

WOMEN'S NOMINATION BELT

The Women's Nomination Belt conveys the central role that women traditionally held in Haudenosaunee society. Jigonsaseh was the first individual who accepted and shared the message of the Peacemaker, becoming the Mother of Nations. The formation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's politico-social structure included political representation for women. Clanmothers were responsible both for nominating and removing the position of chief for each clan; and clanmothers were tasked with holding names for chiefs and other individuals, making Haudenosaunee society matrilineal. These roles are remembered in the Women's Nomination Belt.

The six purple figures linking hands are the clanmothers for each of the Six nations, and they are linked by a solid purple line that represents their right to regulate clan names. The Belt's white background expresses that the clanmothers are the holders of the Kariwiiio (Good Message) first accepted by Jigonsaseh, power and peace. The squares at the center of the belt symbolize the council fire of the Haudenosaunee. A key responsibility of the clanmothers—and the namesake of the Belt—was the practice of nominating the *sachems* or chiefs who would represent each clan and Nation. Once a chief candidate was selected by the clanmothers, he would stand before the Younger (Cayuga and Oneida) and Elder Brother (Mohawk, Seneca, and Onondaga) councils to be reviewed for chieftainship. The role of the clanmothers in choosing the chiefs of each nation is still in practice today.