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IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY

TRAINED AND PROVED THINKERS RULED



MR. Arthur C. Parker, State Archaeologist of New York, has contributed the following historical and intensely interesting article on Indian history:

The Confederacy of the Five Nations of the Iroquois was founded on the doctrine of the community welfare. Its founders, Dekanawida and Hiawatha, believed that tribal groups speaking similar dialects should institute a movement for the consolidation of the Huron-Iroquois stock under a confederate government. To this nucleus should be added other tribes as opportunity afforded. Warfare would therefore be abolished and through the reign of peace, prosperity would come. Indeed, the constitution of the Confederacy as finally drawn up was called the Great Peace Law. The idea was to establish through organization, a mutual understanding of the groups and to consolidate individual interests.

The second ideal was that of the right of the people, in the broadest sense, to govern themselves. Every child was borne into a group, a clan or phratry, having a definite relationship to other groups. Indeed in many instances a name bestowed upon an individual by the nameholders or his group was more the name of an office than of a person. Though all the people might rule, only those who from birth had been trained for ruling were elected to the office. The fifty sachems of the Confederacy were in a sense hereditary rulers, yet there was a latitude of choice, for the oldest was the logical candidate, but if his life record was against him another might be nominated for the civil ruler. Thus there was a wholesome rivalry and the man whose ancestry made him a candidate for sachemship endeavored to attain a proficiency that would at once recommend him. Trained and proven thinkers ruled the Confederacy. As a check on the National and Confederate Councils, there were councils of the men and of the women, both clan and national.