

The Peacemaker & the Tadadaho

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[MP3 recording](#) (10:01, 11.1MB)

[This short film](#) is part of [8 short, testimonial films](#), on the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois.) The Iroquois are embarking on an historic project about the 500-year history of the Iroquois, their relationship with Europe and America and their prophecies that, if heard, can help us navigate the oncoming changes due to climate change. This series of short films is done via their testimony, and creates the space for the Iroquois to tell their story as they strive to uphold the traditions and the legacy of their people while also protecting the central tenets of their people and their relationship and care for the Earth.

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In the story of the Peacemaker, time is something that nobody is sure about. Exactly how long did it take for him to gather five foreign Nations who are not only warring between themselves, they are warring internally, and internally into the family. It was a very, very bad time.

When I looked at Kosovo, recently, I thought, the time must have been similar to that, where the hatred was so embedded that there was no logic whatsoever. It had its own energy, didn't need logic anymore. How it started, probably don't even remember. But it was fierce and I was thinking, must be like that time among our own people.

And so when the Peacemaker finally gathered all the Five Nations at the shores of Onondaga lake, which is upstate central New York right now, that's an ancient, ancient place with a great event

occurring there on those shores, when he gathered those leaders together and sent them in to find their clans, he laid out the process.

He gave everything to us. Just gave it complete. We didn't evolve it. It was just given. He says, Here is the process and here's how you will do this. He said I'm going to plant a great tree, a Great Tree of Peace here to represent peace, spiritual laws of the universe. And he instructed leaders never to challenge those laws, because you will not prevail.

That's where we are today. We seem to be challenging every single one of those laws and we will not prevail. That's a prediction.

At any rate there we were, 49 leaders. The 50th one was a whole long story by itself, the Tadadaho. The Tadadaho that he met had no compassion whatsoever. Fierce beyond fierce. Evil beyond evil. He changed that man. And when they were meeting in that particular time, when he had gathered the Four Nations, he said, Now let's go back to Onondaga. We must bring the Onondagas in, the Tadadaho.

And they couldn't penetrate; he was in the swamp. He lived in a swamp. It's where he liked it. He was fierce. Almost unrecognizable as a human; snakes in his hair. Powerful. Quite content with his power. They couldn't penetrate.

When the Peacemaker first landed with the Mohawks, landed on the Mohawk shore and he was instructed to spend the night at a lodge not far from where he was. And so he spent that first night at that Lodge and at that Lodge there was a woman, from the Eries, what we call the Cat Nation. Her name was Jigonsaseh and she said, My Lodge is open to all men, to anyone traveling on this path. I have one rule: leave your weapons of war outside the door and don't bring that discussion inside. But rest yourself, have something to eat, sleep.

And so when he told her his mission she said, I believe in that mission. That's a beautiful mission. I will help, whatever I can do. This is what I see here every day: these men coming back and the work that they do.

And so at this time when he was stymied by the power of Tadadaho, he said, Send for this woman. Maybe she can help. And so they sent for her. And in the those days, you had to walk. Unless there was a river for a canoe, you walked. And so she got there and they asked her. They said, Do you think you have anything that we can use? Do you know of anything? She says, Yes. Strange enough that you asked, she said but I've been hearing this song, nice birds brought, I've been hearing it in my head again and again and again.

And so she taught those leaders the song. And when they started to sing the song, and they moved towards the swamp, that song pulled Tadadaho out against his will. He was struggling not to be pulled out but it was a powerful song. They were all singing it in a united voice.

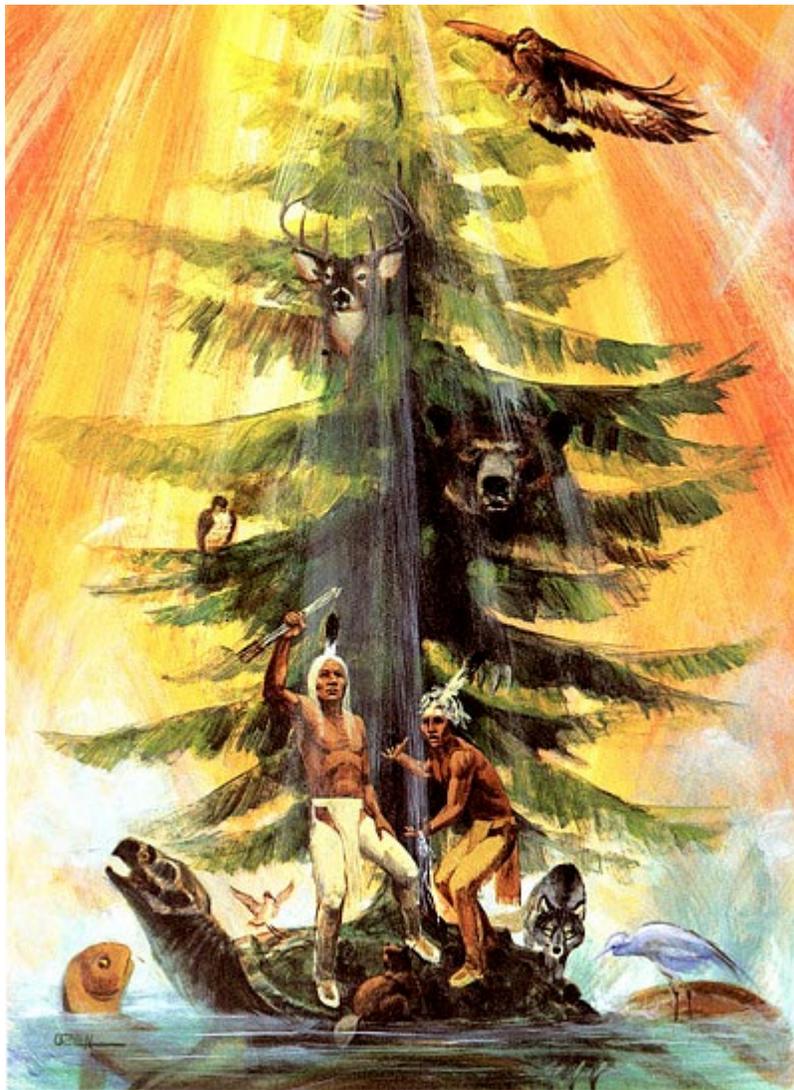
And he came out slow. So they were able to have a discourse, they were able to discuss. And they

said, We need you to be here. He said, Well, why should I? I have all that I need. I'm quite satisfied with what I am. I don't know what you're about but it's not what I'm about.

And they went on in that direction and they were singing. And so they could see the snakes falling from his hair. And he was starting to transform into a human.

And finally they said if you agree to join this Confederation of Peace, then Onondaga will be the center fire and your title, your name, Tadadaho, will prevail from here on. And he agreed.

And that's how the united nations came together on peace. And so when he was talking to them all, on the shores of Onondaga Lake, he said, I'm going to plant this Great Tree of Peace for all to see, this great white pine. It's going to reach to the sky. It will have four white roots of truth, four white roots of peace going in the four cardinal directions of the Earth. And those people who have no where to go can follow that root back to its source and agree to our law of peace and come under its great branches.



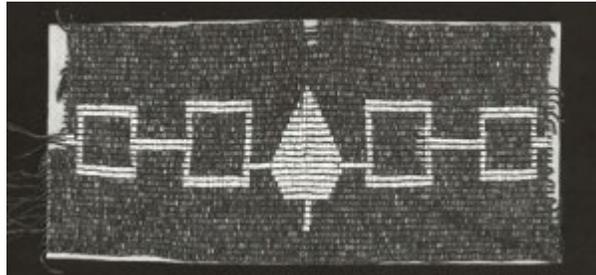
Great Tree of Peace by Oren Lyons

And he said I'm going to place on top of this tree the Eagle, the leader of all the birds. And his duty

will be to watch anything coming forth. And he said in the hands of those leaders, You, you leaders, I will place a wing feather to brush away all things that are coming to the tree on this route. That's the men.

And so he set up this Confederation. And he said, Now I'm going to uproot this tree and into this hole I want all of you men to bring your weapons of war and cast it into this hole. He says, And the underground currents will carry them, the four directions.

And so he did, and one by one they came. And they threw their weapons of war into the hole. He said you are now a Nation of Peace, ruled by law, ruled by the good minds. And that's how it began. And so that symbol still prevails. See it here. Great Law of Peace.



This belt is a national belt of the Haudenosaunee. The belt is named after Hiawatha, the Peacemaker's helper. In this belt, it records when 5 nations; the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk, buried their weapons of war to live in peace. Each square represents a nation and the line connects each nation in peace.... The center symbol represents Onondaga. Here the peacemaker planted the Tree of Peace. Under this tree the leaders buried their weapons of war beneath it.

From: onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/hiawatha-belt/