

Entry Wall

People of the First Light

The Wabanaki

The Wabanaki are a confederacy of tribes that includes the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations.

The Wabanaki have been here, in their homeland, for thousands of generations. There are approximately 8,500 Wabanaki people in Maine today, and more than 65,000 Wabanaki across eastern Canada and northern New England.

Unlike many tribes in the eastern United States, the Wabanaki were never removed from their homeland. They have retained their languages and their culture, adapting to changing environments for thousands of years.

Among the first Native Americans to encounter Europeans more than five hundred years ago, their recent history is one of both great loss and great survival.

Wabanaki people today are engaged in ongoing efforts to protect their sovereignty, to address human rights issues, and to preserve and support their language, culture, and economies.

A Different Kind of Exhibit

You might find *People of the First Light* a bit different from many of the museum exhibits you have experienced. As part of the Abbe Museum's Decolonization Initiative, this exhibit was developed through close collaboration with Wabanaki people. The design of the space and the content of the exhibit are shaped by Wabanaki perspectives. Choices about what to include and how to talk about difficult topics reflect the importance of self-determination. These are the hallmarks of a decolonized exhibit.

Decolonization is broadly defined as the process of reversing colonialism, both politically and culturally. It involves not only recognizing Indigenous perspectives and the ongoing colonization of Indigenous nations, but the devastating effects that colonialism has on Indigenous cultures. Through collaboration with Wabanaki artists and curators, *People of the First Light* strives to be a space for the presentation of Wabanaki history and culture from the perspective of Wabanaki people.

Who are the Wabanaki? What is their story? How has the experience of encounter and the ensuing interactions with other nations impacted them? By decolonizing the museum space, the Abbe provides a platform for Wabanaki people to share their answers to these questions.

[separate section, can this go both on the main entry wall and on the wall coming in from the other side of the gallery?]

Who is Koluskap?

As told in Wabanaki oral traditions, Koluskap was the first man to come to the Dawnland. Koluskap is not the Great Spirit or the Creator, but someone who was sent by the Creator to carry out instructions. This included the task of bringing his children—the Wabanaki People—into the world. He did this by shooting one of his arrows into a brown ash tree, splitting it in half, so the people could emerge from it. Through many stories, Koluskap teaches the Wabanaki much of what they needed to know in order to survive in their home.

In this exhibit, you will see three spellings of Koluskap. “Koluskap” uses the standardized Passamaquoddy-Maliseet writing system, while “kəloskəpe” uses the system developed for writing Penobscot. “Glooscap” is a spelling that reflects French and English written versions of the word, and is still commonly used by Mi’kmaq and Maliseet in Canada.

Defining Sovereignty

In the United States, tribal sovereignty is defined as the inherent authority of Indigenous nations to govern themselves within the borders of the country. Specifically, tribal sovereignty entails not only the right to govern, but to define membership, regulate tribal business and domestic relations, and manage tribal property. It also refers to the group’s identity as a political body that works on a government-to-government basis at the federal level. Sovereign tribes are considered by Congress as “domestic dependent nations” within the United States.

Struggle for Self-Determination

In 1980, new political ground was broken with the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. On behalf of the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Maliseet, the U.S. Government made the legal claim that two-thirds of the state had been illegally taken from the tribes. Ultimately, the legal battle ended with a settlement that enabled the tribes to purchase some land back from the state and private land-owners.

In exchange for the settlement, the tribes agreed to drop their claim, as well as abide by most state laws and provide services similar to a municipality. Another stipulation of the settlement was that any federal Indian policies enacted after 1980 that would affect or preempt laws in Maine shall not apply within the state, unless the Federal law is specifically made applicable within the State of Maine. The tribes maintain that the Settlement Act was designed to be a working, changeable document—the State of Maine, however, maintains that the settlement was and is non-negotiable. The result of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act is a struggle for self-determination that continues to this day.

The Wabanaki

The four federally recognized tribes that make up the Wabanaki include the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Micmac, and Maliseet. Historically, the Abenaki of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Quebec were also part of the Confederacy, but they no longer have communities in Maine. While the Abenaki have Indian Status in Canada, they have not yet achieved the same recognition status in the United States.

Abenaki

While the Abenaki have official Indian Status in Canada, they are the only members of the Wabanaki Confederacy that have not achieved federal recognition in the United States. Their historic territories extend from Southern Maine into Quebec, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York. There are Abenaki reserves at Odanak and Wolinak, in Quebec, and the state of Vermont recognizes four Abenaki bands.

The linguistic root of the word “Abenaki” comes from “people of the dawn land,” a variation of Wabanaki. With only a small number of native speakers, Abenaki is considered to be an endangered language.

There is a population of approximately 2,100 Abenaki in Quebec, and 2,500 in Vermont and New Hampshire. The Abenaki continue to seek federal recognition status in the United States.

Penobscot

Penobscot traditional territory centers around the Penobscot River drainage. Today, their reservation is based on Indian Island, or Panuwapskek, “the place of the white rocks,” and includes all of the islands upstream from there.

The Penobscot are closely related to groups whose territories extended into southern and western Maine, often overlapping with the Abenaki. Historically, the Penobscot accepted refugees from these tribal groups into their community.

The Penobscot language has been classified as an endangered language, but the Penobscot Nation is working to preserve its language by developing a writing system and hosting Penobscot language classes for the community.

The Penobscot Nation became a federally recognized tribe in 1975. As of 2011, the Nation had a population of approximately 2,500, primarily living in and around Old Town and on Indian Island.

Passamaquoddy

The Passamaquoddy, whose traditional name, Peskotomuhkatiyik, means “people that spear Pollock,” have their traditional territory around the St. Croix River and Passamaquoddy Bay in Maine and New Brunswick, Canada.

The Passamaquoddy language is spoken in Passamaquoddy communities and taught in Passamaquoddy schools.

Today, the Passamaquoddy tribe has two reservations in the U.S.—Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), an inland village on the shores of Big Lake in eastern Maine, and Sipayik (Pleasant Point), a coastal village on Passamaquoddy Bay.

The Passamaquoddy achieved federal recognition in the United States in 1975. As of 2011, the population of the Passamaquoddy tribe in the United States was approximately 3,500, with 2,100 at Sipayik and 1,400 at Motahkomikuk.

Maliseet

Historically, Maliseet territory centered on the St. John River drainage, and overlapped with both the Passamaquoddy and Mi'kmaq territories. The Maliseet call themselves *wolastoqiyik*, or “People of the Beautiful River.” The Maliseet share a common language with the Passamaquoddy, with only slight dialectical differences.

The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians is located on trust lands in Houlton, Maine and they achieved federal recognition status in October of 1980. According to the 2011 Census, they have a population of approximately 1,000. There are eight Maliseet communities in New Brunswick and Quebec, with an estimated population of 4,200.

Micmac

The Aroostook Band of Micmacs is the only band of Mi'kmaq that resides in Maine; the majority of the population is in Canada. The difference in the two spellings and pronunciations of the name is the result of their traditional territory being divided by the creation of the border between the United States and Canada.

The word Micmac is an English version of *mi'kmaq*, and the linguistic root of the word is still debated. Commonly accepted meanings among the various Mi'kmaq bands include “our kin” and “people of the red earth.” The Mi'kmaq language is spoken in many tribal communities and has several dialects.

The Aroostook Band of Micmacs became federally recognized in the United States in November of 1991, and is located on trust lands in Presque Isle, Maine. The 2011 Census shows a population of approximately 1,100. There are a total of 29 Mi'kmaq bands in eastern Canada, with a population of approximately 65,000.

[Intro Wall Scrim]

People of the First Light

Welcome to where the first light of the sun touches the land.

Here is where the Wabanaki call home, where they were created thousands of generations ago, and where they will remain for thousands of generations more.

This is the world in which the Wabanaki believe that all beings—people, animals, plants, water, earth, stars, and spirits—have souls, living together as relations, with a shared responsibility to care for one another.

Koluskap and the Ash Tree

When *Koluskap*, the first man, arrived in the Dawnland, there were no people living here.

Charged by the Creator with the task of creating a race of people to care for the Earth, Koluskap made his first attempt and created people from stone. Many were monstrous giants that were destructive, stubborn, and cruel. Stones do not have hearts, so the Giants were unable to feel empathy for the other creatures in the Dawnland.

So, Koluskap had to rescind his gift, turning the Stone Giants back into the mountains and islands that we see in the Dawnland today.

Koluskap then chose another material with which to create a race of people—the brown ash tree. He knew that the tree already had a heart, so he took an arrow from his quiver, fired it at the tree, splitting it in half to reveal twin spirits living inside.

Koluskap told the spirits that he had a gift for them, but would only give it to them in exchange for a promise. They must promise to serve as stewards of the Dawnland, and care for all of the creatures within it. The spirits agreed, and emerged from the tree as the first Wabanaki woman and man, side by side.

-As told by George Neptune, Passamaquoddy, based on community oral tradition and informed by *Algonquin Legends* by Charles Leland, 1884.

The Wind Bird

Wocawson, the wind bird, lives in the far north, sitting upon a great rock at the end of the sky. Whenever he moves, the wind blows.

One day, Koluskap was in his canoe. The wind blew so hard that he could not stay in his canoe.

He said, “Wocawson, the great bird who lives in the north, is doing this.”

Koluskap set out to seek Wocawson and found him sitting on a big rock. He used his great power to tie Wocawson’s wings together, throwing him down into a split between two great rocks. Then he left him there.

Now, the Indians could go out in their canoes all day long. It was always calm. But eventually the water in the lakes became stagnant, so thick that Koluskap could not manage his canoe.

Koluskap remembered the great bird, and went to see him again. He found Wocawson, lifted him up, put him back on the rock, and loosened just one of Wocawson's wings.

From that day on the wind never blew as it had of old.

-Adapted from a story told by Lewis Mitchell, Passamaquoddy, ca. 1911, recorded by John Dyneley Prince.

Aglebe'm, the Monstrous Frog, a Maliseet Story

A long time ago, *Aglebe'm*, a monstrous frog, kept back all the water in the world so that the rivers stopped flowing, the lakes dried up, and people everywhere began dying of thirst.

The people sent a messenger to Aglebe'm asking him to give the people water, but he refused.

A great man was sent to Aglebe'm to convince him to release the water for the people. Aglebe'm refused, saying that he needed it all to lie in.

The messenger then cut down a tree so that it fell on the monster and killed him. The body of the tree became the river, the branches became the tributaries of the river, and the leaves became the ponds at the head of these streams.

-Adapted from version told by Gabe Paul, in *Malecite Tales*, by Frank G. Speck, 1917.

Map Panel

The Wabanaki Homeland

Wapna'kik

Ckuwaponahkik

wapánahkik

Mi'kmaq

Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

Penobscot

This place is a Wabanaki place, and has been for thousands of years. Explorers, colonizers, and non-Native people and governments have imposed boundaries, and given their own names to places across the landscape. Despite this, the Wabanaki have retained the original names and stories of their homeland.

This map presents the Wabanaki homeland as seen and explained by the Wabanaki.

Map Interactive

Places of the Dawnland

We invite you on a virtual journey across the Dawnland.

In **Changes in the Dawnland**, see how Wabanaki territory has been affected by colonization.

In **Wabanaki Today**, visit contemporary Native communities across Maine and the region.

In **Language and Landscapes**, learn how Wabanaki place names record generations of knowledge and a deep connection their homeland.

In **Stories of the Dawnland**, read Wabanaki stories, passed down from one generation to the next, about the landscape of Ckuwaponahkik.

[Video]

Mec-ote yut ntiyultipon

(We're still here)

There are more than 8,000 Wabanaki people in Maine today. They have a great diversity of life stories and experiences, and they express their Wabanaki identity in many ways. This film gives a glimpse of the contemporary Wabanaki people and their world.

Directed by Ben Pender-Cudlip & Adam Mazo

Produced by the Upstander Project

[Regalia intro banner]

Wabanaki Regalia

Regalia are an important way that Native people express their identity. They are both an individual expression, one that is shaped by the traditions and aesthetic of their own tribe, and an acknowledgment of the shared global heritage of indigenous identity.

Regalia are not costumes—they are clothing and other items that are worn for special occasions such as ceremonies, celebrations, and political gatherings. Different parts of a tribe's regalia often have deeper spiritual meanings, allowing each set to be as complex and multi-faceted as the individual who wears it.

When non-Native people interpret regalia as fashion, it often gets appropriated in unintentionally harmful ways.

On display are examples of regalia from the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes. These regalia show a wide range of regalia styles, from traditional to contemporary.

The Abbe Museum is currently working with Abenaki communities to include Abenaki regalia in this exhibit soon.

Child's jingle dress

Cotton, silk ribbon, tin jingle cones

On loan from Maulian Smith, Penobscot Nation

This regalia is worn for jingle dancing, a style of dance with traditional and contemporary significance seen at pow wows, celebrations, and ceremonies. The tin cones are arranged to make a tinkling sound as the child dances.

Child's ribbon dress

Cotton, silk ribbon, velvet

On loan from Elizabeth Neptune, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township

This ribbon dress features floral prints and bold primary colors, reflecting design elements representative of Northeastern Indigenous aesthetics. Ribbon dresses and ribbon shirts are common regalia across Indian Country, with colors and patterns varying from tribe to tribe and maker to maker.

Women's buckskin dress

Deer skin, glass beads, cowrie shells

On loan from Donna Sanipass, Aroostook Band of Micmacs

This dress, made from tanned deer skin, is a traditional form of regalia still worn by many Native people, with styles varying from region to region. The incorporation of glass beads and imported shells shows the influence of trade on traditional practices.

Men's fancy regalia

Polyester, cotton, silk ribbon, glass beads, deer skin, assorted feathers

On loan from Percy Sacobie, Maliseet, St. Mary's First Nation

This style of regalia is associated with fancy dancing, often seen at pow wows and other public events across Indian Country. Traditionally associated with Indigenous cultures in western North America, fancy dancing and other pow wow traditions have become an important part of Wabanaki celebrations.

A pow wow is a social gathering event held by Native/First Nations communities and organizations throughout North America, where people come together to dance, sing, socialize, and honor their cultures. Pow wows may be private or public and generally include a dancing competition. They vary from one-day events to major pow wows that can last up to a week long.

Meet the People

The stories of real people can tell us a great deal about the culture, history, and present-day lives of the Wabanaki. We would like you to meet some of these people.

Mary (born 1935) and Donald Sanipass (1928-2007), Mi'kmaq

As a child in New Brunswick, Donald helped gather wood for basketmaking with his father and grandfather. Mary grew up in a basketmaking family from Nova Scotia. She was included in "ash hunting" trips into the woods, and she watched her grandmother and other relatives make baskets.

Donald and Mary both went to the residential school at Shubenacadie, although not at the same time. The two met when Donald was working in Gouldsboro, cutting wood. Mary was working as a cook at Big Chief Sporting Camps nearby.

For many years, as their children were born, they followed seasonal work. They worked winters in the woods in northern Maine - Donald cutting the trees and Mary hauling the wood using a draft horse. In the spring and summer they would make baskets for the potato harvest. Around August, they would shift to Washington County to rake blueberries, followed

by a move back to Aroostook County for the potato harvest. Any down time between jobs was for harvesting ash and making baskets.

Mary and Donald are best known for their potato baskets and other utility baskets – like pack baskets, and fishing baskets. All of their children also make baskets, as do several grandchildren. Mary still makes about six baskets a day using her grandmother’s crooked knife, carving her own handles and hoops, and dyeing her splints by hand. Donald passed away in 2007, a huge loss to the family and the community.

Me and Mary wanted to get married, but our folks didn’t like the idea of her marrying me when she was so young. So we sneaked away and eloped. (Donald)

Fred Tomah, Maliseet (born 1951)

When I am weaving a basket, the elders are there with me. I expect them to walk through the door at any moment.

For the first fifteen years of his life, Fred was only allowed to watch and learn. As his grandfather, father, uncles, and cousins gathered in “The Shack” to make ash work baskets, Fred was sometimes tasked with hauling ash logs out of the woods. Through patience and careful attention, he showed he was ready, and they let him start weaving.

Born in Houlton, Fred grew up in the constant company of these male relatives—harvesting wood for baskets or snowshoes, trapping, hunting moose, carving tools, and making baskets. Spending a few years in the military, Fred also worked as a bellhop, washed cars, and held odd jobs during high school; all the while he learned the cultural traditions of his people.

Fred is best known for his signature black and natural baskets with vivid, woven geometric patterns. A master basketmaker, Fred harvests his own materials and weaves baskets that combine the utilitarian with the fancy basket form. Often the patterns on his baskets are inspired by the stories he grew up hearing - stories about Katahdin and the people, plants, and animals that are part of the Maliseet world.

A regular presence at local basket shows, Fred easily sells out and is busy with special commissions for his loyal collectors.

Fred is also deeply involved in the work to monitor and respond to the threat posed by the emerald ash borer beetle, an invasive insect that could potentially destroy the ash trees.

When the borer gets here, it’s going to eradicate the entire species. It’s created havoc in other states. It travels so far each year. If [the infestation] should come in my time, my baskets can be made from cane. Basket making can go on in the absence of ash.

Donald Soctomah, Passamaquoddy (born 1955)

In the past, Native people were made to feel bad about being Indian, but now we’re teaching kids to be proud of who they are.

Donald Soctomah began his service to the Passamaquoddy Tribe as tribal forester. With a degree in forest management, he was a steward of the tribe's forest resources and advocate for tribal jobs in the logging industry.

During his eight years in the state legislature, he was one of the driving forces behind two critical pieces of legislation. *LD291: An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools* passed in 2001. In 2000, he helped spearhead legislation that would replace official place names in Maine that contained offensive terms referring to Native Americans. The last place names were changed in 2011.

Donald's work over the past decade has focused on preserving Passamaquoddy history, culture, and language. He serves as the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) for the Passamaquoddy tribe. He also manages the tribal museum and archive at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), has published several books on tribal history, and has become a go-to source for tribal members and non-Native educators, museums, and researchers who want to get a better understanding of Passamaquoddy history.

His work as THPO also encompasses the protection and preservation of tribal historic resources, such as archaeological sites and petroglyphs. He tirelessly works to protect these resources while at the same time educating both tribal and non-Native audiences about their importance. He has been honored locally and nationally for his work.

Each time we travel to the ancestral sites we get a blessing from above.

Lucy Nicoliar, Penobscot (1882-1969)

Lucy Nicoliar was known as Princess Watahwaso, the Bright Star of the Penobscot. She was a woman of character who possessed great beauty, poise, and intelligence. She became an accomplished singer, dancer, public speaker, and social activist. Lucy spent many years away from her Indian Island home, but her family and people were always with her.

Known to her family and community as Aunt Lu, Lucy left a lasting legacy of cultural revival and pride, social awareness, and equal rights for her people. Her entertainment skills and zeal helped educate others and reinvigorate a strong Penobscot identity.

Lucy traveled around the country as a performer, becoming a star on the traveling circuit. She recognized what the public wanted for "real" Indian performances, and dressed the part, often wearing Plains Indian style regalia. Lucy was also a master at marketing the image of the Indian to help sell Penobscot baskets.

While on the road performing, Lucy encountered women who were leading the fight for women's rights in America, and she brought her passion for this cause back to Indian Island. She lobbied for voting rights for Native people in Maine. She also helped convince the state to build the first bridge to Indian Island, and worked to provide educational opportunities to Penobscot children.

Adapted from the exhibit *Aunt Lu*, written by James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot.

Thousands of Generations at Pesamkuk

Wabanaki people and their ancestors have lived in Pesamkuk, this place we now call Mount Desert Island and Frenchman Bay, for thousands of generations.

Their oral traditions tell of how they were created in this place, their homeland, and how they came to know how to live responsibly here.

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that Native people have been here on this island and its surrounding region for thousands of years, adapting to changing environments and making a sustainable living.

The earliest Native American sites in Maine uncovered by archaeologists tell of people 12,000 years ago living in an open, tundra-like environment following the retreat of the last glaciers. They were hunting giant animals like mammoth and mastadons with stone-tipped spears.

How Glooscap Made the Animals Small

In the beginning the first man, Glooscap, formed all things, said the Elders. All the animals then were the same gigantic size. The lively flea jumped forty miles. This was too far for the best interests of all concerned. So, Glooscap rubbed him down until he became very little. The moose, on the other hand, was not so stupid — he would neither do harm nor be unduly exuberant, so he was rubbed larger. The squirrel ran up a tree so fiercely that he tore it down. He was rubbed smaller. Thus Glooscap rubbed everything larger or smaller according to the nature which it displayed.

-Adapted from a story told by Lewis Mitchell, Passamaquoddy, ca. 1910

As the environment began to change, and forests grew across the region, Wabanaki ancestors adapted and innovated, developing the knowledge and technologies to travel the waterways of their homeland, to hunt, fish, and gather in an increasingly rich and diverse ecosystem, and build social and cultural systems to sustain their communities.

By about 3,000 years ago, the Wabanaki were living in a natural world very similar to today's Maine. And, they developed a culture that continues today, providing the solid foundations that allowed them to survive the massive upheavals resulting from the arrival of European outsiders.

Miskotik, the Plentiful Place: Wabanaki Life at Tranquility Farm

Archaeological research at the Tranquility Farm Site, on the shores of Frenchman Bay, is uncovering exciting and intriguing stories of Wabanaki people and their ancestors. Excavations since the 1930s help us understand daily life at this site. Future research will continue to deepen this understanding.

Wabanaki people lived at this beautiful spot along the coast in wigwams and gathered around hearths. They experienced a relatively stable environment after a millennium or more

of substantial climate change. They made efficient use of natural resources—using clay for pottery and bone and stone for tools. They enjoyed a diverse diet including plants, shellfish, marine mammals and birds. They also had plenty of time to make music, create jewelry, and embellish their clothes and tools with art and design. Thousands of years later, these activities are all evident in the material remains recovered by archaeologists.

Many of their activities left no material traces. One can imagine seeing children in canoes riding the waves, young couples flirting, siblings bickering or elders sharing life lessons with a captive audience. These types of activities are also important parts of the human experience.

When the first Europeans began arriving on their shores, the Wabanaki began to trade with these new people. But not long after, the Wabanaki families who had been living at Tranquility Farm over many generations left the site. This was likely the result of the devastation caused by diseases and violent encounters both with and between European colonizers. But they did not leave their homeland.

Contact

At the time of European contact, the island of Pesamkuk was an international meeting place for the the Wabanaki confederacy nations. Coming from as far south as Massachusetts and as far north as Newfoundland, the People of the First Light gathered annually at Astuwikuk, “the Coming Together Place,” present-day Northeast Harbor. Wabanaki people used this island as a summer-time home to meet, trade, hunt, and gather with their distant relatives. Bar Harbor was then known as Moneskatik, “the Clam Digging Place,” reflecting the seasonal use of resources by Wabanaki hunter-gatherers.

The earliest written accounts of Wabanaki-European contact on Mount Desert Island were recorded by Samuel Champlain, a French explorer and cartographer who made many trips to the Dawnland. He first sailed by the island of Pesamkuk in 1604, renaming it L’Île des Monts Deserts. Various isolated incidents of contact occurred on the island in the following years, with the first settlers establishing the French Jesuit mission of Saint Sauveur in 1613. The settlement was destroyed by the English after only three months, and its exact location is still unknown, other than references to its location across the bay from Astuwikuk, the main Wabanaki village on the island. The *sakom* (chief) of this village, now known as Chief Asticou, would become one of the most famous Wabanaki chiefs of the period.

As the European presence in the Dawnland increased, Wabanaki people began to concentrate themselves within the main village areas, rather than separate into traditional smaller family camps across the homeland. The Wabanaki way of was changed forever, the result of constant interference—from conflicts between the French and British, dramatic losses of loved ones from newly introduced European diseases, and aggressive missionary tactics to convert the Wabanaki to Christianity.

Continuity and Change

Conflicts between and with the French and the British continued to affect the Wabanaki way of life for several centuries. Forced from neutrality by the increasing amounts of conflicts, the Wabanaki found themselves on either side of many battles and conflicts that shaped American history. Beginning with King Phillip's War in 1675, the Wabanaki fought in King William's War, Queen Anne's War, Lovewell's (Drummer's) War, King George's War, the French and Indian War, and the Revolutionary War, ending in 1783.

During the 18th century, settlers began to arrive on Pesamkuk, starting with Abraham Somes and his family in 1761. By 1840, the Rusticators (summer visitors looking to get away from the crowded, polluted cities of the eastern seaboard) came to Pesamkuk, and the village of Moneskatik was named Eden by white visitors. All the while Wabanaki people were still following their tradition of traveling to their summertime homes on Pesamkuk, but the reason had changed. Rather than coming to meet and trade with other people from the Dawnland, Wabanaki people traveled here to interact with non-Natives, selling traditional crafts and outdoor guiding services to visitors as a means for survival in the new cash-based economy. Setting up temporary encampments for the season, Wabanaki people were a crucial attraction within the tourism industry until 1923, when Indian encampments were officially banned from the town. Then, Wabanaki people continued to visit the island setting up small roadside camps and selling door-to-door. Without the larger, formal encampments on the island, Wabanaki visitation declined.

Today

While the main tribal communities are located some distance from Mount Desert Island, Wabanaki people are still present in this place. With several Wabanaki people choosing to make Mount Desert Island their home and the Abbe Museum's dedication to decolonization, Bar Harbor is slowly but surely becoming a destination for Wabanaki art and culture. Many more Wabanaki travel to the island to sell their art through shops and festivals, to teach children and adults about their culture and history, or even to be tourists like so many of us.

One of the best opportunities to learn about Wabanaki art, culture, and history on Mount Desert Island is to attend the annual Native American Festival and Basketmakers Market, a collaboration between the Abbe Museum the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, and the College of the Atlantic. Every summer, Wabanaki artists from all over the region converge on Bar Harbor for a day. Artists and craftspeople demonstrate their skills and sell their work—everything from finely woven ash and sweetgrass baskets, to beautifully etched birchbark containers, to detailed wood carvings, to elegant jewelry. Visitors to the Festival can also sample Wabanaki and other Native American foods, listen to stories and music, and learn more about how Wabanaki art forms are created.

The Abbe also works with Acadia National Park and Dawnland, LLC, (the concessioner in the Park) to produce an annual summertime program series in which Wabanaki culture keepers share their knowledge with Park visitors.

These are just a few examples of how the People of the First Light have, and always will be, a part of this place.

Headline News

On a daily basis, Wabanaki people from every nation are taking action to address the ongoing impacts of colonization. They are fighting to preserve their sovereignty, to protect their environment and resources, to ensure the well-being of future generations, and to keep their culture and languages strong. Many times, coverage in the general media presents a very colonized and biased perspective on these critical current issues. In this section, we invite you to hear the stories of Wabanaki activists, culture keepers, and newsmakers from their own perspectives.

The Penobscot River and the Penobscot Nation

In August of 2012, a statement was issued by the Maine Attorney General's Office indicating that the Penobscot Nation's territory did not include any portion of the Penobscot River. Interestingly, this statement was issued one month after the approval of the Enbridge (Line 9) Tar Sands Pipeline in Canada, and shortly after a meeting between the Maine Governor and Oil and Gas Representatives in Canada. It is suspected that this is connected to the proposed East West Industrial Corridor, which would go from Coburn Gore to Calais, passing through Penobscot Nation Territory and crossing over the Penobscot River. Many believe that these developments may have prompted the State's action against the Tribe's territorial and water rights.

The Attorney General's statement represented a complete departure from previous opinions, which recognized the Tribe's inherent connection to the Penobscot River and their ongoing sustenance and subsistence fishing rights. The Penobscot Nation viewed the Attorney General's statement as an attempted territorial taking. Therefore, they filed suit in the U.S. District Court, requesting that the court settle the territorial dispute (*Penobscot Nation v. Mills*). The United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Interior joined the case on the side of the Penobscot Nation. The case focused on the Nation's cultural and traditional connection to the Penobscot River, including their sustenance and subsistence fishing rights.

A group of towns along the Penobscot River, along with a number of industrial polluters, intervened in the case on the side of the State. The intervenors attempted to portray the case as a water quality control case. This is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. After realizing that the facts of the case had been misrepresented, two of the intervening towns (Orono and Bucksport) formally withdrew from the case. These two towns now stand in support of the Penobscot Nation's traditional and cultural fishing rights.

On October 14, 2015, the Court heard oral arguments in the case. At the end of 2015, U.S. District Court Judge, George Singal, issued an opinion stating that the Penobscot Nation's reservation did not include the waters of the Penobscot River, but that the Tribe did maintain cultural and traditional sustenance and subsistence fishing rights. The Department of Justice

has requested legal clarification of the Court's decision. The case remains on hold until that clarification is received.

Sherri Mitchell, Esq.

Penobscot Tribal Member

Taking Action

Visit <http://sunlightmediacollective.org/> to learn more.

Write to your legislators and to the Maine Attorney General's office in support of the Penobscot Nation's territorial and water rights.

Follow Dawnland Environmental Defense on Facebook.

Truth, Healing, and Change: Maine-Wabanaki REACH

REACH (Reconciliation, Engagement, Advocacy, Change and Healing) began as a collaboration of state and tribal child welfare workers who learned together that children, families, and communities need truth, healing and change.

REACH initiated the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whose mandate was to understand the experiences of Wabanaki people with state child welfare. The findings and recommendations of the TRC inform and guide the work of REACH and provide a touchstone for present and future action.

Wabanaki people have the highest rates of socioeconomic distress in Maine, as evidenced in statistics and Wabanaki experience. Maine residents are largely ignorant about the Wabanaki, the Indigenous people of this territory, and unaware of their part in this centuries old story.

This situation is a result of a history of colonization and strategies of genocide against Native people, and of continuing relationships that favor non-Native individuals, communities, and governments over Wabanaki. Laws, policies, and practices often limit tribal sovereignty and limit the ability of the tribes to help their people. In 2015, we have seen the state of Maine oppose the tribes on fishing rights, sovereignty of home waters, prosecution of domestic violence perpetrators, and development of economic opportunities. Mainers benefit from these limits at great expense of Wabanaki people. We rarely talk about this shared history and present realities.

Combatting 500 years of colonization, genocide, and oppression requires a conscious act of decolonization, reconnecting back to land, place, and an identity that was defined prior to colonization. It means rejuvenating the spirit that's rooted in land, ceremony, identity, and relationships. It means supporting Native people in addressing the needs and aspirations of their communities, and to recover and reclaim languages, customs, spiritual traditions, justice systems, and hope.

REACH aspires to restore truthfulness, compassion, love, acceptance, equality, and generosity.

- REACH staff

Take Action

Visit at www.mainewabanakireach.org to learn more and find out how you can become involved.

Indian Mascots in the State of Maine: Skowhegan, the last one standing.

Over the last few decades of school athletics in our state there have been many “Indian” team mascots that have used derogatory imagery and words. Indians, Redskins, Braves, Warriors, and others were once commonplace in many communities. Over time, most have abandoned these racist traditions one by one in favor of new mascots that truly reflect their pride in their school and communities. Today, we are left with one high school that hangs on to their Indian mascot, flying in the face of positive social advancement.

The Skowhegan Area High School persists in racially charged mascot usage with their mascot, “Indians.” They have consulted with a diverse panel of Wabanaki people from every tribe in Maine and we sent a clear message: if you want to honor us and our ancestors, you will change the mascot. Instead, they voted by a slim margin to keep the mascot.

Both sides continue their efforts to find a resolution. The Notyourmascot Maine Chapter has held rallies for the cause, engaged in public speaking, and written editorials. We also keep our efforts up behind the scenes to pressure state agencies and boards in hopes that a higher power can force a change for the good of all of our state. Keeping the mascot means that institutionalized racism can be validated and protected in 2016, and that is unacceptable.

The debate has been ugly at times and the group “Skowhegan Indian Pride” has presented many insensitive and outright racist online posts and in-person events, ranging from an old piece of paraphernalia called a “scalp towel” to holding a rally for “Indian Pride” on Columbus Day.

The dust will settle when the mascot is gone. For now, we keep up the work to change it.

-Maulian Dana Smith, Penobscot

Take Action

Follow Notyourmascot Maine Chapter on Facebook.

The Story Tree

The Wabanaki have a wonderful variety of oral traditions that vary from community to community. One story shared across all the tribes tells of Koluskap creating Wabanaki people

from the brown ash tree. While some details may differ depending on who is telling the story, they all include Koluskap firing his arrow into an ash tree, bringing life to the People of the First Light.

Wabanaki Oral Traditions

In Wabanaki cultures, the function and importance of stories and oral traditions represent more than just a continuing tradition. Stories were the medium through which knowledge was passed down from generation to generation before written language systems were developed in the 20th century. Each storyteller was expected to tell a story in their own way, giving a piece of themselves to the story as a gift to future generations. Today, oral storytelling is still the preferred way to pass on traditions, since writing them down poses the risk of making what has always been a dynamic form static.

Koluskap and the Ash Tree

This story tells how Koluskap created the first Wabanaki man and the woman from the ash tree. Embedded in the story is important cultural knowledge. Both the Wabanaki people and their baskets come from the ash tree, a deep connection from the beginning. The man and the woman emerged together, as equals. And as is communicated in many Wabanaki oral traditions, humans are given the responsibility of caring for the earth and all its beings.

Aglebe'm, the Monstrous Frog

This story, variations of which are known in all of the Wabanaki communities, tells of the importance of water, and especially rivers, to the Wabanaki. It recounts a confrontation with a giant monster that hoarded all of the water in the Dawnland. The destruction of the monster created the river systems important to the Wabanaki, and shows that that if life is to be sustained, there must be a balance between the needs of all beings.

Contemporary Wabanaki Music: Skicin in You

In 2015, The N'we Jinan Tour, an initiative to bring a mobile recording studio to First Nations communities across Canada, was invited to work with youth on the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy (Pleasant Point) reservations. Spending three days in each community, N'we Jinan's David Hodges worked with Wabanaki youth to write and produce music that is representative of their experiences. This song, "Skicin in You," was created by Penobscot Nation youth.

To listen to more of their music, visit <https://goo.gl/h9u6c5>.

Courtesy of Seven Eagles Media.

For more information on The N'we Jinan Tour, visit <http://nwejinan.com/>.

Traditional Wabanaki Music: The Snake Dance

Jesse Walter Fewkes, an anthropologist and archaeologist, was the first person to record Indigenous peoples using a phonograph. While most of his work focused on the Hopi of the Southwest, the Passamaquoddy were the first people who Fewkes chose to document through the use of wax cylinder recordings. These recordings made it possible to revive several traditional songs, including the Snake Dance song, which is still sung in Wabanaki communities today.

Language

INTRODUCTION

Wabanaki people have a unique story. They still speak the languages of their ancestors. They are among some of the few Indigenous cultures of the eastern seaboard that have their languages intact. The Penobscot, Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Western Abenaki dialects, members of the Eastern Algonquian language family, represent a deep and ongoing connection to the cultures, histories, landscapes, and ancestors of the People of the First Light.

PASSAMAQUODDY-MALISEET

The Passamaquoddy-Maliseet language is spoken by the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet tribes of Maine and New Brunswick, with only slight dialectical differences between communities. The creation of the *Peskotomuhkati-Wolastoqewi Latuwewakon*, A Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Dictionary, and its online language portal, represent the culmination of over forty years of language preservation efforts. Considered to be an endangered language, the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet language is taught in reservation schools alongside the regular curriculum. In 2015, the Passamaquoddy Tribe released a language-learning smartphone app and founded a language immersion school for tribal members.

For more information on the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet language, visit <http://pmportal.org/>

MI'KMAQ

With nearly 30,000 citizens, the Mi'kmaq First Nation has the largest number of native speakers. Across twenty-nine communities, the Mi'kmaw language also has the widest range of dialectical variations of any of the Wabanaki languages, with the greatest linguistic

differences between the Mi'kmaq of Quebec and Nova Scotia. Several writing systems exist for the Mi'kmaw language, but the Smith-Francis orthography was adopted as the official orthography by the Grand Council in 1980. The Mi'kmaw language learning smartphone app was released in 2015 and is free for anyone to download. The Mi'kmaq language is the only Wabanaki language that is not considered to be endangered.

To learn more information on the Mi'kmaw language, visit <http://mikmaqonline.org/>

PENOBSCOT

Language revitalization efforts within the Penobscot community have resulted in major increases in numbers of speakers. Considered a critically endangered language, Penobscot is now taught as part of the regular curriculum at the Indian Island School, and language immersion programs are being offered with increasing frequency. Currently, the Penobscot Nation is developing the Penobscot Language Dictionary with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For more information on the Penobscot language, visit <http://www.penobscotculture.com/>

ABENAKI

The Abenaki language, or the Western Abenaki dialect, is considered to be critically endangered. The majority of speakers reside at Odanak, Quebec. The Abenaki were among the first to have dictionaries written in their language, an important resource for language revitalization. Abenaki people residing within the United States are at a certain disadvantage—since Abenaki children attend public schools, the language is not a part of their daily curriculum. However, the creation of an online dictionary and language immersion camps is increasing access to the language.

For more information on the Western Abenaki language, visit <http://westernabenaki.com/>

[Translations for SoundStiks]

John Dennis, Mi'kmaq

It is necessary for all Native people, especially children, to speak their language, for they are the ones who will carry on the Mi'kmaq way of life. They need to know their Native ways, and they need to be able to write their language, for now is the time to take care of what has been given to us by our elders. The elders are leaving, and there are not as many now who speak the language. We must listen to them, for they know how our world is. It is hard to place a value on the language—it is more valuable than everything you own. It is getting more difficult for Mi'kmaq children to learn to speak the language, let alone read or write it. As the years go by, the children are taught more from other languages than from their own.

Edwina Mitchell, Maliseet

I speak from the heart and I was always taught to be very proud of who I was, my language and where I came from. My mother always told me to say to people when they asked where you came from to just say proudly that you're Maliseet and you speak your language and you're very proud.

Carol Dana, Penobscot

The Penobscot language is very important. Exists who I (I want to say our identity is in our language). I support the language today and always I continue to speak of it very much.

Roger Paul, Passamaquoddy

You have to learn the language. We have to teach our children the language because in our language is our culture, and it tell, us who we are and how we have to live. The words that we use describe the world around us and how we're related to the world around us, how we treat the world around us. And in our language, as we teach the kids our language, we teach them how to live as who they are.

We're related to the birds, the fish, the animals, we're related to the trees, we're related even to our mother the Earth. When we talk about our mother the Earth, when you pick up dirt, in English they think it's creepy and they want to get it off of themselves, but in the language, dirt is made up of our ancestors, our grandmothers and grandfathers, and whenever we pick up the dirt we remember that and we treat our mother the earth as though she's a living being, as our ancestors.

Encounter and Contact

Continuity, Change, and Shared Histories

Encounters between Wabanaki cultures and others have been and are both wondrous and violent.

The arrival of colonizers in the Wabanaki homeland initiated a time of oppression and destruction, both of land and of identity, which has continued to this day.

Wabanaki leaders and tribal citizens have acted deliberately to ensure the continued survival of their culture and their people.

We invite you to engage with the shared history of the Wabanaki and the colonizers. Delve in to the diverse and complicated relationships and events that have occurred. Consider how

the past is still present and how this shared history still affects both the Wabanaki and non-Native people in both positive and negative ways.

The past is present. Time is like the ripples from a canoe as it moves through water. The ripples are constant and present. –Jamie Bissonnette Lewey, Abenaki