

so it was replaced with a silver chain. Unfortunately, silver will tarnish if it is not polished regularly. Therefore, to maintain the brilliance of the alliance, it was necessary to polish the silver chain of friendship, symbolically, by exchanging gifts across it.

The most important Aboriginal gift was wampum strings and belts, which held great value as records or reminders of significant events or agreements. For example, when General Brock was killed at Queenston Heights in 1812, the Iroquois presented a string of red wampum to honour his memory. In return, British officers would present weapons, tools and trade silver jewelry. It is important to note that much of the trade silver was ornamented with Masonic symbols. A painting of Chief Joseph Brant done in England in 1776 clearly shows him wearing silver broaches in the shape of the square and compasses, as well as a Masonic ball fob opened up in its form of a Christian cross.

Another important gift was the pipe tomahawk, which was both a weapon of war and a tool of diplomacy. Many pipe tomahawks were ornamented extensively with Masonic symbols. A nice example in a Detroit museum has a large silver square and compasses inlaid into the blade. The military significance of the pipe tomahawk is obvious. But at a formal meeting or council, the pipe tomahawk took on another significant role. It was tradition for the pipe to be smoked and passed around to all members at the start of any council. Tobacco was a sacred gift of the Creator and Mother Earth. When the smoke was inhaled, it was then blown to the sun to thank him for the gift of light, without which no life could exist. (The reference to light is a striking connection to Masonic ritual, which would not have been lost on any Masons taking part in the council.) Smoke could also be blown to the ground, to thank Mother Earth for her bounty. The pipe thus helped to set a proper tone for the deliberations and ultimate success of a council.

Many of the British officers of the Indian Department were indeed Masons, a tradition going back to the days of Sir William Johnson the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Crown Colony of New York, before the American Revolution. In fact, Sir William founded St. Patrick's Lodge at Johnson Hall, on the grounds of his estate in Johnstown, New York, north of Albany. John Butler, a senior officer in the Indian Department, was one of the officers of St. Patrick's Lodge. He would later lead Butler's Rangers in the American Revolution, and became one of the founders of modern Niagara on the Lake, and of Freemasonry in early Upper Canada.

While it is not surprising that the officers of the British Indian Department were Masons, most people are intrigued to learn that a high proportion of Aboriginal warriors and chiefs were also Masons. The Enlightenment movement of the 18th century that favoured Freemasonry taught that Aboriginal peoples were "Noble Savages" or children of the wilderness unspoiled by civilization. Since Freemasonry embraced all men, First Nations warriors were natural candidates. In return, Aboriginal culture, always open to new concepts, embraced Freemasonry. The Masonic Great Architect of the Universe was similar to the Aboriginal belief in the Creator who made the world, its animals and its people. Aboriginal culture was reinforced by rituals, signs and symbols. Any Aboriginal warrior would immediately recognize the importance and power of Masonic rituals, signs and symbols, and would thus be attracted to the Craft.

Freemasonry thus created a cultural bridge that enabled men from very different cultural backgrounds to meet on the level for shared personal experiences. On a larger scale, it provided a