

# ONEIDA

QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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Fall/Winter 2025







## A Message from the Nation Representative

Since time immemorial, the Oneida people have been guided by the Great Law of Peace—the Haudenosaunee principle that calls on us to make decisions today with the wellbeing of the next seven generations in mind. It teaches us that the land we walk on does not belong to us alone, but to those who will come after us. It reminds us to care for our Mother Earth, to educate our young people well, and to always build on the progress made by those before us. In many ways, the Great Law of Peace offers wisdom that is relevant to everyone and everything we do.

As we continue investing in our enterprises and the economic future of our region, we do so with this long-term responsibility in mind. The recent completion of the Point Place Casino Hotel expansion and the ongoing Turning Stone Evolution—our largest expansion in history—are examples of this commitment. We cannot remain still or rely on past success. We must remain determined, forward-thinking, and resourceful in growing an economy that reinforces our role as both a cultural and economic anchor for Central and Upstate New York—our sacred homelands.

The Great Law also calls on us to come together with a good mind and to give thanks for the gifts the Creator has provided. This message resonates strongly at this time of year. Our community gathers for the annual Three Sisters Dinner to celebrate and give thanks for the harvest season, and we

pause to honor our Nation's veterans—and all veterans—whose service has strengthened our people and this country since its founding. Their legacy calls us to continue protecting and advocating for our homelands.

That responsibility remains as urgent as ever. November 11th is not only a day to honor veterans; it is also the anniversary of the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua. This treaty—the oldest still in effect between the United States and any Native Nation—affirmed our rights to more than 300,000 acres of our ancestral territory. Despite that clear promise, our lands were stolen through illegal treaties and sales until we were left with only 32 acres. Even then, attempts were made to take what little remained.

Yet through persistence, unity, and a commitment to justice, we have regained more than 18,000 acres of our homelands—the most under our sovereign control since 1824. Progress is never quick. It takes time, effort, and in many cases, trusted partners to move forward. That is what Nation leadership has been committed to for nearly half a century. Make no mistake: the progress we have achieved is substantial, but our work is never finished—and it is essential that our children understand that this effort is passed down from one generation to the next.

We must always remain vigilant and steadfast in protecting our lands, our rights, and the future of the generations yet to come.

### ONYOTA'A:KÁ:

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### TOLL-FREE MEMBER PHONE:

**1.800.685.6115**

Contact: The Oneida Indian Nation, P.O. Box 1, Vernon, NY 13476 or use the Member App. Visit [www.OneidaIndianNation.com](http://www.OneidaIndianNation.com) for news, information and the latest edition of The Oneida newsletter in PDF format.

Ná ki' wáh,

Ray Halbritter

Nation Representative





Members of the CNY Chapter #490 Military Order of the Purple Heart presented the Nation with Purple Heart designation on Friday, October 24 at the Mary C. Winder Community Center. Nichola Aregano-Diaz (Turtle Clan), Turtle Clan Council Member Derek Montroy, Oneida Indian Nation Representative and Turning Stone Enterprises Chief Executive Officer Ray Halbritter and Wolf Clan Council Member Chuck Fougner accepted on behalf of the Nation.

## Oneida Indian Nation Receives Purple Heart Designation

The Oneida Indian Nation recently received the Purple Heart designation from the Central New York Chapter #490 Military Order of the Purple Heart of the United States of America. The designation was bestowed upon the Nation by Chapter Commander Joseph Fraccola during a presentation held at the Mary C. Winder Community Center. The Nation was honored for its legacy as America's First Allies, and the enduring friendship and service to local veterans and causes.

As America's First Allies, the Oneida Indian Nation is proud of its history of service and sacrifice in the U.S. Military. The Oneidas have fought alongside their American allies in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War, where Oneida ancestors contributed greatly to the American cause for freedom, suffering dearly in the process. Today, Oneidas and American Indians continue to serve in the U.S. Military at a higher per capita rate than any other ethnic group. ❖



In gratitude for the designation, and for their service, Oneida Indian Nation Representative and Turning Stone Enterprises Chief Executive Officer Ray Halbritter presented the CNY Chapter #490 Military Order of the Purple Heart with a friendship feather. Chapter Commander Joseph Fraccola accepted on behalf of the group.





Assemblymember Pamela Hunter, USMC veteran Nichola Aregano-Diaz (Turtle Clan), and Oneida Indian Nation Representative and Turning Stone Enterprises Chief Executive Officer Ray Halbritter at the Annual Veterans Recognition Ceremony and Breakfast, Nov. 3, 2025.

## Oneida Indian Nation Honors Veterans During Annual Recognition Ceremony

The Oneida Indian Nation welcomed more than 450 local veterans to the 24th annual Veterans Recognition Ceremony and Breakfast held Monday, Nov. 4 at Turning Stone Resort Casino. During the event, Oneida Indian Nation Representative and Turning Stone Enterprises Chief Executive Officer Ray Halbritter reflected on the Oneida Indian Nation's history of military service, highlighting Nation Members in attendance as well as the many team members who are veterans of the military.

"We look forward to this event all year long," said Halbritter. "It allows us to recognize the service of our region's veterans and say thank you for your sacrifices and commitment to the values of liberty and justice that define this country."

Halbritter recalled the Nation's legacy as America's First Allies during his remarks, and connected the unbreakable bonds formed on the battlefield many years ago to the shared dreams of freedom today. "No matter which branch of the military you represented, where or when you served, you are part of this rich shared history spanning almost two and half centuries," he said. "You earned your place within it by coming together with people from all walks of life to achieve a common goal: the preservation of freedom at home and its expansion throughout the world."

Oneida Indian Nation Member Nichola Aregano-Diaz (Turtle Clan) was honored for her service in the U.S. Marine Corps as a Communications Specialist during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Nichola honorably served from 2001 to 2006 and was deployed multiple times to the Middle East. She was promoted twice during her time with the Marines and earned the Presidential Unit Citation, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Kuwait), the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment





The annual event brings together many local veterans to celebrate and honor their service and sacrifice in the U.S. military.

Medal (3rd Award) and certificates of commendation and appreciation. She was presented with a Brave Star Blanket, which celebrates the patriotism of American Indian services members. Nichola currently serves as General Manager of the Oneida Indian Nation's Mary C. Winder Community Center, carrying the core values of honor, courage and commitment to the community she proudly serves.

Ryan McGinnis, a PGA Teaching Professional with the Turning Stone Resort Casino golf team, also was recognized for his work with the Nations' PGA HOPE program that serves veterans and active-duty service members. McGinnis received a friendship feather from the Nation in honor of his commitment to veterans.

Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente and New York State Assemblywoman Pamela Hunter also delivered remarks thanking those in attendance for their service and sacrifice.

"I am grateful for being given the opportunity to address over 400 veterans and to join in honoring Oneida Member and Marine Corps Veteran Nichola Aregano-Diaz and PGA Teaching Professional & PGA Hope Central New York Instructor Ryan McGinnis," said Picente. "I commend Oneida



Jennifer Powless, Vietnam War veteran Chip Isaacs (Turtle Clan) and Shirley Hill (Turtle Clan).

Indian Nation Representative and Chief Executive Officer of Turning Stone Enterprises Ray Halbritter for his dedication to those who have served and our first allies for their generous donation to Feed Our Vets."

Assemblywoman Hunter(D-128), Speaker Pro Tempore and Chair of the Assembly Subcommittee on Women Veterans, was the keynote speaker.

"As both an Army veteran and the only female veteran currently serving in the New York State Legislature, events like this hold a deeply personal meaning for me," said Hunter. "I am truly honored to share this moment with all of you as we recognize the men and women who have bravely answered the call to service."

At the event, the Nation also made a donation to the Feed Our Vets, Utica Pantry, to help support their services in providing food assistance to veterans and their families. ❖







## Community Comes Together to Celebrate Three Sisters

In November, the Oneida Indian Nation hosted its annual Three Sisters Dinner at Turning Stone Resort Casino's Shenandoah Clubhouse, sponsored by the Nation's Diabetes Program. The event gives attendees the opportunity to learn about diabetes management, ask health-related questions, and gain useful tools for living a healthier life.

Organized by Diabetes Program Coordinator Mollie Tracy with the Nation's Health Services team, the evening featured a panel discussion with Dr. Juan Packer, Nurse Practitioner Christina Riggall, and Behavioral Health Manager Jill Gustin. After the discussion, guests enjoyed a healthy buffet prepared by the Turning Stone culinary team. Barb George-Winton (Wolf Clan) also made the delicious corn soup for the gathering.

The evening concluded with songs and social dances led by Adah Shenandoah (Wolf Clan), bringing together community members of all ages.

The Oneida Indian Nation Health Services Yukwata'kali:ték (yoon gwa duh ga lee dake) diabetes self-management education program is accreditation through the American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE). This recognition certifies that the Nation's diabetes program meets all standards set forward by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and salutes the department's comprehensive diabetes education program that integrates educational, clinical and public health services. ❖









## MEMBER PROFILE

# Pedaling with Purpose: Amy Ernenwein's 4,300-Mile Journey Across America

When Amy Ernenwein (Turtle Clan) dipped her bike wheels into the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Washington on May 23, she wasn't racing toward a finish line—she was beginning a long and amazing journey through the country's mountain ranges, great plains, busy highways and isolated back roads. Over 109 days and 4,308 miles, she pedaled her bike and four panniers with her friend, Dan Mitchell, from a tiny coastal town to the boardwalk lights of Coney Island.

The trip was far from easy. Heat waves, headwinds, and unexpected flat tires tested her patience. Some days brought endless climbs, and others with long stretches of isolation. But each morning, she packed up her gear, swung her leg over the bike, and reminded herself of a simple truth: "You just can't quit on a bad day."

Amy had learned that mantra years earlier through hiking the Appalachian Trail. On her fourth day of that trek, she'd realized she could finish the entire thing — that she had the endurance and mindset to see it through. The same quiet confidence resurfaced on this ride.

"I just kind of knew we were going to do it," she said.

Amy and Dan met while bike riding on the Erie Canal three years ago. Biking has always been a major part of their relationship. Last year, they rode from Amy's driveway all the way to Niagara Falls and then down to Washington, D.C.— a journey totaling 1,005 miles. Even before they finished, their minds were already thinking about their next challenge: a cross-country ride.

What surprised her most wasn't the difficulty of the miles, but the generosity of people that appeared along the way. One day, they found themselves stranded with a flat tire and no tubes left to change it. A stranger pulled up to them asking if they needed help and took them to the nearest hotel a few miles away.



On another occasion, when Amy and Dan had pushed a long day's ride a little too far—hungry, tired and running on fumes—a friendly hotel owner handed them the keys to their truck so they could drive into town for a pizza instead of backtracking on their bikes.

"People took the time for you," she recalled, still amazed at the chain of kindness that seemed to follow her.

Among the many highlights of the trip, some of the most memorable moments came while crossing Coeur d'Alene territory in Idaho, camping in Yellowstone National Park, and visiting the Crazy Horse Memorial in South Dakota. The scenic trails of the Pacific Northwest offered a breathtaking beauty that was hard to put into words, with the Cascade Mountains rising in the background along the long winding roads.

Her family, including her mother, Jenny (Turtle Clan), and father, Jack

Ernenwein, followed from home with equal devotion. Each night, they traced her route on pages from a road atlas, adding notes about her progress and snippets of her day — the funny moments, the hard days, and the small victories. Those pages became a second journal and a shared record of progress in their daughter's steady movement eastward.



Amy Ernenwein and friend, Dan Mitchell.



To her, this ride wasn't about competition or records, it was about showing that adventure belongs to anyone willing to make the time for it. "I just set my mind to it and went out and did it," she said simply.

Her open, adaptable outlook translated naturally to her career at Turning Stone Enterprises, where she spent 25 years building relationships and creating meaningful connections. She retired in 2017, but the people skills she developed there continue to shape how she approaches every new encounter. Her brother, David, continues to work as an Operations Manager at YBR Casino and Sports Book.

By the time she and Dan rolled into Coney Island on September 8, they had crossed a continent and could finally celebrate their shared accomplishment. The support she received from her family and friends, as well as strangers she met along the way, wasn't about how fast she rode, but about her determination and desire to complete such a tough challenge.

"It worked out in my life that I had a window of time to do this," Amy explained. "But whatever your thing is—just make the time. You can do it."

Now home again, Amy still is thinking about what comes next. She thought about a canoe trip down the Mississippi River, the Greenway Trail that goes from Maine to Key West, Florida, or a trail closer to home. For now, she's content knowing she did something few ever attempt.

"I didn't fall once," she laughed. "And at the end of it all, it's just a bike ride. You get up, you pedal, and eventually, you make it to the other side." ❖



Amy at the Warriors and Veterans of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe monument in Plummer, Idaho

## Wáhta' Maple Farm Expands Lineup

Wáhta' Maple Farm has expanded its lineup with a new collection of maple-based products utilizing its signature organic maple syrup. Each item showcases the rich, natural flavor of pure maple syrup and highlights the craftsmanship the brand is known for.

The new products include a **Coffee Bean Infused Organic Maple Syrup**, pairing maple and coffee; **Certified Organic Granulated Maple Sugar**, a natural alternative to white sugar; a smooth, spreadable **Organic Maple Cream**; and **Organic Cinnamon and Vanilla Bean Infused Maple Syrup**. The sugar comes in a 2 oz. shaker-style container, all others in 8 oz. glass bottles.

These new products are available at the Turning Stone General Store, YBR Casino and Sportsbook gift shop, Point Place Casino Hotel's Perfect Pour Café, Shako:wi Cultural Center, Maple Leaf Market stores and select SāvOn convenience stores.

From the sugarbush to bottling, Wáhta' Maple Farm syrup is produced entirely on the Oneida Indian Nation's homelands, using a sustainable approach to sugaring and bottling that minimizes environmental impact. ❖





## Family Fall Fest Celebrated at Community Center

It was a spooktacular time at this year's Family Fall Fest at the Oneida Indian Nation's Mary C. Winder Community Center held Oct. 25. From costume and pumpkin carving contests to donut-eating challenges and hayrides to the Nation's Recreation Center haunted house — there was fun for every generation.

The Mary C. Winder Community Center offers year-round programs and activities for Oneida Indian Nation Members, children of enrolled Oneidas, and Health Services clients that creates fun opportunities for the community to come together. Community Center memberships are available by signing-up at the Welcome Desk. Call 315-829-8227 for more information.







## Oneida Lacrosse Club Victorious in Inaugural Invitational held at Community Center

**C**ongratulations to the Oneida Lacrosse Club, winners of the inaugural Oneida Lacrosse Club Invitational, held Nov. 15-16 at the Oneida Indian Nation's Mary C. Winder Community Center in Oneida, NY. Four teams battled it out in round-robin style box lacrosse action, including the Oneida Lacrosse Club (OLC), Utica Yeti, CTC Elite and Northeast LAX, with the OLC sweeping its way undefeated to the championship.

The weekend event also featured several American Indian crafters, vendors and raffles, as well as a popular Smoke Dance competition that was held on Saturday.

The Oneida Lacrosse Club is an independent non-profit sports organization that aims to bring the community together through the spirit of lacrosse. For more information, visit [www.oneidalaxclub.org](http://www.oneidalaxclub.org). ❖

## Elder's Craft Fair Ushers in the Holiday Season

**C**ongratulations to Regina Jones (Turtle Clan), winner of the grand prize drawing during the Oneida Elder's Craft Fair on November 21. Regina took home a beautifully decorated holiday tree adorned with handmade creations from Oneida Elders.



The annual Craft Fair featured several vendors offering arts and crafts and special gifts perfectly timed for the holiday season.

Proceeds from events like this help support Oneida Elders during their daily activities and trips, ensuring our Elders have the opportunity to live life to the fullest. ❖





## Elders Celebrate Thanksgiving

On November 7 the Oneida Indian Nation's Elders Program hosted a Thanksgiving Luncheon celebrating the community's Elders. The event brought together Nation Police officers, who served the meal, and Elders and their families for an afternoon of connection and conversation. Members of the Nation Council also joined to share in the celebration.

Held during Native American Heritage Month, this gathering highlights the Nation's year-round commitment to its Elders. Through the Elders Program, American Indians age 55+ living in the area enjoy daily lunches, engaging activities, access to state-of-the-art Health Services, and affordable housing options near the Ray Elm Children and Elders Center in the Village of the White Pines housing community. ❖



Paul Ordiway (Turtle Clan), sitting, and Nelson Jones II (Turtle Clan), were among the many Nation Elders who came together for the annual Thanksgiving Luncheon.



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