

A Comparison between Haudenosaunee and Euro-American Women: Before the Woman's Rights Movement

Social:

Haudenosaunee

- Children are members of their mother's clan
- Violence against women is not part of culture and dealt with seriously when it occurs
- Clothing fosters health, freedom of movement, and independence
- Woman's responsibilities have a spiritual basis

Euro-American

- Children are the property of their fathers
- Husbands have the legal right and religious responsibility to physically discipline their wives
- Clothing is restrictive, unhealthy, and dangerous
- Women's subordination has a religious foundation

Economic:

Haudenosaunee

- Work satisfying, done communally
- Responsible for agriculture as well as home life
- Work done under the direction of the women working together
- Each woman controls her own personal property

Euro-American

- Work drudgery; isolated
- Responsible for home, but subordinate to husband
- Work done under authority of husband
- No rights to her own property, body, or children

Spiritual:

Haudenosaunee

- "Sky Woman" the spiritual being, catalyst for the earth
- Mother Earth and women are spiritually interrelated
- Women have responsibilities in ceremony
- Responsibilities in balance with those of men

Euro-American

- No female in the godhead: women are responsible for sin
- Spirituality not connected to the earth
- Women forbidden to speak in churches
- Responsibilities subordinate to men's authority

Political:

Haudenosaunee

- Women have equal voice with men in decisions
- Women and men have equivalent and equal governing responsibilities
- Confederacy law ensures woman's political authority
- Decision making by consensus; everyone has a voice

Euro-American

- Illegal for women to vote; women are arrested for voting
- Women are excluded from political office
- Common law defines married women as "dead in the law"
- Decision making by men; majority rules

Chart from *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists*
Sally Roesch Wagner (Native Voices, 2001.)

"Early women's rights activists believed women's liberation was possible because they knew liberated women, women who possessed rights beyond their wildest imagination: Haudenosaunee women."

— Sally Roesch Wagner, *Sisters in Spirit*

Bryant & Stratton College
Graphics Team:
Brooklyn Mae Golden
Darecy Filsinger

Project Coordinator:
Sally Roesch Wagner

Special Thanks to:
Lelia Shelton
Renée Crown University Honors Program,
Syracuse University students

This project was supported by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a network of historic sites and museums dedicated to interpreting themes of human rights through dialogue-based approaches