

her personal correspondence throughout the rest of her life. She even allowed Yeigh (and later McRaye) to bill her as the “Mohawk Princess” despite the obvious inaccuracy of the appellation (Foster 1931; Keller 1999:20; Weaver 1997:62).²⁸

In the fall of 1892, she began wearing theatrical costumes for her performances. Her most famous one, the costume she wore for most of her career, she made with the help of her sister Eva Johnson:

The costume consisted of a buckskin dress fringed at mid-calf length to show a red woollen [*sic*] lining. The neck was round and cut very low, its edge decorated with silver brooches hammered out of coins; in later years she used these brooches to secure a set of ermine tails presented to her by the Hudson’s Bay Company. ***At her waist she attached wampum belts***, the Huron scalp she had inherited from her great-grandfather, and her father’s hunting knife. Buckskin leggings and moccasins modestly covered her legs, and from one shoulder fell a woollen [*sic*] cloak.

The most unusual feature of the costume was its mismatched sleeves. The right one consisted of a strip of buckskin attached to the dress at the shoulder and to a band at the wrist. From either side of this strip, ten-inch-long fringes of buckskin hung down gracefully.... And so the left sleeve became a simple drape of rabbit pelts hanging to a point slightly below her elbow. (Keller 1981:66; *emphasis added*; see Figures 1, 8 and 9).²⁹

As the story goes, the differing sleeves were Eva Johnson’s idea (Keller 1981:66; Keller 1999:20–21). Before it became part of her costume, her red wool cloak served first as the “blanket that was spread on the ground for Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, when he was made an honorary chief of the Six Nations in 1868” and later as the cover for her family’s piano (Keller 1999:21). To complete her costume, she wore her signature bear claw necklace (see Figure 1). Pauline Johnson’s stage costume could not be considered regalia. It has been pointed out that she limited its wear to the stage and that it was inauthentic in its appearance (Lyon 2008:3; Strong-Boag and Gerson 2000:51; Weaver 1997:63). Eva Johnson (cited in Johnston 1997:113), once said that Pauline Johnson based the design of part of her costume “from a picture which we had of Minnehaha,” a fictional character of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*.

Her fanciful stage costume and the language of her poetry and prose led some of Pauline Johnson’s detractors to accuse her of pandering to Indian stereotypes of the day

²⁸ She was also billed as “Indian Princess,” “Mohawk Poet Reciter” and “Red Indian Princess” (Johnston 1997:99, 106, 163).

²⁹ Hartley (1980:26) noted that Pauline Johnson would pull out her father’s knife from its sheath during recitations of her poem “Ojistoh,” a ballad “about a woman who stabs an enemy warrior with his own knife.”