

REGIONAL COVERAGE

Repatriation: Wampum beads return to the Onondaga Nation

By [Ellen Abbott \(/people/ellen-abbott\)](#)

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Photo by [Ellen Abbott / WRVO](#)

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Some sacred and cultural objects of the Onondaga Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are back where they belong, after languishing for years in the Onondaga Historical Association in Syracuse.

A ceremony Tuesday handed over a centuries-old wampum belt, and was the final in a series of repatriations from the historical association to the Onondaga Nation. Those items also included bones of ancestors for proper burial.

The wampum belt had been stored at the association in Syracuse since 1919, and because it's a private museum, it wasn't required to return it. Spiritual leader Sid Hill says he hopes this sets an example for other museums that may be holding on to sacred objects. He also laments that many of the nations sacred items are in the hands of private collectors.

"A lot of our art, our masks, our remains are still out there, we see them being auctioned on the internet and we don't understand that sometimes, because they are our sacred objects," said Hill.

Jake Edwards, one of the leaders in the Onondaga Nation, says these beads, which speak to the Onondaga and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, are now where they belong for future generations.

"They're home and they're still alive. And they're not going anywhere, just like us. We're not going anywhere either," said Edwards.

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