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“Caughnawaga Indians were taking part in one of the most dramatic episodes of history…”: Manufacturing Mohawk Nationalism on the Nile Expedition of 1884 – 1885

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“Caughnawaga Indians were taking part in one of the most dramatic episodes of history…”: Manufacturing Mohawk Nationalism on the Nile Expedition of 1884 – 1885

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ABSTRACT

In 1884 to 1885, a British military endeavour was launched to relieve General Charles Gordon at Khartoum, Sudan, who was besieged by Islamic insurgents. The Nile Expedition, as it came to be known, included approximately four hundred Canadian civilians employed to transport troops and supplies down the Nile River. Through the participation of eighty Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) men, the Nile Expedition became a site where Indigenousness was performed and negotiated, and would influence relations between the Mohawks and white settler society. This was done through the development of Mohawk nationalism, which strived for a distinct Mohawk identity, culture and political autonomy. The perspective of two Mohawks, Louis Jackson and James Deer, demonstrate their Indigenous Mohawk identity and through the representation of their experiences in written first-hand accounts. The two would also use the Nile Expedition after their return to Canada in their careers to advocate for change in white settler society.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> By joining the Nile Expedition, these Caughnawaga Indians were taking part in one of the most dramatic episodes of history. The Sudan was in upheaval. Moslem fanatic, proclaiming himself the Mahdi (the Moslem Messiah), had led a powerful uprising against the Egyptians… The detachment of Caughnawagas was led by Louis Jackson, who patriotically abandoned his ripened harvest on the reservation to take this command. The journey up the Nile was a severe test even for the skill of the Iroquois. Each of the five cataracts presented different hazards. Yet all were mastered.
>
> - Edgar Andrew Collard, *The Gazette,* December 22, 1984.[1]

On October 28, 1884, a group of Kahnawake Mohawks became the first Indigenous people of North America to sail the Nile River in Egypt. Mohawks were present in Egypt to assist the British Army in the relief of General Charles Gordon at Khartoum, which required Indigenous sailing and navigational skill. The Nile Expedition, as the relief expedition came to be known, was a cooperative effort between Canada and Britain, as approximately four hundred Canadians were recruited to navigate the boats down the Nile. The boats used were Canadian by design; flat bottom Mackinaw boats used by fur traders and inspired by Indigenous canoes, and it was important to Wolseley that Canadians be the one to operate them. This momentous occasion and the subsequent expedition up the Nile marked an important moment in Canadian settler relations with Indigenous people and the formation of Indigenous identity by those who participated. Louis Jackson and James Deer, two Kahnawake Mohawks on the Nile Expedition, used

[1] Edgar Andrew Collard, "From Caughnawaga to the river Nile," *The Gazette,* December 22, 1984.

the Nile Expedition to negotiate Indigenousness and their Mohawk identity while facing colonial institutions.

During the summer of 1884, Canadian civilians were recruited to sail the British Army up the Nile to relieve Gordon due to their reputation as skilled boatmen. Voyageurs of the Canadian fur trade were known globally for their skills navigating Canadian rivers; relief expedition organizer General Garnet Wolseley specifically requested voyageurs join them in Egypt.[2] Recruitment from cities and reserves in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec resulted in a cosmopolitan group representing the Canadian frontier, with French, English, and Haudenosaunee languages being spoken among them. The Canadians, who were given the pseudonym "Nile Voyageurs," left Canada on September 19, 1884 and did not return until March 3, 1885.[3] Upon their arrival in Canada, they were some of Canada's earliest war heroes.

Of the four hundred Canadians that enlisted approximately eighty-four were Indigenous Canadians who were recruited from various Indian reserves.[4] Most were members of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk)[5], a Haudenosaunee nation whose territory

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[2] Lord Derby to Lord Lansdowne, telegram, August 20, 1884. At this time, the voyageurs of the fur trade had declined and were considered extinct, having left the fur trade for more profitable work on railways and lumber yards. C.P. Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs 1884-1885: The Canadian Contingent in the Gordon Relief Expedition* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1959), 8, 55. For more about fur trade voyageurs, see also: Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the Northern American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

[3] Some Nile Voyageurs stayed in Egypt on an extended contract, separate from the Nile Expedition including some Indigenous Canadians. Jackson and Deer would return home after the initial contract term was concluded in February. Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 13, 32.

[4] "Indigenous" will be used in place of "Indian" but will remain unchanged when citing archival sources.

[5] "Mohawk" translates to "man-eaters" in Algonquin and is sometimes seen as a derogatory term. Because the Kanien'kehá:ka people have reclaimed the term Mohawk as an identity, that will be used to refer to them. Laurie Edwards, "Mohawk," in *U*X*L Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*. *Encyclopedia.com*. Accessed October 4, 2022. https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/mohawk-0

ranged from Ottawa and Montreal to upstate New York. Sixty of the Indigenous men were Mohawks, many from Kahnawake,[6] Akwesasne, St. Regis, and other Mohawk territories. Two Kahnawake Mohawk Nile Voyageurs wrote about and published their experiences in Egypt on the Nile Expedition, incorporating their local culture and traditions. Louis Jackson's *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* and James Deer's *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* were both published in 1885 and detail their experiences on the Nile Expedition.[7] Jackson and Deer represented their experiences abroad as Mohawks, with Mohawk influences, and these works would be used during their lives and careers to advance Mohawk ideas.

Both Jackson and Deer went on to prolific careers in the public as band leaders, entertainers, and Mohawk activists. In the late-nineteenth century, Indigenous rights and identities were being undermined by colonial institutions in Canada and the United States (which occupy Mohawk territory), with Indigenous inequality being codified through legislation such as the Indian Act of 1876 and the Indian Appropriation Acts. Such legislation aimed to forcibly assimilate Indigenous groups into hegemonic white settler society through the erasure of Indigenous cultures and practices. Jackson and Deer saw Mohawks on the Nile Expedition as a formative moment in Mohawk history and a means to resist forced assimilation practices. The Nile Expedition was used by Louis Jackson and James Deer to promote Mohawk nationalism, the drive for political autonomy and

[6] Historically spelled as "Caughnawaga," Kahnawake is the contemporary name of the Kahnawake Indian Reserve No. 14 and will be the preferred term where applicable.
[7] The full title of Louis Jackson's book is *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt: A Narrative of What Was Seen and Accomplished by the Contingent of North American Indian Voyageurs Who Led the British Boat Expedition for the Relief of Khartoum up the Cataracts of the Nile* (Montreal: W. Drysdale & Co., 1885)

cultural revitalization, through their published first-hand accounts and in their lives post-Expedition.

The Nile Expedition – Organization and Operation

The organization of the Nile Expedition and recruitment of Canadian Nile Voyageurs was the proposed solution to the siege and isolation of General Charles Gordon at Khartoum, Sudan. Gordon was the acting Governor-General of Sudan in British controlled Egypt and facing a nationalist Islamic uprising led by the Mahdi, Ahmad bin Abd Allah.[8] In March 1884, Mahdist forces began sieging Khartoum and after capturing Berber in May they successfully isolated Gordon and Khartoum. The British government had no intentions of mounting a relief expedition to save Gordon, but they were pressured by the British public, as Gordon was a popular figure in Britain.[9] Acquiescing to public pressure, the British government began organizing a relief expedition and looked to Canada for a critical resource, boatmen.

The organizer of the Nile Expedition, General Garnet Wolseley, recruited Canadian boatmen for two important reasons. First, Wolseley felt that imported boatmen were more trustworthy to transport the British Army than Egyptians and Sudanese. Because the Mahdist Uprising as a local nationalist movement, local boatmen could have

[8] At the time, Sudan was an Egyptian territory and because Egypt was controlled by the British, British influence extended to Sudan. The Mahdist Uprising was a result of local frustration to changes under British control. For more, see P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881 – 1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
[9] Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 3. Some historians argue that the Nile Expedition from its inception was mismanaged and doomed to be a failure, only being executed to appease critics. See, Mike Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire: Wolseley's Failed Campaign to Save Gordon and Khartoum* (London: Frontline Books, 2013).

less incentive to aid in its suppression and work alongside the occupiers of their country.[10] Therefore, it was important that the British Army find competent boatmen among subjects of the British Empire that had no affiliation with local affairs.

The second reason Wolseley preferred Canadian boatmen was because of his familiarity with them and their reputation as exceptionally skilled navigators. Between the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, Canadians of the fur trade gained a reputation for their skills shooting canoes along rivers, transporting furs and trade goods along trade posts from Montreal to western Canada. and were considered some of the best boatmen in the world. The world viewed voyageurs as "singing, laughing, leaping over waterfalls, and paddling faster than speeding arrows" and loyal to their employers.[11] In 1870, Wolseley used the reputation and skills of voyageurs to execute an expedition to Manitoba.[12] Its success would later be used to model the Nile Expedition and explains why Wolseley turned to Canadian voyageurs for the task of navigating the Nile River.

The operation of the Nile Expedition was to be conducted in three parts: transport from Alexandria to Wady Halfa, navigate the cataracts of the Nile, and then liberate Khartoum. The transport between Alexandria to Wady Halfa was the easiest portion of the Nile Expedition; both the British Army and the Nile Voyageurs were transported by a steamboat flotilla owned by Thomas Cook and at Wady Halfa they were met with the

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[10] Anthony Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs: Recognition of Canada's Role in the Empire, 1884-1885," Ph.D diss., (Carleton University, 2012), 323.
[11] Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 2, 4. The Nile Voyageurs received their pseudonym based on the reputation of these historic fur traders.
[12] Donald F. Spankie, "The Canadian Connection," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Vol. 65, No. 264 (Winter 1987), 223. The "Wolseley Expedition" was a response to the Red River Rebellion under Louis Riel, which resulted in the capture of Fort Garry and the suppression of Riel's rebellion.

whalers that would take them the rest of the way.[13] The trip took approximately three weeks from the Nile Voyageurs' arrival in Egypt, and they landed at Wady Halfa on October 26th.

The second portion of the Nile Expedition was where the Nile Voyageurs would be fundamental to the operation. From Wady Halfa, mounted troops of the British Army would march along the Nile, but the infantry and other units would be transported in whalers by the Nile Voyageurs.[14] Between Wady Halfa and Khartoum were several cataracts, shallow waters with rocks breaking the surface which made navigation difficult and dangerous. It was the responsibility of the Nile Voyageurs to successfully navigate these waters to maintain the advance to Khartoum. The Nile Voyageurs would alternate between sailing (if weather and river conditions permitted) and paddling the whalers, avoiding rocks, currents, and other dangerous obstacles along the way.

The work of the Nile Voyageurs depended on both cooperation from British soldiers, Egyptian soldiers, and Dongolese labourers, all who acted as crew members to the Nile Voyageurs. In the whalers, there were usually six rows of crew members, all who acted under the instruction of the Nile Voyageurs who operated the bow and stern.[15] The most dangerous part was at the rapids of the cataracts, where the crew would go ashore to haul the whalers while the Canadians navigated the boats. Louis Jackson describes the process as:

> At a cataract the crew would go ashore, save two, a voyageur in the stern to steer and another in the bow to fend off rocks, or in case of need, give one swift, severing hatchet-stroke on the hauling rope… now they are adrift in the cataract, and must shoot down unknown rapids, chancing

[13] Adrian Preston, *In relief of Gordon: Lord Wolseley's campaign journal of the Khartoum Relief Expedition, 1884-1885* (London: Hutchinson & Co. LTD, 1967), xxxiii.
[14] Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 17.
[15] Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs," 335 – 336.

> everything, swinging into shore as soon as may be with the help of paddle and sail.[16]

It was during this process that most Canadians lost their lives, because only the Nile Voyageurs were capable of successful navigating the Nile cataracts and rapids.

This stretch of the Nile Expedition was expected to continue until reaching Khartoum, where the British Army would rescue Gordon. Instead, Khartoum fell and Gordon was killed on January 26th with the mounted reinforcements only two days away.[17] Many Nile Voyageurs would return to Canada after the death of Gordon, but some remained on extended contracts, and all were regarded as Canadian heroes. But, among the Nile Voyageurs, it was said that "there were some excellent men amongst them, and more particularly the Indians" were the most successful and competent boatmen.[18] Most of these successful Indigenous boatmen were Mohawks from Kahnawake.

Historical and Political Context of Kahnawake

Mohawks settled in Kahnawake and the surrounding area of Montreal during the late-seventeenth century, and by 1667 Mohawks had established a community along the St. Lawrence River.[19] Mohawk settlement was the result of interactions with colonial settlers and forced adaptation to European presence in Canada. The Mohawks developed a

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[16] Cleveland Moffett, *Careers of Danger and Daring* (New York: The Century Co., 1913),166 – 167.
[17] Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 36.
[18] Charles Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns, 1882 to 1885* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1900), 316.
[19] David Blanchard, "...To the Other Side of the Sky: Catholicism at Kahnawake, 1667 - 1700," *Anthropologica* Vol. 24 No. 1 (1982), 88.

relationship with French settlers, and it was French settlers that influenced Mohawk movement to Kahnawake. The relationships between Mohawks and European settlers during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries dictated how Mohawks adapted to change and explains the emergence of a unique Kahnawake cultural and political structure by the time of the Nile Expedition. Kahnawake was defined by the ability of Mohawks to syncretize European practices to make them compatible with traditional Haudenosaunee practices while still retaining a distinct identity and strengthening their economic and political position.

Kahnawake was chosen as a settlement by the Mohawks due to its strategic geographic location. Migration northwards was seen as advantageous, and "trade and Catholicism" were the driving forces of Mohawk settlement.[20] Kahnawake was located between French and British colonial territories and allowed Mohawks to participate in the burgeoning fur trade. Because French and British colonists around Montreal were engaged in conflicts and power struggles, Kahnawake "expanded [Mohawk's] sphere of political influence and dominance" by positioning them to act as a mediary in fur trade between the two colonial powers.[21] Settlers' geographic access to Mohawks as traders and labourers made Mohawks active participants in local economies, and it set a precedent for Mohawks to be used for their skills in the labour market. During the height of the fur trade, Mohawks became renowned for their skills as river boatmen and workers along the trading posts of the St. Lawrence River. The hard-working reputation Mohawks earned contributed to their recruitment on the Nile Expedition two centuries later and as

[20] Gerald R. Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 44.
[21] Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*, 30.

ironworking "Skywalkers" building New York City.[22] Settling in Kahnawake allowed Mohawks to participate in local economies, but also to maintain close ties with their European allies, Jesuit missionaries.

Contact with Jesuit missionaries and conversion to Christianity created a distinct syncretic Mohawk culture in Kahnawake. Mohawks, in response to contact and conversion, developed a method of "indigenization" which reconciled traditional Haudenosaunee practices with Christianity, creating a Mohawk Christian culture.[23] Mohawks at Kahnawake became renowned for their faith and were given the pseudonym "Praying Indians" for their performance of Christian rituals.[24] The syncretization of Mohawk practices within a Christian framework and the growth of a Mohawk Christian identity was possible due to the settlement of Kahnawake and geopolitical isolation of Mohawks from the Haudenosaunee.

Mohawk movement to Kahnawake and away from the Haudenosaunee meant that they were isolated from their traditional political sphere, the Rotinonhsiónni (Iroquois) Confederacy. The Iroquois Confederacy was structured "on the clan system of the five nations," with the Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Secena, and Mohawk ruling by

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[22] Richard Hill, *Skywalkers : a history of Indian ironworkers* (Brantford: Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre, 1987), 26. Mohawks established a "Little Caughnawaga" and Mohawk community in New York City through their work as Skywalkers. For more, see David Weitzman, *Skywalkers : Mohawk ironworkers build the city* (New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2010).

[23] Susan Neyland, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 18. Neyland defines indigenization as "the influence of Native cultural practices, interpretations, and behaviours upon Christianity." For more on Mohawks and religious syncretism, see Blanchard, "…To the Other Side of the Sky."

[24] Arthur J. Ray, *An Illustrated history of Canada's Native People: I have lived here since the world began* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 66. On Mohawk performance of Christianity and the relationship between Jesuit missionaries, see also, William B. Hart, *For the Good of Their Souls: Performing Christianity in Eighteenth-Century Mohawk Country* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020).

consensus.[25] The clan system of the Haudenosaunee was hereditary; chiefs were either chosen on lineage or chosen by elder women of the clan. In 1665, before the move north, the Kahnawake Mohawks split from the Iroquois Confederacy over disagreements regarding French settler relations.[26] In 1684, the Iroquois Confederacy "no longer recognized Kahnawà:ke as part of the League" and formally acknowledged the Mohawk split. After settling in Kahnawake and remaining politically detached from the Iroquois Confederacy, Mohawks at Kahnawake developed their own system of governance.

Mohawk political structure after separation from the Iroquois Confederacy retained elements of Haudenosaunee political culture but developed in a new manner. The clan system operated in Kahnawake and other Mohawk settlements, but one chief from the seven Mohawk clans served as representatives on the newly formed Council of Chiefs.[27] Chiefs, like in the Iroquois Confederacy, were appointed for life and titles were hereditary, and their positions were confirmed by the Canadian government whose permission allowed the Council of Chiefs to operate within colonial institutions.[28] The Rotihsennakéhte or "Deer" clan were part of the Council of Chiefs,[29] and James Deer, a descendent and hereditary chief, would become a Nile Voyageur. The Council of Chiefs

[25] Gerald F. Reid, *Kahnawà:ke: Factionalism, Traditionalism, and Nationalism in a Mohawk Community* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 1. The Rotinonsiónni was called the Iroquois Confederacy, the Iroquois League, or the Five Nations. The Tuscarora would later join the Iroquois Confederacy in 1722 and it would then be known as the "Six Nations."
[26] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*, 5. The other members of the Confederacy developed closer ties with the French and allowed French settlers to enter Rotinonhsiónni territory.
[27] Gerald F. Reid, "Kahnawake's Council of Chiefs: 1840 - 1889," Haudenosaunee: Kahnawake Branch of the Mohawk Nation Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy. N.d. Accessed October 17, 2022. http://www.kahnawakelonghouse.com/index.php?mid=2&p=2. Reid claims that the Council of Chiefs likely existed in the late-seventeenth century, but was active in the 1840s.
[28] Reid, "Kahnawake's Council of Chiefs."
[29] The seven clans represented on the Council of Chiefs were: Rotihsennakéhte ('Deer'), Rotikwáho ('Wolf'), Rotiskerewakaká:ion ('Old Bear'), Ratiniáhten ('Turtle'), Rotiskerewakekó:wa ('Great Bear'), Rotineniothró:non ('Rock'), and Rotinehsí:io ('Snipe').

would remain as the primary political structure of Kahnawake and the Mohawks until internal strife and external colonialist ideas forced change during the late-eighteenth century.

In 1869, the Canadian government implemented the Gradual Enfranchisement Act that would usurp Indigenous rights and force a band council system of governance on Indigenous peoples. The band council was an electoral system modelled after European democratic systems. Every three years Indigenous men would gather and elect representatives (a chief and councillors) to serve their community, which eliminated the participation of women in the electoral process and the traditional hereditary chiefs. In Kahnawake, Mohawks were continually disenfranchised under oppressive legislations such as the Indian Act of 1876, and their lands infringed upon.[30] The band council system would not be implemented until 1889, after Mohawk men petitioned the Canadian government to dissolve the ineffective Council of Chiefs in response to these infringements on Mohawk rights.[31] The time between the Gradual Enfranchisement Act and the implementation of the band council system in 1889 saw the rise of Mohawk nationalism and its interpretation within the Nile Expedition.

The rise of Mohawk nationalist sentiment in Kahnawake during the 1880s leading up to the Nile Expedition was a response to colonial institutions that sought to oppress Indigenous and Mohawk rights in Canada. The objectives of Mohawk nationalism was resistance against colonial oppression, ambition for political agency, and the restoration

[30] Mohawks were subject to the terms of the Indian Act, apart from the implementation of the band council system, and were enduring acts of forced assimilation to join white hegemonic society.
[31] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke,* 53.

of Mohawk cultural practices.[32] This resistance was one of a larger pattern of Indigenous nations in Canada establishing Indigenous sovereignty within colonial frameworks, and many paralleled the Mohawk method of resistance.[33] At the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford, Ontario, the Baptist Progressive Warriors followed the Kahnawake model and also advocated for the implementation of the band council in the 1890s, though they were unsuccessful. The band council may have been a design of white colonial government, but it was not a successful instrument of assimilation due to Indigenous resistance.

After the 1889 band council implementation, the Canadian government continued to undermine Indigenous governance through the Indian Act and its many amendments. In Kahnawake it became apparent that having a band council would not provide additional freedoms, and many Mohawks advocated for the reinstitution of the Council of Chiefs. The creation of the band council created factions of political spheres, but the traditional council operated underground in" an organized, functioning body, with legitimate authority in the community into the mid-1920's."[34] The Canadian government would also continue their forced assimilation practices, with Indigenous resistance along the way.

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[32] Alfred, *Heeding the Voices,* 14.

[33] Martha Walls, *No Need of a chief for this band: the Maritime Mi'kmaq and federal electoral legislation, 1899 - 1951* (Victoria: UBC Press, 2010), 2. Walls argues that the Mi'kmaq also engaged in a syncretic process of adaptation to the triennial system, like with the Mohawks at Kahnawake. Sally Weaver, "The Iroquois: The Grand River Reserve, 1875 - 1945" in *Aboriginal Ontario: A History of the First Nations* ed. Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 239. The Progressive Warriors of the Iroquois were Methodist Christians educated at the Mohawk Institute of Brantford, a Mohawk site of resettlement under Joseph Brant, who advocated for the implementation of the band council in the 1890s.

[34] Gerald F. Reid, "It is Our Custom - *The Persistence of Kahnawake's Council of Chiefs in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,"* Haudenosaunee: Kahnawake Branch of the Mohawk Nation Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy. N.d. Accessed October 17, 2022. http://www.kahnawakelonghouse.com/index.php?mid=2&p=3. For more about the factions of Kahnawake that emerged in the 1890s, see Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*.

Louis Jackson and James Deer represent two ends of the political spectrum of Kahnawake during the 1880s: a band councillor, and a hereditary Mohawk chief. Both attempted their own revitalization and continuation of Mohawk culture and politics, negotiating Mohawk agency in the colonial institutions they interacted with. Jackson and Deer drew on their participation on the Nile Expedition to construct their idea of Mohawk nationalism. Their interpretations of Mohawk nationalism, and its manufacturing on the Nile Expedition demonstrate how Mohawks were creating their cultural and political identity during the 1880s.

Historiography of the Nile Expedition and Mohawk Nile Voyageurs

The Nile Voyageurs are situated in the wider themes of imperialism and nationhood in Canada by scholars focusing on the Nile Voyageurs as a collective rather than as distinct groups and Canadian responses to the Nile Expedition. Canadian Army historian C.P. Stacey wrote *Records of the Nile Voyageurs 1884-1885: The Canadian Contingent in the Gordon Relief Expedition* in 1959 and concludes that the Nile Expedition was "a strictly imperial project."[35] Instead, the Nile Expedition is significant in Canadian political discourse that emphasizes Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's refusal to provide federal support for the Nile Expedition. Macdonald is represented as an avid supporter of imperial unity with Britain and a partnership of nations, but in fact that unity did not supersede the national interests of Canada. Macdonald's refusal of federal support is seen as a formative decision displaying Canada's agency in external political

[35] Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 7.

affairs.[36] Stacey's analysis of the Nile Voyageurs was centred around the Nile Expedition, its organization and political ramifications, not the Nile Voyageurs themselves or the Indigenous Canadians.

Other scholars have built on Stacey's argument connecting the Nile Voyageurs to Canadian nationalism and imperialism. Roy MacLaren argues that the presence of the Nile Voyageurs in the Expedition was "an indication that Canada was coming of age in the imperial era of Victoria," and "contributed to the impetus to full Canadian nationhood."[37] These same ideas were present on the Canadian homefront and in popular discourse; Canadian Baptist newspapers invoked imperialist responses to the Nile Expedition, as demonstrated by Gordon Heath. He argued that "no one has explored the churches and the birth of new imperialism."[38] The relation of the Nile Expedition to Canadian imperialism and nationalism disregards the perspective of those who were not a part of hegemonic white Canadian society. Mohawks, as Indigenous Canadians, had a separate identity and idea of nationalism than the one that dominated earlier historical analyses based on white Canadian experiences.

More recent scholarship focuses inwards on the experiences of the Nile Voyageurs using written accounts. The Nile Voyageurs and their treatment on the Nile Expedition is analyzed through the framework of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition.[39] Anthony Michel calls his work a "labour history, a history of settler-aboriginal relations,

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[36] C.P. Stacey, "Canada and the Nile Expedition of 1884-1885", *The Canadian Historical Review* vol. XXXIII, no.4 (December 1952), 340.
[37] Roy MacLaren, *Canadians on the Nile, 1882 - 1898: Being the Adventures of the Voyageurs on the Khartoum Relief Expedition and Other Exploits* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), xvi-xvii.
[38] Gordon Heath, "The Nile Expedition, New Imperialism and Canadian Baptists, 1884 - 1885," *Baptist Quarterly* 44:3 (July 2011), 172.
[39] Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs",16.

an imperial history, a history of Canadian identities, a study of the militia, a series of regional histories and a study of politics, society and culture in the 1880s."[40] The Nile Expedition and Canadian settler-aboriginal relations is also argued in "To Represent the Country in Egypt: Aboriginality, Britishness, Anglophone Canadian Identities, and the Nile Voyageur Contingent, 1884 - 1885." In this, Michel examines how Anglophone Canadians on the Nile Expedition created images of themselves in contrast to Indigenous people.[41] The exploration of settler-aboriginal relations and the formation of a national identity by Michel can be subverted; the same framework is applicable to the formation of a Mohawk national identity and how Jackson and Deer created images of Mohawks.

Carl Benn is the sole scholar to study the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs and Indigenous cultural practices on the Nile Expedition using Jackson and Deer's writing. Prior historians have neglected or overlooked the nuance these two sources provide to the greater overall understanding of the Nile Expedition and the experiences of the Canadian boatmen. Benn provides reproductions of Louis Jackson and James Deer's publications in *Mohawks on the Nile* and establishes their significance to Mohawk history. Looking at Mohawk military practises and alliances, Benn argues "Mohawk service on the Nile fell within a number of important norms in Iroquois cultural practises, work patterns, and alliance relationships."[42] The precedence of Mohawk cultural practices on the Nile Expedition provides context for how Mohawks used these cultural practices in forming their national identity.

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[40] Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs," ii.
[41] Antony Michel, "To Represent the Country in Egypt: Aboriginality, Britishness, Anglophone Canadian Identities, and the Nile Voyageurs Contingent, 1884 - 1885," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* Vol. 39, No. 77 (2006), 46.
[42] Carl Benn, *Mohawks on the Nile: Natives Among the Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt, 1884 - 1885* (Toronto: National Heritage Books, 2009), 10.

Louis Jackson, James Deer, the Nile Expedition, and their place in Mohawk history has little corresponding scholarship. Jackson and Deer are mainly subject to analyses of their lives post-Expedition, which often features them in a supplementary role within a larger scope. Jackson is featured primarily within the discourse of Kahnawake's political culture after the Nile Expedition was completed. Reid's analysis determines that Mohawk nationalism emerged in the late 1880s and 1890s as a response to the Indian Advancement Act, and he uses Jackson's role as a band leader within his analytical framework.[43] Jackson and his political career, the role of the Nile Expedition in the creation of Mohawk nationalism is largely ignored or understated in discourses.

Contrary to Jackson and his involvement in the political sphere, James Deer reflects the cultural development of Mohawk nationalism. Deer's role in scholarly works focuses less on his contributions on the Nile Expedition, but instead as a Mohawk entertainer, where Mohawk identities were imagined and performed. Intersectional studies of Indigenousness, performance, and Wild West shows use the Deer family as one of many case studies to argue the negotiation of identity and agency.[44] Works that feature James Deer the most are centred around his daughter, Esther, also known by the stage name "Princess White Deer." Esther was the most famous Deer and largest subject of Indigenous performance analyses; in these works James Deer is relegated to a

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[43] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*, 50. For more on Jackson and Mohawk politics, see: Daniel Rueck, "Commons, Enclosure, and Resistance in Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory,1850 - 1900," *The Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 95 No. 3 (Sept 2014); Daniel Rueck, "Enclosing the Mohawk Commons: A history of use-rights, landownership, and boundary-making in Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory," Ph.D. diss., (McGill University, 2013), 308 - 322.

[44] Linda Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 124; Christine Bold, *"'Vaudeville Indians' on Global Circuits, 1880s to 1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 2. To see more about indigeneity and performance, see also: Linda Scarangella McNenly, "Foe, Friend, or Critic: Native Performers with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Discourses of Conquest and Friendship in Newspaper Reports," *The American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring 2014).

supplementary role, not as the main subject.[45] This framework sees the significance of the Nile Expedition as Deer's performance piece and there is little analysis of the contents of Deer's writing. James Deer, the Nile Expedition, and what he has to say about his experience abroad presents an opportunity to expand scholarship of Indigenous performance and identity.

Methodology and Organization of Ideas

The Mohawk nationalism envisioned by Jackson and Deer is an ethno-nationalism based on a desire for self-determination and retention of a cultural identity and autonomy as a direct response to colonial institutions.[46] Mohawks also created a national identity through a traditionalist revival, that is, "to revive and refashion the community's indigenous political and cultural institutions" in the face of European opposition.[47] Following this definition by Alfred, the parameters of Mohawk nationalism will be expanded upon and resituated using Deer, Jackson, and the Nile Expedition. Mohawk nationalism will be located outside the boundaries of Kahnawake, demonstrating it as more than a local response to external forces. More importantly, Mohawk culture will be

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[45] Patricia O. Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer: The Biography of Esther Deer* (Sparta, New Jersey: Flint & Feather Press, 2012). See also, Christine Bold, "Princess White Deer's Show Blanket: Brokering Popular Indigenous Performance Across International Borders," *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada* Vol. 41, No. 1 (2020), 40.

[46] Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*, 14. Alfred defines Mohawk nationalism specifically as "a form which seeks to achieve self-determination not through the creation of a new state, but through the achievement of a cultural sovereignty and a political relationship [with the state] based on group autonomy". See also: Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014), 18; Patrick Macklem, "Ethnonationalism, Aboriginal Identities, and the Law," in *Ethnicity and Aboriginality: Case Studies in Ethnonationalism* ed. Michael D. Levin(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Timothy A. Schouls, *Shifting Boundaries: Aboriginal Identity, Pluralist Theory, and the Politics of Self-Government* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003.

[47] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*, xviii.

given greater prominence within the idea of Mohawk nationalism, but still in conjunction with Mohawk politics.

One thing to note is that Jackson and Deer, as Mohawks from Kahnawake, represent only a fraction of the Mohawks and the Indigenous people on the Nile Expedition, which numbered approximately ninety. From the St. Peter's Reserve in Manitoba, twenty-three Métis enlisted for the Nile Expedition.[48] There were also other Indigenous men who were identified by Stacey through his brief remarks of "Indian Oka," "Indian Sand Point," or "Indian Pickamock," who were not part of a larger band within the Contingent.[49] Of the ninety Indigenous men, sixty-one were members of Mohawk tribes, mainly from Kahnawake, Akwesasne of St. Regis in New York/Ontario, and Kanesatake.[50] The unique cultural heritage of these distinct groups of people, collectivized and grouped as "Indians"[51] in Canada, demands separate analytical frameworks for their experiences. So, Jackson and Deer, two Mohawk men from Kahnawake, do not represent all Indigenous experiences on the Nile Expedition, and they do not represent all Mohawk experiences.

Jackson and Deer's primary objective was the promotion of Mohawk nationalism, but they also used traditionally European practices to achieve that goal, primarily through their representations of the native Egyptians and how they interacted with them.

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[48] Lawrence J. Barkwell, "The Nile Voyageurs 1884 - 1885: Manitoba Métis and Indians of the Nile Expedition," Metis Museum, Louis Riel Institute, November 20, 2007. Accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/07194.Nile%20Expedition.pdf, 2. In the list of the Manitoba Nile Voyageurs, Barkwell provides a short biographical sketch of the Indigenous men who served, including what classification of Indigenous group they belonged to. Barkwell listed a number of Métis men, those identified as having "filed for Half Breed Scrip", as well as men from the St. Peter's Reserve.

[49] Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs*, 265 - 266.

[50] Benn, *Mohawks on the Nile,* 167.

[51] Indigenous is a collective term referring to Métis, First Nations, and Inuit people within Canada. When possible, the names of bands will be given priority when referencing Indigenous peoples.

Mohawks adopted syncretism "according to a pragmatic evaluation of Mohawk interests and needs…to balance tradition and change" during early encounters with European settlers.[52] Mohawks converted to Christianity and adopted European languages and modes of thought, which explains how Jackson and Deer represented Egypt in their writing. When the Nile Voyageurs were in Egypt, a land that Indigenous Canadians had little interaction with, Mohawks adopted European "Orientalist" methods of thinking.

In addition, Jackson and Deer's representations of Egypt and Sudan are good examples of Said's Orientalist worldview. Orientalism as a "body of occidental representations of the oriental world which both constitute the Orient as Other to the Occidental and appropriated the domain of the Orient by speaking for it" is found in Jackson and Deer's writings.[53] Canadians and Indigenous peoples have been argued not to be considered traditional Orientalists in previous scholarship.[54] However, even though the Egyptians and Mohawks could both be considered victims of imperial power, Mohawk engagement with the Orient were individualistic and nuanced, with both engaging and disengaging from these frameworks. These occidental representations and the methodology used to create them are used by Jackson and Deer to support their Mohawk national identity.

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[52] Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors,* 24 - 25.
[53] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 3.
[54] Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs," 325. Michel argues that Orientalist discourses are not applicable to the Nile Voyageurs because "Canadians do not share a common knowledge-power discourse, be it orientalist or otherwise." Orientalism is typically applied to Western academics and Westerners that maintained the colonizer-colonized dichotomy, specifically the British and French, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 4; Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 2010), 188 - 189.

The use of tropes and typing, particularly found in travel writing, is one of the themes that will be used from Said's *Orientalism*. As a relationship based upon unequal power dynamics that situates the West as inherently superior, Said argues that Western writers manifest this relationship within a "*comparative* framework," juxtaposing the writer's Western ideals to observations of the Orient.[55] Comparisons served to cast the people of the Orient into archetypes that strengthened their place outside Western society, their abject strangeness, and justify their subjugation. These archetypes would then be systematically implemented into their writings, which evolved from observations into "a document of useful knowledge…readily accessible to anyone."[56] This same comparative framework and implementation is found in the writings of Jackson and Deer and how they presented Mohawk nationalism to their audience.

Jackson and Deer's writings combine elements of Orientalism, reframed through a Mohawk lens, with Mohawk culture in their framework of representation. Mohawks had a long tradition of a warrior culture; they warred with other Indigenous groups, and were an especially feared rival of the French colonial settlers.[57] The warrior culture of Mohawks made them especially valuable allies in the fur trade and during the fur trade wars.[58] During periods of peace throughout the year, Mohawks would hunt, farm, and play games, especially lacrosse.[59] These Mohawk cultural traditions were reframed in a

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[55] Said, *Orientalism,* 149.
[56] Said, *Orientalism,* 158.
[57] Nancy Bonvillain, *The Mohawks* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992), 38.
[58] Nicole St. Onge, "'He was neither a soldier nor a slave: he was under the control of no man': Kahnawake Mohawks in the northwest fur trade, 1790 - 1850," *Canadian Journal of History* Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016), 1.
[59] Bonvillain, *The Mohawks,* 22. See also, Olivia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2009). For more on lacrosse and the history of Indigenous sport, see Alan Downey, *The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2018).

modern context and applied to the Nile Expedition, including how Jackson and Deer represented their experiences to promote Mohawk nationalism.

Gerald Alfred's argument of Mohawk nationalism is mostly located within the confines of Kahnawake politics, but this argument is applicable to Louis Jackson and can be expanded upon. Jackson and Deer represent the two spheres of influence where Mohawk nationalism confronted colonial institutions, culture and politics. They also represent change on two frontiers: local and global. Deer and his presence in the entertainment industry presents an opportunity to build upon Alfred's argument by locating these ideas outside of Kahnawake. This also connects arguments by Bold and Scarangella McNelly that suggest spectator shows were locations where indigeneity and agency were negotiated.[60] From the world of entertainment to the governance of Kahnawake, Jackson and Deer used the Nile Expedition as a device in the redefining of cultural and political institutions, which worked in correlation with the promotion of Mohawk nationalist ideas.

The following chapters look at the Nile Expedition, Jackson and Deer, situating them within and beyond the framework of Mohawk nationalism. Due to his position as the leader of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs and his strongest resemblance to the conventional framework of Mohawk nationalism, Louis Jackson is the subject of the first chapter. The next chapter focuses on James Deer and his experiences being a Nile Voyageur, Indian showman, and Indigenous activist, and how he represented Mohawk nationalism outside the borders of Kahnawake. The experiences of Jackson and Deer will

[60] Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 124; Bold, *"Vaudeville Indians"*, 2.

be presented in chronological order, with biographical context, from the events of the Nile Expedition to their lives after its completion.

CHAPTER 2

LOUIS JACKSON - LEADERSHIP AMONG THE MOHAWKS

Louis Jackson and the Nile Expedition demonstrate attempts at negotiating Mohawk agency and identity within colonial frameworks and the promotion of Mohawk nationalism. As a Mohawk foreman and leading boatman among the Canadian Nile Voyageurs, Jackson was placed in a unique position to showcase Mohawk cultural practices and identity. Representations of the Nile Expedition and his personal experience as a book in *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* allowed Jackson to spread ideas of Mohawk nationalism among the populace. This was done by situating Mohawk culture in and against the Egyptian landscape and highlighting the work of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs on the Nile Expedition. Jackson's demonstration of Mohawk identity, culture, and nationalism became foundational in facilitating political change in Kahnawake after the Nile Expedition.

Life Before the Nile

Louis Jackson was born Rowi Tawehiakenra in 1843 to Mohawk parents from St. Regis (Akwesasne) and Kahnawake.[61] Not much is known about Jackson's formative years, but it is apparent that he had some formal education because he was literate and multilingual. Based on available sources, it is most likely that Jackson received his education in an

[61] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke,* 77. It is unsure when Jackson obtained his Anglicized name, but both "Louis Jackson" and "Rowi Tawehiakenra" are used interchangeably in official government documents and by historians. Because Jackson authored *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* under his Anglicized name, that will be used to reference him.

Indian Day School during his childhood. Indian Day Schools were operational at the time of Jackson's childhood, and children from Kahnawake were sent to Wikwemikong school on Manitoulin Island for education.[62] The Wikwemikong school was run by Jesuit missionaries, and Western religious-based education of Indigenous children was one method of attempted cultural assimilation by white settlers. Despite the attempts of white settler society to eradicate Indigenous cultures in the younger generations, Jackson was resolute in his Mohawk identity.

Jackson's experience within a colonial educational institution formed his relationship with the government and how he advocated for Mohawk rights against the systemic oppression enforced by the Canadian government and the schooling policies it imposed even before the Nile Expedition. The education of Indigenous children was overseen by the Canadian government in collaboration with religious institutions. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Canadian government attempted to use education to target children for early intervention assimilation.[63] The policy of assimilation and efforts to enforce it were strengthened through reports such as the *Bagot Commission Report* of 1842, and led to further restrictive policies and eventually the residential schooling system.[64] Under these restrictive administrations, Indigenous people would have little to no recourse against mistreatment, though that did not deter them from trying.

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[62] Wahéhshon Shiann Whitebean, "Child-Targeted Assimilation: An Oral History of Indian Day School Education in Kahnawà:ke," MA Thesis (Concordia University, 2019), 46.
[63] Wikwemikong school operated as a Day School from approximately 1840 until 1887, when it was converted into a Residential School.
[64] John Milloy, "*A National Crime": the Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 12 - 13. For more on the residential schooling system, see J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: a history of native residential schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

One action Jackson took against these policies was to lodge complaints to the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA). Jackson's complaint was against the teacher of the Caughnawaga Indian day school, E.R.A. Fletcher, and his wife who also worked there. The Fletchers were accused of beating the Indigenous children in their care and neglecting the students' education in favour of having them perform manual labour.[65] These complaints were predicated on the experiences of other Mohawks in Caughnawaga, who may not have had the ability or resources to advocate for themselves. Jackson accused Fletcher of being inefficient and infringing on the rights of the Mohawk students.

Jackson's accusations led to investigations conducted by the DIA, which ultimately resulted in changes that helped protect the rights of Mohawk students. The DIA investigations concluded that Fletcher was guilty of having students assume responsibility for younger pupils, neglecting their education, forcing them to do manual labour, and beating students.[66] Despite his guilt, Fletcher faced no consequences for his actions; he continued to operate the Caughnawaga Day School and continued his "battle against Indianism" for the duration of the 1880s. However, change did occur due to Jackson's complaint because it appears students were given better education according to assessments.[67] Being able to levy a complaint to the DIA and initiate an investigation into

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[65] Library and Archives Canada, "Caughnawaga Reserve - Complaint by Louis Taweiakenra Jackson against the manner in which E.R.A. Fletcher conducts the school", 1878, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Fonds, RG10, Volume 2051, File 9453. http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=2082274&lang=eng. The forced labour of Indigenous students was a common element of residential schooling to limit economic mobility and keep Indigenous people working skilled professions. See, Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision,* 83.
[66] "Complaint by Louis Taweiakenra Jackson," RG10, Volume 2051, File 9453.
[67] "CHILDREN OF THE FOREST,"*Montreal Gazette,* July 12. 1883. See also, Chris Willmore, *Caughnawaga (Kahnawá:ke): Settler accounts to 1900,* 151. Accessed September 15, 2022. https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/willmore/wp-content/uploads/sites/5845/2021/01/Caughnawagato1900.pdf

Fletcher indicates that Jackson was able to operate within colonial institutions and facilitate improvements to the education system. Jackson's complaints also demonstrate that the Mohawks of Caughnawaga saw him as a leading figure able to bring about change, even before the Nile Expedition.

The reputation of Jackson as a community figure explains why he was personally recruited to serve as a foreman of the Nile Expedition and lead the Caughnawaga contingent. During the summer of 1884, Jackson was preoccupied with working on his farm, preparing for the upcoming winter months when it would turn into lumbering season. Lord Melgund, the Earl of Minto and later Governor General of Canada, approached Jackson and personally asked him to oversee the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs and be their foreman.[68] To join the Nile Expedition, Jackson had to abandon his seasonal farming, something he was hesitant to do, but agreed, incentivized by the promise of guaranteed income and the opportunity to "look over the Caughnawaga boys."[69] This proved to be beneficial to both Melgund and Jackson; because he was a trusted community figure, having Jackson be their leader would encourage other Mohawks to also enlist, but Jackson's would also be present to observe and protect the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs.

The supervision of a male elder on journeys correlated to historical Mohawk work culture, proved a unique opportunity for young Mohawk men, and allowed Mohawk practices to flourish under new conditions. During the height of the fur trade, Mohawks

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[68] Louis Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt: A Narrative of what was seen and accomplished by the Contingent of North American Indian Voyageurs who led the British Boat Expedition for the Relief of Khartoum up the Cataracts of the Nile* (Montreal: Drysdale & Co., 1885), 5.
[69] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 5.

actively sought out exciting, potentially dangerous employment away from the Kahnawake community as a coming-of-age tradition, and St. Onge says:

> By seeking [dangerous] employment, young men became adults and thus were considered ‘‘warriors’’ in their communities. Only by going with more experienced older men away from Kahnawake whether as hunters, voyageurs, raftsmen, or river pilots did youth transition to full manhood.[70]

The Nile Expedition not only invoked the legacy of voyageurs in the past, but it also presented an opportunity for young Mohawk men to participate in a cultural practice which seldom occurred due to rapid industrialization and the decline of the fur trade. This also became an opportunity for young Mohawk men to go to unprecedented lengths beyond what their ancestors did by travelling to the Middle East, where they could use Mohawk skills and cultures in a new landscape.

If the Mohawks were to navigate the Nile River, the question also arose of what type of watercraft would be used, and Jackson was able to ensure that the boats were suited to the rapids and were Indigenous designs. When Lord Melgund visited Kahnawake, Jackson expressed some resignation about the boats to be used and “impressed upon [Melgund] the importance of boats suited to the rapids, particularly the broad flat-bottomed boat used at Lachine.”[71] Broad flat-bottom boats refer to the Mackinaw boat, which were used by fur traders, but whose design was inspired by Indigenous canoes.[72] Canoes were symbolically important in Indigenous cultures, and Mohawks, as reputable boatmen, had a strong relationship with canoes. Erickson argues

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[70] St. Onge, “Kahnawake Mohawks in the northwest fur trade, 1790 - 1850,” 9.
[71] Lord Melgund to Lord Wolseley, report, October 3, 1884. See also, Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 83.
[72] James H. Marsh, “Mackinaw Boat,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada. Article published February 7, 2006; Last edited December 16, 2013. Accessed September 22, 2022. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/mackinaw-boat

that during Canadian settlement and confederation, "the canoe moved from a more specific material-economic role to one that also narrates [Canadian] national identity."[73] In the case of Jackson and the Nile Expedition, the canoe as a political device was used to narrate Mohawk national identity in contrast to a Canadian identity. The design Jackson requested, along with other canoes, were the ones primarily used by the Nile Voyageurs in Egypt. Their use, due to the determination of a Mohawk man, illustrates how the Nile Expedition was laden with Indigenous practices before it commenced.

A Mohawk in Egypt

On October 7, 1884, Louis Jackson, sixty-one Mohawk men, and the contingent of Canadian Nile Voyageurs stepped off their boat and found themselves in Alexandria, Egypt. Over the next few months, the Mohawks would face danger at every turn, but they also found themselves in a wondrous new land that piqued their curiosity. The representations of the Egyptian landscape and people in Jackson's written account appropriates European ideas of Egypt and the Orient, only to also compare them to Mohawk cultural practices and identity. Jackson's representations were intended to reconcile the Mohawk presence in an unfamiliar land by finding commonalities and differences between Canada and Egypt. By situating Mohawk cultural practices within this comparative representation, Jackson constructs a Mohawk identity and nationalist ideas.

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[73] Bruce Erickson, *Canoe nation: nature, race, and the making of a Canadian icon* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 3. For more on the politics and symbolism of canoes, see Bruce Erickson and Sarah Wylie Krotz, *The Politics of the Canoe* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021).

An Orientalist idea that Jackson appropriates is the representation of the Orient within a framework of Christianity. Early Orientalists were Biblical scholars, but during the late eighteenth-century and beyond, religious patterns were "reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in the secular frameworks" within Oriental representations.[74] As Mohawks were adaptive and syncretized their cultural and religious practices to their environment, Jackson does the same when transplanted from Kahnawake to Egypt.[75] *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* represents a unique reconstitution of Christian tropes as Jackson utilizes a Christian lens in his work and representations of the Orient. Jackson's observations, and his interactions with the native Egyptians indicate how he, as a Christian Mohawk, was able to situate his cultural and identity in Egypt and adapt it to suit the landscape.

One characteristic of the Egyptian landscape that Jackson and other Mohawks fixated on was its historical significance as Biblical lands. Orientalism utilises the trope of "the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed by has remained fixed in time and place," and Egypt as a Biblical land drew the imagination of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs.[76] During one of the trips up the Nile River, Jackson discusses the men's excitement at being "shown the exact spot, where Moses was picked up," a reference to the Old Testament story of baby Moses and the reed basket.[77] Jackson knew that spot being the exact location of Moses' rescue was highly improbable, but he still entertained the idea, enough so to incorporate it into his monograph. Though it may have seemed novel to Jackson, the invocation of Moses and Biblical stories was a way for Jackson and

[74] Said, *Orientalism,* 51, 121.
[75] Blanchard, "... To the Other Side of the Sky," 88.
[76] Said, *Orientalism,* 108.
[77] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 12.

the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs to comprehend that though Egypt was a foreign land, it was not wholly unfamiliar. But after the novelty of Egypt wore off, Jackson used the idea of Christianity in Egypt to comprehend his experiences and incorporate his own Mohawk worldview within it.

Jackson's attitude towards native Egyptian Christians of the Orient he encountered centred on the idea of familiarity and finding commonalities between them. This presents a uniquely Indigenous interaction with the Orient, as Jackson diverts from the binary oppositions that define Orientalism and instead finds parallels with Egyptians. Jackson refers to his guide while in Assuan as "my young Christian" and as a friend, denoting a sense of mutual connection with him.[78] The relationship Jackson formed with this young Egyptian seemed to have its basis in their shared Christian identity, but they had more in common. Both Jackson and his young Christian friend were both colonial subjects, Others in the institutions of white society, and part of a marginalized group of people. Moreso, Jackson may have seen reflections of his own culture within this boy: native peoples, forced subjects of white rule, acting as guides for those impeding on their land. The reconstitution of Orientalist ideas meant, for Jackson, including and simultaneously reconstituting Mohawk experiences in a comparative framework.

The comparative experiences of Egyptians and Mohawks extends from religious identities to labour practices as well, and Jackson uses them in conjunction. As a farmer, lumberman, and Mohawk, Jackson had a unique perspective of Egypt and Egyptian practices. Farming was established in Kahnawake centuries earlier and was an important part of Mohawk practices; they grew a multitude of crops and used animals in their

[78] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 13.

agricultural practices.[79] Being Christian converts, this also meant that Mohawks did not work or cultivate the land on Sunday, the Sabbath. This idea of work on the Sabbath contrasts the ideals of the West, something so ingrained in labour practices in Canada that the Nile Voyageurs would strike to enforce their labour standards abroad.[80] These practices influenced how Jackson perceived Egyptians and how he represented them in his work, incorporating Mohawk religious and agricultural practices into his comparisons.

One of the contrasts Jackson wrote about was the work schedule of the Egyptian people and how stark it was in comparison to Mohawk labour practices. Jackson wrote that the Egyptians would work on Sunday, and therefore did not observe the Sabbath and "the people here have no Sundays."[81] Egyptians working on Sunday was shocking to Jackson because he and the other Nile Voyageurs had advocated for their rights to not work on the Sabbath. Jackson gives no considerations to other factors that could necessitate the Egyptian farmers working on Sunday, only that it contrasted with his experience and farming practices. Jackson's comparison of Egyptian labour to Mohawk practices in *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* situates Mohawk culture against the Egyptian landscape, but he also finds ways to draw parallels among them.

Despite their different work schedules, Jackson's writings about the Egyptians include descriptions of their agricultural processes, and he compares it to his own farming methods. Cattle used by the Egyptians within their farming process were represented by

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[79] Rueck, "Enclosing the Mohawk Commons," 41.
[80] Frederick Charles Denison, Sunday, November 2, 1884, *Diary of Nile Expedition 1884-1885*, Toronto Reference Library, L22 *The Denison Family Fonds.* See also, Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 108.
[81] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 12.

Jackson as analogous to ones used in Mohawk farming. The animals are said to be "the same size as [Kahnawake's], but they have a lump on their back and their horns run straight back," and the sheep "look much like the Esquimeaux [sic] dogs" of Manitoba.[82] This perspective is uniquely Mohawk because drawing parallels to cattle in Kahnawake and dogs of Manitoba was a way for Jackson to reframe Egypt through a Mohawk lens. Such representation was intended for the Mohawk reader to visualize Egyptian practices in juxtaposition to their own experiences, situating Mohawk cultural practices among the Egyptian landscape.

The parallels in their farming practices explains why Jackson viewed Egyptian farmers through an empathetic lens, as he did with his Egyptian tour guide. When the Nile Expedition camped at night, Jackson was sorry that they "unavoidably did more or less damage to the crops, which must have caused serious loss to these poor people."[83] Because of his own experiences as a farmer, Jackson understood the impact that any damage to crops could have on a person's yield, and therefore their livelihood. Jackson would have also been sympathetic to the Egyptian farmers because they were further victimized under imperial white settlers. Jackson willingly left his fields to join the Nile Expedition, knowing he would be fairly compensated monetarily, but the Egyptian farmers whose crops they ruined had no agency and no recourse against the British government.

The representation of Egyptians and their experiences under British colonialism is something that can only be articulated by someone with similar experience. The sympathy to the plight of native peoples during colonial expansion offers a perspective

[82] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 11.
[83] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 15.

not often found in typical Orientalist writings. Jackson's own familiarity with British colonialism and white expansionism as a Mohawk gave Jackson a unique framework of representation of the Orient that was distinctly Indigenous Canadian. Jackson's position in the labouring class and identity as a colonial subject define how he represented the Egyptians with greater nuance and compassion than his non-Indigenous counterparts.

The sympathetic perspective of the Egyptian people did not negate Jackson's desire to demonstrate the skills of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs that would appeal to a Mohawk reader. As boatmen on the Nile Expedition, the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs were determined to perform their job to the best of their ability and protect the Mohawk legacy of being expert river navigators. Jackson comments at the end of the monograph that the world learned that the Egyptians "could still learn something of the craft from the Iroquois Indians of North America and the Canadian voyageurs of many races," establishing that the Iroquois (Mohawk) Voyageurs did their duty and did it well.[84] Beyond that, not only did the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs perform their roles, they performed it better than Egyptians could have, and Mohawks as river navigators were unparalleled in their skills.

Emphasizing the individual role Mohawks played on the Nile Expedition was a way for Jackson to continue the legacy of the voyageurs of the fur trade. It was believed that the practice of river navigation was in rapid decline and traditional voyageurs were almost extinct.[85] However, Mohawk adaptation to industrialization and focusing more on lumberyard and agricultural work did not mean that the practices of voyageurs had

[84] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt,* 34.
[85] Lord Lansdowne to Lord Derby, telegram, August 23, 1884. Draft, P.A.C., G. 21, No. 162, Vol. 1. See also, Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 58.

declined. What Jackson sought to prove in *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* was that the traditions and skills of voyageurs were still alive and continued to be practiced among the Mohawks. Jackson used the Nile Expedition as a global demonstration of Mohawk skills and cultural legacy, and he used *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* to disseminate that idea among the Mohawk community.

The use of a published book to promote Mohawk cultural practices abroad in itself constitutes a form of self-determination and refashioning of Mohawk traditions within a contemporary framework. Collins argues that Jackson used writing as a modern interpretation of Indigenous oral tradition that was "motivated by what he felt his people most needed, that is to be recognized, not only for their skills, but their culture as a whole."[86] Not only did Jackson reinterpret Indigenous traditions, but he also used literacy skills that were taught to him within colonial educational institutions to reinforce cultural practices that said institutions considered undesirable. Jackson redefines Mohawk culture through his writing, but he also uses his monograph to promote Mohawk culture to the Kahnawake community.

Jackson targeted the Mohawk Caughnawaga community as his demographic audience. This is evident in the title *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* and Jackson's use of inclusive language. Throughout the account, Jackson addresses the reader by making direct reference to "[o]ur fifty-six Caughnawaga Indians" and "our services" to the government" to invoke a sense of inclusion.[87] Jackson's consistent use of the generalized

[86] Karin Ann Elizabeth Collins, "Full Circle: From Survival to Integrity Canadian Indigenous Travel in the Nineteenth Century," (paper presented at The Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities Official Conference Proceedings, Japan: Osaka, 2011), 235. Accessed July 18, 2022. http://papers.iafor.org/wp-content/uploads/conference-proceedings/ACAH/ACAH2011_proceedings.pdf
[87] Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt*, 14, 34.

“we” to describe the actions of the Kahnawake group is used as a narrative tool to make the reader understand that the Nile Expedition was a collaborative group effort and the Caughnawaga Voyageurs were working together. This also coincides with Collins' argument, as Jackson was recognizing the contributions of not only the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs to the Nile Expedition, but the Mohawk community. Jackson attempts to entice the Mohawk reader by drawing on ideas of Mohawk community and tradition to present a strong distinctly Mohawk cultural identity.

The experiences of Louis Jackson as a Mohawk leader on the Nile Expedition became a way to reinterpret Mohawk cultural practices within a new framework. This reinterpretation through a written narrative was shared among the Mohawk community back in Canada to strengthen community resolve, as well as to promote a strong Mohawk identity and nationalist zeal. Establishing Mohawk culture within an imperial military expedition that was continents away from the Mohawk community was unprecedented but proved opportunistic to Jackson and the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs. When the Nile Expedition was concluded, Jackson and the Nile Voyageurs found themselves in conflict with the Canadian government.

The Fight not Finished: Leaving the Nile Behind

At some point during the Nile Expedition, Mohawk Nile Voyageurs received word that land distributions were about to commence in Kahnawake. This redistribution of Mohawk land was part of the Walbank Survey, a longstanding effort by the Canadian government to utilise “resource and land shortages in its attempts to undermine

Kahnawá:ke leaders, gain control of the land, and ultimately disperse the community."[88] The Walbank Survey was conducted without the consent of the Mohawk people, nor was it required under the new provisions of the Indian Act.[89] This dispersing of land would be the first of many attempts by the Canadian government to interfere with the political structures in Kahnawake both during and after the Nile Expedition. However, this would also be one of many forms of resistance and demonstration of agency by Mohawks, and Louis Jackson and the Nile Expedition defined the Mohawk response.

The timing of the Walbank Survey and the redistribution of lands was not coincidental. William McLea Walbank chose winter of 1884 to 1885 to conduct his survey and February of 1885 to start the tribunal, knowing that a good number of Mohawk men were abroad on the Nile Expedition. Rueck says that:

> Walbank had not informed Kahnawa'kehró:non of his time-table in advance and had not provided them with a way to file their claims in absentia. If he had thought ahead and shared his plans with the community, these men might not have agreed to go to Egypt in the first place, or they could have made their claims before leaving.[90]

Despite this attempt at subverting Mohawk land traditions and political agency, the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs were determined to fight against this encroachment upon their rights. When the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs received this news, they actively chose not to

[88] Rueck, "Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance," 352. For more about the Walbank Survey and colonialist expansion into Mohawk territory, see: Daniel Rueck, "'I do not know the boundaries of this land, but I know the land which I worked': Historical GIS and Mohawk Land Practices" in *Historical GIS research in Canada* ed. Jennifer Bonnell and Marcel Fortin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014): 129 - 152; Daniel Rueck, *The Laws of the Land: The Settler Colonial Invasion of Kahnawà:ke in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Vancouver: UBS Press for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 2021).
[89] Rueck, "Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance," 365. Walbank lied in his reports and claimed that Mohawks had given their permission for this survey, which was untrue.
[90] Rueck, *The Laws of the Land,* 184.

reenlist on the Nile Expedition to return home and defend their rights, as they were given the chance to voice their grievances.

When given the opportunity to re-engage on the Nile Expedition, most of the Mohawk men chose to return home to fight the Walbank Survey, and Jackson directly influenced their choice to return. Because Jackson chose to not reenlist so he could defend his land ownership, many Mohawk Nile Voyageurs followed suit. Denison noted that many of the Mohawks did not reengage and if Jackson had, "he might bring most of his gang with him," because he was their foreman and leader.[91] This also correlates to lumbering practices in Canada, and Benn argues that "Jackson's impact paralleled practices in the lumber industry where a foreman's choice to stay or leave an employer played a large role in the decision of the men."[92] If the Mohawks enlisted for the Nile Expedition based on Mohawk coming of age traditions and of Jackson's position as an elder, then the inverse is also correct.

Many of the Mohawk men did not wish to disengage from the Nile Expedition, but following Jackson's example and fighting for Mohawk rights against the oppressive Canadian government became a higher priority. When they returned home from the Nile Expedition, the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs made it clear they were doing so out of duty and to ensure their traditional rights to land ownership. One Mohawk told the *Montreal Daily Star* that he did not wish to leave Egypt, but the Canadian government had forced their hand by attempting to usurp their land without their consent.[93] In the end, the Walbank Survey was unsuccessful due to the protestations of the Mohawks, but their

[91] Lieutenant-Colonel F. C. Denison to Lord Melgund, telegram, January 1, 1885. P.A.C., G. 19, vol. 34. See also, Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 177.
[92] Benn, *Mohawks on the Nile,* 63.
[93] "The Canadian Voyageurs," *Montreal Daily Star,* March 6, 1885.

response to the Survey while on the Nile Expedition demonstrates that Mohawk national interests superseded individual desires, and Jackson as a leader led this response.

Jackson's position of leadership amongst the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs and the promotion of Mohawk culture by Jackson in *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* became driving forces in the acceleration of Mohawk nationalism and Jackson's political career. Mohawk nationalism included advancing political change in Kahnawake to obtain greater agency; Jackson was one early proponent of radical political reform. At the time of the Nile Expedition, the local political system in Kahnawake had long been a council of chiefs based on hereditary inheritance in accordance with Iroquois political tradition. However, the council of chiefs at this time was ineffective, and of the seven positions, only three were filled due to several deaths and resignations.[94] The Indian Act of 1876 implemented a band council system which replaced the traditional council of chiefs, an attempt at limiting Indigenous political institutions. Jackson would subvert the intended purpose of the Indian Act of suppressing Indigenous peoples through the elimination of the ineffective council of chiefs by replacing them with Mohawk political activists.

In 1887, Jackson and a group of Kahnawake Mohawks petitioned the government to implement the Indian Act on the reserve because of the weakened council of chiefs. The petitions justified the change using Section 72 of the Indian Act of 1880, as "the 1884 act offered a weaker band council and the potential of more interference by the DIA."[95] Purposefully invoking the 1880 clauses because it offered more political self-determination in Kahnawake became part of a larger strategy by Jackson, to participate in

[94] Reid, "Kahnawake's Council of Chiefs."
[95] Rueck, "Enclosing the Mohawk Commons," 306; Canada, House of Commons, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada,* April 18, 1888 (Ottawa, ON: House of Commons, 1888), 900. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_07186_6_2/2

colonial institutions while simultaneously exercising resistance to it. This is reminiscent of how Louis Jackson had lodged formal complaints with the Department of Indian Affairs against the Indian Day Schools to facilitate change. The band council system was not implemented until 1889, but Jackson did not allow it to undermine Mohawk rights and used it to advocate for further change, using the Nile Expedition to legitimize his election to the band council.

Leveraging his position as a leader on the Nile Expedition, Jackson was elected to the band council of Kahnawake in 1889, and he used his platform to advocate for Mohawk political agency. Winning by a wide margin of votes, Jackson had many of the Kahnawake Nile Voyageurs voting for him.[96] From the moment of his election, efforts were made to delegitimize Jackson's appointment; some of his political opponents, the local Indian agent, and the DIA attempted to overturn his victory.[97] These efforts were unsuccessful, and Jackson became a band council leader representing Kahnawake and Mohawk interests. Jackson's election signified that his leadership on the Nile Expedition as a foreman gained him considerable social influence. Thus, the Nile Expedition directly impacted local Kahnawake politics, but also affected politics outside of Kahnawake and the Mohawks.

Kahnawake would not be the only Indigenous reserve in the late-nineteenth century that would advocate for the implementation of the band council as the local governing structure. The Progressive Warriors of Brantford, Ontario advocated for the band council to replace the Confederacy Council with a band council by using the same

[96] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*, 76. Jackson was the leader of the Conservative faction of Kahnawake.
[97] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke,* 80.

methods Mohawks used at Kahnawake.[98] The Progressive Warriors were comprised of mostly Mohawks, undoubtably influenced by what the actions of their fellow Mohawks at Kahnawake. The Confederacy Council persisted because, unlike the Council of Chiefs, they were still active, effective, and were willing to compromise with the Progressive Warriors.[99] The adherence to the Kahnawake method of political agency by Iroquois at Brantford indicates that the ideas of Mohawk nationalism were frameworks that other Indigenous nations could utilize in their fight against colonial institutions.

The Kahnawake band council was a detriment to white settler economies, politics, and attempts at forcibly assimilating the Kahnawake Mohawks. This put Jackson in conflict with the Canadian government. Perhaps in response to white encroachment on Mohawk land via the Walbank Survey and unofficial movement of traditional boundaries, Jackson used his position on the band council to seek retribution through legal government entities. Similar to his complaint to the DIA regarding Mohawk education, Jackson lodged complaints to the Minister of the Interior regarding non-payment of seigneurial dues by white settlers, estimated at $3,333.33 in 1890.[100] These dues became part of a lengthy legal battle and would not be paid out, but the process adhered to the pattern of exercising Mohawk land rights against settler governments. This recalcitrant defiance became Jackson's primary method in exerting Mohawk rights against the suppressive Canadian government.

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[98] Weaver, "The Iroquois," 239.
[99] Weaver, "The Iroquois," 240 - 241.
[100] Willmore, *Settler Accounts to 1900*, 142; Canada, House of Commons, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada,* March 31, 1890 (Ottawa, ON: House of Commons, 1888), 2724. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_07186_8_2. The seigneural system was a land ownership system implemented in New France but reformed and abolished under British rule. See, Gerald R. Alfred, "To Right Certain Wrongs: A report on research into lands known as the Seigniory of Sault St. Louis," *Kahnawake Seigneury Office,* 1995.

Jackson continued to use his position and brazen confrontation of the Canadian government to challenge the DIA and the Indian Act, as well as to promote Kahnawake autonomy. Furthering his advocacy for Mohawk education, one early resolution proposed by Jackson and passed by the band council was the removal of white children from the local Kahnawake school.[101] Exerting control over Mohawk education became a means of reclaiming Mohawk agency. Under colonial institutions, "teachers' lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of Mohawk sovereignty and self-determination created barriers for Mohawk students' success."[102] The advocacy for Mohawk-only schools also set the precedent for future educational institutions such as the Kahnawake Survival School in 1978 and the Akwesasne Freedom School in 1979, whose curriculums are dedicated to preserving Mohawk culture and language.[103] This resolution was one of many passed by Jackson and the Kahnawake band council, and such as Jackson's political policies earned him a negative reputation within the Canadian government.

The negative reputation Jackson garnered as a band councillor did not negate the respect he had earned on as a foreman the Nile Expedition, as it was still referenced years after the Nile Expedition was completed. Jackson and his Mohawk allies were regarded as an "obstructive party" to the DIA's efforts of dismantling Kahnawake political

[101] Reid, *Kahnawà:ke,* 79.This resolution was passed by the band council of Kahnawake, but would not be ratified by Superintendent General Dewdney.
[102] Sharon Vegh Williams, "Sovereignty and Scholarship: Mohawk Self-Determination in Mainstream Schooling," *Journal of American Indian Education* Vol. 52, No. 2 (2013), 3. See also, Sharon Vegh Williams and Joni M. Cole, *Native Cultural Competency in Mainstream Schooling: 'Outsider' Teachers with Insider Knowledge* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 44.
[103] Louellyn White, *Free to Be Mohawk: Indigenous Education at the Akwesasne Freedom School* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 12.

structures among members of the House of Commons.[104] Consequently, efforts were continually made to oust him. During an 1890 attempt to remove Jackson through accusations of alcoholism, Wilfrid Laurier came to his defence. Laurier reminded members of the House of Commons that Jackson was "one of the men known to the whole world as Capt. Jackson, who commanded the Canadian boatmen in Egypt," despite it having occurred five years prior.[105] Laurier's invocation of the Nile Expedition and subsequent references to "Captain Jackson" reminded members of the Canadian government that Jackson had served the British Army with distinction, and because the Nile Expedition was seen as a positive reflection on Canada, respect should also extend to its participants. The reference of the Nile Expedition also emphasized that high-ranking members of the Canadian government recruited Jackson to be a leader, and to question Jackson's capabilities as a leader would mean challenging the judgement of those who recruited him. The attempts at removing Jackson were ultimately unsuccessful, and he continued to serve Kahnawake as a band councillor until the mid-1890s.

Conclusion

Louis Jackson's venture with the Nile Expedition and his publishing of *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* demonstrates a uniquely Indigenous Mohawk engagement with the Orient. Jackson demonstrates some typically Orientalist frameworks in his perception of Egyptian peoples and practices, such as utilizing a comparative framework and

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[104] Canada, House of Commons, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada,* March 31, 1890 (Ottawa, ON: House of Commons, 1888), 2725. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_07186_8_2

[105] *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons,* March 31, 1890, 2726.

incorporating Christian themes, but he did not possess the colonizer mindset that defines an Orientalist. Instead, Jackson travelled to Egypt on the Nile Expedition with the intention of demonstrating Mohawk skills on an international stage. Jackson acted as a Mohawk nationalist, using the events of the Nile Expedition in his writing to promote a Mohawk identity and facilitate change in his community.

The political ascent of Louis Jackson and the band council system caused a revitalization within Kahnawake. The years following saw a rise in traditionalism and the desire to revert to the traditional Council of Chiefs, with varying degrees of success. The band council continues in Kahnawake, but as a syncretic form of Mohawk governance and implementations of the Indian Act. Alfred calls the contemporary band council an "essentially [Mohawk's] creation, taking into account the modifications that have been made in its structure and philosophy," in their fight for self-governance.[106] This is an oversimplification of the complex political structure of Kahnawake, the band council, and the factions within, but it highlights that Mohawk self-determination continues to define Kahnawake's political institutions.[107] These institutions would not have been created without the work of Louis Jackson, *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt*, and his use of the Nile Expedition to demonstrate his leadership capabilities.

[106] Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *The meaning of self-government in Kahnawake,* Gerald R. Alfred. Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1994. publications.gc.ca/pub?id=9.829586&sl=0 (Accessed Oct. 8, 2022), 28.
[107] For more on Kahnawake's political institutions, see: Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of our Ancestors*; Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*; Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*.

CHAPTER 3

JAMES DEER - BOATMANSHIP AND SHOWMANSHIP

The political element of Mohawk nationalism found its stronghold in Kahnawake during the 1880s and 1890s, but the cultural facet of Mohawk nationalism developed both within and away from Kahnawake. James Deer, a Mohawk from Kahnawake, wrote and published a pamphlet called *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt*, which was used as a performance script in vaudeville and Wild West shows that toured the world. Deer's pamphlet performed the same function as Jackson's writing: to situate Mohawk cultural practices in and against the Egyptian landscape, as well as demonstrate Mohawk nationalism to its readers. The primary method of putting Mohawks in opposition to those around them on the Nile Expedition, showing how Mohawks confronted that opposition emphasized their skill and physical prowess in relation to others. Deer's performance of the Nile Expedition and *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* as an exhibition were used to demonstrate Mohawk identity to audiences. It also situated Mohawk identity and their negotiation of agency within a Western convention. James Deer represents the cultural development and spread of Mohawk nationalism, using the Nile Expedition as a device to demonstrate Mohawk cultural practices in his work through both his written account and his Wild West performances.

Oh, Deer! - The Biography of James Deer and Recruitment on the Nile Expedition

James Deer was born Ar Ha Ken Kia Ka on January 3, 1866 in Mexico, New York to Mohawk parents Chief John Running Deer (Ta Si Ta Leri) and Esther Loft. Chief Running Deer was the last of the hereditary Mohawk chiefs and at the time of James' birth, Chief Running Deer and the Deer family were prolific members in the performance circuit.[108] James Deer was raised among a troupe of Mohawk and Indigenous performers and lumberman, as Chief Running Deer oversaw forestry work when not performing.[109] According to Benn, upwards of fifteen percent of Kahnawake's population in the 1880s worked in the entertainment industry, and in the wintertime, seasonal work drove them to the lumber yards.[110] Deer's upbringing surrounded by performers and lumbermen shaped his Mohawk identity, how that identity was expressed, and his sense of adventure.

Recruitment from the lumber yards was prevalent from the inception of the Nile Expedition, and that reflected in the work culture among the Nile Voyageurs. Towards the end of the year, "the lumberman's year began as the farmer's year was drawing to a close," and farmers, including many Mohawks, ventured north for seasonal work.[111] Lansdowne requested recruits from the lumber yards for their mutual benefit; Lansdowne would rescue the lumbermen from the "dullness of the lumber trade" while

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[108] Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 21. Chief Running Deer was one of the first Indigenous persons to perform public exhibitions in the 1860s and had performed for King Edward VII on his visit to Canada.
[109] Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 34 - 35.
[110] Benn, *Mohawks on the Nile,* 104; Charles Hamori-Torok, "The Iroquois of Akwesasne (St. Regis), Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte (Tyendinaga), Onyota'a:ka (the Oneida of the Thames), and Wahta Mohawk (Gibson), 1750 - 1945," in *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives of the First Nations* ed. Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1994), 266.
[111] Donald MacKay, *The Lumberjacks* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 9, 73.

simultaneously filling his quota of Nile Voyageurs.[112] The Nile Expedition was the first opportunity for Deer to leave Kahnawake for the purposes of work; as he had only just turned eighteen that year, Deer had not experienced his first winter in the lumber yards as an adult and had yet to participate in the coming-of-age tradition of seeking dangerous employment outside the community centre.

As seen with Jackson, this continuation of a Mohawk coming-of-age tradition found its place within the Nile Expedition. Worldly curiosity and a desire to work outside the boundaries of Kahnawake led Deer to enlist on the Nile Expedition. At just eighteen years old, James Deer and his twenty-two-year-old brother John enlisted on the Nile Expedition to find adventure and travel to Egypt.[113] The Deer brothers served as boatmen alongside the other Mohawks from Kahnawake under the supervision of foreman Louis Jackson.

Contrasting Jackson's supervisory role, Deer's perspective represents the liminal Mohawk Nile Voyageurs whose transition into manhood was reliant on the success of the Nile Expedition. This cultural practice of boys leaving the village under the tutelage of a Mohawk elder is apparent in how Deer frames his experiences. Because the boys were seeking to become "warriors" in their society, Deer viewed the Nile Expedition as a battleground of sorts to prove the Mohawk's worth and skills by placing them in conflict with others.[114] This representation results in a unique Mohawk perspective, laden with a desire to fulfil a coming-of-age tradition and return home a man. As a young, ambitious

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[112] Lord Lansdowne to Lord Derby, telegram, August 23, 1884. Draft, P.A.C., G. 21, No. 162, Vol. 1. See also, Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 58.
[113] Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 257. The Deer brothers were numbers 32 and 34 on the Nominal Roll of Nile Voyageurs compiled by Stacey. At eighteen years old, James Deer was one of the youngest of the Nile Voyageurs.
[114] St. Onge, "Kahnawake Mohawks in the northwest fur trade, 1790 - 1850," 9.

Mohawk reaching adulthood aboard a laborious military expedition in a foreign land, Deer conscientiously constructed his representations abroad in *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* to reflect this. The intersection of labour, adventure, tradition, and Mohawk identity would come to define the experience of James Deer while in Egypt, as well as how he represented those experiences in his vaudeville performances.

Deer Season - The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt *and the Nile Expedition*

The perception of Egypt as a land of excitement for the Nile Voyageurs, along with James Deer's youthful inexperience of the world, are shown through the incorporation of Orientalist travel writing tropes in *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt*. Orientalist travel writing situated Westerners "in foreign lands encountering strange and disorienting customs and practices," and emphasized the "colonial preoccupation with land and empire."[115] This, coupled with the idea of Egypt as a land of ancient wonders, commodified the Orient and made it into a consumable product for Westerners. Deer exemplified this idea in *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt.*

Deer's role as a boatman with no additional responsibilities gave him more leisure time and ability to explore Egypt during down time. Deer describes the temple of Ramses II and its exploration by the Nile Voyageurs, noting its construction and intricate carvings.[116] During times when the Nile Voyageurs were not actively engaged on the boats, they were able to take in the sights of Egypt and take a tour of Cairo and the

[115] Lowe, *Critical Terrains,* 31.
[116] James D. Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, 1885), 9 - 10.

Pyramids. This tour was organized for the Nile Voyageurs after the completion of the Nile Expedition as a reward for their hard work, and for them to fully enjoy the sights.[117] As *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* was written to perform for white Western audiences, Deer's representation of the Orient was a methodical theatre staging, setting the scene for the Western audience by using tropes familiar to them. Deer situates the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs' presence in Egypt and establishes how he represents the Orient in his work. Deer utilises the tropes of Egyptian sights and novelties not only to describe the landscape of Egypt, but also the people themselves.

The fascination with Oriental nudity and sensuality is a prominent feature in textual and visual representations of the East, and the subversion of gendered representations in Deer's work can explain how he perceived the Egyptians he encountered. The intersection of nudity, gender, sexuality, and Orientalism has been largely studied regarding women and how it was used to reinforce patriarchal social norms and placate the male gaze. The sensually naked Oriental woman dominated representations to dehumanize and objectify them, making women of the East exotic and erotic goods for their pleasure.[118] Deer uses the naked Arab male to highlight the contrast of appropriate clothing and presentation in Western culture which presumes that the Oriental man is uncivilized and barbaric.[119] If nude Oriental women were a literary device to induce arousal, the nude male body in Deer's representation is intended to induce the opposite effect and pose a threat to masculinity.

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[117] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt*, 25 - 27. The Nile Voyageurs were given a government-sanctioned tour of Cairo and the Pyramids.
[118] Rana Kabbani, *Imperial fictions: Europe's myths of Orient* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1994), 69.
[119] Said, *Orientalism,* 59.

The threat to masculinity the male Arab presents that the Nile Voyageur must overcome demonstrates the warrior culture in the coming-of-age expedition of the Mohawks. In Deer's representation of the Orient, the naked, barbaric Arab is someone to subdue and dominate in order to become a true Mohawk warrior and fulfil this tradition. Additionally, the underrepresentation of women and their physicality emphasizes that Deer's representation of the Nile Expedition was a masculine sphere in a Mohawk perspective. The focus on male nakedness and use of the male gaze reinterprets its traditional Orientalist usage to the perception of the Nile Expedition as part of a masculine work environment.

When arriving at Cairo, the first observation Deer makes is of the Egyptian people and their appearance, emphasizing their Otherness and abject strangeness in relation to Mohawk practices. Deer notes that the Egyptians' "complexion is very dark, but not so dark as Negroes; their hair is straight, and they scarcely wear any clothing."[120] Deer continues his focus on the Egyptian body and nakedness further into the Nile Expedition, saying that the farmers "go naked, while others wear small aprons and most of them are bare-headed."[121] Compared to Jackson's observations of Egyptian farmers, Deer's emphasis is less on the Egyptian farming practices and more on the Egyptian farmer and their strangeness. The nakedness and strangeness of Egyptian men was only one of many ways Deer employs the archetype of the uncivilized, immoral Oriental.

The immorality of natives was presented by Deer not only through their physical appearance, but also through their customs, which put them in contention with the Nile Voyageurs. Though Deer had a few positive interactions with native Egyptians, his

[120] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 7.
[121] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt, 12-13.*

overall impression of them was negative. Deer called Arabs "extremely tricky and dishonest," and was critical of any interaction with them.[122] He even considered the Egyptians selfish, saying:

> "The first Arabic word we learned was 'backsheesh' which means present or gift, and we were told that the word 'finish' meant nothing to give, and consequently it was a word we heard quite very often."[123]

The implication that the Nile Voyageurs were hospitable but were met with greediness speaks to the supposedly uncultured, selfish nature of the Oriental but also reflects ingrained Orientalist tropes. Moreso, the act of non-reciprocation by the Arabs was insulting to Haudenosaunee practices and values.

In Haudenosaunee culture, the act of gift giving was sacred and ingrained in their values. Gifts marked social relationships, economic contracts, and were also used in treaty negotiations and celebrations.[124] The concept of reciprocity in gift-giving was equally important to the Mohawks and the Haudenosaunee, as they believed in "gift giving or social exchange between equals with the expectation of deference or obligations in return."[125] By Egyptians asking for gifts from the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs and then refusing to participate in reciprocal gift giving, they were seen as being impolite. Deer's representation of Egyptians as selfish was meant to highlight how antithetical Egyptian customs and social morals were to Mohawk ideals. The presentation of the immoral Egyptian in

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[122] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 8.
[123] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 13.
[124] William N. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making" in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League,* ed. Francis Jennings, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 24.
[125] James Cicarelli, "Economic Thought Among American Aboriginals Prior to 1492," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* Vol. 71, No. 1 (January 2012), 97 – 98.

interactions with the Nile Voyageurs is used to cast the latter as morally righteous figures that would overcome and subdue the former. The antagonism from Egyptians towards the Mohawks dictated how Deer represented his interactions with Egyptian peoples, as well as how Mohawks were victorious in these instances.

The representation of antagonistic Orientals and the righteous Mohawks may have had its roots in Indigenous performance and the perceptions of Others in Wild West Shows. In Wild West Shows, Indigenous performers played stereotyped "Indian" roles and were typecast as villains against white cowboy heroes.[126] These shows included "representations of Native peoples as exotic noble savages," stereotypes which were perpetuated in visual and print media.[127] The struggle between good and evil, civilized and uncivilized, cowboy and Indian within performances influenced Deer's writing and how he presented the Egyptians. Deer's subversion of the Wild West stereotypes and binaries became his method of demonstrating Mohawk abilities. Instead of Indigenous peoples being cast in the antagonistic role, Deer was able to frame Mohawks as the protagonists. The Nile Expedition allowed Deer to subvert caricatures in Indigenous representation and exercise agency in how he was able to represent his people, replacing the role of the "Indian" with the Oriental.

The trope of the aggressive, barbaric Oriental was utilized frequently by Deer in *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* to describe Mohawk interactions with the native

[126] Linda Scarangella McNenly, "Foe, Friend, or Critic: Native Performers with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Discourses of Conquest and Friendship in Newspaper Reports," *The American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring 2014), 145.
[127] McNenly, "Foe, Friend, or Critic," 144.

Egyptians, and Mohawks were consistently combating those they encountered. In Western discourse, "Islam came to symbolize terror…hordes of hated barbarians," and as the Nile Expedition was an imperial endeavour against Islamic militants, this influenced Deer's representation of the Egyptian people.[128] Many of the interactions that Deer has with Egyptians positions Canadians and Mohawks as the dominant party in conflicts, demonstrating their physical superiority. The interactions of Deer and native Egyptians are described in such a way that situates the Egyptians as aggressors and emphasizes negative Oriental traits.

Seldom does Deer portray Egyptians positively, and any portrayals of physical altercations mitigates any role the Nile Voyageurs may have had in them. In Girgeh, a local Egyptian was shot and killed by a Nile Voyageur when he was "looking for melons" in the Egyptian farmer's field and was subsequently chased off.[129] There are various interpretations of this story, depending on who was telling it. Some stories mention Nile Voyageurs shooting at a scarecrow, while others say that the Nile Voyageurs were attacked by the Egyptian farmers unprovoked.[130] These retellings absolve the Nile Voyageurs of guilt for their role in the shooting, underplaying the actions of the Canadians. This representation of events also contrasts Jackson's empathy for Egyptian farmers and the damage they endured from the Nile Expedition. Deer's

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[128] Said, *Orientalism,* 59.

[129] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 8. Deer adopts the story of melon-stealers, but the truth of this event varies by source; most agree that this event involved melon stealing, but Neilson fabricated a story of shooting at a scarecrow and the killing being an unfortunate incident. See also, Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs," 320.

[130] Anonymous, "THE CANADIAN VOYAGEURS. JOURNEY OF THE CONTINGENT UP THE NILE," *Montreal Daily Star,* November 24, 1884; Library and Archives Canada, John Louis Hubert Neilson fonds, MG29-E37, pg. 34-35. Though these letters to the *Montreal Daily Star* were anonymous, they were actually the works of Dr. John Louis Hubert Neilson, the Nile Voyageur's doctor and member of the Canadian Army. Neilson's diary of the Nile Expedition also features the Girgeh shooting, and makes his doubts about the melon story clear.

deliberate underscoring of malice on the part of the thieving Nile Voyageurs is an attempt to maintain the appearance of Canadian morality and attribute the aggressive actions to the local Arabs. However, the Girgeh incident was also a demonstration of physical domination over the Orient, as the Nile Voyageurs were victorious in this conflict.

The representation of physicality, masculinity, and competition were present throughout *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt*. They were also Deer's primary method of demonstrating Mohawk superiority. The influences of the lumber yards and Mohawk culture feature prominently in these representations due to Deer's upbringing in those two spheres. Though these influences are also present in Deer's Orientalist interpretation, there is a distinct separation within *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* of the Nile Voyageurs in Egypt and the Nile Voyageurs at work. The former emphasizes Nile Voyageurs versus Egyptians, and the latter Nile Voyageurs versus themselves. The representation of competition on the Nile Expedition was exacerbated by the division of the Nile Voyageurs into gangs.

The Nile Voyageurs and their division on boats into "gangs" according to their region of origin[131] created an arena of competition within the Nile Expedition, and Deer highlighted the Mohawk gang to demonstrate their superior work. The division of gangs created a microcosm of the Canadian frontier at the time; French, English, Mohawk, Manitobans, Peterborough, and other distinct geographic and linguistic Canadian groups were all represented in some form on the Nile Expedition. This separation contributed greatly to the Nile Voyageurs' ability to reject a collective Canadian identity. Like

[131] Hon. Adolphe Caron to Lord Lansdowne, letter, August 25, 1884. See also Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 63. Caron suggests letting the Nile Voyageurs "be led by one of their own race" or according to nationality. This could have been to alleviate issues of language barriers between the Nile Voyageurs, who spoke a variety of languages.

Jackson, Deer saw the Nile Expedition as a chance to showcase Mohawk skills on a global stage, but he preferred to do so by comparing the work done by the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs to the other gangs. Anglophone Canadians defined themselves by their relationships with the British and Indigenous Canadians and they tried to demonstrate to the public that "'Canadians and Indians' were distinct and separate," and that Indigenous men were not representatives of Canada.[132] Similarly, the Kahnawake men did not see themselves as representative of Canada but of Mohawk people. As a result, the Nile Expedition became an arena for competition wherein Deer was determined to illustrate the ability of the Mohawks by placing them in opposition to others.

Due to Deer's experience as a lumberman, he defined worth to contributions within a work environment. Similarly to Jackson, Deer sought to exhibit the skills of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs. Thus, he used superior workmanship to demonstrate Mohawk culture and domination. The intersection of dominance and display between traditional voyageurs has been explored by Podruchny, who argues that voyageurs created "hyper-masculinized practices, which enabled men to perform their manhood in exaggerated ways."[133] This includes through competition. In this case, the performance of masculinity and manhood through competition was demonstrated through the work they conducted, showcasing the skills of the Mohawks in juxtaposition to other Nile Voyageurs and participants of the Nile Expedition.

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[132] Michel, "To Represent the Country in Egypt," 48.

[133] Carolyn Podruchny, "Tough Bodies, Fast Paddles, Well-Dressed Wives: Measuring Manhood among French Canadian and Metis Voyageurs in the North American Fur Trade" in *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities Across Time and Place* ed. Robert Allen Rutherdale and Peter Gossage (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 337, 340.

As the Nile Expedition was a dangerous endeavour, and Mohawks purposefully sought out dangerous work to demonstrate their masculinity and skill, the loss of Mohawk lives held great significance. The death of Louis Capitaine, a fellow Kahnawake Mohawk, was a large point of contention for Deer. He gave a full recount of the events leading to Capitaine's drowning:

> Louis Capitaine, another of our Indian boatmen, was to manage the bow. Lord Perry [Lieut. Pirie of the Life Guards], however, the officer in this boat, took the tiller in his own hands and announced his intention of steering the boat; as January was at the bow, Capitaine was displaced altogether and was, in consequence, extremely sulky and bad-tempered… Capitaine stepped to the bow with his paddle, to assist. Being so angry he was probably careless and thrusting his paddle too deep into the water the force of the rapid threw him over the bow and about ten feet clear of the boat.[134]

Deer places the blame for Capitaine's death solely on the shoulders of Lord Pirie, who he thought had no right trying to steer the boats, undermining the authority of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs. Capitaine's carelessness is attributed to anger at his displacement by Pirie, which could also be interpreted as an insult to Capitaine's (and Mohawk) skills. In comparison, Deer provides a cursory overview of fifteen others who died during one stretch of the Nile Expedition, most not being named.[135] Deer's staunch defence of Capitaine and anger over his death asserted that the death was through no fault of the Mohawks but rather a white European who overstepped his bounds and attempted to usurp Mohawk authority.

The idea of gangs, competition, and fighting for local honour through the performance of work placed the Mohawks in direct competition with the French. This

[134] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt*, 11 - 12.
[135] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt*, 15.

resulted in physical violence. Deer recalls that after the Nile Expedition was completed and the Nile Voyageurs were being transported back to Canada, the French attacked the Kahnawake Nile Voyageurs because the Mohawks had performed better on the Nile Expedition than the rest.[136] The two groups had to be separated, but Deer does make sure to tell the reader that the French "were badly defeated" by the Mohawks until they were later ambushed one hundred men to twenty.[137] Deer emphasizes that Mohawks had bested a group of white Canadians not once, but twice, and it was only through dishonourable methods of combat that the French managed to defeat the Mohawks. The French conflict was a formidable display of Mohawk power and righteousness in the competition for physical dominance.

Competition and physical domination also found its place among the Nile Voyageurs through sports and friendly competitions. Sports were an important aspect of Mohawk history, identity, and nationalism, and the athleticism of the Kahnawake Mohawks was heavily featured in *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt.* The Kahnawake Nile Voyageurs even included a prominent lacrosse player, "Big" John Rice (Jean-Baptiste Taiaiake Rice), who had just returned from a tour of lacrosse exhibitions in 1883.[138] Lacrosse and sports games were important to the Haudenosaunee because, according to oral traditions, lacrosse (*tewa:aráton*) was a gift from the Creator and was

[136] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 28 - 29. Deer does not specify if only the Caughnawaga Mohawks were attacked, so it is presumed the French attacked all the Indigenous indiscriminately.
[137] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 28 - 29.
[138] Allan Downey, *The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood* (Victoria: UBC Press, 2018), 56.

not only a game, but a medicine and healing ritual.[139] It also served the function of keeping young Mohawk men active and healthy, and prepared them to be warriors.

In the Mohawk perspective, to perform and excel at lacrosse was not only important to display masculinity, but to also display an Indigenous identity. According to Burstyn, sport is a vehicle for hypermasculinity, and "masculinism, through sport, encourages and promotes other ideologies and other forms of inequality."[140] This idea, in conjunction with Indigenousness, sports, and the Nile Expedition explains how Deer's concentration on Mohawk athleticism was intended to promote Mohawk nationalism. Lacrosse as an Indigenous game "mirrors larger issues in Indigenous identity formation during Canada's Colonial Age and in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people," and this formation also extends to other games.[141] Presenting Mohawks as stronger and dominant over the non-Indigenous people was a method of expressing an Indigenous identity. Sports were a way to provide entertainment, but also were an opportunity to display physicality, masculinity, and power. When representing a nation, this meant they were also fighting for honour.

Aboard the *Ocean King* during their one-month trip to Egypt, the Nile Voyageurs amused themselves by holding games of tug of war that were divided by city of origin. Deer writes that the Kahnawake team won at tug of war, "beating the Manitoba, Ottawa, Peterborough, and Three Rivers teams each three times in succession."[142] The defeat of many groups (including other Indigenous peoples from Manitoba) was a proud moment

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[139] Downey, *The Creator's Game*, 8.
[140] Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 4.
[141] Downey, *The Creator's Game,* 21.
[142] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 6.

for Deer, especially because the Mohawks defeated their opponents multiple times, a testament to their skills. Despite being a friendly form of competition, the desire for victory was enough to erode comradery in favour of honour. Other Nile Voyageurs attempted to undermine the Kahnawake Mohawk victory, claiming they had an unfair advantage by wearing rubber shoes.[143] As a source of pride and masculinity among the Nile Voyageurs, sports were used by Deer to demonstrate the dominance of the Kahnawake Mohawks.

Competitions and sports exhibitions were performed not only amongst the Nile Voyageurs, but also between all on the Nile Expedition, and Deer used this competitive environment to display Mohawk athleticism. After the Nile Expedition was completed, the British Army hosted an array of sports games for the participants. Group sports were divided into teams of British, Canadian, and Egyptian men for the purpose of national representation.[144] The use of a collective Canadian identity is exploited by Deer to display their physical prowess, but he discards the Canadian identity to promote Mohawk victory whenever possible.

Deer describes how the Canadians bested the other groups, but the role of Kahnawake men is prioritized in his representation. The Canadian victory at tug of war, whose team was composed of Nile Voyageurs from all over Canada, was attributed to the number of Kahnawake Mohawks on the team.[145] However during individual foot races, Deer emphasizes how the Kahnawake Mohawks were especially dominant and bested

[143] Denison, September 26, 1884, *Diary of Nile Expedition 1884-1885.* See also, Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs,* 95.
[144] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 20 - 21.
[145] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 23. Deer lists Fred Ayotte, a Kahnawake Mohawk, on the Canadian team roster.

other Canadians.[146] Foot racing was also an important legacy in Mohawk sports history, and Deer's own father Chief Running Deer was renowned for his one-mile run and participated in games commemorating the 1860 Royal Visit to Canada.[147] Deer implies that, as a collective, Canadians were more athletic, strong, and masculine than the other groups on the Nile Expedition, but among the Canadians, the Mohawks were the most skilled. The Nile Expedition was concluded with this sports competition, and the Nile Voyageurs embarked for their journey back to Canada.

The World is the Mohawk Stage - Deer and Post-Expedition Performance

Returning home to Canada, James Deer published *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* to spread the word about Mohawk skills on the Nile Expedition. However, the process of publication proved difficult for him. Deer had trouble finding a publisher for his pamphlet; he ultimately had to fund its publication with his own money. Publishing the pamphlet "can be understood as an act of self-determination" and being resolute through adversity. Like Jackson, Deer knew the mass appeal and availability of print publications allowed for his representation of the Nile Expedition and the performance of Mohawks to be spread to a wider audience.[148] The publication of *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* may have been about a Mohawk experience, but his intended audience was not the Mohawk community.

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[146] Deer, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt,* 22 - 23.
[147] Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 21.
[148] Bold, *Vaudeville Indians*,143.

If the title *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* was used by Jackson to draw in the Mohawk community, *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* was intentionally used to intrigue white, Western, Canadian society. The Canadian public was heavily invested in the Nile Expedition and "the smallest bits of news were widely reprinted" to satisfy these needs.[149] By using a broader title that appropriated common monikers used in newspapers and publishing his account less than a year after the Nile Expedition was completed, Deer opportunistically catered to a large audience. Deer was able to maximize his range of consumer appeal by using the place of the Nile Voyageurs in public discourse to his advantage, but he also did it to subvert reader expectations.

Deer intended for the title *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* to imply that the exploits and experiences of the white Canadian Nile Voyageurs would be the topic of focus. With Canada still celebrating the return of the Nile Voyageurs and their work abroad, it would be presumed by the reader that a detailed recount would laud the Canadians, especially the white Canadians who vastly outnumbered the Mohawks. Instead, what readers received were tales of white Nile Voyageurs who were incompetent at their roles and Mohawk men who were celebrated for their success. Referring back to the idea of competition and representation, readers were also confronted with the defeat of white Canadians on a national and international stage by the Mohawks, which contrasted with the commonly held belief of white, European superiority. Content that promoted Mohawk strength and cast many of the white Canadians in a negative light was unanticipated by the audience. As a result of this, the pamphlet was used by Deer to promote a Mohawk identity outside the immediate community and outside the borders of

[149] Michel, "The Nile Voyageurs," 280.

Canada. Deer's method of promoting a Mohawk identity post-Nile Expedition is completely contrary to Jackson; while Jackson went on to advocate for local change in Kahnawake, Deer took Mohawk culture to the global stage.

After the Nile Expedition, James Deer and the rest of the Deer family returned to the performance circuit and incorporated *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* into his act. The presentation of Mohawk culture to Western audiences within the performance circuit circumvented settler culture and reinterpreted spectatorship of the Indigenous image. Indigenous performers repurposed and redefined dominant settler culture and stereotypes of Indigeneity, and Deer utilised his script and narrative as a way to negotiate agency and identity.[150] With the Nile Expedition and the death of Charles Gordon still relevant in public discourse, audiences knew of its events but had no exposure to Canadian experiences.[151] Advertisements of James and John Deer billed them as "veterans of the Lord Wolseley expedition…as boatmen-scouts, and had received medals from Queen Victoria."[152] Through his performance, Deer's representation became the leading authority of events from the Canadian perspective and his narrative was widespread. Commanding the narrative was Deer "exerting choice and authority over the space of performance" and how he presented Mohawk culture and skills.[153] *The Canadian*

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[150] Bold, *Vaudeville Indians,* 2; Linda Scarangella, "Indigeneity in Tourism: Transnational Spaces, Pan-Indian Identity, and Cosmopolitanism" in *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century* ed. Maximilian C. Forte (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 164.

[151] Louis Jackson and James Deer's accounts were the most readily available publications from the Nile Voyageurs. There were accounts and letters published in Canadian newspapers, such as the John A. Sherlock *Toronto Saturday Night* series, but had little to no circulation outside Canada. The closest equivalent would be *Les Voyageurs Canadiens a l'Expedition du Soudan* by Gaston P. Labat, who served as a medical officer, not a boatman.

[152] Bold, *Vaudeville Indians,* 153; Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 63.

[153] Bold, *Vaudeville Indians,* 144.

Voyageurs in Egypt was performed for many years afterwards, and its significance extended beyond the stage.

The continuation of *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* into the 1950s, over sixty years since the Nile Expedition's completion, raises questions about its legacy and importance among the Mohawks. Interest in the stage performance created and directed by Deer would "continue to mount until at least the 1950s" and be performed by his descendants.[154] Using Collin's idea that *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* was a modern reinterpretation of Indigenous oral traditions, the same argument can be applied to *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt.* The use of the Nile Expedition by Deer as a performative piece in Indigenous theatre is another modern interpretation of oral tradition, laced with visual components and storytelling.[155] This was an effective way to exploit growing public interest in theatre and vaudeville in the West while retaining elements of Mohawk tradition and representing Mohawk practices. The performance of *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* by Deer's descendants is also a reinterpretation of inheritance and the retention of cultural practices through the generations. The idea of performing while simultaneously retaining Mohawk identity was passed down through the Deer family, including to James' daughter, Esther.

Esther Deer, professionally known as "Princess White Deer" was an actress, singer, and performer. She was recognized for her Indigenous identity. Known for her "Indian" attire from clothes made in Mohawk tradition by her father to her grandfather's

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[154] Bold, "*Vaudeville Indians,"* 140.

[155] Christine Bold, "Princess White Deer's Show Blanket: Brokering Popular Indigenous Performance Across International Borders" *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada* 41:1 (2020), 45. Deer and his "Indian Village" would also perform horse tricks and dress in traditionally Mohawk attire. The Nile Expedition show was one of a variety of acts performed by the Deer family.

show blanket, Esther Deer was visibly and unapologetically Indigenous.[156] Her long, prolific career as a Mohawk performer led her across the world, but she used her platform alongside her father to advocate for Indigenous peoples. Residing in New York, James and Esther Deer fought against injustices against Indigenous people by the American government. At Annual Indian Day in 1929, the two pleaded "for solidarity to preserve the identity of the Indian race," in the face of hegemonic white American society.[157] Deer's post-Nile and post-performance life turned him towards the public political realm, and he embraced his identity as a Mohawk chief.

Much like Jackson had decades earlier, the Nile Expedition was used by Deer as a political device to garner respect and legitimacy in Mohawk politics. In 1937, James Deer attempted to revive the traditional Iroquois Confederacy while acting as a Mohawk chief. Deer invited Iroquois chiefs from the Six Nations to a council at St. Regis.[158] This act was in direct defiance to the government and their attempts at limiting Indigenous autonomy. In 1924 the Canadian government had overthrown the Confederacy Council in Brantford and forcibly implemented band council elections.[159] Deer began his speech to a less than captive audience with "how he helped conquer the Nile with Wolseley at Khartoum."[160] As his most famous exploit, the Nile Expedition was invoked to legitimize Deer as a Mohawk elder. However, this narrative neglects the fact he was a boatman, not a leader or prominent community figure like Jackson was. Deer was also forty years too

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[156] Bold, *Vaudeville Indians,* 158. See also, Bold, "Princess White Deer," 39; Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows,* 134.
[157] Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 169.
[158] Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 174. Deer was not regarded as a traditional chief by many, who were satisfied with the current political administration by Mohawks.
[159] Susan M. Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 236.
[160] Galperin, *In Search of Princess White Deer,* 178.

early in the attempt to revive the Iroquois Confederacy, which gained traction in the 1970s as a political method to build kinship lies and links between Mohawks and Iroquois.[161] James Deer died a few years after his attempt to revitalize the Iroquois Confederacy in 1939.

Conclusion

James Deer - Nile Voyageur, vaudeville performer, and not-quite-Mohawk-chief - was a young, ambitious man when he left on the Nile Expedition at eighteen years old, and it influenced his life as his greatest act. The writing, performance, and legacy of *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* as a pamphlet and stage performance demonstrated Mohawk skills and cultural practices through the experiences of the Mohawk Nile Voyageurs. Deer's experience with the Orient and the Nile Expedition, along with how he represented them, incorporates many influences from his Mohawk Canadian upbringing: class, labour, race, and gender. All these influences helped him navigate and negotiate agency within colonial institutions.

The reconstitution of Mohawk identity within white cultural institutions by Deer represents the cultural aspect of self-determination in Mohawk nationalism. Orientalism, labour, race, and masculinity were all reinterpreted by Deer and situated in his pamphlet *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt.* The later adaptation of the pamphlet as a stage performance to promote Mohawk identity also represented self-determination and the negotiation of Mohawk agency within spaces that commodified the Indigenous image.

[161] Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors,* 135.

While a political advocate and hereditary chief of the Mohawks, James Deer's cultural contributions as an early vaudeville performer were significant in the construction and presentation of Mohawk identity, practices, and nationalism.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

On July 11, 1990, the Oka Crisis erupted between Mohawk protestors from Kanesatake, Akwesasne, and Kahnawake and the Canadian government. The Oka Crisis was a local response to the Oka government and development companies encroaching on Mohawk territory.[162] The land was being appropriated under the instruction of Oka Mayor Jean Ouellette to develop a golf course.[163] Media coverage of the Oka Crisis drove public discourse over Indigenous rights, as the Canadian Armed Forces were deployed to end the crisis.[164] The coverage of the Oka Crisis garnered international attention to the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and all eyes were on the Mohawks of Kahnawake.

In 2005, the world would turn its attention to Indigenous peoples again, not as warriors fighting for their rights, but as spectacles in performances. Euro-Disney unveiled its recreation of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show featuring Native performers.[165] The Euro-Disney show was created to coincide with the centennial of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show coming to France in 1905 and featured shows similar to the original. Euro-Disney featured shows such as stagecoach robberies, historical re-enactments, horse trick

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[162] Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of our Ancestors,* 2. Alfred was living in Kahnawake at the time of the Oka Crisis, and this inspired his scholarship of nationalism in Kahnawake.
[163] Harry Swain, *Oka: A Political Crisis and its Legacy* (Madeira Park: D & M Publishers, 2010), 74. The proposed golf course never came to being due to the Oka Crisis and intervention from the federal government.
[164] Swain, *Oka*, 129.
[165] Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*," 142.Scarangella specifically uses "Native" instead of Indigenous because performers were from all over North America, not just Canada.

riding, and more.[166] In these performances, Natives were spectacularized and their skills put on display for public entertainment.

The common thread linking these two seemingly unconnected events together is that they are a continuation of Mohawk practices from the Nile Expedition and the Mohawk community. These two events represent two facets of Mohawk nationalism and self-determination: cultural and political resistance to and reinterpretation of colonial institutions that aimed to suppress Mohawk rights and agency. Both these events also have commonalities in how participants in the Nile Expedition inspired these movements. The Nile Expedition was a device used by Louis Jackson and James Deer, two Mohawk Nile Voyageurs, in their promotion and formulation of Mohawk nationalism. As a broader representation of the Mohawk desire for self-determination and retention of a cultural identity, Mohawk nationalism became a core method in how their experiences in Egypt were represented and how they used the Nile Expedition to further their careers.

As a politician and community leader, Louis Jackson became a proponent in advancing Mohawk political sovereignty and resistance to Canadian colonial institutions. Jackson was the foreman of the Kahnawake Nile Voyageurs in Egypt, and his monograph *Our Caughnawagas in Egypt* is laden with elements of Mohawk cultural practices. In Kahnawake, Jackson was an advocate for the band council system and the replacement of the Council of Chiefs, which succeeded. Nile Expedition was used to legitimize Jackson's election to the band council and invoked during his career to gain recognition and respect. Jackson would use his position on the band council to advance ideas of Mohawk nationalism and greater autonomy.

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[166] Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*," 142.

Deer, as a performer, was a revolutionary in his production and management of *The Canadian Voyageurs in Egypt* as a vaudeville show. Deer subverted preconceptions and schematizations of Indigenous performers. His representations of the Nile Voyageurs and Mohawks in Egypt were centred around the display of Mohawk power, skills, and culture. The integration and dispersal of Mohawk culture among a global audience reframed Mohawk culture in ways that challenged colonial institutions and negotiated agency within. The Nile Expedition was a catalyst for Mohawk nationalism and influenced how contemporary Mohawks engage with nationalist ideas and their own cultural roots.

The experiences of Mohawk boatmen on the Nile Expedition and their representations in written accounts illustrates how some Indigenous peoples were adapting to life in post-Confederation Canada. The refusal to acquiesce to forced assimilation and the fight against systemic and social inequality helped the preservation of Indigenous cultural practices. As a British military endeavour in Egypt, the Nile Expedition would be an unexpected location for ideas of Mohawk nationalism to manifest. However, Louis Jackson, James Deer, and the contingent of Kahnawake Nile Voyageurs demonstrated the value of the Mohawks to the world.

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