

FORT STANWIX TREATY 1784

The Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1784 wampum represents a meeting between representatives of the Haudenosaunee and the United States shortly after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War (April 1775-September 1783). The white wampum background represents peace, and the six diagonal purple bars represent the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee. Previous attempts by the British and Haudenosaunee to set boundaries and prevent Euro-settler intrusion into Haudenosaunee territory, such as the Proclamation of 1763 and the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768, had failed to protect Haudenosaunee territory. During the American Revolution, the Haudenosaunee Grand Council remained neutral, but select groups within the Six Nations allied with both the British and the Americans, meaning Haudenosaunee warriors fought on both sides. The 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War, excluded the Haudenosaunee from the negotiation process, leaving the status of their lands uncertain.

The Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1784 was the first of several post Revolutionary War treaties that addressed Indigenous land rights. The newly formed United States claimed the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had formally sided with the British and saw the Haudenosaunee as defeated enemies and the treaty as a way to punish rather than negotiate with them. The treaty discussions took place over 19 days, resulting in the U.S. demanding Haudenosaunee political hostages from each Nation and large cessions of their traditional territory for settlement by the now-American colonizers. The United States pledged that they would respect the Haudenosaunee land claims within the new boundary lines set by the treaty, a promise which the U.S. government did not keep. The Haudenosaunee argued against the legitimacy of the treaty in later diplomatic conversations and gained back some of the land lost in the Fort Stanwix Treaty through the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794.