

Ögwe'ö:weh Consciousness as Peace

Haudenosaunee Recognition of White Pine as a Symbol of Peace

For the Haudenosaunee, the white pine is a powerful cultural symbol.

Not only does it carry deep intellectual teachings, but it is equally a reflection of their keen scientific insight and application of the knowledge gained through observatory pedagogy in their daily lives.

The white pine is referred to by the Haudenosaunee as a “Great Tree of Peace”

and has signified a moment of raising the Ögwe'ö:weh consciousness to the importance of peace as a central philosophy and as a way of life. The tradition holds that the Peacemaker came among the five warring Haudenosaunee nations to enact a peaceful and lasting union by laying out a new way of thinking, a new law and order.

For the Haudenosaunee, peace demands a specific mindset called “a good mind”

and collective action on behalf of both human and the natural community. Hence, for them, peace does not involve a mere absence of strife, but an act and a process of seeking universal justice by empowering society at large to cultivate the right, unselfish and healthy mind. In the Seneca language, the word *sgeno* signifies both peace and health, because only a healthy person can seek peaceful solutions.

The Wampum belt and beaded pine featured here portray the message of peace.

Emblematically, this moment of unification and of consciousness raising to the message of peace has been portrayed through the white pine symbol (case to the right) and through the Ever Growing Tree Wampum belt (below). The eight branches on the belt represent the five nations and the three major principles of the Haudenosaunee law: peace, power and righteousness, while the fifty rows of wampum represent the fifty Confederated Chiefs.

Haudenosaunee in North America

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, comprising the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora Nations, are the most ancient peoples inhabiting eastern North America. The Ögwe'ö:weh translates from Seneca language as “The Original People” or “The Real People,” i.e. the People born of this place.

Addressing the international community in Geneva, Switzerland in 1977,
the Haudenosaunee delegation stated:

“Our culture is among the most ancient, continuously existing cultures in the world. We still remember the earliest doings of human beings. We remember the original instructions of the Creators of Life in this place we can call...Mother Earth.... Our roots are deep... [and w]e have a great love for our country, for our birthplace is there. The soil is rich from the bones of thousands of our generations. Each of us was created in those lands and... from these lands will spring the future generations of the Onk-ehón:we.”