

Building community, trust, and relevance through diversifying, decolonizing, and digital storytelling

Maine Archives and Museums
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Abbe Museum

Decolonizing Museum Practice

Informed and inspired by the work of Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk)

- ❑ Decolonizing practices at the Abbe are **collaborative** with tribal communities. We are open to and actively seek ideas for projects or initiatives from our Native advisors and stakeholders. Native collaboration needs to happen at the beginning and throughout the life of the project.
- ❑ Decolonizing museum practices **privilege Native perspective and voice**. When we prioritize the accounts and observations of Indigenous scholars and informants, the story broadens, expands, shifts, offering non-oppressed perspectives of Native history and culture.
- ❑ Decolonizing museum practices include the full measure of history, ensuring **truth-telling and the inclusion of difficult stories**. Issues around water quality, hunting and fishing rights, and mascots are connected to the past and the present. When we present this full history we have a better opportunity to identify harmful statements and practices.

If you want to start learning about decolonizing museums:

Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums, Amy Lonetree, 2012, University of North Carolina Press.

"Lonetree" Decolonization Matrix
An Exercise

Abbe Exhibits	Collaborative Exhibit Practices	Truth-Telling About Colonization	Indigenous Perspective Framing Presentation
Headline News	X	X	X
N'tolonapemk	X	X	X
Aunt Lu	X	X	X
Four Mollys	X		
Layers of Time			
Indians & Rusticators		X*	
Waponahki Student Art	X	X	X
Journeys West			
Twisted Path I	X	X	X
Twisted Path II	X		X
Look Twice	X	X	X
Dr. Abbe's Stone Age Museum			
Transcending Traditions (traveling)	X		X
Timeline	X	X	X
By Native Hands (traveling)			
North by Northeast (traveling)	X		X
Power of Place			X
Eyes of Nature (birchbark)			X
Mocataugan (crooked knives)			
Made of Thunder Made of Glass		X	
Robert Neuman show		X	
Wounaan Baskets			
Objects of Our Affections			
Wabanaki Guides	X	X	X
IndiVisible (traveling)	X	X	X
Twisted Path III (2014)	X	X	X
Coming Home (2015)	X	X	X



THEMES

The Abbe interprets the history and culture of the Wabanaki people, placing emphasis on Wabanaki perspectives and experiences and their context in the world and American history. There are three major content areas encompassing the stories of the Abbe Museum.

CONTINUITY & CHANGE

- The Wabanaki experience is a 12,000+ year history and this is demonstrated by several lines of evidence, including, but not limited to, archaeology and oral history.
- The Wabanaki live in their homeland and continue to build family and community in New England and Eastern Canada.
- The Native perspective, as told by women and men, on Wabanaki history and culture is a story of unity and complexity.

ENCOUNTER & CONTACT

- The experience of encounter between cultures was and is both wondrous and violent.
- The contact period initiated a time of oppression and destruction that continues today.
- Cultural survival was and is a deliberate act, guided by Wabanaki leaders and tribal citizens.

NATIVE VOICE & COLLABORATION

- Native voice as primary voice in exhibits, programs, and events is paramount.
- Native consultants, staff members, trustees, volunteers, and contractors are crucial informants and collaborators.
- Acknowledging and knowing one's own culture and history is key to a better understanding of Wabanaki culture and history.
- Understanding Native sovereignty and the protection of the sacred is essential.

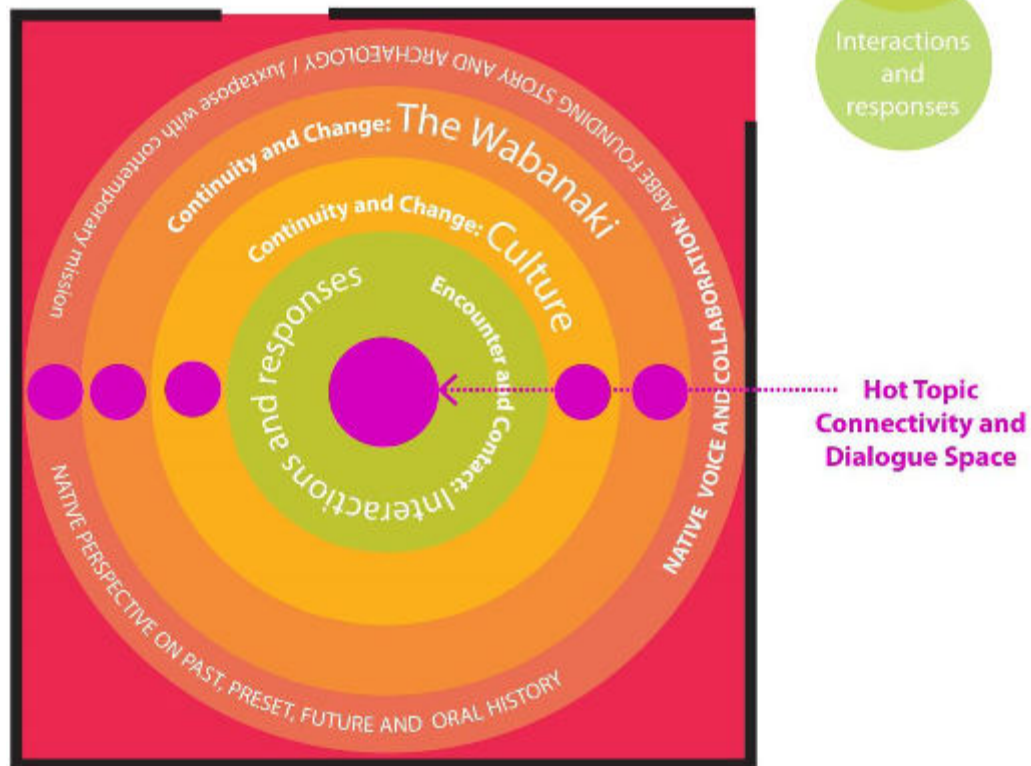
OUR PERSPECTIVE

Created as an anthropology-focused museum, the Abbe works from a history perspective today. This recognizes native history in a 12,000 year continuum that includes insights from anthropology, archaeology, and ethnology, but is viewed through the history discipline.





Gallery schematic A.





people of the first light

ENCOUNTER INTERACTIVE



The Wabanaki Language and Culture Interactive



Tree

BENCH



Contemporary Issues Interactive: Connect and dialogue

WABANAKI HOMELAND/MAP INTERACTIVE



REGALIA

BENCH

VIEW

VIEW

VIEW

PROJECTION

Archaeology Dig Site Tranquility Farm

“The past is present. Time is like the ripples from a canoe as it moves through water. The ripples are constant and present.”

– Jamie Bissonette Lewey, Abenaki

The Wabanaki Homeland



people of the first light

When was the first light of dawn touches the land.
Wabanaki (Wabanaki) all here, where they were created
millions of years ago, and where they will remain for
millions of years more.

They do understand the Wabanaki believe that all
things—people, animals, plants, water, earth, stars, and
other—connected, living together in nature, with a
great responsibility to care for one another.





This place is a Wabanaki place, and has been for thousands of years. Explorers, colonizers, and non-Native people and governments have imposed boundaries, and given their own names to places across the landscape. Despite this, the Wabanaki have retained the original names and stories of their homeland.



Wabanaki

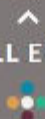
John Banks, Penobscot
Norman Bernard, Mi'kmaq
Jamie Bissonette Lewey
Cassandra Dana, Passamaquoddy
Natalie Dana, Passamaquoddy
James Eric Francis, Sr.
Suzanne Greenlaw, Maliseet
Sherri Mitchell, Penobscot
Brenda Moore-Mitchell,
Passamaquoddy
Elizabeth Neptune, Passamaquoddy
Simon Nevin, Mi'kmaq
Bonnie Newsom, Penobscot
Molly Neptune Parker,
Passamaquoddy
Gabe Paul, Passamaquoddy

Jennifer Pictou, Micmac
Darren Ranco, Penobscot
Percy Sacobie, Maliseet
Donna Sanipass, Micmac
Mary Sanipass, Micmac
Maulian Smith, Penobscot
Chris Sockalexis, Penobscot
Donald Soctomah, Passamaquoddy
Fred Tomah, Maliseet
Maine-Wabanaki REACH
Penobscot Nation GIS office
Maliseet GIS & Natural Resources
Passamaquoddy GIS office

Allies & Adversaries



EXPLORE ALL ENCOUNTERS



Stopping the Bulldozers

By the 1960s, the state and private landowners had taken much of the land reserved for the Passamaquoddy Tribe in earlier treaties. The Passamaquoddy decided to fight back – and an opportunity quickly presented itself.

In 1964, a local non-Native man “won” a parcel of land at Indian Township in a poker game. When he began to bulldoze a road across the property, the Passamaquoddy took a stand. A group of women were soon arrested for blocking his equipment. In the process of fighting the charges against the women, the tribe found that they could take the fight for their treaty lands to the courts, and win. This laid the groundwork for federal recognition and land claims.

 THIS TOPIC IN DEPTH



Passamaquoddy women leaving the Calais courthouse, 1964. Courtesy of Donald Soctomah.



Plaisted's camps, Indian Township, 1950s. Courtesy of Donald Soctomah.

Learn about how Maliseet and Passamaquoddy allies helped the Americans achieve their independence.

NEXT >



Colonization & Human Rights



EXPLORE ALL ENCOUNTERS



Colonization and Human Rights

Colonialism is the establishment, maintenance, acquisition, exploitation, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is a set of unequal relationships between the colonized and the colonial power.

The process of colonization began with the first arrival of Europeans in the Wabanaki homeland. Believing they were justified in the eyes of a Christian god, colonial powers sought to assimilate or destroy Wabanaki cultures and people. Colonizers believed in a cultural superiority that privileged them over Indigenous peoples.

The impact of ongoing colonial relationships in the U.S. can be seen when the human and collective rights of the Wabanaki are violated.



"Best Wishes to Rainbow Phillips"
James Galt
Signing the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, 1980.
Courtesy of Butch Phillips.

“Deep in the subconscious of many Native people is the unfinished story that begins with the exploration of the European powers and the way things could have been before that.

– Donald Soctomah, Passamaquoddy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, 2005

Find out about the changing nature of relationships between the Wabanaki and the state of Maine.

NEXT >

Meet the People

Donald Soctermah
Pemmican
1911-1981



Donald Soctermah was a Pemmican maker and a member of the Pemmican Society. He was born in 1911 and passed away in 1981. He was a dedicated collector and preserver of Pemmican, a traditional food made from bison and fat. He was instrumental in the discovery and excavation of the Pemmican site in 1971. He was a member of the Pemmican Society and the Pemmican Society of Canada. He was a dedicated collector and preserver of Pemmican, a traditional food made from bison and fat. He was instrumental in the discovery and excavation of the Pemmican site in 1971. He was a member of the Pemmican Society and the Pemmican Society of Canada.

Lucy Nisler
1881-1968



Lucy Nisler was a Pemmican maker and a member of the Pemmican Society. She was born in 1881 and passed away in 1968. She was a dedicated collector and preserver of Pemmican, a traditional food made from bison and fat. She was instrumental in the discovery and excavation of the Pemmican site in 1971. She was a member of the Pemmican Society and the Pemmican Society of Canada. She was a dedicated collector and preserver of Pemmican, a traditional food made from bison and fat. She was instrumental in the discovery and excavation of the Pemmican site in 1971. She was a member of the Pemmican Society and the Pemmican Society of Canada.

Mary and Donald Simpson
1911-1981



Mary and Donald Simpson were Pemmican makers and members of the Pemmican Society. They were born in 1911 and passed away in 1981. They were dedicated collectors and preservers of Pemmican, a traditional food made from bison and fat. They were instrumental in the discovery and excavation of the Pemmican site in 1971. They were members of the Pemmican Society and the Pemmican Society of Canada. They were dedicated collectors and preservers of Pemmican, a traditional food made from bison and fat. They were instrumental in the discovery and excavation of the Pemmican site in 1971. They were members of the Pemmican Society and the Pemmican Society of Canada.

Paul Linn
1911-1981



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