
MARSHALL JOSEPH BECKER

Unique Huron Ornamental Bands: Wampum Cuffs

Approximately 300 individual artifacts incorporating small, tubular shell beads—called wampum—into a woven band are known to survive from traditional times, and specifically before 1835. Despite more than a century of academic interest in this aspect of material culture in the Northeastern cultural region of North America (Holmes 1883; Hamy 1897; Beauchamp 1898, 1901), only recently a number of separate and distinct functions for specific types of wampum bands have been recognized (Becker 2001, 2002). Among the various types of wampum bands now recognized are bands of a trapezoidal shape that resemble the pattern used for the wrist-covering part of gloves (gauntlets), also replicated by the cuffs on European overcoats of that period.

Research directed at collecting all records relating to these trapezoidal bands identified thirteen surviving examples (Fig. 1). This distinct subset of wampum bands was used by the Wendat (or Huron) on coats worn by elders engaged in diplomatic and/or ceremonial roles. The special functions suggested for the trapezoidal bands of Wendat material culture have been deduced through study of the bands themselves together with evidence gathered from the documentary and visual sources. Searches of the archaeological and photographic records of Aboriginal peoples have failed to identify any evidence for this category of wampum band. The sparse record, reviewed below, also reveals that not a single cuff appears in the iconographic record published after the 1730s.

During the period from 1897 into the early part of the 20th century we find the appearance of several examples of cuffs as they came to the atten-

tion of scholars, or became part of various museum collections (Hamy 1897, Beauchamp 1898). Study of the few known specimens of these ornamental coat cuffs suggests the possibility that no examples were made after 1800. The evidence also suggests that wampum cuffs emerged only within the area of the confederated Huron tribes. With the decline in Huron political independence during the middle of the 19th century, wampum cuffs appear to have gone out of use. Regardless of the complex issues of cultural change that came into play during this period, these revelations indicate that most of the known examples—generally as single examples rather than in pairs—remained in Wendat hands until the late 1800s, but that their traditional functions had ended and long been forgotten.

Information relating to surviving examples suggests that several of these wampum cuffs were fashioned as matched pairs. Each cuff requires at least 1,500 individual wampum beads, or at least 3,000 beads for a pair. These conservative numbers still represent a significant investment of resources in cuffs that probably were used to decorate coats worn by tribal elders or officials. The cost involved in cuff production may, in fact, explain why so few are known, or survive. It may also provide a clue to the development of these bands. It is possible that pairs of trapezoidal bands came into use before the Huron confederacy was dispersed in 1649, and re-emerged some time after 1675 when social stratification and/or political offices emerged within the remnant groups of the Huron confederacy at locations such as Lorette.

No.	Current Location	Description	Origin
1.	Oneida Indian Nation, Inc.: NY	28-row, 5 checked diamonds in a “V” formation	Georgian Bay, Canada: Huron (Fig. 2)
2.	Oneida Indian Nation, Inc.: NY	27-row, 9 open rectangles in a slash	Georgian Bay, Canada: Huron (Fig. 3)
3.	Musée d’histoire naturelle et d’ethnographie: Lille, France	A 28-row, stepped design (a linear 9-step “V” or “U” pattern)	French Canada
4.	Musée d’histoire naturelle et d’ethnographie: Lille, France	Identical to no. 3 above, which suggests they are a pair	French Canada
5.	Musée de l’Homme: Paris	Stepped design of 2 parallel lines	Huron
6.	Musée de l’Homme: Paris	Possibly a match to No. 5, above	Huron
7.	Museum of the American Indian: Heye Centre, New York	20-row, 7 checked diamonds in a “V”	Unknown origin
8.	Museum of the American Indian: Heye Centre, New York	25-row, 2 parallel zigzag lines	Identified as Iroquois by an anonymous cataloguer
9.	Canadian Museum of Civilization: Gatineau, Quebec	3 checked diamonds in a “V.”	Huron
10.	Canadian Museum of Civilization: Gatineau, Quebec	5 checked diamonds in a “V”	Huron
11.	Currency Museum: Ottawa, Canada	7 checked diamonds in a “V” pattern	Unknown origin
12.	Time-Life, Rockefeller Center, New York City	28-row, 3 diamonds in a “V”	Unknown origin
13.	Peabody Museum: Harvard University, Boston, Mass.	20-row, 7 checked diamonds in a “V”	Misidentified as Penobscot but probably Huron

Historical Context

Gabriel Sagard’s observations of native life in North America, principally made among the people who called themselves Wendet, was first published in 1632. The Wendat, or Wyandot, commonly are called “Huron.” His observations in Canada were made during his stay from June 1623 through the fall of 1624. This was just after Champlain had made his important observations on the emergence of the standard wampum bead, and extremely early in the development of wampum as a commodity. Sagard’s ethnographic review is of particular note here for his data concerning the early uses of wampum. These standardized shell beads first appeared among the Wendat, perhaps as early as 1610 or 1611 (Becker 2006), and rapidly spread between 1615 and 1620. Sagard’s published works (1632, 1636) suggest an early proliferation in the uses of true wampum by the Wendat. The text quoted below, derived from a recent edition of Sagard’s 1632 original, includes insertions—included here within brackets—representing the additions made in Sagard’s 1636 edition. Note that “great plates” are among the ornamental wampum objects reported, but nothing resembling a trapezoidal cuff appears. This suggests that cuffs evolved in the period between 1624 and the 1680s.

Leurs Pourceleines sont diuersement enfilées, les vnnes en colliers, larges de Trois ou quatre doigts, faicts coimme une sangle de cheual qui en auroit ses fissesles toute couuertes et enfilées, et ces coliers ont enuiron trois pieds et demy de tour ou plus” . . . en ay veu d’autres qui en portoient encore des brasselets [1636 adds de pourceleine] aux bras, et de grandes plaques [1636 adds accomodées de me] par deuant leur e tomach, et d’autres par derriere, accommodez en rond, et [1636 adds quarré] comme vne carde à carder la laine, attachées à leurs tre ès de cheueuz: quelqu’ vnnes d’entr’elles ont au i des [added in 1636 chaines,] ceintures et autres parures [des bra elets] faictes de poil de por- espic. . . . (Sagard [1939: 2:344-45] 1632: 191-95)

My translation below incorporates current metric standards and anthropological information to provide nuanced meaning.

Their shell beads are strung in various ways, sometimes to make bands that are 5 to 8 cm wide, similar to a horse’s girth but with some of the threads used to fashion the band passing through the shell beads. Some of these bands are as long as a meter, or even longer. . . . I have seen other women who wore bracelets [of these beads] on their arms and [as] great plates in front of the stomach, and other [such plates] behind, circular in shape, and still others [(a rolled) square] in shape like a teasel

Fig. 1
The currently-identified thirteen surviving examples of wampum cuffs.

for carding wool hanging from the locks of their hair. Some of them also have belts and other finery made of porcupine quills....

Sagard made no reference to diplomatic uses for strings and belts of wampum, the function for which this commodity became most known. Bracelets of wampum are often noted in records as early as the 1620s. They generally were relatively short strings of wampum, long enough to encircle a wrist perhaps two or three times but shorter than the strings identified as necklaces. Within twenty years, large belts of wampum were being used in diplomatic as well as ornamental contexts.

In 1645, a large number of strings and belts of wampum were presented at a major treaty held at Trois-Rivières between the Huron and the Five Nations Iroquois, with Algonquian and French also attending. The wampum strings, or small belts, exchanged at that time are identified as presents (*presens*) or “words,” each of which represented a specific statement, generally in the form of a request (Thwaites 1896: (27) 280-87; (28) 280-83). In the fall of 1645, the Annierronnen (Mohawk) killed a number of Christians. At a subsequent session of the treaty “they present[ed] the scalps of the Christians of St. Joseph ... and a great [band] of porcelain, which was to serve as irons to put them in chains.” The presentation of “*vn grand collier de porcelaine*” suggests the presentation of a wampum belt similar to “a great necklace [band] of three thousand beads” (Thwaites 1896: (28) 284-85, 293).

During the fall session of the treaty, strings of condolence wampum were presented first. The act of presenting wampum belts and condolence strings by throwing the items offered at the feet of the intended recipient had become part of diplomatic wampum rituals (Thwaites 1896: (27) 291). This form of presentation forces the intended recipient to stoop in order to retrieve the item transferred, thus acknowledging an inferior position in the interchange. Alternately, the recipient can reject an offering by using a stick to toss it aside, as one would a snake. By 1645, ornamental and diplomatic uses for wampum had matured, yet the only 17th century reference to the trapezoidal bands, now identified as cuffs, does not emerge until 1689.

In 1689, Michel Bégon de la Picardière (1638-1710) wrote a letter to M. Esprit Cabart de Villermont to which he appended a “*Memoire des Curiosités qui me sont venues de Sep* [sic] *Canada*” (curiosities that had come from Canada) (BN, Dangeau Collection, mss 0855, f 186-87, reel F-486, 9 Jan, old no. MG7-1A2). Bégon’s

letter was written from Rochefort, where he had just assumed the post of *Intendant* of the port.¹ The list of curiosities includes some forty-seven entries, ranging from ethnographic specimens and seashells to mineral samples of various types. The most relevant entry is first on the list: “*Une paire de bracelets de rassades*” (a pair of beaded bracelets [woven cuffs]). During personal communication in 2006, Jonathan Lainey² explained that the term “*rassade*” refers to beads in general, as in a pair of “beaded bracelets” (cuffs), as distinct from a string of beads worn as a bracelet. Most significant is the note that the beaded bracelets are identified here as a “*paire*” and listed separately from other bracelets. The wording is an alert to the probability that this is a set of wampum cuffs, perhaps one of the two sets now identified in French collections.

The large size and particular trapezoidal shape of all thirteen surviving wampum cuffs suggests that they are distinct from most of the bracelets described in the early literature, which were decorative ornaments consisting of a short string of wampum. Worthy of note is the appearance during the 1650s of roughly-tailored matchcoats as a major item of trade throughout the northeast (Becker 2005a). These tradecoats—derived from earlier lengths of blanket material used as matchcoats—rapidly evolved into an array of garments. Many of them were complex tailor-made coats with elaborate ornamentation that were given as special gifts. The large cuffs on European coats served as a model for construction of wampum bands of cuff shape. Examples now in French museum collections confirm that by the 1670s, wampum-ornamented coat cuffs were made by the Wendat, probably as additions to imported garments.

Surviving Examples and Early Iconography

In addition to the Bégon letter of 1689, other examples provide convincing evidence for the early use of wampum cuffs. The earliest and perhaps most significant piece of iconographic confirmation of the use of trapezoidal bands of wampum as cuffs (as distinct from bracelets or garters) appears on a plate published by Bacqueville de la Potherie in 1722. In this plate Bacqueville depicts a man who appears to be wearing a fringed trapezoidal cuff around his wrist. The next year Bacqueville (1723: 90) provides a more detailed drawing that illustrates a trapezoidal band worn as a cuff (Fig. 4). In this instance, a portion of the decorative design

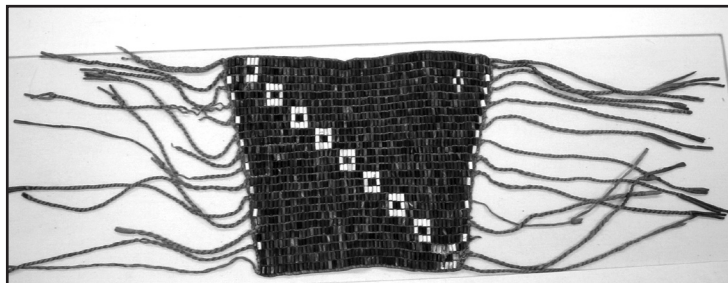
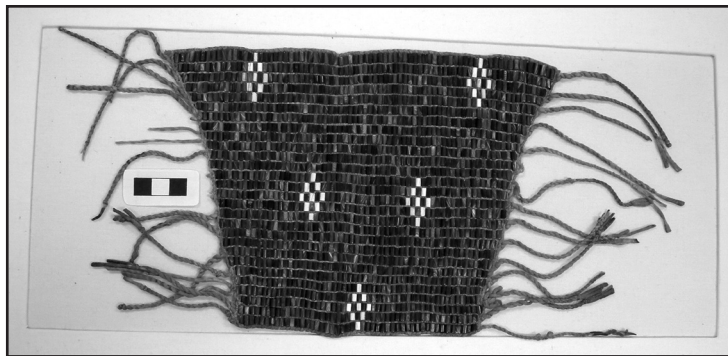
is evident. This design is quite different from those appearing on cuffs now known to be in France but is similar, if not identical, to one of the two examples of cuffs (Figs. 2 and 3) now owned by the Oneida Indian Nation, Inc., in New York State.

A later work by Bacqueville (1753: (4) 90) presents an illustration of a male identified as an Iroquois chief, shown facing to his right (to the viewer's left) and holding one end of a band of wampum in his outstretched right hand. Unfortunately, Bacqueville does not provide a specific description of the materials depicted on the plates in either the 1722 or 1753 works. Two years after Bacqueville's first edition was issued, his drawing appeared in a variant form in a volume by Lafitau. Lending further evidence for the early use of Wampum cuffs, Lafitau's plate appears to derive from Bacqueville's 1722 edition. Lafitau's plate, however, also includes a second figure: a female wearing a similar example of a cuff. Lafitau offers the following explanation for his plate:

On voit ici un détail des habillemens & des ornemens des Sauvages. 1. 2. Figures de Sauvages des Nations Iroquoises & Huronnes vêtus à la moderne, homme & femme. . . 8. Braffolet de porcelaine travaillé en petits Cylindres. (25)

We see here in detail the dress and ornaments of the natives . . . Depictions of the natives of the Iroquois and Huron tribes, male and female dressed in today's fashion [1720s]...Bracelet assembled from small, cylindrical shell beads. (Translation mine)

The male in the upper left of Lafitau's plate appears to be a mirror image of the male in the Bacqueville plate, while in the upper right is a female figure depicted with a wampum cuff on her outstretched left wrist. These two figures may be accurately illustrated ethnographic observations of the Huron; on the other hand, the poses may simply be artistic devices used to balance the picture. The male, facing toward the centre, is a Native American male holding in his extended left hand a belt of wampum that is approximately ten centimetres wide and thirty-five centimetres long. The fringe descending from his left wrist denotes the presence of a wampum and fringe cuff. His right hand is held at his lower chest, the wrist being obscured by a blanket-cape so that the presence of a second cuff is not evident. The woman is facing the male across the page. Her right arm is extended and in her right hand she delicately holds the edge of a blanket-shawl. In a formalized, palm-up gesture, her



left hand appears to point to the fringed wampum cuff on the right wrist.

The trapezoidal wampum cuff depicted bottom center on Lafitau's plate is depicted with the longer edge at the top, in the fashion of 17th- and 18th-century European style cuffs. The curvature of the upper and lower unequal-length margins appears to be a convention that suggests this object was intended to curve or wrap around a wrist. From each of the non-parallel sides there extends seven "strings," indicating a braiding of the warp lines, as is common in fashioning garters and cuffs. As illustrated, this cuff seems to have a raised (perhaps beaded) border and an ornamental design consisting of a pair of stepped lines ascending along either side from the center of the base. This pattern duplicates surviving examples 3, 4, 5 and 6 as noted in figure 1. The cuff illustrated by Lafitau in 1724, therefore, may have no relationship to the Bacqueville cuffs.

While Lafitau's work provides no indication about the cultural affiliation of the male and the female depicted in his illustration, I suggest they were Huron. Interestingly, there is a complete lack of any cuff-like ornamentation in any of the many paintings of individual Huron and Iroquois from the mid-1700s through to the 1800s. The extensive photographic record after 1830 is devoid of any trapezoidal wampum bands, an observation that confounds scholars. Further, not a single archaeological example of wampum cuffs is known. The

Fig. 2 (Top)
Oneida Indian Nation, Inc., NY: A 28-row cuff with a design of 5 checked diamond in a "V" formation. From the Georgian Bay region of Canada, and probably Huron. Photograph by Deb Twigg.

Fig. 3 (Bottom)
Oneida Indian Nation, Inc., NY: A 27-row cuff with a design of 9 open rectangles in a "slash." From the Georgian Bay region of Canada and probably Huron. Photograph by Deb Twigg.

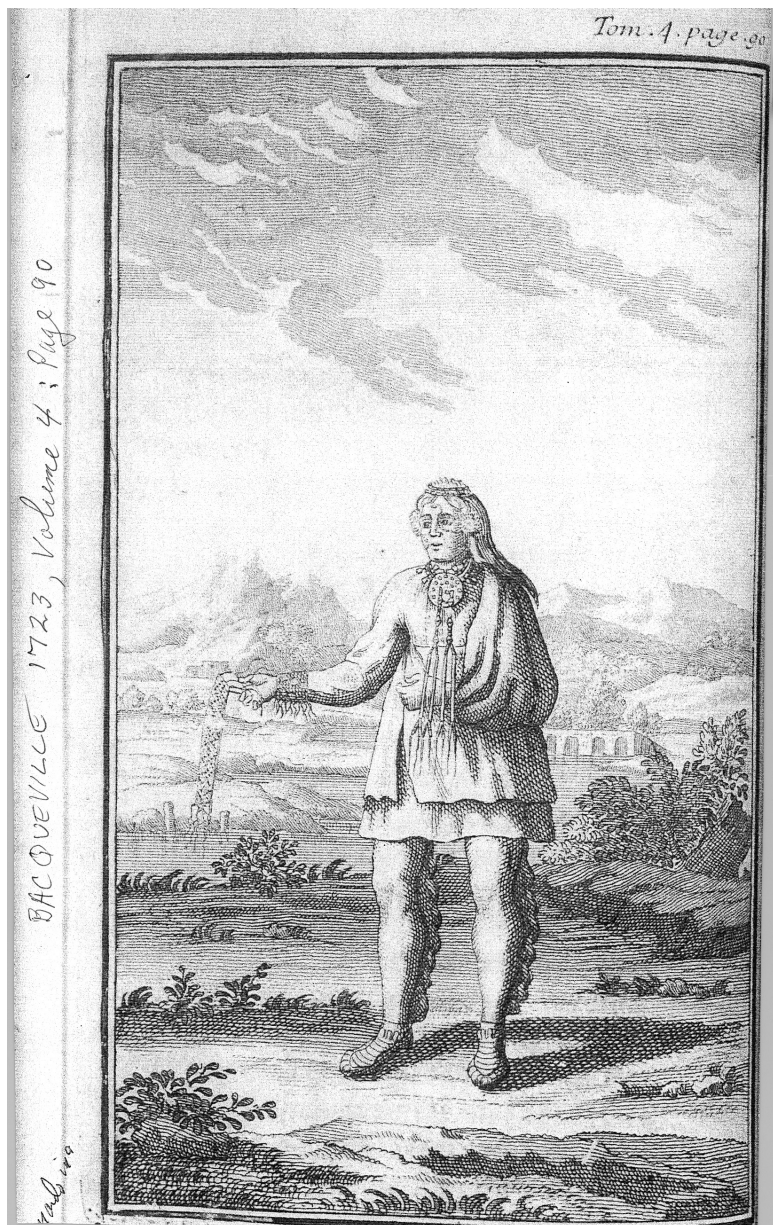


Fig. 4
 Engraving published by Bacqueville (1723, Vol. 4: 90), providing the clearest iconographic image of a Wampum cuff. The design on the cuff appears to be a "V" formed by five diamonds or similar to the example illustrated by Beauchamp as shown in figure 2.

recovery of important and impressive examples of mortuary materials from two Pequot cemeteries in Connecticut (McBride 1993) offers the best archaeological view of the many ornamental uses for wampum in New England (Becker 2005b). This site, far from Huronia, provides the best overview now available regarding decorative uses for wampum, but nothing resembling wampum cuffs.

The Reappearance of Wampum Cuffs

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the study of wampum cuffs is that aside from the Bégon letter there is not a single text description for them, either as pairs or as individual examples, in any of the published historical records prior to 1897. Not one photograph or drawing illustrating trapezoidal wampum cuffs appears between 1723 and 1897. In that year Hamy (1897) published excellent photographs of the pair in Paris (numbers 5 and 6 described in figure 1).

In the 1850s, only a few decades after the last known use of diplomatic wampum belts, Lewis Henry Morgan³ studied wampum as part of his interest in the cultures of the Five Nations Iroquois (Tooker 1994). Morgan commissioned an example of a wampum belt to be assembled in traditional fashion. Formal studies of wampum began with William Holmes's (1883) review of shell ethnographic objects in the Americas, centered on bands then held by the Onondaga. Notably he makes no reference to trapezoidal bands.

By 1850, interest in American Aboriginal cultures had grown among European ethnographers, resulting in active expansion of museum collections (Hamy 1890). The particularly large collection of wampum then at the Trocadero Museum (and perhaps William Holmes's 1883 work) led E. T. Hamy to publish a preliminary paper on what has come to be called the Huron "Four Nations Belt" (Hamy 1895-96), followed by the landmark overview of the Trocadero wampum in 1897. The latter's unsurpassed illustrations include those of the cuffs held in Paris (unfortunately shown in a folded position). The first mention of wampum cuffs in print in North America appeared the following year. Beauchamp's summary of Holmes's indicates that two "small belts sent [to] me for inspection, not long since, were of a peculiar form . . ." (1898: 12). Beauchamp identified the "belts" as "cuffs" in 1901, when he illustrated them for the first time (Beauchamp 1901: Plate 12). Who owned them in 1898, as well as their previous history, has just been discovered (Becker, forthcoming)."

In New England, where most wampum was produced prior to 1700, the renewed interest in Wampum was absent. In his discussion of shell bead use in New England, Charles Willoughby (1905: 507), included no reference to wampum. This was likely not an oversight, but perhaps a reflection of the uses for wampum as ornament only (Willoughby 1935: 271-72; Becker 2005b). Frank Speck's erroneous association of cuffs with Penobscot material culture and his belief that they were hair ornaments (1911: 24, Fig. 18; 1916: 129) are part of his problematic statements on the subject. Both of these hypotheses have been proven incorrect, although I, too, initially believed that trapezoidal bands originated among the Penobscot. Speck (1911: Plate VIII), however, provides useful information with his photographs of the Huron elder who he referred to as a "chief" and who Lainey identified as Gaspard Picard Ondiaraléthé. Speck shows Ondiaraléthé standing beside his grandson. Ondiaraléthé wears a coat with complex-looking cloth ornaments inserted into the shoulder seams. Another photograph of Ondiaraléthé shows him wearing a different coat with less complex-looking shoulder seam inserts. The different coats suggest that they were official tribal uniforms worn on special occasions as symbols of office, and likely handed over to newly elected or appointed office holders. If wampum cuffs adorned earlier examples of Wendat coats, by 1900 all had become detached—perhaps given or sold to others. Nevertheless, Lainey notes that none of the images of Huron, or other Aboriginal people, show them wearing anything that resembles these trapezoidal bands.

Discussion

In the years 1623-1624, during the period when Gabriel Sagard lived among the Wendat and their neighbours, Aboriginal people dressed in the simple garments that were traditional in the Northeastern part of North America. They were, however, eager to obtain cloth from European sources (Becker 2005a). Unlike the distinct hair styles recorded by Gabriel Sagard (1939), little is known about the specific clothes worn by each culture. Headbands of wampum or other materials, as well as long hair, may have evolved as cultural markers, or perhaps became generic markers of Aboriginal identity (Welters 1993), much like feather ornamentation had come to represent Aboriginal Americans in early European art (Becker 2000). It could also

be said that variations among Aboriginal people may have been conflated by early observers into a stylized type, the way in which feathered bonnets of the various Plains Indians came to represent "Aboriginal" after the 1830s.

By the 1640s, wampum, commonly woven into a variety of forms, had become an abundant commodity in the Great Lakes area. The data imply that wampum cuffs emerged at some time before 1680 as a part of the material culture specific to the Wendat. To explore variations in types within the general artifact category of wampum bands, it is necessary to examine in greater detail the documentary and archaeological record, as well as the artifacts themselves. This may reveal variations in the ways they were used by different Aboriginal people. All thirteen known examples of wampum cuffs appear to be fashioned with true wampum beads. Thus wampum cuffs are closely related to diplomatic wampum belts and not to the many decorative bands in which glass and metal beads are included. The limited evidence suggests that wampum cuffs may have been made in pairs, as indicated by the two pairs of early date now held in French museums. Wampum cuffs may have been worn on the coats of diplomatic representatives, verifying or reinforcing the words of the speaker in the same way that the presentation of wampum at treaties had once been an essential symbol of good faith in political dealings. The implied use by a female, as indicated by the iconographic records of the 1730s, may be interpreted in several different ways.

The possibility that cuffs were worn as single examples may explain why so few matched pairs survive, although I suspect that pairs were separated at a late date. The appearance of so many cuffs as single examples also may have been important in leading Speck to infer a use as hair ornaments. Of note, is the possibility that the woman in the Lafitau illustration may be wearing only one cuff. Of equal importance, is the determination of who may have made this and who may have been wearing it.

Although research suggests that thirteen trapezoidal wampum bands still exist, as of this date there is not a single direct ethnographic description to link them with the decorative functions of cuffs. Also lacking is any statement concurrent with their manufacture and/or use that might confirm a specifically-Wendat cultural association. Nevertheless, several catalogue clues strongly point to a connection between the Wendat and these cuffs.

First, the early illustrations depicting cuffs appear to come from the area of the Huron, although Bacqueville had lived for a few years among Iroquoians at Sault St. Louis (Kahnawake). On the right wrist of the person illustrated in figure 4 we see the only indisputable representation of a wampum cuff that is known before 1898. The cuff is depicted as a dark wampum band with three small diamonds aligned to form one arm of a V-shaped pattern (five diamonds). The other “arm” of the V is not shown. Two surviving examples of cuffs bear such “V” shaped designs formed by five diamonds. It is notable, however, that both surviving cuffs (listed as number 1 and number 10 in Fig. 1) with this decorative design are not among those known to be held in European collections, suggesting that the depicted cuff was seen in North America or that a similar example reached Europe but remains unknown, if it survives at all.

Second, the two pairs of cuffs in French collections are the earliest documented examples and both are unequivocally identified as Huron. Third, the association of many other examples with the Huron, or the area known before 1645 as Huronia, supports the assignment of these pieces to the Wendat as a unique cultural trait. The possibility may also be considered that cuffs were used only by those Huron who operated out of Lorette (the “Wendat Loretteronnans”), or by the Huron living around Detroit. Lainey (personal communication), however, suggests that they may have been used by all Aboriginal people of French Canada.

The survival of only thirteen examples of wampum cuffs may be explained by the fact that they were an elaborate and expensive ornamentation of which relatively few were made. Lainey proposes the possibility that many of these ornate objects were buried with the dead, and that this aspect of mortuary ritual may partially explain why so few are known. If burial of these cuffs was common and they are a late product—possibly emerging only after 1700—any graves of the ancestors wearing these ornaments now remain secure. The archaeological evidence that is available provides no indication that this type of wampum band had ever been interred with the dead of any culture.

As Jonathan Lainey (2004: 4-5) recently pointed out, the limited data available regarding surviving examples of all types of wampum limits the possibility of answering many questions relating to its uses and distribution. I suggest that among the Huron, wampum cuffs emerged as official symbols of office, to be worn only by incumbents.

In particular, the possibility that these unusually designed trapezoidal wampum bands served as representations or symbols of office—rather than expressions of ethnicity as suggested by Penny (1992: 28-54)—remains to be confirmed.

Recent detailed studies of individual wampum belts (Becker 2001; 2004) have provided data relating to the technology used to fashion these objects. The lack of specific data on the provenance of most of these bands continues to stymie attempts to identify specific cultural makers, and to separate the makers from possible later users or owners. The composition of trapezoidal bands appears to be entirely of wampum, indicating a use more like diplomatic wampum, a category of wampum that cannot include glass beads. An all-wampum construction would suggest a greater power for cuffs and a possible association with religious and/or political leadership.

The few early illustrations of cuffs generally had been interpreted as representing examples from among the Five Nations Iroquois, but I suggest that the authors were more likely to depict Aboriginal people of French Canada, such as the Wendat. Not surprisingly, the best documented of the existing wampum cuffs are specifically identified as being Huron in origin. Only one surviving cuff is designated as Iroquois and only one other is identified as Penobscot. In both cases, these catalogue entries were assigned without evidence for their actual origins, or even the names and possible cultural affiliations of the last private owners. An origin among the Five Nations Iroquois can be eliminated on the basis of the finding that all but one of the other belts are Huron in origin. This includes the two best examples of pairs of cuffs that are held in French museums. The French examples also suggest that these cuffs were produced as pairs in some part of the far northeast. The specific listings for these identify them as from among the Huron in French Canada.

Of particular importance to understanding any category of wampum band is a review of the extensive documentary record in conjunction with detailed studies of each variety. These data enable the recognition of the varied categories of wampum that had been made, the makers of each type and the identification of their specific uses. In all probability, the wampum cuff at the Currency Museum, (the best documented example) originated among the Wendat. It was likely included among several wampum items Paul Picard sold to a collector ca. 1888-1890 (Lainey 2004: 97). Picard’s

father, Tahourenche, was an important elder in the Huron community (Lainey 2004: 123, 150, 156). His family had held in trust a number of artifacts once important to the Wendat, but for which cultural meanings had been lost. These once-cultural items were transformed into family heirlooms, with Picard's family serving as custodians. Picard's sale of these pieces reflected an ordinary and personal business transaction, duplicated by other Aboriginal people, as well as by immigrants to Canada from all over the world.

Conclusion

The changing use of Wampum by Aboriginal cultures appears to have been abrupt, not gradual. This is likely the result of two factors: the emergence around 1615 of the standardized shell beads that were called wampum, and the explosive dispersal of this commodity as a vital aspect of the pelt trade.

The limited evidence available from the past, together with contemporary distorting factors, allows for a range of interpretations of possible functions for trapezoidal wampum bands. Continuing searches for documentary evidence, as well as improved archaeological techniques of recovery, may lead to a better understanding of these specific aspects of traditional cultures. For the present, the

hope is that the available evidence will be published and will, combined with existing information, foster a better understanding of our respective pasts.

Searching three lines of evidence (illustrations, documentation and association with Huronia) for Aboriginal uses of trapezoidal wampum bands has brought limited success. The laborious process of gathering available evidence has, however, enabled the establishment of four theories regarding trapezoidal bands of wampum. First, trapezoidal bands represent a unique artifact category within the general range of woven bands. Second, the specific shape of the artifacts, as well as the unusual cloth attachments now found on one pair, suggest that they all functioned as cuffs. Third, the catalogue records—limited as they may be—strongly point to the Wendat as the makers and users of wampum cuffs, indicating that further evidence for their origins and history should be sought in Wendat mortuary and ethnographic contexts. The modern Wyandot (Huron) and other descendants of the important Huron Confederacy may also hold information relevant to these objects. Finally, the fact that almost all of these bands contain only beads of wampum, and no inclusions of glass or metal, suggests diplomatic and/or political functions that were distinct from ornamental wampum bands, which include beads made of glass and/or copper.

Notes

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1. This letter is important in the efforts to identify cultural origins of other North American objects now in France.

2. Unless otherwise indicated, any reference to Jonathan Lainey can be attributed to personal communication of 11 October 2006.
3. Morgan (1818-1881), a New York State lawyer, became the first modern ethnologist and founder of scientific anthropology. He recognized several different systems of kinship and established the basic format for studying them. In this process, Morgan developed an important early model for the study of social evolution.

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