

**A Cross-Border Land Acknowledgement
GMM of Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!)
Deborah Barndt, January 29, 2025
(with power point slides)**



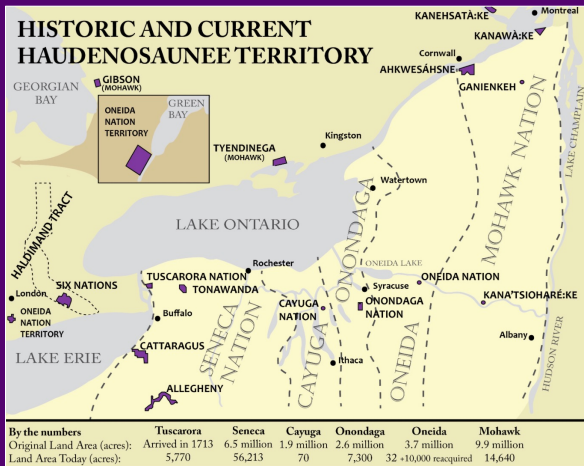
We are living a moment when Canada-U.S. relations deepen the climate crisis, and thus SCAN's climate justice work.

Today our southern border is trembling, tightened and challenged.



The land on which I stand is framed by these geopolitical borders: Tkaronto, Kanadario, Kanata. All Iroquois words for borders drawn by colonial powers. While the Huron-Wendat and Anishinaabe have also been caretakers here and the Mississaugas of the Credit are the current treaty holders, I want to focus today on the Haudenosaunee (known as the Iroquois Confederacy in French and Six Nations in English) who offer important stories about the Canada-U.S. border.

Haudenosaunee Confederacy Crosses Borders



Before the nation-states of the U.S and Canada were formed, the Haudenosaunee at one point covered an area from what is now Connecticut to Wisconsin and into current provinces of Ontario and Quebec. While many live in their traditional territory in upstate New York, many move regularly across borders. The Mohawk Nation of Akwasasne, for example, straddles both two national and two provincial borders.



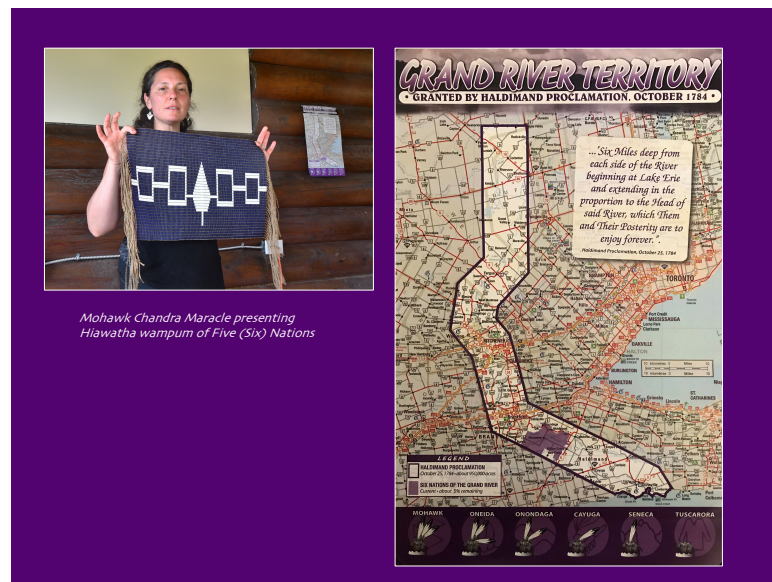
Early 1600s: Mohawk leaders meet Dutch traders in Albany

Many of us have also lived on both sides. On U.S. election day in November, I was visiting cousins on the family farm near Schenectady, New York. While digesting the election results that week I visited the Iroquois Museum and the New York State Museum to research my mother's Dutch ancestors who founded New Amsterdam or New York. I learned that the Dutch and Haudenosaunee first met to trade where the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers meet, the current site of Albany, New York's state capital.

In 1613, the Mohawks approached the Dutch at this site and proposed the first two row wampum an agreement of peace and friendship, two parallel paths of the ships and the canoes, respecting each other's cultures, and agreeing not to interfere.



The more liberal and tolerant approach of the Dutch didn't last long, however. They soon became as aggressive as the French and English, in brutal warfare, land grabbing, and, famously, the beaver fur trade war. Trade wars are certainly not new.



Closer to home in Ontario, Chandra Maracle, Mohawk food leader, explains how the Haudenosaunee who assisted the British in the War of 1812 were relegated to the Haldimand tract in the 1800s, and since then Six Nations of the Grand River Territory has shrunk to a postage stamp of land through ongoing occupation and settlement.

Haudenosaunee Gifts:

- Edge of the Woods greeting
- *Teioháte Kaswenta* or Two Row wampum treaty
- Democratic governance and gender relations
- The Great Law of Peace
- Thanksgiving Address



Rick Hill with 2-row wampum at Mnoomin Festival, Curve Lake, 2022

LEGACIES
EARTH
TO
TABLES

(earthtotables.org)

Over the past decade, through the Earth to Tables Legacies Project, an exchange with Six Nations around food sovereignty, I've learned that the Haudenosaunee offer several legacies that could inform our climate justice work, both within Canada and between Canada and the U.S.

- 1) The Haudenosaunee "Edge of the Woods" greeting is a way of acknowledging that whenever we travel or gather, we are carrying with us many emotions. Today, for example, we are probably bringing a lot of grief, anger, and anxiety into this zoom room. We need to acknowledge those feelings and create a space for respectful dialogue.
- 2) Rick Hill reminds us that the two-row wampum treaty first negotiated in the early 1600s, representing the ships and the canoes, is being reclaimed today as a model for respectful nation to nation relations. This should inform our work on all elections, as well as campaigns like the LNG struggles in BC.
- 3) The U.S. constitution drew heavily from Haudenosaunee democratic governance practices, and their form of gender relations inspired the Women's Suffragette movement; both are being threatened in today's political climate.
- 4) The Great Law of Peace that united the first five nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, over 1,000 years ago, offers a message sorely needed in the context of current continental and global conflicts.
- 5) Most profoundly, I've learned from the Thanksgiving Address, a world view that acknowledges and thanks all the interconnected beings in the natural world that sustain our lives. It's a kind of broad land acknowledgement that could be the manifesto for a more sustainable, just and healthy planet.



Haudenosaunee ideas and practices were a threat to the early colonial leaders. George Washington, the first president of the United States, understood the power of the Haudenosaunee food security practice of storing corn for seven years, so he ordered all grain stores to be burned. Since then, the Mohawk word for "U.S. President" is "Hanadagá-yas" which literally means "town destroyer." Does this moniker hold true in the present moment for Indigenous communities and, indeed, for all justice-seeking communities on Turtle Island?

A Haudenosaunee response to this moment:

History has taught us we cannot trust nor depend upon our trading partners, whose consumer appetite outweighs their moral consciousness.

Only by having a reliable source of food we produce ourselves (in right relationship with the earth) can we thrive in the future.

- Rick Hill, Tuscarora educator, artist, knowledge keeper

I asked Rick Hill, who has spoken in a SCAN! webinar, what might be a Haudenosaunee response to this moment and the impending trade wars. His response:

History has taught us we cannot trust nor depend upon our trading partners, whose consumer appetite outweighs their moral consciousness.

Only by having a reliable source of food we produce ourselves (in right relationship with the earth) can we thrive in the future.

In this historic moment,
how can SCAN! cross borders
for Climate Justice Advocacy and
in Solidarity with Indigenous Nations?



How can SCAN!s analysis and actions cross borders for Climate Justice Advocacy and Indigenous Solidarity?