

## Remembering Jake Swamp-Tekaronianeken



Jake Swamp-Tekaronianeken, 69, the Wolf Clan Mohawk diplomat, author, teacher, chief, husband, father, grandparent and great-grandparent passed into the spirit world on October 14, 2010 at his home on the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory.

Swamp was one of the most respected and honoured Mohawk Iroquois leaders of the past century. He was a member of the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs for over three decades, a position in which he served as a counselor, spiritual leader, legislator and ambassador. He was an exceptional orator with a powerful command of the Mohawk language. He possessed great knowledge as to the cultural heritage of the Haudenosaunee and shared that wisdom not only with his people but at forums, conferences and classes across the planet. He was known not only for his knowledge but for his teaching skills which were defined by his unique sense of humour.

When Skennenrahowi (the Peacemaker) established the Haudenosaunee Confederacy 800 years ago he set standards for leadership which were embodied in Tekaronianeken. He was patient, compassionate, humble, generous, intelligent and kind. Whenever he was called upon to serve the needs of the Haudenosaunee he did so without hesitation. He established the Tree of Peace Society in 1984 to promote the teachings of the Skennenrahowi while advocating greater ecological awareness and sensitivity. Swamp planted hundreds of Peace Trees in many nations, an activity begun with the founding of the Confederacy. Through his example millions of trees have taken root around the world from Israel to Australia, Venezuela to Spain and in all regions of North America.

Jake Swamp was a founder of the Akwesasne Freedom School in 1979 and helped develop a curriculum which was based on the traditional values of the Haudenosaunee. He managed Radio CKON at Akwesasne and not only oversaw its Native based programming but helped secure its status as the only Native licensed broadcast facility in the Americas.

Swamp served as Mohawk Nation diplomat in many instances. He addressed the Fourth Russell Tribunal in the Netherlands, was a delegate to the United Nations, met with leaders of foreign nations and advised representatives from the US Congress and Canadian Parliament. He worked closely with Dr. Greg Schaaf to have the US Senate pass a resolution acknowledging the influence of the Haudenosaunee on the US Constitution and thereby initiated a revolution in the understanding of American history. He was a delegate to two sessions of the World Parliament of

Religions where he was affectionately called "el jeffe".

As a member of the Mohawk Nation Tekaronianeken took an active role in preserving the ceremonial activities of the longhouse people. At each one of the rituals he rose from his seat as a Wolf Clan leader to address the people, with the beauty of his words calling their attention to those rituals which express the nation's collective gratitude to the natural world for the blessings of life. He presented infants to the people, gave advice to newlyweds and spoke words of condolence to those who suffered the loss of their loved ones.

There is another requirement for leadership set by Skennenrahowi, perhaps the most important of all. Before one can become a leader that person has to have the love and support of their family and must in turn love them; peace in the home brought about clarity in council. Tekaronianeken was a devoted family man, married to Judy Point Swamp for 49 years. Theirs was a solid and stable union defined by mutual respect, admiration and a quiet yet powerful affection. Jake was a highly skilled ironworker, he was one of the legendary Mohawk "skywalkers", travelling great distances to provide for his wife and children. This determination to insure his family's health and security was a legacy of his parents, the late Leo and Charlotte Papineau Swamp. Jake was the second child of fourteen, in a family raised to be self reliant, hardworking and creative. He is leaving behind seven children, twenty three grandchildren, and thirteen great grandchildren, many of whom are now assuming their own leadership roles within the Nation. He was a devoted lacrosse fan and an avid gardener and was rightly proud of the athletic skills of his family.

it is taught by the Haudenosaunee that whatever one does in life it is essential to leave things better than when they were found, to take into consideration the effect of one's actions on the seventh generation into the future. Throughout his wonderful life Tekaronianeken abided by this principle. Through his books, his words and his actions he brought great honour to his family, his community, the Mohawk Nation and the Haudenosaunee.