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Research Writing

9 April 2025

A Case for Haudenosaunee History in the New York Public Secondary Education Curriculum

Introduction

Overwhelmingly, New York state's public secondary education curriculum fails to sufficiently or accurately teach the history of local Native Americans, and their interactions with the settlers of the early North American colonies and the United States of America. Some public-school learn an incomplete version of Native American history that focuses on specific, sparse examples and fails to fully explain the storied histories of native peoples and the complex interactions between Native Americans and the budding United States. In particular, the histories of the powerful Native American nations that held sway in North America before their removal and collapse are often overlooked, specifically that of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy,¹ perhaps the most influential, hegemonic, and longstanding coalition of Native American tribes that dominated what is now the Northeastern United States and Southeastern Canada from around the 13th century to the American Revolutionary War, and which continues to exist today.

This paper will use historical evidence to explore the rich history of the Iroquois, along with their complex interactions, conflicts, and cultural differences with European colonial powers, the burgeoning United States, and other Native American societies of the Northeastern

¹ Throughout this paper, several broader words and phrases will be used to refer to particular peoples, places, and events that are specifically relevant to the context of this paper. Unless otherwise specified, "Native Americans," "Haudenosaunee," and "Iroquois" will refer to the same thing: the native peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which will also be referred to as "Confederacy," "Iroquois Confederacy," "Five Nations," and later "Six Nations."

U.S. and Southeastern Canada during the 17th and 18th centuries. It will also explain the histories and ways of life of the Iroquois before European colonial incursion, and how American educational discussions typically revolve around stories of Native American subjugation and removal, largely ignoring the complex histories of pre-colonial tribes.

Furthermore, this paper will argue that a more complete and historically accurate curriculum that includes information about the fates of Northeastern tribes and the tumultuous history of native-settler relations during the North American colonial period should be adopted by New York, and perhaps other states, in order to preserve history, respect the Native Americans of the past, and ultimately dispel the inaccurate narratives that serve to simplify and rewrite the true stories of pre-colonial, early North American colonial, and U.S. history, including the influence that the Iroquois had on the latter.

While it is important to understand the history of 18th-19th-century Indian Removal and the effects of Manifest Destiny (see Appendix) on Native Americans' histories, students should also be given an understanding of pre-colonial Native American history, particularly the history of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, a strong coalition of Native American tribes that lasted longer than the British Empire, how that mighty alliance was broken and its people scattered in the wake of the American Revolution, and how the systematic process of Native American cultural erasure occurred in the Northeast, in many cases decades or centuries before the widely-taught Native American removal of the 19th century.

This paper will begin with an explanation of Iroquois Confederacy history, emphasizing the cultural and geopolitical importance of the nation with respect to pre-colonial North American history and general world history. It will also argue that the complex history of the so-called "New World" is often overshadowed by the history of the "Old World."

Historical education of the 17th and 18th centuries often focuses on British control of the colonies and the American movement toward revolution and independence, but its effect on Native American societies and cultures in the frontiers of the Northeast are often neglected or understated. This paper will present a brief overview of the colonial-era history of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy; explain its interactions with European settlers and American colonists; detail the state's collapse due to conflict, disease, and land purchase and theft; and ultimately present an argument for its inclusion in New York state—the ancestral Haudenosaunee homeland—curricula alongside currently commonly taught history.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is a coalition of Native American tribes that historically occupied much of what is now the Northeastern United States and Southeastern Canada. Iroquois land claims fluctuated over time, but at its greatest territorial extent during the 17th and 18th centuries, the alliance occupied a tract of land that stretched from present-day Michigan, New York, and Ontario in the north and North Carolina and Tennessee in the south. From New York and Pennsylvania, Haudenosaunee territory extended as far west as Illinois.² Presiding over the tributaries of the strategically significant Delaware, Chenango, Hudson, Mohawk, Ohio, St. Lawrence, and Susquehanna Rivers, the Iroquois held sway over passage inland, and thereby controlled the flow of valuable goods around the Northeast.³ Their strategic geographical situation, access to abundant resources, and military prowess, among other things, made the

² taniam. “1640 – 1701 – Beaver Wars (French and Iroquois Wars) Force Relocation to Door County, Wisconsin.” *Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi*, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, 9 May 2022, nhbp-nsn.gov/timeline/1640-1701/.

³ “The Six Nations Confederacy during the American Revolution (U.S. National Park Service).” *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, 10 Oct. 2024, www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-six-nations-confederacy-during-the-american-revolution.htm.

Iroquois a force to be reckoned with and allowed for their long-unrivaled dominion over the region.

Scholars estimate that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was formed around 1142. The Iroquois League was first united under the Great Law of Peace, an agreement between the Five Nations, which would later become six, for mutual peace, protection, and cooperation. According to Haudenosaunee legend, the pact was sealed when a white pine tree was uprooted, the previously warring Iroquois' weapons were thrown into the hole it left behind, and then the tree, which came to be known as the "Great Tree of Peace," was replanted overtop of the weapons.⁴

Clans, Longhouses, and Village Life

"The People of the Longhouse," as the Haudenosaunee called themselves, were bound to clans, which were typically named after animals. These extended family units, traditionally headed by the eldest woman of the clan, or the "Clan Mother," were matrilineal, with children belonging to their mother's clan. All members of an extended family lived together in one longhouse, a traditional structure built by many Northeastern Native Americans and understood by the Haudenosaunee as a symbol of community. Iroquois longhouses typically housed around 60 individuals, with additions being built onto the structure to accommodate new family members.⁴

By the 17th century, the average Haudenosaunee village was home to between 200 and 3,000 people. Settlements were typically constructed near accessible water sources, and food was acquired from the forested areas that usually surrounded them. In addition to the natural cover of the trees, many villages were protected by tall wooden palisades, which prevented incursion

⁴ "Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators." *National Museum of the American Indian*, National Museum of the American Indian Education Office, Smithsonian Institution, 1 Feb. 2010, americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/haudenosauneeguide.pdf.

from dangerous wildlife or rival tribes. Despite their industriousness, the Haudenosaunee managed to live in communion with the natural world, valuing the careful management and sustainable use of natural resources. Unlike the many European cultures with which the Iroquois would later come into contact, they did not establish permanent settlements. Instead, they moved every 20-30 years to allow local resources like firewood, wildlife, and soil nutrients to recover from their presence.⁴

All that the Iroquois needed to survive was directly harvested from their immediate surroundings. Unlike some mass cultivation techniques employed by other cultures, agricultural techniques like the planting of the “Three Sisters” (corn, beans, and squash) made for sustainable, low soil impact agriculture, in addition to providing a well-balanced diet. Food foraging, a common practice among the Iroquois, also had virtually no negative effect on the environment, which helped ensure that the Haudenosaunee would not “use up” the land, which could theoretically have sustained them indefinitely. White-tailed deer, one of the most important and numerous animal species of the Northeast, were hunted primarily for their meat, hides, and bones, but almost all parts of the animal were generally used to minimize waste. A deer alone could provide meat, several sets of hide moccasins (footwear) and blankets, thread made from muscle fibers, bone tools, rattles made from hooves, ceremonial headwear made from antlers, and more.⁴

Though the Iroquois lacked a formal calendar, they were attuned to an annual cycle, with different tasks necessary to sustain communities through different seasons. In the warmer months, the vast majority of Iroquois people’s life was spent outside. Spring meant planting crops, tapping syrup trees, and harvesting fresh bark for longhouses, canoes, and other constructions. In the summer, the Iroquois hunted, fished, tended to crops, tanned hides,

maintained their villages, and preserved food for the winter. Fall meant harvesting crops in earnest and stashing food to sustain communities through the winter. The harsh winters of the Northeast were a time for strengthening community, with people largely huddled in the warmth of their longhouses, busying themselves with pursuits such as mending tools and clothing, as well as exchanging legends and histories with one another.⁴

Unlike the traditional written histories of the Old World, the Iroquois utilized wampum belts for the memorialization of significant events and treaties, religious rites, and the recording of history. Though it is commonly believed to be a form of currency used by Native Americans, wampum—small purple and white beads made from the shells of particular shellfish—was actually strung on belts to create intricate patterns of deep symbolic significance. In the Haudenosaunee tradition, the white beads signified peace, and the purple ones indicated more serious political issues.⁵ Perhaps the most iconic of the Haudenosaunee wampum belts are the Hiawatha Belt and the Two Row Wampum. The Hiawatha Belt immortalizes the creation of the Iroquois Confederacy with the Great Law of Peace, and depicts the Great Tree of Peace, connected to four white boxes. Each of the boxes and the tree itself symbolizes one of the original Five Nations of the Confederacy.⁶ The Two Row Wampum, on the other hand, is a reminder of the first treaty between the Dutch and the Iroquois.

Government and Territory

At the height of their strength, the internally peaceful Iroquois drew their strength from their large population, vast territory, access to resources, and agricultural proficiency. They

⁵ “Wampum.” *Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, Haudenosaunee Confederacy, 9 June 2021, www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/wampum/.

⁶ Jourdan, Judith L. “Wampum: Our Historical Record.” *Oneida Nation*, Oneida Cultural Heritage Department, 18 June 2015, oneida-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/WAMPUM-OUR-HISTORICAL-RECORD-9.13.pdf.

warred with neighboring tribes, particularly the nearby Algonquian peoples. Though the original lands of the Iroquois were in what is now New York State, their dominion also eventually spread (largely due to the Beaver Wars of the 17th century) throughout much of the Northeastern United States to include land in what are now the states of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and the Canadian province of Ontario.²

This territorially vast empire was governed by a circle of Chiefs, or “sachems,” who represented the Confederacy’s many clans. As such, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is widely considered to be the world’s oldest extant participatory democracy, and has even been officially noted as an inspiration for the founding documents of the United States. Each village in the Confederacy was governed by the chiefs that represented its resident clans, and Clan Mothers were responsible for selecting a new chief when the old one died. Clans looked both to their Chiefs and their Clan Mothers for spiritual, political, and general guidance and support.⁷

Old World Disease

The first interactions between Europeans and the Haudenosaunee came in the 16th century. Devastatingly, interactions between North Americans—whose immune systems were not adapted to the microorganisms of the Old World—and Europeans—harborers of all manner of contagious microorganisms as a result of widespread trade, urbanization, and reliance on livestock—transmitted diseases like smallpox, which wreaked havoc on Native American societies, including but not limited to the Haudenosaunee. Throughout European and early American history, diseases like smallpox are known to have been weaponized against the highly

⁷ Ramsden, Peter G., and Zach Parrott. “Haudenosaunee (Iroquois).” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, The Canadian Encyclopedia, 15 May 2024, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/iroquois.

susceptible Native Americans, resulting in devastating outbreaks that contributed to the downfall of many Native American tribes.

Early Interactions with Europeans

Around 1613, members of the Iroquois Mohawk tribe noticed people entering their land and clearing forests for development, prompting the Mohawk to send a delegation to meet the interlopers. The aforementioned Two Row Wampum Treaty was established between the Iroquois and the new arrivals—the Dutch—to ensure that the two peoples would co-exist peacefully in perpetuity. While the Dutch suggested that themselves and the Mohawk were akin to father and son, respectively, the Mohawk suggested that they and the Dutch refer to one another as “brother,” which suggests an equitable and egalitarian relationship between the two parties. In keeping with the Haudenosaunee tradition, the treaty was memorialized on a wampum belt. The belt depicted two parallel rows, intended to represent the paths of two boats on the same river, but never intersecting. The respective ways of life of the Iroquois and the Dutch, per the treaty, would not overlap or interfere with one another.⁸ The belt was also known as the “Covenant Chain,” as the symbolism of the agreement included a silver chain tying both the Europeans’ ship and Iroquois’ craft to the Haudenosaunee Tree of Peace. The symbolism of the Covenant Chain was thereafter applied diplomatic discussions between the Haudenosaunee and the British, and was upheld for many years. To solidify the symbolism of the accords between the Iroquois and Europeans, an actual silver chain was crafted, presumably by the British.⁹

Trade and War

⁸ Duhamel, Karine. “The Two Row Wampum.” *Canadian Museum for Human Rights*, Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 14 Nov. 2018, humanrights.ca/story/two-row-wampum.

⁹ “The Covenant Chain.” *Portland State University*, Portland State University, 1 Oct. 2001, web.pdx.edu/~caskeym/iroquois_web/html/covenantchain.htm.

By the time European settlers began to explore the interior of North America in earnest, the Iroquois Confederacy was already a well-established superpower in its part of the world. Colonial interests, however, were often at odds with those of the Haudenosaunee, and conflict inevitably arose around control of valuable resources. In the early 17th century, a series of conflicts often referred to as the Beaver Wars saw the Iroquois fighting against neighboring tribes, as well as British and French settlers, for control of the beaver fur trade. Also known as the Iroquois Wars, these conflicts resulted in the absorption of several other peoples into the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, as well as the assimilation of many of the defeated tribes' territories. The Beaver Wars also resulted in widespread devastation to Iroquois and neighboring territories.² Control of much of North America's lucrative fur trade meant that the Iroquois could establish early trade relationships with European powers, including the British, Dutch, and French, which allowed the Iroquois to purchase vital European goods, particularly firearms, which only reaffirmed the alliance's military might and regional dominance.

Around the dawn of the 18th century, as tenuous peace came and Haudenosaunee expansion began to slow, the Iroquois Confederacy maintained a fairly dominant political standing in the. The Haudenosaunee parlayed this impressive reputation into lucrative trade and military relationships with the British, Dutch, and French. As wars between European states spilled over into their North American colonies and fresh conflicts arose on the continent, however, the Iroquois often found themselves aligned with or against European powers, aiming to both profit and protect their lands.

Some treaties, such as the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht between the British and the French that established a border between their respective North American holdings, respected the Haudenosaunee's right to move and trade across territorial borders, as they had been doing since

long before the arrival of Europeans to the New World.¹⁰ The earlier Nanfan Treaty in 1701, even saw an agreed-upon land exchange between the British and the Haudenosaunee, who gave their lands in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario over to British colonies.¹¹ With the exception of the Beaver Wars, early disease transmission, and occasional outbursts of conflict between the Haudenosaunee and colonial governances, such as New France and its Algonquian allies, early Iroquois-European interactions were, by and large, trade-focused. Tenuous trade agreements were established between the Native Americans and the colonists, resulting in mutually profitable trade of the region's valuable resources—namely beaver pelts—and use of the area's many important arterial waterways.⁴ In addition to the territory that they had gained during the Beaver Wars, the Confederacy absorbed its sixth nation, the Tuscarora, in 1720. It seemed that the Iroquois were on the rise.

In 1768, British Imperial leaders met with their Haudenosaunee counterparts in Fort Stanwix, on the New York frontier, to adjudicate mutually agreeable territory claims. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix established a firm boundary between British colonial land and that of Native Americans, including that of the Haudenosaunee, and that of other tribes for whom the Iroquois leaders signed without their leaders' approval. The treaty was largely ignored by the British, who did little to prevent their colonists from moving west into the frontier.³ Over the decades from 1738-1796, the Iroquois slowly lost chunks of their ancestral land to the colonies, and later to the new United States.¹¹

The American Revolution

¹⁰ Sutherland, Stuart R.J. "Treaty of Utrecht." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, The Canadian Encyclopedia, 19 June 2015, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-of-utrecht.

¹¹ "Six Nations Land Cessions." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 Jan. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Nations_land_cessions.

The American Revolution would shatter the once great Iroquois Confederacy. On the eve of the Revolution, representatives from the newly formed Continental Congress met with Haudenosaunee leaders at Fort Pitt, and requested that the Iroquois maintain their neutrality during the oncoming war. While the Six Nations initially agreed, keeping to themselves as the first rumblings of revolution shook the colonies and other Native American tribes joined the fray on one side or the other and refusing to allow their men to be drafted, the Iroquois were forced to choose sides when the war began in earnest in 1776.¹² The Haudenosaunee were faced with an impossible decision, one in which they could not be guided by any precedent set by the leaders of the past. In a letter to the governor of New York, Oneida leaders wrote, “We are unwilling to join either side of such a contest, for we love you both, Old England and New. Should the Great King of England apply us for aid, we should deny him – and should the colonies apply, we shall refuse. We Indians cannot find or recollect from the traditions of our ancestors any like case.”³

Some Iroquois tribes pushed to remain neutral, not wanting to get involved in the colonists’ war. The British promised others that their tribal lands would be left undisturbed after the war if they helped put down the rebellion. Still others recognized that the colonies were their neighbors, and inspired by relatively good relations with several American colonists, believed that they had a neighborly responsibility to help the colonists repel the British invaders. After some deliberation, the Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, and Seneca tribes aligned themselves with the British, while the Oneida and Tuscarora took up arms against their former allies to fight for the rebels. The nations that, before the Great Law of Peace, had fought one another incessantly for generations were back at each other’s throats, this time to win a war for one

¹² “Timeline.” *Onondaga Nation*, Onondaga Nation, 7 Jan. 2022, www.onondaganation.org/history/timeline/.

foreign party or another.¹³ The Iroquois played several different parts throughout the war, ranging from direct involvement in many of the casualty-heavy battles of the Revolution to scouting, guide, and supply roles.³

The true, irrevocable downfall of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy arguably began in 1777, when at the Battle of Oriskany, near Fort Stanwix, the Oneida and their Continental Army allies clashed with British-aligned Cayuga, Mohawk, and Seneca warriors for the first time. The skill and ferocity of the Iroquois warriors on both sides of the battle made for particularly violent fighting, and though both sides won important victories in the battle, no true victory was felt by their Haudenosaunee allies, who had been dragooned by the dubious promise of land preservation into killing their own countrymen.¹³ Oriskany marked the beginning of fierce, violent conflict among the Iroquois that would continue to spiral out of control for years to come. The proverbial longhouse had been razed and its inhabitants scattered. The Haudenosaunee would never be the same again.

Throughout the rest of the Revolution, much of the British fighting on the frontier was done by colonial loyalists or Native Americans who had been drawn into service by the promise of peace with the British after the war. As the war raged, the British ordered their Iroquois allies and colonial loyalists to attack rebel-controlled settlements and strongpoints. In response, the Continental Army was ordered to Haudenosaunee territory in an attempt to stop the raids, where it razed British-Native settlements, destroyed civilian food supplies, and flattened all resistance.¹⁴

¹³ “Liberty Exhibit Big Idea 5: Native American Soldiers and Scouts.” *Museum of the American Revolution*, Museum of the American Revolution, www.amrevmuseum.org/liberty-exhibit-big-idea-5-native-american-soldiers-and-scouts. Accessed 9 Apr. 2025.

¹⁴ Makos, Isaac. “Roles of Native Americans during the Revolution.” *American Battlefield Trust*, American Battlefield Trust, 21 Jan. 2021, www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/roles-native-americans-during-revolution.

For years, native peoples were pulled into violence, both as victims and perpetrators, all across the frontier.

The Post-Revolution Era

What came after the British surrender at Yorktown in 1781 was also devastating to an already war-torn Native American population. When the Treaty of Paris was signed two years later, all British holdings from the Atlantic to Canada and the Mississippi River were handed over to the United States, but the input of the Native American tribes that occupied that land were not considered. This callous disregard for Native American sovereignty affected not just the tribes of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, however, but all the peoples of the ceded territory.¹⁴ But the once-powerful Iroquois, whose strength had been sapped by years of devastating infighting and whose territory sat in the near frontier, at the very doorstep of the new imperialist nation, was suited to bear the brunt of early American westward expansion.

In a separate treaty, signed amidst the ruins of Fort Stanwix between the United States and the leaders of the now disparate Six Nations, the British-aligned tribes of the Confederacy were forced to cede large tracts of land to the United States. Furthermore, despite their service to the U.S., the rebel-aligned Oneida and Tuscarora tribes were not rewarded, nor were they compensated for the heavy losses they sustained during the war.³

In addition to rending their political system, the cataclysmic downfall of the Haudenosaunee also brought about a fundamental shift in their communal perspective and way of life. Their vast territory had been claimed by others, and they were pushed to small reservations. Their culture, which hinged on living off the land, could no longer be sustained, thanks to their severely diminished territory. The forests they once relied on for food were no longer theirs to hunt, the rivers they had once controlled were navigated by new ships, and the

fields they once farmed were tended by new hands. They went from living in longhouses of entire extended clan units to living in single family homes, as was the custom in the European cultures that now dominated their ancestral lands.⁴ The Haudenosaunee were shattered. The longstanding nation had been sundered by war, famine, disease, and subjugation by European colonial empires and the newly minted United States. The Confederacy, which had dominated its corner of the world for many centuries, had been reduced to a shadow of its former self. The council fire burnt out, the palisades fell, and the longhouses rotted away, leaving little trace of the land's former stewards.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy Today

Today, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy persists as a collection of communities on reservations throughout their ancestral lands. Far from being the regional powerhouse that it once was, however, the Haudenosaunee continue to feel the effects of colonialism to this day. Various websites employed by the Six Nations tribes catalog the storied history of the Haudenosaunee, and help to ensure that their traditions and stories will not be forgotten. Though the tribe and its current members exist within the context of the 21st century, many adherents to the Iroquois way of life still value many of their ancestors' tenets: maintaining a connection to nature, striving for peace, and fostering close-knit communities, as the Haudenosaunee did before their collapse.

Current New York State Curriculum

Despite its clear significance, New York State's public secondary education history curriculum fails to sufficiently brief students on Iroquois history. The framework, which was last updated in 2017, requires students to take Global History and Geography I in grade 9, Global History and Geography II in grade 10, and United States History and Government in grade 11. Native Americans do not feature in the frameworks of Global History and Geography I or II.

Native Americans in general are included in the framework of United States History and Government, albeit in a limited capacity, but the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, by any of its names, is not mentioned at all.¹⁵

Native Americans are mentioned in the following contexts in the Common Core Framework of the grade 11 United States History and Government course: early contact and interactions with Europeans, effects of European colonization, the impacts of the Revolutionary War, post-Civil War civil rights issues, consequences of mid-late 19th-century policies and westward expansion, impacts of World War II, and social issues and movements. While this framework could allow for instructor-driven interjection of Haudenosaunee history, it is not explicitly required to be taught. Furthermore, the existing curriculum suggests that Native American history began when they first interacted with European colonists, and fails to accurately describe the much older history of the Iroquois, which is, of course, the history of the land on which the United States now sits.¹⁵

Proposed Changes to New York State Curriculum

The following will focus on the aforementioned course United States History and Government. It should be noted, however, that while the history of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy does overlap with the history of the United States, they are not the same thing. The inclusion of the history of another nation in a U.S. history class is, of course, reductionist at best, but it is implausible to suggest that New York public secondary school students take an entire class dedicated to Native American history, let alone that of a Native American nation which is

¹⁵ “New York State Grades 9-12 Social Studies Framework.” *New York State Education Department*, New York State Education Department, University of the State of New York, Feb. 2017, www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/framework-9-12-with-2017-updates.pdf.

completely distinct from the United States. That being said, because of the Iroquois' connections to the U.S. and status as a predecessor of the modern nation, it seems most sensible to include it in a United States history class. Notably, pre-U.S. North American history, like that of early European colonial undertakings, is featured in United States History and Government. Like the Iroquois Confederacy, such subjects predate the United States, so their inclusion in the course is grounds for the inclusion of other pre-U.S. topics as well, including the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

An argument could be made for the inclusion of Iroquois history in general world history classes, such as those required by New York State for 9th and 10th graders, because it was such a longstanding nation, and was so influential in its part of the world. That being said, owing to its relative isolation from the Old World, on which New York's required world history courses primarily focus, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was scarcely involved in the wider development of history, having little to no impact on the world outside the Northeastern U.S. and Southeastern Canada until around the 17th century. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to include the history of the Iroquois in a United States history course than a world history class. While all U.S. states might consider including the history of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in their secondary education curricula, New York is an especially fitting state to institute this requirement because its modern borders encompass the ancestral heartland of the Iroquois. While the Confederacy did expand far beyond New York's current limits, and indeed those of the United States, the original Five Nations of the Iroquois hailed from New York, and the central council fire of the Confederacy was located near what is now the center of the state.

Furthermore, the representative Iroquois government is believed by some to be a precursor to that of the United States, with the influence of the Haudenosaunee on the

contemporary American government being officially recognized by the U.S. Senate in 1987. Similarly, the modern United States owes some of its iconic symbology to the Iroquois, with the well-known U.S. symbol of the eagle holding a bundle of 13 arrows, one for each of the original 13 colonies, hearkening back to the Haudenosaunee Eagle and its bundle of five arrows representing the original Five Nations of the Confederacy. It has also been called the oldest extant participatory democracy on the planet, giving it some more credibility for potential inclusion in a world history course.¹⁶

In order to inspire better understanding of the Iroquois history, and thereby the history of New York, the Northeast, and the United States, several changes should be implemented to New York's public secondary education required social studies curriculum. First, the pre-colonial history of the Iroquois Confederacy should be taught, including its formation under the Great Law of Peace, the function of its government, the details of its culture and society, and its regional geopolitical significance. Second, the extent of current education requirements about early interactions with European colonists is unclear. If they are not already, instructors should be required to teach about economic relationships, early conflicts, disease transmission, and various treaties and political agreements between the Iroquois and Europeans, such as the Two Row Wampum. Third, requirements regarding the effects of the Revolutionary War on the Haudenosaunee, should be expanded to include its involvement in the war, its division in choosing sides, its unjust treatment after the war, and its subsequent fall from power. Fourth, and finally, the current state of the Haudenosaunee should need to be relayed to students, including all the events that transpired from the United States' absorption of the nation's ancestral lands to

¹⁶ Davis, Jennifer. "The Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Constitution." *Library of Congress*, Library of Congress, 21 Sept. 2023, blogs.loc.gov/law/2023/09/the-haudenosaunee-confederacy-and-the-constitution/.

today, how the Haudenosaunee were relegated to reservations over the course of the centuries since American independence, and how the Confederacy persists to this day. And the information exists. Many resources regarding the history and culture of the Iroquois can be found on the internet, including articles and guides for educators, which could be used to inform any changes made to the curriculum.

It is important to note that the prior suggestions should not completely replace the existing Native American education requirements mentioned above, but instead should supplement them to create a broader, deeper understanding of Native American—especially Haudenosaunee—culture and history. Space for these suggested changes could be made in the curriculum by condensing existing pre-U.S. history requirements and adding these in, as they would make for a more layered understanding of that particular historical era.

Conclusion

In summary, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was a significant faction in pre-colonial, colonial, and Revolutionary U.S. history, and its exclusion from New York's public secondary education curriculum results in an incomplete understanding of local Native American history. While many of the Native American subjects included in the state's Common Core social studies curriculum are important, the addition of Iroquois history and culture would serve to broaden New York students' understanding of the history of their state and country, along with the nations that came before the United States, how they interacted with European colonists. For New York secondary school students, who reside on the very same ancestral heartlands once occupied by the Iroquois, it is important to who the Haudenosaunee were, how they lived, and what became of the People of the Longhouse.

Appendix

19th-century Indian Removal can be broadly understood as a period of deliberate, prolonged relocation of Native American tribes in order to clear land to be settled by U.S. Americans moving westward into territories acquired through the Louisiana Purchase, the Mexican-American War, or otherwise purchased from Great Britain.

Manifest Destiny is a 19th-century American ideal which roughly holds that American expansionism, particularly into what is now the Western United States, was divinely ordained. It was widely used to justify westward expansion and the Native American displacement it caused. The widespread migration of Americans into western lands in the 19th century was a catalyst for conflicts with the Native Americans that were indigenous to those lands and those that had been relocated there by the U.S. government.

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