old men of a hundred and thirty to forty years, it is only because we are gradually adopting your manner of living, for experience is making it very plain that those of us live longest who, despising your bread, your wine, and your brandy, are content with their natural food of beaver, of moose, of waterfowl, and fish, in accord with the custom of our ancestors and of all the Gaspesian nation. Learn now, my brother, once for all, because I must open to thee my heart: there is no Indian who does not consider himself infinitely more happy and more powerful than the French.

An Indian Woman Bequeaths Her Property

The Massachusetts Bay Colony required that wills be signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses to be considered legal documents. The will of Naomai Omaush, a Wampanoag woman from Gay Head on Martha's Vineyard, demonstrates that she had embraced Christianity and acquired some European goods. It also suggests that she had adopted some of the forms of "doing business" in colonial society and with them, perhaps, some new notions about property and its transfer. The document was originally written in the Massachusett dialect of the Algonquian language.

10

NAOMAI OMAUSH

Will

1749

Know ye this all Christian people of God. I Naomai Ommaush of Gayhead know that very soon I go the way of all the earth, whence I shall not be able to return again. And now I hope, if I should die this year, I would have my sins be forgiven by the blood of my Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Translated and published in Ives Goddard and Kathleen J. Bragdon, eds., *Native Writings in Massachusett*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 1:55.

And again I know that although my body dies and has rotted (?), it shall rise again on the last day, and also my soul shall also enter where he is, on the great day of resurrection, to go to meet the Lord in heaven. And then we shall dwell with the lord forever.

And I Naomai Omaush say this before God: I willingly bequeath this property of mine to my kin. Each one shall take, after I die, what I have not yet used.

To Zachary Hossueit, the minister, I bequeath one *ohquoh*—it is straight-looking (?) (and) large—and also six pewter dishes, and also seventeen pewter spoons. [[And this]][1] And also to his wife Butthiah Hossueit I bequeath one of my dresses—whichever one she pleases she shall choose when I have died. And I say at this time, no one shall have the authority to defraud them out of the things I bequeath to them. And, witnesses, see [[m[y m]ark (and) m[y sea]l]] my mark and also my seal.

Naomai Omaush, her (X) mark and Seal (S)

Witnesses:
Jude Hossueit, his mark (X).
Buthiah Accomus, her mark (X). On July 8, 1749.

On July 8, 1749, on that date (?) I also say I bequeath to [[my broth]] my kinsman *(nuttauwatueonk)* Calab Elisha one blanket.

On July 8, 1749, on that date (?) I say that I bequeath to my kinswoman *(nuttauwatueonk)* Jeanohumun one *ohquohkoome kaskepessue* and also one of my dresses.

On July 8, 1749, on that date (?) also I bequeath to my kinsman *(nuttauwam)* Henry Amos (some of) that cloth of mine that I may then have; of the red he shall have one *penchens* because of how kind he has been to me.

On July 8, 1749, on that date (?) I bequeath to my kinswoman *(nuttauwaeh)* Ezther Henry one dress of mine of blue (?) calico; I bought it from her late mother, and she shall have it.

On July 8, 1749, on that day I bequeath to my kinswoman *(nuttauwam)* Marcy Noah one petticoat. And those other things more that I have of household goods, those I shall use as long as I live. And then if I do not use them all, you shall divide them up when I have died.

[1] Letters in brackets indicate deletions by the writer of the document; words in parentheses are the original Massachusetts terms.

My bequeathing of all this to my kin *(nuttauwamoog)* was done; I willingly do it on this date (?) before my G[o]d, the Lord Jesus Christ. [Se]e my mark and also my seal.

Naomai Omaush, her (X) mark and seal (S)

[Wi]tnesses:
[Jude] Hossueit, his mark (X).
[Buth]i[a]h Accomus, her mark (X).

Autobiography of an Indian Minister

The Mohegan Indians of Connecticut had lost huge tracts of land to English colonists by the early eighteenth century, and it had become increasingly difficult to practice their traditional economy of hunting, fishing, and gathering. Confronted with apparently insurmountable pressures on their old ways and beliefs, some sought escape from their new world by turning to alcohol. Others turned to Christianity and education as offering hope for survival. Mohegan Samson Occom (1723–1792) converted to Christianity at age sixteen, studied with Reverend Eleazar Wheelock in the 1740s, and went on to become well known as a schoolteacher and an Indian minister. He traveled to England in 1765–1768, preaching sermons to raise money for Wheelock's school. Occom's brief autobiographical sketch contains an account of his conversion during the era of the Great Awakening, the emotionally intense religious revival that swept colonial America in the 1740s. It also reveals the various occupations Occom tried in colonial society and gives vent to his complaints against what he came to see as the church's exploitation of Indian missionaries.

11

SAMSON OCCOM

A Short Narrative of My Life

1768

From my Birth till I received the Christian Religion

I was Born a Heathen and Brought up In Heathenism, till I was between 16 & 17 years of age, at a Place Calld Mohegan, in New London, Connecticut, in New England. My Parents Livd a wandering life, for did all the Indians at Mohegan, they Chiefly Depended upon Hunting, Fishing, & Fowling for their Living and had no Connection with the English, excepting to Traffic with them in their small Trifles; and they Strictly maintained and followed their Heathenish Ways, Customs & Religion, though there was Some Preaching among them. Once a Fortnight, in ye Summer Season, a Minister from New London used to come up, and the Indians to attend; not that they regarded the Christian Religion, but they had Blankets given to them every Fall of the Year and for these things they would attend and there was a Sort of School kept, when I was quite young, but I believe there never was one that ever Learnt to read any thing,—and when I was about 10 Years of age there was a man who went about among the Indian Wigwams, and wherever he Could find the Indian Children, would make them read; but the Children Used to take Care to keep out of his way;—and he used to Catch me Some times and make me Say over my Letters; and I believe I learnt Some of them. But this was Soon over too; and all this Time there was not one amongst us, that made a Profession of Christianity— —Neither did we Cultivate our Land, nor kept any Sort of Creatures except Dogs, which we used in Hunting; and we Dwelt in Wigwams. These are a Sort of Tents, Covered with Matts, made of Flags. And to this Time we were unaquainted with the English Tongue in general though there were a few, who understood a little of it.

Typescript in Baker Library Special Collections, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

From the Time of our Reformation till I left Mr. Wheelocks

When I was 16 years of age, we heard a Strange Rumor among the English, that there were Extraordinary Ministers Preaching from Place to Place and a Strange Concern among the White People. This was in the Spring of the Year. But we Saw nothing of these things, till Some Time in the Summer, when Some Ministers began to visit us and Preach the Word of God; and the Common People all Came frequently and exhorted us to the things of God, which it pleased the Lord, as I humbly hope, to Bless and accompany with Divine Influence to the Conviction and Saving Conversion of a Number of us; amongst whom I was one that was Imprest with the things we had heard. These Preachers did not only come to us, but we frequently went to their meetings and Churches. After I was awakened & converted, I went to all the meetings, I could come at; & Continued under Trouble of Mind about 6 months; at which time I began to Learn the English Letters; got me a Primer, and used to go to my English Neighbours frequently for Assistance in Reading, but went to no School. And when I was 17 years of age, I had, as I trust, a Discovery of the way of Salvation through Jesus Christ, and was enabl'd to put my trust in him alone for Life & Salvation. From this Time the Distress and Burden of my mind was removed, and I found Serenity and Pleasure of Soul, in Serving God. By this time I just began to Read in the New Testament without Spelling,—and I had a Stronger Desire Still to Learn to read the Word of God, and at the Same Time had an uncommon Pity and Compassion to my Poor Brethren According to the Flesh. I used to wish I was capable of Instructing my poor Kindred. I used to think, if I Could once Learn to Read I would Instruct the poor Children in Reading,—and used frequently to talk with our Indians Concerning Religion. This continued till I was in my 19th year: by this Time I Could Read a little in the Bible. At this Time my Poor Mother was going to Lebanon, and having had Some Knowledge of Mr. Wheelock and hearing he had a Number of English youth under his Tuition, I had a great Inclination to go to him and be with him a week or a Fortnight, and Desired my Mother to Ask Mr. Wheelock whether he would take me a little while to Instruct me in Reading. Mother did so; and when She Came Back, She Said Mr. Wheelock wanted to See me as Soon as possible. So I went up, thinking I Should be back again in a few Days; when I got up there, he received me With kindness and Compassion and in Stead of Staying a Fortnight or 3 Weeks, I Spent 4 Years with him.—After I had been with him Some Time, he began to acquaint his Friends of my being with him, and of his Intentions of Educating me, and my Circumstances. And the

good People began to give Some Assistance to Mr. Wheelock, and gave me Some old and Some New Clothes. Then he represented the Case to the Honorable Commissioners at Boston, who were Commission'd by the Honorable Society in London for Propagating the gospel among the Indians in New England and parts adjacent, and they allowed him 60 £ in old Tender, which was about 6 £ Sterling, and they Continu'd it 2 or 3 years, I can't tell exactly.—While I was at Mr. Wheelock's, I was very weakly and my Health much impaired, and at the End of 4 Years, I over Strained my Eyes to such a Degree, I Could not persue my Studies any Longer; and out of these 4 years I Lost Just about one year;—And was obliged to quit my Studies.

From the Time I left Mr. Wheelock till I went to Europe

As soon as I left Mr. Wheelock, I endeavored to find Some Employ among the Indians; went to Nahantuck,[1] thinking they may want a School Master, but they had one; then went to Narraganset, and they were Indifferent about a School, and went back to Mohegan, and heard a number of our Indians were going to Montauk, on Long Island, and I went with them, and the Indians there were very desirous to have me keep a School amongst them, and I Consented, and went back a while to Mohegan and Some time in November I went on the Island, I think it is 17 years ago last November. I agreed to keep School with them Half a Year, and left it with them to give me what they Pleased; and they took turns to Provide Food for me. I had near 30 Scholars this winter; I had an evening School too for those that could not attend the Day School—and began to Carry on their meetings, they had a Minister, one Mr. Horton,[2] the Scotch Society's Missionary; but he Spent, I think two thirds of his Time at Sheenecock, 30 Miles from Montauk. We met together 3 times for Divine Worship every Sabbath and once on every Wednesday evening. I (used) to read the Scriptures to them and used to expound upon Some particular Passages in my own Tongue. Visited the Sick and attended their Burials.—When the half year expired, they Desired me to Continue with them, which I complied with, for another half year, when I had fulfilled that, they were urgent to have me Stay Longer, So I continued amongst them till I was Married, which was about 2 years after I went there. And Continued to

[1] Niantic. In the seventeenth century, the western Niantics of southern Connecticut had been allies of the Pequots; the eastern Niantics in Rhode Island had been allies of the Narragansetts.

[2] Reverend Azariah Horton (1715–1777), a missionary to the Shinnecock Indians on Long Island.

Instruct them in the Same manner as I did before. After I was married a while, I found there was need of a Support more than I needed while I was Single,—and made my Case Known to Mr. Buell[3] and to Mr. Wheelock, and also the Needy Circumstances and the Desires of these Indians of my Continuing amongst them, and the Commissioners were so good as to grant £ 15 a year Sterling— —And I kept on in my Service as usual, yea I had additional Service; I kept School as I did before and Carried on the Religious Meetings as often as ever, and attended the Sick and their Funerals, and did what Writings they wanted, and often Sat as a Judge to reconcile and Decide their Matters Between them, and had visitors of Indians from all Quarters; and, as our Custom is, we freely Entertain all Visitors. And was fetched often from my Tribe and from others to see into their Affairs Both Religious, Temporal,—Besides my Domestic Concerns. And it Pleased the Lord to Increase my Family fast—and Soon after I was Married, Mr. Horton left these Indians and the Shenecock & after this I was (alone) and then I had the whole care of these Indians at Montauk, and visited the Shenecock Indians often. Used to set out Saturdays towards Night and come back again Mondays. I have been obliged to Set out from Home after Sun Set, and Ride 30 Miles in the Night, to Preach to these Indians. And Some Indians at Shenecock Sent their Children to my School at Montauk, I kept one of them Some Time, and had a Young Man a half year from Mohegan, a Lad from Nahantuck, who was with me almost a year; and had little or nothing for keeping them.

My Method in the School was, as Soon as the Children got together, and took their proper Seats, I Prayed with them, then began to hear them. I generally began (after some of them Could Spell and Read,) With those that were yet in their Alphabets, So around, as they were properly Seated till I got through and I obliged them to Study their Books, and to help one another. When they could not make out a hard word they Brought it to me—and I usually heard them, in the Summer Season 8 Times a Day 4 in the morning, and in ye after Noon.—In the Winter Season 6 Times a Day, As Soon as they could Spell, they were obliged to Spell when ever they wanted to go out. I concluded with Prayer; I generally heard my Evening Scholars 3 Times Round, And as they go out the School, every one, that Can Spell, is obliged to Spell a Word, and to go out Leisurely one after another. I Catechised 3 or 4 Times a Week according to the Assembly's Shout or Catechism, and

[3]Reverend Samuel Buell (1716–1798), a minister at Easthampton, Long Island.

many Times Proposed Questions of my own, and in my own Tongue. I found Difficulty with Some Children, who were Some what Dull, most of these can soon learn to Say over their Letters, they Distinguish the Sounds by the Ear, but their Eyes can't Distinguish the Letters, and the way I took to cure them was by making an Alphabet on Small bits of paper, and glued them on Small Chips of Cedar after this manner A B & C. I put these on Letters in order on a Bench then point to one Letter and bid a Child to take notice of it, and then I order the Child to fetch me the Letter from the Bench; if he Brings the Letter, it is well, if not he must go again and again till he brings ye right Letter. When they can bring any Letters this way, then I just Jumble them together, and bid them to set them in Alphabetical order, and it is a Pleasure to them; and they soon Learn their Letters this way.—I frequently Discussed or Exhorted my Scholars, in Religious matters.—My Method in our Religious Meetings was this; Sabbath Morning we Assemble together about 10 o'C and begin with Singing; we generally Sung Dr. Watt's[4] Psalms or Hymns. I distinctly read the Psalm or Hymn first, and then gave the meaning of it to them, and after that Sing, then Pray, and Sing again after Prayer. Then proceed to Read from Suitable portion of Scripture, and so Just give the plain Sense of it in Familiar Discourse and apply it to them. So continued with Prayer and Singing. In the after Noon and Evening we Proceed in the Same Manner, and so in Wednesday Evening. Some Time after Mr. Horton left these Indians, there was a remarkable revival of religion among these Indians and many were hopefully converted to the Saving knowledge of God in Jesus. It is to be observed before Mr. Horton left these Indians they had Some Prejudices infused in their minds, by Some Enthusiastical Exhorters from New England, against Mr. Horton, and many of them had left him; by this means he was Discouraged, and was disposed from these Indians. And being acquainted with the Enthusiasts in New England & the make and the Disposition of the Indians I took a mild way to reclaim them. I opposed them not openly but let them go on in their way, and whenever I had an opportunity, I would read Such pages of the Scriptures, and I thought would confound their Notions, and I would come to them with all Authority, Saying "these Saith the Lord"; and by this means, the Lord was pleased to Bless my poor Endeavours, and they were reclaimed, and Brought to hear almost any of the ministers.— —I am now to give an Account of my Circumstances and manner of Living. I Dwelt in a Wigwam, a Small

[4] Isaac Watts, the famous eighteenth-century hymn writer.

Hut with Small Poles and Covered with Matts made of Flags, and I was obligd to remove twice a Year, about 2 miles Distance, by reason of the Scarcity of wood, for in one Neck of Land they Planted their Corn, and in another, they had their wood, and I was obligd to have my Corn carted and my Hay also,—and I got my Ground Plow'd every year, which Cost me about 12 shillings an acre; and I kept a Cow and a Horse, for which I paid 21 shillings every year York currency, and went 18 miles to Mill for every Dust of meal we used in my family. I Hired or Joined with my Neighbours to go to Mill, with a Horse or ox Cart, or on Horse Back, and Some time went myself. My Family Increasing fast, and my Visitors also. I was obligd to contrive every way to Support my Family; I took all opportunities, to get Some thing to feed my Family Daily. I Planted my own Corn, Potatoes, and Beans; I used to be out hoeing my Corn Some times before Sun Rise and after my School is Dismist, and by this means I was able to raise my own Pork, for I was allowed to keep 5 Swine. Some mornings & Evenings I would be out with my Hook and Line to Catch fish, and in the Fall of Year and in the Spring, I used my gun, and fed my Family with Fowls. I Could more than pay for my Powder & Shot with Feathers. At other Times I Bound old Books for Easthampton People, made wooden Spoons and Ladles, Stocked Guns, & worked on Cedar to make Pails, (Piggins), and Churns & C. Besides all these Difficulties I met with advers Providence, I bought a Mare, had it but a little while, and she fell into the Quick Sand and Died, After a while Bought another, I kept her about half year, and she was gone, and I never have heard of nor Seen her from that Day to this; it was Supposed Some Rogue Stole her. I got another and Died with a Distemper, and last of all I Bought a Young Mare, and kept her till She had one Colt, and She broke her Leg and Died, and Presently after the Cold [Colt] Died also. In the whole I Lost 5 Horse Kind; all these Losses helped to pull me down; and by this Time I got greatly in Debt, and acquainted my Circumstances to Some of my Friends, and they Represented my Case to the Commissioners of Boston, and Interceded with them for me, and they were pleased to vote 15 £ for my Help, and Soon after Sent a Letter to my good Friend at New London, acquainting him that they had Superseded their Vote; and my Friends were so good as to represent my Needy Circumstances Still to them, and they were so good at Last, as to Vote £ 15 and Sent it, for which I am very thankful; and the Revd Mr. Buell was so kind as to write in my behalf to the gentlemen of Boston; and he told me they were much Displeased with him, and heard also once again that they blamed me for being Extravagant; I Can't Conceive how these gentlemen would have me Live. I am ready to (forgive) their Ignorance, and I

would wish they had Changed Circumstances with me but one month, that they may know, by experience what my Case really was; but I am now fully convinced, that it was not Ignorance, For I believe it can be proved to the world that these Same Gentlemen gave a young Missionary a Single man, *one Hundred Pounds* for one year, and fifty Pounds for an Interpreter, and thirty Pounds for an Introducer; so it Cost them one Hundred & Eighty Pounds in one Single Year, and they Sent too where there was no Need of a Missionary.

Now you See what difference they made between me and other missionaries; they gave me 180 Pounds for 12 years Service, which they gave for one years Services in another Mission.—In my Service (I speak like a fool, but I am Constrained) I was my own Interpreter. I was both a School master and Minister to the Indians, yea I was their Ear, Eye & Hand, as Well as Mouth. I leave it with the World, as wicked as it is, to Judge, whether I ought not to have had half as much, they gave a young man Just mentioned which would have been but £ 50 a year; and if they ought to have given me that, I am not under obligations to them, I owe them nothing at all; what can be the Reason that they used me after this manner? I can't think of any thing, but this as a Poor Indian Boy Said, Who was Bound out to an English Family, and he used to Drive Plow for a young man, and he whipt and Beat him almost every Day, and the young man found fault with him, and Complained of him to his master and the poor Boy was Called to answer for himself before his master, and he was asked, what it was he did, that he was So Complained of and beat almost every Day. He Said, he did not know, but he Supposed it was because he could not drive any better; but says he, I Drive as well as I know how; and at other Times he Beats me, because he is of a mind to beat me; but says he believes he Beats me for the most of the Time "because I am an Indian".

So I am *ready* to Say, they have used me thus, because I Can't Influence the Indians so well as other missionaries; but I can assure them I have endeavoured to teach them as well as I know how;—but I *must Say*, "I believe it is because I am a poor Indian". I Can't help that God has made me So; I did not make my self so.—

Letters of a Narragansett Family

Formerly one of the major powers in southern New England, the Narragansett Indians of Rhode Island were devastated by King Philip's War (1675–1676), during which an English army destroyed their main village. Reduced in numbers and surrounded by more and more English neighbors, they struggled to survive in the eighteenth century. The emotional intensity of the religious revival known as the Great Awakening appealed strongly to the poor and powerless Indians of Rhode Island and southern Connecticut, and most Narragansetts converted to Christianity in 1743. They established their own Narragansett Church on their reservation, with their own minister.

Several Narragansetts attended Moor's Indian Charity School, established by Eleazar Wheelock in Lebanon, Connecticut, in 1754. In 1769, the school was moved to Hanover, New Hampshire, when Wheelock founded Dartmouth College. Wheelock hoped to produce more students like Samson Occom who would serve as missionaries to their people, but the school's record in Indian education was mixed at best, and much of Wheelock's energy was diverted into fund-raising. Nonetheless, a trickle of Indian students attended the college, and many learned to read and write.

Wheelock and other teacher-missionaries often used their students' letters to promote funding. As Daniel Simon's letter illustrates, however, Indians did not write only what their teachers wanted to read. Nor were students the only Indians to write letters to teachers. Parents and relatives were very concerned about the experience of Indian youth in colonial colleges, as the first letter, written (or dictated) by the elder Sarah Simon, attests. That letter, together with the younger Sarah Simon's letter, illustrates the importance of family ties as well as the pain of separation that was a common experience for Indian students in white schools from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century.

Colonial colleges aimed to give Indian students an education as well as to instill in them skills and a work ethic that would prepare them to participate in white society and *help with the school's upkeep. Daniel Simon was one of five children sent to Wheelock's school by the widowed Sarah Simon. He entered the school in 1768 or 1769 and was the first Native American to graduate with a degree from Dartmouth College. He was licensed to preach in 1778, taught in the mission school in Stockbridge, and later served as missionary to the Indians at*

Cranbury, New Jersey. He found some fault with the allocation of energies to the various agendas at Wheelock's school, which required more work than studying.

12

SARAH SIMON

Letter to Eleazar Wheelock

1767

Charlestown y^e^ 9^th^ of October AD 1767

Dear S^r^

I've great satisfaction, in the account my daughter Sarah has given me of Your pious care of those Children which are under Your tuition. In perticular, do express most harty Thanks, for the education of my Daughter. I've a little Son that I want You shou'd receive into Your School. if You wou'd, I shou'd except it as an Inesteemable Favour. and wholy give him up to You, to be altogether under Your wise Instruction, 'till he arrives to y^e^ age of twentyone years: beging this favour only, that You wou'd at proper seasons, allow him y^e^ privelidge of visiting me.

from y^r^ very humbl^e^ Serv^t^
Sarah Simon

James Dow McCallum, ed., *The Letters of Eleazar Wheelock's Indians* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Publications, 1932), 220–21, 227, 229.

13

SARAH SIMON (THE DAUGHTER)

Letter to Eleazar Wheelock

1769

Lebanon Apral 4th 1769

Revend and Honrd Sir

as I have Receved many kind favours I desire to bag one homble requast ond that is whether the Doctor would be willing to let me go to my home if I would not be gone no longer then if I only want to Mohegin. for I wont very much to See my Mother I understand She has mate with trouble latly and She wants see me and she is not able to come to See me. and tharfore I think it my gret Duty to go and See hir.

for I donot think that she is long for this world I have no Reson to thing so. for She is very weekly and always Sick. my Parant is very near and Dear to me: and being I do not desine to Ever to go home and live with hir again, I Desire to beg that favour to go and see hir as ofen as the Doctor is willing I should for I dont want to ofand the Doctr in the least. but I feel willing to do any thing Sir that you think is bast for me.

Oh how I orto Blease and adore that grat and kind God that put it in the hands some of his Pepple to take so much Care of the poor indions nee above all the rast. it Seems to me I could go any where or do any thing if it would do any good to my poor Parishing Brethren.

So I desire to Subscrib mysilfe your

Ever Dutyfull Sarvent

Sarah Simon

14

DANIEL SIMON

Letter to Eleazar Wheelock

1771

Sept 1771

I now make bould to write to the most Reverend Doctor, when I Came frist to this School I understood that this School was for to bring up Such Indians, as was not able to bring up themselves, but the doctor is to learn them to work, but I have been to work Ever Since I have been able; and therefore if the doctor will let me follow my Studys, I Shall be thinkful, as I understood the doctor when I talked with him, that we must work as much as to pay our way; and if we Should, what good will the Charity money do the Indians; which was given to them, if we poor Indians Shall work as much as to pay for our learning, we Can go Some other pace [place] as good as here for learning, if we are ablie to work and pay for our learning and I Say now, wo unto that poor Indian; or white man that Should Ever Com to this School, with out he is rich; I write as I think, and the doctor must not get mad with me, as I am a going to tell the doctor, what I think, I intend to deal with the Doctor as honnest is Ever the doctor had a Indian, and if the doctor dont let me follow my Studys more then I have don; I must leave the School, I Cannot Speand my time here, I am old, and I must improve all the time I Can if I undertake to get learning, and if I Cannot get learning here as I understood I might; I have no business here, and I must leave the School and if the doctor will let me go home to Charles town this fall I will Strive to get Sum body to pay the doctor his money for my learning, and if I Cannot I will Com back and pay the doctor for the jorney; and I will go to Studing arithmetic this winter, and in the Spring I will go a mong the Indians if the doctor and I Can agree, and if so be I can get any body to pay for my learning I shall follow my Studes, and if I Cannot I must leave the School, and if I have a Rong understaning of this School, I am willing to acknowledge but I belive I have not and so I writ no more but your most Dutiful pupil

Daniel Simon

I Should be glad if the doctor will give an answer to this

The Iroquois Reject Wheelock's "Benevolence"

In 1772, Eleazar Wheelock sent an emissary to the Oneida country in northern New York State to learn, among other things, the Indians' attitude toward his missionaries and toward sending their children to Dartmouth College. In June 1772, Oneida headmen at the village of Kanowalohale at the site of present-day Vernon, New York, gave their answer, which was duly reported to Wheelock. That same year, Wheelock sent his son Ralph to the Onondaga council in a final effort to get the central Iroquois council to agree to the education of their youth. In both cases, the Indians' frank response reveals the widely different attitudes held by Iroquois and English societies about the teaching and treatment of children. Henceforward, Wheelock concentrated his recruiting efforts among the Indians in Canada.

15

Speech of the Oneida Headmen

1772

Kanawarohare June 5th 1772

The headmen met at Mr Kirkland's[1] house, & delivered the following answer to [Eleazar Wheelock]. . . .

Father, attend, & hear for our father the less. The occasion of our entering your house this morning is, to answer the speech delivered us the other day-evening from our great father, which was this (here repeated over the speech *verbatim*)

Father now attend; hear the result of our council—as you desired us to speak plainly & deal faithfully, so we shall do.

[1] Reverend Samuel Kirkland (1741–1808), Presbyterian missionary to the Oneidas and founder of Hamilton College in Clinton, New York.

James Dow McCallum, ed., *The Letters of Eleazar Wheelock's Indians* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Publications, 1932), 281–88.

Our minds do not advance with the great minister's proposal: indeed they are at a perfect stand. We see no way open for prosecuting his purposes.

English schools we do not approve of here, as serviceable to our spiritual interest: & almost all those who have been instructed in English are a reproach to us. This we supposed our father was long ago sufficiently appraised of.

And as to our neighbouring towns, there is not, at present, the least gleam of light—even no appearance at all which embraces such a proposal.

Our father does not know the mind of Indians: their minds are invincible: they are strongly attached to other things. We don't say to what their minds are most strongly inclined; but of this we are confident, that they are not disposed to embrace the Gospel: for here we are upon the spot, with open ears, ready to receive such intelligence.

Moreover; we are dispised by our brethren, on account of our christian profession. Time was when we were esteemed as honorable & important in the confederacy: but now we are looked upon as small things; or rather nothing at all. Now may we not well conclude that they don't favor your designs? or would they not speak well of us, instead of reproaching us for embracing this religion you are endeavoring to publish among them?

As to your expectations of a favorable answer from the Onondagas, we must desire you to cut off your hope, & not protract it to any farther length; for we know by experience that hope defered is very painful.

Father we must tell you, Your former speech there, by your son, made so little impression, & left so few marks, that we have never been able since to find any traces of it; tho' we have often discoursed with one & another upon the subject. We never conceived that the least expectation should be at all excited in our great father's mind of their acceptance of his proposal, from what past there, if he has been rightly informed.

(Then turning to Mr Kirkland they proceeded—And you father, well knew, having often heard, the result of that meeting, & we took it for granted you had rightly informed our great father, *long ago*.)

Our great father the great minister is at great trouble & expence to gospelise us Indians—& must be grieved, even pained in heart, that so many of his designs are frustrated; & so many of his attempts prove utterly abortive! To remedy this, we advise our father to consider well, & take good heed in his future endeavors—yea, let him take very good heed. Let him move slowly; very slowly.—Let him examine thoroughly & critically in the minds & state of the Indians, in whatever place he may

design any future mission. We pity him on account of his great distance from the Indian country.—

How often has he sent, this great distance, with high expectations of success, when there has not been the least encouraging appearance among us! And so his missions have turned out a mere sham, & all in vain! Why, father, we are here upon the spot, within hearing of what passes through the whole house of our confederacy; if we had ever heard anything encouraging, from any quarter of our neighbourhood, with respect to the gospel's moveing forward, we should have instantly informed you. And here are those who are commissioned more immediately for that purpose.

As to what we understand of your son's mission to Onondaga, & their answer, we lords beg to refer you to those who have attended your son in his journey there; as they undoubtedly may be more perfectly acquainted with the whole transactions, on both sides; & also inform what past there. Here sits one, *Thomas* by name, who well knows the whole affair from first to last.

Whenever we hear of any place in our neighbourhood, we shall readily inform our father the great minister, that he may not send any more in vain at this great distance.

We would again desire that our father's long deferd expectations from Onondaga may pain him no more—& hope he will take good heed & well digest his future missions. Let him not send again without sufficient information & good encouragement: because some Indians are not wise, & have thought they must too hastily become religious, before they have time to make their choice, & duly considered the nature of the offers made them.

Father, agreeable to your desire we have thus spoke our minds freely & with fidelity.—

16

Speech of the Onondaga Council

1772

Brother, we heartily thank you that we now understand the whole of your message, as you are come with the word of God.

You have spoke exceeding well! Very *sweet* words indeed, as comeing from the tongue, from when we perceive you have spoke!

But brother, do you think we are altogether ignorant of your methods of instruction? (Then takeing & shakeing him by the shoulder said) Why, brother, you are deceiveing yourself! We understand not only your speech, but your *manner* of teaching Indian. We understand affairs that are transacted at a great distance to the westward—they are all brought here; this is our centering council-house: just so well am I acquainted with your deportment. I view all your conduct as just by, under my eyes. Take care brother!—In the first place, correct yourself. Learn yourself to understand the word of God, before you undertake to teach & govern others: for when you have come to understand it yourself, perhaps some of our children will like to make trial of your instructions. For the present brother, I shall watch your future conduct. You have spoke *exceeding* well, even to our *surprise*, that our children should become *wise in all things* by your instructions, & treated as *children* at your house, & not *servants!*

Brother, take care—you were too hasty, & strong in your manner of speaking, before the children & boys have any knowledge of your language.

Why, brother, if another hears my dog barking, or having hold of a creature, & bids him get out, & perhaps he don't obey him immediately, not understanding the voice; upon which the stranger catches up a club & malls my dog—I shall resent it because he is my dog. Brother, I love my dog. What do you think of children then in the like case? . . .

Brother, you must learn of the French ministers if you would understand, & know how to treat Indians. They don't speak roughly; nor do they for every little mistake take up a club & flog them. It seems to us that they teach the word of God—they are very charitable—& can't see those they instruct *naked* or *hungry*. . . .

Brother, possess your mind in peace. We will take into consideration the message you have brought us:—But our people must assemble first.

As the word of God is of such vast importance, our brethern the *outward* door, the *Senecas,* must be informed. When they speak their minds, you shall hear ours; if *they* embrace your message, *we* shall undoubtedly.

Neither our brethren the *Mohawks,* nor the *Onoidas* did tell us when they began to embrace your religion. But we are the central-council-house, & can't determine without the voice of all our distant brethren.

A Delaware "Mouthpiece"

Joseph Pepee, a Christian Delaware from New Jersey, served as interpreter for missionary David McClure during McClure's travels to the Delaware towns in the Ohio country in 1772. Pepee not only translated for McClure but also acted as the medium through which McClure responded to doubting Indians. One of the Delawares objected to conversion because the Christians he knew were not good role models. They were, he said, "worse, or more wicked than we are, and we think it better to be such as we are than such as they are." McClure gave Pepee instructions about how he should answer, "knowing him capable of it," and Pepee "enlarged with great zeal and ability." McClure recorded the gist of the talk, but how much of it was Pepee and how much McClure is hard to say. McClure's words give an accurate account of the decline in Indian fortunes as Europeans increased in number, but it is questionable how many of the Indian listeners shared the McClure/Pepee interpretation of the cause of that decline.

17

JOSEPH PEPEE

Response to the Unconverted Delawares

1772

The white people, whom you are acquainted with, (meaning the traders) are no Christians; they do not know or do the things which God has told them in the Bible. No, Christians will not receive them into their society. If you want to see christians you must go to Philadelphia. There you will see good people, who love the word of the Great God, and mind it. . . .

We remember, . . . that our fathers told us, how numerous the Indians were in their days, & in the days of their fathers. Great towns of Indians were all along the sea shore, and on the Rivers, and now, if you travel

Franklin B. Dexter, ed., *Diary of David McClure* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1899), 81–82.

through that country, you will scarcely see an Indian; but you will see great and flourishing towns of white people, who possess the land of our fathers. And we are cut off, and fall back upon these distant rivers, and are reduced to a small number. The white people increase, and we Indians decrease. I can tell you, my countrymen, the reason of this. The white people worship the true God, and please him, and God blesses and prospers them. We and our fathers worshiped Devils, or them that are no Gods, and therefore God frowns upon us. And if you continue ignorant of him, when you have opportunity to know God and worship him, he will cut you off, & give this good country to a people that shall serve him. And if it shall be asked what has become of the Indians that lived here? none will be able to tell. You will be cut off, and your children as a great many powerful Indian nations have been, and none of them are left.

"The White Woman of the Genesee"

Accurate information about and viewpoints from Native American women in colonial times are extremely scarce, and historians usually have tried to reconstruct the experiences of Indian women through words written by European men. One of the few exceptions is the life story of Mary Jemison, a white woman who was captured and adopted by the Senecas at about age fifteen in 1758. The Iroquois traditionally adopted captives into their society to fill the place of deceased relatives. Mary Jemison married an Indian husband and raised a family. In time and in cultural allegiance she became a Seneca, sharing fully the lives of eighteenth-century Seneca women. She lived most of her life in the Genesee country of western New York, the Seneca heartland, and became known as the "white woman of the Genesee." In her old age, she dictated her story. Though the narrative of her life is flawed by the intrusive influence of her nineteenth-century writer, it nevertheless provides us with a rare opportunity to read the words of a woman who was living in Indian country in times of dramatic change.

Indian warriors took hundreds of colonists captive during the early wars in North America. Some of the captives were killed, some were ritually tortured, some were ransomed, and some escaped or were otherwise liberated. Many, however, lived the rest of their lives in Indian villages. Captive children sometimes grew up thinking they were Indians. Older

captives often built new lives, marrying into Indian society and raising children as the memories of their former life faded. Contrary to English colonial propaganda and Hollywood stereotypes, Indians did not always subject their captives to cruel treatment. Indeed, Indian war parties regularly treated with kindness prisoners whom they expected to adopt, especially women and children. Once adopted and accepted into Indian society, many captives refused the opportunity to return home, preferring life with their new families. Many women appear to have found life in an Indian community more rewarding than the isolation and hard work that was the common lot of a wife on the colonial frontier.[1]

These extracts from the autobiography of Mary Jemison give insights into the ways in which—by adoption, acceptance, kind treatment, and family ties—one woman came to be a "white Indian." After the American Revolution, Mary Jemison had the chance to return to white society but refused. By the time she died, she had had two husbands (one a Delaware, the other a Seneca), she had borne eight children (only three of whom survived her), and she had thirty-nine grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren. Jemison is still a prominent name among the Senecas.

18

MARY JEMISON

A Narrative of Her Life

1824

At night we arrived at a small Seneca Indian town, at the mouth of a small river, that was called by the Indians, in the Seneca language, Shenan-jee, where the two Squaws to whom I belonged resided. There we landed, and the Indians went on; which was the last I ever saw of them.

[1]The literature on Indian captivities is extensive. Ian K. Steele, *Setting All the Captives Free: Capture, Adjustment, and Recollection in Allegheny Country* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2013), provides a comprehensive study of the subject in the area and era that Mary Jemison was taken captive.

James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (1824 and various editions).

Having made fast to the shore, the Squaws left me in the canoe while they went to their wigwam or house in the town, and returned with a suit of Indian clothing, all new, and very clean and nice. My clothes, though whole and good when I was taken, were now torn in pieces, so that I was almost naked. They first undressed me and threw my rags into the river; then washed me clean and dressed me in the new suit they had just brought, in complete Indian style; and then led me home and seated me in the center of their wigwam.

I had been in that situation but a few minutes, before all the Squaws in the town came in to see me. I was soon surrounded by them, and they immediately set up a most dismal howling, crying bitterly, and wringing their hands in all the agonies of grief for a deceased relative.

Their tears flowed freely, and they exhibited all the signs of real mourning. At the commencement of this scene, one of their number began, in a voice somewhat between speaking and singing, to recite some words to the following purport, and continued the recitation till the ceremony was ended; the company at the same time varying the appearance of their countenances, gestures and tone of voice, so as to correspond with the sentiments expressed by their leader:

"Oh our brother! Alas! He is dead—he has gone; he will never return! Friendless he died on the field of the slain, where his bones are yet lying unburied! Oh, who will not mourn his sad fate? No tears dropped around him; oh, no! No tears of his sisters were there! He fell in his prime, when his arm was most needed to keep us from danger! Alas! he has gone! and left us in sorrow, his loss to bewail: Oh where is his spirit? His spirit went naked, and hungry it wanders, and thirsty and wounded it groans to return! Oh helpless and wretched, our brother has gone! No blanket nor food to nourish and warm him; nor candles to light him, nor weapons of war:—Oh, none of those comforts had he! But well we remember his deeds!—The deer he could take on the chase! The panther shrunk back at the sight of his strength! His enemies fell at his feet! He was brave and courageous in war! As the fawn he was harmless: his friendship was ardent: his temper was gentle: his pity was great! Oh! our friend, our companion is dead! Our brother, our brother, alas! he is gone! But why do we grieve for his loss? In the strength of a warrior, undaunted he left us, to fight by the side of the Chiefs! His war-whoop was shrill! His rifle well aimed laid his enemies low: his tomahawk drank of their blood: and his knife flayed their scalps while yet covered with gore! And why do we mourn? Though he fell on the field of the slain, with glory he fell, and his spirit went up to the land of his fathers in war! Then why do we mourn? With transports of joy they received him, and

fed him, and clothed him, and welcomed him there! Oh friends, he is happy; then dry up your tears! His spirit has seen our distress, and sent us a helper whom with pleasure we greet. Dickewamis has come: then let us receive her with joy! She is handsome and pleasant! Oh! she is our sister, and gladly we welcome her here. In the place of our brother she stands in our tribe. With care we will guard her from trouble; and may she be happy till her spirit shall leave us."

In the course of that ceremony, from mourning they became serene—joy sparkled in their countenances, and they seemed to rejoice over me as over a long lost child. I was made welcome amongst them as a sister to the two Squaws before mentioned, and was called Dickewamis; which being interpreted, signifies a pretty girl, a handsome girl, or a pleasant, good thing. That is the name by which I have ever since been called by the Indians.

I afterwards learned that the ceremony I at that time passed through, was that of adoption. The two squaws had lost a brother in Washington's war, sometime in the year before, and in consequence of his death went up to Fort Pitt, on the day on which I arrived there, in order to receive a prisoner or an enemy's scalp, to supply their loss.

It is a custom of the Indians, when one of their number is slain or taken prisoner in battle, to give to the nearest relative to the dead or absent, a prisoner, if they have chanced to take one, and if not, to give him the scalp of an enemy. On the return of the Indians from conquest, which is always announced by peculiar shoutings, demonstrations of joy, and the exhibition of some trophy of victory, the mourners come forward and make their claims. If they receive a prisoner, it is at their option either to satiate their vengeance by taking his life in the most cruel manner they can conceive of; or, to receive and adopt him into the family, in the place of him whom they have lost. All the prisoners that are taken in battle and carried to the encampment or town by the Indians, are given to the bereaved families, till their number is made good. And unless the mourners have but just received the news of their bereavement, and are under the operation of a paroxysm of grief, anger and revenge; or, unless the prisoner is very old, sickly, or homely, they generally save him, and treat him kindly. But if their mental wound is fresh, their loss so great that they deem it irreparable, or if their prisoner or prisoners do not meet their approbation, no torture, let it be ever so cruel, seems sufficient to make them satisfaction. It is family, and not national, sacrifices amongst the Indians, that has given them an indelible stamp as barbarians, and identified their character with the idea which is generally formed of unfeeling ferocity, and the most abandoned cruelty.

It was my happy lot to be accepted for adoption; and at the time of the ceremony I was received by the two squaws, to supply the place of their brother in the family; and I was ever considered and treated by them as a real sister, the same as though I had been born of their mother.

During my adoption, I sat motionless, nearly terrified to death at the appearance and actions of the company, expecting every moment to feel their vengeance, and suffer death on the spot. I was, however, happily disappointed, when at the close of the ceremony the company retired, and my sisters went about employing every means for my consolation and comfort.

Being now settled and provided with a home, I was employed in nursing the children, and doing light work about the house. Occasionally I was sent out with the Indian hunters, when they went but a short distance, to help them carry their game. My situation was easy; I had no particular hardships to endure. But still, the recollection of my parents, my brothers and sisters, my home, and my own captivity, destroyed my happiness, and made me constantly solitary, lonesome and gloomy.

My sisters would not allow me to speak English in their hearing; but remembering the charge that my dear mother gave me at the time I left her, whenever I chanced to be alone I made a business of repeating my prayer, catechism, or something I had learned in order that I might not forget my own language. By practising in that way I retained it till I came to Genesee flats, where I soon became acquainted with English people with whom I have been almost daily in the habit of conversing.

My sisters were diligent in teaching me their language; and to their great satisfaction I soon learned so that I could understand it readily, and speak it fluently. I was very fortunate in falling into their hands; for they were kind good natured women; peaceable and mild in their dispositions; temperate and decent in their habits, and very tender and gentle towards me. I have great reason to respect them, though they have been dead a great number of years.

The town where they lived was pleasantly situated on the Ohio, at the mouth of the Shenanjee: the land produced good corn; the woods furnished a plenty of game, and the waters abounded with fish. Another river emptied itself into the Ohio, directly opposite the mouth of the Shenanjee. We spent the summer at that place, where we planted, hoed, and harvested a large crop of corn, of an excellent quality.

I had then been with the Indians four summers and four winters, and had become so far accustomed to their mode of living, habits and dispositions, that my anxiety to get away, to be set at liberty, and leave them, had almost subsided. With them was my home; my family was