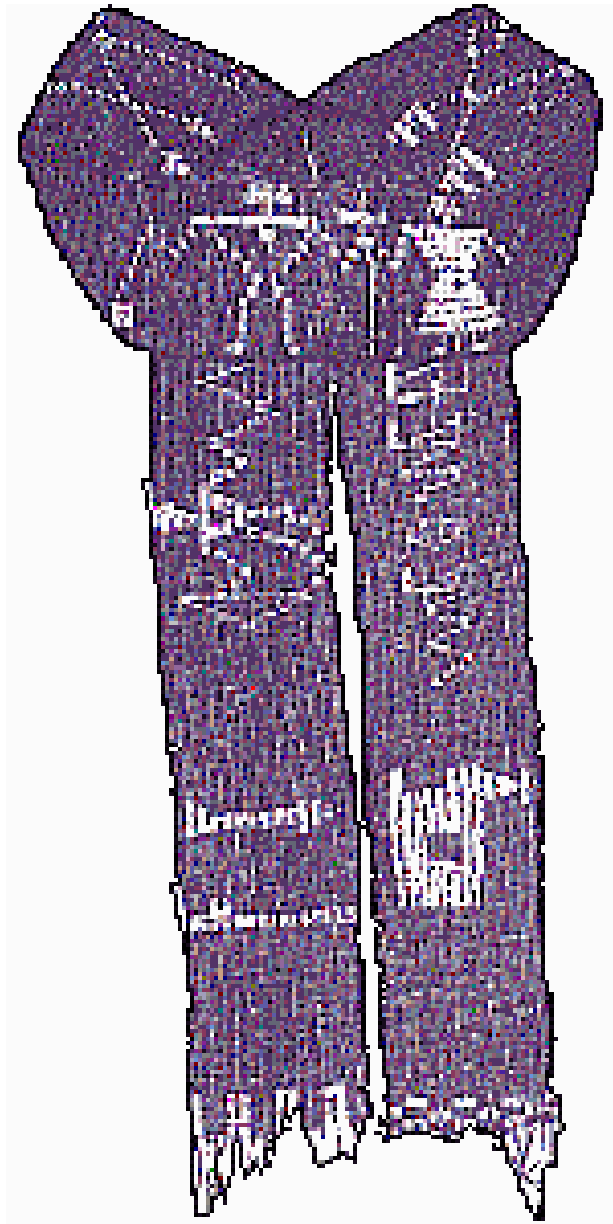


The Vatican Wampum Belt

This particular wampum represents an important agreement between Grand Chief Membertou and the Mi'kmaq districts and Roman Catholic Church, as represented by missionaries. In 1610, Grand Chief Membertou became the first North American native to be baptized a Catholic. Shortly after the baptism, Membertou asked the Jesuit missionaries to take this Mi'kmaq to Pope Paul V in Rome as a sign of his nation's good faith. The belt is still held by the Vatican and Mi'kmaq leaders are currently trying to repatriate it as an important cultural artifact.



The Wampum is read from left to right as follows:

Church Agreement

1. The left side represents the agreement of the Roman Catholic Church with Mi'kmaq Grand Council. The markings on the left represent the seven Mi'kmaq districts. This means that all seven districts joined in the concordat with the holy father.

Church built on the rock

2. The second symbol is the church, built upon the rock, St. Peter. The symbol of the church with an open window represents the principle that each Mi'kmaq had the right to accept or reject Catholicism through individual choice. Also, the open church must accommodate the Mi'kmaq language and culture.

Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphic Script

3. In the Ancient Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphic script, the council freely grants forever to the Catholic Church the right to build and keep churches on the Mi'kmaq lands, as well as the privilege that its priests may conduct masses and teach in the Mi'kmaq language.

The keys of St. Peter

4. The keys of St. Peter represent the grand chief's recognition of the pope's spiritual and political authority in the world, including Mi'kmaqik. The keys are placed on the belt to symbolize Vatican protection of the Mi'kmaq nation and its people under the authority of god. No power on earth could attempt to harm Mi'kmaq Catholics.

Black Robe and Mi'kmaq

5. The fifth symbol, the black robe, represents the priest. This figure, together with the Mi'kmaq figure holding the cross, illustrates the union of the church and the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. Each are equal and sacred in the alliance. The small bundle the

Mi'kmaq holds represents the retention of the Mi'kmaq sovereignty and cultural rights within the alliance. Mi'kmaq cultural rights will be especially accommodated within the church.

The crossed Spears

6. The sixth symbol, the crossed spears, represents the grand chief's promise to plant Christ's lessons of wisdom, truth, and forgiveness in the hearts of all Mi'kmaq, Like the spears stuck in the ground.

The pipe and the battle axe

7. The seventh symbol, the peace pipe and the battle axe, reflects the grand chief's pledge to follow the path of brotherly love, and to protect those who join in the holy alliance.

The Twelve Apostles

8. At the end of the wampum is the symbol for the twelve apostles of Niskam's child, Jesus Christ, who have spread God's message to the world.

Taken from Issues in the Mi'kmaq Community, *Mi'kmaw Past and Present: A Resource Guide*

Native author's view / history of the Vatican Wampum Belt
<http://tribes.tribe.net/realdealthistory/thread/031ae494-9587-4665-a5cb-99b5513f9496>

This handout was created by www.wampumbear.com