

## Kandiaronk



In this series of articles relating to the establishment of Hudson's Bay Fort Colville in 1825 we are going to step much further back in history to a time between 1648 and 1701 when the French in Quebec were at odds with the English in New York and both had formed alliances with local native tribes to further their interests. My interest was piqued in this era while reading a large ground-breaking book, The Dawn of Everything A new History of Humanity by David Graeber and David Wengrow. It attempts to re-examine the assumptions commonly found in comprehensive accounts of human history by archeologists, anthropologists etc. about the intelligence and cultural formations of early humans. It is a kind of "myth buster" exposé of history as written by Western thinkers.

Early on, Graeber and Wengrow compare thinking about inequality in Europe and observations of European society by Kandiaronk, Chief of the Native American Wendat people at Michilimackinac in New France. It struck me that the traditions ascribed to the Wendat people, Huron, Iroquois and others in Northeast North America were similar to those described by local Okanogan historian Arnie Marchand in Stim an S Kw ist (What is Your Name). Laws, if you could describe them as such, in both native cultures did not come with built-in enforcement such as police. So if for instance, if a family member was killed, the family of the killer was expected to repay that debt to the deceased's family. In Wendat society the aggrieved could demand another person to replace the first.

There were many other customs that seem odd to Western thinking but prompted extensive discussion between the Jesuits, who accompanied the French fur traders to North America, and the natives themselves. These discussions were recorded in the

seventy one volumes of The Jesuit Relations, an account that was published and widely read in European circles. The Wendat response to a French governor's edict forbidding alcohol being given to natives was recorded by Jesuit Father Lallemand saying that (translated from the French): "They are free people, each of whom considers himself of as much consequence as the others; and they submit to their chiefs only in so far as it pleases them."

Wendat philosopher-statesman, Kandiaronk, is mostly known for brokering The Great Peace of Montreal (1701) between France, the Iroquois, and the other Indian tribes of the Upper Great Lakes. He did this literally on his death bed and died the day after it was signed. In 1703 French aristocrat Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, (AKA Lahotan) published "*Curious Dialogues with a Savage of Good Sense Who Has Travelled*". Lahotan, who had been in New France, attributed the savage end of the dialogue to Adario, who is believed to be Kandiaronk.

American natives who had been put to work as galley slaves and seen how European society worked continually chided the French on the "inhumanity" of their systems of royalty and money. About money Kandiaronk (as Adario) said "*I affirm that what you call money is the devil of devils; the tyrant of the French, the source of all evil; the bane of souls and slaughterhouse of the living... Money is the father of luxury, lasciviousness, trickery, lies, betrayal, insincerity, - all of the world's worst behavior.*"

In a culture that hinged on the "divine right of kings" and similar principles of papacy, czarism, castes and serfs, the claim that every person was of equal value and could determine what laws they wished to acknowledge was blasphemy. This claim of personal freedom was converted to an argument for what became the "Enlightenment" concept of equality and the will of the people as being the foundation of political authority.

These are the very ideas that came back to roost in the United States in the Declaration of Independence stating that "*all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" The "endowed by their creator" part still clings to its Christian roots, but the equality part is a direct consequence of Native American culture.

(I note here that local natives largely converted to Catholicism, not seeing any real conflict between its principles and those of their own culture. The Jesuits were instrumental in fostering education and immunization.)