

Unit Plan: The Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace & U.S. Government Comparison

Teacher: Anne Tahamont, Silver Creek Central School

Grade Level: 12th Grade – Participation in Government-Jessica Kardashian’s class

Length: 5 Days (40-minute class periods)

Theme: Indigenous Governance, Democracy, Symbolism, Civic Values

Unit Goals:

Students will be able to:

- Relate the story of the Peacemaker to the United States Constitution
 - Identify and correlate at least three symbols from the Peacemaker’s Journey to what is used within the United States (Eagle, the arrows in the talons, the stars etc.)
-

New York State Social Studies Standards

- **12.G1:** Civic Participation
 - **12.G2:** Rights, Responsibilities, and Duties of Citizenship
 - **12.G4:** Foundations of Government and Law
 - **12.G5:** Comparative Government
 - **12.G6:** Public Policy
-

Essential Questions

1. What is the Great Law of Peace, and how did it unite the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
 2. In what ways did the Haudenosaunee influence the formation of the U.S. Constitution and government?
 3. How does symbolism within the Great Law of Peace convey political and moral values?
 4. How can Indigenous models of governance shape modern civic understanding?
-

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Recall major events in the story

- Demonstrate knowledge of the five original nations
- Understand why he came with the message of peace, love and righteousness

Target Statements:

- I will be able to summarize the Peacemaker's Journey and key players

Materials:

- White Pine Needles
- iPad

Procedures:

- **Background:** Students just finished their unit on the US constitution, the 3 branches & separation of powers.
- **Anticipatory Set:** Greet students as they enter the classroom and explain who I am for the ones who don't know me and what I teach.

Day-by-Day Breakdown

Day 1: The Story of the Peacemaker

Objective: Students will learn about the origin of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the role of the Peacemaker.

- I will explain why I chose this class to come and talk to. I will access prior background knowledge by asking who knows about the Hodinöšö:nih Confederacy and the five nations that make it up.
- I will begin to tell the story of the Peacemaker's Journey on how he came to be, starting with his mother and grandmother, why they moved out of the village
- I will describe what is happening during this time period of his birth-wars are going on, cannibalism, killing of one another
- He was born to a virgin mother, his grandmother tried to kill him 3x
- What was different about him
- Finally, they go back to their village, and he tells of his message and who he is uniting
- He builds the canoe, pine tree and symbolism
- He sets sail, tells the Mohawks to get ready
- He meets Jikonsaseh and what she represented, how she tried to kill him and accepts the message

Exit Ticket: Qualities of the Peacemaker

Day 2: Structure of Haudenosaunee Government

Objective: Examine the structure and principles of the Great Law of Peace.

- Discuss the main points of Day 1 & review who everyone is
- Continue where I left off, he meets the cannibal
- Walks along the shore sees the wampum
- Talk about Tadadaho and who he is, how he got to be the way he is
- He meets Hiawatha
- Performs the first small condolence on him
- Talk about grief and what happens to us during that time
- Small class discussion with students on grief and how it effects each person differently but also impacts decisions you make.
- Discuss how he's talking to the most feared of each village, what their names mean
- How many chiefs are in each nation
- The Cayugas have upper and lower
- Then the Seneca's-why didn't they want to join
- They go back to Tadadaho to convince him the power of peace, love and righteousness
- What does he do and why doesn't it work

Activities:

- Fill in Grand Council Diagram (Handout A)
- Discuss consensus vs. majority rule

Exit Ticket: Explain consensus

Write the following excerpted quote on the board to help when doing Handout A

"The Council shall consist of 50 chiefs selected by clan mothers. All decisions must be unanimous, showing unity of mind. The people must have a voice through their clan representatives."

Handout A: Fill-in Diagram of Grand Council

- Five Nations
- 50 Hoyaneh (chiefs)
- Role of Clan Mothers

- Consensus decision-making

Day 3: Symbolism and Law

Objective: Interpret symbols of Haudenosaunee governance and their civic meanings.

- Discussion and Review of Days 1&2
- Continue where I left off-he goes back to the Seneca's again
- He gets them to agree and goes back to Tadadaho
- All 50, along with Jikonsaseh
- Why it's important she's the one to comb the snakes from his hair
- Take a walk out to the white pine tree-tell about roots growing in 4 directions, we buried our weapons of war, eagle placed on top • Have students look to identify the needles.
- Talk about the symbols within-the eagle, the arrows, tree of peace
- Make the correlation between the symbols we chose and the ones in the US
- Talk about house and senate vs. older brothers and younger brothers
- Benjamin Franklin's writings of the Iroquois
- Compare and contrast of our way and the US adaptation of what happened
- Ask for any feedback, comments, concerns

Activities:

- Analyze visuals: Tree of Peace, Wampum Belts (Handout B)
- Symbol interpretation activity on the board
- Create personal symbol for civic values

Exit Ticket: Which symbol was most meaningful?

Handout B: Symbol Chart

Symbol	Meaning
White Pine	Unity, peace
5 Arrows	Strength in unity
Eagle atop the tree	Vigilance
Wampum Belt	Record of law, agreement

Day 4: Compare & Contrast with U.S. Government

Objective: Compare Haudenosaunee and U.S. government structures and principles. **Activities:**

- Venn Diagram Activity (Handout C)
- Read Franklin quote on Iroquois influence (Handout D)
- Partner work: Identify 3 similarities and 3 differences
- **Exit Ticket:** Influence on U.S. democracy

Handout C: Venn Diagram Template

Handout D: Franklin Quote

"It would be a strange thing... if six Nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such a union... and yet a like union should be impracticable for ten or a dozen English colonies."

Day 5: Civic Reflection & Final Assessment

Objective: Reflect on civic lessons and Indigenous values today. **Activities:**

- Brainstorm civic values from both systems
- Final writing: Choose 1 of 3 prompts (Handout E)
- Share responses
- Miss Tahamont will share a traditional dish of Roast corn soup and explain its meaning

Handout G: Writing Prompts

1. How could the U.S. benefit from adopting more Haudenosaunee values or structures?
2. What does it mean to be a peacemaker in government today?
3. Create a symbol for peace and explain its meaning.

Assessment Criteria:

- Accurate understanding of Haudenosaunee governance (30%)
- Comparison to U.S. systems (30%)
- Reflection and originality (40%)

Closure: The completion of the activity is watching the Belouga of Richard Mitchell explaining the roles of the chiefs, clan mothers and faithkeepers and class discussion.

Cultural extension- The students were very interested in traditional foods and are trying traditional food prepared by another class this week.