GRADE 4-6: MATH

RECOGNIZING SHAPES AND PATTERNS IN WAMPUM BELTS

**Purpose:** Students will recognize and apply their knowledge of rectangles and patterns using measurement and fractions.

**Estimated time:** 75 minutes

**Resources required:**
One per group of each of the following:
- Measuring tools (string, measuring tape, ruler, etc.)
- Purple crayons or markers
- Large pieces of blank white paper or graph paper (should be approximately 100 cm by 50 cm)

**Resources included:**
- Picture of Kahswenhtha wampum belt

**Activity:**
1. Show students the picture of the Kahswenhtha wampum belt. Explain that wampum belts were made by some First Nations to represent treaties between different groups. Most were made of purple and white beads carved from a valuable kind of seashell. The Kahswenhtha wampum belt showed an agreement between the Iroquois and European explorers and settlers who came to North America. “Kahswenhtha” means “sharing the same river; steering our own boats,” and was a promise between the two groups to treat each other with respect.

2. Ask students to describe the belt using words associated with shapes and patterns and to be as specific as possible.

3. Tell students that they will create wampum belts of their own. Let them know the guidelines they must follow when making their belts. Write the following rules on the board or a large piece of paper:
   a. The length of the wampum belt must equal half the height of the oldest person in the group.
   b. The width of the wampum belt must equal one quarter the height of the youngest person in the group.
   c. The design on the belt must be a pattern of white and purple circles to represent the beads. (If using graph paper, students should use each square to represent a bead.)
   d. Optional: The design on the belt must represent a saying or idea about how to live together respectfully, e.g., “treat others the way you would like to be treated.”

4. Divide the class into groups of 3 to 5 students. Give each group a measuring tool (string, measuring tape, ruler, etc.), a large piece of blank white paper or graph paper and a purple crayon, pencil crayon or marker. Once students have their materials, they may begin their designing.

5. Allow students 20 to 30 minutes to complete their belt drawing.

6. When all groups are finished, have them share their wampum belt designs with the rest of the class. Ask students to describe how they designed the belt, using the specific dimensions to explain. Ask them to explain why they chose this pattern and to explain its meaning.

7. Display the designs in the classroom with a brief description of the design and meaning to share with the school community.

**Educator’s Note:** Vary the fractions, measurement tools and pattern complexity based on class level.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the lesson plans, share these resources with your students:

- Free The Children's We Stand Together 2011/2012 Daily Fact #2: [www.freethechildren.com/private/we-stand-together-downloads-resources](http://www.freethechildren.com/private/we-stand-together-downloads-resources)
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada: [www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032291/1100100032292](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032291/1100100032292)
- Mohawk Council of Akwesasne: [www.akwesasne.ca/node/118](http://www.akwesasne.ca/node/118)