

# The Tuscarora ask Pennsylvania for aid

## As you read...

In 1710, the Tuscarora sent an “embassy” to the Conestoga, an Iroquoian tribe that lived on the Susquehanna River in what is now Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. There they met with two representatives from the provincial government of Pennsylvania, John Ffrench and Henry Worley, and with representatives of the Five Nations of the Iroquois. Ffrench and Worley made this report to the governor, who placed it before the Council of Pennsylvania on June 16th.

The Tuscarora pled their case eloquently, but Ffrench and Worley told them that to be welcomed in Pennsylvania they must provide a certificate from the government of North Carolina, proving their good behavior. They seem to have impressed the Iroquois delegation more. After the Tuscarora War, the Iroquois invited the remaining Tuscarora from North Carolina to move to New York and become the sixth nation. Had they been permitted to move to Pennsylvania in 1710, the Tuscarora might have shared the fate of the Conestoga, the last of whom were hacked to death in 1763 by the Paxton Boys (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paxton\\_Boys](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paxton_Boys)).

At Conestogo, June 8th, 1710.

Present:

- John ffrench.
- Henry Worley.

Iwaagenst Terrutawanaren, & Teonnottein, Chiefs of the Tuscaroroës, Civility, the Seneques<sup>1</sup> Kings, & four Chief more of yt nacon<sup>2</sup>, wth. Opessa y<sup>e</sup> Shawanois<sup>3</sup> King.

The Indians were told that according to their Request we were come from the Govr. & Govmt., to hear what proposals they had to make anent a peace, according to the purport of their Embassy<sup>4</sup> from their own People.

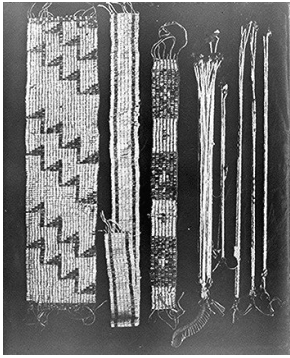


Figure 1. American Indians of eastern North America used wampum belts made from shell beads as money and gifts, and also to encode messages through the weaving of differently colored beads.

They signified to us by a Belt of Wampum<sup>5</sup>, which was sent from their old Woman<sup>6</sup>, that those Implored their friendship of the Christians & Indians of this Govmt., that without danger or trouble they might fetch wood & Water.

The second Belt was sent from their children born, & those yet in the womb, Requesting that Room to sport & Play without danger of Slavery, might be allowed them.

The third Belt was sent from their young men fitt to Hunt, that privilege to leave their Towns, & seek Provision for their aged, might be granted to them without fear of Death or Slavery.

The fourth was sent from the men of age, Requesting that the Wood, by a happy peace, might be as safe for them as their forts.

The sixth was sent from their Kings & Chiefs, Desiring a lasting peace with the Christians and Indians of this Govmt., that thereby they might be secured against those fearful apprehensions they have these several years felt.

The seventh was sent in order to intreat a Cessation from murdering & taking them, that by the allowance thereof, they may not be affraid of a mouse, or any other thing that Ruffles the Leaves.

The Eight was sent to declare, that as being hitherto Strangers to this Place, they now Came as People blind, no path nor Communicacon being betwixt us & them; but now they hope we will take them by the hand & lead them, & then they will lift up their heads in the woods without danger or fear<sup>7</sup>.

These Belts (they say) are only sent as an Introduction, & in order to break off hostilities till next Spring<sup>8</sup>, for then their Kings will Come & sue for the peace they so much Desire.

We acquainted<sup>9</sup> them that as most of this Continent were the subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, tho' divided into several Govmts.; So it is expected their Intentions are not only peaceable towards us, but also to all the subjects of the Crown; & that if they intend to settle & live amicably here, they need not Doubt the protection of this Govmt. in such things as were honest & good, but that to Confirm the sincerity of their past Carriage<sup>10</sup> towards the English, & to raise in us a good opinion of them, it would be very necessary to procure a Certificate from the Govmt. they leave, to this, of their Good behaviour, & then they might be assured of a favourable reception.

The Seneques return their hearty thanks to the Govmt. for their Trouble in sending to them, And acquainted us that by advice of a Council amongst them it was Determined to send these belts, brought by the Tuscaroroes, to the five nations<sup>11</sup>.

May it please your honr.

Pursuant to your honrs. & Council's Orders, we went to Conestogo, where the forewritten Contents were by the Chiefs of the Tuscaroroes to us Deliver'd; the sincerity of their Intentions we Cannot anywise Doubt, since they are of the same race & Language with our Seneques, who have always proved trusty, & have also for these many years been neighbors to a Govmt. Jealous of Indians, And yet not Displeas'd with them<sup>12</sup>; wishing your honr. all happiness, we remain,

Your honrs. Most humble & Obliged servants,

JOHN FFRENCH,  
HENRY WORLEY.

<b>Journey to Conestogo.<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>DR.</b>		
<b>To bread,</b>	£0	4	2
<b>To Meat,</b>	0	4	0
<b>To Rum,</b>	1	10	2
<b>To Sugar,</b>	0	15	2
<b>To two Men's hire for Baggage,</b>	4	0	0
<b>To John,</b>	1	4	0
	£8	5	2

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## Notes

1. The Seneca, one of the Five Nations of the Iroquois. (The others were the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, and the Cayuga.)
2. That nation.

People in the eighteenth century used a great many abbreviations in their writing, perhaps in part because they wrote with quill pens — turkey feathers sharpened to a point — and ink made by hand from materials such as walnut husks (see [http://www.learnnc.orghttp://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Making\\_Walnut\\_Ink](http://www.learnnc.orghttp://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Making_Walnut_Ink)). The writer had to stop every few words to dip his quill in the ink, making writing considerably more time-consuming than it is today!

Often the letter “y” was used to substitute for “th,” and vowels might be dropped altogether or moved to a superscript (for example, y<sup>e</sup> for “the”).

In “nacon,” the “c” may also be an abbreviation for the “ti” — or it may simply be a different spelling of “nation.” In the eighteenth century, the idea of standard spellings for words hadn’t taken hold, and people spelled (and capitalized) words as they saw fit.

All of this can make reading colonial-era documents a little confusing until you get a feel for them. If a word looks unfamiliar, try reading the passage out loud — often it will sound right even if it doesn’t look right.

3. The Shawnee, an Algonquian people who lived in south central and southwest Pennsylvania as well as western Maryland and Virginia and present-day Ohio and Kentucky.

4. Today an embassy is the home and offices of an ambassador from one country to another — a very formal structure. Historically, an embassy was a delegation or a mission sent from one ruler to another. Here, then, the Tuscarora who went to Pennsylvania on behalf of their people were an embassy.
5. Wampum is a string of white beads made from the shell of the North Atlantic channeled whelk, traditionally used by American Indians of eastern North America. Belts made of wampum were given or exchanged in many different ceremonies, from marriage to treaties between peoples. Wampum could also be used for storytelling or to spell out the terms of an agreement, by using different colored beads as memory aids.
6. Probably this is supposed to be “old women,” plural. Each of the first six belts is from a different group of the Tuscarora people. Note that old women come first, and then children (including those not yet born). Why do you think the Tuscarora gave these belts first, instead of starting with the kings and chiefs?
7. How do these words — and the overall tone of the Tuscarora’s petition — sound to you? How do you think they sounded to the Pennsylvania officials who heard them? Were the Tuscarora really as humble as they sound here? If not, why might they have spoken this way?
8. At this point, the Tuscarora had not begun to fight back or engage in “hostilities” against the white colonists, but this phrase might imply that they are ready to do so, if necessary.
9. Told them — acquainted them or made them familiar with the knowledge.
10. “Carriage” here means the way a person carries himself or behaves.
11. Although the Tuscarora seem to have intended the belts for the Pennsylvania officials, they sent them with the Seneca delegates to the Five Nations instead. Perhaps they thought their mission had failed, or they realized that they would not be able to obtain a certificate from the government of North Carolina. They may also have been offended that Ffrench and Worley did not accept the belts as a guarantee of the Tuscarora’s good faith.  
  
In any case, it seems that they thought it best to start making friends with the northern Iroquois, at least as a backup plan. It turned out to be a good move, because after the Tuscarora War in North Carolina, the Iroquois were moved by the belts and the message to invite the remaining Tuscarora to move north and become the Sixth Nation.
12. The provincial government of Pennsylvania was one of the friendliest towards American Indians, which is why the Tuscarora came to Pennsylvania instead of to another colony. William Penn, the proprietor, was a devout Quaker and a pacifist, and in addition to establishing religious freedom, he worked to make sure that Indians were treated fairly. He paid Indians fairly for their land, learned several native languages, and guaranteed fair trials for native peoples. After Penn’s death in 1718, the colony’s leaders were not always as fair to the Indians as he had been, but colonists and Indians lived peacefully in Pennsylvania longer than in other English colonies.
13. At the bottom of their report, Ffrench and Worley attached a bill for their expenses. The amounts are given in pounds, shillings, and pence; see “The Value of Money in Colonial America (page )” for an explanation.

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### **Figure 1 (page 2)**

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