“The (Really) Great Law of Peace” by Cynthia O’Brien

The Haudenosaunee flag was created in the 1980s. The flag’s symbolism is based on the Hiawatha wampum belt, strands of purple and white shells used centuries ago as currency. Here, it symbolizes the union forged when the former enemies buried their weapons under the Great Tree of Peace. It represents the original five nations united by the Peacemaker and Hiawatha. The tree symbol in the center represents both The Great Tree of Peace and the Onondaga Nation, while the squares represent the other four of the original five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy (from left to right): the Seneca, the Cayuga, the Oneida, and the Mohawk.
Examples of Nonlinguistic Representations of Learning Target Vocabulary in This Lesson

Record: Image Copyright Kamira, 2013. Used under license from Shutterstock.com.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I notice...</th>
<th>I wonder...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**I notice...**

1. How long ago did the six tribes of the Iroquois nation come together?

2. What is a “longhouse”?

3. Write another interesting fact you heard about the Iroquois.

**I wonder...**

1. Circle a question you think is interesting.
   - A. Why did they decide to join together?
   - B. Were the people in the six tribes friends with each other?
   - C. Did they all speak the same language?

2. Circle a question you think is interesting:
   - A. Were all the people who lived in the longhouse friends?
   - B. How did they keep their longhouses warm?
   - C. Why is the tree in the center?

3. Ask a question you have about the Iroquois.
“The (Really) Great Law of Peace” by Cynthia O’Brien

Many centuries ago, a Huron woman dreamed that her son would become a great man. According to legend, her dream came true. The woman’s son, Dekanawidah, founded the Great Law of Peace — the oldest constitution in North America. Over 800 years later, the Iroquois peoples of Canada and the United States still follow its rules!

NATIONS AT WAR

Dekanawidah grew up on the north side of Lake Ontario. He learned about the Iroquois nations that lived across the lake, including the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca peoples. These five nations shared many traditions, including their style of home, called a longhouse. But they were bitter rivals, and they fought each other over many issues.

MIRACLE MAKER

Dekanawidah believed he could put an end to the fighting. He crossed Lake Ontario in a canoe made of stone, then set about bringing peace to the warring nations.

Early in his journey, Dekanawidah visited the Mohawk peoples. He preached his message of peace to them, but they were very suspicious. To win their trust, Dekanawidah climbed to the top of a tall tree overlooking the Mohawk River. He told the people to chop down the tree so that it would crash into the rushing rapids. If Dekanawidah survived, it would be proof that his message was true.

When the tree crashed, Dekanawidah vanished into the water. But early the next morning, he was found sitting calmly in the forest, enjoying his breakfast by a fine. So impressed the Mohawk chief that his nation was the first to agree to peace.
“The (Really) Great Law of Peace” by Cynthia O’Brien

Five feathers are a symbol of unity for the people of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Wampum belts, made of shell beads, were often created to mark important historical events. This belt represents the Great Law of Peace, and it is a symbol of unity among the Five Nations.

The Iroquois Grand Council of Chiefs at the Six Nations Reservation in Ontario, 1871.

P E O P L E O F T H E L O N G H O U S E

While on his travels, Dekanawidah met a man called Hiawatha, a brilliant speaker who also wanted to help bring peace. Hiawatha joined Dekanawidah on his visits to the other nations. Together, they told the people of their peace plan.

Dekanawidah used arrows to explain his message: a single arrow can break easily, he explained. But five arrows, tied together, are strong and cannot break. The arrows symbolized the strength of the five nations together.

After long talks, the leaders of all five nations agreed to peace. They called themselves the Haudenosaunee, meaning “people of the longhouse.” Their new government became known as the Iroquois Confederacy.

T H E G R E A T L A W O F P E A C E

Dekanawidah created a set of rules (or constitution) for the Confederacy, called the Great Law of Peace. The laws focused on respect and equality among nations.

In celebration, Dekanawidah planted a white pine. He buried arrows beneath it to represent the end of war.

This Tree of Peace became the symbol of the Confederacy, and Dekanawidah became known as the Great Peacemaker.

P E A C E F O R A L L T I M E

In 1702, the Tuscarora nation joined the Iroquois Confederacy, and the group became known as the League of Six Nations. Today, the Haudenosaunee continue to follow the Great Law of Peace and to honor the Peacemaker who made it all possible.

Overview and Background Information: Oral Tradition

Dekanawidah (day-kahn-na-WEE-da), the Great Peacemaker, convinced the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk nations to join together in peace. They established a Confederacy. This means that each tribe kept its own land, language, and culture, but they all agreed to some rules that would help them make decisions and get along peacefully. The set of rules was called “The Great Law of Peace” and was also known as the Iroquois Constitution. These rules were not written down at first. Dekanawidah shared these rules out loud at a meeting near present-day Syracuse, NY. He was talking to the leaders of the five nations. He said the words specifically to Adodarhoh, also known as Tadodahoh, the leader of the Onondaga nation, and other leaders who were at the meeting. Others who heard Dekanawidah say the rules of peace retold the rules to their own families. Over the years the rules were told and retold. Someone finally wrote the words down. Because the rules were told out loud for a long time, it is hard to know if the versions that are written down say exactly what Dekanawidah said.

The Great Law of Peace has more than 100 rules that are about everything from making decisions to adopting children to what to say at a funeral. Below are just a few sections of one version of the Great Law of Peace, Prepared by Gerald Murphy (The Cleveland Free-Net - aa300). Distributed by the Cybercasting Services Division of the National Public Telecomputing Network (NPTN).1

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**Section 1 of the Great Law of Peace**

1. I am Dekanawidah and with the Five Nations’ Confederate Lords I plant the Tree of Great Peace.  
I plant it in your territory, Adodarhoh and the Onondaga Nation, in the territory of you who are Firekeepers.

I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves. Under the shade of this Tree of the Great Peace we spread the soft white feathery down of the globe thistle as seats for you, Adodarhoh, and your cousin Lords.

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 Peace. There shall you sit and watch the Council Fire of the Confederacy of the Five Nations, and all the affairs of the Five Nations shall be transacted at this place before you, Adodarhoh, and your cousin Lords, by the Confederate Lords of the Five Nations.
Section 4 of the Great Law of Peace

4. You, Adodarhoh, and your thirteen cousin Lords shall faithfully keep the space about the Council Fire clean and you shall allow neither dust nor dirt to accumulate. I lay a Long Wing before you as a broom. As a weapon against a crawling creature I lay a staff 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 Lords to your aid.

Section 7 of the Great Law of Peace

7. Whenever the Confederate Lords shall assemble for the purpose of holding a council, the Onondaga Lords shall open it by expressing their gratitude to their cousin Lords and greeting them, and they shall make an address and offer thanks to the earth where men dwell, to the streams of water, the pools, the springs and the lakes, to the maize and the fruits, to the medicinal herbs and trees, to the forest trees for their usefulness, 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 reveal 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 Lords declare the council open.

Section 24 of the Great Law of Peace

24. The Lords of the Confederacy of the Five Nations shall be mentors of the people for all time. The thickness of their skin shall be seven spans—which is to say that they shall be proof against anger, offensive actions and criticism. Their hearts shall be full of peace and goodwill, and their minds filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the Confederacy. With endless patience they shall carry out their duty, and their firmness shall be tempered with a tenderness for their people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodgment in their minds, and all their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation.
Section 4 Questions
a. How many “Cousin Lords” will help Adodarhoh keep the space around the council fire clean?
b. What is the “Long Wing” for?
c. What should they do with the staff if a creature comes into the area?

Section 7 Questions
a. What is the first thing council members do when gathering for a meeting?
b. What do council members give thanks for? List several examples from the section.
c. What is this section mostly about?

Section 7 Questions
a. Who is this section addressing? In other words, who is this law for?
b. What is a mentor?
c. What are qualities of a good mentor according to this section? List several examples from the section.
d. What is this section mostly about?
New York’s First People
The first people to live in New York arrived from the north 11,000 years ago. They hunted and gathered food in the pine forests. Later, people learned to plant corn, beans, and squash. They did not have to move around to look for food any more. They began to settle in the Hudson River Valley and on Long Island.

After settling, people began to join together in groups called tribes. Two tribes in New York were the Iroquois and the Algonquian. Iroquois moved onto the land west of the Algonquian. They started to fight with the Algonquian and with other tribes for food and land. They also wanted to win honor in battle.

1. Annotate your text. Use what you have learned about reading closely. Underline the things you understand.
2. Circle words that you do not understand. Read around the words and see if you can figure them out.
3. How long ago did New York’s first people arrive?
4. According to the passage, what did New York’s first people do so that they did not have to move around?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________


5. Why did the Iroquois and the Algonquian begin fighting?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________


## Postcards to Tim:
### Four-Square Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The first thing Tim should know:</th>
<th>Another thing Tim should know:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Sentence:</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For more information about the Four-Square approach, see: *Four-Square Writing Method: A Unique Approach to Teaching Basic Writing Skills*, by E. J. Gould and J. S. Gould [Teaching and Learning Company, 1999])
**Directions:** You are a writer and a flag designer. After researching the history of the Iroquois flag and reading about the creation of the Iroquois Confederacy, you have created a classroom flag to show the same ideas of peace and unity. First, complete the Four-Square graphic organizer on the next page about the symbols on your flag. Then write a paragraph in which you explain how the symbols in your flag represent peace and unity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First symbol on your flag:</th>
<th>Second symbol on your flag:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details (Describe the symbol. What does it symbolize? How does it connect to the Iroquois flag?)</td>
<td>Details (Describe the symbol. What does it symbolize? How does it connect to the Iroquois flag?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Topic Sentence:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third symbol on your flag:</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details (Describe the symbol. What does it symbolize? How does it connect to the Iroquois flag?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Write your paragraph here. Be sure to include the following in your writing:

- A main idea (a topic sentence explaining what your flag represents)
- Supporting details (a description of each symbol on your flag)
- A clear explanation of what each symbol represents
- A concluding sentence
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