PERSPECTIVES

USABLE PASTS: OMISSIONS IN *THE JOURNAL OF MAJOR JOHN NORTON, 1816* AND THE FIGHT FOR HAUDENOSAUNEE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY

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Abstract

John Norton was a Mohawk war chief primarily remembered for his loyal support of the British during the War of 1812. Norton was more than just a loyalist, however. Norton, like his predecessor Joseph Brant, was a fierce proponent of Haudenosaunee land rights. No scholars have asked whether Norton used his journal, which he intended to be published, to assert Haudenosaunee rights to settler audiences. I argue that through carefully selected omissions of Haudenosaunee acts of violence and disloyalty, and through emphasis of American brutality, Norton sought to show settlers that the Haudenosaunee were worthy of self-governance.

Résumé

John Morton était un chef de guerre Mohawk, dont on se souvient surtout en raison de son appui loyal envers les Britanniques lors de la guerre de 1812. Norton était bien plus qu'un loyaliste, cependant. Comme son prédécesseur Joseph Brant, c'était un farouche partisan des revendications territoriales de sa nation. Aucun chercheur ne s'est demandé si son journal personnel, qu'il comptait faire publier, aurait eu pour but de défendre ces revendications auprès d'un lectorat allochtone. Je soutiens qu'en omettant avec soin toute mention des actes violents et déloyaux des siens, et en soulignant la brutalité des Américains, Norton visait à montrer aux allochtones que les siens méritaient l'autodétermination.

John Norton, also known as Teyoninhokarawen, was a Mohawk war chief distinctly remembered for his actions in Niagara during the War of 1812, and particularly at the Battle of Queenston Heights, where he led a small contingent of eighty Grand River warriors and turned the tide of battle in favour of the British (Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 169). He was more than just a soldier, though: Norton was a drummer in the British army, school teacher, trader, interpreter for the British Indian Department, translator of the Gospel of John into Mohawk, friend to the renowned Joseph Brant (and, eventually, appointed a Pine Tree Chief by him) and, after the War of 1812, the author of *The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816*. Ethnically, Norton was half-Cherokee. His father, also named John, was taken by a British officer from the village of Little Keowee during the Anglo-Cherokee War of 1759-1761 and was raised in Scotland. Norton's father eventually met and married Scotswoman Christian Anderson in 1769 (Morgan, 19). A product of their marriage, Norton was born on December 16th, 1770 in Crail, Scotland (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 283). Half-Cherokee and adopted into the Mohawk of the Grand River by Joseph Brant, Norton shared a similar vision with Brant and fought fiercely for Haudenosaunee sovereignty in an age of bellicose, increased American encroachment on Indigenous[1] land, and waning British reliance on the Haudenosaunee as allies. Like Brant, Norton actively contended that the Haudenosaunee, under the stipulations of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, were allies of the Crown, not subjects, and had the right to do whatever they pleased with their land. Scholars of Indigenous studies have not asked whether Norton used his journal, which he intended to publish, to advocate for Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Inspired by the works of Rick Monture, who has shown how Haudenosaunee writers used literature to assert their sovereignty, and Norman Knowles's book, which shows how Loyalists in the late-nineteenth century created "usable pasts" to fit contemporary political agendas, I argue that Norton similarly used his journal to create a usable past and assert Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Through chronological analyses of Norton's depictions of the Battles of Queenston Heights, Fort George, Stoney Creek, Beaverdams, the 1813 British Blockade of Fort George, and Chippewa, I argue that careful omissions of scalping, excessive violence, and disloyalty were made by Norton to make the Haudenosaunee seem "civilized" by British standards of the nineteenth-century and therefore, able to govern themselves, rather than have the Crown paternalistically govern them. A brief historiographical overview will precede analyses of these battles and skirmishes to show the historiographical gaps I intend to fill with this essay. Following this historiographical overview, I outline the historical context of the Grand River settlement and the wider political context of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. My analysis of Norton's journal and omissions therein follows the historical context

and concludes with a paragraph summarizing my main points and future avenues of research scholars should undertake.

Since his obscure death in 1831, John Norton has remained relatively absent from the historical record and Canadian historiography. This is perplexing considering the significant role he and the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River played in the defence of Upper Canada during the War of 1812. Donald Hickey, for example, remarks that Norton played a more significant role in the defense of what is now modern Canada than Tecumseh did, yet Tecumseh is more well-known amongst Canadians (Finlayson, 136). Norton's absence from Canadian historiography stems from nineteenth and twentieth century unwillingness to consider Norton as "truly" Indigenous, which has led scholars to discredit his journal as just another memoir of a soldier's experience during the War of 1812. Historiographical discredit of Norton's Indigenous ancestry originates in claims made by Norton's enemies, Francis Gore and William Claus, men engaged in a feud with Norton over Haudenosaunee land rights. Claus claimed that Norton, a "white interloper", did not truly represent Haudenosaunee interests and cast him as a "white man under the Mask of being a Mohawk chief." Similarly, Gore wrote in 1815 that Norton "is not an Indian, but a Native of Scotland," who "acquired the language, and manner of the Indians," while a trader in Ohio (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 275). Claus and Gore's deceitful detractions influenced later historians to distrust Norton's indigeneity. Ernest Cruikshank claimed in 1902, for example, that Norton "was the son of a British officer by his marriage with a Miss Anderson" (Cruikshank, 22). Considering Ernest Cruikshank published extensively on the War of 1812 and was considered an authority on the topic, twentieth century reluctance to consider Norton as Indigenous is perhaps understandable.

Carl Benn has done much to restore Norton's status as Indigenous in the recent decade. Benn shows, for example, that Norton undertook a personal journey to Cherokee territory, which was substantiated by three different sources from Moravian missionaries, all of which claimed that Norton was able to find his family (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 265). British documentary evidence further proves there was a raid on Little Keowee during the Anglo-Cherokee War, where Norton's father was from, and that 40 Cherokee children were taken by soldiers, several of whom were Andersons (Norton's mother's maternal name) (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 266-267). Considering the reliability of his journal, why should scholars question Norton's claim to be Indigenous? Furthermore, the liberal adoptive practices of the Haudenosaunee in the early nineteenth-century negate questions of Norton's indigeneity. Simply, Norton was Mohawk by Mohawk standards of the time and, therefore, scholars have no right to question his indigeneity (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 261).

One other reason for Norton's absence from Canadian historiog-

raphy is the fact that his journal laid dormant for almost two centuries. After the War of 1812, from 1815-1816, Norton visited friends in England and finished his journal. Norton intended for the journal to be published but his companions insisted it was incomplete. Norton's journal was forgotten upon the death of his aristocratic patron, the Duke of Northumberland, in 1817. His journal was rediscovered in the 1970s, edited by Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman, and published by The Champlain Society. Norton's journal was re-published by The Champlain Society in 2013 and included an introduction by Carl Benn, who corrected many of the historical errors in Klinck and Talman's first edition. Klinck and Talman clearly wanted to capture the original form of Norton's journal but this form, devoid of sub-headings and chapters to orient the reader, makes it difficult to read and somewhat inaccessible.

Since the publication of Norton's *Journal* in 1970, and Benn's reclamation of Norton's indigeneity, many scholars began to read Norton's work as an "authentic" Indigenous account of the War of 1812, particularly revelatory on Haudenosaunee activity in Niagara during the War of 1812. It was not until the publication of Carl Benn's *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812* that something close to a biography of Norton was published. Benn's *Mohawk Memoir* is not a full publication of Norton's journal, but a publication specifically of Norton's actions during the War of 1812 with extensive annotations, commentary, and introductions. While Benn's publication omits Norton's travels in the Cherokee country, it is the most recent and detailed account of Norton's actions in Niagara during the War of 1812.

Countless scholars have noted how Norton, throughout his life, fought for Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Norton, according to Cecilia Morgan, "shared Joseph Brant's dream of a politically independent Grand River," and, although a firm believer in the British Empire, asserted the Haudenosaunee were allies, not subjects, of the Crown (Morgan, 25-37). Norton believed in Haudenosaunee self-determination, but one area of inquiry that has not been studied is how Norton used his journal to assert Haudenosaunee sovereignty, which this essay will illuminate.

Norton was adopted into the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River, a community which had a long-established relationship with the British Crown. This cross-cultural contact is reflected in the dress of the Haudenosaunee in the middle of the eighteenth century, which "conveyed a mix of tradition and adaptation, of America and Europe," as is evident in Norton's dress (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 18). (See Figure 1) After the Seven Years War, and the Crown's prohibition of colonial westward expansion beyond the Appalachian Mountains through the Royal Proclamation, the Haudenosaunee living in the Province of New York faced increased encroachment on their lands by ravenous colonists. In 1775, Mohawk war chief Joseph Brant and his companion, John Hill,

travelled to London with Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Guy Johnson, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Daniel Claus. Brant and Hill hoped to procure the Crown's guarantee of Haudenosaunee sovereignty in the wake of settler encroachment (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 87). The Crown lavished Brant and Hill with presents and promises of "future redress" for the Mohawks once the American Revolution was resolved (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 88). During the Revolution, Brant became, insincerely, a Loyalist because he thought the British were likely to be victorious and could therefore use his loyalty as a bargaining chip to serve Haudenosaunee interests (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 89). Much to the chagrin of the British-allied Haudenosaunee, the colonists won the Revolution. The peace treaty between Britain and the United States was "remarkably generous" in favour of the United States, and to the detriment of Britain's Indigenous allies (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 111). Most of the Haudenosaunee, including Brant and his Mohawks, now resided in American territory. This British betrayal stunned Brant, who in a letter to Frederick Haldimand stated that "England has Sold the Indians to Congress" (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 113). In 1783, just after the Revolution, the American population was 2,500,000, whereas the population of British North America was a mere 100,000 (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 119). Frederick Haldimand helped resettle many Loyalists in Upper Canada, including the Haudenosaunee. Haldimand's desire to resettle the Haudenosaunee was not out of benevolence, nor was it because he supported Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Instead, Haldimand desired to supplement the small British population of Upper Canada and to settle Brant's Haudenosaunee at Tyendinaga, a reserve surrounded by Loyalist settlements, to stifle their autonomy and increasingly bring them under Crown authority. Brant, however, refused and eventually chose the Grand River as his settlement because there were few settlers there, meaning Brant could easily maintain Haudenosaunee sovereignty (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 121). By 1789, the population of the Grand River was about 1200, 1/3 of which were Mohawk, the other 2/3 were Cayucas, Onondagas, Tuscaroras, Oneidas, Senecas and even some Mohicans, Delawares, Tutelos, and Nanticokes (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 122-123). Brant sold 10,000 acres of his land to ten Loyalist families, who produced agricultural yields for the Haudenosaunee, instructed them on settler agriculture, and generated revenue so the Haudenosaunee could maintain their independence (Morgan, 24). By 1791, the Haudenosaunee led by Brant had built a prosperous, booming community. There was trouble on the horizon though, and Norton would be tasked with resolving it.

Figure 1: Portrait Painting of Major John Norton by William Solomons, 1804-1805. Norton's dress displays elements of both British and Haudenosaunee culture. His headdress, for example, is Indian chintz, a British import, and the cravat around his neck is of British manufacture. His earrings, tunic and footwear, however, are of a Haudenosaunee style. For more on Anglo-Haudenosaunee cultural relations, see: Elizabeth Hutchinson, "'The Dress of His Nation': Romney's Portrait of Joseph Brant," *Winterthur Portfolio* Vol. 45, No. 2/3 (2011): 209-228. Portrait accessed digitally through the Canadian War Museum: https://www.warmuseum.ca/collections/artifact/1032163/

By 1791, Norton went northwest to become a schoolteacher at the Grand River settlement. Considering his fluency in English and other Iroquoian languages, it is likely that he instructed English at the settlement (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 271). In 1795, Brant recommended to British officials that Norton be taken on as a British Indian Department interpreter; obviously, Norton had impressed Brant while at the Grand River. Brant, so clearly enthralled by Norton, adopted him as a nephew in 1798. In 1804, Brant chose Norton to travel to London to negotiate Haudenosaunee sovereignty. Morgan notes that Norton was Brant's ideal diplomat because

> Not only was he familiar with the situations at the Grand River and shared Brant's hopes for the community's political independence and improvement, Norton was well-acquainted with the Indian Department. The latter, Norton felt, had become an impediment to the Haudenosaunee's prosperity: its treatment of the Six Nations was becoming increasingly autocratic, while simultaneously the department wished to reduce its financial obligations for the community (Morgan, 25).

While in England, Norton became close friends with a small group of progressive, aristocratic Englishmen who he maintained correspondence with throughout his life (Morgan, 26). More significant to his residence in England, Norton became close with one of Brant's friends from the Revolution, the Duke of Northumberland (Morgan, 28). The Duke of Northumberland later became Norton's aristocratic patron. Although Norton was unable to make any significant Haudenosaunee land claims while in England, mainly because Upper Canadian officials sent word to London denouncing Norton's mission, he was able to garner a powerful circle of aristocratic friends. As Morgan notes, Norton was not shy at tacitly suggesting Haudenosaunee sovereignty to his English friends. While writing to William Wilberforce, Norton wrote "how God with *your* Navy protects its shores" [emphasis my own]. This tacit claim by Norton asserted that the Royal Navy served to protect British subjects, like Wilberforce, and not specifically Haudenosaunee allies like Norton (Morgan, 37). Brant died in 1807 and his successor, Norton, became the leader of the anti-Indian Department faction on the Grand River. From 1809 to 1810, Norton travelled to Cherokee territory to find out information about his family, which he covered extensively in his journal (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 283). Norton possessed incredible foresight as is evident by his comments made about the Cherokee in his journal. As a direct witness to interethnic conflict amongst the Cherokee and aggressive American encroachment and violence against the Cherokee, Norton stated the Cherokee must "seek and encourage unanimity of sentiment throughout the Nation, as the surest preservative of its respectability and

permanent welfare" (Norton, 70). The bellicosity of the United States, which Norton bore witness to while amongst the Cherokee, made its way south: on 18 June 1812, the burgeoning United States declared war on Britain and their Indigenous allies. American statesman Thomas Jefferson hubristically declared, "The acquisition of Canada this year, as far as the neighborhood of Quebec, will be a mere matter of marching, and will give us the experience for the attack on Halifax, the next and final expulsion of England from the American continent." With the American declaration of war on Britain, the Haudenosaunee, just like the Cherokee, were divided on who to side with. The Neutralist party on the Grand River took warning from Haudenosaunee involvement in the American Revolution and advocated for staying out of settler wars. The Neutralists were partly influenced by the Haudenosaunee of New York, who thought influencing the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River to neutrality would procure American amity (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 31). Americanists considered the larger geopolitical context of the War of 1812; with Britain at war with Napoleonic France, many Haudenosaunee were skeptical of the numerically inferior British armies' ability to defend Upper Canada (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 32). The British army's numerical inferiority, plus influence from the Haudenosaunee of New York, led some Haudenosaunee of the Grand River to lean towards neutrality or the Americanist party. Norton led the pro-British party on the Grand River. Although undermined by the Indian Department and Upper Canadian government, who wanted the Haudenosaunee weak to protect settler interests, Norton found support with the British army, who he believed could be used to advance Haudenosaunee interests (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 31-34). Although racked with political discord, the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River put to the test Jefferson's assertion that taking Upper Canada would be a "mere matter of marching" at the Battle of Queenston Heights on 13 October 1812.

The beginning of the War of 1812 was disastrous for the ill-equipped, militarily inferior United States, as Robert Malcomson concisely states, "Midway through August 1812 General William Hull's entire army was captured at Detroit by the British under Sir Isaac Brock. The [American] army of the Northeast [who intended to invade Lower Canada] had not even been collected by that time" (Malcomson, *Quenston Heights*, 7). In October 1812, late into the military campaigning season, the Americans hoped to win a decisive victory and consolidate themselves in Upper Canada before settling down for the winter. The most viable place for an invasion was Queenston because it was ill-defended compared to the British Fort George at the mouth of the Niagara River and near the American Fort Niagara, allowing them to easily muster soldiers for an invasion. The American invasion of Queenston occurred in the early morning hours of 13 October 1812, when 3500 American soldiers invaded Upper Canada. The early stages of the battle favoured the 1300

British soldiers defending the Heights because of the 18-pounder Redan Battery that shelled the Americans as they crossed. Around 6:00 a.m. American Captain John Wool led 150 soldiers up a small path from the base of the Heights and managed to get around the British and take the Redan Battery (Malcomson, *Queenston Heights*, 22). Hereon, the Americans ascended the Heights, overran the British in Queenston, and consolidated their position. Norton likely heard the American attack as it began around 3:00 a.m. and would have made ready with his warriors. Initially, Norton mustered 500-600 Grand River warriors for the Niagara campaign, but by 13 October numbers were reduced to 300 because of inadequate autumnal clothing amongst the warriors and because the hunting season had begun (Norton, 118-123). While Norton and his warriors made their way to Queenston they came across retreating Upper Canadian militiamen who erroneously stated that 6000 Americans had gained the Heights. Norton also learned that the Americans overtook the British right flank and so he resolved to take it back or at least keep the Americans pinned down in their position while reinforcements arrived from Fort George (Norton, 125). The erroneous and disheartening news relayed to Norton and his warriors by the Upper Canadian militiamen led many of the warriors to abandon the campaign as they had families back in Niagara and, rightfully, feared for their safety (Norton, 126). Norton was left with eighty warriors at his command. Despite "the imperceptible desertion of many", Norton and his 80 warriors "returned fire" against the Americans with "coolness of spirit" (Norton, 126). Norton and his men successfully kept the Americans pinned atop the Heights until reinforcements arrived and a combined force of Haudenosaunee warriors, British regulars, and Upper Canadian militia pushed the Americans to the edge of the Heights, forcing their surrender.[2] Violence, however, continued after the surrender of the Americans. British officer John Smith reported to Henry Procter that the British had "much trouble in restraining the Indians" (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 95). And, as Benn notes, "Some of the American wounded seem to have been killed by tomahawk blows during [the surrender] and some Iroquois may have used excessive violence in securing the surrendering Americans" (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 95). Scalping was as much a part of Haudenosaunee warfare as linear tactics was European. The Haudenosaunee believed spiritual power resided in the scalp and, therefore, to deprive an enemy of a peaceful afterlife, one had to remove the scalp, in the process subsuming the scalped person's spiritual power (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 78). Avenging the death of slain Haudenosaunee may have been another motive for the post-surrender killings; the Haudenosaunee believed death had to be avenged (or a grave-covering ceremony performed) for the deceased to find peace in the afterlife (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 53). Haudenosaunee who had adopted Christianity, however, tended to eschew scalping (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 83). Excessive violence was also a means by which

the Haudenosaunee enacted what Alan Taylor calls a "theater of intimidation", whereby Indigenous people frightened Americans to prevent them from engaging in future incursions on their land (Taylor, *Civil War*, 206). Furthermore, Norton would not have been able to stop scalping or post-surrender violence for fear of alienating the few warriors he commanded. Norton gave little indication of the post-surrender violence in his journal, however, merely stating, "They [Americans] had no reason to complain of cruelty this day" (Norton, 134). Scalping and excessive violence, which Norton is likely to have understood but disagreed with because of his zealous Anglicanism, was clearly omitted from his narrative. This fits with Norton's style, as he tended to exclude content he found uncomfortable rather than lie (Benn, *Mohawk Memoir*, 144).[3] Considering that Norton intended to publish his journal to a wider settler audience, it makes sense that he would omit violent details from his narrative. Scalping and excessive violence was extremely nuanced, and a settler audience was likely to either misunderstand or willingly ignore and dismiss it as "barbaric". Popular settler rhetoric of the early nineteenth-century posited that Indigenous people were "uncivilized" and "barbaric", as is echoed in comments made by people like Isaac Brock, who considered the Haudenosaunee a "degenerate race" (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 88). Indigenous scalping and violence fed this rhetoric and Norton's omission of scalping and violence was clearly meant to make the Haudenosaunee more "civilized" by contemporary settler standards and, therefore, able to govern themselves, which is what Norton ultimately envisioned for the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River.

On 28 November 1812, Brigadier General Alexander Smyth attempted one final invasion of Upper Canada before winter. His invasion attempts at Frenchman's Creek and Fort Erie were failures, however. Shortly before these incursions, Smyth proclaimed to his soldiers,

> I will order forty dollars to be paid for the arms and spoils of each savage warrior who shall be killed… You have seen Indians… hired by the British to murder women and children and kill and scalp the wounded. You have seen their dances and grimaces and heard their yells. Can you fear them? No; you hold them in the utmost contempt.

"Spoils" of Indigenous people is interpreted by Norton to mean Indigenous scalps (Benn, *Mohawk Memoir*, 139). Through American deserters, Norton was relayed the message of Smyth's proclamation: "We got Smyth's proclamation, which even exceeded Hull's. In it he offers a reward of forty dollars for the despoils of every Indian warrior" (Norton, 139). Hull's proclamation that Norton mentioned was declared shortly before the American invasion of Upper Canada, wherein he declared, "The first stroke of the Tomahawk, the first attempt with the scalping

knife, will be the signal for one indiscriminate scene of desolation. No white man found fighting by the side of an Indian, will be taken prisoner. Instant destruction will be his lot." Hull advocated for the eradication of Indigenous people and those who fought alongside them. Norton's declaration that Smyth's proclamation exceeded Hull's is a comment on its viciousness, as Smyth did not just advocate for the eradication of Indigenous people, as Hull did, but actively promoted Americans to commit genocide for financial gain. The inclusion of Smyth's proclamation in Norton's journal, and the omission of the scalping and violence that happened at the end of the Battle of Queenston Heights, was clearly meant to invert beliefs held by most settlers: it was not Indigenous people who committed acts of barbarism, but Americans. This was true in a way, as Captain William McCulloch took the first scalp of the War of 1812 by killing and scalping a Menominee warrior (Taylor, *Civil War*, 210). The emphasis on American barbarity and Norton's omission of violence committed after the Battle of Queenston heights, then, was clearly meant to show that the Haudenosaunee did not need to be paternalistically governed because they were "civilized" enough to not commit atrocities and were, therefore, worthy of sovereignty; it was not the Haudenosaunee who needed to be conquered and governed, but the Americans.

British military fortunes changed in favour of the Americans during the 1813 campaign. On 27 April 1813, the Americans successfully took York, the capital of Upper Canada. A month later, sailing south, the Americans bombarded and destroyed Fort George. Two days later, they began an amphibious landing and assault on Niagara. Norton and the warriors of the Grand River were present at the Battle of Fort George on 27 May 1813 but in small numbers. As Norton noted, "The warriors of the Grand River were very dilatory in coming down to Niagara this spring. I heard of their preparing, but none came" (Norton, 166). Just before the Battle of Fort George, Norton had about 80 Haudenosaunee warriors under his command; only 15 remained at the onset of the battle, which Norton honestly stated in his journal (Norton, 168-171). Norton does not mention the real reason so few Haudenosaunee fought at the Battle of Fort George and subsequent engagements, attributing his band's small numbers to the warriors' "dilatory" nature. What was the real reason for Haudenosaunee abandonment of the British cause? Carl Benn notes, "For the Iroquois, especially those with traditional religious views, successive British defeats… seemed to indicate that the king's men were losing their spiritual powers" (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 109). It seemed the British cause was frowned upon by the Great Spirit or the Christian God and, therefore, many Haudenosaunee opted to withdrawal from the conflict.[4] Norton was clever in attributing small Haudenosaunee numbers at the Battle of Fort George to their belatedness, as few settlers would have seen Haudenosaunee spiritual doubt as a justified reason for not

participating in the Battle of Fort George. Emphasizing their tardiness, however, justified their absence and is an evident attempt by Norton to emphasize Haudenosaunee loyalty, which could have been used to negotiate future discussions of Haudenosaunee sovereignty.

The British retreated to the Burlington Heights after their defeat at Fort George. British Brigadier General John Vincent decided to fortify the British position at Burlington Heights to show his solidarity with the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River, whose settlements along the Grand River were threatened after the loss of Fort George (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 109). Merely days after the American victory at Fort George, Colonel Henry Dearborn sent a force of 3700 hundred American regulars in pursuit of the British. To the Haudenosaunee, it seemed the British would either surrender or be defeated by the numerically superior Americans, which would lead them to retreat to Kingston and abandon the Haudenosaunee. Fearful of this prospect, Norton noted "[my] warriors all left me to place their families in a place of security" (Norton, 175). Norton was left with his "young Cherokee cousin, a few Delawares, some Chippewas, one Mohawk, and a Cayuga" (Norton, 176). The British decided to ambush the Americans rather than be overwhelmed by superior American numbers. At 2:00 a.m. on 6 June 1813, 700 British soldiers prepared to ambush the encamped Americans at Stoney Creek. The Haudenosaunee of the Grand River, except for Norton's small contingent, refused to participate and instead waited to see how the British fared in the battle. Carl Benn aptly encapsulates Haudenosaunee sentiment at the time of the Battle of Stoney Creek, considering "the shock of 350 British casualties at Fort George, the strategic location of the peninsula, and the history of American success in the revolution and in the frontier wars of the 1790s, it is no wonder the Six Nations saw their future threatened and contemplated extreme measures to preserve their vulnerable society" (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 110). These extreme measures included potentially turning on the British to procure American amity (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 110). Those who considered abandoning the British and turning on them at Stoney Creek were later punished. There is one memorandum, for example, signed by the Chiefs of the Grand River on 9 January 1814 that suggested financially penalizing certain families that had considered betraying the British (Benn, *Mohawk Memoir*, 186). Despite Haudenosaunee abandonment, the British, along with Norton's small contingent of Haudenosaunee warriors, successfully ambushed the 3700 encamped Americans. Norton, however, gives no hint of Haudenosaunee treachery in his journal, joyously proclaiming victory for the British (Norton, 179). Although Norton is honest about the abandonment of his soldiers, their abandonment is justified by Norton's claim they were trying to protect their families, which would resonate well with a settler audience recently wracked by the War of 1812. In reality, the Haudenosaunee had planned to abandon the British, and

for good reason. However, Norton did not include this fact in his journal because it would make the Haudenosaunee look disloyal, therefore making them unworthy of self-governance from a settler's perspective due to their ambiguous loyalties. The Haudenosaunee rightfully always tried to serve their own interests, but settlers wanted them to be loyal subjects of the British crown. They proudly were not.

Haudenosaunee spiritual confidence in the British was regained after the decisive and surprising ambush at Stoney Creek. After Stoney Creek, the Americans retreated to Fort George. From 7 June to 22 June, British Captain James FitzGibbon, from his outpost at DeCou House, organized and led raids against the American picket lines around Fort George. In his journal, Norton mentioned that he had about 60 warriors of the Grand River in his company just before the Battle of Beaverdams (Norton, 189). On 20 June, however, Norton's war party was supplemented by "a considerable body of Kahnawakes, Chippewas, [and] some of the people of the Grand River," later joined by a "considerable party from the west" (Norton, 190). In total, Norton's warriors of the Grand River, combined with Indigenous warriors from Lower Canada, Chippewas, and Mississaugas totalled about 440, 200 of which were from the Grand River (Benn, *Mohawk Memoir*, 192). On 22 June, Colonel Charles Boerstler led 600 Americans out of Fort George with the intention to end FitzGibbon's incessant raids by destroying the British and Indigenous forces centralized at DeCou House. The British, however, were made aware of this American attempt to destroy DeCou House, and the Indigenous force, combined with 46 soldiers of the 49th Regiment of Foot, were tasked with ambushing the Americans as they passed Beaverdams. The battle was a success for the predominantly Indigenous British force because of Boerstler's fears of an Indigenous massacre. While in parley with FitzGibbon, Boerstler stated, "For God's sake, keep the Indians from us" (Taylor, *Civil War,* 226). However, when Boerstler surrendered, Norton vaguely stated, "the ignorant disregarded the token of submission" (Norton, 191). Benn mentions that the Indigenous warriors began looting the Americans, which the Indigenous warriors justified by saying the Crown had not given them war prizes from previous engagements (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 119). Similarly, after the British raid of Buffalo, Norton justified Indigenous looting by stating Buffalo "was completely pillaged by the Indians, and it contributed not a little to alleviate the distress and poverty into which the war had thrown them" (Norton, 221). British General John Vincent was displeased and "the Kahnawakes seemed to think that their service had been prized too lightly and hastened to return to their homes" (Norton, 192). By discouraging looting, Vincent alienated his Indigenous allies who then exercised their autonomy by abandoning the British. Interestingly, Norton's journal provides no record of the looting that happened after the Battle of Beaverdams, which is complicated by the fact that Norton condemned Chippewa in-

justices, such as looting, after the Siege of Fort Meigs (Norton, 163). It should be mentioned that the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River did not partake in the Siege of Fort Meigs and, therefore, could not have been associated with any post-battle violence or looting committed. It is clear then that Norton deliberately excluded Indigenous looting from his narrative of the Battle of Beaverdams to make the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River look more "civilized" to a settler audience.

The British decisively defeated the Americans at Beaverdams and from thereon were blockaded by the British under the command of Major-General Francis de Rottenburg. The British typically had about 200-300 soldiers active during the blockade, and the Americans about 4000-5000 (Benn, *The Iroquois,* 44). The numerically superior Americans often were engaged in small skirmishes with the British, which Norton noted in his journal, "Having received information that the enemy [the Americans at Fort George] sent out a party of two or three hundred men every day to look out for Indians, we were desirous that they should not be disappointed again" (Norton, 195). On 8 July 1813, an incident occurred between the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River and 30 American soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Joseph Eldridge. Haudenosaunee warriors attacked Eldridge's position but were repulsed by the Americans. The Americans then dashed after the retreating Haudenosaunee into the nearby woods (Taylor, Civil War, 228). The Americans fell into a well-practiced Haudenosaunee military position; often, Haudenosaunee warriors feigned retreat and took up more advantageous positions, which allowed them to dispel their pursuing enemy (Benn, The Iroquois, 80). Eldridge and his men were led into an ambush and slaughtered (Taylor, *Civil War*, 228). According to an anonymous American officer who supposedly saw the bodies of the killed Americans, Eldridge and his men had been, "utterly stripped and scalped, and mangled in a… sort of sportive butchery" (Taylor, *Civil War*, 228). Norton saw the bodies of the killed Americans, but makes no mention of the "sportive butchery" they had supposedly endured: "We passed by the place [where Eldridge and his men had been killed] and found the bodies of the Americans lying there…" (Norton, 197). Norton later got the full story from an Onondaga warrior named Kahishorowanen. According to Kahishorowanen, he had overtaken Eldridge and two of his soldiers, urging them to surrender by motioning his pistol at the Americans. As Kahisorowanen turned his head, Eldridge opened fire and injured Kahisorowanen. The Haudenosaunee then "despatched all three without delay" (Norton, 198). Although the anonymous American officer wrote his account of the Eldridge incident long after the skirmish, and considering Americans often amplified Indigenous atrocities to serve their own malicious ends, the fact that British Lieutenant-Colonel Bisshopp prohibited Norton and the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River from invading Black Rock on the grounds of "the enemy… always

making a great outcry of the perpetration of cruelties by His Majesty's [Indigenous] allies, whether any were committed or not…" implicates that the Haudenosaunee may have been involved in the Eldridge incident (Benn, *Mohawk Memoir*, 200). Although it can never be truly ascertained what happened during the Eldridge incident, Norton's omission of the details is somewhat suspicious, especially considering he ignored other incidents of Haudenosaunee violence, like at the Battle of Queenston Heights. Norton, then, either omitted this incident because it did not happen, or because it was a stain on the Haudenosaunee's reputation that emphasized their "barbarity" to a settler audience.

Finally realizing the military and psychological value of Indigenous combatants, the Americans began to employ the Haudenosaunee of New York against the British by July 1813. About 3800 Haudenosaunee lived in New York and therefore the Americans had a sizeable population to muster from (Taylor, *Civil War*, 228). The remainder of 1813 was relatively uneventful for the Haudenosaunee, but the following summer proved tragic; the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River and their cousins in New York, unfortunately, fought against each other at the Battle of Chippewa on 5 July 1814. Two days before the battle, American Major-General Jacob Brown with 5000 soldiers besieged and captured Fort Erie from the British. British Major-General Phineas Riall sought to relieve Fort Erie and moved south towards Chippewa, where he met the Americans on 5 July (Benn, *The War of 1812*, 49). Brown commanded 2100 soldiers at Chippewa, 350 of which were the Haudenosaunee of New York. Riall commanded 2000 soldiers, 250 of which were Indigenous combatants, 150 of whom were from the Grand River (Norton, 233). Chippewa was a bitter loss for the British. In his journal, Norton mentioned that some Americans were taken prisoner and noted that among the killed was American Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Bull. Norton made it seem as if Bull was killed during the battle, but he had been killed and scalped by an Indigenous combatant after being taken prisoner, according to Benn (Benn, *Mohawk Memoir*, 235). I have been unable to find information on Bull, apart from his uncited mention in one of Benn's annotations, but if Benn's assertion is correct then Norton clearly omitted Bull's post-surrender death from his journal because it damaged the reputation of the Haudenosaunee.

The Battle of Chippewa was especially disastrous for the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River and New York and effectively ended the war for both. As Benn succinctly states, "Neutralist sentiment regained the ascendancy after Chippewa and the majority of warriors on both sides of the border withdrew from hostilities except to defend their homes and families when threatened directly." Peace was declared between Britain and the United States on 24 December 1814. The war ended for the Haudenosaunee in April 1815, when the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River assembled at the Burlington Heights, buried the hatchet,

and promised the Indian Department they would adopt more "peaceful pursuits" (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 179). After the War of 1812, Norton returned to England from 1815-1816 to write his journal. In 1821, Norton fought for Haudenosaunee independence once more and returned to London to procure the Haldimand Grant, which was ultimately unsuccessful (Morgan, 48). Afterwards, he returned to the Grand River but left in 1823 (Benn, "Missed Opportunities", 274). From thereon, Norton's voice disappeared from the historical record.

Evidently, Norton made careful omissions from his journal to make the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River seem more "civilized" for a nineteenth-century British audience and therefore worthy of self-governance. Norton made the Haudenosaunee seem more civilized through omitting acts of violence, such as scalping and the execution of prisoners, which happened after the American surrender at Queenston Heights, the Eldridge incident, and the Battle of Chippewa. He also weaponized American barbarity, using Smyth's proclamation, to highlight that it was the Americans, not the Haudenosaunee, that needed paternalistic governance. He also excluded certain parts that may have made the Haudenosaunee seem disloyal, which he did by emphasizing Haudenosaunee tardiness at the Battle of Fort George, rather than lack of confidence in the British cause, and by ignoring the fact that they planned to betray the British if Stoney Creek went poorly. These minor omissions do not take away from the veracity of Norton's account; Norton simply excluded or emphasized other details that made the Haudenosaunee look like better allies of the Crown, and therefore able to govern themselves. Considering that Norton fought for Haudenosaunee sovereignty throughout his life, it is not surprising that he would use his journal to influence settler policy and opinions on the Haudenosaunee.

Norton's journal was never published in his lifetime, which must be kept in mind, but one does wonder whether the publication of Norton's journal may have influenced public opinion and policymaking had it been published. Perhaps the Haudenosaunee would not have been seen as "wards of the state", but valued friends and allies.

The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816 needs much more scholarly research. Jarvis Brownlie has shown how Anishinaabe missionaries Peter Jones and George Copway created a "usable past" by emphasizing how their Indigenous ancestors endured a shared heritage of suffering against American invaders, just as the descendants of Loyalists did in the late nineteenth-century. Did Norton similarly attempt this by emphasizing American violence against the Cherokees in his journal? This is a question that will, hopefully, soon be answered.

Norton's creation of a usable past and his fight for Haudenosaunee sovereignty reminds us of the extent to which the Haudenosaunee were, and are, willing to go to assert their autonomy against encroachments

from settlers. In this essay, I have shown how Norton used literature as a weapon; I, too, hope my essay can be utilized to show that the Haudenosaunee were, and are, allies of the Crown and Federal government, not subjects.

Notes

1. Throughout this essay I use "Indigenous" when referring broadly to the Indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. I am as specific as possible with my classifications, referring to tribal names when possible, e.g. Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca or Tuscarora. John Norton's warriors of the Grand River were predominantly Mohawk, broadly Haudenosaunee, and even included warriors from Lower Canada and the western part of the Americas. To be succinct, when referring to Norton's warriors of the Grand River, I simply call them the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River. I have chosen to focus on the people first, and therefore call them Haudenosaunee of the Grand River rather than Grand River Haudenosaunee, since Indigenous people place less of an emphasis on land ownership than settlers do. For more on the tribal composition of the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River, see (Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 122-123).

2. For a concise summary of Haudenosaunee actions at the Battle of Queenston Heights, see (Benn, *The Iroquois*, 94-95).

3. I will cite Benn's annotations in *Mohawk Memoir* as such throughout the remainder of the essay.

4. This was not a problem solely faced by the Haudenosaunee but by settlers too, both British and American alike. Many simply did not want to be involved in the War of 1812 and joined whichever side was winning at the time, which Alan Taylor shows throughout *The Civil War of 1812*.

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