

Syracuse

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# Halbritter Focuses on Enterprise In Talk

■ The Oneida leader spoke to business students at his alma mater, Syracuse University.

By DAVID TOBIN  
*The Post-Standard*

To aspiring business executives at Syracuse University's graduate School of Management, New York Oneida leader Ray Halbritter had words of affirmation — economic power is the foundation for political power.

"It may be that economic rights are as important to a people as human rights, as civil rights," Halbritter told the audience of about 80 students and faculty.

Halbritter, in his 90-minute talk at his alma mater, reviewed Iroquois and Oneida Nation history and touched on issues facing the Oneidas and other Iroquois nations in New York.

On Gov. George Pataki's request to negotiate with Indian nations over sales tax issues by June or face state collection of sales tax on goods sold to non-Indians on Indian territory: "We won't negotiate unless the governor lifts the ultimatum. We won't negotiate with a gun to our heads."

On last week's Supreme Court decision strengthening states' immunity from lawsuits: "It won't affect us. We already have our gaming compact, and we got the state to waive its sovereign immunity (against being sued on gaming matters) in our compact."

On construction of the Oneidas'



DAVID LASSMAN/The Post-Standard

**New York Oneida leader Ray Halbritter speaks at Syracuse University's School of Management about economic opportunities and empowerment for the Oneida Nation.**

luxury hotel at Turning Stone: "It will start in two weeks, hopefully. Steel should be delivered in 10 days."

On the Oneidas' plans for a casino in Monticello: "It's entirely up to the governor. That'd be tough now to get anything started."

On disputes over his leadership: "Ninety percent of Oneida people wrote documents supporting me. I don't think Pataki has that. I don't think President Clinton has that."

Halbritter told students that the Oneidas try to make decisions mindful of the Iroquois traditions of consensus and right-mindedness.

Profit is not the sole end, he said. Oneida Nation members' improved self-esteem is the greatest benefit to come from nation enterprises, he said.

"But some Indian people think, if you do something modern, you're going against your religion," he said.

As an example of emphasis on traditional values, he cited the Oneidas' policy against serving alcohol in Turning Stone casino. "It's the only casino in the country that doesn't serve alcohol," he said.

Halbritter also cited the Oneidas' payments to the town of Verona for

renovation of its town hall, a new master plan and a \$7 million extension of sewer and water lines.

He suggested that sovereign Indian nations such as the Oneidas could greatly benefit their neighboring states and communities with free-trade zones that provide tax advantages to businesses that locate there.

Oneida Nation success, he said, has flowed from the spirit with which its business enterprises were undertaken.

"You really can't be fulfilled unless you give without expecting a return," he said.