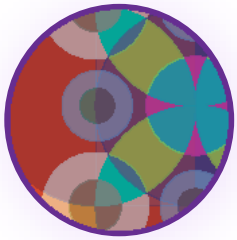


TEACHING

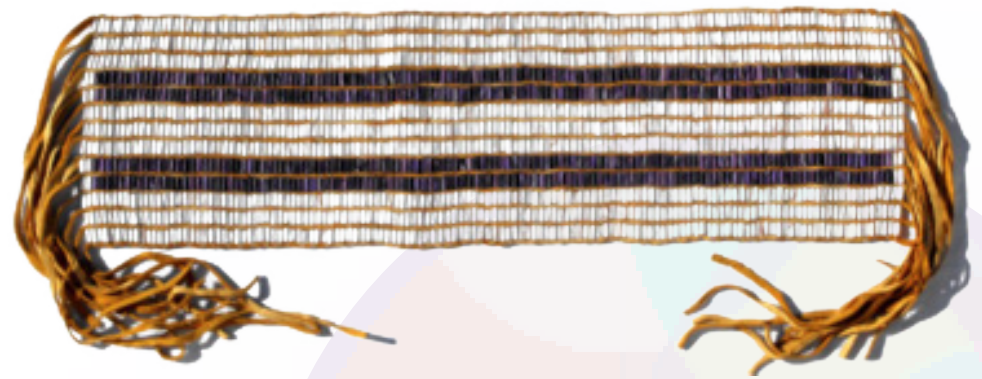
Two Row and Dish With One Spoon Wampum Covenants



Many Indigenous stories and teachings focus on relationships and forging alliances and covenants: with Creator; with the cosmos, lands, waters, animals and plants; with the ancestors and future generations; and between sovereign nations (Indigenous and settler). There are often sacred symbols and metaphors that conceptualize teachings and relationships in ways that make them both more accessible and deepen their meaning, adding an enduring relevance and application that are not bound to a specific moment in time or place. With respect to truth and reconciliation commitments and building long-term, mutually respectful, and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous community, Indigenous teachings and metaphors are rich learning tools for municipalities and civic institutions. Although centuries old, the Two Row Wampum and Dish With One Spoon Covenants continue to be important guiding principles for guiding city building and urban planning in 2021.

Background

The Guswenta¹ or Wampum Treaty is considered the “Grandfather of all treaties” and was a mutual covenant made in 1613 between representatives of the 5 Nations of the Haudenosaunee (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca – previous to the Tuscarora joining the confederacy in 1722) and representatives of the Dutch government in what is now upstate New York. The Two Row Wampum agreement was later renewed with the French, British, and American governments under the framework of the Silver Covenant Chain agreements.²



Credit: Two Row Wampum Belt (Photo Credit: Wampum Chronicles)³

1 - There are a number of different Indigenous names for the Wampum treaty or covenant depending on the Indigenous language such as Teioháte in Mohawk and Aterihwíhsón:sera Kaswénta in Cayuga.

2 - Maracle, C. (2015). Grandfather of All Treaties. Vtape: Toronto. <<https://www.vtape.org/video?vi=8500>>

3 - <http://www.wampumchronicles.com/tworowwampumbelt.html>

After much conflict, both the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee were inspired to build peace between their nations. The Two Row Wampum covenant is a foundational metaphor and teaching across Indigenous Nations of what an equitable, mutually respectful, and healthy relationship of co-existence can be between Indigenous peoples and settler society. The Two Rows of the Wampum Belt are a visual depiction of the alliance, with two parallel lines of purple beads symbolizing the canoe carrying the Haudenosaunee peoples, traditions, laws, and lifeways; and the ship carrying the traditions and laws of the Dutch.

The Two Row Wampum teaching tells the story of two sovereign peoples separately steering their own vessel on the human-made river of peace, strength through unity, and a good mind/equal justice. It tells of two distinct peoples and political entities bound in the spirit of alliance and mutual respect for each nation's right to self-determine their own path, and agree to share the same lands and resources peaceably. The Guswenta teaching was given to the Haudenosaunee peoples by the Peacemaker and ancestors and has been passed down over the centuries in the oral tradition. The Two Row and other Wampum belts are used by First Nations for the purposes of teaching, ceremony, governance, and as a model for repairing nation-to-nation relationships across Turtle Island.

Contemporary interpretations of the Two Row Wampum oral teaching consider that its founding architects had the foresight to know that there would come a time in the two row journey when either settlers may want to enter into the canoe or worldviews of Indigenous Nations, or on the other hand, Indigenous people may want to (or be forced into) the ship and ways of settler governments and society. There was also a prophecy in the Two Row teaching that people from either nation would have a foot in each vessels or world, and become unstable in their foundation.⁴ The legacies of colonialism and assimilation, coupled with new

4 - Hill, R. (2016). Two Row Wampum Conversation in Cultural Fluency #5 Guest Lecture

opportunities and futures for Indigenous peoples at the intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems, make the straddling of both worlds a common reality for many – especially younger generations.

Unfortunately, centuries of colonial rule by different European nations in Turtle Island corrupted the original spirit, intention, and manifestation of the values and principles of the wampum covenant. In particular, the British Crown and contemporary Canadian governments sought to systematically and systemically disrupt, control, and damage Indigenous Nations and territories. "Polishing" the Guswenta refers to a commitment to revisit this powerful teaching by the Haudenosaunee ancestors to renew their relationships and agreements. This is where the work lies for current and future generations: to protect and reaffirm the original oral teaching and live by their values and principles.⁵ In this current era of Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation and righting relationships, the Two Row Wampum teaching is particularly relevant.

Integral rights and responsibilities outlined within wampum agreements like the Two Row and the Dish With One Spoon are the commitment by all parties to peaceably share the particular lands and resources of the region where they are negotiated. Described as 'one-dish alliances', wampum treaties identified hunting grounds and resource commons to be cared for and used sustainably by all nations sharing the region. Just as family members ate from 'one dish,' each entitled to their own portion, nations in close proximity to one another agreed to share the same hunting territory and resources without conflict over access.

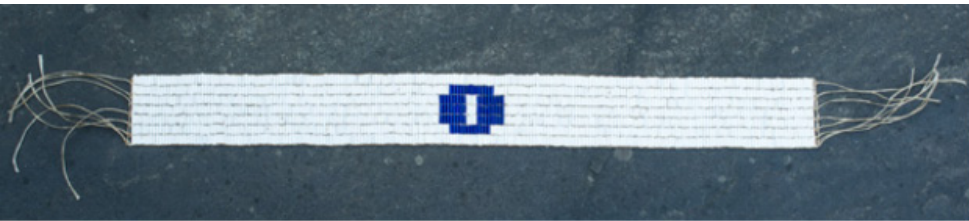
presented as part of the Conversations in Cultural Fluency Lecture Series, Six Nations Polytechnic. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTpFqm_lUNo&pbjreload=101>

5 - Ibid

6 - Counsel of Grandparents (n.d.), The Dish with One Spoon, Well Living House <<http://www.welllivinghouse.com/about-us/research-ethics-well-living-house-governance/>>

Dish with One Spoon Wampum

The Dish with One Spoon Wampum between the Anishinaabe Three Fires Confederacy (Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations) and Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora) is the most well-known inter-nation 'one-dish alliances.' It represents a formal peace agreement assuring mutual benefit to all parties and extends to all other Indigenous Nations and settlers who arrived in the area around the Great Lakes region (including Ontario) and along the St. Lawrence River up to the border with the current province of Quebec. This wampum covenant and other 'one-dish treaties' reflect the principles that were given to the Haudenosaunee by the Peacemaker in the Kaienerekowa (Great Law of Peace).



Credit: Dish With One spoon Wampum Belt (Photo credit: Muskrat Magazine)⁷

7 - <http://muskratmagazine.com/toronto-aka-tkaronto-passes-new-city-council-protocol/>

The Peacemaker said that nation leaders should eat from this common dish, sharing one spoon and only taking what each one needs. No knife should be used as there should be no conflict and violence; everyone has an equal right to eat from the dish or harvest from the land's bounty.⁸ There should always be something for others and future generations and the plate should be kept clean. Our harvest from and development of the land should be based on ethical, conscious practice as caring stewards.

Although the Haudenosaunee-Anishinaabe relationship has at times been strained by war, the two confederacies have maintained respectful relations since the creation of the peace agreement in 1701. Again the dish represents shared hunting grounds, but in the Haudenosaunee version there is one spoon not only to reinforce the idea of sharing and responsibility, but also to promote peace. First Nations continue to use a 'one-dish protocol' when obtaining permission to hunt and harvest foods from neighbouring nations and communities, or the right to travel across their lands.⁹ Like the Two Row Wampum, the Dish With One Spoon has deep relevance for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies in terms of building equitable and reciprocal relationships across nations, governments, and communities; and ethical planning, use, and stewardship of the lands that we share.

8 - Maracle, C., Hill, R. and Decaire, R. (n.d.) Haudenosaunee Gifts: Contributions to Our Past and Our Common Future, Earth to Table Legacies. <https://earthtotables.org/essays/haudenosaunee-gifts/>

9 - Counsel of Grandparents (n.d.), The Dish with One Spoon, Well Living House <http://www.welllivinghouse.com/about-us/research-ethics-well-living-house-governance/>

Oral Narrative of the Two Row Wampum

The following excerpt outlines the relationship and agreement between Haudenosaunee leaders and the Dutch settlers. It is based on the oral history of the Two Row Wampum covenant and belt by Cayuga Chief Jacob Thomas,¹⁰:

There was not much “love” between the settlers and the Natives in the beginning of first contact.

The parties began to talk about forming a friendship.

The Creator did not intend that we would live in discord, and we should respect one another instead.

They came to one mind to make a legal agreement (meaning words on paper and words in wampum belts) so that all descendants will know what was agreed upon.

They agreed on the symbols of their new relationship:

- *First, they would have friendship and love as the Creator intended. In this way they would have peace. This will be symbolised by the Earth, the Creator’s creation, and its happenings (as long as the Earth lasts, so too will the agreement).*
- *Second, we’ll take each other by the hand (take a hold of each other’s arm). They agreed to call each other ‘brother,’ because brothers cannot control each other. They are equals.*

10 - Chief Jacob Thomas. (May 2007). Recorded by Michael Foster, Canadian Museum of Civilization Seen in: Hill, R. (2013). Talking Points on History and Meaning of the Two Row Wampum Belt presented at Deyoháhá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre, Ohsweken, ON. <<http://honorhetworow.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TwoRowTalking-Points-Rick-Hill.pdf>>

They sealed their friendship by smoking sacred tobacco, so that the Creator will then bear witness to our agreement.

They agreed to solidify their agreements with a three-link chain:

- *First link stands for friendship.*
- *Second link stands for our both having good minds*
- *Third link means there will always be peace.*

Principles of the agreement:

- *They both have their own authority (strength/power), and do not have jurisdiction over each other.*
- *They have their respective beliefs, from the same Creator.*
- *They have their respective laws.*
- *Term of the Agreement – They agreed it will last as long as:*
 - *The Sun always makes it bright on earth.*
 - *The Waters flow in a certain direction.*
 - *The Wild Grasses grow at a certain time of year.*

They placed their two vessels (onake = canoe & honwey = boat, in Mohawk) in the water, lined them up evenly and set them on parallel courses, for the people to follow. Inside each they put their respective beliefs and laws:

- *The Ögwë’ö:weh said: “We will make a wampum belt of that likeness of two paths so people will know what we will go by.”*

- *“People who get into your boat will be guided by it. Your people who will get into the canoe will be guided by the ways of the canoe.”*
- *Someone who has a foot in each boat might fall into the water and no power on earth can help them.*
- *From time to time, they will meet to polish off the dust that has settled in the agreements and thereby renew their relationship and the agreements we have made.*
- *“We will appear the way we did when we first met.” (meaning, wearing distinctive clothing)*
- *“All of our people shall always know of it (the agreements). And there will be peace in the days to come.”*



Credit: Two Row Commemoration (Artist Credit: Mohawk artist Tracy Thomas)

Dish With One Spoon - A poem by Duke Redbird

*The Mississauga Nation welcomed settlers from across the seas
 When they arrived in their territories Such beauty revealed before their eyes
 Was beyond their ability to describe
 In all the languages that the settlers spoke
 There were no words that could evoke
 With any clarity a single thought
 What Mother nature's splendour brought
 It was from Indigenous tongues that the settlers learned
 the language of the Earth in all Her idioms
 Toronto from Tkaronto
 Tree standing in the water
 A meeting place where small fish could gather
 Nearby hills where alders grow
 That was called Etobicoke
 And in the autumn, before the winter snows
 The passenger pigeons rested in Mimico
 And to the west, where the great waters flow
 The lake and lands were called Ontario
 Eagles soar high with prayers for manitou
 The Mississauga peoples smudge and launch their birch-bark canoes
 Three sisters: corn, bean and squash
 The planting season has begun
 Tobacco is offered a gift to Grandfather Sun
 Sage, sweetgrass and cedar to Grandmother Moon
 There is peace, joy and harmony in the treaty lands called A Dish With One
 Spoon*