

Six Nations Legacy Consortium

War of 1812

Choices With Consequences

The era of the War of 1812 is a time of difficult choices and unseen consequences. Both Covenant Chain and War Belts were employed to seduce the Ögwë'ö:weh (Native Nations) into military alliances with the Americans, British or other Native Nations. Red-painted wampum belts appeared pulling people into the bloody reality of war.



War Belt, National Museum of the American Indian

The tomahawk depicted in wampum belts represented the power of the warriors. The ritual of placing the war club or tomahawk in the hands of the warriors was more than symbolic gesture. The Hodinohson:ni warriors had to decide who would feel the wrath of those war clubs and tomahawks, knowing full well that they may be facing their own people in battle. It had been 30 years since most of the Grand River residents were made homeless because of war. No one wanted to see that happen again. Confederacy Chiefs were dedicated to keeping peace, but could not find the powerful words necessary to keep the warriors at bay. Hodinohson:ni women, still stinging from the disruption caused by the American Revolutionary War, could not stop their sons from heading down the war path. At first the Grand River community was hesitant to join in the war. The Crown had not kept its promises after the American Revolutionary War, and there was serious doubt whether the small British military force and untrained Militia could defeat the Americans. However, about 300 Grand River warriors eventually picked up the war club, and fought under the direction of the Indian Department. Often they became the deciding factor in battle. What path would you have followed? The path of the Great Peace, or the path of war?