



The Two Row Wampum Treaty of 1613

Sunday Brunch Revolutionary Texts Lecture Series

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Two Row Wampum – Gaswéñdah by Deyhowähda·dih –Bradley Powless



In 1613, the Mohawks noticed people arriving in their territory unannounced. The new people came on the River that Flows both Ways (Hudson River) in large vessels. Their vessels had large blankets that could catch the wind. They docked their vessel and they began to unload their large canoe.

The new people dressed oddly and had hair on their faces. There were men, women, and children. They all spoke in a language we did not understand.

The new people had begun to cut trees with a kind of axe we have not seen before. This material was shiny and reflected the sun. They wore it on their chest and it appears they could also use it for cooking. They began to clear land to build homes and farms.

The Mohawks sent a messenger to see if it was their intention to stay. The Mohawks then told the rest of the Haudenosaunee of these new people. The people they met spoke in a language we haven't heard before. It took much time and patience for us to begin to communicate.



The new people with their large vessel thought that they should be called “Father” and the Haudenosaunee should be called “Son.”

The Haudenosaunee said that this is not agreeable. Referring to you as our Father and us as the Son gives the Father authority to tell the Son what to do. Therefore, we believe we shall address each other as “Brothers.” This shows that we are equal to each other.

As the Haudenosaunee and Dutch discovered much about each other. They had a church where they would give thanks to the Creator. We had a longhouse to give thanks. The Dutch had Kings and Queens who guided their path. We had our Chiefs and Clan Mothers. We are truly different.

After much deliberation, we decided to live in peace.

The Haudenosaunee and the Dutch agreed on three principles to make this treaty last. The first principle was friendship; the Haudenosaunee and their white brothers will live in a friendly way. The second principle is peace; there will be peace between our two people and disagreements will be settled through dialogue. The final principle is forever; that this agreement will last forever for our future generations to live with a calm mind.

The Dutch said that they will record this agreement with a pen and paper. It is our way to make a wampum belt for future generations to retell our story. It will be referred to as **Gaswéñdah, the Two Row Wampum**.

The belt begins with rows of white to show that we didn't always live together. Secondly, there will be two rows of purple wampum running down the middle of the belt. In one row is our canoe holding our ways; our language, songs, dances, how we govern, and how we celebrate our Creator. In the other row is your ship holding your ways; your language, songs, dances, how you govern, and how you celebrate the Creator. Each row will be equal in weight to show to all that even though our ways are different, they are equal. Neither of us will try to steer each other's vessel as we travel side by side down the river of life.



This agreement of peace and friendship will be shown to last forever by the two purple rows running off the end of the belt. Forever meaning; as long as the water flows downhill, the grasses grow green, and the sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

The Dutch also decided to remember this agreement. But with three interlocking chains to represent peace, friendship and forever.

But what material shall the chains be made of?

Should we use gold?

Gold chains would not do because they are easily bent and broken.

Should we use iron? Iron chains would not do, because iron rusts and will break.

Should we use silver? Yes!

The chains will be made of silver. Silver is strong and will not bend nor rust. Silver can also be polished to look new. When we meet, we will say that we are "polishing the chain of friendship" between us. This will be forever referred to as the **Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship**.



Importance of Gaswéñdah Today

The Haudenosaunee see the Two Row Wampum as a living treaty; a way that they have established for our people to live together with our Brothers in peace. Each nation will respect the traditions, laws, and customs of the other. And finally, neither Brother will try to steer the other's vessel by passing laws or hindrances to their Brother's way of life as we travel down the river of life together.