

The tribe that guarded the sacred precincts of the council house was distinguished for ages by its flattering title of the "Lenape"; but after the English changed the appellation of the river to "Delaware," they came gradually to be known by the same name. In the use of these terms, however, great delicacy of perception was observed among themselves. These shades of expression pervade their language, tempering all their communications, and frequently imparting its pathos or energy to their eloquence.

For many hundreds of miles along the northern boundaries of the Lenape were seated another people, similarly situated as to subdivisions, descent, and language. They were called by their neighbours the "Mengwe." These northern savages were for a time, however, less powerful, and less united, than the Lenape. In order to obviate this disadvantage, five of the most powerful and warlike of their tribes, who lay nearest to the council house of their enemies, confederated for the purposes of mutual defence; being in truth, the oldest United Republics of which the history of North America furnishes any evidence. These tribes were the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Senecas, the Cayugas, and Onondagas. At a later day, a straggling band of their race, which had "gone nigher to the sun," was reclaimed and admitted into a full communion of all their political privileges. This tribe (the Tuscarora) increased their numbers so far, that the English changed the appellation they had given the confederation from the "Five" to the "Six Nations." It will be seen, in the course of the narrative, that the word nation is sometimes applied to a community, and sometimes to the people, in their most extended sense. The Mengwe were often called by their Indian neighbours, the "Maquas," and frequently by way of contempt, "Mingoes." The French gave them the name of "Iroquois," which was probably a corruption of one of their own terms.

There is a well-authenticated and disgraceful history of the means by which the Dutch on one side, and the Mengwe on the other, succeeded in persuading the Lenape to lay aside their arms, trusting their defence entirely to the latter, and becoming, in short, in the figurative language of the natives, "women." The policy on the part of the Dutch was a safe one, however generous it may have been. From that moment may be dated the downfall of the greatest and most civilised of the Indian nations, that existed within