

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE WIGWAM

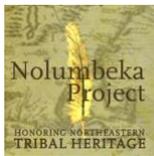
Jennifer Lee, Northern Narragansett, grew up without knowledge of her Native ancestry. She has spent her adult life as an independent researcher learning the true history and culture of the Northeast Woodlands Indigenous Peoples. She has been sharing what she learns at schools, historic sites, and community events for 28 years by holding classes in her eastern conical wigwam. She makes bark baskets, teaches bark basketry, and attends as many powwows and educational events as she can.

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.
- **DEER ISLAND**--A concentration camp was established on this island in Boston Harbor during King Philip's War, 1675-1676. Many Nipmuc people--even some who were allied with the English--were imprisoned there without enough food or shelter; many died. To this day, many Nipmuck people go there every year to commemorate their ancestors.
- **GREYLOCK (WAWANOLEWAT)** was born in Woronoco (Westfield). He fought the English in the 1700's to prevent colonial forces from attacking and encroaching on northern Abenaki communities. He moved from the Connecticut River Valley to Missisquoi in northern Vermont but returned frequently to visit his relatives in Woronoco.
- **HOMELAND**--Instead of permanent towns and individually owned house lots, Native people of many tribes used and shared large areas of land seasonally to hunt, fish, plant, harvest, gather medicines and materials, and hold ceremonies, and to bury their dead.
- **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



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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 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.
- **MASSASOIT**--A great sachem of the Wampanoag people. One translation of his name is, "He speaks our hearts." He was a peaceful ally of the English at Plimoth Colony. His oldest son Wamsutta was believed to have been poisoned by the English. His son Metacomet (a.k.a. King Philip) was the primary leader of Metacom's rebellion (a.k.a. King Philip's War), 1675-1676.
- **NONOTUCK or NORWOTTUCK**--"Land in the middle of the river" or "Lands around the mid-point of the river" are names for present-day Northampton, Amherst, Hadley, and Hatfield. The Nonotuck were closely allied with the Pocumtuck, and many members of those two tribes moved to the refugee village of Schaghticoke (pronounced SKA-ti-coke) in New York during King Philip's War, 1675-1676.
- **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."
- **POCUMTUCK**--Present-day Greenfield and Deerfield. The Pocumtuck were closely related to the Nonotuck, Agawam, Quaboag, and Woronoco Peoples. Many fled as refugees to Northern Abenaki lands and Schaghticoke (pronounced SKA-ti-coke) during colonial wars.
- **SACHEM**--a Native leader or family head.
- **SCHAGHTICOKE** (pronounced SKA-ti-coke) is the name of a refugee village on the Hoosic River in New York State. A tribe in Northwest Connecticut bears the same name, as does a Mohican Village occupied before 1676.
- **WESTERN ABENAKI** traditional homeland includes present day Vermont, New Hampshire, northern Massachusetts, and southern Quebec.
- **WIGWAM**--a bark-covered dwelling, dome or cone shaped.
- **WORONOCO**--A tribe that lived near present-day Westfield, closely allied with the Agawam, Nonotuck, and Pocumtuck Peoples.

Suggested questions for students:

- Can you find your town on the map of Massachusetts?
- Can you find what Tribe's original homeland is located where your town is now? To learn about the Native history of your town, identify whose Tribal homelands your town is in. That Tribe's history is your town's history. Town lines are arbitrary borders that do not reflect traditional Native homeland or land use.
- What river is closest to your town? What is the name of that river in Algonkian language? (See *Northeast Native History* by Jennifer Lee for a list of native place names.)



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- If you lived in the homeland model of shared land today, rather than individually owned house lots, where do you think you would go to fish, hunt, gather berries, plant, or have a gathering?
- Where do you go in the summer? Where do you think the tribe, whose original homeland included your town, would go in the summer?
- What year did your town become an official town? How did it get its name? What was it called before its present name? How long has your town been called its present name?
- How did Native people from the land that is now your town get to the Deerfield Conference in 1735? What rivers and what Indian trails did they use?
- What Tribes can you name in Massachusetts? in New England? in New York? in the U.S.?

Highly recommended, brief, easily accessible resources:

- [Abenaki Missisquoi History and Chronology \(approximately 8 pages\)](#)
- [A Brief History of the Mohican Nation Stockbridge-Munsee Band \(An online 10-page booklet of Mohican history from pre-contact to the present day\)](#)
- [A Brief Look at Nipmuc History \(approximately 5 pages\)](#)