

The Women's Council nominated the sachems and the National Council of men generally confirmed the women's choice, and if not, ordered another.

The constitutional requirements for fitness in a sachem were generosity, truthfulness, reliability, chastity, moral courage, patience, consistency, social service and a religious spirit. All these things were definitely demanded, and a national officer could be removed for deficiency in any one of them, after fair warning and after judgment in the peoples' council.

Lest good men who might be of service to the nation be overlooked, "pine tree" chiefs were elected who were allowed to speak and to admonish in council but who could not vote. The nation thus recognized and asked advice of its thinking men.

The peoples' council could initiate a proposition and demand action by the national or confederate council; they could nullify a national or confederate decree. In all councils an order or decision had to be unanimous. This was sometimes difficult to secure but there were just and courteous ways of securing unanimous action even in the council of Confederacy. This idea bred courtesy and tolerance among the people.

The land was held in common but individual rights of occupancy were recognized, subject to the prior right of clan and nation. Land could not be sold any more than air could be; neither had any man the right of monopoly.

The Iroquois constitution was the legal basis of the Iroquois "Kultur" and to establish itself it sought in every way to persuade other groups to join the Confederacy. Failing three times to convince a tribe peacefully, a war of extermination was waged and the broken groups of the conquered adopted and distributed in the villages of the various nations. Once adopted, though they might in a measure be slaves, the captives were loyal and their children were given full rights. In their treatment of prisoners the Iroquois were not more cruel than the Romans, and indeed their festivals of victory were similar to the triumphal pageants of the Caesars.

The Iroquois always desired peace at the cost of national honor; they desired the friendship of all nations, but not to the degree of subserviency, and to that end cultivated oratory and diplomacy along with their military system to such an extent that both the early French and English were astonished and frequently baffled.

All the Iroquois people were an agricultural village-dwelling race, and could they have carried out their governmental policy without European interference would have erected an aboriginal empire of no mean magnitude.