

BACKGROUND: **HISTORICAL AGREEMENTS** **WITH INDIGENOUS** **COMMUNITIES**

Excerpts from [Grand Expressions: A Self-guided Tour](#)

Shared spaces

The Grand River Watershed (outlined above) is Southern Ontario's largest and most populated watershed. However, many of its residents are unaware of historical agreements made between the area's Indigenous peoples and settlers (now Canadian society). The **Two Row Wampum** (beaded belt) is one of the oldest treaty relationships between the Onkwehonweh (original people) of Turtle Island (North America) and European immigrants. The treaty was originally made between Dutch traders and settlers and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois, or Six Nations) peoples in 1613. According to an interpretation by historian Ray Fadden, the rows:

"...symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs, and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs, and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel."

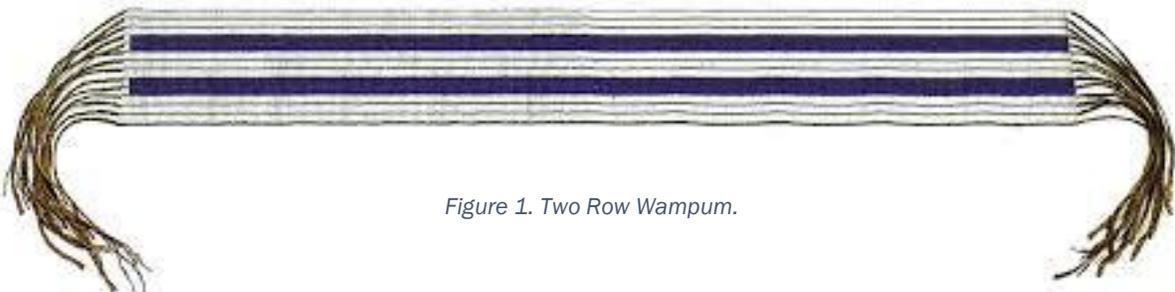


Figure 1. Two Row Wampum.

The **Dish With One Spoon** is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee — and later, Europeans and all newcomers — that bound all parties to share and protect territory and its resources. Although commonly referring to the treaty signed in Montreal in 1701, the Dish with One Spoon was an Indigenous covenant dating as far back as 1142. The “Dish” (sometimes called the “Bowl”) represents what is now southern

Ontario, from Lake Simcoe to the Great Lakes to Quebec's border (including the north shore of St. Lawrence River). The "Spoon" may represent resources within that dish. Since we all eat out of this One Dish with One Spoon (e.g., shared resources), we all have a responsibility to ensure the dish never empties - to take care of the land and preserving the creatures we share it with.



Figure 2. Dish With One Spoon wampum.

Nearly a century later, Québec governor Sir Frederick Haldimand signed a decree on October 25, 1784 that granted a tract of land to the Haudenosaunee to enjoy forever. This decree – the **Haldimand Proclamation** – designated six miles (~10km) on either side of the Grand River from its source to Lake Erie to the Six Nations forever.

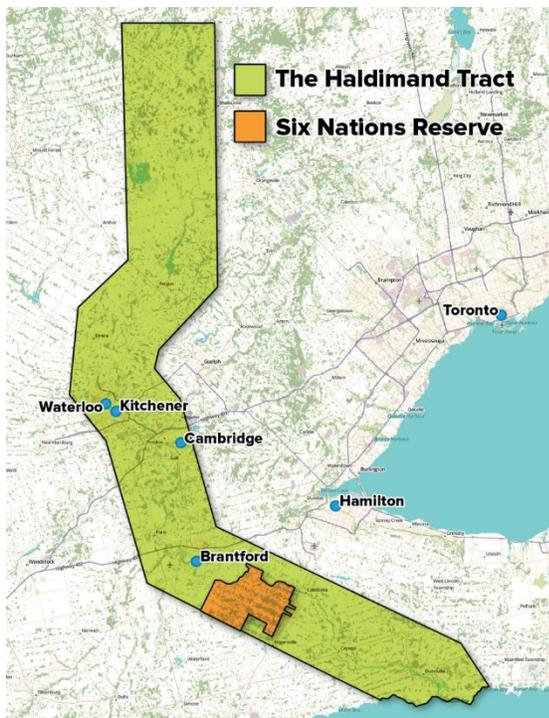


Figure 3. The Haldimand Tract. Map adapted by Alternatives Journal from Six Nations Lands and Resources, map data from openstreetmap.org.

The Six Nations lost their territory in New York due to their alliance with British forces during the American Revolution; the Haldimand Tract was compensation for their loss. However, only about 5% of the Haldimand Tract remains in the hands of the Six Nations peoples. The Six Nations reserve is the only place in North America where all six nations – Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca and Tuscarora – reside.

Unkept promises

The treaties described above represent three historical promises to share the Grand River Watershed and surrounding areas with Indigenous peoples:

- To collaboratively maintain the health of lands, waters and animals;
- To recognize distinct but equally valued cultures living together but separately, without interference from each other; and
- A Declaration placing land under the permanent authority of the Six Nations.

To this day, none have been fulfilled.