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Indigenous Self-Vanishing? Relating the North American  
“Iroquois Wars” and the Southern African *Mfecane*

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Early American history and early Southern African history have much to offer one another, but signal debates in one field go unnoticed in the other. Both fields have witnessed strong efforts to reorient scholarship from older vantage points along the colonial coastlines to newer ones in the continental interiors. Both fields have investigated the consolidation of powerful indigenous social formations, and both fields have engaged the concept of settler colonialism. For a generation, however, Southern Africanists have robustly debated a period of great violence, the so-called *Mfecane*, said to have gripped indigenous peoples at the outer edges of, or even beyond the reach of, colonialism. Here Native North Americanists can learn from their Southern Africanist counterparts. This debate resembles and can contribute to early Americanists’ discussion of such matters as the “Iroquois Wars” (also known as the “Beaver Wars”) and the southeastern “shatter zone.” And exploring Southern Africanist scholarship offers more than new questions for consideration by Americanists. It also reveals a troubling shared backstory to the colonialist theme of indigenous self-vanishing.