

## **Task Force on Haudenosaunee Confederacy Naming on the Oswego Campus**

### **The Issue**

Both faculty and students have raised questions about the current names of dining halls, residence halls and roads associated with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. These include several residence halls on West Campus (Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca) and other structures (roads, dining halls, fields) which use inappropriate euphemisms (“Iroquois”<sup>1</sup>) associated with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.<sup>2</sup>

There is great power in names and naming and it is the opinion of a number of SUNY Oswego faculty that the dormitories, roads, and fields around West campus do not honor the Haudenosaunee<sup>3</sup>; furthermore, there is no educational value of living/playing/driving in these spaces nor are there any institutional standards for educating students, faculty, and staff about either the “contributions of the Iroquois to New York State,” the “historical and sociological significance of those nations,” or the concerns of contemporary Haudenosaunee peoples.

This task force will examine naming associated with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and make recommendations to the Faculty Assembly regarding the renaming of some or all of these structures. The recommendations would go forward to the Office of the President and ultimately, the SUNY Oswego College Council, the body tasked with naming campus structures.

### **Background: Creating a Task Force**

Under our Faculty Bylaws (Article VII, Section 4):

The Faculty Assembly and the administration shall concurrently create task forces on issues of college-wide concern and charge them with specific duties in order to enhance communication and consultation among faculty, administration, professional staff, the unions, and the students. Each task force and its charge shall be established by formal written approval of both the Faculty Assembly and the administration. The written charge shall include a deadline for the work to be completed and a detailed description of how the membership shall be determined. A report of the results shall be recorded in the minutes of the Faculty Assembly. Upon reaching its deadline, the task force shall cease to exist, unless otherwise extended by the consent of both the Assembly and the administration. . . . Each task force shall include balanced representation from the faculty, administration, professional staff, unions, and, when appropriate, the Student Association.

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<sup>1</sup> Iroquois is an etic term (of French/British/Algonkin origin) which translates as “the snake people” or “snake in the grass”. “Iroquois” people call themselves “Haudenosaunee” or “people of the longhouse” which is a confederacy of Nations including the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, + Tuscarora.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.onondaganation.org/history/>

<sup>3</sup> According to archival notes “Iroquois Nations were chosen due to the influence on James Fenimore Cooper’s writing and the acknowledgement of the traditions of the Iroquois tribe who made contributions to New York State.” Also to “commemorate the historical and sociological significance of those nations.”

With the completion of the Task Force report, the Faculty Assembly may then choose to endorse the recommendations and ask the Office of the President to bring these recommendations to the College Council.

### Charge

1. Conduct research on the history of the naming of the structures in question.
2. Prioritize engagement with Indigenous communities, including local tribal nations, to seek their input and guidance on the renaming process. This may include consultation with Indigenous leaders, scholars, and/or community members.
3. Seek feedback from the campus community.
4. Coordinate the development of a campus education campaign about the history and culture of the Indigenous nations after which the structures are named, as well as the reasons for the proposed renaming. This can include events, workshops, and other activities to encourage dialogue and promote understanding.
5. Recommend next steps regarding the renaming of specific buildings and structures. Recommendations will consider the historical significance of the structures and the potential impact of the renaming on the campus community.

**Deadline:** April 2024

### Composition of the Task Force

<b>Constituency</b>
Admin designee
Admin student affairs
College Council member
Community member
Professional staff
Students (3)
Faculty (3) (From 3 different units: SS, HUM, STEM, SOE, SOB, SCMA)
Triandiflou representative
Director of NAS
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