

Treaty Making

CHIEF IRVING POWLESS JR.

Sagooli. Niawenha skenon. I'm one of the leaders at Onondaga. In the language of the Onondagas it's Onondagega, which means "People of the Hills." We are one of the nations of the Haudenosaunee. Haudenosaunee means "People of the Longhouse." In the Longhouse are five nations of people. They are the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. The Longhouse represents the territory of the Haudenosaunee. In the rooms of this Longhouse are these nations. The Longhouse of the Haudenosaunee consists of what is now the state of New York. At one time in our history, the house of the Haudenosaunee covered the territory from what is now Canada to North Carolina and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River.

Somewhere back in our history, we were wandering away from the mandates, the policies, and the Way of Life that the Creator had given us. He put us on Mother Earth to take care of his gifts to us. These gifts were the animals, the trees, the plants, and the waters; we were to make sure that the coming generations would be able to enjoy the same things that we enjoy today—today meaning whenever this was in our history but also meaning today, the present.

Many, many years ago, we had gone through a period of time when we wandered away from our mandates. We began to war against each other. This was contrary to how we were supposed to be conducting our lives. This was a dark period in our history for our people.

So a messenger was sent to us. This messenger came with a message of peace. We refer to this messenger as the Peacemaker. The Peacemaker told us that we have what we refer to as a Good Mind. With the Good Mind, we should be able to live together in peace and harmony with our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our relatives, our clans, our nations—all of the people who live on Mother Earth. This also includes our relatives in the forest, in the air, and in the waters here on Mother Earth. We can settle our disputes without violence.

The Peacemaker established among us a system of identification that consisted of nine clans. The clans that he established at this time were the Wolf, Turtle, Snipe, Beaver, Deer, Eel, Hawk, Bear, and Heron. Some of our clans, such as the Wolf Clan, are in all of the Five Nations, the

Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and the Senecas. He put leaders in charge of these clans. These leaders are Clan Mothers, Chiefs, and Faithkeepers. In our language the Chiefs are called Hoyana, meaning that they are of the Good Mind. He devised a system of putting leaders in place and taking them down. If they did not do their duties for the benefit of the people, then there was a process through which they would be removed as leaders of the community. This system is still in place and still carried out as formatted so many years ago.

It took a long time for this to become a reality. The Peacemaker started out on his mission and traveled to the various nations. He went among the Mohawks and told them that this is how we should be conducting ourselves as a people. The Mohawks agreed with this idea of peace. The Mohawk Nation became the Keeper of the Eastern Door of our Longhouse. Among the Mohawks he set nine leaders in place and he gave them three clans. These clans were the Wolf, Bear, and Turtle. Then he went among the Oneidas. The Peacemaker did the same thing at Oneida. He explained the way of peace, and the Oneida people accepted this message. He placed three clans and nine leaders. He came among the Onondagas. At Onondaga he wasn't able to work things out, and so he continued on to the Cayugas. At the Cayuga Nation, he installed ten leaders, then he went to the Senecas and installed eight leaders. The Seneca Nation is the Keeper of the Western Door. Then he came back to Onondaga to see what he could do with the Onondaga Nation.

Onondaga was a key nation for the formation of the Haudenosaunee because of one powerful, evil man. His name was Tadodaho. It was important that this man become a leader of the Haudenosaunee because of his powers. The Peacemaker and an assistant went before Tadodaho to convince him that he should be a part of the Haudenosaunee. The man helping the Peacemaker was named Hiawentha (sometimes known as Hiawatha). He was an Onondaga. Hiawentha agreed that this is the way that we should follow. Together Hiawentha and the Peacemaker convinced Tadodaho that he should become this special person among the Haudenosaunee, with special duties and special mandates for the Haudenosaunee. Tadodaho finally agreed to be a part of the Haudenosaunee. The Onondaga Nation was also given special duties. This nation would hold the wampum belts—the Wampum Keeper of the Haudenosaunee. The meetings of the Haudenosaunee would be held at Onondaga. Today that could be described as the capital of the Haudenosaunee. Our nations are known as Fires. The Onondaga Nation then became the Keeper of the Fire for the Haudenosaunee.

Now our house was complete. We had a Longhouse (territory) in which five nations of people lived. The nations live in the various rooms of this Longhouse that stretches across Mother Earth and covers much of the land. If anyone were to speak to the Haudenosaunee, they would

have to come to Onondaga at the central Fire. In order to get to the central Fire a nation would have to come through one of our doors. If they came from the west they would have to get permission from the Keeper of the Western Door, the Seneca Nation. If they came from the East they would have to get permission from the Keeper of the Eastern Door, the Mohawk Nation. Then that nation would be able to meet the Haudenosaunee at their central Fire at Onondaga. This process and protocol was set up by the Peacemaker and is still followed today. This process, set in place so many years ago, gave us the protocol to meet the foreign nations that would come into our Longhouse. We have not changed this process. This is important for you to understand. Our western brothers did not have this process, so it was difficult for them to deal with the hordes of people that were coming into their territories and setting up residence in their rooms as they did among our people.

The process that was used by the Peacemaker to put leaders in place as he went among the nations was that he picked the most vicious, the worst people in the community. He asked for them specifically. He said, "Show me your worst." These men were brought before the Peacemaker. He said to them, "We are talking about a different concept, a different Way of Life for our people. A life of peace." He convinced these people that they should change their ways. They would be the leaders. The reason that he picked the worst people in the nation was to show us that people can be changed so that they are following the mandates of the Creator.

We bring this message to you from whenever it happened many years ago, that we have the minds to change our ways. We can become role models of the community, upstanding citizens, people that can control our own destiny and look to the future, so that we can take care of the people. When we look among us, we see these young people who seem to be unruly, who seem to be carefree, not caring. We know that one of these days these people will change, and they will be the role models and the leaders of tomorrow. You have the same young people in your communities. Watch them, for they might end up as circuit judges. They might end up as president of the United States. We don't know. But we know that this comes about, that people have the ability to take in this concept of peace, change their ways, and become upstanding citizens, not only in our communities but in yours as well.

Tadodaho has someone that sits alongside him to assist him. Sitting on the right-hand side of Tadodaho is Honoweyaydee of the Wolf Clan. On the left-hand side of Tadodaho sits Dayhawtgawdoes of the Beaver Clan. And that's who I am. I am the leader of the Beaver Clan. That is the name that I use when I am out among the Haudenosaunee as one of the leaders. But when I was a little boy and I was introduced to the people of the Onondaga Nation, they hung a name around my neck that

I would use for the rest of my life. That name is Chawhdayguywhawdayh. Chawhdayguywhawdayh, meaning that wherever I go, everything will be equal. Chawhdayguywhawdayh is also one of the leader's name among the Mohawks.

When the Peacemaker put the Mohawk leaders in place, in order to show that we are of one family and to show that we are all related, he took Hiawentha, an Onondaga, and put him into the Mohawk Nation and made him the second leader of the Mohawk Nation. The reason that this was done was to show us that we are all in the same house. We are all from the same family, all living together. This means that we can put people in place as leaders that are from a different nation of the Haudenosaunee.

The third person that he put in place was Chawtdayguylewadeh. Chawtdayguylewadeh is of the Wolf Clan. Somewhere in our history the Onondagas took up that name and I now carry that name. It is the same name. It is just pronounced differently in Mohawk.

So my name, both of my names, are as old as the formation of the Haudenosaunee. And when I'm through using this name, after I have gone away, gone to another place, someone will step forward and take one of my names. Someone will be set in place as a leader of the Onondagas, of the Beaver Clan, and he will have the name of Dayhawtgawdoes. Some young baby of the Wolf Clan will then take my name, Chawhdayguywhawdayh. These are names that have been passed on down throughout in our history. The names continue today, because the people still do their duties as put forth so many years ago. When I am through with these names, there will be two people who will have my names.

The process that was given to us was a way that we should work together. The Peacemaker gave us clans; each one is a member of a clan. My wife is Onondaga and belongs to the Eel Clan, so her children are Onondagas of the Eel Clan. They have a leader and a Clan Mother. When something comes up among the people, the Eel Clan will sit down and discuss this issue. The other clans have the same process. Then their spokesman will go before the Council and present what the Eel Clan's position is or what they think about an issue. This provides a way for all of the people to have a voice in the government.

This process was observed by the people who came to see how our government worked. The process was then introduced into your system, and so our clan meetings became town meetings in the villages of the colonists. Our process also ended up in your Bill of Rights. The freedom of speech, the right to meet, and the right of freedom of religion—all of these came from our way of being a free people.

We were also given a very precise process of protocol for us to meet foreign nations. A foreign nation at that time would mean the Hurons, Algonquins, Delawares, Chippewas, Blackfeet, Lakota, Seminoles, and

whoever else wanted to meet with us. This process was also used when the Europeans came into our territory.

The Peacemaker and Hiawentha also installed us as spiritual leaders to take care of the ceremonies that the Creator had given to us—the way we give thanks for all of the gifts from the Creator. We have now traveled through our life and our history with these mandates. These ceremonies are still done today.

In 1492, a man came to our shores. We discovered him there in the seas. He was lost. His name was Christopher Columbus. Our relatives invited him ashore and gave him food. When he came ashore, he met our people. When he returned home he took some of these people back with him to Europe. He spread the word that there was this rich wholesome land across the waters. This land was rich in resources. He told them they should go to this land and claim it for the Queen.

Historically, if we look into our history books, we have a couple of dates: one, 1492, when Christopher Columbus arrived and another when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Those who landed at Plymouth Rock came from where? They came from England. So what did they name the place where they landed? New England, true. Then there were some people who came from York. They landed on an island. What did they call that island? New York; very intelligent people that were able to think up a name for this new place they were in. Today we still call these two places New England and New York.

Another group of people started up a river that went around this island. The gentleman that sailed up the river declared that he had discovered a river. No one knew it was there. He found this river. This man was Henry Hudson, so he named the river after himself. We now call it the Hudson River. The people who came up the river were the Dutch. They landed and settled in what is now the capital of the state of New York. The Dutch named their villages Albany, Troy, Rotterdam, and guess what? Right. A village named New Amsterdam.

We had been taught throughout our history that we should live together in peace and harmony, and that all people are equal. The people that we had been encountering were, as I said before, other Native Americans. We lived together, respecting each other's ways, each other's languages. The languages are different. But when we all became the Haudenosaunee, we didn't ask the Mohawks to change their language, and we never asked anyone else who joined us to change their language.

The English called us the Five Nations. The French called us the Iroquois. They were unable to say Haudenosaunee. That's not too hard to say. But Haudenosaunee is not in your history books. They talk about the Five Nations.

In the 1700s in North Carolina lived the Tuscaroras. They were driven out of their territory and came to live with us in 1724. Then we

were referred to as the Six Nations. The French still called us Iroquois. Nobody called us Haudenosaunee. This is the name that we have always called ourselves. Haudenosaunee, Onondagega, and Ongwehoweh. Ongwehoweh, meaning the Real People, People of the Land. Not Indians, but Real People, Ongwehoweh. Each of the Indigenous people on Turtle Island that is now the United States refer to themselves as People of the Land, Real People. They have their own word to describe themselves, and so it is with us.

So, there we were, looking at what was coming into our territory: a group of people who were settling, building houses, chopping trees down, shooting the deer, shooting the muskrats, the rabbits, the pheasants, the partridges, and the turkeys. Wherever they went, they laid waste to the land. You were not a very conservative people then, and you still are not conservative today.

We knew that your ancestors would be coming to our territory, because we were told in the prophecies of our people that strangers would be coming into our territory. These prophecies said that the strangers would be destructive. What they didn't tell us was how destructive your people would be. In the short time that you've been here on Turtle Island, Mother Earth, you have destroyed much of the country. That destruction still continues today.

In the 1600s, when the Dutch had settled in what is now Albany and the surrounding area, we were looking at them as people who were coming into our territory with a different language, different concept, and different ideas. But we realized that they were a people, a people equal to us. Different language, different culture, different ideas, but a people. Runners came from the Mohawk territory. They came to Onondaga to ask Tadodaho to call a meeting of the leaders of the Haudenosaunee, because we had people coming into our territory. We must decide how we are going to live together with the people who had entered our house and were living in a couple of our empty rooms. They were uninvited and they were destructive.

Tadodaho sent runners out to the Five Nations, and he told them what the agenda would be. When the Five Nations met, we discussed the Mohawks' concerns about our brothers and sisters who were moving into our territory and how we were going to live together. Under the protocol set up by the Peacemaker, some delegates were chosen, and they went to Albany to meet with the leaders of the Dutch to discuss our concerns. After a time our leaders struck an agreement with the Dutch people, an agreement whereas they would live together in peace.

After they made their agreement, the Dutch said to our leaders, "We think that in the future when we meet, it would be our idea that you would refer to us as father and we will refer to you as son." Now we had

a lot of men sitting there. How many men have been reprimanded by their fathers? Yeah. The father has authority, as you know. So we looked at what a family was like, and we realized that a father and son relationship would not be to our advantage. It would be better, because of our concepts, that we be equal. Brothers are equal in a family relationship.

Our leaders informed the Dutch people, "From this day forward, we will refer to each other as brothers." Greeting each other as "brother" is not a statement from the 1970s or 1980s but a statement from our people in 1613. The Dutch agreed that this would be how we would conduct ourselves and greet each other from that day forward as brothers. The Dutch said to us, "We have pencils and paper, and so we will record this event on a piece of paper."

We said, "That is fine for you." When the Haudenosaunee was formed, we were provided with a process to record events. This process is the use of wampum beads, which are made out of quahog shells. The quahog comes from the East Coast. Any of you who have attended clam-bakes know what a raw clam looks like. The shell of a quahog is white on the inside. In the center of the shell it is purple. So we were given a process at that time to make beads. We were to break the shell into fragments, make round beads out of the fragments, and drill holes through them. These beads were then white and purple.

We use these beads for identification, as carriers of messages, and as records of events. So when the Haudenosaunee was formed, wampum belts were made that told about this event and the history of our people, the Hiawatha Belt, the Tree of Peace Belt, the Fan Belt, and the Tadodaho Belt. We then informed the Dutch people that we would put our record of this event in a wampum belt.

"We think that in the future, there will come a time when you will not have your piece of paper, but we will still have our belt. Because we are meeting for the health and welfare of our people, we should make sure that this agreement lasts a long time, like forever."

"Forever" is described by our ancestors in this agreement in the following words: "As long as the grass is green, as long as the water flows downhill, and as long as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west." This is the first place that these words were spoken. Subsequently, you hear them in movies, you hear them in various places. The United States used these actual words in some of the treaties that were made in the 1800s. But they were first spoken here by the Haudenosaunee to show that we would make this treaty last forever. We did not think that your paper would survive the times.

Today the sun still sets in the west, just like it did in the 1600s. So that hasn't changed. The grass is still green. Next to my house there is a creek, and its water runs downhill. That agreement that we made back then is still in effect as far as we are concerned.

Now what did we agree upon at that time? The first agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans who were coming into our country was completed and recorded by the Haudenosaunee. It is called Guswenta, the Two Row Wampum Belt. I hold in my hand a record of that event. Where is your piece of paper? And what do you know of this treaty? What do you know of this agreement?

This is an agreement between our two peoples. This agreement is still in effect because the grass is still green. This was the grandfather of all treaties, this was the first one that we made. A very important concept was expressed at this time, that concept being that we were equal. At this time the Haudenosaunee were a very powerful, powerful people. We realized that you were a young people, that you were just learning, yet we realized that you were equal. This is a very important issue. You must understand the concept: we recognized you as people and that we were equal.

The Two Row Wampum belt is made of white and purple beads. The white beads denote truth. Our record says that one purple row of beads represents a sailboat. In the sailboat are the Europeans, their leaders, their government, and their religion. The other purple row of beads represents a canoe. In the canoe are the Native Americans, their leaders, their governments, and their Way of Life, or religion as you say it. We shall travel down the road of life, parallel to each other and never merging with each other.

In between the two rows of purple beads are three rows of white beads. The first row of white beads is "peace," the second row, "friendship," and the third row, "forever." As we travel down the road of life together in peace and harmony, not only with each other, but with the whole circle of life—the animals, the birds, the fish, the water, the plants, the grass, the trees, the stars, the moon, and the thunder—we shall live together in peace and harmony, respecting all of those elements. As we travel the road of life, because we have different ways and different concepts, we shall not pass laws governing the other. We shall not pass a law telling you what to do. You shall not pass a law telling me and my people what to do.

The Haudenosaunee have never violated this treaty. We have never passed a law telling you that you could not worship Sunday morning at nine o'clock in your church. We have never told you that you have to change your ways. We have never told you that our ways are better than yours. We have never passed a law telling you how to live. There are many things that you do that we do not understand. We do not understand why you throw water onto a baby's face. We know that you have many statues in your churches and that you have names for these statues. We do not know why you have chocolate rabbits bringing jelly beans on Easter Sunday. We have never passed a law telling you that you could not do this anymore.

You and your ancestors, on the other hand, have passed laws that continually try to change who I am, what I am, and how I shall conduct my spiritual, political, and everyday life. Because you don't understand the religions of the Native Americans, you have said, "They must be wrong; therefore, we must pass a law that prevents them from doing that."

You have passed a law that says that we are United States citizens. You have passed laws on jurisdiction. We did not agree to be citizens, and we did not agree that your governments could have jurisdiction over us. We do not accept these laws. We are not citizens of the United States, nor do you have the right to say that the state of New York has jurisdiction over us. The Department of Justice agrees with us. Recently the Justice Department submitted briefs in one of the cases that we were involved in, and these briefs stated that jurisdiction is not absolute, it is concurrent with the nations.

You have prohibited some of our religious practices. You prevent us from going to our sacred sites—a violation of our agreement. During the 1860s, you said, "Ghost dancing is no longer permissible." Many of the religions of our people went into hiding. They went underground because this agreement was being violated. We noticed that among your people there were many different kinds of religions, each one stating that this is the religion for everyone to follow. When your missionaries came to us, they said, "You should become a Christian and be like us."

We said, "We are not sure if we want to be like you. We have noticed that in your daily life, you argue about which church is better than the other. We would suggest at this time that you gather all of the leaders of your various churches, and let them decide which one is the best. After they have decided, then you can come to us and tell us which one is the best. Then we might think about joining that one. But in the meantime, I think that we shall continue to be as we have been instructed by the Creator as Ongwehowe, Onondagegah, and as Haudenosaunee."

Many of our people did change over to Christianity. However, there has been a core of people, not only among the Haudenosaunee but also among all of the Native Americans across what is now the United States, that have maintained their Way of Life. Many have done this secretly, because there were federal laws passed that said they weren't able to do these things any more.

We have never, never violated this first treaty. We stand before you today saying that we are equal, and we still recognize you as people. We ask the same courtesy and the same respect, that you honor us as people and allow us to continue to live as we have lived thousands of years before you came into our territory. From 1613, when the first treaty (Two Row Wampum Belt) was made, until after the Revolutionary War, the Haudenosaunee made somewhere between fifty and sixty treaties with the Dutch and the French and the British.

When the Haudenosaunee was formed, symbolically the Peacemaker lifted a tree out of the ground. Into the hole where the tree was, we put our weapons of war. Then he put the tree back into the ground, therefore planting the Tree of Peace. On top of the Tree of Peace sits an eagle that warns the Haudenosaunee of danger. Under the spreading branches of the Tree of Peace sit our people and their friends and allies in peace and in friendship.

So the Dutch, French, British, and many Native American nations have sat under our Tree of Peace, and they have agreed that we should live under this concept and this idea. As the various people mingled with us, they started to learn about a different Way of Life. They were under the rule of the king of England. Who ruled France, was that a king also? And the Dutch, was that also a king? The Europeans were people who were not able to sit down and discuss their destiny. They were told what they were supposed to do by those who ruled their country.

Our concept of government was very different. The people who came into our communities would say, "We have a suggestion for you. What do you think about this idea?"

The person who was being asked the question would say, "I don't know. I'll be back."

Your ancestors would then ask, "Where are you going?"

He'd say, "I'm going back to my Clan. I'm going back to my Nation and let the people decide about your idea." They would return to the Eel Clan, the Wolf Clan, the Beaver Clan, the Snipe Clan, or the Turtle Clan, and the Clan would meet and they would discuss what was being presented. Each of the people in the Clan had a voice on every issue. Each could stand up and say, "Well, I agree with them," or "I disagree." Maybe we would change their presentation.

But when they got through, they were of one mind. We have an expression among us. The expression is "Let us put our minds together as one." This is a concept that was not known among the Europeans. "Let us put our minds together as one and give thanks to the Creator for the gifts that he has given to us for our pleasure and benefit." We do this every time we meet. We put our minds together as one.

As individuals you have to have separate voices in order to put your minds together to become of one mind. You have to agree with your neighbor. You have to agree. You must compromise your differences until you become of one mind and you are agreeable to the situation. This is what we were taught. This is the way we lived. This is what we were telling the people who came into our territories. We were telling them that individual people have a voice. They can speak up. They have freedom to stand up and voice their opinions. They have the right to meet, so that they can voice their opinions in a group and become "of one mind." They have the freedom to choose how they are going to worship.

The people who were coming into our territory were looking at these concepts and saying, "How can we do that?" We suggested at the time that they join together as we had done. It would be advantageous for the Thirteen Fires up and down the East Coast to join together as one and become united so that they could speak as one, because unity is strength.

I would suggest to you that if you look into the archives of Europe in the 1600s, you would not find any record of those people sitting down at a meeting discussing their future. They were being told. They weren't given a choice. They weren't given a voice. But here in the territory of the Haudenosaunee this was happening. And not only here. It was also in the territory of what is New England. Because in New England today, they still have town meetings where the people go to meet and to voice their opinions about what is happening in their community. This concept and idea came from the Native Americans that your ancestors met.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and others were coming into our territory asking us, "How does your government function?" We explained that to them, that we are free people. These events were happening in 1754, 1755, somewhere during this time period.

The people talked about this freedom for the next twenty years. Finally they said, "Well, let's revolt. We don't have to be under the direction of Great Britain. We can be free people like the Haudenosaunee. They've given us a concept, an idea of how a free government can work, where we can speak for and on behalf of the people. But before we do that, we know that the Haudenosaunee have made fifty to sixty treaties with the Dutch, the French, and the British. They're good friends with them."

Joseph Brant, a Mohawk, married Sir William Johnson's sister. Sir William Johnson was the ambassador to Great Britain. He lived up near Fonda, New York. Sir William Johnson's hall is where he lived and dealt with the Mohawks and other native nations. The hall is still there today. You can go visit it. Get off the thruway at Fonda and ask where the hall is. It's only a few miles away. In 1768, Sir William Johnson wanted to have a line of demarcation. From what is now Rome, New York, down to New Orleans, he drew a line. East of that line to the Atlantic Ocean would be for the new people to colonize, to build homes, and so forth. Everything west of that was Indian country. We agreed that this is how we would live together and we would share the gifts.

Because we had made all of these treaties, George Washington said, "In this upcoming Revolutionary War, it would be to our advantage to not have the Haudenosaunee fight with Great Britain. We know that they have a lot of friends there among the British."

They sent out the first federal agent, George Morgan, to the Haudenosaunee and its allies in 1775 to ask for a meeting. The purpose of

this meeting was to insure that the Haudenosaunee be neutral during the upcoming Revolutionary War. You will not find the name George Morgan in your history books. He is just not there. Nor is the meeting between George Morgan and the Haudenosaunee. We agreed at this time that we would be neutral during this war. Our word is as good as it was in the 1600s, as it was in 1775.

But the colonists were not used to having people say, "This is how it's going to be" and only have to say it once. So in 1776, the request was repeated at Fort Pitt. George Morgan came again to the Haudenosaunee to make sure that we would be at peace, that we would not fight in the Revolutionary War. To commemorate this event, they made a belt using the same colors of white and purple. The belt has 2,500 beads. Through the center of the belt are thirteen diamonds, representing the Thirteen Fires. I don't know where this belt is. It is hidden in the archives of some museum, or some library, or maybe in the private collection of some individual. We do know that the belt exists. There was an allocation from the federal government for the funds to make this belt. This allocation is recorded in Washington, D.C. George Morgan carried this belt to the Haudenosaunee and asked us to be neutral during the fight between the colonists and Great Britain. The Haudenosaunee carried the belt to its allies and said, "We will be neutral in the upcoming war."

The war was fought. Some of our people, such as Joseph Brant, because they had made friends, fought with the British, not as members of the Haudenosaunee, but as individuals. Some of our people had made friends with the colonists, those revolting, and so they fought with the Revolutionaries. But politically, the Haudenosaunee were neutral during the Revolutionary War, contrary to what you read in your history books.

History books say there was a war. The books say the Haudenosaunee, or the Six Nations, fought with Great Britain and they lost; therefore, they were conquered. Well, who was at Valley Forge with George Washington? The Oneidas were there. They took seven hundred bushels of corn. Our people fought on both sides. Politically they were neutral. The record should show this in your history books. The history books should also state that we were not defeated by the United States in the Revolutionary War.

After the war, George Washington said, "We have to expand. We must expand to the west. But there is a group of people in our way called the Haudenosaunee, or the Six Nations. They must be annihilated. They must be destroyed. Terminate them. Extinguish them." Washington sent out Major General John Sullivan in 1779 to extinguish the Haudenosaunee.

If I requested that hunters go out and shoot all of the deer in the woods, what do you think would happen? The deer would run, because we're a noisy bunch of people. And when we got to the woods, there would be nobody there. The deer would run away. We might get one,

but most likely we wouldn't get any. We'd return home. The next day, the deer would be running around in the woods again.

This happened when Sullivan came through our territory. He went to our villages but there was nobody there. Since he was there to destroy, that's what he did. He burned our villages. He burned our silos. He burned our cornfields. He burned our orchards. He destroyed our food storage bins. We had no food for the winter. When we returned to our villages, we saw that our villages and towns were destroyed. We then gave a name to George Washington. We hung a name on his neck. That name is Hanadahguyus, which means "Town Destroyer."

That is the custom of our people. We name our people and then we rename people with that same name. That way the name is passed down through our people and our history. There is the president of the United States who resides in Washington, D.C. His name is William Clinton. On April 29, 1994, we wrote him a letter, inviting him to Canandaigua on November 11, 1994, to assist and to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Canandaigua Treaty. I'll let you guess what the first line of that letter said. Yeah, you're right. It said Hanadahguyus. Underneath that, it said "President William Clinton."

If you look at your past presidents and examine what they did during the time that they were in office, you will understand what I mean. Look at the era of Andrew Jackson, Harry Truman, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan. How many towns did these presidents destroy? Each one of your presidents has been in a situation in which he made a decision that resulted in having a town destroyed. President Clinton looked overseas to the Persian Gulf and Saddam Hussein. So President Clinton destroyed some towns and villages in Iraq. The name is so appropriate. We still refer to the president of the United States as Hanadahguyus. Some of the troops were aboard an aircraft carrier. I'll give you one guess at the name of this ship. Yup. You're right again. The name of the ship was the *George Washington*. How ironic.

When our people came back into their villages, and they saw what had happened to them, they said, "We shall do the same thing." They went out on the frontier, the western frontier. Now the western frontier then was not where Cochise, Geronimo, and Sitting Bull were. That frontier came later. That was a hundred years later. The frontier that I'm talking about is the line that was drawn in 1768. That's the line. That's the frontier line. You won't read this in your history books either. Most of the information that I'm telling you about is not recorded in your history books. This is the oral history that my father and my elders told me. I didn't read about these events in the history books. Anyway, retaliation was the name of the game at this time. We went back and destroyed 1,500 miles of frontier land.

George Washington said, "I cannot afford to fight the Haudenosaunee and its allies." Remember that when we agreed to be neutral there were 1,500 of us at Fort Pitt. These included leaders and some of the warriors. There were more warriors who stayed home, who were ready to fight for our protection. Each warrior that we had at that time was equal to fifty soldiers in the Revolutionary War. So if we had a hundred men, that total was equal to five thousand soldiers, a very formidable force. George Washington had just finished fighting the Revolutionary War. He could not afford to fight with us. He did not have enough money to pay the soldiers who fought for freedom in the Revolutionary War, and therefore he did not have enough money to finance another war against the Haudenosaunee and their allies.

George Washington said, "We must have a treaty. We must sit down and agree to live in peace." He asked us to meet at Fort Stanwix, which is now called Rome, New York. This was in 1784. There we made our first treaty with the United States. This treaty was signed by the representatives of the United States and the representatives of the Haudenosaunee. Article I stated, "Let there be peace and friendship between us." At this treaty we drew some lines from Lake Ontario down the Niagara River, around Lake Erie, down through Pennsylvania and then south, down the Ohio River and then east, along the Susquehanna back up around Rome, a huge circle. This was the land of the Haudenosaunee. All of the land outside of that huge circle could be used by the Revolutionaries for settling their villages. It must be understood that the line that we drew was not to keep our people in, but was to keep your people out. But your ancestors didn't pay attention to the treaty that we had just made. They continued to come into our territory. This was a violation of the treaty.

We went back to George Washington and said, "Your people are violating this treaty."

We met again at Fort Harmar in 1789. There we struck another treaty with the United States. Again, we said in Article I, "Let there be peace and friendship between our peoples." We had a big problem—people were still coming into our territory. There were land grabbers, land speculators in the state of New York. George Washington passed a law in 1790. It was called the Non-Intercourse Act. This act is still in effect. The law states that there will be no legal transactions of Indian land unless there is a federal agent present.

The thirteen colonies, when they joined together to form the United States, gave up some of their power. Before the Revolutionary War, as an entity, the state of New York was able to negotiate and make treaties with the Native American people. But after the Revolutionary War, the Articles of Confederation were set down. This did not work for them, so the United States Constitution was written to replace the Articles of

Confederation. In order to have a central power, the Thirteen Fires would have to give up some of their powers to the central power. The central power, the United States, then took over these duties. One of the powers that the states had was to make treaties with foreign nations. States also had the powers to regulate trade and commerce with these nations, to declare war, and to set up an army. The state of New York now could not act on the same issues that it had acted upon before the war. Like the other colonies, New York had given up its rights. The United States now had what the courts of today refer to as "plenary power," meaning that it would now act for and on behalf of the states on these issues. These powers were then put into the Constitution of the United States.

People of the state of New York ignored the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the Treaty of Fort Harmar, the Non-Intercourse Act of 1790, and the original agreement in 1613. They set out to take over the lands of the Haudenosaunee. They commissioned a group of people to extinguish Indian title to our lands. Their report to the state of New York is recorded in the *Proceedings of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Appointed by Law for the Extinguishment of Indian Titles in the State of New York* with an Introduction and Notes by Franklin B. Hough.¹ This two-volume record is known as the *Hough Report*. At the present time still, the state of New York has not been able to extinguish the title to our land. The land still belongs to the Haudenosaunee.

We looked at what was happening to us at that time and the protection that George Washington gave us. He put into law the Non-Intercourse Act and then he said to the Haudenosaunee, "Herein lies your protection." The settlers still came and they still violated the law. We went back to George Washington, Hanadahguyus, and said to him, "Your people are still violating the treaties."

George Washington sent out Timothy Pickering to meet with us. We gathered at Canandaigua, New York, in July of 1794. There for a six-month period we discussed the terms of an agreement between our peoples. Many issues were discussed during that six-month period, and these discussions were brought back to our separate nations. On November 11, 1794, we finally signed the treaty. This treaty was between the Haudenosaunee (the Six Nations) and the United States. Again, Article I states, "Let there be peace and friendship between our two peoples." This treaty was ratified by the United States Congress and was signed by George Washington, the president of the United States.

The treaty still exists and is used today by the Haudenosaunee and the United States. The Canandaigua Treaty, the Fort Stanwix Treaty, and the Fort Harmar Treaty have never been abrogated by the United States. The Canandaigua Treaty is also known as the Timothy Pickering Treaty and the George Washington Covenant Treaty. There is a wampum belt

in the possession of the Onondaga Nation that is six feet in length. It has thirteen figures holding hands with two native figures. The two native figures are on both sides of a house that is in the center of the belt. This belt is known as the George Washington Treaty Belt and was made to commemorate the Treaty of Canandaigua in 1794.

Yearly, the federal government expends \$4,500 for treaty cloth that is sent to members of the Haudenosaunee. Each of the Nations receives this cloth. That \$4,500 used to buy a lot of things back in 1795. Because we didn't have any lawyers sitting with us at the signing of this agreement, we forgot to put in a cost-of-living clause. You can imagine what \$4,500 would be like today if we calculated that at 10% compound interest over the years. The sum would be something that we could use for the benefit and welfare of our people. As it is now, since the Haudenosaunee has grown in numbers, the \$4,500 buys a small amount of treaty cloth. This treaty cloth is sent to us, and we get about a quarter of a yard of material for each person. The material is muslin. The United States used to send us yards of cotton cloth. It is much too expensive today and it would not be very much cloth, so the United States sends us muslin instead.

When I was a child, the Longhouse used to be filled with calico prints, cotton prints, huge piles of cloth. Our people went into the Longhouse and took their share of treaty cloth. That treaty cloth still comes to us every year. The federal government in 1954 tried to buy out those treaty rights, those annuity rights. They sent a man to each of the Six Nations and asked if we would like to get a lump sum that would forever pay the annuities.

Each one of the Nations said, "No, we won't do that. As long as the cloth comes to us, that means that the treaty is still in effect. We cannot make a decision like that because we would be making a decision that affects our grandchildren. Some time in the future the children might ask us why we made that kind of decision."

A report made by the Senate and signed by Richard Nixon in 1954 explained this part of our history. In this report it says that the United States government has never laid claim to the land of the Six Nations. That means that land that you walk upon, the land that you enjoy today are the lands of the Haudenosaunee. We are here today telling you that you must honor these treaties. You are the other half of these treaties. Talk to any one of our people, not only the Haudenosaunee, but the other nations of native people. As I had mentioned before, there were about four hundred treaties that were made between the native people and the United States. These treaties were ratified by Congress.

Article VI of the Constitution says the treaties that are made, and are to be made, by the United States will be the *supreme law of the land*. The federal and state courts cannot change the agreements that were made. A court decision, *Jones vs. Meehan*, says that if there is a

treaty dispute involving our people, because the Indian is unlettered, the courts are to interpret the treaties as the Indian understands them and not as they are written.

We, as a people, walk around with our mandates that we shall take care of Mother Earth, not only for our sons, but also for our coming generations. The land that we occupy at this time is very small compared to the land that we were in control of. We cannot fulfill our mandates as we did many years ago. We now remind you that you are the other half of that treaty. We ask that you, as people of the United States, remind your leaders that you have treaty obligations with the Native people. You, as a people, would like to have those treaties honored.

I would be very embarrassed if I were sitting at a table with a foreign country, requesting their country to have a treaty. And the foreign country asked me, "What is your treaty record?" I would have to say, as a citizen of the United States, "I have violated every treaty that I have made with Native Americans, but with you, I won't do that."

I would probably say, "Well, let's take another look at what we're going to do here." You, as the other half of the treaty, are supposed to be taking care of the environment. You are supposed to be respecting Mother Earth, the plant life, the trees, and the animals, because we're living together. What have you done that violates this concept, this idea? Think about this question and then answer it honestly.

I come from Onondaga. We are living on a small plot of land just eight miles south of Syracuse, New York, where there is a lake named Onondaga Lake. Onondaga Lake is known as the most polluted lake in the United States. It's 4 1/2 miles long and about a mile wide. Fish that used to be in that lake but are not there anymore include whitefish, sturgeon, and salmon. They ran from the creeks of Onondaga down into the Atlantic Ocean and back. The short period of time that the settlers have been in our territory began somewhere around 1780. One hundred years later, we had a polluted lake. Two hundred years later, we have the most polluted lake in the United States.

When I heard that, I said, "Wow! You know, that is really something terrible!" If we continue to pollute at this rate, how long will we last? I would like to give you students a math problem. Our people have been on this land for many thousands of years. The land was not polluted when the settlers came to our territory. In two hundred years, we *now* do not have the same gifts that existed when the settlers came to our territory. These gifts are extinct. They no longer exist. The problem is this: how long will we exist if we continue to pollute at this rate?

$$\frac{\text{Natives—No Pollution}}{5000 \text{ years}} > \frac{\text{Settlers—Pollution}}{200 \text{ years}} = \text{EXTINCTION}$$

We must live by the laws of nature. These laws are very simple. I'll give you one for example: you must drink water to survive. How long will you last without water? Not very long. How many days? Not many. If you pollute the water so that you can't drink it, then you are looking at extinction. Only one percent of the water on earth is drinkable, yet you continue to pollute the water. This is a violation of this concept, this agreement that we shall live together in peace and harmony as brothers, not only with each other but also with the environment.

Just north of Onondaga Lake is another lake, Lake Ontario. That lake is huge—130 miles long, 10 miles wide, a few miles deep. I have a friend who lives up on South Sandy Creek, which flows into Lake Ontario. She had a dog. The dog was down by the banks, where it found the insides of a fish. Fishermen were down there and didn't want to take the fish home to make a trophy out of it. They decided to behead it and clean it. So the dog came down, and, seeing the remains of the fish, ate them. Three days later, the dog died of mercury poisoning. Lake Ontario is polluted. This huge body of water is polluted. This is another violation of the treaty. We are told not to eat the fish that come out of this lake. What a shame to have such a beautiful lake that once was so clean, and now it is so polluted that it is dangerous to our well-being to consume the fish!

We must continue to live together under this concept of peace and harmony, not only with each other but with our friends: the animals, the fish, and the birds. When you came into this country, there were many animals and birds. Some of these birds and animals do not exist anymore. They are extinct because you have destroyed them in the very short period of time that you have been with us here in what is now the United States. We, as Haudenosaunee people, ask that you respect us today the same way that we respected you when you first came here. We ask that you will recognize that we are equal, that we are human beings, and that we are your brothers and that we are a people. We ask you to remember that what you do to the web, you do to yourself. We continue to speak the words of our ancestors. We tell the people that this is what we're about. We have the mandate to preserve the gifts that we receive.

My knowledge about the woods and the animals was taught to me by my father. He said to me, "When you go into the woods, take only what you need, when you need it, and use what you take." When I went hunting, I shot only what I needed that day. When I went fishing, I only took one or two fish, depending on the size. I have taught my children the same ways that my father taught me, the same ways that his father taught him.

The history of our people has come to us by being passed on from generation to generation in our oral tradition. Today we still carry on the ways of our people.

We are a sovereign nation of people. We qualify to be a member of the United Nations. We have our own government. We have civil ceremonies such as marriage and funerals. We have our own language. We have a government that has the process and protocol to put our leaders in place or to remove them if they do not work out for the people. We have our own land base. This then means that we have the right to make treaties with foreign nations. We have made treaties throughout our history. We still have the right to make treaties with foreign nations. We travel around the world on our own passports. We have been in thirty-nine foreign countries with our passports. The treaties that we made were usually for the welfare, benefit, but most important, for the preservation of our heritage, culture, and the language of our people.

We are not citizens of the United States. We are citizens of the Onondaga Nation. We do not vote in your elections, nor are we a part of the Democratic or Republican parties. We do not accept federal funds from the United States. The funds and services that we do receive come to us as *treaty obligations*. As a sovereign nation, we do not accept the federal and state laws that violate the concepts and interpretations of our treaties, as we understand these treaties.

Our mandate of today is the same as it was yesterday. What we see today, we should preserve, so that our great-great-grandchildren will be able to enjoy the same things that we see today. If we have fresh water, then let there be fresh water three or four hundred years from now. If we have fresh air, then let there be fresh air. Let us live together in peace and harmony with each other, the forces of nature, and the environment, forever.

Dawnaytoh.

Based on an address by Chief Powless Jr., Onondaga Nation, at a symposium held at Finger Lakes Community College on October 26, 1994.

NOTES

1. This report was published from the original manuscript in the Library of the Albany Institute with imprint: Albany: Joel Munsell, 1861.

WORKS CITED

Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Appointed by Law for the Extinguishment of Indian Titles in the State of New York. 2 vols. Introduction and Notes by Franklin B. Hough. Albany: Joel Munsell, 1861. Manuscript, Library of the Albany Institute.