

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples from all around the Northeast gathered seasonally to fish and celebrate at Peskeompskut on the shores of the Connecticut River--part of present-day Montague, Gill, and Greenfield. On May 19, 1676, over 300 Native people--mostly women, children, and elders who were refugees from King Philip's War--were killed in an attack by armed English settlers. This was among the largest massacres of Indigenous people in colonial U.S. history, and a turning point in King Philip's War. On May 19, 2004, representatives of the Narragansett Tribe and representatives of the Town of Montague signed a Reconciliation Agreement to acknowledge the tragic events of May 19, 1676, and to begin to put the traumatic echoes of the past to rest. On May 15, 2021, Native and nonnative people gathered to affirm Indigenous resilience and the healing of the past, and to honor and remember those who died 345 years ago. This film records that event.

Definitions of terms introduced in the film:

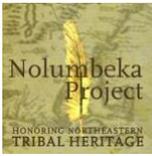
- **ABENAKI**--"People of the Dawnland." The Abenaki homeland includes present-day Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, northern Massachusetts, and southern Canada and the Maritime Provinces. The Vermont state-recognized Abenaki tribes are Elnu, Koasek, Nulhegan, and Missisquoi, St. Francis/Sokoki Band. There are also unrecognized bands of Abenaki in Vermont, and there are more Abenaki tribes in Canada.
- **INDIGENOUS, FIRST NATIONS, NATIVE, NATIVE AMERICAN** are all terms used to name the Native People of this continent. There are many different opinions about use of the term "Indian." The Natives of this continent are not from India, but the term "Indian" is found in many legal names and documents such as "The Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians " and The National Congress of the American Indian. There are a variety of opinions about who is "Indian." Some say you are Indian only if you are enrolled in a federally recognized tribe. Others say you are Indian if you have Indian ancestors. Some tribes are recognized by the federal government. (See [Map of Federally Recognized Tribes in New England.](#)) Some tribes are only recognized by various state governments. Some tribes and individuals are not recognized by any U.S. government entity. In 1953, the U.S. government, in violation of prior treaties, terminated recognition of about 100 different tribes by means of the "Indian Termination Act." Some tribes continue to seek federal or state recognition. It is a very difficult, cumbersome process.

What does a Native American look like?

It is impossible to describe what Native Americans look like. Today's "Native Americans" descend from over 300 distinct nations (also known as tribes) spanning the large North American continent. Just as someone from southern Europe can look very different from a northern European individual, so too Native Americans are different. A person with Eastern Woodland heritage will have different physical characteristics than people from the Plains, the Southwest, or Northwest Coast Regions. Today, most Native American families have intermarried with non-Natives, and even though they may have African, Asian, or European characteristics, they still continue the traditions and spiritual practices of their ancestors.

--courtesy of Institute for American Indian studies, Washington, CT

- **INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**--At various times in the past, Native people were punished for speaking their Native language. Today, many tribes are working to revitalize their traditional languages. Yet



INDIGENOUS VOICES IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

in 1789 it was illegal, and punishable by death, for anyone, Native or settler, to teach Mashpee Wampanoag people to read or write in the English language.

- **PESKEOMPSKUT** was the site of an Intertribal village stewarded by the Pocumtuck People and shared by northeastern tribes who gathered there seasonally for abundant fish harvests and to renew kinship ties. It includes parts of present-day Montague, Gill, and Greenfield. Indigenous people continue to gather there to this day. One translation is "where the salmon jump at the split rocks." in the Nipmuck language it means "where the rock splits the river."
- **WESTERN ABENAKI** traditional homeland includes present day Vermont, New Hampshire, northern Massachusetts, and southern Quebec.

Suggested questions for students:

- Why was it illegal and punishable by death for anyone, Native or settler, to teach Mashpee Wampanoag people to read or write in English in 1789 when at other times, it was illegal for Native people to speak one's Native language?

Highly recommended, brief, easily accessible resources:

- [Abenaki Missisquoi History and-Chronology](#)
- [Abenaki Indian Fact Sheet](#)
- [Elnu Abenaki Tribe Website](#)
- [A Brief Look at Nipmuc History](#) (approximately 5 pages)