

Still, said curator James Smith, "I hate giving anything up. It hurts. "But on the other hand, it's remedying a longtime wrong."

It was the first time a museum has returned historically significant and valuable wampum belts to the confederacy.

The belts, insured for more than \$1 million at the museum, were rolled in pure muslin, cushioned by tissue paper and placed in a plain bag worn over the shoulder of Mr. Force's wife, Maryanne.

"When you're carrying something valuable, it's better to carry it in an inconspicuous bag," explained Mrs. Force, who researches and writes for the museum.

"We didn't want attention called to the fact we were carrying them. One does have to be careful."

The belts, in good condition except for a few missing beads, were carefully unwrapped by Mr. Force, Tom Hill, curator of the Woodland Museum, and Sadie Buck, assistant curator. They worked on the ground under the canopy, surrounded by chiefs and clan mothers who stood or sat still and quiet, staring.

"It felt so good to have them back," said Cora Davis, a Cayuga clan mother.

After the ceremony, the rest of the people formed a long line and filed past the belts, staring at them with curiosity and awe.

After the ceremony, the belts were to be taken to the Woodland Museum's storage room where there is a controlled environment to protect artifacts. They probably will be displayed there, making an important addition to the museum's collection, Mr. Hill said.

"It's a great honor. These are major artifacts of international significance. A lot of people would like to see them."