

Annotated Document

Lesson Six: Choosing Sides: The Native Americans' Role in the American Revolution

The Oneida Indians to Governor Trumbull

" As my younger brothers of the New-England Indians, who have settled in our vicinity, are now going down to visit their friends, and to move up parts of their families that were left behind--with this belt [a real belt] by them, I open the road wide, clearing it of all obstacles, that they may visit their friends and return to their settlements here in peace.

Comment [pb1]: The Oneida open their address to the Connecticut Governor with an expression of peace and the desire for continued peace

" Now we more immediately address you, our brother, the governor, and the chiefs of New-England.

Comment [DPJ2]: The Oneidas ask that their message be communicated to the four New England colonies: Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire.

" BROTHERS-We have heard of the unhappy differences and great contention between you and Old England. We wonder greatly, and are troubled in our minds.

" BROTHERS-Possess your minds in peace respecting us Indians. We cannot intermeddle in this dispute between two brothers. The quarrel seems to be unnatural. You are two brothers of one blood. We are unwilling to join on either side in such a contest, for we bear an equal affection to both you Old and New England. Should the great King of England apply to us for aid, we shall deny him ; if the colonies apply, we shall refuse. The present situation of you two brothers is new and strange to us. We Indians cannot find, nor recollect in the traditions of our ancestors, the like case, or a similar instance.

Comment [DPJ3]: The Oneidas were bewildered by the quarrel between the colonists and the British. They had strong ties to each side and the conflict seemed a fight between family members to them.

" BROTHERS-For these reasons possess your minds in peace, and take no umbrage that we Indians refuse joining in the contest. We are for peace.

" BROTHERS-As we have declared for peace, we desire you will not apply to our Indian brethren in New-England for their assistance. Let us Indians be all of one mind, and live with one another; and you white people settle your own disputes between yourselves."

Comment [DPJ4]: The Oneidas express the view that the Indians of the Northeast be considered neutral in the coming conflict - they do not want the colonists to pit one group or nation of Indians against another. The English of Old England and New England should solve their own problems.

Source: *American Archives*, 4th series, vol 2 (Washington, D.C., 1839), 116-17.