

The French And Indian War: Great Law of Peace

Outline: "The French and Indian War: The Great Law of Peace"

I. Introduction

- Overview of the French and Indian War (1754-1763) as part of the global conflict known as the Seven Years War.
- Brief description of participants:
 - French and their Native American allies.
 - British and the Iroquois Confederacy (Haudenosaunee).
- Importance of the Iroquois Confederacy's Great Law of Peace during the conflict.

II. The Iroquois Confederacy and the Great Law of Peace

- Formation of the Confederacy: Overview of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy and their alliance through the Great Law of Peace.
- Founders: The Peacemaker and Hiawatha's role in establishing the Confederacy's constitution to promote peace and unity.

III. Key Principles of the Great Law of Peace

1. Governance Structure and the Council of Chiefs

- The Tree of Peace: Symbolism of the Tree of Peace and the idea of unity.
- Council of Chiefs: Structure and decision-making processes:
 - 50 chiefs (sachems) appointed by Clan Mothers.
 - Consensus-based decision-making.
 - Example: Resolving disputes through discussion until consensus is reached.

2. Role of Clan Mothers

- Authority to select and remove chiefs.
- Responsibilities in ensuring leaders act in the community's best interest.
- Example: Clan Mother's power to depose a chief for misconduct.

3. Principles of Peace and Conflict Resolution

- Emphasis on consensus, forgiveness, and conflict resolution.
- Condolence Ceremony: Healing and peace restoration among the nations.
- Example: Resolving boundary disputes through dialogue in the Grand Council.

4. Laws of the Confederacy

- Rules governing conduct, justice, and cooperation.
- "Thick Skin" Principle: Chiefs' expected conduct and demeanor.
- Division of powers among the nations, such as the Onondaga's role as "Keepers of the Fire."
 - Example: Repercussions for chiefs violating council rules.

5. Welfare of the Community and Future Generations

- Decisions made with the "seventh generation" in mind for long-term sustainability.

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- Thanksgiving Address: Importance of gratitude and respect for nature.
- Example: Balancing hunting practices with ecological preservation.

6. Symbols of Unity

- The Longhouse: Symbolizing the unity of the six nations under one roof.
- Wampum Belts: Use as records of treaties, agreements, and historical events.
- Example: The Hiawatha Belt representing the unity of the Confederacy.

IV. The Influence of the Great Law of Peace

- Impact on the Iroquois Confederacy's interactions with European powers during the French and Indian War.
- Influence on modern democratic principles in North America.

V. Conclusion

- Summary of the Great Law of Peace as a democratic and sophisticated governance system.
- Its emphasis on consensus, respect for individuals, the role of women, conflict resolution, and future generations.
- Legacy and continued relevance of the Great Law of Peace in promoting peace, justice, and unity.

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What?

A global war between the French and the British Empires. The part of the war fought outside of America was known as The Seven Years War, and the part fought in America was known as the French and Indian War. The entire conflict lasted 9 years.

Who?

Participants: on the one side, the **French** and the seven tribes that fought alongside them, and the other side was the **British** and the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.

We said the Iroquois Confederacy consisted of six tribes based upon their oral Constitution known as the Great Law of Peace

The Great Law of Peace: Overview and Key Principles

The Great Law of Peace (Kaianere'kó:wa) is the constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy (Haudenosaunee), one of the oldest participatory democracies in the world. Established well before European contact, the Great Law of Peace outlines the structure of the Confederacy, governance principles, and rules for maintaining peace, justice, and harmony among the member nations: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and later, the Tuscarora.

The Great Law was founded by the Peacemaker, a spiritual leader, with the aid of Hiawatha, a charismatic orator. Together, they promoted peace and unity among the previously warring Iroquois nations. The principles and rules embedded in the Great Law are passed down orally and symbolically, particularly through the Wampum belts, which serve as records of treaties, agreements, and historical events.

Here are some key aspects and examples of the Great Law of Peace:

1. Formation of the Confederacy and the Council of Chiefs

- **The Tree of Peace:** According to Iroquois tradition, the Peacemaker planted the Tree of Peace, symbolizing unity and the end of conflict among the nations. The roots of the tree extended in all directions, representing the outreach of peace and protection to others who embraced the principles of the Great Law.

- **Council of Chiefs:** The Confederacy is governed by a council of 50 chiefs known as sachems, who are appointed by the Clan Mothers. The Council meets to discuss and make decisions for the collective well-being of all member nations. Each nation is allotted a specific number of seats: the Mohawk and Seneca each have 9 chiefs, the Oneida 9, the Cayuga 10, and the Onondaga, who are the "Keepers of the Fire," hold 14 seats.

- **Consensus Decision-Making:** The Great Law emphasizes decision-making by consensus. All chiefs must agree before a decision can be made. This principle ensures

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that all voices are heard and that decisions are made collectively, with the welfare of every nation considered.

Example: If a dispute arises between two member nations, the issue is brought to the Grand Council. Chiefs discuss the matter until a resolution is reached that satisfies all parties. No single chief or nation has the authority to make unilateral decisions for the Confederacy.

2. Role of Clan Mothers

- The Great Law of Peace establishes the important role of women, particularly Clan Mothers, in governance. Each clan is led by a Clan Mother who holds the authority to select, advise, and, if necessary, depose chiefs (sachems).
- Responsibilities: Clan Mothers choose leaders based on qualities such as honesty, wisdom, and dedication to the welfare of the people. They ensure that chiefs act in the best interests of the clan and the Confederacy as a whole.

Example: If a chief fails to fulfill his duties, acts unjustly, or abuses his power, the Clan Mother has the right to remove him from his position. This checks the power of leaders and maintains accountability within the governance structure.

3. Principle of Peace and Conflict Resolution

- The Great Law emphasizes peace, consensus, and forgiveness. It includes protocols for conflict resolution and peace-building to maintain harmony among the nations.
- Condolence Ceremony: When a member of the Confederacy is lost, the Great Law prescribes a Condolence Ceremony to console the grieving family and nation, promote healing, and restore peace within the community.
- Council Procedures: If a conflict arises, the Council convenes to discuss the issues and listen to all perspectives. Decisions are made only after thorough discussion and consensus. The process is designed to promote dialogue and prevent the outbreak of violence.

Example: If a boundary dispute occurs between two nations, representatives bring the matter to the Grand Council. The chiefs listen to each side, engage in discussion, and seek a resolution that respects the sovereignty and needs of each nation.

4. Laws of the Confederacy

- The Great Law outlines specific rules governing the conduct of the chiefs and the people, promoting justice, mutual respect, and cooperation.
- "Thick Skin" Principle: Chiefs are expected to have "thick skin," meaning they must remain calm, patient, and respectful during discussions, even when emotions run high. They are required to set aside personal grievances for the greater good of the Confederacy.
- Division of Powers: The Confederacy is structured with clear divisions of responsibilities. The Onondaga are the "Keepers of the Fire" and host the Council meetings. The Mohawk

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and Seneca serve as the "Keepers of the Eastern and Western Doors," respectively, ensuring the security of the Confederacy.

Example: During council meetings, if a chief violates the rules of conduct by acting disrespectfully or aggressively, he may be reprimanded or removed from his position by the Clan Mothers.

5. Welfare of the Community and Future Generations

- The Great Law of Peace emphasizes the welfare of the people and the environment. Decisions are made with consideration for how they will affect "the seventh generation," promoting long-term sustainability and stewardship of resources.

- Thanksgiving Address: Meetings often begin with the Thanksgiving Address, a prayer of gratitude to the natural world, expressing respect for all living things and acknowledging the interconnectedness of life.

Example: When discussing hunting practices, the chiefs deliberate on how to balance the community's needs with the sustainability of animal populations. The decision is made in a way that ensures future generations can continue to rely on the land for sustenance.

6. Symbols of Unity

- The Longhouse: The Confederacy is symbolized by the longhouse, representing the collective dwelling of the six nations under one roof. The Mohawk guard the eastern door, the Seneca the western door, and the Onondaga maintain the central hearth.

- Wampum Belts: Wampum belts are used to record agreements, treaties, and historical events. The Hiawatha Belt is a famous symbol of the Confederacy, with a central tree flanked by squares representing the five original nations.

Summary

The Great Law of Peace provides a democratic framework that emphasizes consensus, respect for individuals, the role of women in governance, conflict resolution, and long-term thinking. Its principles influenced modern democratic systems, particularly in North America, offering a sophisticated example of how indigenous governance structures promoted peace, justice, and unity among diverse peoples.