



Conservation Department

Condition and Treatment Report

Exhibit:

Loan:



Catalog Number: 008386.000

Culture: Iroquois

Catalog Description: Wampum Belt. [Catalog card note: League Belt of the Iroquois Property of Chief Johnson, Of Grand River, Ontario]

Description and Technology: DESCRIPTION: Wampum belt composed of cylindrical shell beads woven on fiber and hide thongs that form a purple background with two parallel lines of white in a zig-zag pattern ending on one side with two side-by-side white "X" motifs. Blue silk ribbon binds both the PR and PL edges. Ribbon binds each end of the belt and hand stitched beige thread. Disassociated pieces include three broken pieces of unattached purple wampum beads and an unattached piece of blue silk ribbon.

Orientation: Proper right end will be "XX" white bead design with blue silk ribbon on PR front have a faded catalog marking number "8386"; back side has numbers "29-34-1" marked on blue silk ribbon on "XX" white bead design end.

TECHNOLOGY:

Of the beads that were manufactured and used by the Iroquois those known as "wampum" are by far the most significant. Though the term wampum has been used in some places to include both the discoidal and the cylindrical beads, the true wampum is an Indian-made shell bead, cylindrical in form, averaging about one-quarter of an inch in length by an eighth of an inch in diameter, perfectly straight on the sides, with a hole running though it the long way (Lyford 45).

The purple beads were made from the colored lip of the shell of the hard clam, or quahog (*Venus mercenaria*), while the white wampum were fashioned from the columellae of the conch (Speck, Orchard 19).

The following information is on the drilling techniques for archaic bannerstones of pre-contact Native American Indians and is a technique that could have been used to drill other materials such as wampum shell beads: The following account is given by Knoblock: Drilling could have also been done with either a pump, pulley, or bow drill method (82). The following information is taken from Knoblocks book and paraphrased: In 1937 and 1938, a Mr. B. W. Stephens worked together with the author to continue the author's experiment to drill quartz with a bow-drill using a hollow reed and sand. After some previous experimentation it was found that a long piece of rawhide about one-eighth thick and one-eighth wide was the best material to use as a bow-string as opposed to using heavy linen archery bow-strings and heavy beeswaxed cotton cords which would quickly break. An illustration (Plate 30), shows their use of a bow, a spooled drill-stick of cane, a quartz pebble being drilled, and a broken Indian axe for a weight. Mr. Stephens and the author are thoroughly convinced that the prehistoric Indians had resorted to similar inventive