

# 1764 Treaty of Fort Niagara Wampum Belts

Compiled by the Six Nations Legacy Consortium

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In 1761 British general Jeffery Amherst cut off funds for providing diplomatic gift-giving for Native leaders, which he considered a form of bribery. He also refused to supply Indians with ammunition.

“In 1763, a few months after Britain and France signed a peace treaty, a volatile Ottawa chief named Pontiac set off an uprising that quickly engulfed the northwestern frontier. Amherst wanted to send blankets infected with smallpox, but he was outmaneuvered by Johnson, who had him recalled to London and instead put down the rebellion with gifts, political theater and manipulation of the Indian nations' rivalries,” wrote Caleb Crain, *New York Times*, 2005.

Wampum diplomacy was in full force at this treaty council with over 2,000 delegates of 22-24 Native Nations, and others affiliated and represented by their delegates for this council. The subsequent treaty was referred to as an engagement in the minutes of the council.

At least 84 wampum belts were exchanged during the treaty council. Some belts presented by one speaker may have been returned across the fire to another speaker, however, the minutes of the treaty council are not specific on these details.

There were also a number of wampum strings sent across the fire as well.

It appears that the treaty council was a series of mini-councils with the various nations, focused on the same discussion, but tailored to their specific circumstance. Sir William Johnson, as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Crown, negotiated concessions and pledges of loyalty with each nation, or small groups of nations. In all cases he used two main threats to force an agreement:

- 1) Trade was suspended with all nations until the English received satisfaction for the harm done to them during the recent war;
- 2) The English Army and their Native allies [primarily the Six Nations] would invade and destroy their settlements.

Once all of the sub-agreements were made and wampum belts properly exchanged, then Johnson presented to the large Covenant Chain belt to the Western Lakes Confederacy members who had an encampment on the west side of the Niagara River, opposite Fort Niagara.

Johnson then negotiated a separate treaty with the Genesee Senecas [*Chenussio*, in Seneca for "Pleasant Valley," and also known as the "Genesee Castle"] who had harbored Delaware insurgents and participated in what has become known as the Devil's Hole Massacre of 1763, where 21 teamsters and 83 English soldiers were killed. Some estimates put the total death toll as 121. Johnson's initial report of the defeat listed 25 soldiers killed in the first attack and two companies; and five officers and sixty privates in the relief force that was ambushed.

The Senecas had been employed to carry goods up the escarpment for the French and now the British, at what became known as the Carrying Place. During 1762, the British made many improvements to the

portage which included the use of horses and carts. The Seneca porters objected to the arrival of the covered Conestoga wagons which soon resulted in those Seneca becoming unemployed. The attack on a wagon train was as much a labor strike as it was part of the Pontiac War, during which eight British forts were destroyed, and hundreds of colonists were killed or captured.

Farmer's Brother was later identified as the master-mind behind the attack, however, his name was not mentioned in the treaty minutes.

*Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 12: January 1764 - December 1767 (1936), pp. 109-120, list only two treaties negotiated at this time:*

- Treaty of Peace, etc., with the Chenussios and other enemy Senecas, concluded by Sir William Johnson, baronet, at Niagara, August 6th, 1764.
- Articles of Peace concluded by Sir William Johnson, baronet, with the Hurons of Detroit, at Niagara, July 18th, 1764

Note: SWJ = Sir William Johnson

**July 9:** Ottawa of Michilimackinac to SWJ

- **Three Strings** – request of Young White Man to serve as interpreter
- **Strings** returned with acceptance of interpreter, and pledge to provide gifts upon their good conduct

**July 10:** Nipissings and Ottawa offer pipes, tobacco and a dram.

**July 11:** Bildanwan, Ottawa Chief:

- **Bunch of black wampum** – distressed because of lack of goods, facing starvation
- **Bunch of black and white wampum** – request to sell furs and purchase rum to take home

SWJ responded:

- **Belt #1** – Request they bring their drunken fools to their senses first before trade will resume, offers little ammunition and clothing for their families.
- **Belt #2** - Trade in furs continues for 'Good honest Indians,' also offers rum to take home

**July 12:** Menominee and Folsavoins (Green Bay) sent calumet of peace

**July 13:** SWJ to 'Ottawas, Chipeweighs, and Nipissins' in presence of Six Nations:

- **Three strings** of welcome
- **Belt #3** – Request names of the instigators of the unjust war, under threat that the British army will move against all.
- **Belt #4** – Requests warriors to join the army that will punish the offenders, no trade until they are punished.
- **Belt #5** – Request fort at Michilimackinac restored to restore the trade.
- **Belt #6** – Continued good behavior toward the English will result in benefits.

Chippawa Chief from north side of Lake to SWJ:

- **Bunch of Wampum** – serves as introduction

**July 14** - none mentioned

**July 15** – none mentioned

**July 16:** SWJ to Menominee and Ottawa

- **Belt #7** – Reiterates message of Belt 3,4and 5
- **Belt #8** – Explains that English understood that they were coerced in to war by the French, but until the dissident nations come in line, trade us suspended.
- **Belt #9** – Promises of riches and happiness; English will treat them kindly and trade honestly.
- **Belt #10** – Keep skies clear, waters of lakes & rivers smooth; protect the forts, solders and traders; pay restitution of trader's losses; return prisoners; enter into alliance with the English and Regulations of Indian trade will end abuses.

**July 17:** Hurons to SWJ:

- **Bunch of wampum** - Sign articles of peace; thankfulness for clemency.
- **Belt #11** of six rows – Blamed the Ottawa; Acknowledge King George as their head.

**July 18** – Other record show the Treaty of five articles Between the King and Hurons was signed on this day:

- Firm and absolute peace; Hurons admitted into the Chain of friendship & alliance with the Crown.
- Prisoners will be returned within one month
- Disassociate with enemies of the King; bring complaints directly to Johnson
- Acknowledge the King's right to lands above their village as was once held by the French.
- Protect passage from Lake Erie to Detroit, and supply warriors as needed by the Commandant; English will end all hostilities against the Huron, past offences forgiven, and fair trade to open.

**July 19:** Ottawa Chief to SWJ

- **Belt #12** with Calumet – Gave pipe sent by western Nations, to be kept to for their use when they hold council.
- **Belt #13** of seven rows – Nations in poverty and hope that Great Spirit is looking down on the actions.
- **Belt #14** of eight rows – Request restoration of trade and preferred values of furs.
- **Belt #15** of eight rows – Request that soldiers not harm them.
- **Belt #16** of eleven rows – Request open trade on behalf of Chief Piggagun.
- **Belt #17** of ten rows – Request fir trade on behalf of Chippewaighs near Toronto.

SWJ responded:

- Refers to giving '**great Covenant Chain Belt**' if his terms are met; offers trade goods as well.

Mechuckimon, speaker of the Indian of Michilimackinac:

- **Belt #18** – Welcome back to Michilimackinac; Hold no prisoners but reports that Chippewaighs have two soldiers and five ‘Panys.’ [Panis]

SWJ responded:

- **Belt #19** – Request assistance in getting prisoners back from ‘our Enemy.’

**July 21:** SWJ to ‘Meynomenys of La Baye (Green bay)

- **Belt #20** – Johnson’s heart is good & hearts of the English never alter without good reason; bad people need to be punished for the suffering they caused.
- **Belt #21** – Promises good treatment if good behavior is maintained.
- **Belt #22** – Acknowledges the change in thinking of their young men; will keep the wampum as proof.
- **Belt #23** – Continue to be of one mind with the Ottawa
- **Belt #24** – Promise of trade if they behave well; offers liquor to take home.

**July 24:** SWJ to Chenussios and other “enemy’ Seneca:

- **Belt #25** - Chastise them for harboring enemy Delaware; showed up with only four prisoners; breached treaty; “neglect of the belts’ and message he sent; new expectation are forthcoming.
- **Belt #26** – Explained articles of the preliminaries agreed to in April; expects all prisoners, deserters, Frenchman, and Negroes within three days.
- **Belt #27**- men to accompany engineer to run lines as were agreed upon.
- **Belt #28** – Demands they deliver at least three of the Delaware ringleaders, or their chiefs to explain themselves; provide protection over the Carrying Place.
- **Belt #29** – Demands six chiefs as hostages until all conditions are fulfilled; if so, then he will drop demand that the two murderers at Kanestio [two Dutch traders] be delivered to him.
- **Belt #30** – Pledges ruin if they deceive the English again, but will be forgiven if they honor the new ‘engagement.’

**July 25:** SWJ to Chenussios:

- **Belt #31** – Demands to know if they will fulfill Articles of Peace by delivering all prisoners.

Chief of Chenussios to SWJ:

- Repeated message of first belt, and some prisoners arrived while he was speaking, other still on their way.

Tohaditkarawa Chief of Chenussios to SWJ:

- Last spring “you threw a Belt to the rest of the Six Nations (not to us)” asking them to take up the hatchet against his enemy; and second belt to bind their warriors to prevent them from going to war; have used other belts to bind their warriors together in one place, to join the army against his enemies; agree to give ‘a Grant of the Carrying Place, and the Lands Opposite to Niagara’; cannot deliver the two murderers because one has since died and the other fled.

**July 27:** Shuckey (Crane) of the Toughkamawiman to SWJ:

- Request trade, offering large beaver skin blanket & calumet
- **Belt #32** - Shows a small belt – ‘this is the Road to Peace, which we will keep open, & desire you will lay your foot on one End, as we shall ours on the other.’

Weshion, Chief of the Sakis to SWJ:

- **Belt #33** – When he left, the Day was clear ‘like this Belt in my hand’; offered to prove their friendship with the English, as well as the Reynards [Fox] and Puoans.
- **Belt #34**, black painted green – Request necessities and trade

Chief or Reynards (near St. Marys) to SWJ:

- **Belt #35**, black with five rows– Request trade
- **Belt #36**, black and white – Pledge friendship on behalf of the Reynards, “Outagamies, Tawas, Menomineys, Puoans, Sakis, Aijarcey, Nottawaes, or Sieux”; had sent belts to the Tawas not to take up hatchet; wipe the tears for the losses sustained.

Puoans to SWJ:

- **Six Strings** – ‘We will take you by the hand, squeeze it, and hold it fast’; request trade.

**July 28:** SWJ to Toughkinawinan:

- **Belt #37** – Offers a day of trade for their good behavior.
- **Belt #38** – Hope to clear road to make it safe; affixes feet was requested; accepts pipe that was offered.

SWJ to Sakis:

- **Belt #39** – Offers ‘some little Necessaries & Rum’ because of their previous good conduct.

SWJ to Reynards:

- **Belt #40** – Welcome with gratitude and concern for their distress.
- **Belt #41** – Expresses thanks ‘for all your good Offices.’

SWJ to Puoans:

- **Four strings of wampum** – Assurance that trade will open up once enemies are humbled.

SWJ to Aukussey:

- Gifts a medal and pair of colors to Washiboo, Chief warrior and Nonah, Chief of Reynards and Winosigo, Chief of Puoans.

**July 29:** Chief of Ottawas to SWJ:

- **Belts #42 & 43** - Two belts from about his neck – offers his personal wampum as proof of his friendship.
- SWJ- Likely returned those same two belts with thankfulness and pledge to preserve friendship.

Wabbicomicot, Chief of the Chippaweighs of Toronto:

- **Belt #44**, black with five circles of white – to acknowledge what was said at Detroit in 1761, and explains attempts to dissuade bad Indians.
- SWJ responds and gives **wampum belt**, but it is unclear if it is the same that he was given.
- **Belt #45** – large belt with a figure representing Niagara’s large house, and fort, with two men holding it fast on each side, and a road through it, requesting Wabibicomicot and his people ‘settle at their old Place of Abode near Toronto to watch over the fort and Carrying Place.
- SWJ gave him a medal, as well as one to his brother, Estawabey and Brother-in-law Weynakibio.
- Six Nations and Cognawageys pledge their support, ready for war with ax given them last spring.

**July 31:** In attendance:

- 5 Onondagas
- 7 Mohawks
- 6 Kahnawake
- 4 Cayugas
- 4 Oneidas
- 3 Canajohares
- 2 Swegatchy
- 2 Aughquisreh
- **Belt # 46** – 23 rows broad & year 1764 worked upon it - Western Indians set up camp across the river. SWJ ‘exchange the great Belt of the Covenant Chain that we may not forget our mutual Engagements; to bind all of the western nations together with the English, take fast hold, never let it slip; show to all Nations then fix one end with the Chipaweweighs at St. Mary’s and the other end at his house; don’t listen to any other news, as it may shake the Belt; promises favor, plentiful trade and happiness; reject war and respect and esteem the English. “I exhort you then to preserve my Words in your Hearts, - look upon this Belt as the Chain which binds you to the English, and never to let it slip out of your Hands.”
- **Belt # 47** – If proper restitution is given to the traders who suffered losses in the war by purchasing their ‘Negroes, Panis, or Servants’ from them; promise a supply of liquor in the future. [Panis is the 18<sup>th</sup> century name of Indian slaves, derived from the name of the Pawnee, who as early as 1670 were captured by the Fox and sold to the French Canadians]
- A Chippaweweigh chief stated that it would be best to keep the great wampum belt at Michilimackinac as it is more central. SWJ gave them liquor before they parted.

**August 2:** Indian from Michilimackinac to SWJ:

- **Belt #48** of thirteen rows – Speaking on behalf of all the Indian he thanks SWJ from bringing them to their senses, and pledges their commitments.
- **Belt #49** of fourteen rows with white triangles – Pledge to hold the Covenant Chain fast, not listen to bad Birds, and will look to him for the truth.

**August 3:** Chenussios to SWJ:

- **Belt #50** of seven rows – thank the Great Spirit that they have come to this day to accept what had been agreed to earlier.
- **Belt #51** – returned belt given previously by SWJ that was given questioning if they had lived up to their commitments, but now assure him that they have done so.
- **Belt #52** – returned a belt they had received from Kahnawake as an invitation to this council.

- **Belt # 53** of six rows – return belt given earlier with the consensus that they will fulfil the engagement except for delivering the murderers.
- **Belt # 54** of eight rows – return belt given previously, with expressions of sincerity.
- **Belts #55-59** – These were given to them previously by the Delaware, as they asked for sanctuary after being burned out by the English; Delawares pledged to abide by the decision of this council; request no ore resentment toward them; offer to keep them in control.
- Previous spring SWJ gave war belt and now they offer 23 men to join the English army.
- **Belt #60** – showed belt that SWJ gave to bind their warriors to prevent them from making war; attested to the fact they had done so, and now offer their warriors to him.
- **Belt #61** of eight rows– it is unclear whether or not this is the belt mentioned above – Wise men at this council convinced them of their errors, they being ‘situate so far from the rest, that we forgot our old Customs, and Engagement’: request pity and forgiveness, as they resolve to live in Peace and Friendship with English.
- Belt #62 – to make amends, they take up a large Pine Tree, and under its Roots, they bury the Bones of the people they killed, so ‘they may never more appear either in your Sight, or ours.’
- **Belt #63** – “I now take up a large Smooth Stone with which I cover the Crack made by the taking up the Tree, so that it can no more appear.” Ten prisoners were delivered. “This we assure you is all we have in our Power to do as a Proof of our Sorrow.’
- **Belt #64** – Request to think of mutual interests.
- Repeated the words on the wampum belts from the Indian from Canada (Kahnawake?)

SWJ responded (likely returning the belts that were just given to him):

- **Belt #65** – hope that they fulfil their engagements and accepts they will take care of the Delaware.
- **Belt #66** – Hopes their promises are sincere; English have always been sincere, and did not make war upon them.
- **Belt #67** – Insists that the Delaware deliver up their ‘king’ Attyatawitsera and Squash Cutter to be disposed of by the General as he sees fit; deliver all remaining prisoners to Fort Oswego; only then will their hostages be returned.
- **Belt #68** – Restates requirement to relinquish the Carrying Place and the Rapids; adding “Lands from above your late Gift, to the Rapids at Lake Erie on both side the Streights, in Breath as the former and to include all the Islands to please the King.
- **Belt #69** – Rejects their offer of young men because the soldiers ‘have not yet got your late Behavior out of their Heads.’
- **Belt #70** – Expect them to keep their young men within proper bounds and never break the engagements.
- **Belt #71** – Please to hear they are sincere, but they must listen to their wise chiefs and remember the engagement made.
- **Belt #72** – Expresses thanks for covering the grave, but it was already done so the soldiers would not retaliate, and they are determined now to forget it.
- **Belt #73** – Take it or leave it – accept the terms and they will be part of the Covenant Chain of Friendship.

- **Belt #75** – Listen to the advice of the Kahnawake and Six Nations; expects the warriors who will leave with him to ‘exerting themselves on every Occasion against our enemies, in a manner becoming Men, and faithful Allies.’

**Aug 4:** Chenussios to SWJ:

- Two chiefs (Souwarraghyonana and Arighwadaga) will be offered as hostages; agreed to give land to the King; want to give islands to SWJ instead.
- **Belt #76-78**, of the Covenant Chain – purged their hearts of everything bad, renew chain of friendship, and all past matters forgotten; pledge to abide by the treaty.
- **Belt #79** - addressed to both SJ and the several nations, to open the road, keep it in repair and safe for Brethren to travel.
- **Belt #80** – Request trade be open for the rest of the nations, as they are dependent upon it.
- **Belt #81** – Remove all obstructions from the road of Peace and Trade; traders to return; posts and places to trade to be announced.
- **Belt #82**, to Mohawks – ask forgiveness for any mistakes made in speech.
- **Belt #83**, A Belt of the Five Nations – Six Nations and Kahnawake address to the women of Chenussio – “I now speak in the name of the Women of our Castle, - they sincerely pity your late Situation, and they know their own Power & Influence, they now plant the Sachims Horns on their Heads so that they may be as powerful as ever, and be distinguished from all the rest.

**Aug 6** – Treaty of Peace and Alliance between his Britannick Majesty and the Chenussio Indians, and other Enemy Seneca . . . the articles were read. [Other enemy Senecas refers to the Senecas in the Ohio Country, led by Kayahsota<sup>9</sup> (Guyasuta), who circulated war belts prior to the actual conflict.]

- Lasting peace to be maintained
- April 1764 agreement confirmed except for the delivery of two murderers.
- Deliver Delaware king and chief warrior within three weeks; and every prisoner
- Deliver Sherlock the deserter; and two chiefs to be hostage
- Extend land granted in April, all the way to rapids of Lake Erie, for the King’s sole use; sialdns in the river to Johnson.

Signed by the clan symbol (heron, snipes, bear, deer, hawk, turtle) of seven Seneca leaders  
(Copy of Treaty with the Chenussio Indians, 1764. Maine Historical Society)

Chenussio speaker holding the Covenant Chain belt, to SWJ:

- **Belt #84** – A happy day to be taken back into the Covenant Chain, as Great Spirit intended, and pledge to hold fast the present engagement.

Source: Excerpts from ‘Copy From Conference with Indians’ (July 9-14, 1764) in Massachusetts Historical Society, Parkman Collection from mutilated copy Johnson Papers 4: 466-478.

August 23, 1764 – SWJ wrote to CADWALLADER COLDEN (New York Historical Society, New York City):

Attendingt eh treaty were “Hurons, Ottawaes, Chippaweighs, Sakis, Puans, Reynards, Menominy's, & in short all ye Cheifs of the Western Nations, except about 300 under Pondiac at the Miamis River, and

the Potawatamies who did not choose to trust themselves down, the whole amounted to upwards of 2000, including those of the 6 Nations who accompanied me they were the largest Number.”

“Shawanese & Delawares of Ohio did not attend”

“I therefore renewed & Strengthened the Covenant Chain with them, and they have promised not only to get all the Prisoners out of the Enemy's Hands but also to procure restitution for the Traders losses, they have likewise agreed to the reestablishing a Post at Michilimacinae.”

“The Indians who have made peace & those who have renewed their engagements have been very Solicitous for Trade, & it was Judged adviseable to let them purchase with what little Furs they had, such things as they wanted (amunition excepted) I told them repeatedly their loss of Trade must be charged upon the Enemy, and that 'till they were punished, or brought to a proper Submission, they must not expect it as before, however I know nothing will contribute more to keep them at peace, than the letting them have a Trade carried on by Honest Men, and of this I think necessary to acquaint You as Passes are to come from You by the Kings Proclamation.”

In Johnson's report to the Lords of Trade in August 30, 1764 (NYCD, Vol. 7, pg 648-649), he noted the following:

- Western Alliance had requested peace, and Niagara Treaty entered them into an alliance
- 2060 Indians, of which 1700 were fighting men
- Admission to the Covenant Chain of Friendship was dependent upon them re-opening Michilimackinac; returning all prisoners; restitution for trader's losses.
- The Senecas were 'great losers by us' because of the amount of land and rights of carriage they were forced to give to the King.
- Recommends that the English 'conquer their prejudices by our generosity'

Four years later, the Six Nations would hold a treaty council with the British at Fort Stanwix, which was on the boundary line defined by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It resulted in the largest land cession in colonial history. A Haudenosaunee speaker noted that it took the energy of both the Six Nations and the King's people to polish the silver covenant chain.

More than twenty boat loads of gifts were piled so all arriving Native delegates could see what was in store for them if they signed the treaty.

October 26, 1768 SWJ held a 15 row Covenant Chain belt that had been used since the time of William Penn. SWJ strengthened the peaceful union; reviewed the economic benefits that have accrued since the time of contact,