

Seton (cited in Foster 1931:51) responded to Johnson, indicating his willingness to help her find a buyer for the belt and may have put her in touch with Joseph Keppler, Jr. to George Heye.<sup>18</sup>

When Pauline Johnson (1905a) began corresponding with Keppler two years later, it was to request his help in finding a buyer for her belt:

I have in my possession a very renowned Wampum Belt. Its history is beyond question. It is one of the 'Five Nations' League Belts, one of the most famous of all our National Belts. I can establish without a doubt its identity—I am compelled to sacrifice it, to part with it either completely sell it, or sell it at a figure, to be repurchased by myself at the end of three years....I have had the belt valued at about eighteen hundred dollars but would let it go at a little more reasonable rate than that.... My belt is thirty-eight inches long, and four inches wide, and for so ancient a specimen is in good repair—of course it has come broken in some places—they all have not having been restrung for some many years. Will you kindly write and tell me if you know of a possible purchaser? I have a splendid opportunity to present myself to the public in England – another such chance my never come, and I am using every means in my power to avail myself of it.<sup>19</sup>

By early 1906, Keppler had introduced Pauline Johnson to George Heye (Johnson 1906a). As is apparent from her letters to Keppler, Pauline Johnson was reluctant to completely relinquish ownership of the belt and was instead interested in the possibility

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<sup>18</sup> In his professional life, Keppler was the editor and publisher of English Puck magazine. He was also a Haudenosaunee historian and an activist who was made a Pine Tree Chief by the Seneca of New York in 1899 “for special achievement in the welfare of Indians” (*Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*, November 10, 1957). He often used his given name, Gyantwaka, in his correspondence and was well known among the Haudenosaunee. His relationship with George G. Heye goes back to the turn of the century (Mason 1958:12). Both were avid collectors of Indian artifacts and Heye made many purchases from Keppler over the course of their relationship. In 1927, Keppler was appointed to the MAI-HF Board of Trustees, a position he held until his resignation in 1947. Keppler seems to have been initially connected to the Johnson family through Pauline Johnson’s sister, Eva (or Evelyn) Johnson. The Joseph Keppler Jr. Iroquois Papers held in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at the Cornell University Library, includes correspondence between Keppler and Eva Johnson dating as far back as 1903 (Johnson 1903). Eva Johnson was a Native activist and a dedicated historian of her people and her family. She was a leading member of Brant County Historical Society and a contributing writer to the Ontario Historical Society’s journal (Keller 1981:100). It has also been noted that Evelyn’s activism brought her in contact with American native and non-Native activists such as Harriet Maxwell Converse (Strong-Boag and Gerson 2000:54).

<sup>19</sup> The dimensions of the belt described in this letter match the dimensions of the zigzag wampum belt (NMAI 008386.000) and it is clearly the one purchased later by Heye. At the end of this letter, Pauline Johnson refers to Keppler’s relationship with her sister Eva Johnson, asking him not to mention the matter to her (Johnson 1905a). Pauline Johnson’s request to conceal her desire to sell the belt from Eva Johnson is intriguing: she donated wampum to the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the accession record notes that these “four wampum belts and six strings of ‘national wampum’ were not to be exhibited or published until after Evelyn’s death,” suggesting that she preferred the details of the donation to be, at least temporarily, privileged information (Nicks 2009:24, endnote 6).