



## Glossary for *American Indians in an Age of Empire and Revolution, 1750-1783*

**Covenant Chain:** The Covenant Chain describes the alliance system between the Haudenosaunee (also called the Iroquois Confederacy or Iroquois Great League of Peace) and British North America. The Iroquois Confederacy had linked the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk since c. 1200. (The Tuscarora nation joined later as the sixth member). The Covenant Chain brought colonial governments in economic, diplomatic, and military alliance with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, uniting the British with the Haudenosaunee during major conflicts such as the Seven Years' War. The chain metaphor likened the importance of ongoing renewal of agreements to the need for metal chains to be polished to avoid corrosion.

**Middle Ground:** The historian Richard White used the term the Middle Ground<sup>1</sup> to describe the system of accommodation that Algonquian-speaking peoples and Europeans developed in the Great Lakes Region (*pays d'en haut*) from the mid-seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. French and Native people found common meaning through cooperation, cultural exchanges, expediency, and productive misunderstandings, made possible and necessary because no one group held dominance. Other historians have applied the concept more broadly to describe spaces of flexible spaces of accommodation between American Indians and Euro-Americans. The concept of the Middle Ground helped scholars discuss Native agency—recognizing American Indians as historical actors with a range of choices rather than as simply the victims of colonization.

**Pontiac's War (sometimes called Pontiac's Rebellion):** In Pontiac's War, a pan-Indian alliance of nations (including the Ottawas, Delawares, Potawatomis, Wyandots, Shawnees, Mingos, Ojibwas, and Miamis) challenged British control of the interior of North America. The Ottawa headman Pontiac inspired warriors to attack British forts by relating to them the vision that the Delaware Prophet Neolin received from the Master of Life. This spiritual understanding, which blended Delaware and Christian notions, criticized Native people for becoming too dependent on European tools and trade, and urged them to take back their lands and traditions. The conflict began north of Detroit in 1763, but quickly American Indians throughout much of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley. The roots of the conflict lay deep in the displacement, disease, profound cultural shifts, unfair dealings, and violence that Native people experienced through their contact with Euro-Americans, but the policies of Jeffrey Amherst (who discontinued the long-standing practice of gift-giving as a way of maintaining diplomatic relations) are commonly seen as the spark that touched off the conflict. Moreover, American Indians had been completely excluded from the negotiations

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<sup>1</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).



the ended the Seven Years' War, and they faced a future in which they could no longer leverage longstanding French-British tensions to their advantage.

**Proclamation Line of 1763:** In October 1763, the British Crown established a line at the crest of the Appalachian Mountains, to the east of which lay land for British subjects to settle and to the west of which would be “for the use” of American Indians. This measure was not about protecting Indians, except insofar as it helped to prevent frontier violence between Native people and colonial settlers who continued to encroach westward. During this period, American Indians faced pressure from both British colonial elites—who were engaging in rampant land speculation—and poor whites—who tried to become small farmers by “squatting” on land where they had no right even by British law. Instead, the Proclamation encouraged legal British settlement to the less colonized provinces such as Nova Scotia, Georgia, Quebec, East Florida, and West Florida. The 1763 line was never intended to be permanent, and it was extended farther west on multiple occasions before the American Revolution.

**Seven Years' War (French and Indian War):** Conflict emerged in 1754 in the Ohio Country on American Indian land that was under competing French and British claims. From 1756-1763, the Seven Years' War spanned across the world to Europe, the Caribbean, and India. British colonials called the conflict in North America because their major opponents were France and its Native allies. French colonials called it *La Guerre de la Conquête* because France lost its claims to continental North America during the war, and French subjects living in New France became British subjects.

**British Superintendent of Indian Affairs:** From the founding of the American colonies, control over Indian trade, diplomacy, and war belonged to each colony individually. However, as greater cooperation and coordination became necessary during the Seven Years' War, the responsibility for Indian Affairs would be centralized under Crown appointees who approached the task with greater consistency, skill, and knowledge in Native practices, languages, and cultures. The Northern Department of Indian Affairs (north of the Ohio River) was headed by Sir William Johnson (1756-1774) and Guy Johnson (1774-1783). Edmund Atkin (1756-1762), John Stuart (1762-1779), Thomas Brown and Alexander Cameron (jointly appointed in 1779) oversaw the Southern Department of Indian Affairs (south of the Ohio River).

**Wampum:** Beads made from quahog clam and channeled whelk (sea snail) shells, called wampum, were a critical part of American Indian exchanges. Wampum had value as currency, but it also had a deeper significance. White and dark beads were strung into patterns in strings and belts. The patterns conveyed messages that sachems and chiefs could read that symbolized and memorialized treaties.