I hadn't used the inkle loom ever before. Now I threaded it with white and purple. White and purple are the colors of the quahog shells, the colors of the beads made by Native Americans, and the colors of the original wampum belt. The three lines of white stood for Peace, Friendship, and Forever. One purple line represented the canoes of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois, as they were named by the French) carrying all their laws, customs, and beliefs. The second purple line represented the boats of the new people from across the seas—the Europeans—with their laws, customs, and beliefs. The white and purple of the weaving told a story of equality as both boats traveled down the river of life together, side by side, into the future.

The Two Row Wampum Belt was created to commemorate the first treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch in about 1613, as the Dutch sailed up the Hudson River, known to the Haudenosaunee as The River that Flows Both Ways. To hear the Haudenosaunee tell it, they saw the new people come and realized that they were not going away. They held long discussions with their confederacy on how to learn how to live with their new neighbors. The Two Row Wampum Treaty was their plan. Each culture would be independent and equal, none would be dominant. They would call each other brothers. And the Haudenosaunee would teach the Europeans how to live in this new land with the animals, herbs, and plants that each group depended on for life.

The Haudenosaunee kept their part of the agreement. They have lived on the land of their ancestors, trying to keep their ways. The newcomers have not kept their side of the agreement. The Doctrine of Discovery, a papal bull created in the 1500s, told the Europeans that any land that was not inhabited by Christians was considered uninhabited and would be taken in the name of the ruler. This "Doctrine of Christian Discovery" led to the idea of Manifest Destiny that we all learned about in school. The Europeans felt it was their "destiny" to continue to push west on Turtle Island, as it was known by the Haudenosaunee, "discovering" and claiming all the lands they found. Many treaties were broken along the way.

The Onondaga and Neighbors of the Onondaga had worked for years to reach out and educate people in the Syracuse area about the string of broken treaties and the concerns of the Onondaga about the Rights of the Land. They decided to dedicate 2013, approximately 400 years after the first treaty, to a massive education and outreach campaign about the Two Row Wampum. This effort came to be known as the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign; a campaign to polish the covenant chain of treaties between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans; to educate people about the importance of the treaties and the importance of Mother Earth in all of our lives; and to explore ways to honor both the treaties and the Earth.

The centerpiece of this campaign was a symbolic enactment of the Two Row. A group of Native Americans and a group of allies canoed in two lines down the River that Flows Both Ways from Albany, NY to New York City. Together we covered 150 miles in 12 days, camping every night at a
different site along the river. We were a nomadic community supported by teams which transported our gear and a traveling band of cooks, peacemakers, media professionals, and medics who accompanied us the entire way.

Every day started with a reminder of our purpose, the "Words that Come Before All Else," The Thanksgiving Prayer, sometimes in the language of the Haudenosaunee, sometimes in English, bringing our minds together in agreement on our responsibility to give thanks to the other nations of the world; the waters, trees, animals, the sun, the moon, and more. This is one of the important issues for the Two Row, the responsibility we have to the Rights of the Land. This involves how we live, how we think, how we consume, and how we fulfill our responsibilities by giving thanks.

Often, in the morning or in the evening, we would be reminded of The Good Mind. How the Peacemaker who came to this area 1,000 years ago, teaching that a healthy mind seeks peace and harbors good will for others, brought the various warring nations to live together in peace and become the Five Nations (later six with the acceptance of the Tuscarora). Since all is for the good of the community, each person’s actions and thoughts affect the community. That hit me hard. Yes my actions are usually good and for the good of all, but my thoughts? Have my thoughts been wandering into negativity? Have they been affecting those around me? I saw the potential impact of that possibility. I see where I have work to do.

We were met by chiefs of local nations that we paddled through. We arrived in New York City and we were met by a delegation, including the Dutch vice consul. We marched to the UN and sat in the celebration of the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples in the UN chambers and were commended by the Secretary General of the UN. I am told we brought life to the UN and to that proceeding.

I didn’t want the Two Row journey to end. I don’t want it to end. I want to go on and on in that community, continuing down the River of Life side by side in our canoes and kayaks, in Peace and Friendship Forever.

So I sat at the loom and began to weave. I was weaving bracelets for the Two Row—more than 400 of them, in white and purple. If I did it right, each bracelet would be imbued with my hopes and dreams for the wearer of the bracelet: that they would dedicate their lives to living in the Way of the Two Row, Honor the Treaties, and Protect the Earth.

To learn more about the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign, please visit the Two Row site at http://honorthetworow.org/.
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