

Kayanerekowa (“K” is pronounced “G”)
(The Great Peace)
Or
(The People of the Great Peace/Cosmic Kinship)
—The Mohawk Nation and Haudenosaunee Confederacy—

By
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The Mohawk Nation is one of the six nations of the historically famous Iroquois Confederacy in North America. The Mohawks are presently a Nation of some 25 000 people living inside and outside of seven communities distributed in the upper states of New York and in the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario (Canada). While these people are customarily called “Mohawks” by outsiders, a name given to them by the Algonquian tribes/nations, in their own language the Mohawk call themselves Ganienghehaga, literally meaning “People of Ganiengheh” (the land of the Flint). The French, following Huron practices, used to call them “les Agniers”. The Six Nations Confederacy of which the Ganiengheh have always been a constituent member, is still called the Iroquois by outsiders; in their own languages however, the Iroquois call themselves the Haudenosaunee: “People of the Longhouse” or “People of the Great Peace” (or “Of the Cosmic Kinship” (Kayanerekowa).

Besides signifying primarily the Great Harmony and the Peace Messenger’s message, Kayanerekowa —The Great Peace—also refers secondarily to two historical forms that it has taken in Iroquois and Mohawk history. I shall now describe briefly each of these four meanings.

1) The Great Harmony (or Cosmic Kinship)

a) Introduction :

I once asked the respected elder Sakokwenionkas (Tom Porter) of the Mohawk Nation: how would you translate in English the word Kayanerekowa. He thought briefly and said: “The closest I can find is simply: “The Great Nice” i.e. the Great Splendour (i.e. the whole cosmos and all its life forms: humans, animals, earth, sun, moon, planets, galaxies, rivers, mountains, trees, winds, etc., etc. seen and expressed in terms of the great kinship: grandmother the moon, the grandfather the sun, uncles the winds, each human clan expressed in terms of the bear clan, the turtle clan, the wolf clan, etc. And it is the “Law of Peace” not because somebody legislated and announced it one fine day, but the way things are. It is the proper nature of everything.

¹ This text is an abridged and revised version of a series of studies on the Mohawk Nation and the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Confederacy), named People of the Longhouse or People of the Great Peace, a series that was written and published by R. Vachon in the Intercultural Institute of Montreal’s International Journal Interculture in two separate English and French editions from 1991 (issue 113) to 1992 (issue 114) to 1993 (issue 118 entitled “The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace ch. 3 : The People of the Great Peace” 82 pp) and issue 121 (53 pp) on the Mohawk communities. All issues were written with the help of two highly respected Mohawk elders namely : Kaientaronkwen (Ernie Benedict) and Sakokwenionkas (Tom Porter).

Our focus in this present study limits itself only to the notion of Peace in the Mohawk Nation and among the Haudenosaunee. Without reference to the already dealt with origin and history of their Dynamics of Peace from the beginning to our time. We are also leaving aside here, our further studies in Interculture in 1995 (127-128-129) entitled “Guswenta or the Intercultural Imperative, (subtitled) Towards a re-enacted Peace Accord between the Mohawk Nation and the North American Nation States (and their people) 159 pp, in two separate French and English editions available at www.iim.qc.ca.

The Great Peace is not primarily the Peace Messenger's message or any message about something called the Great Peace, but the message is the Great Peace and Kinship of all beings. It is the Great Peace that speaks. It is important to distinguish between the Great Peace as the Peace messenger's message (see below) and the Great Peace itself as the source of the Messenger's message. The Great Peace is not primarily the Peace Messenger's message or any message about something called the Great Peace, but the message is the Great Peace of Cosmic Kinship that reality is. The peace messenger is simply an emissary, a voice of that Peace. It is the Great Peace and Cosmic Kinship that primarily speaks, not the Messenger. It is the Great Peace that makes itself known through him and is realized as well through the clan mothers, the council of Rotiianeson, the words, the symbols.

In this fundamental sense, the Great Peace is not Iroquois or Mohawk although it has found an Iroquois interpretation and expression. No Iroquois would claim that the Great Peace or cosmic kinship is Iroquois property or the exclusive creation of the Iroquois, although their interpretation and expression of it is bound to be unique and Iroquoian.

b) "The words that come before all else": 'the Thanksgiving address'

It is customary for Mohawks and Haudenosaunee who still claim to follow the Kayanerekowa, to start every meeting in their own languages with "The words that come before all else", namely giving thanks to the Kayanerekowa i.e. to the Great Nice, to the grand Splendour of it all, thus inviting everyone to enter into "the good mind" i.e. into the spirit of the Great Peace and Cosmic Kinship as they come together to deliberate and to do whatever they are doing. It is a spirit of thanking "The Great Nice" and listening to it... This is done by all, even the young in school and elsewhere, before any important meeting.

The Kayanerekowa is not written but oral, it is not a repeated formula but it is each time spelled out differently in eloquent and poetic words that are left to the inspiration of the one who gives thanks and who invites all to be "of the good mind". As illustration, here is Sakokwenionkwas' opening address at the International Colloquium "Living with the Earth: cross-cultural perspectives on sustainable development: indigenous and alternative practices". Orford, Quebec, 1992 Intercultural Institute of Montreal (pp. 17-26)...:

Mohawk Welcoming Ceremony

SAKOKWENIONKWAS [TOM PORTER] (AFTER AN INTRODUCTION IN THE MOHAWK LANGUAGE)

(FIRST, I HAVE ASKED THE CREATOR FOR PERMISSION TO SPEAK IN A LANGUAGE THAT HE DID NOT GIVE ME IN THE BEGINNING WHEN THE WORLD WAS MADE. I ASKED THE CREATOR THAT I MAY USE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, FOR AS WE GATHER HERE, THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS A LANGUAGE THAT IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. FOR THAT REASON, I ASKED THE CREATOR FOR PERMISSION TO USE THAT LANGUAGE, SO THAT MANY PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WILL KNOW THE MIND OF THE CREATOR AND WHAT HE HAS TOLD US HERE IN NORTH AMERICA.

BEFORE I BEGIN, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK FOR YOUR ATTENTION. IN MOHAWK, WE HAVE AN EXPRESSION. WHEN WE BEGIN TO SPEAK, WE SAY "ENSEWATEHONSICOSTE". IN ENGLISH IT MEANS LITERALLY: I ASK THAT YOU STAND YOUR EARS UP STRAIGHT TO CATCH ALL THE WORDS THAT ARE SPOKEN.

ALSO, I AM GOING TO BE SPEAKING TODAY OF THE CREATOR. WHEN I SAY "CREATOR", I AM NOT DESCRIBING A CREATOR OR GOD LIKE THE IMAGE THAT APPEARS IN YOUR MIND OR IN MANY PEOPLE'S

MINDS. I MEAN A HIGHER POWER THAT HAS NO DEFINITION. IT IS SO POWERFUL THAT THERE CAN'T BE ANY DEFINITION.

IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT WHEN WE WERE MADE, OUR LIFE WAS PREDESTINED. THE NUMBER OF DAYS WE WILL LIVE HERE ON THE EARTH WAS MARKED ON A COUNTER-STICK WHEN WE WERE BORN, AND NO ONE, MAN OR WOMAN, HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE WHAT THE CREATOR HAS MADE. SOMETIMES THE CREATOR MAY GIVE US ONE HUNDRED YEARS TO STAY HERE ON THE EARTH. HE MAKES A MARK ON THE STICK AS EACH DAY PASSES, AND WHEN WE COME TO THE LAST MARK, THEN WE'LL JOURNEY FROM THIS WORLD TO THE NEXT WORLD.

WHEN THIS OCCURS TO OUR LOVED ONES, WE NEVER SEEM READY, EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITH GRIEF. WE NEVER SEEM TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH IT. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I ASK YOU "TO STAND YOUR EARS UP STRAIGHT" FOR THE MANY HUMAN BROTHERS WHO HAVE JOURNEYED HERE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD, THERE IS GREAT TURMOIL AND THERE IS SADNESS. AND I SAY THESE WORDS BEFORE WE REALLY BEGIN THE CEREMONY BECAUSE AMONG THE HUMAN BEINGS THAT ARE HERE, IT COULD BE THAT SOMEBODY HAS RECENTLY LOST A LOVED ONE WHO HAS JOURNEYED TO THE NEXT LAND. AND WHEN THAT IS THE CASE, THE EYES ARE FILLED WITH TEARS, AND THIS BLURS THEIR VISION OF REALITY. AND SUCH A PERSON NEEDS HELP. WHEN A LOVED ONE HAS PASSED, THE EARS BECOME OBSTRUCTED BY DUST, THE DUST OF DEATH. YOU CANNOT HEAR PROPERLY WHEN YOUR CHILDREN, OR YOUR COUSINS, OR YOUR UNCLE TALK TO YOU, NOR CAN YOU HEAR THE BIRDS WHEN THEY SING. IF ANY OF YOU HAS LOST A LOVED ONE, IT IS FOR YOUR BENEFIT THAT I SAY THIS. IF THIS IS THE SITUATION THAT YOU ARE IN, I ASK YOU NOW TO LISTEN, BECAUSE YOU ARE A HUMAN BROTHER.

FROM THE VERY BEAUTIFUL BLUE SKY, FROM THE BLUE CLEAR SKY, I WILL TAKE THE EAGLE'S FEATHER. AND I WILL USE THIS EAGLE FEATHER IN A SPIRITUAL WAY TO REMOVE THE DEATH DUST THAT OBSTRUCTS YOUR EARS FROM HEARING. AND I WILL PUSH THE DEATH DUST AWAY SO THAT YOUR HEARING CAN BE RESTORED, SO THAT YOU CAN HEAR YOUR LITTLE CHILDREN WHEN THEY SPEAK TO YOU, SO THAT YOU CAN HEAR THE SONG OF EVERY BIRD AS HE SINGS TO YOU AND SO THAT YOU CAN, IN FACT, AGAIN HEAR THE LIFE THAT THE CREATOR HAS GIVEN US. AND THEN, MY FELLOW BROTHERS, IN YOUR SADNESS, IN YOUR GRIEF, IN YOUR HEAVINESS, I TAKE A GLASS OF MEDICINE WATER FROM THE VERY BEAUTIFUL BLUE CLEAR SKY AND ASK THE SPIRIT TO REMOVE WHAT HAS STUCK IN YOUR THROAT, OBSTRUCTING THE FOOD FROM PASSING THROUGH AND OBSTRUCTING THE WORDS THAT COME FROM YOUR THOUGHTS. I OFFER FROM THE VERY BEAUTIFUL CLEAR SKY THIS FRESH GLASS OF MEDICINE WATER. I OFFER IT TO YOU NOW, SO THAT WHATEVER OBSTRUCTS THE PASSAGE IN YOUR THROAT WILL NOW GO THROUGH TO YOUR STOMACH. THE KNOTS WILL BE UNTIED AND YOU CAN EAT AGAIN PROPERLY, AND YOU CAN AGAIN SPEAK PROPERLY TO YOUR KIDS, TO YOUR YOUNG ONES, TO ALL THAT LIVE.

AND NOW I TAKE FROM THE VERY BEAUTIFUL SKY A BEAUTIFUL CLOTH THAT IS WHITE, MADE OUT OF DEERSKIN AS SOFT AS COTTON. AND MY BROTHER, IF YOUR MIND IS HEAVY WITH SORROW, I WILL USE THE CLOTH OF THE DEER THAT IS SO SOFT. FROM THE CLEAR BLUE SKY I'LL WIPE THE TEARS, SO THAT YOUR VISION WILL NOT BE BLURRED AGAIN TOMORROW, SO THAT YOU WILL SEE THE BEAUTY THAT THE CREATOR HAS MADE, SO THAT YOU WILL SEE YOUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS AND YOUR NEPHEWS AND NIECES, YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS. THEY NEED YOU TO SEE IN A CORRECT WAY. AND SO IT IS, FELLOW BROTHERS, IF YOUR MIND IS GRIEVING FOR SOME LOVED ONE WHO HAS PASSED, I LIFT UP YOUR MIND SO THAT YOU MAY WALK AGAIN IN A CORRECT WAY.

AND NOW, I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN WITH THIS ANCIENT "PRAYER". I DON'T KNOW IF PRAYER IS THE CORRECT WORD. THE REASON I MENTION THIS IS BECAUSE I THOUGHT I KNEW HOW TO SPEAK ENGLISH VERY CORRECTLY. THAT WAS WHAT I THOUGHT FOR MANY YEARS. AND FOR MANY YEARS, I SPOKE IT AS IF I WAS A MASTER OF IT. BUT DID YOU KNOW, UNTIL TWO WEEKS AGO, I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT PRAYER MEANT AN INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP OR COMMUNICATION WITH THE CREATOR POWER? THAT WAS WHAT I THOUGHT IT WAS. AND THEN I PICKED UP THE BIG WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY TWO WEEKS AGO, AND I LOOKED IT UP. IT SAYS "TO REQUEST SOMETHING". FOR ALMOST HALF A CENTURY, I

WAS SAYING THE WRONG THING! ENGLISH IS A VERY TRICKY LANGUAGE. I HAVE BEEN TRICKED FOR 40 YEARS OR MORE. SO, BEAR IN MIND THAT THIS IS THE LANGUAGE THAT WE HAVE FOR THIS MEETING AND THAT WE COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. WE NEED TO TAKE CARE SO THAT WE DON'T GET TRICKED OR MISINTERPRETED, BY NO FAULT OF OUR OWN.

I AM GOING ALSO TO ASK YOU TO HELP ME WITH THIS OPENING CEREMONY, THIS SPECIAL SPIRITUAL MOMENT. YOU KNOW THAT WHEN THE TEACHER WRITES ON THE BOARD ALL DAY, IT IS ALL SMUDGED. THEN AT THE END OF THE DAY IT IS ALL WIPED CLEAN. YOU TAKE A WHITE CLOTH AND YOU CLEAN IT ALL OFF, AND IT BECOMES CRYSTAL CLEAR, LIKE A BEAUTIFUL LAKE. AND THEN WHEN YOU NEXT MARK ON IT, IT IS VERY VISIBLE, VERY CLEAR. THAT IS WHAT I AM GOING TO ASK THAT WE DO IN THIS GROUP, IN A SYMBOLIC WAY - THAT WE WIPE EVERYTHING AWAY TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE CREATOR AND FOR ALL THE SPIRITUAL THINGS IN THE WORLD BEFORE WE CAN BEGIN THIS WONDERFUL GATHERING.

NOW THIS IS WHAT MOHAWK PEOPLE DO EACH TIME WE MENTION A SACRED THING. AT THE END OF EACH SPIRITUAL STATEMENT, I WILL SAY OUR MINDS ARE ONE, THEN I WILL ASK IF YOU WILL SHOW AGREEMENT IN YOUR LANGUAGE, FOR INSTANCE IN ENGLISH SAY "YES", OR IN MOHAWK, WE WILL SAY "THO", THAT MEANS "YES, I AGREE". IN FRENCH, THIS WILL BE "OUI", I SUPPOSE. WE WILL PARTICIPATE TOGETHER. I HAVE HEARD THIS SPIRITUAL TALK SINCE I WAS A CHILD. IT IS THE SAME SPIRITUAL SPEECH THAT OPENS ALL OFFICIAL MEETINGS AND ALSO CLOSES EACH MEETING. IT OPENS ALL CEREMONIES. EVEN WHEN PEOPLE MARRY, IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART. WHEN TWO OR MORE PEOPLE COME TOGETHER TO DISCUSS SOMETHING OF HUMAN LIFE, THEY SAY THIS PRAYER TOO. SEE, HERE I GO SAYING "PRAYER" AGAIN! YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHY "PRAYER" IS INCORRECT WHEN I HAVE FINISHED. WE BEGIN, NOW, BROTHERS AND SISTERS.)

AS WE ARE GATHERED HERE, IN THIS VERY BEAUTIFUL PLACE, WITH THE TREES AND THE HILLS, AND THE BIRDS AND THE ANIMALS THAT LIVE AROUND HERE, WE ARE THEIR VISITORS. AND AS WE ARE GATHERED HERE AND I LOOK AROUND, AND WE LOOK AROUND AT EACH OTHER, IT SEEMS THAT EVERYBODY IS HANDSOME AND BEAUTIFUL. SOME EVEN HAVE FLOWERS ON THEIR CHESTS LIKE ROOSTERS WITH BEAUTIFUL FEATHERS. AND AS I LOOK AROUND, IT APPEARS THAT NO ONE HAD AN ACCIDENT ON THEIR JOURNEY HERE. NO ONE HAS A CRUTCH OR CAST BECAUSE THEIR LEG IS BROKEN. AND WE ARE FORTUNATE. AS WE LOOK AROUND, WE SEE AND WE FEEL TRANQUILITY AND PEACE, AT LEAST AS MUCH AS CAN BE EXPECTED. AND THAT'S VERY WONDERFUL. AND WE WILL DO AS THE CREATOR SAID. WE WILL GATHER OUR MINDS TOGETHER AND THINK IN ONE WAY. AND THEN, IN A SYMBOLIC WAY, WE WILL PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS", LAYER AFTER LAYER AND THEN WE WILL PILE OUR GREETINGS ON THE SAME PILE, LAYER AFTER LAYER, AND THEN WE WILL WRAP AND TIE THOSE "THANK-YOUS" AND GREETINGS WITH OUR LOVE, EACH OF US. AND WE WILL OFFER THIS ONE TO ANOTHER, TO OUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS, OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. AND WE SAY "THANK YOU" AND WE GIVE OUR GREETINGS TO ONE ANOTHER AND OUR LOVE. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND NOW, WE WILL TURN OUR ATTENTION TO OUR MOTHER, THE EARTH. FOR IN THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD, OUR CREATOR USED HIS HANDS AND HIS BODY AND HE CREATED THE EARTH. AND THEN, WHEN HE CREATED THE EARTH, HE TURNED THE EARTH INTO A WOMAN, INTO A MOTHER. THIS IS WHY WE CALL OUR EARTH OUR MOTHER.

AND THEN, WHEN HE TOUCHED HER, HER WHOLE BODY BECAME SPIRITUAL, HER WHOLE BODY BECAME SACRED. AND THEN HE TOLD MOTHER EARTH: YOU ARE GOING TO BE THE MOTHER OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS: YOU ARE GOING TO BE THE MOTHER OF ALL THE BEARS AND THE DEERS AND THE ANIMALS, AND THE BIRDS AND THE INSECTS. YOU ARE GOING TO BE THE MOTHER OF ALL LIFE. YOU WILL GIVE BIRTH TIME AND TIME AGAIN, FOR EVERMORE. AND AFTER YOU GIVE BIRTH TO ALL THOSE LIVES, MOTHER EARTH, YOUR JOB IS NOT DONE YET. YOU HAVE TO NOURISH THEM. YOU HAVE TO GROW THE FOOD THAT WILL FEED THEM SO THAT THEY WILL HAVE A GOOD LIFE. AND SO NOW, FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS, MEN AND WOMEN THAT ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY, I AM ASKING THAT OUR MINDS BE GATHERED AND COME TOGETHER AS ONE MIND AND ONE THOUGHT. THE REASON IS BECAUSE WE HAVE ONE OF THE MOST STEADFAST, ONE OF THE MOST CONSISTENT MOTHERS IN ALL THE WORLD. IT IS OUR

MOTHER EARTH WHO CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF OUR BODIES AS WE WALK UPON HER, WHO GIVES BIRTH AND FEEDS US EVERY SINGLE DAY. AND SHE'S BEEN DOING IT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF MANKIND AND BEFORE. WHAT A WONDERFUL MOTHER!

AND SO, I ASK FOR THAT REASON, THAT WE, THE CHILDREN THAT ARE GATHERED HERE, BRING OUR MINDS AND THOUGHTS TOGETHER AS ONE. AND IN A SYMBOLIC SPIRITUAL WAY, LET US PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS" AGAIN, LAYER AFTER LAYER, AND THEN OUR GREETINGS, LAYER AFTER LAYER. AND LET'S TIE IT UP WITH OUR LOVE, THOSE GREETINGS AND THANK-YOUS, AND LET'S GENTLY PICK IT UP AND SAY: MOTHER EARTH, WE CHILDREN TODAY THANK YOU FOR OUR BIRTH, FOR OUR NOURISHMENT AND FOR OUR LIFE. MOTHER EARTH, YOUR CHILDREN SAY "THANK YOU" AND GIVE YOU OUR LOVE. OUR MINDS ARE NOW ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND THEN WE TURN TO OUR BEAUTIFUL CREATOR WHO HAS NO FACE AND NO BODY, AND WHOSE APPEARANCE NOBODY KNOWS. ALL WE KNOW IS THAT IT IS THE GREAT POWER OF THE UNIVERSE. AND WHEN OUR CREATOR MADE MOTHER EARTH, HE MADE THE GRASS THAT GROWS SO THAT DEERS AND ELK AND BUFFALO CAN EAT. HE PLANTED THE MEDICINES IN THE VALLEYS, IN THE MOUNTAINS, IN THE GREAT PLAINS, IN THE WOODS, IN THE DESERTS. AND WHEN HE PLANTED THOSE MEDICINES OF ALL KINDS, OUR CREATOR SPOKE TO THOSE MEDICINES, AND HE TOUCHED EACH MEDICINE. HE GAVE EACH A SPIRITUAL MEANING AND HE TOLD THOSE MEDICINES: WHENEVER THE ANIMALS AND THE HUMANS GET SICK AND THERE IS DISCOMFORT, AND THERE IS NO PEACE IN THEIR LIFE BECAUSE OF SICKNESS, THEY WILL COME TO YOU. AND YOU, THE MEDICINES WILL DOCTOR THEM AND REMOVE THEIR SICKNESS; YOU WILL RESTORE THEIR PEACE AND TRANQUILITY AND COMFORT.

FOR EVERY SICKNESS KNOWN TO MANKIND OR ANIMALS, THERE IS A PLANT GROWING OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, THAT CAN TAKE AWAY THAT SICKNESS IF ONLY WE COMMUNICATE TO IT IN A SPIRITUAL WAY. AND THE MEDICINES WAIT EVERY DAY FOR THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF BEING ASKED TO HELP US FEEL BETTER. BUT WE DON'T ASK ENOUGH. AND IF WE DON'T ASK, THEY FEEL ABANDONED AND THEN, THERE IS MORE SICKNESS. ALL THE PLANTS ARE GROWING, THE GRASS IS GROWING, THERE IS LIFE. AND SO I ASK THIS FINE GATHERING OF FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS: CAN OUR MINDS COME TOGETHER, AND OUR THOUGHTS LINE UP AS ONE THOUGHT, AND CAN WE PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS" AGAIN? YES, WE CAN. PILE UP AGAIN OUR GREETINGS. LET'S PILE UP AGAIN OUR LOVE. THEN, IN A SYMBOLIC SPIRITUAL WAY, LET'S DISTRIBUTE THOSE PILE-UP "THANK-YOUS", AND GREETINGS AND LOVE TO EVERY GRASS, TO EVERY MEDICINE PLANT IN THE VALLEYS, THE MOUNTAINS, THE FORESTS, EVERYWHERE. AND WE SAY "THANK YOU" FOR BRINGING HEALTH AND POWER TO US, FOR HELPING US. WE THANK YOU, MEDICINE PLANTS OF THE WORLD. OUR MINDS ARE NOW ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND THEN, OUR CREATOR MADE THE RIVERS AND THE WATERS THAT FLOW UPON THE MOTHER EARTH. AND WHEN OUR CREATOR MADE THE STREAMS AND CREEKS, OUR CREATOR USED HIS HANDS AND HIS BODY AND THE WATER BECAME A POWER, A SPIRIT. AND THEN OUR CREATOR SPOKE TO THE WATERS AND THE CREEKS AND THE RIVERS AND HE GAVE THEM A SOUL, HE GAVE THEM A SPIRIT. AND HE SAID: NOW, WATERS OF THE WORLD, YOUR JOB WILL BE THIS: YOU WILL GO AND MOVE IN THE RAPIDS, IN THE NIAGARA FALLS AND THE GRAND CANYON. YOU WILL GO TO THE VILLAGES OF THE ANIMALS, THE VILLAGES OF THE HUMANS AND YOU WILL QUENCH THEIR THIRST. YOU WILL PURIFY. YOU WILL HELP THEM PREPARE THEIR FOOD SO THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE. AND SO THE RIVERS ARE INDEED A LIVING ENTITY. AND IF ONE DAY THEY SHOULD DISAPPEAR, SO THAT WE CANNOT DRINK THE WATER FROM THE STREAMS AND THE RIVERS, WE WILL PERISH. WE WILL DRY UP AND WE WILL HAVE NO LIFE.

BUT THE RIVERS ARE STILL RUNNING, THE OCEANS ARE STILL MAKING WAVES THE WAY THEIR CREATOR TOLD THEM TO DO SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. AND SO, BECAUSE OF THAT, WHEN WE DRINK A COLD GLASS OF WATER EACH DAY, WE THINK: WHAT A PEACEFUL FEELING AND WHAT ASSURANCE THAT THERE WILL BE A TOMORROW. WHAT STRENGTH THAT COLD GLASS OF WATER GIVES TO US. FOR THAT REASON, OUR MINDS SHOULD COME TOGETHER AGAIN AS ONE. AND WE WILL PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS", OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE TOGETHER. AND WE WILL GIVE IT TO EVERY RIVER, EVERY LAKE, EVERY OCEAN, EVERY STREAM, EVERY SPRING. AND WE TALK TO THE SPIRIT OF THE WATER AND WE SAY

TO THE SPIRIT OF THE WATER: WE, WHO ARE THE HUMAN BEINGS AND WHO ARE YOUR RELATIVES, THANK YOU TODAY. WE ARE GIVING YOU OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE FOR THE QUENCHING OF OUR THIRST, ON BEHALF OF OUR CHILDREN, OUR NEPHEWS AND NIECES. WATER SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, WE SAY "THANK YOU" FOR FOLLOWING THE PLAN THAT THE CREATOR GAVE IN THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD. OUR MINDS ARE NOW ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND THEN OUR CREATOR MADE THE TREES THAT GROW EVERYWHERE, ALL KINDS OF TREES. SOME TREES ARE TALL AND BIG, SOME ARE SKINNY AND TALL, SOME ARE SHORT AND BIG, JUST LIKE HUMAN BEINGS YOU KNOW. AND HE MADE FEMALE TREES AND MALE TREES, WHO MAKE LITTLE BABIES TOGETHER, ALMOST LIKE HUMANS. AND THEN EACH BABY BECOMES A SAPLING, WHICH IS A LITTLE KID, AND THEN A TEENAGED TREE, UNTIL IT BECOMES A GRANDPA TREE, AND COMPLETES THE CYCLE. TO THE TREES, THE CREATOR SAID: YOU WILL HELP THE HUMAN BEINGS, AND THE BEARS, AND THE WOLVES. HE TOLD THE TREES THAT.

AND FROM THE TREES WILL COME THE APPLES, THE ORANGES, THE PLUMS, THE CHERRIES, AND ON AND ON. FROM THOSE FRUITS, WE WILL BE NOURISHED; OUR CHILDREN, OUR ELDERLY WILL HAVE THE STRENGTH AND POWER TO LIVE. FROM THE TREES, YOU WILL GATHER BOARDS TO MAKE A SHELTER OVER YOUR HEAD. BUT MAKE YOUR SHELTER HUMBLE ENOUGH FOR YOU, YOUR WIFE AND YOUR CHILDREN AND NO MORE. IF THERE IS NO EXCESS, LIFE WILL BE EVERLASTING. YOU WILL USE THE BOARDS TO MAKE A LITTLE HOUSE SO WHEN THE COLD RAIN DROPS COME, YOU WILL HAVE COMFORT. WHEN THE HOT SUMMER SUN COMES, YOU WILL SEEK SHELTER WITHIN. AND WHEN THE COLD WINDS BRING THE BIG SNOW OF THE WINTER, YOUR CHILDREN WILL NOT FREEZE. FROM THE TREES, WE MAY TAKE REST AND IN THEIR SHADE, WE FIND COMFORT IN THE HOT SUMMER DAYS.

THE TREES WILL MAKE THE WIND THAT WE BREATHE FROM DAY TO DAY AND NIGHT TO NIGHT. AND OF ALL THE TREES THAT THE CREATOR MADE, HE CHOSE THE MAPLE TREE TO BE THE LEADER. NOW THE TREES ARE STARTING TO GET BUDS, AND SOON THE LEAVES WILL LIVE AGAIN TO MATURITY. AGAIN THERE WILL BE CHERRIES, AND PEACHES, AND PLUMS AND APPLES. AND OUR LIFE WILL BE SUSTAINED THE WAY THEIR CREATOR INTENDED IN THE BEGINNING OF TIME. JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO, OUR PEOPLE HAD OUR MAPLE TREE CEREMONY, BECAUSE THE MAPLE IS THE LEADER OF ALL THE TREES OF THE FOREST.

AND SO NOW, I ASK THIS FINE GROUP OF PEOPLE TO LET OUR MINDS BECOME ONE, AND LET US PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS", OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE AND LET US THROW IT TO THE UNIVERSE SO THAT EVERY TREE AND EVERY BUSH RECEIVES AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OUR LOVE, OUR "THANK-YOUS" AND OUR GREETINGS. TO THE TREES OF THE WORLD, WE SAY "THANK YOU" FOR FOLLOWING THE CREATOR'S PLAN SO THAT WE HAVE LIFE. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

IN THE BEGINNING, WHEN THE WORLD WAS NEW, WHEN OUR CREATOR FINISHED MAKING ALL THE ANIMALS AND EVERY CREATURE, THEN THE VERY LAST ONE TO BE MADE WAS THE HUMAN BEING. AND WHEN HE NOTICED THE HUMAN BEING WAS THE LAST TO BE CREATED, HE GAVE US SO MANY DAYS TO LIVE. AND HE DID THE SAME WITH THE BEARS AND THE DEER—THEY ONLY LIVE SO LONG. AND HE SAID: THERE IS A LIKELIHOOD THAT THE HUMANS, THE BEARS AND THE DEER MAY BECOME BORED EVERY DAY THAT THEY LIVE. THEY MAY BECOME LONESOME FOR LACK OF SOMETHING TO DO. AND SO, DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE CREATOR DID? HE BEGAN TO CREATE WHAT THEY CALL "BIRDS", AND HE PUT WINGS ON THEM OF BEAUTIFUL COLOURS. HE LET THEM GO INTO THE AIR SO THAT THEY WOULD ZOOM BY WHERE THE HUMAN BEINGS WALK, SO THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT BECOME BORED. AND THEN, OUR CREATOR GAVE THEM EACH A SONG, AND HE TOLD THE BIRDS OF THE WORLDS: EVERY MORNING, WITHOUT FAIL, JUST AS THE SUN BEGINS TO RISE IN THE EAST AND THE DAWN BREAKS, ALL THE BIRDS WILL BEGIN TO SING THEIR MULTITUDE OF TUNES AND SONGS. AND THEY WILL MAKE A CHORUS, A BEAUTIFUL SONG OF LIFE. EVERY MORNING, WITHOUT FAIL. AND THIS MORNING, I HEARD THEM AGAIN, JUST AS THEY DID YESTERDAY, AND SINCE THE BEGINNING OF MANKIND'S MEMORY, BECAUSE THE CREATOR TOLD THEM TO DO THAT. THEY SHAKE UP OUR MIND SO THAT WE WILL NOT BE BORED AND WE WILL ENJOY OUR VISIT ON THIS EARTH. AND, OF THOSE BIRDS, OUR CREATOR CHOSE THE EAGLE TO BE THEIR LEADER. SO THE EAGLE IS OUR GUARDIAN BIRD.

AND SO I ASK NOW THAT OUR MINDS BECOME ONE AND THAT WE SEND OUR "THANK-YOUS", OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE TO EVERY BIRD. AND WE, YOUR HUMAN RELATIVES, THANK YOU, THE BIRD LIFE, FOR THE PAST DAYS' SONGS. THEY ARE VERY BEAUTIFUL SONGS, WITH WHICH YOU FOLLOW THE CREATOR'S WAY. WE ACKNOWLEDGE YOU WITH OUR LOVE. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND THEN, OUR CREATOR MADE THE FOUR WINDS OF THE UNIVERSE. WHEN MOTHER EARTH HAD GIVEN BIRTH AND WAS WORKING TO PRODUCE THE FOOD TO FEED THIS LIFE, SHE GOT VERY TIRED. AND SO OUR CREATOR MADE THE EAST AND THE NORTH WINDS, TO BRING A WHITE BLANKET OF SNOW TO COVER MOTHER EARTH. THEN MOTHER EARTH CAN REST. AND WHEN MOTHER EARTH HAS RESTED, THEN, THE BROTHER WINDS OF THE SOUTH AND THE WEST WILL TAKE AWAY THE WHITE BLANKET OF SNOW AND ALL THE FLOWERS WILL START TO SPROUT. AND EVERYWHERE THERE WILL BE BLOSSOMS OF ALL COLOURS, AND LIFE WILL BE REBORN. AND THAT'S THE TIME NOW, IT'S COMING. AND SO TO THE FOUR WINDS THAT BRING US THE CHANGES OF THE SEASONS, THAT WE MAY HAVE LIFE - WE THE PEOPLE ARE NOW OF ONE MIND. AND AGAIN, WE WILL PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS", OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE. WE WILL THROW IT INTO THE UNIVERSE, SO THAT THE FOUR SACRED WINDS WILL BRING THE SEASON CHANGES. THEY WILL BE ACKNOWLEDGED WITH THANK-YOUS, GREETINGS AND LOVE. OUR MINDS ARE NOW ONE. (ALL: YES!)

OUR CREATOR MADE TWO SUNS IN THE SKY. FIRST THERE IS THE DAYTIME SUN THAT SHINES. OUR CREATOR SAID WE WILL CALL HIM OUR ELDEST BROTHER. YOU AND I WILL BE THE YOUNGER BROTHER AND SISTER. AND LIKE AN OLD BROTHER, HE WILL WATCH OVER HIS YOUNGER BROTHER AND SISTER. AND OUR CREATOR SAID: EVERY DAY YOU WILL SHINE SO THAT THE HUMANS, THE BEARS, THE DEER AND THE BIRDS WILL SEE ONE ANOTHER WITH THE LIGHT. WHEN THEY WALK UPON MOTHER EARTH, THEY WON'T COLLIDE AND CAUSE INJURY TO EACH OTHER. HE TOLD THE ELDER BROTHER SUN THAT HE SHOULD BRING THE WARMTH SO MOTHER EARTH WILL GIVE BIRTH AND GROWTH. AND OUR ELDERS TOLD US THAT THE OLD BROTHER SUN STARTS IN THE EAST, AND HE GOES ACROSS OUR SACRED LAND TO THE MOUNTAINS AND THE VALLEYS UNTIL HE GETS TO THE GREAT PACIFIC OCEAN. AND THERE THE CREATOR WAITS FOR A REPORT FROM THE OLD BROTHER SUN, ON HOW HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE DOING, AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

AND SO NOW, I SUGGEST AGAIN, BECAUSE WE ARE PEOPLE OF LOGIC, PEOPLE OF KINDNESS AND COMPASSION, THAT WE BRING OUR MINDS AND OUR THOUGHTS TOGETHER AGAIN. AND IN THIS ROOM, IF WE CAN IMAGINE IT, WE WILL PILE UP ALL OUR "THANK-YOUS", LAYER AFTER LAYER IN A BIG PILE. AND THEN WE WILL PILE UP OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE. WE WILL WRAP IT UP, AND WE WILL PILE IT ON IN ONE BIG CONCERTED EFFORT. LET US PICK IT UP, THIS PARCEL OF THANK-YOUS, GREETINGS AND LOVE, AND THROW IT UP INTO THE UNIVERSE TO OUR OLD BROTHER, THIS SUN. WE THANK THE OLD BROTHER SUN FOR TODAY'S MIRACLE OF DAY AND FOR THE WARMTH THAT HE BRINGS AND THE LIFE THAT HE SECURES AND GUARANTEES US. WE SAY "THANK YOU", OLD BROTHER SUN, FROM YOUR HUMAN RELATIVES. WE ARE NOW OF ONE MIND. (ALL: YES!)

AND THE SECOND SUN, WHICH WE CALL THE MOON, IS OUR GRANDMA. WE CALL HER IN MOHAWK "IETISOHA OSONTENNEKA KARAKWA" OUR GRANDMOTHER, THE MOON, THE NIGHT-TIME SUN. OUR CREATOR MADE HER AND HE TOLD HER: YOU ARE GOING TO BE THE GRANDMA, THE GREAT-GRANDEST ONE OF THEM ALL. EVERY 28 OR 30 DAYS, YOU WILL HAVE A CYCLE. AND IN THAT CYCLE, YOU WILL ORCHESTRATE THE MOVEMENT AND THE BIRTH OF CHILDREN TO THE MOTHERS OF THE WORLD. AND SO THAT'S WHY EVERY MONTH, THE WOMEN CLEAN THEIR BODY AND THEIR BLOOD, SO THAT NEW BLOOD CAN BE MADE AND A NEW HUMAN BEING CAN BE BORN WITH THE PRIVILEGE TO LIVE ON THIS EARTH. AND THE MOON, OUR GRANDMOTHER, ORCHESTRATES THAT. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHAT WOMEN THEY ARE HOW RICH OR HOW POOR, WHAT COLOUR THEY ARE, WHEN GRANDMA MOON SAYS: LADIES, GET READY, IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO GIVE BIRTH TO A HUMAN BEING. AND THAT'S WHAT THE CREATOR TOLD HER HER JOB WOULD BE. MY CHILDREN WERE BORN. MY GRANDCHILDREN ARE BORN. WHAT A WONDERFUL GIFT.

AND SO I ASK NOW THAT IN THIS FINE GROUP OUR MINDS COME AS ONE. LET US PILE UP OUR THANK-YOUS, OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE. LET US PICK IT UP AND THROW IT UP HIGH INTO THE UNIVERSE, TO THE GRANDMOTHER MOON. AND WE SAY: GRANDMA MOON, WE ARE YOUR GRANDCHILDREN AND WE ARE OF ONE MIND. WE THANK YOU FOR ALL THE BIRTHS OF OUR CHILDREN AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN, AND FOR THE BABIES THAT WERE BORN TO EVERY NATION OF THE WORLD. GRANDMOTHER MOON, THANK YOU FOR THE BIRTH OF THOSE CHILDREN. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND NOW, TO THE STARS OF THE SKY WORLD, THE MULTI-MILLIONS OF SHINING STARS. OUR GRANDMA AND GRANDPA SAY EACH OF US HAS A STAR THAT SHINES FOR US. IN DAYS LONG GONE BY, WHEN THE WORLD WAS NEW, IT IS SAID THAT THE STARS TALKED TO THE PEOPLE, THAT WE COMMUNICATED. THEY TOLD US WHAT WAS COMING NEXT YEAR, WHETHER THERE WOULD BE AN EARTHQUAKE, OR A DROUGHT, OR A WET SEASON THAT WOULD DROWN THE CROPS. THE STARS WOULD TELL US, A YEAR AHEAD OF TIME, FOR THAT IS THEIR JOB. WHEN THE CREATOR MADE THE SACRED EARTH, HE DIDN'T ABANDON US THERE WITHOUT ANY FACILITIES. EVERYTHING IS THERE TO HELP US LIVE. BUT OUR ELDERS TOLD US THE DAY WOULD COME WHEN HUMAN BEINGS WOULD FORGET HOW TO READ AND TALK TO THE STARS. AND I THINK THAT THAT HAS COME NOW. MOST PEOPLE OF THE WORLD, OUR ELDERS SAID, WOULD BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN, AND THEY WOULD NOT KNOW HOW TO READ THE STARS. THEY WOULD NOT HAVE FULL WARNINGS. AND EVEN THOUGH THAT IS THE CASE, AND WE'VE FORGOTTEN WE KNOW SOMETHING, YET IN A DRY SEASON, IT IS THE STARS WHO BRING THE FRESH WATER, THE MORNING DEW, TO EACH BLADE OF GRASS THAT GROWS. AND EVEN THOUGH WE MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN THE OTHER THINGS THAT THE STARS HELP US WITH EVERY NIGHT, THERE IS ONE THING THAT WE CANNOT FORGET, AND THAT IS THAT THE STARS ARE OF GREAT BEAUTY WHEN THEY FILL THE SKY AT NIGHT. EVEN THE GREATEST ARTIST OF THE ENTIRE WORLD COULD NOT PAINT A MORE BEAUTIFUL PICTURE THAN THE STARS OF THE NIGHT. THAT ALONE IS SUFFICIENT TO BE GRATEFUL FOR. SO, LET US PILE UP OUR "THANK YOU'S", OUR GREETINGS AND OUR LOVE AGAIN, AND THROW IT UP HIGH INTO THE UNIVERSE SO THAT EVERY SINGLE STAR IS ACKNOWLEDGED BY YOU AND ME. ON BEHALF OF OUR CHILDREN, WE SAY "THANK YOU" TO THE STARS OF THE SKY WORLD FOR FOLLOWING THE CREATOR'S WAY. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND NOW, WE TURN TO THE FOUR SACRED BEINGS WHOM WE CALL THE SKY DWELLERS, THE FOUR MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE. THESE ARE THE ONES WHO DO NOT HAVE A BODY, AND WHO ARE LIKE THE WIND. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO PROTECT US WHEN WE MIGHT DESTROY OURSELVES. FOR AFTER THE CREATOR MADE ALL OF CREATION, AND HIS LAST CREATION WAS THE HUMANS, HE LOOKED AT THE HUMANS AS THEY WALKED AND SAID: I MADE A LITTLE BIT OF A MISTAKE WHEN I MADE HUMANS. FOR IT IS THE HUMAN BEINGS WHO ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO FORGET WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY ARE HERE. THE WOLF WHO WALKS THE EARTH NEVER FORGETS HE IS A WOLF. THE EAGLE WHO FLIES IN THE SKY NEVER FORGETS HE IS AN EAGLE. BUT THE HUMAN BEING GOES ONLY A LITTLE WAY AND THEN HE FORGETS WHO HE IS, FOR THE HUMAN IS THE WEAKEST OF ALL THE SPECIES OF THE CREATION.

FOR THAT REASON, THE CREATOR CREATED FOUR SACRED HUMAN BEINGS CALLED THE "MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE", THE PROTECTORS OF HUMANS. WHENEVER THE HUMAN RACE GOES IN THE DIRECTION OF COMPLETE DESTRUCTION, THEN ONE OF THOSE WILL BE BORN AS A HUMAN BEING. HE WILL BE A PROPHET OR A TEACHER AND HE WILL REINSTALL AND RENEW OUR INSTRUCTIONS SO THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO FIND THE ROAD AGAIN. THESE ARE THE GREAT "MESSIAHS" THAT ARE BORN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. AND SO, TO THE FOUR SACRED BEINGS WHO HAVE HELPED US TO SURVIVE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, WHOEVER YOU ARE, WHEREVER YOU ARE AND FOR EVERYTHING YOU ARE, WE THE HUMANS SAY "THANK YOU" TODAY. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND NOW, TO OUR CREATOR, THE MAKER OF ALL THE UNIVERSE. WHEN OUR CREATOR MADE THIS UNIVERSE, HE DID NOT MAKE IT COMPLICATED. HE DID NOT MAKE THE PROGRAM ON THE IBM MACHINE TOO DETAILED AND COMPLEX. ALL HE DID WAS TO SAY: ALL I WANT YOU TO DO IS TO BE BORN AND TO WALK ON THE EARTH FOR SO MANY DAYS. AND ALL I ASK IS THAT EVERY TIME YOU WILL DRINK A GLASS OF WATER, YOU SAY "THANK YOU" TO ME AND TO THE POWER OF THE WATER. WHEN YOU EAT FOOD, ALL

I ASK IS THAT YOU BE GRATEFUL FOR THE FOOD THAT YOU EAT AND NOT TAKE MORE THAN YOU NEED. AND WHEN YOU BUILD A HOME, BUILD IT ONLY BIG ENOUGH FOR YOUR WIFE AND YOUR CHILDREN AND NO MORE, NO EXCESS. IF YOU DO THAT, THERE WILL BE ENOUGH IN THE WORLD FOR ALL, AND ALL WILL HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

SO DON'T FORGET TO SAY "THANK YOU", SIMPLY "THANK YOU". NO GREAT RELIGION, NO GREAT COMPLEXITY. JUST HUMBLY, HONORABLY "THANK YOU" TO ALL THAT IS LIFE. OUR CREATOR MADE THE MOST PERFECT WORLD. AND SO I ASK NOW THAT IN THE MOST POWERFUL, HUMBLE WAY, WE FILL THIS ROOM UP HERE. IMAGINE IT IN OUR SPIRITUAL MINDS, OUR SYMBOLIC MINDS. LET US PILE UP OUR "THANK-YOUS" IN A HUNDRED LAYERS. LET US LIFT THE CEILING WITH OUR GREETINGS, AND THEN LET US TIE IT WITH A BIG ROPE OF LOVE THAT WE WILL GET FROM HERE, AND THEN LET'S PICK UP THIS BIG PILE WITH ONE EFFORT, IN A SYMBOLIC WAY, AND LET'S GATHER UP THAT BIG PILE OF LOVE, "THANK-YOUS" AND GREETINGS AND SEND IT HIGH INTO THE UNIVERSE, TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR CREATOR HEARS AND FEELS OUR "THANK-YOUS", OUR GREETING AND OUR LOVE. OUR CREATOR, WHO IS OUR MAKER—YOUR CHILDREN TODAY SIMPLY THANK YOU. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. (ALL: YES!)

AND NOW, I HAVE OFFICIALLY OPENED THIS GATHERING IN A SPIRITUAL WAY. AND WITH SUCH WORDS, I HAVE MADE A SPIRITUAL ROPE TO TIE EVERYONE, TO BRING OUR MINDS TOGETHER. YOU COME HERE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. THESE WORDS THAT I HAVE SAID COME FROM TEN, TWENTY, FORTY THOUSAND, FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS AGO. THEY ARE THE ORIGINAL SPIRITUAL WORDS OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF NORTH AMERICA. ON THESE GROUNDS, I WELCOME YOU HERE, TO NORTH AMERICA, IN THE ORIGINAL WAY, YOU WHO COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

AND OUR CONCERNS ARE THE SAME HERE. HOW DO WE ENJOY THIS LIFE, IN A PROPER, HUMBLE WAY, WITHOUT EXPLOITING IT? HOW DO WE HONOUR OUR MOTHER THE EARTH THAT THE CREATOR MADE, SO THAT OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN WILL HAVE A CHANCE? THAT'S THE MOST HONORABLE REASON TO COME TOGETHER - AS INTELLECTUAL AND RATIONAL PEOPLE FROM EVERY COLOUR, LIKE A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN OF MANY FLOWERS. LET THE RAIN FALL ON IT, LET THE WIND GIVE IT NOURISHMENT, SO THAT EVEN "THE POWERS THAT BE" MAY KNOW HOW TO APPRECIATE THE BEAUTY OF THE BOUQUET. AND IN THAT WAY, WE HAVE NOW OPENED OFFICIALLY. SO BE IT. OUR MINDS ARE ONE. THAT'S ALL. (ALL: YES!)

(EDITOR'S NOTE: I REMEMBER TOM PORTER SAYING TO ME LAUGHINGLY ONCE: "GOD MUST CRINGE WHEN HE HEARS THE WORDS THAT COME BEFORE ELSE, IN ENGLISH AND NOT IN MOHAWK.")

2) The Peace Messenger's message or constitution

a) The Legend of the Peace Messenger

Long before Europeans first came to this country, a man, a Huron (it is sacrilegious to name him) came to Iroquois country, as an emissary, a symbol, a messenger of the Great Peace, i.e. he claimed that the Great Peace spoke through him. But he carried also a message of peace i.e. an interpretation of that Great Peace to offer and to establish in concrete form. "I plant the Tree of the Great Peace—a great White Pine and bury all implements of war under it" he said. All nations and individuals are welcome to take shelter under its spreading branches. It has spreading and ever growing branches and white roots that extend to the four quarters of the earth. He came to reconnect the Iroquois and all the Nations to the Great Peace... (For a brief history of the legend, see: The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace in Interculture, Winter 1993, issue 118, pp. 9-15)

b) The Nature of the message (op. cit. pp. 16-18)

Weapons of war were buried under the Tree of Peace, forever. Warriors and war chiefs were eliminated forever. The Great Law does not contain the word Warrior but Rotisenrake:te meaning

“braves”—just “young men”, nothing else. The War Chiefs and head warriors were replaced with 50 Peace Chiefs² (rotiianeson: the good men), who could never go to war and were not to order anyone around. It also elevated assistants, deputy or subchiefs, runners for the peace chiefs (good men). The women were made into clan wethers who were to name and raise the Peace Chiefs and watch over them.

The two principal historical forms of the Great Peace (op. cit. pp. 19-35)

Besides signifying the Great Harmony/Cosmic Kinship and the Peace Messenger’s message or constitution, Kayanerekowa—the Great Peace—also refers to the two historical forms that it has taken in Iroquois and Mohawk history. I shall now describe briefly the nature of these two forms.

3) The League of Six Nations, the Grand Council of 50 Rotiiane (Rotiianeson)

This is now called the Six Nations’ Confederacy, and is the only form of “government” detailed in the Great Law of Peace.

The Great Peace here refers to the alliance between the five Iroquois Nations (six since 1714) past and present: namely Onondaga, Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Tuscarora. These nations allied themselves into one League, one Longhouse, where each Nation had and has its own Fire, and where all formed and still form one “family” consisting of elder and younger brothers. Each kept their own languages, customs and national differences, yet they found and still form one body, one mind, one heart linked together in a loose confederation rather than a unitary state, each of them retaining full independence but bound by kinship ties rather than by relationship of estate or real property. All, were and are based on the “Constitution”, namely the Great Law of Peace.

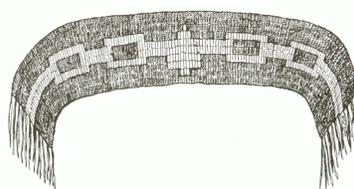


Figure 1: Aionwatha (The Five Nations Belt.) The center symbolizes the Onondaga nation, flanked by the Mohawk and Seneca Nations, then by the Oneida and Cayuga. The two extremities remain open for other Nations to join in.

The Great Peace may refer also to the past and present Grand Council of the 50 Rotiiane (Rotiianeson), which is today often called the government of the Confederacy, or simply the Confederacy. This government is not a central, statist, coercive government in the Western sense. Each one of the five (now six) Nations are physically distant from each other. Each has a distinct homeland and is profoundly independent from the others, although they all constitute one Longhouse and are bound together as a single bundle of arrows. They each have as well their own Longhouse, their own Fire, their own Peace Chiefs, but the latter also sit together in a common Longhouse, each with their respective functions, yet with no king or commanding chief. None of the Peace Chiefs either alone or together are commanders. It must be made crystal clear that these Peace Chiefs are named by the Iroquois people through the Clan Mothers of clans abiding by the Great Law of Peace, of which the Rotiiane are held to be the official interpreters, in consort with Clan Mothers, elders, faith-keepers, ancestors, etc. Hence such a “government” can never form a self-perpetuating body which would continue to exist over against or in spite of the people.

² See further p.5 : the preliminary note on the English word “chief” as a translation of “Roiane” “Rotiiane”.

* Note on the words chief and royaner (pronounce loyané which is the singular, and rotiianeson which is the plural and pronounced “lodianeson”): to avoid misunderstandings it is very important to know and understand what is meant by the word chief or peacechief which is an English translation of the word roiane (singular) and rotiane/rotianeson (plurals) which literally means the “good/kind/peaceful men” that are named by consensus by the clan mothers who watch over them and can correct or even depose them if they do not act properly. The word chief in English usage connotes commander, head or “subjects”. Not so the word roiane which, according to elder Sakokwenionkwas, means the good, kind, peaceful man who does not command but is an entitled mirror of the Great Peace and Kosmic Kinship in his behavior.

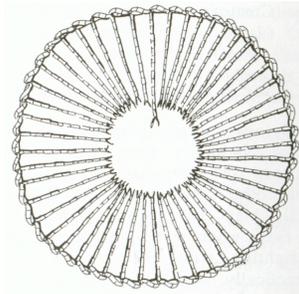


Figure 2. Tekentiohkwanhakshta (what binds the people together.) The sacred circle is composed of 50 strings, each symbolizing a royaner (an entitled leader); the longest string symbolizes Atotarho of the Onondaga Nation. Their arms are intertwined, in a role where the political and the spiritual are never separated. It also symbolizes the people and the cosmic kin.

This alliance or League or Confederacy and its Constitution are still very much alive and active today. So is the Council of the 50 Rotiiane. Both the league and the Grand Council (as well as the Constitution)—although undeniably ancient—have been relatively unchanging in their elaborate structure. The internal structure of the Grand Council has remained “relatively unaffected” by interaction with Europeans during the colonial era. It is equally very much still “in charge” today, that is, unimpeached in its authority, all rumors to the contrary throughout history (and even today) notwithstanding. Its function has always been and remains “to prevent a disuniting of the minds” not only of the League but also between the League and other Nations. But it could never and cannot today enforce peace. It was and it remains a matter of good thoughts, of Good Mind. This it brings about through ceremonies and condolence rituals, restraint, wampum, and the exchange of gifts. The fact that the League and the Grand Council are still with us today is eloquent testimony to the Iroquois peoples’ loyalty to the Creator’s instructions as given in the Great Law of Peace.

For a brief history of the League and Grand Council, see R. Vachon *The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace in Interculture* (Issue 118, Winter, 1993, pp.22-26)

4) Extended Family Alliance System between the Six Nations Confederacy and other Nations.

The “linking of arms” in a kinship alliance (Tehona- tenentshawā:kon) was intended by the Confederacy to function with either other Native Nations or with European Nations³. In practice, these both were kinship alliances set up to last forever, needing only to be periodically reaffirmed and ceremonially refined. The system did, however, tend to work differently in each of the two cases.

³ See Mary A. Druke “Linking Arms, in Richter and Merrill, op. cit. p. 29-39.

a) *With Other Native Nations*

Alliances were forged before and after European contact, and the system still practiced today. Westerners have called it “Intertribal tributary alliance”. This is not correct. The idea of paying tribute has always been foreign to the sharing traditions of the Great Law of Peace. It was and it is, rather, an alliance of communitarian or extended family reciprocity, where the Confederacy and other Native Nations committed each other to share hunting grounds, counsel, foods, furs, flint, wampum, etc. There could and can be a mutual non-aggression pact, whereby the implements of war were and are symbolically buried. There could and can be mutual assistance pacts, either by coming to each other’s help in case of outside aggression from other Nations, or through trade. *This alliance was and is a parental relationship—as brethren, cousins, uncles, nephews, grand-fathers, women, etc.—but never one of subordination, subjection, or sovereignty over subjects.*

Few studies have been made of these alliances before and during contact. It is not within the scope of this essay to do so. Suffice it to say that the oral traditions of the Iroquois do transmit valuable information. For example, there is a long Cayuga tradition which affirms that the Delaware (or Lenni Lenape) were considered generally, by all nations, Iroquois included, as the “Grandfathers of the Algonkian family of Nations” and were respected as such by the Iroquois, who also called them “grandfathers” and even “women”. The Iroquois oral tradition also narrates the first battles initiated by the Algonkians and Mohicans against the Iroquois, and how these two conflicts were settled according to the principles of the Great law of Peace. For example, a peace alliance (or treaty) was made between the Iroquois and the Algonkins (Northern Algonkians) where the war clubs were buried in a hole and a peace belt given by the algonkins, which still exists today, and which opened the Saint Lawrence valley to Iroquois settlement⁴.

Sometimes, other Native Nations even sought and got a seat and voice inside the Grand Council of the Five Nations Confederacy. One entered the Confederacy through one of the five Nations, usually the one in whose vicinity one was living. Then one spoke through that Nation. This is, for example, still the case today with the Tuscarora Nation, which speaks in the Grand Council through the Oneida Nation. The southeastern Susquehannocks entered through the Mohawks, the seven Christian nations of Canada through Onondaga, the western Native Nations through the Senecas, etc. A consensus had and has to be reached, for example, between the Oneidas and Tuscaroras for the Tuscarora to be heard in the Grand Council. After contact, as we shall see, many of the Native Nations used the latter method to enter into kinship alliances with the British, although they felt free to proceed to such alliances with the British without going through the Confederacy Channel.

b) *With European Nations*

The Confederacy also practiced the “linking of arms” and kinship alliances with the first European Nations whose members came to Turtle Island—also always based on the Great Law of Peace. But such alliances were designed to deal specifically with Confederacy/European relations. What characterized them was that they explicitly acknowledged the unique and irreducible ways or paths of life of each culture, accepted the differences and intended to respect them, from both sides. They were based in other words on two-row (or Two paths) wampum Trenty called by the Mohawks, the *Tekeniteyoya:te* (Two Paths) and by other Iroquois, *Kashwen:ta* (sometimes spelled *Guswenta*, their word for *wampum*).

The very first such alliance was made by the Mohawks with the Dutch, and later ones with the English, the French, and the Americans. They were to be the basis for peaceful Confederacy/European relations through all history—and are still considered so today, despite the triple betrayal of there sacred

⁴ D. Blanshard, *Seven Generations* (Kahnawake, 1980), p.97

alliances by the French, English and Americans during the 18th century and thereafter. This linking of arms and kinship alliance was first called a rope, then an iron chain, then a Silver Covenant Chain.

The British were the first to use the name “Covenant Chain”, in 1677. But for them it meant the British/Iroquois chain, called the Silver Covenant Chain, and it excluded the French. The French called theirs the Friendship Alliance, for they never accepted being part of the “Covenant Chain”. For them, the latter was the British Chain. For the Iroquois, it was “*Tehonatenent-shawā:kon*” (the “linking of arms” or “clasping of hands for Peace”). When speaking to Euro-Americans, they still refer to it as the Covenant or Friendship Chain. Unlike their Western “allies”, they never had any problem including both the French and the English in its embrace.

c) *Twofold Understanding of the “Covenant Chain”*

It must be clearly stated at the outset that the Iroquois and European understanding of this system were radically different, in spite of the fact that both spoke of the “Covenant Chain” or Friendship Alliance” (or Chain). To put it briefly, it was for the Iroquois a kinship alliance of brothers for protection and peace. For Europeans, it was a kingship and friendship based alliance with “subjects and allies”, for their own self-protection and to facilitate further conquest.

—*From the Iroquois viewpoint*, it was an institution based on the extended family or kinship relationship of brothers, uncles, nephews, women, etc., to which they were accustomed in the Iroquois League of Nations. It followed the spirit of the Great Law of Peace and its protocol. It was founded also on the Circle of non-governance, where no one nation is higher than any other, although there may be—and was—a *diplomatic* Central Fire and Head of the Circle (the latter being the Mohawk Nation within the Confederacy, and the Confederacy itself within the Covenant Chain). I call it a “diplomatic” center or head, in the sense that it was not a “power”center, a head that governs, orders, or makes subjects of others.

The Iroquois always refused, either as a Confederacy, or as Nations, communities and people, to be kings or “subjects” of anyone outside or inside the Confederacy. They never tried to turn other Nations—whether European or Native—into subjects. From their point of view, therefore, the Covenant Chain was not based on any notion of kingship. Notions of kings and subjects were completely foreign to their language and their philosophy. So, indeed, was the notion of friendship—they accepted the European word “friendship” to express the linking of arms, but they understood it as kinship.

Furthermore, this Covenant was not based on any notion of ownership, territory, territorial expansion, transformation and expansion, or conquest and empire, as would be the case in European political philosophy. The “Covenant Chain” was never an Iroquois empire, nor was it ever intended to become one. There was no question of tribute or tributaries.

Finally, for the Iroquois, this institution was neither one nor two (or more) covenant chains, but a pluralistic chain of covenants, in the sense that kinship alliances might take very different forms according to the Nations (Native and/or European) it linked. The Iroquois—contrary to the French, English, and Americans—had no problem making alliances with very different European or Native Nations, even with those currently at war with one another, as was the case, for example, between the French and the English, the British and the Americans, Canada and the U.S.A., during various epochs.

The Covenant Chain was, in principle, neither exclusive of any nation—European or Native—nor omni-inclusive i.e. imperialistic. In fact, Native Nations and European Nations (specifically British, French and American) were all part of that Chain, the *Tehonatenentshawā:kon*.

Another characteristic of the Covenant or Friendship Chain (this extended-family alliance with European Nations) was that many Native Nations would ally themselves with European Nations by going through the Iroquois Confederacy, as the diplomatic “head” of the system of alliances, whenever they found this procedure useful. But none were obliged by the Confederacy to do so in order to establish alliances with European Nations.

— *From the European point of view*, the “Covenant Chain” or “Chain of Friendship” was understood and presented in a radically different light.

It was seen, first, as a *kingship alliance* between the European King, on the one hand, and his loyal subjects the Native Nations on the other; the King being the father, and the native subjects his children. It was also viewed as an alliance between friends, i.e., allies, not between kin. And all this was according to the best traditions of kingship (as fatherhood) and friendship in the Western traditions.

De facto, however, these noble European traditions had somewhat deteriorated. By the time they reached the shores of the New World, they were invariably adulterated with elements of conquest and territorial expansion.

At first, when the Europeans were unable to dominate the Native Nations, they confederated with some of them as formal peers and allies in order to gain advantages over other Europeans and their Native allies.⁵ Later, when they were more powerful, they sought to conquer and subdue these Native “peers and allies” themselves. So their alliances with Native Nations were forged as if between independent Nations, but the Native Nations were in fact seen as (and even called) subjects in order to please the European kings and impress European powers. In the final analysis, however, the Europeans sincerely believed that the native Nations were subjects, or at least had to become so. Indeed, from the European point of view, they could be nothing else.

Now, since the Mohawks—Keepers of the Eastern Door, Head of the Iroquois Confederacy—seemed to the Europeans eminently successful in “controlling” the corridors to the West, to the north (from the south) and to the south (from the north), they were—in European eyes—a “power” not only to reckon with, but primarily with which to be allied in order to make headway in conquering the continent. The Mohawks had been so successful in making alliances with the Dutch and Eastern Algonkians that they were seen by the British as possible strong allies for British penetration, or as a buffer to protect the British from the French up north. The French thought likewise, but saw the Mohawks and the Iroquois at first as a danger to their northern fur trade and yet also as a buffer protecting them from British incursions into New France and the rich northern Fur Trade.

d) *Brief History of the Covenant Chain*

The first official “linking of arms” or “clasping of hands” with European Nations happened between the Mohawks and the Dutch in 1643 at Fort Orange (now Albany, N.Y.). This is where the first Two-Row Wampum Treaty took place. In 1645, the Mohawks, on behalf of all the Iroquois, made a treaty of friendship with New France its Algonquin and Huron allies. In 1663, they entered into another Friendship Alliance, solely with the French.

⁵ Allied and peer nations, since it is not in the European tradition to make treaties with groups who do not have a status equivalent to Nations. Europeans in general, however, had trouble recognizing Native Peoples as Nations since they did not have many of the trappings of European Nation-States. But it can be argued that they did treat them officially as Nations, at least temporarily, to further their own colonial interests.

The English word “Covenant Chain” first appeared in the Maryland Mohawk agreement of July 1677. In 1677, the first “Silver Covenant Chain” was made between the Iroquois, on the one hand, and the New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies, as well as the River Indians of the Hudson Valley, on the other. In subsequent years, the alliance was gradually extended to all the colonies and other Indian Nations, south, east, north, and west, and was constantly renewed. As Jennings puts it: “The Covenant Chain is the reason there was peace during the long period from 1677 to 1755.”⁶ Finally, for the British, it was a British chain which excluded the French. Since the Iroquois had become British allies, the British started presenting the “Iroquois Confederacy and its Native Allies as the Iroquois Empire dependent on the Province of New York” (Colden, 1747), and the Confederacy’s Native Allies as their “tributaries”.

Jennings has shown that the Iroquois Empire did not exist. It was a creation of the British imagination employed in order to eventually appropriate their lands. The British used their alliance with the Iroquois (and *their* allies) to argue the dependency of these Nations on the British Crown and, hence, British sovereignty over all of known North America. The Iroquois “depended” on New York, which was in turn a dependency of the British Crown. If the Iroquois therefore had tributaries and an Empire, it belonged to Britain. What belonged to the Iroquois belonged to Britain. All very convenient. As early as 1688 the British were saying: “We have thought fit to own the Five Nations as our subjects and resolved to protect them as such”. As Jennings has written: “Lacking a reasonable alternative until the French could be forced off the Continent, the British donated an empire to the Iroquois in order to claim it for themselves.” (op. cit., p.11)

In 1701, a separate Alliance and Covenant was established in Montreal between the Iroquois, the French, and the latter’s allies, because the French refused to join the Covenant Chain which was considered by them (and the English) as an exclusively British/Iroquois (plus Native allies) Chain—although never so by the Iroquois, as noted above.

For the British, the Covenant Chain was an instrument of conquest. Its purpose was to extend the British Empire. This was the hidden agenda. When the western Native Nations left the Iroquois Confederacy in the mid-1700’s, and thus were no longer seen by the British as tributaries of the Iroquois, the British really thought that the Iroquois empire—the Confederacy itself, and thus the Covenant Chain—had collapsed. In fact, for the Iroquois, there had never been an Iroquois empire. There had always been and still was a Confederacy or League of Five Nations, an extended kinship alliance with some other Native Nations, and still a Covenant Chain alliance with the Dutch, the British, the French, and the Americans, based on the Guswenta.

There was, further, still an “official” European Covenant Chain which was being “officially” betrayed by the very French, British, and American Nations which had “officially” signed it. The betrayal had, however, taken place long before. Kelsey puts it well: “In all their negotiations with the Indians, both British and French authorities behaved toward the Confederacy as though they considered it an independent nation... But the truth was that both the French and the British considered Indians, whether within or without the Confederacy, as subjects...”⁷

At first the Natives had not understood what the word “subject” meant. When they did, they categorically refused—all along—to be considered the subjects of any king, European or otherwise. Some accepted being called children of the French father Onontio⁸, but they made it clear what they meant by father. Today, nothing much has changed. The words children and subjects of the Kings are not used, but their modern equivalents are: citizens of the United States and of Canada, subject to the laws of the United

⁶ F. Jennings, the Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, op. cit. p. xvii.

⁷ I.T. Kelsey, Joseph Brant 1743-1807, Man of the Two Worlds, (Syracuse, 1984, p.16).

⁸ The Mohawk title given to the French king or to his New France Governor. The word means beautiful mountain.

States and of Canada. And the Mohawks and Iroquois are still saying: “We are not citizens of your United States or your Canada. We are not subject to your laws. We are brothers and sisters who long ago made an eternal kinship and friendship alliance, based on the Two Row Wampum, where we welcomed you to share this land with us in mutual respect for each other’s cultures: you staying in your boat and we in our canoe, and linking arms forever.”

For a brief descriptive overview of the Mohawk kinship diplomacy with regard to European notions and to United States and Canada’s assimilation policies from 1600 until today. (see R. Vachon *The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace*, op. cit. pp. 36-82).

A short bibliography

It must be remembered that the Kayanerekowa is primarily an oral tradition, although much has been written about it; this must be kept in mind as we write this text and refer to texts written even by the Mohawks and the Haudenosaunee.

Finally, for a first hand more detailed official account of our topic by the Haudenosaunee themselves, which was presented to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People 1993 and 1994 (445 pages) and published by the latter, see:

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By

Paul Williams and Curtis Nelson

Part I	The Tree and the Great Law of Peace (pp. 1-51)
Part II	The Sailing Ship and the Silver Chain (pp. 52-104)
Part III	The Treaties are stones in the stream. They mark our place in time (The Treaty of Fort Stanwix 1760) pp. 196-235
Part IV	The Chain Tarnished. The Stream Polluted The Bright promises fade. As the Sun Still Shines (pp.345-413)
Appendix I	Letter to Queen Elizabeth II from the Grand Council (1981) pp.414-416
Appendix II	Statement concerning the lands and government of the Haudenosaunee (pp. 417-423)
Appendix III	Presentation of the Haudenosaunee to the Special Committee of the House of Commons of Canada on Indian self-government (pp. 424-445)

Conclusion

A note on some of the major Mohawk- Haudenosaunee Peace Symbols

These Peace symbols, whether it be 1) the Guswenta (also known as the two-row wampum belt which underlines the mutual respect for the differences between the Haudenosaunee and the newcomers from Europe, as they travel together on the same rivers of life, (one in its canoe and the other in its boat without trying to have one foot in the one and the other foot in the other) or whether it be any of the other below, they should not be understood as being one of exclusive relationship, because for the Haudenosaunee it is a Kinship alliance which respects the different kinships.

It is definitely not a kingship relationship. This is further emphasized by another peace symbol, namely 2) the rope or belt of friendship “which is understood” by the Haudenosaunee also as a relationship of kinship which goes beyond Western friendship and which must be renewed periodically. It is expressed also 3) by the symbol of both holding hands and arms together in a circle around the Tree of Peace so that the Tree of Peace may not fall, and 4) by asserting that all implements of war have been thrown in the hole under the Tree of Peace, so that there should never be warriors nor war between us all.

Furthermore, 5) the symbol “One bowl, one ladle” or “One dish, one spoon”, is one of the many traditions of mutual understanding with regard to the use of land, meaning the mutual promise that there should be no knife of property or of exclusion with regard to Mother Earth, so that everything should be in common. The Haudenosaunee in their presentation to the Royal Commission on the Aboriginal People of Canada (1993-1994) reminded the Commission: “All Nations will eat from the same bowl and dish, being careful that there be no knife near the dish in order to avoid confusion and shedding of blood”. According to the Six Nations Confederacy itself, the emphasis is on “relationship” more than on formalities of a treaty between powers and their respective subjects. The very notion of “subjects” is foreign to them.

Finally, all these extremely important peace symbols are only a part of the Great Peace so that the Great Peace should not be reduced to them, for together, we must listen ever more to the Great Peace and abide together by its pluralism which cannot be reduced to any one single definition of it. Hence the words that come before all else: those of the good mind: thanks to the Kayanerekowa: the Great Harmony of it all, keeping in mind the seven generations to come...