THE TWO ROW WAMPUM:
HISTORIC FICTION, MODERN REALITY

Mémoire
présenté
à la Faculté des études supérieures
de l'Université Laval
pour l'obtention
du grade de maître ès arts (M.A.)

Département d'histoire
FACULTÉ DES LETTRES
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL

FÉVRIER 2004

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Abstract

Contemporary Iroquois hail the Two Row Wampum as the grandfather of all treaties between Amerindians and Europeans, asserting the everlasting autonomy of each nation regarding their own beliefs, traditions and laws. However, early colonial written sources do not refer to any such agreement resembling the Two Row, despite their descriptive detail of Iroquois-European political proceedings. This thesis examines the contradiction between Iroquois oral tradition and European written documentation, illustrating how the Two Row appears to be a nineteenth century invention. Despite dubious historical origins, the Two Row nevertheless provides the guiding principles of peace and autonomy innately assumed by the Iroquois at contact. Today, as a mythic discourse of heroic proportions, the Two Row asserts the nationhood of the Iroquois who, threatened with extinction, struggle to maintain their cultural and political autonomy.

Résumé

Les Iroquois contemporains considèrent le wampum à deux voies comme le plus ancien traité amérindien-européen, qui affirme l'autonomie politique de chaque nation. Les sources écrites de la période coloniale cependant, malgré leurs détails descriptifs des négociations politiques, ne mentionnent aucune entente de ce type. Ce mémoire démontre la contradiction entre la tradition orale iroquoise et les sources écrites européennes, et soutient l'hypothèse de l'invention du wampum à deux voies au cours du dix-neuvième siècle. Malgré ses origines historiques douteuses, le wampum à deux voies exprime les principes inhérents au contact : la paix et l'indépendance. Aujourd'hui, le mythe du wampum à deux voies sert à réclamer la préservation de l'identité nationale des Iroquois qui, menacés par l'extinction, luttent pour conserver leur autonomie culturelle et politique.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my director, Laurier Turgeon, for suggesting the fascinating subject of wampum belts and for providing me with a solid foundation for my research. I am also grateful to my co-director, Denys Delâge, for his knowledge of the Two Row Wampum in particular and for the words of caution that ensured I examined my sources with a critical eye. To both, I would also like to offer my thanks for comments and suggestions on my completed chapters and guidance along the way.

I am also grateful to Kara Zemel, Library Technician of the Kanien’kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Centre in Kahnawake for her help in locating a number of obscure and valuable articles. Keith Jamieson also kindly provided me with personal documents and newspaper articles from the Woodland Cultural Centre’s Library in Brantford, Ontario. I am also indebted to Keith for arranging an afternoon with Norm Jacobs (Grand River Wampum Keeper) and his wife Carol (Cayuga Bear Clan Mother), whom I warmly thank for their time, revered knowledge and patience in explaining the Two Row Wampum and the Haudenosaunee worldview.
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Introduction

Wampum means nothing to white man, all to Indian.

Thomas Webster
Onondaga Wampum Keeper¹

Contemporary Haudenosaunee² hail the Two Row Wampum belt as the grandfather of all treaties, ratified between their Confederacy and the Europeans in the seventeenth century. Perpetually ensuring the friendship, respect and autonomy between the Indian and the White man, the Two Row outlines these principles in its structure and metaphors. Signifying 'One River, Two Vessels,' the purple lines represent the Iroquois canoe and the European ship comprising the laws, traditions and customs of their respective people. Each vessel travels down the river of life in a parallel path, never interfering with the other.³

Figure 1. Chief Jacob Thomas holding a replica of the Two Row Wampum.  
*Wampum: Beads Tell the Story,*  

² We use Haudenosaunee and Iroquois interchangeably throughout this thesis to describe those belonging to the Six Nations Confederacy. The Confederacy comprised of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca nations, with the Tuscaoras joining in the early 1700s.
Today, the Two Row Wampum provides the foundation for assertions of sovereignty and self-government, as the Haudenosaunee call upon the Canadian and American governments to respect their historic pledge. Of course, the importance placed upon this particular wampum belt does not derive solely from contemporary political aspirations, nor from contact era diplomacy. Rather, the importance of wampum belts originates hundreds of years ago in pre-contact America.

Shell beads, early ancestors of today’s wampum beads, existed long before contact in North-eastern societies, perhaps serving to identify and sustain social or ethnic relationships among those who would later become Iroquoians. In fact, although the Haudenosaunee possessed few before contact, these precious shells dominated Iroquoian mythology, testifying to their importance in cultural matters. Wampum as the slim tubular shell beads that we know today only originated around the contact era, manufactured by the Algonquians of Long Island and Cape Cod. Extremely valuable in ceremonies, as presents and as decoration on clothing and the body, the Iroquois wove their wampum beads together with deerskin, creating necklaces, strings and, eventually, belts.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Europeans mistook wampum beads for money because of their high demand amongst Amerindians. Dutch factories produced the beads to purchase furs, which, along with the introduction of iron tools into Native societies, greatly increased the quantity produced. Natives and Europeans circulated wampum beads

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5 The name Hiawatha, the prophet-founder of the Iroquois Confederacy, signifies “he who seeks the wampum belt.” This definition undoubtedly evolved after contact since Iroquoia did not possess enough wampum beads to produce belts prior to European arrival. William M. Beauchamp, “Wampum and Shell Articles Used by the New York Indian”, Frederick J.H. Merrill ed., Bulletin of the New York State Museum, 8, 41, (February 1901), p. 341.
8 Wilbur R. Jacobs, “Wampum, the Protocol of Indian Diplomacy”, William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser. 6.4 (October 1040), p. 596.
throughout the Northeast, necessary for social, political, religious\(^9\) and now economic relations. The Iroquois attained a large supply of wampum due to their supremacy in warfare and commerce, and they soon made numerous belts to express the most important of messages, including diplomatic agreements.

The presentation of wampum strings and belts, accompanied by eloquent metaphorical discourse, was indispensable to the complex set of political proceedings in early contact America. The first North American treaty recorded exemplifies this custom, with the Mohawk presenting multiple strings to French officials at Trois-Rivières in 1645.\(^{10}\) Each wampum string offered legitimized the accompanying speech in which Kiotseaeton, the Mohawk speaker, strove to negotiate a peace and the return of prisoners with poetic symbolism. The exchange of wampum soon became the necessary protocol for all political negotiations between the Iroquois\(^{11}\) and the Europeans. Accompanied by oral tradition, wampum strings were used for smaller agreements such as condolences and prisoner return while the intricate belts preserved the intentions and articles of ratified treaties guaranteeing the crucial alliances of the period in a distinctly Native way.

The Europeans, however, did not comprehend the crucial significance of wampum in diplomacy whereby the belts served Amerindians as living interpretations of messages, as ratified agreements,\(^{12}\) and as mnemonic aids of recollection.\(^{13}\) Europeans accepted the wampum belt tradition, creating, presenting and accepting belts in diplomatic discussions, but only because successful negotiations necessitated such protocol.\(^{14}\) They did not recognize the sacred nature of wampum belts as living diplomatic documents in the same

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\(^{11}\) Of course, many other North-east Woodland Natives used wampum belts in negotiations with European powers, as well as amongst themselves, but this thesis concentrates on the Iroquois uses of such treaties.


\(^{13}\) Michael Foster, "Another Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils", Jennings et al., eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, p. 99.

\(^{14}\) Snyderman, "The Functions of Wampum", p. 473.
way that Amerindians did not accept written European treaties, contrary to their understanding of political etiquette.

0.1 Historiography

Wampum belt historiography parallels the much broader domain of Amerindian studies. Each evolved according to four main trends, all of which overlap to a certain extent: Firstly, during the nineteenth century, researchers ignored the 'primitive savage'; Secondly, the beginning of the twentieth century marked the fear of Native extinction; Thirdly, the 1930s saw ethnohistory emerge as a valid approach; and, lastly, after the Second World War, the study of Native history became increasingly politicized.

Throughout the first trend, many westerners ignored Native history, which they considered primitive and thus undeserving of preservation. Following with the Euro-American obsession with social Darwinism, most nineteenth century historians regarded Amerindians as inferior beings, almost animal-like, thereby selecting and evaluating historical evidence according to the racist values and assumptions of the period. These historians, most notably Francis Parkman, did not describe Native tradition according to its own merits, but instead judged Amerindian culture in terms of what it lacked in comparison to Europeans, and assumed that indigenous civilisations would perish in the name of progress. Throughout this period, researchers ignored wampum belts, considered the primitive attempt of an archaic civilisation to emulate superior European record keeping.

A second trend emerged with the fear of imminent extinction of North American Indians at the turn of the twentieth century. Artists and historians refuted the cold-blooded, malicious savage of the past, creating a so-called Imaginary Indian, popularized in the early twentieth century by environmentalists such as Grey Owl, authors and entertainers such as

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15 Of course, this is not the case with all researchers of the nineteenth century. Some, such as Lewis Henry Morgan in his book *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or, Iroquois*, describe Native societies as primitive, yet deserving of study and respect for cultural and political achievements. (Rochester, New York: Sage & Brother, 1851).


Pauline Johnson and artists such as Emily Carr. Historical research also reflected this exotic image of the noble savage. American anthropologist Horatio Hale, wrote extensively of Iroquois society and government, describing indigenous peoples throughout the Americas as perfect human beings with “the love of peace, the sentiment of human brotherhood, the strong social and domestic affections, the respect for law, and the reverence for ancestral greatness.” While many Natives undoubtedly held these values dear, Hale, and many others, painted a perfect picture of indigenous society, which was highly misleading and which resulted in “an idealized image of the Indian.” Such romanticization of Native cultures led to the desperate desire to preserve the artefacts and culture of a seemingly dying race, succumbing to government sanctioned assimilation policies and the prohibition of traditional rituals. Multiple historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, including William M. Beauchamp, Frank G. Speck, Horatio Hale and Arthur C. Parker, attempted to preserve Native artefacts, laws and customs in museums, written documents and photographs before it was too late. Academics still considered wampum belts inferior to writing; however, wampum also represented the disappearing Indian’s noble culture, reminiscent of a once powerful, yet primitive, Native society.

The third ethnohistorical trend developed in the 1930s (and which continues today), influenced greatly by Franz Boas’ tradition of studying “the ways of life of specific Indian peoples, rather than items of culture in isolation from the total cultures of which they were a part.” Thus, instead of ignoring Native culture, or studying it in a vacuum, void of European or other Native influences, ethnohistory examines the complex and diverse points of contact amongst Natives and Europeans over the previous centuries. Diverging from the traditional study of elitist political history, historians now examine the social, cultural and economic history of previously marginalized groups. Today, interest in other previously ignored subjects such as the various functions of wampum beads and belts, adds a new dimension to Amerindian history whereby multiple sources and angles of analysis unravel the complexities of the past. Following with an ethnohistorical approach, academics study

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20 Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, p. 196.
22 Ibid., p. 100.
23 Ibid., p. 101.
material culture as an important, non-verbal, testimonial of the past.\textsuperscript{24} Previously only descriptive of ‘primitive’ societies without writing, the study of material culture now exposes a relationship between physical objects and human behaviour in every western and non-western society.\textsuperscript{25} Material culture researchers, such as Laurier Turgeon and Lynn Ceci, find wampum belts fascinating since their movements between multiple societies describe intercultural relationships often absent in oral and written sources.\textsuperscript{26}

The final stage, marking the politicization of Aboriginal historiography, occurred with the altering social dogma halfway through the twentieth century. At the end of the Second World War ethnic minorities demanded liberation from colonial powers, and the United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights guaranteed Native cultural freedom,\textsuperscript{27} thus changing western academia in fundamental ways. Gaining momentum during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, some historians began examining Amerindians in a new light, one where Natives possessed agency in Amerindian-European relations. Researchers such as William Fenton, Michael K. Foster and Francis Jennings\textsuperscript{28} examine individual nations as existing autonomously both before and after contact, instead of either ignoring Amerindian presence, villainifying Native deeds or romanticizing Aboriginal lives. Wampum belts provide the perfect opportunity for historians to delve into a formerly overlooked subject, interpreting their findings to emphasize the prior cultural, social and political autonomy of Native peoples. Today, wampum belts have regained some of their historic command, since, as Pauline Joly de Lotbinière points out, “le registre des wampums


\textsuperscript{27} Alan C. Cairns, “Aboriginal Nationalism and Canadian Citizenship”, \textit{Cité Libre}, (Fall 2000), p. 51.

sert à rappeler au gouvernement fédérale ses responsabilités.”

This impact on current political debate and governmental responsibilities reminds academics of the importance of accurate historical interpretation. It is difficult to determine the exact terms of agreement settled with particular wampum belts, however, increasing political recognition of Amerindian rights demand that historical inquiry shed light upon these diplomatic covenants of the past.

The evolution of Native historiography whereby ethnohistory extends into previously unexamined areas and the politicization of historic discourse fulfills certain ambitions, guarantees controversy. Many historians, such as William Fenton, Maurice Ratelle and André Vachon, view wampum belts as simple historic artefacts, souvenirs of the ancient relations between Amerindians and Europeans of the contact period. In this sense, while recognizing the anterior importance of wampum, they reduce the belts to historically ‘dead’ objects, created and used by humans only in the past. Other researchers, such as Richard Hill, Michael K. Foster and George S. Snyderman, as well as Six Nations communities, value wampum belts not simply as objects, but as living treaties that represent historic and contemporary contracts between sovereign nations. While contemporary diplomatic negotiations between First Nations and the Canadian state no longer require the presentation of wampum belts, these researchers consider the ancient pacts still in effect, having never been renegotiated by any government.

0.2 Hypothesis

The great disagreement regarding the historic and contemporary status of wampum belts, which volleys between ancient artefacts and living documents, provides the starting point for this thesis. The Two Row Wampum is just one belt among many that enters this debate with contemporaries claiming it incarnates historic proof of Iroquois sovereignty. According to the Haudenosaunee, the very fact that Europeans accepted and appropriated wampum belts in nation-to-nation negotiation demonstrates the historic and perpetual sovereignty of the Iroquois people. European states on the other hand, never considered the Amerindian nations as equal, only acquiescing to their political rituals to appease them and gain allies to firmly establish command of the continent. Today, the repatriation of wampum belts previously ignored in museum vaults, revitalizes their role as a valid text, a testimony to the identity, religion, culture, government, as well as the hope and destiny of the Haudenosaunee, that challenges Euro-Canadian assumptions of superiority over the 'primitive savage.' The role of the Two Row Wampum belt as a powerful political tool and the hesitation on the part of the Canadian government to treat it as such requires that an inquiry shed light upon the origins of this belt.

At first glance, the Two Row Wampum's political message is incredibly powerful in an emotional sense, highlighting principles valued today among Natives and non-Natives alike. Haudenosaunee oral tradition interprets the belt as symbolizing a separate canoe and ship, sailing side by side down a river, which respects the autonomy and the sovereignty of each Nation. According to Iroquois oral tradition, the Dutch ratified the Two Row Wampum Treaty in the early seventeenth century and the English followed suit after their conquest of the Dutch in 1664, demonstrating that the Europeans understood, respected and guaranteed Iroquois autonomy. Iroquois traditionalists proclaim that the Two Row Wampum has guided all subsequent negotiations between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Crown to

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34 "Sacred Wampums of the Hodenosaunee", Undated article found at the Woodland Cultural Centre, Grand River, Ontario, 17 February 2003.
35 "The Two Row Wampum", Akwesasne Notes New Series, 1.3/4, p. 15.
36 Oral tradition also maintains that the Iroquois ratified the Two Row with the French in the mid-1600s and the Americans after the Revolution.
this day,\textsuperscript{37} despite the Canadian and American refusal to respect their historic guarantee of Iroquois sovereignty. The Two Row emotionally compels the contemporary governments to recognize their duty and return to the partnership of respect and autonomy initially established with the Haudenosaunee. Since the Haudenosaunee base their current political demands of Iroquois autonomy and self-government on the interpretation of the Two Row belt, it appears important to verify its historical accuracy. This thesis thus examines contemporary Iroquois oral tradition of the Two Row Wampum, as well as European seventeenth and eighteenth century sources and Iroquois nineteenth century records in an attempt to discover the true origins of this contemporary guarantor of perpetual sovereignty.

We are interested in two principle questions. Firstly, did the Two Row Wampum exist historically or is it a relatively recent invention in order to justify the historic sovereignty of the Six Nations? If the Two Row Wampum did exist in the seventeenth century as the most important of all treaties, as proclaimed by contemporary oral tradition, then it is reasonable to assume that we can trace its origins through the use of both written and oral sources. If, on the other hand, the Two Row is a fabrication of later years, the historical record would undoubtedly remain silent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Secondly, if the Two Row did not exist historically, or if it existed in an alternate form than proclaimed by contemporaries, how, for what reasons, when and by whom was it invented or elaborated upon? Do the motivations surrounding a possible creation of a Two Row myth serve to reconstruct Haudenosaunee sovereignty, to preserve Iroquois identity, and/or to reclaim a dignity lost in the face of assimilation? We wish to unravel the life history, or the biography, of the Two Row Wampum in an effort to establish its true origins, including any possible creation or modification preceding its contemporary political usage.

The biography of an object is much like that of a person who simultaneously fulfills many different roles in society over their lifetime, in the familial, professional, psychological

\textsuperscript{37} While it may seem that the Canadian government should be included for relations past 1867, the Iroquois maintain that negotiation with the Canadian government is unnecessary since they made all anterior agreements with the British Crown. Of course, in practice today this is not the case, but the Iroquois nevertheless refuse to officially recognize the transfer of Indian Affairs to the Canadian government, insisting that as they historically treated with the British, they must renegotiate all previous pacts only with the Crown. Mercredi and Turpel, In the Rapids, p. 63.
or political realms. Accordingly, our examination of the Two Row Wampum traces its historic and contemporary functions in Iroquois society, while remaining conscious of the belt’s culturally constructed contexts, which also change over time. Igor Kopytoff describes the key questions needed to unearth the life histories of either an object or a person:

What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its ‘status’ and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in the thing’s ‘life,’ and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?

Only by asking such detailed questions can we discover the true ‘life’ of an object, whose role, as described by Janet Hoskins, is crucial “for self-definition and an anchor for the self-historicizing subject.” The Two Row is thus not simply an object with a meaning, but is pivotal in describing the Haudenosaunee individual and worldview as “a tool of autobiographic self-discovery, a way of knowing oneself through things.” Furthermore, attaching a seemingly ordinary object, such as a beaded belt, to an event embeds it “in the memory as markers of the extraordinary,” evident with the spiritual zeal that holds the Two Row above all treaties. We thus examine each stage in the Two Row Wampum’s life to glean insight into the worldview of a nation, spoken from the Two Row’s three historic phases: birth, museum display, and, today, restoration as a politically powerful national symbol of the Haudenosaunee people.

### 0.3 Outline

Our study of the Two Row Wampum’s origins begins in the first chapter with a philosophical debate regarding ‘What is writing?’, which is crucial to understand because contemporary Iroquois equate the Two Row Wampum to written European treaties. Then,

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39 Ibid, p. 66.
41 Ibid, p. 198.
detailed examination of our controversial sources (material, oral and written) illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of each, demonstrating how they can manipulate our understanding of the Two Row Wampum. An explanation of our methodology outlines the procedure by which we illuminate the perplexing origin of the Two Row in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter proceeds to outline the oral tradition of the Two Row Wampum as understood in a contemporary context. In discussing the metaphorical symbolism of the Two Row today, we reveal the meanings associated with colour, the canoe, ship and river, as well as kinship relations. Then, a detailed examination of Dutch and English historic documents from both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries investigates the existence of the Two Row Wampum during the colonial period.

In the third chapter we breach the first accounts of the Two Row Wampum's oral tradition of the late nineteenth century, describing how such a message, innately implied since contact, took on a life of its own, evolving to the present-day interpretation. A case study of one Two Row Wampum belt held in the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation for over seventy years illustrates the transformation to the Two Row from an anterior to a contemporary meaning.

In the final chapter, we study the reasons behind the development of the Two Row, which serves to unify a people against a common aggressor and build a sense of cohesiveness and nationhood. In outlining the concept of mythistory in relation to the Two Row Wampum, it is easy to see why such an innovation remains so resilient over time. Finally, examining the contemporary political ramifications of using a myth to justify self-government in a Canadian context sheds light upon both the benefits and difficulties of such an aspiration.

43 There are at least 4 belts in existence today. This, according to Council Fire: A Resource Guide. (Brantford, Ontario: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1989), p. 8, is not unusual since "it is likely that the British gave the Confederacy copies of the original belt at later Councils to renew their commitment."
Chapter I
Sources and Methods: Comparing Wampum Belts, Written Records and Oral Tradition

According to Iroquois traditionalists, some sophisticated wampum belts fulfil the same goals as written treaties in that they permanently recorded diplomatic contracts between Natives and Europeans. The Two Row Wampum, for instance, outlines the guarantee of brotherhood, sovereignty and respect ratified at contact that is, according to the Six Nations, still valid today. It is therefore crucial to understand the similarities between wampum belts and writing which legitimizes Iroquois claims that their belts are equivalent to Europeans treaties. Although a comparison with writing may seem to undermine Native systems of communication and project a European term on a non-European culture, it is necessary because the western concept of writing is so prominent in our society.

This chapter examines the notion of the European phonetic alphabetic and its relation to wampum belts, ultimately demonstrating that, with a broader definition of writing, indigenous methods of recording communication can be included in the dominate western paradigm. Further on, we examine the merits and the shortcomings of our three sources; the belts themselves as historical testimony, oral tradition, and written documents, each of which offers a unique perspective of the Two Row Wampum’s origins. Finally, the methodology section explains our independent and simultaneous examination of each source in an effort to arrive at the most accurate and well-rounded interpretation of the Two Row Wampum. Beginning, then, with a definition and theoretical discussion of writing, we attempt to avoid Eurocentric bias and at the same time not fall victim to revisionism, but simply present the various debates surrounding the concept of writing and its possible extension to wampum belts.
1.1 What is Writing?

While it is possible to generalize by saying that writing (in the sense of scratching on solid surfaces or using any kind of material meant to codify meaning) is an activity common to several cultures (and it is conceivable that every culture with writing systems has expressions to designate these activities), the conceptualization (i.e., the “meaning network”) associated with the word and with the conceptualization of the activity is culture specific.\(^{44}\)

Writing exists in many forms, from the European alphabet to Chinese characters, serving to communicate a ‘coded’ form of knowledge, such as past events and specific instructions. Writing ultimately ensures accountability and respect for common social rules and the shared history of a particular (‘culture specific’) community. Only the members of a similar cultural-linguistic group can decipher the intricate system of codes and grammatology of the specific system. Even more narrowly defined, western writing is understood to literally transcribe speech,\(^{45}\) “by means of conventional visible marks.”\(^{46}\) Such a definition is severely limiting, for it does not consider the equivalent to writing in other cultures, such as semasiographic systems,\(^{47}\) which fulfil the same goals of communication through alternate means. Although phonetic and semasiographic systems may seem very different in their structures, they both trace their roots to oral tradition.

1.1.1 Writing, Orality and Evolution

The goal of all sophisticated writing systems is to express ideas orally.\(^{48}\) Semasiographic notation signifies a general idea that needs oral elaboration, while phonetic text spells out the sound emitted orally to provide the reader with the precise words describing an idea. Many scholars, in fact, view semasiographic and phonetic writing as inferior to speech and thought, serving only to supplement them.\(^{49}\) Ferdinand de Saussure, for example, hailed “the primacy of oral speech, which underpins all verbal communication,”\(^{50}\) claiming that writing exists only to represent the spoken word.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{47}\) Soon to be described in detail, semasiographic systems include symbols, signs and pictures.
Western writing fails in many ways to perfectly represent orality. Intonation, gestures and pauses, although captured in a limited way by grammatical notation, remain relatively obscured to a reader of a phonetic text.\textsuperscript{52} Semasiographic systems, however, with their reliance on accompanying oral tradition, maintain a closer relationship with orality.

Europeans often assume that the alphabet, or some sort of phonetic characters, is the apex of development, drawing a society out of the linguistic ‘dark ages’ during which semasiographic systems communicated thought. Following the path of European progress, western writing developed in Ancient Greece and gradually moved to Italy during the Renaissance and consumed France during the Enlightenment,\textsuperscript{53} leading many to mistakenly assume that phonetic writing is the only device by which to achieve evolutionary goals. The requirement of recording systems for the organisation of various establishments such as religion, the court, the government, the academy and the family,\textsuperscript{54} is obvious. Similarly, it is an accepted premise that writing and reading are essential for the development of science, history, philosophy, as well as academic expansions of literature, art and language itself.\textsuperscript{55} However, Native societies across the Americas, who did not possess ‘writing’ in the strict European sense, nevertheless formed complex religious, political, intellectual and social institutions, organizing their societies with semasiographic record keeping. The Aztec, Inca, Iroquois and other American civilisations prove that the evolution of political states and of knowledge systems is not uniquely dependent upon phonetic writing.

Upon arrival in the ‘New World,’ Europeans judged Native culture according to western thought and advancements and dismissed Native recording systems as primitive precursors to writing itself. However, an examination of American recording systems shows

\textsuperscript{52} Boone, “Introduction”, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{53} Mignolo, “Afterword”, p. 302.
\textsuperscript{54} Olson, “Literacy as Metalinguistics”, Olson and Torrance eds., \textit{Literacy and Orality}, p. 253.
\textsuperscript{55} Ong, \textit{Orality and Literacy}, p. 15.
that Indigenous semasiographic records strove to attain the same goals of communication and preservation of information as phonetic forms.

1.1.2 Writing and Drawing

While western development of the alphabet allowed for an increased distinction between writing and drawing,\textsuperscript{56} the latter remained a valuable and precise form of communication in many other cultures. The Aztec and the Maya of Mesoamerica did not differentiate between writing and painting in their hieroglyphics and did not consider their writing to be a direct reflection of the spoken word.\textsuperscript{57} The use of drawing is not so foreign as one might initially assume since today many other methods express ideas that the written word cannot accurately describe. For example, mathematical equations, chemical structures and geographic locations convey their meanings best in graphical, numerical and artistic forms, compensating for what the oral or written word would lack in their description.\textsuperscript{58}

If we take writing to mean "the communication of relatively specific ideas in a conventional manner by means of permanent, visible marks"\textsuperscript{59} as described by Geoffrey Sampson, then Amerindian pictorial systems can most definitely be included in this broad definition. Two categories of writing stem from Sampson's explanation: phonetic systems, enveloping the traditional representation of speech, and, semasiographic systems that "convey ideas independently from language and on the same logical level as spoken language rather than being parasitic on them as ordinary scripts are."\textsuperscript{60} Semasiographic systems further divide into two subcategories. The first is conventional, comprising mathematical, scientific and musical notations that express meaning through the placement of and relationship between other coded symbols. The second is iconic, such as road signs, signs for travelers, cleaning instructions, etcetera, which also convey meaning through relationships to other pictures. Both semasiographic systems transcend linguistic differences since certain symbols are commonly understood within similar cultural groups that do not

\textsuperscript{56} Mignolo "Afterword", p. 293.
\textsuperscript{57} Mignolo, "Afterword", p. 295.
\textsuperscript{58} Boone, "Introduction", p. 9.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
necessarily share the same language. The visual components of semasiographic language metaphoric ally represent ideas that require the reader to think of multiple meanings in a parallel fashion, not limiting them to separate distinct segments that follow a linear chain of sequence like the phonetic alphabetic system. Thus, both phonetic and semasiographic forms of visual communication permanently transcribe information according to the specific needs of individual communities.

1.1.3 Writing and the Quipu

The Incan quipu system, formed by long, multicoloured strings knotted in different places, coded information semasiographically in a complex, almost mathematical manner. While I. J. Gelb dismisses the use of the quipu for the recording of historical and other events as "plain fantasy," many other authors consider the quipu's purpose parallel to that of writing: both organized ideographical values to communicate knowledge, albeit in a very different manner than the alphabetic or even other semasiographic systems. Mirroring the wampum belt's interdependence with orality, only an interpreter trained in the intricate combination of strings, colours and knots could decode quipu messages. Thus, while the general sense of the message remained entrenched in the quipu's unique combination of knotted strings, the specific nuances ultimately depended on the interpreter's understanding of the event in question. While it may seem that this communication system does not fit into the category of writing, as they were not drawn on a solid surface with an instrument like other alphabetic or semasiographic systems, they nevertheless fulfilled the same goals as European writing in recording information. Some scholars refuse to include semasiographical writing as a reliable recording system since, according to John DeFrancis,
it "is limited in what it can express and who is able to understand it." However, this reliance of the quipu (and the wampum belt) on an interpreter to bring the message to life parallels European societies, where only those specifically trained could read alphabetic text. Thus, as Elizabeth Hill Boone highlights, despite differences in form, the quipu, as well as wampum belts, shared the same function of alphabetic documents:

One thing shared by all these indigenous New World systems is that they give accountability. Because they are permanent, or relatively so, they functioned for their societies to document and to establish ideas. As records, they are memory that can be inspected by others.... Most importantly, all were accepted as valid documents.

1.2 Reading Wampum Belts as Text

Some wampum belts fulfilled the same goals of writing, conveying, as George Henry Loskiel observed, "ideas to a distant nation, or... preserving the memory of remarkable events," by the unique placement and colour of beads and icons. For example, many belts depict a line running between two or more squares (representing different fires, or nations) or between two or more people (again, indicating nations), which illustrates an unobstructed path, or a peaceful road of communication between the groups. People holding hands or linking arms again shows a similar friendship, universally understood. A belt with a picture of a hatchet, on the other hand, implies war, which is yet again a symbol embedded in the consciousness of most human beings (those who understand exactly what a hatchet is, in any case).

Colour symbolism also communicated an important message, 'speaking' even before the official reading of a belt. White wampum symbolized "peace, desire for understanding,

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68 John DeFrancis, as cited in Ibid, p. 7.
69 Reading and writing long remained an elitist skill in Europe, excluding the common man or woman from the record keeping process. Similarly, in Incan and Iroquois societies, only those trained understood how to read the quipu and wampum belt.
70 Boone, "Introduction", p. 22.
72 See *Wampum Belts*, (Onchiota, New York: Six Nations Indian Museum) for crude illustrations of numerous belts.
and sociability,” while purple, or dark wampum “conveyed a semantic context of death, mourning, and associability.” A wampum belt painted red reflected “high emotion and excitement and the ultimate expression of antisociability: war.” While these values for white and red wampum beads coincide with the oral message of the belts themselves, the symbolism of purple wampum remains contestable. Many belts, perhaps even the majority that survive today, combine both purple and white beads in their pictographs and are known to represent peaceful relations. It therefore does not seem likely that the purple wampum beads strung into belts symbolized death during the contact period. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, however, purple wampum represented fatality and mourning, strung into single strands and used in the Iroquois Condolence Council to grieve for dead chiefs. As wampum belts developed as integral components of the treaty-making process, it seems likely that encoding pictures on the belts evolved as a means to avoid miscommunication among different Native and European nations. Obviously, to create certain pictographs, such as an open road of communication between two nations, two colours were needed. The increase in quantity of purple wampum after contact, allowed for a shift in the link between the colour purple and death in lieu of a necessity to create pictographs. Thus, Amerindians and Europeans avoided some of the miscommunication that resulted from differences in language and definitions by conversing through the universally comprehensible pictographs and colour symbolism on wampum belts. However, since the wampum’s icons and colours conveyed only the basic message and relied upon an interpreter for details, confusion and misinterpretation still existed if the belt’s oral accompaniment and metaphors were misconstrued in any way. If read correctly by a knowledgeable interpreter, however, many suggest that wampum belts parallel European books since good speakers can "point out the

74 Ibid, p. 325.
75 For example the First and Second William Penn Belts, the Two Row Belt, the Friendship Belt and the Hiawatha Belt, to name just a few.
77 Purple wampum was made from quahog or hard clam shell, which was very difficult to attain without the iron tools introduced by Europeans. See Beauchamp, “Wampum and Shell Articles”.
exact place on a belt which is to answer to each particular sentence,”79 with the icons and colours outlining the general story to the average observer.80

1.2.1 Wampum Belts as Treaties

Historically, within the Iroquois Confederacy wampum belts were the only way to record a treaty81 because they guaranteed the authenticity of the message and acted as a binding promise.82 The Iroquois had little use for written treaties, simply considered a European translation of the sacred belts.83 Even the Haudenosaunee protocol of accepting or refusing the belt paralleled how a signature or lack thereof indicated the acceptance or refusal of a European treaty.84 Europeans quickly adopted wampum protocol, crucial to negotiation with Native peoples in the Northeast Woodlands, and all parties presented the belts and eloquent messages ranging from access to trade routes and territory to the renewal of the Covenant Chain Alliance.85 Obviously, the oral tradition preserved in conjunction with the belts did not transcribe the proceedings verbatim, but rather maintained the general idea and relationship established in each agreement.86 The wampum keepers periodically read the belts in their community in order to keep the message alive and to pass on the knowledge to others. The Iroquois, therefore, never considered treaties to be inanimate agreements folded away on paper, but instead reflected living promises that continued to grow and thrive in the community’s retelling of the stories.

80 It is important to note that, while some readers can link an idea or portion of the message to a specific combination of beads on the belt, ‘reading’ a wampum belt is not analogous to ‘reading’ this text. Although the wampum message can remain very continuous over time, the belt preserves general ideas, not the specific, linear construction of precise letters and words found in a sentence.
83 Beauchamp, The Iroquois Trail, p. 73.
85 The Covenant Chain Alliance, the most important agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the English colonies, was ratified in 1677, proclaiming eternal friendship and peace between nations. The two met frequently (later incorporating other Native nations) throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to renew these principles, solidifying their relationship with numerous wampum belts.
86 Mary A. Druke, “Iroquois Treaties: Common Forms, Varying Interpretations”, Jennings et a., History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy, p. 91.
Wampum belts evolved as crucial to North American diplomacy in the centuries after contact, which makes it likely that they were an Iroquois attempt to counterbalance European written treaties. The changing political, economic and social climate of post-contact America necessitated the permanent transcription of alliances crucial to survival in the new North American context. Wampum belts, with their iconic and colour symbolism and in conjunction with the oral decoding of the interpreter, therefore reveal simply a different language in need of translation. Japanese for example, is comprised of completely different characters than English or French and is translated during contemporary discussions with the Canadian state. As treaties, or contracts negotiated by political authorities and preserved in a permanent form, wampum belts retained diplomatic agreements, as did European documents. Today, many Iroquois claim that wampum belts, as sophisticated and precise record keeping systems, recall “treaty conditions and pledges quite accurately even a century and a half later.”* Although it is very probable that the belts fulfilled the function of indigenous treaties during the contact period, it is quite complicated to translate this role into the present because of contemporary difficulties in interpretation.*

1.2.2 Translating Wampum Belts into the Present

Despite the similar function to writing, it is today difficult to consider wampum belts as a textual source in another language since the iconic and colour symbolism of the belts falls short of a full explanation provided by the interpreter. Much in the same way an illiterate person examines a deed, understanding the purpose but not the particularities, a person who is not trained to read a wampum belt remains ignorant of the detailed message. European documents of the historic period often contain a translation of the wampum message, which can help in deciphering the message. However, Europeans illustrated the belts with fleeting detail, concentrating on the message pronounced instead of the object itself, rendering it very difficult to associate specific wampum belts to particular events. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to associate precise wampum belts to specific treaties in

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* Although, as previously stated, many wampum belts displayed universally understood pictographs, these images are not enough to link a specific message to a belt, but instead only imply peace, friendship, religion or war — basic messages that do not provide enough detail to be considered a treaty without the accompanying oral tradition.
European records due to the huge number exchanged each year. A final hindrance to the contemporary readings of wampum arose from collectors towards the end of the nineteenth century, who, fearing the imminent extinction of Native culture, sought to preserve wampum belts and other vestiges of Native tradition in museum vaults, far away from the people who could read them, which in turn caused the degeneration of some messages in the collective consciousness of their nations.\textsuperscript{89}


Wampum belts offer a different perspective that is not jaded by their creator's preconceptions, thus remaining relatively consistent and repetitious over time. Of course, when translated into the present, the modern observer’s biases shade the examination of belts, creating a new discourse redefined according to the context of the modern western world.\textsuperscript{90} Today, with increased success in museum repatriation, the reappropriation of many belts into Aboriginal communities allows for the resurrection of their anterior role, representing to the Iroquois nation-to-nation pacts between sovereign peoples. The Two

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\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, p. 193.
Row Wampum as a guarantor of Iroquois sovereignty perfectly plays into current political aspirations, demanding recognition, respect and self-government. The forceful language of wampum belts today is much stronger than in the past, influenced by increased political power of Native peoples, and their continuing success in demanding historic recompense in Canadians courts. However, it is difficult to ascertain if this powerful voice is historically accurate or if it is embellished by outspoken Native rights groups and/or by political correctness that holds controversial debate hostage. It is for this reason that modern interpretations of wampum belts must be compared with oral tradition and written sources of all historic periods in order to better judge the historic reality and avoid creations of a modern, politically motivated, discourse. Only once historical accuracy is verified (through the use of both oral and written sources), can the belts be used to attain political goals coinciding with the ancient wampum promises.

1.3 The Conflict Between Oral and Written Tradition

Today, the western concept of linear history, which overwhelmingly includes written sources, dominates Native past. Western definitions of writing and history are impossible to avoid, as “even the word history reveals its ethnocentric or provincial origins...[that] implies a particular manner of conceiving of the past and the fashion in which we write about it.” It is interesting to ponder what it would mean to write or read “in a culture in which transience and change are welcomed, naturalized, and accepted,” but the reality of a western based academia means that we bring to any study our own notions of history and writing, making it difficult to adopt other concepts. For this reason, it is all the more important to consider the ‘other side’ of diplomatic negotiations and not solely the European account of wampum belt discourse in order to take into account Native values, traditions, realities, and of course, how they see their own history. The writing of Indian-white history must consider each player in the changing geo-political and cultural landscape since “to ignore the Indian thoughtworld is

91 Guilt ridden by historical injustices, it has become increasingly unpopular to criticise Native discourse, whether asserting sovereignty, environmental kindness, or cultural superiority.
92 It is crucial to understand that many wampum belts were intercultural agreements between Natives and Europeans. For this reason, the perceptions of both parties must be examined.
94 Warkentin, “In Search”, p. 12.
to continue writing about ourselves to ourselves" and therefore cannot truly be called an intercultural history of post-contact Americas.

Much can be gained from written sources but ethnohistorians must also rely upon artefacts and oral traditions in order to understand all cultures and to avoid a history written by European “ventriloquists.” The purpose of this section is not to debate if oral tradition or written records are more accurate in describing historical events, but rather to illustrate the strengths and shortcomings of each in order to show that a comprehensive study of the Two Row Wampum requires the careful examination of all sources, including the wampum belts themselves. Oral tradition transcribed historically and today, along with records of diplomatic proceedings during the contact era and written interpretations of academics and collectors from the turn of the century, are examined and compared, resulting in a more complete vision of the historic and contemporary life of the Two Row belt.

1.3.1 The Oral Tradition of Wampum Belts

The unique relationship between wampum belts and oral tradition unite the two as a physical representation of the living message that ‘speaks’ to an audience through an orator, supposedly remaining an impartial translator of the message. The nature of this interdependence means that we cannot ignore oral tradition in wampum research. Many scholars agree that oral tradition is a valuable way to transmit history that can be as precise as European sources, “transmitting a relatively continuous, if rearticulated, cultural substance over many generations.” One of the foremost authorities in Iroquois culture, the late Cayuga Chief Jacob E. Thomas, explained that elders carefully instruct children in the precise memorization of stories, preparing them to become spokespeople of their nations: “When you pass it on, you don’t try to use your own ideas, because if you do, you keep

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people confused. The thing that I have heard is only what I go by."99 Twice a year, every year, wampum keepers gather the entire community, hold various belts up high and recite the oral tradition, entrenching it in the consciousness of the people.100 Not only does this help pass the message down from generation to generation, but it also ensures accountability, making it very difficult for someone to alter the message in any significant way since the community knows the original story. Gordon Day, in a study of Abenaki oral tradition, confirms this careful transmission of information, expressing surprise at the capacity of well-preserved oral tradition to corroborate and even to complement written sources.101 The exactitude of oral tradition is impressive, as stories "seemed to have been passed on by an aged person carefully and deliberately training young children until some of them knew the old stories verbatim, as an American child of my generation might know The Night Before Christmas."102 Oral tradition allows students of Amerindian history to "get as close as possible to the Native point of view and thus to avoid any stereotypical, monolithic view of Amerindians as secondary players."103

A grave danger of using oral tradition in historical research, outlined by Toby Morantz's discussion of the Cree, is that academics may inadvertently 'plunder' from Native cultures and alter orality so that it fits into "the European-Canadian view that history is structured, chronological, and progressive." Adopting Amerindian oral tradition in the writing of Euro-influenced history would ultimately, according to Morantz, complete the assimilation process and remove a distinctly Native outlook of their own history, untouched by western-trained academics. Ultimately, non-Native use of oral tradition would unassumingly "distort and destroy the depiction of the relationships, the symbolism, the patterning, and the integrity of the Cree oral tradition." By reducing the richness of orality to what the readership desires (oral tradition referring to land claims, for instance), a wealth of

100 Tehanetorens, Wampum Belts, p. 4.
102 Ibid, p. 103.
information would be lost in favour of issues that are more popular.\textsuperscript{104} There is no denying Morantz’ assertion that oral tradition simply does not fit into the European concept of linear written history that forms the foundation of contemporary western historical discourse and that removing the vestiges of a unique Native historical version is a valid danger. However, much knowledge of the ‘other’ can be gained by enlarging our western conceptions of writing and history, allowing orality to complement written narratives, that it may warrant such a risk.

Despite the important benefits, the majority of authors remain wary of oral tradition, particularly because Natives understand history in a cyclic manner that may or may not distinguish between myths and reality.\textsuperscript{105} The mixture between myth and reality remains foreign to western-based academia, despite the mythic foundation of European (Judeo-Christian) history and the endurance of some such ‘myths’ today.\textsuperscript{106} Not only is western history based upon certain metaphors, icons and mythic traditions, but it also “bends time to emphasize certain culturally important continuities...[while finding] it difficult to accept Native continuities that stress different versions and structures of history.”\textsuperscript{107} A history involving ‘supernatural’ events does not necessarily mean that it is an invented fallacy, but the story was probably loosely based on a particular occurrence and adopted the ‘mythic’ components as a means to explain the seemingly unexplainable.\textsuperscript{108}

Many other authors find it difficult to respect oral tradition as a valid source, considering it to drastically change over time, which challenges its validity.\textsuperscript{109} Since “oral tradition is a memory of a memory and depends on person-to-person telling and retelling,

\textsuperscript{104} Toby Morantz, “Plunder or Harmony? On Merging European and Native Views on Early Contact”, Warkentin and Podruchny eds., Decentring the Renaissance, p. 65.


\textsuperscript{106} For example, many Biblical stories tell of ‘supernatural’ events, such as Noah and the Ark, Moses’ Exodus from Egypt and Jesus walking on water. These events, while considered Holy Truth by many, can also be seen as mythical stories, but are not openly denied because they remain a part of the dominate western religious doctrine. Similar myths in Native societies are dismissed as untrue simply because of their minority belief base. This subsequently leads many westerners to distrust Native oral tradition in general, assumed to always be inaccurate, despite the historic truths that form the base of many ‘myths.’

\textsuperscript{107} Doxator, “Inclusive and Exclusive Perceptions of Difference”, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{108} The construction and veracity of myths is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.

\textsuperscript{109} Ratelle, Le « Two Row Wampum », p. 3. See also Morantz, “Plunder or Harmony”, p. 48-67.
which offers more opportunities for omission, distortion and error to creep in,\(^{110}\) it is not considered a valid source. As a history is passed down and retold, its significance is often altered according to the modern context and the needs of society, "in a way that adds, deletes, or embellishes certain elements, altering the emphasis or even the interpretation."\(^ {111}\) This phenomenon is not unique solely to oral tradition as is often implied, but also victimizes European records as the author selects extracts and interprets them according to their own goals and expectations. Furthermore, since accurate maintenance of the message requires frequent readings of the belts, originals held for decades in museums far away from their original communities challenge the resiliency of the oral tradition.\(^ {112}\) Reproductions read at special occasions often help the chiefs to preserve the wampum message while the originals are kept in museums but, as we will see, a great capacity for distortion remains. Those who transmit oral tradition are also not immune and may be influenced by "white historical narratives, missionary propaganda, and even anthropological publications...[and] frequently reflect knowledge of periods later than those to which they are alleged to refer."\(^ {113}\) Researchers also have difficulty distinguishing between people’s life stories, which represent certain elements important to individuals, and oral history, which describes a community’s sense of their past. Thus, interviewers may ask questions that guide and limit each story to a certain extent.\(^ {114}\)

The above weaknesses of oral tradition illustrate the importance of a critical mind when examining all sources. We should not, however, automatically assume the accuracy of the written word in light of orality’s shortcomings. Scholars should strictly scrutinize all sources equally to avoid an overly Euro-centric view and to include Amerindians in the writing of their own past.

\(^ {111}\) Ibid, p. 56.
\(^ {114}\) Morantz, “Plunder or Harmony”, p. 57.
1.3.2 The European Records of Wampum Discourse

European written sources, recorded more or less at the historic moment and preserved in a language and alphabet still understood, remain most credible in the eyes of many. The use of precise dates, places and names provides a chronological order and numerous other details that allow the reader to situate the event with others in a historic context, illustrating the motivations of historical actors. Furthermore, texts serve an archival function where "new information can be added and old superseded or abandoned...allow[ing for] the accumulation of texts that go far beyond the storage capacities of any knower,"\textsuperscript{115} preserving messages in a concrete fashion for years to come.

The familiarity of these sources, however, does not mean that we can blindly accept them without a critical eye. In fact, numerous academics criticize European written sources because of their inherent prejudices. Difficulty understanding the customs, motives and desires of Native peoples due to cultural differences and preconceptions jade many European documents.\textsuperscript{116} It is thus often difficult to find the representation of the Amerindian in accounts that frequently reflect the desires and expectations of their authors.\textsuperscript{117} Preconceived generalizations of Native culture\textsuperscript{118} often caused authors to ignore Amerindians or judge their cultures as 'primitive' or 'savage,' resulting in manuscripts that better reflected the literary style of the era than an accurate portrayal of Native society.\textsuperscript{119} Some authors even recorded historic accounts without witnessing the event, but rather, having heard about it second hand, leaving later academics to question the exaggeration or falsification of the description.\textsuperscript{120} Marie de l'Incarnation, for instance, probably based her recording of Kiotseaeton's presentation of wampum in 1645, on Father Barthélemy Vimont's \textit{Jesuit Relation}.\textsuperscript{121} Similarly, Marc Lescabot and Gabriel Sagard's ignorance regarding the instrument used in

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{115} Olson, "Literacy as Metalinguistics", p. 253.
\item\textsuperscript{116} Snyderman, "The Functions of Wampum", p. 470.
\item\textsuperscript{117} Foster, "Another Look at the Function of Wampum", p.100.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Snyderman, "The Functions of Wampum", p. 470.
\item\textsuperscript{119} Foster, "Another Look at the Function of Wampum", p.100.
\item\textsuperscript{120} Beauchamp, "Wampum and Shell Articles", p. 329.
\item\textsuperscript{121} Warkentin, "In Search", p.2.
\end{itemize}
creating wampum beads is probably due to the fact that they did not actually witness the production process themselves despite their seemingly first hand accounts.122

European sources, like oral tradition, are also reinterpreted by each generation of scholars "in light of new issues in the present that impose questions on the events of the past."123 However, Morantz claims that the reinterpretations of written documents "are more constrained than those of oral traditions because more of the original account is preserved."124 While it is true that written documents possess a great advantage having been transcribed at the moment of historical action, we should not accept any source without a critical eye. The problem is that phonetic writing is so highly esteemed that virtually nothing can shake its pedestal, while the validity of oral tradition always remains suspect because it hails from a different conception of history still seen as primitive and less accurate. Both sources are equally crucial in understanding the history of an intercultural North America, and for this reason must be combined for any comprehensive study.

1.4 Methodology

As shown by the above discussion, the analysis of wampum belts requires the combination of various elements to see how each party understood the belts’ meaning in an intercultural context. Remarkably, many academics, such as George R. Hamell, Tom Flanagan and even William Fenton,125 do not examine oral tradition as part of their methodology in researching wampum belts. Of course, it is vital to remain conscious of the weakness of oral tradition; however, when compared with other historical testimony, orality nevertheless contributes valuable information from a different perspective that should be acknowledged, even if it is proven false. Other researchers, such as Paul Williams, Richard Hill and Tehanetorens,126 primarily use oral tradition to affirm the sovereignty of the Two

123 Morantz, "Plunder or Harmony", p. 56.
124 Ibid, p. 56.
Row Wampum, limiting their work to this methodological approach and thereby ignoring the essential viewpoint provided by written documents, despite their possible misrepresentation of events. Michael K. Foster and Pauline Joly de Lotbinière\textsuperscript{127} are among the few authors who attempt to reconcile both oral tradition and written sources. However, by omitting detailed descriptions of wampum belts in their discussions, they ignore important colour and iconic symbolism, instead favouring the discourse that flowed from the belts. This thesis examines each of these three sources individually and in conjunction, resulting in a profound analysis of the Two Row Wampum that considers all available information in the history of the belt.

Due to the controversy surrounding our sources, we must carefully recognize all prejudices, reflected by Europeans who wrote down the historical discourse of treaty negotiations, by wampum keepers who recalled the oral tradition of the belts centuries later, and by researchers who strive to interpret the belts today. Prior to any analysis taking place, it is essential to examine what kind of dispositions the authors possessed that possibly jaded their version. It is equally vital to situate the document in a historic context that can further illuminate the author’s motivations, particularly considering that Europeans and Amerindians presented wampum belts at political negotiations often crucial to survival in North America. By identifying the historical context and possible biases, we can discover the real motivations associated with the creation of each document and evaluate its degree of authenticity or exaggeration.

It is crucial to realise that Europeans wrote all of our sources prior to the nineteenth century. It is thus problematic to compare, as we do, seventeenth and eighteenth century European documentation (despite their recordings of Native speeches which may or may not be accurate) to nineteenth and twentieth century Native oral tradition. Seventeenth century Native speakers may very well have expressed ideas such as autonomy found in later oral tradition, only to have it ignored by European transcribers who did not want a permanent record challenging their authority. Unfortunately, there is no way of determining lost

messages or insinuations, so we have no other option but to compare these two sources, despite their divergence in era. Although it is important to remain conscious of this weakness in the availability of sources, it does not alter our hypothesis. We should find (albeit possibly in a diluted form), evidence of Two Row symbolism or metaphors in European documents if the belt possessed the same historic importance as is claimed today.

Our approach comprises of four essential steps in which we evaluate the sources individually and compare them collectively in order to understand, as accurately as possible, the history of the Two Row Wampum. Firstly, the contemporary oral tradition of the Two Row Wampum and its references to historic events permit a starting point from which the subsequent research will follow. We analyse the metaphors of friendship, the chain, the river, the boats and family relations, as well as the belt's colour symbolism, illuminating the significance insinuated by this diplomatic record, claimed to be hundreds of years old.

Finishing this initial analysis, we compare the above findings to written records of the Dutch and the English in North America in an attempt to confirm any reference of the Two Row Wampum. It is reasonable to assume that, if the Two Row had the same historic importance as pronounced today, that multiple references of this belt, apparently crucial to Iroquois-European relations, would most definitely exist. The comparison of the metaphors equally discovered in written records provides further clues to the meaning of eloquent diplomatic discourse, as understood across linguistic and cultural divides.

Following this step, we examine the oral tradition of Grand River\textsuperscript{128} chiefs at the end of the nineteenth century for any mention of the Two Row Wampum. Again, considering the magnitude of the belt's significance today, references should exist and provide clues to the figurative origin of the oral tradition of the Two Row Wampum. A case study of Grand River's contemporary Two Row Wampum illuminates the appearance of the message's association with a physical belt in the early twentieth century through careful examination of photographs, letters from collectors and Indian Agents, as well as museum bulletins.

\textsuperscript{128} Six Nations reserve near present-day Brantford, Ontario.
Thus, by examining Native testimonies, European sources and the belts themselves, we will reduce each version's ambiguity, piecing together a more comprehensive understanding of the Two Row Wampum’s history. This allows us to conclude with an analysis of this belt’s contemporary role, with the above findings taken into account, speculating on how and why such a story evolved. In examining how the Two Row aids in the recovery of dignity and the desire of sovereignty for the Iroquois Nation threatened by assimilation, we outline the current political demands based on this belt’s contemporary message.
Chapter II
The Historic (Non)Existence of Two Row Wampum

Today, oral tradition of the Two Row Wampum speaks to an ancient agreement of autonomy and respect between the Haudenosaunee and those of European descent. Reiterated by numerous chiefs, journalists and authors, the Two Row’s message outlines crucial metaphors responsible for elaborating the initial treaty’s principles. After examining both contemporary oral tradition and the Two Row’s complex metaphors, this chapter delves into Dutch and English colonial records in an effort to find a similar message or imagery corroborating today’s oral tradition.

2.1 Contemporary Oral Tradition of the Two Row Wampum

The end of the twentieth century saw a resurgence in Indigenous rights, apparent with Native victory in court cases regarding land claims, resource rights and cultural repatriation. The power of the Two Row Wampum has grown with this interest in Native issues, today testifying to the sovereignty of the Six Nations, maintained, according to their interpretation of this belt, since the first years of contact. All Iroquois accounts of the Two Row Wampum remain very similar, appearing in numerous articles, speeches and other published and personal documents. Respected for his extensive knowledge of Iroquois culture and tradition, Cayuga Chief Jake Thomas recorded the Haudenosaunee understanding of the first treaty between the Iroquois and Europeans, initially ratified with the Dutch, and then the French, the English and finally, the Americans. Although Thomas specifies neither a date, nor specific names, his account of the Two Row Wampum outlines the relationship between the Oh-kwe-hon-weh, or ‘real people,’ and the Dutch as follows:

The Whiteman said, “I confirm what you have said and this we shall always remember. What we do about our own ways of belief we shall both respect having our own rights and power.” The Oh-kwe-hon-weh replied, “I have a canoe and you have a vessel with sails and this is what we shall do: I will put in my canoe my belief and laws; in your vessel you will put your belief and laws; all of my people in my

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129 Of course, the story is also alive in the collective memory of the Haudenosaunee, but for the purposes of this paper, we examine the oral testimony transcribed onto paper.

130 As already discussed, this follows with the circular conception of history among Native peoples who generally do not mention specific dates in their oral traditions, while European history requires their inclusion.
canoe; your people in your vessel; we shall put these boats in the water and they shall always be paralleled as long as there is Mother Earth, this will be everlasting.”

The Whiteman said, “what will happen supposing your people will like to go into my vessel?” The Oh-kwe-hon-weh replied, “if this happens then they will have to be guided by your vessel, by your belief and your laws. I don’t believe that your people would like to go into my canoe because it is so swift, but if it so happens then they shall be guided by my canoe.” Now the whiteman understands this agreement.

The Whiteman said, “what will happen if any of your people may some day want to have one foot in each of the boats that we placed parallel in the water?” The Oh-kwe-hon-weh replied, “if this so happens that my people may wish to have their feet in each of the boats; there will be a high wind and the boats will separate and the person that has his feet in each of the boats shall fall between the boats; and there is no living soul who will be able to bring him back to the right way given by the Creator himself.”

The Whiteman said, “I understand, I confirm what you have said, that this will be everlasting as long as there is Mother Earth. We have confirmed this and our generations to come shall never forget what we have agreed. Now it is understood that we shall never interfere with one another’s belief or laws for generations to come.”

The Whiteman said, he would respect the Oh-kwe-hon-weh’s belief and pronounce him as a son. The Oh-kwe-hon-weh replied, “I respect you, your belief and what you say; you pronounced yourself as my father and this I do not agree, because the father can tell his son what to do and also can punish him; I suggest that you pronounce me as your brother.”

The whiteman said, “the symbol of this covenant is a three link chain which binds this agreement made by us, and there is nothing that will come between us to break the links of this chain.” The Oh-kwe-hon-weh replied, “the first link shall stand for friendship, the second link will stand for our good minds, and the third link shall mean there will always be peace between us. This is confirmed by us.” Again the Oh-kwe-hon-weh said, “this friendship will be everlasting and the younger generation will know and the rising faces from Mother Earth will benefit form our agreement.”

The Whiteman said, “what symbol will you go by?” The Oh-kwe-hon-weh replied, “we will go by these symbols: When the Creator made Mother Earth and created man to walk upon this earth, to enjoy all nature’s fruits saying no one shall claim Mother Earth except the rising faces which are to be born; (1) as long as the sun shines upon this earth, that is how long our agreement will stand; (2) as long as the water still flows; and (3) as long as the grass grows green at a certain time of the year. Now we have symbolized this agreement and it shall be binding forever as long as Mother Earth is still in motion. We have finished and we understand what we have confirmed and this is what our generation should know and learn not to forget.”[131]

This understanding of the Two Row Wampum repeats itself almost word for word in other articles as an accepted version of the first treaty with the Whiteman. The Turtle Quarterly cites oral history as having “preserved the spirit and intent of that treaty,” adding that

The Onkwehonwe called the Wampum Belt – “GUS-WHEN-TA”. The Two Paths signify the Laws and Beliefs of the Whiteman and the Laws and Beliefs of the Onkwehonweh. The White Wampum background signifies Purity, Good Minds and Peace, and that the Two Peoples should not interfere with one another’s Ways.

... The Onkwehonweh said, “What WE agreed upon shall be renewed every so often so that the Covenant Chain made between US shall always be Clean from Dust and Rust. WE shall renew OUR Agreements and Polish the Covenant and when WE get together to renew OUR Agreements, WE shall have Interpreters; WE will dress the same way as when WE met so that OUR People will know WHO WE ARE. I will put on my buckskin clothing, YOU will dress the same way that YOU dressed when You first came to Our People, the ONKWEHONWEH.” So they completed the Treaty of The Two Parties.

Tehanetorens’ book, Wampum Belts illustrates the Two Row in a similar way, outlining the relationship of brotherhood between nations along with the metaphors of the canoe and ship carrying the laws, customs and ways of each group:

We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other’s vessel. The agreement has been kept by the Iroquois to this date.

At least four Two Row Wampums exist today, each copied to reflect “respect for the dignity and integrity of the other culture...stress[ing] the importance of non-interference of one nation in the business of the other, unless invited,” principles which established the

132 The Covenant Chain Alliance, perhaps the most important bicultural agreement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, united the Five Nations (later Six after the Tuscaroras joined the Iroquois League in the 1720s) and their tributaries with the English under the leadership of New York. Established at Albany in 1677, the Covenant Chain metaphorically represented the binding together of the two nations to ensure eternal friendship and peace in matters of diplomacy and trade. The Haudenosaunee required frequent meetings in order to ‘brighten’ and ‘polish’ the chain, keeping it free from rust, metaphors for the renewal and renegotiation of treaties. Early precursors to the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship include a rope that united the Dutch and the Iroquois in the early contact years and an iron chain that confirmed this alliance in 1643. Since, according to Iroquois traditionalists, the Two Row Wampum is the grandfather of all treaties, the Covenant Chain of Friendship is apparently a later manifestation of similar principals.

133 “Record of the Two Row Wampum Belt”, Huron Miller trans., Turtle Quarterly, Native American Center For The Living Arts, (Winter 1980).

134 Tehanetorens, Wampum Belts, p. 11.
foundation for all future Haudenosaunee treaties with other European nations. Two important components of this contemporary oral tradition interest us: the colour symbolism that exemplifies the message and the metaphors that bring the discourse to life. Describing and evaluating each aspect will establish a firm understanding of the contemporary oral tradition of this belt, to be subsequently compared with colonial European documents in an attempt to find equivalent descriptions of the symbolism and metaphors in a historic context.

2.1.1 Symbolism of the Two Row Wampum

The symbolism of the white beads in this belt parallels the association with peace, understanding and friendship outlined in the previous chapter. The white background symbolizes “the purity of the agreement” while the three rows of white beads in the middle of the belt illustrate “the friendship, peace and respect between the two nations.” The significance of these three beads separating the two rows of purple wampum differs slightly depending on who is recounting the story. Chief Irving Powless Jr. describes how “the first row of white beads is ‘peace,’ the second row, ‘friendship,’ and the third row, ‘forever.’ As we travel down the road of life together in peace and harmony, not only with each other, but with the whole circle of life...we shall live together in peace and harmony.” Similarly, the Turtle Quarterly article states, “the White Wampum background signifies Purity, Good Minds and Peace.” Chief Thomas’ version does not specifically mention colour significance, but speaks of the three links of a chain, symbolized by the three rows of white beads in the middle: “the first link shall stand for friendship, the second link will stand for our good minds, and the third link shall mean there will always be peace between us.” All of these accounts, while differing slightly in the words used, highlight peace as the one common concept incarnated by the white wampum. The speakers also cite friendship in three out of the four cases, while the ideas of purity, good minds and respect build on these two initial affirmations that bind the Haudenosaunee and the newcomers. The verbal

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135 "The Two Row Wampum", p. 15.
136 "The Two Row Wampum", p. 15.
138 "Record of the Two Row Wampum Belt".
139 Thomas, "The Two Row Wampum Treaty Belt".
association of such words with white wampum corroborate the concepts of "well-being, harmony, and purposefulness of mind, knowledge, and greatest being." Such are the ideas put forth by the Two Row Wampum, illustrating a mutual understanding of peace and friendship, from which purity, good minds and respect for the 'other' stem, all 'light' concepts that foster cooperation and tranquility, diverting the message from "evil intentions or malicious thoughts."

The purple grains on the other hand, do not represent death, as they would have traditionally, but instead symbolize and encompass "the spirits of the Haudenosaunee and non-Haudenosaunee people and their ancestors." Other than this reference, Two Row accounts do not mention purple wampum specifically, referring instead to the two parallel rows, each representing a vessel carrying the laws, traditions and customs of the respective nations, which obviously lacks in negative connotations. This makes sense since, traditionally a representation of death, conflict, war, mischief and generally negative spirit forces in the universe, the purple wampum on the white background simply aided in the illustration of the message, with the Two Row's message of peace obscuring any negative undertones.

2.1.2 Metaphors of the Two Row Wampum

The Two Row Wampum's oral tradition is rich in metaphors, describing the special relation between the Haudenosaunee and the European in ways that helped reduce linguistic differences by comparing sentiments and ideas to universally understood objects and concepts. The first metaphors mentioned, those of the river and vessels, illustrate the autonomy maintained in each nation's relationship with one another. The river, as a living and moving being, is a symbol and provider of life in the new North American post-contact colonial context, sometimes calm and at other times rough, paralleling Native-European relations. Crucial to transportation to the interior of the continent, the river is constantly

140 Miller and Hamell, "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade", p. 324.
141 Snyderman, "The Functions of Wampum", p. 475.
142 "The Two Row Wampum", p. 15.
143 Snyderman, "The Functions of Wampum", p. 475.
moving and changing but is never vanquished, serving also to nourish the people with food and water, the lifeblood of their relationship together. The canoe and ship, metaphorically carrying the laws and traditions of each group, show cultural differences simply by their structure. Illustrating a journey partaken together, these two vehicles of transportation again express growth and development in an exploration and discovery of the interior of the continent and of each other's cultures. Required to keep from drowning in rough waters, the vessels imply the survival of the laws and traditions of each group in their buoyancy.

Secondly, the comparison with drowning for those who placed a foot in each vessel reflects the notion of water being the provider as well as the taker of life. The river, as a powerful carrier of tradition and law, could also smite those who threatened the stability of the natural order, outlined by the Iroquois in their tradition of the Two Row. Refusing to respect one's own customs and beliefs drowned the impostor in their betrayal of tradition. The wind, separating the two boats in case of such unfaithfulness represents the spirit of Mother Nature, breathing life across the river with her gentle, warm breeze, and taking it away with a gust. The two cultures are intertwined, by the river and the wind, both neutral symbols that cannot be controlled by man, but which adhere to the natural laws of the universe, ensuring that the balance of things is maintained.

Thirdly, the family relations mentioned in the oral testimony are inconsistent with the traditional Iroquois perception of the kinship network. Apparently, although the Whiteman wanted to call the Oh-kwe-hon-weh 'son', they refused this label since “the father can tell his son what to do and also can punish him.” This is a surprising assessment that seems to better reflect twentieth century European-based concepts of family. In matrilineal Iroquoia “fathers did not have power to command their children; nobody did,” although maternal uncles held the most authority in an adult-child relationship. In fact, the Haudenosaunee and many other nations allowed the French Governor to address them as sons, and in calling him father implied a relationship with “a kind, indulgent nonrelative who had no authority over

144 Thomas, “The Two Row Wampum Treaty Belt”
145 Jennings et al. eds., “Glossary of Figures of Speech in Iroquois Political Rhetoric”, The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy, p. 120.
them. In an attempt to adopt the Native style of conducting diplomacy, the French inadvertently chose a kinship analogy that ensured the Iroquois felt no obligation to obey them, simply stressing a relationship of love and kindness instead. The French however, interpreted this relationship to view the Iroquois as children in every sense of the European definition of the word, considering themselves the supreme protectorate of all surrounding Native peoples. The relationship of brotherhood, on the other hand, truly represented, according to the Haudenosaunee, a respectful relationship where each partner negotiated with the other on equal terms. While it is thus not surprising that the Iroquois emphasise brotherhood in the Two Row Wampum’s oral tradition, it truly is shocking that they overtly refuse the notion of a father-son relationship since, according to seventeenth century matrilineal Iroquois society, this would not have implied subordination. It is highly unlikely that the Iroquois understood European connotations of fatherhood at such an early date and refused the father-son labels on the basis of European understanding, which was probably only clarified after years of co-existence. The kinship relations therefore do not fit with seventeenth century Iroquois conceptions. Most probably added in the nineteenth century, the refusal of the ‘father’ relationship likely stemmed from a later refusal to be considered wards of the state, resulting from a deterioration in Haudenosaunee power due to the conquest of New France and the American Revolution.

Fourthly, the description of the permanence of the agreement follows with Native views of Mother Earth, stating that as long as the sun shines, as long as the water flows and as long as the grass grows green, this covenant will endure. Sunlight, the ultimate expression of life, growth and knowledge, is associated with the colour white, symbolizing peace and purity and mirroring the effects of the Two Row. The water flows with the current, illustrating life and the passing of time but at the same time remains vulnerable to change with high winds or rain. Finally, grass, a cautionary celebration of life, is quick to grow but easy to cut as well, a reminder that the nations must continually renew their friendship after dark winters. All three signs signify life and evolution, demonstrating that the Iroquois view

148 We deal with this theory in further detail in Chapter IV.
this agreement, not as a static, inanimate thing, but as an evolving and living brotherhood with the Europeans inhabiting their native soil.

Finally, the concept of a chain to link these two groups together in harmony does not imply slavery and bondage as one might initially assume, but instead reflects communication and powerful and everlasting unity. Each link of the chain incarnates a crucial component of the relationship between the two nations, revolving around their friendship, respect and desire for peace that can metaphorically never be broken, although subject to rust and decay if not properly protected and nourished. While very similar to the imagery of the Covenant Chain of Friendship, the Two Row is not representative of the same agreement. The Two Row is the first of all treaties according to the Haudenosaunee, while the Covenant Chain evolved later, branching off from this initial pact. It is surprising that the Two Row's oral tradition emphasises such a chain because this concept was not widely used until much later. It is of course possible that the creation story of the Two Row mistakenly adopted the origins of the Covenant Chain Alliance, an idea that will be explored in greater detail in the section regarding Sir William Johnson. In any event, the chain concept as well as the other metaphors found throughout in the Two Row's oral tradition, reveal a story filled with a desire for peace, friendship and equality, using universally understood concepts to convey this message between cultural groups both historically and in the present day. Our next task is to find convincing evidence of the Two Row’s oral tradition and accompanying metaphors in historic written documents to prove its existence in the past.

2.2 The Two Row Wampum and the Dutch

Oral tradition claims that the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch ratified the Two Row Wampum at their very first treaty together, which took place in 1613, 1618 or 1643. William Beauchamp quotes John Christopher Pyrlaeur, a Moravian missionary, who wrote in 1743 of "a credible aged Indian," Sganarady:

149 Please refer to footnote 128 for an explanation of the Covenant Chain of Friendship.
150 Tradition holds that such a chain first began as a rope tying fast a Dutch ship to Onondaga, which later evolved to iron in 1643 and then to silver with the English in 1677.
[His grandfather] had been one of the deputies sent for the purpose of entering into a covenant with the whole Europeans; they met at a place called Norman's Kill, about four miles below where Albany was built, where the covenant of friendship was first established, and the Mohawks were the active body in effecting this work.\footnote{William Beauchamp, \textit{History of the New York Iroquois}, New York State Museum Bulletin 78, Archeology 9, (Albany: New York State Education Department, 1905), p. 173.}

Assuming Sganarady was sixty years old, it is very possible that his grandfather attended such a conference 1643, or perhaps even as early as 1613 or 1618, depending on the age of those involved, which is, of course, impossible to ascertain today. Regardless, an agreement was definitely made between the Mohawk and the Dutch near Norman's Kill in the first half of the seventeenth century. Controversy surrounds the date of this initial Iroquois-Dutch agreement with many scholars shunning both 1613 and 1618 due to highly contestable evidence, and favouring instead the much later date of 1643. Unfortunately, the loss of the Dutch West Indian Company records makes it exceedingly difficult to ascertain details of the early Hudson River trade, settlement and dealings with the Natives.\footnote{The diaries of Hendrick Christiaenssen, signatory to the questionable 1613 treaty have also unfortunately been lost. Vernon Benjamin "The Tawagonshi Agreement of 1613: A Chain of Friendship in the Dutch Hudson Valley", \textit{The Hudson Valley Regional Review: A Journal of Regional Studies}, 17.1 (March 2000), www.bard.edu/aboutbard/publications/hvrr/essays/tawagonshi/, p. 12 of computer printout.}

While the earliest council records survive for the years 1638 through 1649, substantial gaps unfortunately exist.\footnote{Charles T. Gehring ed. and trans., \textit{Council Minutes: 1655-1656}, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p.xix.} Thus, it is very difficult to firmly accept or refute claims of 1613 or 1618 agreements and for this reason, we examine all three dates for evidence of the Two Row Wampum.

\subsection{The 1613 Tawagonshi Agreement}\footnote{Benjamin states that an \textit{agreement} and not a treaty took place in 1613, saying "the distinction is important. The Tawagonshi agreement should not be considered a diplomatic instrument, but merely a trade pact between Indian...lords...and company men." Benjamin, "The Tawagonshi Agreement", p. 9 of computer printout.}

The supporters of the 1613 agreement rest their assertion upon the finding of two small scraps of hide by an American doctor of Dutch descent, L.G. Van Loon, who...
apparently attained them through an agent from the Mississauqa Reserve in Canada in an unspecified year.\footnote{Charles T. Gehring, William A. Starna and William N. Fenton, “The Tawagonshi Treaty of 1613: The Final Chapter”, New York History, (October 1987), p. 374.} The agreement, translated from the Dutch, reads as follows:

Met with us here at Tawagonshi the undersigned Jacob Eelckens and Hendrick Christiaenssen, authorized by letter and ordered to investigate the trade with the native owners or rulers of the country hereabouts, and to conclude as far as it may be compatible with the following sachems of the Long House, GarhatJannie, Caghneghsattakegh, Otskwirakerongh, and Teyoghswegengh, as well as with other lesser chiefs of the same, who declare that they all are in agreement thereon; and we, participants, promise: 1. That trade between their people and ours shall be permitted as long as we, participants, are also in mutual agreement; and further, 2. That we, participants, shall have the privilege of bringing our goods out of the trade routes, provided that no purchase agreement concerning them has yet been made; and further, 3. Parcels of land may be purchased that we, the native participants, consider as our own territory, provided that it is discussed by the individuals and a mutually agreeable purchase agreement has been made; and further, 4. That we, participants, shall continue to help one another with necessities in case of shortage of food that is insufficient; and further, 5. In case of disputes relating to real or imagined injustices, we, participants, promise that this shall serve as an Auspicia Melioris Aevi, and that any dispute from whatever nature or origin must then be brought before a board of magistrates in order to investigate everything.

This aforementioned we, participants, promise, in amity and friendship, to sustain and maintain for as long as the grass is green; and as a token of honor and affection we exchange a silver chain for a fathom of wampum; and as acknowledgement of the truth of this, it has been signed by the participants on this 21st of April 1613.

Jacob Eelckens  
Hendrick Christiaenssen  
GarhatJannie [ ] his mark  
Caghneghsattakegh [ ] his mark  
Otskwirakerongh [ ] his mark  
Teyoghswegengh [ ] his mark \footnote{Translated by Charles Gehring in Gehring, Starna and Fenton, “The Tawagonshi Treaty of 1613”, p.379-80.}  

The two Dutch signatories to this pact, Jacob Eelckens and Hendrick Christiaenssen,\footnote{Spellings of these two names vary widely, but for the sake of simplicity the spellings of the Tawagonshi document have been used throughout.} certainly existed, actively trading with the Native peoples along the Hudson River, placing them near Tawagonshi (the hill overlooking Norman’s Kill, near present day Albany) in 1613. Captain Hendrick Christiaenssen, commander of the New Netherland trade, dealt
principally with the Mohicans, while tensions existed with their traditional enemies, the Mohawks, who lived several days journey from the river. Daniel K. Richter tracked a man by the name of Jacques mentioned in three Iroquois legends of the first Dutch-Mohawk contract, whom he believes to be the Jacob Eelckens of the Tawagonshi agreement. Richter considers the Tawagonshi agreement, if accurate, to confirm "not only a very early date for direct Mohawk-Dutch trade, but also the reality of the arrangement with Eelckens enshrined in Iroquois legend." The most important Dutchman to the Five Nations because he traded extensively and spoke their languages, Eelckens' relationship with Native peoples paralleled that of later Governors. Thus, in Iroquois eyes, Eelckens' role as a trader legitimized their agreements with him, even if he lacked official Dutch authority.

Some authors consider this pact quite possible if viewed in the context of Dutch trade relations along the Hudson River in the early seventeenth century. Although in Mohican territory, Tawagonshi hill was a well-used Mohawk travel route used to gain access to the fishing grounds of Hudson River. Furthermore, due to wars with northern Algonquians over trading competition with the French, the Mohawk understood that "an agreement with the Dutch would have served to legitimize their trade in this alien land and perhaps even gain an ally with firesticks in the process." Quickly comprehending the benefits of such an agreement, a shrewd European in turn might have considered a formal pact as a means to access the rich furs in the interior of the continent. Richter also supports this agreement, stating, "despite its rather suspicious origins, the document has an authentic ring" since it suited the purposes of Dutch traders of the era.

Regardless of whether or not Eelckens and Christiaenssen ever signed an agreement, they possessed no authority to ratify official treaties since they were private traders, licensed

161 Ibid, p. 53.
162 Benjamin, “The Tawagonshi Agreement”, p. 6 of computer printout.
163 Ibid, p. 7 of computer printout.
by the Dutch to conduct trade in the area and not to negotiate on the part of the government. Of course, the Tawagonshi agreement could have simply guaranteed the goodwill of the Mohawk, but in this respect would not have been binding on all Dutchmen. Francis Jennings corroborates this opinion, admitting that the Dutch and Iroquois possibly negotiated a 1613 treaty but states that it was not substantial since it was simply between traders who had no binding power to negotiate.

The Two Row Wampum may have played a role in the Tawagonshi agreement, which mentions in the last paragraph an “amity and friendship to sustain and maintain for as long as the grass is green,” and exchanges a fathom of wampum for a silver chain. However, the core text of the agreement denies such an assumption. None of the specific articles in the agreement refer to the Two Row Wampum’s principles of peace and friendship. The mention of “a fathom of wampum” in last paragraph cannot alone link the Tawagonshi pact with the Two Row since it does not refer specifically to the belt’s form, nor to its most fundamental principles as core components of the agreement itself. These final words seem drafted by a European conscious of Native protocol in diplomatic negotiation in emphasising continuing themes of friendship and peace, seemingly added as an aside to the core articles of trade. It is not without interest to note that non-Natives transcribed this document in a Mohawk voice. This may be an attempt to add legitimacy, implying that the Natives really agreed with the points proposed. The text, if an actual transcription of a 1613 event, may reflect poorly what the Mohawk said or agreed upon, especially at this early date with a limited comprehension of Mohawk and Dutch languages on both sides. It is possible that the Mohawk expressed the Two Row’s message, subsequently reduced to the last paragraph of the transcription by Europeans who either did not understand the significance, or deemed it unimportant. However, further research disputes the very existence of this 1613 agreement, thereby rendering the question of the Two Row’s inclusion moot.

Many scholars consider the Tawagonshi agreement a farce, invented by a 20th century pen and mind. Despite the fact that Eelckens and Christiaenssen traded in the early seventeenth century, William Fenton, the ‘dean’ of Iroquois studies, Charles T. Gehring, a Dutch manuscripts specialist, and William A. Starna, a member of the Holland Society Committee, conclude that a great deal of anomalies render van Loon’s document false. The authors question numerous points, beginning with van Loon’s shady record in ‘finding’ other documentary material that turned out to be completely bogus.167 Furthermore, the spelling and wording do not seem consistent with early seventeenth century knowledge as “no Dutch writer for a century afterward spelled Mohawk that well,” while a significant amount of orthography seems copied from Anglican missionaries of the eighteenth century, as well as from Horatio Hale’s The Iroquois Book of Rites, published in 1883.168 Van Loon ignored requests for an original copy of the treaty that would have allowed for x-ray and handwriting testing,169 not surprisingly since the handwriting, is a “clumsy blend of seventeenth- and twentieth-century graphemes,” and does not seem to have the physical characteristics of a quill pen.170 As for language, the most confusing metaphor is that of the ‘silver chain’, symbolising a covenant between the Iroquois and the Dutch, which actually only appeared in 1677 with the English,171 according to all other sources. Prior to the English, the Dutch incarnated their chain of friendship with a rope in the early contact years and later with an iron chain in 1643. Fenton, Gehring and Starna conclude by stating:

The earliest recorded and formal trade agreement between the Dutch and the Iroquois took place in 1634. This was actually a renegotiation of a previous agreement, exact date unknown, but certainly made after the establishment of Fort Orange in 1624. The first treaty of friendship was not made until 1643.172

While traders undoubtedly encountered the Mohawks at such an early date, the evidence does not support any agreement of peace and friendship concluded at Tawagonshi that outlines the Two Row Wampum’s message.

167 Gehring, Starna and Fenton, “The Tawagonshi Treaty”, p. 380-81. Some such documents were a 1634 letter of Jeronimus de la Croix and an early deed to Manhattan and a 1701 map of Albany.
158 Ibid. p. 382.
169 Ibid. p. 382.
170 Ibid. p. 385-6.
171 Ibid. p. 388.
172 Ibid.
However, we should not automatically accept Fenton, Gehring and Starna's rebuttal of the Tawagonshi agreement, as Vernon Benjamin clearly outlines in his article. Benjamin criticizes their argument that the names of the Iroquois signatories are false because they correspond to names of Mohawk towns, claiming that "Mohawks in particular were likely to name persons after places or events." Also, while Fenton, Gehring and Starna question the use of seemingly modern phrases and vocabulary such as, "so long as the grass is green," Benjamin cites a 1630 reference of the same phrase in Rensselaerswyck leases, illustrating that "even if the Indians did not know how to speak like Indians in the seventeenth century, the Dutch did." Benjamin's arguments make a good case for a more detailed examination of the two pieces of hide; however, the fact remains that, regardless of the accuracy of this document, there is not enough evidence to substantiate a link to the Two Row Wampum. We must therefore examine later dates of a possible Iroquois-Dutch agreement to cross-reference with oral tradition for evidence of the Two Row.

2.2.2 The 1618 Tawasentha Treaty

The Mohawk and Dutch possibly ratified a treaty in 1618 at Norman's Kill or Tawasentha, a few miles south of the Mohawk River along the Hudson, where the Dutch "erected a new fortification, and concluded with the great Confederacy of the Five Nations a formal treaty of alliance and peace." E. B. O'Callaghan's History of New Netherland or, New York Under the Dutch further elaborates on this treaty:

They courted their friendship... which now led to that alliance, which, as the tradition does, was concluded on the banks of the Norman's Kill, between the Five Nations and the Dutch.

... the belt of peace held fast by the Dutch and their aboriginal allies, in token of their eternal union. There was the calumet smoked, and the hatchet buried.... By this

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175 Benjamin, "The Tawagonshi Agreement", p. 8 of computer printout.
176 Interestingly enough, the hill of Tawagonshi (of the questionable 1613 agreement) overlooked Tawasentha, or Norman's Kill. Ibid, p. 2 of computer printout. Of course, while neither of these treaties seem to be historically accurate, it is possible that the creation of one was confused and thus extended into a claim of two separate agreements.
treaty the Dutch secured for themselves the quiet possession of the Indian trade, and the Five Nations obtained the means to assert that ascendancy which they ever after maintained over the other native tribes, and to inspire terror far and near among the other savages of North America.\textsuperscript{178}

This account, if accurate, may seem to refer more closely to the Two Row Wampum, placing a greater importance on peace, while the apparent 1613 treaty focused on principles of trade. The ‘belt of peace’ exchanged may have been the Two Row Wampum, although a lack of descriptive detail renders it impossible to know for certain. Richter quotes oral tradition explaining that Eelckens moved his original trading post from Fort Nassau (near Albany) to Tawasentha, or Norman’s Kill in 1617, negotiating a treaty with the Iroquois the following year. However, he notes that if this agreement occurred, the Mohican and not the Mohawk were most probably involved, since the former had aligned themselves with the Dutch early on.\textsuperscript{179} Jennings, also believes that a 1618 treaty probably existed, originally ratified with the Mohicans and eventually mistakenly associated with the Mohawk as time passed.\textsuperscript{180}

The greatest evidence refuting the existence of a 1618 treaty is that no Dutchman recorded such an agreement at the time of Arent van Curler’s 1643 treaty, considered by many to be the first Mohawk-Dutch contract. Furthermore, according to George T. Hunt, there is no mention whatsoever of a 1618 treaty in the surviving Holland Documents of that era. There is, however, record of a 1623 English treaty, which, although most definitely invented, removes credibility from an earlier Dutch claim of 1618. The English, striving to supersede New France’s 1624 accord with the Iroquois, claimed that they ratified the first Haudenosaunee-European treaty one year prior, in 1623.\textsuperscript{181} The Governor of New York from 1683 to 1688, Colonel Dongan, probably concocted this claim, in an effort to denounce French claims to Iroquois territory based on Jesuit occupation and their 1624 agreement. Desperately searching for an older English treaty, Dongan based his 1623 claim upon the testimony of Catelina Trico, an eighty three year old woman who allegedly observed a treaty

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid. p. 79-80.
\textsuperscript{180} Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, p. 54.
between the Dutch, the Iroquois and the Ottawa sixty-five years previous. Her deposition, taken in 1688 by William Morris, the Justice of the Peace reveals with striking detail her memory as an eighteen year old immigrant:

Catelyn Trico aged about 83 years born in Paris doth Testify and Declare that in ye year 1623 she came into this Country w^th a Ship called y^e Unity...[the passengers] settled themselves at Albany & made a small fort; and as soon as they had build themselves some hutts of Bark: y^e Mahikanders or River Indians. Y^e Maquase: Oneydes: Onondages Cayougas. & Sinnekes, w^th y^e Mahawawa or Ottawawaes Indians came & made Covenants of friendship w^th y^e s^d Arien Jorise there Commander Bringing him great Presents of Bever or oyr Peltry & desyred that they might come & have Constant free Trade with them weh was concluded upon & y^e s^d nations came dayly with great multitudes of Bever & traded them w^th y^e ship; y^e s^d Deponent lived in Albany three years all which time y^e s^d Indians were all as quiet as Lambs & came & Traded with all y^e freedom Imaginable,

A closer examination of Trico's disposition makes it evident that she added knowledge accumulated in later years since she distinguishes between the five Iroquois nations and mentions the Ottawa by name, impossible prior to 1659. Governor Dongan also played a suspicious hand in this apparent treaty, which would have furthered his attempts to trade with the Ottawa. In fact, "the venerable Mrs Trico remembered just what Governor Dongan wished" to enhance his claims of trade and occupation of Iroquois and Ottawa territories. The falsehood of this carefully concocted story leads us to speculate that no earlier treaties existed. If Dongan went to all the trouble to invent a tale and convince an elderly woman to swear to its validity, it is hard to imagine why he would not chose to predate all European-Iroquois treaties and in this way further validate his claim to territory and trading rights. The fact that he chose 1623 as his date renders a 1618 treaty between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee highly unlikely.

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182 Ibid, p. 28.
185 Ibid.
186 Beauchamp, *History of the New York Iroquois*, p.173. Treasle also doubts the validity of Trico's claim based on her categorization of the Five separate Iroquois nations. p. 34.
The hostility between the Mohican and Mohawk in the 1620s also makes a 1618 agreement unlikely, especially one that the former allegedly witnessed\(^\text{187}\) outside the boundary of Mohawk territory.\(^\text{188}\) O’Callaghan’s statement that the 1618 agreement “continued without any breech on either side, till the English gained this country”\(^\text{189}\) is without a doubt false, as squirmishes commonly broke out between the Mohawk and the Dutch who had initially befriended the Mohicans, traditional Mohawk enemies. The Dutch and Mohican obviously had an agreement in 1628 when they collaborated in attacking Mohawk settlements, thus questioning the existence of a friendship with any Iroquois nation.\(^\text{190}\)

It happened this year, that the Maykans, being at war with the Maquaes, requested to be assisted by the Commander of Fort Orange and six others. Commander Krieckebeck went up with them a mile from the Fort, and met the Maquaes who peppered them so bravely with a discharge of arrows, that they were forced to fly, leaving many slain among whom were the Commander and three of his men. Among the latter was Tymen Bouwensz., whom they devoured, after having well cooked him. The rest they burnt. The Commander was buried with the other two by his side. Three escaped; two Portuguese and a Hollander from Hoorn. One of the Portuguese was wounded by an arrow in the back whilst swimming. The Indians carried a leg and an arm home to be divided among their families, as a proof that they had conquered their enemies.

Some days after the worthy Pieter Barentsen, who usually was sent upwards and along the coast with the sloops, visited them; they wished to excuse their act, on the plea that they had never injured the whites and asked the reason why the latter had meddled with them; Had it been otherwise, they would not have acted as they had.\(^\text{191}\)

Obviously, no treaty between the Mohawk and the Dutch existed at the time of this conflict since the Iroquois did not apologise for violating a treaty and the Dutch did not accuse any such betrayal. It seems that there was little contact between the two nations in 1628, as the Mohawk imply little meddling on the part of both parties. Even friendly trade relations are rendered void by this attack, as it would have been highly unlikely for the Dutch to fight against a Nation with whom they traded.\(^\text{192}\) Any proposals for an initial Dutch-Haudenosaunee peace must therefore date after the 1628 hostilities.

\(^{187}\) Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, p. 34.
\(^{189}\) E. B. O’Callaghan, *History of New Netherland*, p. 78
\(^{190}\) Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, p. 53.
\(^{192}\) Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, p. 53.
2.2.3 The 1643 Treaty

Dutch traders and Native peoples probably established other pacts prior to the 1643 treaty, although, as previously discussed, these were not ratified with the authority of the New Netherland government. Especially after the Mohawks drove away the Mohicans in 1628, Fort Orange needed to guarantee their fur supply by turning to their former enemies. A Mohawk chief likely referred to one of these earlier treaties in 1660, describing "the old chain of friendship which we have enjoyed for more than thirty years," dating to about the time of the Mohawk-Mohican war. The treaty of 1643, however, is accepted as the first formal treaty between the Mohawk and all the Dutch, "and may be considered the beginning of the long series of compacts which kept these Indians on the side of the Dutch and the English for over one hundred years." The affirmation of a treaty as late as 1643 grants legitimacy, implying that the Dutch were not as concerned as the English in furthering their ambition of American conquest by inventing fictional treaties like Governor Dongan. While the original treaty minutes are unfortunately missing, colonial records show that the Dutch claimed 1643 as "the date of their first alliance with the Mohawk." Arendt van Curler's speech to Mohawk chiefs at their "First Castle Kaghnuwage" in 1659 substantiates the ratification of a treaty sixteen years prior:

1. Brothers, we have come here only to renew our old friendship and brotherhood and you must tell it to your children; our children will always be able to learn from the contents of our writings, which we leave behind us, for they remain while we die. From them they will always see, how we have lived in friendship with our brothers...Three boxes of wampum were given to them.
2. Brother, sixteen years have now passed, since we made the first treaty of friendship and brotherhood between you and all the Dutch, whom then we joined together with an iron chain. Since that time it has not been broken either by us or by our brothers and we have no fear that it will be broken by either side, we will therefore not speak of it any more, but we will all be and remain, as if we had lain

193 From Mohawk speech, June 26, 1660, Court Minutes of Fort Orange, 2:269, as cited in Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, p. 53.
under one heart and in grateful remembrance of our brotherhood we give you now
two boxes of wampum.\textsuperscript{196}

Other references also confirm the existence of such a 1643 treaty in absence of the actual
treaty minutes. On the 30\textsuperscript{th} of August, 1645, the Dutch and River Indians signed articles of
peace with Mohawk ambassadors acting a mediators,\textsuperscript{197} highly unlikely without a previous
agreement establishing their friendship. Furthermore, on the 25\textsuperscript{th} of February 1654, a
resolution provided the Mohawk, “now our good friends,” with ammunition, fearing if they
asked the English, the entire Dutch fur trade may be diverted and “with the loss of their trade,
we would also lose the friendship of the Maquaas and hence heap more misfortunes upon us
and our nation.”\textsuperscript{198} Obviously, if the Dutch provided the Mohawks with ammunition, they
had resolved the hostilities of 1628 and ratified some sort of official pact, as it is highly
unlikely that the Dutch provided guns and powder to a Nation whose loyalties they
questioned.

Historians do not challenge the existence of the 1643 treaty, however, the absence of
original documentation makes it very difficult to determine whether the Two Row Wampum
played a part in these negotiations. Based on Curler’s 1659 speech, it seems unlikely since,
although adamant on the points of brotherhood, friendship and peace, he exchanged boxes of
wampum to validate this message, which falls short of the Two Row’s important physical
structure that so clearly outlines its principles. Furthermore, the mention of the ‘iron chain’
indicates the origin of the Covenant Chain of Friendship,\textsuperscript{199} which supposedly post-dates the
Two Row according to oral tradition. Reference to this ‘first treaty’ bound together by the
‘iron chain’ implies that an early precursor to the Covenant Chain was the first official
agreement between the Iroquois and the Dutch, not the Two Row Wampum. Although both
pacts seem quite similar in their affirmation of friendship and peace, they are not identical,
with the Two Row emphasizing autonomy and the Covenant Chain referring to brotherhood
and a peaceful alliance. Thus, the lack of specific mention of the Two Row Wampum and
the absence its metaphors of autonomy challenges the very existence of the belt itself, as well

\textsuperscript{196} E. B. O’Callaghan, ed., \textit{Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid, p. 35-6.
\textsuperscript{199} See footnote 128 for an explanation of the Covenant Chain Alliance.
as the belt’s message dating to the early days of Dutch-Haudenosaunee contact. Instead, it seems that the Dutch and Iroquois first established a precursor to the Covenant Chain of Friendship, either in 1613, 1618 or, most certainly, in 1643, but that any link to the Two Row Wampum remains obscured from the historical record.

2.3 **The Two Row Wampum and the English**

While Mohawk-Dutch relations recorded in the early contact period do not refer to the Two Row Wampum, oral tradition follows that the English subsequently reaffirmed the treaty as they colonized North America in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Seventeenth century records are difficult to trace, appearing in numerous volumes, scattered throughout various libraries. For this reason, we concentrate on the documents of Sir William Johnson, superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1756 until his death in 1774. Johnson’s records provide an enormous collection of Native-English diplomatic relations, outlining conferences and transcribing Native discourse in great detail and for this reason should at the very least mention the Two Row Wampum. Firstly, this section examines Sir William Johnson as Superintendent of Indian Affairs and his personal seal, and then continues to the council proceedings that describe the very first treaty between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans. We also explore the prominence of the Covenant Chain Alliance in the *Papers*, as well as the numerous metaphors that outline various relationships, in an attempt to find representation of the Two Row Wampum. Finally, we move to council citations that overtly contradict contemporary Two Row oral tradition and present our hypothesis regarding the true origins of this belt.

2.3.1 **The Papers of Sir William Johnson**

Sir William Johnson, born in County Meath, Ireland in 1715, moved to North America in late 1737 or early 1738, eventually becoming Colonel of the Six Nations Indians from 1745 to 1751. Distinguishing himself during the French and Indian War as a military commander, Johnson became the sole Agent and Superintendent of Indians and their Affairs, subordinate only to London, in 1756. Spanning over the Seven Years War to the fall

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of New France and the resulting deterioration of Iroquois supremacy culminating with the initial stages of the American Revolution, Johnson recorded hundreds of letters and conferences regarding Iroquois and other Native affairs. Possessing intimate knowledge of Haudenosaunee forest diplomacy and customs, Johnson was particularly close to the Mohawk, who named him "Warraghiyagey (doer of great things or chief big business)" and thus obtained an intimate look into the demands and motivations of Native peoples in dealing with the British. Fluent in Mohawk, Johnson married Molly Brant, sister of the famous Mohawk loyalist, Joseph Brant, who re-established the Confederacy at Grand River after the American Revolution. Despite Johnson's respect of Native customs, he shared Britain's imperialist goals of expansion and so the Papers must be interpreted with this ambition in mind. Johnson's official seal, however, shows his closeness to the Six Nations with seven hands holding an endless chain (the hand with what looks like a sleeve is probably Johnson's) that surrounds a tree, a pipe, a wigwam, a canoe and ship.

Upon first glance, the canoe and ship seem to indicate the Two Row Wampum, adding legitimacy to its existence. However, Johnson's Papers do not further elaborate on these symbols, thus making it more likely that the canoe and ship simply represented distinct nations, probably referring to the crucial fur trade. The presence of all symbols on Johnson's seal nevertheless demonstrates his affinity with the Haudenosaunee people and his attention


to their customs. Therefore, the examination of all Iroquois conferences spanning the eighteen years of Johnson’s reign should reveal some sort of reference to the Two Row Wampum, if it existed, since they recorded Native voices with astounding care. However, the entire thirteen volumes do not once directly refer to the Two Row, nor mention its unique metaphors. For instance, at the earliest recorded conference in The Papers at Onondaga, April 24-26th 1748, Johnson described his understanding of the earliest agreement with the Five Nations:

Brethren of the five Nations I will begin upon a thing of a long standing, our first Brothership. My Reason for it is, I think were are several among you who seem to forget it; It may seem strange to you how I a Foreigner should know this, But I tell you I found out some of the old Writings of our Forefathers which was thought to have been lost and in this old valuable Record I find, that our first Friendship Commenced at the Arrival of the first great Canoe or Vessel at Albany, at which you were much surprised but finding what it contained pleased you so much, being Things for your Purpose, as our People convinced you of by shewing you the use of them, that you all Resolved to take the greatest care of that Vessel that nothing should hurt her Whereupon it was agreed to tye her fast with a great Rope to one of the largest Nut Trees on the Bank of the River. But on further Consideration in a fuller meeting it was thought safest Fearing the Wind should blow down that Tree to make a long Rope and tye her fast at Onondaga which was accordingly done and the Rope put under your feet That if anything hurt or touched said Vessel by the shaking of the Rope you might know it, and then agreed to rise all as one and see what the Matter was and whoever hurt the Vessel was to suffer. After this was agreed on and done you made an offer to the Governour to enter into a Band of Friendship with him and his People which he was so pleased at that he told you he would find a strong Silver Chain which would never break slip or Rust to bind you and him forever in Brothership together and that your Warriours and Ours should be as one Heart, one Head, one Blood &ca. and that what happened to the one happened to the other. After this firm agreement was made our Forefathers finding it was good and foreseeing the many Advantages both sides would reap of it, Ordered that if ever that Silver Chain should turn the least Rusty, offer to slip or break, that it should be immediately brightened up again, and not let it slip or break on any account for then you and we were both dead. Brethren these are the words of our Wise Forefathers which some among you know very well to be so.

Johnson makes no specific reference to the Two Row Wampum, nor to the metaphors of a vessel, canoe or river symbolising the autonomy of each respective nation as relayed in the oral tradition. Instead, this extract illustrates similarities in body, mind and spirit: the

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202 Of course, as discussed in Chapter 2, such records do not record every detail in Native languages, but instead rely upon what the note taker understood and what they deemed important. Nevertheless, they provide the only preserved account directly quoting Native speeches and in this way illuminate a great deal of Iroquois-English council proceedings.

apparent melding of two cultures instead of their everlasting independence. Furthermore, Johnson stresses the existence of the Covenant Chain as the first binding agreement between the Iroquois and the English, not the Two Row. Similarities do exist with contemporary Two Row oral tradition in that the wind blew down the Nut tree, separating the European vessel from Haudenosaunee land, similar to the wind dividing the vessel and canoe if a person placed one foot in each, betraying their roots by adopting the laws and traditions of another. While similar imagery is used in this instance, it is obvious that the wind and vessels mean two entirely different things – one speaking of the attachment desired between the two races and the other stressing the autonomy of each. It is not surprising to find such images as vessels and winds in Johnson’s speech but it is the detailed understanding of each in the context of the Two Row that differentiate these metaphors from the same ones used in other instances. Of course, the “Band of Friendship” discussed resonates with the Two Row’s fundamental principle of friendship, but since this was a common concept at the time, mentioned at most diplomatic proceedings particularly referring to the Covenant Chain, this expression of friendship alone cannot imply ratification of the Two Row. There is not enough evidence to substantiate existence, particularly considering that the Six Nations response at the same conference did not correct, but rather endorsed Johnson’s story of the first encounter:

Brother
We are very thankful to you for reminding us of the old Agreement made by our Forefathers and are overjoyed to hear that you have found it out, and hope you will take care not to let it be lost again, for we are sensible that keeping up to them Rules laid down to us thereby is the only way to enable us & You to withstand our Enemies and preserve our Lives wherefore you may depend upon it.

A large belt204

The fact that the Six Nations did not contradict or correct Sir William questions the accuracy of contemporary oral tradition since, according to the story recounted by Chief Thomas and others, the Two Row should logically hold primacy in any discussion of ancient Haudenosaunee-European pacts. Of course, it is entirely possible that the Six Nations mentioned the Two Row, but the English interpreters and/or record-keepers did not include it in the account because they did not deem it important or even because they considered it too

much of a threat to desired English supremacy. However, it is difficult to believe that all interpreters and/or record-keepers systematically hid the message of the Two Row in every one of the hundreds of council proceedings in *The Papers*. A 1763 account of the arrival of the Europeans by the speaker Sagayenquaraghta similarly does not refer to the Two Row, speaking instead of the Covenant Chain of Friendship as the principle agreement between the two nations.

Brethren
We have no Writeings of it, but we have a Tradition that God the Maker of all things hath given to the Six Nations our large Country to dwell and subsist in, and made them a strong People, & our Nations have of Old appointed a Fire Place at Onondauga and by that Means united together and so became a strong & Powerfull Confederacy, and afterward they saw at Albany a white People and found Means to enter into a Conference with them and made a Silver Chain, a strong Chain of Friendship, which they and we have from Time to Time <Brightened and> kept clean, and at this first Interview <liked you so well that we> gave you Room for You to settle upon our <Land and you> have since become very Numerous and prosperous <for which we> are Glad and Rejoice.\(^{205}\)

Renewing the Covenant Chain was a fundamental part of eighteenth century Iroquois-English diplomacy and served to remind the Iroquois and English of their obligations as friends and brothers. However, the Two Row, if it existed, encompassed *all* Iroquois-European relations ratified at contact and thus would have been the obvious agreement to cite in the above instance. Other records of first relations with Europeans relay a similar story, lacking in Two Row imagery and instead concentrating on the Covenant Chain Alliance, assumed in the *Papers* to be the very first treaty between the White man and the Iroquois. For instance, an extract of the Minutes of a Congress with the chiefs of the Six Nations held at Johnson Hall on April 17\(^{th}\) 1773, states:

Brother
When we first saw the White People, and fastened the Ship to the great Tree, the Band of our Union, was a fair Trade: when we strengthened our Alliance with the English, and fastened the Ship with an Iron Chain, which was afterwards made of Silver, Trade was our mutual object, and in most subsequent Treaties it was provided that Trade should be plentiful, and that we should not be cheated....we now on behalf of all our Confederacy, renew, strengthen, and brighten the Covenant Chain, - and the Senecas particularly assure you that they, and all their Dependants, do now take hold

\(^{205}\) Ibid, Vol. 4, p. 124. The < > refer to passages that appear in Hugh Hasting's proof (Historian of the State of New York who printed a number of these papers in 1907), but are not verifiable due to the burned condition of the original manuscript.
of it, and brighten the same, firmly resolving to contribute all their Endeaors, in conjunction with the rest of the Confederacy, to keep it bright, hoping that you will be assisting therein, for our mutual Interest, and the Preservation of Peace.

A large wampum Covenant Chain Belt with 12 Squares 11 Rows

Once again neither the Two Row Wampum, nor any associated symbolism are mentioned, stressing the Covenant Chain as the most important relationship with the English, and thereby contradicting contemporary oral tradition. In another example, a meeting at Burnetsfield on July 7th 1761, Conoghquieson, an Oneida or Tuscarora speaker, responds to a murder committed by one of their Nation against an Englishman:

Brother
By taking these measures we keep up the Ancient Custom subsisting between you and the five Nations of immediately condoling with each other on any mischance, whereby we preserve the Covenant Chain bright and lasting; but we are sorry to observe you look so cooly on us, and are very uneasy lest should the Covenant chain not be preserved in like manner on your parts, it might prove of fatal Consequence, and end in the destruction of one of us - Therefore, with this belt we wipe away all your tears, and renew and strengthen the Covenant Chain of friendship which shall not be broken by us, and we therefore hope you will forget what hath passed and not let slip the Covenant Chain

- Gave a black belt of 7 Rows

The details with which the Covenant Chain is explained throughout the conferences speak to its primacy in Iroquois-English negotiation, and outline the desire to preserve this pact, no matter what the cost for fear of ‘fatal consequence.’ Renewal and maintenance of the Silver Chain of Friendship, emphasizing brotherhood instead of the Two Row principles of autonomy, remain the fundamental points of the Covenant Chain, the most important alliance according to The Papers' council proceedings. Of course, Sir William and other Englishmen wrote these documents, which, while they preserved the voice of many Native speakers, may have ulterior motives and may intentionally ignore or create certain facts to further the English agenda of territorial conquest and supremacy in the Americas. It is therefore possible that Johnson or other transcribers ignored the Two Row because its assertions of sovereignty contradicted English policy. If this is the case, it is quite surprising

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that details exist of the Covenant Chain Alliance, which promotes similar values to that of the Two Row.

Both Sir William Johnson and Iroquois chiefs spoke with eloquent metaphors that described the open roads of communication and the Silver Chain of Friendship polished clean of rust. Such descriptions are imperative in illustrating the desired relationship among different nations according to the principles of forest diplomacy.208 The discourse of a sachem named Gagswangaroras, during an Indian Conference at Johnson Hall February 23-28th 1764, illustrates this point precisely:

Brother. –

At that time [at a meeting last spring] we told you that it was with difficulty we passed the Road to you, being new and full of Briars, and other Obstructions, as also crooked. – You then with this Belt assured us that you open up the Road, and make it straight, and good, so that it might be passed by with ease, and Safety.209

The metaphor of a road is often found throughout Native and European speeches, illustrating the ease or difficulty with which communication is upheld between the nations. The Papers are rife with descriptive imagery, with no mention whatsoever of contemporary Two Row metaphors, such as the river, the ship or the canoe. This is particularly curious since other metaphors, such as a road or chain, appear over and over again in The Papers and one would expect, if the Two Row dated from this period, that its descriptive metaphors would be found, both in specific reference to the agreement but also in other contexts. For instance, using nature to reflect the concept of time, the Governor stated in 1763, “we shall live in Peace and Friendship as long as the Sun and Moon shall endure.”210 A similar concept to “as long as the sun shines” from Two Row oral tradition, this phrase alone obviously does not indicate presence of the Two Row, but shows the flexibility of metaphors in referring to multiple messages and for this reason makes it even more surprising that no canoes or rivers represented the ideas of autonomy in other contexts.

208 Forest Diplomacy outlined the elaborate procedures by which Natives and Europeans conducted negotiations, including the presentation of gifts, wampum belts and eloquent speeches during conferences that often lasted many days.
There is no debate that the Iroquois and English alike greatly esteemed the principles of friendship and brotherhood during Sir William Johnson’s tenure. Abraham, a Mohawk speaker addressed Sir William Johnson at a meeting held with all Six Nations at Johnson Hall, April 21-28th 1762. He spoke of the “advantage of us all & for the promoting of Peace, Friendship & Alliance, between the English & all Indians, So that they might become One People.” The three principles of peace, friendship and alliance are similar to those outlined in the Two Row’s oral tradition: friendship, peace, respect, good-minds and purity. The presence of these principles in Abraham’s speech reflects the concepts important to the Haudenosaunee in their relations with the Europeans, which were a crucial part, not only of the Two Row’s contemporary oral tradition, but also of the Covenant Chain Alliance. This notion of one people, however, actually contradicts the message of the Two Row, by illustrating that they should unite and not remain fully autonomous nations. Johnson further outlined this friendship at the same conference, stating:

I can Inform you that the purport thereof was a Renewal of the Ancient Covenant Chain of Friendship formerly Established between your Ancestors & Ours, that we should be United in Friendship, and alliance, & form one body together which Alliance I hope Neither time nor the Death of your Chiefs shall ever Occasion you to forget.

Of course, we can assume that the Iroquois interpreted the formation of “one body together” to imply brotherhood and equality, neither group ruling over the other but instead uniting as one. It is hard to imagine that the Haudenosaunee would consciously relinquish their laws and traditions, whole heartedly ‘becoming’ European. They undoubtedly desired autonomy and independence as distinct nations that did not require formal verbalization and/or official ratification of the Two Row. Sir William Johnson, on the other hand, accepted the label of brother, but continued to affirm English sovereignty over all Native peoples. Regardless of how the English or Iroquois interpreted brotherhood, it implied at the very minimum close Iroquois-English relations and perhaps even the melding of a common North American law, which is contrary to the Two Row’s affirmation that neither side shall interfere in the laws or traditions of the other. For instance, Lieutenant Colonel John Ried speaking to Ogista, a Seneca chief, at Fort Pitt June 16th 1765, stated:

Brother—
By our Laws, all Persons convicted of Murder are to suffer Death, and therein we make no Distinction between White Men, and Indians. – If a white man shall be Convicted of killing an Indian, he will certainly be hanged, and as a Satisfaction due to the Relations of the murdered Indian, they will be called upon to witness the Execution. – On the other hand, if an Indian shall be convicted of killing a White Man, we do expect that the Nation he belongs to, will deliver him up to suffer Death in the same manner (As this has been always one of the first Articles agreed upon between us in all former Treaties) and if they should fail in the Performance of this, we must consider them as a Nation unwilling to do us Justice, consequently look upon them as Enemies, & prohibit any trade to be Carried on with them. ²¹²

This citation clearly shows the presence of a common law, enforced by the English, and refutes the contemporary Two Row claim that each nation shall maintain their jurisdiction. Of course, the establishment of such laws for the interest of the groups on a whole, as done by the United Nations in a modern context, can mutually benefit those with common aspirations, but the wording of the passage (albeit spoken and written by an Englishman) infers a primarily English policy, to be conducted in English courts and thus removed from Iroquois jurisdiction. It is hard to imagine the Iroquois accepting such a proposal if the Two Row emphasised with such force the independence of law and tradition, leading us to believe that such a concept was not entrenched in Haudenosaunee consciousness at the time. In fact, it seems that the Iroquois appealed to the British for legal recourse in a number of instances, one being the unjust dispossession of land, outlined on January 28th 1762 by Kayenquiragoa:

Our troublesome Neighbour George Klock...endeavouring to cheat us of our Lands, and thereby deprive us of subsistence, by making our Young people, and others, drink & then persuading them to Sign Deeds for it, which they are utter strangers to when sober.

...Brother
We now most earnestly desire that this our deplorable situât⁹ may be laid before the Governor that we may be redressed. ²¹³

If the Two Row Wampum guaranteed autonomy it is difficult to imagine why Kayenquiragoa would appeal to Johnson, particularly considering that the procedure for meddling in the affairs of the other is clearly outlined in contemporary oral tradition. If a white man attempts to enter the vessel of the Haudenosaunee then Iroquois beliefs and laws will guide them.

²¹² Ibid, Vol. 11, p. 792.
Stealing Iroquois lands undoubtedly shows a violation of the Two Row principles so it is not clear why Kayenquiragoa asked the English to rectify the situation when, as fully sovereign nations, the Haudenosaunee should have enforced their own laws.

The fact that there is no mention whatsoever of the Two Row or its accompanying metaphors in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* severely contradicts the oral tradition that maintains the existence of this treaty for centuries. One would expect numerous references to exist of such an important treaty, particularly during the French-Indian War of 1754-63, the Seven Years War from 1756-63 and during the Indian uprising of 1764-65, where Johnson needed a guarantee of non-aggression from the Iroquois. While numerous conferences cite the Covenant Chain as an expression of peace, the Two Row Wampum, as the most important treaty of all time, would have carried more weight according to its contemporary message. Similarly, the absence of Two Row discourse in colonial Dutch records calls into question the true origins of this treaty since, if so crucial to European-Iroquois diplomacy, the belt should logically be mentioned at least once. These revelations confirm that there is little likelihood that the Europeans and the Haudenosaunee officially ratified anything outlining the Two Row's principles before the late eighteenth century. Natives and Europeans alike, however, did exchange many wampum belts to pledge friendship and brotherhood. It is very possible, therefore, that the Two Row is a *mentality* dating from the contact period that was eventually formalized in the Covenant Chain of Friendship. Obviously, at contact the Iroquois viewed themselves as a sovereign people and did not think nor desire to become the subjects of the newcomers. It is therefore a given that the Haudenosaunee assumed they would maintain autonomy in their laws and traditions, implicitly reflected in the establishment of a Covenant Chain of Friendship and other guarantees of peaceful relations. This assumption entrenched in the consciousness of the Iroquois, was perhaps verbalised years later as the English and Americans threatened the autonomy of the Haudenosaunee. Risking extinction in the 19th century, the Iroquois needed to formalize their independence and did so with the contemporary version of the Two Row Wampum belt.
Chapter III
The Invention of the Two Row Wampum

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, no historical fact confirms, nor denies definitively, the existence of the Two Row Wampum in the initial contact period or in the years preceding the American Revolution. In fact, as this chapter shows, the earliest references to the Two Row’s message only appear in the late nineteenth century, while a direct link between such a message and the physical belt itself is only evident in the early twentieth century. We examine the similarities between early Two Row imagery and that of contemporary oral tradition in order to illustrate the origins of this legend. Then, we study the history of one Two Row Wampum, today held at Grand River, including its removal from the reserve in 1899, early efforts at restoration, a seventy-two year stay at the Museum of American Indian – Heye Foundation and, finally, repatriation in 1988. Such an examination suggests how and when the Two Row’s message, already in existence, eventually became associated with a particular wampum belt of a completely different origin.

3.1 The Earliest Two Row References

Two references prior to the turn of the twentieth century resonate with the contemporary version of the Two Row Wampum. Despite this, neither mentions the existence of a physical belt, showing that the Two Row message stood on its own. The lack of association with a wampum treaty adds conviction to the possibility that the Two Row does not reflect an official treaty dating from the contact era. Instead, as seen in the following examples, the Two Row’s message seems to originate with the Covenant Chain Alliance in the late nineteenth century, having been elaborated and extended over time. Eventually the two separated and formed the entirely new story of the Two Row Wampum that affirms the sovereignty of the Haudenosaunee people.

[214] There are at least 4 belts in existence today – one is held at Grand River, while the remaining three are at various Haudenosaunee reservations in the United States. This, according to Council Fire : A Resource Guide, (Brantford, Ontario: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1989), p. 8, is not unusual since “it is likely that the British gave the Confederacy copies of the original belt at later Councils to renew their commitment.” Of course, until x-rays are taken of Two Row Belts there is no way to know the age of the belts themselves.
3.1.1 Chief John Smoke Johnson, 1870

The earliest written reference\(^{215}\) of the Two Row Wampum’s message appears in a speech by Chief John Smoke Johnson, the eloquent Mohawk speaker of the Confederacy Council at Grand River, on June 13\(^{\text{th}}\), 1870. However, while his message is strikingly similar to that of the Two Row today, the description of the wampum belt involved does not depict two parallel purple rows on a bed of white, but instead mentions what seems to be a friendship belt, representative of the Covenant Chain of Friendship, as well as a ‘check’ wampum. At the General Council of the Six Nations and other Nations Chief Johnson states:

The Wampum having two men standing one at each end, represents the first meeting or treaty with the British Government. It represents the Six Nations and the British Government. They stand on their own rules, which they laid down, the British Government gave a check Wampum to confirm what the Six Nations had done in their rules and declarations. The marks worked on the wampum shows the British and Six Nations had united by treaty. They were each to have their own way; not hurting their customs or rules or regulations. If the Indian had his bark canoe, let him have it, let the British have his large vessels. The British gives the wampum to confirm the rules and regulations of the Confederacy.\(^{216}\)

This extract is fascinating since, not only does it represent the very first mention of Iroquois autonomy incarnated by a canoe as per today's contemporary message, but it also provides a clue to the origin of this tradition. As there is no written evidence that the Two Row Wampum dates from first contact with the Europeans, historians hail the Covenant Chain of Friendship as the initial and most crucial treaty with the Dutch and then with the British. This Covenant Chain Alliance is represented on many wampum belts, each one identical to the first one described above: two men standing at each end with a line (the chain itself or a path representing open communication) uniting the two, pronouncing their everlasting friendship.

\(^{215}\) That we have found after searching Early Canadiana Online and the National Archives of Canada.

\(^{216}\) Chief J. Smoke Johnson, *The General Council of the Six Nations and Delegates from different Bands in Western and Eastern Canada June 10, 1870*, The Spectator Office, Hamilton, Ontario, www.canadiana.org CIHM 05766, p. 9. It is important to note, of course, that The Spectator Office provided this quotation, which therefore cannot guarantee its authenticity as a purely Native source, much like the Native speeches recounted in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*. 
The second belt, the 'check Wampum' is more ambiguous, since we have not found any other references to bead combinations in the form of a 'check.' It is certain that this second belt cannot be the same as today's Two Row since it is impossible to see how the so-called 'check' could resemble two parallel lines. It seems more likely that this belt was given as a 'check,' symbolising the agreement on the part of the British and thus probably looked very similar to the above Friendship Belt. Nevertheless, in Johnson's account this belt incarnates the remainder of the Two Row's contemporary message, emphasizing the separateness of customs, rules and regulations, as well as the vessel symbolism. The way that the messages of both two belts intertwine in this text is interesting since they both seem to represent the very same thing: the first treaty affirming autonomy of law and customs between the British and the Iroquois.

The friendship belt in Johnson's account clearly suggests a possible evolution of the Two Row's message from the Covenant Chain in the late nineteenth century. Such an extension of the Covenant Chain's principles of friendship and brotherhood is not that far fetched. The attitude of independence between nations must have been so obvious to the Iroquois at contact who thought they negotiated as fully autonomous nations. It would be naive and insulting to assume that with the White man on the horizon, the Haudenosaunee automatically gave up their independence, reducing themselves to subjects of the newcomers. As we well know, the historical record proves otherwise, emphasizing the Iroquois' crucial role in early contact America in many facets: diplomatically, with eloquent political protocol; culturally, with methods of survival; and militarily, with warfare tactics. Europeans eagerly adopted many Iroquois customs in order to integrate into a foreign climate and by no means successfully controlled the Iroquois as a monarch aspired to control their subjects during the
early seventeenth century. Thus, there seems to have been no need for a Two Row treaty at contact when the sovereignty of the Iroquois Confederacy was not threatened. The Haudenosaunee did not have to formally entrench their independence in wampum until later years, when the fall of their Empire and the rise of the Canadian and American political states endangered Six Nation sovereignty. Eventually, after being verbalized in conjunction with the Covenant Chain, as in Johnson’s extract, the Two Row took on a life of its own, incarnating ancient principles initially taken for granted but now accentuated in order to avoid elimination.

3.1.2 Chief William Jacobs, 1872

Cayuga Chief William Jacobs outlined another reference similar to the contemporary Two Row’s message in a letter to the Honourable Joseph Howe, Canadian Secretary of State, dated May 11th, 1872:

You are appointed to make Your own laws and we will make our own laws frinch when he Came and found the read man he says to them let me be ? children and Shake hands with iron the English Came Sailing up to indians Bark Canoe and he says let us be Brothers and Shake hands with sillerver and that will never wills get rust if it dose made will Scoure it up and make it Brite again ...You sail Your own Boat and will paddle our own canoe Side by Side I was not to Enter Your Craft and You was not to Enter in my Canoe Gale and Calm we must be Side By Side...the first pail fase man when he saw the read fase that the Bargan maid they maid it so as long the sun rises and sets and water running and grass are growing and Brush are growing we will be Brothers the pail phases said to the red fase that long we will be Bro when the pail fase man Saw my laws he Says to the read mans fase your laws of the Six nation is good that Your fore farthers maid for You laws the pail fase man said to the read fase I dont understand the way Your Cannoe nils the Six nation Chief Said we Dond under Stand the ways of Your Boat nils the pail fase said to the read man I dont under Stand the Burch Cannoe ruls if I Enter in it might up set, the read man said Yes if You Enter in my Burch Cannoe it will upset the Read man Said to the pail fase that is the ruls and laws the Grate Spirit gave us once we own from the age of the salt water217

The notable absence of a belt in Jacobs’ letter again suggests that this mentality of autonomy amongst Nations was probably innately implied and not formalized by a wampum treaty at contact, but evolved many years later. In Jacobs’ correspondence, the Covenant Chain

217 Chief William Jacobs, Letter to Joseph Howe, 11 May 1872, National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Vol. 1862, C-11103, Files 239. The question mark at the beginning of the text indicates a word in the original that was impossible to decipher.
Alliance and the contemporary message of the Two Row again collide with the shaking of hands with iron and then with silver, suggesting that the Covenant Chain was the first Haudenosaunee-European treaty and that the Two Row message later evolved from this initial concept of friendship. The reference to “Scoure it up and make it Brite again” also concerns the Covenant Chain and the multiple diplomatic meetings throughout the colonial period dedicated to its renewal.\textsuperscript{218} The explanation of the boat and canoe analogy following a desire to continually renew the Covenant Chain and then switching back to the initial ‘bargain’ made between the ‘pale face’ and the ‘red face’ for time everlasting infers a connection between the Covenant Chain and the Two Row Wampum, as though the metaphors expanded upon the formers’ founding principles. The concepts of sovereignty today do not exist alone in Jacobs’ correspondence but instead depend on Iroquois understanding of the Covenant Chain Alliance, from which the Two Row seems to have eventually evolved, creating a life of its own.

While Jacobs’ letter is the first reference that outlines contemporary Two Row symbolism in such detail, certain phrases and words blatantly contradict today’s version. The letter asks for protection from Howe, expressing a desire to make some Iroquois laws more like the laws of the British; “Our beloved Governer General had laws for us indians the protection for indians was good law we think he was kind to his read man we wish this would not be altered this Protection There is Three Things in Your law we wish to be like Yours the way to punish the Bad.”\textsuperscript{219} This is hardly a discourse outlining the total autonomy of the Haudenosaunee since it fundamentally challenges this core element of the Two Row and accepts the melding of Iroquois and British law. Two possibilities thus arise: either Jacobs only spoke favourably of the British to ensure protection from Howe and the story of a canoe and ship affirmed his true view of sovereignty or, Jacobs accepted Iroquois subordination to the British crown and her representatives and the Two Row story simply reflected an ancient tradition no longer in effect. The second possibility seems more likely in this case since Jacobs did not use the story of the autonomous canoe and boat to achieve independence from Britain, instead remaining quite dependent, almost begging for Howe’s protection. The apparent reliance on British law and governance runs contrary to our contemporary

\textsuperscript{218} A great deal of which were presided by Sir William Johnson, who, as shown in Chapter Two, makes no reference to the Two Row in his eighteen years as Indian Superintendent.
\textsuperscript{219} Chief William Jacobs, Letter to Joseph Howe, 11 May 1872.
perception of the Two Row Wampum and questions the true understanding of Iroquois-British autonomy in the late nineteenth century.

It is important to understand the context of the late nineteenth century, which undoubtedly influenced Jacobs message. Native peoples had infinitely less freedom of expression than today where the Assembly of First Nations, while perhaps not as influential as Amerindians would like, speaks out regarding important issues and is an important government lobby organisation. In the nineteenth century, Jacobs simply did not have the same option to challenge the crown’s authority. It is obvious that the Two Row discourse today carries much heavier weight than during Johnson’s and Jacobs’ time, used for reclamations of self-governance and Indian Act reform, which emphasises the degree by which such a story can evolve from its original account depending on the political, social and economic contexts.

Both Johnson’s and Jacobs’ extracts provide us with a deeper understanding of the actual origin of the Two Row; however, the lack of a wampum belt incarnating the message causes us to wonder how an association with the contemporary belt came about. Tracking the life of the Two Row Wampum today held at Grand River in the next section provides one answer to the sensitive subject of the invention of the Two Row’s modern tradition.

### 3.2 The Two Row Wampum Belt of Grand River

One question remains regarding the seemingly recent invention of Two Row discourse: how is it that today a number of white wampum belts with two purple rows\(^\text{220}\) are said to represent this seventeenth century treaty since such an agreement was probably never ratified? Perhaps existing belts with convenient colour combinations simply adopted the Two Row’s message, or possibly some person knowingly fabricated these belts in an effort to provide legitimacy to the newly invented Two Row tradition. This question speaks to whether the Two Row was simply an accepted historical premise for the Iroquois and eventually blended into oral tradition, innocently adopting another wampum belt as its own, or whether the Two Row was intentionally fabricated by a person or persons in order to

\(^{220}\) See footnote 214, which explains why there are at least 4 belts in existence today.
further a specific goal. The story of the Two Row Wampum held today at Grand River, Ontario, is fascinating and suggests a possible origin of this belt over one hundred years ago.

The story begins at the turn of the twentieth century as government policies tried to abolish traditional rituals, as residential schools attempted to erase Native tongues, and as farming and voting incentives aimed to entice Aboriginals to abandon their status. A desperate desire to preserve the culture and history of the perceived 'disappearing Indian' for future generations resulted in the acquisition of numerous artefacts by private collectors and museums. T. R. Roddy, a private collector motivated by financial gain, purchased one of the current Two Row Wampum belts, selling it, along with ten other belts, to George G. Heye in 1910, who sought to eternally preserve the artefacts in his museum vault instead risking their disappearance at Grand River. The chiefs of Grand River finally repatriated the belts in 1988 after their claim lay dormant for more than seventy years. The museum returned the belts on the grounds of their collective ownership that actually stemmed from a faulty historical assumption that the belts were League wampums, when, in fact, they were not.

3.2.1 John Buck, Wampum Keeper

The Grand River Two Row Wampum, according to today's Confederacy Council, is one of the belts brought to Canada by the loyal Indians after the American Revolution and the division of the League. Settling in Grand River, Ontario and led by Joseph Brant, the loyalist Iroquois re-established a Six Nations government with the help of the League belts transported from the previous council at Onondaga, New York. In the nineteenth century, Chief John Skanawati Buck, the League wampum keeper for fifty years until his death in 1893, was responsible for the physical preservation of the belts, as well as their contained messages. It is crucial to understand that these belts belonged to the League as a whole,

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221 Many wampum belts and other Native artefacts of this period are unaccounted for, possibly lost (some belts were kept in a buckskin bag in the Grand River General Store, which is not very secure), destroyed (the antiquity of many made them quite fragile), or sold to private collectors (who had no intention of displaying them for the collective knowledge of the public).

222 That is, the belts belonged to the Grand River community on a whole and not to an individual.


224 See Figure 2 - the man sitting third from the left is John Buck, Wampum Keeper.
serving as mnemonic devices to preserve legends and political transactions for generations to come and were not the personal property of John Buck. In 1871 Horatio Hale photographed the nineteen League belts of great historic importance, subsequently described by Elisabeth Tooker: six related to the founding of the League, four explained the first treaty between the Iroquois and the English, one confirmed a treaty by the Canadian government, and the rest remained unexplained.\textsuperscript{225} It is fairly certain that the Two Row Wampum was not included in John Buck's collection of League belts in the late nineteenth century since neither written nor photographic record can be found. Hale's 1871 photograph clearly shows the nineteen League wampum belts and numerous strings, none of which resemble the Two Row in the slightest.

Figure 5. The Six Nations' belts under the trusteeship of John Buck. The Two Row Wampum is notably absent. Photographed by Horatio Hale in Brantford, Ontario, 14 September 1871. Elisabeth Tooker, "A Note on the Return of Eleven Wampum Belts", p. 225.

Similarly, Buck's 1887 reading of all of fifteen remaining "great wampum records of the Iroquois nation" do not mention any belt with a similar design as the Two Row, nor any tale

\textsuperscript{225} Tooker, "A Note on the Return", p. 225.
similar to the current oral history of this belt. One would expect that, considering the Two Row affirms without a doubt the sovereignty of the Six Nations according to its current oral tradition, this belt would have occupied a prime position among the League belts and would have been read at every possible occasion to remind British Canadians of their historic promise not to meddle in Native affairs.

After Buck’s death in 1893, “most of the fine collection of Canadian Iroquois belts quickly disappeared,” as his children, primarily his son Joshua Buck, refused to return the belts to the community, and instead, as Fenton describes, treated them as private possessions, offering them for sale to numerous dealers. J. N. B. Hewitt, an ethnologist for the Smithsonian Institution, attempted to purchase the belts in 1897, fearing that if the Council of the Six Nations recovered the belts from the Buck children they would continue “to diminish in numbers...as various tempting offers have been made for their purchase.” He believed that by selling the belts off one by one to private collectors, their value would decrease and their history would be lost forever, whereas the Smithsonian Institution could preserve the belts and their messages intact. Hewitt’s relentless attempt to purchase the belts failed, since Joshua Buck, a wanted man for robbery and rape, fled to the United States and probably sold or donated the League belts to the Iroquois of New York State. However, many have erroneously assumed that Joshua Buck sold the League wampum belts to T. R. Roddy, a Chicago dealer in Indian artefacts.

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226 Augusta I. Grant Gilkison, “What is Wampum? Explained by Chief John Buck in 1887”, Annual Archaeological Report, 36 (1928), p. 48-50. It is not known what happened to the other four belts, although Buck is known to have sold at least one to Harriet M. Converse.
3.2.2 T. R. Roddy’s Purchases

In 1899, Roddy possessed eleven wampum belts, assumed by collectors, academics and natives alike to be the League belts illegally sold by the Buck children. This assumption is false, as Elizabeth Tooker outlines in her article. Six of the belts bought by Roddy can be traced by an 1899 photograph by J. N. B. Hewitt to the private collection of Cayuga Chief James Jamieson, who knew so little about the origin of his belts that it “would not cover a letter sheet of paper.” Hewitt’s photograph of Jamieson’s collection shows an obvious lack of the Two Row, which Roddy must have purchased with four remaining belts from an unknown source at an unknown time, bringing his total to eleven wampum belts.

Figure 6. James Jamieson’s belts. Photographed by J. N. B. Hewitt in 1899. Elisabeth Tooker, “A Note on the Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 225

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It is possible that one of these ‘mysterious’ belts came from Buck’s collection since Roddy purchased a friendship belt identical to one in Hale’s 1871 photo (See Figure 4 for a close up of a friendship belt (although probably not the one in Hale’s photograph)). This is far from certain, however, because a number of friendship belts exist, identical to both the one Roddy purchased and the one in Hale’s picture. The others are definitely not from Buck’s League collection based on photographs that documented the collection at the time.
The mistaken association of the eleven belts with Buck’s League collection began with a letter by Harriet M. Converse, a New York journalist, folklorist and museum collector that stimulated the repatriation attempts of the eleven belts, which began in 1900. Converse, who purchased one League belt from John Buck in 1892 and was likely upset that she could not get her hands on more, sent an incensed letter to E. D. Cameron, the Indian Superintendent at Brantford (next to Grand River) in February 1900:

I consider it my duty to you, and the Chiefs of the Grand River Reserve to inform you confidentially that the mission John Buck Wampum belts eleven in number are now in the possession of a Mr. T.R. Roddy....a dealer in Indian relics.... These eleven including the eight now at Ohaweken, and three that John Buck the elder sold, (which were not national) make up the entire 22 which I saw when John Buck was living.

It is indeed a pity that these should have passed into the hands of a speculator.

Converse is obviously mistaken, since Roddy bought six of the eleven from Jamieson and pictures of the remaining four taken by William M. Beauchamp, as well as by Roddy, do not match any of the nineteen league belts in Hale’s 1871 picture, save one.

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236 Fenton discusses four belts sold by the Buck children but later recovered by the chiefs and placed “in the safe of the general store at Ohsweken, the seat of their government” for safekeeping. Fenton, “Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 404. It is not known why Converse refers to eight belts in her letter.
237 It is possible that today’s Two Row was not a national belt and John Buck sold it from his private collection before his death. Lack of records make this impossible to ascertain, but, if true, this means that the Two Row could not possibly have been as important as professed today or it would have undoubtedly been a part of the treasured Confederacy wampums.
239 The friendship belt previously mentioned. (See footnote 233)
Figure 7. Belts purchased by Roddy in 1899.
Numbers 186 and 187 were part of Jamieson’s collection (see Figure 6). Number 188, today’s Two Row Wampum, is not among Jamieson’s belts, nor Buck’s League collection shown in Figure 5. Beauchamp, “Wampum and Shell Articles”, Plate 16, p. 424.

Cameron however, acting on Converse’s letter, assumed that Roddy’s belts originated from Buck’s League collection and sent a letter to Roddy:

Several belts of Wampum the property of the Six Nations Chiefs were stolen from the Six Nations Reserve a few years ago. Every inquiry has been made and now learn, that you purchased in Canada last summer eleven Belts, which are the property of the Six Nations. Certainly no title passed to you and on behalf of the Six Nations Indians I hereby notify you not to dispose of the same, except at your own risk.240

If Roddy replied, his letter is not preserved with the other correspondence. His efforts to sell the belts, however, were hindered due to Cameron’s letter and the actions of New York state archaeologist, Arthur C. Parker who warned all American museums of the theft.241


archaeologists, historians, collectors and Indian Agents at the time disagreed with the seemingly dishonest sale by the Buck children who had no ownership claims to the belts and thought that they should be returned to the custodianship of the Confederacy chiefs.

### 3.2.3 Attempts at Repatriation

A few years later, the Six Nations chiefs attempted to recover the belts, writing to the Governor General of Canada in 1909, asking for his help while Josiah Hill, the secretary of the Grand River Council, circulated a photo to aid in their return. Roddy meanwhile, negotiating through the Indian Trading Company of New York City, finally sold the eleven belts to George G. Heye for $2,000 in 1910, who exhibited them at the University Museum in Philadelphia. Anthropologist Frank Speck discovered Heye's belts while visiting the museum, compared them with the photo circulated by Hill, and wrote to a former colleague, Edward Sapir, then head of the Anthropological Survey of Canada in Ottawa. Sapir in turn contacted Duncan Cameron Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Ottawa to unveil Speck's discovery, communicating that “before much can be done it will be absolutely necessary to have the Indians prove that the belts were tribal and not individual property, and that they were stolen from the tribe as a whole, and not rightfully sold by an individual.”

Scott and Heye then exchanged rather irate letters in which Heye asserted that his belts were not from Grand River and besides, regardless of their origin, he came by them honestly:

>The belts referred to you were bought by me in perfectly good faiths and I have no proof as to the fact that they were illegally taken from the custody of the Six Nations

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242 Fenton, “Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 405. Unfortunately, this photo could not be found. It would be interesting to examine it, since it may provide a clue to the true origins of the five ‘mystery’ belts.
244 Fenton, “Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 405-6.
245 Edward Sapir, Letter to Duncan C. Scott, 16 May 1914.
League therefore I see no reason at all why they do not properly belong to me and naturally I would not hand them over to anyone.\textsuperscript{246}

Finally, upon seeing a picture, Heye admitted they originated from Grand River, but he demanded evidence of their theft. With his title questioned, Roddy returned to Grand River where the Jamiesons reassured him of his ‘absolute’ ownership,\textsuperscript{247} but people still assumed that the belts belonged to the League as a whole.\textsuperscript{248} Roddy did not seem too concerned in establishing his ownership of the other five belts, whose origins continue to remain a mystery.

In 1915, Scott attempted to obtain an affidavit from the Six Nation chiefs proving the national, not individual ownership of the belts, meaning that their sale depended upon the consent of the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{249} The chiefs, while asserting the public nature of the belts, failed to provide Scott with the evidence needed by not identifying the person or persons who sold the belts; “The council desired to give the following information that the wampum belts are the property of the Six Nations Indians of Canada and that the late John Buck fire keeper was the custodian of the Belts and further that the belts were disposed of by some one not at present known by the council.”\textsuperscript{250} Seemingly uninterested in pursuing the recuperation of the belts, the chiefs “were obviously covering up their own lapse as trustees of a national treasure and at the same time protecting one or two of their own people.”\textsuperscript{251} It is even more possible that the chiefs “themselves were not sure from whom Roddy had purchased the belts,”\textsuperscript{252} considering that of the five not sold by Jamieson, only one\textsuperscript{253} may have been part of Buck’s collection of League wampum. The attempts to repatriate the belts to Grand River ended when Heye transferred them to the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation,

\textsuperscript{248} It is unclear why people continued to view the belts as part of Buck’s League collection, when this was obviously not the case (particularly for the six belonging to Jamieson). Perhaps this ignorance of a crucial fact was just a way to reclaim sacred articles, despite the fact that Roddy purchased (some of them at least) legally.
\textsuperscript{251} Fenton, “Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 407.
\textsuperscript{252} Tooker, “A Note on the Return”, p. 232.
\textsuperscript{253} The friendship belt, previously mentioned. (See footnote 233)
created in 1916. The eleven belts remained there for next seventy-two years, until the Confederacy chiefs recruited Paul Williams, an Onondaga lawyer, to resurrect the claim in 1985.

After the appointment of Williams as head negotiator by the chiefs, the chairman of the Collections Committee researched the background of the claim, reporting to the trustees of the Museum. Finally, after a cordial meeting with the chiefs and Williams, and further negotiations, the Museum returned the belts at the Onondaga longhouse at Grand River on 8 May 1988. At the repatriation ceremony, Chief Jacob Thomas read the Two Row Wampum, using his own reproduction since the original was too fragile to handle. He stressed the autonomy of the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans as stipulated in all contemporary accounts of the Two Row. His account of the oral tradition, however, does not coincide at all with the meaning associated with the belt before Roddy’s purchase and at the beginning of the Museum’s acquisition.

3.3 The Two Row Wampum or the Two Road Wampum?

Prior to the 1920s the belt embodied an entirely different message than that of the Two Row today. Roddy called the belt the “Six Nations Two Roads,” and dated it from the end of the American Revolution. William M. Beauchamp, Episcopalian minister and respected archaeologist and historian of the Iroquois, quoted Roddy’s description of the belt as “an offer of peace from the Americans and English respectively, either of which the Indians might choose.” Bruce W. Merwin, describing the belts in the Heye collection in 1916, also subscribed to this explanation: “It was given to the Indians by the Commission, settling the boundary in 1789, to symbolize the two governments. Two white stripes run the entire length of the belt and show that the Indians ‘had two roads offered to them. They

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254 Unfortunately, because of ongoing repatriation claims, the museum’s documents pertaining to this specific case are inaccessible. It would be interesting to examine these documents once they become available to see if the museum realised that the belts did not belong to Buck’s League collection.
255 Fenton, “Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 408.
256 Ibid. p. 395.
257 Picture of ten of the belts bought by Heye with the names given by Roddy – Williams, “Wampum of the Six Nations Confederacy”, p. 203
could go to the British Government or to the United States."

Neither author mentions anything about the belt symbolizing the autonomy of the White man and the Indian, which is puzzling considering one would expect that such an significant message would be maintained by oral tradition and emphasized in any reading. While in the Museum, the belt had no special status, and one cannot even find specific reference to it in the 1922 Guide: "Among those from the Iroquois is a boundary belt, a condolence belt, a friendship belt, and one that was owned by Red Jacket, the noted Seneca chief." It is even unclear which belt is the Two Row from the museum’s description! It is extremely probable, therefore, that at its purchase, this belt held no special significance to the Six Nations community at Grand River. While it is possible that Roddy did not even purchase this belt from Grand River, since its origins cannot be traced, its distinct association with the contemporary Two Road Wampum, outlined by Roddy, Beauchamp and Merwin’s descriptions, makes it unlikely that it ever existed as the Two Row. Today’s message of the Two Road belt strongly coincides with the interpretations from the early twentieth century.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War the Iroquois tried to remain neutral but it did not take them long to realize that neither the English or the Americans intended to leave their country out of the war. One Indian compared his people to a piece of cloth between a pair of scissors, the scissors being the contesting white people and the Indians being the cloth that was cut. "At a great council at Onondaga, the Capital of the Six Nations, they talked over their problem. Some were for helping Great Britain because of the ancient Treaty of Friendship and alliance made with her so many years before....You must remember that in order for the Iroquois to officially declare war it was necessary for each state in their union to declare war. According to the Iroquois Constitution it had to be unanimous. Council after council was held but all could not agree as to what policy to follow. The Mohawks were for war. The Onondagas were neutral. The Senecas and Cayugas were luke warm to either side. The Oneidas and Tuscaroras sympathized with the struggling colonies. Even within a nation all could not agree. Finally Theyendinagea, a Mohawk war leader, said, "Let each nation be responsible for its own members. Let each nation decide for itself what path it will take in this war. He held up this wampum belt which has on it the figures of two roads. They represent the road of the English and the road of the American colonies. The nations of the Iroquois could choose either road to follow. This belt, as well as the war, did harm to the Iroquois and helped to divide them."

260 It is interesting again to see this reference to the Covenant Chain Alliance, seemingly the most important treaty thus requiring the loyalty of the Haudenosaunee to the British Crown in the Revolutionary War. Surprisingly, the Two Row is not referenced as evidence that the Six Nations should stay out of the conflict and follow their own canoe down the river, which would make sense had this belt truly existed at the time.
261 Tehanetorens, Wampum Belts, p. 41-2.
This Two Road Wampum is entirely different from the Two Row and these two belts must have been mixed up at some point. Such a mistake is easily made since the only difference in the physical appearance is that the Two Row is much longer than the Two Road belt; otherwise, both are composed of the exact same bead and colour pattern. It is possible that Roddy confused the belt he purchased with the Two Road belt, when in fact it was the Two Row Wampum. The more likely scenario, considering the lack of historic documentation of the Two Row, is that the belt today claimed as the Two Row at Grand River, is instead the Two Road and symbolizes something entirely different.

3.4 The Association of the Two Row Message with a Wampum Belt

It is difficult to ascertain exactly when the Two Row message became associated with the Two Road belt. According to the 1922 Museum Guide's lack of description of any such belt, this appropriation must have been after a number of years in the collection of the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation. An article written by Howard McLellan in the New York Times Magazine in 1925 offers a clue to the adoption of the Two Row message by the Museum. In speaking of the wampum belts held on the Onondaga Reservation, near Syracuse, New York, McLellan describes the 'hieroglyphic records' that help the Haudenosaunee "maintain a racial reverence for the political institutions of their forefathers and cling to their treaty rights of detachment and independence....[that] guarantee their separateness forever." He goes on to mention the Belt of Law:

The next oldest belt is the Belt of Law. Its two lines of purple wampum, running along the edge of the belt but separated by solid white wampum, established the law of the Indian and the law of the white man. One line represents white man's law; the

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262 The belt's construction today in any case, which may not be a true reflection of the composition of the belts in the past.

263 Three rows of white beads are on each side and in the middle, separating two rows of purple beads.


265 The next oldest after the Confederacy belt, known today as the Hiawatha belt that symbolized the foundation of the League and that, according to oral tradition, dates to 1550. Modern x-ray photographs, however, show a glass bead in the middle and evidence of iron tools used in drilling, meaning that this belt must have been created after European contact, although the symbolism itself is probably much older. Fenton, The Great Law, p. 235-6.
other Indian’s. They do not meet and are separated by “the rest of the world,” or white wampum, indicating to the Indian that the two sets of belt “must always run by themselves and never touch.” The Iroquois say it guarantees their independence from the white man’s world.

This extract is obviously referring to the contemporary Two Row Wampum, complete with the appropriate symbolism and the accompanying message of autonomy. It is unknown when the Two Row message originated at Onondaga, although when Henry Carrington wrote his 1892 Extra Census Bulletin of the New York Iroquois, Thomas Webster, wampum keeper of the Reservation, described a number of belts, none of which correspond in any way to the above extract. This is particularly surprising since the Belt of Law is cited by McLellan as one of the most important affirmations of Iroquois independence, yet apparently it was not important enough, or not yet created, for Webster to mention thirty three years earlier. The true origin of the Onondaga Two Row belt remains a mystery, but it provides a clue regarding the alteration of Roddy’s Two Road’s message while in the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation. An article by George G. Heye appearing in the 1930 edition of Indian Notes shows a photograph of the Two Road/Row with the accompanying explanation:

A belt of white beads with two stripes of purple beads. This is a covenant belt and was early used in a treaty with the English, the agreement being that both parties should travel by separate but parallel paths (the two stripes of purple beads), the Indian by canoe and the white man by his boat, neither interfering with the other in case of murder or robbery.

Obviously, this 1930 version is drastically different from the 1922 Museum Guide reference, in which we cannot even identify the Two Road/Row. It is possible that McLellan’s article influenced Heye, who assumed that his Museum’s belt held the same significance as that in the article, or another unknown source could have influenced the change. Regardless, it is evident that by 1930 the accepted history of the belt conformed to the Two Row view, resigning Beauchamp, Roddy and Merwin’s Two Road view to the early twentieth century archives.

266 McLellan, “Indian Magna Carta”.
What is particularly interesting is that the Iroquois definitely repatriated the Two Row from the Museum convinced that it symbolized the autonomy of the White man and the Indian. It is shocking that the Museum accepted this interpretation since the belt was probably not part of Buck’s League collection in the late nineteenth century and was associated with the Two Road message initially. William Fenton comments on the Museum’s repatriation to Grand River: “There were legal grounds sufficient for retaining the belts, but the board decided that the circumstances of accession were ethically shaky, and that there was more goodwill to be gained by returning the belts to their original owners than by resisting the claims.” Fenton makes an excellent point. The questionable origin of the Two Row means that the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation probably could have argued successfully to retain it. However, the fundamental message of nationhood that it represents to the Iroquois people, regardless of its true origin, ensures that the Two Row is of greater value to the community as a sacred affirmation of sovereignty, than it would be in a museum that displays it simply for historical interest. The contemporary message, symbolising the independence of the Six Nations and their friendship with Europeans, may or may not be historically accurate, but is very real to the Haudenosaunee, serving to restore self-respect and dignity to their Nation, damaged after years of colonization and defeat.

Although this chapter has shown the difficulty in firmly establishing the who, when and how of the Two Row Wampum’s construction, it is evident that it evolved from the Covenant Chain Alliance and reaffirmed the inherent principles of sovereignty assumed at contact. Because the Haudenosaunee’s powerful position during the seventeenth century did not necessitate the ratification of a treaty asserting autonomy, which was so obvious to them, this need only evolved when assimilation threatened the survival of the Six Nations in the nineteenth century. The association of the message with specific wampum belts probably occurred as the message grew and achieved a life of its own, distinct and more powerful than the Covenant Chain Alliance. We now move on to the why surrounding this creation of tradition in the next chapter, explaining how a noble myth, based on a historic understanding, serves to save a race threatened with assimilation and strengthen their nationhood.

269 Fenton, “Return of Eleven Wampum Belts”, p. 408.
Chapter IV

The Two Row Wampum as a Contemporary Myth

After determining that no colonial record even hints to the Two Row’s ratification, the question remains: How and why did the Iroquois produce the Two Row innovation? Did the Haudenosaunee gradually develop the story from an ancient assumption, which metamorphosed into concrete historical ‘fact’? All cultures create stories that reflect the psyche of individuals and of the group, greatly dictating cultural identity and causing the unconscious formation of behaviour or attitudes.\(^{270}\) In this respect, it is more probable that the belief in autonomy held throughout post-contact history fashioned the Two Row in an effort to reinforce Haudenosaunee cultural identity. People see themselves, their society and nature through their very own worldview, often comprised of symbols that store these understandings and codes of behaviour,\(^{271}\) much like the Two Row Wampum stores Iroquois sovereignty. Beginning with an examination of mythological theory in relation to the Two Row Wampum, this chapter details the functions of myths for both social and political purposes. Then, we explore the notions of mythistory and pseudohistory and how the Two Row subscribes to each. Finally, an account of contemporary political aspirations of the Two Row Wampum outline its repercussions for Canadian-Native relations.\(^{272}\)

4.1 The Two Row Wampum as a Cultural Myth

As outlined in previous chapters, it seems that the Two Row Wampum evolved from the Covenant Chain Alliance sometime during the nineteenth century. Based upon an ancient understanding that Iroquois sovereignty would be perpetually maintained, the Two Row today inherits this unspoken assumption of the contact era. While the treaty itself was not actually ratified (the greatest exaggeration of the Two Row discourse), its principles of


\(^{272}\) Although it is important to acknowledge that the Two Row is also used in the United States for similar ends, we concentrate on the Canadian perspective.
nationhood appear in many historical documents of the time.\textsuperscript{273} The Two Row strives to reclaim Iroquois sovereignty, recreating the historic dignity and pride of a Nation long oppressed. Thus, the Two Row exemplifies a cultural myth, not in the sense of a falsehood since it is based on historically truthful principles, but as intimate knowledge of “a people’s worldview: the unexpressed but implicit conceptions of their place in nature and of the limits and workings of their world.”\textsuperscript{274}

Although the term mythology conjures up images of Medusa-like creatures and unrealistic creation stories, a lesser-known function is to provide hints to a culture’s social charter and dominant values.\textsuperscript{275} A tremendous expression of human creativity, it is difficult to determine to what extent myth represents truth, if it symbolically and emotionally reflects a different kind of reality, or if it determines or reflects human behaviour.\textsuperscript{276} In this respect, the Two Row Wampum exhibits each mythological trait, representing a true historic assumption, symbolically and emotionally reflecting the desired reality of autonomy and determining Iroquois actions vis-à-vis the Canadian state. Thus, the Two Row transforms into a ‘truth,’ metaphorically representing the true Haudenosaunee identity, regardless of any academic source that states that it is not historically accurate. However, from the point of view of the academic, the Two Row metaphorically expresses an abstract mentality, not an actual treaty, which nevertheless inspires Haudenosaunee identity and behaviour today. Along these lines, some convincingly argue that the importance lies in the meaning of a myth, not in whether it is true or false.\textsuperscript{277} While emphasizing “something that is still very actual even if it is not quite factual,” mythical stories, according to Joseph Mali, “purport to explain the present in terms of some momentous event that occurred in the past,”\textsuperscript{278} just like the Two Row justifies Iroquois sovereignty today.

\textsuperscript{273} The very fact that the British and Iroquois negotiated treaties speaks to the relative autonomy of each nation. If the British truly reigned as they did in other countries, they needed only to command the Iroquois, not cooperate with them.
\textsuperscript{276} Haviland, \textit{Anthropology}, p. 731.
\textsuperscript{278} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
All myths, rooted either in historical fact or mythical fiction and regardless of the era or the civilisation, perform “the social-psychological function of giving a society cohesion and purposiveness, of strengthening morale and encouraging patriotism;” aspirations that outsiders tend to ridicule for their lack of understanding of the cultural system. In the same way, the Two Row Wampum unites the Haudenosaunee in their quest for recognition of autonomy against a known enemy who does not accept the Iroquois self-perception as an independent, sovereign nation. To Canadians and Americans who remain outside the cultural system, the Two Row seems silly and insignificant, the attempt of a ‘primitive’ people to affirm their independence from three hundred and fifty years ago. We should not be, however, too quick to assume that the creation of myths is an attempt of a society to protect itself in the face of western civilisation and advancement. On the contrary, mythology thrives in all western societies, fulfilling the same functions of nation and identity building in an effort to reach political, cultural and social ends. In this way, we transform myths into ideologies across the globe, deemed true by believers and false by those outside the cultural system.

4.2 Ideological Foundations of the Two Row

The social determinants of ideology, described by Clifford Geertz, highlight the strain theory, whereby ideology “provides a ‘symbolic outlet’ for emotional disturbances generated by social disequilibrium,” and similar reactions are reinforced by commonalities within a society. Alternately, according to the interest theory, the use of ideas as weapons can “institutionalize a particular view of reality” in capturing and enforcing political power. The Two Row conforms to both of these theories at different stages in its life, which is not surprising since many myths serve this double social and political purpose, attempting to satisfy an emotional social inequality and solidify a political institution. Although ideologies vary from culture to culture, “they are, most distinctively, maps of problematic social reality

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279 Claude Lévi-Strauss believed in the similarity of all mythical stories and their ambitions across cultures.
282 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 204.
and matrices for the creation of collective conscious,"²⁸⁴ both of which the Two Row outlines.

4.2.1 The Strain Theory: A Hidden Transcript

The strain theory, influenced by a social disequilibrium, provides an outlet for the resulting emotional turmoil,²⁸⁵ thereby producing a hidden transcript in the Two Row of the late nineteenth century, which quietly challenged the authority of the powerholders. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott describes private communication amongst the oppressed as the hidden transcript, confirming, contradicting or inflecting upon the public transcript.²⁸⁶ The oppressed often work to destroy their oppressor by creating a subculture that challenges the reign of the powerful, either overtly by poaching or stealing, or covertly, by mocking gestures or vocabulary.²⁸⁷

Resistance originates after personal humiliation and exploitation demean the powerless and assert the authority of their superior.²⁸⁸ If people are humiliated enough then they have nothing to lose by trying to correct the injustice, breeding conditions for rebellion. An atmosphere of humiliation and exploitation produced the Two Row Wampum over a hundred years ago. Beginning with the fragmentation of the Confederacy caused by the American Revolution and the obliteration of Haudenosaunee military and strategic powers, the Haudenosaunee emerged bruised and battered into the nineteenth century. As neither the British (later Canadian), nor the American governments had any use for the ‘savages,’ they shuffled them onto reserves in a policy of segregation and assimilation. Living in extreme poverty with only a portion of their previously vast territories remaining and facing forced assimilation, the Haudenosaunee had little to lose by challenging the rulers’ claim to power, finding the perfect outlet in the story of the Two Row Wampum. Thus, dissent, manifested

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 220.
²⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 204.
by the hidden transcript of the Two Row Wampum bubbled over as pressure increased with the “shared anger and indignation experienced by subordinates.” Finally, with the unveiling of the hidden transcript, the Iroquois discovered the wide support for their beliefs, which reinforced the establishment of a unified community, separate from that of the oppressor.

Resistance succeeds in constructing distinct societies with the subordinate’s “codes, myths, heroes, and social standards,” which defies the oppressors by rejecting their cultural identity. The Two Row fits into this method of resistance perfectly, by entrenching a powerful myth in the minds of the Haudenosaunee that directly challenges the legitimacy of the powerholders: the British (now Canadian) and American governments. Gossip further challenges authority figures, serving to ruin the reputation of the powerful, and violating social rules in a relatively safe manner due its anonymity. In this vein, the Two Row Wampum, while more real to the Haudenosaunee people than simple gossip, similarly destroys the reputation of the governments for violating what the Iroquois consider a sacred historic pact. This hidden transcript destroys the reputation of these governments in the eyes of non-Iroquois as well, who are concerned with the honesty and integrity of their democratically elected leaders who apparently ignored a ratified treaty. The principles of peace, friendship and respect incarnated by the Two Row Wampum further destroy the legitimacy of the ruling body as they remain excellent values by which to coexist, regardless of whether or not historic figures entrenched them in a wampum treaty. Finally, transmitting the message by oral tradition is a perfect instrument for cultural resistance due to its anonymity, which frustrates attempts of the authority figures to destroy the message. No one quite knows where the Two Row story originated, but today all Haudenosaunee and

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289 Ibid, p. 196.
290 Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel in “The Inter-Industry Propensity to Strike” quoted in Scott, Domination, p. 135.
292 Scott, Domination, p. 142.
293 Of course, this only works if people believe the story has historical legitimacy, which, in this case, it does not. That said, most people simply believe what they hear if it seems plausible and do not take the time to research issues thoroughly (evident in the lack of debate regarding the Two Row thus far), so Two Row discourse is still effective in questioning the legitimacy of contemporary governments.
294 Scott, Domination, p. 160.
many other Native peoples accept the Two Row’s meaning as common knowledge that reflects how relations with the Canadian government should work. This of course is problematic, because, although many people believe the Two Row professes the truth, it lacks historic fact, but its powerful message is difficult, if not impossible, to ignore.

4.2.2 The Interest Theory: The Invention of Tradition

The interest theory, as described by Geertz, deals with political influence, aiming to achieve power and recognition on a national, and, in this age of globalisation, an international front. Eric Hobsbawm’s work on the invention of tradition discusses how political and social groups of nineteenth century Europe created tradition in order “to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations,” establishing “bonds of loyalty.”

Manipulation of invented traditions is common in political and capitalist structures in order to create a group of people with a similar history, values and heroes. A number of tools achieve such a goal, including real and imagined people, objects, animals or monuments. Thus, “the political use of symbolism and ritual...impose a sense of group identity on otherwise disparate communities,” seen in the early twentieth century unification of Germanic peoples, among other examples. Often developed in response to new situations that reflect the old, tradition is cemented in the consciousness of a people through repetition. By encouraging certain values and behaviour, every tradition reflects strong emotions as it speaks to the very identity of a national community and a people’s worldview.

A powerful tool for nationalists, invented tradition rallies people around a common element that becomes the symbol of their movement. Nationhood develops as Canadians unite around the maple leaf and the beaver, as the French adore Marianne, symbol of the ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ of the French Revolution, and as the Iroquois hail the Two

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301 Ibid, p. 11.
Row as proof of the sovereignty of their nation. However, preconceptions prevent many westerners from recognizing the similarities between our invented traditions, or cultural myths, and those of others. Numerous Canadian myths abound, such as the Canadian Pacific Railway unifying our country,\textsuperscript{302} the North-West Mounted Police heroically pacifying the wild Canadian west,\textsuperscript{303} and the canoe “as the mother of our national dreamlife, the symbol of our oneness with a rugged northern landscape, the vessel in which we are recreated as Canadians.”\textsuperscript{304} Each one of these stories contributes to a national consciousness that unites Canadian citizens who are proud of their shared identity, regardless of whether they have ever traveled coast to coast, ridden the Prairie Plains, or canoed through Algonquin Park. The benefits of nation building outweigh the exaggeration of politicians and storytellers, creating a mythic discourse of heroic proportions out of much smaller events rooted in historical fact. Such is the case with the Two Row Wampum creating a mythic story, an ideology by which the Haudenosaunee live. Demanding political recognition of a purportedly ancient diplomatic treaty, the Confederacy asserts the validity of the Two Row according to international law and denies the jurisdiction of Canadian or American law on their territories.\textsuperscript{305} In this way, the invention of a political tradition, rooted in some historical truth but largely mythologized, holds together a society and demands reform in the contemporary political arena.

4.3 The Two Row as Mythistory

Now that we understand what function the Two Row plays in challenging domination and in creating nationhood, we examine the role invented traditions play in historical study and how they persevere in historical discourse. Mythistory, or the acceptance of imaginary tales or fables as factually based history, is a third tenet in the discipline of history, according to Joseph Mali:

Modern historiography must deal not only with what actually happened (that is, in common terms, history), nor with what people merely imagine to have actually

\textsuperscript{302} Francis, \textit{National Dreams}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{305} “Statement Concerning the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples”, Passed in Council at Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, December 18, 1996, Signed by representatives from the Turtle, Wolf and Bear Clans, \url{http://sisis.nativeweb.org/mohawk/royall.html}
happened (myth), but rather with the process in which both affect the production and reproduction of historical meaning (mythistory). Similar to a cultural myth, mythistory expresses a people’s perception of their world, not necessarily the reality of it, placing historians under extreme pressure to portray “the people they write about as they wish to be.” However, in partially creating history out of cultural myths, people construct a never-ending cycle wherein “this awareness of the narrative patterns of historical reality inspires their actions and therewith all historical events and processes.” Today, the belief in the Two Row perpetuates the demands for self-government in accordance with the seemingly ancient principles of the treaty. Even other history indirectly related to the Two Row is interpreted along similar lines, stating the Two Row principles whenever the Haudenosaunee demand separation of legal jurisdiction or the renewal of a treaty, despite the fact that no overt historical mention of the Two Row exists.

Myths are highly resilient and quite difficult to destroy, endlessly self-perpetuating as they reinforce a culture’s worldview. Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that myths transform themselves both within the myth itself, from one myth to another or between societies, always surviving, albeit perhaps in an altered form. Since “the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction,” too many transformations renders this impossible and the myth becomes less plausible, eventually disintegrating and

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306 Mali, Mythistory, p. 27.
307 Ibid, p. 22.
308 Mali, Mythistory, p. 23.
309 See Paul Williams and Curtis Nelson, “Kaswentha”, Research Reports, Treaties, Project Area 1: Early Treaty Making in Canada, January 1995, For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, (CDROM), Libraxus Inc., 1997. The authors link the Two Row to numerous historical negotiations, such as the discourse of Seneca speaker Kiantwahke, which apparently outlines the Two Row’s principle of autonomy, despite the fact that no explicit reference to the Two Row actually exists. As already demonstrated, because of the similarities between the Two Row and Covenant Chain principles, these historical ‘proofs’ of the Two Row’s existence could just as easily be referring to the Covenant Chain.
310 No such mention exists in the seventeenth and eighteenth century sources described in this thesis to be sure, but what is even more telling are the earliest references of Two Row oral tradition that only appear in the late nineteenth century.
ceasing to exist, victim to an exuberant amount of stress upon its framework. The Two Row, however, has not undergone any substantial changes in its structure for a hundred years. It is not likely that the Two Row will disappear any time soon, as it lends great emotional power and legitimacy to claims of self-government, which are so strong precisely because they have remained in identical form for so long. Such tenacity poses a problem when the myth is viewed as reality and may demean outsiders, as McNeill describes:

A portrait of the past that denigrates others and praises the ideas and practice of a given group naively and without restraint can distort a people’s image of outsiders so that foreign relations begin to consist of nothing but nasty surprises. Confidence in one’s own high principles and good intentions may simply provoke others to resist duly accredited missionaries of the true faith, whatever that faith may be.

Thus, the emotional ferocity of certain myths can cause schisms in a pluralistic society, whereby factions converge and conflict, equally convinced of the validity of their claims. The story of the Two Row allows for such a division between believers and non-believers whereby the Haudenosaunee, respectful of an ancient promise of sovereignty fight against the Canadian government that attempts to reconcile Native and non-Native Canadians in unified state. The threat of villainification caused by the Two Row is dangerous because it ignores the North American reality of a shared community and may result in further fragmentation within Canadian society.

The emotional attachment that most myths induce makes it difficult to examine them objectively, resulting in a very biased version of history, which may in turn fuel cultural divisions. To this end, sociologists examine how we perceive and interpret reality differently according to individual preconceptions. A phenomenon known as belief perseverance, defined as “persistence of one’s initial conceptions, as when the basis for one’s belief is discredited but an explanation of why the belief might be true survives,” hinders the rebuttal of false concepts. Thus, people believe what they want to by perpetuating a factually false conviction with scant evidence, explained away by the desire that the idea is true. Becoming “prisoners of our own thought patterns,” we convince ourselves of the validity of

our theory and ignore or dismiss challenging information,\textsuperscript{317} often with great emotional conviction. In the mind of individuals, therefore, the idea is not a lie, but a truth, perfectly explained, although biased by emotion, preference and ignorance of facts. The story of the Two Row Wampum fits this definition perfectly, as it reflects the initial understanding between the Europeans and Haudenosaunee at contact, by people who want to believe in the entrenchment of eternal sovereignty. Thus, the Iroquois ignore any evidence (or lack thereof) contrary to this 'fact' because of the emotional importance of the Two Row and the desire that it is true.

In a similar vein, identity theory describes a defence mechanism by which we project unacceptable aspects of the self or group upon those external to the belief system.\textsuperscript{318} In this way, people dismiss attributes that run contrary to their worldview, cocooning themselves inside a familiar cultural system that denies alien beliefs. Again, this rings true with the Two Row Wampum, whose principles the Haudenosaunee upheld throughout history, but were reneged upon by the British, Canadian and American governments (in the view of the Iroquois who believe in an overt participation of the North American states in the Two Row Treaty). Thus, the Two Row’s mythistory creates a familiar discourse of good versus evil, similar to that of the hidden transcript: the Haudenosaunee’s cultural system strives to triumph over the Two Row’s antithesis, displayed by traitorous government policies.

Despite obvious problems when myth is considered reality, William H. McNeill describes how mythistory is not all bad. In “emphasizing the really important aspects of human encounters and omitting irrelevant background noise more efficiently...men and women will know how to act more wisely”\textsuperscript{319} within their cultural system. Possibly allowing us to widen “the range of our sensibilities and take[e] a broader range of phenomena into account [allowing us to] see deeper into the reality we seek to understand,”\textsuperscript{320} mythistory offers a version of history that cannot be ignored for what it tells us about how a culture sees itself. However, it cannot be taken as literal truth at the risk of destroying historical accuracy.

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{318} Wurgaft, “Identity in World History”, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{319} McNeill, “Mythistory”, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid, p. 9.
and value. The Two Row Wampum educates people to the ancient and contemporary mentality of the Haudenosaunee as an independent people, demanding that peace, friendship and respect should represent everlasting values between all peoples. Although derived from mythistory, such admirable principles could aid in attempting to provide a solution to the contemporary discontent of the Haudenosaunee in dealing with the Canadian government. However, we must be careful to recognise both the strengths and the weaknesses of Two Row mythistory so that we do not fall victim to pseudohistory, described in the next section.

4.4 Fictional Pseudohistory

Pseudohistory plagues current academia while claiming to represent historical fact, but instead deliberately falsifying evidence in an effort to further a political or religious agenda. Pseudohistory reduces history to mythmaking and ignores traditional academic standards of empirical proof, logic, contextual analysis and the importance of a wide selection of documentation. Often subscribing to cultural relativism, pseudohistorians do not believe in historical veracity but rather consider all points of view equally true, valid only to a particular individual and their environment, a clear cop-out from stringent academic demands that do not accept poorly researched or plainly false history. Just because certain people or groups of people do not like certain historical aspects or want to further a specific cause with inaccurate historical interpretation does not mean that the historical community can fall victim to such revisionism. Serious academics refuse pseudohistoric claims not because of racism or ethnocentrism, but rather because they have distorted history with no respect for fact. A few examples of pseudohistory's outright fabrication of evidence and disregard for the truth include Ernst Zundel’s Holocaust Denial, Afrocentrism and George Orwell’s fictional 1984 where Big Brother rewrites history. All falsify historical fact in order to achieve certain goals (freeing Germans from the guilt of the Final Solution, restoring pride to African Americans after centuries of discrimination and indoctrinating the citizens of

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321 The term pseudohistory should not be confused with mythistory or any academic evaluation of the past, despite its misleading inclusion of the word 'history.'
322 Robert Todd Carroll, Skeptic’s Dictionary, [www.skepdic.com/pseudohs.html](http://www.skepdic.com/pseudohs.html)
Once such example is Ernest Zundel who denies that the Holocaust ever happened. He claims that the Allies created the notion of the Final Solution in the post-war period as anti-German propaganda.
The Two Row is not an example of pseudohistory since it rests upon some historical truth and thus better subscribes to myhistory, outlined in the previous section. Nevertheless, some pseudohistoric goals coincide with those that fostered the expansion of the Two Row Wampum from the Covenant Chain Alliance to its present state, outlined perfectly when compared with Afrocentrism.

In striving to grant emotional force to a "utopian pattern of thought," Afrocentrism insists, correctly so, that Black history is not solely confined to slavery and the Civil Rights movement, but instead possesses a rich legacy of valuable cultural achievements. According to Professor Molefi Kete Asante, a leading proponent of Afrocentricity, such a mentality will help "repair any psychic, economic, physical, or cultural damage done to Africans" to restore humanity and dignity to a people so long victims of abuse and discrimination. This aspiration is worthy, as is the positive "relationship of joy, of power, of peace, of overcoming" that results from the Afrocentric viewing of African culture in a victorious light. Similarly, the emergence of ethnohistory ensures that Native civilisations receive the respect they deserve, avoiding the overly Eurocentric interpretations of the past. The Two Row Wampum also restores dignity to the Haudenosaunee people, hailing them as the preservers of peace and respect in the face of what they consider imperialistic and racist Canadian and American states. While both Natives and African Americans were victimized by discrimination, we should not write history with an agenda to correct past injustices, but should instead strive to expose the truth, whatever that may be. Afrocentrists, however, have no esteem for historical veracity and invent tales in a misguided effort to heal centuries of oppression.

The main complaints with Afrocentrism lie in the fact that claims are poorly researched, founded on faith and possibilities instead of scholarly evidence. Some of the revisionist beliefs held by Afrocentrists include: ancient Greece stole their cultural achievements from a racially black Egypt; Jesus, Socrates and Cleopatra were black;

Aristotle stole his philosophy from the library of Alexandria; and Jews were responsible for the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Contrary to the historical method, Afrocentrists develop an appealing message and “then work backward from what they need to believe through a system of rationalizations, in order to construct ‘proofs.” Afrocentrists also refuse to entertain debate in academic arenas, accusing opponents of racism and ignorance instead of directly refuting their arguments in a logical manner. Ironically, racism, creator of Afrocentrism, also defends it, accusing anyone who dares challenge its legitimacy of bigotry and racial discrimination. Lefkowitz’s insistence that evidence does matter and her refusal to be bullied into silence speaks to the true understanding of history, not as a promotion of group self-esteem, but as an “understanding of the world and the past, dispassionate analysis, judgement and perspective, [and, importantly,] respect for divergent cultures and traditions.”

It is easy to understand the motivation behind such an inaccurate and non-critical belief based on faith, which arose just before the Civil Rights movement demanded racial equality in the 1960s. Centuries of slavery in the American south and overt racism created a desire to counterbalance white-dominated history. To this end, teaching an African-based history dramatically increases the self-esteem of a collectivity long ignored and discriminated against. Black history, however, like all history, should be taught with real heroes and stories, not with an invented history that belittles the real accomplishments of multitudes of people and destroys the validity of subsequent claims of black heroism. Perhaps Lefkowitz said it best in *Black Athena Revisited*:

> What constructive purpose will the myth of African origins really serve? If it causes us to ignore or even to subvert the truth about the past, it damages our ability, the ability of all of us, no matter what our ethnic origins, to judge fairly and accurately,

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328 Afrocentrism is rooted in racism, stating that the only reason why their suppositions are not widely accepted is because of prejudice towards blacks. Believing that the white man is trying to ‘push down’ the African, Afrocentrism exacerbates delicate race relations and forms a history based on racism and hate instead of mutual accomplishments and coexistence. See Mary Lefkowitz’s example when, at Wellesley College’s Martin Luther King Jr. memorial lecture, she challenged the Afrocentric ‘fact’ that Aristotle stole his philosophy from the library of Alexandria on the basis that the library was constructed after his death. The lecturer, Dr. ben-Jochannan, unable to answer her question, “resented the tone of the inquiry.” After the lecture, several students accused Lefkowitz of racism, having been “brainwashed by white historians.” Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History*, (New York: BasicBooks, 1996), p. 2.
which is the best purpose of education. And even if a myth helps people to gain confidence, it will teach them simultaneously that facts can be manufactured or misreported to serve a political purpose; that origins are the only measure of value, that difference is either a glory or a danger, when in fact it is a common, challenging fact of life; that the true knowledge of customs, language, and literature is unimportant for understanding the nature of a culture.\textsuperscript{330}

The only positive aspect of Afrocentric thought is that it opens a "global debate about who we are (or rather who we would like to think we are), and what we should tell our children about the past we have claimed."\textsuperscript{331} Such a debate is crucial to wrestle with the notions of history, myth and mythistory to arrive at a form of historical reality that is as close to the truth as possible, rejecting pseudo\textit{history}, but recognizing the value of mythology in describing a people and a culture.

The Two Row Wampum is not representative of a fictional pseudo\textit{historic} tale invented out of thin air since it rests upon an implicit assumption of autonomy at contact. However, the danger for the Two Row to become pseudo\textit{historic} exists if academics and Iroquois alike do not critically evaluate its origin and purpose. In fact, the Two Row attempts to fill many of the same goals of Afrocentrism in restoring pride and self-esteem to a discriminated minority. Attempting to refute the reality of conquest and subjugation of Native peoples, which reached its height during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, today's story of the Two Row depicts the Haudenosaunee as honourable preservers of peace and autonomy. However, it is naïve to believe that the Iroquois consistently asserted Two Row principles throughout history as they conquered and adopted nations such as the Huron, the Petuns, the Neutral, the Eries and the Susquehannocks by the mid-seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{332} Later, the Haudenosaunee forced others to join the Covenant Chain as their tributaries in an effort to extend their hegemony throughout North America and to strengthen their own Confederacy.

\textsuperscript{331}Guy MacLean Rogers, "Multiculturalism and Western Civilization", Lefkowitz and Rogers eds., \textit{Black Athena Revisited}, p. 443.  
Much in the same way Afrocentrists refuse to admit the role of Africans in the transatlantic slave trade, the Two Row Wampum hides the Iroquois’ past as British mercenaries, crucial to British imperial domination of North America yet equally destructive to other Native nations. The British used the Iroquois to divide and conquer, allowing the construction of a kind of hegemonic pyramid with the British at the top and the Iroquois reigning over other Native nations on the bottom, reminiscent of the Crown’s policy of ‘indirect rule’ in India and parts of Africa. Thus, the Haudenosaunee were far from autonomous, but interacted with the British and in fact aided their imperial designs both in defeating and absorbing Native nations and in selling the British conquered (but often not uninhabited) lands. The British also assumed, by right of the Covenant Chain Alliance, that Haudenosaunee conquest over other nations justified Crown sovereignty over the vacated or no longer hostile territories.\(^3\) Although the Iroquois probably considered their supremacy as simply an assertion of their own imperialistic prowess, it is obvious that they did not believe in autonomy for all Nations implied by the contemporary Two Row Wampum.\(^4\) Instead, they championed only the sovereignty of the two most powerful nations: their own Iroquois Confederacy and the British Empire. The North American reality could have turned out quite differently had the Haudenosaunee not conquered their Native brothers and sisters, but instead united against the invading Europeans. However, the Iroquois were more than happy to cooperate with the powerful newcomers, attracted by firearms, metal, cotton and other trade goods. In establishing their own empire throughout Native America, the Iroquois Confederacy inadvertently solidified the British stronghold on the continent.

Today, this part of Iroquois history is a painful reminder that human beings all strive in some way to assert superiority over others, whereupon the Two Row strives to negate this historic reality. In hiding the imperialistic attempts of the Iroquois Confederacy throughout history, the Two Row Wampum creates both a historic and futuristic ideal of their relationship with non-Natives. We must be careful to recognize the Two Row for what it is (an implicit assumption of autonomy at contact that was eventually verbalised when the

\(^3\) Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, p. 173.

\(^4\) While the Two Row oral tradition specifically refers only to the Iroquois and the Europeans, numerous other Native nations in Canada hail the belt as a guarantor of their own sovereignty both vis-à-vis the Crown and within the Native communities.
Iroquois were threatened with extinction) and not for what people want it to be, which risks belittling the very real accomplishments of the Haudenosaunee (such as the Covenant Chain Alliance). Recognizing the importance of the Two Row as a cultural myth that speaks to the Haudenosaunee's worldview rejects a historical basis for sovereignty founded upon the belt, but is nevertheless crucial for the future relationship between Native and non-Native peoples.

4.5 Contemporary Political Repercussions of the Two Row

Many Native authors cite the Two Row Wampum as the grounds for self-government based upon their belief that the Europeans and the Haudenosaunee vowed to perpetually maintain the ancient principals of peace, respect and autonomy in the seventeenth century. Of course, as we have shown, there is no evidence substantiating such a treaty, which makes the use of the Two Row Wampum belt as a political tool very problematic. Nevertheless, as Chief Powless believes, the Two Row Wampum affirms Haudenosaunee sovereignty from both the American and Canadian governments, maintaining that neither side has the authority to pass binding laws over their friends. As early as 1925 Howard McLellan illustrated the Iroquois notion of sovereignty entrenched in various wampum belts in the New York Times:

It may seem odd that natives living the midst of evidence of the opportunities that come with American citizenship should decline – actually fight off – a privilege for which most of the newcomers clamor.
But the aboriginal Iroquois, after centuries of association with the whites, still maintain a racial reverence for the political institutions of their forefathers and cling to their treaty rights to detachment and independence. Hundreds of haughty Iroquois, living on ancestral land in Western and Central New York, within a day’s ride from Broadway, believe that to merge themselves in American citizenship would be an unforgivable insult to the Great Spirit of their elders. According to Indian interpretation, the records woven into the wampum belts preclude them from accepting our citizenship and guarantee their separateness forever.

More recently, the Iroquois on the American side of the border used the Two Row Wampum to resist the Indian Citizenship Act, the Selective Service Act and the Internal Revenue Service. In Canada, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples describes the Two

336 McLellan, "Indian Magna Carta Writ in Wampum Belts".
337 Hill, "Oral Memory of the Haudenosaunee", p. 28.
Row as a model of parallelism by which to guide Canadian-Aboriginal relations. The Mohawk of Kahnawake, outside Montreal, forcefully affirm that the Two Row Wampum guarantees Haudenosaunee sovereignty “in the international community, not within the Canadian (or American) context” and even issue their own passports to reaffirm “our Nation, our independence, and the future of our people.”

Many Iroquois see the Two Row itself as an accepted treaty in international law. One document found at the Woodland Culture Centre’s library, considers the Two Row Wampum to be an international treaty, ratified “because of the need of mutual understanding and agreement between two or more sovereign nations.” International law accepts treaties of either oral or written nature, providing that “it is clearly apparent that each of the parties involved have given its consent, and agree.” This last point, of course, renders moot the premise that the Two Row is an international treaty since there is no proof substantiating its ratification on the part of the Europeans. While one may convincingly argue that the Haudenosaunee inherently assumed the continuation of the Two Row’s principles after contact, European acceptance of these principles can only be proven in the written historical record, which fails to do so.

Since the Two Row Wampum is not historically verifiable, contemporary political claims should not be based upon its ratification hundreds of years ago. Not only does doing so invalidate the entire historical process by allowing mythistory to become history, but it also invalidates the legitimacy of other treaties and historical events that are factually based. The Two Row as a relatively contemporary myth, however, offers insight in dealing with the present discontent felt by many Native peoples concerning their status within the Canadian

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339 “Statement Concerning the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples”.
341 “Statement Concerning the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples”.
federation. In this way, we can use the Two Row, not as a historic proof of autonomy, but as a projection of a future relationship founded upon the principals of peace and respect.

### 4.5.1 The Two Row as a Model of Canadian-Native Relations

According to Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel, the time has come to “end the legacy of racism and colonialism and enter into a new relationship between First Nations and the Canadian government that is based on mutual respect, sharing and dignity.”\(^\text{343}\) Citing the Two Row Wampum as “how the First Nations still understand our relationship with Canadians,”\(^\text{344}\) Mercredi and Turpel want to work together with Canadians to regain control of Native land.\(^\text{345}\) In an effort to understand such needs of Native peoples across Canada, the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* held a series of public consultations in 1993. The Two Row Wampum played a prominent role in these discussions, mentioned as a means to educate both Native and non-Native peoples in the ideal relationship of respect and autonomy. Max Gros-Louis, a former Huron-Wendat Grand Chief, believes that the Two Row Wampum should guide a relationship between the Canadian government and Native peoples where neither side tries to control the other. In a more forceful vein, the Mohawks of Kahnawake suggest the restoration of a nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and the Haudenosaunee, founded upon the Two Row Wampum instead of the Indian Act, which they believe entitles them to self-determination prescribed under international law.\(^\text{346}\) According to Aboriginal voices, the vision of the Two Row Wampum is therefore crucial in guiding Canadian-Native relations, despite the fact that the present state of affairs does not reflect Two Row principles: The Crown refuses to recognize Haudenosaunee laws and government and undermines them, thereby promoting dependency upon Canadian laws and institutions.\(^\text{347}\)

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\(^{343}\) Mercredi and Turpel, *In the Rapids*, p. 32.

\(^{344}\) Ibid. p. 35.

\(^{345}\) Ibid. p. 36.

\(^{346}\) “Rebuilding the Relationship”, Overview of the Second Round, April 1993, Public Consultation Reports, *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, (CDROM), Libraxus Inc., 1997. As already mentioned, international law only respects treaties ratified by both parties, which is not the case for the Two Row Wampum.

\(^{347}\) Williams and Nelson, “Kaswentha”. 
While Native peoples desire self-government in accordance with the Two Row's principles of autonomy, it is impossible to return to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the sovereignty of the Iroquois was obvious and the Europeans powers remained relatively weak in comparison to today. First Nations of the twenty-first century have integrated into Canadian society, sharing similar values, ideas and luxuries, while at the same time (and against great odds)\(^{348}\) retaining the traditional languages and customs of their peoples. Native reliance on Canadian Medicare, social services, infrastructure and education and Canadian interest in Native land, resources, philosophy and heritage ensure that we all have one foot in each vessel, whether we like it or not. The Two Row message of autonomy as it was implicitly understood in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries simply does not reflect today's reality.\(^{349}\) However, the Two Row ideals, such as friendship, good minds and respect, should guide contemporary relations of coexistence in Canada.

Alan C. Cairns disagrees with the Two Row Wampum as a guide for contemporary Canadian-Native relations in his book \textit{Citizens Plus: Aboriginal People and the Canadian State} since it "casts a blind eye on our interconnectedness," by envisioning "separate societies on separate paths heading to separate destinations."\(^{350}\) The \textit{Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples}' frequent and positive referral to the Two Row Wampum\(^{351}\) as a useful contemporary notion with which to guide Native-Canadian relations cannot, according to Cairns, succeed within the existing Canadian state:

\begin{quote}
The two row wampum so frequently proposed as the arrangement that will fit our needs, stressed the permanence of difference. As an image it postulates parallel paths that never converge. The image is of coexistence with little traffic between the solitudes. It does not suggest shared endeavours for a common purpose.\(^{352}\)
\end{quote}

Thus, according to Cairns, the Two Row model cannot work because it outlines differences instead of emphasising commonalities and civic bonds between Native and non-Native

\(^{348}\) Residential schools, forced relocations and the outlaw of tradition practices are some government sanctioned policies that attempted to destroy Native culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

\(^{349}\) Even recognized Nation states today realise that in this era of globalisation, traditional ideas of sovereignty are changing, obvious with the formation of interstate alliances, such as the EU, ASEAN and NAFTA.


\(^{351}\) Ibid. p. 70-71.

\(^{352}\) Ibid. p. 92.
Canadians. He desires a unified country that stresses our similar values, instead of emphasizing our differences, travelling separately down the river of life in the vessels of two nations. Since a high rate of intermarriage already locks us in a relationship of interdependence, the unification of Native and non-Native Canadians is crucial. Cairns is right in that the Two Row Wampum emphasizes differences and can serve to fragment, instead of unite, Native and non-Native Canadians, however many Iroquois traditionalists do not consider themselves Canadian, despite participating in very Canadian parts of life. It is almost impossible to force a nationality upon a people who believe that they have the inherent right to autonomy, whether based upon the Two Row Wampum or the right to self-determination as guaranteed by international law. We should therefore not simply cast the Two Row Wampum aside as destructive to a unified Canadian society, but use its politically powerful symbol to reconcile the needs of both Native and non-Native Canadians.

The Two Row Wampum model does not necessarily exclude Native and non-Native cooperation, as Cairns suggests, since each vessel sails down the same river together. Instead, the dignity and respect, as well as the lack of interference in some areas (such as education and cultural matters) all adhere to Two Row principles that can be achieved in cooperation with the Canadian state. Although historically ill founded, the contemporary Two Row myth is too important to ignore. If properly seized by both Native peoples and the Canadian government, the Two Row Wampum may serve to realign our relationship on the mutually beneficial foundations of peace, respect and understanding. Perhaps Richard Hill summarized it best:

No matter what its origins, the Two Row Wampum has become the most significant symbol of a preferred relationship of Indians to the nations of the world. In the concepts and ideas it represents we may find answered to the centuries-old problem of how Indians and other cultures can interact, as equals and as nations of people.

353 Ibid. p. 115.
354 Ibid. p. 204.
Conclusion

Writing remains a contestable topic, alternating between the European definition that records speech phonetically and the non-western semasiographical systems that relate the general meaning of an oral message. Although many consider western writing the apex of evolution, necessary for the establishment of complex societies and institutions, Native North and South America maintained sophisticated civilizations by semasiographically preserving information. A perfect example of the organizing abilities of semiotic systems is the wampum belt, used, among other things, to preserve articles of diplomatic agreements. The wampum belt with its colours and pictograms, also relies upon the intricate combination of beads by which the translator interprets the encoded message. The semiotic nature of the belts greatly reduced linguistic confusion amongst nations by outlining the message’s fundamental meaning; however, misunderstandings stemmed from erroneous interpretation of the translator’s oral discourse.

As the Iroquois equivalent to written treaties, wampum belts guaranteed the validity of a message, comprising the general ideas and principles agreed upon in diplomatic meetings. It is most probable that the use of wampum belts in political proceedings evolved after contact as a way to counterbalance European written treaties. Today, however, it is quite difficult to view ancient wampum belts as diplomatic contracts since many of the accompanying oral messages have been lost to time and museums. As for European translations of historic wampum messages, it is difficult if not impossible to associate today’s specific belts with historic documents due to the lack of descriptive detail and the pure number of wampum exchanged. These difficulties illustrate that we cannot solely use the material wampum belt as a source, but must include both oral tradition and written sources, each of which offer unique perspectives in the life of a belt. Oral tradition and written sources also possess numerous shortcomings, as the social, political, cultural and economic contexts of the historic and contemporary eras alter the pronunciation and interpretation of both. All sources, whether material, oral or written, possess inherent prejudices, necessitating the comparison of each in an effort to arrive at the most accurate version of history.
Contemporary oral tradition of the Two Row Wampum describes the everlasting autonomy of both the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans stemming from first contact. With a canoe incarnating Iroquois beliefs, laws and customs and a ship possessing those of the Europeans, each vessel sails side by side down the river, never touching or meddling in the affairs of the other. The metaphors of the belt further exemplify the principles of friendship, peace, respect, good minds and purity, with white wampum signifying a river that incarnates the traditional symbolism of tranquility and 'goodness.' The refusal of the Haudenosaunee to accept the English as their father in contemporary oral tradition surprisingly contradicts seventeenth century Iroquois custom where the father held no special authority in Iroquois society. This inconsistency with historic reality provides our first clue of the relatively modern, not ancient, influence of the Two Row's oral tradition. The closeness of the Two Row Wampum's oral tradition with the Covenant Chain of Friendship, symbolized by the three white beads (or chain links) between each purple row is also fascinating, paralleling our later hypothesis that the Two Row evolved from the Covenant Chain.

The fact that neither the 1613 Tawagonshi agreement, nor the 1618 Tawasentha Treaty, nor the first legitimate Mohawk-Dutch treaty of 1643, exhibit any reference to the Two Row Wampum or its metaphors suggests that the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch did not ratify any such belt in the early seventeenth century. We reject the first two proposed dates as possible Mohawk-Dutch treaties on account of their scant evidence. Even the 1643 treaty, however, the only one that is historically verifiable as a binding treaty between two nations, refers instead to an early precursor of the Covenant Chain Alliance, and not to the Two Row Wampum, which corroborates our suggestion that the Two Row eventually evolved from the Covenant Chain.

It is further surprising that the Papers of Sir William Johnson do not mention the Two Row Wampum either. One would assume that the Haudenosaunee would reiterate the Two Row's important principles and that the British would eventually understand and record them once accustomed to Native languages and forest diplomacy after a century of contact. The Papers' descriptive detail of wampum belt discourse makes it almost certain that had the
Two Row existed as an important part of negotiations during the late seventeenth century, it would be found in at least one record of the Council Proceedings. However, no specific reference to the Two Row exists, which blatantly contradicts contemporary oral tradition; instead, the Papers reflect the Covenant Chain Alliance as the very first agreement with the Iroquois.

All of Sir William Johnson’s accounts of political proceedings, as well as the Dutch sources of the seventeenth century, are of European origin. It is doubtful that they recorded the true Iroquois understanding, perhaps omitting details deemed unimportant or challenging to their desired supremacy. However, it is unlikely that Europeans ignored all references to the Two Row belt, metaphors and principles of autonomy and separateness. It is more probable that instead of existing as a ratified Two Row treaty, the Two Row represented an abstract mentality, stemming from contact, by which the Iroquois assumed perpetual sovereignty and independence from the European nations. The Haudenosaunee obviously did not eagerly submit to foreign rulers evident in their powerful seventeenth century position as the ‘Romans of the New World,’ who assumed their own autonomy. Only in later years, the deterioration of Six Nations supremacy necessitated the verbalisation of an innate state of mind, taken for granted for so many years.

The Two Row Wampum’s message only emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, seemingly extended from the Covenant Chain Alliance and not from a separate historic treaty. The contemporary Two Row message thus outlines the mentality and expectations of the Iroquois at contact, later officially included in a diluted form in the Covenant Chain of Friendship. When faced with assimilation in the late nineteenth century, the Haudenosaunee needed to preserve their culture and verbalise the ancient assumption of independence. However, the late nineteenth century accounts display a diluted form of the autonomy pronounced today probably due to Native status at the time, which lacked in political influence.

The case study of Grand River’s Two Row Wampum shows the appropriation of the message to a belt with a very different original meaning. It is surprising that today the
Confederacy chiefs, the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation staff and academics alike assume the Grand River belt to be the Two Row, despite the historic evidence that shows it is the Two Road belt dating from the American Revolution. This mistaken identity contests the legitimacy with which the Grand River chiefs repatriated the belt from the Museum of the American Indian – Heye Foundation. However, regardless of the true historic origin of the Grand River belt, today the Haudenosaunee hail it as the Two Row Wampum. This identity is genuine to the Haudenosaunee people and the belt remains more important to the community as a guarantor of autonomy and dignity than it ever could behind glass casing or in museum vaults.

The Two Row Wampum, as a mythically constructed representation of the Haudenosaunee worldview, serves to unify, both culturally and politically, the community which views it as truth, despite a lack of historical proof. Politically, the Two Row, like other invented traditions, serves to entrench social cohesion and identity, thereby creating a sense of loyalty and nationhood rallied around a common, powerful symbol. During the nineteenth century and today, the Two Row Wampum entrenches a powerful and dignified myth in the minds of many Haudenosaunee. In this way, the belt strives to counter assimilation by congratulating the Iroquois as preservers of peace and friendship, which ignores their role as mercenaries in the British domination of the continent. The Haudenosaunee, however, base the Two Row mythistory on certain grains of truth; in the case of the Two Row, an ancient mentality innately assumed but not officially ratified. The perseverance of this myth is almost effortless, as national myths possess incredible emotional power that convinces people of their veracity, despite lack of evidence.

Today, the Two Row Wampum is used to justify Iroquois sovereignty from both the American and Canadian governments, maintaining that, according to the principles agreed upon hundreds of years ago, neither side has the authority to pass binding laws over their friends. Such an interpretation based upon the Two Row as a historic treaty is very problematic, since, as we have shown, it is very doubtful that such an agreement ever occurred. Instead, basing claims of self-government and perpetual autonomy upon an ancient understanding, currently represented by a mythological reincarnation of contact-era
assumptions, would be more appropriate. Recognition of the historic non-existence of the Two Row Wampum treaty and proof of the innate assumption of its principles at contact would provide a much stronger argument that coincides with historical fact. Such blatant honesty, while perhaps difficult for the Haudenosaunee who profess the inherent truthfulness of the Two Row, can still accomplish the same goals of relative autonomy and respect, lending more legitimacy to political aspirations than claims based on Two Row mythistory. We must not, however, ignore the reality of coexistence between Native and non-Native Canadians, which renders impossible a return to the contact-era diplomacy between totally sovereign nations. The Two Row Wampum, as a potentially unifying force that respects the cultural autonomy of each nation, can and should be used to build a new relationship based upon the admirable principles of peace, friendship and respect shared by Natives and non-Native Canadians alike.
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