Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)

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The Second Epoch of Time: The Great Law Keeping. Iroquoian history falls into three main epochs: Creation, in the First Epoch; the Great Law of Peace, in the Second Epoch; and Handsome Lake, in the Third and Present Epoch of Time. The main figures of the Second Epoch were Deganawida, the hero of tradition, hereafter called the Peacemaker; Jigonsaseh, the Head Clan Mother; Hiawatha, the inventor of the condolence wampum; and Adodaroh (Tadadaho), the leader of the “enemy” faction.

During the Second Epoch, the Kayánerénhkowa, Kayanênsäko’nà or Gaya-nëshshâ’gowa (Mohawk, Onondaga, and Seneca, respectively, for the Great Binding Law of Peace) was set in place to create the Five (later Six) Nation Confederacy. The original five nations founding the league were the Senecas, Mohawks, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Cayugas. These were later joined by the Tuscaroras, whose entry (a process) has been variously presented in Western texts as occurring in 1711, 1724, and 1735. In addition to the six full-member nations, many other nations, such as the Wyandots and the Delawares, were later incorporated in whole or in part through the process of adoption, sometimes militarily forced.

Antiquity of the League

The Keepers (oral traditionalists) have always maintained the great antiquity of the league, in stark contrast to Euro-scholars, a majority of whom have long tried to attribute the formation of the league to the pressures of European invasion and, consequently, have dated the founding of the league to the mid-fifteenth or mid-sixteenth centuries. Some European-American scholars, including Paul A. W. Wallace, have placed the founding of the league in the fifteenth century before the landfall of Columbus, that is, within a few years of contact with Europeans. In fact, the foundation of the league occurred much earlier and was caused entirely by Iroquoian internal pressures.

The Jesuit Relations of 1654 and 1691 recorded the Haudenosaunee telling the Catholic missionaries that the league had existed “de tout temps [from the earliest times]” (Thwaites, 41:86–87) and “de toute anciennetté [from all antiquity]” (Thwaites, 64:100–101). Chief Jake Thomas, a modern Keeper, claimed that the league was 3,000 years old, while Chief Jake Swamp, another modern Keeper, did not think that a founding date 2,000 years ago was out of bounds, although he placed it at 1,000 years ago (Mann and Fields, 114). In 1825, Keeper David Cusick dated the founding of the league to 1,000 years before the arrival of Columbus, that is, within a few years of contact with Europeans. In fact, the foundation of the league occurred much earlier and was caused entirely by Iroquoian internal pressures.

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Conflicting Contents of Tradition

Many different—and sometimes profoundly different—keepings exist concerning the identities, behavior, and deeds of the key individuals of the epoch.
Each Keeping has its modern adherents, and the contradictions in the versions they know sometimes lead to intense debate. Censorship is, however, a European invention. The Iroquois have never sought to dictate what people may hear or must believe; hence all versions are traditionally “correct.” A spread of extant versions of the Keepings is therefore included in the presentation here. Although telling one overall story, this recital identifies the different versions, and who kept them, as it goes along.

The “collecting” methods of nineteenth- and many twentieth-century European-American ethnographers built a considerable skew into the written record. It should be kept in mind that nearly every extant Keeping that has come down to us in writing has been a men’s story. The women’s traditions were slighted by Western ethnographers, who did not realize that men and women kept their own traditions. Much of the women’s version of what transpired has therefore been lost. Consequently, the story of the Jigonsaseh is much less well recorded today than the stories of either Hiawatha or the Peacemaker, although there are indications in works of Arthur C. Parker and J. N. B. Hewitt that hers was once a vibrant tradition.

There is also evidence that older traditions did not necessarily look like those that are recorded and/or maintained orally today. The most stunning departures from the standard modern traditions of the Great Law—and one of the strongest indications that many more versions once existed than were ever “collected”—are found in David Cusick’s 1825 “Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations,” one of the oldest written versions of the tradition of the law, as well as in Elias Johnson’s 1881 rendition.

There is also strong evidence that the Haudenosaunee actively refrained from telling the tradition of the law to Europeans until the late nineteenth century. The names of the Peacemaker and Hiawatha might have been recorded as early as 1801 and 1816 (Vecsey, 91), but their importance to the league was not understood by Europeans until the twentieth century. Cadwallader Colden (1688–1776), who was well acquainted with the colonial history and structure of the league, was ignorant of its tradition. John Heckewelder (1743–1823), likewise well versed in the laws of the league and other traditions, never mentioned the story of its founding. Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881) made only one buried reference to the Peacemaker, whose importance he clearly did not comprehend, and otherwise demonstrated his total ignorance of the tradition of the Great Law (Morgan, 1:96). Since Morgan’s ghost-writer for The League of the Haudenosaunee was the knowledgeable Seneca Häsanoan´da (Ely S. Parker), these omissions and distortions bespoke an Iroquoian intention of keeping the tradition from the Europeans.

Indeed, the identities, interrelationships, and actions of the figures of league tradition were so completely unknown to nineteenth-century European-Americans that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, using execrable research by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Wallace, 1948, 396), wildly misconstrued Hiawatha not only as the Peacemaker, but as an Algonkin to boot, in his Song of Hiawatha.
(1855). As late as 1892, the runaway popularity of The Song of Hiawatha among middle-class European-Americans led ethnographer William Beauchamp to note in some wonderment, “It is rather odd that what is now the most famous of Iroquois names”—he meant Hiawatha—“was almost unknown until little over half a century ago” (Beauchamp, 137). The true name and nature of the Peace-maker remained unknown to academics until scholars J. N. B. Hewitt (Tuscarora ancestry) and Arthur C. Parker (Seneca) brought them forward at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Traditions of the Great Law

Despite the great variety of extant league traditions, they all contain two sections: first, the story of the founders and their struggles to bring the league about; and second, a recital of the provisions of the Great Law, or Constitution, that resulted. Only the tradition of the struggle is presented here. For the provisions of the Great Law, see Fenton, “Seth Newhouse’s [Dayodekane’s] Traditional History and Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy” (1949); Gibson, Concerning the League (Woodbury, 1992); and Parker, The Constitution of the Five Nations (1916). For a summary, see the entries Governmental Functioning and Powers of the Haudenosaunee League and Gantowisas.

The Struggle

All versions of the Second Epoch agree that it opened onto the tangled and ferocious landscape of war, although the nature of the war differs depending on the tradition. Some of the Keepings hold that the league was formed in self-protection against an outside military threat, while others state that a former unified identity had been forgotten, and the people had become fragmented, engaging in hostilities against those they no longer recognized as kin (Johnson, 45–52; Beauchamp, 16–17).

On the other hand, the women’s Keepings retained by Arthur C. Parker, especially in “The Maize Maiden,” indicate a war over subsistence methods in which agriculture, which had been brought from another nation (most likely the Wyandots), was being attacked by an older hunting culture. The farming culture of what Elizabeth Parker called “the Cultivators” eventually won a leading place in culture. Indeed, this tradition traced the establishment of the Green Corn Festival to the triumph of “the Maize Maiden” (Jigonsaseh) and “Corn Tassel” (the Peacemaker) over Black Lynx (Adodaroh) (Parker, “Maize Maiden,” 191; Mann and Fields, 122–126).

Yet another explanation—typically the only explanation known to European-American academics—speaks of “blood feuding,” or wars of revenge spiraling out of control, with no ideological component beyond the presumed bloodthirstiness of the combatants. The people as mindlessly “lustful for war” can be found in the Newhouse version, among others (Parker, Constitution, 16).

There are indications in the older recorded traditions that a confederation of some sort antedated the Haudenosaunee League as it is known today, and that this earlier confederation crumbled to bits during the bloody civil war of the
Second Epoch. Cusick stated that 2,200 years before Columbus (1,200 years before the present league), an older league had formed to promulgate a war of resistance against the “Emperor” of a “Golden City” that held a vast empire to the south. The Emperor was attempting to invade Iroquoia, igniting a defensive war that lasted a full century and finally ended favorably for the Iroquois (Beau-champ, 10–11). Elias Johnson (Tuscarora) recounted an early, rather weak confederacy, as well, among the “first six families” (nations), under the direction of Tarachiawagon (Johnson, 43).

These traditions may help explain the vast differences in league dating, especially Thomas’s assertion of a 3,000-year-old league. The traditions also seem to fit in with the Earth-Grasper tradition that closed out the First Epoch by showing the people drawing together into councilmanically ordained clans for the preservation of peace (Hewitt, “Iroquoian Cosmology,” 594–607).

**Anomalous Traditions**

In Cusick’s version of the tradition of the Great Law, the only Second Epoch figure mentioned was Adodaroh, and he was the hero of the tale. According to Cusick, the Five Families (Nations) each began igniting their own council fires, without much regard to the others. Eventually, a war broke out among them, for reasons unspecified by Cusick. He did, however, note that Adodaroh, an Onondaga, was “the most hostile chief” active in this war, adorned, on head and body, by “black snakes.” His eating bowls were made from the skulls of his enemies, and his spoons, from their bones. In the course of time, however, Adodaroh desired a change in his lifestyle, and this desire led him to ask the people to change his adornment. With white wampum (a peace emblem), they drove away the black (war) snakes and clothed him instead in the wampum. At that point, Adodaroh emerged as “a law giver, and renewed the chain of alliance of the Five Nations and framed their internal government, which took five years in accomplishing it [sic]” (Beauchamp, 16–17).

If all actors but Adodaroh were absent from Cusick’s tradition, only Hiawatha appeared in Johnson’s 1881 version, with the Jigonsaseh and Adodaroh appearing only at the end as bit players operating at Hiawatha’s behest. According to Johnson, Hiawatha (whose name, he stated, meant “a wise man”) was the reincarnation of Tarachiawagon into a human being, an Onondaga man. In Johnson’s version, he married an Onondaga woman and fathered one greatly loved daughter. Hiawatha also set up governmental councils among the Five Nations, which were at peace with one another (Johnson, 45–46).

In Johnson’s telling, the threat came from outside the Iroquoian world. A horde, previously unknown, but a “furious and powerful enemy from north of the great lakes,” fell upon the Iroquois (as opposed to Cusick’s “emperor” pushing up from the south). Hiawatha rallied a resistance force with the aid of his spiritually powerful “white stone canoe.” Approaching a major war council in his canoe, Hiawatha and his daughter, who aided him in his labors, were stunned by the approach of an “immense” “Celestial” bird that, swooping down on the
pair, seized the “Terrestrial and Celestial” daughter and bore her off to the skies, from whence she never returned (Johnson, 47–49).

In the Johnson version, Hiawatha, distraught by his loss, fell into a despair from which he was only roused by the dedicated labors of his Iroquoian friends. Ultimately, he came around and, resuming his role of political organizer, spoke the words that congealed the Five Nations into one league capable of fending off its northern enemies. The order given by Johnson made the Onondagas the “first nation,” Fire Keepers; the Oneidas, the second nation and wise counsellors; the Senecas, the third and great speakers; the Cayugas, the fourth and shrewd hunters; and the Mohawks, the fifth and knowledgeable farmers and cabin builders. According to Johnson, Hiawatha then appointed the Jigonsaseh, or Head Clan Mother of the league, from a branch of the Senecas. The Adodaroh, “being considered next in wisdom” to Hiawatha, was appointed the Head Sachem of the league. The nations agreed to Hiawatha’s terms, a confederacy was formed, and another great Sky Bird visited the assembly and rained snow-white feathers (emblems of peace) down on them (Johnson, 49–52). The Cusick and Johnson versions of the Great Law tradition are rather anomalous, at least as measured by today’s better-known versions, which form the backbone of what follows.

The Peacemaker

Today’s best-known traditions of the Great Law begin with the birth of the Peacemaker. On the pragmatic level, the Wyandots north of Iroquoia saw the vicious war that was raging to the south and were afraid that it might spread to them. On the spiritual level, Sapling, the Twin co-creator of the First Epoch, returned periodically to instruct and/or aid the people, often under the name Tarachiawagon, or Sky Holder. These two levels combined in the Second Epoch in the person of the league-era Peacemaker. He was a spiritual emissary who came to aid the Iroquois in their time of desperate need. “It is from the sky that he came with his mission,” Gibson said (Gibson, 23).

The Peacemaker was absolutely not Hiawatha. He was, instead, a Wyandot who lived north of Lake Ontario and west of Iroquoia. He was later adopted by the Mohawks. Newhouse placed his homeland near the town of Kahanayenh (Tkahaánaye) on a nearby hill, Tironatharadadohn, on the Bay of Quinte, near the modern town of Kingston, Ontario (Parker, Constitution, 14, 65; Wallace, White Roots, 11).

All traditions present his birth as a spiritually guided event, often forecast in dream time. His Grandmother, Kahętoʔkhaʔ (“End of the Field”), learned in a dream that he was to come through her daughter Kahętehsük (“She Walks Ahead”) on a great mission to the people (Gibson, 6–12; Parker, Constitution, 66; Wallace, White Roots, 11). In turn, Kahętehsük learned through a dream of her son’s mission to the tumultuous south, where he was to bring about a lasting peace among the Ongwe Howeh or Iroquois (Parker, Constitution, 14). In the Chiefs’, Gibson’s, and Newhouse’s 1916 versions, the daughter and future
mother of the Peacemaker was portrayed as a “virgin,” a reference to certain versions of Iroquoian cosmology that presented the conception of the Twins as virginal. Some suspect that these references are evidence of missionary influence over traditional thought.

Newhouse said that despite their dreams, the women attempted to drown the infant. At the instigation of the grandmother, the daughter twice threw the baby into the lake through a hole in the ice. Both times, however, he was found comfortably at her breast in the morning. The third time, the grandmother herself attempted to dispatch the child, yet once more, he appeared on his mother’s breast at morning’s first light. It was at this point that the mother and daughter determined that their dream visions had been accurate and decided to nurture the child, in accordance with the instructions received in their dreams (Parker, Constitution, 14). Three was the traditional number of warnings, while the ability to overcome death, especially by water, was a sure sign of uki, or positive spirit power.

Gibson, however, in a version followed by Thomas, presented both Ka-hętoʔkthaʔ and Kahętehsųk as deeply loving and protective parents to the boy. At first, Ka-hętoʔkthaʔ was upset with her daughter for not naming the father of her child, and this made life miserable for both of them. A dream message soon set her straight, however, after which the two women anticipated the birth with happy expectation (Gibson, 3–13).

In due time, a healthy boy was born. He grew rapidly (another traditional sign of spirit power) and became a handsome youth who, as soon as he could speak, began telling people that it was not good to be unkind to one another (Gibson, 14). A Mohawk account stated that he had a double row of teeth that caused him to stutter badly and made him an object of derision (Howard, 431), although others claimed that his Wyandot dialect of Iroquois was only marginally comprehensible to the southern nations.

Newhouse said that the Peacemaker’s own Wyandot relatives were abusive toward the young man out of jealousy “of his handsome face and good mind,” but conceded that he was “a peculiar man” whose pacifistic philosophy the people did not understand (Parker, Constitution, 15). Gibson, on the other hand, showed the Wyandots as open to and appreciative of his messages, with the Clan Mothers calling assemblies specifically so that he might speak them (Gibson, 27–42).

When he came of an age to consider serious matters, the Peacemaker began his journey to the troubled Iroquois southeast of Lake Ontario in a traditional way, by paddling eastward across the lake in a “white stone canoe” (a reference to an ice floe hollowed out to navigate; Hewitt, “Constitutional League,” 537). This was a particularly spiritual craft, modeled after one used by an earlier incarnation of Tarachiawagon (Johnson, 45). Although harboring her doubts that such a craft would float—“I love you, my child, but what are you doing in launching a stone boat?”—his grandmother and, in several accounts, his mother, as well, helped the Peacemaker launch his canoe and thus begin his great mission
of peace to the south (Gibson, 54–59; quote, 55–56; Parker, Constitution, 67; Wallace, White Roots, 11). The fact that his stone canoe did not sink, but navigated, was taken as a sign that his words were spiritually inspired (Wallace, White Roots, 12).

When he alighted on the far shore of the lake, the Peacemaker was spotted by hunters, who were bedazzled by the light reflecting off his white stone canoe. For his part, the Peacemaker looked about at the desolate surroundings, taking the lack of fields as a sign that no settlements were nearby. The hunters said that they were refugees from the fighting. The Peacemaker immediately replied with his own message of Peace and then reentered his canoe in search of the settlements (Wallace, White Roots, 12).

Newhouse stated that the Peacemaker first approached the Mohawks, under whom he endured a physical trial to establish his credentials and his mission. Having explicated the cause of Peace, he offered to allow the Mohawks to attempt to kill him. If they succeeded, it would show that his mission was not spiritually guided. If they failed, it would prove that he was, as he claimed to be, a Sky emissary. Accordingly, the Peacemaker climbed a tall tree and sat amidst its top branches. The Mohawks cut the tree down and tumbled it over a cliff and into a body of water. No one believed that he could survive such a fall, but the next morning, the people saw the Peacemaker, hale and hearty, cooking his breakfast in his cabin. Ascertaining that the scouts had seen a living being and not a ghost, the Mohawks began whispering among themselves that he might indeed be able to bring forth the Great Peace (Parker, Constitution, 15–16).

*Jigonsaseh*

Many Seneca Keepers held that the Peacemaker’s first dedicated stop was at the Peace House of That Great Woman, the Peace Queen, the Fire Woman, the Mother of Nations, Yegowaneh, whom Elizabeth Parker called the leader of “the Cultivators” (Parker, Life, 17, 46). Hewitt described her as a cofounder of the league, of the same rank as Hiawatha, an “equally astute stateswoman” (Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 322). In many versions, including one kept by Corbett Sundown (Seneca), she was Seneca; in others, including one told by Jake Thomas, she was a Neutral, that is, a nation later adopted into the Senecas (Jemison, 69).

According to Elizabeth Parker, Yegowaneh’s land had not yet been dragged into the great civil war then raging, but her territory, a neutral portion of Seneca land, was regularly crossed by soldiers from both sides of the dispute on their way to battle. Yegowaneh provided food for the war chiefs of both sides (an ancient obligation of the Peace Woman) and lectured them as they ate on their duty “to follow the paths of peace.” She reminded the warmongers that everyone involved was, ultimately, Iroquoian and, therefore, kin (Parker, Life, 45).

When the Peacemaker entered her longhouse, she brought him food and then, after he had eaten, asked him his business, a customary duty of Clan Mothers
in general and of the Peace Woman in particular. She listened intently as he replied with a long description of his peace mission and its three parts, Ne‘‘Skëñ’no‘‘. (Health), Ne‘‘Gaï‘i·hwiiio (Righteousness), and Ne‘‘Gašhasde‘‘sä‘ (Popular Sovereignty). Each of these three elements was split into its two complementary halves. Ne‘‘Skëñ’no‘‘. (Health) meant physical and mental well-being, on one hand, and peace among men and women, on the other. Ne‘‘Gaï‘i·hwiiio (Righteousness) meant behaving well while advocating goodness, as well as embedding social justice in the apportionment of civic rights and duties. Ne‘‘Gašhasde‘‘sä‘ (Popular Sovereignty) meant observing the sacred will of the people and also the organized civic and/or military power to enforce it (Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspect,” 322); Hewitt, “Constitutional League,” 541; Wallace, White Roots, 13–14).

Yegowaneh agreed that these were excellent principles, but asked how the Peacemaker intended to put them into political practice in real life. He answered that this should be done through the longhouse (i.e., through the ancient clan structure) under the direction of the Clan Mothers, who were to hold power over the elective male chiefs. The clan representatives of the Five Nations were to group together in one figurative Kanonsiónni, or Longhouse of the Nations, that would function through thought (councils), not war. Yegowaneh immediately accepted this plan, thus becoming the first influential person to enter into the Peace Plan. In recognition of her wisdom, the Peacemaker renamed her Jigonsaseh (Wallace, White Roots, 14).

In some versions, the Jigonsaseh volunteered of her own accord to stop feeding the passing war parties (Wallace, White Roots, 14; Parker, Constitution, 71). In others, the Peacemaker asked or gently told her to desist from feeding the soldiers, pointing out that because she fed them, they were able to go forth renewed in strength to commit future atrocities (Gibson, 91–92). Either way, upon her full commitment to the cause of Peace, the Peacemaker sent her on a mission to the east, that is, to the Mohawks and Oneidas (Parker, Constitution, 71). On the third day of her journey, she became a Peace Chief and a Speaker of the Good Message of Peace (Gibson, 93). She was a full partner in the cause of Peace, the Peacemaker’s Speaker to the Women.

In “The Maize Maiden,” Jigonsaseh taught the Peacemaker the farming ways of her people, explaining corn and its uses at length (Parker, “Maize Maiden,” 189). Gibson also showed the Peacemaker closely questioning the guardians of the field concerning the crops, especially corn, and hearing, “Actually, it is our sustenance, the corn” (Gibson, 191–195; quote, 192). In the Chiefs’ version, it was Hiawatha who was puzzled by the cornfields. He questioned a guardian of the fields as to their purpose. The guardian replied that he protected the fields from scavengers and enemies, “that our children might live from the harvest” (Parker, Constitution, 76). Throughout the traditions, Hiawatha and the Peacemaker are continually coming across guardians of the fields, who are always friendly to their message.

The Jigonsaseh was regarded in many traditions as the cosmic Mother, a
reincarnation of the First Epoch Lynx, or mother of the Sacred Twins, who became Mother Earth. Chiefs Joseph Jacobs (Cayuga), David Skye (Onondaga), and David John (Onondaga) claimed that Jigonsaseh meant “She-Whose-Face-Is-Doubly-New,” a reference to the pure face of a newborn babe, unsullied as yet by life (Hewitt, “Field Studies,” 178). Jigonsaseh is also said to indicate the new leaves of corn emerging from the ground in the spring, another reference to rebirth, as the faces of spirits awaiting (re)birth are depicted as lying beneath the ground, in the womb of Mother Earth, smiling up at humanity.

Having joined the Peacemaker’s cause, the Jigonsaseh worked tirelessly, often at peril of her life, to lobby for the cause of Peace among the warring factions. The Peacemaker would refuse to open meetings until she arrived (Parker, Constitution, 90; Gibson, 223, 229–230). Elizabeth Parker said that he consulted her “in every important detail” of their work and that, failing her approval, both Hiawatha’s work and the principles of the league itself “could have been assailed.” In short, she was “sacred to her people for her word was law and her sanction was necessary in all political measures” (Parker, Life, 46).

Hiawatha

The next important figure approached by the Peacemaker was Hiawatha. Numerous, often mutually exclusive, versions of Hiawatha’s story cycle exist today, but not because any think him to be the Peacemaker. On the contrary, one set of versions introduces him as a cannibal and right-hand man of Adodaroh. Another set presents him as a wise and eager recruit to the Peacemaker’s cause. The bulk of these traditions unite in presenting Hiawatha as the Peacemaker’s handpicked Speaker to the men.

In the cannibal versions, most notably told by Gibson and Thomas, as well as by Paul Wallace in his version of tradition, Hiawatha was a dangerous man, to be approached gingerly. Hiawatha was said to have been born Onondaga; in other versions, he was merely said to have married into the Onondagas, becoming a valued chief himself. In some traditions, it was Jigonsaseh who advised the Peacemaker to approach Hiawatha. Most state that once he had determined to visit Hiawatha, the Peacemaker talked his intention over with Jigonsaseh before attempting this dangerous mission (Wallace, White Roots, 14).

Once sure of his purpose, the Peacemaker came upon the fearsome Hiawatha very cautiously, climbing up on the roof of his cabin and using it, first, as a good hiding spot, and second, as a good lookout point. After he had lain prone on his stomach, watching for hours, the Peacemaker’s patience was finally rewarded when he spied Hiawatha in the dusk, dragging a human body home for dinner. He watched Hiawatha light the fire beneath his cooking pot. While waiting for it to boil, Hiawatha glanced into the pot from time to time, checking on its progress. At the same time, the Peacemaker was looking down through the smoke hole in Hiawatha’s roof. Both of them looking into the pot simultaneously led to a comedy of errors, for the Peacemaker’s face was reflected in the pot just as Hiawatha peered into it, causing Hiawatha to mistake the Peacemaker’s
reflection for his own (Gibson, 78–81; Thomas; Wallace, *White Roots*, 15; Vecsey, 84).

At this point, astonished by the physical beauty of the face staring back at him, Hiawatha staggered back, lingering momentarily to consider what he had just seen. It seemed to him to have been a vision. As a reality check, he reapproached the pot, peeked in again, and once more saw the magnificent face staring back at him, radiating deep wisdom. “It is an amazing thing that I am so handsome,” he mused to himself (Gibson, 87). Hiawatha finally concluded that “this cannot be the face of a cannibal” (Thomas). He then put aside his former cannibalistic alliances, hauled his cooking pot out to an uprooted tree, and dumped its contents of butchered human meat out into the root hole (Thomas; Gibson, 87–88). At that point, the reformed cannibal felt very lonely and thought to himself, “Perhaps someone will come here, some stranger it may be, who will tell me what I must do to make amends for all the human beings I have made to suffer” (Wallace, *White Roots*, 15).

Sensing that the teachable moment had arrived, the Peacemaker jumped down from the roof, came around to the front of the cabin, and introduced himself. Hiawatha could hardly wait to tell his visitor of the transforming vision he had just had. Rather than explain the source of Hiawatha’s vision, the Peacemaker launched instead into a discourse on his cause of Peace while the new friends went hunting, bagging a deer. Carrying the deer over his shoulders back to Hiawatha’s lodge, the Peacemaker told him, “Deer is what humanity was meant to feed upon.” Open to the message, Hiawatha was quickly enlisted in the Peacemaker’s cause and was sent forth to the nations to call for an end to internecine warfare (Wallace, *White Roots*, 15–17; Gibson, 85–90). The Peacemaker foretold that Hiawatha would be the one to “comb the snakes out of Atotarho’s hair” and that, for this reason, he would be called “Hiawatha, He Who Combs” (Wallace, *White Roots*, 17). In 1971, frustratingly unnamed “Mohawk informants” told Helen Addison Howard a much-abbreviated version of the same story that introduced Hiawatha briefly as “a man who eats humans,” but who, upon meeting the Peacemaker, immediately went over to his side, becoming the “first convert and chief disciple” of Peace (Howard, 430).

The tale of how the Peacemaker and Hiawatha met is far less dramatic in those versions that do not recall Hiawatha as a cannibal. In the Newhouse version, Hiawatha and the Peacemaker did not encounter one another until near the end of the tradition, when they had to join forces to pacify *Adodaroh* and emplace the Great Law of Peace. Prior to that, each had been working independently for peace, with Hiawatha calling numerous councils among the Onondagas in hopes that his kinsfolk could help determine a way to calm down *Adodaroh*, who was causing great difficulty with his singular ways (Parker, *Constitution*, 17). In the Onondaga version told by Skanawati (John Buck), the Peacemaker did not encounter Hiawatha until after an angry *Adodaroh* had arranged for his family to be murdered. This telling likewise had the Peacemaker

In the Chiefs’ 1900 version, the Peacemaker did not become acquainted with Hiawatha until after he had met both the Jigonsaseh and the Adodaroh (whom he reformed without the aid of either Hiawatha or the Jigonsaseh). Coming across a town he had not yet visited, the Peacemaker asked to meet the people’s Royaner (or lineage chief) and found himself taken to the longhouse in which Hiawatha lived. Broaching the topic of his Peace cause, he discovered that the wise and beloved chief had already heard of it. In fact, from the moment Hiawatha had first heard the plan detailed, he had been unable to sleep for sheer excitement. At that moment, the Peacemaker named the chief Haiyohwatah, meaning, it was said, “He has misplaced something but knows where to find it” (Parker, Constitution, 71).

The Chiefs continued that at this point, Hiawatha vouched for the Peacemaker, telling his people that the Peace plan was sound. The council was not entirely convinced, however. The main war chief asked how the plan would deal with the powerful nations east (Oneidas and Mohawks) and west (Senecas and Cayugas), who were not showing any signs of accepting the Peace. The Peacemaker stated that those nations had already accepted the plan. Still unconvinced, the war chief proposed the tree test of integrity, leading into the story earlier attributed by Newhouse to the Mohawks, and from which the Peacemaker escaped unscathed (Parker, Constitution, 72–73). Gibson repeated a similar story twice, since the triumph of the Peacemaker over death greatly guaranteed his credentials (Gibson, 109–21, 154–157). In one Gibson version, Hiawatha assumed the Peacemaker’s place in the test (Vecsey, 84).

**Hiawatha’s Condolence Wampum**

In all versions, Hiawatha lost his entire family, and this misfortune sent him into irretrievable, almost manic grief. The number of his daughters (one, three, or seven) and whether his wife was among the deceased depend upon the version at hand. The mysterious Tehyohrohnyohron, meaning the “high-flying bird which pierces the Skies” (Parker, Constitution, 75–76), figured prominently in most of the traditions of their deaths.

In the Buck version, Adodaroh wished to crimp the political opposition of Hiawatha so badly that he resorted to his usual murderous means. Spotting Hiawatha’s best-loved and pregnant daughter out gathering firewood, Adodaroh directed the gathering council delegates’ attention to the Sky, where they saw “a beautiful creature” coming in for a landing near to where the young woman stood. As the people raced past one another for a better look, they trampled the daughter to death. She was the last of Hiawatha’s surviving children, and her loss threw him into deep mourning (Hewitt, “Legend,” 133).

In Gibson’s and the Chiefs’ versions, the townsfolk noticed something in the Sky in the middle of a lacrosse game that had been called to lift Hiawatha’s
spirits, which were flagging due to the deaths of all but one of his daughters. As the teams watched, the Great Blue Bird came “down steadily from on high.” (Blue was the color of Sky, hence sacred spirit, and was often tricky or selectively invisible.) In an attempt to capture the beautiful but unknown thing while it was flying very low, the excited crowd chased it, colliding with Hiawatha’s remaining, pregnant daughter, who died shortly afterwards (Gibson, 137–138; Parker, *Constitution*, 75).

In Newhouse, the seven beloved daughters of Hiawatha were assassinated in a conspiracy hatched by the Peace camp. The plotters reasoned that cutting all of Hiawatha’s emotional ties to Onondaga would push him out into the wider world to fulfill his larger destiny. They hired the powerful shaman Ohsinoh to work *uki/otkon* in their favor (Parker, *Constitution*, 18–19) (*Uki* is the positive aspect of medicine; *otkon*, the negative aspect. They are complements, not polar opposites.) In yet other versions, Hiawatha’s three daughters died in quick succession of a mysterious illness, while it was his wife who was trampled to death in the panicked stampede to see what had come to land from Sky World (Wallace, *White Roots*, 20).

However he came to be so bereft, through the machinations of *Adodaroh*, the intervention of the Peace camp, or the spiritual presentation of a Sky sign, Hiawatha lost his bearings for some time, bowed down to the ground with unbearable grief. It was at this point that he “split the sky” (or “split the heavens”). William Fenton’s oft-cited gloss of “split the sky” to mean “I am deeply disturbed” is simply wrong. (Fenton was quoted by Woodbury in her translation of Gibson, 138 n.2.) The Split Sky is the north-south axis. When Hiawatha announced that he would “split the sky,” he meant that he would travel the north-south axis, away from Onondaga and his anguish. Buck said that he traveled due south, as did Newhouse and others (Akweks, 10, 11; Hewitt, *Legend*, 133; Parker, *Constitution*, 19; Wallace, *White Roots*, 20).

Hiawatha was to languish in his profound despair for some time before realizing how to come to grips with such pain. No joy could penetrate his heart; tears fell continually from his eyes. As he plodded on, regardless of his surroundings, he passed the Tully Lakes. Seeing him coming, the ducks kindly responded to his request for aid by lifting the water above his head so that he might pass across the lake bed dry footed. It was then, as he crossed, that something caught his eye, sparkling in the sun—layers of shells. Stooping down, Hiawatha scooped them up and tucked them into his medicine bag. Once he had passed, the ducks replaced the water in the lake bed, while Hiawatha took and roasted three of their number for dinner. He named the place where he stayed Ohondogo´nwa, meaning “the Land of Rushes” (Parker, *Constitution*, 20; Wallace, *White Roots*, 20).

That evening, musing over his shells, Hiawatha took the handy rushes from around the lakeshore and made three strands of wampum, symbols of his sorrow. Each night, he would place a longer pole between two upright, notched sticks and drape the wampum over the horizontal bar. He cried aloud that should he
ever meet anyone who was suffering the same depth of sorrow as himself, he would offer that person the condolence of the wampum, in which the words of comfort that accompanied each string would come true, sinking into the heart of the mourner to create a new and happier reality (Parker, *Constitution*, 21; Wallace, *White Roots*, 20–21).

In many versions, Hiawatha roamed the countryside for a long time camping, setting up his poles and wampum, and reciting his message. Hiawatha and his wampum became famous, but the people were not sure that his ceremony would work to comfort the bereaved. In the Chiefs’ version, however, Hiawatha came rather quickly to a town where the Peacemaker was staying. Hiawatha sent a cornfield guardian to town with a message to his chief (the Peacemaker) that “the Good News of Peace and Power” had come. When the Peacemaker heard this message, he immediately went into the field to greet the stranger who spoke such words. Upon seeing that it was Hiawatha, the Peacemaker ordered him not to enter the town until he had been officially invited, by means of a woman, after he had cut and hung up his *o’go´rha* (Mohawk) or *o´tko´ä*¨’ (Seneca)—strings of quills used as wampum (Parker, *Constitution*, 76–77).

The Chiefs’ version continued that when the woman had identified Hiawatha the next morning, she hastened to tell the Peacemaker, who dispatched the war chief to escort Hiawatha into town. The war chief found Hiawatha sitting by his fire, staring at the three *o´tko´ä*¨’ strings suspended from his pole. Three times (the traditional number of calls or warnings), the war chief summoned Hiawatha into town; three times, Hiawatha ignored him.

The Peacemaker was soon told of this puzzling behavior, but when he heard that Hiawatha sat mourning before his wampum, he understood the difficulty. Completing two more strings of wampum, he sent them to Hiawatha, who accepted his invitation wampum to enter town, where he delivered his Good Message of Peace. Their business in that town being finished, the pair left town suddenly, in the middle of the night, to travel to the next town. Some say that they departed in such haste because the townsfolk had not honored Hiawatha as they should have (Parker, *Constitution*, 77–79).

Gibson told a very similar version of this story, except that there was no rush to leave town, for Hiawatha was well received. Nor was the Peacemaker present at the town when he arrived. The chief issuing the invitation was not the Peacemaker. It was only after Hiawatha had spoken that the Peacemaker arrived. Thereafter, the two continued on their mission, journeying forth together (Gibson, 139–172).

Hiawatha’s special mission of the condolence wampum was not yet completed, however, for having hung up his wampum for all to see, having explained its use, and having demonstrated its meaning, he had yet to be condoled himself on his great personal loss. The climactic moment of Hiawatha’s story cycle arrived the day the Peacemaker went deliberately to the place where Hiawatha’s smoke was seen to pierce the sky (a reference to prayer and tobacco smoke).

Hesitating until he heard Hiawatha repeat his wonted plea, “This is what I
would do if I found anyone burdened with grief,” the Peacemaker stepped forward. Gently taking the wampum strings from his friend’s pole and adding to them wampum he had made, the Peacemaker repeated, “string by string,” the comforting words of the great Condolence Ceremony. He wiped the tears from Hiawatha’s eyes; he made daylight for Hiawatha and covered the grave; he lifted the sorrow from Hiawatha’s heart and cleared his mind (Wallace, *White Roots*, 21–22). This was the first Condolence Ceremony. The people nearby saw the Peacemaker perform the ceremony and the relief it afforded Hiawatha. Thereafter, they began using Hiawatha’s condolence wampum to heal those in grief.

*Adodaroh (Tadadaho)*

In those versions in which Hiawatha accepted the Peacemaker’s commissions, he dedicated himself to helping finalize the Peace. In a Mohawk version, Hiawatha sent out runners to call councils among all the Onondagas. The Adodaroh alone among the Onondagas remained unmoved by the Peace Plan. He even sought to impede Hiawatha’s councils by making a habit of meeting canoeloads of delegates at the landing zones to stand imperiously in the way of the disembarking councillors. Three times, Hiawatha sent out runners, but after the first two delegations had been faced down by the Adodaroh, few councillors mustered the courage to respond to the third set of runners (Howard, 431). Other versions state that the runners had been sent by the Peacemaker himself, and that they went far beyond the borders of Onondaga, to the Adirondacks, Cherokee, Northern Wyandot Nations, Eries, Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Ottawas, and Sacs (Parker, *Constitution*, 80–81; Hewitt, “Legend,” 146–147).

Well might the arriving delegates have feared Adodaroh. In those versions that are partially silent on the cannibals, he is merely presented as a bloodthirsty thug who did not hesitate to arrange for the assassination of his political enemies and/or members of their families (Howard, 431; Parker, *Constitution*, 19). In the more numerous versions that speak of cannibals, Adodaroh was frankly identified as one (Akweks, 15; Parker, *Constitution*, 17, 69). He was described by Newhouse and by Buck as “insane” or “mad,” an “angry” man who “rage[d]” (Parker, *Constitution*, 17; Hewitt, “Legend,” 134).

All traditions except Cusick’s and Johnson’s—and even they described him as fierce—presented Adodaroh as a horrifying presence, experienced in otkon (negative spirit power) and visually terrifying to look upon. The twisted convolutions of his mind were mirrored by the living snakes that he wove, writhing, into his hair. He wound yet more snakes around his body. His fingertips were mittens made of severed snake heads, their eyes still glaring at people as he gestured and pointed, his hands never still. His grossly elongated, snakelike penis was wrapped around his waist like a python, in many loops (Thomas; Hewitt, “Legend,” 136, 140; Gibson, 228; Parker, *Constitution*, 89; Wallace, *White Roots*, 18). Newhouse stated that for terror’s sake, the Onondagas “satisfied his insane whims,” hinting at his cannibalism (Parker, *Constitution*, 17).
Due to the obdurate recalcitrance of Adodaroh, who held out long after all others had agreed to the Peace, some (mostly Western ethnographers) say that the Onondagas were the last nation to come to the council. Adodaroh, however, was only one Onondaga and not the nation. Thus the traditional claim is that the Senecas were the last nation to ratify the Peace plan.

The Reluctant Senecas

Singly and together, the Peacemaker, Hiawatha, and Jigonsaseh traveled throughout Iroquoia, tirelessly carrying the message of Peace. They frequently commissioned runners from among their supporters to announce meetings they had called to press for Peace. These runners shape-shifted into swift and far-sighted hawks (Gibson, 203) or crows (Hewitt, “Legend,” 135). At each meeting, more people came over to the cause of Peace, until a majority of the people favored it.

In many versions, the Senecas were the holdout nation, reluctant to come over to the Peace cause (Parker, Constitution, 25–26). In these versions, a place of great honor is reserved for a chief known as Sganyadá:wyoh, or Handsome Lake, the first—and, for a long time, along with his speaker, the only—Seneca to join the cause of Peace (Gibson, 213–221). In these versions, the Seneca Nation was convinced by a spectacular display of Sky uki arranged by the Peacemaker, who promised that he would deliver “a sign in the sky” to them. As kept by Aren Akweks (Ray Fadden, Mohawk) and Torewawaguhn (George Nash, Mohawk), the sign, a “black sun,” or total eclipse, did occur, persuading all of the Senecas to join the cause of Peace (Wallace, “Return,” 399; Mann and Fields, 135–149).

In an alternate version, the Senecas were enticed into the league by the uki power of the Peace Song, sung by the combined representatives of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, and Cayugas as they crossed Canandaigua Lake, traveling to the recalcitrant Senecas. In this telling, it was the Peace Song (and the sight of numerous singers) that persuaded the Senecas to lay down their arms and agree to enter the league (Wallace, White Roots, 23).

The Transformation of Adodaroh

The final moment of tradition is usually presented as the dramatic transformation of Adodaroh from a dangerous madman into a valued member of the community, although not all traditions contain such a section. In the Chiefs’ version, for instance, Adodaroh, not Hiawatha, was the fearsome cannibal re-formed when he mistook the Peacemaker’s reflection in his cooking pot for his own handsome face, so that Adodaroh’s transformation happened early in the recital (Parker, Constitution, 69–70). As the Chiefs told it, the holdout at the end who made the lake fronting the final council impassable, was actually Odate’te’, a principal Oneida chief (Parker, Constitution, 82). In the Johnson and Cusick versions mentioned previously, Adodaroh was never the main threat in the first place.

However, the best-known versions today all close with the three Peace lead-
ers, Hiawatha, Jigonsaseh, and the Peacemaker, joining forces to reform the diehard Onondaga chief, Adodaroh, who continued resisting the message of Peace long after all the other representatives of the Five Nations had agreed to enter the league. In several versions, the Peacemaker and Hiawatha arrived at the final council before Jigonsaseh, whose tardiness worried them, the implication being that her safety was at stake. The two men knew that they could not conduct the final business of establishing the league without her, and presumably, so did Adodaroh. Thus the men feared that he had caused some great harm to befall her. However, her canoe was finally spotted paddling down the river to the council grounds (Gibson, 223–224; Parker, Constitution, 88, 90).

In some versions, before the final business could be conducted with Adodaroh, preliminary meetings had to take place to hammer out the final form and content of the Great Law. Buck said that constitutional “matters” were put into wampum as they were agreed upon (Hewitt, “Legend,” 135). Newhouse stated that the Peacemaker proposed the form of corresponding chiefs and Clan Mothers, with Hiawatha approving it (Parker, Constitution, 27). However, Newhouse left something out: the women’s part in the council. Elizabeth Parker supplied that. She was emphatic that the Jigonsaseh was consulted on the final form of the Great Law and that without her “sanction” of Hiawatha’s “plans,” neither the “integrity” nor the “principles of the confederacy” would have stood. With the Clan Mothers’ rights fully guaranteed, she acceded to the plan (Parker, Life, 46; Jemison, 69). The Chiefs likewise agreed that the Jigonsaseh, “this great woman our mother,” had approved the plans (Parker, Constitution, 91).

Having designed and voted on the form of the proposed league, the delegates still had to bring Adodaroh into the circle of consensus if the Great Law were to be legally emplaced. The challenge was to “straighten and reconstruct his mind, so that he m[ight] again have the mind of a human being” (Hewitt, “Legend,” 135). Central to the success of this effort was the Athahino’ke, mentioned in several traditions. The Cayugas say that Jigonsaseh taught it to the Peace camp. Newhouse referred to it as “the Peace Hymn,” although Buck called it “the Six Songs,” that is, there were six verses (Parker, Constitution, 27, 28; Hewitt, “Legend,” 137, 138). A song of thanksgiving, it expressed gratitude to the war chiefs, the Clan Mothers, the elders, the ancestors, Peace, and the people/league (Vecsey, 87; Hewitt, “Legend,” 139). When it was sung properly, it had the power to calm the mind of Adodaroh, making him receptive to transformation (Parker, Constitution, 24).

Adodaroh may have been insane, but he was also clever and aware of his own best political interests. Therefore, it was necessary to draw him in with an offer worthy of his stature as primary chief of the Onondagas. Thomas said that it was the Jigonsaseh who designed the compromise package that was to prove acceptable to the statesman in Adodaroh. Under her terms, the Onondagas (his nation) were to be the Fire Keepers of the league. They were to have fourteen chiefs in the men’s council, more than any other nation. Of course, since Ado-
daroh was the principal chief already, this offer meant that he would become the first Fire Keeper of the league (Gibson, 231).

Armed now with a song and a plan, the Peacemaker and Hiawatha sought to cross the lake to where Adodaroh sat glowering at them. The pair did not travel alone, but took with them the assembled delegates of the Five Nations to impress upon Adodaroh just how far out of consensus he stood—a powerful argument in Iroquoian culture (Gibson, 222; Parker, Constitution, 91). Getting physically close to Adodaroh was difficult, however, because he was able to command the elements. Ominously, the Peace delegates could hear Adodaroh shouting across the distance, taunting them. On the first and second approaches of the delegation, Adodaroh called the winds up to tornado force, but the Peacemaker cried, “Rest, wind!” and “Stop, wind!” Instantly, the air was becalmed (Gibson, 222–232; Wallace, White Roots, 24–25). Some versions dispense with the windy crossing and merely hold that the delegation came singing upon Adodaroh, instantly effecting “a radical change over his mind” (Hewitt, “Legend,” 138).

At this juncture, the Peacemaker was growing truly anxious over the absence of Jigonsaseh and repeatedly asked those about him if she had yet arrived. He refused to continue the proceedings without her. Finally, it was reported to him that she had come. He personally went back in a canoe to ferry her across to the capstone council himself. The moment he beached his canoe, she “got in and stood up in front” while Hiawatha and other delegates paddled back to the place where Adodaroh sat (Gibson, 229–230; Parker, Constitution, 89–90).

Now the Peacemaker and Hiawatha set about retransforming Adodaroh into human shape. In both the Buck and the “Newhouse” (Dayodekane’s “Cosmogony” attributed to Newhouse) versions, using his own uki powers and presenting wampum with each address, the Peacemaker first righted the misshapen body of Adodaroh, changing his feet from bear claws into human feet and his hands from turtle claws into human hands, before attempting to clip his elongated penis down to the span of one man’s hand. In this final effort, the Peacemaker was unsuccessful, for even as he clipped the penis short, it grew back to its former length. After the Peacemaker’s third, failed attempt to shorten the penis, the assembled chiefs intervened, taking away the “potency” of Adodaroh’s penis, that is, “its ability to kill persons.” Turning to the Peacemaker, they assured him that it would “make no more trouble” (Hewitt, “Legend,” 136, 139–140; Fenton, 149).

The Gibson version was far less graphic, however, merely describing the Peacemaker addressing Adodaroh, quieting the writhing fingers, smoothing down the moving hair, and resetting his face into human contours (Gibson, 233–235). In other versions, once the body of Adodaroh had been straightened by the Peacemaker, the mind of Adodaroh was smoothed by Hiawatha, who “combed the snakes out of his hair” (Wallace, White Roots, 25). “Combing out the hair” is an Iroquoian metaphor that means two different things: (1) to untangle the confused and hostile thoughts of someone who is in moral or mental
The Second Epoch of Time

chaos; or (2) to interpret the visions and/or dreams of another, combing out their spiritual meaning. In combing out Adodaroh’s hair, Hiawatha was doing both, for it was not only the ethical mind of Adodaroh that was twisted, but his spiritual faculties as well. Thus did Hiawatha earn the name “He Who Combs” (and not, as is sometimes erroneously written, “He Who Makes Rivers”).

Once the mind and body of Adodaroh had been set straight, the Peacemaker asked Jigonsaseh to set the deer antlers of office on his head, a public demonstration of her approval of the proceedings. She did, and her act inaugurated the league (Gibson, 237; Parker, Constitution, 91). Gibson recorded that she then officially crowned the remaining chiefs of the new Grand Council one by one as the Peacemaker called each forward to receive his badge of office (Gibson, 241–250). With the Jigonsaseh’s consecration of the officials of the league, the Peacemaker recited the Great Law for all to hear.

The names Adodaroh and Jigonsaseh transformed into position titles that were transmitted in perpetuity through matrilineages of the Onondaga (Adodaroh) and Seneca (Jigonsaseh) nations. The Head Fire Keeper of the men became the Adodaroh, while the Head Fire Keeper of the women was the Jigonsaseh, or Head Clan Mother, of the league. The names of other notable leaders of the time, such as Saganyadaı'yoh (Seneca), likewise transmuted into the position titles of the offices they held in the new league. For a list of the titles of the men’s Grand Council, see Morgan (1:60–61). Perhaps the only comparable list of Clan Mothers’ titles that was ever collected exists on pages 139 and 190–191 of the as-yet-unpublished, handwritten Dayodekane manuscript, a microfilm version of which exists at the Smithsonian Institution (Fenton 150, 152). If Dayodekane was Newhouse, he was in a position to know those titles well, because Newhouse was the women’s speaker to the Grand Council (Fenton, 157).

The Farewell Prophecy

His mission finally completed, the Peacemaker bade farewell to the people, leaving them with a frightening prophecy that warned them never to disagree heatedly with one another, for in a time yet long distant, the White Panther, that Fire Dragon of Discord, would fall upon the people and take away their “rights and privileges.” In that grim time, he said, the people were to hold fast to one another, offering each other support, not opposition. Although the oppressor would mock them, saying, “You were a proud and haughty people once,” and kick aside their “heads with scorn,” the people of the league would avenge themselves before all was said and done (Parker, Constitution, 103–104).

In the end, the Peacemaker quietly returned home to Quint Bay to live out his remaining years. His Wyandot brothers had long waited to see him again. One day, to their surprise, they saw him peering around a tree at them. According to Jake Thomas, he was 120 years old when his mission ended (Thomas).
FURTHER READING


Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma. The Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma occupies roughly 4,000 acres of prairie ninety miles northeast of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Like most other Native American settlements in Oklahoma, this one has roots in the removal policies of the 1830s.

Most of the Native people who live on this reservation are descended from the Sandusky (Ohio) Senecas, who were guaranteed a 40,000-acre reservation there by treaty in 1817. During 1832, however, at the same time that many other Native nations were being compelled to move to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), the Sandusky Senecas were persuaded to sell their lands in Ohio and move west of the Missouri River. The Sandusky Senecas suffered great hardship on the journey and, once in Oklahoma, found that the land assigned to them was unfit for agriculture. A new reservation was negotiated in the northeastern corner of Indian Territory, adjacent to the Cherokee Nation.

During 1881, a band of roughly 100 Cayugas from New York and Ontario joined the Senecas in Oklahoma. Ten years later, the reservation was allotted, and much of its land was opened to non-Indian settlement. The tribe incorpo-