

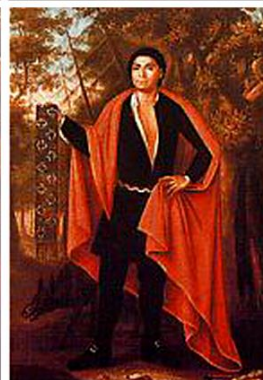


This is NewsLetter Issue No. Two ~ For the year 2023

## The Genesis of the Haudenosaunee

The word *Haudenosaunee* is the Iroquoian name for the Iroquois Confederacy. This article will comment on the creation of that confederation and how it functioned. But before we get to that, a few things should be noted.

You will notice that I do not use the words 'Native American', 'Indigenous People' or any variation of those terms. The term 'Native American' was devised by the US Census Bureau in the 1950s to separate certain people from black people of African descent. I use the terms 'Amerindian' or 'Indian' to denote the first immigrants to the North American continent. I discovered, by the three DNA tests that I took, that I possess about 0.2% Amerindian genes (which I inherited from Rosana, the wife of my Patriot ancestor, Jacob Schmitt). I have also communicated with sachems of the Seneca Nation who told me that they do not prefer the name 'Native American'. They intimated to me that they actually prefer to be referred to by the term 'First People' in



their own language, since that refers to the fact that they too emigrated from Asia and were simply the first people to arrive in and populate the North American continent. For example, the name 'Lenni Lenape means 'Original Man.' But if that, or some similar term is not employed (there being thousands of Indian languages spoken by the many tribes of North America), their next choice is either 'Amerindian' or 'Indian'. So rather than refer to the first immigrants as 'Native Americans' just to appease today's 'woke' people, I have chosen to refer to them in the way that they, themselves, choose.

Similarly, I use the term 'Euro~American' to denote the people of European origin who resided in the English Colonies of the North American continent prior to the establishment of the United States of America. Having immigrated to the colonies, they were no longer Europeans, but until the American Revolutionary War was concluded in 1783, they were

not actually ‘Americans’. They were, essentially and figuratively, ‘Euro~‘Americans’.

As noted at the beginning of this article, the people whom the Euro~Americans came to know as the ‘Iroquois’ were the *Haudenosaunee*. That name translated into English as *people of the longhouse*. It has been proposed that the name *Iroquois* was coined by French traders who heard the Huron refer to their enemy as the *Iriakoiw* which was their name for “rattlesnake”. According to Bruce E. Johansen, author of the book *Forgotten Founders*, the name was derived



from two words uttered at the end of every speech: *hiro* and *kone*. The first translates as ‘I say’ or ‘I have said’ and the second translates as an expression of either joy or sadness relative to what has been stated.

Certain tradition places the founding of the Haudenosaunee / Iroquois Confederacy between the years 1450 and 1570. But scholarly research based on Iroquois oral tradition, solar eclipse data and documentary sources have determined that it was formed centuries earlier. According to research performed by Barbara Mann and Jerry Fields of Toledo University in Ohio, the body of laws adopted by a number of tribes as the Haudenosaunee was fully ratified on 31 August 1142 when the Seneca finally agreed to abide by it.

Despite the animosity between the Haudenosaunee and the Huron (*variously*, Wendat), the creation of the so-called Five Nations is attributed to Deganawidah, the ‘Great Peacemaker’ an Huron (or Onondaga) mystic and his Mohawk disciple, Ayonhwathah *variously*, Hiawatha. Although the confederation of the five Iroquois nations was the product of the legendary Huron mystic, the Huron tribe never joined the Iroquois Confederacy. The five nations which comprised the Confederacy initially were the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida and

Mohawk. They were later joined by the Tuscarora.

To better understand how the Iroquois Confederacy became the dominant entity in the central Mid-Atlantic region, events that took place in the late 1600’s must be reviewed.

Prior to the arrival of the Euro~Americans, the dominant Amerindian nation in the region now known as Pennsylvania were the Susquehannock. A series of alliances and wars between the Euro~Americans and Amerindians ultimately resulted in the destruction of the Susquehannock tribe. The Dutch, the earliest of the fur traders in this region, started a sequence of events that would plunge the Amerindian tribes into war. Soon after their arrival circa 1614 in the present-day Albany region, the Dutch constructed Fort Nassau as a trading post. The trading post settlement was surrounded by nearly 1,600 Mahican Indians, with whom the Dutch made a trade agreement in 1618. The Dutch were interested primarily in trading with the Indians for beaver pelts. In 1626 the Mohawk tribe, for whatever reason now unknown, launched a war against the Mahicans. The Dutch sent a small force of men to give aid to the Mahicans. They were defeated and entered into a truce agreement with the Mohawks. Two years later the Mohawks again attacked and defeated the Mahican tribe, but the attack was not meant for the annihilation of the Mahican tribe. Rather, the Mohawks wanted control of the profitable Dutch trade. The Dutch carried on trade with both tribes for three decades. The Dutch incited much violence among the neighboring tribes through their arrogant attitude toward all Indians. The Dutch were not interested in carrying on any type of relations with the Indians other than trade. As the saying goes, “war makes strange bedfellows”. The Dutch sought diplomatic assistance from the Susquehannock tribe to the south to intervene in the Esopus War (*i.e.* a struggle between the Dutch and the Esopus, a Hudson River tribe associated with the Lenape). In order to gain favor with the Dutch, with whom they too were trading beaver pelts, the Susquehannocks joined in an alliance with their previous enemy, the Mohawks to attempt to pressure the Esopus tribe into negotiating a peace agreement

with the Dutch.

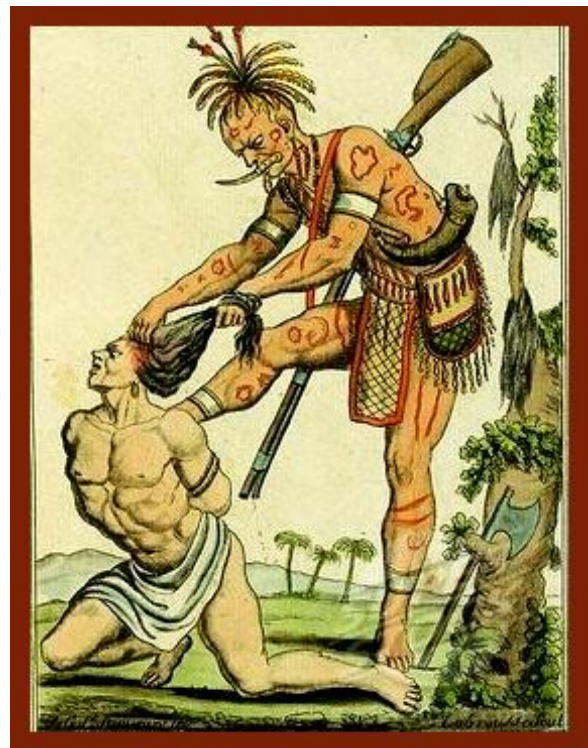
At the time of the Mohawk and Susquehannock alliance, the Iroquois Confederacy was, by no means, the most powerful tribal unit in the northeast. The Iroquois "Longhouse", a metaphorical name for the lands occupied by the Five Nations, which stretched across present-day New York State, was surrounded by enemies. The Mahicans were to the east. The Susquehannocks were to the south. The Neutrals and Eries, each of which were more powerful than the Five Nations, were to the south and west. To the north were the Hurons and the Petuns. The Hurons held a monopoly on the trade with the French in the region of the Great Lakes while the Susquehannocks and Mahicans were trading with the Dutch. The Iroquois Confederacy aligned themselves with the Dutch traders to the east at Albany, but the eastern hunting grounds were being depleted of their beavers. The Iroquois Confederacy, if it hoped to survive, had to guard itself against destruction by the other tribes and also break into the French trading market to the west.

The Iroquois attempted to obtain commercial treaties with the Hurons, but the French blocked their attempts. Since the Hurons were allied to the French, the Five Nations engaged in raiding and other guerilla activities against them. In one particularly ferocious battle a war party of about one hundred Iroquois engaged a party of nearly three hundred Hurons and Algonquin warriors. All but four or five of the Iroquois were slain or captured - only to be eventually tortured to death. The Iroquois resorted to piracy against the French and successfully hindered the activities of the French to the point that the French found a trade agreement more favorable than the losses they were experiencing. In 1645 the French and their Huron allies negotiated a peace treaty with the Iroquois.

The French/Huron Iroquois treaty was put to the test during the following summer. A Huron fleet of eighty canoes traveled to Montreal laden down with furs. The Iroquois were not included in the trade. Angered at the slight given them, the Mohawks sent war belts to the Seneca and Onondaga tribes. At about the same time, in 1647, the Hurons made a war alliance with the Susquehannocks. The Susquehannocks were convinced to act as the intermediaries between the Huron and the Five Nations. A series of unsuccessful negotiations followed. The Hurons did not stop there. They discovered that the Iroquois Confederacy was not acting with a single motivation. The aggressive

Mohawks zealously guarded their rights to the Dutch trade and the Onondagas, Oneidas and Cayugas were jealous of their Mohawk cousins. The Senecas, as the westernmost tribe, were engaged in some trade with the French and Hurons and were not inclined to make war upon them. In an effort to split the Iroquois Confederacy, an Huron delegation went to the Cayuga and Onondaga tribes to attempt to gain peace treaties with them separately. Situated in the center of the 'Longhouse', the Cayuga and Onondaga tribes would effectively separate the Five Nations geographically and emotionally. The Huron plan did not succeed and the Iroquois Confederacy held their ground. It would probably have been at this time that the 'people of the longhouse' began to call themselves the *Aquanuschioni*, meaning the 'united people'.

During the summer of 1648 the Mohawks attempted to block a Huron trading fleet from passing through the Mohawk lands. The Hurons succeeded in passing through the blockade at a high loss in Mohawk



lives. The Mohawks and Senecas retaliated by striking into the Huron lands. At least a thousand warriors made their way to the Huron town of St. Ignace. At dawn on 16 March, 1649 the Iroquois attacked the town, captured or killed most of the inhabitants and set the town on fire. The neighboring town of St. Louis was also attacked and set afire the following day. The Iroquois continued on a raiding spree through the Huron lands. The Hurons fled before them toward the

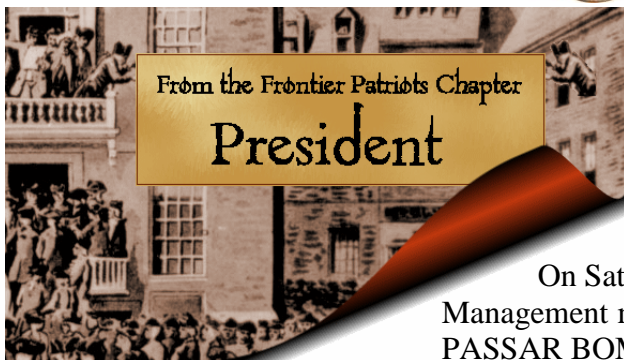
Tionantati (*i.e.* Tobacco) Nation who inhabited the western shores of Lake Ontario. The Iroquois attacked the settlement of St. Marie which was defended by forty Frenchmen and nearly 300 Huron. The Iroquois, while losing only one hundred of their own, killed all but twenty of the defending warriors and Frenchmen and then retreated back toward the east. A party of nearly seven hundred Hurons pursued the Iroquois, but becoming demoralized, failed to engage them in battle. Instead, they returned to their homeland to find at least fifteen settlements abandoned and the other Hurons fleeing. Some of the Hurons sought adoption into certain of the Iroquois tribes while others became absorbed into the tribes of the Neutrals and Tobaccos. In effect, by the end of March, 1649 the Huron nation was destroyed.

Over the next two years the Iroquois embarked on concerted attacks against the Tobaccos and then the Neutrals. The name of the Neutral Nation was given by the French to a tribe which attempted to remain unaligned during the Iroquois/Huron warfare. The initial attack on the Neutrals was made against a town of three to four thousand inhabitants. That attack and a subsequent attack on a second village extinguished the tribe, leaving only about eight hundred of what had been, only fifty years previous, a tribe of nearly ten

thousand. The survivors were adopted into the Seneca tribe. The Erie were the next nation to be conquered by the Iroquois. By 1656 the Erie were defeated and the Iroquois Confederacy held the position of the dominant nation through the northeast region. It should be noted that the Iroquois succeeded at decimating whole tribes not by might but by intelligent maneuvering. They would strike and destroy the tribe's main village and force the survivors to either scatter throughout the land or be adopted into the Iroquois nation. The now-powerful Iroquois Confederacy next set its sights on the Susquehannocks.

The outcome of any conflict is dependent upon any number of things, not just a single one. The Susquehannock, though generally victorious over the Iroquois Confederacy, were being attacked by a new enemy: smallpox. Then in 1674, possibly with the intention of eventually gaining control over the lands of the Susquehannocks, the Maryland authorities stopped supplying the Susquehannocks with weapons and ammunition. They also negotiated a separate peace treaty with the Senecas. The Iroquois then succeeded in pushing the Susquehannock out of the central regions of present-day Pennsylvania and into the Potomac River area.

**To be continued**



**The next meeting of the  
Frontier Patriots Chapter  
of the Sons of the American Revolution  
will be held at the Creekside Inn Restaurant  
at 3059 Everett Road, East Freedom, PA  
on Saturday, 10 June 2023  
starting at 12 Noon.**

On Saturday, 6 May, I attended the PASSAR Spring Board of Management meeting via the Zoom program. It was like most of the PASSAR BOM meetings in that the status of projects were discussed and district deputies gave their reports of what the chapters were accomplishing. One thing grabbed my attention in particular. At the next meeting of the National Society, an increase in NSSAR annual dues from \$35 to \$50 would be voted on. Hopefully that proposal will not pass.

For those of you that receive this newsletter by US mail, if you have an email address, we would appreciate you informing us of it to use for future newsletters. Printing and mailing these newsletters is not that expensive, but it is time consuming. Please send to our Secretary Larry Smith at [schmitt1775@proton.me](mailto:schmitt1775@proton.me)

Frontier Patriots Chapter website: <https://frontierpatriots.com>