Activist Anthropology with the Haudenosaunee
Theoretical and Practical Insights from the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign

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ABSTRACT: As participants in the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign, we explore our experiences as allies and activist anthropologists in a collaborative venture that involved participants from Native nations, academia and local communities. The campaign included local, regional and international events aimed at re-enlivening a 400-year-old treaty espousing mutual respect and balance between Europeans and the Haudenosaunee. The highlight of the symbolic renewing of the treaty culminated in a journey down the Hudson River with Native and non-Native paddlers embodying an ally relationship as they paddled side by side and were followed by ground crews, the media and thousands of onlookers. The campaign, challenged by some anthropologists as being based on a ‘fake’ treaty, demonstrated the successful and dynamic components of a multicultural movement. It inspired us to reflect on the current state of activist anthropology and see the intersections with decolonisation theories, indigenous anthropology and pedagogies of engagement.

KEYWORDS: activist anthropology, decolonisation, Haudenosaunee, indigenous anthropology, pedagogies of engagement, treaty

As participants in the epic Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign of 2013, we explore our experiences as allies and activist anthropologists in a collaborative venture that involved Haudenosaunee leaders, community members, diverse organisations, academics and students from around New York State and beyond. The Two Row Wampum (Teioháte Kaswent), an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Dutch dated to 1613 and codified in a treaty belt, symbolises how people of all cultures should travel down the river of life in mutual respect for one other and the environment. Despite the prominence of the Two Row Wampum in Haudenosaunee culture and oral traditions, some academics – including an anthropologist – led an effort to question its existence and the campaign itself (Hirsch 2014). After reflection and validation by the Haudenosaunee about the importance of the Two Row Wampum, numerous educational activities and events were held as part of the renewal.

The culminating event of the year-long campaign involved hundreds of Native and non-Native paddlers. They journeyed side by side down the Hudson River and landed in Manhattan on the International Day of Indigenous Peoples and then marched on foot to the United Nations carrying a replica of the treaty belt. The insights gained and lessons learned from the ambitious 2013 campaign shed light on the applications of activist and public anthropology and the components of a successful multicultural movement.

We became involved early on to see how we could contribute as public and activist anthropologists. Our backgrounds as a cultural anthropologist (BH) and an archaeologist (JR) included consulting and educa-
tional collaboration with the Haudenosaunee since the late 1990s. We also co-founded the Native American Studies Program at Ithaca College and a community group called SHARE, Strengthening Haudenosaunee American Relations through Education (an organisation that helped get land back to the Cayuga Nation in 2005, now known as the Cayuga SHARE Farm; see Hansen and Rossen 2007). We had worked with the Onondaga Nation and NOON (Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation) on many projects previously, including the collaborative garden at the Onondaga Nation and the educational series ‘Onondaga Lands Rights and Our Common Future’. We became Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign regional co-organisers around Cayuga Lake and volunteers for the main events in the ‘symbolic enactment schedule’, which included numerous festivals and educational events during the paddle down the Hudson from 27 July to 9 August 2013. We worked collaboratively with Cayuga Nation members Dan Hill (Heron Clan), Donna Silversmith (Snipe Clan) and others on regional planning and events.

Our participation led us to reflect on the current state of activist anthropology and to see the intersections between this form of positioned anthropology with decolonisation theories, indigenous anthropology and the pedagogies of engagement. We advocate for theoretical shifts that open spaces for indigenous voices and interpretations to engage with complex debates, issues and histories of which they are an integral part.

**Origins of the Haudenosaunee and Wampum Belts**

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy consists of six nations – the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora. Commonly known as the Iroquois or Six Nations, the name they use for themselves is Haudenosaunee, meaning ‘People of the Longhouse’ or ‘People Building Longhouses’ (George-Kanentiio 2000). Alliances with other nations, cultural rootedness in the landscape and relations with the cosmos have been encoded in oral traditions and strings and belts of wampum (shell beads). A key wampum belt that marks the coming together of the previously warring nations under one confederacy is the Hiawatha Belt. Hiawatha, or Aiinowatha (George-Kanentiio 2000), was an Onondaga man who helped to spread the message of the Great Peace, along with the Seneca female leader Jikonsasay. They carried out these efforts under the guidance of the Peacemaker whose epic journeys and actions in bringing the peace are well known and retold in many contexts.

This foundational belt later became the flag of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and is commonly used to tell the history of the Haudenosaunee and their relations to one another and the land. In the centre, the depiction of the tree represents the Onondaga Nation or central fire of the Confederacy, where Grand Council meetings take place. It also represents the Tree of Peace that was planted when all the nations agreed to bury their weapons of war and accept the Great Law of Peace. The squares on each side of the tree represent the other four original nations: Senecas at the western door, Mohawks at the eastern door and Cayugas and Oneidas between the doors and on either side of the central fire at Onondaga. The Tuscarora Nation joined the Confederacy in 1722. One ‘reading’ of the graphic we have seen many times is that of a metaphorical longhouse sitting atop what is now New York State, with the nations all having their positions and fires within. Such readings of belts are a common occurrence at events.

The Haudenosaunee have used oral culture and wampum belts as continual records of their own history. The Hiawatha Belt is a cultural text that retells a foundational part of Haudenosaunee history: the acceptance of the Great Peace and the formation of the Confederacy. ‘The purpose of the belt, to use an anthropological term, is a mnemonic device for remembering important ideas, so that when the reader of the belt holds it in his hands, the idea literally comes from the belt’ (Jemison 2000: 149). The belt represents much more than merely a political history of coming to peace and forming a confederacy – the wampum belt and its concomitant oral stories also encode important cultural themes such as: the origins of humans and connections to celestial realms; gender relations and the importance of matrilineality; the integrative role of clan systems across the nations; and much more.

Haudenosaunee scholars have written extensively on this tradition of using wampum belts in their culture to signify treaties, relationships and agreements, including the Hiawatha Belt, the Two Row Wampum Belt, the George Washington Treaty Belt and others (George-Kanentiio 2000; Hill 2014; Jemison 2000; Lyons 1992; Powless 2000; Thomas 1994). As Tuscarora historian Richard W. Hill, Sr, states in *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations,* ‘a treaty is not solely words of agreement on parchment but rather an ongoing relationship in which both parties continue to have their concerns openly discussed and considered’ (Hill 2014:
As one of the first treaties between nations, the Teioháte Kaswenta represents the beginning of the covenant chain that links future treaties together. ‘One of the cultural metaphors at the centre of early American treaty making was the Covenant Chain of Peace. The concept behind this metaphor is of an unbreakable chain that unites treaty partners. The chain is made of three links – representing respect, trust, and friendship’ (Hill 2014: 40). Tadodaho Sidney Hill issued a press release early in the campaign planning stages that stated the Teioháte Kaswenta was the ‘Grandfather of all treaties as it established protocol for future agreements and recognition of two distinct separate peoples […] We urge governments such as the United States and Canada to “polish the Covenant Chain” that binds this agreement and provided a process to continue to work as Brothers to resolve our issues such as jurisdiction, land, water, treaty rights, self-governance and peace between all nations and Mother Earth’ (S. Hill 2013: 1). President Obama referenced the need to renew the chain in his November 2013 address to the Tribal Nations Conference: ‘But that covenant chain didn’t sustain itself. It needed constant care, so that it would stay strong. And that’s what we’re called to do, to keep the covenant between us for this generation and for future generations’ (U.S. Department of the Interior 2013: 3).

Many Haudenosaunee elders and scholars have spoken and written about the great significance of the Teioháte Kaswenta. If we are to value Native theoretical frames of experience and interpretation, then including these discourses is paramount. Onondaga elder Chief Irving Powless stated:

The Two Row Wampum belt is made of white and purple beads. The white beads denote truth. Our record says that one purple row of beads represents a sailboat. In the sailboat are the Europeans, their leaders, their government, and their religion. The other purple row of beads represents a canoe. In the canoe are the Native Americans, their leaders, their governments, and their Way of Life, or religion as you say it. We shall travel down the road of life, parallel to each other and never merging with each other.

In between the two rows of purple beads are three rows of white beads. The first row of white beads is ‘peace,’ the second row, ‘friendship,’ and the third row, ‘forever.’ As we travel down the road of life together in peace and harmony, not only with each other, but with the whole circle of life – the animals, the birds, the fish, the water, the plants, the grass, the trees, the stars, the moon, and the thunder – we shall live together in peace and harmony, respecting all those elements…

Contextualising the Two Row Wampum Belt: Symbolism, Significance and Academic Skirmishes

In our work with the Haudenosaunee since the mid-1990s, we have seen the prominence treaty belts hold in communicating with the larger public about their histories, relationships and agreements with outsiders. In classrooms, courtrooms, commemorations, festivals and meetings, we have witnessed replicas of key wampum belts being used, including the Two Row Wampum Belt, often referred to in short as the Gswenta or Kaswenta, which simply means ‘wampum belt’ (Richard W. Hill, Sr, personal communication). As Richard W. Hill (2013: 1) clarifies in his summary of talking points on the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign website: ‘The proper Hodinohs:ni name for the Two Row Wampum is Teioháte (Two Paths/roads in Mohawk Language) Kaswenta (Wampum Belt); Others say it is called Tekani teyothata’te kaswenta; or Aterihwihs:sera Kaswenta (Cayuga).’
The Haudenosaunee have never violated this treaty …

We have never passed a law telling you [how to live] …

You and your ancestors, on the other hand, have passed laws that continually try to change who I am, what I am, and how I shall conduct my spiritual, political and everyday life (Powless 2000: 23–24).

Despite the recognition and common usage of the Two Row Wampum and its prominence in oral histories, academic controversy intensified with the advent of the campaign regarding the date of the agreement or if it ever existed (Gehring and Starna 2012; Hirsch 2014). Anthropologist William Starna and historian Charles Gehring asserted that the 1613 treaty, presumably codified in a Dutch document and a wampum belt, was a forgery (Gehring and Starna 2012). They contacted the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign main organisers and told them that the commemoration would be based on a fake event that never happened. The email exchange was quickly shared with regional campaign organisers – including us – and much discussion and reflection ensued. The Syracuse Post Standard covered the controversy (Coin 2013) and the Journal of Early American History devoted a special issue to the debate:

The regular editors of this journal were intrigued by this debate but also a little troubled by it. While the debate has not received widespread attention outside of New York State, let alone in the international stage, it is nonetheless significant because it is representative of public debates that occasionally erupt at the intersection of scholarly inquiry and public concern (Otto and Jacobs 2013: 2).

Otto and Jacobs go on to discuss the friction between documentary-based research and oral tradition, and state their task as exploring the ‘veracity’ of what has been termed the Tawagonshi or Van Loon (Dutch) document and the Two Row Wampum Belt. They also state their intent to contextualise the investigation more broadly in terms of what the treaty represents. While the upshot of the volume is that the paper document appears to be false based on linguistic analyses (Hermkens et al. 2013), the tradition of an agreement between the Dutch and Haudenosaunee, which may have influenced later agreements with outsiders, is plausible from their perspective.

We have heard Haudenosaunee elders speak often over the last twenty years in which we have worked with them about the significance of the Teioháte Kaswenta and not once did we hear them discuss the importance of a corollary Dutch document. Replicas of the belt were always used as a mnemonic device to discuss the principles the belt represents and how it has been used throughout the generations to instruct outsiders about how we were supposed to live together with mutual respect and balance in this land. Whatever specific year these cultural messages emerged and whether they are corroborated or not in a European-produced document is immaterial to the larger import of what the Haudenosaunee are trying to convey, a point Gehring and Starna miss in their article (2012). The words of Vine Deloria, Jr, come to mind: ‘Like the missionaries, anthropologists have become intolerably certain that they represent ultimate truth’ (Deloria 1988: 100). Gehring and Starna miss another ‘truth’ in their essay: the continued use of the Two Row Wampum through the generations. ‘Subsequently in any diplomatic talks with any outside group, English, Dutch or otherwise, the Haudenosaunee would bring out this wampum and reiterate their understanding of the Two Row’ (Manno 2013: 2). More recently the Two Row Wampum has been an integral part of Haudenosaunee literary and artistic traditions (Kelsey 2014). It is interesting to ponder the idea of something that purportedly never existed as the foundation of continued cultural practices and representations from ancient times to today.

In their discussion of the ‘veracity’ of the Teioháte wampum belt, Otto and Jacobs stated that the ‘widespread adoption’ of dark or purple shell beads did not occur until 1630, thus challenging the 1613 date and the existence of the Teioháte Kaswenta (2013: 6). Interestingly, the 2015 Nation to Nation treaty exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian featured white and purple shell treaty belts dated to 1612 and the early 1600s. Dark shell beads also appear in Haudenosaunee archaeological sites (Beauchamp 1901). As wampum beads appear in pre-contact archaeological sites and archaeological evidence begins to support oral histories of a thousand-year-old Confederacy (Rossen 2015), placing a post-contact historic date on the beginning of wampum use is untenable.

While the academic debates will no doubt continue, the lived reality, significance and symbolism of the Teioháte Kaswenta outweighed the debates about exact dates and documents and the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign went forward as planned. The veracity of Haudenosaunee perspectives, a key component in indigenous anthropology and decolonisation, was acknowledged. As Jack Manno, professor of environmental studies (SUNY, ESF) and educational outreach coordinator for the campaign, stated in a clarification essay,
The organizers of the commemoration of this treaty and the celebration of it this year on the Hudson River never once claimed that the Van Loon document was an indisputable record of the Two Row agreement. You can look at our website and our outreach materials and you will find that we have always understood that the Van Loon document was controversial. The attention paid to this written document, while ignoring the history told in the wampum belts by scholars hostile to the Haudenosaunee, is just an effort to distract your readers from the meaning and importance of the original agreements Native Americans made with Europeans (Manno 2013: 2).

In 2013, we would commemorate and re-enliven the relations and messages encoded in the *Teioháte Kaswenta* and move beyond narrow interpretations of wampum belts as political agreements and embrace their culturally contextualised meanings.

**Development of the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign: Community Mobilisation and Outreach**

The idea for the campaign grew out of collaboration between the Onondaga Nation, local ally groups such as NOON (Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation) and others who had been working towards relationship building and education with the Haudenosaunee for many years. As excitement grew about the potential of such a campaign to educate, unite and highlight the importance of mutual relations and treaty agreements, committees were formed to carry the ideas forward. With the help of the Council of Chiefs and Clanmothers at Onondaga Nation and the Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (R. W. Hill 2013), Andy Mager headed up the organisational and outreach efforts. With the help of a talented group of people, Andy oversaw the launching of the campaign's website and media outreach initiatives. The website became a key resource in not only coordinating regional organisers, it also kept the public informed about the background of the campaign and its many events (http://honorthetworow.org/). What began as a modest plan to educate about mutual cultural respect and to highlight the role of treaties through the vehicle of the Two Row Wampum grew into a large-scale project connecting thousands of people.

State-wide regional efforts focused on community-based events, education, outreach and public relations. The main organising team focused on job capacity and alliance building from the start that yielded support from Native elders, educators, politicians, pan-indigenous alliances, public figures, writers and activists. Eighty-five organisations endorsed the campaign, such as the American Indian Law Alliance, the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples, the Dakota Unity Riders and dozens of community, faith-based and educational organisations, including anthropology departments. The wide base of support was influential in garnering public support and media coverage as the campaign unfolded.

The concept of developing allies for the campaign was central for highlighting the two row symbolism of people working side by side. Initiatives such as the renewal campaign draw people interested in Native American cultures for a variety of reasons. Some want to know more about history and the roles of contemporary Native nations, others want to participate in Native American spirituality or insist on being in the ‘canoe’ and not the ‘ship’ of American society. Finding a clear role for the latter people while teaching them about appropriation of indigenous cultures and maintaining respect is not always easy. Reminding them of the principles of the Two Row Wampum, especially how each group was to stay on their own path as they went down the river of life, was one way to accomplish this. The campaign also developed a variety of outreach materials on ‘How to be an Ally to Indigenous Peoples’ to highlight appropriate support roles. These recommendations included well over a dozen suggestions, such as: (1) respect and support indigenous sovereignty; (2) remember that treaties are the supreme law of the United States; (3) care for the earth and work to end global warming; and (4) do not co-opt Native cultures or ceremonies. We aimed to show that anthropologists (and their students) can be positive allies too.

As part of the numerous initiatives in the Cayuga Lake area, our regional committee organised a three-day paddle from Ithaca to the Cayuga SHARE Farm, tabled at many festivals and events, and presented a resolution in support of the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign to the Ithaca Common Council, which was unanimously passed and signed by Mayor Svante Myrick, a staunch supporter of local Native causes. Our committee also co-sponsored a mural contest juried by Cayuga Nation members at the annual Cayuga Nation Picnic. Brandon Lazore (Onondaga) was chosen as the artist and now his thirty-foot mural depicting the Haudenosaunee and wampum belts provides the backdrop to one of the busiest bus stops in Ithaca on Seneca Street. Dan Hill and Donna Silversmith went on to collaborate on another mural project at the Belle Sherman Elementary School in Ithaca. The entrance of the school
now features a two-storey mural resplendent with Haudenosaunee imagery and themes, including the Two Row Wampum.

In collaboration with Jon Raimon, a teacher at the Lehman Alternative Community School (LACS), we wrote and received a grant to educate in the Ithaca City School District about the Haudenosaunee. Working with Jon and his students, we went into classes and taught about treaties and the concepts represented by the Teioháte Kaswenta. As part of Native American Month in November 2012, we hosted a social dance at Ithaca College during which Chief Jake Edwards (Onondaga) did a presentation about the Haudenosaunee and the significance of the Two Row Wampum. Through Jon’s LACS class, we collaborated on community outreach at the Ithaca Festival Parade in June 2013. LACS students designed ‘Honor the Two Row’ T-shirts and built a horse-drawn float with a canoe on one side and a ship on the other to represent the iconography in the Teioháte Kaswenta. We printed hundreds of fliers about the campaign. The regional committee, LACS students and Ithaca College students passed them out to the thousands of onlookers as the float went down the streets of Ithaca to resounding cheers with Dan Hill and Donna Silversmith in the canoe.

The Ithaca Times picked up the story and ran a two-page spread on our efforts with a picture of Jack (second author) and Craig Luther (Navajo), both members of the local organising committee, carrying the Two Row banner down Cayuga Street at the Ithaca Festival. The article included our work as anthropologists and quoted Dan Hill: ‘This is still our territory. We want to lend support to the overall idea and enactment that the Two Row is still in existence and is still something we live our lives by. People don’t even know that it exists and that they’re responsible for their side’ (Dwyer 2013: 9). This is exactly the kind of collaborative public education and exposure we had worked hard to achieve.

The Symbolic ‘Enactment’ of the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign

A focal point of the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign was ‘a symbolic “enactment” of the treaty with Haudenosaunee people (along with other Native friends) and allies paddling side by side down the Hudson River’ (Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign). Haudenosaunee participants began preparations early, with a major practice run down the Hudson River in 2012 and smaller runs all across Haudenosaunee country, including at the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada. Efforts even included building the first dugout canoe in recent memory at Onondaga Nation. A registration system was set up to plan for a large number of people travelling down the Hudson in canoes and kayaks with other supporters behind the main group. Indeed, the turnout ended up being sizable with approximately 500 people registering for the whole trip or various legs. Paddlers were accompanied by dozens more ground support crew who were all greeted by hundreds – in some cases thousands – of supporters at the stops along the Hudson. We assisted with ground crew duties, presented at the Peekskill Riverfront Park, where the paddlers landed on 5 August, and documented the snowballing effect of the media and public participation in the symbolic enactment.

A highlight of the Hudson River journey was the meeting between the paddlers and the Dakota Unity Riders at the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, also known as the Walkway over the Hudson. The Unity Riders are from the First Nation Dakota People of Manitoba, Canada. Dubbed the Unity Ride, the Dakota participation in the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign aimed to bring healing and hope to our country and the world. The horses, which have been to many sacred sites with their riders, are the instruments of this healing journey. The restorative energy of these horses and riders will be felt this summer as their journey brings them into New York and, ultimately, Washington, DC. […] The combined energy of the Two Row Renewal event […] and the Unity Ride horses led by Chief Gus High Eagle of the western Dakota Nation will continue this epic journey to the heart of New York City. A great alliance and spirit of cooperation will be seen with the coming of these peaceful and giving people as we are transported back in time to a place where Europeans and Indigenous peoples shared this valley in peace (Dakota Unity Riders 2013: 1).

The Dakota travelled on horseback over four thousand miles to accompany the symbolic enactment of the Two Row Wampum and their presence brought emotional public response, media coverage and a heightened sense that the campaign was about much more than honouring a treaty. The Unity Riders rode through downtown streets and garnered front-page newspaper attention with headlines such as ‘By Land and By Sea’ (Kirby 2013).

As people congregated on the Walkway over the Hudson on the morning of 3 August, anticipation mounted while we waited for the Unity Riders and
paddlers to come into sight. The crowd swelled to thousands. Some groups gathered around drums and rattles and sang, others carried Two Row support signs. Finally, we saw the paddlers coming down the Hudson towards the bridge in two row formation. The arrival of a police escort, and resounding applause among the crowd, signalled the entrance of the riders on horseback in full regalia making their way across the bridge. As representatives of the Two Row committee, we went to greet them on behalf of the campaign, which ended up on the front page of the Cortland Standard (Leader 2013). Led by Chief Gus High Eagle, the riders stopped at the centre of the two-hundred foot high bridge to wait for the paddlers to pass underneath. As the paddlers reached the bridge, Chief High Eagle lifted his hand and began singing in Dakota and the boaters raised their paddles in salute and passed under the bridge. It was a highpoint in our experience as activist anthropologists to see Native nations and the non-Native public together at this event and to witness the emotional outpouring at this dramatic moment in the renewal campaign.

The symbolic enactment reached its final day along the Hudson River journey on 9 August. The paddlers planned on landing in Manhattan at Pier 96 mid-morning and thousands waited in great anticipation for their arrival. The symbolic importance of the landing site is notable. This was originally the Lenape territory of Mannahatta, scene of the iconic and controversial 1626 land purchase that essentially began the process of Native displacement (Banner 2005). When the paddlers arrived, to cheers and emotional tears by many, Haudenosaunee participants carried a replica of the Teiiohate Kaswenta from their canoe and presented it to Dutch Consul General Rob de Vos. The Atlantic covered the interaction:

‘Without the help of the Iroquois, the Dutch settlers would have never survived here,’ said Dutch Consul General Rob de Vos, who, with Dan Maffei, Congressman for the Syracuse region, met the paddlers and the nations’ chiefs on the pier. ‘Let’s stay together, listen to each other, and find solutions for future generations.’ Each side held one end of the Two Row Wampum belt, signifying the treaty between the Iroquois and the Dutch, and having exchanged

Figure 1: Jack Rossen greeting Chief Gus High Eagle on the Walkway over the Hudson on behalf of the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign Committee. Photo: Brooke Hansen.
gifts, the chiefs then smoked a peace pipe with de Vos (Taub 2013: 5).

After the ceremonies and social dancing, we then marched across Manhattan with banners and flags, with the Dakota Unity Riders in tow, to the United Nations for the International Day of Indigenous Peoples on 9 August 2013.

Anthropological Intersections

Public, Activist and Indigenous Anthropology: The Praxis of Decolonisation

Public anthropology engages issues and audiences beyond today’s self-imposed disciplinary boundaries. [...] A public anthropology resists the separation of theory from application (Borofsky 2000: 9).

We have long considered ourselves anthropologists who work at the nexus of the interrelated fields of public, activist and indigenous anthropologies, all of which have deep, yet sometimes hidden, roots in the discipline itself. Public anthropology was championed by Margaret Mead, not without criticism (Ambrosino et al. 1981), and has received renewed attention for its linkages with activist and other forms of anthropology (Beck 2009). Similar movements can also be seen in anthropology’s sister disciplines such as sociology (Burawoy 2005). Activist anthropology is another term for a more politically engaged and positioned applied anthropology, reflected as well in participatory action research and praxis. In Charles Hale’s provocative article about activist anthropology, he asserts that it ‘involves a basic decision to align oneself with an organised group in a struggle for rights, redress, and empowerment and a commitment to produce knowledge in collaboration and dialogue with the members of that group’ (2007: 105). He states that not many anthropologists engage with this kind of work as it is difficult, sometimes conflict-ridden and not valued or rewarded by academic institutions. We can affirm experiencing all of these challenges, from dealing with some of our regional committee members who wanted to be in the ‘canoe’ versus the ‘ship’ to committees at our college who categorised such applied work as ‘service’ and not related to scholarship or deemed significant for promotion.

Indigenous anthropology and archaeology resonate with Hale’s definition of activist anthropology. While indigenous anthropologies might be seen as new and emerging fields, as they have not received widespread acceptance yet, their roots go back to native anthropologists such as J. N. B. Hewitt (1892) and Arthur C. Parker (Parker and Newhouse 1916), and can be seen more recently in the works of Bea Medicine (2001), Joe Watkins (2001), Dorothy Lippert (2010), Kathy Kawelu (2010), Sonya Atalay (2012) and others. Silliman’s characterisation of indigenous archaeology defines for us the underlying precepts of the interrelated descriptors we use for our work with the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign: ‘At their core, indigenous archaeologies respect openness, multivocality, personal engagement, ethics, sharing of authority and interpretation, local and cultural knowledge, and the fact that history matters to people’ (Silliman 2008: 3). Indigenous anthropology is practiced by both Native and non-Native anthropologists in two row fashion where the latter can function as allies in this imperative movement within anthropology.

The vantage point of indigenous anthropology is quite different from one that questions the cultural legitimacy of the Two Row Wampum by bickering over a Dutch document. Such a vitriolic endeavour, using words such as ‘fake’, ‘fraudulence’, and ‘fiction’ for the Teiohàte Kaswenta and ‘misguided’ for the Renewal Campaign (Gehring and Starna 2012), is even farther from engaging with decolonisation where Native perspectives and frames are valued. The assertions of Gehring and Starna strike us more as recolonisation of indigenous narratives and culture.

As activist anthropologists who engage with cultural revitalisation, education and outreach, our work can also be characterised as attempting to facilitate decolonisation. ‘The intellectual project of decolonisation has to set out ways to proceed through a colonising world. It needs a radical compassion that reaches out, that seeks collaboration, and that is open to possibilities that can only be imagined as other things fall into place’ (Smith 2012: xii). By contributing to a change in consciousness that Native people have called for, anthropologists can be ‘the allies necessary to effect the genuine decolonisation of Native North America’ (James 1992: 8). Colonial frames and neocolonial relations between the United States, Canada and indigenous nations persist in numerous areas related to border-crossing rights, taxation, imposed elected governments, definitions of blood quantum for tribal rolls, and interference on Native lands for development projects. Decolonisation shifts the frame of reference of authoritative knowledge about these issues from outside to within the cultures affected. This does not mean that consensus is automatically reached when Native perspectives are given primacy. It does however mean that decisions
are made by the people who are at the centre of these complex issues. In part, our involvement with the Two Row campaign was through our positioning as academics, which is an inherently colonised foundation. We did approach the organising, event planning and Two Row activities with as much collaboration and radical compassion as possible to respect all those involved and honour spaces for indigenous leadership and direction. As anyone who has worked in communities will recognise, this is not always easy to carry out. Attempts to decolonise histories, cultures, landscapes and our own minds are fraught with colonising structures at every turn. It is a process to be sure that enveloped and challenged Two Row campaign organisers, volunteers, participants, students and anthropologists.

Activist Anthropology and the Pedagogies of Engagement

Students were an integral part of our participation in the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign as volunteers, interns, presenters, paddlers and sometimes peddlers of hundreds of Two Row brochures and fliers. Our commitment to the pedagogies of engagement comes from a desire to have students learn in real-world contexts with Native peoples and to teach them a genre of anthropology that lies at the nexus of praxis and collaboration. We aim to raise a new generation into activist, public and indigenous anthropologies. ‘In efforts of decolonisation, education plays a critical role. Not only must we take on the task of deconstruction, critique of colonial practices and knowledge systems, and modelling improved practices and approaches for the future, but we must also work diligently to educate students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous’ (Atalay 2006: 74).

Pedagogies of engagement in higher education, even decolonising ones (Atalay 2008; Freire 1972), are certainly not new but have received renewed attention under the guises of experiential learning, service learning and civic engagement (Bringle et al. 2012; Cress et al. 2013; Heffernan 2011; Stoecker et al. 2009). Anthropologists have always stressed the importance of immersion, fieldwork and participant observation as the modus operandi since the inception of the discipline so it is not surprising that our pedagogy, as well as our methodology, is guided by this. Service learning articulates well with the activist, decolonising and collaborative fields we wish to engage: ‘Service challenges faculty and students on multiple levels as it incorporates shifting dialogues, and actively engages issues of equity, difference, inclusion, access, justice, and power’ (Heffernan 2011: 2). Service learning moves beyond just volunteering or participant observation and incorporates praxis and critical reflection (Hansen 2010). Our students participated in the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign through taking credit-bearing classes, paddling Cayuga Lake and the Hudson River alongside Haudenosaunee participants, assisting with the logistics of the symbolic enactment, writing critical reflections and presenting what they experienced in local and professional venues.

Reflections on the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign and Activist Anthropology

From many vantage points, the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign was a resounding success. Given the amount of time in which the campaign came together, it is quite impressive to tally the broad-based capacity building, the education that occurred in schools and the public, and the resources garnered for the symbolic enactment down the Hudson River. As we reflect on the elements that made it successful, a number of factors came together that could be used as a model for other similar movements. There was a balance between being rooted in Native concerns, such as upholding treaty rights and responsibilities, and more broadly inclusive themes such as the foundations of American history and protecting the environment. Added to these layers was a global and cross-cultural framing that emphasised connectedness, the struggles of indigenous peoples everywhere and the need for everyone to work together. The inherent interest in Native American cultures was validated by an inclusive treaty where both sides have responsibilities. The renewal campaign also had a well laid out path for allies to follow so that appropriation could be avoided (as much as possible).

That is not to say the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign went off without challenges. There were times where some non-Natives showed a distinct lack of understanding and yielding to Haudenosaunee culture and also where they engaged in behaviours that were more about getting to the destination and racing ahead in their canoes (in this case to Manhattan) than about the process of the journey together. There were some personality issues among the Haudenosaunee organisers. The logistics were sometimes overwhelming and broke down. At the regional level, we were challenged by a few opinionated volunteers and those who wanted to write and
promote their own versions of Haudenosaunee history without guidance from Haudenosaunee people, which replicates the colonial frame rather than challenging it.

As the symbolic enactment of the Two Row Wampum came to a close in New York City, there was a feeling of momentum and climax. We had built so much networking and collaboration we wondered what was next? There was some talk of a larger paddle and walk (and perhaps horse ride) leading to Washington, DC, and involving many thousands of Native people and allies. In the end, the Haudenosaunee, through the Onondaga Nation in consultation with the main organising committee, decided that the goals of the renewal for 2013 were reached and all those involved should carry the messages forward in many ways rather than another single coordinated campaign.

The lessons we learned as allies and activist anthropologists were many. For one, theorising and intellectually supporting decolonisation is a bit easier than operationalising it. Going into a local elementary school for a day or even a week might bring students and teachers to a closer understanding of Haudenosaunee perspectives and treaties, but it does not challenge a state-wide curriculum that is still colonial in its structure. It is also easy to get trapped in the details of planning community events and getting tasks done while the big picture recedes to the background. To honour the Two Row Wampum and engage with decolonisation, we needed to be present in the journey, not necessarily always focused on the destination. ‘Decolonization is a goal but it is not an endpoint. I like this open-ended beginning because it speaks to two things: that the struggle for decolonization is a journey that is never finished and that, on this journey, uncertainty is not to be feared’ (Ritskes 2012: 1).

We were also challenged by the project of disciplinary decolonisation. With such a long history of troubled relations between anthropologists and Native peoples, we still have a lot of learning and listening to do to. This is the biggest theoretical insight we have to offer: put Marx and Foucault to the side for now and ask Native people what they think about wampum, treaties, colonisation, exploitation and their own histories. Theories are explanatory tools to help us understand the world and achieve goals. Decolonisation is a theory, a methodology, a process and a journey. That is not as neat and tidy as some academics would want a theory to be, but this is a vibrant and dynamic pathway forward. Many strides have been made and the growing field of indigenous archaeology is exemplary. Identifying ourselves as anthropologists while working on the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign was sometimes difficult to admit when one of the most vocal critics was an anthropologist who called the whole treaty a fake. With so much oral history, cultural usage and validation of the importance of the Teioháte Kaswenta, how could an anthropologist dismiss all that and declare it a fake because of a questionable European document? Decolonisation theories remind us to recentre authority to indigenous frames, not ignore them and reify neocolonial perspectives. How could we explain to people that we do a different kind of anthropology and that anthropology can offer much to remedy the many cultural and environmental ills of the world?

The connections between public, activist and indigenous anthropology come from the common ground of engaging people well beyond disciplinary boundaries and working in collaboration and dialogue with groups to address issues of power, rights and redress (Beck 2009; Borofsky 2000; Hale 2007; Silliman 2008). It requires personal commitment and an obligation to model theory and practices in action to the next generation of students (Atalay 2006). Our participation in the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign provided such a model for students and presented to the public and Native peoples an application of anthropology that works towards rebalancing our relations with one another and the environment. ‘The hope is that by invigorating public conversations with anthropological insights, public anthropology can re-frame and reinvigorate the discipline’ (Borofsky 2000: 9).

Our situation gave greater insight into Hale’s assertion that ‘the relationship between would-be activist anthropologists and indigenous movements is profoundly contradictory and tension-ridden’ (Hale 2007: 104). We can see why activist anthropology might be anaemic, although we hope and expect this to change. It is difficult, messy and can require a lot of patience in taking the time to really listen to indigenous peoples, coordinate non-Native volunteers and effectively educate the public. On the other hand, it is the most rewarding anthropology one can pursue. We were part of the power and change brought about by the Teioháte Kaswenta as it touched thousands of people. The peak moments we experienced in the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign included collaboration with Native elders, students and community members, as well as seeing Haudenosaunee people raise their voices to be heard locally and at the United Nations. We count these as among the most amazing experiences in our personal and professional lives.
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**Note**

1. The honorary advisory committee included late iconic folk singer and activist Pete Seeger (‘We Shall Overcome’), author Bill McKibben (*The End of Nature*), primatologist Jane Goodall, Faithkeeper Oren Lyons (Onondaga), Richard W. Hill, Sr. (Tuscarora), Onondaga County Executive Joanne Mahoney, incarcerated Native American activist Leonard Peltier, Tom Porter (Mohawk), Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor and writer and activist Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee).

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