

### **Previously Missing Wampum Belt**

8386 - Wampum Belt. 12 rows wide, zig zag pattern of white beads on purple background, silk ribbons at each end, with bag of ribbon and fragments of broken beads.

This belt was on loan to the University of Pennsylvania Museum and they had placed their own catalogue number on the belt. It was missing when the first NMAI inventory was completed and therefore was not part of the wampum previously repatriated.

The wampum belt was once held by Chief John Smoke Johnson, Mohawk Council Speaker of the Grand River Territory. It was inappropriately obtained by his granddaughter, Pauline E. Johnson and used in her lectures and performances. There are several photographs of her wearing this belt. The belt was once described in 1887 at a "reading" of the belts held by the Chiefs at Grand River. (Ontario Archaeological Report of 1928) According to John Buck, the Wampum Keeper at the time, the belt represented a pledge by the Canadian government to never force the Haudenosaunee to change their customs.

When John Buck died in 1893, his children sold most of the 22 wampum belts in his custody before they were transferred to the new wampum Keeper, as was the custom. Chief John Johnson was the wampum Keeper before Chief John Buck. It was discovered that some of the belts had been purchased by Thomas R. Roddy of Chicago from a John. Jamieson, a Cayuga Chief. Roddy had also hired John Buck's son (Joshua) to search out objects to acquire. The Chiefs informed the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa that the wampum belts were illegally removed and an investigation was launched. Roddy had resold a number of belts to the Museum of the American Indian in 1910.

In 1922, upon the death of Pauline's father, George Henry Martin Johnson, Pauline's sister, Evelyn, loaned four wampums to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, with the agreement that they would not be published or displayed until after her death, at which time the loan would become a gift to the museum. Evelyn was fearful of what might happen if the traditional Longhouse people found out that she illegally removed the belts which were supposed to revert to John Buck the Confederacy Wampum Keeper at Grand River. Those wampum have since been repatriated to the Grand Council of Chiefs at the Grand River Territory in 1999.

Pauline Johnson took possession of two other belts that were also the collective property of the Haudenosaunee and carried them with her on her travels as a poet. She sold one of the belts to George Heye to finance one of her trips to Europe in 1906, with the intention of buying it back when she returned. (Betty Keller, "On Tour With Pauline Johnson," *The Beaver*, Hudson's Bay Company, December 1986-January 1987) However the trip was not a financial success and she was not able to repurchase the belt and Heye kept it for his collection.

The letters from Johnson to Heye on the wampum are in the archives of NMAI. Johns asked Heye for \$500 for the belt, with the right to repurchase it within two years. Since the wampum