

## The Origin and Use of Wampum

François Neptune

Wôlinak, PQ

1914

*Source:* Speck, Frank G. 1928. Wawenock myth texts from Maine. *Forth-Third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1925–1926, 165–197.* Washington: Government Printing Office.

*Note:* Speck’s transcription and his free translation are given in (a). A tentative retranscription and retranslation by Philip LeSourd are given in (b).

1. a. ⟨Tanławe’i· aida’ dane’ dudji· bodawa’zi·mα`k<sup>w</sup> ni·nawa’ utai·nα’ mæde’olinowa`k⟩

“Accordingly, then, whenever they held a council there were shamans there.”

b. Tąhlawei aita tąn etoči-potawasimæk, ni=nawa wətainą mətewəlinowak.

‘So whenever a council meeting was held, shamans there as well.’

2. a. ⟨ni·dani·’ ekwampsa·’nəhi·di·t yu’gi·k mæde’olinowa·`k ni·uda’li wewełα’n aweni·’ mliksani·da’⟩

“And according to their strength among these shamans it was known who was the most powerful.”

b. Ni t̄ani ek<sup>w</sup>apsanih̄etit yukik m̄etew̄elinowak, ni w̄ət̄ali-wewehl̄an aweni m̄əlik-sanita.

‘And by the extent to which these shamans were powerful, someone (among them) then revealed if he was the most powerful.’

3. a. ⟨ni·gizi·ʹ bodawazi·m̄aʹkʹ ni·ub̄əʹs·kw̄əletam̄an̄a` ni·ud̄amʹhadiʹn⟩

“After they held their council they lighted their pipes and smoked.”

b. Ni kisi-potawasim̄ək, ni w̄əp̄əsk<sup>w</sup>əlehtam̄əṅ, ni w̄ətam̄hatin.

‘And when they had held their council, they lighted their pipes, and people smoked.’

4. a. ⟨ni·waʹ k̄tci· m̄ədeʹolinu` gestaʹ pʹkw̄udetam̄aʹnt ni·w̄ə; b̄aʹbi· soʹgahazo` wudji·ʹ  
wudon̄aʹk⟩

“In the case of an exceedingly great shaman every time he drew upon his pipe, wampum fell from his mouth.”

b. Ni=wa k̄ci-m̄etew̄elino kehs̄eta-p̄ək̄ətehtam̄at, ni w̄əp̄əpi sok̄əhaso w̄əci w̄əton̄ək.

‘And every time a great shaman inhales smoke, wampum would fall from his mouth.’<sup>1</sup>

5. a. ⟨w̄ə; bi·ḡaʹk ni·waʹ m̄ədeʹolinu` teb̄aʹbwi·wi·` edutsani·ʹt⟩

“If the wampum was white, then it denoted that the shaman was of medium power.”

b. W̄əpiḡək, ni=wa m̄etew̄elino tep̄əp̄əwiwi etotsanit.

‘If it was white, then that shaman was of considerable power.’

---

<sup>1</sup> Speck comments: “The narrator added that some old woman would catch the beads in a receptacle as they fell from the magician’s mouth.”

6. a. ⟨ni·wα·bαbi·m ebas·i·wi·' wɔ·bi·'gən si·bi·wi·' ebas·i·wi·' elwe·mkwi·gə`n ni·wa·  
nodas·ani·t məde·olinu'⟩

“If the wampum was half white and half reddish it denoted the least powerful shaman.”

b. Ni wəpəpim epahsiwi wəpikən sipiwi epahsiwi eləwe mk<sup>w</sup>ikən, ni=wa notahsanit  
mətewəlino.

‘And as for one whose wampum was half white and half almost red, he is the least  
powerful shaman.’

7. a. ⟨neləwε·' mkazewi·gə`n wɔ·bαbi·n ni·nawa·' yugi·'k məde·olinowa·k tanyu·gədji·  
sekɔ·'sidji·'k ni·gi·gədji·' peme·ltodetci·` wɔ·bαbi·' ki·zi·wəda·mhadi·hi·di·da·' məde·olinuwa·k⟩

“But if, in the case of a shaman, his wampum was almost black, then he would win over  
these shamans, the others who had the most wampum, after the shamans had smoked their  
pipes.”

b. Ni eləwe mkasewikən wəpəpim, ni=nawa yukik mətewəlinowak tənuyok=əçi sekosičik  
nikik=əçi pemeltoteči wəpəpi kisi-wətamhatihətita mətewəlinowak.

‘But as for one whose wampum was almost black, as for these shamans, their kind would  
be victorious over those who would have the most wampum when the shamans would all have  
finished smoking.’

8. a. ⟨ni·tα·ławe·i· kadawi·' wələs·tαwα·di·hi·di·de·' yugi·'k ni·zɔ·k·ami·'gəsowa·k  
ni·wətambe·nkek·tona·' wɔ·bαbi·' ni·l·α·mpskahəzu·' kədəgwabi·zu·n ni·dalα·mpskəhəzu·

ni·zno'1 wəldji·a'1' eli·danławei' gi·zi·'wələ's·tawα`dəhi·di't nda'tama mədαbe'k<sup>w</sup> nda'tci·  
gadona'ldi·wi·a`k ni·askami·wi·`

“And so whenever these two nations wanted to make a treaty they gave wampum to each other as a payment, the beads woven into a belt designed with two hands, meaning that they had agreed to the treaty and would fight no more and forever would not hunt one another down again.”

b. Ni təhlawei katawi-wələsətəwatihətite yokik nisohkamikəsowak, ni wətəpenkektonə wəpəpi, ni ləpskahəso k<sup>w</sup>ətək<sup>w</sup>apison ni taləpskahəso nisənol wələčial eli- təhlawei -kisi- wələsətəwatihətit əta=či katonalətiwiak ni askawiw.

‘And so if these two peoples wanted to make a treaty, then they would put up wampum for it, and this was a belt decorated with two hands on it showing how they had made an agreement not to attack each other ever again.’

9. a. ⟨ni·a'tci· nimsi·wi·'⟩

“And that is all.”

b. Ni=ahči ni msiwi.

‘And so that is all.’