EXHIBITION GUIDE

Ganondagan

WAMPUM OTGOÄ

EXHIBITION

March 25th - September 16th, 2023

Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac

Exhibition jointly organized by the Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac and the Seneca Art & Culture Center at Ganondagan State Historic Site
Introduction

This publication is a result of many minds working together to share some of the highlights of the WAMPUM/OTGOÅ exhibition. I wanted this publication to reflect some of the intellectual and scientific understandings of the objects but more importantly, to capture a truly Indigenous view on what these objects represent. We believe that these objects have life inside of them, it was put there by the original makers. They gave of themselves to create beautiful pieces which have endured over the centuries, and they were assigned jobs and responsibilities long ago.

For many of these objects, we know what the intent and some of the meaning behind them was. For others, we don’t have as much understanding. It is our belief that these objects may speak to us today. Through direct contact and access, understandings may emerge. That is why collaboration, access and partnerships with museum institutions is so important to Indigenous people.

Objects like these also play a role in repatriating/rematriating the skills and knowledge of old art forms. We can learn from them, and in some cases, see how old art forms were practiced and then be able to recover those forms. We do that work here at Ganondagan.

But it is not a one-way street; Indigenous collaboration with museum institutions can be a mutually beneficial process. The institution’s understanding of their collections is enlarged by consultation; their staff, and more importantly, their audience benefits from that knowledge sharing. And of course, the Indigenous collaborators can bring what they have learned and what they have seen back to their people. WAMPUM/OTGOÅ is a perfect example of this process.

The voices we have included in this publication are honest and informed and without a doubt, truly Indigenous.

Michael Galban
Historic Site Manager
Ganondagan State Historic Site
Shell Wampum Collar
Likely Hodinöhsö:ni’, before 1725
Marine shell, leather, porcupine quill, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris  71.1878.32.56
We know this object type today as a “yoke.” Some people still wear cloth-and-bead versions of them in Haudenosaunee communities for special occasions like ceremonies or performances. This version, made entirely of wampum beads and trimmed in red porcupine quills, relates to old wampum rhetoric.

Long ago, when war was proposed, a belt would be thrown on the ground in front of those receiving the proposal for alliance. It was seen as a serpent skin and would either be picked up as a sign of joining the war or could be literally tossed away from the council fire, either by foot or a wooden cane. This yoke represents that serpent or an underwater being like an otter or panther. It is meant to drape over the head and could have held meaning as ceremonial “war dance dress” or as part of animal society dress.

The symbols could represent council fires or nations who were related to the owner. We see six “council fire” squares which would ring the neck of the wearer. Knowing the dating of the object, it is hard not to imagine it related to the joining of the Tuscarora to complete the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee.

Michael Galban
Wašiw & Kutzadika’á
Historic Site Manager of Ganondagan
Curator of the Seneca Art & Culture Center
“Gift from the Hurons to the Immaculate Virgin”
Wendat (Huron), after 1660
Marine shell, leather, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris
71.1878.32.155
Between 1654 and 1716, a dozen wampum belts were created by Indigenous populations living in religious missions to be offered to European and Canadian shrines. The vast majority of these were produced by the Wendat and served as religious vows or as pious offerings to honor the Virgin Mary and other Catholic Saints. Honoring Mary (The Mother of Christ) is not totally alien or contradictory for a matrilineal society like my own, that also was born from an original Mother (Aataentsic, Sky Woman).

Though woven in a missionary context by newly converted Wendat, these belts are not regarded as totally different from those made for international diplomatic situations. The alliance or the communication being made, in this case, with a religious congregation rather than with another nation. In that sense, these belts retain traditional political and diplomatic functions.

While some may see this example as proof of assimilation and acculturation that would take away our Indigeneity or our authenticity, we see it as a fine example of openness and syncretism. These objects were created with the capacity to absorb and adopt concepts of the “Other” and to expand our relations, networks and influence. For us Wendat, it is an example of our cultural flexibility as well as the strength of our conceptions of alliance, kinship and governance.

Jonathan Lainey
Huron-Wendat Nation of Wendake, Wolf clan
Curator, Indigenous Cultures at McCord Stewart Museum
Pipe Tomahawk
Northeast Woodlands, 1763
Steel, brass, silver, wood
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris
71.1934.33.51 D
“What draws my eye is the engraving on this pipe tomahawk, which is that of a sun. In Seneca oral tradition, when we refer to the sun we say, Hosgëgéhdago:wa:h what that means is “our elder brother the daytime sun who is the great warrior.” We know from oral tradition and also from the sun ceremony (which is still performed today), that back in the day, the warriors would perform a sun ceremony on the eve of battle. Because the sun was known as the great warrior, they would perform the ritual for him asking him for his protection, but also for his blessing, and that’s why they refer to him as Hosgëgéhdago:wa:h. One of the qualities of this brass pipe tomahawk is its color—its shininess; but also the fact that this item is made particularly for warfare and yet also for peace, so we know that the Seneca did go to war but they also encouraged peace, and that’s what it reminds me of.”

Jamie Jacobs
Seneca, Turtle Clan
Collections Manager for the Rock Foundation
-excerpt from interview, recorded February 20, 2023.
Illinois Confederacy Wampum Belt
Kaskaskia, before 1725
Marine shell, leather, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris
71.1878.32.61
In 1725 several Native American diplomats traveled to Paris. These leaders, including the Michigamea leader, Šikaakwa, presented this kilahkwaakani “object for making a speech” or ‘wampum belt’ to the French king on behalf of the Inohka people. In the early eighteenth century, the Inohka or Illinois Confederacy was composed of at least six different nations, and their peoples dominated the Illinois River Valley. The French relied on alliances with these powerful nations to support their colonies in North America. These leaders’ trip to France was intended to accomplish two things; the Illinois wanted to reaffirm their alliances with the French and to ask for additional military support in their longstanding conflict with the neighboring Mahkwahkiiimina ‘Meskwaki nation.’ This kilahkwaakani ‘wampum belt’ carried the Inohka’s message across the Atlantic and remained in France as a reminder of their shared intent.

The emblem of today’s Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma contains four arrows, each arrow representing one of the four tribes of the contemporary face of the Illinois Confederacy: Wea, Piankeshaw, Kaskaskia, and Peoria. The cultural parallel with this war belt is striking as four men carrying bows were used to represent the shared intent of four member communities of the Confederacy. Their identical designs illustrate the sharing of political power among the nations. Their bows reminded the French of their value as military allies and served as a visual request for further support in their war against the Meskwakies.”

Elizabeth Ellis  
Peoria Tribe of Indians  
Assistant professor of History, Princeton University

George Ironstrack  
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma  
Myaamia Center, Miami University

Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma emblem
Dark Wampum Strands
Northeast Woodlands, early 1700s
Marine shell, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris 71.1878.32.58
“So, the information I can offer about this particular piece is the fact that the majority of the beads are dark wampum, and what I can relate it to is that in Haudenosaunee culture and ceremonialism, when death occurs, there’s a lot of darkness. In Seneca, when somebody suffers a loss or death they are said to be in “darkness.” In the condolence ceremony and in the funeral speech, that’s what it says. There is a word that I know of, wa’agwajö:yoda:gwæs, which means “the sky has fallen in on her,” and what it refers to is that there’s a lot of darkness around because of the death. So, there is a lot of references to darkness in Haudenosaunee culture when somebody passes away, and that’s what I see when I look at this wampum. It might have been that these strings were all separate hanging down once, as opposed to all twirled around and tied at the top. Because that what the darkness strings usually looked like.”

Jamie Jacobs
Seneca, Turtle Clan
Collections Manager for the Rock Foundation

-excerpt from interview, recorded February 20, 2023.
Moccasins
Northeast Woodlands, 1700s
Leather, birch bark, porcupine quills, moose and deer hair, glass beads, silk, metal, plant fibers
Through Indigenous Eyes

“ In my community there have been many waves of traditionalism in my lifetime. Traditional clothing has been one outward expression of this. Gustoweh (headdresses), cradleboards and moccasins are all ways to express a national and familial identity. Ahtahkwaohnwe (literal translation: original shoes) are even given their own day in “Indian Country” called ROCK YOUR MOCS, where people wear their cultural moccasins to show pride in their heritage.

While consulting at the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, I was able to handle and study this pair. This pair are made from Native-tanned deerskin and are decorated in dyed deer hair, moose mane, glass wampum beads, and porcupine quills. This pair of Ahtahkwaohnwe are a labor of love and a literal reflection of the natural world.

There are but a few people today who can work at this skill level. Looking to our past, our people find inspiration in these old objects. There was a time when I didn’t think my people’s clothing was as beautiful as other Nations like the Lakota people, who I saw in National Geographic Magazine. And then my husband created an exquisite pair just for me, and I fell in love with our old ways. I hope that my beautiful quilled Ahtahkwaohnwe, that resemble this historic pair, will also be treasured and passed down to our descendants, alongside the knowledge of how to make them.”

Tonia “Iakonrikonriio” Galban
Mohawk, Bear Clan
Educator Emeritus for Ganondagan
Bandolier Bag
Northeast Woodlands, around 1770
Fabric, glass beads, skin, porcupine quill, animal sinew
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris  71.1878.32.142
“Bags such as this one were made for men. This particular bag is most likely comprised of parts from a few different sources; a “Frankenstein’s monster” if you will. The pouch portion is a cloth liner which has been turned inside out to reveal the bright block printed fabric. The leather flap once was decorated in porcupine quillwork and may have been original to the pouch. The strap was probably attached at some point to the bag and was not original to the piece. The green, yellow and black beads are glass imitation wampum beads. The colors imitate the way Native wampum users would rub colored paint on shell wampum belts to temporarily alter their meaning. Green painted wampum belts were usually an invitation to war. Despite the attempts by Europeans to find commercial substitutes for shell wampum, Hodinöhso:ni’ people always preferred shell wampum for ceremonial and diplomatic purposes. Imitation wampum was acceptable for decorative use as can be seen here.”

Michael Galban

Wašiw & Kutzadika’a

Historic Site Manager of Ganondagan
Curator of the Seneca Art & Culture Center
War Club
Around 1700
Wood, traces of red and black pigment
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris 71.1917.3.11 D
"This reminds me of the medicine society of the Senecas. The medicine society was formed long ago by the mystical animals or the animals of the forests. They all contributed a piece of their flesh and what they did was they dried it and ground it into a powder, and they had administered this small medicine to one of the male hunters and what it did it healed him, and today it became what we now know as the medicine animal society of the Seneca.

This society is linked to warfare because that was where the medicine was used primarily at that time, but today it’s used for healing. We do have an otter society ceremony within the Seneca, which is restricted to members of that society, but we know that otters have healing powers. The otters that appear on top, in my perspective, were to heal the owner of the club if he should be injured while in battle, but also they could serve as protectors. We know from the otter medicine society (still performed today) and through oral tradition that otter medicine is used for healing all people and not just for warfare."

Jamie Jacobs
Seneca, Turtle Clan
Collections Manager for the Rock Foundation

-excerpt from interview, recorded February 20, 2023.
Woven Bag
Iroquoian, second half of the 1600s
Shell, moose hair, porcupine quill, leather, green woodpecker skin, plant fibers
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris  71.1878.32.63
“This diminutive bag is the highlight of this exhibit to me. Haudenosaunee women developed a method of using dyed moose hair to embroider objects like this bag. They would wrap the hairs around the twined wefts in sophisticated and vibrant patterns. It is possible that the energetic designs were meant to “dazzle the eye” and attract good spirits. The aesthetic of this type of work centered a high contrast and dynamic imagery. We cannot know the specific meanings behind the motifs, but certainly we can appreciate the boldness and mastery of the art form.

This small pouch was meant to hold loose wampum beads and was known as a “notas” in the 17th century. Two large wampum beads dangle at the sides, possibly to be used as “toggles” to help carry the bag. These two beads are far older than the bag, perhaps made in the late 1500s, whereas the bag was made in the second half of the 1600s.”

Michael Galban
Wašiw & Kutzadik’a’a
Historic Site Manager of Ganondagan
Curator of the Seneca Art & Culture Center
Captive Tie
Northeast Woodland, around 1720
Plant fibers, porcupine quill, leather, animal sinew, metal, animal hair
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris 71.1934.33.72.D
In Seneca, the word that we have for anything or any person that is tame is, they say ganohsgwa. So, we know that back in our history, prisoners were brought back to the village in a ritualized way, this was because the fate of these prisoners was left up to the women. So, in Hodinöhsö:ni’ culture, it just confirms the fact that women did have authority even in times of warfare. It was the women’s responsibility to make these things, the halter and the cordage and the quillwork; because when the prisoners were brought back, we know that they were handed over to the women and their fate was decided by them, either to be absorbed, adopted or even sometimes executed. So, this object is interesting, but its more than just a symbol of warfare. It’s also a symbol of women’s authority even on the issue of war.

Jamie Jacobs
Seneca, Turtle Clan
Collections Manager for the Rock Foundation
-excerpt from interview, recorded February 20, 2023.
Shell Wampum Beads
1500-1600
Marine shell, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris   71.1878.32.154
Through Indigenous Eyes

“ This particular string of white wampum is short, the beads are different size, barrel shaped, definitely made by the hands of an Ongwehonwe person at some point in time. It reminds me of what is described from oral tradition, the elders and ceremony; they described short strands of wampum used as what they call body keepers or protectors. In Seneca they say “ohgyadano ni ganose:sa’ otgoä.” Ohgyadano means “it protects my body.” Ni ganose:sa’ means, it’s a short strand, and otgoä is the word for a wampum bead.

In oral tradition it does say, in the code of Handsome Lake, that one of the individual chiefs came forward and asked Handsome Lake why he should accept his message. Handsome Lake says that he was thinking in two ways. So, the chief replied that he didn’t agree with what Handsome Lake was saying. And also that should he (the chief) be thinking two ways, and stray off of the Ongwehonwe path, that a short wampum string will bring him back.

In a short time, they see this chief and he’s welcoming priests into the Tonawanda community. The chiefs take that wampum strand, and they remind him of what he had promised. That the short strand of wampum that he used as a body keeper will bring him back. But he refused, and Handsome Lake says that this man was the first man in Tonawanda to accept Christianity. My great-grandmother Esther Sundown carried one just like this, and that’s what she called it as well.”

Jamie Jacobs
Seneca, Turtle Clan
Collections Manager for the Rock Foundation
-excerpt from interview, recorded February 20, 2023.
Strings of Porcelain Beads Imitating Wampum
French (possibly Saint-Cloud Manufacture), early 1700s
Enameled terracotta, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris  71.1878.32.267
Through Indigenous Eyes

“We know that this object, the beads that are strung on this, they are made of ceramic. So, we know that these particular beads would have probably been used to substitute the white shell wampum. We know that in Hodinöhsö:ni’ culture, strands of white wampum are strung together and they’re called gaji:sda’, or fires. Today, the longhouses all have a string that looks just like this. In the language, they refer to them as Oyodehgo ga’nigöë, “it works on the mind,” and they’re linked to the history of Gaiwiyo. I don’t really think that this string is from that history, but it just looks like it. What it reminds me of, is that Ongwehonwe people do find it okay to substitute for wampum beads if they aren’t available. Some of the fires that I have seen from some longhouses do in fact have substitution wampum beads made of ceramic. This one here appears to be what looks very familiar to me. That the beads look like they are white shell wampum, but in fact they’re ceramic.”

Jamie Jacobs
Seneca, Turtle Clan
Collections Manager for the Rock Foundation

-excerpt from interview, recorded February 20, 2023.
War Club
Northeast Woodlands, 1680-1720
Maple wood, traces of black pigment, leather, shell
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris    71.1917.3.14 D
Through Indigenous Eyes

“The ball-headed war club is but one weapon carried by Haudenosaunee men to battle, and these weapons were often personalized to its carrier. This club bears inlays of wampum along the spine with lines almost forming a chevron by the grip. Other examples might have carvings representing how many battles the person had fought or even their own likeness. In this way, a club could act as a calling card, reflecting its user and their battle record. They might even carve their own facial tattoos onto their club to better identify themselves.

Many objects in Haudenosaunee country are decorated for the sake of being decorated. These designs could be seen as just decorations whereas some might have symbols representing the clan of those that own the object. While objects like spoons, bowls, or war clubs have a specific function, their form could often carry design.”

Grandell Hallett Logan
Seneca, Snipe Clan
Native American Educator for Ganondagan
Shell Moon Pectoral
Northeastern Woodlands, 1690–1725
Marine shell, plant fibers
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris     71.1934.33.36 D
These objects are also known as “gorgets” but in the Native languages they are referred to as a “moon” or a “sun.” This example is probably cut from a large lightning whelk from the Atlantic shores. The lightning whelk was the original source of white wampum beads. Shell moons, like this one, are worn around the neck and were worn to project the wearer’s “inner light” and to dispel any “darkness.” They relate directly to the story of Creation, where the head of the twins’ mother is hung up in the sky to look down on our Earth and influence the women below.

The daytime and nighttime orbs are central to our universe of family. The moon is our grandmother and the Sun, our uncle, the elder brother to Sky Woman. Each can be worn about the neck in shell-form to carry along a bit of that energy.

Some men would even tattoo these emblems on their upper chest as a permanent gorget. Often times celestial symbols are engraved into these gorget, further associating them with the upper world. The subtle lines along the edge may represent the rays of light emitting from the sun or moon.

Michael Galban
Wašiw & Kutzadika’á
Historic Site Manager of Ganondagan
Curator of the Seneca Art & Culture Center
Wampum Bead Necklace with Bird Effigies
Hodinöhsö:nï' possibly Onöndowâga:’ (Seneca), 1688–1710
Marine shell, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris 71.1881.17.1
“In the Haudenosaunee Creation Story, when the Skywoman is falling to this world, the Earth is covered entirely in water, similar to how we as human beings are encapsulated by water in our mother’s womb.

It is said that the leader of the water birds is the Loon. They say that the water birds were once inhabitants of the Skyworld but now resided here on the Earth.

As Skywoman fell, the water birds were looking into the water and thought that the visitor was emerging from below the surface. However, other birds looked to the sky and saw she was falling and not floating up to the water’s surface. In our language this bird is called Tehaluhyakahn#la, meaning “he looks to the sky.”

They say that the loon then organized the water birds to fly up to greet Skywoman and bring her safely down to the surface. However, they were going to need a place to put their visitor, a place for her feet to be set upon. Loon asked the water birds to put their minds together to see if they could formulate a plan. Unfortunately, they were unable to come up with a solution. Loon then gathered up other animals who were swimming in the water and asked them to put their minds together and see who amongst them would be able to support their visitor on their backs to keep their visitor from sinking. They thought that maybe if they retrieved some earth from the bottom of the great waters, they could then put it on the back of one of their group.

The Great Snapping Turtle volunteered and was able to bear the weight. The water birds and water animals all agreed in consensus, they were “of one mind” that the Great Turtle would be the one to support Skywoman. The Loon was then satisfied, and Skywoman was placed on the Great Turtle’s back.

They say this was an example of working together and coming to “One Mind” when making important decisions and that our Chiefs should do the same when they council as well. The Chiefs would possibly wear a wampum necklace like this one decorated with water bird effigies to remind them of the importance of counseling together to become of “One Mind.” Migratory water birds also play a role in our health and well-being as they help to circulate the air when they travel so that airborne sicknesses do not linger in one area for too long.”
Wampum Belt/Collar
Northeast Woodlands, around 1700
Marine shell, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris
71.1878.32.57
“Through Indigenous Eyes

At my first glance of this gaswêhda, I was intrigued with the unique arrangement of the beads to create this design. I first noticed its abstract resemblance of a swastika or whirling log motif found in many nations’ symbology like the Navajo, Comanche, Sioux, and even the prehistoric Hopewell. These motifs represented cardinal directions for travel or winds, or were used as a symbol of peace and good fortune. Although this design is not common among Hodinöhsö:ni’ wampum belts, the variance in symbols used on belts is a reminder that these were always meant to be interpreted and upheld by both sides agreeing to peace or commemorating an important historical event, what we call degaiöhdahgöh. I also think that the opportunity to see a belt like this is important in reclaiming traditional knowledge and revitalizing principles and concepts not commonly understood today.

Cole Reuben
Seneca, Snipe Clan
Native American Educator for Ganondagan

“
Pendant Knife Sheath
Northeast Woodlands, 1770s
Glass beads, leather, birch bark, metal, porcupine quills, plant fibers
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris  71.1878.32.163
The strap on this knife sheath is made from imitation glass wampum beads. That’s what draws me to this piece. Today we call the technique “bias weaving.” It is a technique that seems to originate in the northeast woodlands in the mid-17th century.

Seneca women living at Ganondagan used this technique; we know this because the archaeological record tells us. Today, we teach this technique to Seneca people so that these old art forms can be re-integrated into contemporary Seneca arts. It’s a way of honoring the past and strengthening the future for Hodinöhsö:ni’ people.

Michael Galban
Wašiw & Kutzadika’a
Historic Site Manager of Ganondagan
Curator of the Seneca Art & Culture Center
Wampum Cuffs
Possibly Hodinöhsö:ni', before 1725
Marine shell, porcupine quill, leather, plant fiber
On loan from the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris
71.1878.32.60
There is a painting of the British Indian Department officer Guy Johnson seated and next to him is his confidant, David Hill. David wears the dress of a Mohawk man from the later 18th century and on his wrists, he wears beaded wampum wrist bands as well as a wampum choker. I imagine that this pair was worn similarly. There are over a dozen wampum or glass wampum wrist bands known from the 18th century and from the historic record, we know that both men, women and children wore them in all manner of situations. We may look to a spiritual reason for wearing them but we might also imagine that sometimes people simply adorned themselves in beautiful things to please themselves.

Michael Galban

*Wašiw & Kutzadika’aa*

Historic Site Manager of Ganondagan
Curator of the Seneca Art & Culture Center
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**Onöndowa’ga’’ (Seneca)**

- Jóähdöh
  - (in the past)
- Kwaji:yä’
  - (family)
- Níáhsë:no:t
  - (what his name is)
- Oiyowagönyë:s
  - (something to be highly respected)
- Oji:sda’
  - (fire)
- Onöhgwa’shä’
  - (medicine)
- Skënö’
  - (peace)
- Wá:di:ögot
  - (they performed a ceremony)
- Yöjáswas
  - (she made an invitation)
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**Wampum Belt/Collar**  
© musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac

**Moccasins**  
© musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac + Claude Germain

**Dark Wampum Strands, Gift from the Hurons to the Immaculate Virgin, Illinois Confederacy**  
Wampum Belt, Shell Moon Pectoral, Shell Wampum Collar, Strings of Porcelain Beads Imitating Wampum, Wampum Bead Necklace with Bird Effigies, War Club 71.1917.3.14 D, Woven Bag  
© musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac + Patrick Gries

**Bandolier Bag, Captive Tie, Pendant Knife Sheath, Pipe Tomahawk, Shell Wampum Beads, Wampum Cuffs, War Club 71.1917.3.11 D**  
© musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac + Pauline Guyon

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