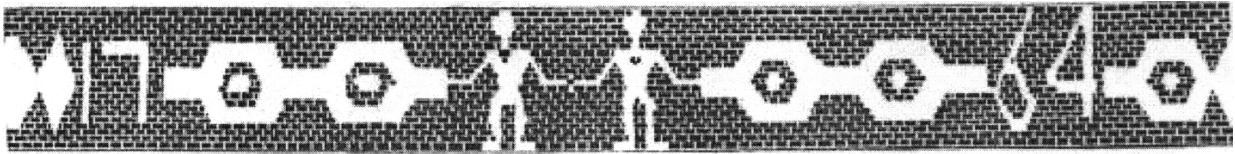


Conflicting Covenant Chains



Covenant Chain Wampum Belt, 1764

This drawing was made from the original belt, which has since been lost.

The Hodinohson:ni had been allied with Great Britain through the Covenant Chain, as seen in the wampum belt. The Covenant Chain is not only a treaty; it is also a political alliances and economic partnerships, yet is like an ongoing family. The Chain extends the principles of the Great Law of Peace to the newcomers, and thereby makes family of treaty partners to reduce the potential for conflict. In 1812, there were two different Covenant Chains, each tied to different allies – Great Britain and the United States.

For Grand River this was further complicated by the fact that many of the past and present officers of the Indian Department had children with Hodinohson:ni women. This created a different kind of family relationship that affected politics, economics and land holdings. As the war approached, loyalties were torn, even within families.

In the Seneca language the term used for white people translates to “our younger brother,” which implies an understanding that they had to help their younger brother. The King, on the other hand, saw himself as our father, not a brother. Our leaders insisted that he call us brother, not his children. In 1812, that ‘Great Father’ tugged on the Covenant Chain to get the attention of his allies. So, too did the President of the United States. The Hodinohson:ni had to decide which ally had our best interests in their heart.