



The Haudenosaunee Confederacy 1774-1777

by: Doug George-Kanentiio

Began in July of 1983, the Indian Times is a news journal dedicated to reporting on what is happening in Akwesasne and our Sister Iroquois communities. The news policy at Indian Time insists we try to give our readers as truthful reporting as we can. We encourage and invite opinions different than ours. We are committed to a free and open press at Akwesasne. We believe in the unrestricted flow of information to our people. By this means, we have the ability to make intelligent, informed decisions about our collective future.

Indian Time is a product of the people of Akwesasne. It is your newspaper printing stories about you. Please feel free to contact our Kanatakon offices in the Akwesasne Communications Society Building if you have concerns, compliments or plain old curiosity about the material printed in Indian Time.

Niawenkowa, Akwesasne for your support.

Printed At:
The Malone Telegram
387 East Main St.
Malone, N.Y. 12953

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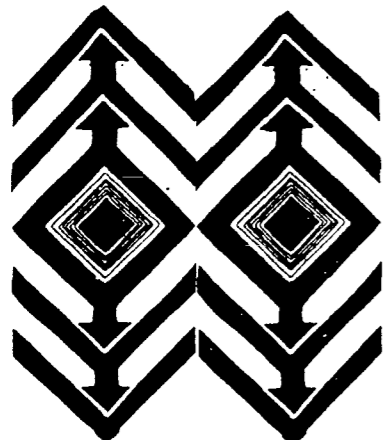
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- Volunteers: Emily, Myra, Rene Maddi, Anna and Margaret.

Indian Time is published weekly. Subscriptions to The Indian Time: \$40 per year; Cover price: .50 cents; Bulk orders of Indian Time: .40 cents per copy on consignment. Call our office for set up.

With a circulation of 1,350 within Akwesasne, Kahnawake and surrounding Iroquois communities, advertising in Indian Time can be a profitable move for your business.

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In 1774 the Haudenosaunee Confederacy controlled a land area which stretched from the St. Lawrence River to Kentucky. Its territory included parts of present day Quebec, Ontario, most of New York, western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and parts of Kentucky. While the main communities of the Haudenosaunee were located in the central New York region there were significant Iroquois villages along the Susquehanna, Allegheny and Ohio rivers. The Iroquois had a population estimated at 10,000 in 1768.

The Iroquois consisted of a number of native groups sharing a language derived from a common root. According to the Iroquois themselves they are linguistically and biologically related to the Huron (Wyandot), Cherokee, Tobacco, Wenro, Naticoke, Erie (Panther), Conestoga (Susquehanna) and Neutral peoples. During the war years of the 17th century the Iroquois of central New York absorbed most of these nations, relocating them within various Haudenosaunee communities.

By 1774 the Iroquois Confederacy had a number of refugee nations living within its territories. The Naticoke, Mohican, Lenni Lenape, Shawnee, Tutelo, Saponi, Abenaki, Nipissing and Algonquin were permitted to settle on Confederate lands but forbidden to sign any agreement which would cede those areas from the Iroquois. A large group, the Tuscaroras from North Carolina, arrived in Iroquois territory after 1710, when they had a lost a war with the English settlers. Their villages were situated south of Lake Oneida between the Onondagas and Oneidas. While not having a permanent seat in the Grand Council the Tuscaroras were considered as being the sixth member of the Six Nations Confederacy.

The Confederacy itself is composed of (from east to west) the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca nations. Together, they had formed a political and cultural alliance some time before the arrival of the Europeans in North America. Brought together by a prophet called the Peacemaker, the five nations agreed to abandon war among each other and to seek a universal peace through various diplomatic and spiritual means. Bound together by a common culture, language and political system the Confederacy was for many generations the decisive native force in the northeast.

Membership within the Confederacy's Grand Council consists of 50 chiefs or rodiyane (lo-di-ya-ne literally "nice people"). The Mohawks have nine, the Oneidas nine, Onondagas fourteen, Cayugas ten and Senecas eight. Decisions reached by the Grand Council must be agreed to by all five nations. The Onondagas appoint one amongst them to serve as chairman of the Grand Council. Any nation has the right to summon a Council by sending runners throughout the Confederacy to notify the people of an upcoming meeting. The runners carry a string of white wampum which they give to each nation to be returned at the beginning of the Council. Purple strings of wampum beads are used to notify the chiefs of the death of a clanmother or chief. Issues arising from the east must first pass through the Mohawk Nation Council before introduced at Onondaga. The Mohawks are "Keepers of the Eastern Door" since the Confederacy refers to itself as "people of the longhouse." The Senecas monitor the west while the Onondagas look to the north and south.

All chiefs are nominated for office by a woman leader called a clanmother. The clanmother is in turn selected by an assembly of her clan. The Iroquois have nine clans: bear, wolf, turtle, snipe, deer, hawk, heron, beaver, eel. All clan members are considered immediate family even if they are of different nationality. The clanmother has the power to nominate and depose chiefs provided such actions are acceptable to the clan. She attends meetings of the national councils where she can exercise veto power over an act by voicing her opposition through her chief. Each clanmother can only select one chief from her clan but both of them will serve as a team for life. Her selection is either endorsed or rejected by a meeting of her clan. The clan's endorsement is then reviewed for acceptance by the national council before final approval by the Grand Council. There are very specific qualifications a candidate must meet prior to nomination. The Iroquois valued generosity, humility, honesty, dedication and patience as prerequisites to holding office. No chief was permitted to own property or to become enriched by service. A chief had to be married and have demonstrated a ability to care for his family. They were permitted to have assistants called "sub-chiefs". In ceremonial and spiritual matters they called upon a faithkeeper, male or female, who had specific knowledge regarding the rituals of the Iroquois.

In effect, the Mohawk Nation, as an example, had 34 formal leaders: nine male chiefs, nine assistant chiefs, nine clanmothers, six faithkeepers and a male assistant to the turtle clan chief Tekarihoken. This assistant insured the directives of the council were carried out in accordance with local customs and the Great Law of Peace.

Chiefs could not be involved in acts of violence. The Confederacy had one man from the Seneca Nation in charge of organizing a militia for purposes of self-defense. There was no such title as "war chief" since the primary purpose of the Confederacy was to secure universal peace. In extreme circumstances however, the Confederacy could engage in hostilities against another nation. Decisions as to a declaration of war were made by the women, so too did they determine conditions for peace. The women controlled the naturalization laws of the Confederacy, a means by which former adversaries become citizens of the Confederacy. Land cessions could be made by each respective nation, but the Grand Council held veto powers. The Grand Council itself adjudicated disputes between nations, coordinated the ceremonies for the installation of chiefs, empowered diplomatic missions, retained treaty signing rights, carried out war, granted refuge to dispossessed peoples, coordinated trade and commerce. It could remove formal recognition of a nation or deny a seat on Council to a chief. As record keepers for the Confederacy the Onondagas were called the "firekeepers" for all the Iroquois. The Onondaga kept and preserved the wampum belts for the Confederacy.

The Cayugas and Oneidas were the "younger brothers" of the Confederacy while the Mohawks, Senecas and Onondagas were the "elders." A critical part of the spiritual-political rituals of the Iroquois were the rites of

See Confederacy, continued on page 7

The community of Akwesasne always remembers their deceased family members or friends around Easter. Indian Time will be accepting IN MEMORIAM from the community. This will be a prepaid donation that can be dropped off or mailed to:

Indian Time
Hilltop Drive
St. Regis, Quebec H0M 1A0
DEADLINE: Wednesday, April 15, 1992, noon.

Letters Welcome: Indian Time, welcomes your letters. However, we reserve the right to edit for brevity, clarity, legality, personal abuse, accuracy, good taste and topicality. Please include your name, address and day-time telephone number in case we need to reach you. Unsigned letters will not be printed.

It is with appreciation to the North American Travelling College that we will be reprinting, as a weekly feature, stories from the book Traditional Teachings. These stories are copyrighted and may not be reprinted without permission of the NAITC.

The People

96th Wampum

Whenever a very important matter or an emergency is presented to the Council of the League and the matter affects the entire Hotinonshonni, the Sachems of the League must submit the matter to the decision of their people and the decision of the people shall effect the decision of the Council of the League. This decision shall be a confirmation of the voice of the people.

97th Wampum

The men of every clan of the Hotinonshonni shall have a continuous Council Fire burning for purpose of holding a council of the men when the men feel it is necessary to meet to discuss any business in the interest and welfare of the clan and its people. It shall have the same rights as the Council fire of the Women.

98th Wampum

The women of every clan in the Hotinonshonni shall have a continuous Council Fire burning for the purpose of holding a Council meeting of that clan when it is necessary in the interest of the people. The decision of the women's council shall then be introduced to the Council of the League by the Head Warrior of that Clan.

99th Wampum

All the Clan Council Fires of the Nation or of the Hotinonshonni may unite into one general Council Fire, or delegates from all the Council Fires may be appointed to unite in a general Council for discussing the interest of the people. The people shall have the right to make appointments, and to delegate their power to others of their number. When their decision shall be reported to the Council of the Nation or the Council of the League by the Head Warrior or the Head Warriors.

100th Wampum

Before the Onkwehonwe (Original Beings) united, each Nation had its own Council Fire. The Five Council Fires shall continue to burn as before. The Sachems of each Nation in the future shall settle their Nation's affairs at this Council Fire governed by the laws and rules of the Council of the League and the Kaianerekowa (Great Law).

101st Wampum

Should a niece or nephew see an irregularity in the performance of the functions of the constitution of the Hotinonshonni in the Government Council or in the conferring of titles of Sachems, they shall have the privilege of requesting through the Head Warriors that it be corrected to conform with the ways of the Kaianerekowa (Great Law).

Address For Funeral Of A Young Man

102nd Wampum

In the beginning of your life, you are taken away. The future of the people is no longer a part of your life.

We are now of one mind as you start on your journey. We release you for we know it is no longer possible for you to walk together with us on earth. We lay your body here, and we lay it away. We say to you, "Pass on to the place where the Creator dwells, let nothing happening here hinder you, do not let action while you were alive prevent your journey, let not the things which gave you pleasure slow you down, while you were here many feasts were given for you. All these things that were ours do not let them trouble you. Do not let your relatives and friends trouble your mind. Go in peace, disregarding all things." To the relatives of the deceased: "To you who were related to the deceased look to the path that will be yours one day. Because of this, watch yourselves as you go from place to place. Do not be idle in your acts or with your words. Do not give way to evil behavior. One year is the time that you must abstain from unseemly activities but if you can not do this for ceremony, ten days is the length of time to regard these things for respect."

Next week, Address For Funeral Of A Woman Of The Nation (103rd Wampum) and Address For Funeral Of An Infant Or Young Woman (104th to 107th Wampum)

On Behalf of the students of the Recreation Facilities Management program, Cornwall Island Campus of Algonquin College. We would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to Ms. Gail General and Ms. Pam Brown for sharing with us their knowledge and expertise of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation. Their patience and perseverance enabled the students to understand the various steps of the program. Through their diligence and hard work, we the students are benefactors of a life saving skill.

- Marty Bush
- Dan David
- Robert Francis
- Sherri Francis
- Rachel Gray
- Felicia Jacobs
- Peter Lafrance
- Emily Lauzon
- Laura Morris
- Danielle Oakes
- Donna Rockwell
- Wayne Sampere
- Tracy Sunday
- Kim Thompson
- Tracy Thompson
- Steve Thomas



Change of Scenery for Top of the Hill



Photo: Derrick Paul. People who are not regular visitors to "over the hill" in St. Regis Village noticed that the Six-Plex housing complex has been torn down. The building has been a permanent part of the landscape to staff at CKONI/Indian Time.



Obituary

Alfred J. Ransom

Alfred J. Ransom, 68, died in Rochester, N.Y. on March 23, 1992. He was born on June 19, 1923.

He is the son of John and Nancy Jock Ransom.

He is survived by his wife, Edsel, three sons John, Glenn & Phillip from Rochester, daughter Coralce, also from Rochester.

He also had grandsons and granddaughters.

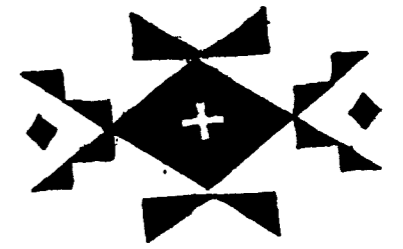
He is also survived by two sister, Mrs. Robert L. (Harriett) Ellis and Mrs. Arthur (Margaret) Bova and nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by a son Dave, two brothers, Abe J. and Thomas Ransom and a sister Melissa R. Miller.

Alfred was a retired Ironworker and lived in Rochester, N.Y.

He will always be remembered by his family and friends by his sense of humor.

Funeral arrangements were made with Miller Funeral Home in Rochester, N.Y.



Tribal Council Drafts Zoning Ordinances

A copy of the proposed zoning ordinances was made available to the general public on Friday, April 3. The draft zoning ordinances may be picked up at the Community Building, Hogansburg, N.Y. in the Tribal Clerk's office.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council has drafted a set of zoning ordinances which will be applied to the U.S. portion of the reservation once it has been accepted by U.S. tribal constituents. It will designate special areas for specific uses, such as residential, commercial, industrial.

Zoning has become a necessity in order to preserve residential neighborhoods and sustain commercial areas of the reservation. With a limited land base, the Tribal Council has vested an active interest in the development of the draft zoning ordinances that will ensure a harmonious living environment for all residents and future generations.

The draft zoning ordinances may be picked up until May 30, after which date the Tribal Council will hold two (2) public meetings designed to receive feedback from community residents. These public meetings will be announced at a later date.