

Mystery of missing mace finally solved

OHSWEKEN — A woman dressed in traditional native clothes hugged Six Nations Chief Coun. William Montour. Her voice shook as she told him: "I don't think you can understand what it means to us."

He replied: "I hope it brings us together."

A 64-year-old mystery that had caused tension between the traditional and contemporary councils on the reserve was finally solved Sunday.

Chiefs and clan mothers of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy gasped when Chief Coun. Montour presented their mace to them.

The strings of wampum, used to open and close the confederacy's council meetings, were stolen from the old council building on Oct. 10, 1924 — 17 days before the first new council was elected.

Chief Coun. Montour found the mace in the new council building's vault last week.

"I don't know how it got there and I don't know how long it has been there," he told the confederacy. "All I know is I want to present it back to where it belongs."

Cecil Morgan, a Department of Indian Affairs official in 1924, wanted as much wampum as he could get, explained Paul Williams, the confederacy's lawyer.

Mr. Morgan said he wanted to keep the wampum safe, but he was trying to "demoralize the confederacy chiefs," Mr. Williams said.

With the help of Hilton Hill, a clerk in the department's office and the first elected chief councillor, Mr. Morgan took the mace and locked it in the office vault, Mr. Williams said.

The vault's contents were moved to the new building's vault in 1979.

It was suspected that the mace

was in the building, but no one could find it until employee Charlene Bomberry discovered it a year ago.

Ms. Bomberry told the chief last week: "I was waiting for the right moment."

Returning it to the confederacy was not a hard decision, Chief Coun. Montour said. "They're the owners

of it."

The mace is the "symbol of council in session," Mr. Williams said.

It was used again for the first time Sunday to open another ceremony to accept 11 wampum belts returned by the Museum of the American Indian.