The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Arts and Architecture

WAMPUM AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

A Dissertation in
Art Education
by
Victoria Weaver

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ABSTRACT

The return of thousands of Native American objects from museum collections to Native American communities was mandated by Public Law 101-601, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3048, 1990). NAGPRA legally changed how Native American objects are currently interpreted. As a result of NAGPRA, some museum artifacts indicating a past presence are now reinterpreted as living objects of cultural patrimony to contemporary Native American cultures. The shift from past to present and from artifact to object of cultural patrimony suggest that objects like wampum are imbued with social practices.

My research investigated the perspectives of five Native members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy for the purpose of identifying how wampum is interpreted within their community. Through the methods of critical pedagogy, I analyzed traditional function of wampum, its use, and interpretations within the Mohawk and Onondaga communities of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Three themes arose from my study. The first theme identified wampum as an object attached to the social practices through which the Haudenosaunee Confederacy sustain their beliefs, values, and history. Secondly, wampum is considered a living object within the community and therefore one that can relate to its environment much like other living entities. The final discovery was the identification of new interpretations of how wampum is used to represent contemporary cultural identities.

The implications of my research are significant to my field of art education because art educators use objects to teach about Native American art and culture. The reclassification of wampum from artifacts to living objects of cultural patrimony suggests that current pedagogy should be revisited to assure that contemporary information about wampum and the people who constructed it are authentically represented in art classrooms.
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PROLOGUE

For me, anthropology is about embarking on a voyage through a long tunnel. Loss, mourning, the longing of memory, the desire to enter into the world around you and having no idea how to do it, the fear of observing too coldly or too distractedly or too raggedly, the rage of cowardice, the insight that is always arriving too late, the defiant hindsight, a sense of the utter uselessness of writing anything and yet the burning desire to write something, are the stopping places along the way. At the end of the voyage, if you are lucky, you catch a glimpse of the lighthouse, and you are grateful. Life, after all, is bountiful. (Behar, 1996, pp. 2-3)

Finding Behar’s description of the anthropological writing process as a way “to know others by knowing herself and who has come to know herself by knowing others” (Behar, 1996, p. 33) helped me to reflect on my own experiences resulting from the process of gathering, identifying, analyzing and writing my research information. At times, my research felt messy. I did not travel in a straight line, was not always clear about where I was headed or how to get there, and received misleading information. I was swayed, shaped, and, at times, lost in the process along the journey. With the help of my committee and Behar’s words, I found the other side of the tunnel. As a result, I have adopted Behar’s method of disclosure in my writing so that the process of collecting information, making connections, and shaping my research are part of this dissertation and that future readers may better determine my presence as author in this research.

Writing the prologue has two objectives. First, the prologue presents the reader with the context in which my research was formed. It identifies the circumstantial evidence, the influences, the people, and experiences that eventually formed and shaped my research. Secondly, it presents a beginning point – the point in which I committed to the journey, not knowing where it might lead and where it would end. The following narrative begins that journey.

Beginning in 1990, I spent several years during the summer at the Stevens’ traditional Navajo home on the Navajo Reservation, where master weaver Bertha Stevens taught white woman how to weave Navajo style under the less-than-condoning scrutiny of other local Two Grey Hill weavers. In defense to the criticism directed at Stevens’ willingness to teach white women, she defended her sharing of weaving knowledge as a gift of good will and as a means of financial support. Stevens taught us Navajo style. We were expected to sit quietly, listen,
observe, tell stories, sing, dance, weave, cook, cut wood, attend and pay for ceremonies. These valuable lessons became very useful in my research.

In the summer of 1998, after four years of teaching elementary art in Carroll County, Maryland, I applied to the Art Education program at The Pennsylvania State University for the purpose of earning the terminal degree in art education. I wanted to better understand the contexts that influenced how I taught Native American cultures and art. I believed that accurate information about our first Americans was burdened by years of multiple and dated perspectives and not easily accessed. I depended on museums and their label information to provide information about Native American artifacts. However, with the changes that sent many Native American artifacts home to Native American communities, I was curious and concerned how the loss of Native American artifacts from museums would affect the quality of information that I used in my teaching.

During my first two graduate years at Penn State, I focused on the loss of museum artifacts mandated by the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). I was admittedly more interested in museum losses than Native American cultural gains. In spite of the museum emphasis, I found my beginning point at the 2000 ATLATL Native Artist Conference at the National Museum of American Indian in New York City. In a discussion about the repatriation of wampum, Seneca Chief Peter Jemison spoke about the positive cultural and educational differences that the return of wampum had inspired. Jemison recounted that “our interest in wampum was rekindled…by seeing the old things that are coming back, figuring about how to do them now….there has been a gathering time when our people did things so we have to recover this knowledge.” His words became the catalyst for my research. If wampum contained knowledge, then I was going to find it. I read numerous articles and contacted several museum professionals who were named participants in the process. Two anthropologists hesitantly agreed to talk with me. I have chosen to tell their stories because they, in some small way, mirror the larger controversies regarding repatriated objects. Their names have been changed so that I might tell their stories.

In March 2001, I travelled to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City for the purpose of interviewing the anthropologist who handled wampum, Dr. BD. Over the course of our e-mail communications, I presented my topic, my research areas, the intended audiences, and implications for my research. I wanted to come to the AMNH to
examine the curatorial files and photo attached to the recently repatriated Oneida Title Wampum (50.1/1836). In return for my request, I received a museum form requiring student verification. However, when I arrived for my appointment, I was met with open hostility regarding my research topic, the interview was refused, my questions regarding current displays of wampum were unanswered, and the photo had become suddenly unavailable. I later contacted the Chair of the Anthropology department and requested in writing the chair’s assistance in getting a copy of the photo. I was informed that because of NAGPRA, the wampum and all intellectual property including images of the wampum were now owned by the Oneida nation and that the AMNH did not have the rights to make copies of the photo. I talked to several members of the Oneida Nation Office and retold my experiences. I asked if I might be able to receive a copy of the photo for inclusion in my research. They responded by pointing out it was not their photo nor did they have the right to give me permission for an object in the AMNH possession. The Oneida Nation Office added that they were, however, happy with the response from the AMNH because they were recognized as the rightful owner of the wampum.

On May 2, 2001 at 6pm, I received a call at home from Dr. DT, a Native American Smithsonian-based physical anthropologist and one who was at the epicenter of repatriation. I asked how Dr. DT felt about NAGPRA. Was Dr. DT affected personally? Dr. DT was not enthusiastic, but began the conversation with a reference to the highly disputed human remains found along the edge of the Kennebunk River. Dr. DT suggested that the American community would be served better if the Kennebunk man would be preserved, curated, and studied rather than returned to a Native American community. Repatriation, according to Dr. DT, was filled with deception and tragedy, for Dr. DT felt strongly that those who received the objects did not have the understanding and facilities to preserve them. Dr. DT recounted a few examples where exquisite examples of Iroquois hair combs were dumped into a barrel and haphazardly buried, and several repatriated Hopi society altar fixtures ended up for sale at the local flea market. Dr. DT believed that many items were broken and certainly most of the scientific knowledge had been forever destroyed.

I understood Dr. DT’s concerns regarding the loss of information associated with objects, but I also wanted to know if Jemison’s claim to a type of cultural revival was prevalent among those Native American nations that had received repatriated objects. I asked if there were sufficient evidence that the research on Native American objects in museum collections by non-
native scholars had been helpful to contemporary Native American communities and how so? Dr. DT responded that Native American communities had benefitted from anthropological research. Dr. DT suggested that almost every anthropologist can recount incidents in which the incorporation of knowledge from field notes or published writings has aided in the re-education of the Native American community. “Everyone has loads of anecdotal stories! This is not unique.” However, most people don’t acknowledge these openly for two reasons, she suggested. One reason is to avoid possible embarrassment for the tribe. Having to admit that current Native American cultural leadership relies on white science undermines the belief in the immutable truths of generally transmitted oral history. Secondly, the use of scientific research to help Native Americans identify their histories and beliefs is very common and therefore not considered newsworthy.

As our conversation drew near to a close, we returned to the current status of the NAGPRA law. Was Dr. DT affected personally? Although Dr. DT felt like a moderate in this political debate over human bones and cultural patrimony, Dr. DT was called an apple by a few of the Native Americans involved. Dr. DT explained that the reference to an apple was a name given to Indians who look red/Indian on the outside, but act white on the inside. Dr. DT also received anonymous phone calls with veiled threats not to come home to the reservation. Unfortunately the issue of repatriation was so highly politicized in the initial stages that trying to negotiate a middle ground has become impossible. Sadly, Dr. DT admitted that there were no words that might soften the personal and cultural losses revealed regarding the changes caused by NAGPRA.

I was moved by the profound sense of loss embedded in Dr. DT’s conversation. I was prepared to agree with the political stance that the support for the repatriation of Native American artifacts was shortsighted, but, in fact, the reverse happened. I remembered another speaker from the ATLATL Native Artist Conference. Cheyenne artist Suzan Shown Harjo recalled her mother’s visit to an Oklahoman museum where her father’s burial clothes were on display. The notion of seeing a relative’s funeral clothing publicly displayed was more offensive and more upsetting than the potential loss of scientific information that Dr. DT lamented. I had, without recognizing exactly when, become open to the many stories retold by Native Americans about the loss of their community property, the loss of their heritage, and the loss of their lives in a way that I had never heard before. I began to listen … just like Stevens had taught me.
As a result, listening to the many responses from the people for whom the repatriation of objects was more compelling redirected my research focus from museum perspectives to Native American perspectives. I have shared, as I have here, the same stories with other museum, university, and Native American members as a way of finding others who have also met with similar responses. At times, the stories retold have allowed me to pass tests among my listeners that I was unaware of - tests created when people pass through cultures, and when people need to verify the intentions of others. And sometimes, I am the storyteller and nothing more. So I invite the reader to continue reading the passage of my journey and listen, carefully listen, to the perspectives presented. I promise that the stories discovered will change how information about Native American wampum is taught.
On October 21, 1989, a small group of Onondaga Chiefs and religious leaders traveled to the New York State Museum in Albany to accept a box containing twelve wampum belts (Oneida Indian Nation, 2001; Powless, 2005). “Those belts included the Hiawatha Belt, which tells of the formation of the original Five-Nation Iroquois League, and the Washington Covenant, which commemorates a peace treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the 13 original colonies” (Powless, 2005, ¶ 11). The 12 belts are considered culturally significant because they present a visual document of Native American history and the formation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Powless, 2005). Their return, celebrated with a day of ceremonies in a traditional style longhouse, “marked the first time in 92 years that the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had seen the 12 wampum belts” (Powless, 2005, ¶ 11). The identification of the repatriated wampum belt’s present location has not been made public. Speaking as a member of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Williams (2000) stated, “They are home and they are safe” (Interview).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy represents a system of governance through which the original five Native American nations coexist: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations. The Tuscarora nation joined later to make Six Nations. Today, the people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy reside in 16 individual tribal communities within New York, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada. Their communities existed before the formation of the United States and Canada and continue living within their borders today. Their central governing body, the Grand Council, is situated in Brantford, Ontario Provence, Canada. The Haudenosaunee continue to maintain the rights of ownership of their wampum and are actively involved in the repatriation of wampum back into their native communities.
To simply identify wampum through a single interpretation would be difficult and misleading because wampum encompasses a variety of definitions and forms. In general, wampum belts and strings are used in a variety of ways that include the use of wampum as mnemonic devices, historical records, legal documents, and treaties. The use of wampum as Indian money was limited to trade between the colonists and native people during the late seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. Examples of traditional handmade wampum are still available in the Native American form of woven belts, wampum strings and beads and the colonial form of Indian money.

Figure 2: Examples of woven wampum beads and the Quahog clam shell

Traditional wampum is described as small cylindrical shell beads made from the Northern Quahog clam shell found in the North Atlantic along the New Jersey to Maine coastline (Orchard, 1975, p. 17). The manufacturing of the wampum bead was slow and tedious. The shells were reduced to smaller pieces measuring 1/8” in diameter and ¼” in length (Beauchamp, 1901; Brinton, 1897; Williams, 2000). After the shells were smoothed and shaped to their final form, the cylindrical shells were then centrally drilled for beading and sorted according to the shell’s naturally occurring cream to purple color palette. The deep purple wampum beads were highly valued in comparison to the more abundant cream color because of their limited quantities and their preferred use in creating contrasting designs in the wampum. Figure 2 shows contemporary shells and wampum beads that were purchased from Mohawk wampum expert, Myron Chute, in 1999. Two sizes of wampum beads were woven to understand how to work with wampum beads.

The production and consumption of wampum has been practiced for over four hundred years in both native and non-native communities. It is therefore important that a description of
the production and use of wampum is presented in order to clarify the context of my research. Although the use of wampum can be attributed to various Native American communities, I have limited my research to the Native American community of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The first period of manufacturing occurred in the late 1400s and before European exploration and contact. This time period is considered the beginning of wampum. Brinton (1897) described it as a period in which shells were ground down on rocks to form their shape and size. Bow drills were used to create the hole for beading and then the beads were roughly strung or woven into belts. The Hiawatha Belt and the Circle Wampum are two of the most significant wampum for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and both were created during this first period.

The first, and therefore the most significant, wampum belt is The Hiawatha Belt (Figure 1), which visually represents the historical event that brought peace among the Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Seneca nations. It is a woven belt that is named after the warrior Hiawatha who gathered the individual five nations under a central government for the purpose of increased representation and protection against encroaching Europeans. The Hiawatha Belt is a woven wampum belt that measures 38 rows or 17” wide, almost six feet long, and is designed with dark purple and white wampum.

The Hiawatha Belt also represents a peace treaty between each of the five nations and identifies the responsibilities of each nation as a member of the Confederacy. A white pine tree symbolizing the heart of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is found in the center and represents multiple ideas. It identifies the Onondaga Nation as the wampum keepers. They are responsible for the safekeeping of traditional wampum including the Hiawatha Belt and its meanings. The white pine tree design also symbolizes the final act of peacemaking between the five warring native nations and is remembered through the designs of the Hiawatha Belt. The pine tree symbol represents the council fire where the peace treaty was accepted and the tree that was planted on top of the buried weapons.

On either side of the white pine tree are two white open squares, which represent the unity of the Five Nations. The outer squares are smaller and represent the doorkeepers or the outer limits of the Confederacy territories. When facing the Hiawatha Belt, the outer left square represents the territory of the Seneca Nation and refers to their position as the guardian of the western territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Moving towards the center is a slightly
larger square that represents the Cayuga nation and their promise to defend the southern territories of the Confederacy. To the right of the pine tree design is the square design that represents the Oneida nation and protector of the northern territories. The final square located to the far right represents the Mohawk nation who is the defenders of the eastern territories. The line that extends through and connects each design component represents the Path of Peace (Oneida Nation, (n.d.); Oneida Indian Nation, 2001). It is an invitation to other native nations to join the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Of equal significance is the collection of fifty strings of wampum beads known as the Circle Wampum. Figure 3 shows the completed Circle Wampum. Each individual wampum string represents an original member from each of the five nations who pledged peace at the first Council Fire. Each chief possesses a unique combination of purple and white beads that identify particular leadership roles for the fifty chiefs within their own nations and the Confederacy. The Circle Wampum is only visible when all fifty chiefs convene at a council fire and all fifty wampum strings are connected. As a result of the matching of the wampum strings with specific governing positions and responsibilities within the Confederacy, the original traditions are passed down from one generation to the next through the passing of the bead strings. Figure 4 shows several of the string wampum and wampum belts in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History. These pieces were not repatriated for a number of reasons. The
wampum strings and belts were created from parts of others, their meaning was unknown, or they were used as currency.

Brinton (1897) identified a second period of the production of wampum during the middle of the sixteenth-century. He described this as a period in which increased contact with fur traders changed the way the wampum beads were drilled. The bow drill was replaced by an iron nail used as a steel awl. The introduction of the steel awl had its effect on production and it was said that a man could support himself in the new world if he had one in his possession. It became so valuable that it too was considered appropriate for trade - “one hundred muxes, as they [the steel awls] were called, said to be the price of East Hampton” (Martin, 1996, p. 133).

During the seventeenth-century, the production and consumption of wampum changed significantly because of the introduction of new tools and new interpretations assigned to wampum. In part, the introduction of Dutch metal drill bits increased production of wampum by making wampum more available to a larger market of both native and non-native consumers. However, it was the fur traders who first recognized the inherent value associated with wampum in their business practices with native communities. Trading with wampum simplified the exchange of goods by creating negotiable systems of value for both traders and native people. As a result, the success of trading with wampum became a factor in the establishment of Dutch and English wampum factories along the Northeast coastline. In light of the new and growing demand, Dutch and English factories used both Quahog clams and shells to increase profits led to the use of machine driven techniques to turn and drill wampum beads.

The use of wampum as currency in the exchange of goods eventually characterized wampum as Indian money (Orchard, 1975). The use of Indian money diminished as a result of the introduction of cash and paper money during the Anglo-French Beaver Wars. However, Martin (1996) suggests that the wampum as Indian money interpretation endures today because of its association with colonial life, though it is often disregarded by members of the Confederacy because of its lack of historical significance with regards to wampum’s original interpretations. Evidence of historical significance is, as I was told, an essential component of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Over the last two decades, thousands of Native American objects of cultural patrimony like wampum have been removed from museums and placed in the hands of Native American leaders, elders, and religious groups (Naranjo, 2000) under Public Law 101-601, the Native
American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3048, 1990) also known as NAGPRA. NAGPRA specialist Naranjo emphasized that the requests from Native Americans for the return of cultural objects preceded these actions by many years. There is evidence, as early as 1899, of requests from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to have their wampum returned from private relic collectors. “The Onondaga Nation and the State of New York filed suit against collector John Boyd Thatcher seeking the return of the sacred wampum belts in his possession” (Hill, 1996, p. 84). The state suit was dismissed and the wampum later became part of the collection at the New York State Museum in Albany, New York (Hill, 1996), where it remained until its eventual repatriation on October 21, 1989 (Powless, 2005, ¶ 11).

The United States government began to address these questions of ownership in 1990, with NAGPRA. Under the terms of NAGPRA, federally funded museums must repatriate Native American artifacts if the artifacts are identified as objects of cultural patrimony. NAGPRA defines the term artifacts with specific reference to Native American wampum found in museums. However, NAGPRA reclassified wampum as objects of cultural patrimony when the wampum was considered both sacred and integral to the continuance of Native American cultures. Therefore all wampum that was considered as cultural patrimony was returned to the Native American cultures of its origin.

The reclassification of wampum from artifacts to objects of cultural patrimony raised questions regarding the meaning of wampum. As a child, I was taught that wampum shell beads were a form of Indian money that was primarily used as barter for goods between the colonists and the Indians. The renaming of the wampum beads and their eventual repatriation back to the culture from which they came, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, suggested that there were more significant interpretations attached to wampum than that of currency. My curiosity about the interpretation of wampum based on cultural patrimony shaped the genesis of my research.

For my dissertation research, five members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy were interviewed for the purpose of identifying and analyzing the meaning of repatriated wampum beads within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The purpose of my research was to determine, because of the recent change in ownership, if the meaning had changed, how the meaning of wampum changed, and for whom it had changed. Based on the repatriation of wampum, my primary research questions were designed to address the identification of wampum within the context of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and to analyze the changes in wampum from artifact...
to object of cultural patrimony. Therefore my research began with three questions. What is wampum? What does wampum mean? How is wampum used?

I believe that this dissertation will be most helpful to non-native art educators who want to understand why some, but not all, Native American wampum was repatriated. I believe that people will also want to know how wampum appears to have multiple interpretations. I am not suggesting that beliefs, meanings, and perspectives were missing from Native people within their own communities or that this research is to provide or replace native information. My intention is to relate native and non-native historical information with contemporary information about wampum for the purpose of teaching about Native American wampum in art classrooms.

In chapter one, I present the theoretical framework of critical art pedagogy, which is used to identify and analyze the interpretative changes of wampum. The scope and sequence of my dissertation research are also presented through the following sections. In “Negotiating Multiple Cultural Methodologies”, my claim as both participant and observer acknowledges the inherent subjectivity within my research, the influences of both traditional and postmodern feminist ethnographic methodology, and the topic of giving back. “The Development of My Research” section introduces the influences and events that led to my research topic. In “Finding the Participants”, I present the process through which participants were identified and selected. “The Analysis of the Interviews” section offers comparative analysis as the theoretical framework used to identify interpretive changes in pre- and post-NAGPRA ownership. The chapter ends with a summary of each of the next three chapters.

Teaching About Native American Art and Culture

The recognition that I am an art educator and that my research topic of wampum was considered a representation of Native American art and culture influenced my search for a theoretical framework through which I could complete my research. My selection criteria was first based on finding a framework to provide sound analytical tools for qualitative research that would assist in the application of my research into the field of art education. Although my research topic was about the interpretation of wampum, I also wanted to find a framework that supports the perspective that interpretations about wampum are culturally constructed and that I, as part of the research process, have both shaped its meaning and it has shaped me as well. My
selection of critical art pedagogy was based on its ability to place wampum into the larger
cultural context, to negotiate multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings, to accentuate the
process of personal reflectivity, and to offer a theoretical orientation for teaching art.

Critical art pedagogy uses a cognitive, thematic, and interdisciplinary approach to
classroom instruction. It provides instructional practices that are able to incorporate emerging
cultural information into the art classroom. In mainstream American art classrooms, the use of
multiple cultural perspectives within a predominantly Western perspective towards art
production, history, criticism, and aesthetics is just beginning. It is within these classrooms that
critical art pedagogy is most useful in incorporating representations of marginalized cultures’ art
forms, beliefs, and aesthetics. For underrepresented cultures like Native Americans, critical art
pedagogy is redundant because the concept of living and negotiating in multiple worlds is
already in place. Being Native American in a dominantly white Christian world is already
layered with perspectives from both worlds. It’s a life that is often described as living in two
worlds. The self-described “bicultural artist and Indian rights advocate” (Quick-to-See Smith,
1999, p. 79) Jaune Quick-to-See Smith used her paintings to address the multilayered and
multicultural influences of living as a marginalized Native American. In particular, Smith
addressed the issues of multiple perspectives in her 1996 catalog *Subversions/Affirmations.*
Smith stated that art is a bridge between cultures. Her method to move between two worlds was
to incorporate her life experiences. She explained that “the only way to survive was to act white,
dress white, and think Indian secretly in your head and your heart” (Quick-to-See Smith, 1999, p.
81). Her work incorporated the complex and “nuanced environment inhabited by indigenous
people in this country” (Quick-to-See Smith, 1999, p. 27) by integrating the multiple
perspectives prevalent within marginalized cultures. For those art educators who live in
dominant cultures and are interested in strengthening Native American representation in the art
curriculum, the use of critical art pedagogy will be very useful.

Critical art pedagogy, derived from the 1960s social movement of multicultural
education, is concerned with equal representation in education for all marginalized groups,
including Native Americans. Multicultural education began as a social movement to incorporate
examples of art from marginalized peoples and to acknowledge the breadth of global artists.
Students were exposed to a visual plethora of art forms that proposed to represent all peoples.
Multicultural education was believed to provide social parity within public classrooms. The
common belief was that “multicultural curriculums became partial solutions to address the absence or trivial representation of cultural diversity in schooling” (Young, 1990, p. 1).

Multicultural education continued to define diversity comparatively, in terms of whether or not the artwork could interface within the dominant western canon of art. Those artists whose work carried on cultural traditions from generation to generation often did not fit. This segregation led to special focus units like those on Native American art, which were kept isolated as if artistic themes, issues, and ideas were not truly connected to western art and its context. Although comments by Native American educators are not consistently addressed to the art classroom, Native Americans are still marginalized by dominant curricular practices. According to Creek educator K. T. Lomawaima, the ways that Native Americans are presented in the classroom and in the news reinforces the same old ideas, only in new forms. Speaking about pedagogical practices, Lomawaima (2000) suggests that the changes during the last thirty years are minimal, superficial, and deceiving.

Pedagogical practices, curricula, and teachers have changed significantly in recent decades, but the insidious legacy of colonial education has not been vanquished yet. It stretches far beyond classrooms and schools. It seems clear that much of America still believes American Indians must be subordinate peoples and politics. (pp. 20-21)

Lomawaima’s (2000) comments regarding the illusion of cultural inclusion can be demonstrated by looking at the Native American content demonstrated in Artworks for elementary teachers: Developing artistic and perceptual awareness (2002). Chapter one begins with an introduction to Artists in society: A brief overview in which six paragraphs introduce art through the ages. This is followed by a scant paragraph introducing Tribal artists, more specifically-African artists. A mere fifteen pages out of two hundred and five pages represent nonwestern art (Herberholz and Herberholz, 2002, pp. 183-198). Multicultural education’s limitation of integrating diversity eventually contributed to inconsistent art classroom practices and inability to provide strong nationwide standards (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2005). In Artworks for elementary teachers: Developing artistic and perceptual awareness, four out of the five images of Native American art were ancient; only one was contemporary as of 1990. The ratio of ancient to contemporary examples measures four to one, indicating the consignment of
Native American culture belongs to the past. In effect, the same old ideas about Native American art are presented, but in new forms. In spite of the inclusion of diverse artworks in texts, multicultural education was still placed pedagogically outside of the mainstream of classroom practices (Herberholz and Herberholz, 2002). In retrospect, like the pedagogical theories that preceded multicultural education, it became the platform from which cultural diversity sprung.

There are several theorists whose contributions predate the development of critical art pedagogy, but remain significant to the interdisciplinary practices espoused by critical art instruction. In particular, Feldman (1970) and McFee (1986) incorporate ethnographic approaches to studying Native American art and culture by emphasizing the connectivity of culture to art production and aesthetics. Feldman (1970) linked the creative process anthropologically through the use of art in social settings. His text, *Becoming human through art*, reinforced the conceptual view that art reflected life and that culture was inseparable from the study of art. In the same manner, “McFee advocated an art curriculum that would seek communicative significance and social meaning” (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2006, p. 51). McFee (1986) emphasized the meaning of artworks and artifacts as a means of examining the culture in which they originated. The belief that art is constructed within a social context and reflects a way of seeing, a point of view, and the values of its maker is perceived as evidence that art can be defined through social practices. As forms of social practice, “art and design are [considered] cultural artifacts and performance; they are visual culture, and they reflect our society” (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2005, p. 50). Stokrocki (1995), for example, believed that the instruction in art education found on the Navajo reservation reflected the same social values found in the Navajo culture: “patience, speaking softly, Native American time and seasonal influences” (p. 185). I found all of these qualities to be useful in negotiating cultural differences between the Native American and non-Native American communities.

Critical art pedagogy is similar to multicultural education because its emphasis is to provide global art experiences within the art classroom. The basic premises of critical art pedagogy are also similar to multicultural education in their goal to reduce marginalized representation in general by increasing cultural representation and cultural diversity in classroom curricula. The use of cultural diversity within curricular strategies proposes changes to the perceived narrowness of school art curricula. In comparison, a curriculum that embraces critical art pedagogy’s objectives also addresses more specific pedagogical issues than multicultural
education. It proposes to replace the present art curriculum, characterized by Efland, Freedman and Stuhr (1996) as a modernist conception of a universal discipline with its grand narratives of progress, with a “more postmodern vision of a pluralist, interdisciplinary, intercultural and multisited enterprise” (Herne, 2006, p. 11). The use of cultural diversity in critical art pedagogy continues to restructure art education by defining art “as culturally significant meaning encoded in an affecting sensuous medium” (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2005, p. 50). The paradigm shift (Herne, 2006) from multicultural education to critical art pedagogy should be perceived as the next step in developing strong pedagogical theories and practices for teaching about Native American art and cultures.

Critical art pedagogy also “espouses identifying and creating an awareness of the roots of inequality and marginalization, forming and enunciating critiques of the resultant social problems, and actively engaging in resistance” (Cary, 1998, pp. 12-13). Methods reflecting critical art pedagogy purport to expand social awareness of racism and emphasize greater open-endedness in cultural representation through the inclusion of “the plural perspectives and voices of different informants, researchers and participants” (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2006, p. 25). Critical art pedagogy provides meaningful learning through multiple perspectives from historical and contemporary sources. “It [critical art pedagogy] aims to decenter claims of truth, transform them, and reorient them toward social plurality” (Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996, p.86).

According to Cary (1998) and Anderson and Milbrandt (2006), the acceptance of multiple perspectives is not only preferred, but possible. By welcoming diverse perspectives, critical art pedagogy methods actually open the process of interpretation to increased involvement and greater interactions between and within cultures, and among students in the art classroom. The central objective of this pedagogical approach is to challenge the dominant ways to interpret and value things. It requires those who have accepted traditional methods for interpreting Native American objects as artifacts to look at those older perceptions in new ways (Tippeconnic, 1999). In using critical art pedagogy, dialogue among students and teachers is encouraged with the belief that there are more authentic meanings. As a result, students are encouraged to become actively involved in the process of making meaning; a process that describes art making as a method for humans to make sense of their environment, emotions, and perceptions.

In the case of NAGPRA, the collaboration between museums and Native Americans regarding objects of cultural patrimony has provided beneficial knowledge for both museums
and native communities. In many cases, this involves recognition of knowledge that was obtained without the input from each interested party. Therefore, it is possible that the criteria for relevancy with regard to multiple perspectives may not be similar among all interested people and that there will also continue to be disagreements regarding a particular perspective’s authenticity. But the central goal for this project is to encourage marginalized ideas, perspectives, and beliefs to be acknowledged, listened to, and incorporated into mainstream art education. That is why methods promoted by multiculturalism and critical art pedagogy are especially relevant to studying Native American objects.

Critical art pedagogy, like multicultural education, is identified as an educational reform movement (Banks and McGee Banks, 1989; Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996). Both advocate the reconstruction of school and society (Young, 2002). In art education, multicultural education introduced curricular elements that reflected art created by under-represented or marginalized students. “The initial goal of multicultural education was to improve educational achievement for ethnic students who were being disenfranchised by the educational system” (Stuhr, citing Banks and Banks, 1994, p.171). With similar goals, “postmodern critical art pedagogy also seeks to reduce cultural conflict through the recognition of educational practices” (Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996, p. 85) and “challenge the control which dominant groups currently exercise over school art curricula” (Cary, 1998, p. 67). While both share the objective of broader representation, critical art pedagogy looks beyond the selection of artwork and looks at the possible reasons for the fashion in which art and cultures are represented. The difference between the two is even more significant when applied, as I propose, to the selection and interpretation of wampum.

Negotiating Multiple Cultural Methodologies

The common denominator between critical art pedagogy and critical ethnographic research, and the reason for their inclusion in this study, is their shared assumption that studying meaning within cultures requires a complex rather than singular orientation toward culture. Their compatibility and their application are found in their shared recognition of multiple meanings of artifacts and their emphasis on contextual strategies for the study of cultural artifacts. While critical art pedagogy provides the foundation for instruction in art education, the practices of
Critical ethnographic research, field study, the use of field notes, observations, and interviews, provide the content for this research.

Critical ethnographic research is the research methodology that Native American historians Deloria (1994) and O’Brien (2008) insist that non-Native American scholars use when writing ethnographic and historical descriptions of Native Americans. O’Brien (2008) suggested that a continuance of past methodology would result in “stereotypical images of Native people that would leave them locked in nineteenth-century daguerreotypes” (p. 1). O’Brien’s (2008) comparison of ethnographic methodology results to past photographic practices is perceived as one-sidedness. “Since ethnographies are written for and circulated almost exclusively among scholarly audiences, those whose lives and voices are depicted rarely get an opportunity to read and respond publicly to how they have been represented” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995, p 234). Response to the one-sidedness of ethnographic research has included wider discussions within broader cultural communities. Deloria (1996), Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) and O’Brien’s (2008) strong arguments to infuse contemporary research with multiple viewpoints ultimately influenced the design of this project.

One concern that must be addressed is the idea of giving back (Fixico, 2000), which has grown directly from criticism of earlier ethnographic research involving Native American cultures. Early twentieth-century ethnographers like Boas (1895/2002) and Brockhaus (1885) were accepted and accommodated into Native American communities as members of those communities. Deloria (1998) and Fixico (2000) suggest that these researchers’ personal gains from the experience of living with their respective communities were selfishly personal and provided very little to their hosts. As a result, “a number of field researchers now urge taking ethnographic accounts back to those whose lives they represent, not primarily to validate those accounts, but rather to open up active dialogue between members and researchers about the meaning and import of such accounts” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995, p. 234).

The one-sidedness of past research was also addressed in my own research. Critical to both researcher and reader is the identification and discussion regarding my research stance and my subjectivity. I am neither a member of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy nor Native American. I felt very uncomfortable at first as a non-Native as I took on the role of the traditional anthropologist, I felt like an outsider. But opportunities kept lining up with the subject of the repatriation of wampum and my own interest in making art with beads.
In addition, my familial background is Swiss and while it does not represent Native American experiences, I have often understood that the Swiss are different from the other European nations. The Swiss have ways of perceiving, valuing, and experiencing life that affects how we are and how we are identified. I see the differences in behavior and cultural practices among my family that differ from my German neighbors. My family is split between America and those who remained in Zurich, therefore living closer to our ancestral roots and sites. There is pride among those who have remained close to our family homes and communities. They are the family members who tell us about the old ways, why we celebrate something with a particular piece of silver or the wedding pins that came from ancestral ties with the Russian royal family. They are closer to their history than I am. I am aware of the distances between my family in Switzerland and my life in America. Because of these small differences, I am neither American nor Swiss. At times, I am a hybrid of both and sometimes I become the other. I believe that most people experience that social position of the other in their life if they are open to acknowledging that social and cultural position. As a result of my family position as the occasional other (it only happens when I travel to Zurich), I have become aware of issues resulting from displacement, loss, and the inability to access and understand common meaningful Swiss objects and places. I believe that my experiences might provide some empathy towards the much larger issues that many Native American people face. In preparation for research, I questioned my ability to use my experiences with Penn State faculty John Sanchez, a member of the American Indian Movement. He suggested, after a pause in the conversation, that I was already more aware than most other white people about the marginalization of Native peoples and that my strengths might be found not within the Native communities but as a white person educating other white people. Sanchez remarked that I “could reach people that he could not in being a non-Native” (Sanchez, 2001, conversation). Mohawk Attorney Williams agreed. “Every voice helps.” (interview)

For that reason, I employed a number of approaches that provided opportunities in which the collected information represented the ideas and meanings of the participants in ways that were fair and measurable. As an art educator studying the interpretative transformations of Native American artifacts into objects of cultural patrimony, I sought a deeper immersion into Native American communities as an attempt to increase my own understanding of what makes wampum meaningful and important to the people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.
There were some Native Americans who did not wish to contribute to this research and criticized the perceived inequities resulting from the time spent educating a researcher about Native American cultures, beliefs, and philosophies. They perceived little or no benefit coming back to the Native community for their efforts. Another who wished to remain anonymous said, “Why should I help another white person get their doctorate when I can use the same time to help a Native person get theirs?” And other Native Americans noted that the information was not for sale and ignored any inquiries through letters and phone calls.

I struggled with how this study might benefit the Haudenosaunee people. National Museum of American Indian’s Director Rich West (conversation, AAM conference, 1999) suggested that there were inaccessible places where Native Americans still would not be invited to speak because of their dress, their appearance, and their race. According to West, there were several ways that I might contribute in certain circumstances because of my racial and educational background. Giving back came in many forms and opportunities. West insisted that both white and Native Americans were needed to continue to develop strong research in the field. He suggested that the results of my study, coupled with the incorporation of Native American ideas, could add to the emerging perception that Native American cultures reflect contemporary people and worldviews.

Research Methodology

My research methodology is ethnographically based. Ethnographic research describes and interprets cultural behavior through the methods of field participation and observation (Clifford, 1988; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2005; Geertz, 1976; Smith, 1999; Wolcott, 1985) with an emphasis on life experiences (Barker, 2003). In my own research, I gathered information to describe the use of wampum within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy through attendance at cultural events, ceremonies, interviews, and field observations. I appreciated the guidance, wisdom, and direction regarding the meaning of wampum given by several members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy because it helped me to develop and improve the process through which I gathered information. I was introduced into a network of people who were variously connected to wampum. They were museum workers, teachers, faith healers, traditional and elected chiefs and artists. I was also given the freedom to become more of a witness and less of
an outsider when it came to community events and public ceremonies because our foci, as a
group, was on participating rather than on my questions and their responses. In spite of my
outsider position, I participated as a witness of the reading of the wampum at the New York
Canandaigua Treaty Commemoration on several occasions as well as an evening guest at one of
their Longhouse Society’s meetings.

I believe that the combination of leadership from within the community and their
acceptance of my research topic, methods, and goals provided a much needed balance to the
more problematic qualities of traditional ethnographic methods of study regarding Native
American objects discussed earlier in this chapter. With their help and that of my own
committee, I was able to address the overwhelming one-sidedness of exogenous analysis and
identify my own subjectivity in the seemingly objective research processes. The insightful
process of self examination revealed the often hidden influences of past experiences upon the
process of collecting and analyzing the research materials. In particular, I found that I was most
comfortable in one-on-one situations with people in positions of leadership, such as chiefs,
elders, teachers, artists, and faith keepers, to name a few. This is not to say I did not ask
questions to a variety of the population, but the responses were lacking in clarity of topic and
experience. As a result, the examination of the meaning and use of wampum within the
Haudenosaunee Confederacy was shaped by my own desire to speak with those who were in
traditional positions of leadership and maintained a long-term relationship with the use of
wampum. Had I limited my research to a younger, less informed, or gender specific group, the
resulting conclusions of this research would be different. I better understood the subtle ways in
which my position could provoke criticism among both Native and non-Native Americans
(Deloria, 1994; Tippeconnic, 1999), as an outsider analyzing cultural interpretations. In
recognition of the inherently biased qualities of studying cultures, I looked for guidance from
within the native community for the purpose of providing a more balanced methodology. One
particular researcher (O’Brien, 2008) suggested that future acknowledgment and inclusion of
current native perspectives are needed to counteract historically biased information. She
challenged all researchers to “introduce readers to a variety of practices that are steeped in
indigenous traditions and philosophies even as they respond and adapt to the present context”
(O’Brien, 2008, p. 1). O’Brien (2008) suggested that the study of Native practices should include
“first hand experiences, ethnographic accounts, narratives, and current scholarship in order to
present a richly textured portrait of the intersection of tradition, cultural renewal, and ceremony that exist in a complex mélange with other cultural traditions - both Native and non-Native” (p. 1). O’Brien’s challenge to revise Native American research methods acknowledged this combination of cultural information as part of the formation of a broader portrait of Native people. In doing so, she included collaborative spaces in research for both Native and non-Native perspectives and models, practices designed to minimize outside influences in the interpretative process of research.

In response to O’Brien’s emphasis on cultural inclusion and to my own interest in embracing critically based culturally responsive methods, I found the combination of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw’s (1995) methods for analyzing field notes and Behar’s (1996) use of the narrative form of writing especially useful. I would like to begin by defining what Ruth Behar describes as a vulnerable observer because it is central to the development of my own field note analysis. In her book titled *The Vulnerable Observer*, Behar (1996) challenges readers to rethink traditional ethnographic conventions by providing a heightened awareness of the contradictions inherent in studying other people and authoring their stories.

Behar begins her first essay by demonstrating the difficult role of impartiality which the traditional ethnographic canon expects of the observer. She retells Isabelle Allende’s story of a young Columbian avalanche victim, Omaira Sanchez, whose dying moments were recorded by photographer Rolf Carle for television. Faced with the responsibilities of both observing and responding, Carle eventually abandons his camera and offers Omaira what little comfort he can. Behar suggests a moment of vulnerability when Carle chose to empathize with the young victim and respond to her imminent death. Carle’s transformation from observer to responder demonstrated what Behar (1996) terms as the “central dilemma of all efforts at witnessing” (p. 2). According to the traditional ethnographic theories, the science of observing is portrayed as a neutral practice. However, the predicament for Allende, Behar, and Carle is situated in the impossibility of separating science from discourse.

Carle’s reaction to abandon his role of observer, to reveal his emotions and to participate, now includes him in Omaira’s story. He no longer remains objective, but vulnerable to the unfolding events of Omaira’s death. In the *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Behar (1996) describes Carle, the vulnerable observer, as “someone who’s willing to be transformed by the experience …who is moved by the process of observation and feels compelled by what he or she hears and
Vulnerability is a double-sided occurrence. The act of being vulnerable does not occur without other people. In Behar’s research, both observed and observers are affected by the relationships between them. Each contributes something towards the direction of the resulting research through their interactions of dialogue and actions. The interaction between participants also holds an element of vulnerability. Vulnerability refers to an emotional risk level that each participant knowingly or subconsciously reveals or suppresses. The risk level is qualified through the extent of trust or anxiety that may result from the sharing, and therefore, exposure of that person’s thoughts and/or actions. Because vulnerability is a social construct between humans, there will always be an element of vulnerability in anything that people do. Therefore, becoming vulnerable, as either the observed like Omaira or as the observer like Carle, is not situated in the question of whether vulnerability has occurred, but whether it is recognized. It is in the recognition of each participant’s level of emotional interaction that the concept of subjectivity, and conversely objectivity, within research can be examined.

The recognition of participants’ subjectivity and vulnerability is considered necessary by Devereux (1951), Geertz (1973), and Behar (1996). The differences explained by Behar demonstrate the individual levels in which each researcher is willing to recognize their own vulnerability. Devereux “champions vulnerability for the sake of science [in the belief] that self subjectivity … will lead to true science” (Behar citing Devereux, 1996, p.8). For Devereux (1951), the danger of subjectivity is neutralized by its recognition. Geertz (1973) also emphasizes self-reflection as a method to attain truer ethnographic representation of those observed. However, unlike Devereux’s (1951) emphasis on field observations, Geertz (1973) believed that real ethnographic work is reflected in the writing style of the researcher. Geertz (1973) wrote, “the writing must convey the impression of close-in contact with far-out lives” (Behar citing Geertz, 1996, p. 7). Both Devereux (1951) and Geertz (1973) created an emotional distance between themselves and those they observed, and by creating emotional distance, reduced levels of vulnerability. In addition, both Devereux (1951) and Geertz (1973) used their
own world views and cultural experiences to articulate the differences found within those they studied. In contrast to the recognition of the differences between the ethnographic observers and those observed, Behar (1996) presents her own position of vulnerability as one that identifies the ties and similarities the researcher may have with the people he or she is studying. Behar (1996) describes visualization as a key component within the dichotomies of both observed and observer. It is “the shift toward viewing identification, rather than difference” (Behar, 1996, p. 165). The shift registers the changes from traditional ethnographic viewing of us versus other and western versus the rest to an intersubjective blurring of cultural boundaries and identities.

Through her writing, Behar (1996) offers a number of subtle but powerful changes in writing ethnographic material. A casual glance at her work may not reveal her contributions to the call for new forms of ethnography. However, I would like to briefly discuss three that have helped me to reconsider my own methods of research. Behar’s (1996) three contributions are the renaming of the process of observation as one of witnessing, her use of mirroring to blend the experiences of the researcher/observer with the experience of researched/observed, and her analogy of fieldwork as a journey.

By referring to the process of observation as witnessing, Behar (1996) forced me to look at the differences between the observation and witnessing through my own methods. Observation is defined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) as the approach used by someone who is “concerned with getting into place to observe interesting, significant events in order to produce a detailed written record of them” (p. 18). They have described me. My field notes resulted from a combination of careful planning and fortunate timing to participate in public ceremonies and meet key people. The result was a very effective, economically time managed approach to my fieldwork. It was the perfect plan for me to work within a restricted budget and time frame. I also believed that my decisions were more informed based on the presumption that I could best form the scope and sequence of my research. However, in being so precise, so intent on meeting my own objectives, I now see that I lost opportunities to go beyond observing and to witness these events. Witnessing transcends the act of observing by emphasizing the personal component of participation. A witness would participate in the event and share, in some manner, a part of its history, rather than stepping outside of a ceremony to document it. Carle, as described by Behar (1996), stepped out of his role as a photographer, as an observer to become a witness and participant in Omaira’s story. At that moment, Carle’s and Omaira’s journeys were
joined. Not only does Carle move from a more neutral role of observer to a more vulnerable role of witness, but he also changes from a secondary to primary source. His story is now forever intertwined with her story and, therefore, his memories and perspectives have become first-hand as well. The transition from observer to witness precipitates the transformation of reality.

Witnessing offers several methods to refine anachronistic and depersonalizing ethnography. Autobiography in the form of personal narratives and self reflectivity through the mirroring of participant experiences are two that “challenge the role of ethnographer as sole purveyor of ethnographic truth” (Behar, 1996, p. 27). As a result of a shift to witnessing, storytelling and autobiographies are now used by previously marginalized, outsider, and underrepresented research participants. The resulting shift from the edge to mainstream ethnographic writing has allowed for new voices in ethnography. There are a growing number of Native Americans who are now writing about their own communities. Jemison and Schein (2000) published a collection of articles written by members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that addressed a variety of issues, political, cultural, legal, and personal within their Native American community. Each author presented their knowledge, experiences, and beliefs regarding the two hundred year old history following the signing of the Treaty of Canandaigua. The collection of stories offers valuable information regarding their historical perspective known to the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As a form of autobiographical writing, their stories present a powerful tool for personal and cultural representation. In time, Behar suggests that autobiographies may become known as situated knowledges recognized in their own right as vulnerable but relevant evidence. At the moment, indigenous knowledges, those formed from within cultures like the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, continue to offer a range of cultural evidence through storytelling and autobiographies that contest the static and arbitrarily defined lines between native and non-native cultures.

One method used by Behar (1996) to blur the lines of traditional ethnography is a method called mirroring that promotes self reflectivity for all participants. In framing the stories of Omaira Sanchez, Rolf Carle, Isabelle Allende, and her daughter, Behar has developed a set of mirrors as a way for all participants including Behar to move beyond cultural boundaries and reflect upon their lives. The use of mirrors suggests that there are essential human responses that can be made visible through the inspection of others. Behar uses a shadow autobiography of her own life story that undulates in and around the central topic of her essay as a means to reflect her
own emotional responses and involvement. It is a provocative move that has been both praised and criticized. In fact, it is this shadow autobiography that has become the most controversial and well-known aspect of Behar’s work.

Behar’s style of writing uses an autobiographically based “I was there” narrative. She describes the personal commitment to the process through the metaphor of a voyage or journey, much like life. When you are living life, you don’t always recognize the journey. It is only when you step out of the journey that you can reflect upon its lessons. Behar (1996) suggests that self reflection is possible if you use your observations as a method to make your own experiences more visible.

Reckons it to a voyage down a long tunnel in which the process of interacting as an observer, of being human within the context of the observer, becoming part of the story, realizing that our presence is not without observations, where the lines blur as to who is observing whom? And if you are fortunate, to have been given the opportunity to see beyond yourself from the perspective of the observed and to gain insight from being visible, then you might see the light from the tunnel (pp. 2-3).

I believe that Confucius’ statement, if you want to know yourself you should look at others, echoes Behar’s revisions in ethnographic research and the resulting blurring of roles. The gradual changes provoked by new ethnographic approaches found in Behar’s work have opened new methods for research and insight into ethnographic conclusions. But she cautions that entering her field is not for everyone. Enter, she writes, “only insofar as you are willing to view them [people and their customs] from the perspective of an anthropologist who has come to know others by knowing herself and who has come to know herself by knowing others” (Behar, 1996, p. 33). Entry, however, does not mean the abandonment of time honored ethnographic methods. In the next section I discuss the types of writing strategies qualitative researchers take in analyzing and writing up an analysis.
Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes

In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995), Emerson, Fretz and Shaw present an intensive and detailed approach to ethnographic research that is separated into four dominant areas: field notes, pursuing members’ meanings, coding, and writing. Each area blends a number of strategies for the purpose of converting experiences within social contexts into text. In this section, I will present their key concepts followed with comments regarding my own research.

The initial process for ethnography for a researcher is to enter into an unfamiliar social setting where she or he can participate in the daily lives of others. A deeper immersion into a culture is desired in order to understand which social experiences are significant and which are not. As a result, researchers subject themselves to a different social order from their own in order to experience as closely as possible what members of that culture might experience.

However, after reading *The Vulnerable Observer*, I no longer believe that a position as a neutral observer is possible. Even the most seemingly simple question regarding the meaning of wampum in my own fieldwork made my participants pause before answering. Often, my question was met with another. Why do you want to know, they asked? I wondered if they had not listened or perhaps not understood as I explained the purpose of my research. Or had I touched upon a subject that they had never been asked to qualify? Many stated that it was the first time they had ever been asked the meaning of wampum. What were the consequences of my questions? How many of my participants would tell of a visitor from Penn State who wanted to know the meaning of wampum? How would my story be retold and how would their listeners respond? With curiosity, anger, or how? One of my participants, Addie Powless, confessed in her interview that she should not be telling me anything, but then continued to justify her time with me as a cultural compromise for both of us. “It is better [that] people know about wampum, [for us] not to keep it a secret”. She said she preferred to teach people what is real about the Longhouse rather than letting the stereotypes persist. I agreed and wrote it in my field notes.

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw described the written record of ethnographic experiences and observations by citing Geertz (1973): “the ethnographer inscribes social discourse; he writes it down” (1995, p. 15). They place considerable weight on writing and using field notes. Field notes offer more than just a mechanism for recording; they can be used as a cultural translation. It is the process of paralleling one set of cultural concepts with another. Anthropologists
frequently use translation to conceptualize writing a version of one culture that will make it comprehensible to readers living in another. The process of translation raises several questions about the separation of methods and findings. Methods influence the quality of their relationships with the participants. There are a number of choices regarding how ethnographers decide to translate their experiences and observation into written notes. Two are described in the text and often both are used: a suspension of notes to maximize participation in the experiences themselves and a regard to the best places and events to observe. The first method, called headnotes, values a more open ended experience within the research community by purposefully separating research from writing from the researcher’s relationships. The headnotes are internally stored, reflected upon, and then written. The latter, referred to as open jotting, emphasizes the position of the researcher who, in order to write, makes the process of research writing more obvious. While this process emphasizes the presence of the researcher through disclosure, it also may inhibit or alienate those who participate. The initial process of setting up methods should reflect the best styles of field notes that work for each situation and participant.

For my field notes, I used both headnotes and open jotting to support the audio- and visually recorded interviews for each participant. When it was possible, I recorded everything because I didn’t trust my memory and because I did not want to misquote my participants. When I was observing I often jotted notes or used a small cassette recorder to save my thoughts for later writing. Recording did affect the dynamics of the interviews and the time I spent with each participant. It felt to me a bit formal and awkward in the beginning. It did produce a division between us because I was positioning each participant as someone knowledgeable and, therefore, able to represent the meaning of wampum. After all, I was asking them to translate their own cultural experiences for someone outside their culture.

According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, the preferred process of translating cultural experiences is narrating. Narration is the compilation of a day’s or week’s experiences into a cohesive story. By placing the experiences in a chronological order, the story is intended to unite the events with a point. In some cases, narratives can situate the seemingly unattached and sporadic details of an event or interpretation together into a broader narrative of the culture. For example, the participants in my research represent different types of members within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. They share the role of someone both knowledgeable and willing to be interviewed regarding wampum. However, they also represent different religions, locations,
gender, education, occupations, marital status, language skills, and age. Finding a common story line would be difficult unless I introduced the process of my journey into the research field notes. Writing the story from the perspective of a collaborator in the research rather than a neutral observer, I can reveal the terms and bases through which people give meaning to wampum.

The final step to writing field notes is the open-ended process of textualization, used by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw to define the type of interpretation that results when ethnographers convey their insights and understandings to those who are not familiar with the research topic. In textualization, the ethnographer filters the experiences of the participants. Care must be taken to understand the possible problems in this step as textualization is described as an invisible step in “getting it down on the page” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995, p. 42). Therefore, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw have defined attitudes, perspectives, timing and reflection as areas that the researchers should consider when they are writing field notes.

I am especially attracted to Behar’s statement regarding the death of memory in *Death and Memory* (1996) because it also connects to the arguments that support the repatriation of objects of cultural patrimony. She coined this phrase, the death of memory, in reference to the loss of funerary traditions documented in the northern Spanish village of Santa Maria del Monte. Central to the whole essay is Behar’s preoccupation with memory: memory of fading burial practices in the village and at the same time, her own fading memory of her grandfather after his death while she was researching in Spain. Behar suggests that the real harm within the aging population of Santa Maria del Monte is situated in the death of memory. She writes, “There is a small horror … with each death, a part of the lived memory that connected every villager to a peasant past is erased, made unrecoverable” (p. 41). She readily laments the loss, but even more, she focuses on the villagers’ profound awareness that they have outlived their memories and traditions. Behar (1996) cites Walter Benjamin when he described disruption in cultural traditions. “Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.” (p. 42)

In similar fashion, members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy also lamented the loss of cultural memory through the dispossession of their wampum. Chief Bonaparte claims that the wampum is alive and coexists in past, present, and future. The loss is like losing your relatives and friends. At the time, I didn’t really understand that, but in talking about how I could better understand the concept of living with regards to inanimate objects, Bonaparte suggested “that
there are objects like wampum that hold the memories of all who touch them through their marks of use or disuse.” “You mean spirits?” I asked, thinking he meant ghosts. He laughed and said, “No, more like handprints, you know, spiritual handprints.” I responded with a “Wow. That’s a great image and I get it.” “Thanks, I just made that up,” he replied. At that moment we both began to understand, in our own context, more about how to explain and how to understand the concept of living objects. Now reflecting back to this moment, our shared discovery of the term spiritual handprints was a time when two cultures met and a time when authentic cross-cultural interpretation occurred. Bonaparte also agreed to my analogy that the original Betsy Ross American flag was also a living testament to the formation of my country and to my national identity. It was a powerful moment for the two of us to see through each other’s eyes. I’m not sure if he saw anything differently. However, I finally could put a real emotion to the loss of something as culturally important as the original wampum belts. His emotion regarding the loss of wampum was tied to my analogy of losing the American flag that hangs in the Smithsonian. Both wampum and the American flag represent so much more than just our national borders and governance; they represent all the people who lived and died honoring and protecting them.

In summary, I have provided, as evidenced above, a small sample of my integration of the concept of vulnerability within a small excerpt of my research. It is presented in a Behar-styled autobiographical narrative form, a style that I will also use in the analysis of the interviews regarding what I discovered about the construction of meaning of wampum in the post-NAGPRA community of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The Development of My Research

This project began in wanting to know more about how Native American artifacts and culture are presented and taught within the context of a Native American community. Over the course of the last nine years, I traveled into the Oneida, Mohawk, Seneca, and Onondaga reservations for the purpose of retrieving information about the educational methods and applications regarding how wampum was used to communicate cultural ideas. These communities were chosen because of the available participants willing to speak with me.

Three specific venues—public sites, museums, and schools—were identified as active environments within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy communities where wampum was taught.
Multiple and diverse forms of wampum and its symbols were visible throughout the Onondaga and the Mohawk tribal communities. The museums identified were the (Mohawk) Akwesasne Cultural Center, the (Onondaga) Six Nations Museum, the New York Cumberland County Historical Museum (the site of an Onondaga wampum celebration and the signing of the Treaty of Canandaigua). The schools include the St. Regis Mohawk Elementary School, the Akwesasne Freedom School, and the Onondaga Nation School.

Once the sites were identified, then further introductions through the previously established network of Native American participants were obtained. The selection of people interviewed was based on four areas of interest: (1) their tribal position, (2) their educational involvement with wampum, (3) their willingness to be interviewed, and (4) their knowledge of the issues of wampum.

The original selection for the interviews included tribal leaders, teachers, government representatives, and museum professionals. Some, however, chose not to be interviewed for a variety of reasons. In hindsight, I was initially unaware of tribal protocol. It was after several attempts to talk to the tribal chiefs and elders that I realized my research methodology was ineffective and unfortunately, I feared, disrespectful. Although, no one ever voiced annoyance at my applications for interviews or suggested that my behavior was inappropriate, I was met with silence and refusals. Silence is a form of communication. It can communicate “privacy, respect and caution” (Glenn, 2004, p. 149). In my particular case, I felt it also communicated a resistance to allowing another non-Native person to benefit from the information given. There is a current trend in Native communities to encourage only Native people to represent components of the Native communities as a method to accurately portray Native identity, issues, and ideas. As a result, the control of Native ideas, information, and property within the Haudenosaunee community is hotly disputed. This dispute also affected my final selection of people to be interviewed.

Not all of the opinions expressed were equally represented in the body of this work. It was not possible to include all of the transcribed interviews within the dissertation because of space and relevancy. Therefore, the selection of the final text was based primarily on the degree of relevance to an understanding of wampum that each interviewee was perceived to have.

There were those who were open to interviews, but refused to sign any form granting permission to record the interviews and use their words and ideas in my research. This refusal
greatly jeopardized my ability to collect data. As a researcher, I am compelled to comply with
the federal guidelines for research on human subjects. Their refusal was not about the sharing of
knowledge but their suspicion of government forms from past tribal experiences. Initially I
presented my proposed interviewee with a short two-page permission form to be signed and
returned to The Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections upon completion
to this research. The purpose of the form was to grant permission for an interview and the use of
the interview within this research. Every Native participant without exception refused to sign.
Williams (Interview, August 1, 2001) explained this particular Native response. “Our permission
is implied. If we stand here, answer your questions, talk to you, give you our real name, and let
you take photos, then that should be enough. Nothing else is necessary.”

I returned to the Office of Research Protections to redevelop the permission forms. Thus
overcoming the first of many cultural differences in gathering information, I was able to find
generous people who not only guided me through the process of tribal protocol but the process of
conducting research within a Native American community as well. Communication between the
Office of Research Protections and the Haudenosaunee Cultural Communications Office was
necessary. It was necessary to distinguish that the people that I interviewed were speaking for
themselves and did not represent the Haudenosaunee community legally or otherwise. Oral
permission was accepted by both government agencies and allowed for my research to proceed.
The new waiver was granted for an oral permission to be acceptable when I interviewed, and it
was incorporated into the present Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections
form IRB#00B0682-01.

Interviews, photographs and real names were taped with the participant stating that oral
permission had been given according to the Pennsylvania State Office of Research Protections.
Once each tape was transcribed, I would listen again to the tape while reading the words. Then I
hired an editor to review the tapes against the transcriptions to verify or correct the
transcriptions. At that point, I made a copy with a cover letter and sent the transcribed copies of
the interviews back to each interviewee. The interviewed were asked to read the transcriptions,
and add comments if they wanted to. In two weeks, I promised to check back to them for their
comments, questions, or concerns. To date, I have had minor changes either oral or written from
the individuals I interviewed through a number of follow up communications for clarification
regarding Native American names. Initially, I believed that their comments and corrections
indicated approval for their inclusion in this dissertation. However, follow up phone calls and letters were made to make sure that their responses implied their consent.

Gathering information for scholarly research within Native communities was not always easy or welcomed. Researchers like me can no longer assume that traditional methods using field observation will be successful within the indigenous or Native communities. Smith (1999), in reference to decolonizing methodologies, stated that Native American and indigenous communities are no longer willing to have others enter into their community, observe them, and create judgments without the community’s authority and input. I found that also to be true. Out of the seventy-five possible participants, only fourteen agreed to be interviewed as the central portion of my research. In the interest of research specificity, the interviews were further reduced to reflect the common perspectives found in many interviews, but best articulated through five people.

Prior to their interview, each person was given a set of general questions that they were asked to read and to which they were later asked to respond. These questions specifically related to the context in which the informant related to wampum, and to their level of engagement with wampum. Each set began with the original three questions, and that became the common denominator among all of the participants. Teachers were asked how wampum was used in the classroom. Community faith keepers were asked about traditional ceremonies and uses of wampum. Museum staff members were questioned about conventional methods for exhibiting wampum. The general set of questions is listed below.

1. Why did NAGPRA mandate the repatriation of wampum?
2. What is the historical interpretation of wampum?
3. What is wampum’s meaning within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
4. How does wampum function within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
5. How is wampum identified within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
6. How is wampum represented within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
7. What were some of the issues regarding wampum within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy?
All interviews were taped as a precaution to avoid possible errors in representing what was shared. The process of translation suggested by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) “entails reconfiguring one set of concepts and terms into another; that is, the ethnographer searches for comparable concepts and analogous terms” (p. 16). The use of analogies to bridge understanding was effective. However, analogies did not always provide a clear method of translation and analysis because of the many inherent problems situated within interpretations. The process began with the awareness that I assumed a common understanding because we both spoke English. I didn’t think that I was translating events, words, and expressions, but I was. I did not anticipate the possibility that the same words spoken by one or the other might differ in their intended meanings. What the participants said, might be different in meaning from what I understood. In addition, my subjectivity was not always obvious (to the participants, my readers, and myself). When the words *sacred* or *beauty* were used, I attached my own experiences as the basis for understanding. I translated what *sacred* or *beauty* meant to me and did not necessarily understand what it meant when a participant applied the ideas of sacredness and beauty to wampum. Therefore, whenever possible I qualified those ideas as cultural concepts, which allowed those meanings to become contextually situated. By analyzing where the participants applied those concepts, I discovered how they were defined.

The use of predetermined questions was ill-equipped for analysis because the type of questions prepared focused more on getting the answers desired and were created before I actually knew each participant. By asking the questions about NAGPRA, I assumed that each participant was equally familiar with NAPGRA. By asking the question about the historical interpretation of wampum, I assumed that there was only one interpretation, and that this answer would also be equally known and, therefore, equally verified. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) called my experiences in developing interview questions problematic because they were limited “ways to reducing social discourse to written form” (p. 9). Reduction occurs when a multichanneled interview becomes linear through the process of writing. “A transcript thus selects particular dimensions and contents of discourse for inclusion while ignoring others.” (p.9) Even when audio and video recordings seem to record every nuance occurring, the result is actually a controlled portion of reality. In the same manner as the transcripts, my choice of questions acted as a reductive method by reflecting my deeper assumptions about wampum and how to understand it.
Therefore, once the interviews were transcribed, I produced a different set of questions. These questions focused on how the participants knew what they knew and emphasized the significance of their behavior when using wampum. The changes in questions allowed me to better understand and appreciate their responses from their perspective.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter two reviews information about wampum that was produced prior to repatriation for the purpose of clarifying the epistemological influences on the coexisting classifications of wampum as both artifact and object of cultural patrimony. The three sections help to separate the coexisting perspectives and shared themes regarding wampum. The central recurring themes were identified as concerns with ownership, access, and interpretation of wampum. Section one titled *Wampum as Artifact* begins with the earliest recorded information about wampum through the eyes of early traders, priests, and nineteenth-century ethnographers. It encapsulates how wampum was identified as an artifact and how that classification led to the belief that wampum and the culture that made it was left in the past. Section two titled “The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act” presents a summary of NAGPRA’s objectives, definitions, and relevance to identifying wampum as an object of cultural patrimony. Section three presents the Native American perspective of wampum found within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and is titled “Wampum as an Object of Cultural Patrimony”. In this section, I discuss the reception and use of oral history as a means of recoding information about wampum. The final section titled “Ownership, Access, and Interpretation” summarizes the extent to which both classifications of wampum are equally concerned with the relationship of ownership and how ownership affects cultural access and interpretations.

Chapter three presents a narrative account of my interviews with Francis Boots, Darren Bonaparte, Paul Williams, Sonny Edwards, and Toni Benedict interspersed with comments from the other participants. Their interviews reveal how personal and cultural life experiences contribute to their understanding of wampum after the repatriation of wampum back into their community. The chapter ends with an analysis of the issues of ownership, access, and interpretation discovered through the process of my interviews, and summarizes the various themes across the narratives.
Chapter four provides a discussion of the theme of social practice and living objects and the implications that arise from my final analysis. In the first section I address my initial research questions through the results found in the multiple connections and implications between the pre and post NAGPRA interpretations of wampum. In section two, the application of critical pedagogy framework is addressed. Section three presents implications of my research for art educators as well as other researchers and educators who work in fields of study that use objects as identifiers of cultural practices. Section four examines my personal growth through a variety of reflective stances. The final section offers suggestions for future research opportunities in the field of art education regarding the teaching of wampum and other Native American objects.
WAMPUM AS BOTH ARTIFACT AND OBJECT OF CULTURAL PATRIMONY

It is important to examine the transformation of wampum from museum artifact to object of cultural patrimony because it will help to convey the social and political factors that influenced the meaning of wampum and, by association, Native American cultures. It is especially critical to identify the historical roots that have shaped the current descriptions of wampum as an artifact and as an object of cultural patrimony.

In this chapter, an overview of the interpretation of wampum in relationship to NAGPRA is provided to clarify how and why wampum was removed from museum collections and returned to the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This chapter also presents an analysis of the three themes of ownership, access, and interpretation in relation to the wampum found in both non-Native and Native American cultures. While these three themes concerning wampum coexist in each culture, they do not support the same meaning about wampum. Therefore, section one begins with examples of how wampum was historically classified as an artifact and examines why that classification is still current today. Section two continues to examine wampum within the broader issues of ownership, access, and interpretation found in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Section three examines wampum as an object of cultural patrimony within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Section four culminates with a summary of how the three themes of ownership, access, and interpretation contribute to the meaning of wampum as an artifact and as an object of cultural patrimony and the problems that exist because of these divergent interpretations.

Wampum as Artifact

The word artifact generally embodies three similar characteristics: scientific, physical, and cultural. Encarta’s definition of an artifact indicates that the word was developed within the emerging mid nineteenth-century field of anthropology. For example Franz Boas (1895/2002) collected Indian artifacts as undeniable physical evidence of their maker’s cultural existence. Artifacts were considered a “method dependent result: something that appears to exist because of the way an object or data is examined, e.g. a form of behavior that is indicated by a behavioral test” (Encarta, 2007a, ¶3). An artifact became the evidence of cultural action. In 1977, the term
“artifact” was defined by *Webster’s New World Dictionary* through its Latin root of *arte*, meaning by skill, and *factum*, meaning by hand (Neufeldt & Guralnik, 1991, p. 78). The definition stated that an artifact was made by a human: “1. any object made by human work; esp., a simple or primitive tool, weapon, vessel, etc. [and also considered a foreign substance]; 2. any non-natural feature or structure accidentally introduced into something being observed or studied” (Neufeldt & Guralnik, 1977, p. 78).

Both *Webster* and *Encarta* dictionaries defined artifacts through a scientific model similar to that created by collector and researcher L. H. Morgan. Morgan’s system of Native American descriptions and classifications, disseminated through his publications, continues to influence the fields of anthropology and museum practice. For much of the twentieth-century, wampum was considered an artifact. Wampum was primarily consigned to collections in museums where the majority of information about wampum was encoded over a century earlier in the form of anthropological documentations (Alexander, 1992; Ames, 1986; Fixico, 2000; Morgan, 1851/1922). These notes, diagrams, correspondence, and transcriptions of conversations were collected and stored, with the actual wampum beads, strings, and belts, in museums. Much, but not all, of the current written information about wampum was collected through “combining in-depth field work with a comparative perspective” (Finnegan, 1992, p. 1) by trained anthropologists and ethnographers. As a result, non-Native Americans created most of the written information about wampum currently available.

In general, it is important to realize that differences in interpretations of wampum resulted from varying cultural perspectives. The recognition of underlying preconceptions about Native Americans and their objects is critical in understanding the hidden political or social context in which past research and development of educational curriculum was pursued (Rogoff, 1998). This can be demonstrated in reviewing a condensed history highlighting descriptions that identify Native Americans and their objects.

Subjective and derogatory descriptions were evident as early as the 17th century when French Jesuit missionaries recorded early Native American culture through their diaries and letters. The use of words like “savage” and “primitive” by the Jesuits conveyed underlying social values and identified elements of racial supremacy through their use (Berlo, 1992; Brown & Vibert, 1996; Mark, 1980). These documents were considered no more than “a compendium of travel literature” (Mark, 1980, p. 5), but provided early descriptions of wampum and its use by
the “Native American heathens and savages” (Brown & Vibert, 1996, p. xvi). These early descriptions of wampum were based on its use as an item to barter and not as evidence of historical events or treaties. “Wampum came to be used extensively for trade by the colonists as well as the natives. In 1664 Stuyvesant arranged a loan in wampum worth over 5,000 guilders for paying the wages of workers constructing the New York citadel.” (Davies, 2002, p. 458) Written interpretations of individual wampum belts from the native point of view would not appear until much later and were limited to scientific descriptions and measurements.

By the eighteenth-century, increased exposure to immigrating Europeans brought new technologies such as “guns, cloth, beads, rum and brandy” (Tooker, 1994, p. 5), and steel tools. The availability of these goods and means of production increased wampum bead production for the purpose of exchange. As a result, the introduction of new technology also contributed to the increased perception of wampum as Indian money and the increased involvement in the manufacturing of wampum by non-Native Americans. One reference even attributed the invention of wampum to English ingenuity, since the author assumed that it was “wholly impossible that they [Native Americans] should ever have been able to have made wampum from the clam shell for themselves” (Weld, 1799, pp. 390-391). Weld never traveled to North America, and reached these conclusions without realizing that Native Americans had used the bow drill to create the tiny holes for the beads. Unfortunately, Weld’s comments reflected a growing dismissal regarding Native Americans as a source of information about wampum. A lack of authentic information and a lack of criticality about wampum prevented Weld from moving beyond second hand descriptions for his understanding of the interpretations regarding the various forms and uses of wampum.

The period between the American Revolution and Weld’s comments showed little change in the uses of wampum. Wampum’s use as money grew, and its use within the Confederacy diminished (Martin, 1966). The American Revolution was a disruptive period for many Native American communities. In the newly formed nation of the United States, the resulting attempts of cultural assimilation through new forms of education, religion, and governance contributed to changes in both cultural and historical information for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. These cultural differences did not go unnoticed. The awareness of an interest in the aboriginal people (Tooker, 1994) encouraged research on a wide range of topics including the study of Native American behavior, language, and history in the fields of ethnography, linguistics, and
archeology. Following suit, in 1847, the New York Regents of the State Cabinet of Natural History solicited aid “in furnishing the relics of the ancient masters of the soil, and the monuments and remembrances of our colonial and revolutionary history” (Tooker, 1994, p. 16). As a result, research about Native American culture increased. Museum cases were filled with examples of wampum and other Native American artifacts because “these memorials unlock the social history of the past; and although silent, they speak more eloquently than all human description” (Morgan, 1851/1922, p. 96).

Contemporary museums still follow earlier eighteenth and nineteenth-century collecting enthusiasm and display format. For example, both the New York State Museum in Albany, New York and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City present native people in dioramas that date from the 1970s. Today these presentations appear frozen in time. Similarly, at the time of my research in the late 1990s, examples of native wampum were still displayed with minimal effort to provide contextual information. In addition, the shell wampum was mixed with other materials including metal and leather. The practice of placing mixed materials together suggest an oversight in the conservation of these pieces. Normally, leather, metal, and shell are placed in different displays because of their different needs for air moisture and light condition.

Non-native researchers of Native American culture and, in particular, wampum included Morgan (1849, 1851/1922, 1852), Hale (1897), Brinton (1897), and Beauchamp (1898, 1901), and later Hodge (1922), and Speck (1925). The researchers embraced a “kind of mystical connection with the land” (Tooker, 1994, p.17). During the late 1800s, many white Americans viewed themselves as heirs to the Indian, but in keeping with a belief in progress, they also believed that the white American culture was “a civilization that was a superior embodiment of the ideals that the continent engendered” (Tooker, 1994, p. 17). Volumes were written about the cultural habits, tools, and beliefs of the Haudenosaunee as a result of researchers’ close friendships with Native American informants and their field observations. It was during the 1800s that distinctions between the types of wampum, their designs, and use were first discussed, and the first written reference to the Hiawatha Belt appeared. First published in 1851, Lewis Morgan’s pioneering book, titled *The League of the Haudenosaunee: People of the Longhouse*, explained for the first time in a systematic way the ancient social and political structure of wampum as it functions within the Haudenosaunee society (Wilson, 1959, p. 51). Morgan
(1851/1922) presented an overview of wampum as a primary tool for identification of events in the form of belts, and of Clan and Confederacy leadership in the form of strings. His photographs of wampum belts, made possible through his friendship with Seneca Elder Ely S. Parker (1908/1968), were instrumental in current reclamation of cultural knowledge about wampum’s symbols and oral descriptions.

With the help of Parker, Morgan emphasized the importance of complete documentation as necessary and responsible methodology in the collection of Native American culture and artifacts. But Morgan also suggested that the collection of both historical and social information such as Native American names and stories was problematic, as “various names given to them at different times were entirely accidental and none by which they ever recognized themselves” (Morgan, 1851/1922, p. 48). As a solution to the potential for errors in translation and interpretation, Morgan used a system of classification that followed an ordering of Native American artifacts based on the identification of the original producers and original use. In the case of the Hiawatha Belt and other wampum, Morgan’s descriptions determined the number of beads, their method of manufacture, and their condition. Morgan’s notes (1877) included a brief interpretation of the Hiawatha Belt based on its classification as an ornament. In his cataloging of wampum, Morgan also commented that the Hiawatha Belt appeared to have sustained some damage to the ends and that some of the beads are missing. He also included one explanation of the use and origin of wampum.

Wampum was an original Indian notion, which prevailed among the Iroquois as early, at least, as the formation of the League. The primitive wampum of the Iroquois consisted of strings of a small fresh water spiral shell, called in the Seneca dialect Ote-ko-a, the name of which has been bestowed upon the modern wampum. When Da-ga-no-we-da, the founder of the League, had perfected its organic provisions, he produced several of this ancient wampum of his own arranging, and taught them its use in recording the provision of the compact by which the several nations were united into one people. (Morgan, 1851/1922, p. 71)

Morgan’s implied reference to the Hiawatha Belt as the original wampum belt and as the symbol of unity for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was both vague and confusing because of
the general and brief nature of his description. However, the inclusion of specific Haudenosaunee names suggested that Morgan was incorporating descriptions from Native American oral stories through his observations. In later chapters, Morgan suggested that the development of wampum, from the original Hiawatha Belt to the Dutch wampum examples of his day, was further evidence of a broader anthropological claim based on progress and social evolution. He believed that the Haudenosaunee League represented through the creation of the Hiawatha Belt, the ancient social and political systems of a dying civilization. “Their [Native American cultures] gradual displacement is as inevitable as the progress of events.” (Morgan, 1851/1922, p. 97) His comments regarding the progress of events mirrored the then-contemporary belief that Native Americans developed “through regular stages from a few germs originally planted in the soil of human mind far back in the prehistoric ages” (Morgan, 1851/1922, p. 97). Morgan reiterated one of the grand narratives of anthropological development. In particular, his evolutionary chronology of human development offered a unifying explanation in which Native American tribes were placed at the beginning of a hierarchical scale measuring the progress of civilization. Morgan’s idea of progress for the societal advancement of Native Americans was thought to be a healthy dose of “morality, liberty, society, industry, and civilization … [and suggested that]…the unity of the human race was…derived from one stock” (Morgan, 1851/1922, p. 172).

In Morgan’s published interpretation of the Hiawatha Belt, the central narration, that of tribal relationships, was excluded from his description. Instead, Morgan used the designs of the Hiawatha Belt as a measurement of cultural progress in relation to the dominant white American culture. Morgan described the evolution of the Haudenosaunee culture through technological advancements. As a result, the description of the Hiawatha Belt became a lens through which tribal and American social development was chronologically ordered. In this manner, Morgan argued that tribal units such as the Haudenosaunee were precursors to the more progressive white American culture. He defended the idea that there was only one race and one species, derived from one stock, and based it on levels of technological competency. In the field of ethnology, Morgan’s work was compared to that of Darwin (Lloyd, 1901/1922).

Later ethnographic research about the Hiawatha Belt offered minimal changes in methodology, but emphasized both symbolic and literal translations of the wampum belts. The interpretations were again grounded in ethnographic theories regarding issues of technology and
linguistic development. However Speck (1925) stated that “nothing tangible can be elicited from extant records regarding these interesting belts and we are left to find other sources to furnish testimony as to their possible meaning” (p. 10). Speck’s refusal to personally speculate on the actual singular meaning of the belts’ symbolism could be interpreted as an epistemological shift in ethnographic research. Speck believed that the meanings attached to the symbols of the belts were best interpreted by those who used them. He called them mnemonic symbol writing and suggested that memory and oral traditions played a significant role in the wampum belt’s meanings and uses. He also implied that the meaning was constructed through their functions within the Haudenosaunee cultures. Speck argued that the development of mnemonic symbol writing could also be interpreted as a social practice within a broader phenomenon. “One could cite other instances, by no means rare, where the symbolism in wampum belts exhibits its connotation, possibly to be regarded as a genetic one, with realistic and symbolic art in the North” (Speck, 1925, p.14). Speck wrote that the symbolic picture writing found “was a shared property and a part of the general culture complex of the [northeast] East” (p. 14).

The significance of the contributions made during this period of early cultural investigations by scientists like Hale (1897), Morgan (1849, 1852, 1922), and Speck (1925) are complex. Their methods of field observations, their use of Native American informants, and their subsequent selection process regarding significant facts became standard models used within many research disciplines. But the impact of their findings about wampum, and in particular about the Hiawatha Belt, reached an even broader audience, the American public. In this manner, the resulting selection of information influenced the interpretation of wampum belts. For example, the interpretation of the Hiawatha Belt was limited to a scientific based analysis regarding bead manufacturing that included physical measurements, conditions, and technologies, but fell short in retaining the oral stories that carried wampum’s real social meanings. As a result of the process through which wampum was ultimately examined by the nineteenth and twentieth-century anthropologists discussed earlier, a single viewpoint of wampum’s meaning evolved. America’s interpretations of wampum were limited to descriptions that interpreted wampum as an artifact and as a form of colonial money used with the Indians prior to the late eighteenth- century minting of federal coins and paper money.

The designation of wampum as an artifact was, in part, due to changes in cultural ownership and access to the wampum. During the nineteenth-century wampum was defined as a
cultural commodity of what was believed to be a failing cultural group, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The exchange of wampum from the Confederacy to non-Natives not only disrupted the value of wampum within the Haudenosaunee, but it also prevented future generations from using it. The nineteenth century was a period when the concept of absolute ownership of the wampum was not well understood among the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Venables, 1995).

When wampum was removed from the Haudenosaunee culture, its original native values regarding possession were replaced by non-native definitions. For the nineteenth-century researchers, possession of wampum equaled absolute ownership. American law followed British law in citing that the proof of ownership was based in possession. For example, when there is a dispute over the rights of ownership, property law states that possession is nine-tenths of the law (McCoy, 1993). Initially property law was restricted to land issues, but its application has broadened to include ownership of objects also.

In property law, there are three elements that must be met to claim ownership. With respect to wampum, the three elements that posit rightful ownership are that wampum must be exclusively possessed, that a fair exchange has been made, and that wampum must be continuously possessed. The result is that nineteenth-century researchers exclusively and continuously possessed the wampum and could provide a bill of sale. Under non-native based laws, the researchers had a stronger legal claim to owning wampum than the Native community, which merely said it belonged to them. As a result, the ownership of wampum by non-Native people was never questioned by other non-native people and claims by the native members of the Haudenosaunee were ignored because of lack of proof.

Ownership of wampum also meant that decisions directing how wampum was used and who could use it were regulated by the owners. It also appears that the removal of wampum from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy ended the ability to access and interpret how wampum was used within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As early as the 1890s, there was evidence that the chiefs of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy were already petitioning for the return of their wampum belts held, they believed, in cultural guardianship at the New York State Museum. “The duty of the ‘keeper of the wampums’ [sic] to store all necessary facts in his memory and associate them with the successive lines and arrangements of the beads” (Venables, 1995, p. 33) was not possible without the wampum. The removal of wampum not only affected whether or
not it could be used within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, it also affected the ability to sustain
the meanings that were originally placed onto them. The association between the chief facts of
the national events and treaties and the wampum belts was diminished by their separation. The
placement of wampum into museum collections also led to a fixed representation of wampum’s
use and, inadvertently, of the culture that made it. Both wampum and the Haudenosaunee
Confederacy were perceived as frozen in time.

For a culture whose whole history and identity has been transmitted through the use of
mnemonic devices like wampum, the loss of access to wampum was perceived as necessary by
non-Native researchers for the continuance and preservation of Native American culture (Boots,
1989). On the other hand, moving wampum to museums created unparalleled access to the
wampum by audiences outside of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy through written reports and
museum displays.

The relationship between access to wampum and the rights of ownership also influenced
how wampum was interpreted. Lubin (1994) suggested that the period of the late nineteenth-
century represented America’s approach to ethnographic representation through the “cult of
genius, and the romantic belief of privileged figures” (p. xi). I believe the term can also apply to
the nineteenth-century ethnographic attitudes describing cultural relationships through a
hierarchical and progressive timeline. The chronological placement centered on the progression
of colonial events and worldviews demonstrated the perspective of the researchers and
collectors. It was within their world that wampum became an artifact and was defined as a
system of currency. Under this singular perspective, the collecting of Native American artifacts
became an effort to represent an emerging and non-Native American nation rather than to save
the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It was an effort to acquire cultural power found within the
reinterpretation of cultural information. This presentation of wampum as an object of a failing
community was further supported by the lack of Native American information presented with
wampum. The resulting display of wampum reinforced the concept of wampum as an artifact
and the nationally pervasive belief in the identity of the dying Indian. More specifically, the
museum displays of Native American wampum artifacts supported the growing importance of
the culture that determined how it was displayed.

As a result of more than one hundred years of separation, the original cultural uses of
wampum as significant objects within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy faded, both from the lack
of access and the inability for it to be interpreted in a manner originally designated. But the pursuit of its return has not diminished within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The repatriation of wampum represents a cultural change that both disrupted and challenged the rules of ownership for federally funded museums and institutions regarding the selection of objects that traditionally represent Native American cultures and art.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The relationship between culture and ownership is central to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990). The reclassification terms used in NAGPRA emphasized that the interpretation of wampum as an artifact of Indian money was used to justify its remaining in museum collections. By reclassifying wampum, from an artifact of the past to an object of cultural patrimony, NAGPRA emphasized that wampum should be returned unconditionally to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. NAGPRA also acknowledged, indirectly, the adverse cultural effects of separating wampum from the Haudenosaunee.

The impact of changing ownership, from the original Native American faith keepers through the nineteenth-century researchers and then returning to living members of the Haudenosaunee community, demonstrated the application of one of the basic tenets of the Hiawatha Belt. Those rights are interpreted from the Hiawatha Belt to apply the same “basic human rights to self determination, to advocate the protection and preservation of indigenous cultures, languages, lifestyles, beliefs, and relationships within the earth” (Akwesasne Notes, 2004, p. 2). For many, the return of the intellectual rights by acknowledging the original uses and interpretations of wampum as a object of cultural patrimony signaled a larger acceptance of the Native American culture of the Haudenosaunee within the general American public. “Based on NAGPRA, the message is that the Native cultural values are more important than the broader American values at this point” (Benedict, 2002, Interview). Shifts in cultural sources changed how wampum is now interpreted. When wampum was removed from museums, its definition as an artifact was challenged. Yet, the concept of wampum as an artifact still remains in art classrooms that I have supervised. Wampum is represented by student and master art educators as artifacts of Indian money with no other attached meanings. However, because of NAGPRA’s specific definition regarding Native American objects, wampum is now considered an object of
cultural patrimony. In this next section, an overview of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is introduced for the purpose of connecting the issues of ownership, access, and interpretations with the Native American wampum. NAGPRA’s application far exceeds wampum and therefore must be presented in a broader context.

Public Law 101-601, the “Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act” (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3048, 1990), was signed into law on November 16, 1990 by President George H.W. Bush. Introduced by Representative Morris Udall of Arizona on October 22, 1989, the legislation demonstrated “our civility and our common decency in the return of native [sic] American remains to their rightful resting place, and the protection of Indian graves in the future” (136 Cong. Rec. E3484-01).

Considerable debate between Native Americans and scientists ensued over ownership, access, and use of Native American human remains and associated objects. Some arguments about these issues were racially constructed. “Anthropologists and museum directors often offered their opinion about the intelligence of Indians; many believed that Indians will not know how to take care of the items that had been returned to them” (Mihesual, 2000, p. 98).

To many scientists and museum directors, skeletal remains and funerary items are better used as tools of learning. These professionals continue to argue that repatriation and reburial of these items will be detrimental because of the loss of research opportunities. “The examination of human remains yields information about an area that is frequently difficult or impossible to explore: the mundane daily activities of the peoples of the past” (Landau and Steele, 2000, p. 80). In contrast, Mihesual reminds his readers that many Native Americans view the rights of ownership and use on a more personal level.

The remains represent cultural ancestors and unearthing the skeletal remains and funerary objects are disruptive to their religious beliefs and to the dignity of the descendants of those Indians they study. Despite the differences of opinion over academia’s return of Indian skeletal remains and funerary objects to tribes, one thing agreed upon was that the looting of Indian burial sites must be stopped and that museums should not display Indian skeletal remains and sacred objects. (2000, pp. 99-100)
In Section 2, entitled “Definitions,” No. 3 NAGPRA defines the term *cultural item* to identify four specific types of cultural objects:

(A) **Associated funerary objects** are described as those objects exclusively made for burial and placed in the graves “at the time of death or later, and both the human remains and the associated funerary objects are presently in the possession or control of a Federal agency or museum” (NAGPRA, 104 Stat 3048, 1990).

(B) **Unassociated funerary objects** are those objects that are reasonably believed to have been “a part of the death rite or ceremony of a culture …where the human remains are not in possession or control of a Federal [sic] agency or museum” (NAGPRA, 104 Stat 3048, 1990).

(C) **Sacred objects** are “ceremonial objects, which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present day adherence” (NAGPRA, 104 Stat 3048, 1990).

(D) **Cultural patrimony** refers to “an object having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture itself, rather than owned by an individual Native American” (NAGPRA, 104 Stat 3049, 1990).

NAGPRA’s implementation is limited to federally funded museums, federal agencies, and federal lands and to any Indian tribe that is “recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians” (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3049, Sec. 7). NAGPRA defines *museum* as “any institution or state or local government (including any institution of higher learning) that receives Federal [sic] funds and has possession of, or control over, Native American cultural items” (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3049, Sec. 8).

The National Museum of the American Indian, further referred to in my research as NMAI, was established on November 28, 1989. Public Law 101-185 defines the NMAI as an individual museum within the Smithsonian Institution and “a living memorial to Native Americans and their traditions” (NMAI, 103 STAT 1336, § 2). NMAI is to provide increased and significant representation in the museum for Native American cultures and collections through exhibition, research, meetings, and education. The NMAI policy statement, available in 2005 museum brochures, is to “support the continuation of ceremonial and ritual life among Native American peoples, to foster and support the study by Native Americans of their own
traditions, and to forge consensus among the Museum and Native American communities while accounting for and balancing the interest of each” (NMAI, Brochure, 2005).

NMAI’s authority extends to the “inventory, identification, and return of Indian human remains and Indian funerary objects in possession of Smithsonian Institution” (NMAI, 103 STAT 1343, § 9). As the sole recipient of the Smithsonian’s Native American collections, including those at the Museum of the American Indian, NMAI must comply with NAGPRA regulations governing the return of Indian human remains and Indian funerary objects to particular Indian tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations.

At the center of NAGPRA are the issues of ownership and subsequent control of Native American human remains, associated funerary objects and the information learned from the items. In NAGPRA the definition of ownership is addressed through the benefits perceived. Researchers defended the role of the anthropologists by emphasizing the significance for Native people through the possible benefits of having easy access to human remains and cultural objects. “Scientists cite numerous advances in knowledge obtained from the study of human remains and claim that the knowledge is useful and beneficial to the living, especially Native Americans” (McManamon, 1994, p. 17). The debate about the Kennewick Man demonstrates the controversies of ownership of human remains that extend beyond simple legal issues.

The human skeletal remains that have come to be referred to as the "Kennewick Man", or the "Ancient One", were found in July, 1996 below the surface of Lake Wallula, a section of the Columbia River pooled behind McNary Dam in Kennewick, Washington. (McManamon, 1994, p. 19)

Following the process mandated by NAGPRA concerning human remains found on federally funded lands, an attempt was made to identify a cultural affiliation to determine whether the Kennewick man should be returned to the Umatillo Indians for reburial or remain accessible to science for further study.

On September 21, 2000, Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt provided detailed scientific reports of completed work supervised by the National Park Service and Corps of Engineers, the agencies responsible for the land where Kennewick man was recovered and, therefore, the current owners. Between 1998 and 2000, the Department of the Interior and National Park
Service, in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for the Kennewick remains, conducted a series of scientific examinations of the remains. In a letter written by Babbitt, the cultural affiliation of the Kennewick man was identified as belonging closest to the Umatilla tribe.

The Department of the Interior gathered and considered an extensive array of information to reach the decision regarding the disposition of the Kennewick human remains….the evidence of cultural continuity is sufficient to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the Kennewick remains are culturally affiliated with the present-day Indian tribe claimants [the Umatilla tribe]. (McManamon, 1994, p. 18)

However, opinions differ on the interpretation of evidence and the law in the complex and unusual case of the Kennewick Man. Ten years later, the controversy continues. The Umatilla tribe still wants to bury the bones before additional testing destroys the Ancient One, the Umatilla name for the Kennewick Man.

If this individual is truly over 9,000 years old, that only substantiates our belief that he is Native American. From our oral histories, we know that our people have been part of this land since the beginning of time. We do not believe that our people migrated here from another continent, as the scientists do. (Minthorn, 1996, ¶ 6)

But a small group of scientists, backed by the United States judicial system, have chosen to withhold burial of the Kennewick Man based on evidence that suggests the Kennewick Man is not linked to any of the existing tribes. Francis McManamon, Chief Archeologist for the Department of the Interior and spokesperson for the small group of scientists who actually performed the initial analysis, challenged the official conclusions offered by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt.

To date, the non-destructive information was not adequate for the Department of the Interior to make a determination of whether or not these remains are "Native American" for the purposes of NAGPRA. This is because there is not sufficient reliable
chronological information that could be gleaned from the non-destructive examination and results. (McManamon, 1994, Report)

These arguments were based on the fact that the scientists led by McManamon believed that the reading of the DNA suggested that the skeleton was more like the prehistoric Jomon of Japan or Polynesians or Caucasians than Native Americans (McManamon, 1994). “The tests showed the skeleton was 9,300 years old.” (Cary, 2007, ¶2) Based on the passage of time and the lack of supportive materials, cultural affiliation is hard to prove.

In the case of the Kennewick Man, the debate over ownership and future purpose demonstrates the complexities involving NAGPRA’s laws governing the protection of human remains between cultures. Profoundly different perspectives have emerged within the Kennewick Man debate. The debate over the Kennewick Man demonstrates how the control of human remains is often subject to culturally distinct interpretations. Until NAGPRA, most Native American human remains and objects were scientifically handled by non-Native Americans. “Treatment was often determined by archeological customs, museum or repository policies, various state and national laws, and even the whims of politicians” (Rose, Green and Green, 1996, p. 87). As a result, Native American human remains were often considered more significant to research rather than to cultural traditions. Minthorn, a Umatilla Board member and religious leader, acknowledges the cultural distinctions between the tribal and scientific perspectives in his request for the return of the Kennewick Man.

We are trying to ensure that the federal government lives up to its own laws, as well as honoring our policies, procedures, and religious beliefs. We understand that non-Indian cultures have different values and beliefs than us, but I ask the American people to please understand our stance on this issue. We are not trying to be troublemakers; we are doing what our elders have taught us - to respect people, while they’re with us and after they’ve become part of the earth. (Minthorn, 1996, ¶ 11)

Arguments for future scientific study to determine Kennewick’s Man’s ethnicity would be less important if there were not multiple historical narratives or worldviews regarding the place of Native Americans in the United States. “The fact that scientific narratives gain
precedence over Native narratives about their own history is indicative of the power differential inherent in colonial relationships” (Crawford, 2000, p.229). As a result of the continuation of colonial perspectives, stereotypes, and attitudes regarding Native Americans, the debate over Kennewick Man has also become a battle over who has the right to speak for themselves. Rather than seeing the Kennewick Man as an object of knowledge, control over the historical narrative means treating the human remains with the respect granted to all living humans. “It means that Native Americans, as subjects and not objects can provide their own equally valued notions of history, time, space, and ancestry” (Crawford, 2000, p. 233).

The repatriation of cultural patrimony is no less complex. Many Native American objects are subject to repatriation because they meet the definition of cultural patrimony. There are two principles that are the basis for NAGPRA claims: cultural significance and communal ownership. The definition “an object having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture itself” (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3049, 1990) emphasizes the connection between past and current cultural use of an object within a specific tribe.

The Zuni Pueblos view their Ahayu:da wooden-carved kachina figures as sacred cultural property. An excerpt from an early repatriation request reflects tribal perspectives. “Ahayu:da are communally owned by Zuni Pueblo; Ahayu:da outside the Zuni tribal boundary has been unlawfully removed; Ahayu:da are needed for the current practices of traditional religion by the Zuni people” (Herold, 2001, p. 98). In the same manner as the Zuni Ahayu:da, wampum is considered culturally significant for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. “The power and spirit of these objects must be restored if our communities are to become healthy living places” (Hill, Sr., 2001, p. 135).

Wampum is a compelling example of cultural patrimony. Wampum is sacred to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy because like so many other Native American objects, “their presence is needed for spiritual purposes in the long standing and ongoing religion” (Merrill & Ahlborn, 1997, p. 179). Wampum is also owned communally by the tribe and, therefore, satisfies the second part of NAGPRA’s definition regarding ownership of cultural patrimony. Wampum, as cultural patrimony, “cannot be alienated, appropriated, or conveyed by an individual regardless of whether the individual is a member of the Indian tribe” (NAGPRA, 104 STAT 3049, 1990). Wampum is considered cultural patrimony because, for the people of the
Haudenosaunee Confederacy, it is “an integral part of our daily lives. We still use it” (Powless, 2005, ¶ 4).

NAGPRA allows access to cultural artifacts and historical documents that were previously under museum care and not easily accessible or available to Native Americans. The effect of retrieving cultural artifacts and their documentation has been and promises to remain significant. Richard Hill, Sr. describes how the return of the artifacts has affected his own Native American community. “The archeological record in many ways confirmed our oral history and gave a deeper sense of history to the cultural patterns that we still see in our communities” (Hill, Sr., 1996, p.71).

It appears that the objective of the 1990 federally mandated enactment titled the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act has been accomplished. To date, more than one million sacred objects and funerary objects have been repatriated back into Native American communities (Bray & Rand, 1996, p. 47) under the assumption that NAGPRA was the right thing to do. The transfer of ownership and care was legally, ethically, and morally substantiated by previous actions under the guise of federal policies of assimilation, public welfare, and scientific study (Harjo, 2001; Trope, 2001; Worl, 2001). “NAGPRA was intended to provide some small measure of justice for Native Peoples in the modern era for the generational suffering and hardship imposed by policies and practices that outlawed Native religions and violated fundamental rules of human decency” (Harjo, 2001, p.3).

Although Harjo’s comments were focused on disruptive governmental policies that set into motion a century of collecting human remains for governmental studies, the confiscation of sacred objects, funerary items, personal and cultural items was also practiced. Harjo (2001) described the cultural deficit created by the haphazard collecting of Native American objects and human remains that often ended up in private collections, museums, and historical societies. “Early collection practices resulted in physical and spiritual damage of unimaginable, incalculable, inhuman proportions and in the demise of a great many of the traditional religions and ceremonies of Native Peoples” (Harjo, 2001, p. 6). Harjo’s comments are mirrored in contemporary criticism about the loss of meaning and the lack of cultural protocol and care when handling many of the objects previously collected. A combination of lost meaning and a lack of consensus on how sacred objects and human remains should be respected has complicated the repatriation process. Hill (2001) described a situation in which a policy for accepting human
remains is not often easy or comfortable for members of the Zuni Pueblo. “The Zuni tell the museums that, since the museums desecrated the grave, the responsibility for the proper care of the dead is theirs, not that of the Zuni. In short, they [the Zuni Pueblo] have no cultural mechanism in place to address the reburial” (Hill, 2001, p. 82). As a result of repatriation, many cultural beliefs were examined as a process of accepting sacred objects, and, in the case of the Zuni Pueblo, refusing to accept human remains.

NAGPRA has defined the current policies regarding the cultural ownership of Native American cultural patrimony within the United States. However, it does not address the questions regarding cultural ownership that extend beyond our national borders as a result of constant global interaction in trade and information. With regards to globalization, I present the ideas and opinions of Kwame Appiah, a philosopher whose work has widely dealt with the dilemmas of globalization, cultural membership, and the ethics of cultural ownership.

Appiah (2006) suggests that cultural ownership should be viewed through a broader lens, naming cosmopolitanism as a suitable framework. The concept of cosmopolitanism starts by identifying what is human in humanity, and because of those shared relationships within our species, suggests that individuals are connected globally and, therefore, affect lives everywhere. It also implies that we can learn from everyone. “Think of the people of the earth as so many branches of a single family, and the universe as a state” (Appiah, 2006, p. xv).

Appiah’s (2006) definitions regarding the concepts of culture and cultural patrimony reveal the application of the concept of cosmopolitanism.

Culture is whatever people make and invest with significance through their exercise of their human creativity. [It is] produced through conventions, never individual, and rarely universal. Cultural patrimony refers to the products of a culture: the group from whose conventions the object derives its significance. Here the objects are understood to belong to a particular group, heirs to a trans-historical identity, whose patrimony they are. (p. 118)

For Appiah, the debate over cultural ownership should be reworded. It is not a question over ownership but a question regarding whose hands the stewardship of cultural heritage should be placed. In his rewording, Appiah addresses the real problem of cultural ownership. Does
cultural patrimony belong to individuals, to a specific group of people, or to the world? Appiah answers that the real obstacle to understanding cultural ownership is based on global identity. He stated the following. “The challenge, then, is to take minds and heart formed over a millennia of living in local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe we have become” (p. xiii).

For Appiah, the ownership of cultural patrimony should be connected globally, but regulated locally. He frames this local-global relationship within the mutual, but often competing, existence of local and universal values. His two main perspectives emphasize local values and communities and at the same time, seek universal standards. This is possible by connecting “not through identity but despite difference” (Appiah, 2006, p. 135).

In stressing individual values and local communities, Appiah acknowledges the uniqueness and singularity of cultural objects in the same manner that Benjamin (1936) identified objects as having an aura. Aura is the connection that we have with the original object and it is the magic that makes us want to possess specific objects and not others. In stressing a respect for individual and local differences, Appiah claims that the relationship between objects of cultural patrimony and “the practices and beliefs that lend them significance” (p. xv) determines and justifies the individual or local communities’ rights to ownership. He emphasizes the inseparable connections between objects of cultural patrimony and social practices. One does not continue to exist without the other and, therefore, individual cultures should retain cultural ownership. “It is that, in simplest terms, cultural property is regarded as the property of its culture. If you belong to that culture, such work is, in the suggestive shorthand, your cultural patrimony. If not, not” (p. 118)

However, the rights to ownership of cultural patrimony can also be recognized for their universal values in the ability to demonstrate the broader human community. It is this broader and more universal application that Appiah points to when he stresses global obligations. “One [reason] is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship” (p. xv). He argues that “a great deal of what people wish to protect as ‘cultural patrimony’ was made before the modern system of nations came into being” (p. 119).

For example, Appiah presents his experiences as a Nigerian and debates the future of Nok sculptures situated in Nigeria. He suggests that “if a culture came to an end like the Nok of
Nigeria, and the people became something else, why should those descendents [contemporary Nigerians] have a special claim on those objects, buried in the forests and forgotten for so long” (p. 120). Appiah argues that contemporary Nigerians who claim rightful ownership of Nok sculptures because of their current cultural affiliation and geographical position are misled. “They are claiming for a nation whose boundaries are less than a century old, the works of a civilization more than two millennia ago, created by a people that no longer exists, and whose descendents we know nothing about” (p.121). A more reasonable stance would determine the government gets to decide what to do with objects in the case when nobody can establish a reasonable claim. Appiah (2006) believes that “governments should think of themselves as trustees for humanity because Nok sculptures are of potential value to all human beings” (p. 120).

In effect, this position of ownership places a special obligation on the government to preserve objects of cultural patrimony because cultural heritage belongs to all humans and, therefore, cultural patrimony is an issue for all humans. This position of global ownership reinforces Appiah’s framing of cultural patrimony as “one of the basic elements of civilization and national culture, and that its true value can be appreciated only in relation to the fullest possible information regarding its origin, history, and traditional setting” (127).

In summary, Appiah has presented two strong perspectives regarding local cultural and global ownership of objects of cultural patrimony. He has examined and determined that objects differ in their relevance and significance. In the end, Appiah theoretically straddles the debate over cultural patrimony between local and global ownership by understanding and emphasizing the rights and responsibilities of both positions. Individual cultures retain ownership when objects are connected with current social practices, therefore making them inherently necessary for local cultural preservation. But at the same time, when there is no continuity of title or when the object becomes inaccessible through private collections or illegal distribution, then the onus of ownership of cultural patrimony demands that education through exposure “should not be limited to our own” (p. 127) because the benefits in sharing the ideas attached to cultural patrimony far exceeds localized usage. Appiah argues that “the aesthetic value is not fully captured by its value as private property” (p. 127). The benefits are found in the human connection. That is, the connection that can be found if only we “move beyond thinking of it [cultural patrimony] as ours and start to respond to it as ... the connection to humanity” (p. 137).
In similar fashion to Appiah’s concept of local ownership on the framework of cosmopolitanism, NAGPRA also addressed the human connection by returning wampum and other objects cultural patrimony significant to Native American cultural practices. However, not all objects met NAGPRA’s definition of cultural patrimony and, therefore, remain in museum collections. In particular, there are a number of wampum belt, strings, and beads that are still housed in the collection at the American Museum of Natural History shown in chapter one, page 9, figure 4. Their significance is currently unknown. In this case of unrepatriated wampum, Appiah’s application of universal ownership has also been applied. The AMNH provides both the stewardship of the wampum and the site where all people may view wampum. This is an opportunity through which local cultural information can be shared for the purpose of both appreciation and education. It is possible that the AMNH can become, as Appiah (2006) described, a site where “conversations happen across boundaries of identity [and where] people get used to each other” (p. 85).

In effect, NAGPRA has demonstrated that it works within Appiah’s framework of cosmopolitanism. The impact of NAGPRA, the return and reintegration of specific cultural items, has untold consequences for local and global cultural education because of the research required for repatriation. In retrospect, Public Law 101-601 has contributed to Native American knowledge and knowledge about Native Americans by changing, through possession and ownership, the sources for information. Prior to NAGPRA, evidence to establish cultural ownership and affiliation was often assigned to human remains and cultural items. Now, the recognition of Native American narratives as proof of cultural significance and ownership has forever changed the manner in which Native Americans and their cultures shall be known, exhibited, and used in education.

However, NAGPRA recognizes that cultural information is not only preserved in objects, but can also be found in the living, breathing culture. “The repatriation process focuses on objects within their specific cultural settings” (Worl, 2001, p. 24). By placing the objects and human remains back into the cultures that value them, new types of contextual information are now available. No longer do objects have to speak for Native American ideas and information. Native Americans have now become central figures in the interpretation of cultural information about Native Americans: they can speak for themselves.
Now that millions of sacred objects have been returned, the communities in which the objects were originally made have undergone a level of cultural renewal. Communities are eager to participate in a process Sackler (1996) describes as “finding the meanings that have been assumed by the dominant culture for a very long time. It is time now for those questions [of meaning and use] to be addressed from the ‘non-dominant’ point of view” (p. 70). Sackler’s comment suggests that the changes from repatriation affect more than just the transfer of the rights of ownership; she implies, by suggesting the needed changes, that dominant and non-dominant points of view or perspectives are different. If Sackler’s comments about these perspectives are correct, then it is to be expected that the repatriation of cultural objects may also result in significantly different interpretations for Native Americans.

If my assumptions regarding the emergence of additional interpretations from Native American communities are plausible, then the impact for art educators is significant. The inclusion of this information into mainstream America would also reach and influence a broad audience. “It offers anthropologists, museum personnel and others involved with museums and institutional collections additional education about the collections for which they are or have been responsible” (Sackler, 1996, p.70). Art educators need to develop working strategies to incorporate the new cultural information and educational methodologies that, as Sackler (1996) suggested, are emerging from Native American communities. For this reason, I believe that the cultural consequences of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act promise future opportunities and challenges for art educators in understanding the complex and rich nature of Native American cultural information arising from the presence of multiple perspectives and sources.

Wampum as an Object of Cultural Patrimony

In the 1977 Webster’s dictionary, definitions of patrimony did not exist. However Encarta’s internet dictionary now offers the following definition that appears to embrace both scientific and cultural classifications. Derived from a fourteenth-century Latin-based French noun, the word patrimony stems from pater meaning father. There are three applications given: “1. heritage: the objects, traditions, or values that one generation has inherited from its ancestors; 2. inheritance from father: an inheritance from a male ancestor; 3. belonging to church: an estate
or endowment that belongs to a church” (Encarta, 2007b, ¶1-3). The change from artifact to object of cultural patrimony is clearly a reference to the changes in cultural and contextual significance that objects like wampum underwent as these objects were reinterpreted. If applied to the definition of an object of cultural patrimony, then wampum represents an object that is linked to cultural inheritance belonging to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

By definition, cultural ownership is concerned with the production of ideas and the use of information that describes behavior, beliefs and values shared by a particular set of people, and the control of the benefits that are received as the consequences of these patterns of ownership (Barker, 2003; Foucault, 1994). The issue of cultural ownership is complex because it deals with two distinct cultural definitions of ownership: absolute ownership versus stewardship. In the case of American law, specific ownership can be proven by the use of receipts, titles, and witnesses to prove the transfer of property. But in traditional Native American governments, ownership is both individual and cultural. Cultural ownership is better defined as a type of stewardship that resembles the type of civic responsibility found in many American museums. Similar concepts of stewardship are found in museums and Native American communities because both emphasize a high level of ethical responsibilities regarding the care and cultural preservation of artifacts for the community they serve. Native American communities believe that the cultural artifacts are “placed in their keeping for seven generations” (S. Edwards, Phone Call, June 2, 2003) and, in similar fashion, museums are prepared to serve their communities through the collection, care, and preservation of their collections in perpetuity. Ironically, the concept of stewardship is also one of the reasons why many Native American objects were removed from museums and returned to their respective communities.

As a result of providing for the return of wampum to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, there have been reports of increased use and applications within the community (Jemison, 2000). Access is no longer an issue controlled by people outside of their communities. Questions about wampum, in regards to when, where, by whom, and for what wampum will be used, are now controlled by the Grand Council in Canada and by the faith keepers within the Onondaga Nation.

Unlike the published accounts of wampum as artifacts, not all current interpretations of wampum are written. There are narratives that, when orally presented, represent what wampum means. For Native Americans, the most popular and most accessible current sources of information about wampum are the oral narratives or histories handed down from storyteller to
storyteller, family to family, and kept within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Oral histories are “spoken recollections of the past that are traditionally or universally known in a given culture” (Finnegan, 1992, p. 7). By adding the concept of tradition to oral history, Finnegan implies that the stories are authentic because they are “fundamental and valued, often supposedly transmitted over generations, perhaps by the community or ‘folk’ rather than conscious individual action” (p. 7).

Historical accuracy presented through oral traditions is often challenged because of the difficulty of repeating and validating information (Clifford, 1988; Deloria, 1998; Durkheim & Mauss, 1963). Oral traditions are often categorized as mythological (Clifford, 1988; Durkheim & Mauss, 1963), with the understanding that “myths are fundamentally a [linguistic] classification, but one which borrows its principles from religious beliefs, not from scientific ideas” (Durkheim & Mauss, 1963, pp. 77-78).

Anthropologists Durkheim and Mauss (1963), Geertz (1973), and Levi-Strauss (1995) argued that it was possible to understand “the inner nature of a society by uncovering the meanings of its constituent parts” (Jacobson, 1991, p.110) through the methods of witnessing social performances, like oral histories, provide. Geertz (1973) associated social performance with two social functions. First, the sociological function of performances, in the form of the telling of oral traditions and myths, contributes to the maintenance of the social order (Geertz, 1973). So when oral traditions are shared about the Hiawatha Belt, the lessons found within the stories provide an organizational protocol that determines leadership, political relationships, and rules of social behavior.

Geertz’s (1973) second claim, based on his fieldwork in Bali, defined the “Balinese reading of a Balinese experience [as] a story they tell themselves about themselves” (p. 35). In the same manner, the oral traditions that are connected to the Hiawatha Belt not only express social reality in such a way as to make it comprehensible to the Haudenosaunee, but the oral traditions also transform social reality. The retelling of the myths shape and educate the participants. In this manner, the history, the mores, and the values of the Haudenosaunee are presented both audibly through oral traditions and visibly through the designs that make the Hiawatha Belt a unique artifact. One is not complete without the other.

For the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, oral histories function as informed truths. They are accepted because oral histories provide through memory the illusion of objectivity, both because
of their cultural longevity in passing from one generation to another, and because of their perceived relevance in providing cultural meaning. In the case of wampum, oral traditions carry the message of why wampum is so significant. Religion (as a cultural system) formulates a culture’s view of the way their world is and hypothetically determines the organization of their society. In short, “myths explain the unexplainable and provide explanations of why cultures are organized the way they are and how people should behave” (Jacobson, 1991, p. 109).

In general, there is a heuristic element in incorporating oral traditions in all research methodology that Mauss (1967) called the “total social phenomena: legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, morphological and so on” (p.76). Oral traditions are a great source of information because they are generated exclusively for and by the culture that created them. They include ideas and beliefs about “individual and collective rights.... being of interest to both families and clans ... concern true religion, animism, magic ... notions of value, utility, consumption ... and aesthetic emotion” (Mauss, 1967, p. 77). It is only by considering the oral traditions that the “total social phenomena” of the wampum and its cultural significance can be seen “in the round, as they really are” (Mauss, 1967, p. 78).

Reconstructing the Native American worldviews and recovering authentic Native voices about wampum has become a main concern for many Native Americans and non-Native American scholars (Deloria, 1998). Donald Fixico (1997) maintained, “that in order to write Indian history, one should consult Indian sources, which included Indian oral history” (p. 7). He defined oral history as “an integral part of their lives, filled with protocol, conceptualization, an explanation of the known and the unknown, and it presents a different reality when viewed from inside their communities” (p. 7). Under his proposal, past interpretations about the Hiawatha Belt should be examined and their interpretations questioned based on the fact that much of what has survived was written by non-Native Americans.

In the case of the wampum, both written and oral traditions offered powerful, however partial or sometimes misleading, insights into Haudenosaunee culture. Oral traditions were not considered by 19th century ethnographers to be more reliable than myths until recently. As a result of relegating oral traditions to mythical constructions, Native American interpretations were considered less than credible in the eyes of dominant American culture scholars, government officials and educators (Deloria, 1994; Fixico, 2000).
In the broader cultural context, it is difficult and perhaps unnecessary to try to determine which stories are more authentic or more truthful because of all the historical contributions and layering of ideas that have accumulated during wampum’s history. The original information has been shared and recorded through the memory and documentation of wampum keepers, explorers, military men, collectors, storytellers, scholars, linguists, philosophers, curators and educators as sources embedded within an ever-changing context. Past arguments over the validity of oral traditions have succumbed to the insistence on empirical data to substantiate their meaning. Where historical documents were seen to provide pathways toward objective truths, many scholars now challenge the very notion of objectivity and ultimate truth.

Every research participant with whom I spoke believed that their oral stories and histories of wampum were historically and chronologically correct. In addition, many elders, attorneys, and chiefs of the Haudenosaunee claim that oral traditions about wampum continue to provide the corporeal truths and evidence regarding Native American identity (Jemison, ATLATL Conference, October 15, 2000; Williams, interview, August 2, 2001). For the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Hiawatha Belt is a sacred object of cultural patrimony because it continues to symbolize the formation and existence of the Confederacy. To have the Hiawatha Belt presented as merely a cultural design element, an artifact connected to myth, or a specimen for anthropological consideration is perceived as short sighted, confusing, and wrong (Deloria, 1998, Fixico, 2000).

For a culture whose history and identity have been transmitted through oral traditions and kept alive through the use of mnemonic devices like wampum, the gradual change to the written word was transformative. It was perceived necessary for the continuance and preservation of Native American culture (Boots, 1989). The impact of changing sources from the original Native American faith keepers through the 19th century anthropologists and returning to living members of the Haudenosaunee community demonstrated the application of one of the basic tenets of wampum. Those rights are interpreted from the wampum to apply the same “basic human rights to self determination, to advocate the protection and preservation of indigenous cultures, languages, lifestyles, beliefs, and relationships within the earth” (Akwesasne Notes, 2004, p. 2). For many, the return of the intellectual rights by acknowledging the original uses and interpretations of wampum as a object of cultural patrimony signaled a larger acceptance of the Native American culture of the Haudenosaunee within the general American public. “Based on
NAGPRA, the message is that the Native cultural values are more important than the broader American values at this point” (Benedict, 2002, Interview). Shifts in cultural sources changed how wampum is now interpreted. When wampum was removed from museums, its definition as an artifact was challenged. Yet, for many Native and non-Native audiences, the concept of wampum as an artifact still remains one with little contemporary meaning attached. However, under the ownership of the Haudenosaunee, wampum is now considered an object of cultural patrimony. Once again, wampum is subject to the exclusive Native American interpretations and use within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that only cultural ownership can provide.

Ownership, Access, and Interpretation

In the first three sections of chapter two, I presented three themes found within the artifact and object of cultural patrimony classifications of wampum. These interpretations of wampum are prominently found within three source areas, 19th century ethnographic research, the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and written documentation by members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In the presentations of each of the three sources, the relationship between ownership, access, and interpretation was also examined in the context of the source materials. As a result of examining the central themes, several points regarding the meaning of wampum will be summarized in this final section.

An examination of the transformation of wampum should also include the historical roots that have shaped the current descriptions of wampum as an artifact and as an object of cultural patrimony. The purpose of determining historical roots is to reveal the possible benefits and beneficiaries behind each classification.

To begin, I will look at the time period and culture in which each interpretation was constructed. Wampum as an artifact was examined through the perspective of non-Natives. The earliest comments involved wampum in the process of trade and commerce. Dutch and English colonists manufactured wampum to support their growing economy, standardize trade and strengthen their territorial claims along the Atlantic Ocean coastal communities. Wampum remained in use until a more prevalent currency was created in the late 1780s. The creation of a standardized currency for use in the colonies nullified wampum’s value for those colonists and traders who used wampum. In the eyes of the early Americans, wampum became a symbol of the
past. In the context of the colonists and traders, ownership of wampum was connected to its value in bartering and trade.

It was not until the 1800s that wampum was reinterpreted by non-native ethnographers who considered wampum a representation of what was then perceived as failing Native American cultures. The collection of wampum became significant as a way to preserve mementos of Native Americans within the context of American history.

Both perceptions of wampum were constructed in relationship to how wampum was accommodated with the non-Native American culture. As a result, wampum was considered part of the past. It was classified as an artifact because it was perceived by non-Native Americans as a relic of currency and later a memento of the past.

In contrast, both NAGPRA and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy argue that the meaning of wampum has never changed within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Wampum is an integral part of the world views of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and based on their significance within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, wampum has been reinterpreted as objects of cultural patrimony. Within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, there is a common belief that the perceptions of the meaning of wampum by non-Native Americans outside of their community are misleading and less relevant.

Even when the wampum was inaccessible to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy because it was in museums, the meaning of wampum did not change. But, because of wampum’s inaccessibility, some meanings remain unknown. As a result, some of the wampum belts whose meaning is unknown have remained in museum collections in spite of the argument that all wampum should be returned to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The relationship between ownership, access, and interpretation has been demonstrated consistently throughout this chapter as codependent. Access to wampum has only been available through possession and therefore through ownership. In similar fashion, both the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the non-Native American communities retain ownership of wampum through their own cultural interpretations. Through the perspective of non-Native American communities, wampum is still recognized as Indian money and more recently, as significant doctrines of Native American cultural objects for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Through the perspective of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, wampum is a sacred and integral part of their heritage and world beliefs. As a result of this shared history of wampum, the interpretations of
wampum as both artifact and object of cultural patrimony help represent the contextual nature of objects by focusing on the perspectives of both cultures who claim ownership and the right to interpret it.

The coexistence of multiple interpretations of wampum, especially those that were constructed outside of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, is not accepted by members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. A commonality among criticism from within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is directed at the construction of museum displays representing Native Americans. Hill’s (2000) criticism of the methods through which Native Americans and their objects are presented in museum settings questioned not only the information that is presented, but also the authorship of information about Indians. And by pointing out that non-Indians have created exhibitions about Indians, Hill (2000) and Truettner (1997) questioned the authenticity of the exhibitions. Many museum displays remain based on the same nineteenth and twentieth-century ethnographically-based information that has fueled other cultural misrepresentation about wampum. The possibility of misrepresentation lies in the absence of Native American input about real wampum because of the belief that museum displays represent an illusion of cultural accuracy which all cultures seem to have uncritically embraced.

The acknowledgement of differing and shared forms of knowledge is a primary tenet of critical art pedagogy. “Among these [critical art pedagogy] beliefs are the propositions that knowledge is multi-form, value-laden and socially constructed in the cultural arena” (Cary, 1998, p. 13). Critical art pedagogy is useful in identifying the social and cultural narrative components surrounding wampum because critical art pedagogy recognizes the powerful relationship between knowledge and ownership. “Given a form of power thought to be an ultimate source of truth, those who enjoy direct access to it can regulate that access so as to exclude others and maintain their own power and privilege” (Cary, 1998, p. 14). The ability to restrict cultural information, as described by Cary, suggests that this is a voluntary or conscious effort on the part of those who regulate information. Since the inception of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the elders and chiefs of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are the stewards of wampum and they now regulate how wampum is used and interpreted.

The process of my research must also be considered in contemporary twenty-first-century interpretations of wampum because it too becomes part of the ongoing process of making meaning. For every person I approach, for every question I ask, and for every response
that is given, there are consequences. Whether they are great or small, the consequences are not yet known. However, I believe that my interviews and field research have become both unavoidable and unregulated influences in the interpretation of wampum. My research is intrusive in the sense that I disrupt the daily routines of those who grant interviews. My research incorporates the guidance of those elders and Chiefs of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy who were willing to be interviewed. For other elders, however, my research may be perceived as unregulated and uninvited. As a result, I have also become a contributing factor to the interpretive process and to the critical art pedagogical process.

In the next chapter, the stories and perspectives of five members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are presented the meaning and use of wampum as an object of cultural patrimony. Their comments provide an opportunity for non-Native Americans to understand how multiple and seemingly opposing interpretations of wampum are affected by these varying perspectives.
THE INTERVIEWS

In the previous chapter, I discussed the definitions of wampum as an artifact found within historical and non-Native interpretative work of early anthropologists, explorers, and missionaries. Their narratives were a blend of their own perceptions and experiences with Native culture and suggested the demise for wampum and the culture that created it. In this chapter, I discuss the personal accounts of wampum that promote a view of it as living artifact. The selection and subsequent analysis of these five interviews is significant because I have discovered information that extends beyond the identification of wampum. In my analysis, I identify a pattern that is shared between participants. It represents the type of information each interviewee chose to share and those questions to which they chose not to respond. Their responses and their avoidances shape the final analysis.

I am grateful to these five individuals for allowing me to verbally poke, prod, and question their views, beliefs, and uses regarding wampum. They are in the order that I interviewed them: Francis Boots, Sonny Edwards, Darren Bonaparte, Paul Williams, and Toni Benedict.

The presentation of their stories in a narrative mode of writing serves to connect each as a vignette of a greater story, one through which meaning can be found within all the stories by analyzing both their similarities and differences with regards to wampum. My organization of the contributions of these five individuals was also facilitated by the integration of Behar’s (1996) autobiographical style “where bearing testimony and witnessing offer the only, and still slippery, hold on truth” (p. 63). It is a style that promotes a more personal and vulnerable relationship between myself and each participant. Therefore the resulting stories presented in this chapter were intended to identify, develop, and analyze my understanding of how these five individuals defined wampum and how wampum defined these individuals.

It is also important to acknowledge that the various backgrounds and experiences of each individual represent their stories and should not be perceived as information that is generally known, accepted, or absolute within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As a final warning to the reader, the stories presented here should not be used as any type of cultural measurement. They are best described as a window through which the reader may view my experiences as a
researcher within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It is a portal through which the reader can
discover how wampum is interpreted and used there in the first decade of the 21st century.

Francis Boots

My very first interview within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was with Francis Boots, the Tribal Historian Preservation Officer (THPO) for the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation. He was not the first person I had approached to be interviewed, but he was equally interested in meeting with me, an outsider, to discuss the topic of wampum. I first contacted Boots by e-mail through the St. Regis Nation Website and began to ask him questions about wampum. Within a month, I had shared my research topic to identify how wampum was interpreted after repatriation and he had invited me to visit.

On May 30, 2001, I left Penn State University in State College and drove the seven hours to Hogansburg, New York. The summer was especially green because of the extended rainfall and the scenery was silhouetted by mountainous ranges and quiet dense old growth forests. As I drove north, I had second thoughts. Here I was driving into an unknown community and assuming that I would find the right people to define wampum. After all, I reasoned, Boots seemed like an authority on the subject. But exactly why did I believe that Boots would be a reliable source for the information about wampum? What types of qualities make a person a
reliable cultural informant? Were the right people defined by their cultural positions? Did reliability in information define authentic information? Was authenticity inherent in Boot’s position as Tribal Historian? It was a difficult question with no easy answers. So I decided that the issue of getting reliable information from authentic sources would be a great place to start. I was going to ask Boots to help me understand how he viewed the reliable nature of cultural information. After all, he was the Tribal Historian.

When we finally met, I was greeted with a hearty handshake, a broad smile, and a motion to remain silent. I was motioned to sit opposite Boots at the large conference table. Then Boots introduced himself. “My name is Ohontsiawakon and they also call me Francis Boots.” He then welcomed me to the Mohawk Nation with the beginning of the Confederacy’s Thanksgiving Address in his language. He spoke for about five minutes in Mohawk, using his face and body to express both a blessing, a welcome, and as I was to find out later, an offer of protection during my visits to the Mohawk Nation. The protection was not from harm but more like a friend’s offer to help.

Boots introduced himself as a person possessing cultural authority. He was the Tribal Historian Preservation Officer and, therefore, was able to officially represent the history and events from a Mohawk perspective. But I asked him to define himself in terms of his reliability in representing the Mohawk Nation’s history. “How should I measure the authenticity of this interview?” I asked. He laughed and then proceeded to tell me about his life and how it worked towards his position today.

Boots suggested that what sets him apart from other individuals in his culture is his familiarity with, and his immersion, in the core values of the Longhouse. Today, as a clan member, Boots uses wampum in the traditions of the Longhouse and his first language is Mohawk or Kanienkeha. His first interaction with wampum began when he was a young boy. Under the guidance of his uncle, he became a messenger for the Six Nation delegation. This meant that he took a length of wampum beads to all who were invited. Each bead stood for the number of days until the meeting. His job was to confirm that the wampum and message were delivered, that the summons to the meeting was accepted, and that each person was introduced to the delegation.

At the age of 21 and as a member of the St Regis Mohawk Longhouse, Boots was condoled (initiated through wampum) as the head of the Men’s Warrior Society: a position of
authority within the Grand Council and St Regis Mohawk. It is now his responsibility as a conodeled Chief to open their meetings with the Thanksgiving Address, keep order (not behavior but protocol) in the way of the Council. He will remain in that position until he dies. Within the Longhouse, he is in a high position of authority because of the serious nature of keeping the beliefs and traditions alive.

The difference between Boots’ positions as a traditional Chief and as the Tribal Historian Preservation Officer can be best understood through an examination of their origins of governance. As a traditional Chief within the Longhouse, his position and responsibilities relate to the historical creation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the original ten Mohawk Chiefs who were present. Boots’ title and title wampum represent one of those ten Chiefs and are handed down from generation to generation to denote both tribal authority and historical acknowledgement to those who formed the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In the traditional system of governance, membership in the Longhouse is necessary in order to be conodeled as a Chief. In contrast, his position as the Tribal Historian Preservation Officer functions within a governance system implemented by the United States Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. This Act provided, at least in theory, a place within the United States legal infrastructure through which American Indians could self govern. A position within the governing system provided by the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 represents consent and participation in the legal system of the United States. In the federal system of governance, a chief is elected in the same manner as any other American official, through the procedure of voting, and limited by term and age regulations. Both traditional and federal systems coexist in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

With respect to other nations within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Boots was careful to separate the Mohawk Nation from others. He said I could measure the differences between this Mohawk reservation and other reservations through the practice of the wampum. “We are full of culture. Myron [Myron Shute, wampum maker] brings the practical. Others talk about philosophy, theory, lots of old stories, but it is not practiced. We live it. We live the truth, not just preach it.” Boots, in essence, implied his culture’s articulation of wampum was more reliable because they know their history, they’re willing to communicate with others, they still speak their language, and they believe that the future will be beautiful. This last comment refers to a prophecy in which the lost status of Indian nations will once again return. It is one that I heard in many different forms, but all pointed towards a return of political power for all indigenous
cultures. So in essence, Boots’ emphasis on the value of knowledge and the use of that knowledge to connect generations far exceeds wampum’s value as a relic. His comments also revealed the personal side of Francis Boots, Chief and Historian of the St. Regis Mohawk Nation. They reveal that he presents his information about wampum through his own experiences and that his experiences became the foundation and portal through which Boots knows about wampum. So I asked him “What is wampum?”

Wampum beads are referred to as *otsı’nehtara* and, above all else, they indicate the presence of the Creator. Boots recalled his opening words and translated.

I just stated that a long time ago when our people recognized that we needed a recording of our history and our ceremonies, then we would create a wampum belt. More important, whenever our Chiefs’ Council is open, it is brought out in the open and it lays in front of everybody. That is an indication that the Creator or all the powers of the natural worlds are listening to our words.

By positioning the *otsı’nehtara* as vehicles through which direct contact with the Creator can be made, wampum emphasizes the need to be accountable. As Boots suggested, when the wampum is present, then clarity of thought, words, and deeds is imperative. “We bind to our conscience to tell the truth as we understand it in our Councils and to speak softly and to speak kindly and not to speak too much as to continuously confuse the issues.” In essence, each person is answerable for his or her actions to a higher and more powerful entity, the Creator. The wampum is there to support what Boots deemed as the honorable intentions of a Mohawk.

For this reason, wampum is used for a number of situations, or as Boots described, “each has many meanings.” For outsiders like me, the initial categorization of the various traditional applications of wampum can be overwhelming because of the multiple uses and meanings. Wampum can relay official summons to meetings, a job Boots held earlier in his life. Wampum can also record history through specific event-related designs and sanction ceremonies. It is the sanctioning presence of the Creator within wampum that makes wampum necessary for traditional Longhouse wedding and funeral ceremonies, in the official recognition or condoling of traditional leadership roles, in condolence ceremonies and in both American, Canadian and tribal court room settings.
The use of wampum is not always understood. In court settings, Boots finds it necessary to counteract this resistance by instructing people about wampum.

Sometimes people want to bind their conscience that they will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on wampum rather than the bible. So I end up educating the judge, instructing the prosecutor. I educate everybody. It is a symbol and we put as much authority into the wampum string as we do our Bible.

Comparing the use of wampum with the Bible was not an arbitrary association, but one that highlights the cross-cultural uses of sacred objects between other cultures and religions within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy communities. In this instance, the reference to the Bible also acknowledges the historical presence and growing number of Catholics, Mormons, and Protestants among the Mohawk Nation members.

Another demonstration of the use of sacred objects to communicate similar essential concepts such as truth and loyalty is the existence of wampum belts in France’s Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral Treasury. During my visit in 2002, I was able to speak with Vincent Cochet, the curator of the Treasury in a late night and unplanned, but welcomed visit. The two wampum belts I was shown were made by the Abenaki and Huron members who had converted to Christianity under the 17th century Jesuit missionaries. The wampum belts are unusual because they use old Latin to spell out the message rather than the symbols found in most old wampum belts. Later I translated the messages of these belts and found that the Native makers of these belts pledged their obedience to the Virgin Mary and identified their tribal affiliations. Cochet believed that these two wampum belts were sent by the missionaries as a sign of friendship and a payment of homage to their patron, the Abbe and Recteur de la Cathedrale de Chartres. More significantly the giving of these belts also signaled the conversion of Native American people to the religious communities in France.

I must have looked lost because Boots backtracked with an infusion of history to help me understand the variety and sometimes conflicting perspectives of wampum. While earlier Catholic missionaries incorporated the use of wampum belts in the Catholic Church to further assimilate membership among the 16th and 17th century Mohawks, they did not attach the same
meaning to the belts. He stated that some did not want to accept the responsibility of cultural stewardship and of holding the wampum for the next generation.

First of all, I think it has to be said that we are the custodians of the wampum. The *otsi’nehtara*, bead by bead, belongs to the next generation. I am here to be responsible for it and to hold it and to have knowledge of it. But it does not belong to me. It belongs to the future generations and those whose faces are not yet seen. That is how delicate our respect [is that] we have for it.

As a result of not accepting the position of stewardship given to them, some members of the Confederacy contributed to past losses of both cultural information and belts. Their misunderstanding and misplaced trust in collectors and museums to uphold the position of steward contributed to the ultimate transfer of ownership, not stewardship, of many wampum beads and belts. Added to the loss of the wampum was the “over-culture’s perception that we were considered wards of the state because we were unable to take care of our own affairs.” For Boots, the correction of ownership and the return of many, but not all, wampum beads and belts are due to social consciousness and NAGPRA. Now, as belts return home, people are focusing on developing contemporary relevance in wampum.

Contemporary relevance is at the core of wampum’s significance. That is why, Boots explained, wampum should be returned home.

It is the preservation of the belts and their meaning that must be preserved because it connects us to our history. It is essential for our culture to survive. And because of that, it [the old wampum beads] should be preserved, honored and shared at all costs. It should not be changed and that is what makes it sacred.

But change happens. Old ideas are often reshaped to embrace new ways of living. That is why wampum is seen everywhere: on schools, on bumper stickers, flags, etc. I asked if the changes in use altered the meaning of wampum. Boots agreed. “It is the new message and the new identity of the Confederacy that is now emerging.” In spite of its changes, Boots insisted
that the ability to change over generations also offered evidence that it remained a core or essential component, and therefore a sacred component, of the Confederacy.

I ventured into an area in which I believed I had no experience in understanding. Was this the meaning of a living object? Boots agreed. “The key concept attached to a living object is its relevancy.” For example, Boots drew the Hiawatha Belt design and pointed to the Tree of Peace.

Here there is room to fit many nations under the Tree of Peace because it is able to change with the times and fit the needs of today as well as the past and also the future. It [the Hiawatha Belt] has a peacemaking role for the whole earth, not just the Confederacy.

Therefore, Boots believes that the Hiawatha Belt is a living document based on its fluid nature. NAGPRA agrees. The Hiawatha Belt is an object of cultural patrimony. The Hiawatha Belt also maintains an attachment to the earth from which it was created. So I wondered aloud. Is wampum about land rights as well? Is that the real underlying significance of repossessing the old wampum belts…to prove the right of ownership of original lands? Is that the real issue?

Boots studied me seriously. I had touched on a very emotional and complicated point between native and non-native people. I could see him trying to find a way to articulate such a complicated issue. At first, he spoke his Mohawk language. Then he returned to English and explained that he had said a prayer that I might understand the power of his words. He admitted that no one had ever asked these questions and he was concerned that I might not understand the impact they might have when shared.

It was not until I wrote this chapter that I began to understand his intent. Some answers and some ideas should be left unsaid. Some unshared. We talked quietly for many minutes after I stopped the recorder.

Would his answers be different if I was a native person? Yes and no he answered. The content would be essentially the same but his delivery would use examples that he believed were meaningful to me as a white non-native person. In his experience, relating information to a listener’s experience was most effective. He said, wisely, “and what would be meaningful to you, would be helpful to me.”
Later, when the official interview restarted, Boots returned to my questions regarding the relationship between land and wampum.

Do you now understand that it is not about property? It is about territory. Because if I am walking to the end of my territory, there is a wampum that tells me how I should behave in another man’s land. This is the Circle Wampum for which I think you are familiar. There are fifty strings hanging from it and it is in a circle of two intertwined cords. Around this circle, you have the title wampum of the fifty clans. These represent the fifty original families and the clan sign under which you are born.

There are many messages in the Circle Wampum. One message is that when you were born, you were born with a birthright of your nation. And no one can take that away unless you are cast out of the circle. Someone selling wampum would be cast away outside of the circle. Leaving him with no clan, no language; it does not belong to him anymore.

In here [the Circle Wampum] are our laws. In here are our ways. In here are our traditions and in here are our sacred places. Everything is contained and in here is our worldview. Outside is beyond our world. So when you see this, you see everything about us.

While Boots continued to talk, I found myself looking at the person who had just spent the last five hours guiding me. With his last comment –“you see everything about us”– I realized how generous Boots had been. Somewhere along the way, we had shared information that only friends share. I saw him as a friend who had allowed me to know him and I began to understand, at least emotionally, why the access to the old wampum was so critical.

Ironically, access to repatriated wampum has not changed, according to Boots, for the average Mohawk. There is no real difference between the pre- and post-NAGPRA periods. Boots’ remarks refer to what he witnessed in the repatriation of wampum from the Field Museum in Chicago to the Grand River Onondagas. In spite of the changes in possession, the wampum moved from one locked museum vault to another. Only the ownership had changed. In spite of the repossession of the wampum, Boots exclaimed that “we still do have access to it [repatriated wampum]. [But] we are still not going to have the children take it in their hands and feel the culture, the vision, and feel the teachings.” Boots comments underscore the commitment
to the long term care of the wampum while realizing its contemporary importance for younger generations.

However, because of the continued lack of access to the repatriated wampum, the younger generation has turned toward the elders for guidance. The younger generations’ interest in reproducing the designs, duplicating authentic methods and materials, and living according to its teachings had grown. As part of a growing network of researchers, historians, and artists interested in wampum, Boots suggested a visit to the Akwesasne Mohawk Cultural Center and urged me to contact two wampum makers, Myron Chute and Darren Bonaparte. Chute’s wampum reproductions were on exhibit at the Akwesasne Mohawk Cultural Center, but it was Bonaparte who granted my request for an interview.

Darren Bonaparte

Darren Bonaparte, a former radio disc jockey for the local Mohawk radio station 97.3 FM, is currently an elected Chief of the St. Regis Mohawk Nation located on the Canadian side of the St. Regis Mohawk Reserve on St. Regis Island in the St. Lawrence River. He says he is a chief, not THE CHIEF. In the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an elected Chief is someone who is voted into office through a public election according to Canadian laws. The position of an
elected Chief is one of the positions of authority in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that coexists with the traditional system of governance set by the clan system of the Longhouse. Bonaparte is also known by his traditional Mohawk Chief’s name, Akiatonharonkwen.

On August 1, 2001, I drove north to St Regis Island, arriving late in the evening for the purpose of meeting Bonaparte the next day. I was pleasantly surprised to find a message in my hotel telling me to meet him early the next morning at the front door of the St Regis Mohawk Nation Offices. As I drove from Hogansburg towards St Regis, I was amazed again at the use of the Hiawatha Belt design. It was on buildings as frieze designs. In the local gas station, I bought a lanyard with the traditional design woven into it. Pulling up to the steps of the Nation offices, I found Bonaparte surrounded by a group of friends. Cautiously I parked my 1998 pearl Cadillac Seville and headed toward the person who best resembled Bonaparte’s online photo. My choice was correct, and after introductions to his family, office colleagues and friends, we climbed back into my car and headed out for, as Bonaparte described it, an adventure. While giving me a tour of his community, Bonaparte asked if I was interested in traveling to an undisclosed location that he felt would be a better place to do the interview. I agreed and on the way, we stopped by his house and picked up his reproduction wampum belts.

As we drove, he waved to people and asked for me to honk on occasion as well. I mentioned that I had the distinct feeling that I was driving him around as part of a campaign drive or something. Bonaparte laughed and remarked that it was “good to have people be shook up. So they don’t always see you in the same way, you know. This might be very good for my image.” I had to admit to myself that this was the strangest interview I had ever done, but in some ways, it was the most real. At least, it was more comfortable for me because I had, for that moment, become part of his performance. Yes, having Bonaparte be seen with a white girl driving a Cadillac around the reservation could create political noise for him. The funny part to me was that he had found a way to make my research benefit him as well.

We continued to explore St. Regis by driving past the St. Regis Catholic Church located at the confluence of the St Regis and St Lawrence rivers. Bonaparte pointed out many event sites but asked me to stop while he pointed to a small stone church. “This is my Church. This is where our old log chapel used to be. This used to be our old mission. It had a palisade which burnt down in 1762. And this is where we rebuilt it.” Then he laughed. “I’m Catholic! Not what you expected, right?” I smiled and slowly connected the relationship of his religion to his position as
an elected Chief. As someone who had wanted to make a difference, an elected position was the only path available. Without membership in the Longhouse, Bonaparte admitted that he would never be offered a traditional Chief position of the Longhouse.

As we headed towards our destination [an old plantation from the 1820s in Ogdensburg], I asked Bonaparte how he had become so knowledgeable about wampum. If he wasn’t a member of the Longhouse, how did he learn? Bonaparte started by recalling a compelling court case as his motivation to learn more about his nation’s history.

[It was] when a Grand [Council] Chief went to court about the border crossing rights. The history that he put in the report was garbage. It was awful. The Grand Chief lost his case. They [the Canadian government] voted against us having trade, using the border for trade. That means we can’t purchase the goods in America and sell them in Canada without the approval and, therefore, the taxes of the border tariffs. So I said we can’t risk our rights with bogus history. Now, it is one more right that we no longer have.

Bonaparte’s demeanor changed as he talked about the loss of additional rights. By not knowing the history and relationship of trade between Canada and the Mohawk Nation, the rights to free trade, as symbolized in the Two Road [Wampum] Belt, had also been lost. To make his point, he made me pull over into the entrance of a cornfield so that he could show me the wampum belt that proves not only nation status but the right to uninterrupted free trade between nations. As he held up the Two Road wampum, he explained that the two parallel white wampum lines on a field of deep blue-purple signified the two parallel paths of each nation. Neither path crossed over the other. The agreement to coexist was obvious, he said. But nobody knew its meaning and so the case was lost. He said he should have known how far reaching the power of the wampum could be. “It saved my life. So why not the Mohawks?”

“Drive through that field, the corn field?” I asked incredulously. “Sure you can do it. Just drive. See over there. That is where we are headed…to the bark Longhouse,” said Bonaparte. Fortunately, it had been an early harvest so only the barest of stalks remained. It was a relatively smooth ride once I adjusted the speed to the width of the rows. Apparently the faster you go, the smoother the ride. Midway through we were laughing so hard, I was tempted to stop. But the fear of getting stuck kept us moving until we parked in the grassy areas around the Longhouse. As we
walked closer, holding armfuls of reproductions of wampum belts, he continued his introduction of the longhouse.

They rebuilt it last year. It is a post contact Longhouse in the style of late 1700s. You can tell because of its point roof. I think they used cedar bark from the lumberyard. They put plastic up to keep the rain out. I don’t think they had plastic back then.

I was struck by his comments about the use of inauthentic materials and mentioned the irony of the building and belts. Here we were with numbers of reproduction belts that Bonaparte had woven out of clamshells, rather than quahog shell beads, and, yet, he was suggesting that the authentic use of materials was important. “Was there a difference?” I asked.

No, it’s not sacred here. Neither are my belts. These are not real [pointing to his belts and then to the larger structure we are now in]. We have visitors here all the time. It’s not like a real longhouse. It’s just a reproduction so using fake materials to match the real look is okay. But the real longhouse up the road is authentic, and the new wampum belts made today is made from the clamshell. They have to be authentic. They are sacred to us. They have to use the real stuff.

Spiritual fingerprints of centuries of people are all over the wampum. And that is why we protect the use of the old belts and the old longhouse. Centuries of Chiefs have held these belts. Some of the greatest orators of their times have held the original belts, and it is loaded with knowledge.

So back to your question. I think that the use of alternative materials is ok as long as the purpose and intent is out of respect and it does not diminish the importance of it. That is where my belts come in. They saved my life and gave me a new purpose.

In his explanation, Bonaparte paired authenticity of materials with their use and introduced a term, spiritual fingerprints, that helped me better understand the spiritual component of wampum. Was this then a reference to his belief that wampum was living and therefore sacred? Bonaparte was quick to answer that not all old wampum was sacred. His belief in its
sacredness, if I understood him correctly, was based on its ability to allow Mohawk seers to connect with the spirits that were attached to the belt.

In the old days, they say people had more psychic powers. They had a lot more seers. Maybe there is a way to pull that knowledge out. I think it might be true because why quahog? It is a hard durable substance that is made by a living creature and will last for centuries if properly cared for. That is what I think. It is an organic thing that is very hard and very durable that will live a long time if it is properly cared for. So I think there is something about that whole thing of the belts living.

Bonaparte’s identification of the concept of living wampum emanating from the organicity of the quahog shell was new to me. This concept also connected with the Mohawk world view of the whole earth as a living and breathing entity as well. Was it possible that his idea was widely accepted or was it a personal view? He didn’t know. But it was the first time I had ever heard someone identify the materials as the source of its being.

For members of the Longhouse, authentic quahog beads were required, but for outsiders like me, the use of similar materials was acceptable. I recalled Boots’ words regarding the physical experience of the belts and asked Bonaparte if I could hold them. I closed my eyes and let my other senses work. I had, through earlier research, touched old wampum and had felt a deep reverence for something that has passed through so many hands over time. Was this true for all wampum or was it the cathedral setting that set the tone? It was calming in the cool interior of the Longhouse. Outside noises were buffered and I was overwhelmed by the opportunity to be here with Bonaparte and his belts.

There was also a visible change in Bonaparte. I sensed he had left his official role of elected Chief and faced me as the Mohawk Akiatonharonkwen. He had relaxed with his belts around him. In his hands, he held the Hiawatha Belt. It was a long time before he spoke.

For me, each bead that I put on this belt was a journey. I had just given up all that crap and realized that you never quite get to all those grand ideas of what you are going to do when you are partying, drinking and smoking dope. Drugs and alcohol kill your initiative. Once I quit all that stuff, I said I was going to make the Hiawatha Belt. Each bead made
me slow down and think about things. Each bead brought me closer to what it means to be the kind of Mohawk I wanted to be.

I gave a lot of thought as to what my new purpose in life was. Once I saw I could do it, I went to the next thing on the list and so on. That is why I am here today.

I asked him to explain his new purpose. “To teach and to communicate with young people. To turn them away from drugs and alcohol and get them really jazzed over their history,” answered Bonaparte.

Having the wampum here so people can see and feel it helps. The visual impact of it helps to spiritually teach and to bring the ideas to life. That is why I use it [reproductions of wampum]. I feel like there is nothing wrong with that. Even though I am not a member of the Longhouse per se, I still feel that my heritage is my birthright.

He emphasized the Mohawk history of the wampum beads as a way of helping the younger generation to reconnect with their culture, but he also emphasized the consequences of history as a method through which people and cultures are identified. But Bonaparte acknowledged the use of wampum by non-Native people as well. “White people did make wampum. They had a wampum factory in New Jersey where they made wampum for colonial governments to use in trade with the Indians. But that has nothing to do with our wampum and our issues.”

Before he spoke again, Bonaparte gently placed the Hiawatha Belt over one of the horizontal support beams and retrieved another belt.

This is the Seven Nations Belt. It represents a time when we were Catholic. The Seven Nations is not the Six Nations plus one. It is actually five Indian villages located on the St. Lawrence Valley that were allies with the French. Each village decided their own way and that is why the French called them their own nations. The treaties between the nations were written in the wampum so that is why the return of wampum is so important.
I had never seen this belt and was curious to understand why its return was also important. Why did wampum that documented treaties with other nations like France remain important if the area involved is now under Canadian or American jurisdiction? Bonaparte’s answer was revealing because it connected wampum’s current significance to past events. There are families [currently] fighting over land rights and I think that this is probably key to so much of the wampum.” His reference suggested that the division of land between Canada and American after the Civil War was still a current issues and one that was documented through the use of wampum. Bonaparte began his explanation with a reference to the historical loss of rights with regards to land ownership for the Mohawk communities.

It’s so typical of all the different ways land has been treated here. This part [pointing to the land under the Longhouse] was sold off of the Reservation at some point by the old American side Chiefs. There was a civil war among the Mohawk and the ones that supported the Americans in the Revolution kind of broke away. When they divided the territory, it caused a civil war among the Iroquois. Everyone wants their original land back whatever that is and blames the other for the lack of it. Families don’t speak to each other because they are still fighting over land.

I shared Boots’ observation that individual ownership was not a tradition of the Longhouse. Bonaparte agreed. “It’s not our way. But since they have instituted private ownership, it has led to so many disputes.” My comment, he remarked, was interesting because the St Regis Mohawk Council had just had a strategic planning review of all current property claims and started to talk about newer practices in regards to how to manage each claim. The purpose of the planning, Bonaparte explained, was to stop “constantly shoveling money into our greedy ass lawyers. So we are getting more bang for our buck.” When asked if they used Mohawk lawyers, he responded no.

We use just regular lawyers who have a background in claims. We have a lawyer named Paul Williams who is an Iroquois Confederacy lawyer. He’s a non-Native but very well immersed in the history, married a Native women, and he is actually an adopted
Onondaga. He is also very involved with repatriation. He’ll be here all day tomorrow. I can introduce you to him.

Bonaparte’s offer to introduce me to Williams was extremely helpful. The use of non-Native lawyers followed a historical pattern of representation by others but Bonaparte’s reference to Native adoption through marriage was not often known outside of Native people. I was curious to meet Williams after Bonaparte’s praise and hoping he would also be interested in talking about the repatriation of wampum.

Bonaparte had presented one of the two issues surrounding wampum, the issue of land rights. When asked to speak about the other issue associated with wampum, Bonaparte lamented the loss of knowledge and recalled witnessing a repatriation event at the Museum of the American Indian and the Heye Foundation in 1998. “I don’t think there was any kind of ceremony. There were words spoken, but there wasn’t like a formal ceremony. It was not how things normally happened.” His observations reflected the dilemma that many native people confront when sacred objects are returned. Since the objects were never meant to be separated from their place in each culture, knowing how to receive them back is a huge problem. “There is no ceremony for getting your belt back from the white man,” he stated. What arrangements must be made, how do you travel with such a valuable piece, and who should touch it are all questions that must be considered carefully. What types of protection or blessings are needed? This information is bound to each piece. So finding the answers is based on each individual belt and its interpretation. Finding the right ceremony is hard when the knowledge of the belt has been lost. Bonaparte explains how the information is often retrieved.

We have to do cultural research and look into the acquisition records at the museums to see what was said about the belts at that time. There are oral traditions about certain belts. But we go back into the old documents about the belts. We especially like to use the Indian Council minutes that go back about two hundred years and try and figure out what the belts are and mean.

The written records are helpful as a beginning stage. Another method is through the interpretation of symbols. Symbols like the animals, the bands on the end, the diagonal lines, the
diamonds and the squares, are well known. Bonaparte points to the symbols as he explains their most common meanings. The squares mean villages, the diamonds mean Council fires or nations, the diagonal bars mean the supports of the Longhouse. But the meaning of the symbols can change in relationship to the entire belt and the final interpretation is a long process through research found in multiple language resources. The difficulty is in the reading because, as Bonaparte explains, “symbols have multiple ideas attached to them. Like a square can also mean a trading post or sometimes they are talking about white trading posts. Some people say it is a language of symbols.” He likened reading the belt to oral traditions. They are both based on cultural memory, and if not practiced, then parts are forgotten. The loss of Mohawk language skills also contributes to the loss of cultural memory.

Bonaparte was already familiar with the significance of the link between the Mohawk language, wampum, and cultural memory. He found his relatively small knowledge of the Mohawk language was an obstacle in his own research. “I can’t read or write. I speak some, but I don’t know all the words that I should.” Although his own language skills were limited, Bonaparte suggested that if I were interested in pursuing a visit to the Akwesasne Mohawk Freedom School, where they only spoke Mohawk, he would arrange it.

We had spent most of the day talking in the Longhouse and as the sun began to set, Bonaparte insisted that we look at just one more wampum belt. He called it the Stone Canoe and asked me not to describe it visually.

This is one you probably have not seen. It is a reconstruction of one that they found in a burial in Seneca country. It might represent a stone canoe of the Peacemaker. The stone canoe represents a sign from God. When Peacemaker carved this canoe, it floated, and so we believe that this could only happen because of the presence or help from God. When I do my story of the Peacemaker and to show that he was coming from God, I use this belt to tell that story.

His comments interested me because it was the first piece of information in which he showed a hesitance to tell all. His request that I not share the visual design of the belt suggests that he was hesitant to reveal some information close to the Mohawk people still. It reminded me of Addie Powless’ comments. She is a Clan Mother, bead weaver, and teacher of the Onondaga
Nation. Her concerns regarding teaching beading to non-native students revealed her mixed feelings. Addie admitted finding it hard to face the first class. “Some would say that teaching outsiders is wrong.” However, she also admitted that many of the Onondaga were not interested in learning the older beading methods and the money coming to her as a teacher helped. “If teaching others about our ways is so wrong, then I would know that it was wrong and would not do it. The real problem is that some people believe I am wrong because I am teaching the white people our history.” Powless’ comment about knowing right from wrong suggests that she is struggling with her situation more than she is willing to admit. Bonaparte deals with the same issues of cultural sharing. He says that he is getting a lot of calls from “Indians who are all over the country and that don’t have easy access to this stuff. There are even people here on our Res and they want to come at it from the comfort of their living room.” Access to information is important for Bonaparte and Powless, who believe in sharing information to keep it current. They have both found that their approaches must meet the needs of their students. Whether it is in Bonaparte’s teachings about wampum, his Website, or Powless’ teaching of the Onondaga style of beading, they both believe they are living the native way.

As we packed up the car and drove back across the corn fields, I asked Bonaparte if he was aware of any new applications of wampum designs that might change the way it was perceived. Oh yes, he said, he sees the Hiawatha Belt all over the place. They [the water company] already use the design on their water bottle logo. You can go to the store and buy a bottle of water, and it is everywhere. Everything you see around here has used the name of Iroquois this or that…Iroquois everything. The Hiawatha Belt is on flags, in schools, and bumper stickers.
I shared that I thought it was everywhere. It has become a cultural icon with its own meaning beyond what it originally meant. Bonaparte agreed.

Right. It was not like that in the old days. In the old days, there was nothing like that. I remember when my brother first started getting into the Longhouse, and he was drawing this [the Hiawatha Belt design]. I didn’t know what it was. Now every kid on the Res knows that when you are out driving and someone sees a car with that symbol, then you know that those people are Indian. It is like automatic “Oh that is our people right there.” Its family and you honk the horn and feel the connection.

We had come full circle and arrived back at the St. Regis Mohawk Nation Council Offices. It was a particular sensation and certainly hard to measure, but I felt that the closer we were to the Council Offices, the more we returned to the people we had been when we began the day together: a Mohawk Chief and a white university researcher. But before I left I needed to ask, for the sake of good research, if the information he had given would have been different if I had been a Native person. He laughed and promised to ask on my behalf for time to speak with Williams. His reluctance to answer the question was clear. My question was irrelevant. He left me with these words. “I’m glad you are doing this because you can speak to people and educate them in places that I cannot go, and I think it is good that both Indians and whites are working towards the same goals.”
I interviewed Paul Williams on August 2, 2001, after regular office hours in the St. Regis Mohawk Council Office through an arrangement made by Bonaparte earlier that day. Williams was part of the legal team representing repatriation and land issues for the Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in Brantford, Ontario. We settled into the kitchen table at the offices and while I set up the recorder, he had already started talking. I was asked not to interrupt him but to wait with my questions. This was an unusual request between a researcher and a participant, but not uncommon on the reservation. As a result of this request, I found that the dynamics between the participant and myself were more similar to that of a story teller and audience than those found in the give and take of a question and answer session. The effects of allowing the participant to direct the interview were both positive and negative. The interview was more personal as each participant generated the topics that they felt were significant. However, the possibility of overlooking my research questions was present. To advance both the participants’ agendas and my own, I asked that Williams read over the research questions prior to our interview.

Williams began by examining the Great Law, a reference he applies to the Hiawatha Belt. He explains from a lawyer’s perspective that there are two parts to the belt: the beginning of lawmaking and the use of the condolence. The first part presents the arrival of the Peacemaker and presents the concept of reestablishing peace and the creation of the Hiawatha Belt. A brief
selection is presented that represents the key elements leading up to the nature of the condolence ceremonies.

When the Peacemaker comes across Lake Ontario, he deliberately seeks out the worst possible human being to carry his message to first. He deliberately chooses Hiawatha [who] had three daughters. Each of whom was killed through evil. Hiawatha’s mind is overcome with grief and anger. He becomes a man-killer. The Peacemaker deliberately goes to him because this man has, in Joseph Campbell’s definition, become a monster. That is, he can’t perceive reality anymore. His mind is not capable of that.

Williams’ response provided information on both personal and cultural levels. On the personal level, Williams’ reference to Joseph Campbell revealed two things about himself. He believes that monsters are people who function outside of cultural norms in an agitated mental state and that monsters are found in all cultures. In addition, he correctly assumed that the reference to Joseph Campbell helped me to comprehend this particular reference to Hiawatha’s anguish prior to the formation of the Confederacy. In this next excerpt, Williams describes how the Peacemaker guided Hiawatha back to a good mind and a peaceful heart.

You don’t attack monsters in their strength. You attack them in your weakness. The Peacemaker creeps on top of Hiawatha’s lodge and looks down through the smoke hole. Hiawatha who is stirring his pot of human remains looks into the bowl and sees the Peacemaker’s beautiful serene countenance. He is staggered into a moment of clarity, wondering could that be me. [Hiawatha] goes out of the lodge and says, if I found someone suffering as I am, I would find a way to raise up his mind. The Peacemaker hears this, goes off and thinks about it and devises the ceremony of condolence.

Today, the condolence ceremony is used to reestablish peace within individuals and between people by removing those things that would cause grief, anger or sorrow. Williams explained that there are two types of people: people who are monsters and people whose minds are clear. “The obligation of clear minded people is to let their friends grieve fully and then to
come forward and raise up their minds and clear their minds again. It brings respectful ways for one people to reach out to another group and that is the beginning of the use of wampum.”

The next selection focuses on the moment when shells were identified as wampum. The origin of wampum is based on the Peacemaker’s vision and would not be recognizable to current forms of wampum.

There’s Hiawatha sitting there with his mind gone with grief and anger and the Peacemaker comes back to him having maybe string either because he saw the birds fly up and leave little shells. Either he saw the birds fly up and leave little shells on the lake bed or because the birds fly up with algae dangling from their legs and shells on them. The Peacemaker has strung these things and that is the first use of wampum.

According to Williams, the Peacemaker had to rid Hiawatha’s mind of all that caused him grief, before he could give him the message of peace. Wampum became the tool through which a clear and good mind that respects peace could be found. In using wampum at the various ceremonies, each member of the Longhouse is reminded of the story of the Peacemaker and Hiawatha. It is a way of “recalling that first Condolence and that is where the sacredness begins with that powerful ceremony.” For Williams, the concept of sacredness is situated in its original context, but carried through all wampum by its materials and the very nature of its use in ceremonies.

It was clear to me that Williams has spent time thinking about wampum and enjoys sharing his knowledge about wampum. This was reinforced as he stood for a break from the office kitchen table and the hard seated chairs. In his hand were wampum beads. He carries wampum in his pocket wherever he goes and described them as sources of comfort, inspiration, and memory. As I write, I believe he also uses the wampum to keep his mind focused and guided by the wampum embedded messages of the Peacemaker.

The next wampum created after the original strings of algae-bound fresh water shell was made when the Five Nations join to form the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It is described by Williams as a time when they united as one with their minds together.

Now that our minds are good, we join them so you have five strings that are joined at one end. Again it is strings and not belts. When the Constitution of the Confederacy is
created, the emblem of that Constitution is the Circle Wampum. It is a string and not a belt.

The Circle Wampum was made before contact with Europeans, according to Williams. It was made as a precursor of the woven belts. Williams explained, “You have symbols made of strings before you have the belts. I don’t mind believing that the belts were made after the Europeans arrived, but the wampum was there first and it was sacred before them.”

The inclusion of European influences by Williams suggested that he believed that meanings also changed. I asked him to speak about the variations that were available. He responded that among the fifteen Iroquois communities, there is no official version and pointed to the inherent structure of oral traditions as one reason why interpretations vary from individual to individual. As we continued to talk, a powerful storm began. The only other person in the building settled in near us as the thunder and lightning moved across the night sky.

When you have an oral tradition, the details vary, depending on the speaker and on how fast you want to do it. For example, the Thanksgiving Address can take 5 minutes and it can take 45 minutes and it is the same Thanksgiving.

But it is different when you are talking about the Great Law because if you are looking at a visionary messenger from the Peacemaker, compared to say Jesus or Buddha, [he] is not talking about how individuals should behave. He [the messenger] is talking about how society should behave. It is a different kind of message and one step removed beyond the individual. The message must remain the same. That is why the wampum is so sacred. It carries power. It is a living power because it is the living word.

Williams clearly prohibits the individual interpretation of the messages of the Peacemaker and of wampum, by association. The messages attached to wampum deal with broad cultural beliefs and therefore, he believes, are outside of individual interpretations. In addition, he laments the loss of wampum because of its long-term effects.

If you look at wampum, we have suffered a triple loss: culture, language, ecology. People no longer know the words that are spoken into the belts. People confuse the words
about the wampum itself. People no longer know how to make it. Even the big shells with the convenient purple are much harder to find now.

Williams’ concern regarding the damage to his culture is also impacted by the repatriation of wampum. Even with its return, the reintroduction of the information in each wampum takes time.

Part of it is what do you do with it when you get it back? It’s always disappointing to think that it is in a large old bank safe in somebody’s basement and we bring it out occasionally. But we have used it for the following. We have used the Covenant Chain wampum as part of the evidence in a court case of the relationship between the Crown and the Confederacy. In terms of the Crown’s obligations in land dealings and a Confederacy Chief explained that wampum to the court. It becomes evidence of a transaction. For my purpose as a lawyer, sometimes those documents become deeply important in terms of land rights, hunting rights, modern issues.

Williams’ example emphasizes the use of wampum as evidence in land rights. But he adds that education of the wampum is also a large issue for the Confederacy and is delighted when the belts can move among each community.

When we got the wampum back from the Royal Ontario Museum, we made a point of having the return take place in the Thomas School at Six Nations with four hundred kids there. The Chiefs and Clan Mothers were there, also. We explained the wampum to everybody. The kids also did pictures of the wampum and what it meant. This is how we begin to stop the loss of the wampum.

Williams’ description of taking wampum back into the communities is another method to reach the next generation. Again I ask him why the information is not yet written for a wider educational impact. He laughed and said he too had thought that after law school. But not now, he said. He understands that it is not about the sacredness of the words.
There are times when wampum is brought out to renew things. Actually it is the word bumps into my mind that they have to re-mind themselves. You look at the Haudenosaunee relationship, and it is a river. The two row flows and the individual councils are like rocks along the way that mark the flow. So that is why things have to be renewed. That is why, written into the Great Law, it says that every five years the people have together and recommit themselves to this and refresh their memories of it.

The purpose of not recording the meanings of the wampum is to keep the process of renewal alive. Williams believed that it is better to keep the Great Law in your mind because then it will govern how you behave everyday not just when you find the time to read it. When a wampum belt is renewed, when the words are spoken, then the ideas are also confirmed.

As parting words, Williams related his current interest in studying the nature of effective resistance. He believes that the current economic globalization threatens our long term survival through environmental destruction and cultural homogenization. In defense or as an act of resistance, Williams suggested that lessons can be learned by studying past successes.

It turns out that successful resistances all share certain characteristics. They all share archetypal players that are crucial individuals in the resistance. I’m writing this now. I am looking at men who have become tremendous resistance figures. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind wake by day to see that it was vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men; they dream their dreams with open eyes and make it real. They make it possible.

The earlier storm had passed, the extra person returned to their work, and the night was again quiet. I asked Williams if he saw himself as a man of resistance when it came to wampum.

Yeah, but it may come too late. But I am still on how to create lawful resistance. Resistance is deliberate. We can see the enemy. And some Sioux says that there are thirteen types of ground. Dying ground, disputed ground, quaking ground, and so forth. But dying ground is when you have no place to go and no choice but to fight. That is
when your troops will fight best, when they know that this is the place where if they don’t stand, they die. When it comes to wampum, it is time that we stand our ground.

It seemed that when Williams talked, he had more than just wampum on his mind. I asked if he knew what would be his first area of resistance. He lamented that people did not realize that their language was already standing on dying ground.

As if a sign, the lights flickered and then turned off. The storm had returned and disrupted the electricity. We found our way out to the parking lot, where Williams wanted to finish the interview with these final words. “There are only two people in the world left who speak Tuscarora. We must resist the loss of our language and culture not only for ourselves, but for the children. That is why wampum is important.” His words tied together his feeling about the living wampum by reinforcing the critical connection between the return of wampum and its impact on the cultural sustenance of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It seemed that his thoughts about wampum and its connection to maintaining Native languages prepared me for my next participant. Sonny Edwards was a Native speaker who also owed his life to wampum.
I followed Bonaparte’s suggestion to visit the Akwesasne Freedom School located in Hogansburg, New York for the purpose of learning more about their native-based curriculum. I was interested in how they taught about wampum. Since I arrived on August 15, 2001, school was not in session. But because of the students’ absence, I was able to spend more time with the staff and, in particular, Sonny Edwards, the school custodian/gardener/handyman. After spending several hours talking to the principal and teaching staff about their exclusive use of the Mohawk language and culture to teach, I stepped outside to be greeted by Sonny Edwards. It was a very hot August afternoon and Edwards appeared to have just finished the last of his gardening chores for the day. We introduced ourselves and sat under the trees in an effort to hide from the sun.

Edwards began by speaking to me in Mohawk. Then he translated his Mohawk into words that I could understand. He began to tell the history of the school built in the 1970s by gesturing to where trees were removed, cement slabs created, and walls raised to form the body of the small four classroom school house. He ended by pointing at the gardens. "Here we began the gardens because that is where our culture is. We are so connected to nature that we believe in being a part of it. I have been here ever since." His thirty plus year commitment was impressive and I asked him the secret of his success. Without hesitation, he said that he did it for the
children. “I wanted to give our kids and grandkids the same type of exposure that we had growing up to learn about their Native history and language”.

I had just left the school and at the entry were several examples of student wampum belts woven from macaroni. This was not what I had expected. How do the students learn about wampum? Edwards responded that wampum is not taught as a separate subject but connected to everything within their curriculum. “You asked me about the wampum and I will get to that, but wampum has the Creator in that too and that is what makes it sacred. Because without the Creator, what do we have? Nothing.”

Then he proceeded to settle into his chair a bit more, and proclaim that every person must come to the faith of the Longhouse and wampum on his or her own. As a way of making the point clear, Edwards began his own story.

I was in Mohawk School with Ray Fadden [history teacher]. I remember back in the forties when he was teaching. You went to kindergarten you seen [sic] the beginning of your life [the creation story], where you came from, why you are and who put you here. Then the next grade answered part of the beginning. All the Mohawk stories were in pictures. So in first grade, he would have why we had the eagle. Second grade he would show what the eagle is for. Third grade would tell you why eagle is here for us. Each painting that Ray Fadden made was like a page: page one, page two … and when you got to eighth grade you knew what you were.

Edwards’ memories of these Mohawk centered paintings were vivid; they had certainly made an impression on him and I asked him about them. What made this stay in your memory? Edwards replied, “You see, I am born traditional of the Snipe clan. We are destined to be teachers.” This meant that he was born into the Longhouse traditions and he confirmed that was where he was exposed to wampum. “My Grandfather used to preach the Great Law [a reference to the Circle Wampum] and I preach the Code of Handsome Lake [an assimilation of both Catholic and Longhouse beliefs and ceremonies].” Knowing his background in the Longhouse certainly helped me understand his deep interest in keeping the traditional ways alive at the Akwesasne Freedom School, but it didn’t explain his attachment to Fadden’s paintings. It also wasn’t the first time that people remarked about Fadden’s contributions so I was very curious
about the point Edwards was making. But I was more curious about his background and his knowledge. He seemed to be leading me into a question.

“Are you one who is able to recite the Code?” I asked.

“Part of it”.

“Does that make you a…”

“A Faith Keeper? Yes. I am the last of the seven faith keepers and the power is unbelievable.”

My understanding, based in Navajo protocol, was that Faith Keepers limit their contact with people outside of their culture for the purpose of avoiding outside influences. Edwards’ acknowledgement caught me off guard. My inner voice was asking what I should be doing because I was in the presence of a very powerful man. According to Williams, there are only a few of the old Faith Keepers currently alive. My outer self probably blushed. I wasn’t really sure how to handle this new information. Edwards responded with a smile and continued his story.

He [Fadden] had a way of teaching us, a native way when we went to the public schools, which helped all of us native kids. We were in the Salmon River Schools in Hogansburg [NY] and felt lost. We couldn’t speak our language and we had to learn white things. Man, was that hard. It wasn’t right but that was how it was. So Ray painted the walls and when we were having a hard time, we could look at the paintings and remember our stories and that helped us get through school. We also to learn about the wampum stories. When I was hit by the car that is when you really figure out some stuff about your life. I was in a terrible accident and they left me for dead. I stayed there until they found me the next morning and so for a long time I prayed. Not like prayers but I used the paintings that Ray [Fadden] had made. I used them to guide me all night because each one was a story and each one had the Native truths in them.

Edwards’ near-death experience had changed his life. In addition, through his use of Fadden’s paintings to live through the night of the accident, Edwards realized his destiny as a traditional Healer and Faith Keeper. He is also grateful to Fadden because he taught the traditional stories that helped Edwards remain true to his culture.

Edwards measures his cultural authenticity through the lack of change. He believes that his wisdom has come from his experiences in living. Now looking back over the years, he
blames the intrusion of an outside world as the main cause for the losses of his culture. He would like to see all of the wampum returned because “we know how to take care of them. We know the stories.” Edwards worries about those who only know a little of the truth about wampum. “They are more dangerous than you can think because they appear to know the truth, but they don’t, but everyone believes it is the truth.” As he talks, he recounts stories about anthropologists Fenton and Parker and how they came looking for glory and not truth. Truth is found in the wampum, he repeats over and over again. For Edwards, truth is also non-changing and his ties to traditional beliefs were clearly articulated. He addressed several methods through which the rules of his faith are structured. He emphasized the tradition of oral histories and the important use of verbal recall to maintain the traditional meanings of wampum.

The idea was that there was no commitment as noble as knowing the faith. The Creator gave you a recorder in your memory and a camera in your mind’s eye. That is why our ancestors had ears, eyes and mouths. They didn’t write anything down. They remembered it. And by remembering it, they knew it well and lived the law of our Creator.

See if you write something down, it depreciates and it becomes dead. No one can dispute what is written because the dialogue is dead. But if it is remembered then people will talk about what the laws are and what is the meaning of wampum and continue to live with it because they are always trying to understand it.

The incorporation of wampum into one’s life, as Edwards points out, is important in sustaining traditional ways of life. Wampum represents the people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. “We are identified as the wampum people, People of the Longhouse.” Making sense of what it means is more difficult because of the many different levels of experiences for traditional families. For Edwards, the lessons found within the stories about wampum should remain the same. It is the people who should accommodate the stories, not the stories that should change to fit the people. But his ideas meet with resistance from the younger generation and sustaining the ideas found in the wampum is very difficult.
As a faith keeper, you are constantly attacked. The criticism is hard to live with. I sometimes put my head down and walk away. People think you are no longer useful and so they do not want to hear the stories because they do not have Nintendo in them and they do not mention the problems that we Mohawks have to face every day. But if they were to listen closely and think about what is said, they would find the answers. And the wampum floats through all of this.

Edwards draws closer to me and talks in a quieter voice. He tells me how he hears about the people who are going to use the idea of wampum in any way to their advantage. He is afraid that the unregulated use of wampum, already visually pervasive in Hogansburg, will become like “Coca Cola or Pepsi.” He is afraid that the Hiawatha Belt design will be so visible that it will become invisible and lose its magic and its sacredness. “You know when you see wampum on cars, shirts, and on water bottles, then it becomes like a design only. The impact of its meaning becomes invisible and you only see the product.” He already sees the negative effects of the sale of cultural items. He asks rhetorically, “So when you give me twenty bucks, do you think I would tell you the truth?”

We are near the end of the interview and have moved closer to the garden. Edwards turns to me and gently takes my hands. I suddenly realized that in the last few hours, he had sized me up. Now, according to Edwards, I have a purpose. “In the beginning of your life, and you are at the beginning of your Indian life, you will not know what all of this information about wampum is or what it means, but at the end of your life, where I am, it all makes sense.” Edwards described me as “bound to help those people to teach them the truth about Indians, our way and use wampum to do that.” I agreed; after all that is my purpose in research. But Edwards saw it as more of a divine obligation. He had given the message to me and now I was bound to share it with others. He spoke.

The Creator said “I gave my message to the people.” It is now our responsibility to see that it is heard and followed. That is why we use our wampum to tell the message and why it is good to have wampum back with us.
Edwards was right about sustaining cultural knowledge. What good were the meanings of wampum if they were not shared? As I began to look more closely at the subtle differences of the plants in the school gardens, I realized I was just beginning to understand the diverse ways of knowing wampum. As I walked down the garden path and away from the school, I realized that Edwards had changed our roles. He remained the Faith Keeper, but I had become, once again, the student. It was a familiar role for both of us.

Toni Benedict

At the time of my research, Onondaga Toni Benedict was working on her Ph.D. in Art Education from the University of Buffalo and working at the New York State Museum as the Native American Specialist. Initially she was hired to interview and take photos of contemporary artists, but as her background became known, she assumed the care position for their Native American collections. The intentionally broad title incorporated a number of job descriptions. She was educator, photographer, writer, workshop leader, and museum liaison on several repatriation occasions. I was sure that her experiences as an educator would reveal yet another perspective to the various interpretations of wampum for after all, we discovered that we were both researching wampum for our Ph.D. theses.

Our first in-person meeting was January 15, 2002 as a result of an extensive Internet search for Native American staff members in museums that experienced the repatriation of
wampum. As we walked through the many galleries, she explained how the broad scientific nature of the museum was transformed in part because of the new initiatives with Native Americans that were just beginning to be integrated. Benedict stopped at one display titled *Native American at Elk Pond* and explained the changes.

It was a popular exhibit of a Native adorned with a wampum belt over his shoulder and barely dressed in the middle of the fall in the Adirondacks. However, there was a push to get that figure out of there because it was supporting a stereotypical image of a Native person as a savage. The new exhibit is more realistic, updates old information, and shows our emphasis on developing culturally sensitive displays.

I was interested in knowing how the display was constructed. Were Native people involved? Who created the text and content? Benedict smiled and continued.

Our permanent exhibits were basically written by George Hamill [Ethnology Collection Manager] in the Anthropology office. He was also the exhibit designer and interpreter and the one who was writing the text for the labels and copy. He made a concerted effort and was probably only one of the few people in this museum to make an extraordinary effort to contact and pull together Native people in order to understand what was important and what kind of information should go into the exhibit. So that part of it, the voices, as far as the community themselves, is incorporated into the text. It may not be their exact words but they are present. He made sure that the information that was given to him as being important to say was also incorporated into the exhibit. So not only was the anthropological perspective evident but also the Native view, too. It still reads like a single voice, but that is misleading. It is a result of many voices.

I disagreed. It was deceivingly clear. Because in its clarity, it denied acknowledgment of those who did contribute. For a visitor, the museum’s exhibit appeared to have one author. Benedict agreed that unless you knew about the prior collaboration, then the process seemed invisible. This led me to ask Benedict whether or not working at the museum led to conflicts.
She motioned that we should leave the public areas and look for a quiet room where we could talk undisturbed. Once settled in the conference room, Benedict responded.

I wanted to think about this before I answered so that is why I asked for us to move. First, let me qualify what I say. Anything that I am saying about the wampum belts is my experience and my ideas. I do not speak for anyone or any nation.

Benedict’s response was unexpected but served to underscore the acknowledgement and relevance of the speaker in relationship to the information given. Her concern mirrored the overall general complaint from Native Americans (Deloria, 1999) regarding the construction of their history. In their eyes, their voices have remained unheard. Benedict’s confession that she speaks as an individual also confirms her position within the Onondaga Nation as a member but not the official spokesperson. It also provided an opening to the question of who provides the most authentic information about wampum. Benedict answered that the Chiefs did for each nation. “They all could speak for the Confederacy, but all of them would have to agree about which one would speak for the Confederacy.” Given the nature of her dual membership as a museum staff member and a member of the Onondaga Nation, was she also speaking as a museum person? Was there a difference? Although she didn’t say yes, her answer led me to believe that there were times when each perspective took precedence. Benedict answered,

As far as the object itself, I am speaking as a Native person and that point of view. When we are speaking about the interpretation of objects and what is going on in the museum world, then I am going to be speaking as a Native person working in a museum.

I realized by watching Benedict’s positioning of her body that I was causing her mild discomfort and promised myself just one more question before turning to another area of research. I asked if there were any conflicts between her museum work and her Native heritage. “Actually once the Haudenosaunee Standing Committee requests that wampum be repatriated, then it will become more difficult to maintain a balance because I am always going to be with that [the Onondaga] community,” she answered. She continued to describe the areas in which she
felt most insecure were those that dealt with the long term care and preservation of the repatriated wampum.

As far as me knowing that there are wampum that people do not know how they were used at one particular time. They are going to be returned. My concern is whether or not there are people within the [Native] community that still know how they are going to be used or what is going to happen to them. And if not, then what is going to happen to them?

So that is where my museum side comes in and not only my museum side, but also my survival side. I also want to know that somewhere down the line, maybe we can find somebody who knows and who has a glimpse into what that particular wampum was used for. And I am just talking hypothetically right now because I am not really sure what the meaning of those wampum might be, the ones that are asked to be returned.

Benedict’s comments demonstrate the process of negotiating worldviews between Native and museum worlds by blending her own Native values with those of the museum. In this case, care and interpretation are linked between the two. I asked if they get new meaning when they are returned. Does wampum become something other than an artifact if the meaning is unknown? She shook her head and smiled. She insisted that museums label every single thing to determine value. But it depends on who you ask because when cultural information is appropriated by others for their benefit, everyone suffers.

If you are talking to a Clan Mother, they call it wampum or the wampum belt. Not an object and not an artifact. People would be offended by having wampum called an artifact because an artifact belongs in a museum and to another time and place. There are a lot of Native people who have not necessarily been brought up with that Native culture. And maybe they have only learned about wampum within their adult years, not as a child, and they might be likely to meld all those terms together and use them interchangeably.

The possible damage created by unregulated information about wampum is demonstrated by Benedict’s reminder that there are many levels of understanding within Native cultures. The
idea that wampum is considered alive is presented tangentially. “If something lives in the past and continues to exist in the present, then it could be considered as living. That is what I believe,” explained Benedict, speaking from her Native perspective. However she also described the lack of understanding in museums and therefore a conflict between her position as Native American and as a museum specialist. “For many anthropologists, the beads have become more valuable than the ideas. So it is the beads that [anthropologists believe] should be protected and not the people whose ideas are embedded in the beads.” But according to Benedict, it is not just about the beads.

In the way that I have been taught, is that when that original belt is in a particular place and when the words are spoken and particularly when tobacco is burned. The tobacco is burned in order to communicate the words with the Creator. So to me, the wampum belt carries the words. That connection between you and the Creator is what makes it alive.

The concept of living wampum is based, if I understand Benedict’s explanation correctly, on the combination of meaning, beads, ceremony, and belief. Therefore the repatriation of wampum back to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy unites all four components and renews its ability to function as significant contributor to the sustenance of the Haudenosaunee culture.

Educational programs are also under development to support and correct public perspectives regarding wampum. Benedict stated that her goal is to provide lessons about wampum in public school settings to help unravel the mysteries of NAGPRA. She explains how she views the effects of repatriation.

Things have definitely changed because of NAGPRA. I don’t think that everyone knows or understands the law, but many more people in museums and the art world have been made aware of the issues of Native ownership, spirituality, and living cultures. That is why I like working in the public schools. We [the museum staff] want to encourage an exchange of authentic information rather than the elimination of it.

At that moment, we heard another school class arrive, and we decided to move beyond the safety of the conference room and continue the interview within the exhibit areas. Benedict was visibly excited as she realized that she had visited this particular school group and taught them about wampum. Benedict looked over the class, pointed out three or four students from the
Onondaga Nation, and spoke to them in Onondaga. She announced that this was true exchange between Native and non-Native people and museum and school systems.

Oh yeah, that is where my Native side is coming in. The way that I feel, and I know that I have talked to a number of [Native] people that feel the same way. We still need to be able to access information and objects. I believe that people who have a vested interest in it should have access to it.

Benedict’s enthusiasm was due, in part, to the Native students’ presence at the museum. It was, according to her, a rare visit. “Native people have not always been welcome. These students are too young to remember when access to wampum was denied. Now look how different it is.” As we moved among the exhibits, the students were asked to focus on the ways that people are portrayed. Benedict continued to explain how museums still need to exchange information with the Native communities rather than eliminate or help to diminish the ideas attached to it. “Since there is no New York curriculum written for Native Americans, it is our job to teach about culture. It doesn’t replace our Clan Mothers, it adds to it.” How, I asked, were the lessons similar? How were they different?

The Clan Mothers were the teachers of culture in the Onondaga communities. Benedict described “Audrey Shenandoah. She is the one who taught us through the stories and through the language. She is one of the few that can teach us.” Other people have to use wampum to teach. Benedict teaches by making wampum belts with the students.

I showed some pictures of wampum to some kids. I told them this was a story, and I asked them to tell me what their story would be based on the pictures. They were asked to pick an event in their life which they thought was particularly significant and then to translate it into a pattern. They could not use words.

The difference between the reproduction of traditional wampum belts designs and those that Benedict asks the students to create is that the students’ belts are based on student-generated events. The students were asked to focus on one event. The results, shared Benedict, were unexpected.
They [the students] had to finish up and complete the project and be able to explain what the story was behind it. If they had a series of images or figures, they had to know exactly what role that particular image had in the story. They seemed to have a lot of fun with that. I was surprised. And I welcomed the responses I got from the kids. I had thought that they were going to be able to just sit down and whip something off and some of them did. But then others shared the passing of a parent or a divorce, and they were really thoughtful because they didn’t want to undermine a particular event as they were telling the story. So some of them were so honest, and it was wonderful.

Benedict’s unit allowed students to develop their own story into the medium of wampum, and by association, understand the powerful relationship between symbols and memory. The use of individual experiences of the students also promised diversity in their interpretations and the ability to reinforce different perspectives. For Benedict, the positive benefits from teaching in the classroom are reciprocated.

They showed me as an educator the amount of trust that kids put in me as far as being as a teacher and an authority figure. More often than not when I walk out of a class, I have learned something as well.

In the last few minutes before the museum closed, I asked Benedict about how I should analyze the variations in the interpretations about the Hiawatha Belt that I had discovered as part of my research. Benedict first answered by describing how the process of telling a story depends on the people, time, and place in which it is remembered.

In telling a story, the speaker can make a choice as to what information is important at that time and place. Then the next time, it may be a little different. Both stories are correct, but you must understand the context in which they were presented to understand how that can be. Sometimes we can only see what we want. That is why storytellers are the ones that are helping to carry on the oral traditions. They continue to play such an important role in our culture because that is our culture: the oral traditions. So the storytellers are those that have that capability of memory and those that have that ability
to communicate effectively per each situation and be able to provide the people who are listening to an experience rather than just presenting a verbatim type of thing. Teachers know that. You can’t go into a classroom and teach a program five times the same exact way. It drives you nuts.

I loved that Benedict chose to connect our roles as teachers within her explanation. In my experience, I found that I varied instructional content to match the context of my students. So it was easy to understand her educational intent in making those changes. Her final words, however, were more personally directed. I was considered a listener and a witness to the information about wampum. She suggested that the stories and information that I had learned from my research are now part of my life, too. Therefore, my responsibility was to help keep the wampum and its meanings alive.

But it is not only on the person that is communicating it, but on the listener to keep it fresh and alive. They have to keep it in the same spirit as they heard it and share with others. That is not easy. Native communities see them as special people that have the ability to do that. But you too, because of your research path, have become a part of the story. You are a messenger and now you must help to keep wampum alive.

I was without words and humbled with her invitation to become part of a larger cultural movement. As the museum began to close for the evening, we managed a tearful farewell with promises to keep in touch. Finally, I turned and entered into the creeping darkness of a winter night in Albany, New York. When I glanced back, Benedict was gone. All that was left were her words.

The Interpretation of the Interviews

In this final section, a summary is presented to organize and clarify the themes found within the narratives by the participants regarding the interpretative nature of wampum. I begin by reviewing my choices regarding the narrative mode of writing and the selection of these five participants. Next, I defend my choices to organize the analysis of the interviews through comparative analysis. My final comments a discussion of what I perceive to be the two themes
regarding the authorship of wampum and the belief that wampum is alive. These two themes were discovered through an analysis of the interviews. Although each participant discussed who has the right to interpret the official meaning of living wampum, they did not always agree on their meaning and applications. The discrepancies between what was said, in the interviews and what is practiced within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, is also addressed in the final comments.

Writing in the narrative form is especially suited for someone like me who enters into research topics with the hope that the process of research will expand, stretch, or even challenge my personal worldviews. It supports a more critical examination of both researcher and researched through revealing the changing relationships between us. In addition, the narrative form provides a reflective tool that makes my role more visible in the process of learning. In the final chapter, I will provide examples of my own discoveries as a result of this research process.

In designing this research, I did not choose comparative analysis to examine the information collected in the interviews; rather it chose me. It evolved from the writing of my field notes because it provided the organizational lens through which the seemingly massive and diverse quantities of information could be analyzed. I am satisfied that the comparative investigation of similarities and differences in both participants and their information provided a thorough assessment of their responses regarding the meaning of wampum.

In addition, each participant provided additional contextual information through the use of their narrative story telling. It is useful for the readers who were not present during my research because it aids in the visualization of the specific situations in which the participants responded. The analysis of this ancillary information often reveals specific details such as time, place, and people. Therefore the narratives provide a full picture to the reader. Presenting a larger picture to the reader empowers the reader to better respond to the overall choices made in the collection and analysis of information.

In my research, I define a theme as action that is subjectively meaningful and occurs repeatedly and consistently among the participants. In general, a theme incorporates a variety of issues through the medium or social practices of a culture. Social practices constitute the processes and action through which people relate to each other and to their environment. For our purposes, I have chosen to interpret themes as social practice within the Haudenosaunee
Confederacy because the process of identifying themes helps to clarify the underlying shared beliefs and actions of the participants to each other as a social group and to wampum.

There are two major themes discovered through my analysis that are formed as a result of the identification of shared experiences and beliefs among the participants and, in particular, in response to me. I emphasize my relationship in this process because I believe that my relationship as researcher affected the participants’ response methods. I believe that how their perception of me affected the manner in which they similarly responded. For that reason, the first theme refers to social representation. It recognizes the participants’ perceptions of themselves and their experiences with wampum as more similar than different. By doing so, it challenges the idea that each participant believes that their experiences with wampum are unique. The second theme identifies a shared belief among the participants regarding wampum as a living entity. Both themes suggest social practices in the areas of they relate to wampum. It is my aim to explore these two areas of social practices and consider how the findings might enhance art education pedagogy.

The first theme, of social representation, recognizes the similarities and differences between each participant with regards to their experiences with wampum and their claim of uniqueness in these experiences. However, the consistency by which each participant represented single situations regarding wampum suggests a larger social practice is in place. It appears that the preferred social practice, for those who have experience with wampum, is to posit themselves as both humble and insignificant. I believe there are several reasons why each participant believed their knowledge was specific to their experiences and should not be recognized as the official word. I discuss later in the summary, the information regarding the similarities and differences of each participant for the purpose of supporting my claim regarding a preferred social practice of representation within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The following observations are divided into the four areas of common traits that each participant shared. These traits identify their (1) positions of knowledge, (2) their insistence of a personal rather than official level of engagement with wampum, (3) their shared existence within the pre and post NAGPRA historical context, (4) and their use of oral history or storytelling as the preferred methods of communicating.

At first glance, the participants appear to represent unique profiles. They do not conform to any single age, gender, religion, educational, race, or economic description and yet, they do
represent the broad spectrum in which members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy live. This includes young and old, female and male, members of the Longhouse and members of the Catholic Church, eighth grade and college educated, adopted and native born, lawyers, educators, Faith Keepers, elected and traditional Chiefs, rich and poor. In addition, each participant held a position of tribal authority and was known for his or her expertise in a number of areas associated with wampum.

During the interviews, each participant expressed their belief that their experiences and association with wampum made their subjective experiences and subsequent emotional connections individual and unique. However, I believe that their claim for uniqueness actually suggests several patterns of behavior concurrent and in accord to the existing social practices of the Haudenosaunee communities. The categories of individual difference vary, but the group emphasis to represent culturally significant and politically charged wampum through their individual experiences suggests that this practice is preferred. I believe that the use of personal experiences is socially preferred because it circumvents the suggestion an official and therefore indisputable Native perspective, and therefore, in some manner, avoids a historical repeat and misrepresentation of Native ideas and people. But it also allows Native people to reconnect with wampum on a personal level and, therefore, the sharing of personal experiences has become a socially accepted practice within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

In similar fashion, each person avoided representing the official interpretation of wampum. Benedict, Boots, Bonaparte, Edwards, and Williams work as leaders within their respective communities. They are perceived as figures of authority and, therefore, respected as experts in their individual areas. Benedict, as a museum educator at the New York State Museum in Albany, New York uses wampum to teach both Native and non-Native people about the culture of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Boots is a traditional Akwesasne Mohawk Chief of the Longhouse located in while Bonaparte is an elected St. Regis Mohawk Chief on Cornwall Island. Edwards is a Faith Keeper and he preaches the Code of Handsome Lake in the Akwesasne Mohawk community. Williams works with the Canadian-based Grand Council, where he defends the laws of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. All are members of very different social institutions, yet make significant decisions regarding how much information about wampum should be shared. With respect to their positions of leadership, none of them proclaimed their stories or interpretations as official. The differences in their individual
experiences would suggest that the participants are completely different, but they all share the same worldviews that wampum is significant and essential to the continuing sustenance of their social identity as members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Even so, they all insisted that their experiences with wampum were unique and personal. However, the emphasis on categorizing their knowledge as personal is unanimous. In other words, the participants separately shared wampum together. They are all personally invested in wampum and, therefore, are similar to each other in their beliefs that wampum can be known and experienced on a personal level.

Another pattern within each interview was that each participant had lived through the period prior to the repatriation of wampum in 1990 and was a member of the fifteen individual Native communities of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy prior to 1990. This time period is recognized as the period when traditional wampum was inaccessible to Native communities because it was housed away from the Haudenosaunee communities in museums and private collections. Each participant related, through their own experiences, how the loss of traditional wampum belts affected them. The inclusion in each interview of a time when wampum was not available suggests that the lament of lost wampum was indicative of the larger social tone within each Haudenosaunee community. In addition, the prevalent feeling of loss was underscored when the participants shared the positive cultural circumstances of its return, its contribution to cultural renewal, and the subsequent broad Native celebration upon its return.

Their shared temporal or chronological association prior to 1990 also places all of the participants in the period after NAGPRA, after the repatriation of wampum belts and strings, and in the period when wampum was back within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It might be assumed that the return of the wampum back to the Haudenosaunee communities was an indication of increased access or at least the promise of increased interaction. However, each participant lamented that access to the traditional old wampum belts was still very limited. Each participant referred to the larger concerns regarding the protection and care of the belts, but believes that the social interaction and the practice of sharing the stories surrounding the old traditional belts are just as important. Ironically, they admitted that the opportunity for the average person to touch or view the old wampum was, at this time, highly unlikely.

The last component of the larger theme of representation can be found in the manner in which each participant chose to articulate their experiences to me. Each participant shared some,
or all, of their information in the form of a story. Their answers to my question were woven into the context of larger stories. For example, Williams responded with the story of the Great Law when asked to name the wampum that he felt was most significant. He could have easily named the Hiawatha Belt but instead he supported his choice of why he felt it was the most significant wampum by sharing the details of its origin and its essential link to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. He chose to place his answer into a context in which the Hiawatha Belt would normally be presented. His choice benefited both of us. For Williams, the choice to respond with a story suggested that he was more comfortable using that mode than a more directed formal process of interviewing. For me, it provided more details, perhaps ones about which I would not have thought to ask. In a similar manner, Bonaparte escorted me into a traditional Longhouse where he spoke of personal loss and then of his growth through the process of making traditional wampum belts. Through his beading, he discovered his nation and his culture. Standing alone, listening to him, and holding the belts, I began to understand how a woven belt of beads might become symbolic of an individual and a nation’s narrative to survive.

I was, at one point, confused by the many renditions of each belt. There seemed to be different stories for each belt and each person. But for each participant, the individual variations of old wampum seemed less troubling. For example, the various interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt were characterized by the participants as inherent to the process of oral history or memory. When questioned regarding what I perceived as conflicting information, the participants suggested that the use of interviews as the collection of my data offers insights into the individual and group subjective experiences. Each participant agreed that the variations were a cause of individual tailoring of the information to fit the storyteller and their audience. Edwards described it as “knowing what you needed” in order to understand.

They all had their ways of negotiating the differences by noting their individual preferences and experiences. Williams blended the information with correlations to American literature and to the Constitution of the United States in order to explain the Great Law. Bonaparte found a way to communicate what the Hiawatha Belt wampum means by emphasizing its ability to spiritually span past, present, and future generations. Boots used a time line through which historical events were remembered and retold. Benedict reinforced the universality of the Hiawatha Belt’s ideals suggesting that her students make their own connections with the broad concepts found in the wampum. Similarly each of the participants valued the variations in
information and delivery as indicators of a good speaker. Therefore, the acceptance of different perspectives found within the interviews reinforced the belief that wampum provides guidance in a broad spectrum of issues. More importantly, the use of selective elements within each participant’s interview suggests a preferred style of teaching and a preferred practice used within the Haudenosaunee communities that support both cultural and individual interpretive applications.

The second theme found as a result of my research is the perception of wampum as a living object by each of the participants. Equally significant, to the readers, is the relationship between wampum as a complex organic object and its naming as an object of cultural patrimony. As a result, the origin of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the subsequent making of the Hiawatha Belt and remain culturally relevant over many generations. The ability to remain alive and in touch with multiple generations is one of the qualities that all of the participants used to describe continuing cultural relevancy of wampum. The concept of living wampum emphasizes that the stories, concepts, wisdom, and events attached to the beads are timeless. As a result, wampum remains essential to the past, present, and future generations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and therefore warrants the classification as an object of cultural patrimony.

In contrast, the museum classification of old wampum as artifact denies the present and future cultural impact of wampum for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Benedict underscored the commonly held perspective that the reference to wampum as artifacts was offensive. “First we do not refer to wampum as an artifact or an object of cultural patrimony. It is just wampum. Second, we do not examine wampum piece by piece under a microscope. It is living and we respect that.” Benedict’s response was directed to my question that asked how wampum was introduced in the Onondaga Nation School. “You show respect by referring to wampum by its [various] names, and not calling it an artifact. We don’t even have a name in our language for wampum that ceases to exist.” Benedict’s statement that respect and care of the old wampum is crucial for its continuing relevancy was also communicated by the other participants. That the wampum continues to contain the cultural history, beliefs, events, and language of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy explains why wampum is so essential.

However, it does not explain how the interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt remain essential. The method through which the participants apply the interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt is divided into two separate and different frameworks. One perspective, held by Boots,
Edwards, and Williams, is theoretically based on intent and contends that the broad and flexible terms were specifically used to create a living document.

As a non-Native person, I wanted to test the theory that suggests that an artifact can function as living document. I searched for and found that the United States Constitution is considered to be living. The idea that the United States Constitution is a living document is not shared by everyone. Currently in 2010, there are those law makers and judges that believe that the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, like the Hiawatha Belt, should “begin with the text, and to give that text the meaning that it bore when it was adopted by the people” (Scalia, 2005, p. 1). They are called the originalists named for their belief that the original meaning of the written document is currently still relevant. For originalists like Supreme Court Justice Scalia, the U.S. Constitution was created with general provisions and expansive applications so that it could accommodate future and unknown events. It was not written to be an evolving or living document. Originalists are people who rely heavily on the original artifact and intentions as their guide for the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. They believe that the U.S. Constitution is a legal document, “and like all legal documents, it says some things, and it doesn’t say other things” (Scalia, 2005, p. 3)

In contrast to originalist beliefs, there are non-originalists who believe that the U.S. Constitution is a living organism. The authors described their constitutional philosophy as constitutional fidelity,” a principle that serves not only to preserve the Constitution’s meaning over time, but also to maintain its authority and legitimacy. The words and principles of the Constitution endure as our fundamental law because they have been made relevant to the conditions and challenges of each generation through an ongoing process of interpretation. (Karlan, Liu and Schroeder, 2009, p. 4)

According to those who believe that the U.S. Constitution is a living document it remains significant to part, present, and future generations because it is enabled to change through the process of the majority rule. “The Constitution endures because its meaning and application have been shaped by an ongoing process of interpretation” (Karlan, Liu, and Schroeder, 2009, p.9).

The argument regarding whether the U.S. Constitution is an artifact or a living document is very similar to the ongoing interpretation of wampum. Both wampum and the United States
Constitution reveal through their declaration of national laws the beliefs and social practices of the culture that created them. However, neither wampum nor the United States Constitution provided rules regarding how they should be interpreted. Should the meanings of wampum and the United States Constitution remain set in their original time and place of origin and therefore, reflect their original intentions? Or should they evolve like other living organisms in order to remain significant to future generations? At least for wampum, a decision regarding its relevancy to the contemporary Haudenosaunee Confederacy has been reached. The definition of wampum as a living document was supported by the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act by the renaming of wampum from an artifact to an object of cultural patrimony. My research, however, found that the participants had different ideas.

Everyone agreed to the high significance of the Hiawatha Belt in their culture. Boots, Bonaparte, Edwards and Williams agreed that the Hiawatha Belt is a legal document. In that capacity, it acts as the Constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Their beliefs can be likened to constitutional originalists. The compliance to original concepts and messages is the only acceptable interpretation. They believe that the applications of interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt must remain true to their original form and content. Therefore, the current ideas, ceremonies, and protocol should be kept the same as the original intent of the Hiawatha Belt as mandated by the Creator. Edwards strongly emphasized the Creator’s message in the Hiawatha Belt. By conforming to the traditional ideals and concepts found in the original interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt, he believes that the message of the Creator is still necessary to sustain the true cultural ways of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In effect, the people must live according to the original codes of behavior. However, Edwards also perceived the duplication of the Hiawatha Belt as destructive towards the original interpretations of the wampum because it reduces the overall experience to one of the everyday and ordinary. In addressing the abundant application of the Hiawatha Belt designs, he argued against the grass roots applications. “It is not for everyone. The principles of our culture, as spoken by the Creator, should remain above and apart from the daily grind. It should elevate each person in order to keep a good heart and a good mind.” His words direct the interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt inwardly. That, according to Edwards, is the Mohawk way.

In contrast, the other application of the Hiawatha Belt takes a more public approach. It focuses on the reinterpretation of the original concepts into everyday practices. This approach is
also called an evolving document and changes with the perceptions of the general public. This approach suggests a level of malleability to the original interpretations in order to make its messages more practical. Benedict and Bonaparte feel strongly that as a living document, the Creator’s messages found within the Hiawatha Belt should be constantly modified to fit the needs of the present and future generations. The message must be updated. In support of the idea that the messages of the Hiawatha Belt should change, Bonaparte suggested that the Hiawatha Belt should relate to everyone. “After all, it is our birthright and it is who we are. Why not wear it proudly?”

It is difficult to suggest how the Hiawatha Belt’s interpretation will ultimately be affected. At this time, perhaps because of the distance between each participant, the public debate about interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt has not begun. I do believe that the individual participants’ awareness and concerns regarding the interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt reflect and suggest future considerations and changes in meaning and application of all wampum. But it does not appear that my participants were even aware that there is a difference of opinion on how the interpretation of wampum should proceed. If there is current discussion regarding how the messages of the Hiawatha Belt should be applied, I believe it would be addressed by the Six Nations Grand Council as well as the individual nation councils of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It is within these governing bodies that the policies found within the Hiawatha Belt are currently being formed.

With respect to the interpretations given, I found two common opinions regarding the interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt. First, in spite of the difference in their narrative and their levels of familiarity with the Hiawatha Belt, they all believed that the wampum provided historical evidence of Haudenosaunee Confederacy’s origin. Secondly, they all agreed that the Hiawatha Belt was tangible evidence of their cultural legitimacy and nation status. It is through the remembering of historical events, through the establishment of relationship to others, and through its values that the people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are defined. Bonaparte’s descriptions of wampum as spiritual fingerprints not only emphasizes the concept of living wampum belts, but also idealizes who they were, who they are, and who they will be.

For the participants, the interpretation of wampum has not changed. They currently resist new adaptations, new interpretations, and new positions as authorities for wampum by viewing change as disruptive to the intentions of original wampum belt-makers. Each participant’s
narrative suggested the probability that there are many more perspectives, lessons and unfolding social practices that are to be revealed, created, and discovered. But for now, the participants believe the interpretations, the beads, the ceremonies, and the beliefs gives wampum a unifying layering that, at least on the surface, has remained unchanged.
CHAPTER FOUR

WAMPUM AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

In this final chapter, my research regarding the interpretation of wampum is presented. Section one begins with a conclusion regarding my research. This includes a discussion of the different interpretations of wampum. Initially two cultural interpretations were identified. The first interpretation was found within the museum displays at the American Museum of Natural History and was supported by volumes of written documentation in the form of diaries, field notes, and scientific presentations. This first interpretation suggested that earlier generations of Native Americans used wampum as a form of money. Also in this first section, I discuss my findings regarding how wampum is interpreted, how wampum functions, and how wampum represents the underlying beliefs and social practices in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the culture from which wampum originated. In section two, the role of critical art pedagogy as my theoretical foundation is examined. In section three, the applications for teaching about wampum are discussed as well as I also examine the implications of my findings in relationship to culturally responsive teaching. Section four presents my reflection and reveals a few personal discoveries. The 5th and final section presents suggestions for future research.

Conclusions

Let me begin this section by reviewing my research. It was 1990 when I read about the return of Native artifacts from federally supported museums like the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C and the New York City based American Museum of Natural History. The artifacts were taken from the museum displays and returned to the Native communities from which they had originated. As someone who grew up visiting museums and was now teaching art, I was worried that our museums would be emptied and that the examples of Native art would disappear. At the time, I believed this was a short sighted political decision made by the United States government.

In 2001, I became a doctoral degree candidate at the Pennsylvania State University in Art Education. I chose to examine the exodus of Native artifacts from museums as my research
This direction was based on my continuing belief that the return of Native artifacts would undermine the educational component of museums. I asked, “How would museums provide information about an object, which they no longer possessed”? My question grew from the fear that the removal of artifacts would diminish my ability to gather supporting teaching information from museum displays for my own classroom instruction.

In order to develop a sound research proposal, I determined that a thorough review of the 1990 federally mandated law titled Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act was necessary prior to the completion of my research proposal. As discussed in detail in chapter two, NAGPRA reversed ownership of many Native American objects by reclassifying artifacts to objects of cultural patrimony. The reclassification provided cultural relevance to objects that were previously considered culture-less and therefore needed to be returned to Native American cultures. I examined hundreds of NAGPRA repatriation files where I discovered that wampum was among the most reoccurring objects to be repatriated from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, New York. While there, I chose wampum as my focus because of my own interest in beads and because of the large number of repatriated wampum.

I traveled to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City and met with several museum staff members for the purpose of finding specific examples of recent repatriated Native American artifacts. I discovered that my questions regarding the repatriation of wampum were not welcomed and previously requested assistance in viewing repatriation papers, archival notes, and historical documents was met with resistance. I have since returned to the American Museum of Natural History and found that the discussions regarding the museum’s interpretation of wampum have not changed, but there appears to be less resistance to my inquiries. Wampum, as defined by this museum, was considered an artifact and not culturally significant.

Rightful ownership was the central topic of NAGPRA. The museum staff of AMNH believed it legally owned the wampum in its possession because the museum had supporting receipts for the purchase of their inventory. They also believed and exercised the right to share or limit the amount of public display based on decisions made in the best interest of the wampum and the museum. As a result of their determining how and when their wampum should be displayed, they constructed an interpretation of wampum that they believed to be most accurate. Their interpretation, as evidenced in the labels assigned to displayed wampum, suggested that
wampum had two main functions. One was as a decorative bead and the other as Indian money used during the early colonial period and prior to the minting of nationally accepted coinage. This is the same definition that I was also taught.

However, the information about wampum found by examining AMNH’s collection did not provide a strong argument for its repatriation. I, therefore, deduced that there must be another reason for the federal government to mandate the return of wampum. Why did Native people want it back? Was there another reason? It was at that point in my research design that I realized the need to interview members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy for their perspective. It was then that I realized that I had shifted my focus from a museum-based interpretation about an artifact to a focus on a Native-based interpretation by the people who fought to have it returned.

From this research, I understood that ownership of wampum was important in the formation of NAGPRA but it did not fully explain why the United States government was involved. The debate of ownership of cultural artifacts extends far beyond American politics and Native American objects. It extends to a perspective that emphasizes the need for globalization of cultural heritage. According to Appiah (2006), the ownership of cultural heritage of other cultures should be encouraged because it reinforces the values of universal humanness and not its differences. He defends the shared ownership of sacred work and protection of scared sites for the benefit of future generations. For Appiah, the common connective human bond should extend beyond political influence. He believes that all people, as citizens of the world, have ethical and moral responsibilities to people of other cultures; even if they do not recognize that responsibility. In the question of rightful ownership of wampum, I believe that Appiah would argue that wampum belongs to all people and should remain accessible to everyone, not just to a select culture.

Following Appiah’s emphasis on cultural accessibility, I therefore looked at how the issue of accessibility might be the reason for the repatriation of wampum. I wondered how and for whom access to an artifact might effect its repatriation. Again, I believed that the answer to understanding the act of repatriation was situated in its reclassification and questioned if it was possible that the interpretation found in the AMNH’s displays was incomplete. Did wampum mean something more than an artifact and Indian money?

I wanted to understand Native perspectives regarding wampum. My research prior to entering the communities of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was beneficial. Even though I
only understood the issues of ownership and accessibility of wampum from a non-Native perspective, it was a good starting point. My priori exposure to NAGPRA and my experiences in the American Museum of Natural History revealed to the Native participants the level of my understanding. They could and did make evaluations about me. It appeared that my knowledge of wampum and repatriation separated me from the occasional inquisitive tourist and presented me as a serious researcher with meaningful research questions to be asked. What remained was to find the meaning of wampum from a Native perspective.

Each interview question was intended to collect a portion of information that, when placed with the others would provide a broad context of meaning and help identify how wampum was interpreted within the culture that created it. Therefore, my first question to each participant was formulated to have the participants describe wampum and therefore address the identification of wampum in terms of its traditional materials. I asked, “What is wampum?” My second question addressed the interpretation of wampum. I asked, “What does wampum mean?” This second question was useful in two ways. The participants allowed the participants to choose what belt they were interpreting and the source from which to anchor their meaning. The diversity of answers among the participants suggested a variety of belts, meanings, and sources; a thought that had not crossed my mind at that point. I was treating wampum as an object of singular use and meaning. The participants’ responses also revealed, by manner of their choices, that each preferred certain wampum. Their choices also appeared to reflect their preferred method of knowing wampum. The attorney introduced a legal perspective, the museum educator provided an educational point of view, the Faith Keeper presented spiritual information, the historian recounted historical events, and the belt maker talked about construction and materials. Each seemed to know and contribute to the meaning of wampum from their own experiences.

While my two initial interview questions supplied a number of answers concerning wampum, the resulting information actually spawned a third question and what I now believed was the key to my research. It was a question that addressed the reclassification of wampum from an artifact to an object of cultural patrimony. I asked, “How does wampum function as an object of cultural patrimony?” This question addressed how the use of wampum in both public and private traditional practices in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As previously discussed, each participant chose to discuss the use of wampum through their own unique experiences. However, this time, their responses were very similar. The wampum was sacred and it was alive
When asked, the participants believed that wampum’s function as an object of cultural patrimony was found in the process of identifying, authenticating, and sustaining traditional interpretations of wampum. The participants agreed that the return of the wampum had left most of recovered wampum’s original interpretations and applications intact. For Boots, Benedict, Bonaparte, Edwards, and Williams, the symbolism referred to specific events and relationships within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and their embedded narratives. These narratives and symbolic designs believed to have been created by or under the influence of The Creator, identified how members of the Longhouse were to live together and acted as the connective cultural thread. It was in the construction of wampum belts and the messages embedded in them that the original, and therefore traditional, interpretations were sustained. In effect, the return of previously museum owned and museum interpreted wampum belts back to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy re-authenticated cultural beliefs, practices, and history through the reconnection of wampum belts with their specific interpretations and applications. Each person believed that the wampum was alive.

Wampum’s description as a living object became the most significant theme found within my research because of the many reoccurring references to living wampum by the participants. They mutually agreed to the living quality of authentic wampum. As detailed in Chapter Three, each participant believed that wampum was alive although their answers suggested multiple definitions regarding the specific qualities of a living object. Boots, Benedict, and Williams stated that the wampum was considered a living object because of the relationship between the message and wampum. Neither message nor wampum could stand alone and be considered alive; the two were both necessary. The emphasis on the necessity of both object and its message reinforces the existence of a symbiotic or organic relationship between inanimate object and intangible message in which the survival of one is forever attached to the other. If the concept of survival is to be considered in cultural practices, then the death of a ceremony or belief could also be described as the separation of its practice from its meaning. In the case of wampum, the removal of wampum diminished the memory of its messages, and without the memory of its messages, the wampum dies. Therefore the social practices of the reading of the messages embedded in the wampum and the passing of the wampum among the members of the Longhouse are meant to sustain the living relationship between message and wampum. For
Boots, Benedict, and Williams, wampum is alive because it possesses, among other life like characteristics, the ability to die.

The instilled sense of life in wampum is also embraced by Bonaparte and Edwards. For them, the use of a living shell material to make traditional wampum was evidence of wampum’s designation as a living object. While Bonaparte did not provide more than the shell connection, Edwards provided a more substantial discussion regarding the life of all things on earth. He related that all things are related and living because of their association with The Creator. The presence of The Creator is in everything and therefore everything is an embodiment by association to The Creator’s eternal existence.

There are other perspectives that support the idea that wampum is a living object. From the analysis of the interviews, and therefore perspective, the concept of living objects can also be described as a cultural process in which objects represent messages constructed by the culture who created the object. The object is believed to be living as long as its message is reinforced through ritual applications, interpretations and ceremonies. The object, in our case wampum, is considered living because it acts like an organism; adjusting, evolving, and surviving in its cultural environment. Its survival is, in Darwinian terms, based on its strength as an organism to remain significant in its environment. The concept regarding the survival of the fittest can also be applied to those messages, and wampum, that continue to identify their cultural messages in a manner that remains relevant to contemporary cultures.

In effect, wampum is like other living organisms. It influences the environment in which it lives and, in turn, is shaped by them. Wampum’s contribution to its culture is its ability to reinforce the values of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy through the use of its designs, wampum belt ceremonies, and messages. In addition, wampum continues to grow, like a living organism because it is now being shaped by innovative uses, new applications, and meaning derived from contemporary processes of symbol representation. Wampum clarifies social relationships, serves as cultural expressions, and reaffirms traditional and contemporary identities. As a living object, wampum functions for the survival of the Haudenosaunee culture and as an object of cultural patrimony.

Therefore, the second theme of my research focuses on how the function of wampum relates to its own cultural survival and that of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Cultural survival is a key characteristic of traditional living wampum, which relates to the survival of the
meaning and messages attached to the wampum by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Both Williams and Edwards in their interviews provided information regarding how members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy relate to each other and to others outside of their community. The information was embedded in the stories that each of them retold. They were intentionally designed to be broad enough to encompass traditional cultural messages and fluid enough to relate to contemporary needs of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As a result of the close relationship between wampum and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, wampum’s function of connecting traditional and contemporary social practices and ability to evolve culturally gives it an appearance of a living object.

The third theme found within the interviews highlighted the contemporary applications of traditional wampum designs. In chapter three, I suggested that these were considered disruptive to the traditional wampum interpretations by the participants, but not credible additions to the meaning of wampum. For purposes of this discussion, the word disruptive references a hybridization of the traditional Hiawatha Belt design with contemporary materials and identities. However, the consistent application of the Hiawatha Belt design provides evidence that new meaning is developing. The evidence of this development of new meaning and interpretations is found in the prevalent social practice of visibly displaying the traditional designs of the Hiawatha Belt. The integration of these specific design elements of the Hiawatha Belt is not limited to bead work. Its applications are boundless and include the already prevalent use of the design on architecture, flags, jewelry, and clothing. As a result, the symbolic design of the Hiawatha Belt appears everywhere you look within the communities of the Hiawatha Confederacy. In contrast, the symbols within the design of the Hiawatha Belt were rarely seen outside of these communities. The prevalent and specific placement of the Hiawatha Belt designs within the Haudenosaunee Community suggests that the use of the designs represent a new construction of meaning accepted by the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy for the purpose of identifying cultural membership.

To understand how this new meaning can be created through social practices, it is important to examine how an object like wampum maintains its meaning. Wampum’s unique ability to live in the past, present, and future depends, in part, on a strong and continued connection between its symbolic beaded designs and its socially constructed meaning. The survival or life of its meaning is dependent upon the continued and long term cultural use of
wampum within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In effect, symbolic communication often requires a long life through object permanence. For example, the Hiawatha Belt, at over 600 years old, symbolizes the oldest wampum belt is widely recognized throughout the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as both representing the people and their history. Its successful ability to relate cultural ideas and beliefs through its symbol-based designs is directly related to its continued importance with the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and now extend beyond the traditional forms.

Wampum is coded with visual symbols that are culturally designated and represent both traditional and contemporary interpretations and practices. In the specific case of the Hiawatha Belt, the formal aspects of the style and composition found within its block and tree design connotes or implies the specific governance through which the five original Native nations now operate. But now, the designs of the Hiawatha Belt formed through new applications and new socially constructed practices represent cultural recognition of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Examples of the Hiawatha Belt design’s new interpretations and applications are visible everywhere, but especially on the Mohawk and the Onondaga Reservations. The resulting applications are innovative. The examples are numerous and plentiful ranging in scale from key chains, bumper stickers, hats, stained glass windows, sidewalk markings, and architecture. One of the most notable and innovative application of the Hiawatha Belt design is found in the architectural structure of the Onondaga Nation School.

Figure 7: Onondaga Nation School Seal, Nedrow, New York

Figure 8: Onondaga Nation School Gymnasium Windows Showing the Design of the Hiawatha Belt
The Onondaga Nation School is located on the Onondaga Reservation in Nedrow, New York and is contracted through the New York State Department to teach kindergarten through eighth grade for native students who live on or near the Onondaga Nation. The Onondaga Nation School incorporates an abstracted eagle profile as its footprint and the design of the Hiawatha Belt wampum for gymnasium window shapes and tile patterns. The use of new materials and applications supports the transformation of traditional wampum into the present. In spite of the changes in materials and function, I was reminded that the relationship between new forms of the Hiawatha Belt design and old was based on the original living belt. Therefore all representations of the Hiawatha Belt referred back to the original message.

The innovative uses of the Hiawatha Belt design within a school and cultural center also support the idea that wampum lives within and is easily accessible to the community at large. In addition, the placement of the Hiawatha Belt designs into the architecture of the Onondaga Nation has increased their public image and identification with wampum. By identifying their nation as those who use wampum, the Onondaga also identify themselves and their place within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as the wampum keepers.

The re-interpretation and purposely dominant visual placement of the Hiawatha Belt within the school architecture suggests that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is actively engaged in social practices that aim to reconstruct the interpretation of wampum and, in turn, reaffirm the identity of those who construct those interpretations. As a result, the traditional and seemingly permanent interpretations of the Hiawatha Belt are now disrupted through the process of blending traditional wampum with contemporary re-contextualization. Wampum is finding new meaning and new significance as it travels from the past to the present. The construction of new ways of doing things suggests that the cultural values of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are being formed and reinforced through social practice. Both traditional ceremonies and meaning are expanding to incorporate contemporary identities and issues. In essence, the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy have successfully used wampum to allow the past and present to coexist.
Critical Pedagogy

My research would not have been possible without embracing the underlying beliefs and methods of critical pedagogy. It initially guided me to form critical inquiry methods regarding how cultural beliefs about wampum are constructed, interpreted, and transformed. But by critically examining my own cultural filters through the analysis of my own questions, I realized that the benefits of critical inquiry for me were situated in the acknowledgement of coexisting, but different, yet cultural interpretations of wampum.

In the critical pedagogy framework, the pursuit of authentic or contextually situated research is suggested because the gathering of historical and social contexts provides cultural substance for critical analysis. An analysis of the relationships and patterns found within both Native and non-Native cultures provided authentic information about wampum and the cultures that created it. Critical pedagogy supports the examination of the artifact and its uses and meanings for patterns, themes, and reoccurring issues. Since changing social, personal, and cultural conditions affect interpretations and perceptions, it was also possible to identify how different cultures interpret wampum differently at different times.

Critical pedagogy also assisted in the identification and analysis of the underlying structures of representation. I was able to identify differences in how wampum was interpreted between the museum artifact and the Native object of cultural patrimony by asking questions. These questions helped to make the presence of cultural representation more transparent. In the interpretations supplied by the American Museum of Natural History, the meaning of wampum as colonial money represented an interpretative perspective that highlighted the singular trade-based use of wampum between European traders and Native people. In contrast, the cultural interpretations of wampum within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy extended beyond the colonial period to include over 600 years of social practices and emphasized wampum’s living status as culturally relevant object.

Three discoveries resulted because I was able to identify how the interpretations of wampum represented cultural ideologies. First, I was able to identify the shared but distinctive interpretations of both native and non-Native cultures as previously discussed. I was also able to better understand why wampum was reinterpreted as an object of cultural patrimony. It is a communication between members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of grand significance.
Wampum belt designs provided diverse forms of communication through which intrinsic and extrinsic values and beliefs were attached. The traditional interpretations of wampum belt meanings were then communicated through discourse, narratives, and ceremonies. They became examples of social renewal and practice. In some cases, new forms and meaning were also attached to wampum in the form of architectural applications, visual culture, and adornment. Through social practices, the values and narratives attached to wampum were both reinforced and extended through alteration and disruption. My final acknowledgement to the role of critical pedagogy is in the development of what I now perceive is my best research question. It is “How did the way wampum was interpreted contribute to the reclassification and repatriation of wampum?” Had I been able to form this question earlier, I would have had a better foundation for my research design. However, now that I am finally able to form a research question that is based in critical inquiry, I acknowledge that the methods of critical pedagogy have enabled me to succeed.

The Broader Implications

The implications of my research indicate that the use of critical pedagogy can enhance the study of cultural objects in teaching as a means to develop a richer and more authentic perspective regarding objects for both students and teachers.

The attachment of meaning to objects is at the very core of art making. It also should be recognized that the object is one of many components in the social process. Therefore the combination of scholarly data about wampum with the application to real life experiences can be experienced in the art classroom through an examination of its narratives and public ceremonies. Artists create and use objects like wampum to communicate ideas. Art educators use objects to study artists and their cultures. Therefore the field of art education should also analyze the current practices of teaching about objects.

I found the methods of critical inquiry and analysis were successful in distinguishing between the Native and non-Native cultural differences in ideas and interpretations about wampum. In turn, it was also helpful in identifying individual responses within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This knowledge led to the examination of rightful ownership, accessibility, and interpretation regarding wampum and helped to identify the social practices
and narratives attached to wampum. Then the narratives were examined in relationship to the interpretations of wampum within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This resulted in substantially different interpretations of wampum when compared to the AMNH’s reference of wampum as Indian money. The resulting narratives provided numerous interpretations and applications not widely recognized outside of the Native community.

While the differences in interpretation regarding wampum as both artifact and object of cultural patrimony remain, the central emphasis on supporting cultural awareness and practices suggest a commonality between cultures that will reinforce the future existence of all interpretations. Wampum’s shared ownership has become part of the ongoing history and meaning of wampum. The various interpretations will remain in spite of the manner in which wampum functioned within both Native and non-Native cultures.

The coexisting and shared cultural histories and interpretations of wampum are not unique. Many other cultural objects share the same type of coexistence as wampum. They were created in other cultures under a different context and now are viewed under different situations and circumstances in museum, private, collections, antique shops, and flea markets in America. The displacement of these objects often affects how they are understood. However, the acknowledgement of their shared provenance can provide additional information about those who created it. In addition, the acknowledgement of multiple cultural interpretations suggests that additional research should reveal additional information and understanding of how objects function within each culture. The increased research activity should also facilitate accessibility to cultural sources, images and information not always available to teachers or students.

Students can also benefit from the use of critical pedagogy in identifying wampum as social practice. Students have a better chance to connect to the meaning of objects like wampum through a more thorough examination of how the objects function within their own cultures. The use of my research data to present the narratives of wampum can help to identify the contemporary social practices using wampum in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. A connection between wampum as a representation of what the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy do to sustain their cultural beliefs and values could be made through the articulation of social processes within the students’ own communities and by doing so, extend and expand the lessons of wampum. As a result, students can examine contemporary applications with their
own similar experiences by connecting how meaning and subsequent interpretations of wampum are constructed, challenged, appropriated, disrupted, and maintained.

Teachers can also benefit from the understanding of the differences between objects as artifacts and as cultural patrimony. One of the primary issues that art educators face in representing other cultures respectfully is in the content and the context from which the object is represented. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding of why an object like wampum was created contributes to wampum being misread. More importantly, a misreading of the process can lead to an abuse of cultural interpretations and inaccurate or misleading information. Art educators are asked to consider how often and to what degree the object of study, in our case wampum, becomes the only way we ask our students to know about the culture that made it.

The implications of my research, of understanding how wampum can be considered an artifact in museums or a living object of cultural patrimony for the members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are not completely known. The outcome of all cultural perspectives reinforces its rich and diverse social practices and highlights the broader relationship between cultures. The outcome of a coexisting acceptance of both cultures rests on the emphasis of context and not content and suggests that other questions still need to be addressed. Can both Native and non-Native interpretations of objects such as wampum continue to coexist and if so, what types of relationship will the diverse interpretations yield? The answers will not be easily found as more and more Native-based materials regarding cultural art and beliefs enter mainstream education. Their applications will overlap, expand, illuminate, contradict and add to the existing information and literature with, I hope, the ability to address both historical and contemporary commonalities in the interpretations of wampum.

However, there are numerous questions that remain unanswered. Some questions have not yet been formed. My own set of questions remains close to my original research questions regarding the frequent accessibility to the information about wampum. How do I continue to facilitate communication with my participants in order to receive current information? In some circumstances, they have moved from their positions within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy through job changes, illness, and change in life’s directions. I am also concerned about the seemingly overnight proliferation of wampum interpretations on the Internet. Are all of them to be considered authentic? What types of questions should I form to know that? Should authenticity even be questioned when wampum is perceived as a social practice? Does the
question of authenticity, as it was defined by the participants, remain significant when looking at contemporary interpretations?

Reflections

I recognize that I have grown through the process of examining others’ cultural objects and worldviews. Therefore, I wish to acknowledge the patience, understanding, and generosity of Mohawk Chiefs Francis Boots and Darren Bonaparte, Onondaga Native American Specialist Toni Benedict, Mohawk Faith Keeper James Edwards, Six Nations Attorney Paul Williams and all of the unnamed others who gave directions, opinions and their time to get me where I needed to be.

There are several personal lessons that I can identify as a result of this research, although I believe that there are more yet to be discovered. To begin this process, I looked at the broad changes in myself. I have learned that the ability to form sound research questions and pair them with proven methodology, supportive advisors, and willing participants is hard work. The rewards are well worth the growing pains and, in my case, life changing.

Completing the process of research has enabled me to become better in my position as a university professor. It has exposed me to a number of contemporary writers, theories, and methodologies as part of my professional growth. I now believe that I am better equipped to ask questions that support a deeper level of thinking. My responses are more thorough and directed in the examination of my research topics and interests. In addition, from writing to rewriting my field notes, I am able to more precisely articulate my thoughts. The results, from working through this research project, have allowed me to further develop artistically as well.

I am more open to other perspectives regarding cultural ideas because in the process of research, I took the time to listen. Listening is a gift to both the speaker and to the listener because it allows for each person to focus clearly on the discussed topic. I found if I didn’t listen, I was thinking about my next comment or question. So I began to consciously focus on the speaker and it was amazing to me how much people are willing to share when they know that someone is listening. The act of listening as a way of learning was made visible in my research by the requests and actions of many of the participants. The method of listening was less visible, but still relevant and used in my own classroom. I have now made an active goal to incorporate
more into my own research and teaching. Listening to what someone is saying rather than thinking how to respond while someone is still talking takes practice. It is most effective, and as I have already demonstrated in my own research and teaching, signals respectful and attentive acknowledgment to the speaker. When one offers both qualities, I believe it sets a tone for others to follow. My students respond positively to this practice especially when my messages include constructive criticism.

There are a number of smaller changes in my actions as both a person and an art educator. My world of ideas has expanded because of the opportunities that I had in the process of visiting the communities of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. I now spend more time observing and asking questions about the art and objects that I see, than making quick judgments about their intent, meaning, and value. I listen more and talk less. I am open to ideas and beliefs that I had previously dismissed. In return, I believe my students benefit from a stronger classroom where pedagogical tools support increased representation of ideas, art forms, worldviews, and perspectives. As a result of their successes, I am happier.

Future Research

Although my research was constructed primarily for non-Native art educators, it would be foolish to suggest that the issues regarding the study of cultural objects in both Native and non-Native art classrooms are well delineated. The issues of diverse perspectives and interpretations are significant in both settings. Therefore, collaborative research between non-Native and Native art educators would promote the development of educational guides that help educators of all disciplines connect Native American cultures to their curriculum. It would also emphasize the commonalities of Native and non-Native communities. It would reveal the histories and issues that both cultures share rather than the differences.

By creating curricular guides designed through cross-cultural collaboration, we will also reveal that art presented within cultural contexts is meaningful. Curricular guides based on specific themes and objects would also provide a connection between past and present Native communities. It would link Native American languages, beliefs, and identities with American histories, beliefs, and places. The teaching about Native American objects should also communicate the same themes that I found present in my research regarding cultural
perspectives. The next step in future research should develop curricular guides that support the visual expression of integrated and contextualized Native American cultural values. Native and non-Native American art and culture are products of social practice and the commonality of their construction as a process of cultures could provide a bridge of understanding that has yet to be built between the cultures. The bridge should act as the Two Road Wampum Belt in which all cultures can journey, but maintain their unique cultural characteristics.

Future research also must follow practices that emphasize the combination of diverse contexts and content of the subject studied and the use of self reflection as a means to make the process of research transparent in classroom applications. If students recognize the step by step choices made by the researcher(s), they too will begin to recognize that the process of critical pedagogical inquiry and analysis, are significant to the meaningful development of their own values, beliefs, and artwork.
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## APPENDIX

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