The Constitution of the Iroquois Nations Great Law of Peace: Gayanashagowa

Opening Oration

I am, Dekanawidah [the Peacemaker] and with the Five Nations' Confederate Lords I plant the Tree of Great Peace. I plant it in your territory, Adodarhoh, and the Onondaga Nation, in the territory of you who are Firekeepers. I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves. Under the shade of this Tree of the Great Peace we spread the soft white feathery down of the globe thistle as seats for you, Adodarhoh, and your cousin Lords. We place you upon those seats, spread soft with the feathery down of the globe thistle, there beneath the shade of the spreading branches of the Tree of Peace. There shall you sit and watch the Council Fire of the Confederacy of the Five Nations, and all the affairs of the Five Nations shall be transacted at this place before you, Adodarhoh, and your cousin Lords, by the Confederate Lords of the Five Nations.

17. Grand Council || Selection of Chief Statesmen

A bunch of a certain number of shell (wampum) strings each two spans in length shall be given to each of the female families in which the Lordship titles are vested. The right of bestowing the title shall be hereditary in the family of the females legally possessing the bunch of shell strings and the strings shall be the token that the females of the family have the proprietary right to the Lordship title for all time to come, subject to certain restrictions hereinafter mentioned...

27. All [Chief Statesmen] of the Five Nations Confederacy must be honest in all things...men possessing those honorable qualities that make true Royaneh [i.e. chief statesmen, literally "noble leaders who walk in greatness" There are no age limits, but statesmen with a family and are citizens of one of the Five, now Six Nations, with exception to the Pine Tree Chief. The clan mothers and women evaluate who is qualified to be a chief statesman.]

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Preamble

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Section 2. House of Representatives || Election of Representatives

1. The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several states, and the electors in each state shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the Legislature.

2. No person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the age of twenty-five years, and been seven years a citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of that state which he shall be chosen.

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Selection of Speakers

14. When the Council of the Five [Six] Nations [Chief Statesmen] convene, they shall appoint a speaker for the day. He shall be a [Chief Statesman] of either the Mohawk, Onondaga or Seneca Nation. The next day the Council shall appoint another speaker, but the first speaker may be reappointed if there is no objection, but a speaker's term shall not be regarded more than for the day.

Legislative

The Council of the Mohawk shall be divided into three parties. [Each has 3 chiefs totaling 9 chiefs.]
The Council of the Seneca shall be divided into 4 parties [Each has 2 chiefs totaling 8 chiefs].

[Together, the Mohawk and Seneca parallel the Senate. The chiefs are chosen by the women and hold the position as long as they serve faithfully. Each has an equal voice, but decisions are formed by consensus.]

Remember, the Iroquois Constitution began as an oral tradition. When you compare the Great Law of Peace sections in the chart with full text versions of the document there may be discrepancies. These occur because the Great Law of Peace has been transcribed at different times and preserved in different versions. Though some of the words may be different, the meaning remains the same.

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Selection of Speakers

5. The House of Representatives shall choose their Speaker and other officers;

Legislative || Number of Senators

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote.

(Superseded by Amendment XVII) Proposed May /3, 1912; ratified April 8, /9/3; certified May 3/, 1913.

Classification of Senators

Immediately after they shall be assembled in consequence of the first election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three classes. The seats of the Senators of the first class shall be vacated at the expiration of the second year, of the second class at the expiration of the fourth year, and of the third class at the expiration of the sixth year, so that one third may be chosen every second; and if vacancies happen by resignation, or otherwise during the recess of the Legislature of any State, the executive thereof may make temporary appointments until the next meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such vacancies.