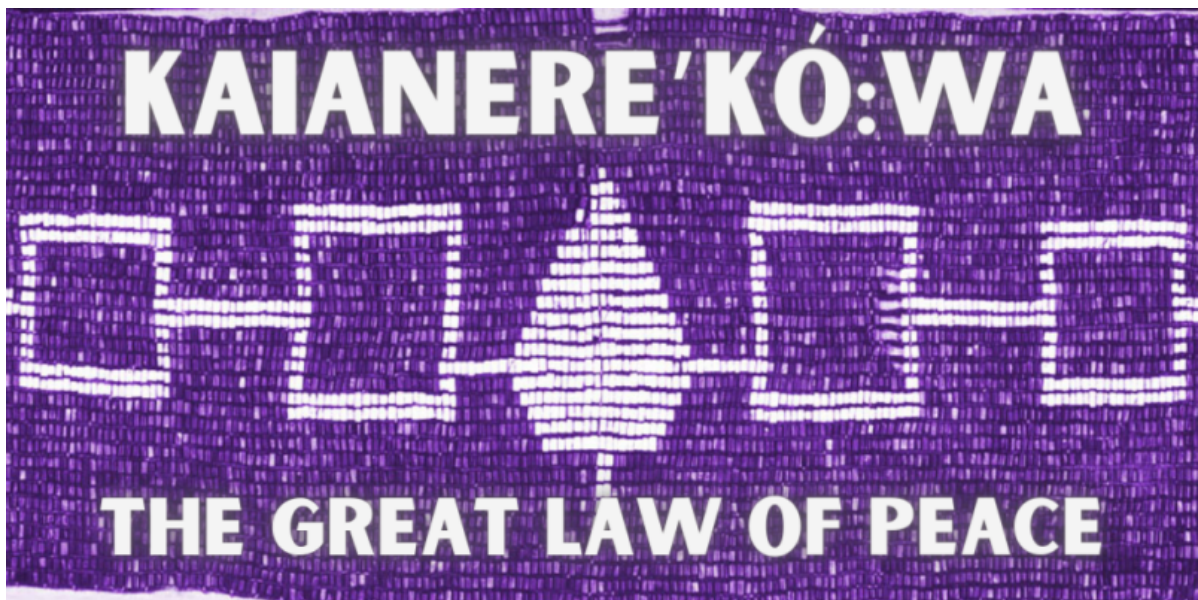


Kaianere'kó:wa

The Great Law of Peace

Haudenosaunee



12th Century

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Preface by the Indigenous Anarchist Federation

Originally from ganienkeh.net/thelaw, retrieved from the Internet Archive after the site went out of service in December 2020. These are published with original commentary from the website after some of the Wampums.

These texts provide an insight into only a fraction of the political thought and structures that Indigenous people have developed over thousands of years of shifting political landscapes. Some things resonate today with us Indigenous anarchics, while some things don't. What can be said is that we all stand to benefit from reading and considering the Great Law of Peace.

The Organization of the Confederacy

Wampum #1: Deganawida and the Chiefs Plant the Tree of Peace

I am Deganawida. With the statesmen of the League of Five Nations, I plant the Tree of Great Peace. I plant it in your territory. Atotarho and the Onondaga Nation: in the territory of you who are the Firekeepers. I name the tree Tsioneratasekowa, the Great White Pine. Under the shade of this Tree of Great Peace, we spread the soft, white feathery down of the Globe Thistle as seats for you, Atotarho and your cousin statesmen. We place you upon those seats, spread soft with the feathery down of the Globe Thistle, there beneath the shade of the spreading branches of the Tree of Great Peace. There shall you sit and watch the Fire of the League of Five Nations. All the affairs of the League shall be transacted at this place before you, Atotarho and your cousin statesmen, by the statesmen of the League of Five Nations.

Note: The term Five Nations makes it evident that all the laws were made before 1714 at which time the Tuscarora Nation was admitted into the Confederacy, but without an equal voice, contrary to the Plan of Deganawida. Apparently, the first Grand Councils of the Iroquois Confederacy were held under the evergreen white pine, the largest tree in Eastern North America, more than 250 feet high. All cut down 200 years ago by the white men who afterwards never let the great tree grow to full size again in their haste and eagerness to exploit it.

Wampum #2: The Great White Roots of the Tree of Peace

Roots have spread out from the Tree of Great Peace: one to the north, one to the east, one to the south and one to the west. These are the Great White Roots and their nature is Peace and Strength. If any man or any nation outside of the Five Nations shall obey the laws of the Great Peace (Gayanerekowa) and shall make this known to the statesmen of the League, they may trace back the roots to the Tree. If their minds are clean and if they are obedient and promise to obey the wishes of the Council of the League, they shall be welcomed to take shelter beneath the Tree of the Long Leaves.

We place at the top of the Tree of Great Peace an eagle who is able to see afar. If he sees in the distance any danger threatening, he will at once warn the people of the League. Note: The translator from the Indian to English got his tree mixed up. Tioneratasekowa does not mean a Tree of Long Leaves, but a Great Tree with ever fresh leaves meaning evergreen or the Great White Pine. The Tree of Long Leaves could not be the White Pine. Unless they had domesticated the eagles, it is an allegory meaning that the people must be very watchful.

Wampum #3: Atotarho and the Onondaga Chiefs Caretakers of the Council Fire

To you, Atotarho, and the Onondaga statesmen, I and the other statesmen of the League have entrusted the care taking and watching of the Five Nations Council Fire. When there is any business to be transacted and the Council is not in session, a messenger shall be sent to either Atotarho, Honowirehton or Skanawati, firekeepers or their War Chief, with a full statement of the business to be considered. Then Atotarho shall call his cousin chiefs together and consider whether the business is of sufficient importance to call the attention of the Council of the League: If so, Atotarho shall send messengers to summon all the chiefs of the League and to assemble beneath the Tree of Great Peace. When the statesmen are assembled, the Council fire shall be kindled but not with chestnut wood and Atotarho will formally open the Council. Then shall Atotarho and his cousin statesmen, the Firekeepers announce the subject for discussion. The smoke of the Council Fire of the League shall ever ascend and pierce the sky so that the other nations who may be allies may see the council fire of the Great Peace.

Note: Chestnut wood throws out angry sparks. The inference here is not to inspire angry moods. Seeing "The smoke of the Council Fire ascend the sky" is to induce friendly neighbors to drop in and sit a spell.

Wampum #4: The Firekeepers to Keep the Council Fire Clean

You, Atotarho, and your thirteen cousin statesmen shall faithfully keep the space about the Council Fire clean and you shall allow neither dust, nor dirt to accumulate. I lay along seagull wing (Tiowatatekowa Onerahontsa) before you as a broom.

As a weapon against a crawling creature, I lay a stick with you so that you may thrust it away from the Council Fire. If you fail to cast it out, then call the rest of the united statesmen to your aid.

Note: Keeping the space around the council fire clean may also mean that a well conducted council is being recommended and the crawling creature may be a disrespectful person or persons seeking to disrupt the council.

Wampum #5: The Council of the Mohawks Divided Into Three Parties

The Council of the Mohawks shall be divided into three parts: Tehanakarine, Ostawenserentah and Soskopaharowane are the first. Tekarihoken, Ayonwatha and Satekariwate are the second. Sarenkowane, Teyonhekwen and Orenrekowa are the third.

The first party is to listen only to the discussion of the second and third parties and if an error is made or the proceeding irregular, they are to call attention to it and when the case is right and properly decided by the two parties, they shall confirm the decision of the two parties and refer the case to the Seneca statesmen for their decision. When the Seneca statesmen have decided, in accord with the Mohawk statesmen, the case or question shall be referred to the Cayuga and Oneida statesmen on the opposite side of the house.

Note: The above is the procedure when the Grand Council of the Iroquois Confederacy is in session.

Wampum #6: Deganawida Appoints the Mohawk Chiefs Leaders of the Confederacy

I, Deganawida, appoint the Mohawk statesmen the head and the leaders of the Five Nations League. The Mohawk statesmen are the foundation of the Great Peace and it shall therefore be against the Great Binding Law to pass measures in the Council of the League after the Mohawk statesmen have protested against them.

No Council of the League shall be legal unless all of the statesmen of the Mohawks are present.

Note: The Mohawks were the first to accept the Great Law. They helped the Founder, Deganawida, to gather the other nations together. Missionaries admit they went all over America and spread propaganda among the Indians against the Iroquois Confederacy, especially against the Mohawks because they were the "most militant and great organizers." The missionaries felt certain they checked the spread of the Great Law which "would have made it impossible for the white men to conquer America."

Wampum #7: The Great Law of Peace Onondaga Chiefs Open the Council Fire of the Iroquois

Whenever the statesmen of the League shall assemble for the purpose of holding a council, the Onondaga Rotiyaner shall open it by expressing their gratitude to their cousin statesmen and greeting them and they shall make and address and offer thanks to the Earth where men dwell, to the streams of water, the pools and the lakes, to the maize and the fruits, to the medicinal herbs and trees, to the forest trees for their usefulness, and to the animals that serve as food and give their pelts for clothing, to the great winds and the lesser winds, to the thunderers; to the Sun, the mighty warrior, to the moon; to the messengers of the Creator who reveals his wishes and to the Great Creator who dwells in the heavens above who gives all the things useful to men, and who is the source and the ruler of health and life.

Then shall the Onondaga Rotiyaner declare the council open. The Council shall not sit after darkness has set in.

Note: The above opening thanksgiving ritual is done at every gathering of the people. The orator gives thanks to all that help human life. Giving thanks to the trees, water, winds, etc., does not mean that the people worship all these useful gifts but thank the power that produces them. The word Royaner means "he makes a good path for the people to follow." Rotiyaner is in the plural.

Wampum #8: Every Onondaga Chief Must Be Present

The Firekeepers shall formally open and close all councils of the statesmen of the League, they shall pass upon all matters deliberated upon by the two sides and render their decision. Every Onondaga statesman (or his deputy) must be present at every Council of the League and must agree with the majority without unwarrantable dissent, so that a unanimous decision may be rendered.

If Atotarho or any of his cousin statesmen are absent from a Council of the League, any other Firekeeper may open and close the Council, but the Firekeepers present may not give any decisions, unless the matter is of small importance.

Note: No chief may start any unnecessary arguments or unjustifiably delay the progress of the Council.

Wampum #9: All Issues Passed First by the Mohawks and the Senecas

All the business of the Five Nations League Council shall be conducted by the two combined bodies of Confederate statesmen. First, the question shall be passed upon by the Mohawk and Seneca statesmen, then it shall be discussed and passed by the Oneida and Cayuga statesmen. Their decision shall then be referred to the Onondaga statesmen, the Firekeepers, for final judgment.

The same process shall be followed when a question is brought before the Council by an individual or a War Chief.

Wampum #10: The Cayuga and Oneida Chiefs Are Next to Decide

In all cases, the procedure must be as follows: when the Mohawk and Seneca statesmen have unanimously agreed upon a question, they shall report their decision to the Cayuga and Oneida statesmen, who shall deliberate upon the question and report a unanimous decision to the Mohawk statesmen. The Mohawk Rotiyaner will then report the standing of the case to the Firekeepers, who shall render a decision as they see fit in case of a disagreement by the two bodies or confirm the decisions of the two bodies, if they are identical. The Firekeepers shall then report their decision to the Mohawk statesmen who shall announce it to the open Council.

Note: This means that in case of a disagreement between the two parties, Mohawk-Seneca and Oneida-Cayuga, the Onondaga statesmen shall cast their "vote" on one or the other, making it a two thirds majority, making it necessary for the one third minority to go along with the decision of the majority and it becomes a unanimous decision.

Wampum #11: Case Must Be Reconsidered if There is a Disagreement

If, through any misunderstanding or obstinacy on the part of the Firekeepers, they reach a decision at variance with that of the two sides, the Two Sides shall reconsider the matter and if their decisions are jointly the same as before, they shall report to the Firekeepers, who are then compelled to confirm their joint decision.

Wampum #12: The Onondaga Firekeepers Are the Last to Decide

When a case comes before the Onondaga, the Firekeepers, for discussion and decision, Atotarho shall introduce the matter to his comrade statesmen, who shall then discuss it in their two bodies. Every Onondaga statesmen except Hononwireton shall deliberate and he shall listen only. When a unanimous decision shall have been reached by the two bodies of Firekeepers, Atotarho shall notify Hononwireton of the fact, then he shall confirm it. He shall refuse to confirm a decision if it is not unanimously agreed upon by both sides of the Firekeepers.

Note: In the Onondaga national council, the party for the final decision is comprised of only one individual, Hononwireton; who however has to follow the rule which is simply to confirm a unanimous decision or to refuse to confirm a decision which was not agreed upon by the two sides. He does not have to take part in the deliberation. It's already taken care of.

Wampum #13: Chiefs to Deliberate in Low Tones

No chief shall ask a question of the body of chiefs of the League when they are discussing a case, question or proposition. He may only deliberate in a low tone with the separate body of which he is a member.

Note: Such an action by a chief may result in disorder and delay the progress of the council.

Wampum #14: The Council Shall Appoint a Speaker for the Day

When the Council of the Five Nations chiefs shall convene, they shall appoint a speaker for the day. He shall be a chief of either the Mohawk, Onondaga or Seneca nations.

The next day, the Council shall appoint another, but the first speaker may be reappointed if there is no objection, but a speaker's term shall not be regarded more than a day.

Wampum #15: Only Chiefs Have a Voice in the Grand Council

No individual or foreign nation interested in a case, question, or proposition shall have any voice in the Council of the League except to answer a question put to him by the Speaker of the chiefs.

Note: This rule precludes hecklers and rowdy disruptions.

Wampum #16: In Case a New Law is Made

If the conditions which shall arise at any future time call for an addition or change of this law, the case shall be carefully considered and if a new beam seems necessary or beneficial, the proposed change shall be decided upon and if adopted, shall be called, "Added to the Rafters."

Note: This points out the law-making privileges of the Rotiyaner.

Rights, Duties, and Qualifications of the Statesmen

Wampum #17: Clan Mothers to Hold Chieftainship Titles via Wampum Strings

A bunch of certain shell (wampum) strings, each two spans in length, shall be given to each of the female families in which the chieftainship titles are vested. The right of bestowing the titles shall be hereditary in the family of females legally possessing the bunch of shell strings and the strings shall be the token that the females of the family have the ownership to the chieftainship title for all time to come, subject to certain restrictions mentioned here.

Note: The families mentioned are political families called the "Clan." The women in possession of the Chieftainship -title wampum strings are Clan Mothers. Like the Rotiyaner (Chiefs), the Clan Mother can be deposed if she does a serious wrong at which time another woman will be installed in her place as the Clan Mother.

Wampum #18: Chief Deposed if He Refuses to Attend a Council Fire

If any chief of the League neglects or refuses to attend the Council of the League, the other Chiefs of the nation of which he is a member shall require their War Chief to request the female sponsors of the Chief so guilty of neglecting his duties to demand his attendance at the Council. If he refuses, the women holding the title shall immediately select another candidate for the title. No chief shall be asked more than once to attend the Council of the League.

Note: The Clan Mother deposes the errant. chief. The War Chief delivers the order by reciting the words of deposition to the errant chief. The three Clan mothers of the Clan of the deposed chief immediately choose another Royaner.

Wampum #19: An Errant Chief Deposed by Clan Mother Through the War Chief

If at any time it shall be apparent that a chief of the League has not in mind the welfare of the people or disobeys the rules of the Great Law, the men or women of the League, or both jointly, shall come to the Council and scold the erring chief through his War Chief. If the complaint of the people through the War Chief is not heeded on the first occasion, it shall be uttered again and then if no attention is given, a third complaint and a warning shall be given. If the chief is still disobedient, the matter shall go to the Council of War Chiefs. The War Chiefs shall then take away the title of the erring chief by order of the women in whom the title is vested. When the chief is deposed, the women shall notify the chiefs of the League through their War Chief and the Chiefs of the League shall sanction the act. The women will then select another of their sons as a candidate and the chiefs shall elect him. Then the chosen one shall be installed by the Installation Ceremony.

When a chief is deposed, his War Chief shall address him as follows:

"So you, ..., disregard and set at naught the warnings of your women relatives. You fling the warnings over your shoulder to cast them behind. Behold the brightness of the Sun, and in the brightness of the Sun's light, I depose you of your title and remove the emblem of your chieftainship title. I remove from your brow the deer's antlers which was the emblem of your position and token of your nobility. I now depose you and return the antlers to the women whose heritage they are."

The War Chief shall now address the women of the deposed Chief and say:

"Mothers as I have deposed your chief, I now return to you the emblem and the title of chieftainship; therefore, repossess them."

Again addressing the deposed chief, he shall say:

"As I have deposed and discharged you, so you are no longer chief. The rest of the people of the League shall not go with you, for we know not the kind of mind you possess. As the Creator has nothing to do with wrong, so he will not come to rescue you from the precipice of destruction in which you have cast yourself. You shall never be restored to the position you once occupied."

Then shall the War Chief address himself to the Chiefs of the nation to which the deposed chief belongs and say:

"Know you, my chiefs, that I have taken the deer's antlers from the brow of ..., the emblem of his position and token of his greatness:"

The chiefs of the League shall have no other alternative than to sanction the discharge of the offending chief.

Wampum #20: For the Chief Guilty of Murder

If a chief of the League of Five Nations should commit murder, the other chiefs of the nation shall assemble at the place where the corpse lies and prepare to depose the criminal chief. If it is impossible to meet at the scene of the crime, the chiefs shall discuss the matter at the next Council of their nation and request their War Chief to depose the chief guilty of the crime, to "bury his women relatives" and to transfer the chieftainship title to a sister family.

The War Chief shall address the chief guilty of murder and say:

"So you,..., did kill ... with your own hands! You have committed a grave crime in the eyes of the Creator. Behold the bright light of the Sun and in the brightness of the Sun's light, I depose you of your title and remove the horns, the sacred emblems of your chieftainship title. I remove from your brow the deer's antlers which was the emblem of your position and token of your nobility. I now depose you and expel you and you shall depart at once from the territory of the League of the Five Nations and never more return again. We, the League of Five Nations, moreover, bury your women relatives because the ancient chieftainship title was never intended to have any union with bloodshed. Henceforth, it shall not be their heritage. By the evil deed that you have done they have forfeited it forever."

The War Chief shall then hand the title to a sister family and he shall address it and say:

"Our Mothers, ..., Listen attentively while I address you on a solemn and important subject. I hereby transfer to you an ancient chieftainship title for a great calamity has befallen it in the hands of the family of a former chief. We trust that you, our Mothers, will always guard it and that you will warn your chief always to be dutiful and to advise his people to ever live in love, peace and harmony that a great calamity may never happen again."

Note: "Bury his women relatives" means political relatives. "Sister Family" is a part of a clan which is composed of three parts with a Chief and a Clan Mother in each part. The Chieftainship Title is lost by the involved part and transferred to another part of the clan. "His women relatives" is that one third part of the clan associated with the deposed killer chief. "Family of a former chief"; political family of the,deposed chief, a third part of the clan.

Wampum #21: Certain Defects Restrict a Chief

Certain physical defects in a statesman of the League makes him ineligible to sit in the League Council. Such defects as infancy, idiocy, blindness, deafness, dumbness and impotency. When a statesman of the League is restricted by any of these conditions, a deputy shall be appointed by his sponsors to act for him, but in cases of extreme necessity, the restricted statesman may exercise his rights.

Wampum #22: Chief May or May Not Resign if Active Chiefs Refuse to Accept His Resignation

If a statesman of the League desires to resign his title, he shall notify the statesmen of the nation of which he is a member of his intentions. . If his co-active statesmen refuse to accept his resignation, he may not resign his title.

A statesman, in proposing to resign, may recommend any proper candidate which recommendation shall be received by the statesman but unless confirmed and nominated by the women who hold the title, the candidate shall not be considered.

Wampum #23: On Chiefs Making Wampum Strings or Belts

Any chief of the League of Five Nations may construct shell strings or wampum belts of any size of length as pledges or records of matters of national and international importance.

When it is necessary to dispatch a shell string by a War Chief or other messenger as a token of summons, the messenger shall recite the contents of the string to whom it is sent. That party shall' repeat the message and if there has been a summons, he shall make ready for his journey.

Any of the people of the Five Nations may use shells or wampum as the record of a pledge, contract or an agreement entered into and the same shall be binding as soon as shell strings have been exchanged by both parties.

Wampum #24: The Skins of Chiefs Shall Be Seven Spans Thick

The chiefs of the League of Five Nations shall be mentors of the people for all time. The thickness of their skin shall be seven spans nine (tsatahniironkarakeh), which is to say that they shall be proof against anger; offensive 'action and criticism. Their

hearts hall be full of peace and good will, and their minds filled with a yearning for the people of the League. With endless patience, they shall carry out their duty. Their firmness shall be tempered with a tenderness for their people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodging in their minds and all their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation.

Wampum #25: Chief Seeking Independent Authority Will Be Deposed

If a chief of the League should seek to establish any authority independent of the jurisdiction of the League of the Great Peace, which is the Five Nations, he shall be warned three times in open Council: first by the women relatives, second by the men relatives, and finally by the chiefs of the Nation to which he belongs.

If the offending chief is still persistent, he shall be dismissed by the War Chief of his Nation for refusing to conform to the laws of the Great Peace. His Nation shall then install the candidate nominated by the female name holders of his family.

Note: Again, the "relatives" are the people of the Clan. Political relatives. The "female name holders of his family" are the Clan Mothers of the Clan. The "name" is the title given to each Royaner while he is going through the ceremony of becoming a Royaner. The title he gets is the name of the original Chief whose place he assumes when installed as a Royaner.

Wampum #26: The Chiefs as Teachers and Spiritual Guides

It shall be the duty of all the chiefs of the League of Five Nations from time to time as occasion demands to act as teachers and spiritual guides of their people and remind them of their Creator's will and words.

They shall say:

"Listen, that peace may continue unto future days! "Always listen to the words of the Great Creator, for he has spoken. "United People, let no evil find lodging in your minds. "For the Great Creator has spoken and the Cause of Peace shall not become old. "The cause of Peace shall not die if you remember the Great Creator."

Note: Great faith shown here.

Wampum #27: All Chiefs Must Be Honest

All chiefs of the League of Five Nations must be honest in all things. They must not idle and gossip, but be men possessing those honorable qualities that make true leaders. It shall be a serious wrong for anyone to lead a chief into trivial affairs for the people must ever hold their chiefs high in estimation out of respect to their honorable positions.

Wampum #28: A New Chief Must Make Pledge via Four Strings of Wampum

When a candidate Chief is to be installed, he shall furnish four strings of shells or wampum one span in length bound together at one end. Such will constitute the evidence of his pledge to the chiefs of the League that he will live according to the Constitution of the Great Peace and exercise justice in all affairs.

When the pledge is furnished, the Speaker of the Council must hold the shell strings in his hand and address the opposite side of the Council Fire and he shall begin his address saying:

"Now behold him. He has now become a chief of the League. See how splendid he looks."

An address may then follow. At the end of it, he shall send the bunch of shell strings to the opposite side and they shall be received as evidence of the pledge. Then shall the opposite side say:

"We now do crown you with the sacred emblem of the deer's antlers, the emblem of your chieftainship. You shall now become a mentor of the people of the Five Nations. The thickness of your skin shall be seven spans, which is to say that you shall be proof against anger, offensive actions and criticism. Your heart shall be filled with peace and good will. Your mind shall be filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the League. With endless patience you shall carry out your duty and your firmness shall be tempered with tenderness for your people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodging in your mind. All your words and actions shall be marked with calm deliberation. In all your deliberations in the Council of the League, in your efforts at law-making, in all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast away. Do not cast over your shoulder behind you the warnings of your nephews and nieces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the Great Law which is right and just. Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people, and have always in view not only the

present, but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground - the unborn of the future Nation.”

Note: A condolence ceremony is performed when a chief dies and a new one is installed. The candidate Chief shall make or buy the required string wampum, four strings of one span (four inches) in length tied together at one end. The Clan Mother keeps the string wampum after the Installation Ceremony. In the address, the Royaner holds the string pledge wampum in his hand. The Rotiyaner of the opposite side of the Council Fire from the Candidate Chief shall do the Installation Ceremony. That is, the Mohawk, Seneca and Onondaga Rotiyaner shall be installed by the Oneida and Cayuga Rotiyaner and vice versa.

Wampum #29: The New Chief Shall Furnish the Food for the Celebrations

When a chieftainship title is to be conferred, the candidate chief shall furnish the cooked venison, the corn bread and the corn soup, together with other necessary things and the labor for the Conferring of Titles Festival.

Wampum #30: Chieftainship Title Can Be Conferred When the Great Law is Recited

The chiefs of the League may confer the Chieftainship title whenever the Great Law is recited, if there is a candidate, for the Great Law speaks all the rules.

Wampum #31: A Seriously Ill Chief Temporarily Deposed

If a chief of the League should become seriously ill and be thought near death, the women who are the heirs of his title shall go to his house and lift his crown of deer antlers, the emblem of his Chieftainship, and place them at one side. If the Creator spares him and he rises from his bed of sickness, he may rise with the antlers on his brow.

The following words shall be used to temporarily remove the antlers:

”Now our comrade chief, the time has come when we must approach you in your illness. We remove for a time the deer’s antlers from your brow. We remove the emblem of your Chieftainship title. The Great Law has decreed that no chief should end his life with the antlers on his brow. We, therefore,

lay them aside in the room. If the Creator spares you and you recover from your illness, you shall resume your duties as chief of the League and you may again labor for the people of the League.”

Note: The Clan Mothers depose a chief before he dies. He must not take the title with him to the grave. The title will be inherited by his successor.

Wampum #32: No Council for Ten Days When a Chief Dies

If a chief of the League should die while the Council of the Five Nations is in session, the Council shall adjourn for ten days. No Council of the League shall sit within ten days of the death of a Chief of the League.

If the Three Brothers (ahsennihontatehkenah) (the Mohawks, the Onondaga and the Seneca) should lose one of their chiefs by death, the Younger Brother (iatatehkenah) (the Cayuga and the Oneida) shall come to the surviving chiefs of the Three Brothers on the tenth day and console them. If the Younger Brothers lose one of their chiefs, then the Three Brothers shall come to them and console them. And the consolation shall be the reading of the contents of the thirteenth shell wampum of Ayonwatha. At the termination of this rite, a successor shall be appointed by the women heirs of the chieftainship title. If the women are not ready to place their nominee before the chiefs, the Speaker shall say:

”Come let us go out.”

All shall then leave the Council or place of gathering. The Speaker shall lead the way from the house by saying:

”Let us depart to the edge of the woods and lie in wait on our bellies.”
(Tenshakonatioswentarese).

When the women title holders shall have chosen one of their sons, the chiefs of the League will assemble in two places, the Younger Brothers in one place and the three Older Brothers in another. The chiefs who are to console the mourning chiefs shall choose one of their number to sing the Song of Peace as they journey to the sorrowing chiefs. The singer shall lead the way and the chiefs and the people shall follow. When they reach the sorrowing chiefs, they shall hail the candidate chief and perform the rite of Conferring the Chieftainship title. (Ohkeiontentshera)

Note: ”Women’ heirs of the Chieftainship Title” means that the Clan Mothers are keepers of the Chiefs string wampum which he turns over to his Clan Mother before he is given the title at the Conferring of Chieftainship rite. The title is the name of the original Chief in whose position the Candidate Royaner is inheriting. ”When the women title holders shall have chosen one of the sons,” means political sons or men of the particular Clan concerned, not necessarily any of their natural sons.

Wampum #33: When a Chief Dies All Iroquois Chiefs Are Notified

When a chief of the League dies, the surviving relatives shall immediately dispatch a messenger, a mentor of another clan, to the chiefs in another locality. When the runner comes within hailing distance of the locality, he shall utter a sad wail, thusly: "Kwa-ah! Kwa-ah!" The sound shall be repeated three times, and then again and again at intervals as many times as the distance may require. When the runner arrives at the settlement, the people shall assemble and one must ask the nature of his sad message.

He shall then say:

"Let us consider." (rakwennikonriak).

Then he shall tell them of the death of the chief. He shall deliver to them a string of shells or wampum and say:

"Here is the testimony, you have heard the message."

He then may return home.

It now becomes the duty of the chiefs of the locality to send runners to other localities and each locality shall send messengers until all chiefs are notified. Runners shall travel day and night.

Note: The mourning relatives (members of the same clan) are consoled by the members of the clan that sits opposite to them at the Council Fire. They also do the running to distant chiefs. When their own chief dies, then the favor is returned.

Wampum #34: No Chief May Carry His Title to the Grave

If a chief dies and there is no candidate qualified for the office in the family of the women title holders, the chief of the Nation shall give the title into the hands of a sister family (Kentennonteron) in the clan until such time as the original family produces a candidate, when the title shall be restored to the rightful owners.

No chieftainship title may be carried into the grave. The chiefs of the League may dispossess a dead chief of his title even at the grave.

Note: "Sister family in the clan." There are three chiefs and three Clan Mothers in each Clan. Each chief and each clan mother represent a 'family' or a political family in the Clan. Makes it easy to reach decisions in Clan Councils. The Chieftainship Titles have been in existence since the Confederacy was founded and must not be buried.

Pine Tree Chief

Wampum #35: The Pine Tree Chief

Should any man of the Nation assist with special ability or show great interest in the affairs of the Nation, if he proves himself wise and honest and worthy of confidence, the Chiefs of the League may elect him to a seat among them and he may sit in the Council of the League. He shall be proclaimed a Pine Tree, sprung up for the Nation, and be installed as such at the next assembly for the installation of chiefs. Should he ever do anything contrary to the rules of the Great Peace, he may not be deposed from office - no one shall cut him down - but thereafter every one shall be deaf to his voice and his advice. Should he resign from his seat and title, no one shall prevent it. A Pine Tree Chief has no authority to name a successor, nor is his title hereditary.

The War Chiefs

Wampum #36: The Title Names of the Five War Chiefs

The title names of the War Chiefs of the League shall be:

- **Ayonwehs:** war chief under Chief Tekarihoken(Mohawk).
- **Kahonwaitiron:** war chief under Chief Otatsheteh(Oneida).
- **Ayentes:** war chief under Chief Atotarho(Onondaga).
- **Wenens:** war chief under Chief Dekanyon(Cayuga).
- **Shoneratowaneh:** war chief under Chief Skanyatariio(Seneca).

The women heirs of each head chiefs title shall be the heirs of war chiefs title of their respective chief.

The war chiefs shall be selected from the eligible sons of the female families holding the chieftainship title.

Note: War Chiefs ruled absolutely over the nations when the Iroquois Confederacy was formed. The ruling war chiefs were Tekarihoken for the Mohawks, Atateheteh for the Oneidas, Atotarho for the Onondagas, Dekanyon for the Cayugas and Skanyatariio for the Senecas. They all became part of the 49 Chiefs in the new order devised by Deganawida, Founder of the Iroquois Confederacy. They became Peace Chiefs and anew order for protection and defense was devised and the new category of War Chiefs established and they included Ayonwehs for the Mohawks, Kahonwaitiron for the Oneidas, Ayentes for the Onondagas, Wenens for the Cayugas and Shoreratowaneh for the Senecas and these new War Chiefs took instructions and directions from the former rulers of the Nations.

The Gayanerekowa has definite functions for the War Chief and his men (Warrior Society). They are charged with the protection, defense and welfare of the people. These duties may take many forms, such as keeping the peace, teaching, speaking to the people, repossessing lost lands, . maintaining human rights, diplomatic relations with other nations, and any other work that promotes the welfare of the people.

Wampum #37: One War Chief for Each Nation and Their Functions

There shall be one War Chief for each Nation and their duties shall be to carry messages for their chiefs and to take up arms in case of emergency. They shall not participate in the proceedings of the Council, but shall watch its progress and in case of an erroneous action by a chief, the War. Chiefs shall receive the complaints of the people and convey the warnings of the women to him. The people who wish to convey messages to the Chiefs of the League shall do so through the War Chief of their Nation. It shall always be his duty to lay the cases, questions and propositions of the people before the Council of the League.

Wampum #38: When a War Chief Dies Another is Installed

When a War Chief dies, another shall be installed by the same rite as that by which a Chief (of the Council) is installed.

Wampum #39: When a War Chief Acts Against the Great Law

If a War Chief acts contrary to instructions or against the provisions of the Laws of the Great Peace; doing so in the capacity of his office, he shall be deposed by his women relatives and by his men relatives. Either the women alone or the men alone or jointly may act in such a case. The women title holders shall then choose another candidate.

Note: The people of the Clans here show their power. The women title holders are, of course, the Clan Mothers.

Wampum #40: When the Chiefs Send a Messenger for the Council

When the chiefs of the League take occasion to dispatch a messenger on behalf of the Council of the League, they shall wrap up any matter they may send and instruct the messenger to remember his errand to turn not aside, but to proceed faithfully to his destination and deliver his message according to every instruction.

Wampum #41: How the Messenger Shall Proceed

If a message borne by a runner is the warning of an invasion, he shall whoop: "*Kwa-ah, Kwa-ah!*" twice and repeat at short intervals, then again at a longer interval.

If a human is found dead, the finder shall not touch the body, but return home immediately shouting at short intervals "*Koo-weh!*"

The Clans

Wampum #42: Titles of Clans

Among the Five Nations and their descendants there shall be the following Clans:

Bear, Eel, Snipe, Beaver, Hawk, Turtle, Deer, Heron, Wolf

These Clans distributed through their respected nations shall be the sole owners and holders of the soil of the country and in them is vested, as a birthright.

Note: There are clans other than these among the S Nations. The Europeans, not being members of any of these Clans, have no right to own any land in this part of the world.

Wampum #43: Members of the Same Clan in Other Nations

People of the Five Nations who are members of a certain clan shall recognize every member of the Clan no matter what Nation, as relatives. Men and women, therefore, who are members of the same Clan are forbidden to marry.

Wampum #44: Lineal Descent of the People Runs in the Female Line

The lineal descent of the people of the Five Nations shall run in the female line. Women shall be considered the Progenitors of the Nation. They shall own the land and the soil. Men and women shall follow the status of their mothers.

Wampum #45: The Clan Mothers, Women Title Holders

The women heirs of the chieftainship titles of the League shall be called Oyaner or Otiyaner for all time to come.

Note: The Clan Mothers shall be called Oyaner. Oyaner is derived from the word Oyana meaning "path ". Oyaner is the female "good path maker." Otiyaner is in the plural. Royaner means, "He makes a good path for people to follow." Rotiyaner is in the plural.

Wampum #46: Clan Mothers Are Keepers of the Authorized Names

The women of the 48 (now 50) noble families shall be the heirs of the authorized names for all time to come.

When an infant of the Five Nations is given an Authorized Name at the Midwinter Festival or at the Green Corn and Strawberry and Harvest Festival, one in the cousinhood of which the infant is a member shall be appointed a speaker. He shall announce to the opposite cousinhood the names of the father and mother of the child together with the clan of the mother. Then the speaker shall announce the child's name twice. The uncle of the child shall then take the child in his arms and walking up and down the room shall sing, "My head is firm; I am of the League." As he sings, the opposite cousinhood shall respond by chanting: "Hyen, Hyen, Hyen, Hyen...", until the song is ended.

Note: The "cousinhood" is the other Clan. The purpose of announcing the Clan of the mother is to point out the Clan of the child. A child is born a Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, etc., but when he is named in the Great Law ceremony, the child becomes an Iroquois or Rotinsonsonni. He is a Mohawk by blood and an Iroquois by law, for Gayanerekowa is also known as the Great Law, is the Constitution of the Kanonsnionwe or the Iroquois Confederacy. By the same token, if an individual or a whole Nation leaves the Iroquois Confederacy and in time realizes their great error and decide to be reinstated, then would be required to go through the Naming Ceremony or in their case, a re-naming ceremony and hold the Pledge Wampum and re-accept the Great Law and this act could be called the Iroquois Pledge of Allegiance.

Wampum #47: In Case Clan Mothers Become Extinct

If the female heirs of a title of a chief of the League becomes extinct, the title shall be given by the chiefs of the League to a sister family whom they shall elect, and that family shall hold the name and transmit it to their female heirs, but they shall not appoint any of their sons as a candidate for a title until all the eligible men of the former family shall have died, or otherwise have become ineligible.

Note: If the Clan Mothers who hold a Royaner Title become extinct, the Chiefs of the Confederacy shall give the Royaner title to another of the three parties making up the clan, but they will not appoint a Royaner until all the eligible men in the former clan (family) have died. Which means that the Chiefs of the Confederacy can institute a new clan if necessary.

Wampum #48: In Case All the Clan Mothers Become Extinct

If all the heirs of a chieftainship become extinct, and so all the families in the Clan, then the title shall be given by the chiefs of the League to a family of a sister Clan whom they shall elect.

Note: The chiefs shall take from a large clan and make a new clan or keep up the extinct clan so that the title shall not be lost.

Wampum #49: If a Clan Mother Refuses to Bestow a Chieftainship Title

If any of the Otiyaner women, heirs of a titleship, shall willfully withhold a chieftainship or other title and refuse to bestow it, or if such heirs abandon, forsake or despise their heritage, then shall such women be deemed buried, and their family extinct. The titleship shall then revert to a sister family or Clan, upon application and complaint. The chiefs of the League shall elect the family or Clan which shall in future hold the title.

Note: How political rights are lost by one of the three parties of a Clan when it's Clan Mother refuses to follow the rules of her position.

Wampum #50: Clan Mother's Duty if a Chief Holds a Conference at His Home

The Otiyaner women of the League, heirs of the chieftainship titles, shall elect two women of their family as cooks for the chief when the people shall assemble at his house for business or other purposes.

Wampum #51: For a Chief Holding a Conference With Other Chiefs at His Home

When a chief holds a conference in his home, his wife, if she wishes, may prepare the food for the union chiefs who assemble with him. This is an honorable right which she may exercise and an expression of her esteem.

Wampum #52: How Clan Mothers Correct Erring Chiefs

The Otiyaner women, heirs of the chieftainship titles, shall, should it be necessary, correct and admonish the holders of the titles. Those only who attend the Council may do this and those who do not shall not object to what has been said nor strive to undo the action.

Note: The Clan Mothers (Otiyaner) may correct and give friendly advice to the Rotiyaner (Chiefs).

Wampum #53: Rules for Clan Mothers to Follow in Selecting a New Chief

When the Otiyaner women, holders of a chieftainship title, select one of their sons as a candidate, they shall select one who is trustworthy, of good character, of honest disposition, one who manages his own affairs, and supports his own family, if any, and who has proven a faithful man to his nation.

Note: When the Clan Mothers "select one of their sons" it means one of the men in the Clan who has the proper qualifications. It does not necessarily mean one of their own natural sons, the Clan being a political family.

Wampum #54: Clan Mothers Hold a Council to Select a New Chief

When a chieftainship title becomes vacant through death or other cause, the Otiyaner women of the Clan in which the title is hereditary shall hold a council and shall choose one of their sons to fill the office made vacant. Such a candidate shall not be the father of any chief of the League. If the choice is unanimous, the name is referred to the men relatives of the Clan. If they should disapprove, it shall be their duty to select a candidate from among their own number. If then the men and women are unable to decide which of the two candidates shall be named, then the

matter shall be referred to the chiefs of the League in the Clan. They shall decide which candidate shall be named. If the men and women agree to a candidate, then his name shall be referred to the sister clan for confirmation. If the sister clans confirm the choice, they shall refer their action to the chiefs of the League who shall ratify the choice and present it to their cousin chiefs, and if the cousin chiefs confirm the name, then the candidate shall be installed by the proper ceremony for the conferring of chieftainship titles.

Note: Again, "one of their sons" means the eligible men of the Clan. The new chief shall have to meet with the approval of all the men, women, Clan Mothers and other Chiefs.

The Symbols

Wampum #55: All Chiefs Contribute to the Making of Grand Council Wampum Strings

A large bunch of shell strings, in the making of which the Five Nations League Chiefs have equally contributed, shall symbolize the completeness of the unions, and certify the pledge of the Nations, represented by the chiefs of the League of the Mohawk, the Oneida, The Onondaga, the Cayuga, and the Seneca, that all are united and formed into one body, or union, called the Union of the Great Law which they have established.

A bunch of shell strings is to be the symbol of the Council Fire of the League of Five Nations. And the chief whom the Council of Firekeepers shall appoint to speak for them in opening the Council shall hold the strands of shell in his hands when speaking. When he finishes speaking, he shall place the strings on an elevated place or pole so that all the assembled chiefs and the people may see it and know that the Council is open and in progress.

Wampum #56: The Great Law of Peace Each Wampum String Represents One Territory of the Nations

Five strings of shell tied together as one shall represent the Five Nations. Each string shall represent one territory and the whole a completely united territory known as the Five Nations Territory.

Wampum #57: Five Arrows Bound Together "United in One Body and One Mind"

Five arrows shall be bound together very strong and shall represent on Nation each. As the five arrows are strong bound, this shall symbolize the complete union of the nations. Thus are the Five Nations completely united and enfolded together, united into one head, one body and one mind. They, therefore, shall labor, legislate and council together for the interest of future generations.

Note: When the Confederacy was formed, Deganawida actually demonstrated by taking one arrow and breaking it in half. Then he took five arrows and tried to break it to show how strong the Five Nations can become.

Wampum #58: Any Chief or Other Persons Who Submit to Laws of a Foreign People Are Alienated and Forfeit All Claims in the Iroquois Nations

There are now the Five Nations League Chiefs standing with joined hands in a circle. This signifies and provides that should any of the chiefs of the League leave the Council and the League, his crown of deer's antlers, the emblem of his chieftainship title, together with his birthright, shall lodge on the arms of the union chiefs whose hands are so joined. He forfeits his title and the crown falls from his brow, but it shall remain in the League.

A further meaning of this is that if, at any time, anyone of the chiefs of the League choose to submit to the law of a foreign people, he is no longer in but out of the League and persons of this class shall be called, "They have alienated themselves" (Tehonatonkoton). Likewise, such persons who submit to laws of foreign nations shall forfeit all birthrights and claims of the League of Five Nations and territory:

"You, the League of Five Nations Chiefs, be firm so that if a tree should fall upon your joined hands, it shall not separate you or weaken your hold. So shall the strength of union be preserved."

Note: This means that the Indians who follow the laws made by foreigners and it includes Canada's Indian Act and the United States Federal Indian Law have alienated themselves from their own nations. That is why an Indian such as a Mohawk who voted in the elections devised by the Canadian or United States governments have to be reinstated in a special ceremony to regain their lost Iroquois citizenship which they lost by the simple act of voting in the Canadian Band Council or United States Tribal Council elections, as well as voting in Canada's national or the United States national elections.

Wampum #59: In Case Any or All Chiefs Go Against the Great Law, They May Either Be Deposed or Executed by the War Chief and His Men

A bunch of wampum strings, three spans of the hand in length, the upper half of the bunch being white and the lower half black, and formed from equal contributions of the men of the Five Nations, shall be the token that the men have combined themselves into one head, one body and one thought, and it shall symbolize their ratification of the peace pact of the League, whereby the Chiefs of the Five Nations have established the Great Peace. The white portion of the shell strings represent the women and the black portion of men. The black portion, furthermore, is a token of power and authority vested in the men of the Five Nations.

This string of wampum vests the people with the right to correct their erring chiefs. In case a part of the chiefs or all of them pursue a course not vouched for by the people and heed not the third warning of their women relatives (Wasenensawenrate). Then the matter shall be taken to the general council of the Women of the Five Nations. If the chiefs notified and warned three times fail to heed, then the case falls into the hands of the men of the Five Nations. The War Chiefs shall then by right of such power and authority, enter the open Council to warn the chief or chiefs to return from their wrong course.

If the chiefs heed the warning, they shall say:

"We shall reply tomorrow."

If then an answer is returned in favor of justice and in accord with the Great Law, then the Chiefs shall individually pledge themselves again, by again furnishing the necessary shells for the pledge. Then shall the War Chief or Chiefs exhort the chiefs, urging them to be just and true.

Should it happen that the chiefs refuse to heed the third warning, then two courses are open: either the men may decide in their council to depose the chief or chiefs, or to club them to death with war clubs. Should they in their council decide to take the first course, the War Chief shall address the chief or chiefs saying:

"Since you, the chiefs of the Five Nations, have refused to return to the procedure of the Constitution, we now declare your seats vacant and we take off your horns, the token of your chieftainship, and others shall be chosen and installed in your seats. Therefore, vacate your seats."

Should the men in their council adopt the second course, the War Chief shall order his men to enter the Council, to take positions beside the errant chiefs sitting between

them wherever possible. When this is accomplished, the War Chief holding in his outstretched hand a bunch of black wampum strings shall say to the erring chiefs:

"So now, Chiefs of the Five Nations, harken to these last words from your men. You have not heeded the warnings of the General Council of Women and you have not heeded the warnings of the Men of the Nations, all during you to the right course of action. Since you are determined to resist and to withhold justice from you people, there is only one course for us to adopt."

At this point, the War Chiefs shall drop the bunch of black wampum and the men shall spring to their feet and club the erring chiefs to death. Any erring chief may become submissive before the War Chief lets fall the Black Wampum. The Black Wampum here used symbolizes that the power to execute is buried, but it may be raised up again by the men. It is buried, but when the occasion arises, they may pull it up and derive their power and authority to act as here described.

Note: The right to decide on execution is held by both the General Council of the Men of the Five Nations and the General Council of the Women of the Five Nations. So is the right to decide on war. The "War Chief shall order his men." In the present century a new title has been given to the War Chief and his men: "The Warrior Society."

Wampum #60: Wampum Belt of the Iroquois Confederacy

A broad belt of wampum of thirty-eight rows, having a white heart in the center, on either side of which are two white squares all connected with the heart by white rows of beads shall be the emblem of the Five Nations.

The first of the squares on the left represents the Mohawk Nation and its territory, the second square on the left and near the heart represents the Oneida Nation and its territory, and the white heart in the middle represents the Onondaga Nation and its territory. It also means that the heart of the Five Nations is single in its loyalty to the Great Peace, and that the Great Peace is lodged in the hear (meaning with Onondaga League Chiefs) and that the Council Fire is to bum there for the Five Nations. Further it means that the authority is given to advance the cause of peace whereby hostile nations out of the League shall cease warfare. The white square to the right of the heart represents the Cayuga Nation and its territory and the fourth and last square represents the Seneca Nation and its territory. White here symbolizes that no evil nor jealous thoughts shall creep into the minds of the chiefs while in Council under the Great Peace, White the emblem of peace, love, charity, and equity surrounds and guards the Five Nations.

Note: The above Wampum Belt was made by Ayonwatha (Hiawatha to the white man) to commemorate the making of the Great Law.

Wampum #61: In Case a Great Calamity Threatens

Should a great calamity threaten the generations rising and living of the Five Nations, then he who is able to climb to the top of the Tree of the Great Long Leaves (White Pine) may do so. When he reaches the top of the Tree, he shall look about in all directions and should he see evil things indeed approaching, then he shall call to the people of the Five United Nations assembled beneath the Tree of the Great Peace and say:

"A calamity threatens your happiness."

Then shall the Chiefs convene in Council and discuss the impending evil. When all the truths relating to the trouble shall be fully known and found to be truths, then shall the people seek a tree of Kahnonkaahkona, the great swamp elm tree and when they shall find it they shall assemble their heads together and lodge for a time between its roots. Then, their labors being finished, they may hope for happiness for many more days after.

Note: This is ancient man's way of warning the people to be ever on the alert to danger, discuss it and do something about it.

Wampum #62: Reading the Great Law

When the League of the Five Nations Council declares for a reading of the belts of shell to mind these laws, they shall provide for the reader a specially made mat woven of the fibers of wild hemp. The mat shall not be used again, for such formality is called "honoring the importance of the law."

Note: The reading of the Great Law from the Wampum is very important and honorable. Some Indians won't read the Great Law in its written form because it says it should be recited every five years from the Wampum records. That's the way it had to be done originally because there was no written language. Now that there is a written language, Deganawida would have certainly recommended and urged that the people read the Great Law often. There are chiefs who don't even know when they are violating the law because they refuse to read it in its written form.

Wampum #63: How the Great Law is Recited

Should two sons of opposite sides of the Council Fire agree (istawa) in a desire to hear the reciting of the laws of the Great Peace and so refresh their memories in a way specified by the Founder of the League, they shall notify Atotarho. He shall consult with five of his cousin chiefs and they in turn shall consult with their eight brethren.

Then should they decide to accede to the request of the two sons from the opposite sides of the Council Fire, Atotarho shall send messengers to notify the chiefs of each of the Five Nations. Then they shall dispatch their War Chief to notify their brother and cousin chiefs of the meeting and its time and place.

When all have come and have assembled, Atotarho, in conjunction with his cousin chiefs, shall appoint one chief who shall repeat the laws of the Great Peace to the two sons. Then the chosen one shall repeat the laws of the Great Peace.

Note: "Two sons of opposite sides of the Council Fire" means two ordinary men, non-chiefs who are members of different clans who sit opposite each other across the Council Fire. Atotarho's "five cousin chiefs" means those who sit opposite him in the Onondaga Council. "Their eight brethren" means brother Chiefs who sit on the same side of the Council Fire. It would seem that the Wampum reader repeats, that is, reads the Great Law twice, once to the two sons and then to everybody.

Wampum #64: The Expert Speaker/singer of the Law at the Installation Rites

At the ceremony of the installation of chiefs, if there is only one expert speaker and singer of the Law and the Song of Peace to stand at the Council Fire, then when this speaker and singer has finished addressing one side of the Fire, he shall go to the opposite side and reply to his own speech and song. He shall act for both sides of the Fire until the entire ceremony has been completed. Such a speaker and singer shall be termed "Two-faced" because he speaks and sings for both sides of the Fire.

Note: People can become lax and negligent and suddenly find themselves without the right kind of speakers and singers.

Wampum #65: Burying the Weapons Ceremony

I, Deganawida, and the United Chiefs, now uproot the tallest tree (skarenhesekowa) and into the hole thereby made, we case all weapons of war. Into the depths of the earth, down into the deep underneath currents of water (Tionswatetsien) flowing to unknown regions we cast all the weapons of strife. We bury them from sight and we plant again the tree. Thus, shall the Great Peace be established and hostilities shall no longer be known between the Five Nations, but peace to the United People.

Note: The Five Nations buried their weapons of war so they'll never fight and kill each other again and they haven't. They only unbury the war club to execute a traitor. However, they did not bury the hatchet to all their enemies for they fought numerous wars and battles after the Iroquois Confederacy was founded and the Great Law was established.

Adoptions

Wampum #66: "a Name Hung About the Neck"

The father of a child of great comeliness, learning, ability or specially loved because of some circumstance may, at the will of the child's Clan, select a name from his own (the father's) Clan and bestow it by ceremony, such as is provided. The naming is only temporary and shall be called, "*A name hung about the neck.*"

Note: A given name can be only temporary.

Wampum #67: Giving a Name to a Person of Another Clan or a Foreign Nation

Should any person, a member of the League of the Five Nations, especially esteem a man or a woman of another Clan or of a foreign nation, he may choose a name, bestow it upon that person so esteemed. The naming shall be in accord with the ceremony of bestowing names. Such a name is only temporary and shall be called, "A name hung about the neck". A short string of shells shall be delivered with the name as a record and a pledge.

Note: This type of name giving is more serious as a string wampum and a pledge are involved.

Wampum #68: Asking to Be Adopted Into a Clan

Should any member of the Five Nations, a family or a person belonging to a foreign nation submit a proposal for adoption into a clan or one of the Five Nations, he or she shall furnish a string of shells, a span in length, as a pledge to the Clan into which he or they wish to be adopted. The Chiefs of the Nation shall then consider the proposal and submit a decision.

Note: Adoption is how the Clans are kept at full strength.

Wampum #69: For One to Adopt a Person, a Family or a Number of Families

Any member of the Five Nations, who through esteem or other feelings, wishes to adopt an individual, a family, or a number of families, may offer adoption to him or them, and if accepted, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the Chiefs for confirmation and the Chiefs must confirm the adoption.

Note: Anyone may adopt a person or many persons but must get official sanction by the Rotiyaner in Council.

Wampum #70: What to Do After Adoption

When the adoption of anyone shall have been confirmed by the Chiefs of the Nation, the chiefs shall address the people of the Nation and say:

"Now you of our Nation, be informed that, ... (such a person, such a family, or such families), have ceased forever to bear their birth nation's name and have buried it in the depth of the earth. Henceforth let no one of our Nation ever mention the original name or nation of their birth. To do so will hasten the end of our peace."

Note: The name of the adopted person's nation or birthplace must never be mentioned as it causes trouble or end of the peace.

Emigration

Wampum #71: About Emigrating to a Distant Region

When a person or family belonging to the Five Nations desires to abandon their Nation and the territory of the Five Nations they shall inform the chiefs of their Nation and the Council of the League of Five Nations shall take notice of it.

When a person or any of the people of the Five Nations emigrate and reside in a distant region away from the territory of the League of Five Nations, the chiefs of the Five Nations at will may send a messenger carrying a broad belt of black shells and when the messenger arrives, he shall call the people together or address them personally, displaying the belt of black shells and they shall know that this is an order for them to return to their original homes and to their Council Fires.

Note: The Rotiyaner may or may not recall an emigrant depending on the circumstances.

Land Title

Wampum #72: Law of Ownership

The soil of the earth from one end to the other is the property of people who inhabit it. By birthright, the Onkwehonwe, the original beings, are the owners of the soil which they own and occupy and non other may hold it. The same law has been held from the oldest times.

Note: The Onkwehonwe legal opinion is that the natives of America were the first humans on this land. The originated in the land they live on and occupy and no foreigners have the right to take over the land. The so-called "conquest of America" is simply a bare-faced robbery of Indian land.

Wampum #73: People Made Different, Put in Different Lands and Speak Different Languages

The Great Creator has made us of one blood and of the same soil he made us, and as only different tongues constitute different nations, he established different hunting grounds and territories and made boundary lines between them.

Note: Each nation has a boundary line to stay within. Also no race of people has a "God given" right to invade other races.

Foreigners

Wampum #74: Alien Nations Admitted on a Temporary Basis

When any alien nation or individual is admitted into the League, the admission shall be understood only to be a temporary one. Should the person or nation create loss or do wrong, cause suffering of any kind to endanger the peace of the League, the League statesmen shall order one of their War Chiefs to reprimand him or them. If a similar offense is committed, the offending party shall be expelled from the League.

Wampum #75: Alien Refugees Seeking Permanent Residence

When a member of an alien nation comes to the territory of the League and seeks refuge and permanent residence, the Statesman of the Nation to which he comes shall extend hospitality and make him a member of the Nation. Then he shall be accorded equal rights and privileges in all matters except as mentioned here.

Wampum #76: Temporary Adoptions

No body of alien people who have been adopted temporarily shall have a vote in the Council of the Chiefs of the League, for only they who have been invested with chieftainship titles may vote in the Council. Aliens have nothing by blood to make claim to a vote and should they have it, not knowing all the traditions of the League, might go against the Great Peace. In this manner, the Great Peace would be endangered and perhaps be destroyed.

Note: The word "vote" is used here to mean "voice" as there is no voting or balloting in the National or Grand Councils of the Five Nations. Only the Rotiyaner have a voice in the Councils unless an individual is asked to speak by the Rotiyaner.

Wampum #77: The Temporary Adopted May Also Be Expelled

When the chiefs of the League decide to admit a foreign nation and an adoption is made, the chiefs shall inform the adopted nation that its admission is only temporary. They shall also say to the nation that it must never try to control; interfere with, or injure the Five Nations, nor disregard the Great Peace or any of its rules or customs. In no way should they cause disturbance or injury. Then shall the adopted nation disregard these injunctions, their adoption will be annulled and they will be expelled.

The expulsion shall be in the following manner. The Council shall appoint one of their War Chiefs to convey the message of annulment and he shall say:

"You,... (naming the nation), Listen to me while I speak. I am here to inform you again of the will of the Five Nations Council. It was clearly made known to you at a former time. Now, the chiefs of the Five Nations have decided to expel you and cast you out. We disown you now and annul your adoption. Therefore you must look for a path in which to go and lead away all your people. It was you, not we, who committed wrong and caused this sentence of annulment., -So then go your way and depart from the territory of the Five Nations and away from the League."

Note: The Tuscaroras were admitted into the Iroquois Confederacy in 1714 and given a piece of Oneida territory. It was too close to white settlements and they asked for land further away and were given land in Seneca territory. They are not a foreign Indian nation. They had found their way back to their own people. A different situation would exist if an alien Indian nation living in their own territory asked to join the Iroquois Confederacy which was the original plan of Deganawida, to have all Indian nations unite in one big alliance. They never got beyond Five Nations. The Tuscaroras were not given a voice in the Grand Council and all other Indian nations seeking admission were given protectorate Indian nation status with no voice nor power in the Confederacy. This is not what Deganawida had in mind. Had his plan been followed, there would now be a mighty Iroquois Confederacy of more than 200 nations with a country of its own. The missionaries take the credit for this failure to create a pan American Confederacy. They say they went all over America to all Indian nations and spread propaganda against the Iroquois Confederacy, especially against the Mohawks whom they consider the most militant and most able organizers. Actually, it was the elitist Five Nations Chiefs who are responsible for the weakness of the Confederacy today.

Wampum #78: Foreign Nations Urged to Accept the Great Peace

Whenever a foreign nation enters the League or accepts the Great Peace, the Five Nations and the foreign nation shall enter into an agreement and compact by which the foreign nation shall endeavor to persuade the other nations to accept the Great Peace.

Note: They asked other nations to help spread peace among mankind.

War

Wampum #79: About War and Having the Men Ready (Warrior Society)

Skanawati shall be vested with a double office, duty and double authority.: One half of his being shall hold the statesman title and the other half shall hold the title of War Chief. In the event of war, he shall notify the five War Chiefs of the League and command them to prepare for war and have the men ready at the appointed time and place for engagement with the enemy of the Great Peace.

Note: At the time the Confederacy was formed, all chiefs were war chiefs and this included Skanawati, Tekarihoken, etc. After the new order of things, the War Chiefs became apart of the National and Grand Council until they died and afterwards, the War Chiefs became a separate entity.

Wampum #80: Establishing the Great Peace on an Outside Nation by Force

When the Council of the League has for its object the establishment of the Great Peace among the people of an outside nation and that nation refuses to accept the Great Peace, then by such refusal they bring a declaration of war upon themselves from the Five Nations. Then shall the Five Nations seek to establish the Great Peace by a conquest of the rebellious nation.

Note: There have been times when people were made good by force. No doubt the rebellious nation was acting aggressively.

Wampum #81: The Men of the League (Warrior Society) Choose Which of the War Chiefs to Lead Them in Battle

When the men of the League, now called forth to become warriors, are ready for battle with an obstinate opposing nation that has refused to accept the Great Peace, then one of the five War Chiefs shall be chosen by the warriors of the League to lead

the army into battle. It shall be the duty of the War Chief so chosen to come before his warriors and address them. His aim shall be to impress upon them the necessity of good behavior and strict obedience to the commands of the War Chiefs.

He shall deliver an oration exhorting them with great zeal to be brave and courageous and never to be guilty of cowardice. At the conclusion of his oration, he shall march forward and commence a War Song and he shall sing:

*Now I am greatly surprised
And therefore I shall use it
The power of my War Song
I am of the Five Nations,
And I shall make an appeal
To the Mighty Creator
He has furnished this army
My warriors shall be mighty
In the strength of the Creator
Between him and my song they are
For it was he who gave the song
This war song that I sing.*

</quote>

Note: The warriors choose the War Chief and they also choose which of the War Chiefs to lead them in the war.

*** Wampum #82: How the War Party Approaches the Enemy

When the warriors of the Five Nations are on an expedition against the enemy, the War Chief shall sing the War Song as he approaches the country of the enemy and not cease until his scouts have reported that the army is near the enemy lines when the War Chief shall approach with great caution and prepare for the attack.

Note: An Indian war is not all work and no play. There is entertainment before the action and after.

*** Wampum #83: After the War

When peace shall have been established by the termination of the war against a foreign nation, then the War Chief shall cause all the weapons of war to be taken from the nation. Then shall the Great Peace be established and that nation shall observe all the rules of the Great Peace for all time to come.

*** Wampum #84: The Conquered Nations May Continue Their Forms of Government

Whenever a foreign nation has been conquered or has by their own will accepted the Great Peace, their own system of internal government may continue, but they must cease all warfare against other nations.

Note: All wars must cease! If necessary by force.

*** Wampum #85: When an Obstinate Enemy is Exterminated

Whenever a war against a foreign nation is pushed until the nation is about exterminated because of its refusal to accept the Great Peace and if that nation shall by its obstinacy become exterminated, all their rights, property and territory shall become the property of the Five Nations.

Note: This is what happens when a nation fights to the death of all.

*** Wampum #86: A Symbolic Relationship Established

Whenever a foreign nation is conquered and the survivors are brought into the territory of the League of Five Nations and placed under the Great Peace, the two shall be known as the Conqueror and the Conquered. A symbolic relationship shall be devised and be placed in some symbolic position. The conquered nation shall have no voice in the councils of the League in the body of chiefs.

*** Wampum #87: Terms of Peace

When the war of the Five Nations on a foreign rebellious nation is ended, peace shall be restored to that nation by a withdrawal of all their weapons of war by the War Chief of the Five Nations. When all the terms of peace shall have been agreed upon, a state of friendship shall be established.

Note: After the war, the enemies shall become friends.

*** Wampum #88: The Great Peace Urged on Foreign Nations by Persuasion or by Force

When the proposition to establish the Great Peace is made to a foreign nation, it shall be done in mutual council. The foreign nation is to be persuaded by reason and urged to come into the Great Peace. If the Five Nations fail to get the consent of the nation at the first council, a second council shall be held and upon a second failure; a third council shall be held and this third council shall end the peaceful methods of persuasion. At the third council, the War Chief of the Five Nations shall address the chief of the foreign nation and request him three times to accept the Great Peace. If refusal steadfastly follows, the War Chief shall let the bunch of white lake shells drop from his outstretched hand to the ground and shall bound quickly forward and club, the offending chief to death. War shall thereby be declared and the War Chief shall

have his warriors to back any emergency. War must continue until the contest is won by the Five Nations.

*** Wampum #89: A Peace Chief on Diplomatic Mission Accompanied by Warriors

When the chiefs of the Five Nations propose to meet in conference with a foreign nation with proposals for an acceptance of the Great Peace, a large band of Warriors shall conceal themselves in a secure place safe from the espionage of the foreign nation, but as near at hand as possible. Two warriors shall accompany the Union Chief who carries the proposals, and these warriors shall be especially cunning. Should the chief be attacked, these warriors shall hasten back to the army of warriors with the news of the calamity which fell through the treachery of the foreign nation.

*** Wampum #90: A Peace Chief Must Renounce His Title to Go to War

When the Five Nations Council declares war, any chief of the League may enlist with the warriors by temporarily renouncing his sacred chieftainship title which he holds through the nomination of his women relatives. The title then reverts to them and they may bestow it upon another temporarily until the war is over, when the chief, if living, may resume his title and seat in the council.

Note: The Royaner turned warrior cannot exert any authority in the field of action and must take orders from the War Chief like any other warrior.

*** Wampum #91: A Wampum Belt of Black Beads is the Emblem of the Five War Chiefs

A certain wampum belt of black beads shall be the emblem of the authority of the five War Chiefs to take up the weapons of war and with their men to resist invasion. This shall be called a War in the Defense of the Territory.

*** Wampum #92: If a Part of a Nation, a Whole Nation or More Than a Nation Endeavor to Destroy the Great Peace by Violating the Laws, They Shall Be Driven From the Territory by the War Chief and His Men (Warrior Society)

If a nation, part of a nation, or more than one nation within the Five Nations should in any way endeavor to destroy the Great Peace by neglect or violating its laws and resolve to dissolve the League, such a nation or nations shall be deemed guilty of treason and called enemies of the League and the Great Peace.

It shall then be the duty of the chiefs of the League who remain faithful to resolve to warn the offending people. They shall be warned once and if

a second warning is necessary, they shall be driven from the territory of the League by the War Chief and his men.

**** Rights of the People**

***** Wampum #93: The Referendum the People Decide on the Most Important Matters**

Whenever an especially important matter or a great emergency is presented before League Council and the nature of the matter effects the entire body of Five Nations, threatening their utter ruin, then the chiefs of the League must submit the matter to the decision of their people and the decision of the people shall affect the decision of the League Council. This decision shall be a confirmation of the voice of the people.

Note: When the referendum (decision by the people) was first practiced.

***** Wampum #94: The Men of Every Clan Shall Hold a Council of the Clan and Their Decision Shall Be Considered by the Council of Chiefs**

The men of every Clan of the Five Nations shall have a Council Fire ever burning in readiness for a Council of the clan. When it seems necessary for the interest of the people, for a council to be held to discuss the welfare of the Clan, then the men may gather about the fire. This Council shall have the same rights as the Council of Women.

***** Wampum #95: The Council Fires of the Women of Every Clan Have the Same Rights as the Councils of the Men**

The women of every Clan of the Five Nations shall have a Council Fire ever burning in readiness for a council of the Clan. When in their opinion it seems necessary for the interest of the people, they shall hold a council, and their decision and recommendation shall be introduced before the Council of Chiefs by the War Chief for its consideration.

***** Wampum #96: All the Clan Council Fires of a Nation or of the Five Nations May Unite Into One General Council Fire**

All the Clan Council Fires of a Nation or of the Five Nations may unite into one general Council Fire, or delegates from all the Council Fires may be appointed to unite in a general Council for discussing the interest of the people. The people shall have the right to make appointments and to delegate their power to others of their number. When their council shall have come to a conclusion on any matter, their decision shall be reported to the Council of the Nation of the League Council (as the case may require) by the War Chief or the War Chiefs.

Note: The League Council is also known as the Grand Council. When the people in general of the Iroquois Confederacy hold a general council, the

Grand Council has to go along with their decision as the Confederacy is a people's government.

*** Wampum #97: Original National Council Fires Shall Continue

Before the real people united their nations, each nation had its own Council Fires. Before the Great Peace, their councils were held. The Five Council Fires shall continue to burn as before and they are not quenched. The chiefs of each Nation in the future shall settle their national affairs at the Council governed always by the laws and rules of the Council of the League and the Great Peace.

*** Wampum #98: Rights of the Ordinary Man and Woman

If either a nephew or a niece see an irregularity in the performance of the functions of the Great Peace and its laws, in the League Council or in the Conferring of Chief titles in an improper way, through their War Chief, they may demand that such actions become subject to correction, and that the matter conform to the ways of presented by the law of the Great Peace.

Note: The "nephew" and "niece" means ordinary men and women who are not Rotiyaner or Clan Mothers, showing that every one has the right to correct any wrong being done. The Great Peace and the Great Law seem to be interchangeable. Each is a product of the other.

*** Wampum #99: The Ceremonies to Continue

The rites and festivals of each nation shall remain undisturbed and continue as before, because they were given by the people of old times as useful and necessary for the good of men.

Note: This law says not to disturb the rites and festivals, that is, not to change it or add to it, such as a new religion, etc.

*** Wampum #100: The Mid-winter Thanksgiving Festival

It shall be the duty of the chiefs of each brotherhood to confer at the approach of the time of the Midwinter Thanksgiving and to notify the people of the approaching festival. They shall hold a council over the matter, arrange its details and begin the Thanksgiving five days after the moon of Tiskonah is new. The people shall assemble at the appointed place and the nephews shall notify the people of the time and place. From the beginning to the end, the chiefs shall preside over the Thanksgiving and address the people from time to time.

Note: The Midwinter Festival begins five days after the new moon following the Winter Solstice. The "Nephews" are runners who go to inform the people of the time of the Festival.

*** Wampum #101: List of Thanksgiving Festivals

It shall be the duty of the appointed managers of the Thanksgiving Festivals to do all that is needful for carrying out the duties of the occasions.

The recognized festivals of Thanksgiving shall be the Midwinter Thanksgiving, the Maple or Sugarmaking Thanksgiving, the Raspberry Thanksgiving, the Strawberry Thanksgiving, the Little Festival of Green Corn, the Great Festival of Ripe Corn and the Complete Thanksgiving for the Harvest. Each nation's festivals shall be held in their Longhouses.

*** Wampum #102: Festival of the Green Corn

When the Thanksgiving for the Green Corn comes, the special managers, both men and women, shall give it special attention and do their duties properly.

*** Wampum #103: Ripe Corn Thanksgiving or Harvest Festival

When the Ripe Corn Thanksgiving is celebrated, the chiefs of the Nation must give it the same attention as they give to the Midwinter Thanksgiving.

*** Wampum #104: About a Good Man

Whenever any man proves himself by his good life and his knowledge of good things, he shall be recognized by the chiefs as a Teacher of Peace and Kariwiyo and the people shall hear him.

** Installation Song

*** Wampum #105: Installation Song by Atotarho

The song used in installing a new chief of the League shall be sung by Atotarho and it shall be:

<verse>

It is good indeed

That a broom,

A great wing

Is given me

For a sweeping instrument

Wampum #106: To Learn the Song of Peace

Whenever a person entitled properly desires to learn the Song of Peace, he is privileged to do so, but he must prepare a feast at which his teachers may sit with him and sing. The feast is provided that no misfortune may befall them for singing the song when no Chief is installed.

Protection of the House

Wampum #107: Protection of the House

A certain sign shall be known to all the people of the Five Nations which shall denote that the owner or occupant of a house is absent. A stick or pole in a slanting or leaning position shall indicate this and be the sign. Every person not entitled to enter the house by right of living within, upon seeing such a sign shall not enter the house by day or night, but shall keep as far away as his business will permit.

Funerals

Wampum #108: Of a Chief

At the funeral of a chief of the League, these words are said:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. You were once a Chief of the League of Five Nations, and the united people trusted you. Now we release you, for it is true that it is no longer possible for us to walk about together on the earth. Now, therefore, we lay it (the body) here. Here we lay it away. Now then we say to you, persevere onward to the place where the Creator dwells in peace. Let not the things of the earth hinder you. Let nothing that transpired while you lived hinder you. In hunting, you once delighted; in the game of lacrosse, you once took delight, and in the feast and pleasant occasions, your mind was amused, but now do not allow thoughts of these things to give you trouble."

"Let not your relatives hinder you and also let not your friends and associates trouble your mind. Regard none of these things."

"Now then, in turn, you here present who are related to the man, and you who were his friends and associates, behold the path that is yours also! Soon we ourselves will be left in that place. For this reason, hold yourselves in restraint as you go from place to place. In your actions and in your conversation do no idle thing. Speak no idle talk, neither gossip. Be careful of this and speak not and do not give away to evil behavior. One year is the time that you must abstain from unseemingly levity, but if you cannot do this for ceremony, ten days is the time to regard these things for respect."

Note: The Handsome Lake religion wanted to impose the one year period of mourning but according to the Great Law, a new Chief must be raised ten days after the death of a Royaner when the Condolence Ceremony is performed and a new Royaner is raised and the ten days of mourning is lifted according to the Great Law.

There is a small condolence within three days of the death of a chief, which is temporary until a full condolence is held with a candidate selected by the clan.

Wampum #109: Of a War Chief

At the funeral of a War Chief, say:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. Once you were a War Chief of the Five Nations League and the United People trusted you as their guard from the enemy." (The remainder is the same as the address at the funeral of a chief.)

Wampum #110: Of a Warrior

At the funeral of a warrior, say:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. Once you were a devoted provider and protector of your family and you were ready to take part in battles for the Five Nations. The United People trusted you, ..." (The remainder is the same as the address at the funeral of a chief.)

Wampum #111: Of a Young Man

At the funeral of a young man, say:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. In the beginning of your career you are taken away and the flower of your life is withered away..." (The remainder is the same as the address at the funeral of a chief.)

Wampum #112: Of a Clan Mother

At the funeral of a Chief Woman, say:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. You were once a Chief Woman in the League of Five Nations. You once were a Mother of the Nations. Now we release you for it is true that it is no longer possible for us to walk about together on the earth. Now, therefore, we lay it (the body) here. Here we lay it away. Now we say to you, persevere onward to the place where the Creator dwells in peace. Let not the things of the earth hinder you. Looking after your family was a sacred duty, and you were faithful. You were one of the joint heirs of the chieftainship titles. Feastings were yours and you had pleasant occasions..." (The remainder is the same as the address at the funeral of a chief.)

Wampum #113: Of a Woman

At the funeral of a woman of the people, say:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. You were once a woman in the flower of life and the bloom is now withered away. You once held a sacred position as mother of the Nation (etc.). Looking after your family was a sacred duty and you were faithful. Feastings were yours and you had pleasant occasions..." (The remainder is the same as the funeral of a chief.)

Wampum #114: Of an Infant or a Young Woman

At the funeral of an infant or young woman, say:

"Now we become reconciled as you start away. You were a tender bud and gladdened our hearts for only a few days. Now the bloom has withered away...(etc.). Let none of these things that transpired on earth hinder you. Let nothing that happened while you lived hinder you." (The remainder is the same as at the funeral of a chief.)

Wampum #115: When an Infant Dies Within Three Days

When an infant dies within three days, mourning shall continue only five days. Then shall you gather the little boys and girls at the house of mourning and at the funeral feast, a speaker shall address the children and bid them to be happy once more, though by death, gloom has been cast over them, then shall the children be again in the sunshine.

Wampum #116: The Burial Rights

When a dead person is brought to the burial place, the speaker on the opposite side of the Council Fire shall bid the bereaved family to cheer up their minds once more and rekindle their fires in peace, to put their house in order and once again be in brightness for darkness has covered them. He shall say that the black clouds shall roll away and that the blue sky is visible once more. Therefore, they shall be at peace in the sunshine again.

Wampum #117: Speaking at the Burial and at the Tenth Day of Mourning

Three strings of shell one span in length shall be employed in addressing the assemblage at the- burial of the dead. The speaker shall say:

"Hearken you who are here, this body is to be covered. Assemble in this place again in ten days hence, for it is the decree of the Creator that mourning shall cease when ten days have expired. Then a feast shall be made."

Then at the expiration of ten days, the Speaker shall say:

"Continue to listen you who are here. The ten days of mourning have expired and your mind must now be freed of sorrow as before the loss of your relative. The relatives have decided to make a little compensation to those who have assisted at the funeral. It is a mere expression of thanks. This is the one who did the cooking while the body was lying in the house. Let her come forward and receive this gift and be released from this task." (In substance, this will be repeated for everyone who assisted in any way until all have been remembered.)

**So ends the words of the Great Law of Peace
passed down by Deganawida**

The Ted K Archive

Haudenosaunee
Kaianere'kó:wa
The Great Law of Peace
12th Century

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