

# Sandy Bigtree

## Selected Audio Transcript

In the founding of the American democracy, they used the clutch of the arrows, which was what the Peacemaker had demonstrated at Onondaga Lake. The Peacemaker said if you unite the five arrows, they're unbreakable. And it was a whole ritual that he did at the lake. So Haudenosaunee leaders were telling the founding fathers about this imagery and about the story of the bundle of arrows, and that's why it was incorporated into the eagle's clutch. The eagle is also held in imagery among the Haudenosaunee because it has the highest vision and can see the farthest distance, and that's what's clutching those arrows for protection. So that's what that image represents, and it goes right back to the Haudenosaunee.

## Biography

My name is Sandy Bigtree from Syracuse. I'm a citizen of the Mohawk Nation. But I did grow up in Syracuse, and I grew up performing on radio and television from the early ages, three years old, throughout my entire childhood, on a weekly basis, every single week of my life. In 1978 I had a band, and the Onondaga Nation asked me if I would bring my band down to the Nation to help draw non-Native people to the territory, so they could educate them on the Indigenous roots to American democracy through the Haudenosaunee. And I took that very seriously, and kind of redirected my life work. And I left performing and met Phil, we came back, that's the work that we're doing. I was on the collaborative board for the repurposing of Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois into Skānoñh, so we could share that message of the Haudenosaunee. And I'm on the board of the Indigenous Values Initiative. I'm also on the board of the American Indian Law Alliance, which sponsors the work of Betty Lyons at the United Nations.