Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Seneca Nation of Indians non-essential services, including all Seneca Language department in house services are suspended until further notice. Once it becomes feasible to reopen, we will do so in a manner that is both safe and following all current health guidelines.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact 716-532-4900.

Gawë:nö’ lesson: Flip Grid

By Gayawë:wi’

This year we have all had to adjust to learning, socializing, and teaching in new ways. With the buildings closed and programming suspended, we have had to switch gears to brainstorming engaging ways to share our knowledge with others.

This summer we teamed up with the SNI Education dept. staff to create and share virtual content for our community at large communicated by social media via FlipGrid. You can download the FlipGrid app or visit our page at www.FlipGrid.com/seneca2020. In the app, follow the pictorial instructions to the right and below to participate! We look forward to seeing your responses.

Online Seneca Language Resources can be found at:
- www.SenecaLanguage.com
- Skype classes, to join message JanosJanineBowen, Wednesdays 10 - 11:30am
- FlipGrid app, code: Seneca2020
RezTalk: Mind Changers

By Aëdza:nio

I posted a video on Facebook in regards to the things that I saw in the community. After posting the video, I sat down with an elder to discuss my public mentioning of things that go on in the longhouse. I worried that I had gone too far. The elder said you didn’t go far enough. So with the backing of an elder, I wanted to share some more words and my own thoughts with you.

Gai:wiyo:h or the Good Message “is the teachings for personal guidance as revealed to Handsome Lake (Ganyódai:yo’) by the Messengers. In the Gañö:wënök (Thanksgiving Address) a section refers to Handsome Lake to whom acknowledgement is given as a carrier of the Gai:wiyo:h (Good Message) to the people.” - Bardeau

Gai:wiyo:h is just around the corner and it is clear that travel restrictions and the fear of the Covid-19 virus will definitely make things different. I am usually excited for Newtown Longhouse to host delegates and visitors from all over Haudenosaunee territories. I look forward to visiting and networking. I look forward to hearing this message in its original language by a Seneca speaker. I’m usually coordinating my dress and moccasins, but this year is different. This year will probably be a more intimate setting. There will probably be less visitors and I’m sure precautions will be taken. What will not change is the message to the people. After the Thanksgiving address and a story of Handsome Lake’s life, we will hear about the Four Wrongs.

There are four major wrongs that make the Creator sad, which the people here on Earth enjoy using. One:ga’ (alcohol/mind changer), Otgö’ (witchcraft), O:noehda’ (love medicine) and Sgayagéöh (abortion) have made the Creator sad. The people here on Earth do not know exactly how many people will die from the enjoyment of using it. What you call One:ga’ is what the messengers call dega’nigöthé:nyöhs (mind altering) in the recital of Gai:wiyo:h. The English translation of an overview of the passage on the mind changer goes something like this:

“The people on Earth do not know exactly how many people will die from the enjoyment of using it. What you call One:ga’ is what the messengers call dega’nigöthé:nyöhs and was not given to the Ögwë‘öweh. It was given to our white brothers in the form of medicine. It was meant for them to use as they will be laboring from morning to night and they will need this alcohol. It was to be used only for our white brothers as a medicine, but the have abused it and it will now be the cause for many minds to split and many will die from it.

For the Ögwë‘öweh, it will bring great misery and hard-ship. When you have touched the firewater called One:ga’, you will like it. You must remember what will result from drinking it. Anyone who drank the firewater will know it as the “mind changer”. They must reaffirm their faith and renewal to Sögwajenokda ‘oh and pledge never to touch it again.” - Traditional Teachings

This message is decades, even centuries old. But the message still speaks to us today. Maybe these are the guiding principals that have been forgotten or have not passed down. Maybe this is the answer to some of our pressing matters. Like I said in my video, there is a heaviness that is plaguing our communities.

The drug use on our territories is so bad, that I caught myself being accepting of marijuana, as if it was not a mind changer. My thought was that “it’s not as bad as crack or heroin or pills.” Then thought, “wait…what did I just think?” When I was in high school, drinking alcohol and smoking weed was “bad”. But at the time, we didn’t see too many other drugs around. I’m sure cocaine was around, but we never really seen it. It was just a couple of years ago that I realized how bad it had gotten. I try to not participate in any judgement and knew if I came across anything I couldn’t respond in a threatening way. I found an empty baggy of something in the back of my classroom towards the end of class. My jaw dropped. I was upset with the way I responded in shock. I was mad, sad, and scared. I put the baggy in my pocket and said I would deal with it after class. One of my students said “Ms. Aëdza:nio, don’t put that in your pocket. You will get in trouble.” Again, I thought “wait…what?” I didn’t even know that. I kept it on my desk and carried it down to the main office after class. That was the eye opener. I knew it wasn’t weed and I had no idea where or who it came from. From that point, I didn’t want to be in the dark about the drug use on our territory. I had to come to the realization that it wasn’t all rainbows and butterflies like I once thought. I needed to get educated.

Everyone says that the answers are in our teachings, this made me feel on the spot as a teacher and a faith keeper. I took an online certification class on substance abuse to be prepared to help. Although I drank and smoked some pot in my younger years, I don’t think I ever felt the things described in my textbooks, or maybe not as severe. I realized that a lot of people who help are former addicts. Maybe I wasn’t going to be as helpful as I hoped to be. But the training made me aware of how to react and respond and that’s what I can do, (continued on page Sëh)
Gaga:' time: The star that doesn’t move

The following is short story collected and published by Erminnie Adele Platt Smith in Myths of the Iroquois as part of the second annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology in 1883. A digitized version of this old book can be found among the vast Google Book library. Enjoy!

A large hunting party wandered for many months, finding little game. At last they arrived at the banks of a great river, entirely unknown to them, where they had to stop, not having the material to build boats. Lost and nearly famished with hunger, the head chief was taken very ill. It was decided to hold a council to devise means for returning to their old homes. During the dance, and while the tobacco was burning, a little being like a child came up, saying she was sent to be their guide.

Accordingly they broke up their camp and started with her that night. Preceding them, with only a small war club, she led them on until daylight. She then commanded them to rest while she prepared their food. This they did, and when awakened by her, they found a great feast in readiness for them. She then bade them farewell, with the assurance of returning to them again in the evening.

True to her word, at evening she reappeared, bringing with her a skin jug, from which she poured out some liquid into a horn cup, and bade them each to taste of it. At first they feared to do so, but at last yielding they began to feel very strong. She then informed them that they had a long journey to make that night. Again they followed her, and in the early morning arrived at a great plain, where she bade them rest again for the day, with the exception of a few warriors who were to be shown where they could find plenty of game. Two of the warriors had accompanied her but a short distance when they encountered a herd of deer, of which she bade them kill all they wished in her absence, and then again promising to return at night, she took leave of them.

At nightfall she returned, saying her own chief would soon follow her to explain to them how they could reach their own homes in safety. In a short time he arrived, with a great number of his People. Immediately all held council together and informed the Hunting Party that they were now in the territory of the Little People, who would teach them a sign, already in the sky, which would be to them a sure guide whenever they were lost; and the Little People pointed out the Pole star, the Northern Star. They told the hunting party that in the north, where the sun never goes, while other stars moved about, this particular star would stand still, as the Indian's guide in his wanderings, and that they were then but to follow its light and they would soon return to their People, where they would find plenty of game. Then they thanked the Little People, and traveled every night until they arrived safely in their homes, where, when they had recounted all their adventures, the head chief called a meeting of all the Nations and said they ought to give this star a name. So they called it Yöëdzade’ gayanó’ta’ (Earth Marker), a name which is used unto this day.

Polaris image: www.bing.com/images

RezTalk: Mind Changers (cont.)

(continued from page Dekni:h) should I come into a similar situation.

After going through many Spiritual trainings and seminars by Indigenous people, I found that the answers are in our teachings. When a baby gets their name in the longhouse, it is said that the clan was lucky/fortunate. Each of us was sent to the Earth with a gift that will be beneficial to ourselves and to our community. We are to foster and support that baby as they grow and ENCOURAGE them. We don’t know what they can and will become. They could be a singer, speaker, dancer, doctor or counselor. We just need to encourage them, love them unconditionally. We need to acknowledge them and their accomplishments big or small. We need to take time to talk to them, guide them, be there for them, and celebrate them.

With the changing times, this new era that we are embarking on and with the things I am seeing in the community, I had a crazy thought. “Handsome Lake brought this message after recovering from abusing the mind changer. The world seems to be in turmoil. What if the Creator sees that we need more guidance? A new messenger? What if one of these addicts that tend to be disregarded recovers and has a new message?” I’m not saying that it’s going to happen, I’m just thinking out loud. It may be hard for some to believe, I’m sure it was difficult to accept that message from Handsome Lake all those years ago. But we having been gathering to hear his message recited every year for many, many moons and continue to follow the instructions on how to conduct ourselves. It’s just something to think about.
**Gakö:ni:h Ganö’ja’ - Braised Sunflowers**

By Sean Sherman

Ingredients:
2 - 4 sunflowers, depending on size
2 to 3 tbs. sunflower oil
½ C. chopped wild onions or shallots
2 tsp. chopped sage
Pinch smoke salt
¼ C. corn stock or water
¼ C. roasted sunflower seeds for garnish
Wojape

Directions:
1. Remove the flowers and the green petal-like leaves from the sunflowers to expose the pith of the flower head. Turn the flower’s head on edge to trim off the yellow face of the flower, removing just the yellow and leaving the meat. Trim off the stem.
2. Film a deep pan or heavy pot with the oil and set over medium heat. Add the heads with the “face” side down and sauté for about 5 minutes. Turn and spoon the onions on top, add the stock, cover the pot, lower the heat, and braise the heads until tender, about 40 minutes. Serve warm, seasoned with smoke salt or drizzle with wojape. Garnish with the sunflower seeds.

Notes: Substitute about 1 to 1 ½ pounds scrubbed Jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes), sliced in half horizontally, for the sunflower heads. Sunflower heads have a flavor similar to artichokes. Braised sunflower heads can be stuffed with wild rice, nuts or beans.

Corn stock: save the corncobs after boiling or roasting the corn on the cob. Put the corncobs into a pot and cover with water by about 1 inch. Bring to a boil and partially cover. Reduce the heat and simmer until the stock tastes “corny,” about 1 hour. Discard the cobs. Store the stock in a covered container in the refrigerator or freezer. Wojape: 6 cups fresh berries, 1 to 1 ½ C water, honey or maple syrup to taste. Put the berries and water into a saucepan and set over low heat. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is thick. Taste and season with honey or maple syrup as desired.

*Recipe from the Sioux Chef’s Indigenous Kitchen by Sean Sherman with Beth Dooley*