

- The ability to listen is as important as the ability to speak.
- Everyone has a special gift or talent that can be Used To Benefit The Larger Community.

Mores

There are mores that are the customs that are considered essential to maintaining the characteristics of the community:

- Clanship relations and names are important. Clan identity impacts on nearly all aspects of the social, political and spiritual organization of the community.
- Council Chiefs protect the welfare of the people.
- Clan Mothers maintain social harmony.
- Faithkeepers keep the ritual order moving.
- Annual cycles of thanksgiving help establish order and rhythm.
- The arts connect the generations in spirit.
- The native languages are the keys to the expressions of the soul.

Ethics

There are ethics that are the moral philosophy and principles that determine what is right and what is wrong in the mind of the traditional Haudenosaunee:

- To be generous
- To share
- To show respect
- To honor others
- To love your family
- To live in peace
- To live in harmony with nature
- To ignore evil or idle talk
- To feed others
- To be thankful
- To be hospitable
- To be kind
- To be cooperative
- To be honest

Philosophy

The philosophy of the Haudenosaunee is the search for understanding of the basic truths of the native universe. It is how the Haudenosaunee have come to understand their role in the world and the important lessons that understanding teaches:

- There is a Creator who produced the things that give bounty to this life.
- The universe is full of living beings - sun, moon, stars, earth, winds, and rain.
- There is a living spirit in all things - animals,



- plants, minerals, water, and winds.
- People have power, called orenda, that accumulates through life experiences.
- People should live in peace with each other.
- People should live in harmony with nature.
- People should be thankful everyday.
- People should be kind, sharing what they have.

- Life is a journey, as people are born from the earth, exist on the earth and are returned to the earth to continue that journey after death.

Beliefs

Belief is the feeling that something is real and true. The Haudenosaunee trust and have confidence in their beliefs about the universe, about the spiritual powers of that universe and about how humans are to conduct themselves on their journey through life. To believe is a conscious act that affects the way we see the world. Art, in broad terms of language, music, dance, and making things, is the act by which we manifest belief, express our own personalities as people living in the world. The Haudenosaunee beliefs include the following:

- The Universe is a large sphere that is divided into the Skyworld above and the Underwater World below. In the middle plane of that sphere rests the earth, which floats like an island on the back of a giant turtle.
- The celestial bodies and forces of that universe are living entities with an inner spirit that can be beneficial to humans if proper respect is paid to them. All people have a spiritual obligations to perform the rituals of thanksgiving in order to assure the harmony of the universe can be maintained..
- The Great Creator has sent three main spiritual messages to the Haudenosaunee after the Creation. These were the Four Sacred Dances, the Great Law of Peace and the Gaiwiiio, or Code of Handsome Lake.
- The children of the Haudenosaunee are born within a Circle of Tradition, but that birthright also requires duty to maintain that circle. Those that join another religion, become citizens of foreign countries or work against the general welfare of the people are considered to have removed themselves from within this

Adapted by Ernest Kaientaronkwen Benedict from his Closing Address at the Sacred Assembly in Ottawa, December 9, 1995. May this be the spirit in which we work together to find an honorable solution to the land claims of the Haudenosaunee people.

Our Mother Earth

Our mother Earth has given birth, as she has for many centuries. She has given birth to all Animal Creatures and to all Plants. For this, we are constantly giving thanks. Other People have come across the Waters and the Seas.

Our Mother on Turtle Island* has taken them into Her home. She has treated all Her Family well. We are now all her Children.

She will continue to be the Mother of all. You, who have risen up in other Lands, have decided to make your journey to this, our Turtle Island.

You may have endured much pain in those other Lands. Your journey may have been full of dangers and hardships, but here you have found a place for yourselves, and we have moved into small places to make room for you.

Here you will find water to wash the bruises from your feet. There will be water to cool your face. There will be water to quench your thirst.

There will be soft furs to rest upon. There will be soft doeskin to take away the dust, that has obstructed your eyes, ears, nose, and throat.

You will now see clearly, the friendship and love of those who are before you. You will hear voices of comfort. You will speak without fear, whatever is in your heart, and in your nostrils will be the aroma of freedom.

You will acknowledge our Mother, the Earth, as your adoptive Mother, for such will be your respectful relationship. You have the honor of

giving Her love and praise and gratitude. You will give thanks to the Creator for all the accomplishments of Mother Earth.

Let us now gather about one Council Fire. Let our thoughts and our words intermingle. As in our Council Fire, many flames become one Fire, and send its warmth among many.

Let us strive to unite our Minds into One Mind, for the good of all.

Onen.

**The Haudenosaunee refer to the earth as Turtle Island, as told in their story of Creation.*

From the booklet



published by

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON)

For more information, or to join in our efforts, contact:

NOON

924 Burnet Ave., Syracuse, NY 13203

(315) 472-5478

noon@peacecouncil.net

www.peacecouncil.net/noon

HAUDENOSAUNEE CULTURE – 2

What are the Underlying Values?



Haudenosaunee culture is a way of thinking, a way of feeling, but also an intuitive way of problem solving and a unique way to express oneself in the world. The Haudenosaunee call all of this “Ongwehonweka” meaning all of things that pertain to the way of life of the Original People. Ongwehonweka includes all of the values, mores, ethics, philosophy and beliefs that we have inherited from our ancestors.

Values

There are shared values held by each generation that contribute to the concept of the self. Values are shared principles that are considered important in life, that include:

- Thinking collectively, considering the future generations.
- Consensus in decision making, considering all points of view.
- Sharing of the labor and benefits of that labor.
- Duty to family, clan, nation, Confederacy and Creation.
- Strong sense of self-worth without being egotistic.
- People must learn to be very observant of the surroundings.
- Everyone is equal and is a full partner in the society, no matter what their age.