

Early Encounters: Treaty Protocols and the Significance of Wampum

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Like all histories, the story of the early colonial era in Eastern North America is complex. This lesson will complicate students' understandings of the power dynamics between native groups, settler colonists and European empires during the colonial period.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will explain wampum, treaty protocol, and their respective significance.
- Students will interpret and think critically about historical images.
- Students will use examples from a visual source to support ideas and understandings.

Essential Questions:

- What was the significance of wampum in early colonial North America?
- What was the significance of treaty protocols in colonial North America?
- Whose cultural values were centered in this process?
- How did various groups attempt to exercise agency and power through treaty meetings?

Ongoing Questions

For a unit that includes this lesson might also include:

- How did Native Americans and colonial representatives incorporate each other into their respective worldviews?
- When, how, and why did the power dynamics between native groups, settlers, and European empires change?

Grade Level: Grades 9-12

Standards:

- **Standard - 8.1.9.A:** Compare patterns of continuity and change over time, applying context of events.
- **Standard - 8.3.9.D:** Interpret how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations have impacted the growth and development of the U.S.

Historical Background:

At the height of its development, the treaty protocol ideally consisted of nine stages. First came a formal invitation to attend a meeting at a recognized or “prefixed” place or “council fire.” This invitation, accompanied by strings or belts of wampum (Dutch colonists called the beads *zewant*), established a right for the hosts to set the agenda and speak first; it also obliged them to provide ritual and material hospitality for the visitors. Second was a ceremonial procession, by foot or canoe, by which the visitors arrived at the site of the council. Third was the “At the Wood’s Edge” rite, in which the hosts offered rest and comfort to visitors presumed to be tired from a long journey. Each side offered the other the “Three Bare Words” of condolence, to clear their eyes, ears, and throats of the grief-inspired rage that prevented clear communication—the rage that, if unchecked, provoked mourning wars and spiraled into endless retaliatory feuds. After at least one night’s rest, the council itself began with, fourth, the seating of the delegations and, fifth, an extensive Condolence ceremony, in which tearful eyes were again ritually dried, minds and hearts cleansed of the “bile of revenge,” blood wiped “from the defiled house,” graves of the dead “covered” to keep grief and revenge out of sight, clouds dispelled to allow the sun to shine, and fire kindled to further illuminate the proceedings. Sixth came a “recitation of the law ways,” a rehearsal of the history of two peoples’ relationships with each other, the basis of their peaceful interactions, and the way in which their forebears had taught them to behave. Almost universally, the connection was described in terms of fictive kinship; two peoples were “Uncle” and “Nephew,” or “Father” and “Child,” or “Brother” and “Brother,” and addressed each other with the authority or deference appropriate to the power relationship inherent in such terms. The recitation of the law ways articulated ideals rather than grubby realities. Kinship terms and other names by which relationships were described served an educative function to remind participants of what their attitudes toward each other *ought* to be.⁵⁶

Only in the seventh stage, after the ritual requirements for establishing a peaceful environment had been fulfilled, could what Europeans considered the business of a treaty council—the offering of specific “propositions”—take place. To be considered valid, each “word” had to be accompanied by an appropriate gift, usually of wampum strings (“fathoms”) or

belts prepared specially for the occasion. “Presents among these peoples despatch all the affairs of the country,” explained a French missionary who understood the process much better than Livingston. “They dry up tears; they appease anger; they open the doors of foreign countries; they deliver prisoners; they bring the dead back to life; one hardly ever speaks or answers, except by presents.”⁵⁷ Wampum gifts in particular confirmed the validity of a speaker’s words in several interrelated ways. As a sacred substance, wampum underscored the importance of what was being said. As a valuable commodity, it demonstrated that the speaker was not talking only for himself or on the spur of the moment, but that he had the considered support of the kin and followers who had banded together to collect the treasured shells and have them strung. And, as carefully woven patterns of white and black beads, wampum also became a mnemonic device, allowing belts or strings to be “read” accurately both by a speaker delivering a message as instructed and by a recipient recalling promises made years before.⁵⁸

While propositions and wampum were offered by the hosts, visitors were to listen politely but not respond substantively until at least the next day. Hasty replies were not only disrespectful but indicated that the negotiator had not conferred with his colleagues and therefore could not be speaking with their approbation or with properly prepared wampum. Only when each of the hosts’ propositions had been answered could the visitors introduce new points. The same expectations of polite listening and postponed responses applied throughout a treaty conference. Thus, as at Albany in 1679, the whole affair could last for weeks. Once the substantive dialogue finally ended, the eighth step was the affixing of marks to any documents Europeans might insist upon. The ninth step consisted of a feast and the presentation of final gifts from the hosts. Unlike symbolic wampum, these tended to be of more material value: food, cloth, tools, weapons, and, too often, liquor—all of which leaders would redistribute to their followers.⁵⁹

Excerpts from: Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. pp. 135, 137.

Materials:

- Benjamin West, "The Indians giving a Talk to Colonel Bouquet in a Conference at a Council fire, near his Camp on the Banks of the Muskingum in North America in Oct. 1764." William Smith, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the year MDCCLXIV* (Philadelphia, 1766). Digital Paxton.
- "The belt of wampum delivered by the Indians to William Penn at the 'Great Treaty' under the Elm Tree at Shackamoxon in 1682" (Penn Wampum Belt). Digital Paxton.
- "Hiawatha Belt" (National Belt of the Haudenosaunee). Onondaga Nation.
- "George Washington Belt" (1794 Canandaigua Treaty Belt). Onondaga Nation.

Procedure:

Prior to this lesson, students should already be familiar with major cultural patterns among Eastern Native American groups (daily life, work cycles, political organization, concepts kinship and reciprocity, etc.), as well as the basic events surrounding the arrival of European groups to Eastern North America.

Warm up Activity (10 minutes)

In groups of 2-3, students examine a copy of the engraving, "The Indians giving a Talk to Colonel Bouquet" and discuss their impressions of the image. The teacher posts the following questions and asks students to pick one or two to discuss.

- What is happening in this image?
- Who do we see in this picture and what actions are taking place?
- What objects do we see in this image?
- What title would you give this image?
- Who do you think made this image and why?
- What questions do you have about this image?

Share and discuss responses as a class. Make note of comments or questions that can be returned to later. The teacher tells students that in today's class, they will dive into treaty protocol, and wampum, both of which are central in this painting.

Mini Lecture: Wampum (10 minutes)

- a) Zoom in on the wampum in The Indians giving a Talk to Colonel Bouquet. Tell students that they will learn about the significance of wampum and the role it played in Eastern North America at this time.
- b) Project or distribute printouts of wampum images (e.g. Penn Wampum Belt). Ideally, the teacher might share quahog shells or physical replicas of wampum with which students could interact.

c) Explain wampum and its significance for native peoples at the time/currently and that it played a role in the spiritual and political life of peoples in colonial America. Information on this topic is excerpted below from a lecture by Daniel Richter (McNeil Center of Early American Studies, August 31, 2019).

- Early European visitors thought that wampum was "money," and while it was very valuable, that wasn't quite the case.
- Wampum was a spiritually charged item, and possessing it and exchanging it showed ones' connection to spiritual power (similar to earlier Cahokian medallions, and other specialty items traded in that time).
- Wampum was also used to communicate and commemorate messages for diplomatic purposes, and giving wampum reinforced alliances and connections.
- Wampum didn't just communicate a message as a text- it was a gift that strengthened and upheld the idea of reciprocity between exchanging parties.
- As such, wampum played a crucial role in treaty talks.
- Indigenous and European groups had to decide ahead of time what they would be saying in treaty meetings, and then embedded the message in wampum strings or belts, which were made by native women.
- The native speakers in diplomatic meetings were highly trained specialists, who read the belts in a formal dialogue.
- Importantly, the *wampum beads* themselves carried the messages- the belt spoke, and spoke with the authority of the people and place it was from.
- Europeans also had to produce wampum belts as part of diplomatic processes.

d) Show images of various wampum belts: Penn Wampum Belt , George Washington Belt, Hiawatha Belt. Discuss the messages these belts may have strengthened or reinforced.

Treaty Protocol in Action (15 minutes)

a) Explain that there was a certain *protocol* – have a student define or look up this word for the class – when indigenous and colonial leaders met. The teacher may quote from this excerpt of Daniel Richter's *Facing East from Indian Country*:

"Originating in the internal political practices of the Iroquois League, the protocol spread in the mid-seventeenth century to other Native groups and to the French, English and Spanish officials throughout the northeast, the Great Lakes, and the southeast, accreting along the way a variety of non-Iroquois Indian and European customs. By the early eighteenth century, treaty conferences throughout eastern North America conformed to very similar ceremonial patterns" (134).

- b) Tell students that they will learn about the protocol by drawing out the steps on the whiteboards or posters around the room. If you haven't already, establish norms about drawings (e.g. all drawings should respect the humanity of all people.)

If your room is equipped with whiteboards, divide them into distinct spaces and label each with a description of that step. Ideally, the teacher would do this before class or as students enter the classroom. If you don't have whiteboards, you may use large post-its or other poster paper.

Treaty Protocol Steps, as outlined in *Facing East* (135-137):

1. Formal invitation to attend a meeting: invitation is accompanied by strings or belts of wampum.
2. Ceremonial procession by foot or canoe to the site of the council.
3. "A the Wood's Edge" rite: hosts offer hospitality to visitors, who are tired from their journey. Both sides give each other the "Three Bare Words" of condolence, to clear their eyes, throats and ears of unproductive emotions (rage, grief, etc.).
4. Seating of the delegations.
5. A Condolence ceremony: "eyes were again ritually dried, minds are cleared of the 'bile of revenge,' blood wiped 'from the defiled house,' graves of the dead 'covered' to keep grief and revenge out of sight, clouds dispelled to allow the sun to shine, and fire kindled to further illuminate the proceedings."
6. Recitation of "law ways:" the history of the relationship between the groups, and rationale for peaceful interactions- described as kinship and becoming family.
7. Specific propositions offered and each should be accompanied by a gift, usually wampum strings or belts. Replies from each group had to wait until the next day.
8. Signing documents.
9. Feast and final presentation of gifts.

- c) In small groups, give students 3-4 minutes to draw their step.
- d) After students return to their seats, briefly walk students through each of the steps and add details as necessary. For example: For indigenous peoples, treaties were primarily ceremonies that ratified and demonstrated alliance and connection --"polishing the chain" that connected groups. The process and ritual was the most important part. It was conducted in public and many members of the community would be present to witness it.

Discussion (5 minutes)

- a. In small groups, have students discuss:
 - What connections can you make to your prior knowledge of Eastern North American culture and history?
 - Is anything about this diplomatic process that you find surprising?
 - Who has power in this process?
 - Whose cultural norms are centered?
 - What does this say about the dynamics between settler colonists and native peoples at this particular time?

- b. If time permits, have students report out to the larger group.

Assessment and Extensions: Students will be assessed on the day's objectives through individual writing in their journals. This could be completed at the end of class, or for homework.

Prompt: Write a journal entry reflecting on today's class. It should be at least two paragraphs.

- In the first paragraph, refer back to the engraving that we saw at the beginning of class. Drawing upon your new understanding of wampum and treaty protocol, describe what may be happening in this image.
- In the second paragraph, write your personal reflections from today's class. For example, has your understanding of the engraving changed since the beginning of class? What stood out to you or surprised you? What questions do you have moving forward?

Lesson 1: Preparing the Learner

Introduce five key terms / concepts for the lesson. State the term and ask students to repeat the term (2 - 3 times). Have students complete the Knowledge Rating to assess if they understand the terms. Students understanding and use of the terms will increase as they use them throughout the unit. A Vocabulary Jigsaw is included to review the terms at the end of the unit.

NOTE: The Knowledge Rating includes cognates. For students whose first language (L1) is not Latin-based, the teacher may choose to provide a translation of the term.) In the eighteenth-century, "frontier" was defined as a vulnerable, militarized boundary, not an area for expansion (Spero). In Spanish, "frontera" is a term for a national border.

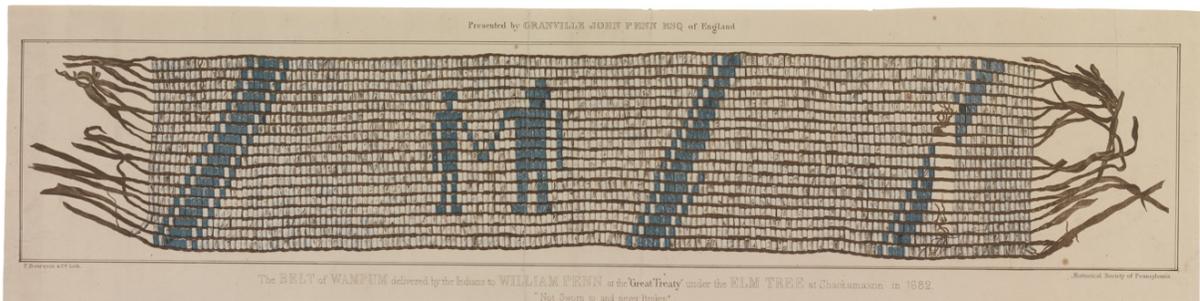
Materials

- Knowledge Rating
- Primary Source Analysis Tool
- Reproductions of Materials
- Vocabulary Jigsaw

Analyze Benjamin West Painting



1. Use the Primary Source Analysis Tool to model analysis of the Benjamin West's Penn's Treaty with the Indians (1771-72).
2. Distribute reproductions of the painting and the Primary Source Analysis Tool.
3. Have students complete the tool in pairs or triads.
4. As a class, share summaries about what they learned from the painting. What is the message? What may be misleading about the paintings? (buildings, clothing, position of people, etc.) Is the painting a primary source document? (No – it's an artist's rendition of an event created nearly 100 years after it occurred and it was commissioned by Penn's son, Thomas Penn.)
5. Ask students what the painting tells people about the relationship between European settlers and indigenous peoples?



The belt of wampum delivered by the Indians to William Penn at the "Great Treaty" under the Elm Tree at Shackamoxon in 1682. "Not Sworn to and never Broken."

Optional: Project Penn Wampum Belt (1682 Shackamaxon treaty). The belt was given to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania by William Penn's great grandson in 1857. Ask students to consider whether or not it is a primary source and what it might tell us about contact between European settlers and indigenous peoples.

Analyze historical maps of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Conestoga Manor

1. Students will analyze 5 historical maps of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Conestoga to locate the Conestoga Indiantown in relation to Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and the colony of Pennsylvania.
2. Model using the Primary Source Analysis Tool to analyze A Map of the Province of Pennsylvania(1756)
3. Divide the class into groups of 4 students. This is the "home group."
4. Give each member of the "home group" a different map. Tell students they will be responsible for teaching one map to other members of their home group.
5. Break into "expert groups." Each member of the "expert group" has the same map. Students should complete the Primary Source Analysis Tool for their map.
6. Return to the "Home Group." Each student will report their findings of the map.
7. As a class, discuss the summary of their findings about the maps.

Summary Quick Write

Project the Conestoga Indian Town Historical Marker and read the marker text:

"About one mile eastwards stood the Conestoga Indian Town. Its peaceful Iroquoian inhabitants were visited by William Penn in 1701 who made treaties with them. In 1763 they were ruthlessly massacred by a frontier mob called the Paxtang Boys."

Students will summarize the historical maker: who, what, where, when.

1. Model who (Iroquoian inhabitants, "Paxtang Boys").
2. Ask students to find what, where, and when with a partner. (Students may benefit reading the text with the bold, italicized and underlined information.)
3. Review the summary.
4. Quick Write: What will be read in *Ghost River*? (In *Ghost River*, we will read about...)

Think/Write/Pair/Share

1. What did you learn about Pennsylvania, Philadelphia and Conestoga Indiantown based on the information on the maps? (I learned...)
2. What is the connection between the paintings, historical marker, and the maps? (The connection is...)
3. What did you learn from the historical marker? (We learned...)

Lesson 2: Interacting with Texts / Concepts

Students will read *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga* multiple times. Before reading, project Penn Wampum Belt (1682 Shackamaxon treaty). How might the image in the wampum belt relate to the paintings? Is it a primary source? Tell students the belt was given by William Penn's great grandson to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1857 and that historians do not know if the belt and date are accurate. Legend has it that the Lenapes and William Penn signed the "Great Treaty" in what became Philadelphia. The site is now called Penn Treaty Park and includes a statue of William Penn.

Wampum was used for peace treaties, political agreements, historical events and ceremonial gifts. "[W]ampum beads, strings, and belts [were] integral to much of (the Iroquoian) religious and political life" (Richter 45).

Materials

- Lee Francis, Weshoyot Alvitre, and Will Fenton. *Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga*. Albuquerque: Red Planet Books and Comics, 2019.
- Knowledge Rating
- Guiding Questions

Multiple Readings of *Ghost River*

1. Initial read: Teacher Think Aloud focused on the images.
2. Review the Knowledge Rating vocabulary terms / concepts. Students will encounter additional terms / concepts in the text.
3. Echo read: Teacher reads text and students echo the reading. (Teacher may opt to have groups rotate the echo read. For example, group 1 echoes chapter 1, group 2 echoes chapter 2, etc.)
4. Read with Guiding Questions.
5. Divide the class into groups of 3 - 4. While reading, students will answer the guiding question in a double entry journal. Teacher may select to jigsaw the text. Each group will read and answer the guiding questions for one chapter.
6. Have students share responses on chart paper or smart board. Re-read the chapter, students share responses, and the class agrees/disagrees with the responses.

Lesson 3: Extending Understanding

Option 1: Collaborative Poster (Groups)

Materials include chart paper and 4 color markers. Students work in teams of 4. Each team will create a poster to address ONE essential question and support their argument:

- How might a people survive and grow from evil and injustice?
- Why are multiple voices and perspectives important when learning about history?
- Should frontiers/borderlands be walls to keep people out or place for people to meet?
- Is history complicated? Is violence simple? (to paraphrase *Ghost River*)

Each team member will use one color as evidence of their contribution to the poster.

1. Write the essential question in the center of the poster.
2. Make a claim that answers the question. Put the claim under the question
3. Include evidence to support the claim. Include: 1 quote; 2 original sentences; and 1 symbol to answer the question.
4. Each team member will share why they selected the question (e.g. why the question is important to them) when they present their poster to the class. Each student will present what they contributed to the poster.

Option 2: Gallery Walk / Exit Ticket (Individuals)

Students will display their posters. Ask students to look for common claims and unique evidence as they walk around and read the posters. (Provide students with paper to record their findings.)

Individually, students will complete an exit ticket:

- Common claims include...
- Unique evidence is...
- After looking at the other posters, I will keep / change my claim / evidence because...

Option 3: Historical Marker (Groups)

In 2013, an event and conference commemorated the 250th anniversary of the Paxton massacres. In Lancaster, PA, an additional historical marker was created, reading: "The Lancaster jail was located a half block to the north from 1753 to 1851. The last remaining Conestoga Indians were held here in protective custody in 1763. They were killed by a vigilante group, the Paxton Boys. No arrests were made." Ask students to review the Pennsylvania historical marker for the "Conestoga Indian Town." Students will rewrite the marker based on what they learned from *Ghost River*. In groups, students will create 3 markers:

- What happened in 1763?
- What is happening to Native Peoples after 1763?
- What are Native Peoples doing today?

Students may submit their revised historical marker and/or make suggestions for a new historical marker to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.