

STAFF - TEACHER COPY

1737 Onondaga Council Ceremony -- A Short Skit

Cast and costumes/props:

Conrad Weiser, a go-between & interpreter

Shickellamy, a Six Nations deputy & interpreter

Narrator

Indian speaker

Chiefs of Onondaga (choose 4-5 students to represent each nation, with rest of class divided up and seated behind them, representing the other chiefs and assembly of Indians) - laminated signs (Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, Mohawk & Tuscarora)

The Skit

Narrator: When Conrad Weiser and Shickellamy meet with the chiefs at Onondaga after their long journey in 1737, they bring messages from the colonial governments of Pennsylvania, which the Indians call "Onas," or Penn, and Virginia, called Asaryquah [uh SAHR e quo]. Let's listen as they deliver their message.

[Conrad Weiser & Shickellamy, enter area and stand opposite the chiefs]

Conrad Weiser: It is the desire of the Governor of Virginia to call and invite you to Williamsburg to a Treaty of Peace with the Southern Indians, the Cherokees and the Catawbas. Let this *[lay down a large string of wampum]* confirm the truth of this request.

It is the desire and request of the Province of Pennsylvania that your friends and Brethren have sent me up to take hold of the Six Nations' hatchet until you have held a treaty of Peace with your enemies the Cherokees and Catawbas, who now cry for peace. *[Lay down the wampum belt.]*

I have at present no more to say. I leave it to you when you will give me your answer.
[Both men exit to side of stage area]

Narrator: The entire group of Indians assembled here proceeds to eat, and then retire to another house. They call for Weiser at night to tell him they are ready to give him an answer, and assemble in Weiser's lodging hut. The wampum Weiser had delivered to the Chiefs is tied to a stick and hung up in the middle of the room. *[Two students hold a stick between them and sit near the center of the circle]* Listen as the chief speaker uses images and symbols to describe how the 6 Nations feel about the invitation.

[Weiser & Shickellamy return to council area and sits with chiefs.]

Indian Speaker:

[in loud voice]

Brethren: we let you know that we have considered all that was said to us in the morning, on behalf of our Brother Asaryquoh [Uh SAHR e quo] the Governor of Virginia and in behalf of our Brethren Onas [OH nuss] James Logan and all the chief Men or council of Philadelphia whom we love dearly, finding them always with an upright heart.

We must let you know that we cannot come to Williamsburg to a Treaty of Peace. There is no road to that place. We never travel through bushes to treaties of peace--it is too dangerous and we have no council fire at Williamsburg. And if we should take a stump of fire to go there we cannot get there without running the risk of our lives, because our brother Uh SAHR e quo has made a fence or wall around his colony and told us not to go over it or he would hang us. That fence or wall stands to this very day. Our brother Uh SAHR e quo's people are very agitated, everywhere in his country.

We therefore give our Brother Uh SAHR e quo an Invitation or a call to come to Albany, here in the colony of New York, together with the chiefs of the southern Indians, the Cherokees and Catawbas, his friends, where we have a fire burning in the shadow of some green bushes, and we will meet with him and the southern Indians in the presence of our brethren the governor of New York, and the commissioners of Indian officers in Albany.

We desire him to make haste if he can, and send word to us when he is yet afar off. We will take all our old chief men to Albany to the Treaty of Peace. If our Brother Onas would be pleased to come to the Treaty we would be very glad.

[The speaker hands a string of wampum to Weiser, and he takes the string of wampum Weiser had given them off the stick and puts it alongside the council group.]

Indian Speaker: As for the desire of our Brethren of Philadelphia to take hold of our hatchet, we grant your request. Some of our warriors are still away in the South. As soon as they come home, the hatchet shall be taken from them also and put away for the time being. In confirmation of what we have said, we give to our Brethren of Philadelphia this belt of wampum and we are very much pleased with their putting their effort to this work.

[the speaker takes the belt that Weiser had given to them off the stick and gives it back to Weiser. Weiser nods. Speaker again faces Weiser & Shickellamy, who represent Virginia and PA]

Indian Speaker: Brother Uh SAHR e quo and Onas James Logan, we must now let you know we have great reason to doubt the truth of the matter that the Catawbas are interested in peace, or cry out for peace. They are a very proud people. Their heart is not upright, but deceitful. We believe that they have cheated their brother the Virginia governor, in telling him that they want to make peace. For if their heart was upright, they would have come long ago to our council fire in Onondaga. They know, and all nations of Indians know, that we always treat messengers and peace makers kindly even in the hottest of wars, and send them away in peace. We go to war when we must be revenged. We never hurt messengers that come to us on business. We treat them with the best that we have and let them go in peace. We believe the Cherokees are a more reasonable people. They had been on their way to us, but the Catawbas sent them back, calling them fools. However, you will find that we are a people that will act uprightly and prudently, and we will come to peace if they give proof of having good motives and an upright heart.

Tomorrow we will send messengers to all the nations to carry this news and proclaim a ceasefire. Now let us prepare the feast.

[Optional: if students have baked cornbread or muffins, or prior arrangement has been made to purchase a snack of this kind, the treat may now be served to the entire class, time permitting.]

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