



## Learning on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

*One of America's Byways*

### Lesson #5

**Subject: Culture – Native American's Story Telling**

**Grade Level: 4 – 6**

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#### **Anticipatory Set:**

Ask the students what is storytelling.

#### **New York State Standards:**

**Social Studies:** Standard #1 - History of the United States and New York

**Language Arts:** Standard #1- Language for Information and understanding

Standard #2 - Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

**The Arts:** Standard #3 – Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Standard #4 – Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts

#### **Objective:**

Students will understand the culture of the Iroquois and how they used storytelling to teach their youth about their religion by memorizing a story and creating a story pouch to use as they retell a Native American story.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose for this lesson is to have students understand the traditions of the Native Americans from New York.

#### **Summary:**

The five nations of native people living in upstate New York have referred to themselves as the Haudenosaunee people, meaning “The People of the Long House.” The French fought along with the Huron Indian Tribes against the Haudenosaunee Indians and gave them a Huron Indian name, which was considered derogatory, “Iroquois”, meaning “Real Adder”, or “ Black Snakes.” The Tuscarora Tribe joined the confederacy around 1720 and now they are known as the Six Nations.

1. Seneca: “Onondowahgah” meaning The People of the Great Hill (also called the Large Dark Door)
2. Cayuga: “Guyohkolohnyoh” meaning The People of the Great Swamp.
3. Onondaga: “Onundagaono” meaning The People of the Hills.
4. Oneida: “Onayotekaono” meaning The People of the Upright Stone.
5. Mohawk: “Kanienkahagen” meaning The People of the Flint.
6. Tuscarora “Ska-Ruh-Reh” meaning the Shirt Wearing People.

#### **Role of the Clan Mother:**

The oldest woman of a clan is called the Clan Mother, whose position is hereditary, is responsible for the welfare of the clan. Her position is to nominate, install and remove the male chief, called Hoyaneh, meaning “Caretakers of the Peace.” In the past the Clan Mother would arrange marriages, counsels members, selects the male candidate for chief, monitor his actions and remove him from office if necessary. The



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Clan Mother's title is within the clan and is usually passed on to her female relatives, looking first at her eldest sisters, other sisters, then her eldest daughter and other daughters to find the one deemed most appropriate to become the next Clan Mother.

### **The values held by the Haudenosaunee People are:**

1. Consensus in decision-making, considering all points of view.
2. Sharing of the labor and benefits of that labor.
3. Duty to family, clan, nation, Confederacy and Creation.
4. Strong sense of self-worth without being egotistic.
5. People must learn to be very observant of the surroundings.
6. Everyone is equal and is full partner in the society, no matter what their age is.
7. The ability to listen is as important as the ability to speak.
8. Everyone has a special gift or talent that can be used to benefit the larger community.

### **The customs that are considered essential in maintaining the characteristics of the community:**

1. Clan identity impacts all aspects of the social, political and spiritual organization of the community.
2. Council chiefs protect the welfare of the people.
3. Clan Mothers maintain social harmony.
4. Faithkeepers keep the ritual order moving.
5. Annual cycles of thanksgiving help establish order and rhythm.
6. The arts connect the generations in spirit and the native languages are the keys to the expression of the soul.

### **Philosophy:**

1. There is a Creator who produced the things that give bounty to this life.
2. The universe is full of living beings – sun, moon, stars, earth, winds, and rain.
3. There is a living spirit in all things – animals, plants, minerals, water, and winds.
4. People have power called orenda, which accumulates through life experience.
5. People should live in peace with each other and live in harmony with nature.
6. People should be thankful everyday.
7. People should be kind, sharing what they have.
8. Life is a journey; as people are born from the earth, exist on the earth and a returned to the earth to continue that journey after death.

### **Beliefs:**

The Haudenosaunee trust and have confidence in their beliefs about the universe, about the spiritual powers that the universe and about humans are to conduct themselves on their journey through life.



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1. The Universe is a large sphere that is divided in the Skyworld above and the Underwater World below. In the middle plane of that sphere rests the earth, which is like an island floating on the back of a giant turtle.
2. The celestial bodies and forces of that universe are living entities with a inner spirit that can be beneficial to humans if proper respect is paid to them. All people have a spiritual obligation to perform the rituals of thanksgiving in order to assure the harmony of the universe can be maintained.
3. The Great Creator has sent three main spiritual messages to the Haudenosaunee after the Creation. These are the Four Sacred Dances, the Great Law of Peace and the Gaiwiip, or Code of Handsome Lake.
4. The children of the Haudenosaunee are born within the Circle of Tradition, but that birthright also requires duty to maintain that circle.
5. Talent is a gift from the Creator that is to be used for the sake of the entire community.

### **The Annual Cycle of Thanksgiving:**

The Haudenosaunee follow a calendar of ceremonial festivals that are celebrated in the Longhouse.

1. **Midwinter** (Jan –Feb) Ganaha’owi – “Stirring the Ashes” to renew all of the rituals and medicine societies at the time of the winter solstice.
2. **All Night Dance** (March) – Ohkiweh – to honor the deceased
3. **Maple Dance** (March) – Hadichisto’ndas – “Putting In Syrup” to give thanks to the sweet water as it begins to flow, signaling the return of the lifegiving season.
4. **Thunder Dance** (April) To acknowledge the arrival of the Thunders, Our Grandfathers, from their annual trip west and the bringing of rain.
5. **Seed Blessing or Planting Dance** (May)- Ganaha’ongwedewa’ye – “our Seed Be Bet” to give thanks to the sustainers of life – the Three Sisters – Corn (22 types), Beans (10 types), and Squash (5 types).
6. **Moon Dance** (May) To give thanks to Grandmother Moon and the female forces of life as spring approaches.
7. **Sun Dance** (May) To give thanks to the sun for warming the earth so the plants will grow.
8. **Strawberry Dance** (June) Wainodayo – To celebrate the ripening of the strawberry, which is a medicine to renew the spirit.
9. **Green Bean Dance** (July) Wainodetgowaso – To give thanks for the first of the Three Sisters to share her gift of life with the people.
10. **Green Corn Dance** (Aug –Sept) Honondewwes – To give thanks for the ripening of the corn and squash.
11. **Harvest Dance** (Oct) Doyonunneoquana deohoka “We put our substance away” to celebrate the successful harvest and acknowledge the end of the growing season.



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Storytelling was very important to the Haudenosaunee people and their culture. The storyteller was often one of the elders who remembered the stories from long ago. The elders were highly respected. The young people would learn these stories at an early age. The storyteller would often carry a story pouch, which contained a number of items to remind them of certain events. Storytellers were welcomed wherever they went and they often would receive small gifts such as tobacco or beads for telling their stories.

### **The Creation**

**Retold By Joseph Bruchac – from the book “From Sea to Shining Sea” compiled by Amy L. Cohn.**

*How was earth formed? The Iroquois people of the Northeast Woodlands say our land began when Muskrat placed a speck of earth on Turtle's back.*

Before this world came to be, there lived in the Sky-World an ancient chief. In the center of his land grew a beautiful tree, which had four white roots stretching to each of the four directions: North, South, East, and West. From that beautiful tree, all good things grew.

Then it came to be that the beautiful tree was uprooted and through the hole it made in the Sky-World fell the youthful wife of the ancient chief, a handful of seeds. Which she grabbed from the tree as she fell, clutched in her hand.

Far below there were only water and water creatures who looked up as they swam. “Someone comes,” said the duck. “We must make room for her.” The great turtle swam up from his place in the depths. “There is room on my back,” the great turtle said.

“But there must be earth where she can stand,” said the duck. And so he dove beneath the waters, but he could not reach the bottom. “I shall bring up earth,” the loon then said and he dove. Too, but could not reach the bottom. “I shall try,” said the beaver and he, too dove but could not reach the bottom.

Finally the muskrat tried. He dove as deeply as he could, swimming until his lungs almost burst. With one paw he touched the bottom and came up with a tiny speck of earth clutched in his paw.

“Place the earth on my back,” the great turtle said, and as they spread the tiny speck of earth, it grew larger and larger and larger until it became the whole world.

Then two swans flew up and between their wings they caught the woman who fell from the sky. They brought her gently down to the earth where she dropped her handful of seeds from the Sky World. Then it was that the first plants grew and life on this new earth began.



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### **Materials:**

1. The book "Haudenosaunee Stories: Heroes and Heroines, Monsters and Magic", Joseph Bruchac
2. Props for the students to use to as a story pouch.

### **Teach:**

1. Discuss the traditions and beliefs of the Haudenosaunee people. Talk about how the women held certain amount of power within the tribe and the clan. Discuss how the Haudenosaunee people value and respected what the Earth gave them.
2. Use the book written by Joseph Bruchac and share "I Will Now Tell a Story," and "The Coming of Legends" from the book.
3. Use the book and/or use the web site: <http://www.indians.org/welker/iroqoral.htm> This web site is children friendly and gives you a number of stories the students could choose from. Assign a story or have the students pick a story from the book or the web site.
4. Have the students read the story they are assigned several times. The student could memorize the story or give their version of the story. The students are to prepare to tell the story to the rest of the class.
5. Have the students come up with several props for the story pouch. As the students tell their story they can pull out an object from their story pouch that goes along with the story.
6. Have the students practice in groups and set a day for the students to present their stories.
7. Have the students visit other classrooms to tell their story or videotape the students as they perform their story.

### **Guided Practice:**

Assist the students in picking out a story, giving the students time in class to practice. Take time and listen to each student practice and give them advice on what they need to work on. Help students find objects to place in their story pouches.

### **Independent Practice:**

Practice story telling by reading the story several times, repeating it to family members. Find objects for story pouch.

### **Extended Activities:**

1. Have the students take and rewrite the story with illustrations. Have the students create a book out of all the stories and illustrations the class created.
2. Take the students to a local museum that has Native American artifacts. Find films that may explain more about their traditions and culture.
3. Have the students create a play from one of the stories.

### **Web Sites:**

1. <http://www.indians.org/welker/iroqoral.htm>  
The web site has a number of Native American stories. The site is a great place for students to go for the assignment.



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2. <http://www.coolpetsupply.com/iroquois.html>  
The web site has a number of Native American stories. The site is a great place for students to go for the assignment. The site has great artwork for the background.
3. <http://www.kahonwes.com/iroquois/stories.htm>  
The web site has a number of Native American stories. The site is a great place for students to go for the assignment.
4. <http://www.angelfire.com/ok/IroquoisStories/>  
This web site has a great example of a student rewriting the story and adding illustrations.

### **Resources:**

1. "Haudenosaunee Stories: Heroes and Heroines, Monsters and Magic", Joseph Bruchac, Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1985
2. "Feeding Body and Soul: Haudenosaunee Agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", Janet Williammee, New York State Historical Association, 2002.
3. "Stories the Iroquois Tell Their Children, Mabel Powers, Fredonia Books, June 2002, ISBN 1589638034
4. "White Roots of Peace: Iroquois Book of Life", Paul Wallace, Chief Leon Shenandoah, Clear Light Books, April 1994, ISBN 0940666367
5. "Legends of the Iroquois: Myths and Legends", Ray Fadden Tehanetorens, Book Publishing Co., May 1998, ISBN 1570670560
6. "Roots of the Iroquois", Ray Fadden Tehanetorens, Book Publishing Co., Jan 2000, ISBN 1570670978
7. "Pete Seeger's Storytelling Book", Pete Seeger, Paul DuBois Jacobs, Harcourt, Sept 2000, ISBN 015100370x
8. "The Storyteller's Start-Up Book: Finding, Learning, Performing, and Using Folktales", Margaret Read MacDonald, House Publishers, July 1993, ISBN 0874833051

### **Children's Books:**

1. Iroquois Stories: Heroes and Heroines, Monsters and Magic, Joseph Bruchac, Ten Speed Pr., June 1985, ASIN 0895941678, ages 4-8
2. "Between Earth and Sky: Legends of Native American Sacred Places", Joseph Bruchac, Voyager Books, May 1999, ISBN 0152020624, ages 4-8
3. Wampum Belts of the Iroquois, Ray Fadden Tehanetorens, Book Publishing Co., March 1999, ISBN 157067082x ages 9-12
4. "The Earth Under Bear's Feet: Native American Poems of the Land", Joseph Bruchac, Putman Publishing Group, Sept. 1998, ISBN: 069811647x, ages 4-8
5. "Boy Who Lived With Bears and Other Iroquois Stories", Joseph Bruchac, Harpercollins Juvenile Books, Sept 1995, ASIN:006021287x, ages 4-8
6. "Eagle Song", Joseph Bruchac, Dial Books, March 1997, ISBN 0803719191, ages 9-12