

Jake Edwards at Indigenous Values talk

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Revisiting George Washington's Assault on the Haudenosaunee 240 Years Later

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Transcript by Andrea Smith

[Starts by introducing himself, name in Onondaga, English name Jake Edwards, Onondaga Eel clan member].

The story you've been hearing about the Sullivan-Campaign campaign is true genocide, it's the false reporting of true genocide. It's to persuade young Americans, colonizers' minds, to make them feel comfortable in a land that does not belong to them.

We are not looking for any kind of evictions, we know we must live peacefully together.

But this campaign of genocide against my people. It's hard to listen to again. It's hard to listen to it from non-Indigenous persons' writings. Because our elders passed down from generations that witnessed it, had different stories that were passed down from the generations that witnessed it.

And I'll start out with some of the people that were in that campaign did not even want to be there. Some of the people that were that were carrying out the orders did not want to do what they were instructed to do. We don't know that side of what would happen to them if they refused, but there was over five thousand white guys coming through the forests led by drunken Indians as scouts. A lot of times you don't see this written or talked about as far as how much rum was involved in all of these decisions. Whether it was colonels, Sullivan himself, George

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Washington himself. All influenced with the mind-twisting rum, alcohol in their decisionmaking. That right there starts out there will be no good decisions being made under that influence.

People of the longhouse, we always talk of the good mind. We've been terrorized, humiliated, raped murdered, persecuted, all of that stuff. And you know, we still have gratitude for our forest, for our mother earth, for plants.

Did you hear about reestablishing gardens, right away? When we hid as people from these invaders. Our elders used to tell us exactly where they hid, their hiding spots, and what they had with them. It was just like our creation story of the Sky Woman bringing down what she planted, the Three Sisters. When they took off running, they grabbed beans, and corn, and squash seeds, and hid with them. Right over there, right over that hill (he points). When our people hid from these invading peoples, soldiers, they're called, we were running to the Cayugas to see if they can help. We had a runner, come tell us, the said the same thing was happening over there. It's a pandemic in Haudenosaunee territory, a pandemic of genocide.

So when we hear about this Sullivan Campaign, we hear about these people who want to take bus tours and celebrate, all this goodness of Sullivan's Expedition for the American people-- .There was a whole bunch of American people who were against it. There are still some people, to this day, Americans, who still would want to honor their forefather's word, of peace. And there's people of the Haudenosaunee, we don't dig that up, that's part of us, it's in us, it's in our DNA as peoples, the Haudenosaunee, that we maintain peace in the best way that we know how with what we have, each and every day through wartime. We still carried on ceremony, the

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goodness of the plant life, the medicines, the animals that run about, we keep them in our minds and in our hearts. We keep the original instructions with us as we walk about, as we run and hide. We ran and hid from those guys, we ran and hid from boarding schools. We ran away from boarding schools too. My grandmother was helped away from a boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and brought back to Buffalo Creek, went and settled over at, got some shelter at Tuscarora, not far, and then was transported back here to Onondaga.

We talk about those treaties, Buffalo Creek treaty, there were a couple of them. We should be talking about the fairness of our survival, as [*Oqunon*] people, here, as Haudensaunee people, here, indigenous people. We don't look for, what's that word, "commemorate," "commemorative," we don't look for that kind of stuff, that we survived, we feel it in our hearts and in our minds every day. When we give thanks. Then we go deal some of the problems that were put to us. But that first with our connection to our mother earth and all that was given to us. We can't leave them out just because we are brutalized by America. We can't leave out the wildlife. They are getting brutalized too. There is comfort in knowing that to this day they are still carrying out their duties, and so are we. They aren't going anywhere, and we aren't going anywhere, as long as we stay together as one. In our goodness in our thoughts and in our teachings. We retain more of the plant life as long as we are paying attention.

So when you talk about the destructions, the mass destructions of the Sullivan-Clinton campaign, it's a horrific thought, it hits, real deep, but I give gratitude to my ancestors who helped us to be here today. We had this spot. I knew where the hiding spot is but I'm not going to tell everyone though, it might come back. (smiles)

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We took some youth up to that spot, this past year, to explain to them Sullivan's campaign and it was around the Fourth of July. By golly I've got to tell you that it's a scary thought when you hear all that celebration going on outside of us here, the fireworks, the big bangs, it just puts your mind into cannonballs and black powder gun coming after to you on your own living room floor. The woodlands. As my grandmother was interpreting the oral teachings of her great-grandmother, who ran up alongside Onondaga Creek right out here, took off over that way (points). She tells us about that, what her great-grandmother told her what she did and where she hid.

My uncle, he showed me where it was. He said, "Take me for a ride, I'll show you where it is." So we went up there, and he showed me. He didn't get out, he was too old to get out and walk. (Oh here he is right here, this guy right here showed me [points to image of relative]) And to listen to these elders' stories, and hear about the locusts, the message that they brought us from the earth. A reminder to us at that starving time, to have gratitude for what mother earth still provides for us. Through that hard time, to share gratitude is powerful, very powerful. It's not something you can read in a book, somebody's journal. In those oral teachings, we hear we are not to trust the white man, not to be with that person alone. You take always two, so that you can watch over that shoulder watch his back and he can watch over your shoulder, watch your back as you are talking to a guy who appears to be trustworthy and friendly. Like the Dutch did to us, or like Columbus' crew did everywhere they landed. They have instructions from their church to subdue, enslave us. They carried those teachings into the next centuries, to the next centuries. Wait a minute, where are we now, 2020, in Washington down there is doing about the same

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thing today to the indigenous people looking for fresh drinking water on the southern border of what they call the United States. It's going on today.

So one of our messages to the world is to understand truth in the history of America. Understand truth in the survival of the indigenous people. And understand that you don't teach your children untruth. Because they grow up living in a world of untruth.

So we have to teach what's here. And when you look outside first thing in the morning what's here is the sun, the new day, and so we teach gratitude for that, for seeing that. You see the forest, and you hear the birds, even in the wintertime--they are not just spring songbirds. You give gratitude for the snow and the rains, and the thunderbeings, they're carrying out their duties.

America needs a strong lesson on honest teachings. Because what provides information is this mechanism of what they called education, higher education. We know professors from all over teaching, and some are teaching indigenous studies. And learning -- Everyone is always learning it's a given, we all are, we learn something every day. Or we should be. And so these professors are coming back and telling us that these people don't know we even exist. And it's kind of funny because some of our neighbors just down the road and the next town, right here, they didn't know that we were still here, they thought all the Indians were out west, like in the John Wayne shows. Colonizing effects of modern Indian as portrayed by the Newspapers and articles.

So we have a lot of work to do, and I'm glad to see this information getting out, and getting out as the truth of what happened. Onondagas were never conquered, you can't conquer a neutral

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nation, a peaceful nation, those are called massacres, invasions and massacres. Documented as “battles,” they called the battles. They weren’t battles. We got families sleeping comfortably and you wiped them out. You just won a battle? Come on. Let’s teach the truth here and explain to America what genocide is, and how America became what it became because of the teachings of the Haudenosaunees. Teachings of the Great Law of Peace, and how we conduct ourselves when we greet somebody.

When we greet somebody, we don't know what they've been through. So we brush them down, clear their throat, wipe their eyes, clear their ears so they can hear. Then we sit and talk with them. So now they got clear voice, the dust in their travels, perhaps we lift them up in their seats, we offer them a seat and lift them up. Clear off any of the stuff that they may be dealing with-- a death in their family, a sickness in their family-- today, by golly, that pandemic going around us. There's a lot of clearings got to happen. And so we conduct their way ourselves in that way. And we still do. And we have in the New York State Assembly at one time, not sure of the year. There was this fella by the name of James Duane or Dwayne James. He had two names for both of his front and last name. And he was either working for the State Assembly under George Clinton. Thereabouts after. And he suggested to the people of New York State to start stop treating the Indians as if they're nations and stop accepting their rituals before a meeting. Don't let them conduct themselves with what we do and what we have been doing with the Gonohanyo the Thanksgiving address. The words before all else, sometimes it's called that-- we would do that at every meeting with the people of New York, with the colonizers, wherever they're from-- the people of Maryland, the people of Virginia. When you when you heard earlier today about how far the influence of the Haudenosaunee was. You can look at where the maple tree grows,

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how far south how far west how far north? And also how far does the great white pine tree grow? That's the influence of how far we passed the message of peace on. So when you hear about treaty of Lancaster, say 1744. about land in Virginia, the treaty was here in Pennsylvania. We were the prime delegates. Besides the governors of Virginia, Maryland, they were given us wampum to maintain peace as they were slowly encroaching. Some of our people didn't like it. So they were saying that we violated the treaty in the mountains of Virginia. It wasn't we violated the treaty, it was we're being encroached on and people were stealing from us. When we sent them back to wherever they're supposed to be staying, Jamestown or little towns down there. The history is not reporting all those thieveries that's been going on.

So we got to maintain the facts of what these people are reporting in their history books, come up to 1924. You talk about the land claims, Edward Everett, and all that was good. Edward Everett came to Onondaga and explained that. And what he offered was, after his explanation of this land is rightfully yours, he said, "We can make it right, and sell it properly." And Onondaga people at that time told him, "We already know that's our land. What you're telling us, we already know that, and it's still not for sale." So he wanted us to side with him and present it to a court to clarify title so that we could properly sell it to New York State, legally sell it. And we told him no.

So we moved on. And the other part of that, you hear about I think, Andrea mentioned about citizenship. In [192X], the U.S. passed a Citizenship Act for those who apply. Well, not too many people applied for to be citizens of the United States as far as indigenous peoples. And that's what it was directed at. And so and I think it was 1925 [1924] they resubmitted, and passed

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it as a blanket that made all Indians citizens. So here at Onondaga, we drafted up and sent a letter to President Calvin Coolidge, at that time, and explained to them that who we are, this is who we are, this is who we remain to be. So it was a basically a thank you, but no thank you letter, we'll maintain our own citizenship. And then some of the reasons of that was, as we looked at the treaties, and you heard that discussion earlier too about the treaties, we wouldn't participate in certain events. Of celebrating Sullivan, because we had land rights, and we got treaties, we have reasons. But there was some of us that did go along with it, because some of us are fresh out of boarding schools and their colonized teachings is telling them to, in order for you to survive here, you have to have this type of education you have drop your pagan ways and move on. Well, you see them in their suits and ties are now in the big top hats and so far, in that era. Everybody was being that way in order to fit in. So we don't get brutalized again. Because our parents did get brutalized in school for speaking language. We know that story. We heard that story. We heard it from actual people, not somebody written. Our relatives, you put your hands on a desk and they get smacked by a stick, yardstick and worse. Right here Onondaga County, that was at the regular schools, you don't want to get into the terribleness of the boarding schools, then you hear about the white guys taking their side of the Americans and saying that, "Well, we gave you land, we give you health, we give you education. We gave you everything you got."

You give us hardship, we maintained our land, you can't give me what's already mine because we never gave you plenary power over us, we never gave our power for you to decide what happens to us over us so now you look back at the United States and in New York State, United States has now formed. They're arguing with New York State, tug of war like, paper war, they're getting fierce to each other these white guys are because they're arguing whose Indians we are,

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New York State always claimed we're New York State's Indians, the United States say's "but we own all the Indians they're ours." These are arguments probably drunken arguments because at every meeting they had they had rum there with them. You got a lot of our people influenced to it, and that's its a sad thing to use that as a weapon, a weapon of war, a chemical weapon. And so today even as I was a youngster you hear about that chemicals nicknamed "hard cider" chemicals because it has the effect of that, it changes your mind, {Onondaga word} your mind isn't good your mind's not right, under the influence. So you can't make good decisions. You can't make good decisions for your children. For what's cooking on the fire, burn it. {word for alcohol] is alcohol, the "mind changer," is how you translate it in English, the mind changer. And when you look at these treaty supplies, sent by Washington or sent by Albany, the man who's making the treaties sent by the land speculators, the biggest commodity is rum--or one of the biggest commodities--are rum. They knew the weapon to use. And our elders used to tell us that these treaties, these land talks and so forth, was that the guys that were sitting there, our people that were sitting there, knew that can't be right. You have a white man come into the community and then he appoints 60 new leaders, 60 chiefs of one nation, to sign off on land. So these guys are all tipping up that rum, to have a good old time and they say, "ah sure, I'll sign it, I'll sign right here." So they did that, those were fraudulent treaties..fraudulent transactions. Chiefs appointed by a white colonel. [laughs] It's kind of funny, really. But it's not, because New York state stood by that. Maybe stood by that to this day, they know they were fraudulent their actions, so why don't they tell the truth?

So with reeducating the people throughout the web, we'll get some good minded, good hearted people to do that work for them and put the education in front of them. They have to understand

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that you can't live by wrong actions and enforce wrong actions and teach the children. Because in our teachings we always carry on that the decisions that you make today are to no way negatively affect seven generations coming. As individuals we make that same... that rule applies to us too, not just government leaders, not just Council, that applies to each and every one of us in the decisions that we make today, should no way harm our future generations coming. And so when you look back and you put rum into all of this you know you're right away, you're not going to make a good decision. You know that.

It's hurtful to see this army tactics of genocide, forced by the U.S., very, very hurtful. And to see that people that are still living in this racism, and supremacy actions across just this little town, Town of Onondaga, we still got it here. Town of Lafayette, our neighbors, all the way around us. Supremacy, because of what they were taught. Just a real quick history of what they're taught, is "Santa Claus is going come down that chimney, bring your gifts if you behave". What a lie. What a lie. And so, the siblings become older and the older sibling now tells the younger sibling mommy and daddy buy those gifts. There's no Santa Claus. Oh, the little kid get so heartbroken and cry and the older person gets whipped and punished for telling the truth. You just ruined your younger brothers Christmas by telling him that. So sometimes the truth hurts. But you know that child will never forget that growing up, that there is no Santa claus. No matter what the department store industry out there, corporations promote. There is no big fat man coming down your chimney.

You're also teaching the kids destruction because you go out into the forest and you chop down a tree. a perfectly innocent tree, drag it in your house, heat it up when it's not supposed to be heated up, decorate it and pollute it and contaminate it and then throw it to the curb when you're

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done with Christmas. So this stuff reaches the environmental impact also. Look at how many Christmas trees are cut down every single year. So there's people environmentalists are changing that, corporations are changing and bringing in toxic materials that you can store in your attic when you don't need it. So there's a lot of teachings that have to be constructed in a manner of honesty. We're here together. We're not looking for division. People of the Haudenosaunee will carry that message of peace, wherever. As long as our Mother Earth provides for us. She has her instructions, we have our original instructions in our hearts, and in our minds is we maintain that balance with each other. We have a lot of obstacles blowing in the wind. But we maintain that balance as one. So there's a term that we use in all our discussions is {long phrase starts with SCADAno han}, make whatever we're talking about, we bundle up our thoughts as one all in one bundle. And we give a great gratitude, no matter what it is, if it's Mother Earth, it's the waters it's the plants it's the medicines, the stars, the moon, the sun, the animals, the birds, the four messengers, above keep our thoughts in the right way, reminds us, that's one of their responsibilities, to remind us. Make good decisions, show gratitude even during hard times, you don't thank them for those people that are doing to genocide you don't thank them, you don't put them on a pedestal, you don't make stone monuments of them. You do the right thing, and remove all of those monuments and put the truth there. And the truth is, put the indigenous peoples back at their home and allow it to be. So we gather our minds as one and we think that way. Whatever we put our minds to, we can accomplish. And so, you know, you know there's so much that has to be discussed, there was so much that's left out. We only have a short time in this day to work on. But to honor 250 years 500 years of wrongdoings and we try to correct it in 20 minutes. This is just the start. And so, we look forward to working with all to accomplish peace and contentment here on Mother Earth as we walk about. And so we bundle our thoughts, we

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gather our thoughts as one, we give a gratitude for this day, for the nourishments that were provided for us, for the songbirds carrying out duties and so forth. And that we will work together to make this place that we call home comfortable for anybody that comes in our woods. Here at Onondaga we've made in our peace, we maintain "Ononadaga word" " the best we can. "Donato"