

**Reply to Beaulieu's prepared by Alan Corbiere
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Oral Tradition and Written Tradition

These two reports are practically oriented from different ends of a spectrum of historical inquiry. In essence, I was charged with providing an Anishinaabe perspective and understanding on the Treaty of Niagara and how that informed the chiefs who signed the Robinson treaties. As such I relied on the wampum belts and the recorded speeches of the chiefs throughout the time period of 1760 – 1881. I focused mainly on Ojibwe and Odaawaa chiefs, whose descendants would eventually enter into the Robinson Treaties.

Beaulieu was similarly charged with examining the Treaty of Niagara (which he denies is a treaty) and the Royal Proclamation, using much of the same materials but relying on and privileging Sir William Johnson's perspective at the expense of the Anishinaabe perspective.

In short, Beaulieu privileges the written record and thus the British perspective, and I give regard to both the written record but insert the oral tradition and the wampum belts and thus detail the Anishinaabe perspective. Beaulieu treats the history in a very linear and chronological manner. I, on the other hand, employ a more ethnohistorical approach that allows for the Anishinaabe perspective and understanding to evolve through time. In this manner I have taken direction from the work of ethnohistorian Fogelson, who stated about ethnohistorical approach:

Such an approach insists on taking seriously native theories of history as embedded in cosmology, in narratives, in rituals and ceremonies, and more generally in native philosophies and worldviews. Implicit here is the assumption that events may be recognized, defined, evaluated, and endowed with meaning differentially in different cultural traditions. (Fogelson p: 134 – 135).

In contrast, Beaulieu follows more conventional training of historicism, which Fogelson typified as, "Historicism deliberately distances the phenomena under investigation," which is to say that Beaulieu attempts to freeze time and categorize the Treaty of Niagara as a one time event that was not renewed every year at various posts by the annual delivery of 'Indian Presents' at Michilimackinac (1760's – 1796), St. Joseph's Island (1796 – 1812, 1829), Drummond Island (1815 – 1829), Penetanguishene (1830 – 1835) and Manitowaning (1836 – 1854). Part and parcel of the Treaty of Niagara was the delivery of presents. As long as the British traveled miles by boat to deliver cloth, guns, ammunition, blankets, rum and other goods, to annually outfit up to 3500 people, the Anishinaabe chiefs of the Western confederacy could draw no other conclusion than that the Treaty of Niagara was being honoured by the British.

Many times in his report, Beaulieu says "the right thing" and acknowledges that the oral tradition has something to offer to understanding the history of the Covenant Chain relationship and the Treaty of Niagara but then he quickly diminishes the merits of the oral tradition. For instance Beaulieu noted that I relied

on oral tradition recorded in the 19th century, stating, “This is an important source to understand elements of the Aboriginal perspective, but it must be considered critically. The variations found in the oral history demonstrate changes in the Aboriginal memory and confirm that this history is not a single overarching story that was repeated from generation to generation,” (Beaulieu p. 13). So Beaulieu notes its importance and states that it must be assessed critically, which I agree, but he ends by stating that it is not an “overarching story that was repeated from generation to generation.” I disagree with this last statement – the recitation of the belt was an overarching ‘story’ repeated generation to generation (just not Johnson’s words verbatim, which seems to be Beaulieu’s unwritten criteria). The reason I state that it was an overarching story handed down through the generations (until colonial power structures precluded such transmission) is because of the following evidence about the keepers of the belt.

In 1852, Reverend George Hallen, who personally knew Assiginack, borrowed the belts and made life size drawings of them and had also taken some important notes. In Mr. Hunter’s report of 1901, he stated that “Mr. Hallen further notes on the margin the name of Nishkawzhinee. At the left of this name are the words, ‘his father,’ probably meaning Assokiknk’s¹ [sic] father. At the right of the name it is stated ‘the belt of 1764 was given to him,’ evidently referring to this belt,” (Hunter 1902, p. 52). Hunter surmises that Nishkawzhinee was Assiginack’s father and that it was he who received the belt, however, it is more likely that it was Nishkawzhinee’s father who received the belt.²

Sir William Johnson did not record the name of the Odaawaa chief who he gave the belt to although a number of Odawa chiefs and orators were there at Niagara. However, the name Nishkawzhinee is specifically associated with the belt. On 29 May 1797 Thomas Duggan, Store keeper and clerk at Michilimackinac and later, St. Joseph’s Island, recorded that “Several Chiefs with their Bands from Arbre Croche arrived,” and that Chief Keeminichaugan spoke on a large belt on behalf of all the chiefs. Keeminichaugan said,

Father, I shew [sic] you this to let you know that we shall never part with it. Sir John Johnson’s Father gave it to us at Niagara, saying, Children This is my Belt, take it, let us always sit down on it and be of one mind, by doing so no bad Birds can hurt us... The Chief into whose hands the above Belts had been intrusted being dead it was proposed in Council to have them put into the

¹ This is Jean Baptiste Assiginack, war chief and an instrumental figure in the history of the Anishinaabeg. Assiginack recited the belts to Sir Francis Bond Head in 1836 thereby inspiring Bond Head to strike up a treaty on the spot.

² Some have suggested that Nishkawzhinee was Assiginack’s father due to way the text is written, however, Nishkawzhinee’s clan was forked stick and Assiginack’s was sparrow hawk. Odaawaa pass clans patrilineally. So this was not a father-son relationship. For Nishkawzhinee’s clan see October 19, 1797 entry in the Duggan Journal wherein a letter dated October 19, 1794 has been copied. The clans of the civil and war chiefs of L’Arbre Croche are copied, including Niscatchininy’s forked stick.

hands of one of their most confidential people when by unanimous consent of all the chiefs present they were delivered into the hands of Nishkaushininy.³

After the death of the keeper, the belt was passed from one generation to the next in a formal setting in front of the garrison at St. Joseph's Island. The way I understand Hallen's note, he is referring to Nishkaushininy's father as the one to have received the belt. It makes sense that the son would assume the role and responsibilities of the father because the Anishinaabeg (Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi) followed hereditary chieftainship. The belt would then be passed into the hands of other worthy chiefs namely Mookomaunish and Naawimushkooda (Hunter 1902, p. 52).

Beaulieu again seemingly values the importance of the oral tradition, "The remarks from the oral tradition clearly demonstrate the importance the Odawas gave to the Covenant Belt that William Johnson had given them in 1764. It is an inestimable source of information to understand how the Odawas of the 19th century saw the commitments made to them by the British in 1764," (Beaulieu p. 19). However, Beaulieu soon casts doubts upon the oral tradition of the early 19th century. Again Beaulieu starts by according the oral tradition credence,

The oral sources are clearly essential in accounting for certain aspects of the Aboriginal perspective of the 1764 meeting. The first significant fragments of this oral history however date back to the early 19th century, half a century after the event in question.⁴

In this instance, Beaulieu creates a distance between the events of Niagara and the oral tradition by saying "the first significant fragments of the oral history however date back ... half a century after the event in question." He is likely referring to Ocaitau's 1818 recitation, which is 54 years later. However, as shown above, the evidence suggests that the belt passed from father to son, one generation, which in Anishinaabe oral tradition is not a very long time.

Time, specifically dates and chronological time in the oral tradition is given different emphasis. We turn again to the ethnohistorical work of Fogelson,

For most Native Americans time is marked by events, and these events are more than the temporary surface disturbances that French social historians disdainfully dismiss. Occurrences that take place in myths, in folk narratives, and in native historical traditions are often what I term epitomizing events. Epitomizing events bring several forces together in dramatic combination; they condense various subtle changes into a single transformative act. Whether such events actually took place or not is immaterial; they are

³ Thomas Duggan Journal, 29 May 1797. Nishkawzhininee and Nishkaushininy are different spellings of the same name.

⁴ Beaulieu p. 24

explanatory mnemonics of the mind and emotional engrams of the heart and, as such, are “real” for members of the culture.⁵

The Treaty of Niagara was what Fogelson calls an “epitomizing event.” In fact this concept and analytic framework seems to fit especially in the following testimony of Odawa Chief Jean Baptiste Assiginack. Beaulieu refers to Assiginack’s rendition of the Treaty of Niagara. Assiginack stated that god spoke to the ancestor of the British and bestowed him with power. Beaulieu comments,

However it is not possible to establish whether the words recorded in the oral tradition in the 19th century always match those spoken by Johnson. It is highly unlikely for example that Johnson would have spoken of the origins of the British nation in the manner Assiginack related in 1851. This type of discourse, which attributed supernatural origins to Great Britain’s power, does not fit with what we know of the Superintendent’s speeches during his meetings with the Aboriginal peoples.⁶

I do not necessarily agree with Beaulieu that Johnson categorically did not say this but the point is that the Anishinaabeg codified the historic event of the Treaty of Niagara as an epitomizing event. The Treaty of Niagara can be characterized as an epitomizing event because several forces are “brought together in dramatic combination” to become “explanatory mnemonics of the mind and emotional engrams of the heart and, as such, are ‘real’ for members of the culture,” even if such events never actually took place as described – it is still real to the Anishinaabeg. Utilizing the concept of epitomizing events, which acknowledges the collapsing of dates and events, the meaning and understanding of the Treaty of Niagara to the Anishinaabeg is not so rigourously tied to the chronological orientation that Beaulieu employs. Sometimes Beaulieu seems to almost adopt this type of ethnohistorical method, as evident in the following example,

When using the oral history to locate a particular piece of information about a historical event that can be dated precisely, such as the Niagara Congress, we must keep in mind how that history developed and adapted events based on the times in which they were spoken. It cannot be taken as static, unmoving ‘material,’ or as the simple recitation of the words that were spoken at Niagara in 1764. The oral tradition’s malleability, its ability to change and adapt to different needs must be included in the historical analysis, especially when this tradition is used as a tool to influence specific actions among the British. As the examples in this section show, the oral tradition tended to gloss over the specific circumstances of a historical event and retain only a general sense.⁷

⁵ Fogelson in Howe 2002, p. 163.

⁶ Beaulieu p. 19 – 20.

⁷ Beaulieu p. 20.

Contrasting what Beaulieu terms 'general sense' to what Fogelson terms an 'epitomizing moment,' it is evident that the Anishinaabeg of the 19th century believed and acted from their understanding of the Treaty of Niagara by abiding and invoking its enduring principles NOT its 'general sense.' The Anishinaabeg believed they entered into a treaty with the British in 1764 because the wampum belt said 1764, not 1761.⁸

The Treaty of Niagara was a historic event that happened at a specific moment in time. However, the Treaty of Niagara was exemplified by Covenant Chain wampum belt, which was a mnemonic designed by the British to contain the principles of the treaty relationship. Sir William Johnson had stated that the belt "should be always shewn at public Meeting to remind them [Indians] of their promises."⁹ It should be pointed out that the belt was also to remind the British of their promises as well. Johnson knew the manner of conducting treaties and forging relationships with the various nations was by wampum and by mutually renewing those pledges. Johnson further commented that "The use of frequent Meetings with Ind^s is here pointed out. They want the use of letters, consequently they must frequently be reminded of their promises."¹⁰ Johnson understood that the wampum belt should be kept by the people but also shown in public meetings. The frequent meetings with the belt was the manner in which the treaty was renewed. The understanding of the mutual 'promises' did evolve over time but the understanding evolved mutually in specific gatherings called the "Annual Delivery of Indian Presents." The British did not attend these 'frequent meetings' by reciting the words of Johnson verbatim, nor did the British in subsequent years resort to reading his minutes of the congress at these public gatherings. The British and the Western Nations were in a treaty relationship that utilized frequent meetings in which the enduring principles of the treaty relationship were enacted annually by the delivery of the Indian presents, gathering, smoking of the pipe, speech making, reporting of 'news,' reporting of grievances and dispute resolution, and public showing of the belts. The enduring principles of the treaty were NOT a clause by clause recitation of Johnson's written minutes. The enduring principles are those that are contained in the diplomatic discourse of the Covenant Chain and written in the Royal Proclamation – principles of autonomy, land ownership, protection, prosperity, trade, and the delivery of presents.

In summary, Beaulieu pays lip service to the oral tradition but references it just to debunk it. Noted oral history scholar Julie Cruickshank commented on this type of scholarship, "Despite growing attention to social processes involved in narrative performance, a textual emphasis in legal and cultural studies still reinforces a century-old tendency to evaluate oral traditions as written words and to sieve for literal meanings that might be compared with competing forms of evidence."¹¹

⁸ Beaulieu insists that the Western Nations first entered the Covenant Chain at Detroit in 1761. This will be dealt with in a later section of the report.

⁹ Johnson to Gage quoted in Beaulieu p. 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., Here Beaulieu errs by using "want" to mean "desire" instead of "lack."

¹¹ Cruickshank 2002, p. 22.

Privileging Text and Johnson's Perspective

Beaulieu does his job in utilizing the correspondence of Sir William Johnson to his superiors and colleagues. However, Beaulieu makes categorical statements about representing the 'Western Nations' perspective that can not be justified.

[Corbiere's] report also omits later documents that help understand the nature of the negotiations that took place at Niagara, specifically the letters William Johnson wrote a few weeks after the event to his superiors (the lords of the Board of Trade and Commander-in-Chief Thomas Gage) reporting his negotiations with the nations in attendance at Niagara. These letters contain explanations that are crucial to grasping the *perspective of the representatives at Niagara* [emphasis added]. It is essential that these explanations be included in the analysis because they enable understanding of the veritable meaning of the two treaties made on this occasion and that of the Covenant [sic] Belt Johnson presented to the Western Nations on July 31, 1764, which is often incorrectly linked with the ratification of a treaty," (Beaulieu p.23 -24)

Beaulieu over extends Johnson's minutes of the proceedings/ congress to state that he gained the perspective of the representatives at Niagara. Unfortunately, for some of the representatives, these are the only records of what they said. We have to trust that Johnson and his interpreters understood all the languages that were spoken there. It is known that Johnson got along very well with the Mohawk. But did he personally understand Ojibwe? Cree? Sauk? Ho Chunk? Wendat? Did he or his interpreters understand the dialectical differences between Algonquin, Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe? Some dialectical differences could be significant. I am not convinced that the perspectives of all of the Aboriginal representatives was recorded. In this case, the oral tradition should be given more weight.

Paper versus Wampum

As mentioned above, Beaulieu privileges the written record in order to deny that the Treaty of Niagara was indeed a treaty. Beaulieu does state that wampum was necessary to seal a treaty but the presence of wampum on its own, in Beaulieu's perspective, does not make a treaty, he outright states that "the sources do not support the thesis that a treaty was made at Niagara with the Western Nations," (Beaulieu p. 14). Beaulieu goes further and states that a treaty has to have a signed document as well.

the signing of treaties in which the British set specific conditions for the nations that had made peace overtures the previous fall (the Detroit Wyandots and the Senecas), and the renewal of the Covenant Chain with the Western Nations that had come to reiterate their friendship with the British and to ask that trade be restored. As such we will avoid referring to the outcome of this meeting as the Treaty of Niagara because, although the term

has been used for several years, it does not accurately reflect the historical situation. A more fitting description of the actual outcomes of the 1764 Congress would be to speak of the two peace treaties of Niagara and the renewal of the British alliance with the other nations present at the meeting,” (Beaulieu p. 10).

Beaulieu points to the fact that the Wendat and Seneca both signed treaties at Niagara and were accepted back into the Covenant Chain. “As such the treaties Johnson negotiated at Niagara were peace treaties [with Wendat & Seneca], containing terms designating the Aboriginal nations as the wrongdoers, because, from the British perspective, they had reneged on their past commitments—those made in Detroit in 1761—by attacking forts in the continental interior and launching raids along the Border,” (Beaulieu p.17). The terms included in those two treaties included **cessions of land**. Throughout the document Beaulieu adopts the definition of a treaty as having to include a signed document. The delivery of wampum alone is not enough to be called a treaty in Beaulieu’s definition. Beaulieu states that if the Royal Proclamation were included as part of the negotiations, it would have been included as a document.

Further, for the Royal Proclamation to have been included in a treaty, its formal presentation would have also had been accompanied by the offering of a wampum belt, to which the Aboriginal nations would have responded to signal their agreement, or by a document that they would have signed. Negotiating a treaty in the Aboriginal diplomatic tradition would have been just as formal as in the European world. The decision to include certain provisions in a treaty did not rely on implicit knowledge, and the simple mention of a subject would not have been sufficient for it to be included as an integral aspect of a treaty.¹²

I agree that negotiating a treaty in Aboriginal diplomatic tradition was just as formal as the European tradition, however, I do not believe that a signed document was required for a treaty to be effected amongst Indigenous nations. I point to the Dish with One Spoon treaty between the Anishinaabe and the Six Nations.¹³ I likewise point to a treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe that was sealed by wampum in the 1690’s commonly called “Yellowhead’s belt.”¹⁴ In fact I believe that the reason the Wendat and Seneca were the only ones to sign a document was because **they ceded territory**. The cession of land required the signatures and the document. The remaining Western Nations did not cede any land and therefore did not need to sign a paper. It is this point that I believe Beaulieu is conflating a treaty and a cession, the distinction is that a **treaty can occur without a cession**.

Regarding the adoption of the Royal Proclamation, Beaulieu notes that

¹² Beaulieu p. 21.

¹³ Lytwyn 1996, p. 222.

¹⁴ Ibid.

For the Aboriginal nations to have believed that they had accepted the Royal Proclamation in the framework of a treaty, the document would have had to be officially presented to them, which was not the case. There is no document that establishes that William Johnson read the Royal Proclamation to the Aboriginal nations at Niagara, or that he had even explained its contents in a general manner (or metaphorically).¹⁵

Sir William Johnson's minutes of the various meetings he had throughout the month do not expressly mention the Royal Proclamation, however, the runners he employed in 1763 to invite all of the nations to Niagara certainly were aware of the precepts contained in the Royal Proclamation because the speech they carried, along with wampum, included the precepts, specifically,

We by this belt of Wampum acquaint you that there is an universal peace concluded among all the Christian powers in Europe, and consequently among the white people in America, by which Peace, the King of France ceded to the King of England all his claim and right of all his dominions on this Continent, as far as the River Mississippi: Wherefore you are to consider the King of England as the only Sovereign over the said territories, who, we hear, intends to put the trade with you and us upon very good footing.... And regard the King of England as our Common Father who is willing to live in peace and friendship with all his children the Indians, and intends to establish a fair and reasonable trade with all Indian nations in his American dominions. He **does not mean to claim your lands as his property** [emphasis added] and desires no more privileges than the King of France had.¹⁶

This message was affiliated with a letter dated 25th August 1763 that Johnson wrote to Amherst. The Western Nations were concerned with their land and wanted to be assured that the King of England was not going to take it on them. The contents of this letter stated that the King was not claiming their land which was to allay their worries.

1764 Treaty of Niagara

Beaulieu continually asserts throughout his report that the 1764 Treaty of Niagara is not a treaty on the basis that it is a renewal of the alliance in 1761 at Detroit. Even if we accept that it is a renewal of the Detroit treaty this does not mean that 1764 is not a treaty - it is a treaty. I contend that Beaulieu is attempting to diminish the stature of 1764 by stating that it is merely a renewal of 1761 and not

¹⁵ Beaulieu p. 21.

¹⁶ See "Message of the Canada to the Western Indians." In O'Callaghan, E. B., ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York. Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1856-1887, vol. 8, p. 544 – 545.

a treaty. I also contend that the Ojibwe and Odawa chiefs viewed the Treaty at Niagara as the 'new' beginning of the Covenant Chain relationship. Beaulieu disagrees.

As opposed to Alan Corbiere's opinion, the Niagara Congress did not mark the beginning of the integration of the Great Lakes nations into the British alliance, which had begun after the Conquest of New France at the Congress in 1761, during which William Johnson reached an offensive and defensive alliance with the former Aboriginal allies of the French.¹⁷ Johnson renewed this alliance with the Western Nations at Niagara in 1764, and he ratified two peace treaties that he used to readmit the Detroit Wyandots and the Senecas after their direct involvement in the military offensive against British outposts in 1763.¹⁸

Here we see two of Beaulieu's assertions (1) the alliance is not a treaty,¹⁹ and (2) that the 1764 Covenant Chain was merely a renewal of the 1761 chain. Regarding the second point, if this were the case, why is there no mention of that 1761 belt being at Niagara? By Beaulieu's renewal logic, the 1761 Covenant Chain wampum belt that was delivered at Detroit should have been brought to Niagara and renewed.²⁰ There is no evidence that the Western Nations who accepted that Detroit belt brought it to Niagara to renew it. This was the manner of renewing treaties and belts – bringing them to the council fire, smoking, reciting the mutual promises, settling grievances, thereby renewing the belts and thus the treaty. A more fitting example of a renewal belt is actually on page 105 of Beaulieu's report. In figure 4 entitled "Wampum belts of the Ottawas," four belts are depicted, the first being the 1764 Covenant Chain belt, the 24 Nations belt and the 1786 Covenant

¹⁷ Note that Beaulieu refers to this as an alliance but Johnson called it a treaty, just like he referred to the Covenant Chain as a treaty.

¹⁸ Beaulieu p. 14.

¹⁹ Beaulieu insistently does this even though the document is called "1761, September 9th, Proceedings at a treaty held at Detroit by Sir William Johnson Baronet with Sachems and warriors of the several Nations of Indians there assembled," LAC RG 10, Vol. 6, pp: 100 – 117, C-1222. Also refer to Beaulieu's text (p. 35), "In his 1762 letter to the lords of the Board of Trade, Johnson explains that he had been sent to Detroit in 1761 to reach an alliance **treaty** with the Indigenous people of the Great Lakes: 'Together with my proceedings at Easton I likewise transmit your Lordships my Transactions with the Indians on my way to, and at the Detroit last Summer, whither I was sent by Sir Jeff. Amherst, that I might settle all matters, and enter into a **Treaty of Alliance** with the Western and Northern Indians.' (Johnson to the lords of Trade, 20 August 1762, PWJ , 3: 865)." Similarly Beaulieu quotes Johnson's February 19, 1764 letter to Gage wherein he states, "At **this Treaty** wheresoever held we should tye them down according to their own forms," (Beaulieu p.74).

²⁰ Johnson stated that he delivered a "Belt of the Covenant Chain containing 20 rows." LAC RG 10, Vol. 6, pp: 100 – 117, C-1222.

Chain “renewal” belt delivered in the name of Sir John Johnson Baronet and the Lt. Col. Robert McDouall belt. The chiefs viewed the 1764 belt as the seminal belt (note that the Detroit belt is not pictured here) and the 1786 belt is the renewal after the American War of Independence.

A further point that goes against Beaulieu’s logic that Detroit was the seminal entry into the Covenant Chain is the language Johnson used at Detroit. Johnson stated,

Brethren – With satisfaction I inform you that His Excellency General Amherst is well pleased to hear of your friendly behaviour toward His Majesty’s troops at their taking possession of the place last year as well as of the promises you made us of becoming our friends and allies and of **renewing the old Covenant Chain** [emphasis added] at the meeting then held here in presence of Mr. Croghan my Deputy.²¹

Johnson then delivered a belt of 12 rows. He continued,

Brethren – With this belt, in the name of his Britannick Majesty, I strengthen & **renew the antient [sic] Covenant Chain formerly [ex]isting between us** [emphasis added] that it may remain bright and lasting to the latest ages, earnestly recommending it to you to do the same and to hold fast thereby as the only means by which you may expect to become happy & flourishing people. Gave the Belt of the Covenant Chain containing 20 rows.²²

Thus, adopting Beaulieu’s logic of renewal, the Treaty of Detroit also sounds like a renewal not a “new treaty.” Beaulieu can not have it both ways, calling one the seminal treaty (1761) when the language used is similar (1764) about renewing the old covenant chain.²³

Beaulieu denies that there was one grand or ‘global’ treaty at Niagara, he insists that only the Seneca and Wendat entered into treaty with the British. However, looking at the oral tradition, it is clear that the Western Nations view the gathering at Niagara as the ‘epitomizing event’ in their history wherein they entered into treaty with the British.²⁴ This treaty with the British was encoded in two

²¹ LAC RG 10, Vol. 6, pp: 100 – 117, C-1222. Proceedings of a treaty held at Detroit by Sir William Johnson Baronet with the Sachems and warriors of the several Nations of Indians there assembled.

²² Ibid.

²³ In his book “An Ethic of Mutual Respect: The Covenant Chain and Aboriginal-Crown Relations,” philosopher Bruce Morito points out that the Odawa had entered the chain prior to 1760 but they were called Utawas and Towaganhas (and various spellings).

²⁴ Refer to the petition of the Grand Council chiefs at Garden River of September 16, 1879, asking for the restoration of the presents wherein they state, “The treaty mentioned above are belts of wampum, six feet long and six inches wide.” LAC RG 10, Vol. 2092 File 15434.

wampum belts: The 1764 Covenant Chain and the 24 Nations belt. In contrast Beaulieu explicitly states,

The presentation of the wampum belt with “1764” inscribed on it did not symbolize a new treaty, but rather the renewal and reinforcement of the alliance made in 1761 at Detroit. The record is clear on this subject, as is Johnson’s correspondence.²⁵

Johnson’s correspondence is clear - Johnson calls the Covenant Chain a Treaty. It is clear that Beaulieu sets out to diminish the oral tradition and the chiefs’ perspective of the Treaty at Niagara by using Johnson’s correspondence to his superiors in which he plans to curtail and eventually discontinue the delivery of annual presents (a part of the Treaty of Niagara, a point which Beaulieu contends). In numerous speeches Johnson makes reference to the Chain lasting forever or “lasting to the latest ages.”²⁶

In closing, it is apparent that Beaulieu recognizes aspects of the oral tradition that creates meaning and understanding for the Anishinaabeg but he seeks to distance the oral tradition from the actual event and thus remove or diminish the Anishinaabeg’s understanding of the Treaty at Niagara. To close it is apt to quote one of the leading scholars of oral tradition Julie Cruickshank,

A definition that equates oral history with archival documents reinforces the idea that what academics (historians, anthropologists, judges) write is “history” and that local practices are “data” for those official histories. It ignores arguments that equate oral tradition with historiography, the oldest form of historical practice or history making with its own rules and methods of verification. Whether the courts will be willing or able to evaluate oral tradition and oral history on its own terms (rather than as data or sources) remains to be seen.²⁷

Let it be known that the chiefs consistently called the wampum belt a treaty. Let it also be known that the considered it as sacred promises made under the watchful eye of the sun and that its terms were inviolable.

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²⁵ Beaulieu p. 18.

²⁶ LAC RG 10, Vol. 6, pp: 100 – 117, C-1222. Proceedings of a treaty held at Detroit by Sir William Johnson Baronet with the Sachems and warriors of the several Nations of Indians there assembled.

²⁷ Cruickshank 2002, p. 23

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