peter intertwined new spiritual teachings with his political authority as a sachem, and offered Algonquian missionaries collaboration and support in their efforts to preach the Gospel to his people.

Paving the way for their preaching and teaching efforts, Haudenosaunee Christians also provided the Algonquian visitors with spiritual guidance and direction, and offered acceptance and pardon for their own spiritual struggles and difficulties. Far from their home communities and often under pressure to live up to Wheelock’s standards for the “design,” young teachers in particular found themselves struggling with their own faith and the burden of Christian leadership and authority in the communities.

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85 Hawley to Oliver, 1761, MHS.
86 OIA, reel c-1222, vol. 1825, 449, LAC.
where they taught. Conditions of impoverishment, inconsistent attendance at their schools, and tense relationships with fellow Euro-American ministers all worked to generate discouragement and frustration among teachers such as Joseph Johnson and David Fowler, and in some cases they responded by rebelling against Wheelock’s vision for their mission.

After teaching at the Oneida communities of Old Oneida and Kanawarohare for nearly two years, for example, Johnson underwent a bout of drinking and misconduct which eventually led him to abandon his work in Iroquoia. According to Samuel Kirkland’s report of the incident, Johnson allegedly turned “pagan” for a week, “painted” himself—perhaps according to the practices of his Oneida hosts—and engaged in dancing and drinking in the community more than once in the fall of 1768. As Johnson himself confessed in a letter to Wheelock, on three occasions he “indulged [himself] in Brutish Ease…which was Occasioned by the temptation of the Devil and together with the Distresses of my mind.” While Kirkland, who was ministering among the Oneida with Johnson, went on to condemn the Mohegan teacher for his actions and described him to Wheelock as in the “Devil’s service,” Christians at Oneida might have been more empathetic and willing to forgive the struggles of the Mohegan youth. After Johnson’s third spell of drunkenness, which came to the attention of the Oneida community, the Christian leader Thomas “advised” the Mohegan teacher to “publickly [make a] Confession as is their Custom.” Perhaps at a gathering of Oneida leaders, students, and other villagers, Johnson subsequently apologized for his misdeeds, and those who attended “promised as it were to Bury in Oblivion and let things be as if it never happened.” While Johnson shortly afterwards decided to return to New England, he
perhaps left encouraged by the ceremony and the sense of restitution he received from
Thomas and other community members.  

Johnson’s departure from Oneida by 1769 signalled the larger unravelling of
Wheelock’s missionary venture in Iroquoia, but his exit did not sever Algonquian ties to
Haudenosaunee communities. The cross-cultural relationships that emerged from the
Algonquian missions to Iroquoia instead created a new corridor of exchange and
interaction across the space of the northern colonies that spilled beyond the defined
“wilderness” and encompassed Algonquian homelands as well. By the early 1770s,
Wheelock faced increasing hostility from Oneida and Mohawk communities who
opposed the harsh treatment their children suffered at his school, strained relations with
Sir William Johnson who favoured his own Anglican affiliations over the teaching of
dissenters, and reprimands from Haudenosaunee leaders for his son’s tactless conduct in
evangelizing the Onondaga. While a number of Oneidas continued to receive Christian
instruction from Samuel Kirkland, who carried on his missionary work among them in the

87 WP 768678.2, 768679. Johnson was not the only schoolmaster to rebel against Wheelock. Despite
Wheelock’s best efforts to control the decisions and actions of the missionaries who served among the
Haudenosaunee, the limits of his power became strikingly visible when Algonquian men acted apart from
his consent and in ways that departed from the ideals of the mission. In the summer of 1767, for example,
David Fowler decided to leave his post at Kanawarohare and return to his family on Long Island, a decision
he reached independent of Wheelock’s approval. Convicted that he had treated his parents “basely” in the
brief visits he had made to his village during his tenure at Oneida, Fowler also desired to return to his island
homeland in order to teach at Montauk, where he learned that “they are sincerely desireous for a School
Master to come amongst them.” Upon hearing of a “misfortune” that struck his sister Phebe—presumably
some sort of sickness or physical ailment—Fowler confirmed his plan and decided “himself as soon as
possible to return” to Long Island “w[ith] his Wife & Child,” and left the mission post in July. Failing to
obtain Wheelock’s approval of his decision, Fowler’s relationship with the minister became strained in the
succeeding months when Wheelock refused to reimburse the Montaukett teacher for the tools he left at the
mission with Kirkland. WP 766121.2, 767328.1, 767424, 767667.4.

88 Murray, To Do Good, 55-57; WP 772174.2, WP 772331; Sir William Johnson to Thomas Hutchinson, 21
August 1771, Miscellaneous Bound Manuscripts Collection, MHS.
following decades, many Natives became increasingly aware of the disrepute their religious affiliations generated in the wider Confederacy. “We are despised by our brethren, on account of our Christian profession,” one Oneida leader noted in 1772, and “now we are looked upon as small things.”

Although a number of Oneidas—predominantly the warriors and their supporters—remained adherents to the faith, several hereditary village chiefs and others remained opposed to the Gospel and Kirkland’s subsequent work among them.

By the early 1770s, Wheelock largely abandoned his “grand design” and turned his attention towards his increasingly Euro-dominated school that he relocated to Hanover, New Hampshire. While perhaps seeing his efforts to remedy the “savagery” of Iroquoia and to create a permanent religious and educational presence there as largely unsuccessful, Wheelock likely perceived the missions to New York much differently than the Algonquian participants. Those who returned to their coastal communities from Iroquoia carried with them broadened understandings of land, community, colonial struggles, and the Christian faith. For Algonquian ministers such as Samson Occom and Samuel Ashpo, their ventures into Iroquoia not only produced new ties with fellow Christians and leaders in Haudenosaunee communities, but also strengthened their roles as spiritual leaders at their own Mohegan community and others in southern New England. As they continued to maintain friendships with Haudenosaunee leaders and friends who visited Mohegan or sent messages and wampum belts to New England, Occom and Ashpo assumed greater authority as preachers in Algonquian communities.

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89 McCallum, Letters, 282.
90 For more on the factions that emerged among the Oneida during the eighteenth century, see Campisi, “Oneida,” in Handbook, 482-83; Murray, To Do Good, 175.
and strengthened the faith networks and Christian fellowship linking Native villages together.\footnote{During the 1760s and 1770s, Haudenosaunee visitors began to appear in Algonquian towns to visit the ministers and teachers, or sent letters and wampum to southern New England communities to relay information. Following his first mission to Iroquoia, Occom returned to Montauk accompanied by an Oneida man who planned to spend the winter in Occom’s household in order to learn English and to instruct the Mohegan in the Mohawk language. When Oneida and Mohawk leaders and parents journeyed to Connecticut to bring their children to Wheelock’s school, they often visited Algonquian communities during their stay to see friends and learn news. In 1767, Oneida sachem Thomas, accompanied by Joseph Johnson, visited Native communities in Connecticut and lodged with the Mohegan sachem during his visit. The following year, Occom described the visits of four Oneidas to Mohegan after he returned from his fundraising tour in Britain on behalf of Wheelock’s school, and recalled that “they heard of my arrival and they wanted to See me, and So they Came Down.” WP 761625.1, 767558.2; Brooks, Collected Writings, 82.}

While Ashpo and Occom preached and travelled between Native settlements in southern New England in the aftermath of the missions, schoolmasters such as David and Jacob Fowler, and Joseph Johnson assumed new leadership roles too. Participating in the missions to Iroquoia as youth and young men, by the early 1770s they drew on their previous experiences and began to preach and teach in Algonquian communities in southern New England, apart from Wheelock’s direction, and to support local efforts to protect reserve lands from encroachment and fraud. Facing hostile relations from colonial authorities and Euro-American neighbours, these men began to consider new possibilities for overcoming the land loss and impoverishment they suffered in New England, and to look to the lands of Iroquoia where they had lived and taught as a place of potential relief and relocation. Even as these teachers, along with Algonquian ministers, worked to strengthen Native education and Christian community in southern New England, they maintained poignant memories and diplomatic ties with the lands and people of Iroquoia. By creating and renewing alliances between Haudenosaunee and
Algonquian communities, and by fostering relationships of cultural exchange, the missions to Iroquoia produced an intertribal landscape that, far from taming the “western wilderness” and its “lawless herds,” instead paved the way for future Native collaboration in the face of growing colonial control.
CHAPTER SIX

‘This Evening had a meeting here’: Community, Place, and the Inter-Village Network of Faith

Eight years after Occom’s last journey to Iroquoia, the Mohegan minister directed a letter to Eleazar Wheelock expressing his interest in resuming his mission work among the Mohawk and Oneida. The intervening years since his last trip had been both busy and trying for Occom, marked by his move from Montauk to Mohegan, his two-year long tour of Britain to raise funds for Wheelock’s school, and his growing involvement in the land disputes in which his community was embroiled against the colony of Connecticut.

Writing from his home at Mohegan in the summer of 1772, Occom informed Wheelock that “if I Shoud go on a Mission, I Shou’d not pretend to Set out till next Spring,” and that he hoped to follow the tradition established in his earlier journeys of taking one of his brothers-in-law with him. Occom quickly pointed out to Wheelock, however, that he had “work enough” at Mohegan and neighbouring villages to perform, and that he “might preach every Day I have So many Calls.” The day before he wrote this letter, Occom had visited the Pequot community at Stonington and preached to a “great number of People” during a “Solemn Meeting.” “I believe ye Lord was there,” Occom relayed to Wheelock, evidenced by the “flow of Tears from the bigest part of the People most all the afternoon.” According to the Mohegan minister, both the large crowds and enthusiastic responses had appeared in the “many Places Where I have been Preaching lately.”

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1 Samson Occom to Eleazar Wheelock, 13 July 1772, WP 772413.2.

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Occom’s brief account of his preaching activities not only indicates his growing leadership and popularity as a minister, but illuminates the emergence of a wider Christian network that linked Algonquian villages together by the late 1760s and early 1770s. In the years following the missions to Iroquoia, a geography of faith flourished in Algonquian New England that flowed from the common evangelical beliefs and practices of many Native Christians and their shared efforts to defend their homelands against colonial intruders.\(^2\) As those who had ministered and taught at Oneida and Mohawk settlements returned to their home villages and shared their experiences with those who had not, they joined other Algonquian Christians in creating and directing churches and schools located on their reserves and strengthened Native leadership in matters of learning and faith. With growing frequency Algonquians travelled the well-worn paths and roads linking their villages in southern New England to join together in singing, exhortation, and prayer, and turned to their own churches and leaders for spiritual authority rather than Euro-American ones. Their collective and individual practices of faith inscribed sacred meaning onto the lands where they lived and overlaid mundane and daily activities with spiritual significance. Challenging colonial constructions of “tribal” boundaries and identities, the inter-communal fellowship revitalized ties between villages and kin groups and asserted the ongoing power and importance of homelands that transcended the specific reservations and colonies in which they lived.

\(^2\) Jon Sensbach has similarly argued that a “geography of faith” emerged among slaves on the island of St. Thomas in the eighteenth century as those who adopted Christianity travelled “the Path”—a road running across the island—between their plantations to worship and convene together. See Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*, 81.
The strengthening of pre-existing ties between Algonquian villages that sprang from their common faith reflected changing patterns of Native authority as Algonquians increasingly directed spiritual affairs within their own communities and at neighbouring villages. Equally as significant, the growing spiritual unity that linked villages together also indicated the persistent tensions that existed within communities and between Algonquians and colonial authorities. At the Mohegan and Narragansett communities in particular, faith and politics remained intertwined throughout the 1760s as ministers and their evangelical followers challenged the traditional authority of their sachems and created new nexuses of spiritual and communal leadership within their reserves. In some ways paralleling the broader religious divides between New Lights and Old Lights in colonial society, struggles over governance, belonging, and authority played out in Sabbath services, schoolhouses, and hymn-gatherings on reserves, and reflected divergent conceptions of community and land. Such tensions spilled beyond reserves and touched Euro-Americans too, as Algonquian ministers and congregants disputed the spiritual authority of neighbouring ministers and exposed their questionable interests in Native lands. Similar to the disputes between New Lights and Old Lights among Euro-American believers, Algonquian ministers and churches resisted the teachings of local ministers when they conflicted with their own beliefs and, more importantly, their efforts to protect their lands.

Joining together with Algonquian believers from other villages for singing and Sabbath services, then, offered spiritual solidarity and a new sense of community for people facing divisions and disputes within their own reserves. Such ties were not free from tensions and strains, however, as varying notions of faith, religious practice, and
place emerged at worship gatherings. Although many Algonquian believers continued to root their Christian faith in the soils of their homelands, a number began to look for a spiritual haven beyond their shrinking territories in southern New England. As struggles for land and autonomy persisted into the 1770s, a growing number of Native Christians instead looked towards a new spiritual homeland far removed from the places of their ancestors which would allow them to practise their faith free from the tentacles of colonial dispossession and control.

Over the past decades ethnohistorians and other scholars have increasingly recognized the moral significance and power of place within Native societies and the histories of colonization. Exploring how landscapes impinge on the beliefs and actions of First Peoples and their relationships to each other, scholars have highlighted the dynamic nature of both community and place. Rather than “inert containers,” as Margaret Rodman has pointed out in her work on Melanesian cultures, places represent “ politicized” and “socially constructed” entities, and remain laden with “multiple and local constructions.” Kerry Abel’s study of community formation and dynamics in northern Ontario likewise describes community as a “historical process” that incorporates the “imagined ideals, economic, political, and social structures inherited from other times and places,” as well as “individual responses” and relationships with the physical environment. From her work among the Lumbee of North Carolina, Karen Blu suggests that “Native American cultural constructions of space and place have rarely been accomplished in complete
isolation,” but instead “are subject to change, and can most fruitfully be discussed as products of interactions, competing views, negotiations, and struggles.”

Scholars examining Algonquian communities following the Great Awakening have similarly begun to address the complex intersection of Christianity, community, and place in their discussions of the struggles and conflict that shaped Native villages by the mid-eighteenth century. As of yet, however, few have fully explored the divergent and often conflicting understandings of faith and place that developed within inter-village networks, Algonquian communities, Native churches, or even among individual believers. While evangelical Christianity revitalized cross-communal worship and fuelled the ongoing defence of land, Christian beliefs and the mobile power of the Holy Spirit also inspired many Algonquians to consider leaving southern New England permanently and to form a new faith community elsewhere. Offering Native adherents multiple, rather than singular, ways to respond to the harsh reality of dispossession and impoverishment on their reserves, Christianity provided believers with new ways of thinking about community and faith that extended beyond their coastal homelands. As their faith became an impetus to both stay and go, by the mid-1770s divisive understandings of community and homeland threatened to unravel the ties that believers had forged across the landscape of southern New England in the preceding years.

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4 Looking at the land dispute at Mohegan, for example, Laura Murray has suggested that conflicts in the community “often played out between Christians,” while Joanna Brooks argues that the revivals in New England generated a new culture of “Christian Indian separatism” that set Native believers apart from colonial authorities. See Murray, “What Did Christianity do for Joseph Johnson?,” 166-67; Brooks, Collected Writings, 13.
In the decades following the evangelical revivals, Algonquians began to establish their own churches, assemblies, and schools for worship and learning on their reserves. During the Awakening, a number of Native men and women had joined Euro-American churches, and looked to non-Native ministers for both spiritual instruction and educational provisions. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, a variety of circumstances compelled Algonquian believers to create their own bodies for worship and to entrust sacred teaching to their own spiritual leaders. During the 1760s, a number of Mohegans abandoned David Jewett’s Congregational Church in New London’s North Parish and began to hold services on their reserve instead. Discovering that Jewett supported Connecticut’s claims to Mohegan lands, Mohegan ministers such as Samuel Ashpo, Samson Occom, and others formed their own separate body for worship and spiritual encouragement apart from the Euro-American church. At Narragansett and Montauk, community members built formal meetinghouses to shelter their spiritual gatherings, and listened to Native preachers direct them in prayer, singing, and biblical instruction.5

As Algonquian youth began to attend Wheelock’s Charity School in Lebanon, and Algonquian emissaries embarked on missions to Iroquoia, the experiences of schooling and intercultural diplomacy worked to generate a drive for Native-based education and religious authority on their reserves. Building on the leadership that had emerged following the Awakening, men such as Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, and David and Jacob Fowler returned from their mission journeys and began to preach and teach at their own communities and neighbouring ones. Other notable community leaders, such as

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5 Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 13; Samuel Buell to Eleazar Wheelock, 14 September 1761, WP 761514.
Samuel Niles, Henry Quaquiquid, John Cooper, and others who had not participated in
the missions to Iroquoia also itinerated between Algonquian reserves and offered their
spiritual direction and teaching to fellow Christians. As members of the generation that
had adopted New Light Christianity during the revivals, these men (along with ministers
such as Occom and Ashpo) served as models to younger Christians such as David Fowler
and Joseph Johnson by directing spiritual affairs and preaching in Algonquian
communities. While new literacy skills offered Algonquian men and women tools for
communicating with each other across the bounded colonial landscape, Native-led
churches and schools became the vital sites where Algonquians joined together for face-
to-face interactions which strengthened their faith and demarcated sacred space.

The church at Narragansett, which Algonquian men and women founded in the
years following the Great Awakening under the leadership of Samuel Niles, became by
the 1760s a place of both communal solidarity and inter-village connectedness.
Physically located in the heart of the Narragansett reserve and surrounded by a mixture of
wigwams and English-style frame houses, the meetinghouse represented a place that
blended innovation with tradition, Algonquian words with English ones, orality with
literacy, and Narragansett believers with the faithful from neighbouring villages. Holding
Sabbath gatherings at the meetinghouse every week, Narragansett Christians also
gathered several times during the week at the building to pray, to exhort each other, and
to sing hymns. Church membership hinged on believers providing a “Satisfying
experience that they are born of God’s Holy Spirit, and Zealously receive ye Seals of ye
Covenant,” and participation in monthly communion required similar attention to the
work of the Spirit and the presence of sin in the lives of Narragansett congregants. As
one observer noted, church members gathered several days before taking the sacrament in order to “examine into each others Standing, [and] publickly renew their engagements to be for God [and] none else.”

Church congregants practised their faith according to a range of cultural adaptations which reflected a mixture of innovation and older customs. Particularly in regard to language and literacy, church-goers varyingly spoke and prayed in English and Narragansett, and relied upon both the written word and spiritual revelation to guide their worship and teaching. Younger church members such as John and Tobias Shattock attended Wheelock’s school during the 1760s and learned to read the Bible, but many Narragansetts—including the church’s minister, Samuel Niles—remained unable to read and relied on oral knowledge and the teaching of the Holy Spirit for their Christian learning. Some Euro-American ministers scoffed at the “visions,” “imaginations,” and “dreams” that guided Niles’ preaching and the exhorters in his flock, while others insisted that “many of them are attended with ye Power of God beyond any people” and that “They are in general more zealous to maintain a religious worship in their families, than ye English are.”

According to one observer, the Narragansett minister was “acquainted with the Doctrines of the Gospel, and an earnest zealous Man” who “has very great Influence over the Indians.” Church services on the reserve not only blended literacy with orality, but also combined the Narragansett language with English speech.

Attendance at Euro-American churches and formal schools certainly increased fluency in

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6 Edward Deake to Eleazar Wheelock, 25 April 1767, WP 767275.1.
8 Stiles, Literary Diary, vol. 1, 233.
English among a number of youth and adults. Many Narragansetts—perhaps predominantly among the older generation—however, continued to use Narragansett at their own services and on the reserve. One visitor to the church in 1768 commented on the “confused noise” that erupted during prayer time, as the congregants “all spake audibly, some in english & some in Indian.”

Using their meetinghouse as a gathering place for worship and community interaction, the Narragansetts also actively demarcated other spaces on the reserve for preaching, celebration, and personal reflection. Spiritual services often took place at homes and wigwams throughout the community, as men and women gathered to hear a word of exhortation, to converse regarding spiritual matters, or to greet a minister visiting their village. Church member John Shattock Sr.’s house, for example, frequently served as a gathering place where dozens listened to the Narragansett man spur believers on in their faith, or heard sermons preached by Stonington minister Joseph Fish who visited the community through the 1760s and 1770s. One observer noted that “strangers” or visitors to the reserve might think of Shattock as a “Minister of ye Gospel, or, at least, a public Teacher” based on his efforts to “exhort frequently” and to “hold meetings” with fellow believers. Attracting as many as two hundred listeners to his wigwam, such gatherings

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9 In addition to John and Tobias Shattock, a number of children and youth from the Narragansett reserve boarded at Wheelock’s school during the 1760s, including Hannah Garret, Mary Secuter, Sarah Simon, Charles Daniel, John Secuter, Samuel Niles, James Simon, and John Matthews. After the schoolhouse opened at Narragansett in 1765, a number of children and adults, notably women, began to attend lessons there, although by the 1770s conflicts with schoolmaster Edward Deake decreased Native attendance and support for the school. McCallum, *Letters*, 294-96; Simmons and Simmons, 13, 23, 31, 41, 55.

10 McClure, *Diary*, 189.

11 Joseph Fish to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 January 1771, WP 771130.
often included Narragansetts, Anglo-American neighbours, and persons of African-Native ancestry who had intermarried with community members or who lived on the reserve.\textsuperscript{12}

Apart from large gatherings at their meetinghouse or homes, Narragansett Christians attached spiritual power to other everyday sites where they obtained subsistence and lived. One of the community’s “chief exhorters,” for example, explained that his salvation experience occurred at a specific wooded place on the reserve. Perhaps referring to the cedar swamp located near the meetinghouse, which provided the community with vital resources for fencing, crafting, and firewood, the man’s account linked his spiritual encounter and new birth to a specific area in his homeland. Recalling the efforts of his grandmother to instruct him as a young boy in biblical truths and the realities of heaven and hell, the man recounted that her teachings failed to produce a lasting change in his spiritual state. As an adult, the man “called to mind” what his grandmother had taught him, and “was a long time in great distress, fearing he should go to Hell.” While he continued to live “as well as he knew” and to pray “to an unknown God,” the man became overwhelmed with fear to the point that “he could not hunt or attend any business.” The Narragansett man finally found relief from his fears, however, after he went into the woods and experienced a vision in which “he was taken by an Angel into Heaven.” Encountering “one sitting on a glorious throne, [who] opened a golden book & shewed him the place, at the sight, all his sins came fresh to his remembrance,” the Narragansett man then saw a “pen dipped in blood,” which “blotted out the account” and removed all his “sins & sorrows.”\textsuperscript{13} Akin to a vision quest, the

\textsuperscript{12} Simmons and Simmons, 31, 40-41, 56, 59.

\textsuperscript{13} McClure, \textit{Diary}, 191.
man’s encounter with God reflected deep-rooted Algonquian notions of sacred power relating to visions and blood, as well as the atoning power of Christ’s blood in providing salvation. The man’s experience in the wooded area on the reserve suggests that everyday places continued to serve as sites of both spiritual encounter and transformation.

The Narragansett meetinghouse, wigwams, and woods served more than the spiritual needs of the community, but became places of worship for neighbouring Algonquians as well. Following the paths tread by the Stonington Pequots during the revival years, by the 1760s Algonquian visitors from Mohegan and Mashantucket frequently travelled to Narragansett to join in services at the church, or to attend other gatherings at the community. Algonquian visitors intermingled and shared news in church pews or crowded together at Narragansett homes, and ministers visiting from other villages rose to preach to and exhort fellow congregants. On a hot summer day in 1768, for example, Mohegan minister Samuel Ashpo attended a Sabbath service at the Narragansett meetinghouse and joined several Native congregants in exhorting their audience. As one observer noted, the various speakers “attempted generally to describe the christian life, & did it, by giving a relation of their own religious experiences, which were mostly visions, dreams, impulses & similitudes.” Ashpo proclaimed to the listening Narragansetts that while he had been a “vile drunkard” and a “poor vile sinner” in the past, God had “forgiven me my sins, for the sake of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ.” Other exhorters followed Ashpo’s example, and related their experiences of warfare and seafaring to their Christian faith and their hopes of “going to Heaven.”

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14 McClure, *Diary*, 189-90.
Opening their homes and meetinghouse to fellow Christians, many Narragansetts likewise journeyed to nearby villages to join in communion services, singing, prayer, and exhortation. Building on the kin networks by which they spread New Light teachings and the Gospel message during the revival years, Algonquian Christians strengthened the ties between their villages by connecting to neighbouring believers for fellowship and edification. Transcending the reserve boundaries and tribal categories that colonial officials sought to erect between their communities, Algonquian practices of Christianity instead overlaid long-standing connections of kinship, trade, and diplomacy with new spiritual meaning. Such webs of spiritual interaction served to transform the physical space of Algonquian reserves into places of inter-communal solidarity and strength, rather than decline and degradation.

The settlements of Mohegan, Mashantucket, and Niantic became places where First Peoples communed together to designate land as sacred and to confirm their belonging and rights. In the winter of 1772, for example, men and women from Mohegan and Narragansett travelled to the Pequot community at Mashantucket to hold a “Conferance.” Many of the Narragansett visitors arrived in the evening before the Sabbath service, and sought shelter from the cold and provision in the wigwams and houses of their Pequot hosts. Joseph Johnson, who had recently returned to Mohegan after several months away from the community, also arrived the evening before the meeting and lodged at the home of Sampson and Esther Poquiantup along with Narragansett James Niles. After leaving his teaching post in Iroquoia in 1768, Johnson had taught briefly in Providence before embarking on vessels bound for the Caribbean and the whaling waters closer to home. Upon returning to Mohegan, the young man had
begun attending village meetings where ministers such as Samson Occom and Henry Quaquaquid spoke, and had dedicated his life to following Christ by the end of 1771. Inter-village gatherings helped to bolster his growing faith, as kin and friends from Wheelock’s school came together to collectively seek God’s presence and aid in their daily lives. Johnson recorded in his diary that the service at Mashantucket allowed him and Niles the opportunity to exchange news and share stories, as the two young men “discoursed almost all night.” The following morning, the Poquiantups’ house was transformed into a place of sacred gathering as Johnson and the other Algonquian visitors convened there to exhort, sing, and pray. Continuing in worship for most of the day, by evening the crowd joined together in communion, and “after they had Ended they Sang, then broke up the Conferance.”

Gatherings such as the one at Mashantucket were repeated elsewhere, as Algonquian ministers and congregants criss-crossed between their settlements and attended to the spiritual needs of their neighbouring kin and friends. In addition to leading church services at Narragansett, for example, Samuel Niles regularly performed communion services at Mohegan and Mashantucket and spoke at other Native villages as a part of his ministry. In the fall of 1761, Ezra Stiles observed that Niles, along with “sundry Narraganset & Mohegan Ind[ians] & Sachem Uncas were assembled at Nihantic for religious preaching.” Those who attended the service crowded into a “House of Two Rooms” and presumably listened to Niles and other exhorters speak and encourage them in their faith. Mohegan also represented a frequent gathering site for worship and

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15 Murray, To Do Good, 133.
16 Stiles, Extracts, 151.
preaching and drew in Algonquian believers from surrounding communities. Occom informed an acquaintance that his home at Mohegan represented a central location for the members of “five Towns of Indians” and that Native Christians convened there frequently for hymn-gatherings. After a season of spiritual revival at Montauk in 1769, several men and women journeyed across Long Island Sound to Mohegan, perhaps to spur their kin and friends on in their faith. Occom’s brother-in-law, David Fowler, along with Montaukett church-leader ‘Deacon Hugh’ and others crowded into Mohegan homes to share God’s recent work in their community, and lodged where they could find room in Occom’s house and others.

Joseph Johnson recorded in his diary similar visits of small and large groups of Christians who stayed in Mohegan homes after long journeys across land and sea, and the frequency of such visitors and gatherings at the reserve community. On a day of public thanksgiving declared by Connecticut in the fall of 1771, Johnson attended a worship service with a “few” other people and listened to a sermon preached by Samson Occom on Psalm 92. In the evening, Johnson joined others from his community in a hymn-meeting led by “David Fowler of Long Island” along with “Some of the young women belonging to Stonington.” After concluding their meeting, the diverse crowd attended the wedding ceremony of Niantic Jonathan Nonesuch and one of Samuel Ashpo’s daughters, performed by Occom, and “Spent the Evening very Pleasant.”

17 Samson Occom to Benjamin Forfitt, 4 March 1771, OP, CHS.
18 Samson Occom to Eleazar Wheelock, 17 March 1769, WP 769217.2.
19 Murray, To Do Good, 105-6.
Despite such apparent unity and inter-communal solidarity among Algonquian Christians, the strengthening of village ties often flowed from the divisions and debates that continued to split their individual settlements. As the defence of homelands and the protection of communal autonomy remained central concerns to many Algonquians, political and spiritual matters became increasingly intertwined in some communities. At the Mohegan and Narragansett settlements in particular, by the 1760s ministers and their congregations increasingly stood at odds with both their sachems and colonial overseers, and drew on their spiritual leadership and the functioning of their Christian assemblies to challenge their authority. Such disputes created new nexuses of leadership on the reserves, as ministers and church members led campaigns to defend their lands and depose their sachems for abusing their power and neglecting their duties. In many cases former councillors themselves, these ministers drew upon their own political standing within the community and challenged their sachems when they abandoned the protocol and responsibilities attached to their position.\(^{20}\)

The Mohegan sachem, Ben Uncas III, and his supporters maintained close ties with Connecticut officials throughout the mid-eighteenth century, and many Mohegans opposed him for his complicity with colonial authority. The sachem’s father and previous Mohegan leader, Ben Uncas II, had accepted Christianity in the years preceding the Awakening, and subsequently had members of his family baptized at Eliphalet Adams’ Congregational Church in New London during the early 1740s. Laura Murray notes that Christianity had become a part of the “fabric” of the community by mid-century,

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\(^{20}\) Among the Wampanoags, David Silverman has similarly noted the role of Native churches and ministers in providing “alternative leaders[hip] to the sachem” and in protecting communal lands during the colonial period. Silverman, “The Church in New England Indian Community Life,” 272-73.
evidenced by the wide number of Mohegans who accepted the faith, including members of the Uncas family, but a political and spiritual chasm increasingly separated the men and women who subscribed to evangelical teachings from those whose declarations of faith aligned them with more moderate teachings and the goals of colonial authorities. Paralleling the wider religious and political debates that continued to divide churches and Christian leaders who varyingly subscribed to New Light and Old Light teachings, Mohegans disputed the role of Euro-American ministers in their community and the new spiritual and political authority of Native preachers. While Mohegan spiritual leaders such as Samuel Ashpo, along with a number of Mohegans, affiliated with Separate ministers and their more radical New Light teachings, other Natives continued to attend moderate Congregational churches. Few records note the persistence of non-Christian beliefs and practices among the Mohegans, but some at least indicate that Natives periodically turned from their faith, and that seasons of “revival” continued to draw those who had yet to accept evangelical teachings towards salvation and the new birth.

As Mohegans varyingly subscribed to moderate and more radical teachings of New Light Christianity, their beliefs and religious affiliations reflected the complex political divisions and struggles to protect land facing their community. After Ben Uncas III succeeded his father as sachem in 1749, his practices of Christianity and his political decisions seemingly worked to perpetuate the disputes and divisions that had split the community in the preceding decades. Maintaining ties to David Jewett’s Congregational

22 David Jewett to Eleazar Wheelock, 7 July 1762, WP 762407; Testimony of Charles Bill, 21 January 1765, WSJP, CHS.
23 Brooks, Collected Writings, 90, 101.
Church, which many Mohegans had abandoned owing to the minister’s support of Connecticut’s claims in the “Mason case,” records suggest that Ben Uncas struggled with drunkenness throughout his leadership, and expressed hostility towards Native ministers in the community. One observer recounted that the sachem did “much hurt” by “buying Cyder & Rum, getting drunk and …seting a bad example [by]…trampling on the laws of God and man.”

Contrasting the sachem’s actions with minister Samuel Ashpo’s “exemplary” Christian character and “considerable” knowledge of scripture, this observer noted the “displeasure” Ben Uncas expressed towards Ashpo and other ministers who provided alternative authority on the reserve.

Struggling in his adherence to Christianity, the Mohegan sachem upset many in his community by ignoring the long-established political protocols upon which his authority rested. While evangelical ministers such as Samson Occom and Henry Ququaquid served as councillors to the sachem through the 1740s and 1750s, they became affiliated with “John’s Town,” the faction opposing the sachem’s leadership, when the sachem disregarded his council and disposed of communal lands. Occom related the “great confusions” at Mohegan in the spring of 1764 after the sachem “Cast off his Councel” and “leas’d out a farm without [one?] of his Councel.”

Sachem Ben Uncas III, like his predecessor, supported Connecticut’s claims to significant portions of Mohegan hunting and planting grounds, and opposed the efforts of leaders such as Ashpo

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24 Robert Clelland to Eleazar Wheelock, 21 January 1764, WP 764121.
25 Robert Clelland to Eleazar Wheelock, 12 March 1762, WP 762212.
26 Statement by Ben Uncas and his councillors, 17 April 1736, WSJP, CHS; Articles of Agreement between Ben Uncas and Mohegan Councillors, 15 May 1750, WSJP, CHS; Ben Uncas to Connecticut Assembly, 20 May 1760, IP I, II:103.
27 Brooks, Collected Writings, 71.
and Quaquaquid to solicit support in re-opening the unresolved “Mason case”—the legal dispute that began in the early eighteenth century over the rightful ownership of Mohegan hunting and planting grounds in Connecticut. Painting his opponents as “Mohegans but by marriage,” the sachem labelled member’s of John’s Town as “strange Indians” and communal outsiders driven by a “restless, fractious Spirite.”28 By trampling on the ancient role of his councillors in 1764, however, the sachem aroused the ire of Mohegans such as Occom, who up until that point had remained neutral in the land and leadership disputes plaguing the community. Noting that many Mohegans “renounc’d” the sachem for his arbitrary actions, Occom also recounted that “we are very much Griev’d with what our [Seers] have done.”29

Drawing on their recognized political standing as former councillors, ministers such as Occom, Ashpo, and others began to use their positions as spiritual leaders to offer their community new direction in protecting their autonomy and lands. While Ashpo and Quaquaquid delivered petitions of protest to colonial authorities such as Sir William Johnson to oppose the land sales and leases transacted by their sachem and overseers in the early 1760s, Occom attracted many Mohegans to worship services on the reserve and provided spiritual guidance apart from David Jewett’s lectures, which were attended by the sachem. Such actions aroused the hostility of both Ben Uncas and Jewett, as one Mohegan related that the Congregational minister “disli[ked] him [Occon] for fear he should get away his Salary for preaching to the Indians…[as] but 2 or 3 went to hear

28 IP I, II: 103; Ben Uncas to Connecticut Assembly, 18 May 1765, WSJP, CHS.
29 Brooks, Collected Writings, 71.
In a missive directed to the Connecticut Assembly in 1765, the Mohegan sachem complained loudly against Occom’s activities at Mohegan and the political and spiritual unrest he allegedly generated. Accusing Occom of leading the “bulk” of the Mohegans to oppose his leadership and that of their Anglo-American overseers, Ben Uncas also insisted that Occom had deterred other Mohegans from attending the lectures and sermons given by the Congregational minister. Rather than attending Jewett’s services, the Mohegan minister held his own services on the reserve during which he “incourages exorting and after his sermon gives Liberty to English & Indians to give a word of Exhortation if they please.”

Paralleling the divides between New Light and Old Light believers in Euro-American society, the sachem’s complaint attacked the informality and spontaneous spiritual promptings that characterized meetings at Mohegan, suggesting that such spiritual practices were absent or prohibited at Jewett’s Congregational church. More than disputing religious practice, however, the sachem’s petition condemned Occom’s efforts to protect communal lands and autonomy at Mohegan. Pointing to Occom’s role in sending Mohegans to petition Sir William Johnson, his promises to get a “tract of land back” for the community, and his opposition to their overseers and the government in general, the sachem demanded that colonial officials appoint a commission to try the minister for his numerous “misdemeanours” and restore harmony to the community.

30 Testimony of Charles Bill, 21 January 1765, WSJP, CHS.
31 Ben Uncas and Counselors to General Assembly, 18 May 1765, WSJP, CHS.
32 Ben Uncas and Counselors to General Assembly, 18 May 1765, WSJP, CHS.
Occom temporarily recanted his involvement in the political struggles at Mohegan and his opposition to Jewett’s ministry in 1765, but by the late 1760s he and other Christian leaders renewed their efforts to defend their lands and defy colonial authority. Following the death of Ben Uncas III in 1769, Connecticut officials sought to install a new sachem in the community according to their own choosing who, like the previous sachems, would support the colony’s efforts to quell the Mason affair. Occom and other leading members of the “John’s Town” faction used the occasion of the sachem’s funeral to demonstrate their rejection of both Ben Uncas’ lineage and government meddling in their community affairs. During the funeral service, which was attended by “both English, & Indians of the Mohegan, & Neighbouring Tribes,” Occom walked out while David Jewett delivered his sermon and was followed by “others of ye Tribe,” leaving only a small crowd to struggle unsuccessfully to transport the sachem’s body to their “usual Burying place.” The “Tempers of a Number of ye Indians, is Worked up, to the highest pitch of Jealousy, & Distrust of ye Governm[en]t and also, of any Dependance on them,” one colonial official in attendance recounted, noting that many Mohegans had recognized John Uncas as sachem “as soon as the Late Sachem Died,” and that the

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33 In March of 1765, Occom submitted to the desires of the commissioners of the Connecticut Board of Correspondents of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) that he rescind his opposition to Montville minister David Jewett and his involvement in the Mason Case. At a meeting of the correspondents, Occom stated, “Although, as a Member of the Mohegan Tribe, and, for many years, one of their Council, I thought I had not only a natural and civil Right, but that it was my Duty, to acquaint myself with their temporal affairs; yet I am, upon serious and close reflexion, convinced, that as there was no absolute Necessity for it, it was very imprudent in me, and offensive to the Public, that I should so far engage, as, of late, I have done, in the Mason Controversy.” Minutes of the Meeting of the Connecticut Board of Correspondents, 12 March 1765, WP 765212.7.
possibility of installing “any Sachem that the government would approve [of]” was minimal at the time.\textsuperscript{34}

Divisions at Narragansett closely paralleled those at Mohegan, as by the 1760s church leaders and congregants had begun to challenge the leadership of the sachem and his supporters. The political and spiritual divide that emerged within the reserve between those affiliated with the evangelical church and those who supported sachem Thomas Ninigret reflected intertwined struggles over authority, land, and spiritual power. Although the sachem and his family remained connected to the Episcopalian church and the political elite in the colony, Narragansett minister Samuel Niles and other congregants used the organization of their church to offer new leadership in protecting their remaining reserved lands.\textsuperscript{35} Looking towards neighbouring Euro-American ministers such as Joseph Fish and Eleazar Wheelock to support their cause, Narragansett believers drew on their shared faith to obtain assistance and allies in the fight to save their homelands. Even as New Light and Old Light ministers alike endeavoured to petition colonial officials on behalf of the Narragansetts, the reserve continued to shrink as the Rhode Island Assembly approved land sales by the sachem.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Report to the Governor, 1769, IP I, II: 286, CSL.
\textsuperscript{35} In 1746, for example, sachem George Ninigret deeded forty acres of land to Christopher Champlin, John Hill, and Ebenezer Ponderson for the use of an Episcopal minister and church in Charlestown. Deed by George Ninigret, 1746, PCRN, Box 1, Folder 8, RIHS.
\textsuperscript{36} Congregational ministers Eleazar Wheelock and Joseph Fish both solicited colonial officials such as Sir William Johnson on behalf of the Narragansetts during the 1760s, as did New London Episcopalian minister Matthew Graves. Graves requested that the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts establish a school on the Narragansett reserve during the mid-1760s, and when his request was approved, the Narragansetts rejected his offer. Apparently Grave’s chosen school overseer, a Mr. Cross, had “proved himself an enemy to the Indians” by recently purchasing the Narragansetts’ best fishing grounds, and the Natives “think it is best to have as little to do with him as possible.” Arnold, \textit{Statement}, 33-35, 43-51; Simmons and Simmons, 18-19.
In the summer of 1767, several Narragansetts travelled to Mohegan to discuss the land loss and abuses riddling their reserve, and to draw up petitions to Sir William Johnson and to the Commissioners of the New England Company in Boston to seek relief. Previous to the gathering, a number of Narragansetts had expressed their growing concern “about the Danger they are in, of loosing their Lands,” and despaired of their efforts to attend school and worship on dwindling lands. Articulating the fears of many in his church, Samuel Niles asked “To What purpose do we build [a] Schoolhouse, [and] Set up preaching…When All Our Lands are like to be Sold under us, and We turnd off, we dont know Where?” In response to the ongoing encroachments, council member Tobias Shattock proposed a meeting at Mohegan “to Consult Further on the Premises.”

Mohegan provided a central location for the gathering, as Shattock and his brother John were both attending Wheelock’s school in Lebanon at the time, and could more easily travel to the Native community located several miles to the south than to the more distant Narragansett reserve.

Given the similar struggles facing both communities, the choice of location also presumably reflected the Narragansetts’ desire to draw on the experience and advice of Mohegan leaders such as Ashpo and Quaquaquid, who had already petitioned Johnson and other officials to protest land sales and the actions of their sachem. While Stonington minister Joseph Fish acted as the Narragansetts’ scribe in drawing up their grievances, no

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37 Simmons and Simmons, 34.
38 Ibid., 34.
39 Tobias and John Shattock both entered Wheelock’s school in December of 1766. Although McCallum suggests that they remained at Moor’s for a year, their studies most likely lasted only until the fall of 1767. Tobias sent a letter to Wheelock in early October 1767 relating that he had left his studies in order fight on behalf of his people for their lands and livelihoods. McCallum, Letters, 201; Tobias Shattock to Eleazar Wheelock, 2 October 1767, WP 767552.
records remain which provide further details of the gathering. Whether or not they used the occasion to also encourage each other in their faith through prayer, exhorting, or singing is not clear, but past gatherings for fellowship and worship most certainly paved the way for meetings to seek political advice and collaborate against colonial and tribal authorities.

Although the Narragansett sachem died in 1769, colonial officials continued to sell reserve lands for another four years until the debts accrued during his reign had been absolved. The sachem’s sister, Esther, assumed leadership of the community in 1770 with the support of some in both groups, but deep lines of animosity continued to divide the members of the “sachem’s party” from the “Tribe’s party.”

Perhaps despairing of finding restitution for their losses, some members of the Narragansett church became increasingly suspicious and hostile towards Euro-American benefactors and ministers, and shunned the efforts of non-Natives to preach and teach in their community. Congregational minister Joseph Fish, who preached regularly at Narragansett during the late 1760s and early 1770s and drew up petitions on their behalf, initially found many people willing to attend his lectures and converse on spiritual matters. As the loss of communal lands continued unabated, however, the Congregational minister encountered increasing hostility from Christian leaders such as Niles, John Shattock, and other members of the Native church. During his early visits to Narragansett, Fish himself had criticized the “separate stamp” he witnessed at the Narragansett church, and related in letters to colleagues the “visionary practices” and “false religion” that marked their services. Fish soon found himself under attack, however, as Niles and other church

40 *RCRI*, vol. 7, 9-10, 17-18, 214-15; Simmons and Simmons, xxxv.
members questioned his own reliance on Scripture more than spiritual revelation, and his salaried position as a “Learned Standing Minister,” and they refused to listen to his preaching. Fish’s standing with the Narragansett congregants perhaps worsened when members of the “sachem’s party” requested his assistance in forming their own church in 1770. Seen increasingly as both a spiritual and political threat to the community, many Narragansett believers expressed “prejudice” and “ill will” towards the minister and questioned his “Presbyterian” and “standing” affiliations against their own “New Light” ones.  

In criticizing and disputing the authority of Euro-American ministers who attempted to preach on their reserves, Mohegans and Narragansetts linked their resistance to clerical authority to the wider struggles to protect land and autonomy in their communities. Such disputes over authority, leadership, and Christian practice were not confined to the internal disputes of divided communities, however. Although Algonquians shared in fellowship, spiritual leadership and political struggle with neighbouring Christians, such solidarity did not preclude divisions or discord within the

41 Fish, who graduated from Harvard, served as minister of the Second Congregational Church of North Stonington, Connecticut from 1732 until his death in 1781. Deeply affected by the church separations of the Awakening era, Fish’s own congregation lost nearly two-thirds of its members to newly-formed Separate and Separate Baptist gatherings, and Fish himself became adamantly opposed to the “false teaching” and spiritual radicalism of New Light preachers. Fish engaged in a lively theological debate with Separate Baptist minister Isaac Backus in the 1760s and 1770s, as the clergymen wrote treatises expounding on their variant understandings of church separations. The Narragansetts were apparently aware of this ongoing debate, as one Native man informed Fish that “Mr. Baccus’s Books Against me Were plenty among them, And, [he] Supposed, that was one Reason Why So few Attended the Lecture.” In 1765, under the auspices of the New England Company, Fish began to visit the Narragansett settlement in Rhode Island once a month for nearly a decade to preach and minister to the Natives, in addition to serving his own congregation and preaching to the Pequots at Stonington. Fish documented his efforts in a series of journals and letters that provide rich descriptions of both the Narragansett church and Fish’s own “Old Light” views regarding Native and non-Native Christian practices. See Simmons and Simmons, xx-xxxv, 52-53, 67-68, 105-6.
network of faith. While their common adherence to evangelical Christianity and dogged efforts to protect their lands provided a number of Algonquian Christians with a new spiritual and political community, men and women often divided over their Christian practices and their understandings of community and place. Far from a picture of homogeneous Algonquian Christianity, the dissent and everyday conflicts that erupted in families, churches, and villages reflected the disputes and inconsistencies that underscored their lived-out faith. Whether individual struggles with sin, disputes over debt, or conflicts over the use of communal resources, the faith journeys of Algonquian Christians often reflected the harsh circumstances of life on their reserves and the dynamic, rather than uniform, efforts of believers to live out their faith.

Struggles with alcohol-use and drunkenness, for example, represented an area in which a number of Algonquian Christians periodically underwent bouts of sinfulness and immorality followed by seasons of repentance and remorse. Colonists eagerly peddled alcoholic beverages in reserve communities, despite colonial laws forbidding such practices, and historically combined such sales with efforts to swindle Natives of their lands and resources. While in some cases Algonquian believers complained to colonial authorities about the efforts of their Anglo-American neighbours to intoxicate them, at other times Christians chose to accept their offers and drink, often to the point of drunkenness. In 1758, for example, Mohegan minister Samuel Ashpo, along with his wife Hannah and his daughter, accused Elizabeth Peck, the wife of a local innkeeper, of violating colonial laws regarding the sale of alcohol. According to Ashpo and his family, Peck sold and delivered “rum and cider” to an “Indian woman” named Widow Ned, an

42 Act for civilizing Indians, 1717, IP I, I: 87, CSL; Governor and Company, 51.
act which was prohibited on reserves, and for her actions Peck was summoned to the county court in New London.\textsuperscript{43}

Several years later, however, Ashpo’s resolve to combat alcohol sales at Mohegan seemed to have faltered, as reports of his own drunken behaviour swirled around the community and beyond. In the summer of 1767, the Connecticut Board of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge suspended the Mohegan minister, who they had supported in his missions to Chenango, on account of Ashpo’s being “Guilty at Sevl times of Drinking Strong Drink to Excess, & of Quarellg, Indecent, unChristian behaviour.”\textsuperscript{44} Ashpo struggled with debt throughout the 1760s, and most certainly felt the pressure of supporting his large family while seeking to both spread the Gospel in Iroquoia and defend lands at Mohegan. In the winter of 1763, one local observer noted that the Mohegan minister had gone hunting in an effort to offset his debts, but doubted that the skins Ashpo brought back would satisfy his creditors.\textsuperscript{45} While his “fall” perhaps signalled to missionary board members an insincerity or absence of genuine faith, Ashpo’s kin and fellow believers accepted the minister back into their meetings and assemblies. By the following year, the Mohegan minister spoke freely before believers at the Narragansett meetinghouse about his struggles with alcohol, and celebrated the forgiveness he received through the “blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who can save the vilest sinner.”\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} Samuel Ashpo, November 1758, NLCC-NA, Box 2, Folder 7, CSL.  
\textsuperscript{44} McCallum, \textit{Letters}, 45-46.  
\textsuperscript{45} Robert Clelland to Eleazar Wheelock, 8 December 1763, WP 763658.  
\textsuperscript{46} McClure, \textit{Diary}, 189-90; Murray, \textit{To Do Good}, 101. Ashpo was not the only prominent spiritual leader at Mohegan to struggle with drunkenness. Both Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson confessed to drinking
While individual Christians underwent periods of spiritual struggle and sin, disagreements between Christians likewise created periodic rifts in churches and communal fellowship. Algonquian congregations were not immune to discord within their ranks as individuals differed in their understanding and practice of New Light teachings. The Narragansett church, for example, while serving as a place of spiritual and political cohesion for Narragansetts and other people, in some cases was wracked by internal divisions and conflicts over faith. Unaffiliated with any ecclesiastical society or presbytery, many observers labelled the church as ‘Separate’ owing to its independent founding, the importance congregants attached to the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching and spiritual revelation, and the fact that minister Samuel Niles had been ordained by ‘Brethren Indians’ rather than recognized church authorities. Disputes and divisions followed the church’s founding in the 1740s, as a small group of Narragansetts broke away from the assembly and met in a “private house” under the leadership of a Pequot minister from Mashantucket for several years before joining Niles’ fold. While most members who attended the church subscribed to ‘New Light’ theology emphasizing the necessity of personal salvation and the convicting power of the Spirit, disputes arose over the presence of sin in the lives of congregants and their failure to adequately or visibly repent of their wrongdoings. Before monthly communion services, Narragansett men and women met together to examine each other’s spiritual state and worthiness for participating in the sacred ordinance. According to local schoolmaster Edward Deake, if the convened believers “find anyone guilty of moral evil, they’ll not let yt member

excessively before Anglo-American ministers and presumably, fellow Native Christians, and pledged their remorse and repentance for their actions. See Joseph Johnson to ?, 20 June 1772, WP 772370.1; Samson Occom to SSPCK, 4 January 1769, WP 769104.

Commune ‘till [they] see ye appearance of Godly sorrow for ye sin committed.” In some cases, “when some Members walks unworthily they are put out of ye C[hurch].”

Such “unworthy walking” seemed to cause a number of disputes between congregants and led to the censure of some Narragansett believers. During his visits to the reserve in the fall of 1768, Stonington minister Joseph Fish commented on the visible tensions that divided a number of church members. Stopping at several wigwams located in the vicinity of the meetinghouse, Fish learned that a number of Narragansett families had avoided attending his lectures when he visited the community because of “old Quarrels and Contentions with and among their Brethren.” As several family members explained to the Anglo-American minister, “Some of the Indians would not like to See them at Lecture, neither did they want to See them,” and therefore both groups avoided attending gatherings that would involve face-to-face encounters. When he returned several weeks later, Fish found that disagreements continued to strain relations between Narragansett congregants, and that one of their prominent members had been “cast out” of the church for “Some offence.” Visiting the home of John Shattock Sr.—a place where Natives often convened to hear sermons or exhort each other—Fish learned that a “Difference” had erupted between the Narragansett man and church leaders that resulted in Shattock being “cut off” from the assembly. While Shattock’s particular misdemeanour remains unclear, he apparently repented of his actions and later rejoined the fold, as he subsequently resumed hosting spiritual gatherings at his house and supported church leaders in community affairs.

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48 Edward Deake to Eleazar Wheelock, 25 April 1767, WP 767275.1.
49 Simmons and Simmons, 49-50.
50 Ibid., 52.
Several years later, the issue of sinful conduct and removal from the church again pitted a Narragansett believer against the church minister and leaders. According to one account, church leaders “Censurd” James Niles Jr., the nephew of minister Samuel Niles, and excluded him from their assembly even though they could not “prove Any Fault, or Censurable Evil upon him.” While Niles might not have committed a specific offence or sin that contradicted the church’s teachings, the Narragansett man’s beliefs regarding church governance and spiritual practices might have put him at odds with leaders of the congregation. Niles confessed to a local minister that he “faulted” his uncle and other Narragansett exhorters “on Many Accounts, especially for their Want of Discipline and Rule of Conduct, which indeed they have not” and the fact that many church members “behave[d] after a Confused, Inconfident Manner.” Perhaps such views had become apparent to Narragansetts in leadership at the church, and sensing Niles’ opposition to the format of their services or their style of worship, they sought to remove him from their midst by charging him with an unspecified misdemeanor. Whatever the source of the disagreement, such incidents demonstrated the communal tensions that accompanied the Narragansetts’ evangelical faith and that divergence in theology and spiritual practice could divide families as well as congregations.  

Division and conflict often spilled beyond the confines of church services and meetinghouses, and touched the daily interactions and working relationships of Christians. In some cases, men and women allowed personal differences and local disputes to undermine their relationships with other members of their villages. School teachers, for example, fell out of favour with parents and the wider community owing to

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51 Simmons and Simmons, 112.
disagreements over their instruction and conduct. By the late 1760s and early 1770s, schoolhouses began to dot the landscape of reserves as Algonquian communities increasingly requested Native instructors to teach their children, and Algonquian men put themselves forward as likely candidates to fill such roles. At Mashantucket, Montaukett, and Stonington, as well as at the Tunxis and Sepos community at Farmington, Connecticut, Native teachers sought to pass on vital literacy skills, instruct their pupils in hymn-singing and Christian knowledge, and offered local inhabitants education and training within their own settlements.

While seeking to instruct pupils in reading and writing as well as Christian truths, in some instances teachers faced reprimands and criticism from parents and other community members. David Fowler, who taught at his home community of Montauk after returning from Iroquoia in 1767, initially took up the post at the schoolhouse after several Montaukett leaders specifically requested that he teach their children. Community leaders had hoped that Fowler’s instruction would serve “some good purpus” in the “souls affairs” of their children, but by 1770 relations had soured between Fowler and many parents. Struggling to support his family on a menial income, the Montaukett teacher also most likely bore the burden of supporting his mother and father after their wigwam burned down in 1768 and all of their possessions were destroyed. According to one report, when Fowler devoted increasing amounts of time to fishing and farming to compensate for the low teaching salary he received, he aroused the ire of many

52 Montauk Natives to Eleazar Wheelock, 4 March 1765, WP 765204.
53 David Fowler to Eleazar Wheelock, 25 May 1768, WP 768325.
Montauketts who complained about his absences and “unsteadiness” at the schoolhouse, and demanded his dismissal.\textsuperscript{54}

While observers described the Montaukett community as “serious and devout” in Christian character, the conflict between Fowler and other villagers over the leadership of the school reveals the rifts and tensions that emerged between fellow Christians.\textsuperscript{55} Following his dismissal from the school and his replacement by Montaukett David Hannibal, Fowler derided the community as “curst,” and insisted that “they don’t admire any thing that would be beneficial to them, either temporal or spiritual.”\textsuperscript{56} Making his criticism of the community’s spiritual state and temporal conditions widely known, Fowler most likely complained loudly in the presence of family and friends from neighbouring communities of the unfair treatment he had received as a teacher and the uncharitable actions of Montaukett Christians in dismissing him in his poverty. A letter that Fowler received from his younger brother Jacob in 1773 reveals the bitter relations that continued to persist between the former schoolmaster and the rest of the community. Jacob noted in his letter that he had “often heard of your uneasiness, and concern for our Poor Countrymen Indians,” and agreed with his brother that “the Christians there [at Montauk] want some body to admonish them in many Points of ye greatest importance and They ought to be pityed.” Encouraging David to let go of his resentment and ill feelings towards his fellow Montauketts, however, Jacob reminded him to “seek first the

\textsuperscript{54} David Avery to Eleazar Wheelock, 25 December 1770, WP 770675.1; David Avery to Eleazar Wheelock, 6 June 1771, WP 771356.
\textsuperscript{55} McClure, \textit{Diary}, 138.
\textsuperscript{56} WP 771356; Love, 203-4.
Kingdom of Heaven and all other Things.”  

Jacob’s advice perhaps succeeded in softening his brother’s grudging attitude towards members of the community, as the following year David reported with excitement the spiritual “stir” and revival he witnessed—and perhaps joined in—among his Montaukett kin.  

The standoff at Montauk over the leadership of the school most certainly pitted Christians against each other, but disagreements over practical and spiritual matters in some cases stretched beyond village limits and included Algonquians from neighbouring communities. Many records indicate the spiritual unity and common fellowship that brought men and women from Pequot, Narragansett, Montaukett, and Mohegan towns together to worship, and yet subtle divisions in belief and practice could threaten inter-village gatherings as well. As Algonquian ministers taught at neighbouring churches or schools, or visitors offered a word of exhortation to their hosts, messages could be misconstrued and motives could be questioned by those who suspected fellow Christians of misguided beliefs or sinful practices.  

Such discord emerged at the Tunxis and Sepos community in Farmington, Connecticut during the early 1770s. Located northwest of Hartford, the Algonquian community at Farmington paralleled the communities at Mohegan, Narragansett, and elsewhere in southern New England in their adoption of evangelical Christianity by the mid-eighteenth century and their exposure to English literacy and formal schooling. Both Native and Anglo-American teachers provided instruction to children in the village during the 1740s and 1750s, and at least one Farmington youth attended Wheelock’s  

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57 Jacob Fowler to David Fowler, 14 January 1773, Mohegan Documents, 1662-1773, Indian Papers, CHS.  
58 David Fowler to Samson Occom, 24 February 1774, OP, CHS.
school in the early 1760s. Although not as closely tied by kinship to the Mohegans, Pequots, or other communities of southeastern New England, the Farmington Natives had become drawn into the inter-village network of faith by the 1770s as men and women from neighbouring communities had begun to visit, exhort, and teach on their reserve. Perhaps most notably, in 1772 Mohegan Joseph Johnson assumed the role of schoolmaster in the community, teaching children basic literacy and leading adults in weekly hymn-gatherings. During his tenure as schoolmaster at Farmington, Johnson often recorded in his diary the visits of Mohegans, Pequots, and Montauketts to the community to share in singing meetings or other worship services that he helped to direct. The Mohegan teacher’s presence in the community certainly helped to draw Tunxis and Sepos believers into the wider network of Christian faith and strengthened ties between Farmington Christians and other Algonquians.

Although such occasions of inter-village worship at Farmington in most cases bolstered the congregants’ unity and faith, on at least one occasion Johnson complained of a visiting preacher whose message and presence promoted spiritual discord. In a letter written to Samson Occom in February 1773 in which he related the progress of his singing school and invited Occom to visit and preach, Johnson included a postscript which made reference to an unpleasant visitor recently at Farmington: “I would have wrote to you, and Enformed you Concerning Our friend, who was [By?] here time past, who Sowed very bad Seed in Some places.” Not identifying the offender by name,

59 Daniel Mossock of Farmington attended Wheelock’s school briefly in 1762, but left after a matter of months. McCallum, Letters, 294. See also Love, 200-2.
60 Murray, To Do Good, 161-62, 164. Occom also recorded in his diary visiting Farmington with David Fowler in the summer of 1774, where they lodged and preached among the Natives for a couple of days. Brooks, Collected Writings, 275.
Johnson instead described the visitor as “the Same Sower that Sowed at Chearlstown.”
While Johnson’s diary entries in the preceding weeks mentioned visits by Mohegans and Pequots to Farmington, his accounts failed to mention the spread of dissension or false doctrine at the gatherings they attended. The visitor, whether a preacher or exhorter, apparently opposed Occom and his ministry, and Johnson wrote that he “hope[d] that it is not in his Power to root out the Esteem, Love, and Respects, which I have Confidence is in all hearts, to wards you.”
While Occom developed many enemies, both Native and non-Native, through his defence of Mohegan lands, Johnson’s report of their “friend’s” visit to Farmington fails to provide any concrete details regarding his identity or motives for speaking against Occom. Rather, the “friend’s” sowing of “bad seed” among Farmington Christians suggests that individual disputes and spiritual disagreements could spill over into other villages and threaten to undermine the unity and fellowship that flowed from their common practices of faith.

The differences that invariably erupted between Algonquian believers and sometimes spanned the faith network linking their villages perhaps contributed to the new and contested notions of place that began to emerge by the early 1770s. While Algonquian faithful had used their Christian beliefs to mobilize their churches and communities in defence of their lands and to reaffirm the sacred quality and value of the places where they lived, Christian beliefs also generated an impulse among a number of Algonquians to leave New England and settle elsewhere. Conditions on reserves continued to worsen during the 1770s as Euro-Americans encroached on Algonquian lands, as officials and committees managed reserves and resources, and as families

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61 Joseph Johnson to Samson Occom, 9 February 1773, OP, CHS. See also Murray, To Do Good, 181.
suffered impoverishment and constraints in performing basic subsistence activities. Recognizing their increasingly tenuous position in New England, some church leaders and ministers began to contemplate forming a new Christian community apart from colonial threats and local factions that would enable them to live and worship freely on land sufficient for their temporal needs.

Such relocation ideas undoubtedly grew from the missions to Iroquoia in the preceding years, and the ties that Algonquian ministers and teachers had forged with Oneida and Mohawk leaders in New York. A number of ministers enthusiastically suggested that permanent relocation among their Haudenosaunee brethren would allow them to continue their missionary endeavour and to shine the light of Jesus among those who remained unredeemed. Ideas of forming a separate, Christian community most likely reflected an awareness of New England mission history too, as Algonquian leaders such as Occom had visited and preached at communities such as Natick, and perhaps hoped to emulate and modify the “praying town” model. The inspiration for removal certainly stemmed from new understandings of place as well, and reflected new ideas about the mobility of sacred power and the possibility of creating a new spiritual homeland through the power of God and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Drawing on an expanding landscape of faith that had enabled them to worship and to practice their faith in neighbouring settlements and gathering sites, some Algonquians began to imagine extending this landscape beyond New England to lands where fellowship and ritual could be practised without infringement or abuse. Particularly for those who had ministered and taught among the Haudenosaunee during the 1760s, removal to Iroquoia offered the possibility of resettlement and the creation of a Christian community on lands removed
from colonial towns and the relentless encroachment that threatened their faith and survival.

As ideas about relocation began to circulate in Algonquian churches, schools, and local gatherings, the tensions between rootedness and belonging in New England and the possibility of relocating their faith community to new lands began to appear in sharper relief. By the late 1760s, ideas about resettlement began to spread among members of the Narragansett church. At the same time that Christian leaders such as Samuel Niles, Tobias Shattock, and Ephraim Coheis doggedly petitioned colonial authorities to prevent the further sale of the community’s lands, they also began to contemplate the possibility of leaving Rhode Island and seeking a homeland to the west or north. Before departing for England to seek redress from the Crown regarding their loss of lands in 1767, for example, Tobias Shattock wrote to Eleazar Wheelock and informed him that if his trip proved fruitless or the Narragansetts failed to raise the money necessary to even send him, the community would consider the possibility of removal. “If we can do no more,” Shattock informed Wheelock, “we Shall try to Secure what we are in poss[essi]on of, & dispose of ye same, & Imbrace Sr. William’s offer.”62 The Narragansetts had petitioned Sir William Johnson several times to seek his influence in their struggle against their sachem and the Rhode Island government, but no records indicate what “offer” the superintendent might have made in response to their pleas. Shattock’s comment, however, seems to reference the possibility of the Narragansetts selling their remaining lands and leaving the colony, perhaps according to advice or provisions made by Johnson.

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62 Tobias Shattock to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 November 1767, WP 767630.2.
A clearer plan of relocation emerged among the Narragansetts in the following years, however, as church members considered resettling on lands in the province of New Hampshire. After the Shattock brothers’ journey to England resulted in the death of Tobias and their failure to obtain the King’s support in their struggle, despair of protecting their ancestral lands led several Narragansetts to contemplate removal as the only solution. In December 1768, an observer noted that James Niles planned to visit Eleazar Wheelock on behalf of the Narragansetts to discuss the possibility of moving to a “Township of good Land, upon some good Stream for Fishing,” which Wheelock had proposed to purchase for the Narragansetts’ relief. While the Narragansett council supported the scheme, Samuel Niles hesitated to make a firm agreement with Wheelock, and suggested that James and other representatives only gather details of the removal.63

By the following December, however, Wheelock had written to the governor of New Hampshire on behalf of the Narragansett community regarding the purchase of land, and apparently received a favourable response.64 Narragansett council members again discussed and debated the removal scheme, but by March of 1770 decided to decline the opportunity to leave the colony. John Shattock wrote to Wheelock to explain the council’s decision, noting that while they appreciated the minister’s efforts on their behalf, they remained attached to their ancestral homelands in Rhode Island. The Narragansetts “wou’d willingly Pursue the [scheme] of settling that Land if it were further to the southward,” Shattock informed Wheelock, but many Natives “have been toward that Countray a Hunting and found the weather hearder and colder then it was

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63 Edward Deake to Eleazar Wheelock, 20 December 1768, WP 768670.
64 Eleazar Wheelock to John Wentworth, 5 December 1769, WP 769655.
here.” Concluding that the summer season “must be a Vast deal shorter then they are here,” Narragansett leaders feared moving to lands where a different climate might threaten their subsistence patterns and ways of life. The Narragansetts’ indecision regarding removal suggests that tensions between rootedness and attachment to their homelands and the desire to remake community elsewhere remained unresolved for many people.

As the Narragansetts debated forming a new homeland outside of Rhode Island, a number of Algonquian men began to envision a new community founded on lands in Iroquoia. Drawing on the relationships they had formed with Oneida and Mohawk leaders and their experiences in teaching and preaching at Haudenosaunee towns, proponents of the relocation imagined founding a Christian community that would both resolve the landlessness and poverty Algonquians faced in New England and enable Algonquian immigrants to minister to their unbelieving Haudenosaunee neighbours. Pairing missions with the creation of a Christian community, the settlement would knit inhabitants together through their common faith and transform the lands of Iroquoia into a new place of sacred power. Spearheaded by ministers and leaders from Mohegan, as well as Montaukett and Farmington, their efforts to spread the idea of resettlement coincided with the closing of the Mason land case in favour of the colony of Connecticut. Despairing that their avenues for regaining lost lands had finally dried up, a number of Mohegans began to look beyond their village and reserve to places that might sustain their community beyond the reach of encroachers. In 1773, Occom informed Wheelock that the “grand Controversy, Which has Subsisted between the Colony of Connecticut and

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65 John Shattock to Eleazar Wheelock, 26 March 1770, WP 770226.2.
the Mohegan Indians above 70 years we hear is finally Decided, and it is in the favour of the Colony.” “I am afraid the Poor Indians will never Stand a good Chance with the English, in their Land Controversies,” Occom continued, “because they are very Poor [and] they have no Money.”

Despite their poverty and discouragement, a number of Algonquians responded to the decision by holding a congress at Mohegan to discuss a plan of resettlement. Attended by men, women, and children from neighbouring villages, those who gathered together resolved to send representatives from the Montaukett, Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett, Niantic, and Farmington communities to Oneida to seek out land for resettlement. By the fall of 1773, Joseph Johnson had assumed a leading role in renewing and establishing diplomatic ties with Oneida leaders and Sir William Johnson, and in November he and Elijah Wimpey of Farmington travelled to Johnson Hall to meet with the superintendent and a number of Native leaders. Occom reported the “good News” the Algonquian travellers returned to share in New England, noting that “The Onoydas Cheerfully Promise to give us freely, if we Will Settle among them, Ten Miles Square of Land, and we shall Chuse the Spot ourselves.” Occom and other leaders began to hope that “the Lord is about opening a Door for the gospel among the Western Tribes…by their Eastern Brethren,” and trusted that “The Lord Will Carry [out] his own Work in his own Time and Way.”

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66 Brooks, Collected Writings, 104.
68 Brooks, Collected Writings, 109.
In the midst of the growing resolve among some Algonquian ministers and leaders to resettle on Oneida lands, however, reluctance, poverty, and attachment to their homelands began to undermine and weaken the consensus and enthusiasm for forming a new Christian community. Men and women who had initially supported the decision to leave New England faced the glaring realities of the debts and obligations they owed to Anglo-American neighbours that could not easily be cleared up, and those who had enthusiastically volunteered to travel to Iroquoia in search of land dragged their feet in committing to the venture. Joseph Johnson and other men from Farmington sent an exasperated letter in October 1773 to the Algonquian villages in southern New England, begging those who had promised to attend meetings at Johnson Hall to “remember the Affair, of which we So earnestly talked last Spring,” and to “Show yourselves men” or to “Send others in their room.” Otherwise, Johnson feared, the superintendent and the Oneidas would think “that we are only talkers, and not worthy of Notice.”

While Johnson managed to convince men representing the Montaukett and Narragansett communities—as well as the Farmington community where he had taught—to attend a conference with the Oneidas in January of 1774, he continued to complain about the unwilling and “ungratefull” attitudes he continued to encounter among fellow Christians.

Despite his apparent commitment to the removal venture, Joseph Johnson himself waged an internal battle against his own attachments to Mohegan which perhaps illuminate the struggles that other men and women faced in fully supporting the planned

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69 Farmington Indians to their brethren, 13 October 1773, OP, CHS.
70 Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 109; Joseph Johnson to Samson Occom, 25 May 1774, OP, CHS.
relocation. For Johnson and others, permanent removal to Iroquoia meant a permanent severing of ties from their ancestral lands, from places of subsistence, and from sites of spiritual power, and brought them face to face with their identity and belonging that was rooted in the soils, streams, woods, and gathering places of southern New England. After attending the initial planning meeting for the removal at Mohegan in 1773, Johnson seemingly underwent a personal struggle as he returned to his teaching post at Farmington. Confiding in a letter to Occom that after leaving the gathering at Mohegan, “my mind is not at Ease, & perhaps will not be till I see Mohegan again,” Johnson related to Occom that he left home “with So much reluctance” and feared that “I never Shall see it any more.”

Johnson’s diary entries recorded while teaching at Farmington further illuminate his internal struggles and the intense longing he felt for Mohegan while absent from the community. “Well I remember home,” Johnson remarked in an entry in December 1772, and followed with a passionate plea to see his homeland again. “O Mohegan O Mohegan—the time is long before I Shall be walking my wonted places which are on thee—once there I was but perhaps never again, but Still I remember thee—in you is lodged my father & Mother Dear—and my Beloved Sisters—and brothers.”

Such intense longing not only reveals the singularity of Johnson’s attachment to his Mohegan homelands, but also suggests the vital connections that other Algonquians felt towards their lands and villages that remained unrecorded. Despite encroachment, dispossession, poverty, and loss, the sites at which ancestors hunted deer, families collected shells, children listened to stories, and Christians gathered to worship and sing.

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71 Murray, To Do Good, 182.
72 Ibid., 160.
remained home for many Natives, and formed the very sinews of Algonquian communities and senses of being and belonging in the world. For Algonquians such as Johnson, intimate familiarity with the landforms, burial sites, and gathering spots in his community evoked powerful emotional ties to place that became clearer and even painful during times of separation or absence. “Alone now I think of Mohegan,” Johnson wrote after a day of keeping school at Farmington, and “my mind runs all over Mohegan as I used to, when I personally was there—but I end hoping in due time to be there once more.” For Algonquians such as Johnson, ties to their land went beyond English concepts of property and ownership, but rather flowed from the ancestry, the sustenance, and the sacred power through which they knew their lands.

Powerful attachments to land and differing ideas about community and place would ultimately divide Algonquian communities in southern New England and loosen many of the spiritual ties forged between fellow Christians and their homelands. By the outbreak of the American Revolution, Joseph Johnson had apparently stifled the internal debates between his longing for Mohegan and his commitment to removal, and had led initial forays into Iroquoia to begin the settlement process on Oneida lands. Followed by Natives from Montauk and Narragansett, Johnson and others set about drawing up plans for the emigration, and some Algonquians even built homes and attempted to farm at Oneida during the violence and turbulence of the Revolution, before retreating to Stockbridge for safety. While the majority of Algonquian emigrants would not leave New England for New York until the conclusion of the war, the process of relocation that followed did not simply reflect divisions between Christians and non-Christians, but

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73 Murray, To Do Good, 156.
divisions between those who shared the same faith. While many embraced the hope of sustenance and Christian fellowship and joined the removal to distant lands, others continued to root their faith in God in the lands of their ancestors, which they continued to defend even as others despaired and left. Although such differing decisions indicate the limitations of Christianity in creating a unified and uniform vision of either community or place, they also reveal the fundamentally complex ties between spiritual power, landscape, and belonging. In traversing the rivers and trudging along the paths that led to Iroquoia and a new home, Algonquian pilgrims most certainly continued to cherish, remember, and mourn for the places they and their ancestors identified as home, and were torn and perhaps tormented in their journey from old places to new. Even Joseph Johnson, who urged on the removal venture until his mysterious death in 1776, continued to describe Mohegan as his “Native place” in the records he left behind. In the years that followed the removal, Algonquians in New York and New England would not only struggle to rebuild Christian community and a sense of place in drastically altered circumstances, but they would quickly discover the persistence of division and discord as they struggled to rebuild livelihoods and protect their new lands.
CHAPTER SEVEN

‘The times are exceedingly altered, yea the times are turned upside down’: Relocation, Land, and Community at the End of the Eighteenth Century

On a spring day in 1789, three Montaukett visitors arrived at the fledgling Algonquian community called Brotherton located on Oneida lands after an arduous journey from Long Island. Visiting friends and family who were already settled at the town, the Montauketts shared with a local minister that their express purpose in travelling to the new community was to “view the tract of Land, lately granted them by the Oneida’s and confirmed by the State of N. York,” and to determine the desirability of joining other Algonquians in removing to the new homeland. Their “whole Nation have it in contemplation to move into this wilderness, if they like the situation,” the visitors relayed during a meeting with missionary Samuel Kirkland, and “their friends here think that they can make a live of it, and a probability that God may build up their Nation.”

After spending several days at the new town and receiving encouraging reports from fellow Algonquian settlers, the Montaukett visitors remained uncertain about the removal plan and the changes that relocation would entail. Before returning to Long Island to report their findings to those who remained at Montauk, the visitors expressed their fears that “Indians would not work like white people” and that they might suffer hardship and poverty if they left their coastal homelands behind. At the centre of their uncertainty the Montaukett visitors worried that “they would suffer and come to poverty if they should move as a body into this part of the world, where there were no oysters and Clams.” While hoping that their common Christian faith would unite them with other
Native settlers, the Montauketts concluded to “leave the issue with that God who governed all the Nations of the Earth.”

The visit of the Montaukett deputation to Brotherton in 1789, and the fears and uncertainty they expressed concerning removal, provides a window into the divergent notions of community and place that emerged among Algonquian Christians by the late eighteenth century. While by the mid-1780s, several Algonquian families and individuals had chosen to relocate to Oneida lands and had set about creating a new community which they called Brotherton, many Algonquians remained hesitant to leave their homelands in New England, and continued to pursue their subsistence patterns and to practise their faith in the places of their ancestors. Perhaps fearing, as the Montaukett visitors did, that removal to Oneida would force them to alter their lifeways and detach them from familiar landscapes and sources of sustenance, a number of Algonquian men and women instead continued to plant, fish, and craft in the places that had sustained them for generations and to defend these lands against encroachment by state authorities.

The diverging choices made by Algonquian Christians regarding resettlement at Brotherton highlight the complex factors that influenced their decisions to stay or to relocate. While the exodus to New York certainly became a multi-generational movement by the 1780s, drawing families and young and old alike to resettle at Oneida, those who decided to remain in New England comprised an equally diverse mix of elderly ministers and church members, younger widows, and children. Some of the leading proponents of the relocation to Brotherton included Algonquians who had previously

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1 Pilkington, *Journals*, 162.
served in Iroquoia as ministers and schoolmasters during the 1760s—men such as Samson Occom, David Fowler, Jacob Fowler, and Joseph Johnson (until his death in 1776)—and most had moved with their families to the new settlement by the late 1780s. Many more, however, had never laid eyes on the lands of Iroquoia before reaching Brotherton. Those who undertook the long and unfamiliar journey to Oneida often comprised younger men and women with children, but older parents and community members who had spent the bulk of their lives in their coastal homelands also joined the migrants in their move to New York. Among those who decided to remain at their coastal settlements, or at least delayed their relocation to New York for several years, were men and women who had not participated in Wheelock’s missions or who in many cases comprised an older generation of Algonquian Christians—the elderly Narragansett minister Samuel Niles, Mohegan spiritual teachers John Cooper, Henry Quaquaquid, and Samuel Ashpo, and leading community women such as Lucy (Occom) Tantaquidgeon, Hannah Ashpo, and Esther Poquiantup. Equally significant, younger Algonquians such as Benoni Occom and Tabitha Johnson—two of Samson Occom’s children—elected to remain in New England rather than follow the paths of removal taken by their parents and other kin.2 Although approximately one hundred fifty Algonquians had relocated to Brotherton by the mid-1790s, many more continued to dwell along the rivers, coasts, and wooded areas of southern New England.

While complex factors such as age and kinship certainly influenced the decisions of the Montaukett visitors and others regarding relocation to Brotherton, their hesitancy to

2 Mohegan list, 1789, WSJP, CHS; Murray, To Do Good, 289; Brooks, Collected Writings, 294, 334, 363, 409-10.
relocate also hints towards the ongoing and contested nature of place-making. Algonquian Christians not only divided over the matter of relocating or remaining in New England, but within the emergent Brotherton settlement and among those who remained in New England, Christians continued to struggle, and often disagree, over matters of land use, practices of faith, and definitions of communal belonging. Perhaps most significantly, the visit of the Montauketts to Brotherton suggests that even as relocation strained family, communal, and inter-village ties, Algonquian Christians remained connected across the geographical expanse of the northern states. Far from severing the ties of kinship, faith, and culture that had linked Algonquian communities in New England, men and women who moved to Brotherton continued to return to their coastal homelands for visits after relocating to New York, while ministers and family members undertook the arduous journey to Oneida lands to visit loved ones who had relocated to the new town. In many ways, Brotherton became an extension of the geography of faith that developed between Algonquian communities following the Awakening, and served as a spiritual outpost to which men and women could travel to visit kin and friends, or a destination to which they could remove when circumstances in New England became untenable. As Algonquian Christians living at Brotherton and in New England struggled to protect and define their communities in different ways, bonds of kinship and faith continued to join the two groups through the end of the century.

The Algonquians who left their homelands behind to settle Brotherton followed the painful paths tread by countless other Native Americans who were likewise forced to abandon villages and ancestral lands in the wake of colonial and American expansion. In the decades surrounding the Revolutionary War, Native communities throughout eastern
North America encountered the unrelenting and often violent intrusion of Euro-Americans upon their lands and lifeways, which forced many to abandon their villages, hunting grounds, and planting fields, and created new amalgamations of communities, cultures, and identities. Such migrations and relocations ruptured families, kin networks, and villages, and severed long-standing ties to lands and places of ancestral significance. The New England Algonquians who sought refuge among the Six Nations following the Revolution joined groups such as the Tuscaroras, Nanticookes, and Tutelos who had migrated to Iroquoia in the preceding decades, and settled alongside the Mohicans from Stockbridge, Massachusetts, who likewise received an invitation to relocate to Oneida at the close of the war. Forming part of a larger history of removal, resistance, and communal reconfiguration, some historians have situated the Brotherton settlement within the emergent pan-Indian movement, and have suggested that new conceptions of ‘Indian’ identity flowed from such relocations. While removal to Oneida certainly worked to transform Algonquian communal affiliations according to their new identity linked to Brotherton, Natives who emigrated from New England remained painfully aware of the linguistic and other cultural differences that distinguished them from their Oneida, Stockbridge, and other Native neighbours.3

3 According to John Wood Sweet, the Algonquian migrants “abandoned the old tribal or ‘town’ identities” that defined them in New England and forged a “new kind of alliance” with the Oneidas. “This transcendent sense of Indian identity,” writes Sweet, “reflected the influence of imperial officials, and later U.S. policymakers, who were often inclined to lump all Indians together as fundamentally the same.” David Silverman has also suggested that the Brotherton removal “signaled a new spiritual and racial order in the Indian northeast” and in exploring Native understandings of Christianity, argues that Algonquians and others came to see themselves as a race cursed by God. Sweet, 316-17; David Silverman, “The Curse of God: An Idea and Its Origins among the Indians of New York’s Revolutionary Frontier,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2009), 498-99, 519-20.
Scholars have recognized the persistence and survival of Native communities through the eighteenth century, but they tend to treat the removal venture to Brotherton as the final exit of Algonquians from southern New England, or at least of the Christian population. In many ways echoing the views of Euro-American observers who described Algonquian villages as degraded and dwindling at the turn of the nineteenth century, some historians have likewise assumed that the majority of Algonquian believers left their homelands for the promise of Christian community and new land available at Brotherton.\(^4\)

While a number of historians have focused on the efforts of leaders such as Occom and others to create a spiritual haven for Algonquian Christians, others have begun to address and account for the choices of Algonquians who remained at Mohegan, Mashantucket, or Narragansett, and their ongoing efforts to practise their faith at their ancestral places in New England.\(^5\) The decisions of many men and women to remain in their homelands not only illuminates the attachment to place that motivated ongoing efforts to subsist upon

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\(^4\) In his history of Algonquian Christians and the life of Samson Occom, for example, William DeLoss Love fails to account for Natives who delayed or resisted joining the Brotherton movement, and ignores the ongoing presence of Native men and women in New England, both Christian and non-Christian, at the end of the eighteenth century. Rather, by focusing on the removal of Native Christians to New York, Love implies that Christian practitioners disappeared from New England, and that relocation reflected differences in faith between the “Christian Indians” who left and non-Christians who remained behind. Love, chapters 14-15; see also Szasz, “Samson Occom: Mohegan as Spiritual Intermediary,” 77-78; Wyss, *Writing Indians*, 123-53; Strong, 79; Fisher, *Traditionary Religion*, 334-72. Fisher similarly stresses that the Brotherton settlers were motivated to relocate by a number of factors, including a desire for religious separatism from both the “unchristian English” and non-Christian Natives. As a result, Fisher’s exploration of the Brotherton removal fails to account for the ongoing presence of Algonquian Christians in New England after the removal.

and protect their villages and reserves, but also suggests that Christianity offered Algonquians differing visions for living out and practising their faith. Only by examining the Native communities in southern New England as well as at Brotherton can we appreciate the divergent ways in which Algonquian Christians lived out their faith, defined space, and struggled to protect their lands and livelihoods at the close of the eighteenth century.

Following the end of the American Revolution, many Algonquian families and individuals began the long journey northward to the homelands of the Oneida where they hoped to form a new community. A number of Algonquians had attempted to settle in Iroquoia during the early years of the war, but the ferocity and widespread violence of the war in Oneida country had driven them to retreat and to seek shelter at Stockbridge, Massachusetts for the remainder of the conflict. As these early emigrants returned to the lands they had begun to settle in the early 1780s, and others journeyed to and laid their eyes upon Oneida lands for the first time, they encountered a landscape ravaged by battle and a people who had suffered the horrors of war. Arriving in the western “wilderness” where they hoped to “Blow the Gospel Trumpet,” the Algonquian pilgrims instead found scorched cornfields and burnt villages and felt the heavy sadness and burden of death that weighed upon the Oneidas and their lands. Perhaps the division and fighting that had snuffed out the Six Nations’ alliance during the Revolution portended the strain and discord that would erupt among the Algonquian settlers as they struggled to create a

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Christian community in Iroquoia in the coming years. As men and women set about the task of forming their new town in the midst of the surrounding devastation and loss, they attempted to incorporate the spiritual practices and lifeways that had characterized their churches and villages in New England into the new landscape they now called home.

Christian leaders such as Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, and David Fowler initially envisioned removal to Oneida territory as a means of resolving the impoverished conditions and encroachment they faced in New England, and yet the circumstances surrounding the relocation to Iroquoia initially provided little respite. Among the small band who had attempted to build homes and set up farms in Oneida territory at the outset of the Revolution, the violence of the fighting on Haudenosaunee lands forced the settlers to flee the new settlement. Petitioning the Connecticut government for assistance from their refuge at Stockbridge in 1780, Algonquian settlers informed officials that they had “been lately driven from [our] Settlements by the Enemy and Sustain[ed] grate damage leaving our Effects [behind],” and requested that officials provide them with funds to support Narragansett teacher Daniel Simon, who had begun instructing their children since their retreat.7

With the ending of the Revolution, Algonquian settlers again journeyed to the land promised them by the Oneidas, but found fields and settlements scorched and destroyed by the relentless military campaigns that had raged across the land. Struggling to farm and obtain enough provisions to support their families, by 1785 the Algonquians living at Brotherton looked to the newly-formed United States Congress to provide their

7 IP I, II: 226, CSL.
community with material and monetary support. “Since the Peace have took Place a
number of [us] have got up here again,” Occom wrote to congress on behalf of the
Brotherton settlers, “and others woud Come up also but we are So poor, we are much
dishartend,—and we find that this late war has stript us of all help we use to have.” In
the wake of the Revolution, a number of British religious societies removed their support
for American missionary efforts, and as Occom noted, “All the Fountains abroad that use
to water and refresh our Wilderness are Dryed up.” Beseeching government officials to
heed the “pinching Necessity that Constrains us to make our Cries for help,” Occom
requested aid in building a grist mill and saw mill in the town, as well as donations of
farming implements and books to assist the migrants in their agricultural and educational
pursuits. 8

The following years continued to present difficult circumstances to the
Algonquian pilgrims as travelling expenses and crop failures laid burdens of debt and
destitution upon the hopeful pilgrims. In 1787 Algonquian petitioners again sought
provision and relief from Euro-American benefactors and in a memorial signed by David
Fowler and Elijah Wimpey, among others, the Brotherton settlers outlined the dire
conditions facing their new community. Explaining that “our Wheat was blasted, and our
Corn and Beans were Frost bitten and kill’d this Year,” the petitioners further noted that
“our moving up here was Expencesive and these have brought us to great Necessity.” 9 In
1788, a wheat parasite known as the Hessian fly destroyed crops in Canada as well as the
northeastern states, and drove settlers and Natives alike to scrounge for plants, small

8 Brooks, Collected Writings, 148-50.
9 Petition to all Benevolent Gentlemen, 1787, OP, CHS.
animals, and fish to offset their hunger.\textsuperscript{10} Around the same time, Occom noted in his diary that the religious meetings at Brotherton suffered on account of the growing impoverishment of the town’s inhabitants. Only a few settlers attended a spiritual gathering at a local home on a summer evening, Occom recounted, as “our People are much Scatter’d on account of the Scarcity of Provisions.”\textsuperscript{11}

Contending against a landscape ravaged by war, the Algonquian emigrants faced increasingly tense relations with their Oneida neighbours in the early years of resettlement. When Algonquians such as Joseph Johnson and Elijah Wimpey first proposed their removal plan to Sir William Johnson and Haudenosaunee leaders in the early 1770s, the Oneida delegates who attended the meetings warmly responded by offering land in their territory for settlement and adopted the Algonquian emigrants as their “younger brothers.” Agreeing to “receive” the Algonquian pilgrims into “our Body,” Oneida leaders who spoke at the meetings at Kanawarohare in 1774 had declared, “Now we may say we have one head, one heart, and one Blood. Now Brethren our lives are mixed together, and let us have one Ruler, even God our Maker, Who dwells in Heaven above, who is the father of us all.”\textsuperscript{12} While such agreements reflected Iroquoian notions of kinship, reciprocity, and long-standing traditions of adopting other nations into their Confederacy, they too signalled the practical exigencies of protecting their boundaries and territory against the advance of Euro-American settlers through the


\textsuperscript{11} Brooks, \textit{Collected Writings}, 375.

\textsuperscript{12} Oneida’s Second Response to Joseph Johnson, 1774, WP 774121; see also Murray, \textit{To Do Good}, 206-22.
incorporation of other Natives.\textsuperscript{13} To strengthen their increasingly vulnerable position as settlers moved west by the 1770s and 1780s, the Oneidas had developed a “buffer zone of dependent communities planted on their eastern margins” and hoped to settle more than one thousand Natives in their territory in the aftermath of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{14} Adopting the New England Algonquians, some historians have suggested, reflected Oneida hopes that the Native migrants would serve as mediators between themselves and Euro-American settlers, as the Algonquian pilgrims possessed valuable literacy skills and cultural adaptations to help the Oneida defend their lands.\textsuperscript{15}

Despite such hopes for indigenous alliance and the protection of Haudenosaunee homelands, tensions quickly emerged between the Algonquian migrants and their Oneida neighbours. Oneida delegates had promised Joseph Johnson and the Algonquian settlers a plot of land roughly six square miles in the vicinity of the Tuscarora settlements, which they had formalized in a 1774 agreement, and yet by the late 1780s the land accorded to the Brotherton settlers had shrunk to a fraction of the original agreement.\textsuperscript{16} Owing to the staggering land losses the Oneida themselves suffered through deceptive treaties engineered by state officials, and perhaps to the influx of refugees seeking land in Iroquoia following the Revolution, in a 1788 treaty Oneida leaders designated a two by

\textsuperscript{13} Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Six Nations adopted a number of Native groups into their League, including the Tuscaroras in the 1720s, and the Nanticokes and Tutelos closer to mid-century. According to Laura Murray, the adoption of the latter two groups, who were both incorporated as non-voting members, may have “provided a precedent for the Brotherton adoption,” as the New England Natives likewise were “never granted full ‘nation’ status among the Iroquois.” See Murray, \textit{To Do Good}, 172; Christian Feest, “Nanticoke and Neighboring Tribes,” in \textit{Handbook}, 246; David Landy, “Tuscarora Among the Iroquois,” in \textit{Handbook}, 519.

\textsuperscript{14} Taylor, \textit{Divided Ground}, 145-46.

\textsuperscript{15} Taylor, 146; Silverman, “The Curse of God,” 513-15.

\textsuperscript{16} BIR, Hamilton College Archives.
three mile tract for the Algonquian emigrants on the southeastern edge of the Oneida reservation. Anthony Wonderley contends that this decision reflected the Oneidas’ displeasure with the Algonquians for failing to fulfill their kinship obligations to their elder brothers during the Revolution, evident in the small numbers of Algonquian men who had enlisted in support of the American cause. While legislation passed by the New York Assembly in 1789 enlarged the Brotherton tract to a size close to the original grant, tensions and misgivings continued to underscore Algonquian relations with their Oneida neighbours.

Disagreeing over the size of the Brotherton grant, the Algonquians and Oneidas also disagreed over the best way to survive in the barren post-Revolution landscape. While Oneida communities had requested aid and instruction from missionary societies in the preceding decades, and had grown increasingly familiar with the English language from the efforts of both Native and Euro-American teachers and ministers, many remained resistant to Christianity and committed to subsistence activities practised by

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17 Between 1784 and 1788, the Oneidas lost more than five million acres of land at the hands of New York state officials, who flouted the federal government’s regulation that only Congress could treat with Native tribes. In the years following the Revolution, Oneida country also became the destination of several refugee groups, including Onondagas, Cayugas, Delawares, and a considerable number of Mohicans from Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Graymont, 286-88; Laurence Hauptman, “Command Performance: Philip Schuyler and the New York State-Oneida ‘Treaty’ of 1795,” in The Oneida Indian Journey: From New York to Wisconsin, 1784-1860, eds. Laurence Hauptman and L. Gordon McLester III (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 41-45; Anthony Wonderley, “Brothertown, New York, 1785-1796,” New York History (October 2000), 465-66; Brooks, Collected Writings, 345, n 181; Love, 285-87.

18 Wonderley, 466-68, 474. Wonderley notes that only a “dozen or more Brothertons served in the Revolutionary War fighting for the American cause” and that they were “enrolled individually in various regiments of the line from New England states.” Mohegan records alone, however, indicate that seventeen men from the community fought and died for the American side during the conflict, calling into question Wonderley’s assessment of Algonquian contributions. See List of Mohegans who died during the Revolution, August 1789, WSJP, CHS; De Forest, 475.

19 Laws of the state of New-York, comprising the Constitution, and the acts of the legislature since the Revolution, from the first to the twelfth session, inclusive, Vol. 2 (New York: Hugh Gaine, 1789), 446; Wonderley, 474.
their ancestors. In an unsuccessful attempt to protect their lands from settlers, one Oneida leader explained to treaty officials in 1785: “the land that you apply for is our Deer-Hunting Country, and the Northern our Beaver-Hunting Country” and both are “very dear to Us.” The loss of such lands, the Oneida leader continued, would “destroy” the livelihoods of their young men. As New York officials staked claims to such valuable and dear lands, Oneida men struggled to hunt in shrinking territories while women planted crops on plots surrounding their villages.

While basic survival became increasingly difficult, the divisions that had arisen among the Oneidas during the mid-eighteenth century continued to grow. By the post-Revolutionary period, the Oneidas were split between those who adhered to Christianity and the efforts of missionaries such as Samuel Kirkland and those who opposed Christian teachings and Euro-American culture and remained committed to older forms of hereditary leadership. As one observer reported of the Oneidas, “tho’ the number of professed Pagans be small, yet the whole nation, notwithstanding their opportunities for religious improvement, are still influenced in a great degree by their old mythology,” and remained “firm believers in witchcraft and invisible agency” as well as “dreams and omens.” Continuing to fish, fowl, and rely on female-based horticulture, many Oneidas resisted the cultural adaptations practised by their Brotherton and Stockbridge neighbours in regards to faith and farming, which generated tensions between the diverse communities as they struggled to survive on the same territory. As one observed noted,

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20 Franklin Hough, ed., Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs appointed by law for the extinguishment of Indian titles in the state of New York published from the original manuscript in the library of the Albany Institute (Albany: J. Munsell, 1861), 91, 101.
“the Oneidas affect to despise their neighbours of Stockbridge and Brotherton for their attention to agriculture, but they are obliged to buy their corn and meat of them.”

Despite strained relations with the Oneida and their straitened circumstances in Iroquoia, Algonquian men and women attempted to remake community and create meaningful ties to the lands and spaces they now called home. Drawing together Christians from the Montaukett, Pequot, Niantic, Narragansett, Mohegan, and Farmington villages, the process of community-rebuilding at Brotherton in many ways reflected the influences of schooling and Euro-American culture that many Algonquians had incorporated into their lifeways in the preceding century. At a town meeting held in 1785, for example, the settlers in attendance outlined plans to organize the town spatially according to “a Centre near David Fowlers House” and a main street that would “run North and South & East and West, to Cross at the Centre.” At the meeting Algonquian settlers also determined that political leadership in the town would fall into the hands of an annually elected committee of trustees, while fence viewers would be chosen to arbitrate boundary disputes among members of the community. Modeling both the town’s spatial organization and government on traditional New England settlements, the Brotherton settlers most likely drew their inspiration from a Connecticut law book obtained by Farmington Natives before they immigrated to Oneida. Designs for the town’s layout also reflected newer ideals of permanence and sedentary settlement, and perhaps signalled the overt efforts of the migrants to protect their new lands against

23 Brooks, Collected Writings, 308-9.  
24 IP I, II: 195.
The houses built by the Algonquian pilgrims likewise reflected the influence of Euro-American culture on the town’s structures. While dwelling sites at Algonquian villages in New England had reflected a mixture of wigwams and English-style frame houses through the end of the century, men and women at Brotherton primarily constructed cabins, houses, and barns that paralleled the habitations of their non-Native neighbours.\(^\text{25}\) Within the first few years of resettlement, the Algonquians constructed a schoolhouse in the town to continue traditions of formal education among their children as well.\(^\text{26}\)

Adapting their town structure and dwelling sites to Euro-American patterns of settlement, the early settlers struggled to establish a community based on their shared salvation, spiritual fellowship, and kin ties. Brotherton visionaries such as Joseph Johnson, Samson Occom, and David Fowler had hoped that their new settlement would become a place of spiritual and temporal refuge for Algonquian Christians, and a beacon of spiritual light to their non-Christian neighbours, and in the early years of relocation Algonquian settlers strove to make such aspirations possible. Seeking to maintain the communal worship patterns they had established between their villages in New England, the Algonquian pilgrims used spiritual gatherings as a means to both re-create a godly community in Iroquoia and foster unity among the diverse members of the town. Whether convening for hymn-singing, prayer, fasting, Sabbath services, or informal exhortation, Algonquians at Brotherton quickly defined the new space in which they built


\(^{26}\) Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 402.
their homes, cleared their fields, and sought to sustain their families as a place of spiritual power and reverence.

Similar to their gatherings in New England, worship services at Brotherton often drew in Christians from surrounding settlements, as well as curious onlookers, and in many cases reflected the multi-ethnic character of Oneida territory in the late eighteenth century. Joining together with Mohicans from Stockbridge who had likewise relocated to Oneida following the Revolution, Haudenosaunee believers, Anglo-American missionaries, and settlers of Dutch and English ancestry, such occasions required preachers to speak in multiple languages to their congregants, or to employ an interpreter to aid in the process. Multi-ethnic worship services not only linked diverse peoples together who shared common beliefs, but also functioned to create new networks of faith between the Brotherton settlers and other communities and villages in Oneida territory.

While Algonquian men and women frequently invited Anglo-American missionary Samuel Kirkland to preach in their town, and hosted visitors from Oneida and Mohican settlements, they regularly travelled to neighbouring villages to participate in prayer meetings or hymn-singing. In the fall of 1786, for example, settlers from Brotherton attended a gathering at the Mohican settlement of New Stockbridge, located to the west of their town, where “there was a Prodigious large Congregation for this wilderness.”

Following the American Revolution, the Mohican-Wappinger community living at the Protestant mission town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts received an invitation from the Oneida to resettle on their lands. Having suffered serious losses during the Revolution, and facing encroachment and dispossession from Euro-Americans living at Stockbridge, the Mohican community began relocating to Oneida in 1783 and formed the community of New Stockbridge, located west of Brotherton on lands near Oriskany Creek. Many of the Stockbridge emigrants were Christians, and a number had received formal Euro-American schooling within their village as well as at Dartmouth College. In 1787, Stockbridge minister John Sargeant Jr. arrived in the new town to resume his pastoral care of the Mohicans and the following year
spiritual services took place first at the home of Jacob Konkapot, and later Peter Pohquunnuppeet, during which Samson Occom preached to a diverse crowd of Algonquians and “White People” gathered for the occasion, and recounted that “we had an Awfull solemnity in the asembly.”

The Brotherton visitors quickly returned the favour, and hosted Sabbath services at their town which drew in Christians from neighbouring communities. At a summer gathering in 1786, Occom noted that many Natives from Stockbridge, along with “four young Onoyda men,” attended a worship service at David Fowler’s house. The Oneida guests, according to Occom’s description, “were drest Compleat in Indian way…they had large Clasps about their arms…and Bells about their Legs, & their heads were powderd up quite Stiff with red paint.” Encouraging those gathered to “remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,” Occom and the diverse crowd joined together in singing hymns before breaking up the meeting. In the coming months, wedding ceremonies, fasting days, Sabbath services, and everyday visits provided further opportunities for the New England Natives to share in faith and fellowship with those living nearby.

While forging new ties with neighbouring believers, Algonquians actively demarcated spaces in their town as sacred sites for worship, prayer, revelation, and confession. In the initial years of relocation, the emigrants lacked a meetinghouse for their Sabbath services, and while they constructed a schoolhouse by the summer of 1788

established a church in the town, which generated conflict with Samson Occom over his efforts to provide spiritual direction and leadership within the New Stockbridge community. See T.J. Brasser, “Mahican,” in Handbook, 208-9; Brooks, Collected Writings, 377, n229.

Brooks, Collected Writings, 343.

Ibid., 339-41, 381.
that served as a central gathering place, local homes and barns served as the primary places for practising their spiritual rites and disciplines. In many ways following the patterns they had established at Mohegan, Mashantucket, and Narragansett, men and women met regularly in small groups or large in homes, fields, or barns to praise God and encourage one another in their faith, and in so doing transformed the unfamiliar lands of Iroquoia into places for fellowship and for finding spiritual presence.

David and Hannah Fowler’s house at Brotherton quickly became a gathering site for individuals and families to sing, pray, and exhort, and provided Algonquian settlers with a sense of communal cohesion and unity in the early years of resettlement. Upon his arrival at Brotherton in the fall of 1785, Occom described the welcome he received at the Fowlers’ house, where “a number were together Sing[ing] Psalms hymns and Spiritual Songs.” Joining in with the Native men and women gathered there, Occom recounted that “they began to Sing again, and Some Time after, I gave them a few words of Exhortation, and then Conclude[d] with Prayer.” Often holding multiple meetings on the Sabbath, Algonquian believers willingly opened their dwellings to fellow Christians to gather and seek God, and treated the everyday spaces of their town as sites for divine connection. On a Sabbath morning in the fall of 1786, several settlers convened at Narragansett Abraham Simons’ house to hear Occom preach from the ninth chapter of Matthew. Stirred by the Mohegan minister’s recitation of Jesus’ words, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” the congregants travelled to the Fowlers’ house in the afternoon to hear another sermon and to join in singing and prayer. Several weeks later, men and women again gathered for a Sabbath service at David Fowler’s

barn, and according to Occom, formed the “bigest Assembly we have had Since I Came to this Place.” While at the morning service Occom testified that “we had the presence of god with us [and] many were deeply affected,” in the evening the Algonquian faithful reconvened at Jacob and Esther Fowler’s house, where they sang and listened to exhortations for several more hours.31

As spiritual exercises and communal gatherings demarcated their homes and wider town as sacred, efforts to obtain subsistence on the lands and waterways surrounding Brotherton allowed the Algonquian emigrants to adapt familiar lifeways to their new environment. The landscape of Brotherton and the surrounding Oneida territory, while familiar to the few Algonquians who had served there as missionaries in the 1760s, represented a foreign and perhaps daunting space for the men and women accustomed to coastal ecosystems. Although the lands around Lake Oneida, the traditional homelands of the Oneida, contained woodlands, rivers, and freshwater bodies similar to those in New England, the absence of coastal inlets, marshes, and beaches for the collection of oysters, clams, and other saltwater fish presented a significant change to the Algonquian emigrants who had relied on such resources for sustenance. The Narragansetts had informed colonial officials in the late 1760s that salt water fishing represented “the main branch of support of the greatest part of our Tribe.”32 Like the Montaukettts, perhaps many of the Algonquians who settled at Brotherton shared their fears about surviving apart from coastal homelands and vital resources, and faced significant adjustments in surviving on the new lands.

In the early years of relocation, the migrants nonetheless attempted to incorporate many long-standing subsistence patterns into the new environment where they lived. Planting and fishing provided Algonquians with opportunities to imprint their practices upon the land and to discover new places that offered sustenance. While their initial efforts at horticulture in the town often met with frustration and failure owing to unfavourable weather conditions and a shortage of implements, the settlers doggedly struggled to raise crops and feed their families. Reflecting the increasingly male-based farming they had adopted in New England in the preceding decades, Algonquian men cleared land surrounding their homes and planted crops of corn, beans, wheat, and potatoes, among other things. Shortly after his arrival at the fledgling town in the fall of 1785, Samson Occom described the farming efforts of Narragansett settler John Tuhy, who had cleared one acre of land and reaped a crop of diverse vegetables. Rather than ploughing his land according to Euro-American practices, the Narragansett man adhered to traditional Algonquian agricultural practices of burning fields for planting and left a “great may Logs ly[ing] on it.”

David Fowler similarly attempted to farm the lands surrounding his home, and within a few years of relocating to Oneida, had constructed a barn to store his implements, seeds, and crop yields. On at least one occasion, Fowler harvested his corn crop with the help of family and friends, and the workers who laboured alongside of him celebrated their success by praising God. “In the after noon he [Fowler] husked his Corn,” Occom remarked on a fall day in 1785, “and the Huskers Sung Hymns Psalms and

33 Brooks, Collected Writings, 309.
Spiritual Songs the biggest part of the Time, [and] finished in the evening.”

Such scenes became increasingly rare as the settlers faced flooding, early frosts, and a subsequent scarcity of provisions in the following years; Algonquians then turned to other subsistence activities to offset the hunger and destitution that threatened their survival.

Following the practices of their Haudenosaunee neighbours, men and women at Brotherton began collecting ginseng plants which grew wild in the forests of the Hudson River Valley for sale in European markets. Joanna Brooks suggests that Sir William Johnson likely introduced the Oneida and Mohawk to the ginseng trade in the late 1750s, while other sources indicate that the Haudenosaunee had engaged in collecting the plant earlier. Missionary Gideon Hawley observed Mohawk men, women, and children collecting the root, which they called kalondaggough, in “great quantities” in the summer of 1753, and noted that they “got considerable by it.”

Selling their roots for goods and money, a number of Brotherton settlers likewise adopted the practice of their Oneida neighbours and began to traverse the woods surrounding their community to collect the valuable roots. Setting up camps in forested regions where they harvested the plants, the Algonquians looked to this new vegetation unknown in their coastal homelands to provide new livelihoods and sustenance at Brotherton. At the end of August in 1786, for example, a group of thirteen Algonquians travelled several miles into the woods outside of the town in search of the roots, and set up a temporary camp to aid their efforts.

Occom noted that the group travelled “together about 3 Miles, and there they incamped [and] made up great Fire,” and perhaps remained several days in the woods before

\[34\] Ibid., 306.

returning to town with their harvest. Several years later, an observer described how the Brotherton townspeople “united” with the Oneida seasonally in the fall to collect ginseng, and how their efforts produced “a thousand bushels annually,” for which they received two dollars per bushel. Offering the settlers a new means of subsistence that paralleled the seasonal nature of hunting, the ginseng trade likewise fostered a new awareness and understanding among Algonquians of the environment and vegetation surrounding the town.

When not scouring the woods for ginseng, Algonquian families and individuals ventured onto nearby lakes, rivers, and creeks for fishing. Native communities in southern New England faced growing constraints on their fishing rights from state authorities by the mid-1780s, but the Brotherton settlers apparently fished unhindered on the waters close to their town and relied upon their catches to supply much of their diet. Oriskany Creek, which flowed along the eastern border of the town, offered a convenient site for fishing, while Oneida Lake and its surrounding waterways, several miles to the north, provided town inhabitants with the opportunity to pursue their catches on open water. Occom recounted fruitful fishing ventures on the creek bordering Brotherton, and on a summer day in 1785 he reported that he caught more than five dozen “Salmon Trouts” while stationed along the watercourse.

The Mohegan minister and others often camped along Oneida Lake in the summer months and devoted several days to canoeing and fishing on the lake and nearby streams.

Reminiscent of their visits to the lake during the missionary ventures of the 1760s, Occom, David Fowler, and other townspeople relied to Oneida Lake as a vital food source during periods of hunger and impoverishment, and frequently intertwined their efforts to obtain food with their practices of spiritual devotion. Before setting out to fish on Salmon Creek in the summer of 1787, for example, a group of Algonquian men “got up early and Pray’d” before launching their canoe towards the fishing site, perhaps hoping that God would provide them with a large catch.\textsuperscript{38} The following summer, Occom and two of his sons journeyed to the lake and spent several days fishing, and combined their subsistence activities with spiritual disciplines. Occom noted their successful endeavours in catching a “fine parcel of Fish” one evening, and recounted that after returning to shore, he and his sons proceeded to make up “a Fire by the Creek and had a fine Supper of F[ish] and afterwards Prayd.”\textsuperscript{39} Although hundreds of miles from the coasts and rivers that traditionally sustained their people, Algonquian settlers looked to the waters which surrounded their town for subsistence and in so doing, created new ties to places in the landscape and gained new knowledge of the territory they called home.

Such efforts towards maintaining communal fellowship and subsisting on their new lands began to founder, however, as the Brotherton settlers faced mounting external pressures that put their Christian unity sorely to the test. The continued dispute over town lands with the Oneida, the ongoing difficulty in raising provisions, and the flood of Euro-American settlers surrounding the new community by the late 1780s all combined to create tensions among the Algonquians and brought to the surface conflicting ideas about

\textsuperscript{38} Brooks, \textit{Collected Writings}, 374.
\textsuperscript{39} Brooks, \textit{Collected Writings}, 404.
both land and communal belonging. While impoverishment and hunger certainly worked
against the town’s cohesion by forcing inhabitants to range far and wide in search of
provisions, conflict with the Oneida over the boundaries of Brotherton fostered divisions
among the Algonquian settlers over how best to resolve the dispute. Similar to their
struggles to protect communal lands and autonomy in New England, the migrants found
themselves at odds over issues of authority and governance in their new lands. As early
as 1787, Occom noted in his diary that a “party Scheam” had been “Contrivd by a few of
our People” who had agreed “with the Onoydas for a Piece of Land.” While the previous
year Oneida leaders had met with Brotherton representatives and suggested that the
Algonquians “live at large with them on their land,” rather than being “bound by any
bounds,” Occom and others had rejected their offer and insisted upon receiving the
clearly-demarcated tract of land they had been originally promised. Following the 1786
meeting, a small group of settlers from Brotherton, unbeknownst to Occom and others,
had reorganized land negotiations with the Oneida and had apparently reached an
agreement. Such dealings had been entered into “Without the knowledge of the Head
men of the Place,” and according to Occom, “Some of the Contrivers of this mischief
were much intoxicated and they drove on the Business with all fury in no order.”
Saddened by the resulting dissension among community members, Occom expressed the
“great Confusion of mind” he and others felt as they continued their negotiations with the
Oneida.\textsuperscript{40}

Tensions continued to build at Brotherton, and in the following year disputes over
town governance and land management escalated into violence. After the conclusion of a

\textsuperscript{40} Brooks, \textit{Collected Writings}, 344-45, 382.
singing meeting at Brotherton in the summer of 1788, the fellowship shared by the Native worshippers was quickly dissolved when a fight broke out between fellow hymn-singers. Occom recounted with dismay that “as the People were returning” from the meeting, “Elijah Wimpey was attacked by…Peter and Jeremiah Tuhy & they abused him much.” As the shocked worshippers looked on, David Fowler’s son, David, joined in the fray and attempted to stop the brawl, but “it was difficult to part them.” Wimpey, along with Joseph Johnson, had been a leading proponent of the relocation venture before the Revolution, and had settled with other migrants at Oneida before the war drove them back to Stockbridge. While Wimpey had assumed a notable role in the resettlement process after the war and was appointed a town trustee in 1785, tensions with fellow townspeople erupted shortly afterwards. Even before the removal to New York, relations between Wimpey and other removal leaders soured when the Farmington man accused Joseph Johnson of supporting the British cause. Denying such charges, Johnson instead informed New York officials that Wimpey was a “subtle, crafty person” and described him as one of his “enemies.” These emerging dissensions in leadership likely followed the Algonquian migrants to Oneida, as by the mid-1780s lines of division had begun to split them community. “It was a Sad night with ‘em and very shameful,” Occom reflected in July 1788, as he struggled to make sense of the shattered fellowship at the hymn-gathering and of the violence that had unfolded between fellow Christians.41

The fight between Wimpey and the Tuhys signalled more than a passing disagreement between the Algonquian men after a singing meeting. Such scenes of hostility and dissension continued to occur at Brotherton as town residents became

41 Murray, To Do Good, 266-69; Brooks, Collected Writings, 402.
increasingly polarized over issues of land use, governance, and communal belonging in
the subsequent years. In the winter of 1790, Occom confessed that he had “been to no
meetings [for] four Sabbaths…and my Mind has been filld with Trouble So that I have
had no peace.” 

During a visit to the community several months later, Samuel Kirkland
commented on the “unhappy divided state” that marked the Algonquian settlers, and
noted that after preaching a sermon to the townspeople, many “sobbed & cried for the
space of a whole hour together…from a view of the divided broken & wretched state of
this people.”

The communal division and conflict that Kirkland witnessed stemmed from a
 provision made by the New York State government in a statute relating to Brotherton
lands. In 1789, the New York Assembly intervened in the dispute between the
Algonquians and Oneida over the Brotherton allotment, and restored the bulk of the land
originally granted to the New England Natives. As a part of the statute they passed,
however, state officials permitted Brotherton residents to lease tracts of town land for up
to ten years. 

A number of Algonquians used this leasing provision as a way of dealing
with their impoverished conditions and the mounting pressure from Euro-American
settlers seeking land, and began renting out tracts of town land by the 1790s. One visitor
to the Mohawk River Valley in 1788 described the settlers who were “continually pouring
in from the Connecticut hive…to overcome and civilize the wilderness,” and such

\[42\] Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 411.
\[43\] Pilkington, *Journals*, 211.
\[44\] *Laws of the state of New-York*, vol. 2, 446.
emigrants certainly put pressure on the Brotherton townspeople to rent out their lands. The town boundaries had not been officially surveyed when the leasing began, and areas designated for communal use were quickly signed over to Euro-American renters. Such actions not only lacked the consensus of the town leaders, but they revived many Algonquians’ fears regarding land loss and encroachment that had plagued their villages in New England. While Occom and a number of Algonquians adamantly opposed the leasing of town land and strove to uphold traditions of communal landholding, Elijah Wimpey along with several supporters flouted town leaders by engaging in individual transactions that leased out substantial acreage for Euro-American use. Reminiscent of the arbitrary actions taken by sachems in leasing and selling Algonquian homelands decades earlier, the emerging leasing controversy raised issues of both protecting land and defining belonging at Brotherton that fundamentally divided the settlers, common faith or not.

Occom responded to the leasing controversy by carrying a petition to the New York State Assembly in 1791 on behalf of the disgruntled townspeople which outlined their grievances against the perpetrators of the leases. Describing the “Flods of Troubles” that “are Overwhelming us like Boistrous Seas,” Occom related the recent disagreements that had divided the Brotherton settlers, noting that “a great number of your People, and a Number of our People are Joining together to ruin and Destroy our Town.” A number of Algonquians had already leased out nearly four thousand acres, Occom insisted, and had done so “without any regard, to old Substantial People, Without any regard to Rule or

order.” The Mohegan minister went on to claim that “your People will even urge Boys Some in opposition to their Fathers to lease Lands to them, and will take leases of any of them.” Painting a despairing picture of a community in upheaval, Occom insisted that “This in Truth is our Deplorable Situation” and feared that the Algonquians would be forced to “push Off Some Where, for we Can not live so.” Occom concluded by beseeching state officials to revoke the authority of community members to lease lands to non-Natives so that the town’s “crazy” and “distracted” “Indians” might “Come to their right Sense.”

The assembly answered the Brotherton petition by passing an act which vested the powers to apportion and lease lots solely in the hands of elected town trustees, and yet such interventions failed to stem the growing number of leases being issued or to mend the differences between the town’s factions. Rather, Occom informed the governor of New York the following year, Elijah Wimpey and his supporters had drawn up their own petition and under the false pretence that they had received approval from the government, “went on with all fury to lease out Lands to the White People.” Judging their actions as “evil” and “wicked,” Occom again insisted that the leases reflected a “party” spirit carried out “in opposition to the Most Substantial part of the Town, against the oldest men and the first Settlers, and the most Sober and Judicious men of the Town.” Describing Wimpey and his supporters as a party “Compos’d of Strangers, that is, they did not come from the Tribes, to whom this Land was given,” the Mohegan minister

46 Brooks, Collected Writings, 157-58.
47 An Act for the Relief of the Indians residing in Brotherton and New Stockbridge, 1791, WSJP, CHS.
asserted that “Three Families are Mixtures or Molattoes; [and] Putchaker, Who Caried their Petition to the Assembly is a Stranger, he Came from Martha’s Vineyard.”

The New York Assembly again intervened in Brotherton affairs by the mid-1790s by dividing town lands between Natives and non-Natives and appointing Euro-American commissioners to adjudicate local disputes. The struggles over leasing that wracked the community in its formative years not only stripped the migrants of more than half of the town lands as well as much of their autonomy, but also revealed the limitations of the Algonquians’ faith in maintaining communal cohesion. Occom’s stinging accusations regarding the ancestry, belonging, and rights of Wimpey and his supporters point towards the complex intertwining of faith and ethnicity at Brotherton, and the exclusionary impulses that threatened Christian unity. Ancestry and ethnicity had become increasingly prominent in Algonquian villages in the decades preceding relocation as colonial officials disputed and undermined the rights of Natives, particularly women, who intermarried with persons of African descent. As Algonquian men fought in colonial wars or went to sea—and often did not return—women increasingly chose to cohabit with or marry African American men, and in some cases incorporated them into their communities. Colonial authorities attempted to regulate and prohibit such marriages in some reserve communities, and in some cases “erased” the Native identity of Algonquian-African children in official records.

48 Brooks, Collected Writings, 137-39.
50 As early as 1719, for example, the trustees who oversaw Montaukett lands prohibited “strange Indians” from living within the community and intermarrying, upon threat of fines, and in 1754 coaxed several
By the 1770s, ethnic categories had become increasingly prominent in Algonquian struggles to define and protect their communities and lands. Even as Euro-American officials and overseers used tribal and racial designations to question Native belonging and rights to their reserve lands, Algonquians themselves began to invoke ideas regarding “strange” or “foreign Indians” to challenge political opponents and to undermine their belonging and authority in the community. At the Mohegan community in particular, in the wake of the sachem’s death members of Ben’s Town and John’s Town continued to vie against each other and insisted on their own political legitimacy and communal rights before colonial officials by questioning the ethnicity and ancestry of their opponents.

As Algonquians looked to Iroquoia for relocation and began to envision their removal, such notions of ancestry, ethnicity, and belonging worked their way into the plans for their new community. The 1774 agreement between Oneida leaders and Algonquian delegates which outlined the land grant for Brotherton reflected this growing awareness of racial categories within Native communities, and stipulated that persons of Montaukett leaders to sign an agreement prohibiting “mustees, molattos, or strangers” from intermarrying with Natives in the community and from holding land. Native women who intermarried with persons of African ancestry, according to the agreement drawn up by the trustees, would lose their rights to land at Montauk. At the Mohegan community as well, references to “strange Indians” and outsiders began to appear in petitions and other documents with growing frequency by the 1770s, as Native petitioners complained against intruders in their settlements or questioned the legitimacy of political rivals. Perhaps fuelled by fears of further land loss after the unsuccessful closing of the Mason Case, a Mohegan petition to the assembly in 1773 stated that Mohegans who married “negros,” whether men or women, would lose their rights within the community. Indian Bond to Prevent Strange Indians Living at Montauk, 1719 and Agreement Respecting Strange Indians Living at Montauk, 1754, Indian Deeds to Montauk, 31-33, 35-36; Mohegan Petition, May 1773, WSJP, CHS; IP I, II: 315, 318. For works on Native-African relations in New England and the emergence of racial categories, see Daniel Mandell, _Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts_ (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 164-202; Ruth Wallis Herndon and Ella Sekatau, “The Right to a Name: The Narragansett People and Rhode Island Officials in the Revolutionary Era,” _Ethnohistory_ 44, no. 3 (1997), 433-62; Plane, _Colonial Intimacies_, 180-81; Den Ouden, _Beyond Conquest_, 181-208; Mandell, _Tribe, Race, History_, 39-69.
African ancestry would be denied rights of possession within the new town. Whether this stipulation emerged from within the Oneida or Algonquian leadership remains unclear, but such a prohibition certainly illustrates the emerging role of ethnicity in shaping communal belonging. While Natives bearing African ancestry comprised notable portions of Algonquian communities by the latter part of the eighteenth century, and most likely participated in many of their Christian gatherings and practices, the leasing controversy at Brotherton highlighted the unresolved relationship between ethnicity, faith, and communal belonging. Occom’s attack on the “strangers” and “outsiders” who had infected the community with “evil” and divisive leasing practices perhaps signalled the failure of the Algonquians’ shared salvation to transcend the multi-ethnic distinctions of the townspeople and their differing approaches to land use. By pointing out that those who supported Wimpey in his leasing endeavours lacked the ancestral rights to the lands at Brotherton, Occom implicitly suggested that ethnicity, rather than Christianity, ultimately defined membership and belonging within the town.

And yet, despite Occom’s insistence that the loss of town lands stemmed from the actions of “outsiders” and “crazy Indians,” the leasing dispute in many cases pitted families, friends and neighbours against each other, and separated Algonquians who had worshipped and fellowshipped together for years past. Even Occom’s own son, Andrew, entered into a leasing agreement in the spring of 1792 with a Euro-American man for a term of ten years. Perhaps a number of the perpetrators did indeed come from communities outside of southern New England or possessed African ancestry, but in most

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51 BIR, Hamilton College Archives.
52 Leasing Agreement between Andrew Occom and Aron Davis, April 1792, WSJP, CHS.
cases the dispute divided Algonquians who had lived, worshipped, and worked together for many years, and who had chosen to respond differently to the pressures of encroachment and impoverishment in Iroquoia. While Algonquians such as Occom desperately strove to protect the lands, communal autonomy, and spiritual fellowship that underscored their settlement at Oneida, other people increasingly viewed and used their land as an individual commodity to be leased at their own discretion and by their own decision to offset material want. Far from becoming a mission-oriented outpost to their Oneida brethren or a community rooted in faith and fellowship, the leasing controversy instead spiralled the townspeople into a prolonged dispute which ruptured their spiritual unity and revealed the ways that their faith could become a force for exclusion rather than unity and inclusion.

As the Brotherton pilgrims struggled and disputed over the best way to live in their new homelands in New York, the Algonquian Christians who had remained in their villages in southern New England encountered their own share of difficulties in maintaining their spiritual practices and defending their lands. The removal venture caused significant splits in families, churches, and villages, and yet for those who remained in New England, their communal and inter-village gatherings along with their subsistence activities served to root them to their homelands and provide meaning to their lives. Continuing to treat their land as a place of provision and ancestral significance, a number of men and women manifested their belonging in New England by gathering for worship and fellowship within and across their communities, and by doggedly petitioning state authorities to articulate their rights and grievances concerning their lands.
Despite the loss of ministers and congregants with the removal to Brotherton, a number of Algonquian church members, exhorters, and spiritual leaders remained behind in New England, and continued to gather together to practise their Christian rites and devotion. By 1795, 137 men, women, and children had migrated to the new community in New York, substantially depleting some of the coastal settlements in New England. Through the end of the eighteenth century, however, more than four hundred Narragansetts continued to live on or near the reservation in Charlestown, while many families—a number of which were headed by women—persisted at the Mohegan, Niantic, and the Pequot communities. At the Pequot communities at Stonington and Mashantucket, for example, Algonquian men and women carried on meeting in each other’s homes and invited believers from neighbouring Algonquian villages to lead and attend their spiritual services. Mohegan and Narragansett visitors frequently journeyed to Pequot homes where they received provision and shelter, and joined in singing and fellowship. Esther Poquiantup, the widow of Pequot Christian leader Sampson Poquiantup, offered her house regularly as a gathering place for Algonquian worshippers, and encouraged those who attended the meetings to continue in their faith. During her husband’s lifetime, the Poquiantup home had served as a gathering place for Narragansett, Mohegan, and Pequot Christians, and Esther maintained this tradition after Sampson’s death in the post-Revolutionary years. In the spring of 1787, Esther hosted a gathering comprised of Pequots and Mohegans, and perhaps others, who met together and were “greatly bowd under the Word, and the young People were much afected.” At the

53 Wonderley, 469; Mandell, Tribe, Race History, 4.
close of the service, a number of people remained behind at the Mohegan woman’s house, and “Sat up a great While [and] had agreeable Conversation.”

Conversations, prayer, and exhorting likewise continued to knit Narragansett Christians together as they opened their homes to visitors and hosted inter-village services. Narragansett minister Samuel Niles, though aged and allegedly spiritually discouraged in the years following the Revolution, made an effort to join in Sabbath gatherings at the reserve and opened his house to worshippers and congregants. On a Sabbath day in the spring of 1785, while one observer described the Narragansett minister as “low,” he nonetheless hosted a gathering of Native Christians who convened at his house to hear a sermon preached from Daniel chapter five. After listening to Samson Occom (who had yet to permanently relocate to Brotherton) expound on the “writing that was written” on the wall against the Babylonian king, Niles and the visiting Mohegans likely joined in singing and prayers at the end of the meeting. Later that day, the Narragansett faithful again convened with the Mohegan visitors to attend another spiritual gathering at a different house on the reserve, and listened to the preaching of ministers John Cooper and Samson Occom. Designating both their meetinghouse and homes as places for worship and sharing with community members and Algonquians from neighbouring villages, Narragansett Christians carried on their efforts to encounter God and learn from his Word in a multitude of places throughout their community.

54 Brooks, Collected Writings, 334, 363.
55 Samuel Niles would have been in his eighties by the post-Revolutionary period, according to an age estimate provided by Ezra Stiles in 1761. While other members of Niles’ family, namely James Niles, the minister’s nephew, immigrated to Brotherton by the mid-1790s, the Narragansett minister remained in New England the remainder of his life. Stiles, Extracts, 114; BIR, Hamilton College Archives; Love, 353.
56 Brooks, Collected Writings, 294.
Algonquian efforts to maintain their sacred gatherings in their communities and with kin and neighbouring believers were not without obstacles, however, as non-Natives intruded on meetings or impeded the Algonquians’ abilities to worship and commune. While in some cases Euro-American neighbours attended gatherings in Native homes, listened to Algonquian ministers and exhorters, and experienced spiritual renewal from participating in the rites, multi-ethnic congregations also produced friction and disrupted Algonquian efforts to exhort and sing. In 1787, for example, two Narragansett men petitioned the Rhode Island Assembly to complain of the disruptions plaguing the Sabbath services held on their reserve caused by “several people” who “make a practice of selling Strong Drink on those days appointed for Worship.” “It often happens,” the Narragansetts related, “that whilst the People are peaceably gathered together, performing their Devotion, many of the loose, disorderly, vain & thoughtless” people entered their meetinghouse intoxicated and disturbed the congregation with “horrid” language and “disagreeable” behaviour. Seeking state intervention to prevent future disturbances at their meetings, the Narragansetts hoped to continue “peaceably performing their Religious Duties.”

Rhode Island officials responded by noting that “both Whites & Indians, frequently assemble themselves at and near the Indian Meeting-House, in Charlestown, to drink strong Liquors,” and placed a prohibition on the sale and consumption of alcohol within one mile of the meetinghouse on the Sabbath. The Narragansetts’ complaint revealed the impediments Native Christians encountered in maintaining their sacred spaces for communing with God and each other, and indicated that the disturbances came from both Native and non-Native interlopers. While the sale of alcohol brought
disruptive Euro-American visitors into Sabbath meetings at the church, Narragansett men and women were seemingly influenced by the availability of drink outside the church as well. Whether the Native perpetrators were Christians who were waylaid on their way to Sabbath services or those who opposed the faith and practices of their Narragansett kin, the conflict certainly strained the fellowship and worship practices of the Narragansett faithful.57

The disruption of Sabbath services represented one of several struggles the Narragansetts faced in protecting their Christian fellowship, land, and communal unity on the reserve. As Narragansett families and individuals emigrated to Brotherton during and after the Revolution, divisions over communal leadership and land use continued to split the community. Paralleling the disputes that would emerge at Brotherton, a number of Narragansetts began leasing out reserve lands “for a great number of years” and claimed the rent proceeds as their own, “without the tribe’s receiving any benefit.” As Narragansett petitioners informed the Rhode Island Assembly in 1779, some of these Natives had leased the “best farms” on the reserve and had proceeded to move “off to other tribes”—perhaps a reference to the Brotherton emigrants—and left Narragansett families living on the reserve unable to “support their poor.” While the Assembly responded by prohibiting Narragansett leasing activities apart from the approval of the “Indian council” and the Euro-American officials they appointed, disputes over land and leadership continued to persist on the reserve. By the late 1780s, state officials commented on the “great uneasiness” and the “divers disputes and controversies” that had “arisen among the Indians…respecting their lands,” as members of “different councils”

57 Narragansett Petition, 1787, PCRN, Box 1, Folder12, RIHS.
struggled for leadership and control of their remaining lands, and struggled against the encroachment of Euro-American neighbours. Narragansett representatives requested that the Assembly intervene and settle the ongoing disagreements dividing their community, and by the early 1790s state officials imposed new rules and regulations regarding the election of council members and the governance of the reserve. While such government interventions brought a measure of unity to the divided community, the poaching of resources and encroachment from Euro-Americans continued to threaten Narragansett lands and livelihoods at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{58}

The Narragansetts’ struggle to protect their Christian fellowship and lands paralleled the efforts of Algonquians at other villages to defend the larger boundaries of their reserves against ongoing encroachment and exploitation by Euro-Americans. In the years surrounding the removal venture to Brotherton, the circumstances of Algonquians who remained in southern New England became increasingly difficult as state authorities aggressively infringed upon and ignored Native rights to land and resources. Facing similar pressures of encroachment and destitution as their kin in New York, Algonquians struggled to retain the dwindling bounds of their homelands and to practise subsistence strategies that state authorities increasingly prohibited. Turning to the well-used tool of petition-writing, Algonquian communities fought back against official policies and intruders alike by sending memorials to local assemblies which articulated their rights to their homelands and demanded restitution for injustices. Throughout the end of the eighteenth century, Algonquian ministers and church leaders continued to assume a leading role in expressing the rights and desires of their villages before non-Native

\textsuperscript{58} RCRI, vol. 8, 573-74; vol. 10, 313.
authorities, and demonstrated the ongoing overlap of spiritual and political authority within reserve settlements.

The petitions issued by Algonquians in the years following the Revolution reflected many of the same concerns as those crafted earlier in the century, but Native Christians began to articulate a new language of rights and belonging interwoven with a much older understanding of their relationship to their lands. Several petitions invoked the concept of the “dish,” for example, and described homelands in terms of the long-standing provisions and sustenance obtained from the fields, forests, and waterways surrounding their settlements. According to Lisa Brooks, the Algonquian notion of the “dish” or “common pot” stemmed from pre-contact traditions and expressed a sense of the social and ecological interrelatedness among human and non-human members of a village or community. The metaphor of the common pot, writes Brooks, referred to that “which feeds and nourishes” and represented “the wigwam that feeds the family, the village that feeds the community, [and] the networks that sustain the village.” Paired with the notion of their land as a “dish,” Native ministers and leaders began to describe their relationships to their territory and resources in terms of “natural rights” and “privileges.” Perhaps drawing upon the rhetoric of Revolutionary period and appealing to Euro-American notions of liberty and rights, Algonquian communities strategically insisted in their petitions that their long-standing privileges to the resources of their homelands had been trampled upon and ignored by non-Native neighbours. Interweaving the sustaining nature of their lands with the inherent rights of possession and use that they claimed, Algonquian petitioners doggedly demonstrated the physical and cultural

59 Brooks, Common Pot, 3-4.
significance that their ancestral homelands continued to hold for their families and wider settlements.

The restrictions that Algonquians suffered on their fishing rights by the mid-1780s stirred a number of leaders to petition state authorities on behalf of their villages and communities. After the Connecticut government limited the annual number of fish allowed to members of the Niantic and Mohegan communities to half a seine, or net, Algonquians responded by sending several memorials to the state assembly to protest such restrictions. A petition signed by Niantic minister Phillip Cuish and three other men from the Mohegan and Niantic communities in 1786 outlined the long relationship the two communities shared with both their lands and the Euro-Americans who settled among them, and insisted that their fishing practices represented “birth rites” that non-Natives had trampled upon. Describing their subsistence practices as “Natural Privileges which we and our forefathers ever had, given to them freely, from the King of Heaven,” the petitioners noted their amazement in learning that Connecticut officials had limited their fish yields to half a seine annually. “We are ready to conclude” the petitioners went on, “that in Time to Come, we must not have only one Dish [but] one spoon for two tribes.” Reminding state officials that when their ancestors had allied with the English and fought against their enemies, “one Hatchet woud not do for Two tribes,” the Niantic and Mohegan petitioners pointed out that now “we are forbid and hindered by some people of using of the little remaining Privilages.” The Mohegans and Nantics traditionally fished at sites along the Thames and Connecticut rivers, and the petition indicates that such livelihoods continued to provide vital sustenance to Algonquian communities. Reasoning that “we can not hurt the Public, by Fishing, for we never had more than two
seins in Mohegan and two in Nahantick,” the Algonquians entreated the assembly to “protect us in our Birth Rites, and Natural Privileges; that none may Dare…to hinder, forbid, or restrain us from Fishing in any of the Places where our fore Fathers and we have fish’d peacably.”

While the petitioners attempted to reverse the restrictions placed upon the fishing practices of their communities, they also demonstrated their ongoing relationships with their lands. Drawing upon the language of “birth rites” and “natural privileges,” the Niantic and Mohegan men intertwined their calls for rights to their resources with an insistence that such rights had been practised by their ancestors. Continuing to see their lands, waterways, homes, and places of worship as components of the “dish” first given to them by the “King of Heaven,” the petitioners described themselves as in a vital relationship with their lands and aligned their lifeways and subsistence patterns with those practised by their forefathers. By seeking to uphold the tradition of fishing “in any of the Places” where both they and their ancestors had obtained provision, the Mohegans and Niantics defined land and space not in terms of property or commodity, but as sources of sustenance to their communities and sites of connection with their kin and ancestors. Although explaining their grievances using terms that Euro-American official would understand, the petitioners equally emphasized the vital provision and ancestral significance that their homelands, or “dish,” represented.

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60 Mohegan and Niantic Indians to the Connecticut Assembly, 1786, Mohegan Indian Documents, Kroch Library Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, Cornell University.
The battle to defend fishing rights in Connecticut represented one of many struggles Algonquian communities faced at the close of the eighteenth century. As state assemblies failed to heed Algonquian pleas reminding them of past alliances and requesting protection of land and resources, encroachers continued to pilfer Algonquian homelands. Recognizing the precarious nature of both their landholding and livelihoods, petitions sent to local assemblies also employed the notion of the “dish” to measure the loss and suffering in Algonquian villages and to present new strategies to survive on their lands in the new republic. While the Mohegans and Niantics had together struggled to protect their fishing rights on Connecticut’s rivers, by 1789 two Mohegan men sorrowfully proposed a new strategy to preserve their reserved lands in the state that recognized the changing and changed nature of their social and physical environment. In a directive signed by Henry Quaquaquid and Robert Ashpo, two pillars of the Mohegan Christian community, the petitioners nostalgically lamented that in times past their ancestors “lived in peace, love and great harmony, and had everything in great plenty.” “The times are exceedingly altered, yea the times are turned upside down” the Mohegan men continued, as “all our hunting and fowling and fishing is entirely gone.” Whereas their ancestors “had but one large dish, and could all eat together,” the petitioners

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61 Other petitions sent to state assemblies by Algonquians articulated similar grievances regarding encroachment and restrictions on resource use. In the mid-1780s, the Montauketts complained to New York officials of the severe limitations they faced in the number of livestock they could hold based on agreements made at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and several years later they again complained to state officials of the injustices and mistreatment they continued to suffer at the hands of their neighbours at East Hampton. In 1785, the Mashantucket Pequots likewise sought the intervention of Connecticut officials in their ongoing struggles to protect their lands and resources from encroachers living at Groton. See Brooks, Collected Writings, 150-52; Stone, The History and Archaeology of the Montauk, 71-73; IP I, II: 248, CSL.
concluded that “now we plainly see that one dish and one fire will not do any longer for us.”

Pointing to the adaptations that many Mohegans had made in the preceding decades, such as fencing their land, holding livestock, and building houses, the petitioners informed the assembly that within the community “Some few there are that are stronger than others…and will take the dish to themselves.” Filled with “sorrow and grief” over their concluding proposal, Quaquaquid and Ashpo asked the Connecticut assembly on behalf of the Mohegans that “our dish of suckutash may be equally divided amongst us, so that every one may have his own little dish by himself, that he may eat quietly and do with his dish as he pleases, that every one may have his own fire.” Connecticut officials granted the Mohegans’ request for individual allotments of land within their reserve, and by the following year the assembly appointed the community’s overseers to divide and apportion the Mohegans’ homeland into individual holdings and tracts. In requesting such an action, Quaquaquid and Ashpo seemingly betrayed the communal values and kinship ties that underscored the village relationships and the faith practice of many Mohegans, and acquiesced with long-standing colonial goals of remaking Native understandings of land according to Euro-American principles. Such a request, however, perhaps more clearly signalled the Mohegans’ desire to protect community members from the imbalance, scarcity, and greed that threatened their sustenance, and a strategy to protect village and kinship relations as a whole. “By advocating for the division of the dish into individual lots,” Lisa Brooks suggests, “the Mohegan leaders may have been attempting to protect the pot as a whole, because individually owned property could not
be easily contested.”\textsuperscript{62} Taking an approach that stood at odds with efforts of Brotherton settlers such as Occom to protect the communally-based nature of landholding and town governance, Quaquaquid and Ashpo instead hoped to protect the subsistence of community members by recognizing and physically demarcating their individual relationships with the land. By concluding each Mohegan would have their own “dish,” however, Quaquaquid and Ashpo continued to define the space of their communal homelands in terms of its sustenance, provision, spiritual power, and ancestral ties.\textsuperscript{63}

The struggles to protect lands and livelihoods that marked Algonquian communities in southern New England as well as at Brotherton did not occur in isolation, but rather reflected the ongoing ties between the older homelands and the new. Despite the rupture that removal to Brotherton created within families and villages, ties of kinship and faith continued to link Algonquians in New England to those in New York, and prompted many Natives to travel between the two homelands for visits or permanent relocation. As both the New York and New England communities struggled locally to maintain fellowship, protect land, and define belonging, they also continued to join with Christians outside of their villages to practise their faith and to strengthen kinship ties. Though the network of faith certainly stretched and strained in the years following removal, the ties between Algonquian Christians never completely severed as a result of relocation.

\textsuperscript{62} Brooks, \textit{Common Pot}, 103.

\textsuperscript{63} Quoted in Brooks, \textit{Common Pot}, 51-52. Montaukett petitioners made a similar request to New York officials in 1800, asking in their memorial that “we may each one of us have his little dish set off by himself that we may at last eat our small portion of sucko-tash in peace.” Closely paralleling the explanation provided by the Mohegan petitioners in their request, the Montaukett\textquotesingle s related that their “dish of venison is so quite turn\textquotesingle d over and destroyed” that they desired individual allotments to protect their remaining lands. See Stone, \textit{History and Archaeology}, 72.
While family members and friends separated by the relocation certainly remembered each other in their thoughts and prayers, the frequent visits they embarked upon between Brotherton and New England visibly demonstrated their ongoing ties. Often following in the footsteps of the Algonquian ministers and teachers who had traversed the corridor linking New England to Iroquoia in the 1760s, men and women journeyed the waterways and paths linking their communities to visit kin, attend Sabbath services, and join in the daily activities that marked village life. Acting as a link between New England homelands and the settlement at Oneida, Algonquian visitors in some cases journeyed to New York to observe and report the progress and state of affairs at Brotherton to those who remained in New England, while others returned to New England to aid friends and family in their struggles against encroachment and land loss.64

Perhaps more than any other Algonquian, Samson Occom journeyed between New England and Brotherton several times in the years following the relocation and remained a spiritual leader and figure within both communities. Although Occom served as a visionary of the emigration scheme and relocated along with his family to Oneida by 1789, he continued to make frequent journeys back to his Mohegan homelands, and often appeared and preached at local gatherings of Algonquian Christians. During a journey to Mohegan in the fall of 1789, the minister not only spent time visiting his son, Benoni,

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64 Samson Occom continued to offer his leadership at his wife’s community at Montauk in their struggles against encroachment and mistreatment by East Hampton authorities. In 1784, Occom hosted a gathering at his house at Mohegan during which Montaukett representatives drafted a statement demanding copies of the deeds of the lands at East Hampton be returned to them by the “certain gentleman” holding them in his possession. The following year, Occom petitioned the New York Assembly on behalf of the Montaukett outlining their grievances concerning their subsistence practices and the restrictions that East Hampton trustees continued to impose on them. Statement by Montaukett Indians, 1784, OP, CHS; Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 150-52.
who had chosen to remain at the settlement along the Thames, but he also visited Pequot men and women at the Mashantucket community. After spending the night among friends at Mashantucket, Occom led a Sabbath service the following morning and delivered a sermon to a “great number” gathered at the meeting site. “The People attended with great attention,” Occom recorded, and “many were much affected.”

Other Algonquians followed in Occom’s footsteps and undertook the long, arduous journey between New England and New York to maintain contact with kin and friends who had resettled at Brotherton. Pequot Benjamin Garret, for example, set out on a journey to Brotherton in the fall of 1784 to visit his daughter and son-in-law—Hannah and David Fowler—who had recently relocated there. A leading member of the “sachem’s party” at Narragansett during the 1760s, Garret seemingly embraced the Gospel in subsequent years and became devoted to preaching in the community. Occom described Garret as “a poor man, and I hope one of God’s poor,” and endorsed the Pequot sojourner as “a temperate man [who]…frequently Speaks in public in Religious meetings, where the Door is open for him.” Perhaps intimidated by the length of the trip as well as its expense, Garret contacted Occom regarding his concerns about provisions, particularly when he arrived at Oneida, and desired the Mohegan minister to notify the Algonquian settlers of his upcoming visit. Sending word by Niantic Isaac Uppuiguiyantup, who was travelling to Oneida ahead of Garret, Occom reassured the Pequot man that he had “mentioned [him] and [his] Design fully” to the “Indians,” and provided Garret with an

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additional written recommendation to carry with him on his travels to New York. The length and nature of Garret’s stay at Brotherton remains unclear, but he likely returned to New England afterwards as his name does not appear in the town’s records.

Several years after Garret’s journey to visit his kin at Brotherton, Mohegan minister Samuel Ashpo and several people from the Stonington and Mohegan communities likewise made the arduous trip to the Algonquian town in central New York. Spending a number of days visiting relatives and fellow Christians now living on Oneida lands, Ashpo and the other travellers attended a Sabbath service and other spiritual gatherings that took place in the town. Joining in with other exhorters who attended the gatherings, at one assembly Ashpo spoke before the Brotherton congregants with “great deliberation” and a “low voice,” and the aged spiritual leader offered his listeners commentary on a sermon preached earlier by Samuel Kirkland.

Ashpo and his friends would return to Mohegan and Stonington after their visit, but other Algonquians who visited Brotherton during the 1780s and 1790s later relocated permanently to the community. Although the leasing controversy and communal divisions strained the town’s unity and threatened to unleash land loss, by the mid-1790s government intervention had limited leasing practices and provided Algonquian inhabitants with individual lots of land for their families. As a result, Brotherton continued to offer men and women in New England a promising community to which they could relocate, and as poverty and land loss continued to challenge their villages and

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66 Tobias Shattock to Eleazar Wheelock, 30 November 1767, WP 767630.2; Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 123-24.
reserves, many chose to turn their backs on their ancestral homelands in the hopes of finding provision, fellowship, and belonging elsewhere. While the small stream of migration continued into the nineteenth century, and members of Pequot, Mohegan, Narragansett, and other villages journeyed to Brotherton permanently, the persistence of the two Christian communities—one in New York, and one in southern New England—physically demonstrated the varying ways in which Algonquian Christians lived out their faith and understood place. Although Algonquian believers in New England and New York shared common beliefs regarding salvation, God’s word, and the Holy Spirit, and had together created an inter-village community of faith in the post-Awakening years, their common faith did not preclude them from making different choices regarding their relationships to land, their understandings of place, and their definitions of community. Even as some Algonquians perceived their Christian faith as a binding force for creating a new spiritual and physical homeland far from New England, and depended on the mobile power of God to protect them in a strange land, others clung to their beliefs while remaining planted in their ancestral homelands, and perhaps could not separate their faith in God from the lands in which they first discovered Him. Perhaps more significantly, while Algonquian Christians continued to rely on their lands as a primary means of subsistence, they fundamentally disagreed over the best way to use and protect them—whether as a communally-held “dish,” as individual “dishes,” or as commodified plots for lease. Although neither the New England faith community or those who relocated to Brotherton could fully maintain the spiritual cohesion or unity their choices to remove or stay appeared to reflect, their struggles nonetheless provide rich insight into the creative
and courageous ways in which Algonquians strove to live according to their faith, to protect lands and livelihoods, and to trust in God in a continually changing world.
CONCLUSION

We are ‘determined to go forward’: Land, Community, and Faith in the New Republic

More than one hundred years after the Mohegan councillor Appagease described “growing up together” with the lands along the Thames River, and nearly forty years after Mohegan preacher Joseph Johnson recorded his longing for his community and homelands, another observer described Algonquian lands and community life in both New England and New York. In 1807, Yale College president and Congregational minister Timothy Dwight embarked on a tour of the northern states which led him through towns and settlements in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York. Visiting churches, schoolhouses, and local homes along the way, Dwight’s journey included visits to Algonquian communities in southern New England and New York and brought the minister face to face with men, women, and children struggling to survive in their coastal homelands and at the new settlement of Brotherton. Recording his observations of the Algonquians he encountered at these stops, Dwight provided his readers with an assessment of Native life that reflected emergent ideas about race and the vituperative attitudes towards “Indians” that held sway in the early Republic. After travelling through Stonington and observing the Eastern Pequot reserve, for example, the minister concluded that “the whole body of these Indians are a poor, degraded, miserable race of beings.” Describing the living conditions of the Pequots—“some of them live in weekwams, and others in houses resembling poor cottages”—Dwight insisted that “all of the vice of the original is left…[and] they are lazy in the extreme; and never labour, unless compelled by necessity.” Taking note of the one “remarkable exception” in the allegedly degraded
community, Dwight recounted that an “aged Indian” at the Stonington reserve “for a series of years, has occasionally preached to them, and is said to give them useful exhortations.” According to the visiting minister, the Pequots “very generally assemble to hear his discourses, and hold him in much respect.” Despite the man’s exhortations, however, Dwight concluded that “not one of the rising generation appears to aim, even remotely, at any higher character.”

When Dwight visited the Algonquian community of Brotherton several days later, he offered a more tempered, if not condescending, account of the growing town. Remarking on the “business of agriculture” which many Algonquian families at Brotherton pursued, the minister also noted that “three of them have framed houses” and “several others have barns also.” Encountering adults and children who spoke “decent English,” Dwight discovered that many Algonquian children attended a schoolhouse in the town where they learned “readily and rapidly,” and that their schoolhouse “serve[d] them as a church” for Sabbath services. Despite such “improvements,” however, Dwight went on to criticize the Algonquian townspeople for their “inferior” husbandry, their “indifferent” fences, and their “imperfectly cleared” lands. “Indeed almost everywhere is visible that slack hand,” the minister complained, “which peculiarly characterizes such Indians as have left the savage life.” While lauding the Brotherton inhabitants as examples of “civilized Indian life,” Dwight was quick to stress that their lifeways remained separate from “persons really civilized” and reflected their “disposition to leave every thing unfinished.”

Dwight’s descriptions of the Algonquian communities at Stonington and Brotherton not only reflect the antipathy that Euro-Americans held towards such people in the early nineteenth century, but they also distort and obfuscate Algonquian culture and community life at the turn of the century. Portraying Natives in southern New England as lazy, degraded, and ultimately disappearing, the minister’s account of the Algonquian community at Brotherton suggested that they, too, were disappearing, although in a much different way. Moving closer and closer towards so-called “civilization,” Dwight’s report described the Brotherton settlers as “Indians” in the “most advanced state of civilization” and heralded their agriculture—albeit mediocre in his mind—and town life as evidence of their cultural transformation. Measuring culture and community life according to Euro-American notions of land-use and civility, Dwight depicted the Algonquians at Brotherton as “improving” their land and “property,” while their kin in New England succumbed to laziness, debt, and general inaction at their squalid reserve settlements. Erasing the history of Algonquian struggles to protect lands, resist colonization, obtain literacy, and practice the Protestant faith in the previous century, Dwight’s account instead highlighted the inherent degradation of Algonquian men and women to explain their poverty and straitened circumstances. Perhaps most disturbing, Dwight’s travelling records powerfully obscure the ongoing connections between Algonquians living at Brotherton and those in New England, and ignore the cultural and spiritual ties that continued to link family and friends across the space of the northern states. Placing both communities outside of Euro-American society—whether as degraded remnants or as “civilized Indians”—Dwight depicted the Brotherton and Stonington Natives as equally disconnected from their lands and from each other.
Such apparent disconnections stemmed from Dwight’s narrow vision rather than any actual severing of ties to kin or place among the Natives at the turn of the nineteenth century. Neither dying remnants nor cultural mimics, Algonquians at Brotherton and in New England continued to adapt to the conditions of American expansion and to use their lands for subsistence and sustenance, spiritual encounters and visions, and fellowship with kin. Despite the hundreds of miles that separated the Brotherton migrants from fellow Christians in New England, both communities also struggled to maintain the network of faith that linked their villages in the decades following the Awakening. While Dwight continued on his journey of the northern states and jotted down his observations, Algonquian men and women too embarked on journeys of their own to maintain kinship ties and to renew their connections at Native settlements nearby and far away. Rather than succumbing to so-called degradation and disappearance, Algonquians at Brotherton and in New England maintained ties between their communities that reflected the ongoing importance of Christianity, kinship, and senses of place. Perhaps most significantly, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Algonquian Christians continued to demonstrate the varying ways in which they responded to the ongoing pressures and conditions they faced in the new republic. As communities in New England and New York continued to battle against encroachment, dispossession, and the control of state authorities, some Natives looked to relocation further west to form another Christian community while others clung tenaciously to the lands of their ancestors.

Life in early nineteenth-century America posed difficulties for Native communities throughout the eastern seaboard, as reservation life, impoverishment, encroachment, disease, and dispossession represented daily realities for all. In New
England, Algonquian communities continued to struggle for subsistence rights, to protect their lands from Euro-American poachers, to contend against corrupt or negligent overseers, and to adapt to the changing demography and ethnicity that characterized their reserves. In the years following the Revolution, the outmigration of many Algonquian ministers and teachers to Brotherton had left community schools without instructors, while the severing of ties with British mission societies had removed a significant source of funding for Native education. As a result, by the early nineteenth century schooling and literacy had begun to languish at many settlements. The Brotherton migrants who settled in New York were not free from hardships either as they too fought to protect their lands and livelihoods by the early nineteenth century. The leasing crisis in the town during the 1790s had not only resulted in the appointment by New York authorities of Euro-American superintendents to oversee community affairs and the loss of communal lands, but had served as a foretaste of the mounting pressure the Algonquian pilgrims would face from land-hungry settlers. In the early 1800s, the population of New York more than doubled as settlers from neighbouring states moved westward in search of farm land and livelihoods. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Brotherton settlers and their Oneida and Stockbridge neighbours faced increasing pressure from land speculators and government officials to relocate further west, and members of the Brotherton community had already begun exploring the possibility of resettlement in Indiana.²

Despite such pressures, Christian practices, kin networks, and subsistence activities continued to root many Algonquians to their coastal homelands and to their newer lands at Brotherton. Far from lazy, dwindling, or slack, many men and women endeavoured to seek spiritual presence and aid in their daily lives, and struggled to survive by relying on local resources and ancestral sites of provision. Into the nineteenth century, a number of individuals and families elected to join their kin at Brotherton, and a steady stream of migrants journeyed northward to Oneida homelands to make a new life away from their coastal waters and lands. Community leaders such as Philip Occuish, James Niles, and Immanuel Simons followed the paths of earlier migrants to New York, and left behind kin and friends at the Niantic, Pequot, and Narragansett communities in New England. Struggling to farm, fish, collect ginseng, and worship on new lands, these men and their families found opportunities to school their children and attend church at the new town, and perhaps adapted their lifeways to the new environment where they settled. Building huts and houses on lots apportioned for their use, the newer migrants served as links to New England by bringing news to friends and family already living there, and by strengthening Algonquian kin networks at the New York settlement.

Such out-migration certainly diminished communities remaining in southern New England, but attachments to place and practices of faith served to strengthen those who remained. At Narragansett, Montauk, Niantic and Mohegan, fishing continued to serve as a mainstay of life, as Algonquians collected shellfish, fished in local rivers and shorelines,

Brotherton Peacemakers to President Andrew Jackson, December 1830, Thomas Dean Papers, 1796-1844, WHSA; Love, 316-19.

3 Love, 353-54, 361.
and as men embarked on whaling voyages to earn a little cash. Finding these livelihoods frequently “hindered” and threatened by Euro-American neighbours, leaders from their communities continued to petition state authorities to recognize longstanding rights to fishing sites used by their ancestors, and defied state-constructed boundaries to obtain the necessities of life. Women increasingly crafted items such as baskets and brooms for sale and exchange at neighbouring towns, while men farmed, fenced, or engaged in day labour. Impoverishment marked every community, and yet many men and women remained resolutely tied to their homelands. As a visiting minister learned from a Narragansett informant, “we wish not to be removed into a wild country…[as] we have here farms and houses of our own…we have land enough, and wood enough, and living on the salt water, and having boats of our own, [and] have plenty of fish.”

Such resolutions were bolstered by the ongoing importance of evangelical Christianity and inter-village fellowship for many Algonquians in these communities. While Euro-American ministers and missionaries such as Dwight declared Algonquian Christians to be the “remarkable exception” at reserves in New England, they missed the vibrant faith that continued to anchor many to the soils of their ancestors and to tie them to their kin. At the Narragansett reserve in Rhode Island, the church remained the central gathering place for the community, and provided congregants with spiritual and political leadership and support throughout the early nineteenth century. Open to Narragansetts, Euro-American worshippers, and Algonquians from neighbouring villages, those who

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gathered for Sabbath services cried out together in prayer and exhortation, and joined in extended services during which both men and women spoke and believers sang hymns.

While local missionaries cringed at the “ignorance” and disorder that marked the Narragansetts’ “mode of worship,” the church offered congregants a place to receive spiritual power, converse with kin, and celebrate God’s work in their lives and wider lands. At a Sabbath service in the summer of 1811, an elderly Narragansett woman shared with fellow believers gathered at the church an “account of her devotion in the woods” when she was young. Speaking of her powerful encounter with God at a forested area on the reserve, the woman recounted that “she was taken to heaven, while her body lay, like a lump of clay, on the earth.” Relaying the indescribable things she witnessed in her vision, the woman recalled that her “spirit returned to one end of it [her body], & it again rose to life.” Other Natives used Sabbath services as opportunities to spur each other on in their daily lives and struggles. Transforming their church into a place of spiritual and communal solidarity, the Narragansetts continued to seek spiritual intervention and assistance in the harsh realities and impoverishment they suffered. After singing hymns together at a service in 1811, several “men & women told their feelings & generally added ‘Shall I go back, no, no, I am determined to go forward.’” As one observer recounted, the Narragansett congregants proceeded to exhort each other “in language of this sort: ‘Hold on brother J., Hold on Brother G, Hold on Sister S’…[and] ‘Oh be strong, one & all be strong.’”

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5 Coe, Journal 4 June 1811- 11 September 1811, SPG; Mandell, Tribe, Race, History, 85.
Such encouragements and exhortations extended beyond the Narragansett church, and formed the sinews of the faith network that continued to draw Algonquian Christians in southern New England and beyond together for worship and fellowship at their villages and reserves. Traversing the woods and waterways between their settlements, Algonquians demonstrated a sense of place and belonging in southern New England that transcended reserve boundaries and tribal designations as they rooted their practices of faith in their kinship ties and their remaining lands. While Dwight disdained the Pequot community at Stonington as miserable and melancholy, another observer noted that a number of Natives continued to “hold a meeting once in a month for religious worship and exhortation, at which they all speak in turn.” The Mashantucket reserve too represented a central meeting place for neighbouring believers, and Algonquian faithful regularly travelled to the Pequot settlement to attend joint worship services there. Leading men and women from the Narragansett church travelled to Groton once every two months during the early nineteenth century for Sabbath services, and “many people of different nations” joined in the gatherings.  

The network of faith extended to New York as well, as Algonquians continued to visit and migrate to Brotherton through the end of the eighteenth century, while Brotherton settlers in turn visited family and friends in New England. In the summer of 1811, for example, a number of Algonquians from Brotherton travelled to Connecticut, presumably to visit kin, and joined in worship services with other villagers during their sojourn in their coastal homelands. At one such gathering hosted by the Mashantucket Pequots, the Brotherton visitors, along with men and women from Montauk and

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6 Morse, *Report to the Secretary of War*, 75; Coe, Journal 4 June 1811- 11 September 1811, SPG.
Narragansett, convened together for hymn-singing, prayer, and exhortation, and lodged at the homes of the Pequot faithful. The worship services most likely lasted for hours, and enabled the Algonquian men and women in attendance to encourage their kin in the faith and to share the struggles and hardships they faced at their settlements.⁷

Such gatherings demonstrated the ongoing spiritual, cultural, and kinship ties that linked Algonquian communities in New England to the Brotherton outpost in New York, and yet the Natives’ shared faith and struggles to protect land continued to present multiple paths of survival and adaptation in the new republic. While many Algonquians resolutely clung to the coastal lands of their ancestors, and mixed traditional subsistence with newer livelihoods and Christian practices, others looked to Brotherton to meet their temporal and spiritual needs and opted to migrate to new lands in the early nineteenth century. Finding the fledgling town inundated by growing numbers of Euro-American settlers, by the early 1800s relocation further west had become a solution supported by a number of Algonquians in the community. After initial efforts to purchase land for resettlement in Indiana fell through, Brotherton representatives, along with leaders from the neighbouring Oneida and Stockbridge communities began to look towards the Michigan territory for their new homes. Launching a second relocation effort in the 1830s, several Algonquian families had resettled along the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin by the mid-eighteenth century, while others chose to remain in New York. Planting crops, attending schools, and setting up Christian worship in the Wisconsin settlement called Brothertown, the Algonquian emigrants again faced the daunting task of rendering the strange landscape familiar and struggled to adapt older

⁷ Coe, Journal 4 June 1811- 11 September 1811, SPG.
lifeways to their new environment. Algonquian and Oneida petitioners described the challenges for those who chose to remain behind in New York, noting that the “white population…was continually encroaching upon [their] possessions and bringing with it vices and evils which corrupted [their] young men and were urging [them] as a people from existence.”

American expansion ultimately failed to “urge” Algonquian communities “from existence,” but rather presented men and women with difficult circumstances and difficult choices in surviving in the nineteenth-century world. Removal and community rebuilding continued to offer many an escape from dispossession and the hope of creating an undisturbed Christian settlement, while for others their attachment to older homelands in New England, and even newer homelands in New York, provided a preferable place to survive and adapt. Such movements across space seemingly fractured the faith community that Algonquians had constructed in eighteenth-century New England, and severed their links to homelands and places of subsistence and spiritual power. Even as Algonquian Christians followed varying routes to protect their families, communities, livelihoods, and faith in the early republic, they nonetheless continued to demonstrate the central role of spiritual power in sustaining their kinship ties, senses of place, and relationships to land. Both in rooting them to ancestral homelands and empowering them to settle in new places, Christianity remained a vital component of Algonquian communities and identities and an ongoing tool in unifying against and defying non-Native prescriptions for both their physical and cultural demise.

8 Love, 316-31; David Fowler, John Quinney, and Daniel Bread to Governor Enos Throop, 13 April 1831, Thomas Dean Papers, 1796-1844, WHSA.
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