

ONEIDA

QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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YEAR**
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Patti Welch and her
mom, Kathy Patterson
(both Bear Clan)
at Oriskany.

Tsilos Edwards (Wolf Clan)
on the Turtle Mound.



Summer 2025

A Message *from the* Nation Representative

This year marked a truly special milestone for our Nation at the Great New York State Fair: it was Oneida Year at the Six Nations Agricultural Society Indian Village. That designation brings unique opportunities to showcase who we are and what we stand for, and this year our people shined brightly.

The honor began with the selection of the Indian Village Princess. Elaina Cook (Wolf Clan) was chosen to serve in this important role, representing the Nation with pride. As Princess, Elaina became the public face of the Village's cultural programming, leading daily presentations that educated visitors on Haudenosaunee dance, regalia, and tradition. She carried out her duties with grace and confidence, culminating in a moving Oneida Day celebration on Turtle Mound where our people gathered to dance together and share our culture. Elaina was an outstanding ambassador, and we could not be prouder of the way she represented us.

In addition, other Nation Members contributed their talents to this year's programming. Jeremy Kennedy (Wolf Clan) performed with his band, bringing energy and pride to the stage, while Mary Homer (Wolf Clan), mother of this year's Princess, showcased an Indigenous fashion show that highlighted her unique creativity. Together, these efforts reflected the extraordinary talents and voices within our community.

Our presence at the Fair is about more than celebration—it is about visibility, influence, and respect. Each year, more people look to the Oneida Indian Nation as a leader, and today, both locally and nationally, stakeholders seek our voice and perspective on critical issues. That has not always been the case, and it is a testament to the hard work and determination that have built our reputation.

When we gather to share our stories, culture, and achievements, we are reminded why we do this work. We are ensuring that the Oneida people are not only seen, but respected and heard.

As we celebrate cultural milestones, we are also advancing bold economic initiatives. The upcoming Turning Stone Evolution project represents the single largest investment we have made at Turning Stone Resort Casino since breaking ground more than 30 years ago. This historic expansion will fuel growth across our enterprises, reinforce our position as one of Central New York's largest employers, and provide new opportunities for our people and our partners.

Diversification has given us strength. It has allowed us to flex our sovereignty when needed, while also inviting others to share in our success. This balance—between independence and partnership—has positioned us as a foundation of regional growth and stability.

This moment is not just about the present—it is about ensuring future generations of Oneidas can thrive. Our people now have access to safe and affordable housing, state-of-the-art healthcare, and gainful employment that matches their skills and aspirations. We opened a new Community Center designed to promote wellness and healthy living, and we are making historic agreements that secure our rights and protect our

sovereignty for years to come.

The strength we feel today is hard-won. No one can take these achievements from us unless we allow it. That resilience defines who we are. With our cultural visibility at the Fair, our growing economic power through Turning Stone Evolution, and our ongoing investments in community health and prosperity, the Oneida Indian Nation stands stronger than ever.

This is a seminal moment for our people. We are standing on our own two feet again—and building a future the next generations will take great pride in.

NΛ ki' wa,
Ray Halbritter
Nation Representative



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Several Oneida Indian Nation Members and family members attended the 248th Commemoration of the Battle of Oriskany on the evening of August 6 at the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site.

Honoring the 248th Anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany: A Legacy of Unity and Sacrifice

On Wednesday, August 6, the community commemorated the 248th anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany—an often-overlooked but pivotal engagement of the Revolutionary War. Fought on a sweltering summer day in 1777, the battle saw Oneida warriors and colonial militia standing side by side in the fight for liberty and self-determination. It remains one of the bloodiest encounters of the war.

Each year, the Oneida Indian Nation joins the broader community at the historic battle site to honor the memory of their ancestors and acknowledge the shared sacrifice that helped shape the United States. This enduring partnership, rooted in a mutual commitment to freedom, played a crucial role in the nation's founding.

Speaking on behalf of Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and the Nation Council, Council Member Jules Obomsawin (Wolf Clan) reflected on the significance of the battle and its lasting meaning for the Oneida People.

“Unlike the American colonists who fought for their own independence, the Oneidas took up arms for a cause that was not originally their own,” Jules stated. “They were inspired by the colonists’ struggle against British tyranny and believed that all people deserve sovereignty and self-determination.”

“That belief,” he continued, “led them to fight not only at Oriskany, but also at Saratoga, Valley Forge, and Barren Hill. They chose to stand with relative strangers over their

Haudenosaunee kin, knowing that the principles of freedom and justice transcended even the deepest bonds of family. It was this powerful conviction that made our ancestors America’s First Allies—a bond forged in battle that still endures today.”

Oneida Indian Nation Council Member
Jules Obomsawin (Wolf Clan).

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THE ONEIDAS AT THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY BY DON TROIANI

Honoring the 248th Anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany

continued from page 3

On that fateful day in 1777, Gen. Nicholas Herkimer led the colonial militia alongside Oneida allies in a fierce struggle to halt a British expeditionary force advancing from the Great Lakes under Gen. Barry St. Leger. The British aimed to converge with Gen. John Burgoyne's troops, marching south from Canada—a union that could have split the colonies in two. Though hundreds perished, including a mortally wounded Gen. Herkimer, the Oneidas and colonial forces succeeded in stopping the British advance. Their efforts directly contributed to Burgoyne's eventual defeat at the Battle of Saratoga, a turning point in the war.

Several Oneida Members attended this year's commemoration, including Patti Welch (Bear Clan) and her mother, Kathy Patterson (Bear Clan), who have been coming to the event for many years to honor their ancestors. It has become an important family tradition—one that Patti credits her aunt, Bear Clan Mother Marilyn John (1945–2007), with instilling in the family.

The annual Oriskany commemoration stands as a solemn tribute to the bravery, unity, and enduring legacy of those who fought and died on that battlefield nearly 250 years ago. ❖



Gabriel and Marcia Abernathy (Wolf Clan) with son, Latluhyahslu:níhe' Zayden.

Sam Wilt and Doris Wilkins-Wilt (Wolf Clan)



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Shirley Hill (Turtle Clan), Vicky Schenandoah (Wolf Clan), Regina Jones (Turtle Clan), Oneida Indian Nation Police Officer Tim Boehlert, Matt Jones (Turtle Clan), Nelson Jones (Turtle Clan) and Dottie Jones (Turtle Clan).

Annual Nation Police BBQ Brings Elders Together

The Oneida Indian Nation Police Department hosted its annual Elders BBQ on Friday, August 8 at the Ray Elm Children & Elders Center. This event supports building connections and strengthening community bonds with our Elders. This is one of the many community oriented activities the Oneida Indian Nation Police Department takes an active role in throughout the year. ❖



Linda Williams (Turtle Clan) and Shirlee Winder.



Debbie Cary (Turtle Clan), Pam Hjort (Turtle Clan), Rhonda Berger (Turtle Clan), Todd Berger, Oneida Indian Nation Police Lieutenant Ben DeLuca, Connie Rohr (Turtle Clan) and Carl Hjort.



Jeff and Gloria Kopp (Turtle Clan) and Paul Ordiway (Turtle Clan).

Members Beat the Heat, Enjoy Feast at Annual Family Picnic

More than 650 Oneida Indian Nation Members and guests attended the 29th annual Member Family Picnic at the former Peaceful Pines Campgrounds in Verona in July. Clams, steaks, salads, desserts and more were prepared by the award-winning Turning Stone Enterprises culinary team for Members to enjoy.

The afternoon festivities were interrupted by a quick downpour at the start of the picnic, but that did not stop the Member community from coming together to enjoy one of the more largely attended picnics in recent years. ❖



Kandice Watson and her mom, Doreen Cornelius (both Wolf Clan).



Sheri Beglen and her mom, Ramona (both Wolf Clan).





Lisa Powless and her mother, and Barbara George-Winton (both Wolf Clan)



Tammy Rood with her son, Alex Dickerman, and daughter, Ashley Little (all Turtle Clan) and guests.



Jamisin Cathers (Turtle Clan)



Mark Berger (Turtle Clan)



Nation Celebrates Oneida Year at the State Fair

With 2025 being celebrated as Oneida Year at the Six Nations Agricultural Society Indian Village at the Great New York State Fair, the Nation had the honor of selecting this year's Indian Village Princess, Elaina Cook (Wolf Clan). As Princess, Elaina shared Oneida and Haudenosaunee traditions with fairgoers by leading three daily social dance presentations and educating visitors about Oneida culture.

During the special 2 p.m. program, Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter introduced Elaina to the visitors to Turtle Mound and shared a brief history of the Oneida people. He reflected on the legacy of Emily Johnson (Turtle Clan), a beloved Elder who spent many years at the fair selling her beadwork and crafts at the Oneida booth. The

Elaina Cook (Wolf Clan)

Heather Homer (Turtle Clan) won a third place ribbon for this beautiful basket. Check out the Oneida Member Facebook Group for more photos.

Nation recently acquired one of her quilts — a piece that beautifully features the Haudenosaunee nations and honors the persistent work of Dr. Erl Bates, who helped establish the Indian Village itself. The quilt won first place in the antiques division of the Indian Village competitions.

Jeremy Kennedy (Wolf Clan), and his band, Sacred Medicine, also performed for the first time at the Fair, right on the Turtle Mound on Oneida Day.

Oneida Day continues to be a celebration of the Oneida Indian Nation's past, present, and future. ❖





Left to right: Camilo Gonzales with mom, Brittany Ninham (Turtle Clan), Brooke Dowdy (Wolf Clan), Elaina Cook (Wolf Clan), Alyssa Stout (Wolf Clan) and Nalani Hill (Turtle Clan).

Right: Sheri Beglen (Wolf Clan)

Far right: Heather Homer (Turtle Clan)



Alyssa and Geraldine Stout (both Wolf Clan)



First Allies Craft Fair Continues to Grow

The annual First Allies Craft Fair, held August 2 in partnership with the Rome Historical Society - Friends of the Fort and Fort Stanwix National Monument, welcomed visitors from across the region. The event, which showcases Oneida history, culture and craftsmanship, featured social dancing exhibitions with Chris Thomas (Onondaga) and his Smoke Dancers, as well as several American Indian crafters, including several Oneida Members.

Photos courtesy of Doris Wilkins-Wilt (Wolf Clan).



Summer Jam 2.0 Provides Learning Experiences, Fun

Kids participating in the Oneida Indian Nation's Summer Jam 2.0 program enjoyed a variety of engaging activities and field trips that sparked creativity, stimulated learning, and connected them to culture through traditional crafts like beading.

The programming followed several themes throughout the summer, including a "Healthy Me" series of activities that included fun and educational trips to go blueberry picking at Abbott's Farm, strawberry picking at Tasselberry Farm, a beach day at Jamesville Beach, and golf lessons with First Tee at Turning Stone's Sportsplex.

Cassie Burnam (Turtle Clan) continued the healthy theme with a midday art activity where kids painted something that represented health and wellness. Older youth tried beading with a loom under the guidance of Doris Wilkins-Wilt (Wolf Clan), Crystal Torres (Wolf Clan), and Ron Patterson (Wolf Clan). Brooke Dowdy (Wolf Clan) also introduced the group to traditional social dancing and singing.



Cassie Burnam (Turtle Clan) assists a child during Summer Jam 2.0.



The Summer Jam 2.0 program closed out the season with Family Day held August 15. After receiving certificates celebrating their summer achievements, the kids headed outside to enjoy the sunshine and some special surprises — including a dunk tank and water slide.

Youth Programs Coordinator Codey Fuller was the first to brave the dunk tank, and plenty of kids were eager to take a turn too.

The Oneida Indian Nation offers recreational and youth development programs for Nation Members and Health Services clients, all designed to support health, wellness, and personal growth. ❖

Youth Work/Learn Crew Wraps Up Busy Summer

The Oneida Indian Nation's Youth Work/Learn (YWL) Program offers American Indian youth meaningful opportunities for work, education, and cultural enrichment. Designed to cultivate job skills with civic responsibility, the program integrates community service, mentorship, and hands-on learning for its participants.

This year, 14 youth participated: 8 in the Crew (ages 13–15) and 6 in the Mentorship Program (ages 16–20). The Crew balanced work, education, and cultural learning—completing projects like maintaining Nation properties, helping prepare for the Member Family Picnic, and volunteering at The Great Swamp Conservancy.

Cultural exploration was central to the program. The Crew attended beadwork workshops at Colgate University and visited the university's greenhouse and Visualization Lab, where they learned about stories told in the stars by various cultures. At the Shako:wi Cultural Center, they toured exhibits, listened to traditional stories, and contributed to a maintenance project by staining the front porch.

Health and wellness activities included pickleball sessions at Turning Stone and community gardening at the Ray Elm Children and Elders Center—promoting teamwork and healthy lifestyles.



A visit to the Nation's Wáhta' Maple Farm offered a behind-the-scenes look into maple syrup production. Maple Production Manager Brendan Schuler and Technician Neil Kimball guided the Crew through tools, techniques, and sustainable practices, followed by a walk through a maple grove to learn about forest management.



Participants in the 2025 Youth Work/Learn Crew are Adrian Rockwell, Blake Kaulback (Turtle Clan), Avery Scott, Alyssa Stout (Wolf Clan), Samantha Scott, Hayleigh Pawlikowski, Cavan Jacobs (Wolf Clan) and Toby Torres (Wolf Clan).

As the summer wrapped up, participants joined a community event at Nichols Pond with children from the Early Learning Center. The day blended history, storytelling, and crafts. Crew members led a fun scavenger hunt, explored the area's historical significance, and listened to stories shared by Doris Wilkins-Wilt (Wolf Clan), Cultural Programs Coordinator at the Shako:wi Cultural Center, and Ron Patterson (Wolf Clan), the Center's Manager.



The Mentorship Program placed older participants in Nation enterprises to gain hands-on work experience aligned with their interests, helping them build professional and interpersonal skills. Returning to the program this year for placement with the Nation's retail operations were Larry Torres (Wolf Clan), Maple Leaf Market, Sherrill; Javlyn Aregano (Turtle Clan), SāvOn Plaza Mart, Oneida; and Braydon Homer, Territory Road SāvOn, Oneida. Meanwhile, Daylah Rey Diaz, Rhys Kennedy (Wolf Clan) and Mariah Williams (Turtle Clan) assisted at Turning Stone Golf. ❖

Familiar Face Joins Staff at Shako:wi Cultural Center

There's a new yet familiar face welcoming guests to the Shako:wi Cultural Center. Cindy Schenandoah-Stanford (Wolf Clan) officially began her role as receptionist on May 13, bringing with her a deep connection to Oneida culture, a strong educational background, and genuine enthusiasm for her new role.

"I love it here because of the sense of community," Cindy shared. "It's so serene. I'm really glad to be a part of the culture and history."

For Cindy, joining the Shako:wi team, which is managed by Ron Patterson (Wolf Clan), feels like a homecoming. Along with her experience in education and retail, she brings decades of memories of the center — from its construction in 1993 to the present day. She's honored to put her skills to use in ways that feel both meaningful and personally fulfilling.

But her responsibilities go far beyond the front desk. Cindy welcomes guests, leads tours and cultural presentations, and manages the center's gift shop — a task she embraces with care and creativity.

"It's like my own little gift shop. I do everything from ordering to arranging," she said proudly.



Cindy Schenandoah-Stanford is embracing her new role as receptionist at the Oneida Indian Nation's Shako:wi Cultural Center.

Cindy's passion for education has always shaped her career, from her time at Verona Collective to her new post at Shako:wi.

"Educating the public was always my favorite part. That's something me and my family have always done," she said. "So when I saw this position open, I thought it was a perfect fit."

Growing up in the area, Cindy has long felt connected to Shako:wi. She fondly remembers watching the building go up and dreaming about it as a child.

"I was here when they built it. I used to pretend it was my house — the most beautiful house I'd ever seen. I still love log cabins," she said with a laugh.

Now, that childhood dream has come full circle. Working at Shako:wi feels like home, and Cindy hopes every visitor leaves with a sense of pride in knowing the history and feeling how deeply the culture can touch the heart.

Whether she's helping students make corn husk dolls or guiding international guests through the exhibits, Cindy is committed to making every visit meaningful. She sees the Shako:wi Cultural Center as a living space for cultural exchange, healing, and identity — and her role within it as both a responsibility and a privilege.

She also honors the legacy of her great uncle, Richard Chrisjohn (Wolf Clan), for whom the center is named. Already, Cindy has become a vibrant part of Shako:wi's welcoming spirit.

"This isn't just a job for me," she said. "It's an honor." ❖

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