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Fri, Sep 15, 2017 at 2:30 PM

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Response Summary:

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College of enrollment

Arts and Sciences

Major field of study

History

Faculty advisor name

Michelle LeMaster

Do you currently have a university assistantship or fellowship? If yes, choose the correct box below.

Graduate assistant

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Choose the type of activity

Presentation at Conference

Title

"Amended Instructions from the Master of Life: The Malleable Politics of Pan-Indian Revitalization, 1765."

Location and Dates of Program/Conference

Annual Meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Oct 12-14, 2017

Abstract Please provide a 3 - 5 sentence abstract (no more than 250 words) that clearly describes what is proposed and how the proposed experience will enhance the applicant's education significantly. Please note: This abstract must be suitable for use in a media release if the proposed activity is funded.

At this year's annual meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, I will be presenting my paper titled, "Amended Instructions from the Master of Life: The Malleable Politics of Pan-Indian Revitalization, 1765." Within the paper, I explore the ways that particular pan-Indian prophesies originally used to unite diverse Indian nations in a common cause were transformed and used by the Lenni Lenape to gain leverage over other Indian groups. This paper and its argument is a crucial component of my larger dissertation research that focuses on the complexities of intercultural diplomacy.

Detailed proposal of research/scholarly work In no more than 1000 words, describe the objectives and approach of your proposed research activity. Make clear how it relates to your immediate and long-term doctoral goals. Include a time-line for preparing for and completing the proposed activity.

In my own research, I employ microhistorical methods to demonstrate how larger models and arguments fail to explain local contingencies within the diplomatic landscape of the eighteenth-century trans-Appalachian West. Previous historians have made diverse arguments about how and why the 1760s specifically served as a turning point in the history of discourses of race, the rise of pan-Indianism, imperial reorganization, or the formation of a nascent American identity. Instead, my research takes a microscopic look at George Croghan's diplomatic mission into the interior of the continent in 1765 and in the process demonstrates how larger arguments cannot satisfactorily explain this historical moment when taken on its own terms.

The details of Croghan's mission are well known to historians of British North American colonialism, Native American history, and intercultural diplomacy. Croghan was tasked with securing peace with the loosely confederated Indian nations that followed the Odawa military leader Pontiac in an armed resistance against British imperial rule west of the Appalachian Mountains. Pontiac himself employed the visions of the Lenni Lenape prophet Neolin to inspire unity among the members of the confederation. While Pontiac's War failed in its ultimate goal—the expulsion of the British west of the Appalachians—Pontiac and other Indian diplomats did succeed in forcing concessions from the British in return for an end to hostilities. Yet while many Indian nations cohered around a common cause, Croghan's actions were seen with suspicion by colonists who questioned Croghan's loyalty and his motives for such intimate relationships with Indians. Groups of colonists had also united around a common enemy, Indians, and Croghan was seen as a traitor because of his willingness to negotiate with them.

As such, this mission has served as compelling evidence in historical arguments about the emergence of discourses that saw North America divided between red and white people, as opposed to national, regional, and religious identities such as Shawnee, French, Virginian, Seneca, or Quaker. Similarly, the implementation of the Proclamation Line of 1763—in which the land east of the Appalachians Mountains was reserved for colonial settlement while land to the West was reserved for Indian nations—is seen as a dramatic imperial reorganization in response to Pontiac's War. Moreover, this reorganization was among the grievances cited by Americans as they declared their independence from Great Britain, arguing that the land reserved for Indians should actually be available for white settlement.

However, most importantly for the purpose of the paper I will be presenting in Winnipeg, Pontiac's use of the prophet Neolin's vision is a crucial piece of evidence in arguments concerning the emergence of a new cosmology and political discourse among Indians. Whereas Indian nations had long understood that the geographies that they occupied were created for them, these creations were understood nationally. As such, Cherokee land was created for the Cherokee. Haudenosaunee land was created for the Haudenosaunee. However, Neolin's vision preached a new message in which Indian land was made and meant for Indians, and white land was made for white people. Therefore, Indians, regardless of nationality were to unite in resistance against white colonization, a call to action to which Pontiac responded.

Yet, when reading the records of George Croghan's mission, a clear-cut narrative in which national identities were replaced by racial identities becomes fuzzier. Specifically, despite the calls for unity previously employed by Pontiac, when Lenni Lenape diplomats arrived to negotiate they used the visions of Neolin to gain political advantage over other Indian nations. Specifically, Lenni Lenape diplomats argued that they had received a new vision which instructed them to negotiate with Pennsylvania's Quakers, a diplomatic approach that I argue was meant to circumvent the Iroquois's privileged position as the closest allies of Britain's Indian Department. Whereas Neolin's vision originally implored all Indians to work together and resist all white encroachment, this amended vision instructed the Lenni Lenape to negotiate alone with a particular group of colonists.

Therefore, this particular paper functions as a single piece in my larger argument about the complicated, locally contingent diplomatic landscape that Croghan, Pontiac, and other British, colonial, and indigenous diplomats navigated. Furthermore, while this paper will be an integral piece of my dissertation, I also hope to convert it into an article. This will be my first opportunity to present my argument in front of the leading scholars in my field, and therefore their feedback will be invaluable for me as I explore which parts of my argument are convincing and which need more work. This feedback will also give me concrete direction for further research, allowing me to be more focused in my efforts while preserving future resources.

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Funds secured from other sources. Please list each source and the amount below. Enter numbers only, no currency signs.

The Gipson Institute for Eighteenth-Century Studies - 500

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