

## ***Star Wars and the Haudenosaunee***

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Last week marked the premiere of the new installment of the Star Wars movie saga and chances are that by the time this article goes to print, I would have seen the movie another two times. Those of you who know me are probably rolling their eyes at the title of this piece, as they understand my fondness for these films. However, I do believe that Star Wars has a deep a cosmic relation to the Haudenosaunee. This article will explore such similarities that exist between the epic film series and the history of the Haudenosaunee.

First of all, for those who are unfamiliar with the film series, it must be mentioned that its story is in a purely fictional universe and does not intend to link reality in anyway; as it does take place a “long time ago, in a galaxy far far away”. Surrounding the Star Wars universe is a philosophical concept called the “Force”. The Force is described in the films as the source of strength, the Force “binds the galaxy together”, “life greets it...makes it grow...its energy surrounds us and binds us.” To the Haudenosaunee, the force is similar to the Kaianere’kó:wa (the Iroquois Great Law of Peace); another philosophy the binds our people together and gives us strength.

The intense ways of the Force are practiced and protected by the Jedi, a relatively small group of spiritual warriors who are the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic. Through discipline and morality, the Jedi have successfully nurtured and defended the Republic for a thousands years, which resembles the way our men protected and defended the symbolic Long House of the Haudenosaunee. In this golden era, the Jedi never get involved in politics, because they knew the day they would; the Jedi way would become compromised similarly to the way Joseph Brant rallied renegade War-Parties to take sides in political disputes.

In the first three episodes of the series, we see the heyday of the Republic; an old government that represents the democratic interests of those star-systems that belong to it. This is a premise that is quite similar to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which is also a representative government that collects the democratic interests of the various nations that are either members or under its protection.

There came a time when the Republic, like the Confederacy, became divided on many issues such as taxation and the true motives of its leadership. In both instances, time seen the mettle and stability of both institutions begin to crumble due to individuals with personal agendas who orchestrated hoax controversies designed to create dissension among the Republic, while mindless drones were rallied to support such ambitious individuals.

The plot of Episode III is yet to be revealed in any specificity, but we do know what ultimately will transpire leading up to the final three episodes of the series. The setting of this trilogy reveals that the Old Republic has crumbled from internal strife giving way to

an invincible Galactic Empire headed by a dark Jedi who manipulates the ways of the Forces for evil purposes. The Empire consolidated its power by hunting down the Jedi and destroying all knowledge of the Force; leaving the Jedi extinct and in hiding. In this instance, the Empire seems to resemble the Indian Act system that has been imposed upon indigenous people in Canada, motivated to diminish their traditional ways and suppress any resistance towards it.

In time, those who became fed up with the tyranny of the Empire began to organize and created a movement called the Rebel Alliance that provided a front to resist the military might of the imperial forces. The Rebel Alliance desired the democratic ways and peaceful nature of the Old Republic and sought to resurrect and re-institute their *traditional government*. Sound familiar? Indeed, we all can recognize the popular movement within Mohawk communities to return to our traditional government while recognizing the tyranny of the Indian Act system and the need to resist it.

Unfortunately for the Rebels in the movie, they believed in the righteousness of the Force, but lacked the training and knowledge needed to wield the Force as a weapon to defend themselves against the Empire. Here in Kahnawake, most people believe that the Kaianere'kó:wa is path for our people to take, but are still in the learning process of this intricate philosophy. One day, I suppose, we can all become Jedis again with the proper discipline and open mindedness.

There are number of more specific comparisons, but I'm sure you got the idea. I hope that those of you who are sci-fi skeptics can now recognize the profound elements that exist within Star Wars, and appreciate the extremely cool history we have as Haudenosaunee. The story that interests me, however, takes place after the victory in the Return of the Jedi; as I'm sure division existed within the Rebel Alliance. Once the Empire is defeated, what then? Will the Rebels manage to restore peace and freedom throughout the galaxy, or will they become like many revolutions that see the oppressed become the oppressors? Likewise, destroying the Indian Act is the easy part, but building our future will take more than balls to achieve.

Ever onwards towards the good tidings of peace and power!