

# ONEIDA

QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER



## Nation Breaks Ground on Community Center

Story &  
Renderings  
pgs. 3-6



Brothers Lowell and Carl George (Wolf Clan), above, and Rhonda Berger (Turtle Clan), were among the Members who took part in the groundbreaking Sept. 13.



Summer/Fall 2022



## A Message from the Nation Representative

**S**hekólih. Earlier this month, we broke ground on a new Community and Cultural Center on our homelands. It was a significant milestone in our People's history and the latest step in the ongoing reclamation and revitalization, not only of our homelands, but of our community.

This project is the culmination of decades of work led by our ancestors who fought so hard to keep our traditions and culture alive for all of us today. The new community center will guide us into a new era that will build on the legacy of the Oneida Indian Nation and ensure our future generations will always have a connection to our Nation and our history.

### ONYOTA'A:KÁ:

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### TOLL-FREE MEMBER PHONE:

**1.800.685.6115**

**NOTE:** Council meetings are not being held at this time for health and safety concerns for our Members during the Covid-19 pandemic. Contact: The Oneida Indian Nation, P.O. Box 1, Vernon, NY 13476 or use the Member App.

Yawá'kó:, thank you, to all of our Members who braved the rain to attend the groundbreaking. Our People believe rain is a special blessing. We are grateful for that special blessing, and all the Creator has given us.

There are many reasons to feel great pride in what we have created here and what we will continue to build. We are taking yet another step forward that will lead to bigger and better things for all of us. As you know, the community center is just one facet of our revitalization effort. New housing, community development opportunities, infrastructure enhancements and other resources will be the strong ties that bind our community together.

Our resiliency has been rooted in the great connections forged between family, friends and all of our Members. That is why a community center is so essential for our future generations. With each reinvestment in our People and our homelands, we move towards a brighter future unto the Seventh Generation.

Ná ki' wa,  
Ray Halbritter  
Nation Representative



ONYOTA' A:KÁ:

# Oneida Indian Nation COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL CENTER



When complete, the 65,000-square-foot community center will be among the largest tribal centers of its kind in the country. Its amenities will include:

- Areas for language and cultural programming and education
- Spaces for community meals and other gatherings
- Library
- Exhibit space
- Field house for lacrosse games and cultural events
- Natatorium with an accessible pool, children's pool, and spa
- Gymnasium
- Fitness center
- Running track
- Play area
- Conference rooms and office space
- More renderings pgs. 6-7



MORE: [www.OneidaIndianNation.com/neighborhoods-project/](http://www.OneidaIndianNation.com/neighborhoods-project/)

ONEIDA

# Nation Members Celebrate Groundbreaking for New Community Center



Council Members Brian Patterson (Bear Clan) and Chuck Fougner (Wolf Clan)

On Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, the Oneida Indian Nation broke ground on a new Community and Cultural Center on Nation homelands. Nation Representative Ray Halbritter delivered remarks highlighting the significant milestone in the Nation's history and how the community center will be welcoming to Nation Members and the surrounding community.

"The community center will be so much more than just impressive features. It will truly be the center of our Nation – an investment in the very heart of our community and a permanent representation of all the history and meaning that term encompasses," Halbritter said. "Like all that we undertake, it will benefit not just those of us gathered here today, but our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren unto the Seventh Generation. Here, they will find a vibrant community and a place they may always call home."

Sheri Beglen (Wolf Clan) began the event with words of thanks and recognition of all the Creator has given. The generational investment in a community center is just one step in a multi-phase plan to develop the Nation's homelands into a greater community.

Nation Members in attendance were given the opportunity to take part in the groundbreaking by moving the ceremonial dirt with a special replica tool. Made by Ron Patterson (Wolf Clan), the replica resembled a tool Oneida ancestors would've used to construct longhouses and villages. Even with the rain, Members were excited to celebrate the historic development of the Nation's homelands.

"It's great to see so many Members here today to celebrate this day together," Language Instructor Chelsea Jocko (Wolf Clan) said. "The Community Center will be so amazing for our community and for our future generations."



Sisters Kim Jacobs and Kandice Watson (Wolf Clan)



Deb Montroy  
(Turtle Clan)



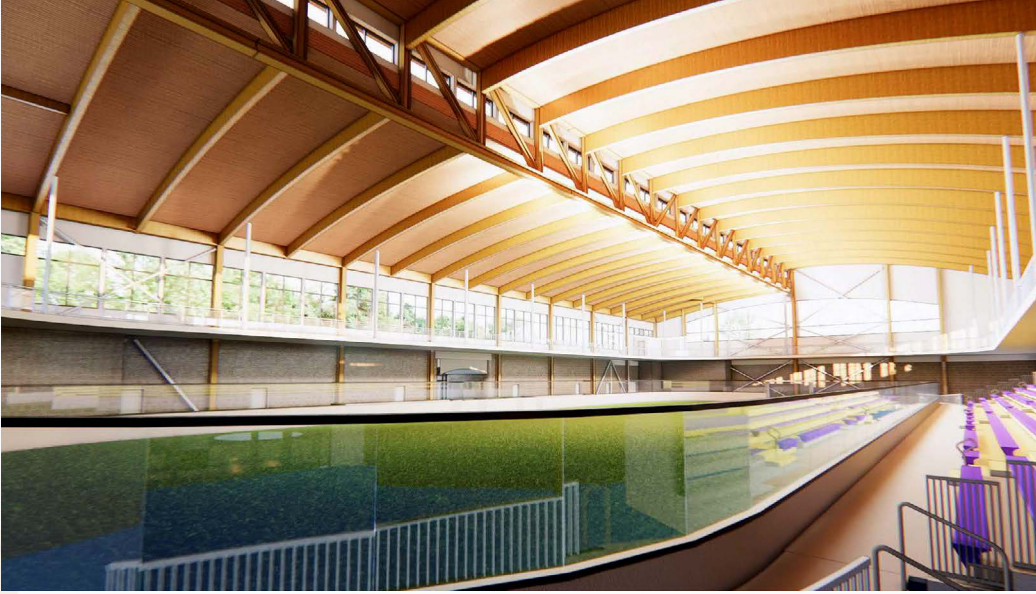
Derek Montroy  
(Turtle Clan)



Sheri Beglen  
(Wolf Clan)



Chelsea Jocko  
(Wolf Clan)



The new community center will include an indoor arena for lacrosse and other events.

“It will be wonderful to have a new community center that will benefit our Members,” said Rhonda Berger (Turtle Clan). “This will give all of us, youth and Elders, a beautiful place to go to maintain a healthy lifestyle.”

The community center will feature Oneida culture and traditions all the way through its design. The entrance will have broad wooden slats that resemble the threading of a wampum belt, highlighting the importance of the Nation’s sovereignty. The four elements – earth, air, fire and water – are represented throughout the architecture as well. In particular, in the center’s culture core, a skylight in the

shape of a feather and a stone floor with a snapping turtle shell pattern emphasize the Oneida Indian Nation’s connection to the earth and the Creator.

The construction of the new community center is just one phase of the Nation’s Oneida Neighborhoods revitalization efforts. The next phase will include additional housing for Nation Members, and this fall, construction will begin on new Elder housing. The plan will increase other available Member housing by 50 percent. ❖



Gil Stout  
(Turtle Clan)



Melissa Patterson  
(Wolf Clan)



Tina Walker  
(Turtle Clan)



Dean Lyons  
(Turtle Clan)



Barbara George  
(Wolf Clan)



Karen Halbritter  
(Wolf Clan)



## Nation to Launch Maple Farm



The Oneida Indian Nation is bringing maple harvesting to our homelands.

Wáhta' Maple Farm will create premium-grade, certified-organic maple syrup through a sustainable approach to sugaring that will ensure minimal environmental impact. As part of this new endeavour, the Nation will also be planting hundreds of maple trees to expand the stock that exists on Nation lands today.

“Wáhta' Maple Farm will continue the diversification that has made our enterprises so successful,” said Nation Representative and Oneida Nation Enterprises CEO Ray Halbritter. “Just as importantly, it will honor the cultural and historical importance of maple trees among our People and the Creator’s medicinal gift of maple sap to the Haudenosaunee. Enjoying this gift required collaboration and hard work, ensuring gratitude for what had been provided.”

Production will begin next spring, creating maple syrup that is fully grown, processed, and produced on Nation homelands using small-batch production methods to meet the highest standards for quality. Wáhta' Maple Farm syrup will be initially offered at SavOn and Maple Leaf Market locations, Turning Stone Resort Casino, and other Oneida Indian Nation enterprises.

Nation leadership is aware that some Nation Members enjoy hunting in the areas where maple sugaring will take place and do not wish to disrupt this activity. However, Nation leadership asks all to take care to avoid disruption of tubes and other maple production equipment when hunting in these locations.

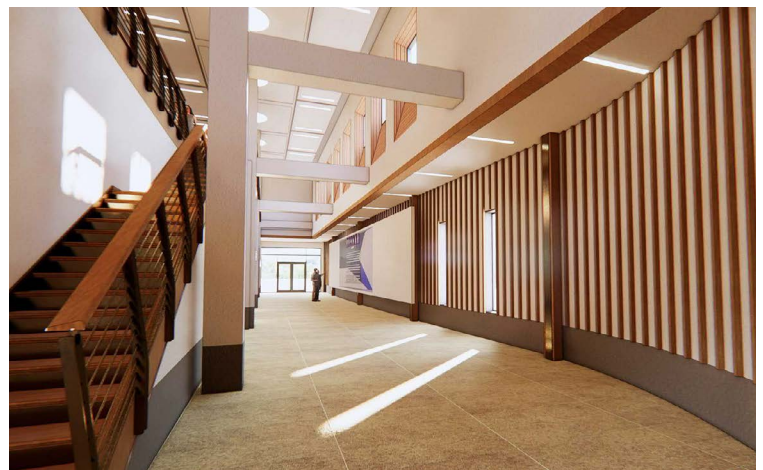
As the Nation launches this new business, we can see how it reflects this important lesson today. The same hard work and partnership that allowed Oneida ancestors to transform maple sap into syrup and overcome the challenges of harsh winters as they looked ahead to spring, have enabled the continued success of Nation enterprises and allowed the Nation to achieve a more sustainable future for all Oneida Members and this region unto the Seventh Generation. ♦



Rear view of community center.



Dining and play area.



Gallery/exhibit area.

## Nation Diabetes Program Reaccredited

The Oneida Indian Nation Health Services' Yukwata'kali:ték Diabetes Program recently achieved reaccreditation by the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists (ADCES). Accreditation represents a high level of quality and service to the community, and the ability to better meet the needs of American Indian patients affected by diabetes. The Oneida Indian Nation program has been accredited since 2011.

"Providing resources and opportunities for healthy living is a cornerstone of our commitment to our People today and unto the Seventh Generation," said Ray Halbritter, Nation Representative and Oneida Nation Enterprises CEO. "American Indians have long been linked to statistics of poor health, and especially diabetes. We are proud to be at the forefront of the effort to turn those numbers around by continuing to provide top-quality care through our diabetes program."

The Yukwata'kali:ték Diabetes Program offers diabetes education sessions at Oneida Indian Nation Health Services by appointment to registered Oneida Member and American Indian clients. Diabetes education services utilize a collaborative process through which people with or at risk for diabetes work with a diabetes educator to receive individualized care to help them reach their health goals.

"Reaccreditation by the Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists helps ensure that our program at Oneida Indian Nation Health Services continues to provide high-quality and evidence-based diabetes care," said Mollie Tracy, RDN, CDN Diabetes Program Coordinator. "This is immensely important for the American Indian population who continues to be disproportionately impacted by Diabetes Mellitus."

ADCES is a National Accredited Organization (NAO) for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Accredited programs must meet the 2022 National Standards for Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support. Programs must maintain compliance with the Standards during the 4-year accreditation cycle. ❖



Mezzanine area.



Multi-purpose room.

## Shoneida Hill Settles In to Role at Shako:wi

The Shako:wi Cultural Center's newest receptionist and tour-guide-in-training, Shoneida Hill (Turtle Clan), is excited to inform visitors about Oneida and Haudenosaunee culture. The 21-year-old is taking on a position once held by her mother, Karen Pierce.

"I was working in the bingo hall, but saw this opportunity to come to the cultural center," Shoneida said. "I used to come here all the time as a kid and thought this would be a place I could learn more about my people."

In her role, Shoneida takes calls to schedule visits with groups and individuals and will offer tours to visitors and new hires of the Oneida Indian Nation with Cultural Programs Coordinator, Jessica Farmer. The two also recently designed a new sweatshirt that is available for purchase at the center.

Shoneida returned to Oneida two years ago after graduating from Lake Shore High School near the Seneca Nation's Cattaraugus Territory where she lived with her father, Heath Hill (Wolf Clan).

"I grew up here and I know a lot of people assume a lot about us as a people," she said. "So I hope visitors will leave with more knowledge of our people outside of what is in school textbooks. I'm excited to be a part of that."



Shoneida Hill is the new receptionist at the Shako:wi Cultural Center.

Both of her parents are dedicated to preserving and strengthening Oneida culture. Shoneida remembers how they previously took Oneida language classes when she was a child going to daycare at the Nation's Early Learning Center. Heath continues to do social dance presentations across the region and Karen works as a sales associate at Heritage, which recently opened its new location at Turning Stone Resort Casino. She does beadwork as well, contributing replica wampum belts as well as numerous jewelry pieces to the store.

"I'm trying to learn our language, but pronunciations can be tricky," said Shoneida. "But I know what my mom is saying when she tells me something in Oneida."

Shoneida is eager to learn more and be an educational resource for the community at Shako:wi. ❖

## Nation Police Officer Honored

Nation Representative and Oneida Nation Enterprises CEO Ray Halbritter recently presented Oneida Indian Nation Police Officer Scott Bogardus with the Platinum CEO Award for his heroic action performing the Heimlich maneuver to save an Elder who was choking at the Ray Elm Children & Elders Center. To the Oneida, Elders are a cherished generation and every effort is made to ensure a safe and secure environment for them. This includes stationing an Oneida Indian Nation Police Officer at the Center, which not only provides a sense of security for visitors, but also allows the Nation's Police Officers to continue their tradition of proactive community policing. Congratulations, Scott. And thank you to all of the Nation Police Officers that make our community safer. ❖



Wolf Clan Council Member Chuck Fougner, Nation Representative and Oneida Nation Enterprises CEO Ray Halbritter, Officer Scott Bogardus, and Senior Manager of Education Brenda Hicks.

## Youth Work Learn Program Welcomed New Participants

This summer, participants in the Oneida Indian Nation's Youth Work/Learn Crew were able to participate in a variety of engaging activities and events. Projects to help maintain various Nation properties included painting picnic tables and clearing debris at Peaceful Pines ahead of the Member Picnic in July, clearing weeds and other debris from the water around the docks at Snug Harbour, landscape work near the Elders gazebo at the Children & Elders Center, and helping to clean up recyclable materials from the Warrior Archery location in Sherrill. Field trips included a stop at Nichols Pond with cadets from Fort Drum and kids from the Early Learning Center and a visit to Shako:wi Cultural Center, among others.

The Crew also was able to visit the Simpson archaeological dig site – a contemporary to Nichols Pond – to search for indications of Oneida occupation of the site generations ago. The group used shovels to clear the topsoil and screens to sift and look for artifacts. They used trowels to clear off the bottom of the test unit to look for items as well. They found rocks that had been used around hearths, ceramic sherds and tools made from chert – a small rock resembling flint.



Participants in the Youth Work/Learn Crew helped clean out the former Oneida Heritage location in Sherrill over the summer ... with a little help from a friend.



Field trips for the Youth Work/Learn Crew included a stop at the Shako:wi Cultural Center for a tour conducted by Shako:wi Cultural Programs Coordinator Jessica Farmer.

Participants in the Crew this year included Javlyn Aregano (Turtle Clan), Beleza Gibson (Wolf Clan), Kalana Dockstader, Lyanna Halsey and Meadow Liddiard.

Older kids in the Youth Work/Learn program took on jobs in the Turning Stone Golf Department. Participants included Josh Frederick (Turtle Clan), Diane Morris, Stephanie Morris, Ashley Scott, Isabella Scott and Caleb Zdyzik. Among their many responsibilities were assisting guests with loading and unloading their clubs, washing the golf carts at the end of the day, retrieving practice balls at the range and golf dome, and helping rangers get guests started on time.

Josh Frederick (Turtle Clan) was happy to work at the golf courses for the first time this year. Cousins Ashley and Isabella Scott were also first-timers at the golf department. Ashley said the job helped her develop her social skills. "It was fun," Ashley said. "Just helping out and making sure guests are satisfied. It's great to be outside and help the other starters."



Josh Frederick (Turtle Clan)

They are looking forward to going back again next summer. ❖



Alex Steeprock is embracing his new position as an apprentice lacrosse stick maker.

## Cultural Preservation Is More Than a Job for Alex Steeprock

Inside the former Oneida Heritage Sales and Rentals store in Sherrill, Alex Steeprock (Turtle Clan) is busy learning the ins and outs of lacrosse stick making. The store has turned into a workshop for woodworking and will now become Alex's classroom. His teacher is Ron Patterson (Wolf Clan), manager of the new Heritage store inside Turning Stone and one of Alex's former lacrosse coaches, who has over 25 years of experience in the process.

Learning this craft as Ron's lacrosse stick apprentice is much more than a job for Alex. He's being trusted to hand down the knowledge and skill to the future generations. That is why he is excited to soak up as much information as he can.

*"It brings me back into my ways - into our ways. I was gone for a long time, but now I get to come back into the community and do this important work. We need to learn how to do it."*

- Alex Steeprock

Prior to returning to Oneida homelands, Alex lived in the Syracuse area. He also used to work at the Nation as a greens keeper at Shenendoah Golf Course. Now 25 years old, Alex is ready to learn more about his culture.

The son of Shannon Steeprock (Turtle Clan) and grandson of Roxanne Webster (Turtle Clan), Alex has been a casual observer of other Haudenosaunee crafts like beadwork and

lacrosse stick making before. But now he has the time to devote to learning and honing his skills.

“It’s not the first time – just the first time having the patience to do it,” he said in jest with a laugh. “It comes pretty naturally, though. Once you do it a few times and learn.”

Alex and Ron are going over the many detailed steps involved in lacrosse stick making, but he was given the task to refurbish a stick first. He sanded it down to give it a finished look and is working on putting on the sidewall and netting.

“Whether it be lacrosse stick making, gestowas or baskets, snowshoes or leatherworking, we are going to teach him,” Ron said. “It’s not just a paycheck for him because what he learns now he’s going to be able to take with him for a lifetime. It’s part of my responsibility to pass it down to the younger generation.”

Alex has carved before with Ron when he was younger. The bending, he said, has been tricky since the trees need to be in a specific condition so they don’t snap. This year, it has been more difficult to get trees in good condition, but they hope to get freshly cut ones in the shop soon.

Ron’s mentorship has been instrumental for Alex. Ron was his lacrosse coach when he played at the box on the Territory – a place he’d always go with his friends nearly every day of the week. He eventually played for the Oneida Silver Hawks, and later, in Onondaga.

“I played lacrosse for Ron for a long time and I’d play everything,” Alex said. “We didn’t have many kids on our team so we’d play where we were needed, which ended up being everything.”

Alex was always immersed in traditional Haudenosaunee and Oneida culture. He attends socials and has danced since he was a kid. It is part of who he is, and that makes his new job learning these significant crafts that much more meaningful.

He remembers dancing at the New York State Fair for years, which is something he may look to do again.

“I haven’t danced in a long time, but I’m thinking about shaking off the rust here,” he said with a smile. ❖



Alex is excited to be honing his crafting skills while working for the Nation.



Alex on Turtle Mound in the Indian Village at the 2014 New York State Fair.

## Oriskany Remembered

August 6<sup>th</sup> marked the 245<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famed Battle of Oriskany, with Oneida Members, local dignitaries and the community coming together in solemn commemoration of the fateful battle.

Bear Clan Council Member Brian Patterson, in attendance with several members of his family, delivered remarks recalling the Oneida's decision to join Americans in the fight for freedom.

"As we gather here today to honor and remember our ancestors who made the ultimate sacrifice here on this site nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, we must do so with an understanding that the freedoms and liberties we all enjoy today may not have been possible if not for the actions of the Oneida and their American allies who made that courageous stand on that fateful day," said Brian. "The Battle of Oriskany cemented a longstanding friendship that had been formed between the Oneida and the newcomers to our lands. That friendship remains very much in place today as we strive to maintain our relationship with our surrounding communities, the state of New York and the United States of America."

A musket and cannon salute and presentation of wreaths and gifts in remembrance of fallen ancestors were part of the annual event. ❖



Top: Bear Clan Council Member Brian Patterson delivered remarks at the 245<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany, August 6<sup>th</sup>.

Above: Speakers included Michael Roets of the New York State Department of Recreation & Historic Preservation and Suzanne Bellinger of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Oneida Chapter.

Left: The Oneida Indian Nation flag flies at the Oriskany monument.