

Name _____ Date _____

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Notes

Hiawatha and the Peacemaker

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According to legend, the 12th century BCE was a time of war and tension between the Haudenosaunee Nations. During this time, a man named the Peacemaker set out to spread a message of unity throughout the region. On his journey he met Hiawatha, an Onondaga leader. Hiawatha wanted to unite the Haudenosaunee people, too, but another Onondaga leader named Tadadaho was against it. Tadadaho was considered so evil that people believed his hair was made of snakes. Still, Hiawatha joined the Peacemaker on his journey.

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Upon arrival to each nation, the Peacemaker demonstrated the power of unity. He would break a single arrow in half to show how easily it could be broken alone. He would then tie five arrows together to show how difficult a united group is to break. He compared each arrow to a Haudenosaunee nation and eventually convinced the Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Mohawk, and Oneida Nations to accept his message of peace. With a confederacy nearly established, the Peacemaker and Hiawatha had one person left to convince: Tadadaho. He resisted at first but agreed to join after they promised Onondaga would be the capital of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It\xe2\x80\x99s said that Hiawatha then combed the snakes from Tadadaho\xe2\x80\x99s head.

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2. b'

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy was formed and governed under the Great Law of Peace. This law calls for respect of people's basic rights. The Peacemaker asked each nation to select leaders to represent them on the Great Council of 50 Sachems. These 50 leaders made decisions for the people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy based on the principles of the Great Law of Peace. They made decisions about declaring war, signing treaties, and organizing the confederacy. In order for a law to pass or a decision to be considered final, all 50 council members had to approve of the decision.

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3. b'

In 1744, the Great Council of 50 Sachems met with a group of English colonists. At the meeting, Canassatego, a Haudenosaunee leader, suggested the colonists form a union. He explained how their own confederacy has made us formidable. This has given us great weight and authority with our neighboring Nations. When Benjamin Franklin received a transcript of the meeting, he published it right away. Over the next few decades, Franklin referenced the Haudenosaunee Confederacy multiple times. He was impressed by their structure of government and thought it would work well for the colonies. In his 1754 Albany Plan of Union, he outlined a similar system. Each colony would handle their own affairs, while a council of representatives from each colony would make decisions for the union as a whole. While the Albany Plan was not adopted, the concept of federalism stuck. Many historians believe this vision of centralized government greatly influenced parts of the US Constitution.

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