

# The Biographical Essay of John A. Gibson (1850-1912), the Seneca Chief of the Six Nations Reserve, Ontario, Canada.

Takeshi KIMURA

## Abstract

This essay attempts to construct and explore the life of John A. Gibson (1850-1912), the Seneca chief of the Six Nations Reserve, Ontario, Canada, by referring to the historical sources which have hitherto not been used. I will show that as a social agent in history, Gibson can be seen as being “traditional” in relation to the narrative and ritual tradition, yet should also be seen as being “modern” in his active relation to the economic and political structure of his time. My historical study shows that Gibson narrated his Onondaga myth not only for the sake of conserving it, but also for the sake of claiming political authority and power of the hereditary chiefs’ council in responding to the immediate political situation.

## Introduction

John A. Gibson was a condoled Seneca chief of the Six Nations Reserve, Ontario, well known to various American and Canadian ethnologists.<sup>1</sup> During his life, he helped such ethnologists as Horatio E. Hale,<sup>2</sup> Alexander A. Goldenweiser,<sup>3</sup> F. W. Waugh,<sup>4</sup> Edward Sapir,<sup>5</sup> and J. N. B. Hewitt<sup>6</sup> in their studies. As to Gibson’s erudition, Goldenweiser, working on the kinship system of the Hotinonshon:ni, lamented Gibson’s sudden death in 1912, and wrote:

Among my informants, by far the most thorough and versatile was Chief John A. Gibson (Seneca) who died on November 1, 1912, while our work was in progress.<sup>7</sup>

John A. Gibson was born in 1850 to John Gibson, an Onondaga chief, whose title was Atotarho, one of the main Onondaga chieftain titles and Hanna Gibson of the Turtle clan of the Seneca Nation. John A. Gibson had two brothers, George and Cornelius, and two sisters, Susan and another whose name is unknown. John was appointed chief in 1872 at the age of twenty-three. Due to an injury he suffered during a lacrosse game, he became blind at the age of thirty-one. John A. Gibson had three children with his Cayuga wife.<sup>8</sup> John A. Gibson died suddenly at the age of sixty-three in 1912.

The Iroquois narrative traditions Gibson provided to contemporary ethnologists became a major source for later scholars such as W. N. Fenton, Hanni Woodbury and James W. Herri-<sup>9</sup> Though we know what Gibson narrated to outside researchers, his biographical life is

not so much known to us. A glimpse into his life comes mainly from William N. Fenton. In discussing the Onondaga cosmogonic myth Gibson narrated to Hewitt, Fenton writes that Gibson was concerned with conserving the narrative tradition.

I am confident that as guardians of the lore of the Iroquois Longhouse, Chief John Gibson and Seth Newhouse would have been intrigued but not amazed to learn that their myth of the beginning of the world has such a distinguished world history; but they would claim priority for it in America, where they were certainly its greatest systematists. This drive toward synthesis which is so evident in the culture of the nineteenth-century Iroquois and which characterizes their two greatest myths, the Myths of the Earth-grasper and the Deganawidah epic, represents in my opinion a response to the threat of the dominant culture by these narrators of ancient myths who seek to conserve as much of the old culture as possible within an ancient matrix. This is the whole history of the Longhouse movement, and it is exemplified among the Six Nations of Grand River by the career of Chief John A. Gibson, who was its greatest advocate.<sup>10</sup>

Fenton's characterization of Gibson as a great advocate of the Longhouse religion reveals some aspects of his life. Fenton's view is also supported by Dean Snow's portrait of the modern Iroquois history in the sense that Gibson was highlighted as a major influential traditional chief at that time.<sup>11</sup> In order to complement their views and to reconstruct a biography of John A. Gibson, I conducted archival research of the microfilm of the Minutes of the Six Nations Reserve Council and that of the book of correspondence of E. D. Cameron, the then Superintendent of the Indian Affairs of Canada in 1996.<sup>12</sup> Also, with the help of the Cayuga chief Jacob E. Thomas of the Six Nations Reserve,<sup>13</sup> I studied Gibson's biography with reference to the Cayuga text of "The Life of John Gibson Narrated to A. A. Goldenweiser by Mrs. Gibson."<sup>14</sup> Based on my historical research, I will argue that Gibson narrated the Onondaga cosmogonic myth for the sake of achieving the political claim of the hereditary chiefs' council, too. In this paper, I will carry out the task of "imagining history" based on my archival research.

Gibson was known to be an important chief, yet he was still one among many other important and influential chiefs. Therefore, it seems to be exaggeration to lay too much importance on him alone.

In addition, as Fenton's above remarks implies, Gibson as a systematizer of the narrative tradition almost can be said to have "invented" a tradition and then defended it.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, it is arguable in what sense Gibson was a "traditional" chief since his political and economic life sometimes didn't accord with the "traditional" Iroquois way academic literatures describe.

Gibson was very keen to accept the historical changes and at some point, he accepted the new and introduced cultural values within a complex matrix of a new cultural mode. For example, as Gibson's mother was a member of the Turtle clan of the Seneca nation, he was remembered as the Seneca chief. Yet, when it came to the inheritance of his father's land, he didn't insist on the principle of the matrilineal inheritance, which Iroquoian literature char-

acterizes as the traditional aspect of the Iroquois society. Considering the more complicated character of John A. Gibson, which the historical materials reveal to us, I will examine the biographical aspects of Gibson in this article. For the sake of convenience, I will divide his life into several aspects: 1) Young John A. Gibson as a lacrosse player; 2) the Gibson's family's issues; 3) John A. Gibson as a Longhouse chief on the hereditary council; and 4) John A. Gibson's ritual knowledge and mythic narratives

### **1. Young John A. Gibson: a Lacrosse Player**

John A. Gibson was born into the historical period when the Six Nations Reserve was undergoing various social changes. To understand his biographical life, it is necessary to examine the historical background. Here, I will discuss the brief history of the Six Nations Reserve.

There are several useful studies of the history of the Six Nations Reserve by Charles M. Johnson and Sally M. Weaver.<sup>16</sup> The history of the Six Nations Reserve starts with a man named Joseph Brant.<sup>17</sup> He was instrumental in persuading the Iroquois Confederacy to join the British against the thirteen colonies, while negotiating with the British to secure the land for his people after the war. In 1784, the Six Nations was granted the land along the Grand River, Ontario, from the British by the Haldimand Grant. Yet, later as white immigration increased, partly because Brant encouraged his white friends to move into the area, there was much authorized squatting on the Six Nations Reserve. As the number of unofficial transactions between individual Iroquois and white land purchasers increased, these agreements isolated the natives stretching out along the Grand River, making them more vulnerable to further white incursion.

In response to this situation, on 27 November 1840, the Upper Canada government passed an order-in-council, "which recommended that the whole of the remaining Six Nations lands, apart from a compact block reserved for their exclusive benefit and free from white encroachment, be surrendered to the Crown."<sup>18</sup> Since the Superintendent of Indian Affairs strongly advocated this scheme, several influential chiefs of the Six Nations Reserve accepted it and signed the surrender document. Yet, this compact caused conflict among the native chiefs as some accused those chiefs who signed the compact of having failed to follow traditional procedures of the Six Nations because the matter was not fully debated among the council chiefs. This conflict eventually caused division between the acculturated leaders and those who were more conservative.

When the Six Nations surrendered their lands to the Crown, they decided to consolidate all the nations on one territory along the Grand River. Between 1847 and 1848, the chiefs, together with the help of the Superintendent, allocated the whole land to most Six Nations families. The settlement pattern shows the division between the more acculturated group, predominantly Christians near Brantford, and the more conservative element of the Longhouse religions further away. There is no documentation about the way the Council allocated

the land, yet it seems that the land was allocated according to the contemporary way.

The establishment of the multi-national Six Nations Reserve in 1847 gave the hereditary council legitimacy in both the community and the Indian Department. Before this settlement, the national councils of the individual nations governed their respective villages. According to Sally M. Weaver, the entire Confederacy Council before 1847 met only for matters affecting the Six Nations as a whole, such as land transactions or dealing with the Grand River Navigation Company. After 1847 the full council condemned separate meetings of the national councils as divisive.<sup>19</sup>

John A. Gibson was born into this new phrase of the history of the Six Nations Reserve. Though there is no information about his childhood, Mrs. Gibson's biographical account provides the picture of young John. For unknown reasons, her narrative ends in the middle of his life story. Yet, from Mrs. Gibson's biographical account, it is possible to see John as a competitive and vigorous youth, especially through his involvement in lacrosse.<sup>20</sup> Even in her account, it is easy to see that John A. Gibson did not just live in a "traditional" sense.

Mrs. Gibson begins her narrative by describing how their marriage started. John's and her parents had arranged their marriage, and provided the young couple with a few animals such as a pig and a chicken. In addition, her parents helped them to build a house and a small bridge over the creek. It is easy to see in her narrative that the matrilocality was no longer in effect and the nuclear family was well introduced into the Six Nations Reserve.

Though it is known that lacrosse was very important to the native men, it is rather peculiar that Mrs. Gibson's narrative of her husband's life is almost wholly occupied with lacrosse. It is necessary to examine why she laid emphasis so much on this aspect of John's life.

There are several aspects of playing lacrosse in her narrative: the way lacrosse was played; the way the clan system functioned on the occasion of lacrosse expedition; and the introduction of capitalist values into playing lacrosse. Though she doesn't clearly mention the name of John in her narrative, it is assumed that he was involved in these occasions she narrated.

Her description is corroborated by other accounts. Until the mid-nineteenth century, any male could join in a lacrosse game. Often, a senior player walked around to look for other young men to join the game. When the Six Nations Reserve was invited to play lacrosse by the players of other reservations, a group of able men got together to form a temporary team. "The people volunteer to go there to play lacrosse."<sup>21</sup>

Mrs. Gibson also narrated the way the clan system functioned within the sport. It was an important social function of lacrosse to reestablish ties among the clan members who lived in different villages. A woman on the receiving side would find the men of the same clan and take them to her home and take care of them during their stay. At night, the people entertained each other and danced together and sang songs.<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Gibson remembered that it was a very nice feeling to see that everybody was happy, peaceful and content, and said that "it was the way our Creator who came from the Sky World gave us."<sup>23</sup> According to Elisabeth Tooker, what Mrs. Gibson narrated here reflects "one of the most important functions of the

clan.”<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, Mrs. Gibson provided information about the changing views of lacrosse once money was introduced into the scene. On one occasion, a native group played lacrosse and received money to cover part of the travel expenses. However, since they lost the game, they lacked funds to return home. For an unstated reason, a person, who seems to have been a white, offered to pay for them to go back home. After this incident, Mrs. Gibson said that the native lacrosse players found that they would not volunteer for playing lacrosse without being paid for the whole round-trip cost.

On another occasion, a person, who seems to have been a white, came to the Six Nations Reserve to recruit native lacrosse players for the game. Though the person paid the necessary expenses for which Mrs. Gibson expressed her great appreciation, the native players of the lacrosse were paid very little after the game. Some were paid one dollar while some were paid one and half. They weren't satisfied with the amount of payment. After this, they started to think about forming the team.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that both Mr. and Mrs. Gibson were involved in organizing the lacrosse team and took a leadership role.<sup>26</sup> The organizers asked the people to sign up for the team and to donate funds to the team for necessary expenses.<sup>27</sup> There were twelve members of the players in the team while other members just donated funds to the team.

Afterward, in order for any outsiders to play a lacrosse game with the Six Nations team, they would have to write down the conditions of the contract with respect to reimbursement and travel expenses and represent it to the Six Nations team.

She described how a lacrosse game went. On one occasion, she said that while the native team and the other team were playing the game, there arose a conflict over the manner of scoring. Though they were arguing during the game, she said, they were happy when the game was over. On another occasion of the lacrosse game, Mrs. Gibson said that there were many spectators. Mrs. Gibson said that on another occasion, the members of the opposing white team which was losing the game tried to hit the native players with the sticks angrily during the game. Afterward, the white spectators joined in the fight.

The above is a rough summary of Mrs. Gibson's narrative of the biography of John A. Gibson. To understand the reason why she emphasized the importance of lacrosse in Gibson's life, it is necessary to understand the role of the war in the Iroquois life.

After the Iroquois confederacy ceased to be useful as a military ally for British Canada, the incorporation of the natives into the Canadian social structure began and native men lost the traditional means to prove their strength and power since wars had formerly been the locus of winning fame and glory. Therefore, the loss of warrior status coincided with the loss of political independence. In relationship to this change, the importance of the lacrosse for the young men is understandable. What Raymond D. Fogelson says about the Cherokee ball game can also be applied to the Six Nations:

The game may have taken on more of the attributes of real warfare. Games were probably

fought with more deadly earnestness, since the ball play served as, perhaps, the only activity by which young men could earn the sort of prestige and status formerly acquired on the war path. Large amounts of aggression formerly directed outward against Whites and other Indians tribes were now turned inward against fellow Cherokee of neighboring towns or political districts. The games took on a new seriousness.<sup>28</sup>

Playing lacrosse provided an alternative source for a new social construction of a renewed native manhood.<sup>29</sup>

## 2. The Gibson's Family's Issues

Among Iroquois scholars, mainly due to J. N. B. Hewitt's portrait of him, there is a circulated image of John A. Gibson as a wise traditionalist. Gibson was often approached by the officials of the Indian Affairs Office to give insightful advice in cases of native conflict.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it is rather surprising to find out that he himself was involved in a family dispute over the inheritance of his late father's land. Furthermore, though traditionally the Iroquois society was known to be matrilineal and matrilocal, in his own issue of inheritance, it seems that he wasn't bothered by the fact that he insisted on the patrilineal inheritance. Though Gibson himself was a "traditionalist," it seems that he had to be a pragmatist when it came to the inheritance of family property.

There are several kinds of disputes in which John was directly or indirectly involved. I will summarize these cases into four kinds; the first is a dispute between John's mother and her brother; second is one between Mrs. John A. Gibson and her brother; third is one among his siblings over their inheritance over the lots having belonged to their father; and fourth is one between him and another native person.

The first is John's mother's land dispute with her brother. From the minutes, it is not clear for which reason and who filed a suit first in this case. On 6 May 1887, the hereditary council made their decision as to the dispute between John's mother and her brother Jacob Hill.

In reference of a dispute between Mrs. John Gibson Sr. Widow. vs. Jacob Hill, on North 1/2 of Lot No. 8 in the fifth Concession, Tuscarora shall be divided into the equal parts, each shall get one half that is say Mrs. John Gibson shall have and occupies. Jake Hill shall have the east 1/2 west 1/2 of the North 1/2 of Lot No. 8 in the 5th Cons. Tus, Co. of Brant, Ontario.<sup>31</sup>

This record shows that at this time, the principle of matrilineal inheritance which was one of the important aspects of the matriarchal society was no longer unchallenged. In addition, it is possible to say that the patrilineal principal had not yet been established despite the imposition of the Canadian law. Since the minutes states "Mrs. John Gibson Sr. Widow," there is a ques-

tion how she made a living after her husband died, and who supported her. As to the council's attitude to her, the council gave financial aid to her since she had some financial problems after her husband's death.<sup>32</sup> It is possible to guess that her son, John A. Gibson, was involved in the council's discussion, therefore, even if he did not express his own view, his presence in the council was indirectly involved in this family dispute.

The second kind of the dispute involved the members of Gibsons' family over the inheritance of their father's land. Considering that John's father's land was located along the Grand River which had direct access to the river water, the land must have been valuable for agriculture.<sup>33</sup> On 4 July 1896, the council speaker proposed to solve the Gibson's family dispute, but John and his brother opposed his proposal.

The Fire Keeper announced that the estate of late John Gibson containing 100 acres of land shall be divided into six equal parts, that is, between his widow, three sons, and two daughters. and that John A. Gibson and George Gibson be paid off by their youngest brother Cornelius Gibson, but is strongly objected by the said John A. Gibson, and George Gibson.<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting to notice that the Fire Keeper himself did not assume the traditional inheritance principle of matrilineality. Both John and George were against the proposed solution not because he violated the matrilineal principle, but because they were told to give their land up to their youngest brother, who in return would pay them.

To solve this dispute, a Gibson family member arranged complicated land transactions among them through the quite claim, which was a legal procedure which a native of the Six Nations Reserve took to transfer the title of the land to other natives because legally the Six Nations Reserve owned the reserve land and allocated the land to each native residents of the reserve.<sup>35</sup> The Gibson family's land dispute had not yet completed by this land transaction. Especially, the dispute between Mrs. Simon Bombery and Cornelius Gibson lasted for a little while.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the in-house land dispute of the Gibson family, John A. Gibson had his own personal dispute with others over the land-transaction.<sup>37</sup> It seems from the records that when Mary Isaac gave up her land to Martha Styres, somehow John A. Gibson obtained some of her land and in return was ordered to pay some balance due, probably to Mary. In taking certain lots of the land, he also took her pony because the pony was regarded as belonging to the land. Yet, when Alexander Hill later began to take care of Mary Isaac (it is not known what relationship there was between them) because she lived on a pension from the Six Nations Council, he claimed he should take her pony back from Gibson.

After John's death, his wife was involved in a land dispute with her brother, James W. Sky, and his wife.<sup>38</sup> From the council minutes, it seems that Mrs. Gibson was claiming her inheritance right to her parents' land based upon the Iroquois traditional matrilineality. It seems that she was against her brother inheriting some of their parents' land.



There is also an issue of the financial relationship between John A. Gibson and the council. The records of the council minutes provide some insights into the financial situation of John A. Gibson. He often received loans from the council.<sup>39</sup> Considering the amount of loans granted to John A. Gibson, it is impossible not to take notice of the fact that he himself was a hereditary chief among the hereditary council. Did his status of being a hereditary chief help him to receive favorable treatment by the hereditary council? There is no hard evidence to support it, but it is quite possible. In another case, at least Gibson seems to be given favorable treatment by his colleagues of the hereditary council. Since Gibson was blind, he received a pension from the Six Nations Reserve Council. Yet, in 1908, the council began to reconsider granting pensions due to blindness. The council decided not to continue to give pension to those who were blind except Gibson. On 8 December 1908, the Minutes reads;

John A. Gibson who is first on the pension list and the same was placed on the said pension list in 1878 on account of blindness, and he has been on ever since. The Council decided that he be allowed to remain on the pension list, and all others who are on the pension list on account of blindness will be skipped over.<sup>40</sup>

It is not known why only John A. Gibson received an exemption in this case. At least it is possible to say that he was favored due to his status.

### **3. John A. Gibson as a Longhouse Chief on the Iroquois Confederacy**

Against the outside society, Gibson acted to represent the Six Nations' voice and interests and defended them in various ways. He was also actively involved in managing and distributing the Six Nations' wealth.

#### **(a) Gibson's diplomatic works**

The Six Nations Council functioned as a cultural representative of the Six Nations Reserve to the outside society. The council often sent its delegations to the outside associations to represent the Six Nations' interest and concern, and John A. Gibson was often included. I will list several instances when Gibson was included in the Six Nations delegation.

1. On 5 1890, delegates to attend the Bay of Quinte Grand Council.
2. On 4 1896, the reception of the Governor General
3. On 5 May 1897, delegates to attend the Historical Society's meeting at Niagara at the Lake
4. On 3 May 1898, delegates to attend the meeting of the Pioneer and Historical Association of Ontario.<sup>41</sup>
5. On 23 October 1902, Gibson was appointed as a Deputation to go to Ottawa instead of Chief J. M. M. Elliot, as they are too many Mohawks appointed already.<sup>42</sup>



Gibson was often included among the chiefs who were asked to compose letters or documents directed toward the outside. When the Six Nations Council send a telegram of condolence to England after Queen Victoria died, the council appointed several chiefs including John A. Gibson to see the Superintendent to send their condolence note to England.<sup>43</sup> The Six Nations Council conferred a symbolic chieftain title to an important administrative officer from Ottawa. On 5 October 1901, on the day when the Deputy Supt. General F. Pedley visited the Six Nations.<sup>44</sup> Iroquois people in the USA asked the Six Nations chiefs to teach them about the Longhouse traditions. When the Six Nations Council was asked to write down the Six Nations Law on 17 March 1903, several chiefs including John A. Gibson were appointed to write it down.<sup>45</sup>

In 1893, when the Colombian Exhibition was held in Chicago, the Six Nations Council discussed whether or not they would send their Deputation to Chicago. After a long discussion, the chiefs decided not to send one. Then, Chief A. G. Smith, a Mohawk, proposed to send the Deputation at their delegates' expense and the Council would make arrangements with the Department of Indian Affairs so that each delegate could have an interest-bearing loan from the funds of the Six Nations to defray the expense to and from Chicago. John A. Gibson was opposed to this proposal, and the council accepted his position.<sup>46</sup>

Though Gibson was a Longhouse chief, his attitude toward Christianity was ambiguous.<sup>47</sup> For example, tensions between the Christian chiefs and the Longhouse chiefs at the council house arose when the Salvation Army applied for permission to use the council house. When the chiefs discussed this proposal on 16 March 1885, a serious argument ensued.<sup>48</sup> I can infer that John Gibson was one of the chiefs who strongly opposed the use of the council house for services by outsiders. The minutes do not record precisely what the chiefs who opposed the proposal said at the council house, but what is significant is that John Gibson apologized as a representative of the Longhouse chiefs. In spite of the opposition, however, permission to use the council house was granted to the Salvation Army the following year.

In the early nineteenth century, when a few whites sought capital to form the Grand River Navigation Company, the then-governor of Ontario granted them money from the Six Nations fund without consulting either the chiefs of the hereditary council or the people of the Six Nations. The Six Nations fund had been established from proceeds of the sale of much of the original Six Nations Reserve to the British Crown through the Canadian government after the natives were told this would protect the reserve land from further encroachment by European immigrants.

The Grand River Navigation Company went bankrupt, however, after the railroad arrived in the city of Brantford, and all the invested money from the Six Nations fund was lost. The hereditary council had asked the Canadian and British governments to reimburse them, but no action was taken by either.

In 1896, a Cayuga man named Snider seems to have taken some sort of legal or formal action on this matter. In the council meeting of June 2 of 1896, Gibson asked the Visiting Su-

perintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs about Snider's efforts.

Chief John Gibson asked the Visiting Supt. as to how Mr. Snider of Cayuga is getting along with the matter of the money of the Six Nations invested into the Grand River Navigation Company.<sup>49</sup>

Neither the British nor the Canadian government ever took any further action to resolve this matter.

It seems then that Gibson represented himself as a voice against the Canadian government and the Department of Indian Affairs. On one occasion, the chiefs of the hereditary council complained to the British government about an unstated issue and demanded that action be taken. Gibson's name is found among the chiefs who voiced their dissatisfaction.<sup>50</sup> Since the Department of Indian Affairs was the administrative body on the reservation, Gibson often represented the voice of the hereditary council, which opposed the Department.<sup>51</sup>

The Six Nations had disputes not only with the Canadian and British governments but also with the neighboring native Mississaugas over the land. In the late 1890's, the Six Nations and the Mississaugas had a long territorial dispute. Britain had bought some land from the Mississaugas in 1877 and granted it to the Six Nations, but this engendered disputes between the Six Nations and the Mississaugas. Both native governments sent delegates to the other's council meetings to discuss the issue. The name of Gibson is found among those delegates from the Six Nations.<sup>52</sup>

The minutes do not state exactly what the problem was between the two native nations. But considering the historical background that the British bought the land from the Mississaugas and granted it to Joseph Brant and other Iroquois people after the colonial war, most likely, the people of Mississaugas claimed some lands of the Six Nations' territory as theirs. In such a case, probably, the Six Nations Council defended their title to the land tract of the Six Nations Reserve.

### **(b) Gibson's role in the domestic politics**

On the hereditary council, John A. Gibson served as a voice of authority among the Longhouse chiefs on traditional matters since he was known for his knowledge of the Longhouse tradition. It is not known exactly how he was regarded in this respect when he was young. Yet, it seems that when he was still a young traditional chief, he was regarded as being important. For example, in 1876, when the Six Nations planned to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Joseph Brant, the council appointed committee members including John A. Gibson for planning.<sup>53</sup>

Gibson was known for his excellent memory and could recite the names of fifty hereditary chiefs of the council without using the Condolence Cane, the normal mnemonic device. Probably due to his knowledge of the tradition, he was, moreover, often appointed by the council to verify and update the list of the hereditary chiefs of the council.<sup>54</sup> In addition,

the council occasionally checked the list of the chiefs of the Confederacy and Gibson usually participated.<sup>55</sup>

There were two other kinds of events in which the conservative traditional chiefs worked; to announce a traditional condolence and to instruct a newly appointed chief. When a chief died, a ritualist gave a short version of the condolence speech at the council meeting, though the condolence ceremony itself took place in the Longhouse. The traditional chiefs who could recite this short version of the condolence came from the conservative members of the Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga of the Six Nations chiefs. Gibson was a Seneca chief, so when he spoke the condolence address, he spoke on behalf of the “three brothers,” the Mohawks, the Senecas, and the Onondagas. The other “sides” of the condolence were the Oneidas, the Cayugas, the Tuscaroras, and the Tutelos.<sup>56</sup> Gibson was often not only in charge of representing the traditional side of the council, but also in the actual planning of the ceremony itself.<sup>57</sup> On the council, a senior chief had the responsibility to guide a young and newly-appointed chief. On one occasion, John A. Gibson was appointed by the council to address a newly-elected chief and to explain the duties of a chief.<sup>58</sup>

Besides the regular council meetings which included all chiefs, the hereditary council appointed a smaller group of chiefs as committee members to discuss certain issues before the whole council would take them up. John A. Gibson was often listed on the roster of a committee which worked on legal issues.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, whether the council should adopt illegitimate children and pay for their support was a major issue. Legitimate children already received financial support from the Six Nations fund. On 8 December 1896, a special council was held to discuss the issue, eventually adopting a by-law concerning the adoption of the illegitimate children. The special council issued five articles. First, “All the illegitimate children whose name has been submitted to the Department by the Council, whose parents are both Indians by blood, having (sic) full rights to be on the pay list of the Six Nations, and no other shall be placed on the pay list of the Six Nations by this resolution.”<sup>59</sup> The fifth article stated the establishment of the Standing Committee on the issue:

5. The Standing Committee shall be composed of Chiefs– John A. Gibson, George W. Hill, Nicodemus Porter, Abram Charles, Josiah Hill, Philip Hill and the Visiting Superintendent–whose power shall be to enquire into and decide upon all cases affecting the illegitimate children hereby admitted and whenever a complaint is made against the lawful children of white men on the pay list of the Six Nations.<sup>60</sup>

Gibson worked also as a guardian for somebody, as the minutes of 6 June 1906 reads.

The Six Nations Council made by-laws on various issues. In March of 1904, the council appointed seven chiefs including Gibson to check the by-laws of the Reserve and amend any defective clauses.<sup>61</sup> Later on 4 December 1907, there was again an opportunity to check and revise the By Laws.<sup>62</sup>

The Six Nations council had to investigate suspicious economic activity by white people on the reservation land since their economic interest was at stake. Gibson was a member of the committee assigned to conduct these investigations as the minutes of 23 October 1906 shows.<sup>63</sup>

John A. Gibson's family also seems to have enjoyed a prestigious status among the hereditary council. His brother, George, was also a hereditary chief. George Gibson was often on the committee on loans of the hereditary council. One occasion, in particular, illustrates the Gibson family's prestige. The hereditary council was asked by the Governor General to adopt the Prince of Wales as an honorary chieftain of the hereditary council.<sup>64</sup> George Gibson was asked to perform the ceremony for the Prince of Wales, and Mrs. John A. Gibson was asked to make a sash to present to the Prince. She was provided with the material for making the sash. The Prince of Wales was conferred the title of Onondiyoh (Lord) of the turtle clan of the Mohawks. Not only John himself but also his wife seems to have been regarded highly among the hereditary chiefs.

### 3. Gibson's Ritual Knowledge

John A. Gibson was not only a hereditary chief but also a reciter of the Code of the Handsome Lake, and a ritualist and narrator of the Longhouse religion. For the founding story of the Iroquois Confederacy Gibson narrated, we can learn from Hanni Woodbury's work. It is also possible to learn his ritual performance of the Condolence Ceremony from Horatio Hale's observation in 1883. Hale had not expected that Gibson would participate in the ritual performance.<sup>65</sup> Hale also mentions the quality of Gibson's singing voice.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, in this section, I would discuss Gibson's relationship to Handsome Lake, the ritual knowledge and the mythic narrative.

Though we don't know what he preached about Handsome Lake's teaching, he was known to be an exponent of the Handsome Lake doctrine.<sup>67</sup> The following record by Edward D. Cameron, the Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, shows that Gibson followed Handsome Lake's instruction forbidding alcohol.

Last year some Indians did give some dances at the Toronto Exhibition. I remember having some correspondence with Mr. Hill, Secretary, and I am under the impression it was Chief John Gibson's Company. Certainly old Bill is a wonderful man for his age and possibly the best dancer on the Reserve. The program he would put on is the same as any other Indian - - - objection to William Hill's Company is that he will get intoxicated once a while, while Chief Gibson do not.

Yours truly,  
E.D.Cameron<sup>68</sup>

There is no solid documentation about how Gibson learned the Code of Handsome Lake.

Yet, there is a clue to it. Hewitt writes that Gibson learned the traditional myths from the Onondaga chief.<sup>69</sup> In this connection, there is an important information. After Handsome Lake died, the women of the Seneca reservation in New York State began to organize the meeting to listen to the Code of Handsome Lake in the early nineteenth century. A ritualist from the Onondaga Longhouse of the Six Nations Reserve attended such an annual meeting held on the Seneca reservation.<sup>70</sup>

As well as being knowledgeable about the Code of Handsome Lake and the Condolence Ceremony, Gibson was actively involved in the annual agricultural rituals. A Canadian ethnologist W. W. Waugh provides insight into this aspect of Gibson's knowledge, though it is a part of his ritual knowledge. Because Waugh was interested in the rituals associated with foods and food preparation, Gibson provided him with information only on these aspects, which are only part of the calendrical ceremonies.<sup>71</sup>

For preparation of the seed-planting rituals, Gibson emphasized the important role of the women. For example, at the time of spring planting, the women's society met about a week before the date of planting and determined the date on which they would perform the rituals. They were responsible for informing all members of the reserve of the determined date. At the ritual, it seems that Gibson was often appointed to make the ritual address.<sup>72</sup> When the men's group and the women's group competed against each other in the ritual game of bowl, the ritual participants gave thanks to the Creator. Then, the leader of the women's society spoke on behalf of the women's side.<sup>73</sup>

After the spring planting ritual, corn "medicines" were applied to seeds to protect the seeds from disease. Gibson explained how to make corn medicine. Waugh writes that "According to Gibson's directions, the roots of a single bunch or cluster of each plant are to be taken, eight quarts of water added, and the whole boiled down to six. This is cooled, the seed corn added and left for an hour or so, after which is drained, placed a basket while still moist, and left until it sprouts a little."<sup>74</sup> When the time to plant corn arrived, the women performed the ritual for planting corn. After the planting of the corn seeds, the women performed a thanksgiving ritual in which the speaker thanked Our Mother, the Earth and the Creator, and asked the Thunder Being to protect the plants and to bring rain to enable the seeds to grow.

Gibson's information matches well with what Annemarie A. Shimony describes concerning the ritual cycle of the Six Nations Reserve in the early sixtieth.<sup>75</sup> Yet, it is necessary to add that this seed planting ceremony which Gibson explained to Waugh in the early twentieth century was no longer in effect when she did her field research in the Six Nations Reserve in the 1960s.

Next comes the ritual for rain, in which the ritual invocation is addressed to the Thunder Being, who had been assigned the task of overseeing the growth of vegetables by the Creator. For this ritual, there were several active ritual participants: a speaker who made a ritual address, young warriors who danced and an elderly woman who was given the task of bringing water. At the beginning, while making an offer of tobacco by burning it, the speaker asked the Thunder Being to bring water to the earth and to renew the streams, creeks and lakes outside

the Longhouse building. After this,

The warriors now begin to dance moving slowly towards the longhouse. The dancers sometimes whoop and shout very loudly, “like thunder,” until they get into the longhouse. The woman follows, sousing them with water as they go. They continue dancing inside for a time. A number of the old men and women then make speeches giving thanks.<sup>76</sup>

When the men danced, they did so around the fire set on the west side of the longhouse building, since the West was the direction from which the Thunder Being was supposed to approach the earth.

During the harvest season, another series of rituals in which women played prominent roles were held. In the first part of all of these rituals, a speaker offered thanksgiving to the Creator. Then the men would dance after which women danced the dance of “Thank Our Mother, the Earth and Three Sisters”. In the second and fourth part, all participants danced together, while in the third part, only women participated. In this harvest ritual, women were ritually responsible for thanking “Our Mother, the Earth and the Three Sisters”.

Besides these rituals, Gibson described the functions and roles of the native groups formed to facilitate planting and harvesting. For example, he described the function of the native cooperative association called the Bees. When a member needed help in hoeing or harvesting, he or she would notify the leader, who would notify the other members of the society. Each member, no matter what age, had to bring his or her own hoe or other implement to the field of the member who had requested help. As the corn grew, everyone would gather together to hoe the fields twice. The first hoeing was called “a large number of people working,” and the second “hilling up.” At each hoeing, the people assembled together, danced and offered thanksgiving. Afterwards, corn soup was made and distributed among the participants. Everyone worked together, and the person who had invited them had to furnish corn soup.<sup>77</sup>

#### 4. Gibson's Mythic Narratives in the History

There are several mythic and legendary narratives which John A. Gibson himself narrated or was involved in compiling. Here, I would like to focus on the historical context of the Onondaga cosmogony and Gibson's possible motivation to narrate it to J. N. B. Hewitt, because Fenton takes this case as a basis of his own characterization of Gibson as a systematizer, as I discussed above.

In order to discuss the historical context and his motivation, I begin with the issue of the historical factors of the compilation of the English text of the founding story of the Six Nations Confederacy entitled “Traditional History of the Confederacy of the Six Nations, Prepared by a Committee of the Chiefs,” with which I will establish a political connection of Gibson's narrating the Onondaga myth. The text was prepared by eight chiefs including Gibson and

was published by the Superintendent of the Indian Affairs, Duncan C. Scott, in 1912.<sup>78</sup>

Various Iroquois scholars state that Gibson's primary motivation to narrate the myth was to conserve it since the Longhouse traditions were disappearing due to cultural pressures of the colonialism. Yet, I will show that when he narrated this mythic narrative, he was not only concerned with conserving the Longhouse traditions, but also defending the Six Nations' hereditary council's political claim. First, I will review scholars' work on Gibson's motivation.

In his article entitled "This Island, the World on the Turtle's Back," Fenton explains that Gibson narrated his Onondaga myth to Hewitt in order to preserve it in a written form.<sup>79</sup> His explanation is based upon two incidents. The first one is the so-called "Warriors movement," which occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. It demanded to introduce an elective council and disband the hereditary council. The second is compilation of the English text of the founding story of the Iroquois Confederacy, as is mentioned above.

In explaining his view, Fenton writes about a Mohawk, named Seth Newhouse, who learned the legend of the founding of the league from elders and wrote it down in 1885.<sup>80</sup> Newhouse was actively involved in the politics of the Six Nations Reserve in the second half of the nineteenth century. Seth Newhouse acted against the forces of acculturation, colonization, and commercialization which were embodied in certain activities taken by the Canadian government.

In this historical context, Newhouse sought the chiefs' council's acceptance of his manuscript draft as an official version of the legend of the foundation of the Iroquois Confederacy, but the chiefs' council rebuffed him. Since Newhouse attempted to "write down" the legend prior to the chiefs' work, Fenton considers there to have been a connection between the two. Fenton writes, "The chiefs, having twice rejected Newhouse' construction of their laws, appointed a committee of themselves to draw up a substitute version which they approved in 1900."<sup>81</sup> Probably, Fenton is right about a possible relationship between the hereditary chiefs and Newhouse. Fenton assumes that the main purpose of the compilation of the text was to conserve the legend as its introduction states.

Yet, according to the Minutes of the Six Nations Council, the stated purpose of the text seems to have been inserted later. After the original appointed eight chiefs including John A. Gibson compiled the founding story of the Six Nations, the minutes of 8 February 1900 reads,

The Council decided to adopt the report of the Committee on Indian rites, and ceremonies, and the history of the formation of the Six Confederate Nations in North America, and that Secretaries are to complete a copy before next general Council, which copy shall be transmitted to the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>82</sup>

Then, later the council appointed a few chiefs to change the compiled version. On 4 August 1900, the minutes reads;



The Council decided to appoint Chief J. N. M. Elliot to assist the Secretary to make the change in the report of the Six Nations Indian History Committee as proposed and forward same to the Department of Indian Affairs.

The changes in the work of the Six Nations Indian history Committee is postponed until next Monday when Chief J. W. M. Elliot and Josiah Hill will continue the work and as soon as it is completed they shall be forwarded to the Department of Indian Affairs for publication.<sup>83</sup>

At the second meeting of the Committee, two chiefs Abram Charles and John A. Gibson were missing with no clear reason cited. Yet, probably, from these records of the Minutes, it is possible to speculate that the second group of the committee and the chiefs Elliot and Hill would write the introduction which reads as follows;

It was in recognition of the fact that all nations have a traditional history which originated while there were yet in a savage state, that this small fragment of Indian traditional history was written by the Chiefs, so that they might preserve it as other nations have done theirs.

It is only natural for a people undergoing transition from a state of paganism to that of civilization and Christianity to evince a desire to have their past mythological legends and crude history preserved.<sup>84</sup>

From the chronological record of the compilation of the text of "Traditional History," it is possible to argue that though Fenton's interpretation is dependent upon the introductory statement of the published text, Gibson was not involved in writing the introductory statement.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to suspect those who agreed with the statement that "it is only natural for a people undergoing transition from a state of paganism to that of civilization and Christianity to evince a desire to have their past mythological legends and crude history preserved." Could Gibson, a ritualist and narrator of the Longhouse religion and a preacher of Handsome Lake instructions have agreed with such a statement? Most probably, this statement was prepared by the Christian chiefs at the hereditary council.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider how and why Gibson was involved in narrating the Onondaga myth to Hewitt.

A historian of the politics and society of the Six Nations Reserve, Sally M. Weaver, also points to the reform movement on the Reserve as a possible impetus for the chiefs' compilation of the "Traditional History." The reform movement demanded the introduction of an elective council, since the Federal Indian Law mandated the abolition of the native form of government, by the Federal Indian Law of 1869 and the Indian Advancement Act of 1884.<sup>86</sup> Both laws required the establishment of an elective council on the reservation. The reform movement was a political and social movement led by some of the native people who were educated in Anglo schools. Those people did not have access to the hereditary chiefs' title,

and had begun to represent an alternative source of leadership. Having received an education, they began to take up new occupations on the reservation.<sup>87</sup> They felt that the hereditary council neither functioned well nor responded to the contemporary needs of the people. For example, they pointed to the bankruptcy of the Grand River Navigation Company as a proof that the hereditary council had ceased to function adequately.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, an elective council would open formal leadership positions to them.

Against both internal and the external political challenges, the chiefs' council felt compelled to express its claim to legitimacy and indigenous authority. On several occasions, the chiefs sought to explain their views to the outside world. For instance, they went to the local historical society to explain the tradition of the Hotinonshon:ni. Around the same time, the chiefs were motivated by their political goals to assist anthropologists in presenting native traditions to the outside world. According to Weaver,

The chiefs quickly responded to invitations from surrounding historical societies to give public talks on the Six Nations' history, and generously assisted anthropologists writing on the Six Nations' customs, such as J. N. B. Hewitt (1892, 1900-26), Horatio Hale (1985), William Beauchamp (1901), Edward Chadwick (1897), David Boyle (1898, 1905), F. Waugh (1961), and A. A. Goldenweiser (1913, 1914).<sup>89</sup>

Weaver is a scholar who hints at a potential connection between the political and social situation of the reservation and contemporary anthropological research. She thinks that the internal political crisis that threatened the authority and legitimacy of the traditional hereditary council was the main reason for the compilation of "The Traditional History." However, her reading of the situation fails to explain why, if the issue was only internal, the chiefs had to explain their position toward the outside world (remember the text was compiled in English).

In order to answer this question, we must examine another historical source which neither Weaver nor Fenton consulted, the book of correspondence of Edwin D. Cameron, the Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs at the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

Cameron was first appointed the Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs on 13 April 1891.<sup>90</sup> Considering the length of time during which he had served as Superintendent by 1900, he had clear knowledge about the issues at stake on the reserve. Cameron recorded his official reports and personal communications for the Department of Indian Affairs in his book of correspondence, which provides a new perspective on the historical situation.

First, it is important to know what Cameron thought about introducing the elective council into the Six Nations Reserve. Cameron was rather hesitant to introduce it for several reasons. He knew that less than one third of the native population was in favor of introducing the elective council. He also feared that the tremendous confusion would result if the elective system were adopted. He finally recommended that the Indian law should be amended so that the Six Nations would be able to continue to hold the traditional council.

I am very anxious to encourage anything which I feel would promote and advance the members of the Reserve, but I feel that, should an elective system is now established that I can foresee considerable trouble, the influence of the present chiefs, prospective chiefs, their friends and the pagans and uneducated element would be very powerful, at the same time I believe that the Indian Act could be so amended so the present system of chiefs could continue and also have an elective system. The present chiefs would be called - - - or Lords and the elective would represent the view of the people and all - - - - - each body, the Department would only approve of such - - - - - would be far the benefit of the Reserve at large.<sup>91</sup>

Cameron expressed this opinion in 1899, about a year before the hereditary council compiled the text of “Traditional History,” and most likely, he hadn’t changed his opinion on the issue of the elective council a year later. If Cameron did not favor an Indian Act to introduce the elective council, and expressed his opinion to the hereditary chiefs, why did the hereditary council feel it necessary to defend their opinion to Cameron? It seems that there was another urgent issue the hereditary council had to deal with.

On 23 February 1900, Cameron wrote:

It has been imposed upon the Six Nations, that the Superintendent General, as trustee of the Indians has unlimited power in dealing with their affairs. The elder members contend, that the Governor General many years ago was their Superintendent General representing Her Majesty the Queen, and no [two unrecognizable words] has any right. This opinion however is only held by a few, as it has been imposed upon them that the Superintendent General is now representing the Queen on their behalf. It is therefore felt that the Superintendent General’s decision is supreme and final, and my experience has been that the Department’s decisions have been respected and quietly submitted to. But ever since the Law Clerk has decided that no action be taken by the Superintendent General, the old feeling revives, that none but Indians have the right to legislate effecting Indians and their properties.<sup>92</sup>

With this political problem lurking behind the scene, a confrontation between the chiefs’ hereditary council and the Department of Indian Affairs took place over a dispute between two family members. To quote Cameron on the same day of 23 February:

When reporting last November I recognized the great danger I receiving a reply from you, that no action be taken by Superintendent General. I therefore recommended that the matter again be referred to the Chiefs, which I am (“an unrecognizable word”) would have prevented serious trouble. The son Levi Johnson claims the property by the Chiefs’ decision and he has been removing wood for his own use, while the father Aaron S.

Johnson claims the land to be his and is also removing wood for his use. It is quite clear that both have no right under the Indian Act to remove wood. I have the impression that Aaron S. Johnson is the rightful owner, but by the Chiefs' decision in favor of Levi Johnson who is taking proceedings against the father for removing wood claiming that he is the rightful owner under the Indian Act.<sup>93</sup>

Cameron was worried that this case might lead to violence, even homicide. Both insisted that they owned the land and the case quickly developed into a serious conflict. When the two reported their cases in person at the Office of the Department of Indian Affairs, they started argue furiously.

In the following page of the same date, Cameron reported two other similar cases soon after the Johnson case. To solve these cases, he recommended the following.

I submit that the Superintendent General, as trustee of the Indians, has full power to deal with these matters, and it is by far better to settle disputes as was the custom rather than ["illegible word"] to interfere and thereby encourage the belief that the Indian alone have the full and exclusive right to settle their affairs.<sup>94</sup>

Cameron wrote that those who held this view were mainly "a large Pagan element on the Reserve," including the Longhouse chiefs. They believed that "white people have no right to legislate for them on their Reserve, but believe that Indians themselves through their Chiefs have the exclusive right under their Confederacy to settle all claims effecting Indians on their property."<sup>95</sup> Cameron did not mention the name of John A. Gibson, but most likely, the "large Pagan element on the Reserve" included him.

The Johnson case proved to be very serious for both the hereditary chiefs' council and the Department of Indian Affairs, as the two wrestled over their legal and political authority and power. In this case, the central issue was who had authority and power to judge the applicability of the law concerning the ownership of timber, but the case had broader implications as well. For the hereditary chiefs' council, it was a political matter of whether the native government alone could have "the full and exclusive right to settle their affairs" on the reservation. For the Department of Indian Affairs, it was a question of whether the Federal Indian Act would be enforced on the Six Nations Reserve by the department.

Cameron's book of correspondence thus sheds new light on some of the historical issues the hereditary chiefs' council had to deal with. It is my contention that it was in order to support their claim that only the native themselves had the right to adjudicate legal matters and property disputes that the hereditary council compiled the document of the "Traditional History" in English. It is clear that the intended audience for this document were whites, especially, the Department of Indian Affairs.

It should be now clear that in 1900 the hereditary chiefs' council was dealing with two challenges to their authority and legitimacy: first, internal challenges by the progressive-

mindful natives who wanted to introduce an elective system on the reserve, as mandated in the Federal Indian Law of 1856; and second, the external political challenges represented by the Canadian government's attempt to absorb native society into Canadian society, at least in terms of the legal system, by restructuring the native political system. It was in this historical context that the chiefs' council appointed eight chiefs, including John A. Gibson, to compile the English version of the "Traditional History of the Confederacy of the Six Nations."

Then, there was also a historical connection between the "Traditional History" and J. N. B. Hewitt's ethnographical work with John A. Gibson. In his introduction to the Annual Report for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1900, the director of the Bureau of American Ethnology, J. W. Powell, reports the following about Hewitt's ethnographic activity:

Early in the winter Mr. J. N. B. Hewitt revisited the remnants of several Iroquoian tribes in New York and Ontario and continued the collection and comparison of the tribal traditions. Finding the conditions favorable for recording some of the more noteworthy traditions, he spent several weeks in an Indian village near Hamilton, Ontario, returning to the office in April.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, it is clear that Hewitt stayed on the Six Nations Reserve precisely during the "favorable" period when the hereditary chiefs' council was working on the compilation of the "Traditional History." The fact that John A. Gibson was among the eight chiefs who worked on compiling this text strongly suggests a connection between the production of the "Traditional History" and Gibson's narration of the Onondaga myth to Hewitt. With his connections with the outside world and, especially the government in Washington, D.C., he was an ideal conduit for carrying the traditionalists' position.

From this examination of the chronology and motivation of the compilation of the "Traditional Narrative" and Gibson's "The Iroquoian Cosmology," it is now possible to say that Gibson did not merely attempt to preserve the narrative tradition in a systematic form. Rather, as the historical context shows, he had a much more immediate political motivation to narrate the Onondaga cosmology to Hewitt. The Onondaga cosmology is rather a political text claiming the source of the authority and power of the hereditary chiefs' council. It is necessary to take into consideration this aspect of history in order to imagine in which sense Gibson was "traditional." It is possible to say that Gibson acted with responsibility not only toward the political stance of the Six Nations Reserve, but also toward the transmitted knowledge of his traditional narratives, which he organized into one systematic narrative form. This systematic form of the native traditional narratives is the powerful proof that the native society had a solid legitimate ground of its own political authority and power against the intruding colonial outsider. He was laying the cosmological foundation of the political authority.

## **Epilogue.**

John A. Gibson died suddenly of a heart attack in 1912. At the Council meeting, the then Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs offered his eulogy at the chief's council and noted that Gibson had played a practical and mediating role in various domestic conflicts. He expressed his sympathy to the chiefs at the council meeting over Gibson's death:

Nov. 5, 1912. Supt. Smith in reply to the remarks of the Fire-Keeper in reference to the death of Chief Gibson stated that he also felt the loss of the late chief and would extend his sympathies to the Chiefs and the Six Nations in general, as he had a very high opinion of the worth of this late Chief and had around him a very useful man in Council and also had done noble service out of the Council by his strong personality which he used to good effect among his people to bring about a reconciliation of disputes.<sup>97</sup>

Though Gibson himself was known as the Seneca chief since his mother was of the Turtle clan of the Seneca Nation, in his death record of the Department of the Indian Affairs, he was listed as an Onondaga.<sup>98</sup>

From my attempt to reconstruct and explore the life of John A. Gibson, it is now possible to say that Gibson was rather a complicated person, and that it is rather a misnomer to regard him only as "traditional." As he was willing to adopt a new "form" of playing lacrosse and to introduce capitalistic values to the "traditional" ball game, he was rather a "modern" player of the "traditional" lacrosse. He accepted the modern and capitalist value which both the native society and non-native society found in playing the lacrosse. Though he was very well versed in "traditional" knowledge of the narrative and ritual traditions, as being in a family dispute over his late father's estate, he acted very pragmatically without being bothered by the fact that he didn't follow the "traditional" matrilineal principle. In this regards, he was not so "traditional." Since Gibson cooperated with anthropologists, scholars tend to overemphasize his importance in history. Yet, he was merely one of many other "traditional" longhouse chiefs at the turn of century. He lived and acted with other "traditional" and Christian chiefs on the Six Nations Council. He knew that his "tradition" taught him and others to live and work cooperatively, but also taught him to be flexible enough to deal with the new and dynamic history. In the end, he was also "traditional" in a sense that he believed that narrating a cosmology was foundational for claiming the political authority and power.

## **Acknowledgements**

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record of the Minutes of the Six Nations Council. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to him. Ms. Anne Scott at the Six Nations Record Centre helped me while I was doing my study of the microfilm record there. I want also to express my gratitude to her. Special thanks also goes to the late Cayuga Chief Jacob E. Thomas of the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada, who helped me in making a rough oral English translation of the Cayuga document of “The Life of John Gibson narrated by Mrs. Gibson to Goldenweiser.” Jake spent about a week with me in summer of 1995 and another week in spring of 1996. Without his kind cooperation, I could not gain a deep insight into the history of the Six Nations Reserve. Besides his help in this translation, he shared the rich oral traditions of the Hotinoshon:ni with me. I cherish my memory of him. I appreciate the Canadian Museum of Civilization for providing me a copy of “The Life of John Gibson narrated by Mrs. Gibson to Goldenweiser,” Goldenweiser, A. A., Collection: (III-I-64M) Box: 180, folder: 4. I. Late Dr. William N. Fenton read the first draft of this article and gave me importance suggestions. I appreciate him for his assistance to improve this article.

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- 1 J. N. B. Hewitt, “Introduction,” “Iroquoian Cosmology, Second part,” *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 43ed., 1925-1926: 455.
  - 2 Although Gibson was not an informant on Hale’s scholarly project, he presented a very interesting picture of John A. Gibson as a singer at the Condolence Ceremony. See “An Iroquois Condoling Council,” in Wm. Buy Spittal, ed. *The Iroquois Book of Rites and Hale on the Iroquois* (Ohsweken, Ontario: Iroqrafts Ltd., 1989): 339-361. The article was originally published in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Second Series* 1, section 2 (1895): 45-65. For biographical information on Hale, refer to D. G. Brinton, “Horatio Hale,” *American Anthropologist* 10 (1897): 25-27.
  - 3 Alexander A. Goldenweiser, “On Iroquois Work, 1912,” *Summary Report of the Geological Survey*, Department of Mines for the Calender Year 1912, no. 26. “On Iroquois Work, 1913-1914,” *Summary Report of the Geological Survey*, Department of Mines for the Calender Year 1913, 1914, no. 26. Hanni Woodbury, ed. and trans., *Concerning the League, The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson*, Newly Elicited, Edited and Translated by Hanni Woodbury in Collaboration with Reg Henry and Harry Webster on the Basis of A. A. Goldenweiser’s Manuscript, *Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics Memoir* 9, 1992.
  - 4 F. W. Waugh, *Iroquois Foods and Food Preparation*, Canada, Department of Mines, Geneological Survey Memoir 86, 1916. Waugh lists the name of John A. Gibson as his primary informant. See p. 2.
  - 5 Ragna Darnell, *Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1900): 17.
  - 6 Hewitt worked with many Iroquois people of the Hotinonshon:ni and left many unpublished manuscripts at the National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D. C.
  - 7 A. A. Goldenweiser, “On Iroquois Work, 1912,”: 464.
  - 8 Mrs. Gibson’s name is known as Mary Skye Gibson.
  - 9 William N. Fenton, “The World on Turtle’s Back,” in *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998): 34-50; Hanni



- Woodbury, op. cit.; James W. Herrick, edited and with a foreword by Dean R. Snow, *Iroquois Medical Botany* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
- 10 William N. Fenton, "This Island, the World on the Turtle's Back," *Journal of American Folklore* 75, no. 298 (1962): 280.
  - 11 Dean R. Snow, *The Iroquois* (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1994): 183-9.
  - 12 I spent about two weeks at the Six Nations Record Centre in winter of early 1995 and took notes of the microfilm of the Minutes of the Six Nations Council related to John A. Gibson.
  - 13 Jacob E. Thomas sadly passed away in 1998.
  - 14 This document is based on Mrs. Gibson's narration of John's early life to A. A. Goldenweiser after his sudden death, and is written in Cayuga language.
  - 15 Eric Hobsbawm and Ranger Terence, ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
  - 16 Charles M. Johnston, *The Valley of the Six Nations: A Collection of Documents on the Indian Lands of the Grand River* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1964); Sally M. Weaver, "The Iroquois: Consolidation of the Grand River Reserve, 1847-1875," in Edward S. Rogers and Donalds B. Smith, ed., *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994): 182-212; idem, "The Iroquois: The Grand River Reserve in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, 1875-1945," *ibid.*: 213-257.
  - 17 Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807, Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984).
  - 18 Charles M. Johnston, "The Six Nations in the Grand River Valley, 1784-1847," in Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith, eds., *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994): 179.
  - 19 Sally M. Weaver, "The Iroquois: The Consolidation of the Grand River Reserve in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, 1847-1875," in Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith, op. cit.: 189.
  - 20 "The Life of John Gibson narrated by Mrs. Gibson."
  - 21 *Ibid.*: 25.
  - 22 Mrs. Gibson narrated a story about a white man who joined in dancing. While the people were dancing, he joined in dancing. While they were dancing, they did not notice him among them, but when finished dancing, they noticed him and took him aside and hit him. He ran away and the people followed out to find him. They then started to dance again saying that when they would see him again, they would kill him. They danced with holding knives in their hands, and while dancing, looked for him. On another dance occasion, a man wearing a mask with a long nose was dancing behind a woman and teasing her along. Because he was persistently teasing her, finally she lost patience and grabbed his long nose and dragged him down.
  - 23 *Ibid.*: 42.
  - 24 Elisabeth Tooker, "Women in Iroquois Society," In Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi and Marianne Mithun, eds., *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquois Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984): 120.
  - 25 "The Life of John Gibson narrated by Mrs. Gibson": 157. Due to an oral translation of the text, we cannot get a clear description of the background of this episode.
  - 26 *Ibid.*: 159-180.
  - 27 *Ibid.*: 165-168.

- 28 Quoted in Thomas Vennum, Jr., *American Indian Lacrosse, Little Brother of War*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994): 220-221. Fogelson also writes, “it seems probable that ballgames assumed greater importance and, perhaps, greater ritual elaboration in post-Revolutionary times as a symbolic surrogate for actual warfare.” *ibid.*,: 330-331.
- 29 In order to examine how John A. Gibson regarded lacrosse, it is necessary to refer to the portion of the mythic narrative concerning the lacrosse game. This is found in the ordeal narrative for Awenhai a spouse of the chief of the Sky World. “And then when they finished eating, the lodge owner said, ‘Verily, thou didst see a large body of people assembled on the field; and as is well known they are about to amuse themselves; they will play at lacrosse ball. Verily they will give diversion to my mind.’” In Gibson’s narrative, the lacrosse game and dream guessing are the only religious actions performed in the Sky World, while the human ancestors learn to perform seasonal rituals from the Creator in this world after the Creator completed his creation. In order to understand why the lacrosse game was depicted to be performed in the sky world, it is useful to refer to Thomas Vennum who writes about mythic aspects of playing lacrosse as follows: “When Iroquois played lacrosse as a religious rite, there were seven men on each team, personifying the seven Thunder gods. They believed that lacrosse was played by these gods in the thunderhead and that the lightening bolt represented their ball.”
- 30 J. N. B. Hewitt, “Introduction,” “Iroquoian Cosmology, Second part,” *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 43ed., 1925-1926: 455.
- 31 My quotations of the Minutes of the Six Nations Council are based on the microfilm deposited at the Six Nations Record Office. *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 6 May 1887.
- 32 For example, on 1 November 1898, “The Council decided to vote relief order to Hanna Gibson and Mary Jamison one dollar each.” On 7 February 1900, the council again granted relief aid of \$1.00 to her.
- 33 According to the map of the Six Nations Reserve compiled and drawn by Geo. R. Tremaine and published by Geo. C. Tremaine in 1858, names of John Gibson and Widow Gibson are seen in the lots along the Grand River.
- 34 The Gibson family had land dispute surrounding Cornelius Gibson, John’s youngest brother. On 4 July 1896, the Minutes reads; “The Council confirmed the agreement between Mrs. John Gibson and her son Cornelius Gibson with reference to the estate of late John Gibson on River Ranger No. 28. Tus. containing 60 acres.”
- 35 On 7 March 1899, the Minutes reads; “The Quite Claim of John A. Gibson, George Gibson, Cornelius Gibson to Mrs. Simon Bombery. Confirmed. The Quite Claim of George Gibson, Cornelius Gibson and Mrs. Simon Bombery to John A. Gibson. Confirmed. The Quite Claim of John A. Gibson, George Gibson, and Mrs. Simon Bombery to Cornelius Gibson. Confirmed. The Quite Claim of John A. Gibson, Cornelius Gibson and Mrs. Simon Bombery to George Gibson. Confirmed.”
- 36 On 3 September 1899, the Minutes reads: “The Council decided to confirm the line staked and by the locating line Committee between Mrs. Simon Bombery and Cornelius Gibson in the north part of River Range No. 28, Tuscarora.” Four years later, on February 5th of 1903, the Minutes reads: “The Council decided that the fence viewers shall go to the Estate of the late John Gibson Sen. and value improvements upon the said estate and find out how much is due to Mrs. Simon Bombery from Cornelius Gibson, her brother, and the said fence viewers shall be paid by

them.”

It seems that Cornelius Gibson wanted to give his land to his sister. After he inherited the land, probably he worked on the land and improved the value of the land by building buildings and growing grass and trees. In order to determine the value of the land with those buildings on it, the council send the fence viewers to estimate value of those improvements. This case was decided on December 8th of 1904. The Minutes reads: “With reference to the dispute between Mrs. Simon Bombery and her brother Cornelius Gibson the Committee decided to adopt the report of the locating line committee on their valuation of the improvements of the North 1/2 of River Range Lot No. 28, being the property of the late John Gibson, Sr., amounting to \$258.66. The Committee awarded one half of this amount, \$129.33 to Mrs. Simon Bombery and which her brother Cornelius Gibson is to pay her. Confirmed by the council.”

Yet, Mrs. Simon Bombery disliked this decision and brought the case back again to the council. On 5 January 1905, the Minutes reads: “The Council refused to entertain the account of Mrs. Simon Bombery against her brother Cornelius Gibson.”

- 37 On December 1895, the Minutes reads: “The Quite Claim of Mary Isaac to Martha Styres is confirmed, and Chief John A. Gibson to proceed and pay the balance still due in the said place.” This dispute between Marry Isaac and John A. Gibson would be brought up again later. On 7 June 1898, the Minutes reads; “The Council refused to reconsider the case between Mary Isaac and John A. Gibson with reference to certain land transaction.”

This case was further brought up to the council meeting. On 2 August 1898, the Minutes reads; “The Council confirms the action of Alexander Hill, Administrator is arranging with his brother Peter Hill to take charge of the said Mary Ann Isaac as long as she lives for the pension coming to her, and he will also take her pony from Chief John A. Gibson.”

- 38 This case was brought to the council in early 1897. On 4 March 1897, the Minutes reads; “The case of Mrs. John A. Gibson v.s. James W. Sky is further postponed for want of evidence.” This case was decided on 6 April 1898. The Minutes reads; “In the matter of land dispute between Mrs. John A. Gibson and James N. Sky on the South 1/2 of R. R. No. 14, Tuscarora- The Committee decided that the above described property will be divided between James N. Sky and his sister Mrs. John A. Gibson as follows. James N. Sky will occupy the east part and Mrs. John A. Gibson the west part. Confirmed by the Council.” Despite the council’s decision, this case didn’t settle between them. The case was brought up to the council a few years later. On 3 March 1903, the Minutes reads; “The Council reaffirmed its last decision in Re. the dispute between James N. Sky and Mrs. John A. Gibson on the south 1/2 of R. R. No. 14. Tus.”

Mrs. John A. Gibson became involved in another land dispute with the wife of her late brother James W. Sky. On 1 February 1910, the council was still discussing their case. The Minutes reads; “In the matter of dispute between Mrs. John A. Gibson and Mrs. James W. Sky after hearing evidence upon the matter the Council postponed the matter until tomorrow.”

This case was taken up by the council later in summer. On 2 June of the same year, the Minutes reads; “After Mrs. John A. Gibson and Mrs. J. W. Sky gave their evidence and their witness in regard to the Estate of the late Chief James W. Sky, the Council decided that Mrs. John A. Gibson shall have the east 1/2 from McKenzie Creek to the public highway, and Mrs. James W. Sky the west 1/2 and the whole of the north side of the said McKenzie Creek of the South 1/2 of River Range No. 14, Tus. (Originally this lot was the property of Mr. & Mrs. John

Sky father and mother of Mrs. John A. Gibson and the late chief James W. Sky.)” Then, a month later, the Minutes reads; “The Council decided that Mrs. John A. Gibson be located on the West part of the south 1/2 of River Range No. 14 Tuscarora, and Mrs. James W. Sky on the East part of the said lot, and the locating line committee to go and survey off the said allotment beginning from McKenzie Creek and giving out to the road southward. The locatees to pay the locating line Committee.”

- 39 On 7 October 1896, Gibson was granted loan of \$150.00 from the hereditary council. In the same list, other twelve people were granted loan. The highest amount granted was \$150.00, and was granted to three including Gibson. On March 3rd, 1903, Gibson was granted another loan of \$50.00. Yet, Gibson was not always given grant of loan from the Six Nations Council. On 7 August 1901, “the Council refused to vote any grant to the application of Chief John A. Gibson.”

In summer of 1906, heavy storm damaged the Six Nations Reserve, and many suffered damages and lost of their property. John A. Gibson suffered fire loss, probably, of his buildings. The Council granted financial help to them. The Minutes reads; “The Council decided to grant one third of the following loses by the recent severe storm and also fire loses.

Mark Martin	240
Jacob Bombery	311
Joseph General	25
J. M. M, Elliott	22
Albert Jamieson	15
Cornelius Gibson	10
Elijah Presty	12
....	
John A. Gibson	Fire Loss 280
Abram Porter	9.”

To assist those who suffered disaster financially further, the Council again granted loan to them. John was granted loan of \$150.00 for a drive house. On 4 September 1906, the Minutes reads; “The following loans passed

Thomas Echo	\$35
John A. Gibson for a drive house	\$150.00
Daniel Doxdater	\$150.00
Peter Monture	\$30.00
Elijah Turkey	\$50.00.”

In 1907, Gibson still lack of financial background. The Council granted him another loan. The Minutes reads; “The Council granted an additional loan of \$40xx to Chief John A. Gibson this being necessary to enable him to complete his barn 45x30. The cost of lumber having advanced \$4.00 per thousand since his loan was first granted he was forced to apply for a future loan or have the barn in an incomplete condition to rot.”

- 40 *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 8 December 1908.

- 41 The member of the delegations were A. G. Smith, John A. Gibson, Alex Hill, George R. Hill, Beafamin Interpreter, Richard Hill, and Nelles Monture.
- 42 On 3 September 1901, the Minutes reads; "Minutes from special Council held on 20th of August 1901. Communication from Capt. R. E. Lauton. Six Nations Indian Exhibit. Pan American Exposition. Buffalo, N.Y. was read by the Secretary of the Council and after some consideration and discussion among the Chiefs, it was decided to appoint Chiefs John A. Gibson and Josiah Hill to prepare a program asked for and forward same to Capt. Lawton."
- 43 On 23 January 1901, the Minutes reads; "The Council decided to dispatch a cablegram of the heartfelt sympathy of the Six Nations to the Royal family of Great Britain for the loss they have sustained in the death of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and for that purpose they have appointed chiefs Blias Louiss Speaker of the Council, Josiah Hill, Secry, SNC, John A. Gibson, J.S. Johnson, David General, David John to wait, on the Visiting Supter, and request him to assist them in forwarding said dispatch in the usual channel as soon as possible."
- 44 The Minutes reads; "After a short consideration amongst the Seneca Chiefs, Chief John A. Gibson arose and announced that they have selected the name Dek,ni,deh ka, egwa, which signifies two sums of the Turtle clan to be conferred upon the Deputy Minster, Then Chief Robert David was chosen to perform the initiation ceremony of installing the Deputy Superintendent General in the position of an honorary Chief of the Seneca band of the Six Nations which was done in a creditable manner according to the custom of the Six Nations after which the Deputy Minister (Chief Dek-ni,deh,ka,eh,gwa) replied in a brief and pleasant manner."
- 45 The Minutes reads; "The Council decided to entertain the communication from the Clark of Green Bay Reservation, Wis. and the following chiefs were appointed to write the unwritten Law and constitution of the Six Nations Confederation. John Charles Martin, John A. Gibson, Nicodemus Portey, Wm. Wage, Thomas W. Echo, and Josiah Hill and they are to be paid by people of Green Bay who desire to have the said Law and Constitution."
- 46 The Minutes reads; "Chief John Gibson with two or three of the Seneca protested on the same side of the House. The Chief Nicodemus Porter in behalf of the Oneida some of the Cayuga, and Tuscarora arose and spoke on behalf of his side of the house agreeing with the proposition of the Mohawk, Chief Moses Hill on behalf of himself and one or two of the Tuscarora & Cayuga arose and expressed that they have agreed with Chief Gibson because we are not asked to do so, by the Dept of Indian Affairs and his party who are protesting. Then, the matter was referred to the Fire Keeper and they confirmed the opinion those Chiefs whose are protesting to the above proposition."
- 47 There was another instance when Gibson referred to Christian missionary. On 13 October 1908, the Minutes reads; "Chief John A. Gibson desired that Rev. George Constable, a Baptist Missionary, should also address this Council meeting, who then spoke that King, the Chiefs for the honor of addressing the meeting. He stated that he was very pleased to meet Mr. Webster representative of the N.E.Co. and also the clergymen of the Reserve. He is also a missionary of the Six Nations representing the Baptist Communities and he trusted that harmony and good work would continue to prevail and advance among at the Six Nations."
- 48 "Some discussion arose as to the advisability of allowing the Council House to be used for any public meetings, (sic) some of the Chiefs strongly opposed to let (sic) the use of the said Council House for religious service when the Sec'y arose and said that he does not wonder at the Pagans

- opposing the advancement of the religion because they have no faith in (it), what he wondered at is this, that professing Christians are opposing the use of the Council House for religious services by any denominations, to which Chf. John Gibson apologized for what he said.” The Minutes of the Six Nations Council, quoted in John A. Noon, *Law and Government of the Grand River Iroquois*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology Number 12 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1949): 47.
- 49 “The Visiting Supt. replied as follows. The petition prepared by Mr. Snider is presented to the Governor General who forwarded the same to the Imperial Government. And I told him to stop until the Governor General pays a visit on this Reserve, when we could ask him to use his influence with the home Government.” *The Minutes*, :307.
- 50 “Sept. 12 of 1899. The Council decided to appoint deputation to await on Edward Leox Sanchari Esq of London, England, at the Kerby House tomorrow afternoon and present our long grievance against the Imperial Government v. c. and ask him to urge them to give us a reply as soon as possible. The following are the delegate chiefs. Peter Powless, John A. Gibson, Alexander Hill, Joseph Porter, Jr., Abram Charles and Joshua Hill.” *Ibid.*, :235.
- 51 On 5 June 1906, the Minutes reads, “Mr. Superintendent Cameron replied to a question of Chief John A. Gibson with reference to Rules and Regulations governing our loan system, and said that the loan system as prepared by the Committee of Chiefs, and approved of by the Council, and afterward-confirmed by the Department of Indian Affairs that \$5.00 an acre on improved land is only accepted as security for loans, a good bush, and the same is fenced in is considered as improved land, because it adds to the value of the farm, or commons are not considered improved lands, therefore they cannot be accepted as security for loans. Therefore the committee on loan should be very careful in recommending for loan.”
- 52 “July 3rd of 1900. The Council decided to appoint a Committee of Six Chiefs to visit the Council of the Mississaugas of New Credit, with reference to land dispute, as soon as arrangement could be made. The Visiting Supt. is hereby requested to communicate with the Indian Agent such Steward and arrange as what day a special Council of the Mississaugas of the New Credit may be held when the following chiefs would attend. Chiefs Peter Powless, John A. Gibson, Philip Hill, A. S. Johnson, Hm. Wage, Josiah Hill, and the Visiting Supt. will accompany the Deputation.” *Ibid.*, :16.
- 53 On 4 December 1907, the Minutes reads, “The Council decided to hold a commemorative Council of the one hundred the anniversary of the death of Captain Joseph Brant Tayendanega on Monday 26th... at 10 O’clock A. M. and the following Chiefs were appointed a Committee to prepare the Program for the occasion. A. G. Smith, John A. Gibson, David John, A. S. Johnson, Wm. Hill and Josiah Hill.”
- 54 For example, On 21 June 1895, the Minutes reads, “The Council decided to appoint John A. Gibson and Wm. Wage to assist the Secretary in revising the list of Chiefs of the Six Nations according to the rules and order of the Confederation.”
- 55 On 8 June 1904, the Minutes reads; “The Council appointed the following Chiefs to look over the present list of chiefs with the Secretary of the Council, Abram Lewis, John A. Gibson, Thomas W. Echo, Joseph Porter Sen, Abram Charles.”
- 56 “July 4 of 1908. Chief John A. Gibson, one of the Chiefs of the Mohawk side of the Council performed the usual custom of condolence among the Six Nations to the other side of the Council



- for the loss they have sustained in the death of Chief Freeman Thomas, one of their colleagues. Chief Robert David of the opposite side of the Council replied in accordance to the ancient custom of condolence." *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, July 4, 1908: 56.
- 57 "For example, he announced the schedule of the condolence at the council meeting on November 4 of 1905. The Chief John A. Gibson announced that a Condolence Ceremony will take place at the Upper Cayuga Longhouse on Friday, the Mohawk, Seneca and Onondaga will meet in the House and to prepare as much before going to the Longhouse." *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 4 November 1905: 213.
- 58 "Freman Thomas a young man Tuscarora was then brought into the Council and stood in the midst of the Six Nations Chiefs by Chief Thomas. Mr. Echo, who was acting for the four brothers and performed the usual Ceremony of conferring upon him the title of Chief Sakivarithra of ----, after which Chief John A. Gibson was selected to give charge to the young man as to his duties as one of the Six Nations Chiefs towards himself as well as to the people of the Six Nations generally, and even those who are coming after us which he did at length in a capable manner then there was a shaking of hands of welcome and retrieved to a sumptuous dinner prepared by the women and relatives of the young chief who is installed in the place and instead of Ex chief Solomon Nash retired under pension." *The Minutes of Six Nations Council*, November 2, 1904: 58.
- 59 *The Minutes of Six Nations Council*, December 8, 1896: 376. There was a note to this article. "It shall be lawful for any member of the Six Nations at any time to make a complaint against the admission of any one of those admitted on the pay list by this resolution. In such case the following proceedings shall be taken. a), The complaint shall be in writing stating reasons for and names of complainant and witnesses thereof. Place the same in the hands of the Visiting Superintendent at — thereon shall summon all persons concerned on the matter appointed the time and place the investigation to be held. b) Such investigation shall come before the Standing Committee appointed for such purpose as herein after mentioned. c) All persons giving evidence at such investigation shall be examined under oath."
- 60 *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*: 378.
- 61 *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 4 March 1904: 447.
- 62 "The Council decided to appoint a Committee of Chiefs to revise and amend the By Laws of the Reserve as follows. A. G. Smith, John A. Gibson, Jns. F. Martin, J. S. Johnson, Peter M. Jamison and Richard Hill."
- 63 "The following Chiefs were appointed a Committee to enquire into the matter of F. W. Merrill's permit to explore for gas and oil for the Reserve, as he had practically done, nothing to carry at his promises to his Council as the time that he applied for his permit. It appears that he got the franchises for speculation only.
- John G. Martin    Chairman  
J.N.W. Elliot    Secretary  
J.S. Johnson  
Dan Mac Naughton  
John A. Gibson  
Lawrence Jonathan  
Josiah Hill."
- 64 *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 11 December 1908: 38-39. The Minutes reads, "The



Council further decided to supply Mrs. John A. Gibson enough silk yarn to make a sash for Chief Onondiyoh, the Prince of Wales, with his Indian name, and Totem upon the Sash, and have it done by the next General Council so that the Address and sash may be forwarded to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, also the written Interpretation of the Ancient rites and ceremonies of the Six Nations by Chief A. G. Smith will be attached to the Address.” The Minutes continues, “Account of John A. Gibson for making and embroiling sash for the Prince of Wales. passed \$15.00. Account of John A. Gibson for sash for the Visiting Supt. passed. \$5.00.”

- 65 “It was now the duty of our chiefs to welcome their sympathizing guests. To my surprise, the person debuted to perform this duty was my blind friend, the younger John Gibson (Kanyadariyo). A fine musical voice, a good memory, and a pleasing presence, to which his lack of vision added a touch of the pathetic, qualified him well for the office. A friend led him by the arm, and with him walked gravely to and fro in the space between the hosts and the guests, while the blind singer, with figure upright and visage bent toward the ground before him, intoned in high, quavering notes the chant of welcome, in the precise words in which it is given in the Book of Rites.

There were, of course, many pauses between the periods, which were filled up with long-drawn utterances of the musical interjection, Haih-haih, without which an Iroquois chant seems impossible. With this exception, if such it can be called, the chief’s remarkable memory enabled him to follow the traditional words quite accurately, and even to recite in proper order the long list of names of ancient towns, where there was nothing in the sense to guide his recollection. I thus learned—what I had not before understood—that this portion of the Book of Rites was intended to be, not spoken, but sung. Subsequently it appeared that the remainder of the book, including even the ‘Laws of the League,’ was in the same category.” Horatio Hale, “An Iroquois Condoling Council,” *An Iroquois Source Book, volume 1. Political and Social Organization*, ed., Elisabeth Tooker (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985): 51-52.

- 66 “From the corner behind the curtain was now heard the Condoling Song, sung this time very sweetly, the musical voice of the blind Kanyadariyo leading the chant. When it was finished he was led forward by another chief, who conducted him up and down the hall, while he sang in high, clear tones the invocation to their forefathers, and chanted the ancient laws which these had made, ‘to strengthen the house.’ The ancient custom requires that the nations who have been comforted shall return a suitable response and acknowledgment. Once more the Condoling Song was commenced—this time from the eastern corner. Chief Skanawati led the chant in a high, clear voice. In the chorus the sweet musical tones of the blind Kanyadariyo and the deep bass voice of his father, Atotarho, could he heard. Twenty strong male voices mingled their powerful harmony, swelling and falling like the moan of a wind rushing through the forest. As thus chanted, the ‘hymn’ became exciting; and I now understood why it was known among them as the ‘Stirrer’ or ‘Rouser.’” *Ibid.*: 55-57.

- 67 F. W. Waugh, “Iroquois Foods and Food Preparation,” Canada, Department of Mines, *Geological Survey Memoir* 86, No. 12, Anthropological Series: 12.
- 68 *The Letter Book of E. D. Cameron*, 30 May 1900.
- 69 J. N. B. Hewitt, “Introduction,” to “Iroquois Cosmology, Second Part,” *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* 43 (1928): 456.
- 70 Tooker, Elisabeth, “On the Development of the Handsome Lake Religion,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133, no. 1 (1989): 35-50.

- 71 William C. Sturtevant, "A Structural Sketch of Iroquois Ritual," in Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi and Marianne Mithun, ed., *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984): 133-152. Among the agricultural ceremonies, the following are what Gibson didn't explain to Waugh: the Moon and Sun ceremony, the Corn Sprouting ceremony, the Strawberry ceremony, the Raspberry ceremony, and the Corn testing ceremony.
- 72 "The speaker may, according to Chief Gibson, conclude as follows: "Thank to our Father who art in heaven. We still have the duty and (sic) privilege of planting corn, beans, squashes, and other vegetable. We ask you, our Father, to supply us this season with food, to send the game birds and animals, as usual. We thank you to-day as we have the privilege of performing our ceremony." Waugh, op. cit.,: 12-13.
- 73 "My sons, we have to perform our duty in thanking our Great Three Sisters. We have now to sing for our Great Three Sisters, and you must help us sing." Ibid.,: 13. Simony gives a similar description of the same ritual fifty years later. Annemarie Anrod Simony, *Conservatism among the Iroquois at the Six Nations Reserve* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994): 164.
- 74 Ibid.,: 19.
- 75 Shimony, op. cit.,: 153-157.
- 76 Waugh, op. cit.,: 26.
- 77 Ibid.,: 11.
- 78 Duncan C. Scott, "Traditional History of the Confederacy of the Six Nations," *Royal Society of Canada, Proceedings and Transactions*, 3rd ser., V (Ottawa: 1912), Sec. II:195-246.
- 79 William N. Fenton, "This Island, the World on the Turtle's Back," *Journal of American Folklore* 75, no. 298 (1962): 283-300.
- 80 William N. Fenton, "Editor's Introduction," Arthur C. Parker, Parker on the Iroquois (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), pp. 1-47. For more information about Seth Newhouse, see Sally M. Weaver, "Seth Newhouse and the Grand River Confederacy at Mid-Nineteenth Century," in Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi, and Marianne Mithun, ed., *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquois Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984): 165-182.
- 81 Ibid., p. 39.
- 82 The Minutes continues, "The act of the Committee on the Indian rites and constitution \$13.00 each was passed as follows: Peter Powless, John A. Gibson, Thomas Hm Echos, Nicodemus Porters, New Wage, Abram Charles, J. M. M. Elliott, and Josiah Hill." The Minutes of 10 April 1900 reads, "The following account were produced to be paid by the Committee- Six Nations League Committee Service. Chief Peter Powless \$13.00, Chief John A. Gibson \$13.00, Chief Thomas W. Echos \$13.00, Chief Nicodemus Porter \$13.00, Chief William Wage \$13.00, Chief Abram Charles \$13.00, Chief Josiah Hill \$13.00 Chief J. W. M. Elliot \$13.00."
- 83 *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 4 August 1900. Some of these chiefs were paid again later. "Committee in Re. completing S. N. Indian League History, as follows: Chief Peter Powless \$6.00, Josiah Hill & 6.00, J. M. M. Elliott \$6.00, Nicomodemus Porter \$2.00, Thomas E. Echo \$2.00 Wm. Wage \$3.00."
- 84 Scott, op. cit.,197.
- 85 E. Brian Titley writes a book about Duncon E. Scott. There he, writing of Scott's very narrow ethnocentric view, says, "Scott firmly believed in the great civilizing mission of the British Em-

- pire, and he saw Canada's international role as an integral component of that entity." *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986): 25.
- 86 Sally M. Weaver, "The Iroquois: The Grand River Reserve in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, 1875-1945," in Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith, ed., *Aboriginal Ontario, Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994): 215-257.
- 87 These reformers were also called the Progress Warriors. They were Christians, active in the church affairs, and participated fully in the community. "In background they reflected the reserve's increasing occupational diversity. Their group included farmers, store owners and storekeepers, mill operators, carpenters, contractors, and in, two instances, a physician and a minister. --With one exception they had no claim to hereditary title." Weaver, *ibid.*: 239.
- 88 The Upper Canadian government invested most of the money in the Six Nations fund in the stock of the Grand River Navigation Company without the natives' knowledge or consent. When the same company went bankrupt in 1858, the Six Nations lost all their that had been money invested in it. For further detail, see Bruce Emerson Hill, *The Grand River Navigation Company* (Brantford, Ontario: Brant Historical Publication, 1994): 88. Weaver, *op. cit.*: 240.
- 89 Weaver, *op. cit.*: 240.
- 90 *The Civil Service List of Canada*, 1900 (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1900), p. 166. Edwin D. Cameron was born on 22 September 1859. He had served as Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs for nine years by 1900. He had had enough time to get to know the chiefs of the hereditary council by then. He earned \$1,200.00 a year.
- 91 On 19 April 1899 of *the Letter Book*, Cameron wrote; "I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd of March last File No. 149, 581, requesting me to express my view as to the suggested change in the method of governing the affairs of the band, etc. I reply I beg to report that the proportion of the Indian in favor of the proposed change are not more than one-third. The reason advanced for the change in your letter are, I consider correct, and therefore much prefer encouraging the younger members to take more interest in their own affairs, but at the same time I feel if the elective system was established on the Reserve and the present system of hereditary chiefs discontinued, considerable trouble might result. A few days ago I received through the Secretary of the Six Nations Council the attached petition, asking that no change in the government of their affairs be made the ----- comprises some 428 names. I am very anxious to encourage anything which I feel would promote and advance the members of the Reserve, but I feel that, should an elective system is now established that I can foresee considerable trouble, the influence of the present chiefs, prospective chiefs, their friends and the pagans and uneducated element would be very powerful, at the same time I believe that the Indian Act could be so amended so the present system of chiefs could continue and also have an elective system. The present chiefs would be called ---- or Lords and the elective would represent the view of the people and all ----- each body, the Department would only approve of such ----- would be far the benefit of the Reserve at large, the matter from which body it would ----, this would satisfy such party, and I am convinced in a few years the ---- would realize that the Elective system was far better. If you would approve of my suggestion it appears to me that it would be successfully carried out. Sir Your obedient servant E. D. C. Supt."
- 92 *The Letter Book of E. D. Cameron*, : 437-438. It is necessary to explain a few technical terms here.

The Superintendent General referred to in the quotation means superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs on native reservation. It was E. D. Cameron who served as superintendent then, who was in the direct charge of an Indian agent on the Six Nations Reserve. At that time, Duncan Scott was the Deputy Superintendent General working in Ottawa. Frederick H. Abbott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada, Report of An Investigation Made in 1914 Under the Direction of the Board of Indian Commissioners, Washington, D.C., 1915: 34-35.* This administrative organization was established after the Department of the Secretary of State Act of 1868 and the Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians and the Better Management of Indian Affairs of 1869 which conferred great power upon the Superintendent General, including allocation of reserve land and control of reserve income. In 1873, the Minister of the Interior was declared the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Before this period of time, when Canadian Confederation was established, the Governor General.

93 Ibid.,: 438.

94 Ibid.,: 439.

95 Ibid.,: 437.

96 J. W. Powell, "Introduction," *Twenty-First Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1899-1099* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903): XI.

97 *The Minutes of the Six Nations Council*, 11 November 1912: 64.

98 The official record of John A. Gibson's death is written as follows.

APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR AND APPROVAL OF WILL

To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Insert name of

(a) deceased In the Matter of the Estate of John A. Gibson.....deceased

(b) applicant The petition of R. J. Stallwood, Superintendent .....

(c) reserve of the .Six Nations Indian Reserve, in the Province of Ontario.sheweth:

1. That..John Gibson..Onondaga. Clear Sky....Band No. 32 of the Six Nations Band of Indians, died on or about the th.day of .November..A. D. 1912 at Six Nations Indian Reserve. on which He had a fixed place of abode.

Strike out

2. (a) That the deceased left no Will inapplicable section.  
or (b) That the deceased left a Will dated the .....day of A. D. 19 naming..... as executor.  
or (c) That the deceased left a Will dated the .....day of .....  
A. D. 19.....has appointed no executor.
3. That the deceased left him has surviving the following heirs at law and next of kin:  
If heir or next of kin is a non-band member please state same.

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