



ONEIDA CULTURAL HERITAGE DEPARTMENT

Edit, Revision, and Layout (10/2014)
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Oneida Tribal Logo



Previous Tribal Logo



Present Tribal Logo

The use of symbolism within the Iroquois culture dates back to before the Peacemaker and the establishment of the Great Law. Among the Iroquois, the power of their symbolism is profound because by their use they fed their minds and guided their actions.

Inherent within the culture, and based in treaty and other legal relationships, the Oneida continue to comprise a Nation with retained rights and governmental integrity.

Previous tribal logos have included a stalk of corn and wheat design which was approved in 1937. In 1970 a logo containing many tribal symbols was approved by the General Tribal Council for use as a seal and was added to the tribal letterhead. In recent years, another more simplified logo was adopted for use. The following is an explanation of what each of the symbols represents to the Oneida people:

Circle – The very shape of the logo is in itself significant. Being round, it represents the

cyclical world-view traditionally espoused by the Oneidas. Within the border are the words, “Sovereign Nation of the Oneida.” On the newer and more simplified version, the wording and many of the symbols were deleted but the meanings still remain within the tree of peace.

The concentric circles represent our eldest brother, the Sun, and our grandmother, the Moon. All of the elements are depicted within a circle which represents the Circle of Life.

1822- At the bottom of the circle on the older logo version is the year 1822 which marks the Oneida’s moved to this area from New York at which time they signed a treaty with the Menominee Nation.

Eagle- The eagle at the top of the tree is the strongest and largest of all birds. He is ever watchful over the Oneida Nation and the Confederacy and warns of danger. He also carries messages to and from the Creator.

Tree- The tree is a White Pine which represents the law and peace among the nations.

In the Iroquois language there is no term to separate peace and law. It is a way of life characterized by wisdom and graciousness. The branches of the tree signify shelter, the protection and security that people found in union under the shadow of law.

Roots of Peace- The four roots on the turtles back spread to the four directions to remind the people that whoever would seek the peace, protection and solace of the Confederacy, they need only trace the roots back to their source and take shelter there. They would discipline their minds to always consider the way of life of all of the people. The tree sits on the back of the turtle because in the Creation Story, Sky Women fell from the sky and landed on the back of the turtle, and over time, it became what we now call the Great Turtle Island (the North American continent).

Clans- The three clans of the Oneida Nation are the bear, the wolf and the turtle. The Bear Clan people are the keepers of the medicines. The Wolf Clan people are the path finders. The Turtle Clan people are the caretakers of the land. The tree stands on the back of the turtle, symbol of the Great Turtle Island which to the Iroquois people signifies the North American continent.

Wampum Belt- The belt represented in the tribal logo is the Oneida Tribal Belt which was created shortly after the Revolutionary War to commemorate the reunification of the Haudenosaunee, (Iroquois Confederacy). It readdresses the commitment of alliance between the nations.

The Oneida Tribal Belt and seven original treaties were entrusted to the care of Elijah Skenandoa, a Turtle Clan Chief of the Oneida nation, who brought it to Wisconsin in the 1830's. Sometime after his death, the belt and treaties were found in the safe in the post office at the Oneida Reservation.

Today the Oneida Tribal Belt is at the Field Museum in Chicago pending a repatriation

claim for its return on behalf of the Oneida communities.

The Weapons- The six arrows bound together represent the commitment of the five nations. (Originally there were five arrows. The sixth arrow was added when the Tuscarora Nation joined the Confederacy). One arrow by itself can be easily broken, but by binding the arrows together, their strength is multiplied. No nation is allowed to pull their arrow from the bundle. This symbol is profound in the fact that the U.S. Government took this idea and used the bound arrows symbol on the back of the dollar bill to represent the unity of the original thirteen colonies. The war club, along with the bound arrows, is depicted buried beneath the tree of peace, a further affirmation of peace. The newer logo no longer uses weapons.

Peace Pipe- Although the Iroquois men were renowned for the quality of the clay pipes later used by the whites, it remains unclear why the long stem pipe was used in the original logo design. The early Iroquois pipes were made of clay or stone, usually with some type of figure carved on the bowl representing humans, animals or birds. The "peace pipe" was more symbolic of the type used by many of the western nations.

The Oneidas are proud people. They fought on behalf of the Colonies in the Revolutionary War and they fought for America in every subsequent war. The Oneida Nation was among the first allies of a fledgling United States, although now they are scattered from New York to Canada to Wisconsin as a result of throes of history.

It is clear through ongoing research that the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin has maintained its cultural knowledge, its pride in its heritage, and its awareness of its traditional legacy and responsibility to the people. The logos, both past and present, signify that knowledge and that pride.