



INDIGENOUS VOICES IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

ANDRE STRONGBEARHEART GAINES, JR. NIPMUC CULTURAL STEWARD

Andre Strongbearheart Gaines, Jr. is a citizen of the Nipmuc people. He serves as a cultural steward for his Tribe and as Resident Artist at Ohketeau Cultural Centre in Ashfield, Massachusetts. He is a father, public speaker, traditional dancer, activist for Indigenous rights, educator, and carpenter by trade. With over a decade in recovery from drugs and alcohol, Andre is a recovery sponsor and integrated life coach for those in need. Andre's work is focused on cultural preservation and revitalization. He focuses on restoring traditional knowledge to Indigenous Peoples including how to flesh and brain tan hides to make items such as drums, buckskin, and blankets. He works to restore balance between everyday life and traditional values while navigating the colonial systems we live in. He considers family, culture, and traditions to be the three most important aspects in his life.

Definitions of terms introduced in the film:

- **MOHICAN/MAHICAN**--Their traditional homeland is the Hudson River Valley from Vermont to New York, but they are now in Wisconsin. They have a tribal preservation office in Williamstown, MA. They are a different tribe from the Mohegan tribe of Connecticut.

Highly recommended, brief, easily accessible resources:

- [A Brief Look at Nipmuc History](#) (approximately 5 pages)
- ["A Brief History of the Mohican Nation Stockbridge-Munsee Band"](#) (An online 10-page booklet of Mohican history from pre-contact to the present day)
- *The Mourning Road to Thanksgiving* by Larry Mann (recommended for older students)