

## First Arrivals from England

Contact with English, Dutch, and French began in the 1500s. These visitors had brought previously absent diseases, including yellow fever, which killed off as many as two thirds of the Wampanoag population in 1616. In 1620, when the first permanent English settlers arrived, 8sâmeeqan, the Wampanoag chief, created an alliance with them ensuring mutual protection.

Prior to the dramatic population loss in 1616, 69 Wampanoag villages existed in our territory. In the 1630s began the conversion of Wampanoag people to Christianity, and by 1677, only 14 villages and praying towns were recorded.

Tensions mounted between the two factions with disputes over land and other natural resources. In 1671, King Philip, son of 8sâmeeqan and chief at the time, and the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony agreed to an armistice. However, it did not improve the situation for Wampanoag people. In 1675 King Philip led his people to war. King Philip's War, as it is recalled, is known to have been the bloodiest and deadliest war per capita ever fought on American soil. At the end of the war, praying towns such as Mashpee became the only refuge for Wampanoag people.

## The Tribe's Deeded Land

The original territory of Mashpee was 16 square miles from Cape Cod Bay to Vineyard Sound. The reservation included parts of Barnstable and parts of Sandwich in addition to Mashpee.

In 1742, Massachusetts passed the "All Remnants" Act which gave land to Wampanoag Tribal members. The land was not free, but rather was taxed. As this was a foreign concept to Wampanoag people at the time, many lost their land because they could not pay the taxes.

## Self-governance

Determined to exercise our sovereignty, in 1760 the Mashpee Wampanoag sent an emissary to request audience with the King of England. By 1763, the Province of Massachusetts declared "Marshpee" an incorporated Indian Plantation with rights to establish her own governmental leaders.

Mashpee became an incorporated town in 1870 and the land was divided among each person 18 and older. The taxed land was a final effort to dispossess Mashpee people of their land. Despite the legality of land ownership in colonial terms, Mashpee is and has always been the land of the Wampanoag.

By 1910, the Wampanoag Nation was reduced to three governments. They were the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah, and the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe.

In 1975 the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council submitted its letter of intent to petition the federal government Bureau of Indian Affairs for acknowledgement. Many other tribes along the east coast followed and were granted Federal Recognition in exchange for land, money, and certain rights. Mashpee did not agree to these stipulations, in particular because we refused to give up our Abo-

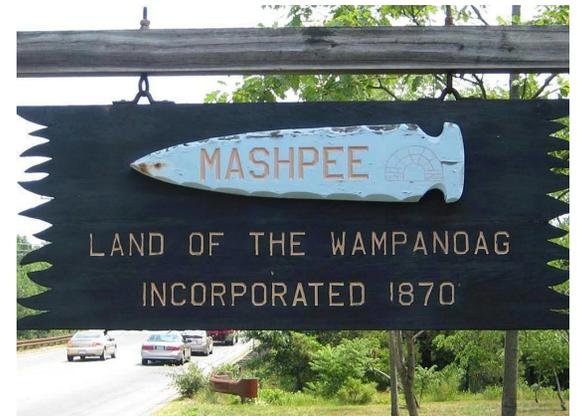


original hunting and fishing rights. After 31 years, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe completed the process and was acknowledged by the United States government without any cessions.

Currently the Tribe is led by two traditional leaders: the chief and the medicine person, and 11 elected council people.

# MASHPEE WAMPANOAG TRIBE

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF MASHPEE



**BROCHURE CREATED WITH THE  
HELP OF THE WÔPANÂAK PÂSUQ  
(WAMPANOAG 1) LANGUAGE  
CLASS STUDENTS AT MASHPEE  
MIDDLE-HIGH SCHOOL, AS WELL  
AS MASHPEE WAMPANOAG  
TRIBAL HISTORIANS.**



[www.Mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov](http://www.Mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov)

## Who are the Mashpee Wampanoag?

You've probably noticed the sign on the cover of this pamphlet as you've driven into Mashpee. One of 69 original tribes making up the Wampanoag Nation, the Mashpee Wampanoag is the tribe that has lived here on this land for over twelve thousand years. As the original inhabitants of this land, we would like to take some time to tell you a bit about us. The following information just scratches the surface of who we are. To learn more, visit our museum on Route 130, or our Community and Government Center on Great Neck Road South, or come to our annual powwow in July.



Round dance at the Mashpee Wampanoag powwow.

## Wampanoag Philosophy

Wampanoag philosophy is based on an understanding that balance is needed in order to sustain life, that both people and land are part of a greater circle, and that the way we live in the world is a privilege.

Wampanoag history was kept orally and our stories teach lessons and provide guidance on how to live, including how and why to conduct ceremonies such as birth, naming, death, thanksgiving, marriage, and cleansing ceremonies.

## Wampanoag Language

Wôpanâôt8âôk is one of nearly forty languages that make up the Algonquian language family. The language has also been documented under other names such as Natick, Massachusetts, Wampanoag, Coweaset, among others. There are 2 dialects of Wôpanâôt8âôk: mainland and island.

Wôpanâôt8âôk was the first Native American language to be written using an alphabetic writing system and Wampanoag people wrote many documents beginning in the early 1600s. The first Bible printed in the United States was printed in Wôpanâôt8âôk at Harvard in 1663.

For 7 generations, Wôpanâôt8âôk (Wampanoag Language) was not spoken. The language was lost due to lasting effects of colonization and forced assimilation, including Wampanoag people being brutally punished for speaking their language, and children being removed from their families. Now, because of the massive written record in our language, and the vision and work of the founders and members of the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, Wôpanâôt8âôk is being spoken again. The language is now being taught by a dedicated group of language speakers in an immersion preschool, the high school classes at Mashpee Middle-High School, and in community classes.

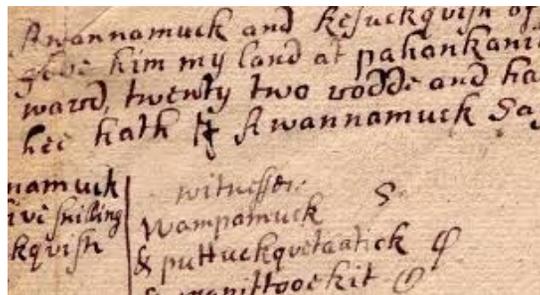


Image of a document written in Wôpanâôt8âôk.

## Traditional Government

Each village was led by a Sôtyum or Sôkushq (male chief or female chief) who were informed by a council of women and men, and clan leaders, who were typically women. Our style of government is similar to other Native societies in the Northeast, and was used by the Founding Fathers as a model for the democracy that became the United States.

## Homes and Family Structure

Wampanoag families back then in the day built their homes with cedar frames, with either cattail mats in spring, summer, and fall, and bark coverings in winter. In warmer months we lived near the water



where we grew and gathered food, as well as fished the oceans and bays. In the winter we moved inland

where we were protected from the water and our diet consisted of stored food and game.

Typically men took care of tasks that would have them travel from the home, such as hunting, while women took care of the tasks that kept them close, such as maintaining the garden.

Wampanoag families were different than the Europeans because each person was accounted for as part of their mother's family line. Wampanoag villages also showed a network of connections from families, as often sisters would live together with their families.

Image above shows the inside of a Wampanoag home. Photo taken from the Wampanoag homesite at Plimoth Plantation.