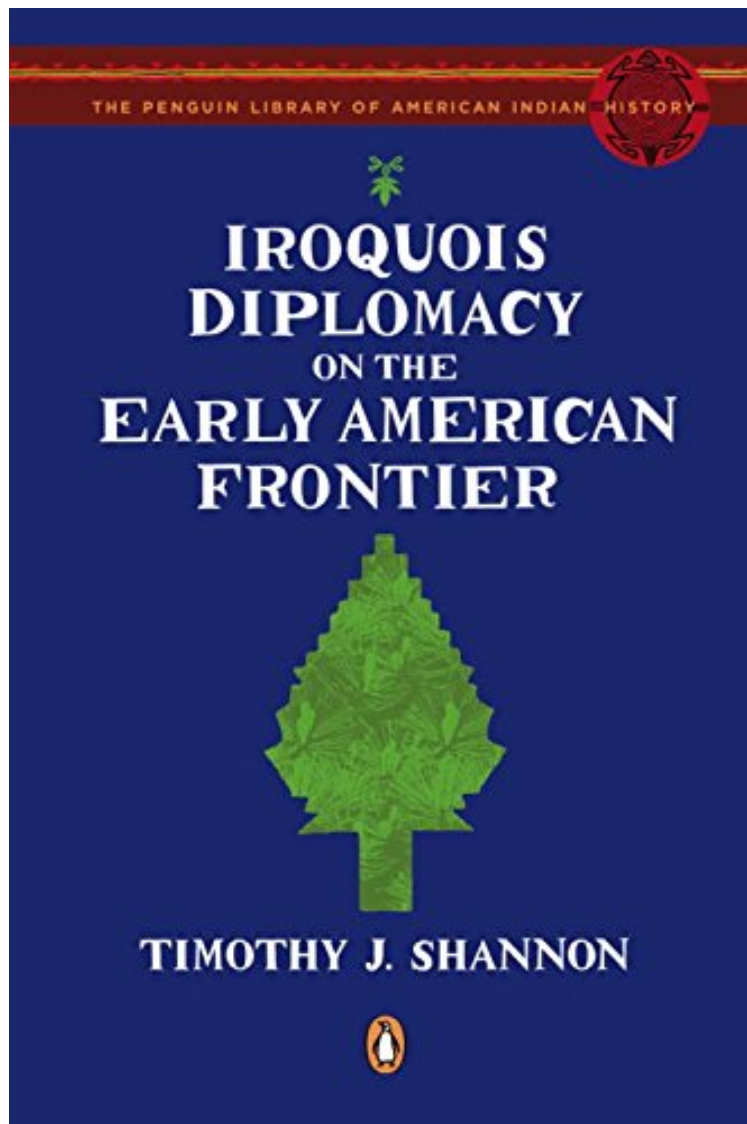


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Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier (Penguin Library of American Indian History)

Timothy J. Shannon

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I very rarely gush over my book reviews (just check out my other reviews). In fact, I am usually quite harsh and focus primarily on the negative, but this book review is perforce going to be different. The fact is that I loved this book.
Iroquois Diplomacy by Timothy J. Shannon is a scholarly monograph on the form and substance of Iroquois treaty making and diplomatic/trade interactions with both Europeans and other Native American groups from the origins of the Iroquois as a distinct people until the 1800s. It is a combined work of history and historical anthropology done to the highest standards of Scholarly integrity. This does not sound like the most fascinating or gripping of subjects but somehow Shannon has done it. The language and narrative style are dynamic and drive the reader onward through what would normally be repetitive accounts of Byzantine and obscure treaties and conferences. This is done without sacrificing scholarly integrity in the least. In fact this is one of the most academically honest books in the best traditions of good historiography. By way of example, the author is necessarily quite limited in his source material for the early days of the Iroquois because of the lack of any written material so he is forced to rely on later accounts. However, when he does so, he points out when and where his material originated and does not make the mistake of reprinting as fact what is only conjecture. He draws on an incredible variety of primary and secondary sources and places each in its context and proper place in his work. His first few chapters are particularly interesting and explain the format of Iroquois diplomatic ritual and their origins. He then goes on to show how Europeans adopted/adapted these forms in their dealings with the Iroquois. The later chapters are a narrative chronicle of the major treaty conferences and resultant treaties with the European powers. Finally, and I am really sorry to be so unreservedly complementary of a book, to add to this list of superlatives, is his stunning even-handed treatment of ALL parties. There was little or no detectable bias or agenda behind this text. I truly admire that since it is very hard to accomplish. He shows all parties in their nobility and with all their blemishes and weaknesses. Despite being a monograph on historical anthropology this book is very accessible, requiring no great amount of additional background knowledge on the part of the reader. This book, or at least selections from it -particularly the early chapters-, could (and should) be incorporated into a high school or undergraduate course on American history, and yet could still be read with profit by a professor of the same subject. Quite simply I recommend this book to anyone, ANYONE, with an interest in American, Colonial, or Diplomatic History as well as Anthropology and Native Americans. Disclaimer: I do not -to the best of my knowledge- know nor have met the author or the publisher, nor do I have any financial interest in this book's sales. My average book rating is 3 stars and this would get six if I could do it.

The newest addition to the Penguin Library of American Indian History explores the most influential Native American Confederacy More than perhaps any other Native American group, the Iroquois found it to their advantage to interact with and adapt to white settlers. Despite being known as fierce warriors, the Iroquois were just as reliant on political prowess and sophisticated diplomacy to maintain their strategic position between New France and New York. Colonial observers marveled at what Benjamin Franklin called their "method of doing business" as Europeans learned to use Iroquois ceremonies and objects to remain in their good graces. Though the Iroquois negotiated with the colonial governments, they refused to be pawns of European empires, and their savvy kept them in control of much of the Northeast until the American Revolution. Iroquois Diplomacy and the Early American Frontier is a must-read for anyone fascinated by Native American history or interested in a unique perspective on the dawn of American government.

From Publishers Weekly
In this scholarly examination of Iroquois diplomacy through the 17th and 18th centuries, historian Shannon rejects the depiction of the Iroquois as noble savages and fierce warriors during the colonization of North America. Instead, he posits, They were flesh and blood participants in a scramble for dominion in North America, and diplomacy was their tool of choice. By maintaining official neutrality during the colonial wars, the Iroquois became key interlocutors in the New World their diplomatic language and rituals became the lingua franca of New World multicultural deal making. Shannon credits the Iroquois strategy of diplomacy and occasional subterfuge with securing their survival as a political entity, pointing out, Other Indians might have fought bravely against the European invaders, but only the Iroquois created a confederacy that was capable of withstanding the juggernaut of colonialization for so long. Shannon meticulously chronicles Iroquois political maneuvering, and although many readers will find the highly technical account tedious, true aficionados of Native American history will relish this serious and sympathetic account of the Iroquois' skilled, if ultimately doomed, diplomacy. (July) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
About the Author
Timothy J. Shannon is professor and chair in the department of history at Gettysburg College. He is the author of several books, including Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier, American Odysseys: A History of Colonial North America, and The Seven Years' War in North America: A Brief History with Documents. Colin Calloway is a British

American historian. He is the John Kimball, Jr. 1943 Professor of History and a professor of Native American Studies at Dartmouth College.