



Introduction

CREATION AND THE PEOPLE

"Unite our minds into One Mind, for the good of all"

As Haudenosaunee people, Oneida history flows out of the Creation Story. The story tells of the great relationships within the world and the relationship of the Haudenosaunee with the rest of creation. Nature was understood as a complex web to be appreciated through thankfulness. The early times were a time of great abundance and a period of great peace amongst the people. The culture was strengthened by ceremonies and renewed through the clan system, which laid out the responsibilities of each member. This social structure was guided by the Clan mothers, the Chiefs, and the Faithkeepers. The Great Law, brought by the Peacemaker in a time of discord among the Haudenosaunee people, speaks of how all members of each clan have a relationship to each other. Wampum belts were used to illustrate the agreements among people, such as the Two-row Wampum with Europeans, indicating a vision of peaceful coexistence between the two cultures.

Balance and harmony with everything on Earth and above Earth was instructed through the Thanksgiving address, also known as the Kanehelatúksla. Oneida lifestyles were hallmarked by many traditional practices delivered from one generation to another. In relation to foodstuffs, by the Three Sisters of corn, beans, and squash, the practices of hunting and fishing, and the gathering of berries, nuts, and roots. For shelter a Longhouse was built for each clan, and for traditional clothing buckskin was crafted for men and wild grass dresses and furs for women. Other important traditions include pottery, black ash baskets, corn husk dolls, the sacred bowl game, and proficiencies in natural medicines and dyes.

In another time of struggle and conflict, the Good Message, known as Kaliwihyo, was brought to the people by Handsome Lake. This message reaffirms the three principles of the Great Law: good-mindedness, peacefulness, and strength among the people.



2

This unity of purpose is also reflected in the principle of One Dish—One Spoon, which states the land, water, air, plants, and animal life are for the collective benefit of the people, as long as they are treated with mindfulness. As stated in the Opening Prayer, the people and all the elements of mother earth can be strong together through mutual care and stewardship; “Let’s put our minds together. So be it in our minds.” Through the humility, honor, and respect of the Thanksgiving address, people may take resources for sustenance, while providing sustainable stewardship for the seven generations that surround them.





WISCONSIN ORIGINS AND HISTORY

In 1821, Oneida people journeyed here from the territory known as New York. The presence of white pines in the area was reminiscent of their attractive homelands. In the following years, more Oneida migrated to this rich and fertile region to create a new homeland. For more than 173 years Oneida people have made this place home. The Oneida Reservation was established pursuant to a treaty which was ratified by Congress, and on February 3, 1838 the Oneida Reservation was established.

The roughly 8 x 12 miles Oneida Indian Reservation lies just west of Green Bay in parts of Brown and Outagamie Counties. The Reservation was established when land traditionally held by the Menominee Tribe was offered to the Oneida Tribe after its members were encouraged to abandon their traditional homeland in New York State. The Reservation size of 65,430 acres is based on approximately 100 acres per each of the 654 Oneida Tribal members originally accounted for. In 1887, the Dawes Act provided for Tribal (communally owned) lands to be “allotted.” Each Oneida family living on the Reservation at that time was provided a plot of land. In 1906, these allotted lands came under tax laws. In 1910, the Oneida Land Company (a private entrepreneur) bought much of the Reservation’s land and opened it up for purchase and development by the non-tribal community. Many Oneida Tribal members sold their allotted lands within a few years. By 1929, the Oneidas of Wisconsin were 99% landless. There were a little over 200 hundred acres left in Trust after 1917. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Section 17, provided for the repurchase of lands for Indians. A little over 1,000 acres was purchased on the Oneida Reservation under this provision in 1936–37. Most of the repurchased land was submarginal and not very suitable for farming, which was the intent for its use. The Oneida Tribe purchased the Summers tract of 27 acres and the Doxtator allotments of 36 and 20 acres across from the Austin Straubel Airport about 1968–69 as part of the 15% set-aside from the \$1.1 million Docket 75 settlement. These purchases initiated the turn around for the Oneida Nation in acquiring back the Reservation.



The Oneida Tribe has made buying back Reservation lands one of its major priorities. Goals include buying back the remaining lands within the Tribal boundaries, managing human impacts, improving and expanding the natural environment by reducing pollution and restoring impacted lands. The Oneida Tribe now owns over 23,000 acres. Lands that the Tribe is buying back have been largely developed for agriculture. Wetlands were ditched and drained and forests had been logged. Remaining forests and undeveloped lands were too wet to farm and draining them had been unsuccessful or impractical. Portions of the eastern side of the Reservation are part of Austin Straubel Airport and the west side of Green Bay.



Over the past 10 years over 300 acres of wetlands have been restored, 30 miles of stream buffers have been established, 4,000 feet of ditched stream channels have been restored, and over 500 acres of new forest have been created. Game and fur species management incorporates field staff reports, community member direction, and kill monitoring for season setting. Managing Reservation lands as a large parcel provides the ability to maintain blocks of many habitat types. Land management requires a Tribal community buy-in. A new era of Oneida Nation natural resource management has begun.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Events and Outreach

One priority of the Live Sustain Grow plan has been to raise community member awareness of the project and solicit community input on resource management decisions. To realize this goal, an interdepartmental outreach team was created for creative collaboration from 2009–2011. The main avenues of communication occurred through participation at community events, the Kaliwisaks (Tribal newspaper), and direct mailing of project brochures. Community events where the Live Sustain Grow outreach team provided education included: Live Sustain Grow community meeting, GTC meetings, Youth and Elder Fishing Days, Oneida Farmer’s Market, Oneida Fall Fest, Division of Land Management open house, and Ridgeview Plaza open house.



Presentations were also directed to community boards and committees such as the Land Commission, Environmental Resource Board, Oneida Nation Committee on Aging, Oneida High School, Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems, and more. Fifteen articles were published over 2 years in the Kaliwisaks on the goals of the plan, specific natural resource issues, and the results of the community survey. Two separate brochures respectively detailing the initial vision and final goals of the project were mailed out to over 1,000 community members. Communication also occurred via the Oneida intranet, internet and direct mailing of the Environmental, Health & Safety Division’s newsletter.

Community Surveys

A review of natural resource focused community surveys from 1995–2008 indicates Tribal members are focused on preserving and protecting natural resources. Reoccurring themes included cleaning-up polluted sites, establishing a national forest, protecting waterways, and increasing hunting and fishing opportunities. The 2008 Quality of Life survey of 627 Tribal members reinforced these themes. To further detail and define the sentiments of the Oneida membership, a 43 question survey was developed with Tribal statistician Melissa Nuthals during 2009 and mailed out to membership in September 2009. The 527 completed surveys were returned and tabulated. Highlights demonstrating the strong levels of support for natural resource protection and preservation can be found in each of the following chapters.

