

EDUCATOR PACKET

Oñgweson gyastoñh
Haudenosaunee: Elements
November 13, 2010 – January 16, 2011



Tom Huff, Seneca-Cayuga, *Seventh Generation*, 2008
Brazilian soapstone. Private Collection.

INTRODUCTION

Agwahseñ-nya`

“That’s what we do, we make things.”

The act of creating works of art is embedded in the Haudenosaunee way of life and has been for centuries. This exhibition presents works by contemporary Haudenosaunee artists from the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy— Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga and Tuscarora. The artists range from those with well established careers to new and notable talents. Among those exhibiting are Jay Carrier, Harold Farmer, Katsitsionni Fox and Ed Burnam, Ronni-Leigh Goeman, Stonehorse Goeman, Tom Huff, Frank Buffalo Hyde, Ada Jacques, G. Peter Jemison, Peter B. Jones, Linley Logan, Shelley Niro, Aweñheeyoh Powless, Jolene Rickard, Clint Shenandoah, Leah Shenandoah, Natasha Smoke Santiago, Smiley Summers, Tammy Tarbell-Boehing, and Tracy Thomas.

This is the first exhibition of Haudenosaunee contemporary art at the Everson Museum since the 1970s. The exhibition is co-curated by Senior Curator Debora Ryan and invited artist Tom Huff with the assistance of artist Aweñheeyoh Powless (Onondaga), an MFA graduate student at RIT and Everson summer intern. Tom Huff is an award-winning artist who has participated in and curated numerous exhibitions during his career. He attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and earned his BFA at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1984. Tom Huff is a Seneca-Cayuga from Cattaraugus who lives with his family at the Onondaga Nation.

Primarily a sculptor who works with stone, Huff has created provocative mixed media installations that address social, political, and cultural issues ever present in contemporary Native American life. *Seventh Generation*(2008), a large sculpture carved from Brazilian soapstone, portrays the Haudenosaunee universe with a turtle representing the earth and an eagle referencing the sky. Six faces symbolizing the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy emerge from the eagles outstretched wings. The Tree of Peace, a White Pine, links the earth and sky, a constant reminder that all things are connected. The seventh generation, which is a metaphor for all future generations that must be considered with every decision made by those living today, is represented by a newborn baby emerging from the stone within.

Ronni-LeighGoeman is one of only a handful of artists who continue to make baskets using the wood of the black ash tree and sweet grass. A tradition passed down in her family, basket-making, a multi-step, lengthy process, begins with a tree which must be stripped of its bark and pounded by hand to release the individual rings which are then sliced into strips for weaving. The sweet grass can

only be picked in late summer, and is used as a decorative treatment woven into the basket.

Haudenosaunee: Elements does not attempt to provide a survey of contemporary art—the talented artists working in our region are too numerous to be represented in this exhibition— but rather to introduce viewers to the broad range of media and art forms by which contemporary artists continue to create their own individual visual language while never straying far from their cultural heritage.

Lessons

Lesson 1

Memory Art

Lesson 2

Promise Belts – Inspired by the Haudenosaunee

Lesson 1: Memory & Art

Materials:

Paper

Acrylic paint

Brushes

Canvas / Heavyweight paper

Blank mind map worksheets

Your thinking cap!

Memory & Symbolism

Many artists use their memory and past experiences as the inspiration for their art. The result is artwork that is personal and symbolic, often expressing the artist's sense of identity.

Native American artist Smiley Summers draws upon the memory of his childhood home in his piece entitled, *No Place Like Home*. This intricately layered painting took him nearly five years to complete and depicts many details of his home including food, tools and family members. Many of the objects are deeply symbolic and have more than one meaning. For example, the water in the lower right corner also symbolizes the earth and has the subtle outline of a face within it. The animals (a wolf, bear and turtle) depicted in the painting represent the different clans within the tribe. The wolf is also an animal that Smiley identifies with and feels connected to.

Objectives:

Each student will create an artwork that represents multiple memories or personal experiences that tell the story of the students' life. The memories/experiences should be meaningful and also express who they are. Students should consider symbolic elements and understand that the piece is a form of personal expression.

Motivation & Discussion:

Show students *No Place Like Home* and start a discussion using the following questions.

- What's going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

Read the accompanying summary of the work, which was based on an interview with the artist to better understand the symbols and images used to tell his story.

Memories don't come to us in the same order as the events occurred. For example, the memory of something that happened an hour ago may spark the

memory of something that happened several years ago. That memory may cause you to recall something that happened last month and so on.

When creating your artwork consider the scale and placement of objects. For example, in *No Place Like Home*, Smiley chose the center of the painting for memories/ people he feels are very important such as his grandparents. Surrounding compartments depict different, yet related memories. The layout of the painting is very much like that of a mind map. Compare the two and discuss the similarities that you find. Next, provide each student with a copy of the blank mind map to brainstorm memories and create thumbnail sketches of them. Ask them to think of symbols that may represent elements of their memories.

Students should also consider the size of objects in relation to their significance. For example, in his painting Smiley depicts his grandparents on a larger scale than most of the other objects, most likely because they were of greater personal significance.

Directions:

- Using acrylic paint as a medium (can also be adapted to colored pencils, pastels or other available resources) students should then create their own artwork based on the story of their life.
- When creating their piece, students should consider the following questions:
 - What memories do I have about being very young?
 - Who are the most important people in my life? What are some good memories I have about them?
 - Where do my memories take place (at home, on vacation, at school, at a friends house, etc.)? How can I show this in my painting?
 - Will I use realistic colors or colors that match the mood of my memory (for example, painting your house yellow because it feels bright and happy).
- Once students have completed the project, share and discuss the completed works as a class using the following questions. Afterward, have each student describe the meaning behind his or her piece to the class.
 - What's going on in this picture?
 - What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What more can you find?

Smiley Summers
No Place Like Home
2009, Acrylic on Canvas

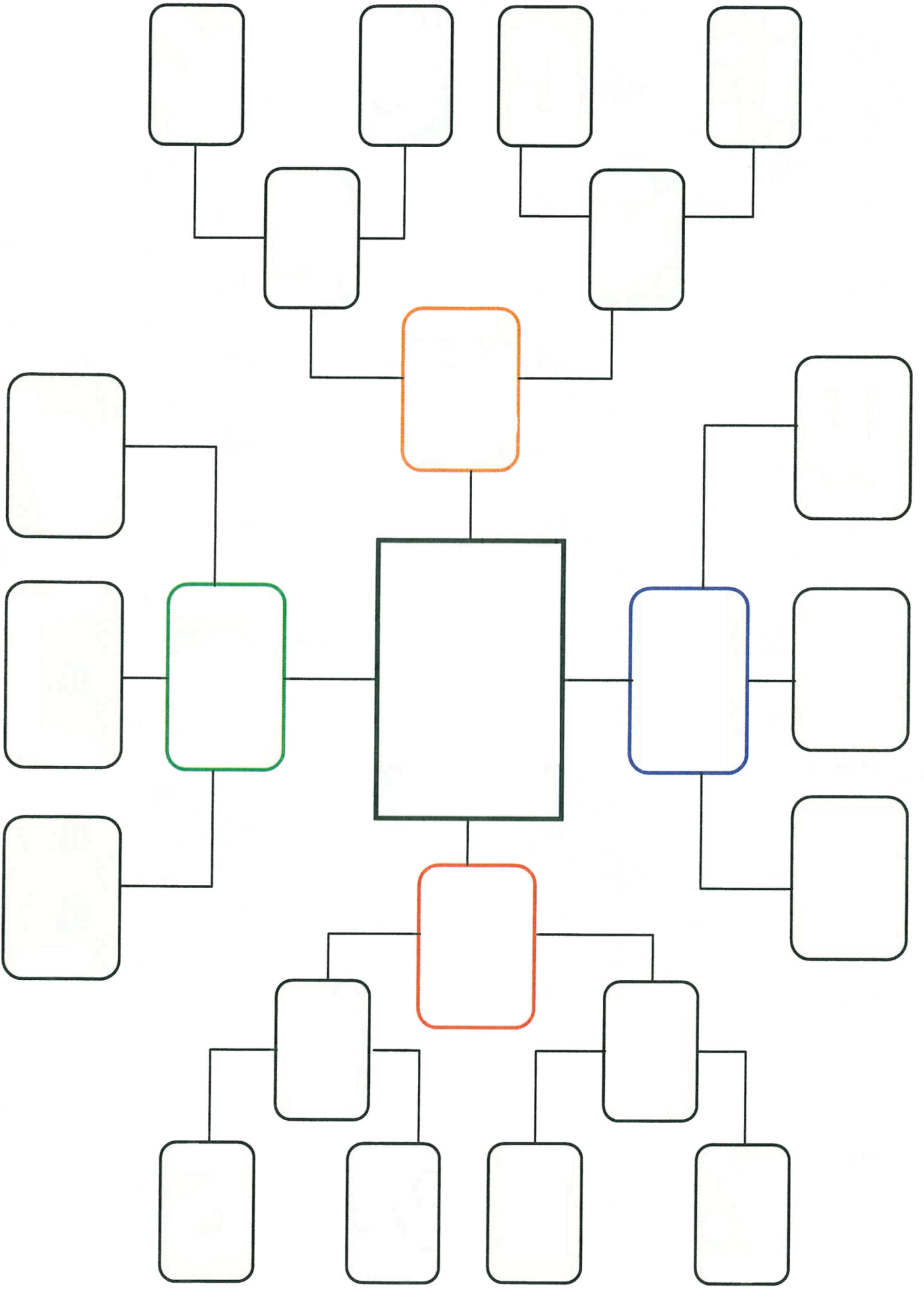
Smiley Summers was born in 1959 and is a member of the Oneida Nation, Bear Clan. He lived with his father on the Oneida reservation in Canada until the age of six when he and his siblings were kidnapped by his mother and brought to Syracuse where he has since lived. Sadly, Smiley was an alcoholic by the age of 13. However, in 1987 at the age of 28, he quit drinking and began painting as a means to express his feelings. He's influenced by the works of Gesso and Eli Thomas, as well as Linda Bigness, who was his painting instructor at the Metropolitan School for the Arts in Syracuse. The artwork in the Everson Museum of Art also influenced Smiley who often visited the museum with siblings and friends as a child. He fondly recalls, quote, "I used to observe the artwork in the museum and I'd say, 'I can do that!'" unquote.

Smiley's work is intensely personal, as he often depicts events and memories from his own life. In this piece entitled 'No Place Like Home' he draws upon memories of his childhood on the reservation. Every part of this intricately layered painting holds meaning for him, perhaps the reason why it took him nearly five years to complete. The two figures in the foreground represent his grandparents, the large pot between them holds traditional corn soup and on the table behind them are bowls of vegetables. To the right, a bathtub, towels and several cups of coffee. To the left, a wheelbarrow and a bench. Smiley describes his work fondly, saying, quote, "This is the way we lived. On the table there was always lots of food, vegetables, bread and soup. On the stove there was always lots of coffee. On Sunday we would line up for a bath because we had school on Monday. The bench on the left I call 'discipline' because that's where we'd have to sit if we misbehaved. The wheelbarrow we used as tool, we always had wheelbarrows lying around. We lived off the land." unquote.

Several other elements of the Haudenosaunee culture appear in this piece. A wampum belt rests on the table above the corn soup. Water appears in the lower right corner, its swirling circular pattern reminiscent of the earth and the subtle outline of a face within it. To the right of the water we see a longhouse, the traditional home of the Iroquois people. Also depicted are three different clans. Look closely and you will find them. On the right is a bear, through the window on the upper left a green turtle and in the wheelbarrow, the face of a wolf. The wolf is an animal that Smiley strongly identifies with despite being a member of the bear clan.

Just beneath the corn soup in the center of the painting is an arrow used to poke the logs to keep the fire going. The arrow rests over the fire, represented by a heart. Smiley describes the meaning of this symbol saying, quote, "It's a heart because if your heart goes cold, you go cold. You've got to have a nice warm heart." unquote.

When asked to describe his method of painting, Smiley recalls, quote, “When I started painting, I didn’t want to be like everyone else. They’re all perfectionists. I’m all for progress, not perfection. I just do what I do. I love to paint and that’s it.” unquote.



Lesson 2: Promise Belts – Inspired by the Haudenosaunee

Using simple materials, students will be inspired to make a promise, and visually represent it with a symbolic work of art.

Goals:

- to discover wampum and its importance to the Haudenosaunee
- to explore the history of the treaties between and their meaning to the Haudenosaunee and the US
- to understand the significance of making and keeping promises
- to work together as a class to create a visual representation of a commitment



*The Aionwá:tha Wampum Belt (above)
and Two Row Wampum Belt (Below)*

from www.kahnawakelonghouse.com

Required Materials:

For XL:

- Paper Towel & Toilet Paper Tubes, cut into 2" lengths
- Cord, cut into 3' lengths
- Wooden Dowels 3'-5' long (2)

For Regular Size:

- Drinking Straws, cut into 2" lengths or plastic beads of various colors
- String, cut into 1 ½' lengths
- Pencils or Wooden Dowels 1' long (2)

For Both:

- Acrylic Paint or Colored Tape
- Sketch Paper
- Activity Sheet (included) for Graphing Ideas
- Pencil
- Colored Pencils, Crayons, or Markers

Background:

*From The Ganondagan NYS Native American Historical Site
(<http://www.ganondagan.org>)*

“What is Wampum?”

Most simply, wampum are beads made from various white and purple mollusk shells which were and are still used by various Native nations throughout northeastern North America for ornamental or ceremonial use.



Contrary to misconceptions, wampum was not "Indian money." Wampum clearly had value as a trade item between the various Native peoples before European contact. But it was later on after European settlement of America that wampum began to be used like currency.

One of the most prized and often used mollusks for wampum beads is the quahog clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*). This clam, which lives in the coastal waters of the northeastern United States, has a distinctive shell that yields the purple beads.

Various whelk species have been used to create the white wampum including the Channeled Whelk (*Busycon canaliculatum*), Knobbed Whelk (*Busycon carica*), Lightning Whelk (*Busycon sinistrum*), and Snow Whelk (*Busycon Laeostomum*). Due to the hardness and brittleness of the natural shell materials used, making real shell wampum was and still is a difficult and time-consuming process even today.



Wampum has a special significance to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people. Archaeological evidence shows that wampum was in use by the Haudenosaunee in the period before the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. But it was during the founding of the Confederacy that Aiiowatha (Hiawatha) introduced wampum in the way that it is currently being used by the Haudenosaunee. Wampum is used to signify the importance or the authority of the message associated with it. As such, treaties and other such agreements

would have a large amount of wampum that had been loomed into a "belt" for them.



The designs and the colors of the beads used in wampum belts had meaning so the belts themselves were mnemonic devices that could aid the memory about the history, traditions, and laws

that the belts had been associated with.

Every Chief and Clan Mother in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy has a string or strings of wampum that serves as a certificate of their office. These along with the authority of the position are passed on to their successors. Runners carrying messages would also carry wampum to signify the truth and importance of the message that they carried.

As Keepers of the Central Fire, the Onondaga Nation are the custodians of wampum records for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.”

Discussion:

- After learning about the treaties forged by the Haudenosaunee and the US, and looking at images of the various wampum belts that symbolized these treaties (included on CD), have your class gather for a discussion on what it means to make a promise. Some discussion questions can include:
 - What are some of the promises that were made in the treaties discussed?
 - How did the Haudenosaunee use symbols to show the promises made?
 - What is a compromise and how did each group arrive at an agreement?
 - What are ways to show you intend to keep your promise?
 - Why did the Haudenosaunee use wampum to illustrate their treaties?
- Take a moment to look at “American Icon – Indian Statue of Liberty” by Peter Jones (image included in your packet). Ask your students:
 - What’s going on with this artwork?
 - How did the artist incorporate wampum into this artwork?
 - Can you identify the belts that are included?
 - What do you think the title means?
 - What message do you think the artist is trying to convey?
- This discussion should also include a brainstorming session to help your class determine a promise they want to make and symbolize with a promise belt. Some ideas include:
 - A promise to the environment to always recycle
 - A promise to your classmates to support each other and conquer bullying
 - A promise to yourself to always do your best work
 - A promise to your family to work hard at chores
 - A promise to your future self to exercise, eat healthy foods, and take care of your body

Step-By-Step Instructions:

1. Determine what your promise will be. Write it in one sentence on the top of the included activity sheet
2. Make a sketch of the symbols you will use in your promise belt that will remind you of the promise you are making
3. Using the grid on the activity sheet, fill in squares with colored pencil, crayon, or marker to create a blueprint of your promise belt
4. Count out how many “beads” of each color you will need; using tape or paint, prepare your straws or cardboard tubes appropriately
5. Tie your first piece of string to the wooden dowel and slide it to the bottom
6. Slide pieces of drinking straw or paper towel tubes (“beads”) onto the string, using your blueprint as a guide for different colors
7. When you have added the correct number of “beads”, tie the free end of the string to the other wooden dowel, and slide it to the bottom.
8. Repeat for each line on your blueprint, until each line is represented with one string of straw or cardboard “beads”
9. Using extra string or tape, wrap both ends of each dowel several times, so that the rows of “beads” stay in place
10. Display the promise belt(s) and discuss the promise that you have made and share with the class three specific ways you intend to keep your promise

Additional Resources:

Online

History of Wampum: <http://www.nativetech.org/wampum/wamphist.htm>

Weave a Virtual Wampum Belt:

<http://www.nativetech.org/beadwork/wampumgraph/index.html>

Information on Wampum: <http://www.ganondagan.org/wampum.html>

Advanced Weaving Techniques for Wampum:

<http://www.nativetech.org/wampum/ssinstr.htm>

Homework Hotline Video on the Canandaigua Treaty:

<http://interactive.wxvi.org/hotline/hhvp/container.html> [in search box, type “treaty”]

List of Images

[Hiawatha Belt](#) – Image from onondaganation.org

[Two Row Belt](#) – Image from onondaganation.org

[George Washington Belt](#) – Image from onondaganation.org

[Wampum Belts](#) – Image from ganondagan.org

[Treaty Council](#) – Image from ganondagan.org

[Grand Council](#) – “A Grand Sachem at the center of a crescent-moon maweomi with a Covenant Chain wampum belt in the foreground, a symbolic element that bound the Grand Council together. From *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains*, Joseph Francois Lafitau, 1724” – Image from acqtc.org

[Wampum Belt Reproductions](#) – Created by Darren Bonaparte – Image from wampumchronicles.com

Web Resources

Onondaga Nation:

<http://www.onondaganation.org/>

Oneida Nation:

<http://www.oneidanation.org/>

Ganondagan Official Site

<http://www.ganondagan.org/>

National Museum of the American Indian

<http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators (pdf)

http://si-pwebsrch02.si.edu/search?site=americanindian&client=nmai1&proxystylesheet=nmai-1&output=xml_no_dtd&q=haudenosaunee

Iroquois Museum

<http://www.iroquoismuseum.org>

Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Indian Fact Sheet

http://bigorrin.org/iroquois_kids.htm

Iroquois History

<http://www.tolatsga.org/iro.html>

The Six Nations

http://www.ratical.org/many_worlds/6nations/

Iroquois

<http://www.iroquoisdemocracy.pdx.edu/index.htm>

Iroquois Constitution

<http://www.indigenouspeople.net/iroqcon.htm>