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# “The Indian Method of Warring”: Wampum, Warfare, and George Washington’s Lessons in Frontier Diplomacy During the Seven Years’ War

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## ABSTRACT

Any scholar and student of early American history is well aware that there is no shortage of literature on George Washington. In recent years, scholars have done well to point out that Washington, despite generations of academic and public deification, was just as human as his more easily forgotten contemporaries, a reality evidenced by his (in)famous military mishap in the inter-imperial hinterlands of eastern North America that started the first world war in 1754. Yet Washingtonian literature remains void of a key element of Washington’s experience in Indian country: his experience with Indians. In a biographical history spanning four centuries, there is still yet to be seen a Washington biography detailing his experiences with his nearest foreign foes and allies. This research paper attempts to fill that void. This is not another study of young Washington’s experience in the British colonial militia, but rather a breakdown of the lessons he learned in warfare and diplomacy as a visitor in Native lodges, villages, and territories and how he applied these experiences to British colonial warfare and wartime politics. These lessons are best understood only when Native players are recast in their proper roles, as the kings, half kings, and queens of Indian country. This redistribution of political and historical agency and reconceptualization of monolithic narratives allows us to better understand the inseparability of colonial, early American, and Native American histories.

## INTRODUCTION

In late April 1754, a pair of couriers trekked through the eastern Ohio country to a Mingo trading village just east of where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers join to form the Ohio River. One Mr. Wart, a young ensign of British Captain Trent’s company, toted in his saddlebag a string of wampum. His escort, an unnamed Mingo man, carried a speech addressed to Tanacharison, or as his British contemporaries fondly referred to the influential Mingo leader, “the Half King.”<sup>1</sup> “I desire, with the greatest Earnestness,” it read, “that you, or at least one of you, would come as soon as possible to meet us on the Road, and to assist us in Council.” As the

Mingo escort read the speech aloud to the Half King, Wart presented the wampum. “I present you with these Bunches of Wampum, to assure you of the Sincerity of my Speech, and that you may remember how much I am your Friend and Brother. Signed, Washington, or Conotocarious.” Upon their first formal meeting months earlier, Tanacharison had bequeathed the nickname to a young George Washington like a family heirloom. Three generations earlier, another Colonel Washington of Virginia had earned the Algonquian term for “Town Destroyer” after his militia unit killed six Susquehanna and Piscataway chiefs in an attempt to thwart a colonial frontier rebellion.<sup>2</sup> (Founders Online, Expedition to

<sup>1</sup> Tanacharison (also spelled “Tanagharisson”) was originally adopted from a Catawba band into the Seneca tribe, one of the Haudenosaunee, or Six Nations Iroquois, nations of northeastern North America. Sometime around 1747, when his name first appears in the historical record, several bands of Iroquois had migrated to where Seneca territory meets disputed land known general as the eastern Ohio Country. The result was a sub-Haudenosaunee nation known as “Mingo,” one considered culturally and socially (although not always politically) exclusive from the core Six Nations. For the sake of this paper, I will refer to Tanacharison as a Mingo leader. For more on Tanacharison’s nationality and the Mingo people, see: Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> At some point during the events that led to Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, Virginia militia colonel John Washington

the Ohio, 1754: Narrative)

Early Americanists know well, of course, that in a poetic twist of historical fate, Washington eventually lived up to the title of “Town Destroyer” when he ordered American General John Sullivan to destroy dozens of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) villages and starve Britain’s closest Indian allies out of their own country in 1779.<sup>3</sup> In the context of Tanacharison and Washington’s relationship, however, the moniker did not carry the grim weight as it once had decades earlier and would reclaim decades later. In his early twenties, George worked hard to reverse his great-grandfather’s bloody backcountry legacy, airing on the side of diplomacy rather than demolition. Still the nickname stuck, appropriated by Washington’s various hosts and correspondents during the 1750s as an honorific title (“Conotocarious,” n.d). The permanency of “Conotocarious” in the minds and dialogues of Native leaders speaks largely to Washington’s early experiences in Indian country. The use of the nickname implied a sense of place the young Washington was to occupy in a world he had much to learn from. In English, “Town Destroyer” reminded Washington of his ancestor’s indiscretions, ones not easily forgotten. In Algonquian, “Conotocarious” reminded the young British officer of his place and purpose in foreign territory.

This highly contested area of eastern North America donned several names—and several more claims to its resources—throughout the eighteenth century. Shawnees claimed the territory between the eastern bank of the Wabash River and the western peaks of the Allegheny mountains as their homeland, bequeathed by divine powers to the ever-powerful Chalahgawtha division of the Shawnee confederacy. The French poetically defined the rich region into which they injected fur-driven capital and Catholicism as the *pays d’en haut*, or “upper country.” The British adopted the Seneca term for “great river” or “large creek” and deemed the area simply as the Ohio country, a term still used interchangeably in the historical literature with “Indian country.” As the famous story goes, it was here, in Indian Country, that Washington started the first world war (Anderson, 2000). Fred Anderson, David Clary, Matthew Ward, and others have done well to demonstrate the importance of the Seven Years’ War in Washington’s excessively mythologized life (Anderson 2000; Clary 2011, Ward 2003).

Yet Washingtonian literature remains void of a key element of Washington’s experience in Indian Country: his

experience with Indians. In a biographical history spanning four centuries, there is still yet to be seen a Washington biography detailing his experiences with his nearest foreign foes and allies. This research paper attempts to fill that void. This is not a study of young Washington’s experience in the British colonial militia, but rather the lessons he learned in warfare and diplomacy as a visitor in Native lodges, villages, and territories. These lessons are best understood only when Native players are recast in their proper roles, as the kings, half kings, and queens of Indian country who dictated local and international politics as much as distant European governors and sovereigns did. For Washington, who quickly found himself in the midst of one of the most contentious places and moments in eighteenth-century North American history, learning the political landscape of Indian country required learning the rules of ritualized exchange of words, wampum, and scalps won in war. In order to do so, the young George Washington had to leave his colonial titles—soldier, socialite, surveyor, and slaveholder—at the Virginian border, and instead adopt his Algonquian name: Conotocarious the Second.

## A TOLERABLE KNOWLEDGE OF THE COUNTRY

Washington had familiarized himself with Indian country long before the beckoning of imperial war. On March 11, 1748, less than one month after his sixteenth birthday, an adolescent Washington set out on his first documented surveying expedition with his mentor George Fairfax. After two weeks of following the eastern edge of the Shenandoah Valley northward, the survey party arrived at Thomas Cresap’s establishment on Patterson’s Creek, just south of Maryland’s Cumberland Gateway into the Alleghenies. It was here that Washington documented his first encounter with “thirty odd Indians coming from War with only one Scalp” (Founders Online, Diary entry: 23 March 1748). The warriors were most likely Lenape; with over twenty years of experience in backcountry trade, Cresap had established a firm relationship with Lenape chief Nemaquin and the two worked together during the late 1740s and early 50s to secure passage via Patterson’s Creek into the Ohio country (Bailey, 1944). In his earliest account of Native Americans, Washington’s description of the Lenape war dance detailed only the peculiarities in their movements, making no mention of any verbal exchanges between members of the survey party and the

led a small company of Maryland and Virginia militiamen to a planned parley with opposition Indian leaders, mainly Susquehannas and Piscataways. His militia killed six chiefs and retreated back to Virginia, which quickly felt the violent repercussions of the chiefs’ bereaved communities. Then-governor William Berkeley criticized Washington’s actions, but he was well received by colonists. Source: “Conotocarious,” *The Digital Encyclopedia of George Washington*.

**3** During American Revolution, General George Washington ordered Major General John Sullivan and Brigadier General James Clinton on an expedition to subdue and break the Haudenosaunee in their own territory. In what later became known as the Sullivan Expedition of 1779, Sullivan and Clinton succeeded in destroying over forty Iroquois villages, burning seasons of food and crops, and driving refugees to Canada. Source: Glenn F. Williams, *Year of the Hangman: George Washington’s Campaign Against the Iroquois* (Yardley, UK: Westholme Publishing, 2005).

Lenape warriors. While Washington's isolated account of Native Americans is scant of meaningful political or cultural detail, it allows us to pinpoint his first exposure to Indian lands and peoples. He continued to survey for Fairfax, but makes no mention of any exchanges or encounters with Native peoples for another five years.

Washington's detailed 1753 narrative of his journey to the French commandant marks the beginning of one of his earliest yet most formative roles: emissary to Virginia colonial governor Robert Dinwiddie. Dinwiddie tasked Washington to deliver a letter to French commanders at Fort LeBoeuf warning the French that their unwelcomed military presence in the Ohio country was sorely testing colonial borders, and in turn, London's patience with the French Empire. The task required the cooperation and assistance of influential Mingo and Lenape chiefs who maintained a watchful eye on the Forks of the Ohio and surrounding area. The expedition—led by Christopher Gist—approached the Forks on November 22. Washington spent four days summoning local chiefs to a council in order to gather information about French intentions in the Ohio country and secure safe passage to Fort LeBoeuf. On November 26, at a council at the trading establishment of Logstown, Shingas, a Lenape chief, and Tanacharison, a highly influential Mingo chief, accepted Washington's gift of wampum and, in return, promised the expedition protection along the Venango Path up to Fort LeBoeuf. Diplomatically inept as well as monolingual, Washington relied entirely on the advice of "Indian Traders" Barnaby Currin, John McGuier, Henry Steward, and William Jenkins, and translation skills of interpreter John Davison.<sup>4</sup> (Founders Online, *Journey to the French Commandant: Narrative*)

The council at Logstown was the first of many exchanges between Washington and Tanacharison. Upon his departure from Fort LeBoeuf in January 1754, Washington recognized the necessity of Tanacharison's and Shinga's blessings, and that their allegiance would not be won easily, for the French had proven themselves far better versed in diplomatic manipulation than Washington cared to admit.<sup>5</sup> But Washington would soon have little to

worry about; likely due to promises of gifts and protection from colonial officials, Tanacharison quickly warmed to the British and facilitated their military occupation of the Forks region. When Captain Contrecoeur arrived with a French force from Fort LeBoeuf at the Forks on April 17, the Virginian militiamen responsible for constructing a new British fort promptly abandoned the site (Dixon, 2007). Upon the militiamen's departure, Tanacharison informed Contrecoeur that it was his own prerogative to establish what later became Fort Duquesne, and that he himself had laid the first log (Dixon, 2007). (Founders Online, *Expedition to the Ohio, 1754: Narrative*)

Few, if any, other Indian leaders in the Ohio country demonstrated the same devotion to the British cause that Tanacharison did. In November 1753, Washington and Gist had gone well out of their way to attempt to win the allegiance of Seneca Queen Alliquippa, but she, and later her successor and son, never formally pledged her tribe's commitment, and criticized the arrogance of British officers.<sup>6</sup> Washington persisted in attempting to win the affections of other powerful Haudenosaunee leaders years into the war; in August 1756, Washington delivered a passionate speech to King Blunt and other Tuscarora chiefs, proclaiming, "Brothers, You can be no strangers to the many Murders & Cruelties, committed on our Country Men & Friends, by that False & Faithless people the French, who are constantly endeavouring to corrupt the minds of our Friendly Indians" and promising to "furnish them [with] Arms, Ammunition, Cloths, provision, and every necessary for War" (Founders Online, *Speech to the Tuscarora Indians, 1 August 1756*). Whether Washington made good on his promise to the sixth Iroquoian nation remains uncertain, but he was likely one of many courting the Tuscarora. The Seven Years' War devastated the Haudenosaunee, as the Six Nations tore itself apart over political, religious, and personal disagreements and sent the confederacy spiraling into civil war. It was promises like Washington's that drove members of the same nation to lead attacks against one another.<sup>7</sup>

Both French and British officers tasked with maintaining the occupation of the Ohio country understood

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Van Braam was also brought along as a French-to-English interpreter. Source: George Washington, "Journey to the French Commandant: Narrative," (1753-54), in Founders Online.

<sup>5</sup> Tanacharison agreed to accompany Washington to Fort LeBoeuf in order to return the treaty wampum he had previously exchanged with the French. Thus when Tanacharison arrived at the fort, the French commandant, Captain Philippe-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire, took Tanacharison's presence as a double cross. Joncaire hid his fury, and instead imbibed the Mingo chief with champagne until he was so drunk that he could not return the wampum belt they had previously exchanged, thus preserving the alliance for another several months. Source: H.W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Kos Showeyha (Alliquippa's son) had a complicated relationship with General Edward Braddock, which shall be discussed later in this paper. Sources: Washington, "Journey to the French Commandant," 1753; Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 40-42.

<sup>7</sup> The Battle of Lake George is one particularly devastating example, during which Catholic Mohawk led French forces in ambushing a Mohawk-led British outfit. Source: Peter D. MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years' War* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Dundurn Press, 2012), 27-35.

that even the temporary assistance of local Indians required a constant amount of attention and plenty of gifts. Winning the war meant winning the favor of the Native leaders whose nations still occupied the lucrative buffer zone between French and British influence. Even so, if the political or economic interests of eager Europeans could not align with individual or collective Indian interests, even the most adept European courtiers went home empty-handed. Given the level of competition, it is no wonder Haudenosaunee, Ottawa, Shawnee, Lenape, and other influencers played coy; if European officers wanted to win, they had to pay for it. For those privileged enough to earn them, relationships between military officers and Native leaders in the Ohio country could be mutually beneficial—so long as the flow of guns, gifts, and wampum remained steady.

### A STRING OF WAMPUM, & A TWIST OF TOBACCO

Prior to the eighteenth century, northeastern Native Americans used wampum in inter- and intra-tribal exchanges for its ritualistic, religious, and spiritual value. Throughout the 1600s, Dutch and English colonists stripped the beads of their sacrosanctity and began mass producing wampum as a form of legal tender in colonial-Native trade (Jacobs, 2009). Eventually mass production in colonies from Massachusetts Bay to Virginia spurred inflation; by the early eighteenth century, few colonial governments still recognized wampum as a legitimate form of currency (Jacobs, 2009). Removed of its enumerative value, wampum was used increasingly for its symbolic properties. Belt designs varied by nation as well as political circumstance; the Lenape-Pitt Treaty Belt exchanged at Shackamaxon in 1682 depicts two men shaking hands, while the Onondaga Two Row Treaty Belt exchanged with Dutch and English officials is a simple design consisting of two parallel strips of purple wampum (Jennings, 1995). While different in design, both belts physically convey sacred alliance. Peace and treaty belts also serve as an alternative method of communication that transcends linguistic barriers; the belt itself conveys a message, as does the way in which it is passed amongst individuals.

Washington mentions the powerful bead at least fifty times in his writings between 1753 and 1757, and consistently notes its ritualistic as well as political necessity in facilitating effective communication and establishing good intentions. Likely acting upon the advice of John Davison and Christopher Gist, Washington's first action upon his arrival at Logstown on November 24, 1753 was to call on Oneida chief Monacatoocha, Tanacharison's clos-

est associate, and gift him two items: "a string of wampum" to be delivered to Tanacharison as an invitation to Logstown, and "a twist of tobacco," a personal token of respect and gratitude meant for Monacatoocha himself.<sup>8</sup> The next afternoon, Tanacharison arrived at Logstown for a private rendezvous with Washington and Davison. The Half King described the indifference the French commander at Fort LeBoeuf exhibited towards Tanacharison himself; when the Mingo chief proposed the French ought to negotiate with English over control of disputed territory, the Frenchman promptly shot the proposal down: "Where is my Wampum that you took away, with the Marks of Towns in it? This Wampum I do not know, which you have discharg'd me off the Land with; but you need not put yourself to the Trouble of Speaking for I will not hear you: I am not affraid of Flies or Musquito's; for Indians are such as those." The disrespect was enough to inspire Tanacharison to willingly provide Washington with a safe route to Fort LeBoeuf, as well as the location of two other newly erected French forts. The French commander's words and Tanacharison's resulting actions taught Washington a valuable early lesson: that the sharing of wampum meant little without respectful intent. (Founders Online, Journey to the French Commandant: Narrative, and Expedition to the Ohio, 1754: Narrative)

Washington's superiors were slower learners when it came to understanding the personalized politics of Indian country during wartime. In April 1757, nearly three years into the Seven Years' War, Washington's aide-de-camp George Mercer wrote from Fort Loudon about a mishap with Cherokee warriors. Wauhatchee, a key Cherokee ally and head warrior, "would not receive the Wampum I offered him, as is usual, at the End of the Speech," reported Mercer, "[he] immediately got up, & went out of the Council in a great passion, and told the rest of the Warriours they might speak to me, if they had anything to say." The warriors had arrived at Fort Loudon earlier than expected to assist in his company's movements, only to find that the gifts Dinwiddie had allegedly promised for their service were not there. One warrior, Youghtanno, assured Mercer that the Cherokee understood the captain nor Dinwiddie meant any disrespect. Wauhatchee, however, would not concede, telling Mercer that the governor's apparent ignorance had cost the head warrior a considerable amount of respect amongst his fellow warriors. Mercer also expected a Catawba unit the next day, who were expecting gifts from the British as well. Mercer warned Washington, "if these Indians go home dissatisfied, we lose the Interest of the whole Nation." Washington rushed the news to Williamsburg, but the seeds of Wauhatchee's distrust of British officers had been sown long before his dramatic flourish at Fort Loudon, and

<sup>8</sup> Tobacco has been used as a symbolic gift exchanged among Native American peoples across the United States for hundreds of years. It is valued for its "medicinal" value, as it provides protection when burned and can also be used in peace pipes, another common ritual that varies by tribe and/or nation. Source: Jack Jacob Gottsegen, *Tobacco: A Study of Its Consumption in the United States* (1940), 107.

no amount of wampum could repair the damage done.<sup>9</sup> (Founders Online, To George Washington from George Mercer, 24 April 1757, and To George Washington from George Mercer, 26 April 1757)

## FRENCH SCALPS AND FOUR HATCHETS

While the mutual exchange of wampum often indicated relatively stable peace amongst nations, this act of alliance-building simultaneously created opportunities for acts of war. Starting in the 1720s and lasting through the end of King George's War in 1748, the British pursued a slow strategy in establishing an alliance with the Haudenosaunee. The process resulted in the creation of the Covenant Chain, a strong but short alliance between the British colonies and Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee Two Row Wampum Treaty Belt made the alliance a sacred one, one that required cooperation and commitment from Iroquoian leaders, who promised to corral ambitious young men, and British leaders, who vowed to keep provocateurs and squatters out of Haudenosaunee country. While the Chain between the colonies and the Iroquois only lasted until 1755, it secured the buffer zone between New France and British America. In the broader context of the Seven Years' War, the Covenant Chain helped to insulate western Pennsylvania, New York, New England and the Ohio country from French military influence. The Covenant Chain was somewhat of a gamble for the Haudenosaunee; committing to the British ensured a steady stream of gifts and military support, but it also removed the Six Nations of their ability to play the contending empires off one another for gifts, military support, and veneration. It was a skill the Haudenosaunee had mastered, and had subsequently sacrificed in consenting to the Covenant Chain. (Dixon, 2007; Jennings, 1995)

Many tribes of the Ohio country refused to take such a risk. In the early stages of the Seven Years' War, British officers (including Washington) hastily dispatched wampum-laden interpreters to Mingo, Lenape, Cherokee, and Ottawa leaders, but the Ottawa depended too heavily on French munitions, while Cherokee leaders grew increasingly frustrated with British ignorance (McConnell, 1992; Anderson, 2000). The Mingo and Lenape proved stealthier in their attempt to extract goods, protection, and respect out of both empires; in retrospect,

Washington's suspicions about Tanacharison's intentions before the outbreak of war are impressively acute. When Tanacharison joined Washington at Fort LeBoeuf in January 1754, the Half King lingered with the French longer than Washington felt was necessary (Founders Online, Journey to the French Commandant: Narrative). Washington's worries eventually proved futile, as Tanacharison later demonstrated his willingness to play into British cause in killing Coulon de Jumonville at Great Meadows the following May—even if he only did so to further his own political goals.

Washington learned quickly that intertribal warfare was as personal as it was political. The unfolding of events at Great Meadows on May 27 and 28, 1754 provide an excellent example of where personal and political motivations in warfare both clashed and converged. Months of diplomatic protocol—the exchange of wampum, the bestowal of gifts, and name-giving—provided a sufficient amount of personal (and, by nature, political) attachment between Tanacharison and Washington (and, by extension, Dinwiddie). On the evening of May 27, when Tanacharison opted to send word of the enemy's movements to Washington instead of Jumonville, Washington's months of effort in the Ohio country proved successful. But there were still reparations to be paid; showing off a string of wampum and showing off a scalp were two entirely different acts. After Washington and Tanacharison's men ambushed Jumonville's outfit the following day and as Washington began to accept the French surrender, the Mingo warriors began killing and scalping the wounded French soldiers, much to Washington's dismay. (Founders Online, From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 29 May 1754)

But the scalps were as necessary to Tanacharison as a clean French surrender was to Washington. The French scalps, along with war hatchets,<sup>10</sup> were sent to Monacatoocha, who then set out to recruit warriors from the Lenape, Shawnee, and Seneca to join the British-Mingo forces at Great Meadows (Founders Online, From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 29 May 1754). Leaders from all three nations refused, for reasons both personal and political. Take Queen Alliquippa as one example: in June 1754, just days after the ambush at Great Meadows, she allowed her son Kos Showeyha to attend council with Washington but refused to allow him to fight under any British officers' command (Founders Online, From

<sup>9</sup> The Anglo-Cherokee War on the Virginian and Carolinian frontiers began in 1758, one year after Wauhatchee's angry confrontation with Mercer at Fort Loudon, and lasted until 1761. The conflict cost the British men and resources and diverted colonial militias from fighting the French and helping to end the Seven Years' War. Source: John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756–63* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> The circulation of hatchets among Ohioan/eastern nations was effectively the equivalent of a formal declaration of war, as much as the presentation/exchange of wampum was a formal declaration of peace, and is therefore bound with the ritualistic and political implications of scalping. See: George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 10 June 1754, in Founders Online; for more on the ritualistic and political implications of scalping in eastern Native America, see Margaret Haig Roosevelt Sewall Ball, "Grim Commerce: Scalps, Bounties, and the Transformation of Trophy-Taking in the Early American Northeast, 1450-1770," University of Colorado, Boulder (2013).

George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 10 June 1754). One month later, Pennsylvania governor Robert Hunter Morris appointed Kos Showeyha and six other chiefs of various nationalities to accompany Braddock at the Battle of Monongahela the next summer (Ward, 2003). Kos Showeyha later resented his forced service to Braddock, confessing that “he was a bad man when he was alive; he looked upon us as dogs, and would never hear anything that was said to him” (Ward, 2003). Kos Showeyha continued to provide intel to Governor Morris for another year of the war, but refused to fight again under any British general who demonstrated that same “pride and ignorance [...] that came from England” (Ward, 2003).

From a European perspective, Washington’s actions at Great Meadows were one massive military blunder; not only had he allowed Mingo warriors to kill French survivors at will, the foolish young Washington later misinterpreted the terms of surrender and inadvertently admitted to murdering Jumonville after the British surrender at Great Meadows on July 4 (Anderson, 2000). Had the British colonies been better prepared to defend the Empire in 1754, Washington’s mistakes would have been warranted. Instead, the British spent seven costly years driving the French from eastern North America. From a Mingo or Oneida perspective, however, Washington was the British gift that kept giving. Through Washington, the British supplied a constant flow wampum, gifts, and military protection into the Ohio country for half a year. Just one day before the warriors collected scalps as proof, Washington demonstrated some concern to the fate of the Anglo-Mingo alliance: “I must take the Liberty of mentioning to Your Honour the g[rea]t necessity there is for having goods out here to give for Services of the Indians,” he wrote to Dinwiddie on May 27th, “[as] they all expect it and refuse to Scout or do anything without—saying these Services are paid well by the French—I really think was 5 or 600 Pounds worth of proper goods sent [...] w[oul]d tend more to our Interest” (Founders Online, From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 27 May 1754). The 22-year-old’s appetite for an early military victory gave Tanacharison and Monacatoocha an opportunity to wave white scalps in the faces of powerful Haudenosaunee and Shawnee chiefs.

Washington recognized that as much as scalping was customary in Native war cultures, it was equally as functional as a scare tactic among European soldiers. “At [Fort Duquesne], [t]hey have had frequent Alarms [that] several Men have been Scalp’d,” Washington wrote to his older

brother, John Augustine, in July 1755, “but this only done with no other design than to retard the March; and to harass the Men” (Founders Online, From George Washington to John Augustine Washington, 28 June–2 July 1755). In 1756, upon arriving at the site of the Battle of Great Cacapon and discovering a dead and scalped Captain John Mercer, Washington himself sent a Lenape or Shawnee scalp to Dinwiddie along with a letter informing him of the seventeen total British casualties.<sup>11</sup> Much like wampum, enemy scalps gradually transformed from ritualistic symbols to a currency or credit of sorts. In November 1756, Washington reported to Dinwiddie that he had instructed British interpreters and officers in South Carolina to delay Cherokee and Catawba warriors from travelling north to fight their longtime rivals, the Shawnee, because the British could not afford to pay the warriors back for their scalps. “Indian Goods are much wanted to reward the Catawbias, and encourage them to our Service,” Washington warned Dinwiddie on November 9, “In what manner are they to be paid for scalps? Are our Soldiers entitled to the reward like indifferent people? It is a tedious & expensive way to defer payment” (Founders Online, From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 9 November 1756). Washington encouraged Dinwiddie to write Governor Lyttleton of these financial troubles, but both governors turned a blind eye. Six months later, Washington again reminded Dinwiddie of the army’s trouble with the Cherokee: “I therefore beg leave to recommend [...] that some person of good sense and probity, with a tolerable share of the knowledge of their customs, be appointed [the] power to reward [the Cherokee] occasionally as their services require: Pay them for scalps; provide them with Provisions, arms, clothing, [etc.]” (Founders Online, From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 30 May 1757). Much to Washington’s annoyance, colonial governors and their subordinates in the backcountry never heeded his advice and gave the Cherokee enough reason to wage their own war against the British.

Washington’s frustrations with the military bureaucracy mounted quickly. Dinwiddie, Lyttleton, and other high-ranking colonial officials did not understand the war in Indian country as did officers, emissaries, or negotiators. Bureaucrats were not responsible for all the blame; having refused the advice of subordinated officers familiar with French and Indian tactics, General Braddock lost both the Empire’s foothold at the Forks of the Ohio and his life during his ill-fated 1755 expedition.<sup>12</sup> In April 1756, Washington voiced his concerns in a powerful

<sup>11</sup> Occurring on April 18, 1756 near present-day Hampshire County, West Virginia, the Battle of Great Cacapon was a violent skirmish between Captain John Mercer’s company and Shawnee and Lenape warriors. At this point in time, Washington had attained the rank of colonel, and Mercer was one of his subordinates. In older sources, the battle was referred to as “the Mercer Massacre.” Sources: West Virginia Archives, “Biennial Report of the Department of Archives and History of the State of West Virginia” (West Virginia Archives: 1911); George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 3 May 1756, in Founders Online

<sup>12</sup> The reasons for Braddock’s failure in the 1755 expedition are disputed amongst scholars of the Seven Years’ War, but the general’s dismissal of advice from officers, emissaries, negotiators, and other figures familiar with the colonial frontier is no doubt a

letter to member of the Virginia House of Burgesses John Robinson: “our Detachments, by what I can learn, have sought [French and Indian forces] diligently; but the cunning and vigilance of Indians in the Woods are no more to be conceived, than they are to be equalled by our people” (Founders Online, From George Washington to John Robinson, 7 April 1756 ). Washington warned Robinson, “Indians are only match for Indians; and without these, we shall ever fight upon unequal Terms.” To an extent, Washington’s struggle with incompetent superiors was more exhausting than were his battles against Britain’s Indian adversaries.

## UNUSED TO THE INDIAN METHOD OF WARRING

When Dinwiddie first granted Washington the title of colonial emissary, the young ambitious Virginian had yet to truly earn it. Nearly two years later, a political system dictated by wampum, scalps, and interpersonal networking allowed Washington the opportunity to earn that title, and more. In October 1755, Washington invited Andrew Montour and the three hundred Indian warriors under his command to an informal rendezvous at Fort Cumberland: “assure them that as I have the chief Command I am invested with Power to treat them as Brethren & Allies, which I am sorry to say they have not been of late” (Founders Online, From George Washington to Andrew Montour, 10 October 1755). He then added “Recommend Me kindly to our good Friend [Monacatoocha] & others [and] tell them how happy it would make Conotacarious to have an Opportunity of taking them by the Hand at Fort Cumberland, & how glad he would be to treat them as Brothers of our great King beyond the Waters.” That October, Washington was absorbed in a heated argument with Dinwiddie over Captain John Dagworthy’s recent assumption of command over Fort Cumberland (Ferling, 2010). The Maryland militia commander’s royal commission stripped Washington of his authority to command the fort, despite Washington’s higher nominal rank. But when Montour and a force of three hundred warriors arrived at the fort, Dagworthy would be hard pressed to turn them away. More importantly, when Monacatoocha arrived at Fort Cumberland, he would be looking for only one person: his oldest friend in Virginia, Conotacarious.

Monacatoocha was one of Conotacarious’ last person-

al connections to the peoples of the Ohio Country. The 1754 winter in the Aughwick Valley took the lives of both the Half King Tanacharison and Queen Alliquippa.<sup>13</sup> Her son, Kos Showeyha, with whom Washington had served during Braddock’s Campaign earlier in 1755, retired from military service and retreated to live among the Upper Susquehanna tribes as a spy for the British. The Seneca prince later died there from smallpox (Hanna, 1911). Shingas, the Lenape “king” who had aided Washington in his first expedition into the Ohio Country, alienated himself and his people from the British during and after the Seven Years’ War. In 1764, just miles from Logstown, King Shingas died of smallpox as well.<sup>14</sup> By the end of Pontiac’s War, Conotacarious the Second had managed to outlive the sovereigns of the Ohio Country. Washington never returned to Indian country as British officer again, eventually forsaking the regalia of the British colonial militia for a Continental Army general’s uniform. When war pulled him back in to Indian country in 1779, the junior Town Destroyer lived up to his predecessor’s legacy at last.

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major cause for the fiasco. Source: Anderson, *Crucible of War*.

**13** Both Tanacharison and Queen Alliquippa relocated their people to the Aughwick Valley to avoid increasing hostilities between French and British forces. Thanks largely to Monacatoocha, Tanacharison’s warriors remained devoted to the British cause after the Mingo Half King died of pneumonia on October 4, 1754. The Seneca queen died from pneumonia as well on December 23, 1754. Source: McConnell, *A Country Between*.

**14** Some speculate that the Lenape chief contracted the disease from contaminated blankets distributed to the hundreds of Lenape camped outside Fort Pitt during Pontiac’s War. Sources: Jeffery Ostler, ““To Extirpate the Indians’: An Indigenous Consciousness of Genocide in the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes, 1750s–1810,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2015): 597–601.

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