

Alf Jacques (Onondaga, Turtle Clan), Stick Maker of the Iroquois

Since the gift of the Creator's game, Dey-Hon-Tshi-Gwa'-Ehs or Lacrosse, the Onondagas and the Haudenosaunee have long enjoyed playing this intense physical and intellectual game. But like most things, there are special abilities and talents that individuals possess that are needed even before the game can begin. One of those individuals is the *Stick Maker*. For over 50 years at the **Onondaga Nation**, that title has been held by Louis or **Alfred Jacques**.



Alf Jacques [Onondaga Turtle Clan] is both lacrosse stick carver and lacrosse player. Alf learned the traditional art of lacrosse stick making from his father, the late master lacrosse carver, Lou Jacques, who taught Alf at age twelve to carve and web the lacrosse sticks. Alf himself is a professional box lacrosse player who is the only player to have held every position in field and box lacrosse. Alf carves his sticks from shagbark, shell or smooth hickory wood. The complicated procedure of cutting, seasoning, steaming, bending and carving from hickory wood is a time-consuming process and the netting involves a webbing technique with either leather or "gut." Alf explains that for Native Americans, lacrosse is both play and religious tradition because as a medicine game, it "keeps the people alert."



Alfred Jacques crafts wooden stick at his workshop.

