



Reading the Wampum: Essays on Hodinöhsö:ni' Visual Code and Epistemological Recovery (The Iroquois and Their Neighbors)

Penelope Myrtle Kelsey

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Since the fourteenth century, Eastern Woodlands tribes have used delicate purple and white shells called "wampum" to form intricately woven belts. These wampum belts depict significant moments in the lives of the people who make up the tribes, portraying everything from weddings to treaties. Wampum belts can be used as a form of currency, but they are primarily used as a means to record significant oral narratives for future generations. In *Reading the Wampum*, Kelsey provides the first academic consideration of the ways in which these sacred belts are reinterpreted into current Haudenosaunee tradition. While Kelsey explores the aesthetic appeal of the belts, she also provides insightful analysis of how readings of wampum belts can change our understanding of specific treaty rights and land exchanges. Kelsey shows how contemporary Iroquois intellectuals and artists adapt and reconsider these traditional belts in new and innovative ways. *Reading the Wampum* conveys the vitality and continuance of wampum traditions in Iroquois art, literature, and community, suggesting that wampum narratives pervade and reappear in new guises with each new generation.

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