

Iroquois

The Iroquois are a group of North American First Nation nations (Indians). In the late 1400's The Peacemaker and Haiwatha helped bring together the nations, who had often been at war with each other, by forming the League Of Nations.

They lived throughout the North-eastern USA and South-eastern Canada. Many now live on reserves in the same areas. Their diet consisted of game that they hunted and the vegetables corn, beans and squash (the three sisters) which they cultivated.

The original nations were the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca. They were later joined by the Tuscarora. The League helped keep the peace and made important decisions on behalf of the nations.

The US Congress copied the idea of the League in it's makeup.

The Iroquois religion is called Longhouse religion. Some Iroquois are Christian. Importantly a common link between the two is that both believe in the Creator of all things.

Iroquois sculptors use steatite found in Cherokee territory in North Carolina. Steatite is a type of soapstone. The colouring will vary from one piece of stone to the next. Most stone has a pleasing brown tone but the colour may range from pale green and blue to gray and a rare dark red.

The Although the artists may work in other materials, steatite is preferred because of its strong colouring and its links with the past of the Indian tribes.

Iroquois sculpture is a continuously growing art form that is winning enthusiastic admirers worldwide. It usually depicts subject matter with great spiritual meaning to the Iroquois.

The Turtle in Iroquois art is important as, it is believed that, upon creation the world was covered in water. Sky people lived far above the earth. One day Sky Woman fell to earth. The birds caught her before she reached the water and Turtle offered to become land.

Wampum belts are often depicted in Iroquois art. Wampum is made from shells cut in to beads with a hole. The beads are then threaded on to strings. Many strings are sewn together to make a belt. The wampum belt can be used for many things – to show stature, to make a promise, to recite a treaty story or other important event.