

The Two Row Wampum made with the Dutch became the basis for all future Haudenosaunee relationships with European powers. The principles of the Two Row were consistently restated by the Haudenosaunee spokespeople and were extended to relationships with the French, British and Americans under the framework of the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship agreements.

It was understood by the Haudenosaunee that

“Together we will travel in Friendship and in Peace Forever; as long as the grass is green, as long as the water runs downhill, as long as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, and as long as our Mother Earth will last.”¹

¹ www.onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/two-row-wampum-belt-guswenta/



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Two Row Wampum - Gusweñta



The Two Row Wampum from 1613 is one of the oldest treaty relationships between the ONKWEHONWEH (original people) of Turtle Island (North America) and Europeans.

This treaty was made between the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and the Dutch settlers and traders who began moving up the Hudson River into Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) Territory in the early 1600's.

Initially the Dutch proposed a patriarchal relationship with the First Nations people with themselves as fathers and the Haudenosaunee as children.

According to Kanien'keha:ka historian Ray Fadden, the Haudenosaunee rejected this idea and instead proposed the following:

"We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. (Our treaties) symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together.

One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs, and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their

laws, their customs, and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel."

There were three principles upon which this treaty was based: friendship, peace and that it would last forever. The Dutch agreed with the principles of the Two Row. They were well aware of the political and military strength of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (which included the Kanien'keha:ka).

As was their custom for recording events of significance, the Haudenosaunee created a wampum belt out of purple and white quahog shells.

The Dutch recorded this agreement on paper with three silver chains. Iron was not used as it would rust over time, whereas silver could be polished

and renewed when the brothers met.

John Borrow, an Indigenous legal scholar and the author of 'Canada's Indigenous Constitution', describes the physical nature of the Two Row Wampum as follows:

"The belt consists of two rows of purple wampum beads on a white background. Three rows of white beads symbolizing peace, friendship, and respect separate the two purple rows. The two purple rows symbolize two paths or two vessels travelling down the same river. One row symbolizes the Haudenosaunee people with their laws and customs, while the other row symbolizes the European with their laws and customs. As nations move together side-by-side on the River of Life, they are to avoid overlapping or interfering with one another."