

ADOPTION OR RANSOM BELT

"When a newcomer arrived as a war hostage or a visitor by her own volition, there was a waiting period during which her character would be evaluated. After the observation period, if the clanmothers agreed that the candidate had reasonably acclimated to the Hodinöhsö:ni' lifeway, the individual was adopted by a family and given a nation and clan. Thereafter that individual was considered Hodinöhsö:ni' and her previous identity was dead.

The Adoption (or Ransom) Belt itself is comprised of three purple diagonal lines of wampum on a background of white wampum. The diagonal lines signify "an unobstructed path, or a peaceful road of communication between...groups," as described by Kathryn Muller. Thus the visual code of the Adoption Belt portrays connection and peace between the adoptee and her adopted nation and clan.

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Regarding the prevalence of adoption, Parker is careful to note that other adoptees "are not numerous, for the Seneca's have never cheapened the honor by bestowing it indiscriminately, and many years sometimes elapse without the performance of the adoption rites." Thus, the process for adoption is practiced with selectivity and deliberation; the decision to bring an individual into a given Hodinöhsö:ni' nation arises out of extended consideration of the best interests of the community and a given individuals ability to fit into and benefit the community's interests."

Kelsey, Penelope Myrtle. "Kahnawake's Reclamation of Adoption Practices in Tracey Deer's Documentary and Fiction Films: Reading the Adoption Belt in a Post-Indian Act Era." Reading the Wampum: Essays on Hodinöhsö:Ni' Visual Code and Epistemological Recovery, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 2019, pp. 85–86.