

"Aside from records wampum was used in the form of strings and belts for a variety of purposes; some of them were probably mnemonic, others only partially so, being based either upon its association with the name of some chief or clan, or upon a semi-sacred character resulting from its important uses. It was employed in summoning councils, and the messenger who journeyed from tribe to tribe found in it a well-recognized passport. When a council was called it was presented by the delegates from the various tribes as their credentials; it was used in the ceremony of opening and closing councils, as was also the calumet; it assisted in solemnizing oaths and in absolving from them; white, it was a messenger of peace; black, it threatened war, and covered with clay, it expressed grief. 'White wampum was the Iroquois emblem of purity and faith, it was hung around the neck of the white dog before it was burned; it was used before the periodical religious festivals for the confession of sins, no confession being regarded as sincere unless recorded with white wampum; further than this, it was the customary offering in condonation of murder, although the purple was sometimes employed. Six strings was the value of a life, or the quantity sent in condonation, for the wampum was rather sent as a regretful condonation of the crime, with a petition for forgiveness, than as the actual price of blood.'" We readily recognize the influence of the Christian missionary, in a number of these symbolic uses of wampum.

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"The great profusion of wampum used in some of the later treaties is a matter of surprise. In a council held between four Indian ambassadors from New England and the French, thirty-six large belts were given by the ambassadors to thank them that their people had not been treated with hostility."²

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"Laftau, whose statements are considered unusually trustworthy, as they were based chiefly on personal observation of the Indian tribes of Canada, gives the following very instructive account of the mnemonic use of wampum:

"All affairs are conducted by means of branches [strings] and necklaces [belts] of porcelain [wampum], which with them take the place of compacts, written agreements, and contracts. . . . The shell, which is used for affairs of state, is worked into little cylinders of a quarter of an inch in length and large in proportion. They are distributed in two ways: in strings and in belts. The strings are composed of cylinders threaded without order one after another, like the beads of a rosary; the beads are usually quite white, and are used for affairs of little consequence, or as a preparation for other more considerable presents.

"The belts are large bands, in which little white and purple cylinders are disposed in rows, and tied down with small thongs of leather, which makes a very neat fabric. The length and size and color are proportioned to the importance of the affair. The usual belts are of eleven rows of a hundred and eighty beads each.

"The 'fisk,' or public treasure, consists principally of these belts, which, as I have said, with them take the place of contracts, of public acts, and of annals or registers. For the savages, having no writing or letters, and therefore finding themselves soon forgetting the transactions

¹ Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

² *History and Description of New France*, Vol. II., p. 256.