

Temporary Exhibition

From October 20, 2023 to March 10, 2024



Wampum: Beads of Diplomacy

A Canadian Exclusive

Wampum are remarkable objects made from shell beads that were exchanged for over two centuries—from the early 17th to the early 19th century—during diplomatic meetings between nations in northeastern America, including European nations. For the first time, this unprecedented exhibition brings together over 40 wampum belts from public and private collections in Quebec, Canada and Europe. Some forty cultural objects from the period also help to contextualize and explain their fundamental role.

The participation of contemporary Indigenous voices in the exhibition highlights the continuing importance of wampum in Indigenous cultures today. Discover the work of artists Hannah Claus, Nadia Myre, Teharihulen Michel Savard and Skawennati, inspired by wampum, and hear stories from members of several nations through a series of videos.

Powerful cultural and political symbols in Indigenous societies, wampum contain messages and knowledge that need to be heard. As material witnesses of the sacred principles and agreements that bind nations, these precious objects are the bearers of stories and should be better understood. The exhibition invites you to understand the fundamental role of wampum in relations between Indigenous and European nations, the relationship between these objects and geopolitical issues in Canadian history, and their significance and influence today.

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