

## PLANTING A TREE OF PEACE

Chief Jake Swamp of the Mohawk Nation and co-director of the Tree of Peace Society (See Bibliography, *Three Strands in the Braid: A Guide for Enablers of Learning*) travels around the world planting Trees of Peace, including one on the Smithsonian Mall during the Bicentennial celebration in honor of the contributions to the U.S. Constitution which came from the Iroquois Great Law of Peace. Such traditional ceremonies cannot, of course, be replicated by non-Iroquois. A ceremony meaningful to your own school or community which will include some appropriate elements of respect, however, can be designed. Here are some suggestions:

\* Planning: Try to include all cultural elements, particularly Native American, and all ages in respect for the Iroquois concept of Unity in Diversity. Select an evergreen tree which will flourish in your area, and prepare a planting site. Remember also that someone must be responsible for the care of the tree. If children want to wear special outfits for the ceremony, be sure to avoid stereotypical Indian paper feathers, war bonnets or tomahawks. Instead, ask them to wear something meaningful they consider symbolic of their responsibility in the community and to the environment. Students might explain and discuss their choices.

\* Suggestions for Ceremony: call the group together with music. If a Native American drumming (much of which is sacred) group is available in your area, this would be appropriate. Form a circle around the tree. Readings could include "The Great Tree of Peace," from *Three Strands in the Braid: A Guide for Enablers of Learning*. If a prayer is to be offered, there are many beautiful Native American ones available. Select two items to be buried under the roots to symbolize national unity and peace. In the original ceremony, weapons of war were buried. Focus on the gifts for the grandchildren and the Seventh Generation hence. Compose a statement of purpose to be read as the planting begins. Place the symbolic items near the roots and sprinkle with soil. Every individual in the Circle -- beginning in the North -- should each add some soil to nourish the tree as they walk around it in a clockwise direction. The ceremony could end at this point, but the celebration could continue with dances, games and refreshments.

*Remember to celebrate the wisdom of living as we do.  
Remember the things we yet need to learn.  
We are one People.*