

# In Our Words - Understanding treaty

Betty Lou Grawbarger –

I think it means that you are wearing different shoes now. Miikiigikidoagomaa. And your life is not the same, you know, like that, now that is the way it was explained to me by my dad. He said, “when you are not wearing your own shoes anymore.” Kaandaanbaasiinniin. I already know that I am not going to sleep. Because I know, like, the deals that were made. Kandahnbasiindish. I won’t sleep because I am thinking too much, you know, the deals that were made between the people and the native people, you know, it is not the right deals. So that’s the way my dad explained it. So, he said how can you sleep when you have been cheated out of everything? Of course, he really put the words in, you know.

Bomgiizhik –

There is this contemporary scholarly narrative that we are all treaty people, it is all based from the wampum belt and it has spiralled into this thing. And then, you have this other narrative that is saying hold on a minute, we didn’t cede and surrender the lands, the treaties are talking about a cede and surrender, why would our people fight in the War of 1812 for an independent homeland only to cede all of it to the British?

Dabasaaniwqwat –

To use our language in order to understand what it really means to write a treaty. Treaty means agoodiiwin. Agoodiiwin means whatever you have, you will always retain that, you will always have that, you will have the land, you will have that other thing. You will always have that, but we give you will be on top of what you have. Agoodiiwin, that’s what that means.

Bomgiizhik –

The wampum treaties are very sacred because the wampum itself is a little animal that lives in the water. And they say that that little animal, it’s like a water spirit, and all of its life, all it does is it collects medicine from the water and it stores it on its back, they take the shell of that little water spirit and they make their agreements with it. So, it is very sacred.

Waawaaskone Kechego –

It took like, a whole day for a woman to make one of these beads, so there was the thought that our rights and everything that we speak about through these wampums comes from the bottom of the ocean floor right to the sky world. And so those natural laws come from that animal that is crawling across the bottom of the floor.

Bomgiizhik –

When they say a belt it is not a belt like this, it is a belt that you put on your head when you are carrying your load, and so the wampum belt symbolizes that belt that went here, and so each nation was carrying the other, and so when the British came here that was the mindset that they ran into, with the indigenous people, that something was very sacred about an agreement.

Waawaaskone Kechego –

Gdoonnaagidnaa - the dish with one spoon - the responsibility that came with that belt where everybody that was in that wampam where we shared all the land and the resources, but we all equally shared with that spoon.

Bomgiizhik –

Treaty between the Anishnaabek and Haudenasuane and other nations were involved, and what it talked about was how they are going to live together in peace and harmony and how they are both going to be able to eat off the same dish using one spoon. So, for example – “this is my rabbit” and then the Métis will say “this is my rabbit” and the Ojibway say “this is my rabbit” and you have everybody saying this is my rabbit - and they all believe they have a right to that rabbit. Poor rabbit. And so, the rights-based agenda that these organizations have are really determinantal to the relationships with each other and our way of life of the land. Which is what the dish with one spoon talks about. It is not a rights-based relationship or agenda but it is a responsibility-based friendship that we have with each other.

Teyhutyatahse –

It goes back to the beginning of what they refer to as Indian Time. Indian time is anything before the sun rises. That's true Indian Time, and that is where that colour purple come in. Once you see a sunrise, you

will always experience that. And it also marks the beginning of life, and that's why that purple remains there and the white represents that purity of how we are as well within spirit.

People like to call it a Guswenta. But Guswenta only translates into something that's laid down, or a belt. But when you hold it up, then the term is called yoh:ha:teni. yoh:ha:teni. talks about this perfect balanced path there. When one side represents the spirit, the other side represents the living, and is a human law that you remain who you are or if you are trying to retrace that step, get to know who you are before you live in somebody else's boat. And that it has different meanings but either side represents again of that respect and that truth and that righteousness in there again. But then a common understanding is that this, it's called a Guswenta but yoh:ha:teni is the closest that we can call it the two perfect paths. This is who we are regardless of if you are Anishinaabe or Haudenosaunee. But when you present it, that's the way you present it. That they stay over there. But it doesn't mean that we can't hold hands and walk together down this river of life.