



By: Kalhakú McLester

To some, Oneida is just a word that they have either never heard of or relate it to a Casino or perhaps Oneida Silver; but in order to understand something you must first have a frame of reference or a point to start. Why is the sky blue? Why does the sun rise? Where do we come from? Who am I? To that end we must start somewhere. This can mean many things to many different people. For me and my questions they start like many do. With the telling of a story. That story is shared by many and told in many different tongues across many different cultures and many different lands. This one is of the Oneida people. To understand the Oneida people, we must hear their story told by them.



[1]

The Oneida believe that we all come from a place not of this world. In a place called Sky World there was a woman who was with child who would come to be known as Sky Woman. She came to this world, that was covered in oceans at the time, through a hole in the sky and with her she brought seeds and roots from Sky World. As she fell to this world covered in water she had no place to land but the sea creatures of this world devised a way to help her. The great sea turtle

rose and provided her with a place to rest. After acquiring soil from the bottom of the ocean with the help of the Loon, Otter, and Muskrat at great cost to themselves Sky Woman went about spreading the soil and seeds and roots that she had with her and began to dance in a circle, rubbing her feet on the turtle's back and causing the land to grow in all directions. This place came to be known as Turtle Island.



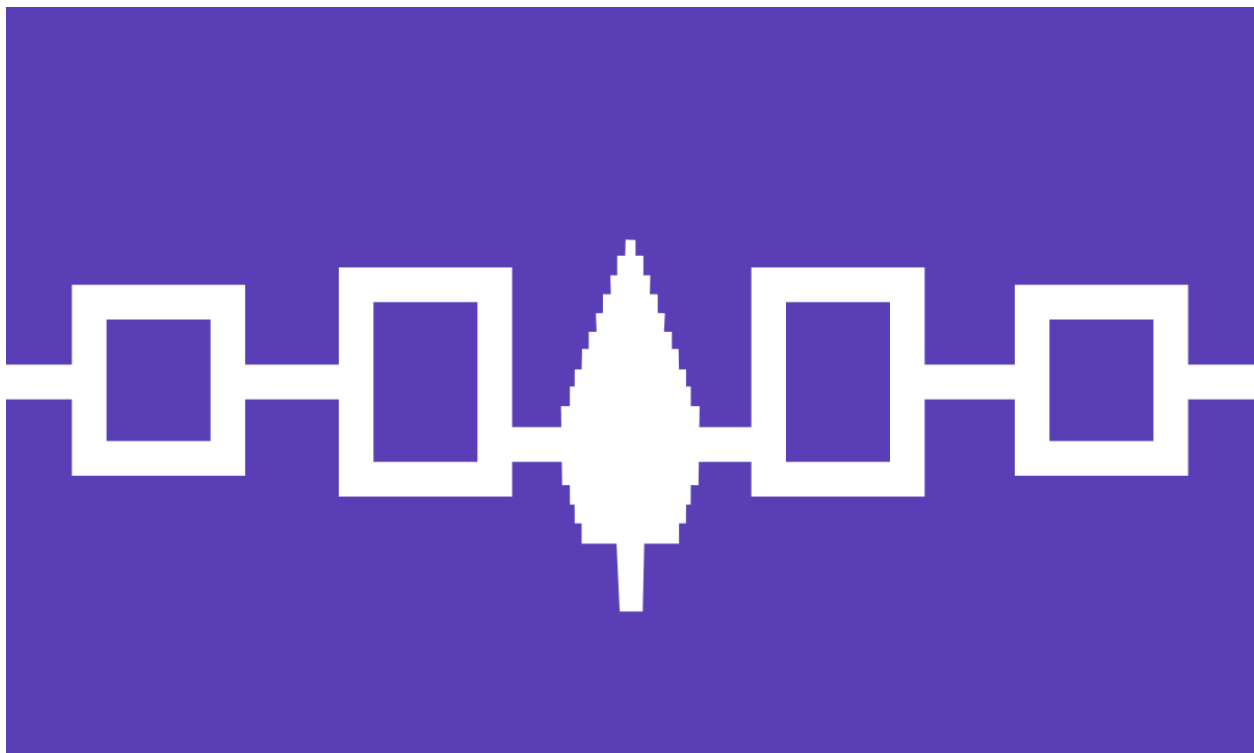
[2]

After which time she gave birth to a daughter and the two of them lived together on Turtle Island. One day while the daughter was out she fell asleep and woke up with two arrows across her belly, one sharp and one blunt. She took the arrows to her mother and her mother told her that she was pregnant with twins. The twin brothers that grew inside of her were rivals. They were called the Left-handed Twin and the Right-handed Twin. The Daughter died during childbirth and Sky Woman, the boys' grandmother, raised the twins. The Grandmother took favor of the Left-handed twin because she believed, mistakenly that, the Right-handed twin was responsible for his mother's death which was untrue. When the daughter/mother of the twins passed she was buried in the ground and became one with the Earth and was forever known as Mother Earth. The Right-handed twin was sad and went off by himself and began creating all the different kinds plants, animals, birds, waters and mountains that we see today. The Left-handed

twin came behind his brother and twisted his creations. It was then decided between the brothers that there could only be one creator in this world and so began several contests to decide who would be the one Creator. The contests ended in a fight to the death in which the Right-handed twin was the victor. The Right-handed twin took pity on his brother because he was kind and did not wish for his brother's death, so the world was divided between the two: the Right-handed twin ruled the day and Left-handed twin ruled the night. To prevent his brother's absolute rule the Right-handed twin created the stars to brighten the night sky. Their grandmother had passed away and because she favored his brother, the Left-handed twin, he placed her head in the night sky and so she became known as Grandmother Moon. From then on, the Right-handed twin was called the Creator.

The Creator went on to create humans making four different kinds red, white, yellow and black. He made each one different and gave them instructions to follow, then set them far away from each other to see how well they would continue his instructions and they did for a time.

The people developed and lived in peace on Turtle Island with each other and with nature. They grew into what is known today as the Seneca (People of the Big Hill), the Cayuga (People of the Great Swamp), the Onondaga (People of the Hills), the Oneida (People of the Standing Stone), and the Mohawk (People of the Flint) Nations Located in what we call today New York State. Collectively these nations were known as the Iroquois as the French had named them, but they called themselves the Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse). Each Nation was made up of a different assortment of clans: Turtle, Bear Wolf, Hawk, Snipe, Eel, Beaver, Heron and Deer which followed the mother's lineage. Oneida was made up of three clans: the Turtle, the Bear, and the Wolf. The homes were organized this way and each child was the clan of their mother.



When the time came that the Iroquois nations began to forget the Creator's instructions, he sent a reminder for the people to renew their ways. It was at this time that the Peacemaker was born amongst the Huron Nation, enemies of the Iroquois. The Peacemaker was born to a virgin mother and when he grew up left his home amongst the Huron and travelled across Lake Ontario south to the land of the Iroquois on a white stone canoe. This time was marked by war and cannibalism and witchcraft amongst the Iroquois nations. The Peacemaker's duty was to bring the teachings of the creator, peace, power and a good mind, back to the Iroquois nations. He started spreading his message of peace to those who would listen. The first one to accept his message of peace was a woman by the name of Jigonsaseh and from that time on, it would be the women who would hold the power to pick the men who would become chiefs. The Peacemaker continued his message of peace and carried it, with the help of others like Hiawatha of the Onondaga Nation, to the nations of the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca and finally the Onondaga Nation. In each nation the Peacemaker elevated the leaders of said nation to Chief only if they accepted his message of Peace, Power, and a Good Mind. The last holdout was a powerful man by the name Tadodaho at Onondaga. He was a very wicked man who used his powers to make the people fear him. It is said he had seven crooks in his body and he had snakes in his hair. This may or may not be taken literally but to illustrate the wickedness of his mind. When Tadodaho heard the people singing and approaching him it is said that he used all his powers to try and stop the approaching chiefs and the Peacemaker, making the wind howl and snapping and felling trees but all of his powers were not enough to stop the united front of the Peacemaker and those that followed. This changed his mind and he allowed them to speak to him about the Peacemaker's message. When he accepted the message the crooks in his body were righted and the snakes were combed from his hair and he was made a chief of the Onondaga and protector of the coming Confederacy.



[\[4\]](#)

And so it was established with representatives from all five nations, Fifty Chiefs in total, the Peacemaker created the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and vowed to bury the weapons of war between each other forever. The Nations would have the power to govern themselves and their lands by the leadership of the chiefs and would decide matters that concerned the Nations and the Confederacy at the Grand Council fire which was housed at Onondaga, New York. With the Five Nations no longer at war with one another and peace among them established once again, the Peacemaker left the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

This is said to have taken many years and though no date can be made when this took place, there are clues that when the Peacemaker was speaking with the Seneca Nation a solar eclipse took place, which can be dated. Some dates say 1450 AD, others August 31, 1142 AD, but given that it would take many years and many more to organize and grow; a date of March 21, 619 AD can be inferred due to the presence of an eclipse in the Territory of the Seneca. [\[5\]](#)

## TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE OF 619 MARCH 21

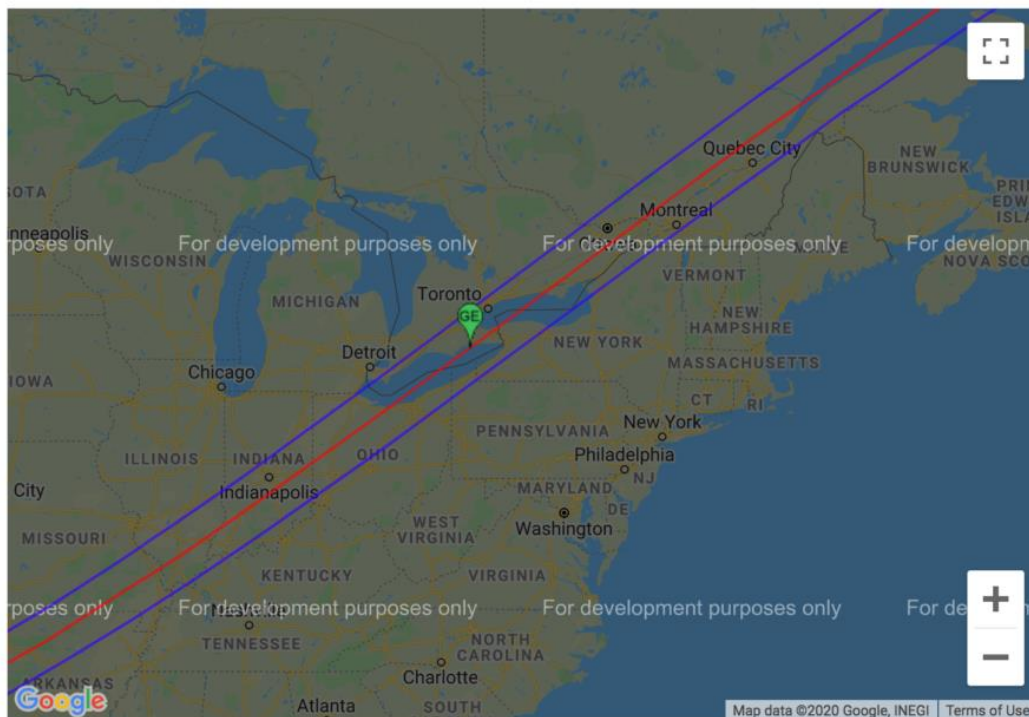
### Interactive Eclipse Path Using Google Maps

Your web browser must have Javascript turned on. The following browsers have been successfully tested with **Google Maps**:

- **Macintosh** - Firefox 3.5+, Chrome 4+, Safari 4+, Opera 10.5+
- **Windows** - Firefox 3.5+, Chrome 4+, Explorer 8+, Opera 10.5+
- **Linux** - Firefox 3.5+, Chrome 4+
- **iOS** - Safari Mobile 4+, Chrome 25+, Opera Mini 5+
- **Android** - Android 2.3+, Firefox 19+, Chrome 25+

#### Introduction

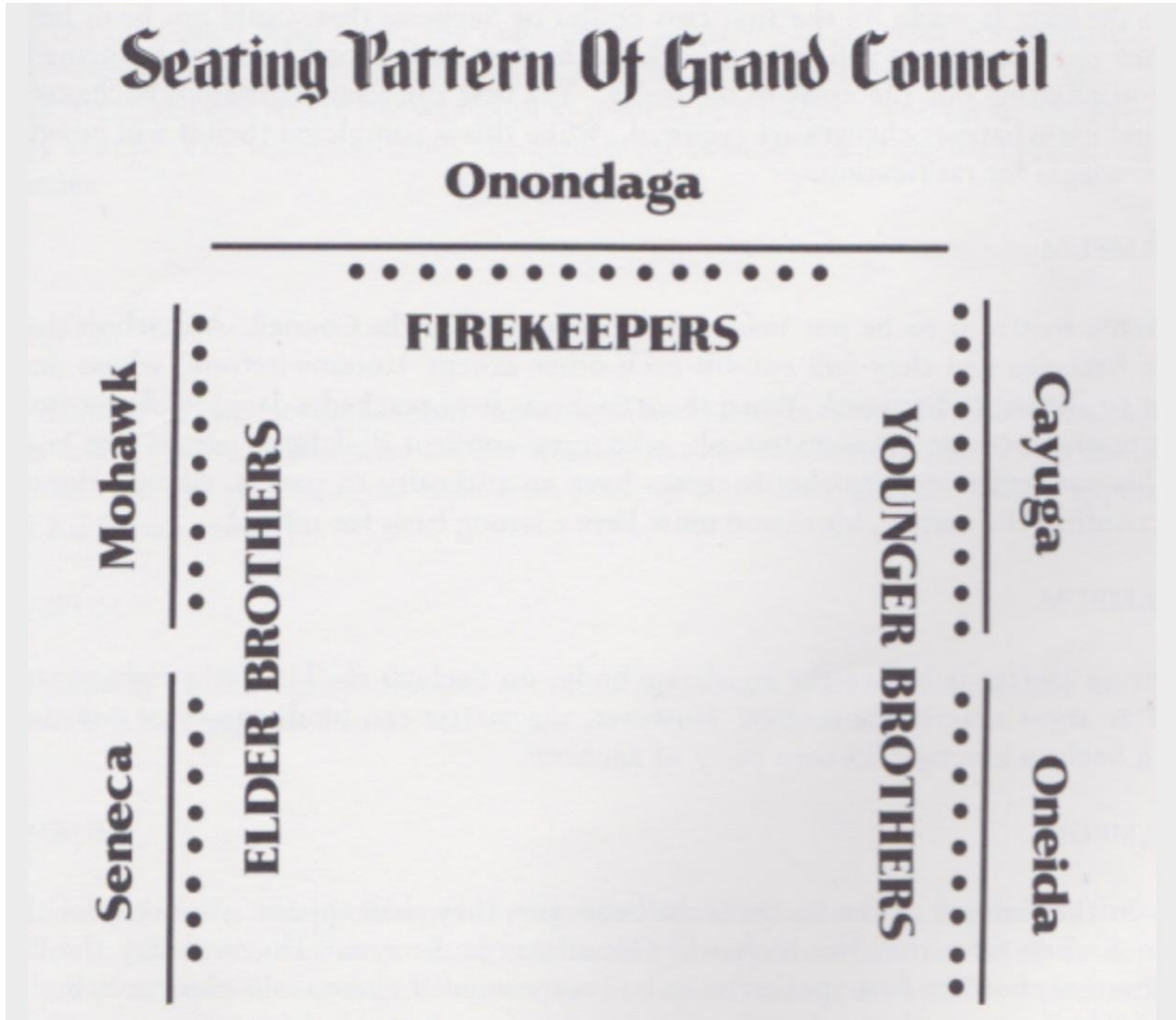
This map shows the path of the solar eclipse across Earth's surface. The northern and southern path limits are blue and the central line is red. The four-way toggle arrows (upper left corner) are for navigating around the map. The zoom bar (left edge) is used to change the magnification. The two buttons (top right) turn on either a map view, a terrain view, a satellite view or a hybrid map/satellite view.



[6]

To understand the role that the Oneidas played one must understand how Grand Council functioned. Issues were brought forth to be discussed at the grand Council of Iroquois Confederacy by system of checks and balances that may be familiar. Issues could be brought in from any nation and be proposed to the council where it would cross the fire to the other two brothers. The Oneida and Cayuga Were called the younger brothers sat on one side of the Council fire. Across from them where the elder brothers Seneca and the Mohawk and finally the Onondagas oversaw the deliberations. The issue being discussed would be presented to the Council, so everyone could hear and then this matter would be passed to the elder brothers for deliberations comments and suggestions. The matter would come back across the fire to the younger brothers and then they would deliberate make comments and suggestions and finally presented for a final consideration in which the Onondaga's what again oversea. If at this time everyone was in agreement, which had to be unanimous, the council would decide how to

proceed with the matter. If the decision was not unanimous than the matter could not proceed any further.



[7]

The power of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy grew far beyond their original homelands. At their height, the Confederacy controlled area from the north to south, the St. Lawrence River to the Chesapeake Bay, and from east to west, the Atlantic to the Mississippi River. They were unrivaled in their agriculture, trade craft, government, and their ability to make war when required, for hundreds of years until strangers from across the waters came.

*Picture of field at top of page is of actual Oneida Homelands in New York.*

[1] Prescott, Mary Lee. Skywoman.

[2] <https://i.pinimg.com/474x/8d/32/a8/8d32a8b05ddc965115ccd994f87783bb--native-art-north-america.jpg> April 23, 2020.

[3] Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iroquois> April, 23 2020

[4] Mitchell, Mike. *Traditional Teachings*. August 1984 pg. 23

[5] Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iroquois> April 23, 2020

[6] NASA <https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEsearch/SEsearchmap.php?Ecl=06190321> April 23, 2020

[7] Mitchell, Mike. *Traditional Teachings*. August 1984 pg.37

**Dedicated to L. Gordon McLester III and Chaz Wheelock 2020**

## **1 Response to *Oneida: Origins Part 1***

1. **CFW wheelock Oneida Nation National** *says:*

[May 23, 2020 at 1:04 pm \(Edit\)](#)

Great statement of Oneida Nation history in context of Haudensusaunee realities and “peoples “

More knowledge of the subject brings us closer to understanding global history and thus hope for a more civilized world of understanding

Carry on