

The Iroquois Confederacy

words matter!

Haudenosaunee is the name that the people of the Six Nations call themselves. French settlers called them “Iroquois,” and historical documents also use “Iroquois.”

The **United Nations** is an organization that works for world peace. It builds cooperation among countries and protects the rights of people. Most countries, including Canada, belong to the United Nations.



Marcine Quenzer painted this picture in 2002. One version of the Peacemaker’s story says that he travelled among the nations in a white stone canoe. Why might a stone canoe convince people to accept his message?

The **Haudenosaunee** [how-den-o-SHOW-nee] feel that they have a message about peace and the environment, just as their ancestors did. In 1977, they made a speech to the **United Nations (UN)**. This is part of it.

Coming of the Peacemaker

“Haudenosaunee” is a word which means “people who build” and is the proper [traditional] name of the people of the Longhouse. The early history, before the Indo-Europeans came, explains that there was a time when the peoples of the North American forest experienced war and strife. It was during such a time that there came into this land one who carried words of peace. That one would come to be called the Peacemaker.

The Peacemaker came to the people with a message that human beings should cease abusing [hurting] one another. He stated that humans are capable of reason [thinking things through logically], that through that power of reason all men desire peace, and that it is necessary that the people organize to ensure that peace will be possible among the people who walk about on the earth. That was the original word about laws—laws were originally made to prevent the abuse [harming] of humans by other humans.

- What lesson could the countries in the UN learn from this speech?
- Compare Haudenosaunee ideas about laws and society with those at the beginning of Chapter 1.

The Peacemaker travelled among the people, going from nation to nation, seeking those who would take up this way of peace, offering with it a way of reason and power. He journeyed first among the Ganienkegaga [Gah-nee-en-gah-HAH-geh]—the People of the Flint Stone (Mohawk)—where he sought to speak to the most dangerous of these people, offering them his message.

He travelled for a long time among the Mohawk, the People of Standing Stone (the Oneida), the People of the Hills (Onondaga), the People of the Swamp (Cayuga), and the People of the Great Hills (Seneca). Eventually, those five nations were the initial ones to take up the offer of peace. These nations gathered together in council, and there they set down the principles of what is called the Gayaneshakgowa [Guy-ya-na-lay-GO-wa], or the Great Law of Peace.

The Peacemaker gathered the nations under the Tree of Peace and recited the Great Law of Peace that they were to live by. Then their weapons were buried under the Tree. A **confederacy** of five nations had been created. Eventually, in the early 1700s, a sixth nation, the Tuscarora, accepted the Peacemaker's message and the Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy was complete.

words matter!

A **confederacy** is a partnership that is agreed on by nations or groups of people.

? Inquiring Minds

The Iroquois Confederacy way of making decisions was different from that of the ancient Greeks. As you read this chapter, think about the following questions:

1. How are democratic ideas about equality, equity, and participation part of the Iroquois Confederacy?
2. To what extent was the Iroquois Confederacy a representative democracy?

What Was Iroquois Society Like?



Iroquois homes or longhouses were wood frames covered in elm bark. This longhouse built around 1640 was reconstructed in the 1960s. It is located at Ste-Marie Among the Hurons near Midland, Ontario.

words matter!

An Iroquois **clan** is a large group of families who are related to one another. Each clan is associated with a different animal.

Today, most Haudenosaunee live in the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. Some of them still follow the ways of governing set by the Peacemaker. However, their way of life is much different than it was in the past.

Before the coming of the Peacemaker, the nations that formed the Confederacy had been at war with one another for a long time. However, the five Iroquois nations actually had much in common with one another. Their homes, their social structure, and daily life in their villages were very similar.

The Longhouse

Longhouses were at the centre of Iroquois society. Their nations were divided into nine clans, which were led by clan mothers. All the people living in a longhouse were descendants of the same clan mother.

Clans are identified by animals. These include the Bear, Wolf, Turtle, Snipe, Eel, Heron, Hawk, Beaver, and Deer. Animal clans are related. A Mohawk of the Turtle clan, for example, is a relative of the Seneca Turtle clan.

As the families grew larger, they would extend the longhouse by building onto the end. Some longhouses were almost as long as a football field! Small Iroquois villages had four or five longhouses; there could be 50 or more longhouses in a large village.



This sculpture, *Clan Animals on the Turtle's Back*, was done by Wayne Skye, a member of the Cayuga Wolf clan, in 1996. Which animals can you find?

The Role of Iroquois Women

Women had positions of respect in Iroquois society. Carol Jacobs, Cayuga Bear clan mother, describes women's standing this way: "In our traditions, it is women who carry the seeds, both of our own future generations and of the plant life. It is women who plant and tend the gardens, and women who bear and raise the children." Women also owned the property and homes.

When a woman got married, her husband would come to live in her family's longhouse. Their children belonged to the mother's clan.

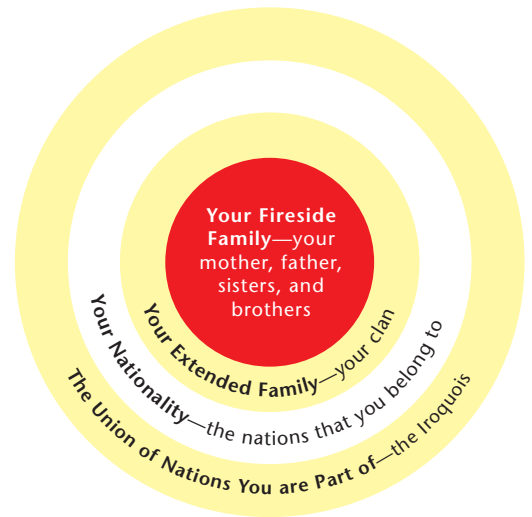
The women raised corn, beans, and squash, which were the main food supply of the Iroquois. These crops are known as the "Three Sisters."



Carson Waterman of the Seneca Nation did this painting in 1992. It shows three clan mothers, each holding one of the "Three Sisters." Tobacco, which was smoked on ceremonial occasions, was the "brother" crop of the sisters.

The Importance of the Clan Mothers

Clan mothers were the leaders of the clan. The title of clan mother was usually passed on to her female relatives: her sisters or her daughters. The Great Law of Peace gave the clan mother ownership of the chieftainship title. This means that clan mothers had the responsibility of selecting the chiefs for their own clan. Clan mothers today have as much importance and respect as they did in the past.



This drawing represents how the Iroquois see their identity.

Skill Smart

Use a Venn diagram to compare the status of Iroquois and Athenian women. Consider such aspects as daily activities, status in society, and political power.

Thinking It Through

1. What do you think these leadership characteristics suggest about the values of Haudenosaunee society?
2. What other characteristics do you consider important in a leader?



Emergence of the Chief was cast by artist Dave McGary in 2005. It shows a clan mother of the Turtle Clan instructing a new head chief of the Mohawk Nation in his duties and responsibilities. The sculpture was created for Concordia University in Montréal when it was discovered that part of the university had been built on Mohawk land. Why do you think the university decided to put up the sculpture?

In choosing a chief, the clan mother would look for characteristics such as:

- honesty and kind-heartedness
- ability to think clearly
- knowledge of traditional ceremonies
- loyalty to family
- ability to uphold the Great Law
- ability to represent the people fairly
- ability to withstand criticism

The Role of Iroquois Men

Although women headed the clans, men served as the chiefs on the Grand Council, which was the government of the Iroquois. The men organized cooperative hunting and fishing parties to provide meat for the village. They cut trees to make longhouses and canoes. They organized team sports such as lacrosse that were part of many seasonal celebrations. Lacrosse was a sport played for fun, but it also trained men for their other tasks in life. It built leadership skills as well as endurance, strength, and speed for hunting and warfare. Games would sometimes last for days.

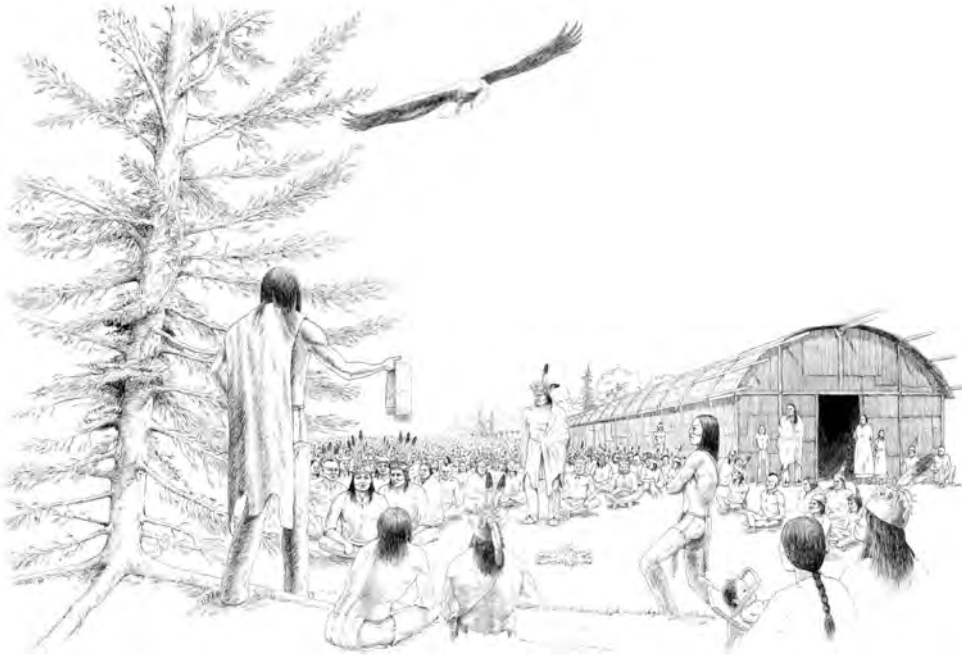
Wars were fought exclusively by men, although the women often decided whether or not war was to be declared. Once the Confederacy was formed, fighting among the Iroquois stopped. However, warfare continued with nations that did not want to be part of the Great Peace.



Lacrosse is still played in Canada. This First Nations sport has become Canada's national sport. How do you think this sport prepares players for other tasks in life?

What Was Wampum Used For?

Wampum is strings or belts made up of white and purple beads that were cut from certain kinds of shells. Each string or belt held a different message. The use of wampum suggested the seriousness of the message and the sincerity of whoever made it.



This drawing, *First Grand Council*, was done by John Kahionhes Fadden of the Mohawk Nation in 1980. It shows the Peacemaker presenting the Great Law of Peace. The figure under the Tree of Peace is holding a wampum belt. According to Iroquois tradition, Hiawatha introduced wampum to his people.

Thinking It Through

In what other ways do societies record their history and laws?

In Chapter 1, you read that Canada has a written Constitution that sets out the rules of Canadian society. The Great Law of Peace is the constitution of the Iroquois. It describes principles of good living and tells how the Confederacy should be organized and run. The Great Law of Peace is so long that it would take days to recite the whole thing. In order to help them remember the Great Law, the Iroquois used wampum belts.

A wampum keeper was responsible for caring for the wampum and reading it. The reader would pass his hands along the belt, bead by bead, using their texture to remind him of the events or treaties it recorded. Wampum keepers were chosen by the clan and trained from a young age—younger than you are now—to remember the information on the belt and tell it in a dramatic and poetic way. Iroquois women made the wampum belts.



This photo taken in the 1870s shows Iroquois chiefs from the Six Nations Reserve reading Wampum belts.

The Hiawatha Wampum

words matter!

A **collective identity** is a shared belief system that often includes the same language, culture, values, and attitudes.



This belt is known as the Hiawatha Wampum. It is a primary source of information about the Iroquois. How does the Hiawatha Wampum show the relationship among the nations of the Confederacy?

Today the Great Law of Peace exists as a written document. It was first recorded in English in about 1880. Now, there are several versions of it. The Hiawatha wampum is one of many belts and strings that describe the Great Law.

Here are the meanings of the **symbols** on the Hiawatha Wampum:

- From left to right, the five images represent the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca Nations and their territories. The Onondaga symbol in the centre also represents the Tree of Peace.
- The lines joining the five images show the connection of the five nations to one another.
- The two lines extending out from the squares at the two ends of the belt are the Path of Peace by which other nations are welcomed to join the Confederacy.
- The Great Law explains the white colour on the Hiawatha Belt this way: “White here symbolizes that no evil or jealous thought shall creep into the minds of the chiefs while in Council under the Great Peace. White, the emblem of peace, love, charity and equity surrounds and guards the Five Nations.”

More About . . .

Wampum Treaty

Wampum often represented treaties among two groups of people. The wampum are primary sources that tell us about Iroquois history. The Two Row Wampum Treaty symbolized the relationship between the Iroquois and the European nations that settled in North America. One purple row of beads represented the path of the Iroquois canoe that carried their culture, laws, and beliefs. This shows that the nations of the Iroquois Confederacy shared a **collective identity**. The other purple row represented the path of a sailing ship carrying the Europeans’ culture, laws, and beliefs. The parallel paths show that that neither group will try to interfere with the other. The three white background rows symbolize peace, friendship, and respect between the two groups.

This is a replica of the Two Row Wampum Treaty.



Who Was Hiawatha?



It is believed that Hiawatha lived sometime between 1100 and 1450.

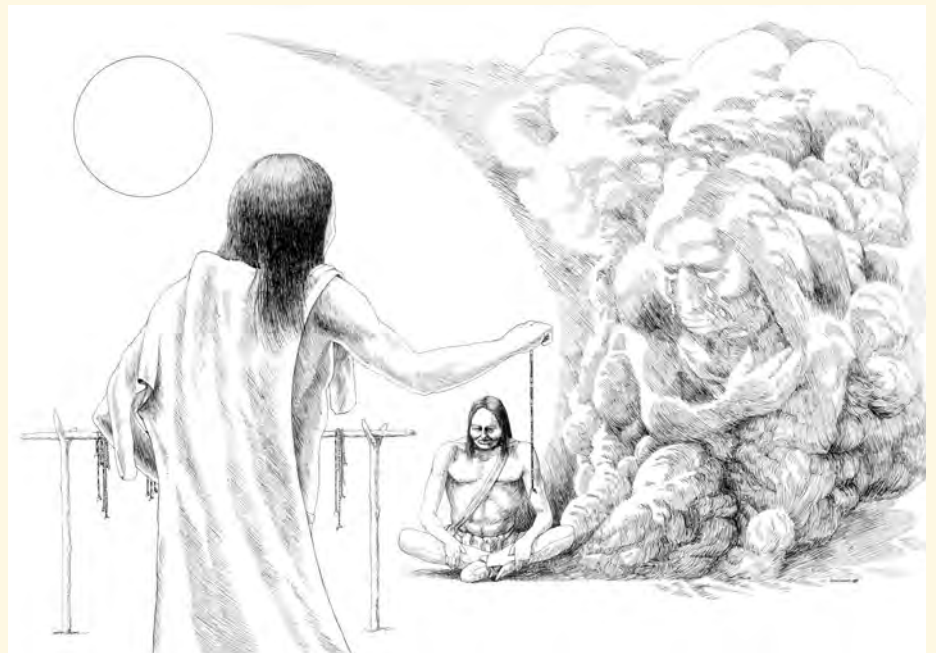
Hiawatha, whose name is sometimes also spelled Hayehwatha, travelled with the Peacemaker and helped him spread his message of peace among the Haudenosaunee. What we know about him comes through the oral stories that have been passed down through the generations. These stories have now been written down.

One of the stories tells about Hiawatha's great sorrow. Tadodaho, the chief of the Onondaga, was not interested in peace. He was an evil man who caused the death of Hiawatha's three daughters. In his sadness, Hiawatha went to live alone in the forest. He put shells on a string as he thought about his daughters. This was the first wampum.

This painting of the first wampum string was done in 1980 by John Kahionhes Fadden of the Mohawk Nation.

Over to You

The ceremony that the Peacemaker performed on Hiawatha became the basis of a ceremony that the Iroquois used to ease sadness when someone died. Wampum strings were exchanged during the ceremony. How might a ceremony like this help to strengthen the bonds of people in a society?



The Peacemaker found Hiawatha in the forest. Hiawatha was so sad that he could not see, hear, or speak, so the Peacemaker comforted him. He wiped the tears flowing from Hiawatha's eyes with soft deerskin. Peacemaker removed the obstruction in Hiawatha's ears with a feather. Finally, he gave Hiawatha cool water to drink, which cleared the obstruction in his throat.

Now that Hiawatha could see, hear, and speak again, he was able to leave the forest to spread the good word of peace. Hiawatha and the Peacekeeper eventually cleared the evil from the mind of Tadodaho. This allowed the Onondaga Nation to join the Confederacy.

Interpreting Maps

What kind of information do maps give?

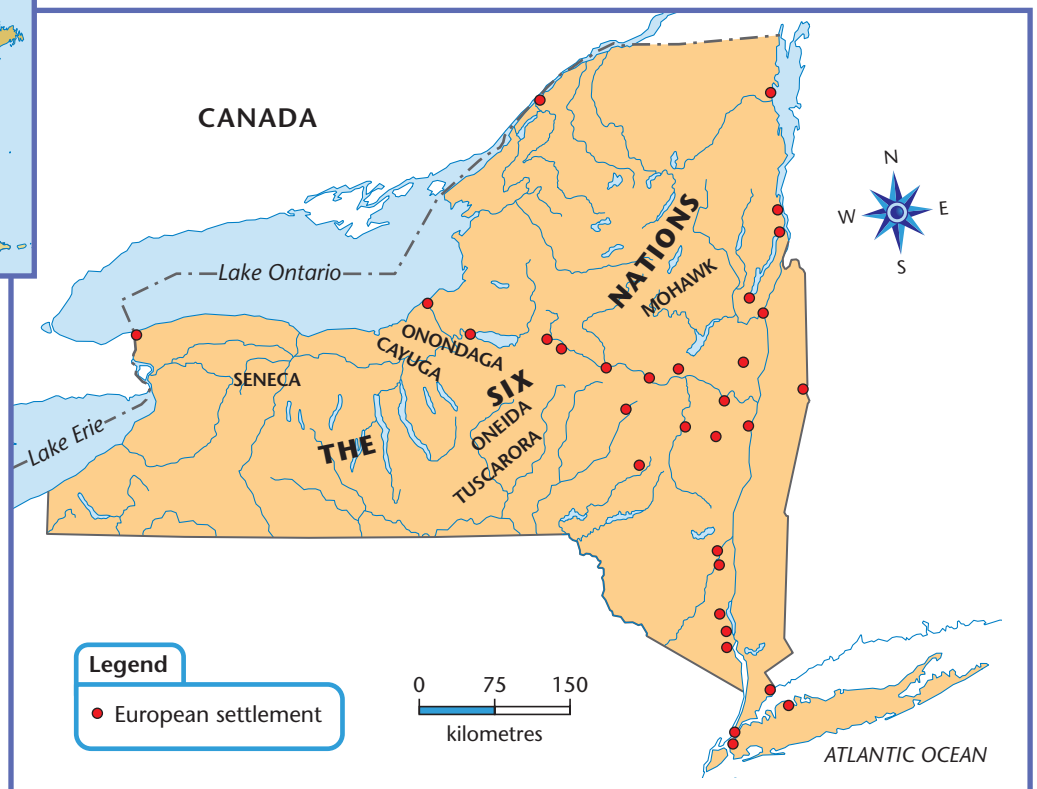
- **Political maps** tell you about the location of countries and cities.
- **Historical maps** tell you what an area was like in the past.
- **Physical maps** provide information about features of the land like rivers, mountains, and land elevation. The physical map on the next page shows rivers and lakes.

Take a look at the map below and identify the following features: title, compass rose, legend, and scale. These features are described in the Skill Smart on page 56. Use information on the map to answer these geographic questions:

- Why were the Seneca given the title “Keepers of the Western Door”? Who were the “Keepers of the Eastern Door”?
- What geographic feature do you think influenced the location of European settlements? Explain why.



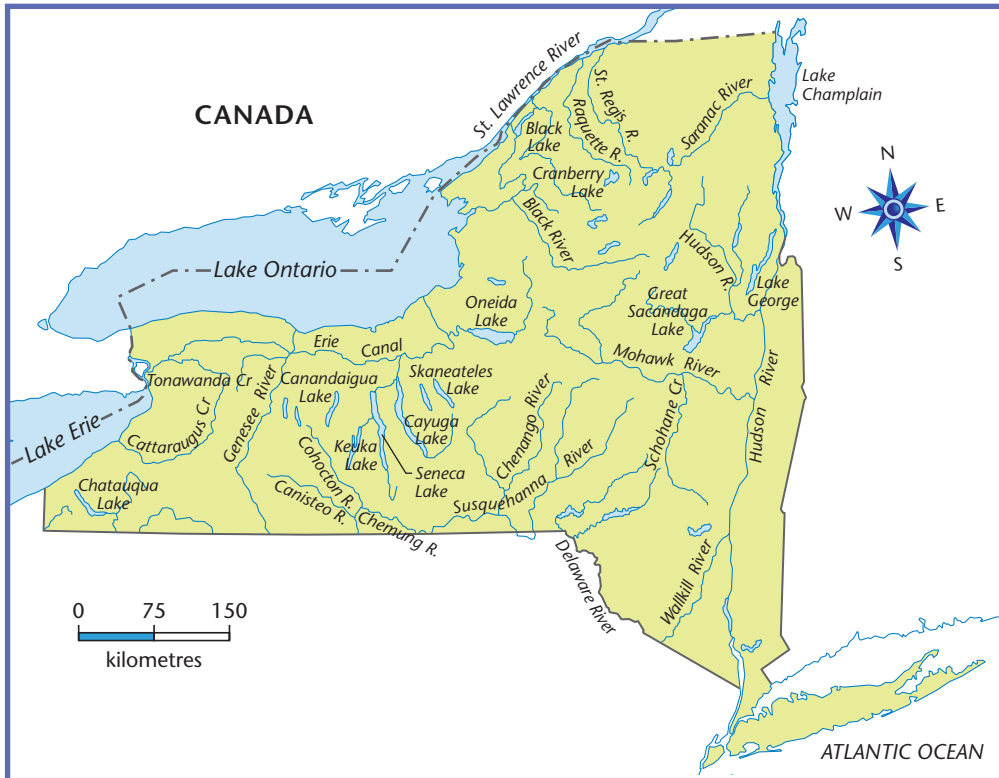
Locations of the Six Iroquois Nations, 1768



Practise the Skill

This physical map shows the names of the rivers and lakes in New York State. Study the map carefully and identify its features.

Rivers and Lakes of New York State



1. Historical maps can sometimes add to our understanding of present-day maps. How did the past influence the choice of names of rivers on the modern map?
2. Make up five geographic questions that can be answered by using the maps on these two pages. Exchange questions with a partner.
3. Today, there are a number of Haudenosaunee communities on reserves in Canada and on reservations in the United States. On a map of North America, locate Kanasatake and the Six Nations reserve. Document the sources you looked at to find this information.



Chief Dekahneh of the Cayuga Nation travelled to Geneva in 1923 to defend the rights of his people before the League of Nations. He was not allowed to speak.

Speaking Out

[The Council of the Six Nations] is still alive and intends, as best it can, to defend the rights of the Iroquois to live under their own laws in their own little countries left to them, to worship their Great Spirit in their own way, and to enjoy the rights which are as surely theirs as the white man's rights are his own.

Chief Dekahneh, Cayuga Nation, 1925

Skill Smart

Create a web to record what you learn about the responsibilities of Haudenosaunee chiefs. Compare your web with a classmate's and look for similarities and differences.

How Was the Confederacy Structured?

For the Iroquois, their Confederacy could be compared to a huge longhouse that stretched over the whole territory where they lived. The Six Nations—Mohawk, Cayuga, Oneida, Seneca, Onondaga, and Tuscarora—lived together under its roof as a family. This longhouse sheltered their bond with each other and protected them from their enemies.

The Chiefs

The leaders in Iroquois society were the chiefs. The Great Law of Peace stated that it was their duty to be teachers and spiritual guides and to remind their people that the Creator wants them to live together forever in peace.

The chiefs were treated with great respect because of their wisdom and other special qualities. However, they were considered the same as everyone else in society—not better or above others. They were the caretakers of the Great Law of Peace and had responsibilities in many areas.



Chief Oren Lyons (left), Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan, Onondaga Nation. The Faithkeeper's job is to maintain the customs, traditions, values, and history of the clan and to uphold the Great Law of Peace and represent its message to the world community. Chief Leon Shenandoah (right), Fire Keeper for Haudenosaunee. This photograph was taken at the Earth Summit in 1992.

The chiefs looked after the welfare of their people and ran the affairs of the clan, the nation, and the Confederacy. They also upheld the rule of law in their society. (You read about the rule of law in Chapter 2, on page 46.)

There were also:

- **war chiefs**, who were selected by each of the nations to sit on the Grand Council. In wartime, these chiefs had to gather warriors for fighting.
- **pine tree chiefs**, who showed special abilities or had an interest in public affairs. They were selected to join the Grand Council by its chiefs.

The Grand Council

The Great Law of Peace established a Grand Council made up of 50 chiefs who represented the nations of the Confederacy. Nations with large populations had more chiefs than smaller nations, but they were all equal to one another.

- The Mohawk Nation had nine chiefs.
- The Oneida Nation had nine chiefs.
- The Onondaga Nation had fourteen chiefs.
- The Cayuga Nation had ten chiefs.
- The Seneca Nation had eight chiefs.

The Tuscarora, who were not part of the original five nations named in the Great Law of Peace, were represented by the Chiefs of the Oneida.

The clan mother could remove a chief who was not doing his job properly. A chief might lose his position for

- committing a serious crime such as murder
- refusing to attend meetings of the Grand Council
- not listening to and representing the views of the people
- disobeying the Great Law
- not acting with the welfare of the people in mind

New chiefs were chosen by the clan mothers. The clan mothers also ensured that all decisions made by the Grand Council agreed with the Great Law of Peace. They carefully watched over discussions and made sure that all voices were heard and treated respectfully. They pointed out any mistakes they saw to the chiefs.



Thayendanegea, whose English name was Joseph Brant, was a famous war chief of the Mohawk Nation. Brantford, Ontario, was named after him.

Thinking It Through

How does the image of the chiefs on the seal suggest unity and equality?

The Seventh Generation

words matter!

Successive descendants in a family make up **generations**. For example, grandparents, parents, and children are three generations of a family.

Speaking Out

In making any law, our chiefs must always consider three things: the effect of their decision on peace, the effect on the natural world, and the effect on seven generations in the future. We believe that all lawmakers should be required to think this way, that all constitutions should contain these rules.

Carol Jacobs, Cayuga Bear clan mother

One important responsibility of the Grand Council was to consider the seventh **generation**. The chiefs had to always keep in mind how the decisions they made would affect the lives of their people for seven generations—more than 200 years in the future. This encouraged the chiefs to act cautiously so that the welfare of their descendants would be protected.

In Canada today we also expect our politicians to try to make decisions that will have positive effects on future generations. Do you think that governments are passing strong enough laws to protect the environment? Health care? Human rights?

More About . . .

The Tree of Peace

The Tree of Peace is an important symbol of the Iroquois. The roots of the Tree spread out to the north, south, east, and west so that other nations could find the pathways to the Great Law. If any person or nation wishes to follow the Great Law of Peace, they are welcome to join the Iroquois under the Tree. The eagle sits at the top of the Tree to spot any approaching danger and warn the Iroquois. Before the planting, the Peacemaker asked the nations to throw their articles of war into the pit. He then planted the Tree of Peace over the weapons.



This Tree of Peace was drawn by John Fadden. The war club under the tree symbolizes the weapons buried by the Iroquois.

Thinking It Through

1. In Chapter 2, you saw that in a democracy people can participate to work for the common good. How does thinking about the seventh generation contribute to the common good?
2. What other kinds of decisions could politicians make today that would affect the seventh generation?

How Were Decisions Made in the Confederacy?

In Chapters 2 and 3, you looked at rights and freedoms, representation, and justice in Canada and ancient Athens. One of the ways these values are achieved in a democracy is by involving people in making decisions. How do people participate in decision making in Canada? How did they participate in ancient Athens?

The Great Law was written to ensure that the Iroquois could live together in peace and harmony. Here are some ways that democratic principles are built into decision making under the Great Law:

- Although different nations had different numbers of chiefs in the Grand Council, there was **equality among them**. They all had the same level of authority.
- **Authority was shared between men and women.** Although only men were members of the Grand Council, it was the women who nominated the chiefs and could take away their title. The fact that people belonged to their mother's clan also gave authority to the women.
- The **clan system** introduced by the Peacemaker helped to make sure that no one nation would ever be able to take over the Confederacy. Because people in each nation belonged to various clans, their loyalty was split between their clan and their nation. This balancing of loyalty worked to maintain democracy and unity within the Confederacy.



How are the students in this class making a decision? What other ways are there of making decisions?

More About . . .

The Tuscarora Nation

When Europeans came to North America, the Tuscarora lived in what is now the state of North Carolina. Like other First Nations people, many Tuscarora fell sick and died from diseases brought by Europeans. Settlers fought the Tuscarora wanting to take over their traditional lands. In the early 1700s, many Tuscarora moved north to New York State where they lived near the Oneida and later joined the Iroquois Confederacy as the sixth nation.

Thinking *It Through*

How are the ideas of fairness and equality expressed on the Hiawatha Wampum belt on page 82?

Making Decisions by Consensus

words matter!

When a decision is made by **consensus**, all the people affected by the decision have an equal voice. There is discussion and the final agreement represents a process that everyone agrees to.

Can you imagine how hard it would be to get all of the students in your class to agree on an issue? How would you go about it? Getting five different nations and the many clans within them to agree on issues was a challenge that the Peacemaker faced. The Great Law sets out a system of decision making that allows everyone a voice and requires the agreement of all. This way of making decisions is called **consensus**. It was another way that fairness and equality were maintained in Iroquois society.

Consensus requires people to be open-minded. They must be willing to think deeply about the issue and to listen to the ideas of others. The decision may not be their first choice, but they must be willing to support it in the best interest of the group.

Thinking It Through

1. Consider how the social structure of the Iroquois Confederacy encouraged consensus decision making.
2. Consensus requires people to be open-minded. Why is it important for members of any society to be open-minded?
3. In a country as big as Canada, it is unlikely that everybody will agree on all issues. In what ways do people show that they disagree with government decisions?

The Onondaga kindled the Council fire at the beginning of the Grand Council meeting. Fire was thought to purify the words of the chiefs and make sure they spoke the truth.



Decision Making in the Grand Council

The process of Grand Council decision making is laid out in the Great Law of Peace. The chiefs were divided by nation for the discussions and each nation had a role. The Mohawk and Seneca, who were the first to join the Confederacy, were known as the Elder Brothers. The Onondaga had the position of Fire Keepers. The Oneida and Cayuga were known as the Younger Brothers.

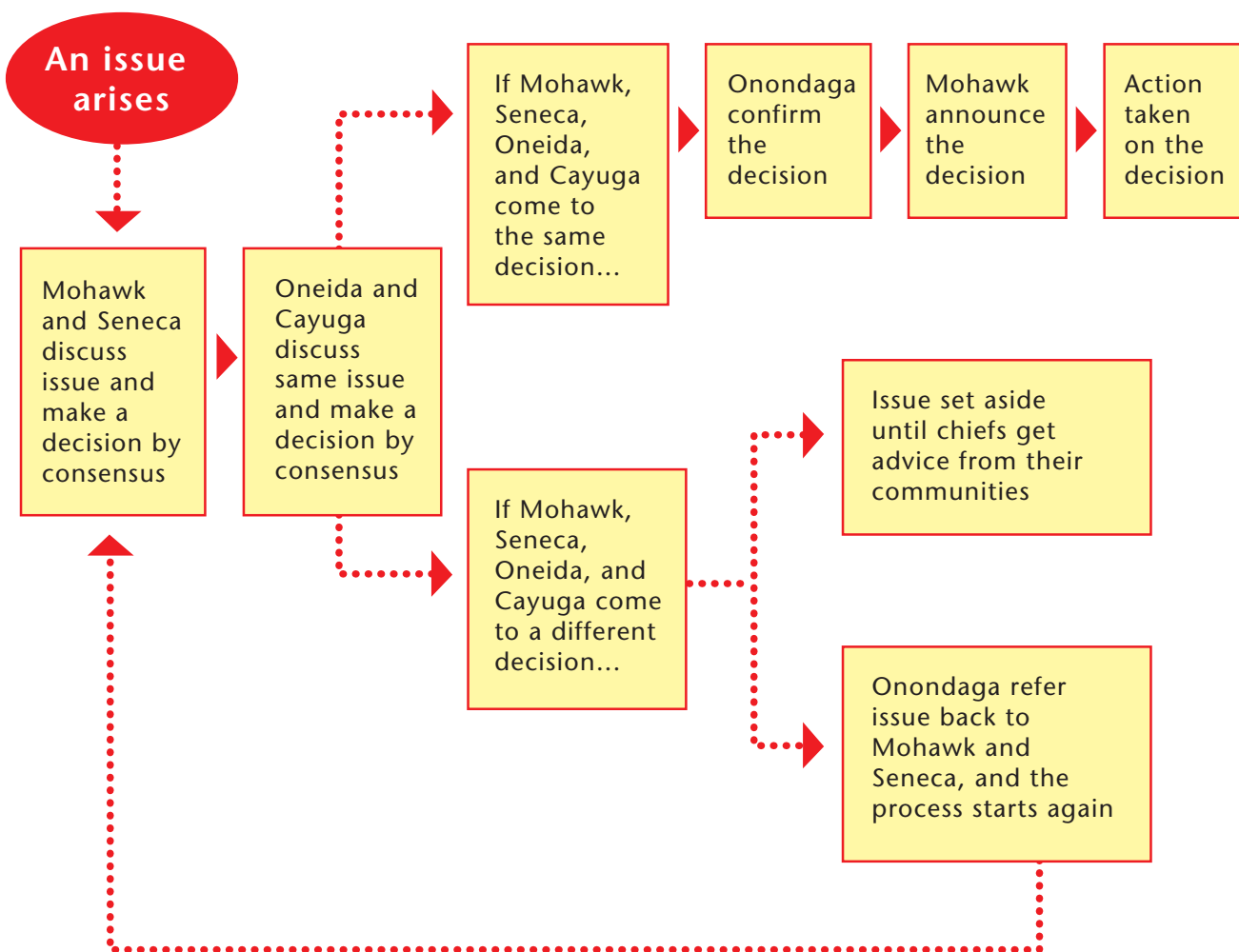
The Onondaga were responsible for opening the Grand Council. They began by thanking the representatives of the other nations for attending and announcing the subject that would be discussed.

The Grand Council chose a speaker from among the Mohawk, Onondaga, or Seneca Nations to conduct the meeting. The speaker held this position for one day. The next day a new speaker would be chosen or the first speaker could be reappointed by the Council.

During a Grand Council meeting, a chief's two faithkeepers and his clan mother sat behind him to advise him and, if necessary, remind him of his responsibility to his people.

Thinking It Through

What similarities can you find between Iroquois and Athenian decision making?



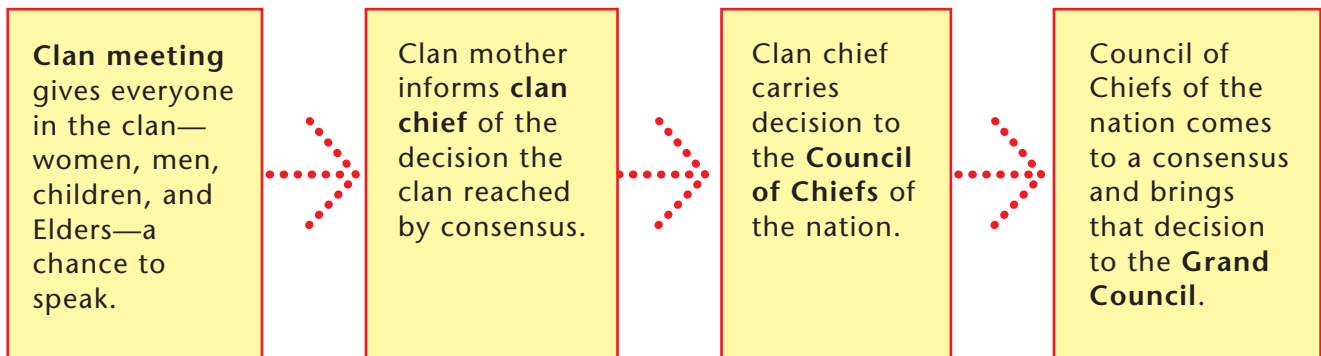
This chart shows the process of decision making among the original five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Consulting the Clans

You have seen that the Grand Council was the governing body of the Iroquois. However, the Great Law gave all the Iroquois the right to participate in decision making. It describes one occasion in which the people were consulted this way:

Whenever a specially important matter or a great emergency is presented before the Confederate [Grand] Council and the nature of the matter affects the entire body of the Five Nations, threatening their utter ruin, then the Lords [chiefs] of the Confederacy must submit the matter to the decision of their people and the decision of the people shall affect the decision of the Confederate [Grand] Council. This decision shall be a confirmation of the voice of the people.

The diagram below shows the process through which the voice of the people was heard. It ensured that everyone—men, women, children, and Elders—had a say in the decision-making process.



Thinking It Through

How is the right of Iroquois nations to keep their own laws similar to the protection of collective rights in the Canadian Charter that you read about in Chapter 2?

Minority Rights

Along with giving people the right to contribute to the decision-making process, the Great Law also acknowledges the unique identity of each nation. It states that the nations will keep their own festivals and laws, and that the chiefs of the nations continue to have the right to settle the affairs of their nations.

Taking the rights of minorities into consideration in decision making is an important way of keeping a society fair. What document protects minority rights in Canada?

Roberta Jamieson

Roberta Jamieson is a member of the Mohawk Nation of the Grand River in southern Ontario. She was the first First Nations woman in Canada to earn a law degree. She was also the first woman to become a chief of the Six Nations of the Grand River, the reserve in Canada that has the most people living on it.

In 1989, Roberta Jamieson was appointed to a 10-year term as the ombudsman of Ontario. An ombudsman is a person who investigates people's complaints about the government. The ombudsman can suggest changes to government policies or change unfair decisions.

In this chapter you have seen the importance of participation and consensus in Iroquois society. Roberta Jamieson feels that her culture has had a great affect on her job as ombudsman. She says:

First, Iroquois people have always placed a lot of importance on diplomacy [talking things over]. We've placed a lot of influence on process, on reaching a consensus, knowing that if you spend the time to come to a genuine consensus it will be long-lasting.

She has used these traditional strategies to help people to reach agreement and solve problems. She tries to bring opposing sides together with the goal of reaching a solution that both can agree on. She encourages them to work together to find a solution, rather than focusing on the ways they disagree.



Roberta Jamieson is the winner of the National Aboriginal Achievement Award.

Over to You

1. Do you agree with Roberta Jamieson's idea that "...if you spend the time to come to a genuine consensus it will be long-lasting"? Explain your thinking.
2. Roberta Jamieson has said that in Iroquois culture "women are the conscience of the council, of the chiefs." What do you think she means by this?
3. Why is the job of ombudsman important in a democracy?

What Is the Best Way to Make a Decision?

The Iroquois thought they had an effective way of making decisions—they used consensus. Ancient Athenians also thought they had a good way to make decisions—they used majority rule.

Both of these ways of making decisions have survived to the present day. The Assembly of First Nations and the Nunavut legislature continue to use the consensus model. Majority rule is used in elections across Canada. What are the advantages of each of these ways of making decisions?



Voting is competitive—it creates winners and losers. Consensus is cooperative and tries to reach a decision that is best for all members of a group.

Viewpoint 1

Consensus decision making is inclusive. The Iroquois Confederacy included everybody who would be affected when making decisions. With consensus, participants can put forward ideas or recommend changes. That's why the Charter of the Assembly of First Nations says that consensus will be used to make decisions.



Viewpoint 2



One person, one vote—that's the basis of our democracy. It's the only fair way in my opinion.

Viewpoint 3



Let's be practical. How could you use consensus decision making to run a country? Consensus is fine for a small group, but when you are dealing with many thousands, or even millions of people, consensus just isn't an option.

Viewpoint 4



Consensus takes a long time. If you have to make a decision in a hurry, voting is the most efficient way. You just give people the choices then you do what the majority believes is best.

Viewpoint 5



Majority rule means that the minority may not be committed to the decision that is made. One time my class voted on whether to go to the zoo or the museum for a field trip. The zoo got the most votes. The kids who voted to go to the museum didn't help plan the zoo trip. Consensus decision making would have made that situation much better.

Viewpoint 6

Over to You

1. Which of the opinions best represent your own ideas? Explain.
2. What are some other benefits and drawbacks of consensus and majority rule decision making?
3. Name classroom situations when using consensus would work best. In what situations would majority rule work best?

Contributing to Community

One morning when Mr. Kahn was taking attendance, the class told him that Matthew was in the office. He and another boy argued over a soccer ball in the schoolyard. The two boys ended up pushing each other and a teacher had to separate them. Matthew and the other boy had to go to the principal to talk to her about what had happened.

Mr. Kahn thought this might be a good time to talk about school rules.

What rules does your school have to make sure everyone is safe and healthy?



MARIA: *The Peacemaker encouraged the nations in the Iroquois Confederacy to use reason. I think that means you need to consider the consequences of your actions before you act. He also talked about peace and unity.*

RICHARD: *I think one important thing he said is that we need to think about how our actions affect the group, both now and in the future.*

IAN: *I wonder how the Great Law of Peace can be applied to our classroom or our school?*

ANGELITA: *Maybe we can use the Great Law to help us come up with classroom rules for problem solving.*



The students spent time researching how people can strengthen a community. There were historic ideas from the Iroquois as well as ideas from other cultures. They found that many sources said that if people were actively involved with others they could build a strong, supportive community where people are willing to help each other without being asked.

IAN: *We need to make everybody feel like they are an important part of the school. I read that in an area of San Juan, Costa Rica, the people agreed to El Ley del Saludo—the Law of the Greeting. They would leave for work earlier than usual and when they saw a neighbour they would stop and talk. This way everybody got to know everybody else. Maybe our school could try this.*

MARIA: *Listening to each other is important. We need to hear and understand what problems or concerns everybody has.*

ANGELITA: *Listening is important, but what we say is important too. We should show respect to each other by not gossiping or saying hurtful things about others. That is a big part of respecting others. I don't know if we always have to think about seven generations ahead, but we should think about the consequences of our actions.*

RICHARD: *Maybe we could write up some guidelines so that students in our school could live more peacefully with one another. I wonder if we can get the other classes to accept our guidelines?*



Besides books, what other research methods could Mr. Kahn's students have used?

Over to You

1. What rules and guidelines do you think would help improve the well-being of your school community?
2. How could you get the other classes to agree on your guidelines? Would you use consensus or majority rules? Are you willing to compromise on your guidelines?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a set of guidelines that all classes agree on? How would you deal with students who choose not to follow your guidelines?

Explore More!

? Inquiring Minds

1. Put yourself in the place of a member of the Iroquois Confederacy who has been asked to speak for your people and explain your system of government.
 - a. How would you describe the democratic principles of the Iroquois Confederacy? Use the organizer below to record your ideas.

The graphic organizer is a table with three columns and three rows. The columns are labeled 'Equality', 'Equity', and 'Participation'. Each column has three horizontal lines for writing. The title 'Democratic Principles of Iroquois Confederacy' is centered at the bottom of the table.

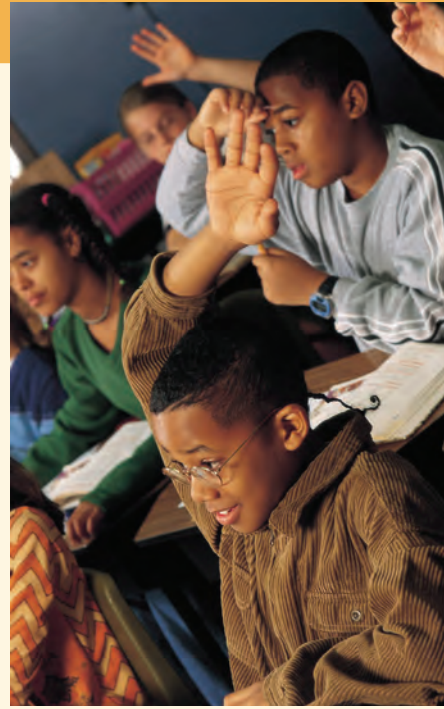
Equality	Equity	Participation

- b. Identify items on your completed organizer or other information from the chapter that you think shows that the Iroquois Confederacy had representative government.
-
2. Look at the map on page 84 to see where the six Iroquois Nations lived in 1768. Find this area on a present-day map of the United States. Refer to maps that show temperature, precipitation, and land use of this area to explain how the geographical features supported the Haudenosaunee way of life.
 3. Another important wampum is the Two Row Wampum that you read about on page 82. From what you know about the history of First Nations in North America, tell whether you think the ideas on this belt have been honoured.

Your Turn

Suppose, like the Peacemaker, you had the opportunity to influence a great number of people. Look back at the Haudenosaunee speech at the start of this chapter and develop a short speech to spread your own message about peace and the environment to one of the following:

- your classmates
 - your school
 - your community
- a. Consider how your speech would be different for each group. Why would it be different for each group?
 - b. Present your speech to your classmates, your school, or some leaders of your community. At the end of your speech invite your audience to propose ways how your ideas might be put into practice.



Democracy In Action Journal

With a partner or group, discuss what values are most important in your classroom. Create a series of symbols in your journal that express these values.

