



## HISTORICAL TIMELINE

# ONEIDA INDIAN NATION



## ABOUT THE ONEIDA INDIAN NATION

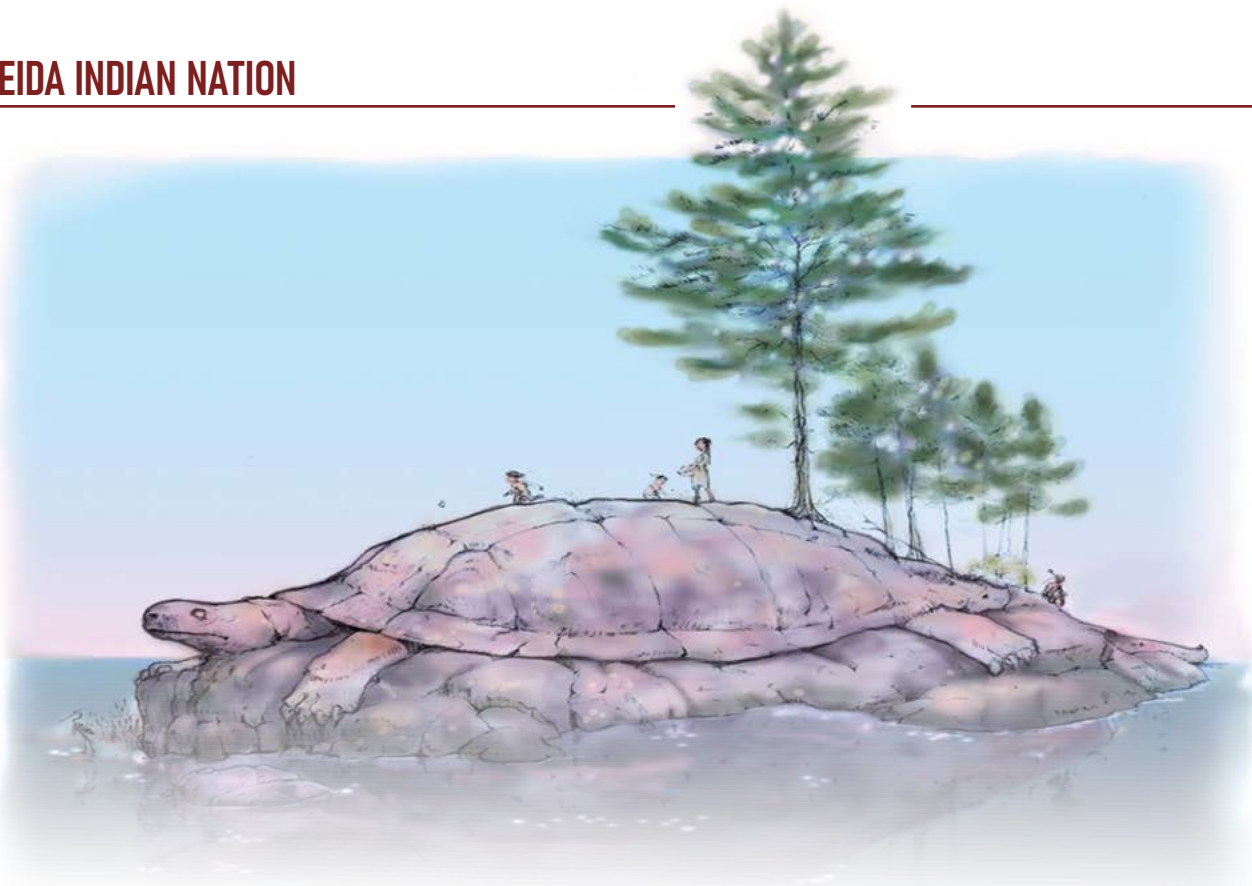
The Oneida Indian Nation is an indigenous nation of American Indian people whose sacred and sovereign homelands are located in Central New York. The Nation was a key ally of the United States during the Revolutionary War, and it has been a cultural and economic anchor for the region. Through the diversified business enterprises it has successfully built in recent decades, the Oneida Indian Nation has become one of the largest employers in Central New York. It has also forged agreements with neighboring governments that have fortified the Nation's sovereignty in perpetuity.

Today, the Nation is focused on reinvesting its revenues in initiatives to help guarantee a prosperous and sustainable future for its current Members and for future generations. The Nation's government makes sure its people can achieve their highest potential in education, have access to quality health care, and can secure their economic future. It is also dedicated to providing legal, administrative and educational services to help protect its people's sovereignty, homelands, culture and job opportunities.



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### BEFORE EUROPEAN CONTACT:

The Oneidas occupy some six million acres of land, stretching from the St. Lawrence River to the Susquehanna River, before the arrival of the Europeans. The Oneida Indian Nation existed as a sovereign government with recognized borders long before the English colonies or the United States were formed. Oneida villages thrived in and around the present-day communities of Stockbridge, Oneida Castle, Canastota, Oriskany, the city of Oneida and elsewhere in what are now Oneida and Madison counties.

### 1613:

Oneida tradition has it that from the earliest contact with the Dutch, the Oneidas and other members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy reached agreement on a treaty with the newcomers recorded with a two-row wampum belt. The belt depicts two paths, one for the Oneidas and their Haudenosaunee brothers, and the other for the Europeans. One path depicts a birch bark canoe, representing the Indians, and the other depicts a ship, representing the newcomers from Europe. This was the first formal recognition by non-Indians that the people who already occupied North America were sovereign nations that possessed territorial rights when the Europeans began to share their land.

### 1763:

A proclamation by the British Crown establishes a policy of reserving to the king, the British Empire's central authority, power over land transactions with Indian nations. This was yet another recognition of the sovereign status of Indian nations and the Crown's desire for formal government-to-government relations.

### 1777:

The Oneida Indians, joined by the Tuscaroras, are the only members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to side with the colonists in the Revolutionary War. The Oneidas played a crucial role in the strategically important Battle of Oriskany, one of the bloodiest battles of the war. The Oneidas also fought alongside the colonists at the Battle of Saratoga and other key engagements. During the bitter winter and spring of 1777-78, Oneida Chief Shenendoah organized a relief mission for Gen. George Washington's troops at Valley Forge, Pa., sending several Oneidas with bushels of corn to help feed the starving army.



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**1778:**

James Duane, a federal treaty agent, writes to New York Governor George Clinton regarding a meeting with the Oneidas: “An Oneida Chief... declared the unalterable resolution of the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, at every hazard, to hold fast the Covenant Chain with the United States, and with them to be buried in the same grave; or to enjoy the fruits of victory and peace...” Oneidas also fought in a battle at Barren Hill, Pa.

**1780-81:**

The Oneidas and the colonists fight in battles at Klock’s Field, near Canajoharie, and the present-day community of Johnstown. After the Johnstown battle, the Oneidas and colonists pursue the fleeing British army.

**1783:**

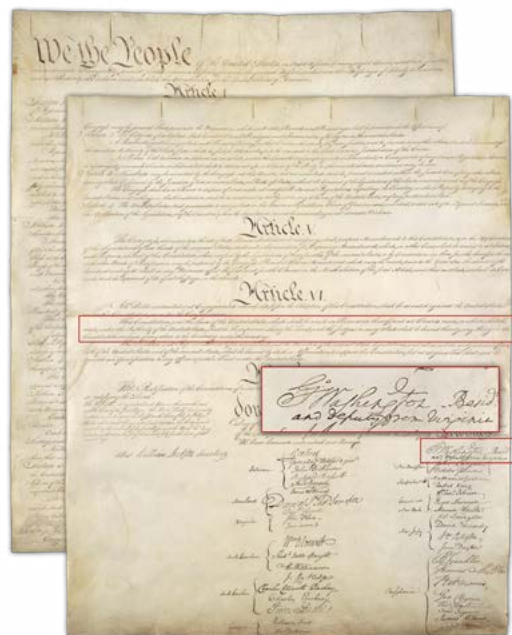
The new United States government, echoing British policy, prohibits anyone other than the federal government – including state governments – from buying or taking land from Indian nations “without the express authority and directions of the United States in Congress assembled.” New York State (and many others) ignored this policy.

**1784:**

In recognition of the Oneidas’ alliance during the Revolutionary War, the Nation is treated favorably in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which states, “The Oneida and Tuscarora nations shall be secured in the possession of the lands on which they are settled.”

**1788:**

Protesting after more lands were lost to the agents of Gov. George Clinton, Oneida sachem Good Peter says, “He did not say, ‘I buy your Country.’ Nor did we say, ‘We sell it.’” The Oneidas had agreed to lease their lands, but New York State had given itself title.



... and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; ...  
- U.S. Constitution, 1787, Article VI  
Signed by President George Washington and the other Founding Fathers

**1789:**

Congress approves the Treaty of Fort Harmar, which reaffirmed guarantees made in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. The new U.S. Constitution is ratified; its provisions include bans against state governments entering into treaties and an assurance that treaties properly made with the federal government “**shall be the supreme Law of the Land.**”

**1790:**

To strengthen its authority in dealing with Indian nations, Congress passes the Trade and Intercourse Act (ch. 33, 1 Stat. 137, codified at 25 USC, sec. 177), which prohibits purchases of Indian lands without federal participation and consent. The law, sometimes referred to as the Non-Intercourse Act, remains in effect today.



... The United State acknowledges the lands reserved to the Oneida, ... to be their property; and the United States will never claim the same, nor disturb them or either of the Six Nations, nor their Indian friends residing thereon and united with them, in the free use and enjoyment thereof; ...

- U.S. Treaty With The Six Nation, 1794, Article II (Treaty of Canandaigua)  
Signed by President George Washington

## 1794:

The Treaty of Canandaigua, signed by President George Washington and the Oneidas, states, “The United States acknowledges the lands reserved to the Oneida... to be their property; and the United States will never claim the same, nor disturb them...” This, like other treaties, memorialized the legal right of the Oneida Indian Nation to own, govern and control its lands.

## 1795-1846:

Some two dozen treaties imposed by New York State on the Oneidas deprive the Nation of all but a few hundred acres of its ancestral homeland. All but two of these treaties were enacted without the required participation or consent of the federal government. In a 1795 transaction that transferred 100,000 acres from the Nation to New York State, federal officials warned the State that the deal was illegal. The State went ahead with the transaction anyway.

## 1823:

Dispossessed of most of their land and under pressure to dissolve their traditional communities, many individual Oneidas “sell” Nation land and move to Wisconsin to form a separate government. Other individual Oneidas move to land they bought near London, Ontario, Canada, and form their own government there. The transactions between the State and individuals are illegal because the land belonged to the Nation, not to individuals.

## 1832:

The U.S. Supreme Court states that treaties between the federal government and Indian nations, including the Oneidas, are binding. In part, the Court said, “The Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil from time immemorial.”

## 1849:

New York State passes an allotment act that makes it possible for communally held land to be divided and ownership of the resulting parcels to be granted to individual Indians. Much of this parceled land was lost to tax sales and mortgage foreclosures.

## 1909:



William Honyoust Rockwell, an Oneida chief, would later write about the day after Thanksgiving, 1909, when “seven big, burly sheriffs” evicted his aunt and uncle from their home on the Oneida Territory as part of a mortgage

foreclosure. His aunt kept returning to the house, and the sheriffs ejected her each time. Their furniture was thrown out onto the highway, and even the horse owned by Rockwell’s uncle was turned loose.

## 1919:

The federal government files suit in U.S. District Court (U.S. v. Boylan) to recover the last 32 acres of the approximately 300,000 acres that had been reserved to

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the Oneidas in the Treaty of Canandaigua. The court ruled in favor of the Oneidas. A year later, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit affirmed the District Court's ruling.

**1920:**



Oneida Member Mary Winder writes to the Federal Indian Bureau, asking how much money the federal government owed the Nation for the loss of its homeland. She continued writing to the government for three decades, asking the

government to live up to treaty guarantees to preserve the Oneidas' homeland.

**1946:**

Congress creates the Indian Claims Commission to adjudicate Indians' claims of unfair treatment regarding their lands. The commission was empowered to award monetary damages in cases where the U.S. government did not live up to its responsibilities, but it could not restore land to Indian nations.

**1948:**

Mary Winder writes to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, requesting payment for or return of the land illegally taken from the Oneidas by New York State.

**1951:**

The Oneida Indian Nation files a claim with the Indian Claims Commission, covering all the land New York State had taken from the Oneidas between 1785 and 1846. The Commission ruled in favor of the Oneidas and said they were due compensation, but it lacked any authority to order the return of their land.

**1970:**

The Oneidas file suit in federal court to press for the return of Oneida reservation land. Because the Constitution grants state governments sovereign immunity from lawsuits, this first suit named Madison and Oneida counties as the defendants.

**1974:**

The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the Oneidas had the right to have their case heard in federal court and sent it back to the District Court for trial.

**1976:**

In June, Ray Halbritter's uncle Samuel Winder and aunt Janice Winder die in a trailer fire on Territory Road after the local fire department refused to respond to calls for assistance. This event becomes the catalyst for the Oneida Indian Nation to become self-sufficient and to re-build its community.

**1978:**

The Oneida Indian Nation made its gaming debut in April with twice-a-weekend bingo from double-wide trailers located on Territory Road, becoming the first American Indian government to offer gaming operations on sovereign land.

The Oneidas sue in federal court to challenge the transfer of some six million acres of land to New York State before the adoption of the Constitution in 1789 and before the Trade and Intercourse Act was passed in 1790. The federal district court ruled that, prior to ratification of the Constitution, the central government did not have the power to prevent states from making treaties with Indian nations. In 1988, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court's ruling.

**1982:**

The Oneidas withdraw their case from the Indian Claims Commission when it becomes clear that the commission was not empowered to return land.

**1985:**

The Oneidas' case against Madison and Oneida counties again goes before the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that the counties were liable for damages in the illegal land deals authored by New York State. The case was sent back to District Court to determine damages; the district court orders the counties, state and Oneida Indian Nation to negotiate a settlement.

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### 1985-98:

Negotiations with the State are sporadic at best; efforts to engage in serious, good faith talks are complicated by a change in New York administrations and differences among the three Oneida nations.

### 1987:

The Oneida Indian Nation reacquires 42 acres of land near the city of Oneida – the first of its ancestral homeland to be reacquired.



### 1993:

Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and New York Gov. Mario Cuomo agree on a gaming compact. Turning Stone Casino opens in the town of Verona becoming the first legal casino in New York.

### 1994:

The U.S. Supreme Court rules that New York State can collect taxes on gas and cigarette sales made on Indian land to non-Indians. The state sets an April 1, 1997 deadline for tribal nations to begin taxing their retail sales. Anti-tax demonstrations and violence erupt on some reservations and Gov. Pataki finally says in May 1997 that the state would stop seeking to collect taxes.

### 1998:

The U.S. Justice Department announces its intention to intervene in the land claim lawsuit to support the Oneidas' rights under the Treaty of Canandaigua and federal law. This intervention allows the Oneidas to bring the State in as a defendant in the lawsuit for the first time. In December, the three Oneida nations

and the federal government file amended complaints, seeking to add the State, several large landowners and a defendant class of individual property owners as defendants. The amended complaints cover all the illegal transactions between the State and the Oneida Indian Nation since 1790, involving about 250,000 acres of land.

### 1999:

In February, Ronald Riccio is appointed settlement master for the land claim negotiations. For the first time since the first suit was filed in 1970, all the parties engaged in serious negotiations.

### 2000:

In March, Federal Judge Neal P. McCurn asks all parties to sign a "stipulation agreement," ensuring that further settlement talks would focus only on issues directly related to the land claim, so that negotiations could continue for another 60 days. The State of New York was the only party that refused to sign the agreement. In June, negotiations under the court-appointed settlement master end.

In September of 2000, Judge McCurn rules on the amended complaint, adding New York State as a defendant for the first time in the history of the Oneida land claim. The judge also ruled that private property owners and non-government corporations will not be added as defendants. The U.S. Justice Department and the Oneida Indian Nation announced they would not appeal the judge's order.

### 2002:

In February, New York Gov. George Pataki, Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and Oneida and Madison counties announce a deal they say could settle the land-claim case. But less than a week later, the Wisconsin Oneidas file suit against 20 property owners within the disputed area, demanding their land. Later, they add 40 more properties to the suit. A U.S. District Court judge rejects the Wisconsin Oneidas' suit in September and the Wisconsin Oneidas appeal the next month.

### 2003:

A federal appeals court rejects arguments that the Oneida Indian Nation no longer exists, saying that the Nation does not have to pay taxes on some properties in the city of Sherrill.

### 2005:

In March, the U.S. Supreme Court, citing concerns about “jurisdictional checker-boarding,” rules that the Oneidas are subject to federal, state and local taxation and regulation on Nation-owned land in the city of Sherrill that is not located on its reservation. However, the Court also notes that the proper way for the Nation to reassert its sovereignty over reacquired lands is through the federal land-into-trust process, and specifically states that it is not overturning its 1985 decision with this ruling. Oneida and Madison counties move to foreclose on Nation land in April. The Nation applies to the federal government to place 17,000 acres in trust, which would protect the Nation’s lands from state and local taxation. A decision from the Bureau of Indian Affairs is not expected until early 2007.

### 2006:

The Bureau of Indian Affairs holds two public hearings as part of the land-into-trust process, seeking input on the impact of placing the Nation’s land into trust.

### 2006-07:

The Bureau of Indian Affairs holds public hearings on its Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which outlines various options ranging from putting all Nation-owned land into trust to taking no action.

### 2008:

In May, the Bureau of Indian Affairs announces its decision to take 13,004 acres of Nation-owned land into federal trust, thus protecting that land from most state and local regulations, including property taxes. The 13,004 acres include the Turning Stone Resort Casino complex, the resort’s golf courses, four SāvOn locations, 80 percent of the Nation’s housing, most of its governmental operations, and about 9,700 acres

of farmland. About 8,800 acres are located in Oneida County; the remainder are in Madison County. The trust lands represent less than 1 percent of the total acreage of the two counties.

Seven lawsuits protesting the BIA decision are filed between May and August. Plaintiffs include New York State and Oneida and Madison counties, who argue that federal trust land is unconstitutional in New York. The city of Oneida and the town of Verona and Vernon filed similar lawsuits.

In December of 2008, the Bureau of Indian Affairs takes 18 acres of land from the former U.S. Air Force operation in Verona into trust for the Oneida Indian Nation.

### 2009:

U.S. District Court Judge Lawrence Kahn throws out key arguments in the anti-trust-land lawsuits filed by New York State and Oneida and Madison counties. Kahn rules that the federal government has the authority to take land into trust in New York State, that the transfer of 18 acres from the Air Force to the BIA for the benefit of the Oneida Indian Nation was legal, and that Turning Stone Resort Casino is operating legally under federal law.

### 2010:

In March, the federal court upheld the constitutionality of trust land in New York State, reaffirmed that the Oneida reservation was never disestablished, rejected challenges to the legality of gaming at Turning Stone, denied challenges to the DOI’s transfer of the 18-acre “Verona test site” parcel into trust, and dropped all claims against Nation Representative Ray Halbritter.

On April 27, 2010, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second District ruled that the Oneida Indian Nation is “immune from the Counties’ foreclosure actions.” This decision reaffirmed the federal law that says that Indian nations can only be sued if they waive their immunity or Congress authorizes. This ruling reaffirmed the decision of U.S. District Court Judge David Hurd that Madison and Oneida counties could not seize Oneida

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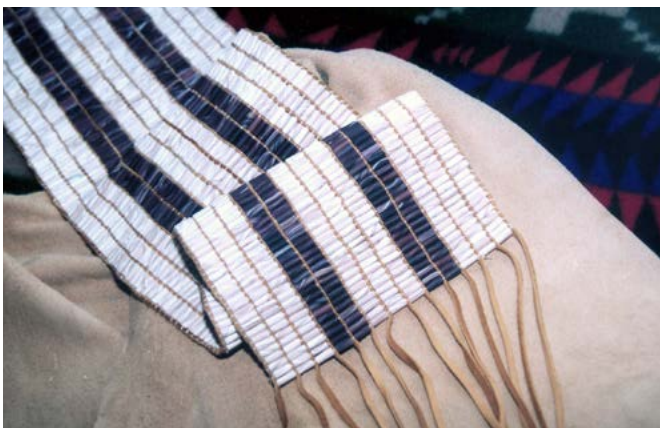
lands for nonpayment of taxes. The Second Circuit court also stated that their 2004 ruling that the Oneida Reservation was never disestablished still stands and “remains the controlling law of this circuit.”

### 2011:

A Federal court ruled in October, once and for all, that the Oneida Indian Nation reservation has not been disestablished, putting that issue to rest. The court also rejected the Madison and Oneida counties’ attempts to impose unlawful penalties and interest. The only remaining issue is whether property taxes may be assessed on the Oneida reservation lands.

### 2012:

A ruling by the U.S. Second Circuit Court of appeals denied Madison and Oneida Counties’ efforts to disestablish the Oneida Indian Nation reservation. This Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruling falls in line with two previous U.S. Supreme Court rulings that the Oneida Indian Nation reservation was never disestablished and that the Treaty of Canandaigua still remains valid in the eyes of the federal government. This ruling puts an end to more than a decade of litigation over the existence of the Oneida reservation.



### 2013:

On May 16, 2013, the Oneida Indian Nation, the State of New York and Madison and Oneida counties signed an historic agreement that officially ended all legal disputes between all the governments involved. This compact, forged through collaborative negotiation

between the Nation, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and county leaders, was passed by the New York State legislature on June 22, 2013 and was soon ratified by federal courts, thus cementing it in perpetuity.



### 2014:

On August 21, the Oneida Indian Nation held a private Signing Ceremony in the Oneida Council House officially marking the transfer of more than 13,000 acres of ancestral Oneida homelands into federal trust. The transfer comes one year after the implementation of the Settlement Agreement between the Oneida Indian Nation and New York State and Oneida and Madison counties, ending all legal disputes between the governments.

### 2017:

The Oneida Indian Nation placed another 4,200 acres of sacred homelands into federal trust. The Nation has now reclaimed nearly 18,000 acres of its land, putting more lands into sovereign Oneida control than at any time in nearly two centuries.

In April, the Nation was honored at the opening of the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, which includes prominent Nation exhibits and a film about the Nation’s role in the founding of this country.

Nation Representative Ray Halbritter spoke at the event along with former Vice President Joe Biden. The Nation became a founding donor to the Museum in 2012, helping to fund its construction.





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**2018:**

The Oneida Indian Nation and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian dedicated a new enhancement to the exhibit "Allies in War, Partners in Peace" located on the fourth floor of the Museum in Washington D.C. The new exhibit features an animated 8-minute film that highlights the Nation's history and role in the American Revolution.

In November, the Oneida Indian Nation Police Department celebrated the 25th anniversary of the formation of the department.

**2021:**

The Oneida Indian Nation Police Department earns the highest distinction from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), an honor the department has achieved every eligible year since it was established in 1993.

In April, Nation leadership announced plans for the Oneida Indian Nation neighborhood, the newest and most significant step in a generation toward creating new living opportunities for Members. The



project began with the construction of a road connecting the Village of the White Pines to Territory Road on the 32 acres that was completed at the end of 2021.

In May, the Oneida Indian Nation, together with officials from Oneida County and the City of Rome, unveiled a new bronze sculpture and public artwork that commemorates the historic Oneida Carrying Place in downtown Rome, a vital mode of transportation, trade and commerce before and during the Revolutionary War.



**2022:**

In September, the Oneida Indian Nation held a groundbreaking celebration to mark the beginning of construction of its new community and cultural center. Located on Oneida Indian Nation lands, the community center is the latest step in the Oneida Indian Nation's ongoing revitalization of its homelands and investments in the preservation of a vibrant community for generations to come.

On November 9, a ceremony was held at Colgate University to repatriate more than 1,500 funerary objects and cultural artifacts to the Oneida Indian Nation from the collections of the Colgate University's Longyear Museum of Anthropology. The repatriation was among the largest single transfers of cultural artifacts in New York State history.

**2023:**

In September, Upstate Medical University opens a brand new Upstate Cancer Center in Verona on lands leased from the Oneida Indian Nation.

## 2024:

On January 3, the Oneida Indian Nation opened Verona Collective, its first cannabis dispensary, located in Verona, New York directly across from Turning Stone Resort Casino. Verona Collective is a seed-to-sale cannabis business fully operated by the Oneida Indian Nation from the cultivation of plants to processing, packaging and retail sales, all on Nation lands.



United States Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland became the first Native American Cabinet Secretary to visit the ancestral homelands of the Oneida Indian Nation on June 27 ahead of the grand opening of

the Mary C. Winder Community Center. Secretary Haaland is the highest-ranking federal executive branch official to ever visit the Oneida homelands.

On June 28, Oneida Indian Nation Members and leadership gathered for a grand opening ceremony at the new Mary C. Winder Community Center. The 90,000-square-foot community center is among the largest tribal centers of its kind in the United States and offers a host of resources to support cultural engagement, community building and more.



On November 19, the Oneida Indian Nation gathered with Mohawk Valley Health System representatives, local elected officials and community members to unveil two new public artworks at Wynn Hospital in Downtown Utica. The 200' outdoor mural and a display inside the facility's lobby are part of the Oneida Indian Nation's \$1 million donation in support of the hospital and highlight the central role of the Oneida people in New York State and United States history.

On December 16, Colgate University repatriated the remains of 21 Oneida ancestors from the collections of the Longyear Museum of Anthropology to the Oneida Indian Nation at the Nation's Mary C. Winder Community Center. The repatriation continues the longtime partnership between the Oneida Indian Nation and Colgate University and reaffirms the university's commitment to the return of all Oneida Indian Nation ancestors and artifacts in its collections. Earlier in December, Harvard University repatriated the remains of seven Oneida ancestors and associated funerary objects at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.