

Northeast Native History

A Very Brief Overview

- *Pre-contact lifeways*
- *Differing Worldviews at the time of contact*
- *Historical events that affected all Native People*
 - *Landmark Decisions*

By Jennifer Lee, Northern Narragansett, independent researcher



Drawing: Monica Alexander

Let us put our minds together
and see what life we can make for our children.

Sitting Bull



Beadwork: Rhonda Besaw

Thank you to the Native elders who have passed down the stories and traditions and culture to their children and grandchildren through the generations.

Only 400 years ago, all the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean was all Indian land.

Some say it still is.

There is a story of a giant beaver who took more than he needed¹. You can still see the beaver today at the intersection of routes 116 and 47 in Sunderland, Massachusetts, or from I-91 between Deerfield and the exit for Rt. 116 in Sunderland, look east.

To learn the Native history of your town; find the Tribe whose homelands include your present day town. Study that tribes' history, but don't stop at your town or state, as many Native people from the Connecticut River Valley refugeed in New York, Vermont, and beyond. Native land use patterns have nothing to do with present day town lines. Also, what happened to Native people in Georgia and California had a profound effect on Native People everywhere.

¹ FIVE MINUTE AUDIO - Marge Bruchac tells the story, "Amiskwôlowôkoiak – the People of the Beaver-tail Hill": audio recording - <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/voices/stories.do>

ILLUSTRATED TRANSCRIPT PAGE: http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/voices/transcripts/wob_creation.html

ESSAY ON THE STORY CONTEXT: "The Geology and Cultural History of the Beaver Hill Story" by Marge Bruchac - http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/voices/transcripts/wob_creation_essay.html

PRE-CONTACT LIFEWAYS

The Indigenous people of the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts, the Sokoki (Abenaki), Pocumtuck, Nipmuc, Agawam, Nonotuck/Norwatuuck, and Woronokes shared a vast homeland of planting fields, fishing places, hunting territories, sacred ceremonial sites, burial grounds, and seasonal home sites. These tribal names describe places. The Indian people often knew themselves as The People. They weren't divided up into such separate tribal entities like today. They were cousins. They moved about their homelands often for fishing, hunting, gathering and harvesting in an ancient familiar land. Their homelands encompassed all the sites where individual and tribal activities took place within a familiar ecosystem over a long time. Try to imagine your shared homeland goes from Putney, VT, to Worcester to Springfield to the Hoosac Range.

They have been here so long that archaeologists have found thirteen layers deep at certain often visited campsites on the Connecticut River – over 10,000 years. The descendants of the Indigenous people of this land are still here.

The town of Deerfield has only been called that for 350 years. Before that it was known as Pocumtuck (translation: swift, shallow, sandy stream). The Pocumtuck were a large tribe who had agreements of shared resources and protection with other Native Nations from Brattleboro, VT to Hartford, CT. It was the “Pocumtuck Confederacy.” The Wampanoags to the east, the Mohicans and Mohawks of NY, and Narragansett of RI, The Mohegan Pequot and Niantic of CT, and the Wabanaki of Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire were interconnected with the Pocumtuck Confederacy for food, gatherings, trade, travel, and political reasons.

Places where many Native people gathered to fish and dance and sing were lit up at night by their campfires. In fact, at times the whole coastline of Connecticut and Long Island was lit up at night by cooking and fish smoking fires. Early travelers called these places “resorts” and the gatherings could last a week or more. Festivals!

Most of the roads we drive our cars on today started out as footpaths that were made by thousands of years of moccassined foot travel. The trail system here was bigger than any in Europe at the time. The early postal riders used this trail system to deliver mail. But, the trails didn't always go in straight lines or the fastest way possible. The Great Trail from Boston to Hartford (or Massachusetts to Podunk) was made for easy travel with great camping and fishing sites on the trail. No bogs or hills as families travelled together with babies and grandparents. The Indian Trails were well accommodated with Native villages, lakes, and food harvesting places, medicine springs and bedrock mortars for grinding corn. The Weckquaesgeek Indian people of Westchester County, NY, considered a half day's journey to be eighteen miles in six hours. A whole village could be moved in a half day for summer or winter homes. In the winter, sleds were pulled on the frozen rivers for efficient travel. Native Nations traded with each other extensively as far away as the Great Lakes for copper and the Arctic Ocean for Ramah chert for arrow heads.

Native People at this time communicated with each other by runners who were trained to run long distances; by mountaintop callers and signaling hills, and vibrating rocks, boulders balanced on top of bedrock that could be moved make a sound or vibration.

The land was full of food and resources because of the way Native People used the land. They actively managed the land. They burned the underbrush twice a year which made the land park-like and easier to hunt. They had tended deer meadows. They made fences, sometimes one mile long, in a V-

shape to hunt deer and turkey. They worked together to make fishing weirs six to twelve inches thick like a basket fence across the river with an opening for catching fish. They managed orchards and nut groves, and had corn fields up to 2500 acres in size. At Nonotuck (Northampton) the corn hills were still visible until the nineteen-twenties even after cows were kept in the fields. There were so many birds in the sky that they sometimes blocked the sun. There were so many fish that one could catch 5000 fish a day or 75 bushels in two days; the trout in the streams could weigh two and a half pounds. There were so many wild strawberries that you could fill three ships with them.

They did not dam the rivers, as flooding is Nature's way of fertilizing the soil. So, the rivers flooded every spring which mineralized the land. Cornfields were near the river, but wigwams were up on hills. The whole Northeast was full of fish that came up rivers from the ocean in succession as waters warmed in the spring in a dependable magnitude. Smelt, alewife, shad, bass, salmon, and sturgeon came one after the other in so many numbers, some said you could walk across the rivers on the backs of the fish and never get your feet wet. The seasonal festivals happened in time with the fish runs at the treaty fishing places; fish was shared by all. The clam beds on the coast were a mile long and so full of clams you got showered by the clams squirting while people walk over them. There was plenty. In May, when the shadbush made white flowers, the people left the corn growing in the fields and set up their wigwams at Peskeompskut to fish for shad. Food was shared, not monetized.

The market economy did not exist here. There was a very different law of the land.

The bark of trees makes our wigwams, canoes, memory scrolls, baby carriers, and food harvesting and storage containers. The birchbark canoe is an exquisitely beautiful vessel that's light enough to carry/portage over mountains and strong enough to carry a moose when in water.

We made dugout canoes out of logs. And we still do. These canoes were big enough to carry 20 people. Some were big enough for 60–80 people. We were big ocean seafarers. We have the oldest maritime culture in the Northeast. There is a special type of rock called Ramah chert. It is only found along the Arctic Ocean, The Native people from RI, CT, MA, NH, VT, ME all had this rock because it made excellent arrowheads. And before any Europeans came we could navigate to the Arctic Ocean.

The Native Astronomers and Calendar Keepers made stone structures. There are split rocks that line up from the Boston Harbor to Ohio that accurately denote the solstice. If you come upon any of these fascinating stone features, don't disturb them. We are still relearning their importance. These stone features should be protected on the National Register of Historic Places, just like your one room school house.²

The longhouses were sometimes 100'–200' in length. The food storage pits sometimes 20' across and 12' deep and sometimes lined with clay that was fire hardened in place. We made clay and soapstone vessels for cooking and eating.

Native herbalists had great knowledge of medicines from plants and trees. Most of the medicines we use today are based on medicines already used by them.

Native people were taller, lived longer, had great teeth, and an absence of deformities in children. At times Europeans lived until about age 40, Native people over 100, like Gladys Tantaquidgeon, Mohegan, who lived to 106 years old (1899 to 2005) and Aquittamaug, Nipmuc, who lived 123 years (1602-1725).

The corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, sunflowers, that we eat today were cultivated by

² For more information on these structures, visit <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/hiddenlandscapes>

Native Farmers.

DIFFERING WORLDVIEWS AT THE TIME OF CONTACT

Land	
Native	English
<p>“What is this you call property? It cannot be the earth, for the land is our mother, nourishing all her children, beasts, birds, fish, and all people. The woods, the streams, everything on it belongs to everybody and is for the use of all. How can one person say it belongs only to them?” Massasoit</p>	<p>“I trusted Umpachela on one red coat and two knives, If I’m not paid in beaver when he comes back from Sokoki (Northfield), all his land is to be mine.” Settler trader</p>
<p>A large range of places for fishing, farming, gathering, ceremonies, festivals, seasonal encampments and gathering places well-defined within a large shared homeland.</p>	<p>One fixed dwelling place, limited shared places.</p>
<p>Mobile farmers</p>	<p>Stationary farmers</p>
<p>“Wild” means excellent hunting.</p>	<p>“Wild” means unused & scary</p>
<p>Relationship and responsibility to the next seven generations in harvesting practices of shared resources.</p>	<p>Get all you can before someone else does</p>
<p>Early deeds reserved the rights of Native People to hunt, fish, set up wigwams, harvest nuts and other food, collect firewood.</p>	<p>Ownership that alienates everyone else. The king owned the wild animals in the woods—a starving person could not hunt to feed their family.</p>
Women	

Women were important leaders, had a voice in councils, could have a career and own land. If they divorced their husbands, they weren't impoverished or looked down on.	Women were subordinate to men, could not own land, were destitute if divorced
Native Women were often the ones to make trades with the English. Some requested wool and cotton in bright and lively colors, and preferred French linen over English linen.	Settler Women rarely worked in this capacity
Warfare	
To scare, settle disputes, some times with a Lacrosse game, count coup (the honor of touching your enemy)	To annihilate, destroy completely—men, women, children, homes and food
Leaders	
No centralized ruler; many leaders and alliances; people lived with the leader they loved or left or another	People were bound to a centralized ruler
The ceremony of exchange reinforces equality	Conquistador myth: that Natives would willingly accept subordination over reciprocity
Leaders strove for consensus and reciprocity	Leaders strove for domination, superiority, and obedience
Leaders distributed goods so the poor were cared for	The king was wealthy, the serfs were poor
Religion	
Difference is an advantage, not a threat	To have a different religion was considered evil and threatening. The papal edicts declared that Indian people were not Christian, therefore not human, and had no soul. That's why one could kill them and steal from them; and why what looked to the English like "unused land" (terra nullias) could be appropriated

Your relationship is between you and the Creator. No one can interfere	The priest had been the go-between between you and the Creator
Do your best to make people proud	Do your best to make yourself proud
All people are free	European people were subjects
Everyone is important	There is a hierarchy of important people
Thanksgiving is daily and seasonally so abundance continues	Thanksgiving is more at set times
Native people don't proselytize	Europeans thought it was their duty to make others Christian even if it meant they broke their own laws to do it. "Thou shalt not steal, kill, or covet thy neighbor's goods."
Stories and Sacred Places and wampum belts	Bible and Church, written documents
Focus on "we"	Focus on "I"

THE COLONIAL INVASION

Imagine you returned to your summer home and found strangers camped out in your backyard. They were different from your family, but you saw they were tired and hungry and sick. So, you let them live there and you fed and protected them. More of these strangers came by and moved into your house. So many came, there was no room for you. Even more of these stranger's friends came and took over all the grocery stores and wouldn't let you shop there. Then they demanded that you give them your cars and accused you of intending to hurt them with your car. But you just wanted to go and get food. Now you're hungry and tired and these people hate you and make fun of you because you want to move back into your house. That's what happened here 400 years ago.

One of the tragedies suffered by the Indian people is that they had no resistance built up to the diseases that Europeans brought with them, diseases associated with the domestication of animals. Between 1616 and 1619 one-third of the Native population in New England perished. It is estimated that, all told, 90% of the Indigenous people of this land died from these diseases. The spreading of diseases was sometimes intentionally manipulated by an elite few. Take a minute to think about how your life would change if 90% of your family and town died. Many Europeans considered this to be a gift from God because they wanted the Native People's land for their own. For the Native people, this was an apocalypse.

Many Pilgrims and settlers were helped by Native people. Without the Indians providing food and seed and planting techniques they would have starved.

The Mayflower Pilgrims were 102 people. Almost half of them died the first winter. Of the 18 women who came, 13 died. Some Sachems wanted to kill the rest of them, because before they came, others from Europe kidnapped and murdered Indian people and dug up their ancestor's graves and stole their winter food supplies.

Yet Massasoit, the great Sachem of the Wampanoag people pitied them, as they had women and children with them. Massasoit made an alliance of protection and land use with them. In a way he welcomed them to be some of Massasoit's own people.

Massasoit's son was Metacomet aka King Philip. By the time he was grown, 20,000 then soon 60,000 Puritans came here from England. They came with ideas and teachings from their religious leaders that it was their right to conquer the Indian people and take their land. They thought that being Christian made them superior to other cultures. They believed that it was their duty to convert non-Christians to their ways, even by force, and even if they broke their own law to accomplish this. These strangers bought their cows and pigs with them and let these animals roam free to feed themselves. The pigs ate the acorns that the deer and wild turkeys depended on. They destroyed the Indian's corn fields and trampled the clam beds. They dug up the Native food storage pits and ate and spoiled winter food supplies.

The Pocumtucks, of what is called Deerfield today, were an agricultural people. They went to the English courts demanding that the English keep their livestock in fences. Sometimes, the English courts suggested the Indians keep their cornfields in fences.

To the Native people, the land deeds of this time were treaties of shared land use.

These deeds reserved the rights of Native people to use the land as they had for thousands of years. The rights to plant, fish, hunt, collect firewood, harvest nuts, and set up wigwams were specifically reserved in these deeds. Natives had no legal representation at land "sales". Often there were no clear borders and often the same parcel was sold, over and over, by different Native people who had no right or authority to do so. Alcohol and exaggerated debts were used to get signatures. Signatures were often forced. The rights reserved were often ignored.

In 1637 the Pequot village in Mystic, CT, was set on fire while whole families slept in their wigwams. It was a horrific murder of 700 people. The Mohegans and Narragansetts sided with the English against the Pequots but were horrified at the total annihilation and killing of women and children. They kept yelling "enough, enough!" The history of Native American people is often told in a way that portrays Native people as being totally wiped out – gone. But there were many other Pequot villages. A village might have one or two sachems and there were 26 Pequot sachems at the time.

Forty years after the Mayflower landed, in 1659, the commissioners in Hartford requested that the Pocumtuck sachems come to their meeting. The sachems refused stating that "they don't request the English sachems come to their meetings and they resented the white's interference in their tribal quarrels."

In 1664, the Mohawks attacked the Pocumtuck village. Native people left but intended to return. The English moved into their village and used their cleared land.

King Philip reminded the settlers how the Wampanoag helped them when they were few and weak. Now the Wampanoag were few and weak. The English should do as the Wampanoag did when the Wampanoag were too strong for the English.

Likewise, the Mohicans reminded the Dutch that when the Dutch were few and weak the Mohicans let them live in peace. Now the Mohicans are few and weak and want to remain in their

homeland.

Metacomet aka King Philip, the son of Massasoit said in 1675: “Brothers, you see this vast county before us that the Great Spirit gave to our fathers and us... That all our customs and council fires are disregarded, the treaties made by our forefathers and us are broken, and all of us insulted; our brothers murdered before our eyes...Brothers, these people from the unknown world will cut down our groves, spoil our hunting and planting grounds, and drive us and our children from the graves of our fathers and our council fires and enslave our women and children.”

King Philip’s War (1675-1676) was an effort to gather the Wabanaki tribes together to push the settlers back to the sea. Native people had forges for gun repair at Mashantucket (Ledyard CT) and Peskeompskut (Turners Falls MA). At this time, there were still more Indians than settlers, but some Native peoples were allies with the English and some stayed out of the fight. Even so, the settlers began to distrust ALL Natives on racial lines. The Nipmuck people were forced to live in “praying towns” (reservations) and eventually were deported to Deer Island with insufficient food, clothing, or shelter. To this day, the Nipmuck People go to Deer Island every year to honor their ancestors.

In King Philip’s War, people died at twice the rate of death of the Civil War. Twelve thousand English homes were burned. Some settlers did go back to England. Many Natives fled north and west. At a mock peace treaty meeting, two hundred Native people were tricked and seized, and deported to slavery in Bermuda and the West Indies. By 1690, it was no longer possible for Native people to provide for themselves by the land in Southern New England. Trade became a necessity. The Lakota people out west lived by the buffalo almost another two hundred years.

The 1704 attack on Deerfield by the Huron, Mohawk, Abenaki, and French included many Pocumtuck people who had been driven out of their land. The Pocumtuck wanted to return but couldn’t because the English had moved in.

Many Native dignitaries went to Europe to understand European laws, to ask for protections, to ask for treaties to be kept, to threaten violence if Europeans occupied unceded lands. One of them was Hendrick, born in Woronoco (Westfield) between 1680-1690. His Father was a Mohican Chief and his Mother was Mohawk. He was one of the four Indigenous Leaders (The Four Indian Kings) who traveled from New York to London England to seek an alliance with the Queen of Great Britain in 1710.

THE DEERFIELD CONFERENCE

In 1735, one hundred and forty Native delegates met with the Massachusetts governor to set up a mission, trading post, and school for Native people in Stockbridge. People who attended the five-day conference:

- 66 Schaghticoke, including Pocumtuck, Nonotuck, and Sokoki
- 44 Housatonic Mohicans
- 19 St. Francis Abenaki
- 17 Mohican
- 8 Kanawake Mohawk

ABENAKI DIPLOMACY

In 1752, Attiwanetto and Atecoundo, Abenaki orators/spokesmen said:
“Brothers, we tell you that we seek not war, we ask nothing better than to be quiet, and it depends, brothers, only on you English, to have peace with us. We have not yet sold the lands we inhabit; we wish to keep possession of them. But we will not cede one single inch of the lands we inhabit beyond what has been decided formerly by our fathers... But we expressly forbid you to kill a single beaver, or to take a single stick of timber on the lands we inhabit. We acknowledge no other boundaries of yours than your settlements whereon you have built, and we will not, under any pretext whatsoever, that you pass beyond them. The lands we possess have been given to us by the Master of Life we acknowledge to hold only from Him.”³

1822 MOHICANS

At Stockbridge Massachusetts, Native people hired a preacher and a teacher, raised sheep, had a sawmill, and fought in the Revolutionary War on the side of the colonists. Still they were forced to leave their homes, because they held land in common and colonial people wanted their land. Even after establishing a church and a school, they were forced to move six times in seventy years. They ended up in Wisconsin. The Mohicans were perhaps the first English speaking people in Wisconsin. Electa Quinney, a Mohican woman, was the first public school teacher in Wisconsin.⁴

INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830

The Indian Removal Act 1830 had as its purpose the movement of all Indian people west of the Mississippi River, disregarding all previous treaties. In 1838, 90% of the Cherokee people could read and write. They had their own newspaper. Only ten percent of the surrounding white settlers could read and write. The Cherokee made many laws protecting their sovereignty. They wanted to remain their own nation separate from the US in the lands they had inhabited for at least 15,000 years. Their white neighbors wanted their land.

The Cherokee chief John Ross collected a petition signed by 16,000 Cherokee citizens, all reached by horseback. There were no cars yet. The petition was made on linen paper sewn together. If you opened it up and laid it flat, it was 160 feet long. It was ignored by the US Congress. Instead of protecting the Cherokee people from their violent neighbors, the US government sent 7000 soldiers to force Cherokee people out of their homes and into cattle pens where they were made to sleep on the ground as their white neighbors moved into their houses and stole their belongings. Fifteen thousand Cherokee men, women, and children, most barefoot, were forced out of their homes and made to walk

³ "Dawnland Encounters" by Colin Calloway, p121

⁴ "A Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band," 10 page PDF by Dorothy Davids:
<http://www.mohican.com/mt-content/uploads/2015/10/a-brief-history-of-the-mohican-nation-stockbridge-munsee-band-2004.pdf>

850 miles from Georgia to Oklahoma in the snow. About 4000 Cherokee died on this “Trail of Tears”. Many people up north in New England protested this action, but not enough to stop it. It broke the US’s own laws. Within 22 years after this horror, the Cherokee Nation had established many businesses in their new land and they had the best public school education for men, women and children in the US. They dressed like whites but retained their culture and their clan system. By 1866 the US demanded more of their Oklahoma land. Chief John Ross died in 1866. Today there are about 380,000 Cherokee, citizens of the Western Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma. The Eastern Cherokee in North Carolina are about 16,000; they are descendants of the Cherokee who hid in the mountains and resisted removal. The Cherokee Removal had a profound effect on all Native People⁵.

AN EXAMPLE OF A NATIVE /SETTLER ALLIANCE
Rhoda Rhoades (1751-1841)

Rhoda Rhoades was a Mohican Indian Doctress of Worthington/Huntington/Chesterfield, Massachusetts at a place called Indian Hollow above the Agawam (Westfield River). She treated and healed her neighbors. She refused payment of more than a token sum. In her terraced garden grew every herb. A great many genteel folks often stayed at her house, a small cabin, and sometimes she stayed at her patients’ house. People came from Westfield, Northampton, Springfield and Hartford to seek her help. She carried maple sugar in birch bark cones in her saddle bags to give to children. She and her brother remained, when a group of Indian People passed by her cabin on their way to Canada, begging her to go with them. She chose to stay, saying her white neighbors had been kind to her. She was a welcome sight when she entered the homes of the sick and dying. Capt. Daniel Ninham and other Mohicans from Stockbridge would visit her several times a year.⁶

SOME SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF NATIVE PEOPLE

Adopt European ways	Reject European Ways
Befriend the English	Destroy the English
Become Christian	Reject Christianity
Hide	Assimilate/hiding in plain sight
Refuge to a safer land.	
Trade Native-made products such as baskets and brooms with the English for necessities such as guns, knives, bullets, gunpowder, wool, buttons, cotton, great coats (business suit of that era).	

⁵ See “We Shall Remain” – PBS American Experience, originally aired May 11, 2009. Episode III covers the Trail of Tears.

⁶ Rhoda Rhoades Women in the Valley, by Marge Bruchac

LANDMARK DECISIONS AND EVENTS

- 1849 GOLDRUSH - Indian people were shot on sight just for being Indian.
- 1860-1970 - RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS: 100,000 Native American kids were forcibly removed from their families and put in residential schools with the purpose of killing their Indian identity. Thousands of students died from disease, malnutrition, and abuse.
- 1887 - THE DAWES ACT proposed to break up Tribal land into privately owned parcels and to prevent Indian people from holding land in common.
- 1953 - THE INDIAN TERMINATION ACT - one hundred tribes were declared terminated by the United States government in an attempt to dismiss treaties, agreements, and obligations to these Native Nations who were forced to give up their lands.
- 1970 - THE NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT passed, restoring the right of Indian people to practice their spiritual ways.
- 1972 - THE INDIAN EDUCATION ACT made it now legal to teach children in their indigenous languages
- 1976—THE MASHPEE NINE - Wampanoag men were maced, arrested and thrown in jail. Their crime: singing Native American songs⁷.
- Native American people have been dehumanized for Centuries.
- Native American culture has been trivialized and demonized
- TRIVIALIZED - Toys, food ads, and mascots portray Indian people as caricatures, not truly human, like the giant tin Indian on the Mohawk Trail or the town in NY called “Big Indian” instead of the Native man’s name, “Wunnesuck”. The bronze statue on the Mohawk Trail “Hail to the Sunrise” is beautiful; but the plaques were put there by non-native people who appropriated the names of the Iroquois Confederacy and tell an incorrect history. Did they have the impression that Native people are gone? There are about 30,000 Mohawk citizens in the US and Canada. The Iroquois confederacy is one of the oldest Democracies in the world. It inspired the US constitution , the women’s suffrage movement and gave the European settlers the very concept of freedom.
- DEMONIZED - Sacred ceremonial sites were given names associated with the Christian Devil. These names persist.
- ERASURE: Many Indian people have been labeled “the last of” their kind even though they have descendants.
- OUTLAWED – At times these cultural markers were made illegal: speaking the name of your tribe, speaking your tribal language, powwows, Native songs, dances, stories, ceremonies, and

⁷ See **The Mashpee Nine** - a book by Paula Peters (also a movie)

even Indian baskets.

- What happened on this land was genocide on a people and their culture. Today's sports mascots are an extension of this.
- 1990 - James Bay Dam separates many Cree people from their hunting and trapping livelihoods.
- 1990 - NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) enacted. It is no longer legal to dig up the graves of Indian people and display their bones.
- 1990 - Oka-Canada - plans to expand a golf course into Mohawk Indian burial grounds caused a military conflict, closing a commuter bridge for a month.
- 1997 - ELOISE COBELL, a Blackfoot lawyer, brought a class action lawsuit against the U.S. government for swindling Native Tribal members out of a documented \$47 billion during the last 100 years. The U.S. government leased out oil, gas, timber, and agricultural interests on Indian lands, but stole, embezzled, misappropriated, and diverted the income. After 9 years of litigation, they were awarded \$3 billion.
- 2002 – ASTRONAUT JOHN HARRINGTON, a Chickasaw Nation citizen, brought with him into space a Chickasaw Nation flag, seven eagle feathers, sweetgrass and arrowheads. Is he a real Indian?
- 2007 - UNDRIPS (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People)
- 2018 - The Catholic Church repudiates and calls the concepts of the “Doctrine of Discovery” and “terra nullius” illegitimate, acknowledging that many Catholics ignored or did not speak out against these injustices.
- 1994 - 250 Indigenous languages are still spoken in the United States
- 2020 - 150 Indigenous languages are still spoken in the United States
- 2020 - The “TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION ON THE INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL POLICY ACT” was introduced to Congress to investigate, document, acknowledge, and address issues related to Indian boarding school abuses.
- MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) - Native American women are murdered and sexually assaulted ten times higher than other ethnicities. Crimes are usually committed by people outside the Native community. Legislative reform is pending regarding police and legal jurisdiction.

TODAY

- Native Americans hold 2% of the US land, down from 100% only 400 years ago
- There are intertribal buffalo herds
- There are MANY federal or state recognized tribes in the NY/New England area some of them are;

NY Tribes

Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida ,Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora ,Shinnecock ,Unkechaug

CT/RI Tribes

Mashantucket Pequot, Mohegan ,Eastern Pequot ,Scaghticoke, Paugusset ,Narragansett

MA Tribes

Mohican ,Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag ,Seaconck, Chappaquiddick,Herring Pond, Pocasset Wampanoag, Hassanamisco and Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuc,

ME Tribes

Penobscot, Passamoquoddy ,Mi'kmaq ,Maliseet

- As of today, there are 574 federally recognized tribes in the US
- There are also many state recognized tribes and descendant groups
- Today's Native Americans work in many different fields from surfers, athletes, musicians, historians, doctors, lawyers, carpenters, etc.
- Many Young Native Americans don't want their culture to die
- Many Native American cultural practices have nothing to do with how you dress or look. For example, a Penobscot family in Maine traded their house for a smaller one to let another larger Native family move into the bigger house. Likewise, a Colville family (Salish tribe from Washington state) moved out of their Vermont house for a weekend to give the parents of Native college kids the opportunity to stay there and see their kids graduate.
- Today foresters are trying to relearn the use of seasonal burns that used to manage the undergrowth and prevent the massive forest fires like the ones currently out west.

To know the truth empowers all to make a better future.

PLACE NAMES⁸

- Massachusetts – at the big little hills
- Quinneticook/ Kwintekw, Connecticut River, the long river from Canada to the ocean;
- Wabanaki – Dawnland
- Abenaki – People of the first light
- Sokoki, Squakeag – People who separated, Northfield, the southernmost Abenaki band
- Squamscot/Great Falls – Turners Falls
- Peskeompskut –place where the rock divides the river, place of the rock where fire bursts out (salmon before dams), where the salmon jump at the split rocks
- Wissatinnewag – Place of mist, shining rocks, Shining Hill, Canada Hill
- Pocomegon River – Green River
- Pequayag/Pequog River – Millers River
- Roanasiatok River – Fall River
- Pocumtuck – Deerfield
- Pocumtuck River – Deerfield River, shallow, sandy, swift river
- Weekionnuck River – Sugarloaf River
- Wequamps - Sugarloaf Mountain, place where the hill drops off
- Pemawatchuwatunck - The Pocumtuck range, The Great Beaver, Ktsi Amiskw
- Kunkwachu/Konguachu – Mount Toby
- Wequittayag, part of Hatfield
- Nonotuck/Norwatuck – land in the middle of the river, the oxbow
- Cappawonganicke – Mill River, it pounds
- Tomheganomskett-Mount Tom
- Nipmuck – Freshwater people
- Nipnet – traditional Nipmuck land from the VT/NH border to Worcester County. MA, Northern RI and Northeast CT, parts of Hampshire and Hampden County, MA
- Woronoco River – became Westfield River, place where the salmon jump
- Chicopee – Rapids, violent water
- Agawam – meadow land/land beneath the water
- Pojassic – Westfield
- Scanunganunk - Indian crossing at the Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers

⁸ Sources - Bond, Sheldon, Bruchac

SOME HISTORIC INFLUENTIAL NATIVE PEOPLE

- Attiwanetto – Abenaki delegate and speaker
- Quoquont – A Pocumtuck man at Hadley
- Umpachela – Sachem of Nonotuck
- Mashaliske – Sunksqua/Squasachim (rock woman) of Nonotuck (Northampton)
- Wuttawalunskin and Chauk – sons of Mashaliske
- Chickwallop – Pocumtuck
- Weetamoo aka Namumpum – Sunksqua of Pocasset Wampanoag
- Awashonks - Squaw sachem of Sakonnet Wampanoag
- Massasoit aka Ousamiquin – Great Leader of the Wampanoag,(He speaks our hearts)
- Metacomet aka King Philip– Son of Massasoit
- James Printer aka Wawaus – helped print one of the earliest books in Algonqian language and the first Bible in North America
- Monoco – Nipmuc protector
- Muttawamp – Nipmuc brilliant strategist
- Matoonas – Nipmuc leader
- Noynetachee – Sachem of Woronoco
- Uncas – Mohegan leader who counseled his people to befriend the English
- Canonchet – Narragansett sachem brought his people to Peskeompscut (Turners Falls) to get seed corn and refuge in a safe place during King Phillip’s War
- Sassacus – Pequot leader
- Canonicus – Narragansett chief
- Greylock - born at Woronoco (Westfield) Massachusetts. An Abenaki leader/protector at Missisquoi Vermont (aka Wawanolewat - “he who fools others or throws them off his track “)
- Shattoockquis - Pocumtuck/Quaboag Sachem
- William Apess - Pequot Minister writer and activist, born in Colrain MA.

SOURCES

- Historic Deerfield 2004 Guide's Training Pocumtuck History, by Marge Bruchac
- Native Land use and Woodland Settlements 2003, by Marge Bruchac, pp 3-4
- The Great Trail of New England by Harral Ayers
- Jesuit Relations
- The Journey, an Algonquian People's Seminar #3, #2, #1, Albany, NY, State Museum
- The History of Northfield by JH Temple and George Sheldon
- Hidden Landscapes: The New Antiquarians, Great Falls, Before the Lake Was Champlain
- Reel Native, WGBH after "We Shall Remain"
- Their Bearing is Noble and Proud
- Our Beloved Kin, by Lisa Brooks
- The Wampum Belt Tells Us, by Basil Johnston
- "All the Real Indians Died Off," and 20 other myths about Native Americans, by Whitaker & Ortiz
- This Land is their Land, by David Silverman
- The Mohican World, by Shirley Dunn
- The Mohicans and their Land, by Shirley Dunn
- The Indians of the Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750, by Dennis Connole
- Dawnland Encounters, by Colin Calloway
- The Common Pot, by Lisa Brooks
- The Ancestral Lure of the Hudson Estuary: Predictable Aquatic Resources, by Tom R. Lake, 2003
- The Pocumtuck Confederacy, Connecticut Valley Historical Society
- American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children
- A Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band
- Finding Balance, by Deborah Spears Moorehead
- Indian New England before the Mayflower, by Howard S. Russell
- In Search of New England's Native Past, by Gordon Day
- After King Philip's War, by Colin Calloway
- Rhoda Rhoades Women in the Valley, by Marge Bruchac

Many Thanks to Ron Welburn (Accomac Cherokee/Lenape descendant) Consultant and Editor