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*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
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Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON: LESSONS LEARNED
FROM AN IRREGULAR WARFIGHTER

AUTHOR:

MAJ JOHN J. MONTGOMERY

AY 10-11

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Edward J. Erickson, PhD

Approved: Edward J. Erickson

Date: 10 March 2011

Oral Defense Committee Member: Pauletta Otis, PhD

Approved: Pauletta Otis

Date: 10 March 2011

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Executive Summary

Title: Sir William Johnson: Lessons Learned from an Irregular Warfighter

Author: Major John J. Montgomery, United States Army

Thesis: The U.S. Army and Marine Corps should instruct Intermediate Level Education (ILE) students on the history of Sir William Johnson, in order to arm them with relevant lessons-learned for contemporary operating environments.

Discussion: As the United States enters its tenth year of conflict against Islamic terrorists, the nation's military services seek to provide their mid-grade officers with educations that promote adaptive and creative problem solving for increasingly complex battlefields. The study of relevant historical figures can contribute positive lessons-learned to the contemporary military officer. One such person is Sir William Johnson, a British Indian Agent during the mid-eighteenth century in North America. By examining Johnson through a contemporary lens, namely the four elements of national power, Army and Marine Corps officers can learn valuable traits that are applicable on modern, often irregular battlefields.

Conclusion: The study of Sir William Johnson presents innumerable lessons-learned for those charged with representing their nations in areas where tribal law still reigns supreme. As the U.S. counters terrorism across the globe, service members will inevitably find themselves dealing with cultures much different from their own. It is for this reason that U.S. Army and Marine Corps officers should study the history of William Johnson when attending their respective ILE courses. Johnson provides timeless lessons concerning diplomacy, information operations, military power, and economic strategy. Twenty-first century leaders must possess a range of skills which cover these four fundamental areas. An officer equipped with the knowhow to effectively cross cultural barriers and successfully influence the people he or she comes into contact with is a true asset.

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Preface

As a U.S. Army artillery officer I deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I and OIF V. During both combat tours I negotiated with numerous Iraqi citizens from all walks of life. As a junior officer I had received little training on areas outside of my basic branch, and I believe additional training would have provided me with additional tools to accomplish my mission. At some point in my military career I realized how important such training would be, especially for mid-grade officers who are often responsible for the planning in a specific area of operations.

While working on my Masters Degree in History, I discovered Sir William Johnson. After reading more about him, I realized that there are many positive lessons to be learned from his experiences, especially for Army and Marine Corps officers. I hope to persuade faculty members at the Army and Marine Corps Command and Staff Colleges to include William Johnson in their curriculums. I believe this would provide contemporary warfighters with valuable lessons which are applicable to any non-conventional operating environment.

I would like to thank the Reference Librarians at the Marine Corps University's (MCU) Gray Research Center for their help in acquiring books from external locations. I would also like to thank the Writing Center at MCU, for the editing and constructive criticism they provided. Finally, I would like to recognize Dr. Edward Erickson for his mentorship throughout this project.

Introduction

Today, the United States' military services seek to provide mid-grade officers with educations that promote adaptive and creative problem solving for increasingly complex battlefields. In particular, U.S. Army and Marine Corps officers are exposed to an abundance of Western military history, as well as some of history's most influential military thinkers. Many believe a military education encompassing both military history and philosophy is critical in developing successful, twenty-first century Army and Marine Corps leaders. As these services have sought to adopt a whole-of-government approach to their education systems, it would seem beneficial to include the study of a non-military entity in the curriculum as well. One such person is Sir William Johnson, a British Indian Agent during the mid-eighteenth century in North America. This paper examines Johnson through the contemporary lens of national power and the four elements comprising it. Although unfamiliar with these terms as used in today's vernacular, Johnson's character traits and career provide the modern warfighter positive lessons-learned relating to diplomacy, information operations, and both military and economic strategy. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps education systems are currently not structured to provide officers with the long-term training opportunities that might begin to replicate Johnson's experiences with Native Americans. Nor do many officer career paths facilitate extensive operational deployments within one particular geographic area, which would enable regional and cultural expertise. Nevertheless, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps should familiarize Intermediate Level Education (ILE) students on the history of Sir William Johnson in order to arm them with relevant lessons-learned for contemporary operating environments.

A Brief History

William Johnson was born in 1715, about thirty-five miles northwest of Dublin, in County Meath, Ireland.¹ His Catholic father and Anglican mother made William an outsider to both religious groups, at a time when spiritual affiliation in that nation mattered greatly.² Despite his parents' non-traditional marriage, his uncle, Peter Warren, took an interest in young William, and invited him to immigrate to North America when he was twenty-three years old. Warren served as a captain in the British navy and had made New York his home port.³ He purchased a large tract of land in the colony, and thought his nephew could help manage it. Johnson set sail for North America in the spring of 1738 with twelve Irish Protestant families who served as the initial tenants.⁴ The property that William managed bordered the Mohawk River, approximately fifty miles northwest of Albany, New York.⁵ William had direct responsibility for the land his uncle assigned him, and indirect responsibility for these poor Irish families.⁶

The experience William Johnson gained while living on the periphery of two distinct societies in Ireland served him well in North America. He soon found that the remote, frontier location of his uncle's land placed him on the edge of British civilization.⁷ Additionally, he discovered the large Native American population living around his Warren's property. This young Irishman found himself serving as a key link between two very dissimilar societies. In less than twelve months, William Johnson realized that he could achieve far more in this new land than simply tending to his uncle's property. Before long he purchased his own house and tract of land about two miles away on the opposite side of the Mohawk River.⁸

A knowledgeable businessman, Johnson understood that he could make a considerable profit by trading with the local Indians. He named his new property Mount Johnson, and soon

established it as the largest and most successful estate within miles. He constructed a lumber mill and trading post, and hired an interpreter to facilitate trade with the Indians.⁹ During this time, William Johnson came to recognize the northern Indians as long-term trading partners and valuable allies.

From the very beginning, Johnson took to the Indians, and they to him. At just over six feet tall, William towered over most other whites, as well as the Indians. His physical prowess, confidence, and inexhaustible energy impressed the Indians (see Appendix A for portrait). Additionally, Johnson took the time to learn about Native American culture, and listened much more than he talked.¹⁰ The other trait, or lack thereof, that served Johnson well, was his ability to differentiate between civil and spiritual religion. As the child of a Protestant and a Catholic, he found he could drift from one denomination to the other based on the situation he found himself in. This transferred over to his association with the Indians and their religious practices.¹¹

Johnson gained a solid reputation among both whites and Indians for his fairness and generosity. Based on his geographical location, he primarily dealt with the Mohawk Indians.¹² Johnson became known as a man of his word, proving himself time and again to his Indian trading partners. Within several years, he achieved such high status among the Mohawks that they decided to adopt Johnson into their tribe. In so doing, they sought to solidify their relationship with a prosperous trader who was noticeably different than other white men they had dealt with in the past.¹³ Sometime around 1742, the Mohawk Indians formally added William Johnson to their tribe as a sachem, which elevated him to the Iroquois ruling council.¹⁴ In this capacity, Johnson became a leader and decision-maker within the tribe. This act solidified his position amongst the Indians and made him the envy of many white traders and Indian agents.

Already a prosperous businessman, Johnson's power expanded greatly during the 1740s. In addition to his authority in the Mohawk Valley, Indians from as far away as Ohio and Florida came to recognize his name.¹⁵ The Iroquois in particular, were greatly influenced by Johnson, and through their actions, elevated him to hero-status among many Indians and whites. Johnson, "with a flair for the dramatic," learned the Mohawk language, partook in their dances and rituals, and shared his bed with many of their maidens.¹⁶ Just four years after his induction into the Mohawk tribe, Johnson became their representative to the white world. In 1746, he led the Mohawks to an Indian conference in Albany, hosted by New York's colonial Governor, George Clinton.¹⁷ "His influence among the Mohawks so impressed Governor Clinton that he immediately made Johnson his sole agent for Indian affairs and appointed him colonel and commissary for all Iroquois warriors who joined the British cause."¹⁸ With this appointment, Johnson further solidified his position on the northern frontier. His connections enabled him to offer the Indians the supplies and materials they had grown accustomed to, while also allowing him to advocate on behalf of Native Americans beyond the Mohawk Valley.¹⁹ At his and the Crown's expense, "he doled out enormous quantities of goods – clothing, arms, gunpowder, kettles, knives, hatchets, tobacco, food, and drink – to his Mohawk neighbors..."²⁰

In addition to trade, Johnson relied heavily on the Indians as military allies in Britain's continuing struggles with France in North America. As important as trade had become, establishing meaningful alliances with the Iroquois and other Native Americans took precedence. William Johnson's status among the Indians convinced most Iroquois sachems to either directly support the British, or at a minimum, remain neutral. Johnson's intimate relationship with the Mohawks and his peacetime leadership convinced his superiors to place him in command of troops during King George's War (1744-1748) and the French and Indian War (1754-1763).²¹

Despite no formal military training, Johnson rose to the occasion and commanded his troops with distinction in numerous battles. His performance under fire earned him the respect of colonial and British politicians, while his ability to maintain the peace on New York's frontier endeared him to many Native Americans and anxious white settlers. Johnson continued to serve as the major link between the Northern Indians and Britain's North American colonies until his death in 1774, at the age of fifty-nine.

While the numerous biographies of William Johnson are interesting reads in and of themselves, it is Johnson's diplomatic skills, information operations, military exploits, and economic strategy that are most relevant to today's U.S. Army and Marine Corps officers. Of the four areas, Johnson excelled in the art of diplomacy. It is within this arena that contemporary warfighters should direct their utmost attention. Throughout America's history, its military leaders have had to fight the nation's battles, and in most cases, deal with their aftermath. As technology continues to drastically change operating environments, today's military leaders must excel at the human dimension of warfare. As the U.S. focuses more on stability operations and a whole-of-government approach to warfare, army and Marine Corps officers who embrace similar diplomatic skill-sets, possess additional tools to succeed in stability and support, and peace-keeping missions. It is here that William Johnson's ambassadorial efforts offer valuable insights to the contemporary military leader. Much like the heroes in William Lederer and Eugene Burdick's *Ugly American*, William Johnson was a man ahead of his time, who clearly understood the power and scope of effective diplomacy.

Johnson and the Power of Diplomacy

Historian Stephen Brumwell describes William Johnson as a "maverick."²² This is a fitting description for a man who loved dressing up as a Mohawk brave and participating in

Native American dances and rituals. Unlike the vast majority of colonists living on the edge of civilization in New York's frontier, Johnson actually understood the Indians' nature and their most pressing issues. He truly valued the friendships and relationships he developed amongst the various Indian tribes. Historian Stephen Brumwell writes, "It was his personal bond, and precious little besides", that convinced the Mohawks to fight for the Crown during King George's War.²³

Johnson succeeded because he exhibited five essential diplomatic traits: respect, integrity, loyalty, humility, and cultural understanding. These are not the only traits required for effective diplomacy, yet they remain as relevant today as they were two-hundred-and-fifty years ago. U.S. military institutions should teach and reinforce these enduring traits, regardless of time, place, or operating environment. William Johnson's character traits provide a fascinating and relevant case study for contemporary, warfighting diplomats.

The respect Johnson had for Native American culture endeared him to the Indians and served as the basis for his diplomatic success. "Although surrounded by greedy traders and Indian haters, he developed respect for the Indian... This sympathetic understanding of another people is the real business of diplomacy."²⁴ By learning the Iroquois language and respecting their culture, historian David Igneri argues that Johnson's diplomatic skills were partially responsible for changing the history of the western hemisphere due to the eventual outcome of the French and Indian War.²⁵ He suggests that these skills enabled Johnson to form strong Indian alliances which led to the British victory over France in the French and Indian War.

Johnson himself understood the importance of respecting Iroquois culture and traditions. He realized that personal relationships had the potential to greatly influence Indian actions.²⁶ Much like tribesmen in modern-day Afghanistan, "Johnson learned quickly that the Indians had

Much like tribesmen in modern-day Afghanistan, “Johnson learned quickly that the Indians had little interest in abstract institutions of power and preferred to have them embodied in an individual.”²⁷ He developed these relationships by investing time and resources into Iroquois communities. He spent years in their company, sitting around fires, participating in their games, and attending their most important ceremonies. Noted Johnson biographer Arthur Pound writes, “Their gutturals he mastered; their folk ways he knew; their quaint, poetic imagery of speech he loved and emulated.”²⁸

The respect Johnson displayed toward the Iroquois and other Native Americans ran counter to the mainstream opinions held by most whites on the northern colonial frontier. Although Johnson realized he held a position of power over the Indians, he “was exceptionally free of run-of-the-mill European assumptions about the inherent superiority of the white race.”²⁹ General Jeffrey Amherst, on the other hand, typified colonial feelings towards Native Americans. He believed Indians were simply subjects “whose good behavior should not have to be bought and whose bad behavior would be punished.”³⁰ To Johnson’s credit, he did not cave to the pressure of his superiors when it came to his personal interaction with the Indians. Although the respect he displayed toward Native Americans earned him numerous enemies among both white traders and politicians, he remained loyal to the people whose culture he genuinely admired. Time and again the Indians demonstrated their appreciation for the respect William Johnson gave them. Aside from the Mohawks adopting him as an honorary member of their tribe and making him a sachem, they also gave him the name *Warraghiayagey*, which in the Iroquois tongue translates as “Doer of great things.”³¹ Respect was a key ingredient to Johnson’s successful diplomacy.

The respect Johnson showed to Native Americans would not have earned their appreciation had he not been a man of integrity. For his day, the integrity he displayed when trading with the Indians “resulted in a rapport that was truly remarkable.”³² This is not to say that William Johnson was faultless, or that all of his business deals were predicated on mutual benefit. But for the most part, historical records indicate that Johnson’s business model succeeded in large part because of his truthfulness. In addition to his own business, Johnson went out of his way to ensure that other traders treated the Indians fairly and honestly. Instead of using military force or withholding commodities, he “persuaded Governor Shirley of Massachusetts to pay the Indians as a way to keep them loyal to the British.”³³ As both governor and interim Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America, his support of Johnson’s recommendation carried additional weight during the early stages of the French and Indian War.

As the years went by and Johnson’s power and stature increased, most of the Northern Indians placed even more trust in him. In order to counter the Iroquois’ declining population, Johnson had the Mohawks inoculated against smallpox when he served as their Indian agent. The fact that Indians allowed a white man to administer this sometimes deadly vaccination attests to the faith and confidence they had in him.³⁴ Along with his prominent status in colonial society, Johnson made a fortune for himself by treating the Indians fairly and honestly. Many Iroquois actually thought of him as one of their own, and more than a few sachems valued both his friendship and advice.³⁵ In over three decades of dealing with and living among the Northern Indians, Johnson earned their trust by maintaining his integrity. This is the second character trait that enabled him to be such an effective diplomat for the British government.

William Johnson made both friends and enemies during his many years dealing with the northern Indians, but nearly all agreed that he possessed a deep loyalty to both Native Americans

and the British Crown. Historian James Flexner describes the successful diplomat in the following manner: "His unique gift was his ability to feel simultaneous loyalty to both Indian and white institutions, to move with no sense of strain according to conceptions thousands of years apart in human evolution."³⁶ Johnson's loyalty earned the trust of the Iroquois and other Indians, and allowed him to participate fully in all aspects of their society. The majority of sachems Johnson dealt with from the Six Nations trusted him implicitly. Author David Igneri argues, "He was perceived as their great and loyal friend who was also the ultimate frontiersman. Possibly, he understood their problems better than any other white man."³⁷

On numerous occasions, Johnson put his business interests, and even his life, on the line for Native Americans and his king. In so doing, he more-often-than-not convinced the Indians to side with his government. Despite the loyalty he displayed for the northern Indians, Johnson's first loyalty was to Britain first. "Although Sir William truly respected the Indians, he showed time and time again that he was first and foremost an official of the British Crown."³⁸ Some of Johnson's prominent contemporaries accused him of "going native," yet even when dressed in Iroquois clothing and dancing in an Indian ceremony, William Johnson understood the hierarchy of his loyalty. Indian leaders understood this fact, yet knew Johnson's loyalty to them was genuine. At one point, in the early 1750s, Johnson resigned as the Northern Indian Agent due to Britain's unwillingness to continue funding his efforts. His resignation shocked the Iroquois Nations and prompted this response from Indian Chief Hendrick: "his knowledge of our affairs made us think him one of us and we are greatly afraid, as he has declined, your Excellency will appoint some person, a stranger both to us and our affairs."³⁹

The very fact that the Mohawks adopted Johnson into their tribe demonstrates the degree of loyalty he showed them. As a full member of their tribe, he also became a full member of the

greatest brave or sachem, and afforded him an equal say in tribal affairs.⁴¹ Johnson's loyalty earned him entrance into the Mohawk tribe, setting a benchmark for other frontier diplomats that followed in his footsteps.

Despite his numerous positions and titles and the associated powers that accompanied them, Johnson maintained a sense of humility when dealing with Native Americans. He recognized the limits of his authority when it came to negotiating with the Indians.⁴² He remained very cognizant of the fact that he did not always gain unanimous Indian support for all of Britain's campaigns against the French. Although adopted into the Mohawk tribe, Johnson did not seek to change them. He believed there were elements of European, or white, culture, that could benefit Native American society. He also believed that the two cultures could co-exist, even if it meant major compromises from both whites and Indians. When Johnson took an Indian woman for his wife, he did not force her to abandon her Native American traditions.⁴³ Rather, he encouraged her to embrace elements of both cultures, especially when it came to the upbringing of their children. Johnson's humility, and willingness to acknowledge the many positive aspects of the northern Indians, strengthened his bond to the tribes and increased the amount of influence he was able to exercise.

Johnson's humble attitude allowed him to understand Native American culture as well as any other white man on the northern frontier. From his earliest encounters with Indians, he embraced their differences and sought to educate himself on their ways. With a firm grasp on Indian culture, Johnson missed few opportunities to expand his power, increase his wealth, or further his reputation. Part of his genius involved the ability to accomplish these endeavors while acting within the constraints of Iroquois society.⁴⁴

further his reputation. Part of his genius involved the ability to accomplish these endeavors while acting within the constraints of Iroquois society.⁴⁴

William Johnson became intimately more familiar with Iroquois culture when he married the Indian woman, Molly Brant, in 1757 or 1758. Molly's grandfather had been a famous Indian leader and her father was one of the most important Mohawk sachems. Her mother also came from a royal lineage, which meant Molly would one day become "the elder sister of the Mohawk nation."⁴⁵ William and Molly had their first child in 1759, followed by seven more in the following years. He generously provided for their children, as well as other Mohawk children surrounding his estate. He had a church built and offered to send nearby Mohawk children to the local mission school.⁴⁶ "For those Indians in his orbit, he embodied the king's pretensions to being the father, benefactor, and protector of the Iroquois."⁴⁷ Johnson's unique understanding of the Iroquois and other northern Indians led him to become "an exceptionally capable intercultural diplomat" who yielded enormous influence for his distant king.⁴⁸

William Johnson achieved notoriety during his day as a key diplomat in the North American colonies. Additionally, historians such as Fred Anderson, Milton Hamilton, and James Flexner give credit to Johnson for his political ability. Flexner writes in *Mohawk Baronet* that, "No other American...had such influence with the government in London. In the Colony of New York, Johnson could... carry anything he pleases both with the Governor, Council, and Assembly."⁴⁹ Flexner goes on to argue that Johnson, or *Warraghiyagey*, as the Iroquois called him, was the most effective "colonizer" of his generation, because he convinced the Indians "to reverence the King as their friend."⁵⁰ More recently, historian David Igneri argued that, "No other diplomat could have organized the Six Nations as a fighting force as well as he did. No one could have influenced the Indians to side with the British or stay neutral in the French and

Johnson and the Power of Information

William Johnson possessed a remarkable ability to communicate effectively with both Indians and his white peers and superiors. In addition, he became an expert at gathering intelligence to aid him in both his diplomatic and military affairs. Johnson's success at harnessing the power of information began when he committed himself to learning the language(s) of the Iroquois. This proved to be no easy task, especially since it was an unwritten language. In fact, most Indian commissioners and traders during his day did not even attempt to learn it.⁵² As an example, the Iroquois word for wine was *oneharadesehoengtseragherie*, which meant, *a liquor made of the juices of grapes*.⁵³ The complexity and nuances of the Iroquois language proved to be "basic to their statecraft."⁵⁴ Despite the challenges, Johnson immersed himself in their culture, and "devoured what they showed and told him with amazing speed and retention."⁵⁵ While at first he used a type of sign language to communicate, after several years, he had very likely mastered their language.⁵⁶

In addition to learning the Iroquois language, Johnson held numerous conferences with the Indians when he had important information to share or needed a decision from a tribal leader. Johnson knew that large, public meetings would generally help his efforts because leaders were held accountable by the participants. Rather than meet secretly behind closed doors, Johnson adhered to Indian custom and usually held communal talks. Not only were Indian leaders on record, but these occasions provided Johnson an excellent stage from which to make his arguments. David Igneri writes, "He was able to persuade the Indians to side with the British or at least stay neutral through the use of dialogue. His rhetorical ability was considerable, and he used it often."⁵⁷ Johnson became Britain's chief negotiator of Indian treaties.⁵⁸ He hosted many Indian conferences at his home, Johnson Hall, especially after the French and Indian War had

used it often.”⁵⁷ Johnson became Britain’s chief negotiator of Indian treaties.⁵⁸ He hosted many Indian conferences at his home, Johnson Hall, especially after the French and Indian War had ended. Hundreds of Indians would converge on his residence, often for weeks at a time, due to his stature within the colonial world and his ability to address Native American grievances.⁵⁹

During the French and Indian War, Johnson used his influence with the Indians to develop an elaborate intelligence system that greatly aided the British cause. On many occasions, Johnson’s Indian allies obtained valuable information concerning French military plans. His Indian informants infiltrated the ranks of French Indian allies and learned many French secrets regarding strategy and the composition of forces. Johnson enlisted other Indians solely for the purpose of tracking French movements and the activities of their Indian allies. Historian David Igneri argues that, “Through this system, Johnson’s influence on the Iroquois Nations and other groups helped the British win the war.”⁶⁰

Johnson and Military Power

Sir William Johnson was first and foremost a businessman and diplomat. His military exploits, however, are what earned him international recognition. Beginning with King George’s War (1744-1748; see Appendix B for description), and continuing through the French and Indian War (1754-1763; see Appendix B for description), Johnson remained intimately involved in the British war efforts. During both conflicts he persuaded many of the Iroquois to fight for Britain, or to at least remain neutral. In King George’s War, Johnson primarily served as a military organizer and logistician. He managed the assembly of Indians into fighting forces, and outfitted them as best he could.⁶¹ Despite his lack of experience in military affairs, Johnson proved a fast learner, and became a valuable asset to the British cause.

In August, 1746, New York Governor George Clinton appointed Johnson as a colonial colonel. He charged him with raising and organizing a fighting force from among the Six Nations, and any other Indians who chose to partake. Clinton also held Johnson responsible for identifying colonial "Christians" who could lead these Indians in battle against the French. The colonial government, for its part, would "attempt" to reimburse Johnson for outfitting the Indians.⁶² Johnson handled his responsibilities as colonel of the Six Nations remarkably well. He spent a great deal of his own money in order to supply both Indian and white warriors. Additionally, his personality quickly endeared him to the men under his command. He led them with "tact and love" instead of harsh discipline. "That he managed to get some vigorous action out of them on that basis demonstrates his patience, at least."⁶³

Johnson's contributions to the British war effort during King George's War are significant because they provided Britain with a capable ally it would otherwise not have had. Until Johnson's appointment as colonel, Britain had assumed that the Iroquois Nation would at best remain neutral. Johnson not only convinced the Mohawks to fight, but he organized and equipped them into a viable fighting force.⁶⁴ Colonel Johnson emerged from King George's War with an even greater reputation. He had revived the Iroquois' faltering loyalty to the British, and had proven himself an effective military organizer and logistician. Additionally, he experienced his first taste of combat while leading a war party against a Canadian village.⁶⁵

At the conclusion of King George's War, Johnson realized that peace would not last long in North America. He spent the years prior to the French and Indian War strengthening his relationships with the Iroquois Nation and expanding his sphere of influence. On the eve of the French and Indian War, Johnson presented his Indian policy at a large conference held in Albany, New York. He recommended to his superiors that additional Indian supply stores be

established in the interior and that another British fort be constructed. Johnson also advocated the creation of an Indian spy system which would use Indians to track French military strength and troop locations.⁶⁶ Most importantly, Johnson persuaded the British to pledge their long-term commitment to the Iroquois Nation. This stemmed from Indian accusations that the colonial governments had abandoned them immediately following King George's War.⁶⁷ Many Mohawks also remained angry at the British for negotiating a peace with France before the Indians could avenge their lost braves.⁶⁸

Despite the peace accord established at the end of King George's War, North American territorial disputes between Britain and France remained. Within seven years, war began anew over colonial expansion into the contested Ohio Valley. Britain dispatched Major General Edward Braddock to North America in early 1755 to command British forces against renewed French aggression.⁶⁹ Braddock had little regard for Native Americans, and believed they had been poorly managed by most of the provinces. Soon after his arrival, in April, 1755, he ordered that William Johnson serve as the sole administrator of the Six Nations and their allies.⁷⁰ In this capacity, Johnson, with nearly complete autonomy, managed relations between the Indians and British. He reported only to Braddock, and had funds directly from the royal treasury at his disposal.⁷¹ In addition, Braddock charged then Colonel Johnson with leading one of the three provincial armies against the French.⁷² The French and Indian War required Johnson to put his boundless diplomatic and limited military experiences to the test once again.

In the early days of the conflict, Johnson persuaded the Iroquois to attend yet another conference held in Albany, New York. After intense negotiations, he finally convinced them to remain loyal to the British. "Admired, often loved by the Iroquois, he alone seemed to understand them or could make himself understood by them."⁷³ Not only would they remain

loyal, but Johnson succeeded in securing the Iroquois' friendship by the time the conference ended. After Braddock's death in July, 1755, Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts assumed command of British forces. He and New York's governor commissioned Johnson as a major general. One of the main reasons Johnson obtained this rank is because both governors believed "his influence over the Native Americans could be a deciding factor in the outcome of the war."⁷⁴

The British needed to halt the French advance from Canada so military leaders planned an expedition to Crown Point on Lake George (see map in Appendix C). Shirley gave Johnson and his men the mission of constructing a fort and then attacking Crown Point.⁷⁵ Prior to setting out, Johnson organized the Indians who would fight alongside his provincials into companies of one hundred men each. In addition, he paid the Indians' salaries and provided their equipment and supplies.⁷⁶ William Johnson and his men began moving up the Hudson River toward Crown Point in August, 1755. His force consisted of over 3,000 colonials (600 men from New Hampshire, 1,000 from Connecticut, 400 from Rhode Island, 800 from New York, and 1,200 from Massachusetts) and over 300 Mohawk warriors.⁷⁷ "This formidable contribution from the senior tribe of the ostensibly neutral Iroquois League was striking evidence of Johnson's influence amongst them."⁷⁸

Despite his limited experience, Johnson was determined to succeed in his first major command opportunity.⁷⁹ He trained his men in the ways of Indian warfare and woodsmanship. He created small ranger-like units, and in so doing, "sowed the seeds of a new American military style."⁸⁰ After bitter fighting, Johnson's numerically superior force defeated the French at Crown Point.⁸¹ Johnson became a hero overnight in North America and Britain. He captured the French commander, Baron Dieskau, and then saved him from Mohawk braves who sought

revenge for their losses.⁸² The actions of Johnson's irregular forces at Crown Point turned the tide of French victories and gave momentum to the British war effort. "He was acclaimed as a near genius, the 'heaven sent' general, and his skill, diplomacy, and humanity were toasted."⁸³ The Crown awarded Johnson £5,000, "a sum that would require a contemporary college professor a hundred years to earn."⁸⁴

Johnson continued to wield influence over the Indians during the war, and in 1759, he again successfully commanded both Indians and colonials in a major battle. The British attacked the French fort at Niagara in July, 1759. Two weeks into the fight, their commander, General John Prideaux, was killed. Johnson assumed command, and led a protracted siege.⁸⁵ Intelligence gathered from his Indian allies allowed him to repulse several French attempts to reinforce the fort. By the end of that year, Johnson and his men had captured Fort Niagara (see appendix C for map).⁸⁶ "The conquest of Niagara was the greatest British victory up to that time on the North American continent. The general public, for the second time, declared Johnson a hero."⁸⁷ William Johnson's third major command opportunity during the French and Indian War occurred in September, 1760, when he led a force of over six hundred Indians in an attack against Montreal. Johnson and his Iroquois allies helped General Jeffrey Amherst capture the French city in a short yet decisive battle.⁸⁸ Under Johnson's influence, "the British benefitted three-fold. First, the Iroquois Nations did not fight with the French. Secondly, they sent warriors against the French. Thirdly, they influenced many other groups to desert the French and side with the British."⁸⁹ Johnson's influence over the Indians likely affected the outcome of the French and Indian War and demonstrates the significance host-nation fighters can play in war.

Johnson and Economic Power

A study of William Johnson is not complete without looking at his business life.

Johnson's diplomatic efforts, information operations, and military service all combined both directly and indirectly to advance his economic pursuits. He realized shortly after arriving in North America that the Indians desired many things that only Europeans could provide. By 1738, when Johnson arrived in New York, the Iroquois were dependant on European traders for many of the basic essentials of their lives. They used everything from metal hoes for farming to firearms for hunting. Additionally, they had to rely on the Europeans to repair their hoes and provide the powder for their guns.⁹⁰ Johnson sought to monopolize this market on the northern frontier, and his deep understanding of Indian culture and the ways in which they conducted business helped him in his goal. Unlike the majority of colonial traders, Johnson became aware of the "ritual dimension of exchange" practiced by the Iroquois and other northern Indians. Instead of seeking a quick profit from the Indian trade, Johnson decided to make a long term investment in the surrounding tribes.⁹¹ Johnson clearly understood the connection between economics and Indian loyalty. For their part, the Indians gained as much from their relationship with Johnson as he did from them.

William Johnson also understood that fair trading would not by itself, earn the Indians' alliance. In addition to the integrity he displayed in trade deals, Johnson also ensured the British supplied the Iroquois with enough "gifts" to ensure their loyalty. During King George's War, Johnson spent over twenty-five times what other Indian agents spent, on "goods and services" for the Indians under his influence. "One Iroquois orator told Governor Clinton in 1751 that 'one half of Colonel Johnson belonged to His Excellency, and the other to them.'"⁹² Johnson used his own money to cover much of these expenses, which over time, made him even more

powerful. By the end of 1747, the French had placed a £200 reward on his head.⁹³ At times, Johnson's success came at a cost his superiors were not willing to shoulder. In fact, Johnson resigned as New York's Indian Agent in 1751 because he had not been reimbursed much of the money he had spent during King George's War. The Mohawks were so upset they threatened to terminate their allegiance with the British if Governor Clinton did not reinstate Johnson.

Johnson's focus on the economy in the Mohawk Valley benefited both the Indians he traded with, and the many white settlers who moved into the area. In turn, this economic prosperity brought relative peace to the area. New York's governor visited Johnson's residence in 1772 and made the following report: "The land on the Mohawk River is extremely fertile and under the highest cultivation. I heartily wish the eastern parts of the province were as peaceably settled."⁹⁴ His investment in his land and the Indian trade resulted in a continuing and very valuable commerce. Through his fairness in business deals, and his treatment of Native Americans, Johnson "encouraged their confidence in him."⁹⁵ It was this trust that enabled him to secure the Mohawks, and most other northern Indians, as British allies.

Conclusion

Studying Sir William Johnson through the contemporary lens of national power, and the four elements that comprise it, sheds a new light on his life and the contributions he made to British North America. More importantly, this study presents innumerable lessons-learned for U.S. military officers charged with representing America in areas dominated by tribal culture. It is for this reason that U.S. Army and Marine Corps officers should study the history of William Johnson when attending their respective Command and Staff Colleges. An officer equipped with the knowledge to effectively cross cultural barriers and successfully influence the people he or she comes into contact with is a true asset.

While his experience is nearly impossible to replicate today, William Johnson serves as an example of an individual who effectively tied all four elements of national power together into a unified strategy. He revealed how an effective diplomat could help form a coalition military force. As technology makes the world smaller every year, this ability to create coalitions, regardless of size or scale, takes on greater importance for military officers. William Johnson valued information, both prior to and during a conflict. His ability to understand the interconnectedness of issues made him extremely effective. Additionally, the trust Johnson built with the Indians often enabled him to get timely and accurate human intelligence both before and during battle. This type of intelligence remains extremely valuable, but is often the most difficult to obtain. Johnson provides the modern warfighter with beneficial techniques for this area.

Though not a professional soldier, Johnson set a positive example for military leaders. He understood the importance of including Native Americans into the British fighting force, largely because the Indians knew the terrain better than anyone, and demonstrated their effectiveness in battle. Johnson's ability to secure the Iroquois' allegiance gave validity to the British war effort against France, especially in the eyes of those Indians who remained neutral.

From an economic standpoint, Johnson clearly provides worthwhile examples that remain relevant today. He first and foremost demonstrated how important economics were to the establishment of cross-cultural relationships. This remains an important topic, especially for U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan, where most things are in some way or another tied to money. Above all, William Johnson's leadership, in the light of the four elements, warrants study. He illustrates just how important one individual can be in forging bonds between groups of people, and serves as an excellent case study for contemporary military officers.



William Johnson at age 36⁹⁶

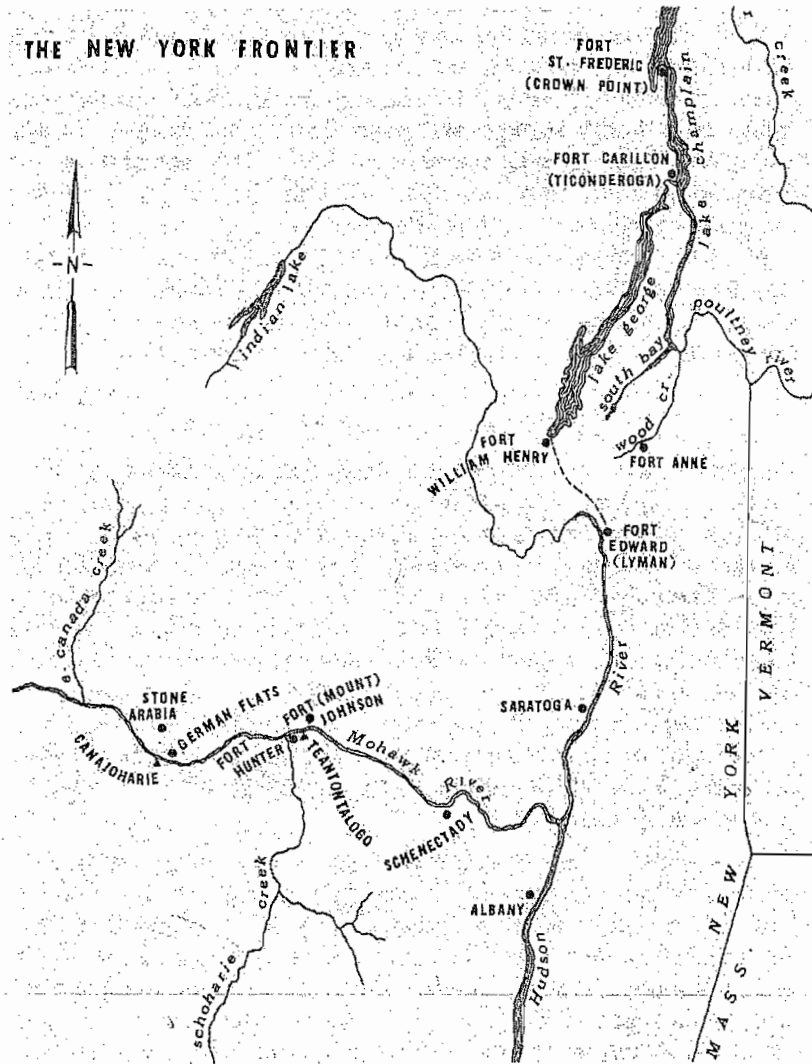
Appendix B – Background Information

Six Nations (or League of the Iroquois) - “the confederacy of Mohawks, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas that stretched across upper New York State.” They maintained a “pivotal position in North American affairs by preserving a formal neutrality and essential unity of action” in King George’s War and the French and Indian War. Originally only five nations, the Tuscaroras joined in the early eighteenth-century.⁹⁷

King George’s War – “Hostilities between Britain and France in the Americas were triggered by the French capture of a British fort off Nova Scotia in 1744. With a combination of British warships and colonial troops, the British captured the key French fort of Louisburg, Nova Scotia (1745), and held it against two French attempts at recapture (1746 and 1747). The fall of Louisburg isolated the French colonies in Canada. There were also successes against French colonies in the West Indies, while the French with Indian help raided the British colonies. The war was ended, along with the War of Austrian Succession, by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (18 October 1748) which restored all conquered lands in the Americas to their previous owners.”⁹⁸

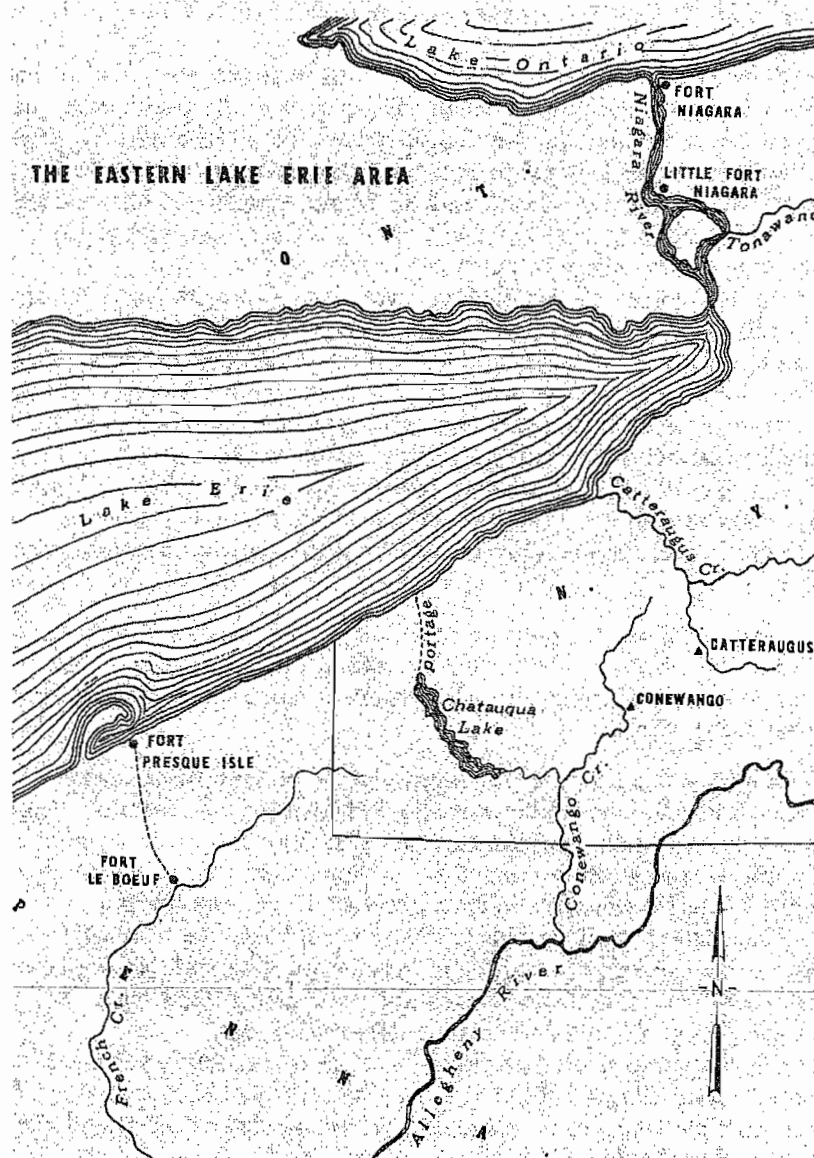
French and Indian War – “The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 seemed to have ended the Anglo-French struggle for worldwide colonial supremacy. Both nations were exhausted, and their rulers – George II and Louis XV – weary of the dreadful costs of war. In the spring of 1752 the French began to make attempts to link their vast possessions along the St. Lawrence River in Canada with those to the south in what would become known as Louisiana by entering the disputed valley of the Ohio. If successful, they would contain the thirteen British colonies in America between the Allegheny Mountains and the sea. Even though the French numbered only 80,000 in North America, of whom about 55,000 were in New France, as opposed to about 1,250,000 British colonists, by the nature of their militarist society, and through their Indian allies and the assistance of a powerful French fleet blockading the Atlantic coast, they might just conquer the thirteen colonies; and the eastern seaboard, from being British and Protestant, would become French and Catholic.”⁹⁹ The French built two forts near the south shore of Lake Erie, and in October, 1753 the British sent Major George Washington find the commander of the French troops and demand that they leave British territory. Washington arrived at the French post in December, and had the British demands rejected. He retraced his journey, and after a month of arduous travel, reported back to his superiors. The French and Indian War had unofficially begun.¹⁰⁰

Appendix C – Maps



Map of the Mohawk Valley and Crown Point¹⁰¹

Appendix C – Maps



Map of Fort Niagara¹⁰²

Appendix D – Timeline

1715:	William Johnson is born near Dublin, Ireland
1738:	Johnson arrives in New York in order to manage his uncle's land holding
1739:	Johnson purchases his first property and establishes Mount Johnson
1742:	Mohawk Indians adopt Johnson into their tribe
1744:	King George's War begins
1746:	Johnson appointed as New York's sole agent for Indian affairs
August 1746:	Governor Clinton appoints Johnson as a colonial colonel
1747:	French place a £200 reward on Johnson's head
October 1748:	King George's War ends
1751:	Johnson resigns as New York's Indian agent
January 1754:	French and Indian War begins
April 1755:	Johnson named commander of Crown Point expedition, and made Superintendent of Indian Affairs
April 1755:	Johnson commissioned as a Major General
September 1755:	Johnson defeats French at Crown Point
November 1755:	King George confers the title of baronet upon Johnson
December 1755:	Johnson relinquishes command of the army he led to victory at Crown Point
1757/58:	Johnson marries the Indian, Molly Brant
1759:	Johnson and Molly Brant have their first of eight children
July 1759:	Johnson defeats French at Fort Niagara
September 1760:	Johnson and General Amherst defeat the French at Montreal
July 1774:	Sir William Johnson dies

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